CHAPTER-IV
THE REGION OF SURJAPUR:
A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

INTRODUCTION:

In the previous chapter it has been established that Muslims in India suffer from greater socio-economic deprivation than Hindus. But the degree of disparity is not uniform across states and across regions.

The Surjapuri Muslims as of today a largely concentrated in the district of Kishanganj in Bihar and in the district of Uttar Dinajpur in West Bengal. But this was not the case earlier. Historically, the Surjapur region was a part of the undivided Purnea district of Bihar. The Surjapuri Muslims occupied eastern third of that district to the east of the river Mahananda. They are said to be of ‘koch origin’ and speak a mixture of Bihari and Bengali, closely resembling the koch-Bengali of Malda. Although in the main, a Bengali dialect, it is written in the Kaithi character, which is one of those used for Bihari. But for the purpose of writing they always used urdu.

At the time of partition of India in 1947, parts of the districts of Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri in the old province of Bengal were allotted to East Pakistan (now Bangla Desh), with the result that the new state of West Bengal severed into two separate physical parts. The West Bengal government, pleaded for the transfer of eastern parts of Purnea district to West Bengal, so that the physical contiguity between the two parts of West Bengal might be established, and, further so that at least the whole length of the National Highway might lie entirely within the territories of West Bengal. But the typical linguistic complexion of the Surjapuri dialect made the region disputed for reorganisation. Thus, claims and counter claims were made by the Bihar and the West Bengal
governments. The States Reorganisation Commission found the linguistic complexion of the disputed area quite unclear and hence considered the claim of West Bengal government and recommended the transfer of the area to West Bengal. As a result a sizeable population of Surjapuri Muslims was transferred from the Kishanganj subdivision of Purnea district to West Dinajpur district of West Bengal. However, an exception was made in respect of Kishanganj town. Recently the district of Kishanganj has been carved out from the Purnea district a couple of years ago. The district of Uttar Dinajpur has been carved out from the West Dinajpur district as an independent district. The Uttar Dinajpur district is largely constituted of the area transferred to West Bengal in 1956. Therefore, the Surjapuri Muslims today, have a predominant population in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal). Despite being an important agriculturist community of the region, it has hitherto remained unexplored. Being an exploratory and ethnographic study it has been felt important to provide a historical account of the region. It becomes immensely important from the point of view of the community, which does not have any cohesive written record till today. Definitely they have an interest in knowing their historical past. The historical account of the region would be able to establish the fact that the Surjapuri Muslims in these two districts cutting across state boundaries shared similar natural resources, cultural and historical experiences. Thus, any disparity at the level of development between them can be explained in terms of the state specific policies of the government of Bihar and that of the government of West Bengal. The historical account would also reflect upon the circumstances under which a large section of their population and area was transferred to West Bengal. It will put forth the conditions for the transfer.
THE REGION:

The term “Surjapuri” emanates after the name of a Pargana in the Kishangaj District, extending over 729 square miles. The people in this region speak a local dialect popularly known as Surjapuri dialect.

The Surjapuri dialect also known as Siripuria dialect or Kishangajia dialect is a border form of speech, Bengali in the main but containing expressions borrowed from Maithli. Surjapuri is a Sub-dialect of Northern Bengali spoken mainly in the Kishanganj & Uttar Dinajpur districts of Bihar and West Bengal respectively. It is also called Siripuria from the name Siripur of the Pargana in which it is most prevalent, and also Kishangajia from the Principal district of that name where it is most prevalent. It is largely mixed with idioms borrowed from the neighbouring Bihari, and is even written in the Kaithi character, which is usually adopted for writing that language. The people who speak it are mostly Koch in origin.

At the census of 1901 the language of 1,773,000 persons or 94.6 percent, of the population, was returned as Hindi and of 92,000 persons, or 4.9 percent, as Bengali. Dr. Grierson, however, estimates the number of persons speaking Bengali to be 603,000 or nearly a third of the inhabitants. According to him, “the dialect in question is, in the main, Bengali with an admixture of Hindi, but it is written in the Kaithi character of Bihar, in which Hindi and not Bengali is written. This fact doubtless weighed with the enumerators more than the niceties of grammatical construction, and as a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult in many places to decide with which of the two languages the local dialect should be classed, for Bihari fades imperceptibly into Bengali and vice versa. To the east it becomes more and more infected by Bengali, till on the east of river Mahananda it is superseded by the Surjapuri
dialect of that language. The Surjapuri dialect is principally spoken by Mohammadans, but Hindus to the east of the river still speak Maithili. The Surjapuri (Siripuria) dialect is a border form of speech, Bengali in the main, but containing expressions borrowed from Maithili.
THE CHARACTER OF THIS DIALECT IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS BY Dr. GRIERSON:

INDO-ARYAN FAMILY: (Eastern Group)

NORTHERN DIALECT, (Surjapuri), Siripuria Mixed Sub-Dialect⁴:

Maujā-Mōhāmārīr Kissā.

Of Village-Mohamari a-story.

Bāsbārū bāp, apnā chhibā bēl, Nagru, Ṭolpēl Marāl bēlā sānge
Bāsbārī's father, of-his-own youngest son, Nagru's Tolphal Maral's daughter with
bhīlā-chhīl. Thōrēk din sab-kōi bahut khusē-rahi.
had-caused-the-marriage. (For)-a-few days every-one much happiness-with remained.

Of-that-daughter-child the-conduct good not was, for-that-reason her-own mother-in-law
nāhīr nō-gēl. Of Village-Mahari a-story. Of-the-humour she was, evil reason her-own
husband separated having-made (to)-her-own
apnā jōrū sāgē bīmār kōē-gēl. Of-bimbār kātāt ohar
father's-house-carried-(her)-away. Some days after that woman died. Nagru
of-his-own-wife in-sorrow sick became. Of-that-sickness in-the-condition his
nāhīr o sarur dēkār ghar sē nikēt dēkā. Nagru bīmār
together brother-in-law and father-in-law him the-home-from drove-out Nagru of-sickness
hēkōt apnā-bēpēr ghar chhālēl. Tō ādēmīk samajhū
in-the-condition his-own-father's house (to)-came. Therefore a-man-to understanding
ačhāt kē apnā-mōgēr bātēt apnā-mātē-bēp sē
is-necessary, that of-his-own-wife at-the-words one's-own-mother-father-with
nī-bīgē.

one-should-not-quarrel.

The western limit of Northern Bengali extends into the Pumea district. The language may be taken as occupying the eastern third of the district, that is to say, the whole of Kishanganj and the eastern half of the Sadar sub-divisions. In the Kishanganj Sub-division, and in Kasba Amur and Balrampur (Amur, Kasba & Gopalpur thana), the Musalmans who are said to be of Koch origin speak a mixture of Bihari and Bengali, closely resembling the Koch-Bengali of Malda. This dialect is called Kishanganjia or Siripuria, and is returned, as spoken by 603,623 souls. Although in the main, a Bengali dialect, it is written in the Kaithi character, which is one of those used for Bihari. It closely resembles, on
the one hand, the dialect of Malda, and on the other hand, in the forms
borrowed from Bihari, the dialect existing in the western Purnea.

The district of Uttar Dinajpur is constituted of those portions of the
Purnea (Kishanganj) district, which have gone over to west Bengal in
implementation of the recommendations of the states Reorganisation
commissions. Therefore, the history of both these districts of Kishangaj
and Uttar Dinajpur is the same.

EARLY HISTORY

The earliest inhabitants of the region are believed to have been
Angas to the west and Pundras to the east. The former are generally
grouped with Bengal tribes in the epics, and formed the easternmost tribe
known to the Aryans in the time of the Atharva-samhita. The latter are
classed among the most degraded classes of men in the Aitareya-
brahmana, one of the oldest Brahmanes, which was written before 1,000
B.C.; but it is also stated THAT THEY WERE DESCENDANTS OF
THE SAGE Viswamitra, which would seem to imply that they had Aryan
blood, though degraded. This opinion survived in the epic period, for in
the Mahabharata and Harivansa the Pundras and Angas are said to be
descended from the being sage Dirghatamas, who was born of the queen
of the demon Bali; and according to the Manu-samhita they sank
gradually to the condition of Sudras because thy neglected the
performance of sacred rites and did not consult Brahmanas. Apparently,
therefore, the Pundras were too powerful to be left out of the Aryan pale,
but had rites and customs so different from those in the home of Vedic
Brahmanism, that a theory of degradation was set up.

Some passages in the Mahabharata (Sabella-parva, Adhyaya 30),
describing the conquests of Bhima in Eastern India, furnish further
information about the inhabitants of this part of the country. Bhima, it is said, conquered Mahanja king of Kausikikchcha, a tract lying between Modagiri (Monghyr) and the land of the Pundras, which is thus identifiable with South Purnea. He also defeated Karna, the king of Anga, conquered the hill tribes, killed the king of Modagiri (Monghyr) in battle, and next subdued the powerful Pundra king, Vasudeva, who is described as the king of the Vangas, Pundras and Kiratas. The Pundra land appears to have been bounded on the east by the river Karatoya; on the west by the modern Mahananda, which separated it from Anga; on the south by the modern Padma; and on the north by the hills, which were inhabited by aboriginal hill tribes, such as the Kiratas. Local tradition still speaks of the struggles and conquests of the Kiratas, and a Kirata (Kiranti) woman from the Morang or Tarai is said to have been the wife of Raja Virat, who, according to legend, gave shelter to Yudishthira and his four Pandava brothers during their 12 years exile. The site of his fort is still pointed out at Thakurganj in the north of the district.

At the dawn of history the district west of the Mahananda apparently formed part, with Bhagalpur, of the kingdom of Anga, while its eastern portion was included in Paundra-vardhana, the name now given to the land of the Pundras. Anga was an independent kingdom till the sixth century B.C., and there are traditions of war between it and Magadha. During the life-time of Buddha it was annexed by Bimbisara, the ambitious ruler of Magadha (circa 519 B.C.), and it appears never to have regained its independence, the Raja of Anga in the time of Buddha being simply a wealthy nobleman, of whom nothing is known except that he granted a pension to a Brahman. Thence forward, its history is merged in that of the Magadhan empire. Paundravardhana also was included in that empire, the Asokavadana recording the fact that Asoka put to death many
naked heretics of that country who had done despite to the Buddhist religion. In later times the district formed a part of the empire of the Imperial Guptas, which extended as early as the reign of Samudragupta (circa 340 A.D.) to Kamarupa (Assam) and Samatata (East Bengal) on the east. The Gupta empire was shattered by the invasion of the Huns, and Purnea appears to have passed into the hands of Baladitya, king of Magadha, who in alliance with other kings, and in particular Yasodharman of Central India, defeated and captured the Hun king, Mihiragula.

A brief account of Paundra-vardhana and its people has been left by Hiuen Tsiang (Yuan-Chwang), who visited it, about 640 A.D. It has a flourishing population and was studded with tanks, hospices and flowering groves. The land was low and moist with abundant crops and a genial climate. In coming to this country from the west, the pilgrim had to cross the Ganges; and in going from it eastward, he had to cross a large river. The province was thus evidently bounded on the west by the Ganges with Mahananda, and on the east by the Karatoya. The country west of the Mahananda as far as the Gandak was occupied by the Vrijis, a confederacy of tribes, who had come in from the north many centuries before and held the tract between the Ganges and Nepal. They were divided into several clans, and General Cunningham conjectures that Purnea may have been one of their capitals, but had long been absorbed in the Magadhan Empire. According to Hiuen Tsiang, the soil of their country was rich and fertile, the climate rather cold. Its inhabitants were quick and hasty of temper, and most were heretics, but a few believed in Buddha.

"At the beginning of the seventh century the tract now included in the district seems to have been under Sasanka; the powerful king of
Gauda (Gaur), who held both North and South Bihar as well as Central Bengal. He was a worshipper of Siva and hated Buddhism, which he did his best to destroy. He dug up and burnt the holy Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, broke the stone marked with the footprints of Buddha at Pataliputra, destroyed' the Buddhist convents, and scattered the monks carrying his persecutions to the foot to the Nepalese hills. Harsha, the great Buddhist emperor of that century (606 – 647), determined to crush Sansanka, and about 620 A.D. succeeded in doing so during the course of his conquest of Northern India, in which, says Hiuen Tsian, 'he went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient; the elephants were not unharnessed, nor the soldiers unhelmeted'. After the death of Harsha, his empire was dismembered; and it seems likely that Purnea became a part of the Magadha kingdom under Adityasena (circa 660 A.D.) from the 9th to the 12th century it was under the Pala kings, and on their decline became subject to the Senas.

**MUHAMMADAN RULE**

At the end of the 12th century the Musalmans under Bakhtiyar Khilji burst down upon Bengal sacking Bihar and Nadia, the capitals of Bihar and Bengal. Leaving Nadia in desolation, Bakhtiyar Khilji removed the seat of Government to Lakhnauti (Gaur), and from that centre Ghias-uddin Iwaz (1211-26) extended the limits of the territory held by the Musalmans. The whole of the country called Gaur, as well as Bihar, passed under his control, and his rule was acknowledged by the surrounding tracts, including Tirhut, which all sent tribute to him. Purnea must, therefore, have come under Muhammadan rule in the first quarter of the 13th century. The north of the district seems still, however, to have been held by the hill tribes of Nepal; and Purnea was long regarded as an outlying province whose revenues were sufficiently burdened.
protecting itself against their incursions. So little is known of the district until the 17th century that not even the names of its faujdars or military Governors have been recorded. It is only known that it formed the frontier sarkar of Muhammadan Bengal and that in the war between Sher Shah and Humayun it supplied the latter with some levies.

During the Mughal rule Purnea formed a great military frontier province under the rule of a faujdar, who was nominally subordinate to the Subahadar. In his revenue capacity of amildar, he was independent of the Diwan of Bengal and rendered no account, the greater part of Purnea being held in Jagir for the maintenance of himself and his troops. From the Ain-e-Akbari it appears that the present district was included in Sarkar Tajpur east of the Mahananda and Sarkar Purnea west of that river. Within its limits were also two mahals of Sarkar Audumbar and one mahal of Sarkar Lakhnauti in the south, all these sarkars belonging to Subah Bengal, and west of the Kosi five mahals of Sarkar Mungir (Monghyr) in Subah Bihar; while the northern strip formed a part of the then independent kingdom of Morang. The old Kosi, it should be explained, was at this time the boundary between Bengal and Bihar and continued to be the boundary till the 18th century, when the five mahals of Sarkar Mungir were annexed to Purnea. Towards the end of the 17th century, Ostwal Khan was appointed Faujdar, with the title of Nawab and united in his person the command of the frontier army and the fiscal duties of Amin or superintendent of the revenues. He was succeeded by Abdulla Khan, who was vested with similar powers. About 1680 Asfandiyar Khan became Nawab of Purnea, and held the office for 12 years. He was succeeded by Babhaniyar Khan, who ruled until his death in 1722, when Saif Khan was appointed Governor. With him the authentic history of Purnea may be said to begin.
GOVERNORS OF PURNEA

"Saif Khan.- The new Governor, Saif Khan, was a nobleman of high lineage, being the grandson of Amir Khan, a famous Governor of Kabul, and a connection of the imperial house. He was sent to Bengal by the Emperor Aurangzeb at the request of the then Nawab of Bengal, Murshid Kuli Khan, who wished to bring this outlying portion of the province under more effective control. At that time the writ of the Mughal did not run to the west beyond the Kosi, the main stream of which seems to have flowed close to the town of Purnea and then due south into the Ganges near Karagola. Beyond it lay the territory of Bir Shah, Raja of Birnagar, who had a force of 15,000 men and did not acknowledge the Mughal authority. To the north the boundary was not far distant from Purnea and was held by hill tribes, who waylaid and plundered all travelers who ventured to pass that way. To check their predatory raids a fort had been built at Jalalgarh and a commandant placed in charge of it. It was, in fact, a frontier fort, estimates for the fortifying and garrisoning of which, dating from about this period, are still in existence. From Jalalgarh the boundary ran eastward, passing a little north of the confluence of the Mahananda and Kankai to the most southern point, where the present pargana of Surjapur touches the district of Dinajpur.

The Nawab, having obtained the services of Saif Khan, conferred upon him the office of Faujdar of Purnea and commandant of Jalalgarh, making him a grant of Parganas Dharampur or Birnagar and Gondwara, as well as the mahals constituting the jagir of the commandant. Saif Khan soon found that their revenues were very small and complained to the Emperor. Aurangzeb then wrote to the Nawab; "I have sent you a caged lion. If he does not get his food, he will give you trouble." Murshid Kuli
Khan took the hint, remitted all arrears of revenue, granted him other concessions befitting his rank and station, and gave him full power to consolidate his rule and extend his domains without an increase in the revenue payable to the State. Saif Khan took full advantage of the opportunity, and can soon have had little cause to complain of an empty exchequer. He overran Birmagar expelled its disloyal chief, Drujan Singh, son of Bir Shah, and thoroughly subjugated his territory. According to Mr. J. Grant, Birmagar included all the lands west of the old channel of the Kosi and was annexed in 1732. He next brought other refractory zamindars to book, imprisoning them and forcing them to pay revenue, so that he soon realized 18 lakhs per annum in place of the 10 or 11 lakhs previously collected, retaining the surplus under the agreement with the Nawab. He also forced the hill tribes back to the Tarai, cleared the jungle, extended the Northern Frontier some 30 miles further North, and broad under cultivation the waste lands that extended to the food of the hills. In this way, we are told, he enlarged the country and its resources, and day by day the strength of his Government, of his finances and of his army increased.

In all his ventures he appears to have been well supported by the Nawab, who furnished him with troops when he wanted them. He was on terms of close friendship with the latter, in spite of the fact that he had refused to marry his grand-daughter, Nafissa Begam, because her lineage was inferior to his own. Murshid Kuli Khan was the son of the poor Brahman, who, when a boy, was bought by a Persian merchant, who had him circumcised and educated. Every year the Nawab invited him to spend some time at Murshidabad and would rally his guest on his ways. One of his peculiarities was the method he adopted for paying his troops, which was by giving one half of their pay in money and the other half in
goods, either plundered, confiscated or bought up cheap. Another was his practice of rewarding his favourites by giving them his cast-off mistresses - a dubious favour, which earned him the sobriquet of Zen Baksh, i.e., the bestower of women, instead of the more common title for a liberal man, Zen Baksh or bestower of gold.

In 1740 Ali Vardi Khan rose in revolt, and Saif Khan, underestimating his power, and thinking that he would be supported by the imperial forces, gave out that he himself would march against him and punish his rebellion. He quickly realized his mistake, and to cover it, counterfeited madness. Ali Vardi Khan; who knew his powerful connections at the imperial court, was only too pleased to overlook the matter; and we find that in 1749, when Ali Vardi marched to Patna to quell a revolt of the Afghans, Saif Khan sent him a levy of 15,000 musketeers which rendered good service in an engagement with the Marathas at Sultanganj. On his return from Patna, Saif Khan invited Ali Vardi Khan to visit him in his own territory, where he had prepared a magnificent camp and costly presents; but this invitation was refused by the Nawab, who was offended at Saif Khan never coming to his court at Murshidabad, though he had regularly visited his predecessors. Saif Khan, accordingly returned to Purnea, where he died next year (1750).

**Fakhr-ud-in Hussain Khan (also called Nawab Bahadur)**, who is said to have no talents or capacity for Government and to have been a bad son and a bad brother. He seized the vast treasure accumulated by his father during his thirty years of office, consisting of jewels said to be of inestimable value, as well as a large sum of money, and also despoiled his brothers of what they had. The Nawab, hearing of his oppressive conduct, appointed in his stead his own nephew and son-in-law, Saiyad Ahmed Khan, also called Saulat Jang, i.e., the impetuous in war. Saiyad Ahmed
Khan set out at the head of 3,000 horse and 4,000 foot, and Fakhr-ud-din, realizing the hopelessness of resistance, went quietly to the Nawab's court at Murshidabad and made his submission. Soon afterwards, during one of the Maratha invasions, hearing an exaggerated account of a mutiny in the Bengal army, and thinking that the Nawab's power was at an end, he escaped from Murshidabad and joined his forces, which he had left encamped on the Mahananda. Thence he marched on to Purnea, but an soon as Saiyad Ahmed Khan advanced to meet him he retired to Malda. There, his incapacity and cowardice soon became apparent. His troops began to desert him and he remained inactive, until Ali Vardi Khan sent a small force, which took him and his treasure to Murshidabad, where he was kept under surveillance. In this way says the author of the Sair-ul-Mutakharin, the Nawab at one and the same stroke took possession of that immense heap of money and jewels that had been amassing for half a century together. Fakhr-ud-din eventually managed to escape again with the help of the Marathas and made his way to Delhi, where he died soon afterwards.

**Saiyad Ahmed Khan**- Saiyad Ahmed Khan had been appointed Governor of Orissa in 1741, but had proved a failure. He alienated his troops by reducing their pay and the Oriyas by his exaction from their zamindars, by his dissolute manners, and by taking their women for his zanana. The people rose in revolt, and put Saiyad Ahmed in prison, from which Ali Vardi Khan who marched south to re-establish his authority rescued him. In 1749 he was made Deputy Governor of Bihar, but this appointment aroused the jealousy of Ali Vardi Khan’s favourite grandson, Siraj-ud-daula. Ali Vardi Khan was induced to install Siraj-ud-daula in the place of Saiyad Ahamed Khan, who was then consoled by being made Governor of Purnea. In this office he did much to redeem his
reputation. He gave up the depraved habits of his young days, and instead of passing his time among dancing women, he attached to his person friends distinguished for their birth, virtue of knowledge. He was careful to go through the daily round of prayers, like a good Musalman, but at the same time he was a jovial soul, who could enjoy the fun of the Basant Panchami. Rising an hour before daybreak, he performed his devotions, and then sat in state in the court hall. There he held public audience twice a week, being accessible to every suitor. On Friday he abstained from all business; but on the other days of the week he devoted himself to it. His method of business was as follows: He sat in a private room, to which none were admitted but some old women of the zanana and some trusty eunuchs. His courtiers, secretaries and heads of the different offices remained outside, sending in by a eunuch any paper requiring his signature. These papers he perused in silence, and returned when he had passed orders on them. Fair copies were then made and dispatched, courtiers being always ready in attendance. At 10 A.M. he had his dinner, from which he would send selected dishes to his friends. A siesta followed then came the mid-day prayers and some reading of the Koran. At 3 P.M. he came into the public hall and discussed science and religion with the Maulvis for two hours. Then he gave audience to his friends for an hour, after which he spent some time with the ladies of his zanana. At night came his fourth prayer, after which he was entertained by actresses, dancers and singers, or by hearing some curious and diverting story or tale, which lulled him to sleep; and this was at about 9 or 10 O’clock.

‘This rule of life’, wrote the author of the Sair-ul-Mutakharin, held regularly the whole year round without exception. He was naturally a sweet-tempered man; and civility was so natural to him, that for full seven years, in which I have been in his service, I never remember to
have heard him say a harsh word to any one (whether high or low), or to have seen him guilty of an improper action\textsuperscript{16}.

As regards the character of his rule, 'this prince governed for full seven years the province of Purnea with absolute power; but yet with so much equity and attention to the welfare of the subject, that both the nobles and husbandmen were exceedingly their applause. Retired in a corner, at a distance from the great roads to and from Hindustan, he had no occasion at all either to wage war or to travel. So that his travels went no farther than Rajmahal, whither his uncle, who was very fond of hunting, used to repair almost every year; and sometimes he proceeded as far as Murshidabad, to see his brother, Nawazish Muhammad Khan, and his nephews and nieces, as well as the princesses of his family. Nor did he ever set out from Purania in a military equipage but on two occasions; the first time it was to oppose Fakhr-u-ddin Hussain Khan, that ill-advised son of Saif Khan; the other, it was to chastise Sheikh Muhammed Jalil, zamindar of Purania, who enjoyed a good estate and a great revenue, but who was undone for having listened to the suggestions of senseless, ignorant friends, by whose counsels he excited troubles, proved refractory, and demolished his own welfare and family. Elsewhere we find that Muhammad Jalil was the zamindar of Khagara and a staunch Shia. The expedition against him took place in the middle of the rains and was a short one, for his troops refused to stand by him. He and all his family were taken prisoners, his estate was confiscated, and he himself died in prison. His grandson was, however, allowed to regain the estate, in order that he might bring back the cultivators and repopulate the half ruined country\textsuperscript{17}.

Towards the end of his life, Saiyad Ahmed appears to have engaged in intrigues to secure possession of Bengal on the death of Ali Vardi
Khan, which was daily, expected, as he was an old man and had long been suffering from acute dropsy. Calculating on such a contingency, Saiyad Ahmed opened up negotiations with the Grand Vizier of the Emperor Alamgir II for the grant of the viceroyalty of Bengal, and devoted the resources of Purnea to collecting large army with which to oppose the claims of Siraj-ud-daula. In 1756, however, a few months before the death of Ali Vardi Khan, Saiyad Ahmed died and was buried at Purnea in a garden called the Jafaribagh. He left a great treasure behind him, consisting of jewels, furniture of silver and gold, precious fabrics, camels, elephants, etc., and at least 45 lakh in the treasury. Raymond, the translator of the Sair-ul-Mutakharin, indeed, estimates that his property was worth over a crore and that his annual savings were over 20 lakh. ‘Add to all this’, he wrote, ‘the standing expenses for seven thousand infantry and as much cavalry, the artillery, a fleet of boats; a numerous court receiving salaries; a seraglio of five hundred women; a table, splendid; and infinity of yearly clothes and jewels; as well as a legion of pensioners that received from five to thousand rupees per month; and this aggregate of expenses cannot be rated at less than forty lacs more; in all sixty lacs—and the translator has been assured by writers of his treasury that his revenue amounted to fifty-eight lacs. Fifty-eight lacs! Here is then a decay incredible, as being past all computation and all conjecture; for although some fifteen years ago Razi-u-ddin Muhammad Khan uses to transmit yearly from thence eleven lacs to the treasury of Murshidabad, it is certain that Purniah cannot yield now (1789) above six or seven lacs a year’.

Shaukat Jang.- Saiyad Ahmed Khan was succeeded by his son Shaukat Jang, who had been Grand Mater of Artillery at Purnea under his father and afterwards at Murshidabad under Ali Vardi Khan. The latter,
it is said, recognized his successions, and in order to pacify an, if possible, buy off such a formidable claimant to the throne, bestowed on him the whole of Purnea as a revenue-free Jagir. Shaukat Jang, at any rate, did no oppose the succession of his cousin, Siraj-ud-daula, but waited for an opportunity to assert his claims. No sooner, however, had he succeeded Ali Vardi Khan than Siraj-ud-daula determined to make his own position secure by removing this rival from his path, and with that purpose set out against Shaukat Jang in May, 1756. He arrived at Rajmahal, but got no further. His soldiers were afraid to cross the Ganges, believing that Shaukat Jang had been reinforced by the imperial troops; while his captains dissuaded him from attempting a campaign in the rains when the country would be under water, Shaukat Jang himself was taken by surprise; instead of taking the field, he begged his mullahs to avert invasion by their prayers, and sent a message to Siraj-ud-daula acknowledging him as his suzerain. Siraj-ud-daula then marched back to attack the English, his campaign ending with the massacre of the Black Hole.

Shaukat Jang had merely temporized. The conspirators at Murshidabad under Mir Jafar Khan, the Bakshi or Paymaster, begged him to put himself at their head, depose Siraj-ud-daula, and rule Bengal. Shaukat Jang lent a ready ear to their suggestions. Vain and loquacious, he openly talked of his scheme and boasted that, after subduing Bengal, he would conquer Oudh and place on the throne of Delhi an emperor of his own liking. He would then march to Lahore and Kabul, and make his home at Khorasan, as the climate of Bengal did not suit him.

At this juncture, his father’s intrigues bore fruit, for he received from the Grand Vizier a pharman or commission authorizing him to take an rule Bengal as Viceroy, on condition that he sent to Delhi the confiscated
treasure of Siraj-ud-daula and remitted annually three crores of rupees as tribute. 'On the receipt of that patent, his pride, which had already reached to the sphere of the moon, now rose to the sun's orb; and he commenced picking up quarrels with principal officers and commanders of the old court'. Most of them were dismissed or degraded, his officers were nearly driven into mutiny; while his soldiers were alienated by his telling them: 'I am not such a fool as Ali Vardi Khan, who gave his men leave to take everything found in an enemy's camp. When I conquer Bengal, my men will not have a handful of straw beyond their pay.'

News of his intentions reached Siraj-ud-daula, who, in order that he might have some one on the spot to watch his movements, granted the parganas of Birmagar and Gondwara to a Hindu favourite named Ras Bihari, sending Shaukat Jang a letter to apprise him of the grant. Shaukat Jang passionately resented this interference with his authority, beat the messenger who brought the letter, and sent a characteristic reply, which he first had read out in Court. His reply was brief and to the point: 'I have received from the Imperial court a patent of Bengal, Bihar and Orrissa; but as the same blood runs in your veins and mine, I will spare your life and grant you a retreat in any part of the province of Dacca you like. Retire there, and leave the palace and treasury to my officers. See that you send your answer promptly, as I wait it with one foot in the stirrup. This letter was enough to enrage a less passionate man than Siraj-ud-daula, who decided to deliver his answer at once and in person. He ordered Raja Ram Narayan, the Governor of Bihar, to march on Purnea from Patna, while his own army advanced from Murshidabad, in two divisions, one of which under his own command, marched up the right band of the Ganges, while the other, under his Diwan Raja Mohan Lal, followed the left band of that river.
Battle of Baldiabari.-When Shaukat Jang was informed of the advance of Siraj-ud-daula, he ordered his officers to select a strong position for his army. Some of them, who had served under his father and were experienced soldiers, selected a position at Baldiabari between Manihari and Nawabaganj, which could easily be defended against a superior force. In front was a chain of deep morasses, over which there was only one narrow causeway, while the country was open behind, so that supplies could easily be obtained. The advantages of the position were, however, largely sacrificed by the troops being encamped at great distances from one another; for Shaukat Jang refused to entrust the command to any one else, and did not know how to marshal the forces himself. When at length he did arrive on the field, he morosely refused to issue explicit orders to his officers, but directed them to return to their positions and there await his commands. When an old Afghan officer drew his attention to the utter disorder that prevailed, and described to him the orderly battalions which Nizam-ul-mulk, the great commander of the Deccan, led into battle, his only answer was to call that general a fool, and to say that he wanted no advice, as he had already fought thee hundred battles.

While the army was waiting for his orders, Mohan Lal’s division came in sight and commenced a cannonade. The smaller guns were out of range, the shots falling into the morass, but the larger pieces commanded Shaukat Jang’s camp. Seeing this, Shyam Sundar, who was in charge of the artillery, with more courage than prudence, quitted the entrenchment and advanced, over the causeway to reply to the enemy’s fire. Shaukat Jang, thereupon, sent a message to the commander of his cavalry taunting him with his inactivity. This officer pointed out that no horse could attempt to cross the marsh and live. Shaukat Jang replied by
contemptuously comparing the conduct of his Musalman horsemen with the courage of the Hindu scribe, as he called Shyam Sundar. The cavalry thus taunted determined to cross the morass at all hazards, and soon were struggling through its thick mud, while the artillery of Siraj-ud-daula, from the other side, poured volley after volley into them. Shaukat Jang did not join them, but having taken his usual dose of bhang, retired to his tent and amused himself with the songs and dances of his harem. While he was thus engaged, the battle went against him in all directions, his artillery being silenced and his cavalry cut to pieces.

At this critical time, some of his officers came to him, and placed him on an elephant, with a servant to support him, as he was reeling with intoxication and could not sit upright. While he was advancing, a musket ball struck him in the forehead and killed him (16th October 1756). According to one account, he met his death while trying to charge a body of troops in which he thought he saw Siraj-ud-daula. The latter, however, did not take part in the battle, but remained in the rear, sending Miran, the son of Mir Jafar Khan, dressed like himself to deceive the enemy.

After the death of Shaukat Jang his forces made little further stand, though they appear to have given a good account of themselves, in spite of their disadvantages, one account saying that Siraj-ud-daula had 5000 killed and wounded. The battle ended with the fall of night, when Shaukat Jang’s forces dispersed, unpursued by the enemy, and without hindrance from the peasants of Purnea, who were not courageous enough to come down in numbers, and plunder the living or strip the dead. Two or three days later Siraj-ud-daula returned in triumph to Murshidabad, appointing Mohan Lal as Governor.

Thus miserably perished Shaukat Jang, leaving the way clear for Siraj-ud-daula. Further, in the words of the Sair-ul-Mutakharin ‘The rash
valour of the young Nawab of Purnea, in delivering Siraj-ud-daula from
the only enemy he had to fear in the country, made it clear to all Bengal
that the English were the only power which could bring about the change
that every one was longing for.

Character of Shaukat Jang- An instructive account of his character
has been given by Ghulam Hussain Khan, the author off that work, who
was attached to his court. He has as little good to say of him as he has of
his cousin Siraj-ud-daula, and finds in their folly the working of fate. It
having, he says, been decreed by providence that the guilty race of Ali
Vardi Khan should be deprived of an empire that had cost so much toil in
rearing, of course, it was in its designs that the three provinces of Bengal,
Bihar and Orissa should be found to have for masters two young men
equally proud, equally incapable, and equally cruel, Siraj-ud-daula and
Shaukat Jang. He was in a good position to judge, for he was the personal
adviser of Shaukat Jang. He gives a quaint account of his duties in that
capacity. Like the Vizier (i.e., the Queen) in the game of chess, I was
close to a wooden king, that could neither think nor act by himself. I was
obliged to read him lessons about signing papers, giving audience, and
supporting a character in public. He could neither read fluently nor write
legibly; so that I was obliged to be both schoolmaster and his minister. I
was obliged to direct his pen, teach him that Aba was written with two as
and a b, and tell him how to join a to the next letter, and a syllable to a
syllable, and how to keep his words asunder. In spite of his ignorance Shaukat Jang was inordinately vain. One
day, for instance, on receiving a petition addressing him as Alam Panah
or Refuge of the world, he gave orders that should always be his official
title, and actually informed the Grand Vizier of the Emperor that, if he
was addressed in any other way, he would tear the letter to shreds and
give no answer. 'As to his morals, although he did not seem vicious, yet he dressed and spoke like a women; but this did not prevent him from abusing, in low and obscene language, every one whatever, without distinction, and that, too, in the fullest hall of audience. To mention all his ridiculous and thoughtless actions would require volumes; and a pity it would be to consume ink and paper upon such a subject. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Shaukat Jang suffered from megalomania.

Khadij Husain Khan.- Next year, after the death of Siraj-ud-daula (July, 1757), a small revolution took place at Purnea. Hazir Ali Khan, who had been Superintendent of the Hall of Audience to Sukat Jang, took possession of the town, imprisoned Mohan Lal and seized the treasury. In this he was supported by Achit Singh, who had for some time held the Parganas of Tajpur, Sripur, Gondwara and Karagola, and was now made his Prime Minister. Both were popular with the people of Purnea, who, says the author of the Sair-ul-Mutakharin, are exactly the counterpart of those of Bengal, those tame, cowardly wretches, at all times so crouching and so ready to submit to anyone that offers. No one will wonder at Hazir Ali that having brought into his views both the troops and inhabitants.

On receiving news of this revolt, the new Nawab, Mir Jafar Khan, prepared to set out to crush it, though he was reluctant to do so, as he wished to march to Patna against Ram Narayan, the Governor of Bihar. He, therefore, readily granted the request of Khandim Husain Khan, who, representing that he wished to 'better his fortunes in the little corner of Purnea', undertook to quell the rebellion of he was made Governor. Khadim Husain Khan was no stranger to Place, for he had been in the service of Saiyad Ahamed Khan, being, indeed, sent by him to take possession of Purnea of his first appointment. He had lately distinguished
himself by his brutal conduct towards the mother of Sraj-ud-daula, having her beaten off when she flung herself on the dead body of her son.

He did not find much difficulty in establishing himself in Purnea. Hazir Ali Khan raised his levies, mostly untrained men, but trusting in the predictions of an astrologer made no attempt to move from his entrenchment. His troops, moreover, were afraid to face the army of about 7000 horse and foot under Khadim Husain Khan, but deserted daily, and, when Khadim Husain Khan advanced against them, fled without striking a blow. Hazir Ali Khan escaped to Nepal, and in December 1757 the new Governor made his entrance, unopposed, into Purnea, where he took up his abode in the palace built by Siyad Ahmed Khan. One of his first measures was to have the nose of the astrologer cut off; he then proceeded to enrich himself by confiscating property and levying heavy contributions from the Zamindars; and in a short time the district was brought under his complete control.

In 1759 the new Governor became embroiled with Miran, son of Mir Jafar Khan, who resented his assumption of an independent position. Miran marched north with an English force under Clive to face the Shahzada (afterwards the Emperor Shah Alam), who had invaded Bihar and called on Khadim Husain Khan to meet him. The latter led an army southward to Karagola, and, to make himself doubly secure, obtained a guarantee to safety from Clive, as he suspected treachery on the part of Miran. They then had an interview in the middle if the Ganges, each being in a separate boat, and were reconciled by the mediation of Clive. The truce, however, was hollow one, for Miran threatened to have Khadim Hussain Khan removed from his post, while the latter withheld all payment of revenue, marched across the Ganges with a force of 6000 men, and threatened to throw in his lot with the Shahzada. This threat
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was effectual, and he received a promise that he should remain Governor, on which he returned to Purnea.

A few months later (May, 1760) he was in open revolt and made ready to join Shah Alam. To raise troops he extorted money from all he could get in his power, whether high or low, and, before leaving Purnea, literally plundered the town and district. In this way he managed to increase his army to 6000 cavalry, 10000 infantry and 30 guns. He at first intended to go by river and for that purpose collected a number of boats; but Major Caillaud, getting wind of his intention, seized them and had them burnt with the ammunition and stores on board. Khadim Husain Khan was consequently forced to march north of the Ganges to Hajipur, where he hoped to effect a junction with the Emperor. There, however, he was attacked by Captain Knox, who marched across the river with a small force, consisting of 200 Europeans and a battalion of sepoys, which could not have exceeded 800 men, 5 field pieces and 300 of Shitab Roy’s cavalry. The Purnea troops, as they advanced, filed to the right and left, and, having completely surrounded this little band, commenced the attack. The battle lasted for six hours; column after column of cavalry charging down on the English detachment, which steadily received them with a discharge of grape or at the point of the bayonet. On one occasion the little party were nearly overwhelmed, but a brilliant charge of the grenadiers of Knox’s own battalion repulsed the enemy and saved their comrades. At length, tired of these fruitless attempts, which had been attended with considerable loss, Khadim Husain Khan was compelled to retreat, leaving behind him 400 dead on the field, three elephants and eight pieces of cannon, which fell into the hands of the victors. Not contented with this success, Captain Knox continued to follow up the retreating enemy until evening closed in upon him, capturing a number of
their ammunition wagons, which he blew up on the spot. The loss of the English on this occasion was remarkably small, for only 16 Europeans were killed; the number of sepoys is not stated.24

After this reverse, Khadim Hussein Khan retreated northwards into Champaran closely followed by the allied forces under Miran and Major Caillaud, which succeeded in making him give battle on one occasion. The battle ended in a rout, the Purnea troops losing all their artillery and being compelled to abandon their heavy baggage and a large quantity of ammunition. The pursuit, however, had to be abandoned, for one night Miran was killed by lightening, and Major Caillaud then determined to return. Khadim Husain Khan was thus left free to effect his escape through the Tarai to Purnea (June, 1760.).25

LAST DAYS OF MUHAMMADAN RULE

For three years after this we hear nothing more of the Governors of Purnea. Under Mir Kasim Ali the Governor was Sher Ali Khan, who when war with the English broke out in 1763, led all his available forces to join the Nawab at Udhua Nullah, leaving his brother as Deputy Governor of the district.

This state of affairs was taken advantage of by Rohi-u-uddin Hussain Khan, a son of Khan, who was in receipt of a small salary at the Nawab's court. Suspecting that the Nawab's downfall was certain, he left Monghyr in an old leaky boat and made his way to Purnea. Arriving there at dead of night, he made himself known to Mehdi Beg, his father's old Maulvi, and then went down the Saura River, where he kept himself and his boat concealed. As soon as he heard of the defeat of Kasim Ali at Udhua Nullah, he returned to Purnea and gathered his adherents around him. Before dawn, he put himself at their head and marched to the palace,
where the Deputy Governor was hiding with a few soldiers. The latter had no alternative but to surrender, and quietly submitted.

It was probably this Deputy Governor, or his brother Sher Ali Khan, who proved a good friend to four English sergeants, prisoners of Kasim Ali Khan, who were among the few that escaped the massacre of Patna. These four men (three of whose names are known, viz., Davis, Douglas and Speedy) had been sent to Purnea and ‘placed under the charge of the Nawab of that district. When Kasim Ali had determined upon the destruction of his prisoners, he sent orders to Purnea for them to be put to death. The Nawab, who happened to be a humane, Goodman, and being highly pleased with the conduct of the sergeants whilst with him, declined putting the orders in execution. He, however, wrote to Kasim Ali, entreating that he would recall his mandate, because he feared, if he was still determined upon it, it would be a difficult matter (as the men were beloved by all his people) to find one that would undertake the task. Kasim Ali, on receipt of the letter, flew onto a violent rage, and directed another order to be sent to the Nawab, in which he told him, if he had not spirit himself to put his command in force against those faithless and treacherous Englishmen, to send them immediately to Patna, where ample justice should be done for the crimes they had committed. On this letter being delivered to the Nawab, he sent for the sergeants, and with tears in his eyes informed them of the severe order he had received, and of the steps he had taken to preserve their lives; that he must now send them to Patna, where he hoped by the time they got there, the rage of Kasim Ali might be cooled, and that they might probably escape death. They were accordingly sent in a boat down the old Kosi with a guard of 13 men, but when the boat had reached the Ganges, they succeeded in overpowering
the guard, and in making their way to Udhua Nullah, where they joined the British army under Major Adams.

Rohi-ud-din Khan, having received the submission of the Deputy Governor, met with no opposition. The people of Purnea welcomed him with nazars, and the revolution was peacefully effected. He next seized a boat laden with treasure for Monghyr, which had put in close to the crazy vessel in which he had come to Purnea, an then sent letters to Major Adams and Mir Jafar Khan, acknowledging the latter as his master, and congratulating both of them upon their successes. Mir Jafar Khan sensible that the war was far from being at an end, was pleased to see so much strength and revenue deducted from the enemy's scale; and he sent to the new Governor a letter, in which he extolled his character for what he had done, and bestowed upon him the Government of Purnea. The new Governor, being strengthened by this accession of authority, established his government everywhere, treated both the people and gentry with the utmost benignity; and firmly keeping his seat on the stead of fortune and good luck, he continued to ride in the fields of command and success for number of years together; nor did he lose his seat, but when Muhammad Reza Khan came to be promoted to the office of Deputy Governor of Bengal. He appears to have been superseded of one year (766-67), by Suchet Rai, who was deputed from Murshidabad to collect the revenue, and to have been succeeded by Razi-ud-din Muhammad Khan. The last of the Governors was Muhammad Ali Khan, who was replaced in 1770 by Mr. Ducarrel, the first English Supervisor or Collector.
EARLY BRITISH RULE:

The early years of British rule were years of trouble for Purnea. The district suffered terribly during the great famine of 1770, the magnitude of which will be realised by referring to the report if the Famine Commission. The Famine Commission was appointed by a resolution of the government of India, dated 16th May 1878. The Famine Commissioners wrote about the famine of 1770: -

In October 1769, very gloomy reports were received from Bihar and North Bengal. In November the collector-General 'saw an alarming prospect of the Province becoming desolate' and the government wrote home (November 23) to the Court of Directors in the most alarming terms. They resolved to lay up a six months' store of grain for their troops and sent in December to Dacca and Backergunj to buy rice for Bihar. In 1770 the distress was acutest in Bihar; efforts were made, not very successfully, to obtain grain from the British Officers at Allahabad and Faizabad; but it is probable that private trade was active.

With regard to the effects of the famine the Report says -

The loss to the country in material wealth cannot be calculated; the loss of life is believed to have been greater than has occurred in any subsequent or historical famine. In the north of Purnea the European supervisors believed that half the ryots were dead; the Resident of Bihar calculated the famine mortality at 200,000 in May; the Resident of Murshidabad in June estimated that by that time three-eighths of the population of the province had died; in July 500 died daily in that town; in Birbhum many hundreds of villages are entirely depopulated and even in large towns not fourth of the houses are inhabited'. The estimate made by the Council in November, 1772, and officially reported after its members had made circuits through the country in order to ascertain the
state of things accurately, was that one-third of the population had died, and this, as Mr. Hunter remarks, implies the death of about 10 millions, as the whole population of Bengal in those days can hardly be estimated at less than 30 millions. That the mortality was extremely great, there can be no doubt; and its effects were visible for many years afterwards in the lowered revenues, the immense untilled areas, and the competition that arose among landholders to induce cultivators to settle on their estates.

There was scarcity in 1783 again. This scarcity did not affect the district of Purnea badly but is important from one point of view and that is this scarcity in Purnea and other districts that led the Government to frame a plan and a possible mode of its execution for preventing future famines in India. Sir George Campbell’s account of the Famine of 1783 mentions that-

It was decided that building of solid masonry should be constructed to serve the purpose of perpetual granaries to the two provinces, Bengal and Bihar, and the Chief Engineer prepared a plan for a circular building in Patna which still stands as a monument of past resolutions, bearing its inscription ‘For the Perpetual Prevention of Famines in India, but empty and disused.

This building known as Golghar is stills a landmark in Patna. In 1783 the Government appointed a Committee with very drastic powers to prevent future famines but we have nothing on record to get an idea of the effects of their labours.

The next scarcity in Purnea was in 1791 and the rice crop was almost an entire failure. The later years of economic distress have been discussed elsewhere.
At the time when Purnea passed into the hands of British in 1770, Mohammad Ali Khan was the Governor of Purnea; he was replaced by Ducarrel who was the first English Supervisor or Collector of Purnea. Purnea continued as a district under the Board and by Regulation I of 1817 Purnea was placed under the authority of Bihar and Benaras Board of Commissioners which also had authority over the districts of Ramgarh and Bhagalpore. In 1872 the district was transferred to the control of the Calcutta Board of Revenue along with some other districts. By Regulation I of 1829 twenty Commissioners of Divisions were crated and Purnea along with Malda was included in the Bhagalpore Division. In 1834, the Burdwan Division was abolished and Malda was then transferred to the Bauliah Division, which was later called the Rajshahi Division. Purnea continued to be under the Rajshahi Division till 1893 when it was again transferred to the Bhagalpore Division. In 1905 Purnea district was again placed under the Rajshahi Division. Purnea came back later to the Bhagalpore Division and has continued to be under the Bhagalpore Division since then.

Because of the troubles of the early years of British rule characterised by famines and epidemics, there was great difficulty in establishing the land revenue administration on a firm basis, and to add to the troubles of the British officials, there was consteer of Purnea mentions; “In October, 1788 one of the Nepalese sardars raided the village of Churli, carrying off one of its inhabitants. The remonstrances of the British succeeded in securing his release, but he had been so brutally handled, his wounds mortifying an being full of maggots, that he died a few days later. “This affair, it was reported, has caused a general alarm along the frontier, and I am very certain if it is overlooked, the consequence will be a total desertion of that part of country, for no man
will choose to hold his life and property at the mercy of a set of inhuman barbarians, which without the protection of Government must be the case in future. A fortnight later the Collector reported to the Board of Revenue another outrage committed by the Nepalese and wrote: “The conquest of Morung by the Goorca on defiance of Mr. Hastings’s order to them not to cross the Cossy, the assassination of the young Rajah of Morung who had taken protection in Purnea, and their repeated ravages on our frontier, by which the revenue had at times suffered considerably, having been looked or not resented, have given them such an opinion of the but a decisive step will be sufficient to restrain them within proper bounds Again in 1793, we find that a band of fakirs, said to be of the same descriptions as the fakirs who for some time have been on the habit of plundering in the eastern provinces, came in from Nepal, raided several villages on the boundary and made an unsuccessful attempt on one of the frontier posts.

Purnea’s connection with Nepal dates from the earliest times because of a brisk trade that existed between Nepal and Purnea district. Purnea was one of the important Indian districts along with Dehra Dun, Gonda, Basti, Gorakhpur, Bharaich in Uttar Pradesh and Champaran, Darbhanga, etc. in Bihar that carried on a good turnover of business with Nepal, Dr. K.C. Chaudhuri in his Anglo-Nepalese Relations has observed that “Trade between the district of Purnea and Nepal had long been of great importance. The export-import trade was of the nature as between the other Indian districts and Nepal.” He further observes that one of the chief trade routes to Nepal was Phulwari via Teragach to Chailghazi.

It has to be remembered as early as on May 21, 1771, Mr. Keighly, Chief of Darbhanga had drawn the attention of the Patna Council to the situation of the Tauter Pergunnahs bounded by Champaran, Purnea, Gandak and the Terai. He had mentioned that the Pergunnahs properly
belonged to the Sircar Tirhut and the Raja of Nepal had held the Tenur on a nominal Peshakash of Rs. 12000 per annum, but that again he paid at his pleasure. He desired the Patna Council to take measures for the extension of the Company's boundaries to their lawful limits. We are not directly concerned with the later vicissitudes a good account of which has been given by Dr. K.C. Chaudhuri in his Anglo-Nepalese Relations. The Council ultimately did not sanction military action against the gurkha Raja but desired that the claim to the annual tribute from him was to be kept up. Thus although an open rupture between the Company and the Gurkha Raja was avoided, border troubles between the two countries continued and Purnea being one of the border districts had to bear quite a lot of brunt. In 1770 Mr. Ducarel, the English Supervisor of Collector at Purnea had reported that Budh Karan, who had been the Dewan of the deceased Raja Kamdat Singh of Morung, was plundering the Company's frontiers and putting the Company's subjects to flight. Ducarel's suggestion was to extend the influence over Morung by rendering military assistance to Regonaut who was opposing Budh Karan. Dr. K.C. Chaudhuri observes that Ducarel "thought that only four battalions of the Company's troops would be sufficient for the purpose and those parts which would be liberated from the occupation of Budh Karan could be possessed by the Company themselves. Such a course, to Mr. Ducarel's mind, was certainly to be beneficial to the Company in more than one way. It would not only secure the Company's borders from incursions from the hills, give the English possession of the Saul forests, fires and spices, but place them at the channel of supply to the hills. Another benefit that would arise out of it was that it would prevent the Sanyasis from ravaging the districts of Bengal by blocking their way. This would also give them control over boats and ferries in the area."
The select Committee was in favour of following more or less a consistent policy of not rendering any military assistance to any of the contending hill Rajahs unless it was necessary for maintaining the interest of the Company. They, therefore, ordered immediate security arrangements for the bordering districts of the company’s territories by proper deployment of troops but deferred consideration of the question of military assistance to Regonaut to a future time when it might become absolutely imperative. This was how the Regonaut episode ended.

Kirkpatrick’s mission to Nepal preceded by Dewan Bhim Shah and Deenath Upadhyaya’s efforts in Patna had some effects. Kirkpatrick was also commissioned to induce the Nepal Government to pay stricter attention to the commercial treaty signed on March 1, 1792. The Anglo-Nepalese commercial treaty was treated as a scrap of paper whenever necessary.

This is borne out by the complaint made by one Mr. Pagan who had settled as a cultivator and merchant on the frontiers of Purnea towards Morung. In his complaint to Mr. Ducan, Resident at Benares, he wrote to say that he had sent some merchandise through Nepal to Tibet, but no sooner the goods had passed the Company’s boundary and entered Nepal than the collectors of the Sayer and Badary therein stationed refused to let his merchandise pass without exaction of the former dues so that Mr. Pagan has been obliged to bring back his goods.

Purnea also figures prominently when Maulvi Abdul Qadir Khan was deputed to Nepal after the virtual failure of Kirkpatrick’s mission. Abdul Qadir Khan was briefed partially by papers sent by the Collector of Purnea. One of the important instructions of the Maulvi was to look into the question of the adjustment of the boundary disputes between Morung
and Nepal. The free booting fakers who were repeatedly making incursions into the Company's territories were also to be looked into.

The select Committee was in favour of following more or less a consistent policy of not rendering any military assistance to any of the contending hill Rajahs unless it was necessary for maintaining the interest of the Company. They, therefore, ordered immediate security arrangements for the bordering districts of the company's territories by proper deployment of troops but deferred consideration of the question of military assistance to Regonaut to a future time when it might become absolutely imperative. This was how the Regonaut episode ended³⁰.

Kirkpatrick's mission to Nepal preceded by Dewan Bhim Shah and Deenath Upadhyaya's efforts in Patna had some effects. Kirkpatrick was also commissioned to induce the Nepal Government to pay stricter attention to the commercial treaty signed on March 1, 1792. The Anglo-Nepalese commercial treaty was treated as a scrap of paper whenever necessary.

This is borne out by the complaint made by one Mr. Pagan who had settled as a cultivator and merchant on the frontiers of Purnea towards Morung. In his complaint to Mr. Ducan, Resident at Benares, he wrote to say that he had sent some merchandise through Nepal to Tibet, but no sooner the goods had passed the Company's boundary and entered Nepal than the collectors of the Sayer and Badary therein stationed refused to let his merchandise pass without exaction of the former dues so that Mr. Pagan has been obliged to bring back his goods³¹.

Purnea also figures prominently when Maulvi Abdul Qadir Khan was deputed to Nepal after the virtual failure of Kirkpatrick's mission. Abdul Qadir Khan was briefed partially by papers sent by the Collector of Purnea. One of the important instructions of the Maulvi was to look into
the question of the adjustment of the boundary disputes between Morung and Nepal. The free booting fakers who were repeatedly making incursions into the Company's territories were also to be looked into.

There was a mutual complaint that robbers were taking up their abode in Morungand in Nepal and carrying on depredations whenever suited. Misra, the Guru of the Raja of Nepal played an important part in procuring the invitation from the Raja of Nepal to the Maulvi to proceed to Nepal an the fourth object on sending Maulvi Abdul Qadir Khan was to communicate with you in respect of settling the boundary between Morung and Purnea which you are so desirous of. Maulvi Abdul Qadir Khan and his party reached Kathmandu in July or early in August 1795. The Governor-General had pointed out to the Raja that orders have been issued to the Collector of Purnea to adjust the Morung boundary in exact conformity to the Raja's application upon that subject. The same anxiety to seek the co-operation of the Nepal Government for an equitable adjustment for the boundary disputes and the subjects of the Company on the frontiers of Purnea and Tirhut is also seen in the later mission of Capt. Knox. This co-operation was very much needed to bring the criminals to justice.

The Last District Gazetter of Purnea by O'Malley mentions:

"The aggression of the Nepalese continued during the next century. In 1808 the Gurkha Governor of the Morang seized the whole zamindari of Bhimnagar. This flagrant encroachment could not be overlooked, and in June 1809 a detachment of troops was sent to the frontier. The Nepalese, yielding to the threat of an immediate appeal to the sword, evacuated the land next year. In 1814 the first Nepalese war broke out, and Major. Latter, with force of 2000 men, was sent up to defend the Purnea frontier, and to give the Raja of Sikkim every assistance in
expelling the Gurkhas from the eastern hills, short of an actual advance of troops. The presence of this force was effectual in preserving the peace of the frontier, and communications were kept up with the Raja of Sikkim. No fighting appears to have taken place, with the exception of a night attack on a post stationed at Mudwani. This attack was repulsed, after the Gurkhas had fired the tents and baggage, and the post was evacuated next day. In 1817, after the conclusion of the war, Major Latter concluded a treaty with the Sikkim Raja at Titalya, by which the British granted the latter all the land between the Mechi and the Tista which had been ceded to them by the Nepalese.\textsuperscript{32}

For facilitating the communication of intelligence between the several military officers commanding detachments and posts on the frontier of the district of Purnea along with Rungpore, Tirhut, Sarun, and Goruckpore, it was thought expedient as a measure of temporary convenience that the Dawk Establishments on the frontier of those districts, should be placed under the exclusive and immediate control of the Magistrates. The Magistrates were instructed accordingly. The relevant documents will be found in an extract from the Proceedings of the Honorable the Vice-President in Council in the Judicial Department under date the 21\textsuperscript{st} February, 1815, which is available in the Old Correspondence Volume of Sarun for the year 1815.

There are also some important letters in the National Archives at New Delhi. Foreign, 1838 Department Secret, Consultations in 2\textsuperscript{nd} August, nos. 11-14 which refers to the constant plundering of Purnea district by bandits from beyond the frontier. There also used to be incursions into the Nepal territory by robbers from Purnea and other districts on the borders. In 1871 it was felt necessary that the whole boundary marks be renewed. A fresh survey was necessary as when
survey was made last, the river Kusit followed between Bhagalpur district and Morung, the whole river belonging to the latter. It was observed that the river has since changed its course and now flows several miles inward and fresh re-surveying and re-demarcation of the line in presence of the officer from Nepal Government was necessary (Foreign Political August 1817, nos. 324-344). Some of Abdul Qader Khan’s records are available in the Pre-Mutiny Records preserved in the Central Records Office, Allahabad. Some of them also refer to the depredations of the fakirs (religious mendicants) in Purnea and other parts of the Company’s Provinces and that after causing depredations they took residence in Nepal. One such letter no. 70 is a translation of the letter from the Raja of Nepal to J. Lumsden.

A letter from the Collector of Purnea, dated the 13th August 1790 was forwarded by the Board of Revenue to the Governor General in Council with the recommendation that it be proposed with the Nepal Government that the abolition of all duties on the Morung and Bengal commerce be reciprocal as obviously promising mutual advantage. This letter is in the Resident’s Proceedings and preserved in the Central Records Office, Allahabad. The Collector of Purnea had also mentioned that the herdsmen went with a large number of cattle to graze in Morung and considerable revenue accrued to Morung by the grazing duty. The Collector proposed that the Chowkis (Fundis) had been discontinued under apprehension that they would be considered as established on the Morung frontier to collect duty to be imposed on imports generally or on both imports and exports as the Board the 19th July, 17099, to J. Duncan, Resident at Benaras, in the same Volume preserved in the Central Records Office, mentions about the timber trade between the riots of Morung and Purnea. John Pagan, as inhabitant of Purnea wrote a letter to
J. Dunca, Resident at Benaras, which was considered by him on the 19th September, 1791 as is found in Volume no. 48 for 1791 (Basta No.32, Record no.48). In this letter Pagan referred to the possibility of a commercial negotiation with Government of Nepal and he wanted to emphasize importation of rice into Nepal. The memorandum attached to Pagan’s representation is an extremely interesting document. It is not known as to how he could come to the figures. He mentions that in 1789-90 the price of the rice sold in the Eastern Morung amounted to Rs. 1,25,000. He suggested that the Collector of Purnea should be authorised to regulate the importation of rice from Morung in a regulated manner. Valuable data will be available in pages 169-178 of Benaras Affairs (1788-1810), Volume (I), by Dr.G.N.Saletore, Director of the Central Records Office, Allahabad, regarding the particulars of duties collected at the different stations under the Nepal Government and also in the district of Purnea. The question of goods duty was again gone into and it was decided that about the duties on goods exported from the dominions of Nepal, His Excellency, the Raja of Nepal, shall be levied at the established stations in the several districts including Purnea through which they shall first pass, and Rowannahs be thereon granted. In a document no. 102 of 1842, transcript of old Correspondence Volume in Champaran Collectorate (July, 1842 to December, 1842), there is a copy of a letter from the Resident of Nepal to the Magistrate of Champaran mentioning that “owing to the repeated representation of the officers of the Dacoity Suppression Commission upon this frontier (Oude, Goruckpore and Purnea) he had issued a strict order of which a copy was enclosed and he wanted to learn the actual fruit of this order.” It was mentioned in that letter that “there is no part of India where so great facilities exist for the concealment and harbourage of large bands of dacoits as in the Nepalese Territories and you need not be reminded by
me that it is the anxious wish of Government that these facilities should be counteracted by our united efforts and those of Major Sleeman's Assistants in this quarter.

The next event of great importance is the insurrection in 1857. O'Malley mentions in the last Gazetteer "Since that year the peace of the district has only been broken by the Mutiny of 1857, On its outbreak, there was no little anxiety regarding the loyalty of the troops stationed just across the border at Jalpaiguri viz., the 73rd Regiment of Native Infantry and a detachment of the 11th Irregular Cavalry. As a precautionary measure. Permission was given, in October 1857 to Mr. Kerry, an indigo planter, to raise a corps of Nepalese; and in November 100 sailors under Captain Burbank were sent to Purnea to protect that place in case of mutiny of Jalpaiguri. At the end of November news came that some companies of the 73rd Native Infantry had broken out at Dacca, and it was expected that they would march to Jalpaiguri and raise the troops there. The Commissioner, Mr. Yule, promptly left Bhagalpur, taking with him a detachment of 50 men of the 5th Fusiliers, then stationed at Monghyr. Marching to Purnea, he joined forces with Captain Burbank and moved to Kishanganj as the point from which he could most readily and effectual act in any direction. With him went all the Europeans in the division, planters, civil officers, etc., all well mounted and armed, forming a by no means insignificant body of most willing and cheerful volunteers. In a few days Mr. Yule had collected not less than 80 elephants, and with his little army was ready for anything that might happen. On the 4th and 5th December two different detachments of the 11th Irregular Cavalry mutinied and went off. On the 9th news reached Kishanganj that they had passed to the south of that place. Mr. Yule putting his men on elephants, marched all night, and arriving in Purnea
(40 miles distant) before daylight, met the sowars, as they were leisurely marching into the place. They refused to face his force, and retired a few miles. The Commissioner followed, and on the 11th came up with them just as they were preparing to march. On this occasion they fought with a resolution worthy of a better cause, some of them charging up to the steady little squares which formed in admirable order to receive them, and falling dead on the bayonets. In the end, they retired under cover of a heavy fog, carrying with them many wounded. Not a single casualty occurred on our side.

On the morning of the 12th the Commissioner, having received information that the sowars intended crossing the Kosi to Nathpur, started to intercept them, and in 45 hours accomplished the 50 miles to that place, including the crossing of the Kosi with its numerous and extensive quicksand. Here he halted a few days and learnt that the sowars had entered the Nepal Tarai, and were Chatra, 36 miles to the north. They were, therefore, out of reach, and as he had received an express from Jalpaiguri, urgently requesting aid against the Dacca mutineers, he determined to move in that direction via Kishanganj. In 36 hours he had covered the 64 miles to Kishanganj, and on the 22nd December he proceeded to Titalya, and thence to a post between Siliguri and Pankhabari. Having waited there till the 26th without further intelligence, he determined on moving to Chawa Ghat on the Tista, where the mutineers from Dacca were expected to cross. On nearing the ghat he came in sight of the enemy’s encampment in a position unfavourable for an attack, and withdrawing into the jungle, established his force on the path by which, as he was told, they must pass. They evaded him, however, at night, taking, an unfrequented bye-path, and on the morning of the 28th he
learned that they had crossed the Mahanadi and were making for the Darjeeling road.

Mr. Yule, leaving his camp standing, took up a position on the road, and after waiting some hours and seeing nothing of them, had just ordered his men back to camp, then the rebels were seen crossing the road at a little distance off. So rapid was their rush cross the small open space from jungle to jungle that Mr. Yule’s advanced party had only time to fire a volley, which killed one straggler, before they again disappeared in the jungle, and the pursuit, which Captain Burbank continued for two to three miles. Was hopeless and unsuccessful.

The fugitives having thus made good their escape into the forest, Mr. Yule moved, parallel with them, on its outskirts, to prevent their making any inroad into Purnea, and reached the Kosi opposite Nathpur on the very same day that they effected a junction with the sowars at Chatra. An attack on their position retreat across the Kosi at a most difficult ford, where many of their horses, unable to reach the opposite bank, were abandoned. Major Richardson, who was watching the opposite bank lower down, was too late to intercept them, and the rebels got off through the Nepal Tarai, eventually making their way into Oudh."

The impact of the insurrections of 1857 was seen in a tightening up of the administration. It was appreciated that there should be more police thanas and an expansion of the administrative machinery to stop such insurrections. Roadways were also improved as the Ganges-Darjeeling Road was found to be extremely useful for military movements. Another effect was seen in the great latitude given to the European and Anglo-Indian planters and zamindars to continue in an Auxiliary Force which was ultimately transform into the Bihar Light Horse. Practically all the European and Anglo-Indian planters of the district some of whom were
the Forbes, the Shillingfords, the Caves, the Picachys, the Downings, the
Johnsons, and the smiths, etc., had joined the Auxiliary Force which rendered a lot of help to the British administration in the troubled days of 1857. The hands of the loyal zamindars were also strengthened by the administration. The peasantry of Purnea was already emasculated and the strengthening of the hands of the European and Anglo-Indian planters and zamindars, the loyalist Indian zamindars and the encouragement to the creation of some large-landed cultivators were factors which went to emasculate the peasants all the more. In the chapter on “Economic Trends” some of these facts have been discussed.

The next important event for the district of Purnea was a sharp earthquake on the 12th June 1897 between 4 and 5 P.M. In his no. 726-G dated Purnea, the 15th June, 1897, J. H. Bernard Esq., Collector of Purnea had sent a report of the earthquake to the Commissioner of Bhagalpur Division and Santhal Parganas. From the report of the Collector it appears that the first shock lasted about $3\frac{1}{2}$ minutes and this was followed by one more shock on the of the 12th June and another on the 13th June. A number of houses in Purnea belonging to the Europeans, the Protestant Church, some Government offices and some residential buildings were damaged. Some bridges on the Ganges-Darjeeling Road were damaged. The Railway Bridge on the Burhidhor, just south of Debiganj was damaged and communications were interrupted. Fissures had occurred in many places from which water and sand had spouted forth. Some of the Government buildings at Purnea which were damaged were the Circuit House, the Post Office, the Zillah School, the Dak Bungalow and old Telegraph Office, District Jail, City Police-station, etc. The belfry of the Protestant Church was badly cracked on the four sides and the wall on the north was broken the whole length horizontally at the
level of the eve of the main roof. The damage was so serious that it had to be taken down. The Collector’s additional Court building although a comparatively new construction was seriously damaged. The District engineer had reported that quite a number of Girder Iron Bridges in the district were damaged and in some cases a few pile piers had shifted out. The Sub-divisional Kutchery of Kishaganj had suffered a lot and the report was most of the arches, walls in several places top to bottom, and roof in places, are cracked and plaster fallen down. The Sub-Jail has also suffered in like manner. The Ramjan Wooden Bridge near Khagra, has been much damaged. Five rows of piles have been moved out of place and out of the perpendicular and incline westward, and the bridge roadway has sunk down. The Sub-Jail in Araria had been seriously damaged and the building was unsafe. The Inspection Bungallow walls were found cracked. The report was “the three upper storied houses belonging to Messrs. Forbes and Downing and Mrs. Shillingford are in ruins also the one storied houses occupied by Messrs. Whilliams and C.J. Shillingford and the R.C. Chapel were all more or less damaged.”

Another event of local importance for Purnea but now of very great importance for India had taken place in 189. From a document in the National Archives of New Delhi, “Foreign Department, External A. May 189, 116-22 K. W.”, it appears that the great problem of the training of Kosi river was taken up at that time. The document referred to is a minute of Mr. A. Izat, Agent and Chief engineer, Bengal North-Western Railway, Mr. J. A. Anderson, engineer-in-chief, Eastern Bengal State Railway and Mr. W. A. Inglish, Superintending Engineer, Bengal. The subject submitted for consideration was the proposal to close the present channel of the river at Chatra by means of a series of crib groins and to re-open the western channel, known generally as the channel of 1889. Mr. Anderson
had proposed that in the event of the works he proposed being successfully constructed, there would not be any reasonable probability of the river breaking back into the channel of 1896 between Bubia and Hurinugra. He considered however that for future years supplementary bunds at other points would be necessary. This minute had the support of English and Col. Gracey who had visited the area. Col. Gracey advised that the E.B.Railway should not take any steps for training the Kosi River and that “even if the moderate floods through, and might consequently decrease the productiveness of the whole tract of country that the training works protected. The railway may in fact render themselves liable for unlimited damages on account of country flooded washed away, or entirely protected from floods by training works, the result of which it is impossible to foresee, whist, on the other hand no credit will be given for the protection afforded to other parts of the country. Col.Gracey thought that “the question was one for the Government of Bengal to deal with, and that if the Government of Bengal decides to carry on any works for training the Kosi the Eastern Bengal Railway would of course, be willing to aid in every way.”

It, however appears from a telegram no328-E.B., dated the 20th February, 1897, from the Foreign Secretary to the Resident in Nepal camp via Segowlie that “Government of India are considering the necessity of building training works on Kosi river where it issues from hills near chatra. If these are started immediately the Government of India hope Nepal Darbar will afford assistance as previously agreed as regards bullies, brushwood and grass and will aid Engineers by collecting labour and arranging food supplies within Nepalese territory”. It was represented that the interests of Nepal were also largely involved. Inno28-C 137-3047, dated Camp Segowlie, the 6th March, 1897, Col.H. Wyle, Resident
in Nepal informed the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department that the Darbar had no objection to the Kosi training works being undertaken near Chatra on certain conditions. These documents show that the training of the river Kosi which had (1961) now been actively taken up as a joint Indo-Nepal Project was actually mooted in 1897 and the project had the blessings of the Nepal Government even at that time. It is not known why and how the project was not taken up at that time. It is only in the nineteen-fifties that the Kosi Project was undertaken and the Purbea district is vitally affected. There is a large Kosi Project Office located in Purbea town and a Kosi colony had been set up. The Kosi Project has been briefly discussed elsewhere so far as its impact on Purbea is concerned.

EARLY EUROPEAN SETTLERS IN PURNEA

Any history of Purbea district should have some reference to the early European settlers. From the old records it would appear that there were European settlers in Purbea almost immediately after the establishment of British rule in the district. Purbea was made the headquarters of the district after the advent of the British rule and by 1771 quite a number of Europeans had settled in the area known as Rambagh. This area, however, became unhealthy as it was hemmed in by the marshy channels of the Saura River.

There was a shift of the Government offices more towards the west of the town by 1835 and gradually the official residents in the civil lines migrated to the present site of Purbea town. The European indigo planters also started settling in that portion of the Purbea town leaving Rambagh or near about the district headquarter. The only building left in Rambagh was the Church and the priest’s house. The Roman Catholic Church was dismantled and re-erected in the new station of Purbea where the
Europeans had already set up their residences. The foundation of this new Church was laid in 1849 and the Church was there till 1934 when it was badly affected by the Bihar Earthquake. The Church was dismantled again and the present Church was erected nearby within a couple of years of the Earthquake.

The nuns of Loreto Convent of Darjeeling had come to Purnea near about 1882 and had opened a day school as well as a boarding school for the children in Purnea district. When the Jesuit Mission of Bengal took over the Purnea Mission from the Capuchin Mission, the school was closed, and the nuns returned to Darjeeling. This house still stamps and is known as “Coumblin”. “Coumblin” is one of the oldest houses in Purnea town. It is now occupied by the Allisons.

Quite a number of European families had settled down in Purnea town and round about. Even till 1933 there were quite a large number of European families lingering on in Purnea town and round about. There were the Shillingrords, Johnsons, Picachis, Cawes, Hayes, Downing, Tom Smith, Byers, etc. in Purnea town. Many of them were gentlemen-farmers, the indigo concerns having been abolished years before and some were in the employment of Banailli and Nazarganj Raj. Earlier some of them had made great contribution to the agricultural prosperity of the district by showing better technique in agriculture and farming methods. Usually each of them would have a consolidated block of land with a bungalow in it, their Kothis would be run more by the subordinates known as Amlas. Many of them were interested in dogs and horses and were keen sportsmen. Mr. Tom Smith of Kolassy was a marvelous horseman and could tame any wild horse. His father Charles Smith was known as Prince Charlie and was one of the biggest race horse owners of his days. He also had extensive property at Hinoo I Ranchi. It is said that
when Prince Charlie would go out for a walk he would be followed by about 50 of his pet highly bred dogs. Tom Snith and Mrs. Snith were of great help in organising socials when the Houston expedition came to Purnea in 1933 and for the first time flew over Nepal in planes.

Another well-known family the remnants of which are still continuing to Purnea is that of the Shillingfords. The three original Shillingfords were Joseph, George and Fred and they were all great sportsmen. Joseph died in 1889, Fred in 1907 at Brighton.

Two brothers George Palmer and Charles Palmer came to Purnea near about 1811. They were related to the John Palmers of Calcutta. George Palmer died in 1840. Charles Palmer had married Begum Reazoon Nissa, Mohammadan lady who had been converted into Christianity. She was also the 8 annas proprietor of Pargana Siripore with Babu Pratap Singh. Reazon Nissa died in 1870 and Charles Palmer in 1873. They had one daughter Marian, who married William Pringle Downing. Marian Palmer Downing pre-deceased her father Charles Palmer. Charles Palmer left his property, which was left to him by his wife Reazoon Nissa, to his grand children and children of Marian Palmer Downing. Marian Palmer Downing had married G.S. Heyes. The original Palmer estate was divided between the Downing and the Hayes in 1874 and came to be known as the Downing Estate and Hayes Estate. Mr. Marian Hayes died in 1911 and G.S. Hayes in 1924.

Another family the Caoes were related to the Shillingfords by marriage. Henry Caoe who died in Purnea in 1886 was the proprietor of Gondwarrah indigo concern which was ultimately owned by the Maharaja of Darbhanga. The ancestors of the Johnson family were J.C. Johnson and E.W. Johnson who owned at one time three indigo concerns in the district.
There were Crow families who were related to the Downing’s by marriage. The last of the Crow family in Purnea was F.Y. Crow who died at Sursee in November 1948.

The Forbes owned the Sultanpore Estate in Forbesganj which is named after the family, were big landlords and indigo planters. A.H. Forbes was a barrister but does not appear to have practiced. He was the last of the family out in India. He died in Darjeeling but was brought and buried in Purnea in 1932. There were numerous other families of European settlers who settled in Purnea both as indigo planters and private gentlemen or officials.

The Indigo planters had their Doctor David Picachy, a good old Medico who was almost always on his trap and horse. Dr. Picachy was also looking after all the employees of the planters. In the early days of the European planters there were a few Mission Hospitals one of which was at Kanki which was at now gone to West Dinajpur. The Majlispoire Mission at Kanki ran their own schools and hospitals.

It may be mentioned that Korah is still known as “Gena_Bari” because a rhinoceros was shot there. This has been referred to before. Another report is that Mr. A.G.M. Wodschow, Manager of the Korah Indigo Concern had shot a rhinoceros. It may also be possible that two animals had been shot.

The Indigo planters did a lot in improving the town of Purnea. A big racecourse was established in the area in front of the present Girls’ School and behind the residence of Mr. William. The regular race meets were so popular that race horses and jockeys would come from Calcutta to take part in these race meets. The planters had their own houseboats. Before the railways were established indigo used to be sent down to Calcutta by river.
Reference has already been made to the shikar that the planters used to indulge. It is on record that Allan Johnson and W.R.P. Downing who is still a resident of Purnea once shot a man-eating alligator which measured 26'-9" from tip to tip and 9'-9" round the girth. When the much-distended belly was ripped open an undigested body of a boy was found. The entire remains of the boy in two portions were recovered and from a copper ring on his big toe was identified to be an Etwari of the village who had been missing since a few days back. Mr. Downing informs that in many of the alligators they had found stones in the larger of the species. He has also experimented on riding a buffalo through alligator infested streams to experiment the truth of the unwritten law between alligators and water buffaloes, that one should not attack or molest the other.

EARTHQUAKE OF 1934

The great Bihar Earthquake of January 15, 1934 was another landmark in the history of the district. Although the epicenter of this earthquake was lactated far away the damages done to the roads, buildings, railway tracks, bridges and culverts were not inconsiderable to the other Bihar districts like Muzaffarpur and Champaran this was probably due to the sandy composition of the soil. Nevertheless, a large number of private and public buildings were damaged in all the urban areas. Gratuitous relief, house building, sands clearance and agricultural loans had to be distributed. The widely spread cracks and fissures on the roads and culverts had thrown the communications out of gear for a considerable time. The administrative authorities, however, tackled the situation quickly and tactfully. Officers were deputed to assess the damages. As the houses in the villages were mostly light structures of jute-reeds and thatch, the damage to them was not so severe. Agricultural
economy was considerably upset as a large volume of sand and Sulpuric clods had been thrown out and had to be cleared. One interesting feature of the Earthquake of 1934 was that the wells both in the rural and urban areas were choked and had to be cleared. The incidence of health in Purnea district as said to have definitely improved after the Earthquake of 1934 and the older generation people assert that the water of Purnea district and the Portability of water had definitely improved.

**KISAN SABHA MOVEMENT**

Kisan Sabha Movement, which had been responsible for an acute agitation in Purnea district in the third decade in this century and figured prominently for about 20 years, has its roots in the very agricultural economy and the previous structure of permanent landlordism in this state. From time to time local leaders have tried to agitate for a better deal for the raiyats (kisans). The inherent defects in a permanent settlement arrangement became all the more acute in Purnea district because of a large number of absentee landlords and because a number of the zamindars left the administration of the zamindari absolutely in the hands of their Amlas (employees). Any reference to the old revenue records of Purnea prior to the abolition of zamindari will show that a large number of the big landlords in Purnea district came from undivided Bengal and other provinces and most of them paid very rare visits to their zamindari. Rich families of Murshidabad Dacca, Calcutta and other places owned large slices of zamindari in this district. Mathurapur Zamindari Company, some of the Tagore families and a few European planters who had gone away abroad had zamindari interests on portions of the district. Their Amlas usually represented them and it is a well-known fact that Amla rule was extremely unsympathetic, many of the villages of Purnea district had literally been depopulated because of the
oppression of the landlords. The European indigo concerns were converted into zamindaries, which were also more or less left to the Amlas. Some of the European zamindars did very little for their raiyats and spent their time mostly in sports in India or abroad. These are some of the factors, which made Purnea district a good field for Kisan agitation.

The kisan Sabha was formed at Monghyr near about 1922-23 and the agitation that was sponsored had its effect on Purnea district as well. The Movement received a great impetus in the hands of Swami Sahajananda Saraswati of Bihar (Patna) who had great mob oratory and toured throughout the State addressing the kisans (peasants) and condemning both bureaucracy and the zamindars. His yellow robes had an extra attraction to the people. Quite a few kisan leaders were prominent throughout Bihar in the thirties and one of them was Swami Bhawani Dayal who had returned to India after a long spell in South Africa. After a formal inauguration of Kisan Sabha at Bihar in Patna district in 1928 Swami Sahajananda Saraswati started organizing Kisan Sabha branches in the various districts and for some time the Kisan Movement was running as an ancillary to the Congress Movement, but occasionally at cross purposes. After the death of Swami Sahajananda Sraswati and because of the Congress impact that had already taken up land reforms the movement as a separate factor had decline and it practically merged into the Congress Movement. But even before the Kisan Sabha had been organised, there were Kisan troubles in Purnea.

A study of the annual Land Revenue Administration Reports of Purnea district will show that year it was reported that the relations between the landlords and tenants were strained. The Land Revenue Administration Report of 1916-17 had particularly mentioned that
absence zamindars in Kishanganj subdivision had developed a continued tendency to dispossess tenants with a view to obtain enhanced rent or realise various customary *abwabs*. Certain types of criminal offences were extremely common in Purnea district even as late as 1930-40. It was a routine matter for the landlord or the Amlas to send for the recalcitrant tenant and to keep him tied up in front of the Kutchery as a public exhibit to terrorise other tenants. The tenants used to be forcibly put into various tortures some physical punishments and extraction of thumb impression of the poor tenants on blank paper was a common *zulum* in Purnea. It is again in Purnea district that one finds very large cultivators owning thousands of acres of cultivation lands. The type of acquisition of huge chunks of cultivation lands in the race of the then laws would normally be possible only if zamindars or the large cultivators had a great influence often sinister on the raiyats. They had almost followed the example of the European indigo planters in the late 19th century who used to take the help of the administration for getting large consolidated blocks of land for their farms. Peculiarly enough in spotty of a vast surplus population that could be siphoned of for agricultural labour there is a dearth of labour leading to importation of seasonal labourers and a consequent unemployment in the villages. This factor was fully utilised by the landlords, planters, amlas who had a regular hierarchy of *tahlus, khansamas, saises, kamias, dais, kaharins*, etc., who were all practically bonded labour.

It is not that troubles between the landlords and the tenants always merely brewed. Occasionally there were violent eruptions. The peasants of Dharampur Pargana raised the banner of revolt in 1922-23 against the Darbhanga Raj on the allegation of exploitations. The fact that the raiyats could openly agitate against such a powerful and rich zamindar shows
that the tenants were quite exasperated. The Non-Co-operation Movement and the Kisan Sabha agitation had affected the raiyats in Dharampur Pargana. The annual Land Revenue Administration Reports are quite specific about this agitation. The gravity of the situation in Dharampur Pargana against the Darbhanga Raj was realised and a reference to the Board was made on this matter to Government as will be found in the Land Revenue Administration Report for 1922-23. In 1924-25 there acute disputes between Mathurapur Zamindari Company, an absentee landlord and the raiyats in Thana Manihari over the settlement of lands known as Mankut which originally produced indigo. In the Kishanganj subdivision the relations between the landlords and tenants had become extremely strained. The Patni tenure, which was prevalent in Purnea alone of all the districts in the State, was another fact for oppressing the raiyats. The Patnidar had his right for a definite period only and naturally he tried to squeeze out whatever he could from the tenants during his Patni. From the Land Revenue Administration Report of 1927-28 it appears that the Collector of Purnea had reiterated his complaint about the indifference of Darbhanga Raj towards his tenants.

By 1927-28 the Kisan agitation had affected all the three subdivisions of Purnea district.

The great economic depression, which became evident from 1929-30, had hit hard the peasantry. The precipitate fall in price of the agricultural commodities badly affected the economic condition of the peasants. During the period under review the Kisan Sabha agitated for reduction or suspension rent and thus tension between the landlords and tenants became all the more acute. The observation of the Commissioner of Bhagalpur on the situation in Land Revenue Administration report, 1931-32 may be quoted. He observes:
There have been two factors during the year, which were liable to cause tension between the landlords and the tenants, the renewal of the Civil Disobedience, and the economic depression. The movement against the landlords has not been an avowed part of the Civil Disobedience programmes in the division where many of the Congress supporters are petty land owners and its effect has been more felt in the general disturbance of confidence and spirit of defiance which it produces.

In the decade 1931-40 the Kisan Sabha Movement became very active throughout Bihar. An Enquiry Committee was set up by the Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1933 and the Committee visited many villages in Gaya district and recorded their observations about the tenants in A history of the Pitiable Plight of the Kisans. The Government of Bihar was watching the situation with utmost precaution and asked their District Officers to supply “more detailed information with regard to the operation of the Kisan Sabha.” “The relations of this body”. They wrote to the latter on the 24th November, 1933, with similar bodies in the United Provinces with the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru of that province are at present one of the politically important considerations. The second Provincial Kisan Conference met at Gaya on the 29th and 30th August 1934 with Shri Purushottam Das Tandon as President. Besides the leaders of Bihar Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother attended the meeting. Speeches were made against the tyranny of the zamindars and exhorted the tenants to fight for improvement of their own lot and for independence. The Gaya Conference deliberations were reported in all the papers of the Province and had great influence on Purnea, which was already, see thing with discontent.

From the perusal of the Land Revenue Administration Reports from 1934-35 to 1939-40 it appears that the Kissan Sabha Movement against
abwabs or illegal taxation. The activities of the Kisan Sabha went to aggravate the relation between the landlords and the tenants. The Land Revenue Administration Report of 1940-41 particularly referred to the absentee zamindars of Purnea as the main source for strained relations. A large number of tenure holders of the district cultivated their lands through bataidars who were mostly santhals in the Dharampur Pargana. The landholders seldom granted receipts and always tried to oust the bataidars when they saw fit. The bataidars organised and insisted on getting rent receipts. A Conciliation Committee consisting of two representatives of tenure holders and two Santhal bataidars with a Deputy Magistrate was set up to restore good relation. The Collector also toured in the area and helped the Committee. As a result, the tenure holders began to grant receipts in printed forms.

The Kisan Sabha Movement slowly merged into the Congress Movement. The Congress had already adopted the main aims of the Kisan Sabha leaders and most of the Kisan Sabha leaders were members of the local or provincial branch of the Indian National Congress. The death of Swami Shajananda Saraswati was also one of the causes of the decline of the Kisan Sabha Movement as a separate political factor. Nevertheless, a series of land reforms were adopted by the British Government just before the country became independent and it can be said that the Kisan Sabha was largely responsible along with the Indian National Congress for them.

CONGRESS MOVEMENT

The environs and the previous agrarian troubles in Purnea district had already prepared the field for the Congress Movement in Purnea district. The bid for freedom that the Indian National congress particularly under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had set in found
Purnea a staunch ally. It may, briefly, be mentioned that Purnea district being so very contiguous to several districts of undivided Bengal had been profoundly affected by the Swadeshi Movement in the first decade of the 20th century. At that time there were no facilities for higher education had to go to Calcutta or to Patna. The Students' Movement in Bihar as well as in undivided Bengal had its repercussions on Purnea district as well. The Bihar National College and T.K. Ghosh Academy were suspected as the two centres for a secret students' organisation which indulged in sedition and both these institutions had a sprinkling of students from Purnea. A purnea boy, Atul Chandra Mazumdar, a Student of the B.N. College, Patna was arrested under the Defence of India Act.

The agrarian troubles referred to elsewhere had also made the general body of cultivators restive against the bureaucracy and the zamindars who had taken to be the allies of the Bureaucracy.

From 1919 Purnea had closely followed the policy, aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress. Some of the delegates of Purnea attended the Nagpur Session of Congress in December 1920 and the moment Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for Non-Co-operation Movement, there were a number of volunteers from his district. Some of the early local leaders were Gokul Krishna Roy, Satyendra Narayan Roy and a few others who gave up their practice in the Bar and joined the movement. There was no dearth of young volunteers from the very beginning, some of whom have now come to the forefront of Bihar politics. In 1921 a National School was started in Katihar. Shri Rajendra Prasad toured in Purnea district in 1921 and addressed meetings at Purnea and at other places. The Movement had caught the imagination of the common man and quickly spread throughout the district. The apathy towards the Government institutions and the urge to boycott them were
implemented even by the ferry-farmers and the pound-keepers the Kishanganj subdivision that had completely boycotted liquor shops. The ban on foreign goods and particularly cloth came to have a firm hold even in the villages.

From 1921 onwards Purnea district has not lagged behind any other district of Bihar to join the different Phases of the Congress Movement. The Civil Disobedience Movement including the non-payment of taxes, the Salt Satyagraha, opening of National Schools, organisation of volunteer force, sponsoring of khadi centres and Congress Ashrams throughout the district, boycott of foreign goods, Quit India Movement, 1942 repercussions, etc., were fully implemented by the people of Purnea, a large number of whom courted arrests and imprisonment in different years. At the very inception of the movement in Purnea a Writer Head Constable, father of Shri Ram Binode Singh, M.L.A. was found to be fomenting hostility among constables and chowkidars in Palasi police-station the place where he was posted.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Purnea in 1925 and had addressed crowded meetings at various places including Kishanganj, Bishnupur, Araria and Purnea, etc. at Bishnupur in Dhamdaha P.S. There was a large gathering and the people had presented a substantial purse for the Deshbandhu Memorial fund, Mahatma Gandhi’s second tour from the 11th January, 1927 was in connection with the collection of money for charkha and khadi. During this tour he came in touch with the National School which was opened as one of the programmes of Non-Co-operation Movement. At Dharampur in 1925 a Middle School was opened in hour of Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to that place. This visit of Mahatma Gandhi along with other leaders of Bihar had a tremendous impact. The active centres were Gokul Ashram at Purnea and Tikapatti Aahram at Tikapatti along with
other places. At the instance of Dr. Rajendra Prasad there was an intensive demonstration in Patna against the Simon Commission in December 1928 and the crowd at Patna that had shouted a full-throated disapproval of Simon Commission had a good sprinkling of people of Purnea. On the constructive side the gospel of charkha and khadi, village development etc., had been taken up through various congress Ashrams. Rupauli, Dhamdaha, Purnea, Banmankhi in Sadar subdivision were some of the very active Congress centres. There were several such in Kishanganj and Araria subdivisions. The enthusiasm of the people to implement the dictates of the Congress could be estimated from the fact that arrests for breaking the Salt Law in Purnea district in the course of six months and Salt Satyagraha came to 716 in number. Thousands of rupees had been realised in fines. Repressive measures on the part of the Administration could not curb this spirit of ending the British regime. At one time some police went with a warrant against a man of Tikapatti who was not found. The police entered the house of one Garib Lall and after removing everything put their own locks on the house. The old mother of Garib Lall was quickly given shelter in another house. The highhandedness of the police brought the men of Tikapatti closer. Heavy fines, confiscation of property, physical torture, rigorous imprisonment, etc., could not damp the fervour to implement the Congress policy.

THE 1942 MOVEMENT

The Civil Disobedience Movement and the kisan agitation had brought in a spirit of restlessness among the people and an antipathy to the bureaucratic British Administration. It had also bought about a sort of solidarity between different castes and creeds. When in August, 1942 there was a mass arrest of the leaders throughout India including Gandhiji and an out-break of a violent lawlessness against the constituted
authority, Purnea district was also the scene of intense activities in which the different sections of the people had participated. The student community and the Congress workers throughout the district, mill and factory hands of Katihar and Kishanganj took the in the upsurge. The arrest of the Provincial leaders at Patna on the 9th, 10th and 11th August 1942, along with the arrests of the leaders of all-India fame at different places in India, ignited the spark and all at once the whole of the district was in the throes of intense excitement which broke out into concrete measures against the Administration, such as, damaging the public communications, Government buildings and properties and hoisting of congress flag on public buildings. Quickly the whole district was up in a revolt and this was almost unpremeditated and without any definite central leadership. The movement quickly went underground and some of the younger generations from their underground coverage used to give directions to particular pockets.

The police and the magistracy were also quick to retaliate and were added by the military. A congress ashram at Tikanpatti was seized and sealed on the 10th August 1942. Processions and assemblies were banned. The police were alerted throughout the district and were strengthened quickly by armed forces and the military were called in. Almost simultaneously there were large processions, hartals and demonstrations at various places in the district from the 11th August 1942. The Congress flag was forcibly hoisted on the court building at Kishanganj. The railway and telegraph lines between Sarsi and Banmankhi railway stations were uprooted and there was a general strike at the jute mills in Katihar. On the 13th August railway lines between Katihar and Barsoi and at the Kosi Bridge near Kursela were damaged. The damaging of railway lines and
telegraph communications had been deliberately done to stop infiltration of the police and military forces.

On the 13th August there was a violent procession of about 10000 persons at Katihar through the public roads. The office of the Sub-registrar was attacked, Government properties looted and the Congress flag was hoisted both on the Sub-Registrar’s office and on the court building of Munsif. Several local leaders were arrested by the police which infuriated the mob all the more and there was a violent attack on the thana. The police resorted to firing to disperse the mob and a young boy Dhruba Kumar Kundu, son of Dr.Kishori Lal Kundu, a prominent congress man of Katihar received bullet injury and ultimately died in the hospital. Several other persons were also injured and a few killed. A huge procession carried the dead body of Dhruba Kumar Kundu to the cremation ground on the river kosi. The crowd was addressed by Kishori Lal Kundu, shri Jibatsa “Himanshu” and others. Shri Jibatsa Sharma was arrested the same day followed by the arrest of Kishori Lal Kundu on the next day.

The news of the death of Dhruba Kumar quickly led to the formation of a Dhruba Das, a contingent to oppose the British Administration in the district. The news of outbreak of disturbances in the neighbouring districts and other places in India spread through newspapers although there was an attempt to stop infiltration of newspapers within the district. The pattern of concrete action was almost the same throughout the country.

Unfortunately, for sometime there was an open excitement to destroy Government properties and public communications. Several local leaders were arrested while they were returning after destroying the railway line to Malda. Cases of arson broke out at various places with the aim of
destroying Government properties only. Besides at Katihar, there was firing at Dharara on the 13th August where four persons were killed on the spot and eight were injured. There was a firing at Araria also where eleven persons were injured. Violent attack by the police with lathis was commonly resorted to throughout the district and there was a mass scale of arrests under different sections of the Penal code and under the Defence of India Rules.

The repressive measures did not seem to have the required effect immediately. On the 16th August a large mob raided the Rupauli and Tikapatti Post Offices and a number of breaches were made on the Purnea-Banmankhi and Purnea-Jogbani sections of the railways. Quite a number of police thanas were raided, furniture burnt down and Congress flag hoisted. By this time the police had realised that it was no use infuriating the mob all the more by the resort of opening of fire and firing became less common.

On the 18th August 1942, there was memorable meeting of the national workers of Purnea at the Sarsi Middle School under the presidency of shri Baidyanath Prasad Choudhury. Shri Baidyanath Prasad Choudhury gave the required lead that there should not be any sudden attack on Government properties and institutions but they should be done after giving due notice beforehand. It was also resolved that all the thanas of the district should be raided and the flag hoisted but the Thana property should be kept in a well-protected place. The meeting also decided to occupy the buildings of the Purnea collectorate on the 27th August and to hoist the flag on the court buildings. It was further decided that there should be a succession of leaders in case of arrests. Shri Lakshmi Narayan Singh “Sudhansu” was nominated to be the first leader
to be followed by Shri Baidyanath Prasad Choudhury, and then shri Basudeo Prasad Singh.

It appears that there was complete lawlessness in certain pockets, namely, Katihar, Rupauli, Barari, Tikapatti and Karagola areas. The District Magistrate moved for the deputation of a military party to deal with the grave emergency on the 20th August. A military force had already been posted at Katihar but the district Magistrate’s report on the 20th August shows that the deployment of military at Katihar did not have much effect.

Orders were issued by the District Magistrate to all the police thanas that the thana buildings should be fenced and the police force kept intact inside and there should be no hesitation to shot anybody entering the compound after giving a warning if that step was felt to be necessary. It further appears that some of the Military Officers in charge of the troops in Purnea were quite eager to prepare “the ground for declaring martial law in the area, if necessary.” The District Magistrate, however, differed from the military view and considered that the situation could be controlled if there was a sufficiently string force at Purnea which could be distributed to the subdivision if necessary. Small military sections were deployed in route marches and in visiting those villages, which were considered to be troublesome pockets. But, even the presence of the military did not curb the feelings. On the 25th August 1942, the Dhruba Day was celebrated throughout the district to commemorate the young boy Dhruba who had died of police firing at Katihar. There were sporadic attacks on the police Thanas at different places and firing had to be resorted to. There was a violent attack on Rupauli police Thana by a huge mob and portions of the Thana buildings were burnt down. The police had to open fire ad according to Government report twenty-five persons
were killed on the 25th August in Rupauli. Grave excesses were committed and the Junior Sub-Inspector of Police and three constables were overpowered and thrown into fire. Similar scenes were reported from Dhamdaha. The Dhruba Das organised a large gathering in the local High School, which was addressed by a few persons. The police station was raided and the flag was hoisted on the Thana building. The Baluchi military section opened fire which killed quite a few persons, some of whom fell dead in the thana compound and some in the fields nearby. Several Union Board Offices were also raid on the 26th August 1942. On the 27th August some political prisoners broke open two cells in the Purnea Jail and some prisoners were set free. A batch of the people proceeding by the Karagola Road was set upon by the police and the military and some of them were beaten severely and a few were taken prisoners. On the afternoon of the same day 27th August 1942 a large crowd of many Santhals carrying cows and arrows moved towards the treasury at Purnea. The military opened fire and dispersed the crows. All this naturally led to excesses by the police. The dwelling houses of some respectable persons were raided by the police and military with a certain amount of vengeance obviously to strike terror in the minds of the people. A very large number of men had been assaulted throughout the district but not arrested. There also widespread arrests of a large number of persons throughout the district and many detained under the Defence of India Rules. A number of important cases of arson, lot and murder ended in charge sheets against a number of respectable persons. Two of such cases may be mentioned. One of the cases was from Banmankhi in which Shri Anup Lal Mehta and others were prosecuted and sentenced to various types of sentences. The sentences were set aside by the Patna High Court. Shri Anup Lal Mehta became the Chairman of the Purnea District Board. The Dhamdaha thana raid case ended in conviction for a
large number of men some of whom were quite young who were arrested, prosecuted or persecuted in the course of August disturbances, mention may be made of a few who have taken a larger hand in politics in later years. They are:-

Shri Lakshmi Narayan Sudhansu, Shri Baidyanath Chaudhury, Shri Daroga Prasad Chaudhury, Shri Anath Kanta Basu, Shri Satinath Bhaduri, Shri Jibach Sharma "Himangshu, Shri Satyendra Nath Roy, Dr. Kishori Lal Kundu, Shri Kamaldeo Narayan Sinha, Shri Bhola Shastri, Shri Phani Gopal Sen, Shri Kasturi Mandal, Shri Bokai Mandal, Shri Ram Narain Mandal etc.

LATTER EVENTS.

With the subsidence of the August 1942 Movement there was a tightening of the administration throughout the country and Purnea was also no exception. The years that followed were marked by a certain amount of scarcity and a short supply of essential commodities, which strengthened in a way the hands of the administration to firmly rule the people. This phase has been described separately. In this context mention may, however, be made that strangely enough the solidarity among the different sections of the district that had been brought about by the Congress Movement was liquidated to a certain extent by a certain amount of communalism. There were also pockets in Purnea district which had a majority of Muslim population. Pockets in Kishanganj subdivision had to be watched on occasions like Bakrid and from time to time there used to be communal tension which usually commenced from the town of Kishanganj. To give an example, even as late as 1934 there was a serious trouble over a Tajia during Muharram in the town of Kishanganj. Persons interested in the spread of communalism had always tried their hands in Purnea district. The activities of the Muslim League
were particularly concentrated in Kishanganj subdivision and in the other Muslim pockets of the other subdivisions. The later phase in the bid for freedom was unfortunately marked by communal riots in 1946. Purnea district was badly affected and there was a certain amount of exodus of the Muslims from this district. The authorities had put down communalism with a firm hand but not before sufficient mischief was done. In May 1947 a largely attended conference of the Bihar Provincial Muslim league was held in Kishanganj with the Hon’ble Raja Ghaznafar Ali in the chair. This conference was held particularly in connection with the communal riots of 1946. In the conference the Bihar Government was bitterly criticised for some of the measures taken to quell the riots. This conference also passed the resolution demanding the inclusion of Purnea, North Bhagalpur, North Monghyr and the Santhal Parganas in the Province of Bengal and in their exuberance went to caution the Muslims of Bihar against Jamait-ul-ulema, the Ahrars and the Khaksars. These bodies along with Abdul Qaiyum Ansari a staunch Congressman of Bihar were called traitors to the country. After independence of the country in 1947 a very important event for the district was the visit of the States Re-organisation Commission in 1955. The visit of the Commission led to an outburst of local feelings and a certain amount of avoidable bitterness between Bihar and West Bengal, which laid claim to portions of Purnea district. It has been mentioned elsewhere that owing to the implementation of the recommendations of the states Reorganisation Commission, a considerable portion of the Kishanganj subdivision was transferred to West Bengal in 1956.
THE POLITICS OF TERRITORIAL REORGANISATIONS AND THE SURJAPURI MUSLIMS:

India, like the other newly liberated and developing areas of the world, is still in the process of State-building. And no problem is genuinely more basic to the very survival of this continental polity as a sovereign identity then the problem of the harmonious and stable composition of its constituent federating units.

Federal-nation-building is an arduous and a long-drawn out process. In the case of gigantic federation of India’s dimensions and region-cum-cultural diversities in depth, the problem acquires a greater degree of complexity and salience. A viable and legitimate federal state authority in India would have to re-concise simultaneously the requirements of a modern state structure (legitimised periodically by the consent of the governed), on the one hand, with the peculiar and specific problems of the federalising process endemic in a ‘Classic’ plural society, on the other.

Let us put the problem in the historical perspective. While Indian society has had a continuity of existence stretching to about 5,000 years—yet politically no such continuity exists. India has had a checkered political career, marked not only by the waves of invaders— from Aryans, Huns, Sakas, Scythians, Greeks, Afghans, Turks and Mughals— who came to conquer but remained to be assimilated and absorbed in the body-politic of this generous, persevering mighty motherland, but also by the rise and fall of dynasties and the shifting nature of political boundaries and changing areas of political loyalties. Except during three brief periods of its long history prior to the establishment of the British Empire in India (1858-1947). That is, during the time of Emperor Ashoka (d.232B.C.),
sultan Alauddin Khalji (d.1316) and the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (d.1707) the country has never been under a single unified authority. It was however left to the colonial British authority in India to have consolidated under a centralised imperial rule the entire sub-continent of India for a period of about a century preceding the proclamation of national independence in 1947.

THE BRITISH REGIME

The British rule however had disrupted the natural evolution of India into an authentic federal polity. It constituted provinces not on rational basis of socio-cultural homogeneity but on expedient factors of annexation and political control. The provinces were formed on the basis of strategic and political considerations rather than on any rational basis. This is necessary to remember in order to realize that the infrastructure of the polity that we inherited in 1947 was a confused mosaic created by a foreign imperial power unmindful of the valid basis for the territorial organisation of the sub-continent.

The province of Bengal in general and the Sujapuri Muslims in particular have been the victims of the disruption caused to the basic socio-cultural ecology of India by the British colonial rule. In 1905 Bengal was divided to form, along with Assam, the provinces of (a) East Bengal and Assam and (b) Bengal, which included the Western part of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Chata Nagpur. The change in the outlook regarding provincial boundaries was reflected in the famous Resolution of Lord Curzon, dated 19th July 1905.

Six years later the partition of Bengal was annulled, though it was considered impossible both on political and on administrative grounds to revert to the Status Quo ante. In 1912 Assam was reconstituted into a
chief Commissioner’s province and the eastern and western parts of Bengal were rejoined to form the province of Bengal. At the same times Bihar, with Orrissa and Chota Nagpur, was constituted into a separate province of Bihar and Orrissa⁴².

Therefore, in 1912 Bihar and Orrissa were carved as a separate province out of the old Bengal province. And Kishanganj (Purnea) became a district of the new province of Bihar and the district of Dinajpur remained with the Bengal province.

In this way the Surjapuri Muslims faced the first political cleavage to its socio-cultural ecology.

**PARTITION OF THE COUNTRY:**

At the time of the partition of India in 1947, parts of the districts of Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri in the old province of Bengal were allotted to East Pakistan (Bangladesh) with the result that the Surjapuri Muslims were divided to live in two different independent but hostile states of Pakistan and India. Moreover, the districts of Rajshahi, Bogra and Pabna where a considerable size of Surjapuri Muslims lived were allotted to East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

**POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA AND THE SURJAPUR REGION:**

The disruption caused to the basic socio-cultural ecology of India by the British colonial rule and as a result of the partition of the country was steadily expected to be removed by a conscious attempt by the Republic of India. A more rational territorial re-organisation based on the principle of linguistic and Socio-cultural homogeneity was expected. A harmonious society and polity of India could have been built on a stable foundation in the measure in which it coincides with the socio-cultural regions of India. Indeed, the history of ancient and medieval India reveals
the existence and what is more, the recognition of these socio-cultural territorial units by many enlightened rulers over the centuries. Indeed, one of the major disasters of British colonial rule had been the destruction in some cases and mutation in others of these viable socio-cultural segments of our society and polity.

A continuing thread running through the major demands and decisions of the national independence movement has been the commitment to the democratic re-organisation of India in keeping with the diversities of its cultures, languages, regions and social distinctiveness, once a sovereign state came into being. To be sure, the acquisition of national sovereignty in 1947, and the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1950, were merely the beginning and not the end of this process. This is evident from the fact that composition and re-composition of the federating states remained a continuing exercise ever since the promulgation of the constitution, and indeed a more thorough exercise was done with the establishment of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1953, and the implementation of most of its recommendations through the states Reorganisation Act, 1956.

THE STATE REORGANISATION COMMISSION (SRC) 1953:

On 22\textsuperscript{nd} December, 1953, the Prime Minister made a statement in Parliament to the effect that a Commission would be appointed to examine "objectively and dispassionately" the question of the Reorganisation of the States of the Indian Union "so that the welfare of the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as a whole is promoted". This was followed by the appointment of the state Reorganisation Commission under the Resolution of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs, No. 53/69/53-Public, dated 29\textsuperscript{th} December 1953.
The task before the Commission has been set out in paragraph 7 of this Resolution in the following terms:

"The Commission will investigate the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation and the bearing of all important and relevant factors thereon. They will be free to consider any proposal relating to such reorganisation. The Government expect that the Commission would, in the first instance, not go into the details, but make recommendations in regard to the broad principles which should govern the solution of this problem and if they so choose, the broad lines on which particular states should be reorganised, and submit interim reports for the consideration of Government." 43

Under this Resolution the Commission were required to make recommendations to the Government of India not later than 30th June 1955. This period was subsequently extended to 30th September 1955.

The Commission in its examination of the various proposals for reorganisation has mainly relied on statistical figures as given in the Censuses of various years. The Census figures for 1951 have been compiled according to what are known as "Census tracts". It has, therefore, been difficult to estimate the mother-tongue figures on a taluk or tehsil-wise basis. The Commission took into consideration only the figures as printed in different Census reports in reaching their conclusions.

The material which has been submitted to this commission from West Bengal is voluminous, and the claims or counter-claims of the government of Bihar, have also been supported in considerable detail. Although these states are predominantly unilingual, the reorganisation of the border areas has not become any the less difficult or controversial. Indeed, as the incidents in Goalpara and the emotional upheaval that
followed the appointment of this commissioning some of the disputed areas have indicated, the readjustment of West Bengal’s borders had become a major problem. The commission did not foresee that with the passage of time, this problem will disappear. It was therefore, dealt with as part of the general settlement of the problem of reorganisation.

The commission was of the view that without a clear appreciation of the conflicting points of view no lasting or satisfactory solution can be proposed. It is necessary, therefore, to indicate briefly the background to these disputes. And further observed:

“Partition has created many problems for West Bengal. Apart from the influx of refugees from Pakistan, which may now be estimated at about three and a half millions the entire communications system of Bengal has been disrupted since 1947. The northern districts of the Presidency division have become less easily accessible from Calcutta; and West Bengal is now the only Part A State which is geographically not a compact and integrated unit.

“To some extent, West Bengal’s difficulties are also shared by Bihar and Assam. Communication links between the north and the south in this part of the country have not been as satisfactory as may be desired. The reasons for this deficiency are various. There is in the first place the problem of bridging the Ganga. The major Rail Bridge across this river was at Paksi in East Pakistan; and since his has been lost to India, a crossing at Mokameh Ghat is now being provided. The Mokameh Ghat Bridge when it is completed will, however, relieve the congestion in traffic only partially. The break of gauge north of the Ganga, the inadequacies of the Assam rail link, and the comparative accessibility of the eastern areas of the Malda and west Dinajpur districts of West Bengal
will still remain problems which will have to be solved independently of the Mokameh project.

"Various proposals have been put forward in order to improve communications between Calcutta and the north-eastern portion of India which is now somewhat isolated. One proposal is that a road-cum-rail bridge and a barrage across the Ganga at Farrakka in West Bengal should be built. It has also been suggested that a new railway line from Dhubri in Assam via Alipur Duar to Siliguri should be laid and that line capacity should be doubled from that point onwards. Rail links are also proposed to be provided via the contemplated Farrakka crossing, connecting the southern districts with Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Behar through the Barsoi-Siliguri railway line; and links with suitable points in the east in the middle portion of the West Bengal State have also been proposed.

"In order to supplement the transport capacity which will be provided by these new railway lines, two road links which will be part of the national highway system are also being constructed within or just on the borders of the West Bengal State. The West Bengal case is that all these projects should be given priority; and that such territorial readjustments should be made as will give to the State control over the areas through which the main lines of communication are to pass.

"Geographical contiguity, in order to ensure the more orderly development of its communication links, is thus the main argument on which the West Bengal claims in the north, that is to say, in the Purnea and Santhal Parganas districts, are based.

"We have dealt so far with what apparently are the most important points in west Bengal's case. But it will be wrong to assume that the claims are based only on administrative grounds. West Bengal so far as we have been able to judge, feels that it has been treated unjustly. This
feeling is based partly on the fact that from 1905 onwards the State has steadily lost territory; the result of the latest change has been to create a disconnected unit, and West Bengal thinks that its difficulties have not been appreciated.

"The "a real extent" of Bengal it has been stated, was always larger than it is at the present time. It is not surprising, therefore, that argument drawn from history has also been considered to be relevant. The West Bengal Government and the Pradesh congress Committee have relied to some extent on the fact that considerable portions of the areas now claimed were previously under the Government of Bengal. Reliance has also been placed on the definition of the limits of the Madarun Sarkar of the Moghul empire; on a resolution passed by the Congress in 1911; and on a statement reported to have been issued by some prominent leaders of Bihar in 1912, conceding West Bengal’s claims to the territory east of the Mahananda, the whole of Manbhum and the Dhalbhum portion of the Singhbhum district.

"The last-mentioned statement has been challenged and counter-arguments drawn from history have been produced in order to rebut west Bengal’s claim. The Government of Bihar has also pointed out that no great importance need be attached to geographical contiguity, in view of the fact that the constitution of India contains adequate provision to facilitate inter-state co-operation, even if such co-operation cannot be assumed in the normal course. The other grounds on which the claims have been made are, it is argued, not substantial.

"A more or less extensive bilingual belt, it is stated, is unavoidable. Attempt to establish the precise linguistic and cultural affiliations of such areas can never be quite successful and may also be unnecessary since a completely unilingual area cannot always be created. Hindi is either the
predominant language or at least a very important language in this bilingual border belt; and since Hindi is not only the regional official language in the disputed areas, but also the national language, proficiency in which is necessary and desirable, the grievance that Hindi is being "imposed" cannot be regarded as legitimate. The Bihar Government has also stated that the natural predominance of Hindi in these areas has been obscured in the past by attempts to impose Bengal; and it has been pointed out that a number of typically Bihari castes are to be found in the territory claimed.

"Many of the arguments advanced against the proposal to create a Jharkhand State are also regarded as relevant to the proposal to transfer the rich mineral-bearing and industrialised areas of Rajmahal, Manbhum and Dhalbhum to West Bengal. This transfer, it is argued, is bound to dislocate the economy of residuary Bihar; and it will upset the balance between agriculture and industry.

"Finally, it has been contended by Bihar that there is no popular demand in this disputed fringe for a rectification of the boundary.

"The linguistic complexion of the disputed areas is unfortunately not quite clear. The mother-tongue data of the 1951 census have been challenged by both Bengal and Bihar; and only a broad judgment as to the relative numerical strength of various linguistic groups in the districts of Prunea, Santhal Parganas, Manbhum and Goalpara seems possible. Neither West Bengal nor Bihar has in these circumstances, confined itself to arguing from past figures. Both the governments have relied on a number of subsidiary factors in order to prove the cultural affinity of the disputed areas.

"The arguments advanced by the Bihar Government in favour of the maintenance of the status quo are not without force. It has also to be
recognised that bilingualism in the area under consideration has to be accepted as an inevitable fact and that no great importance can therefore be attached to mere linguistic affinity.

"We feel, however, that quite apart from the special back ground of the West Bengal claim and its psychological aspect, there is no denying the fact that the present distribution of territories between Bihar and West Bengal is such as to give raise to some real administrative difficulties from the point of view of West Bengal. It may be possible, as the Bihar Government has contended, to mitigate these difficulties within the existing constitutional and administrative framework. However, now that an opportunity for a general settlement has presented itself it will be desirable in our opinion to find more lasting solutions.

"We shall first examine the claims made on the Kishanganj district. The mother-tongue data of the census returns for this districts, as has been mentioned already, have been challenged by West Bengal. The main controversy in this district, however, relates to the classification of the dialect or dialects spoken to the east of the river Mahananda. Grierson and following him O'Malley, classified them as North Bengali, but the Bihar Government, relying among other evidence on the views of Gait, the Census Superintendent in 1901, has challenged this classification.

"We do not feel called upon to review or to decide this question. The affinities between Kishanganjia or Sirpuria as spoken in the extreme east of Punea district on the one hand and Bengali on the other seem to be close. But this dialect is written in the Kaithi script, which is allied to Hindi and as one proceeds westwards its affinities with Maithili and Hindi become more marked. Arguments based on linguistic affiliations, whether advanced by Bihar or by Bengal are thus far from being conclusive.
"The main argument in support of the West Bengal claims on this area is the desirability of making the State a geographically contiguous unit. The Bihar Government has represented that it is not necessary to transfer to West Bengal the area through which the national highway connecting the northern districts to the rest of West Bengal passes. The highway, it is stated is now and will remain the responsibility of the Central Government and whichever State functions as the agent of the Centre, the general principles which have already been laid down regarding the maintenance or the use of national highways will go a long way towards ensuring the interests of all those who may be using them. The Government of Bihar has also dealt at some length with the allegations of lack of co-operation in facilitating transport and communications between the southern and northern portions of West Bengal.

"We feel that this is a matter, which should be examined on its merits rather than on the basis of complaints or counter-complaints against one state or the other. We attach great importance to the geographical compactness of administrative units, because we are of the view that the physical integration of such units is vital to their real political and administrative integration. Apart from the inconvenience in administering geographically detached areas we must take note of the fact that the continued isolation of the northern districts from the rest of West Bengal will tend to foster and accentuate separatist trends in these districts. West Bengal therefore has a good case for a geographical integration of the northern areas.

"Besides even if the Bihar Government extends full co-operation in facilitating traffic between the north and the south of West Bengal certain difficulties are inherent in the existing arrangements. These difficulties
will be eliminated if portions of the Kishanganj sub-division and the Gopalpur revenue Thana are transferred to West Bengal. This will enable West Bengal to construct feeder roads connecting the national highway to its other territories and to control road traffic with Darjeeling and other places in the north by eliminating avoidable delays and cumbersome and inconvenient administrative arrangements and by liberalising if necessary the present practice relating to road transport. West Bengal will also acquire control of the Indo-Pakistan border in this region along its entire length. From an administrative point of view this will be both convenient and desirable.

"We have carefully examined the suggestion that the entire area to the east of the river Mahananda in the Purnea district should be transferred from Bihar to West Bengal in order to provide for geographical contiguity between the two disconnected parts of West Bengal. We do not consider it necessary, however to recommend the transfer of any area, which may not be absolutely essential in order to achieve the object in view. Taking all the relevant factors into consideration we propose that.

(i) the portion of the Kishanganj sub-division which is to the east of the river Mahananda and

(ii) a portion of the Gopalpur revenue thana contiguous to the territory mentioned in (i) and extending down to national highway in this thana.

"Should be transferred to West Bengal. The actual delimitation of the new boundary will have to be settled after a detailed survey. The details of this transfer will have to be left, therefore, to the Government of India, acting in consultation with the State Governments concerned. But it
should be ensured that control of the national highway in the Gopalpur revenue Thana is vested in the Government of West Bengal.

"While making this recommendation we have to take note of the fact that the eastern portion of the Kishanganj subdivision is predominantly inhabited by Muslims who would view with concern the transfer of this area to West Bengal on the ground that their linguistic and cultural rights might suffer and that the possible resettlement of displaced persons from East Bengal might dislocate their life. These fears are not without justification. It would, therefore be necessary for the West Bengal Government to take effective steps such as the recognition of the special position of Urdu in this area for educational and official purposes. The density of population in this area is such that there is little scope for any resettlement of displaced persons. The West Bengal Government would therefore do well to make a clear announcement to the effect that no such resettlement would be undertaken. This would go a long way in our opinion in dispelling doubts and fears."

It was however, discovered soon after the publication of the report of the States Reorganisation Commission that their recommendation should neither establish contiguity between the two parts of west Bengal, nor include the entire highway in the territory of West Bengal. The matter was again considered afresh and it was decided that the new boundary line should be demarcated in the Gopalpur Thana and the Kishanganj Subdivision of the Purnea district entirely with reference to the National highway so that the highway and the area through which it runs may be clearly transferred to West Bengal. An exception was made in respect of
Kishanganj town itself which was to remain in Bihar. The new boundary shall be demarcate, is reproduced below:

(1). As from the appointed day, there shall be added to the state of West Bengal the territories which on the 1st day of March, 1956, were comprised in-

(a) that portion of Kishanganj subdivision of Purnea district which lies to the east of the boundary line demarcated in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (2) by an authority appointed in this behalf by central government and that portion of Gopalpur Thana of the said district which lies to the east or north, as the case may be, of the said boundary line and

(b) And the said territories shall thereafter cease to form part of the State of Bihar.

(2). The boundary line referred to in Sub-section (1) shall be so demarcated as to be generally two hundred yards to the west of the highway in Purnea district connecting Dalkola, Kishanganj and Chopra with Siliguri in Darjiling district and two hundred yards to the south or south -west of the highway in Purnea district connecting Dalkola and Karandighi with Raiganj in west Dinajpur district provided that the boundary line shall be so demarcated as not to cut across any village or town:

Provided further that from the point where the first mentioned highway meets the Southern boundary of that Municipality the boundary line shall be the same as the boundary of the Municipality in the east.

By a Gazette of India notification no.12/3/56 SR-1, dated the 7th September, 1956, Shri V. Vishwanathan, I.C.S., was appointed special
commissioner for demarcating the boundary line in accordance with the provisions of the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act, 1956. The Government of Behar reputed Shri T.P. Singh, I.C.S, and commissioner of Bhagalpur Division. Shri R.S.Pande, I.A.S., joint Development Commissioner and Shri K.K.Mitra, I.A.S., Director of land Records and Surveys to assist the special commissioner, Shri Vishwanathan completed the demarcation work and submitted his report to the Government of India on 7th October 1956.

The following statement reproduced from Shri Vishwanathan’s report shows the area and the population of the Purnea district transferred to West Bengal:

Table: 4.1. Area and Population of Purnea transferred to West Bengal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Islampur</td>
<td>Thakurganj</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Islampur</td>
<td>Chopra</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>52,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Islampur</td>
<td>Islampur</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>59,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kishanganj</td>
<td>Kishanganj</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>66,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kishanganj</td>
<td>Goalpokhar</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gopalpur</td>
<td>Karandighi</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>47,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gopalpur</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>913</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>2,77,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The area was transferred from the district of Punea to West Bengal with effect from 1st November 1958.

As the demarcation was done before the final publication of the records the maps prepared during the last settlement continued to be the official maps. Shri Vishwanathan however, freely consulted the new maps prepared during the present survey and found them extremely useful. An extract from Paragraph 20 of his report is reproduced below. There have been some changes in the alignment of the road between
Raiganj to Dalkola and from Dalkola to Kishanganj. The changes in the alignment were carefully checked up with referred to the old village maps. For a so recheck of these changes in alignment the new survey maps were extremely useful, as though they are not yet official or authoritative, they represent the result of very careful and accurate survey. These new drawings of village maps were particularly useful in checking up on the alignment on the new road from Chopra to Chitalgahatta and to the West Bengal border near Siliguri.

The four governing principles determining the SRC recommendation for the reorganisation of existing units were (i) Preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. (ii) Linguistic and cultural homogeneity (iii) financial, economic and administrative considerations, and (iv) successful working of the five year national economic plan. But on the balance the commission did underline the primary of the linguistic factor in the demarcation of state boundaries except in the case of West Bengal.

'Linguistic-homogeneity' they enunciated, provides the only rational basis for reconstructing the States, for it reflects the social and cultural pattern of living obtaining in well-defined regions of the country. In this formulation they obviously drew inspiration not only from the increasing demands of the popularly elected representatives of the people, but also from the basic approach accepted by the congress ever since 1905. By 1920, at the Nagpur session, the congress was firmly committed to the linguistic redistribution of provinces as a clear political objective. Firm reiteration of this principles was made in the famous report of the Nehru Committee of the All Parties Conference, 1928. The report said interalia that it becomes most desirable for provinces to be re-grouped on a linguistic basis. Language as a rule corresponds with special variety of
culture of traditions and literature. In a linguistic area all these factors will help in the general progress of the province. This region of West Bengal was treated exceptionally by the commission and it applied different principles for its reorganisation probably because of the following reasons:

(i) The Surjapuri dialect is a border form of speech, Bengali is the main, but containing expressions borrowed from Maithli. At the census of 1901 the language of 94.6 percent of the population in the Purnea district, was returned as Hindi and 4.9 percent, as Bengali. Dr. Grierson, however, estimates the number of persons speaking Bengali to be early a third of the inhabitants. According to him the dialect in question is in the main, Bengali with an admixture of Hindi but it is written in the Kaithi Character of Bihar, in which Hindi and not Bengali is written. This fact doubtless weighed with the enumerators more than the niceties of grammatical construction, and as a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult in many places to decide with which of the two languages the local dialect should be classed, for Bihari fades imperceptibly into Bengali and vice-versa. Hence, arguments based on linguistic affiliations, whether advanced by Bihar or by Bengal, were thus far from being conclusive.

(ii) It seems that West Bengal was treated differently by the SRC because of the fact that besides the state of Punjab, it was a state, which has to face partition on communal lines. The three fourth of the population to the east of the Mahananda being Muslims. This being a border region to East Pakistan (Bangladesh), the continued isolation of the northern districts from rest of west Bengal will tend to foster and accentuate separatist trends in these districts. The commission probably endorsed the view that: in the past India did not achieve a real measure of political unification or develop into a living body, social or political,
constituting and integrate whole: if, therefore, we have to create a united India, it must be based on a new concept of unity which cannot be achieved by reaffirmation or re-enunciation of old values such as religion, community, culture and language, which operate more to separate than to unite;

(a) Regional consciousness never contributed to India’s oneness in the past. In fact, it is inherent in narrower loyalties, whether based on communal, provincial or linguistic considerations, that they ally themselves with centrifugal forces and become instruments of inter-state discord and other disruptive trends. The idea of sub-nations or nationalities, which must foment resistance to the growth of national unity, is implicit in the demand for a reorganisation of States or a rectification of their boundaries on the basis of exclusivist factors such as linguistic and cultural homogeneity; and

(b) If, therefore, the unity of India has to develop into a dynamic concept capable of welding the nation together, it must transcend community and language and recognise the entire nation as one integrated unit.

FURTHER DIVISION OF THE REGION:

The Surjapuri Muslims predominate to east of the river Mahananda. Mr. L.S.S.O’Malley in the District Gazetteer of Purnea district, Published in 1911 mentions “The proportion of Hindus is greatest in Thana Damdaha in the west, and decreases as we proceed towards the north-east, until in the of Islampur in the Kishanganj sub-division, there is only one Hindu to every two Muhammadans.”

This region, east of the Mahananda, which is predominantly inhabited by the Surjapuri Muslim, has witnessed repeated bifurcation
and trifurcation. First as a result of the partition of the country in 1947 and thereafter, in 1956 in view of the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission implemented by the Bihar, west Bengal transfer of Territories Act, and 1956. This jolted the Community severely, as an area of 759 square miles with a population of 277, 288 was transferred to west Bengal which was predominantly inhabited by members of this community. Though the Surjapuri Muslims are found predominantly in this region their sporadic presence may be felt in the adjoining other districts of west Bengal and Bihar too. The division of the community did not stop and it continued till recently. The district of west Dinajpur has been divided into two parts, i.e., Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur w.e.f. 1st April 1992 vide the state Government notification, the Calcutta Gazette (Extra ordinary) dated 28.2.92. According to the said division, two sub-divisions namely Islampur and Raiganj (excluding Kusmandi and Bansihari police stations) were separated from Sadar sub-division to form Uttar Dinajpur. It has an area of 3180 sq.kms.

The Sadar sub-division of undivided west Dinajpur district with the additions of Kusmandi and Bansihari police stations of Raiganj sub-division formed Dakshin Dinajpur District. It has an area of 2183 sq.kms. A couple of years ago the district of Purnea of Bihar has been trifurcated. Two more districts of Kishanganj and Araria have been carved out from the east while district of Purnea. The Kishanganj sub-division with an area of 1884 sq.kms has been upgraded as an independent district. The Araria sub-division of the Parent district of Purnea with an area of 2830 sq.kms has been upgraded as an independent district. The parent district of Purnea exists as an independent district with an area of 3229 square km. It is evident from the facts presented above that the socio-cultural region of the Surjapuri Muslims has gone several significant changes in
its geographical limits. As of today, the Surjapuri Muslims are largely concentrated in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (west Bengal). Therefore, a comparative study of the development of this community becomes very important and interesting from socio-economic and political point of views.
A SKETCH MAP
FOR
UTTAR DINAJPUR (W.B.)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


(4). Ibid; P.152.


(15). Id at P.359.

(16). Id at P.136.
(17). Id at PP.141-42.
(18). Id at P.197.
(20). Id at P.54.
(23). Khan, Ghulam Hussain (1904), Vol.II. PP.203-204.
(24). Id at P.251.
(28). Khan, Ghulam Hussain (1904), Vol.II. PP.516-17.
(31). Id at PP.50-51.
(32). Id at P.72.
(34). The Original of this latter is available in the National Archives, Foreign Department, Intelligence Bureau, January 1898. No.230-31.
(35). The above notes were made from a book published in 1920 by the Rev. Father H. Hostin, S.J. The title of the book is "inscriptions on Christian Graves and Memorial Tablets".


(37). Id at P.400.


(39). Id at PP.137-39.


(41). Ibid;


(45). Id at P.177.