Chapter 2

Introduction of the Town
2.1 Geographical Profile

The town of Dibai, comes under the district of Bulandshahr, and is about 120 km southeast of the national capital, New Delhi. It is situated in the western region of the state of Uttar Pradesh (UP), a northern state which was till recently the biggest (before the state of Uttrakhand was carved out of it from the north) and is the most populous in India. Dibai comes under the M.P. (member of parliament) constituency of Khurja (50 km from Dibai) and has one M.L.A. (member of legislative assembly) assembly seat. The town has an area of 2.33 sq. km., with a population of about 34853 (Luxman, 1980). The coordinates of Dibai are 27° 52’ 30” North latitude and 77° 5” East longitude. It is approximately 200 meters above sea level. The Ganges flows 8 km away, on the northeastern side of the main town (Kishore, 1998).

You will find nothing very striking or different about this town when compared to other small U.P. towns. Nevertheless Dibai is an important town of this region. It is ideally situated on the important highway (NH 93), not very far from the national capital and acts as a commercial, educational and healthcare center for the surrounding small towns and villages of this region. Dibai’s significance also lies in the fact that it is the only major township close to the Narora Atomic Power Plant (NAPP), just 15 km away. In the recent past, Dibai was often in the news because it was the assembly constituency and seat of the former chief minister of the state, Mr. Kalyan Singh. And then his son, Mr. Rajveer Singh was the elected member of legislative assembly (MLA), in 2002.

In the days gone by, Dibai was famous for its crafted cheelams (an earthen pot used for putting tobacco and coals, mounted on the hukka (the standing smoking pipe) and aathishbazi (fireworks). Dibai’s craftsman had the reputation of making one of the finest cheelams and would display some of the most breathtaking fireworks at marriages parties, functions and festivals. Times
have changed and the demand for these crafts is negligible and hence the once very the popular cottage industry of cheelams and aatishbazi is almost dead.

You may enter Dibai from north, i.e. from Delhi side by the Delhi – Badaun highway. This highway connects at 90 degrees with the national highway (NH-93) of Agra – Muradabad, 3 km before the town at an intersection called Dibai doraha. From this point, to the right (east) is Aligarh city at 43 km and to the left is Anupshahr town at 15 km. Another option to reach Dibai is by train from the southern side. Dibai’s railway station is located 3 km away from the town at Kaser village, on the Aligarh – Chandausi – Dehradun rail line.

There are trees lined by the roadsides and green agricultural farms extending to as far as you can see. On entering the town, the greenery suddenly disappears and in place of the trees, buildings big and small, old and new starts to appear alongside the highway, which runs straight through the town. Just on the point of entry, is the police station cum check post, followed by the government hospital and then the anaaj mandi (crops market) to the right and a petrol filling station on the left.

As seen in other towns, here also the line of shops starts with the garages, with trucks and buses lined up, mechanics and vehicle spare parts shops, and dhabas (road side restaurants) on both sides of the road. As you enter further, the traffic on the road starts to get thick. The traffic is a mix of bullock carts and tractor trolleys loaded with agricultural products, horses carts, rickshaws, cycles, two wheelers and of course the trucks, buses and small vehicles passing by the town. The roadside hawkers selling fruits, vegetables and other petty goods, on carts and sitting on the ground, adds to the traffic commotion.

On moving ahead there are stores and small showrooms of electronic goods and two wheelers. There are also nursing homes and doctors clinics, schools, iron fabricators, fertilizers and seeds stores. By the sides of this road are also present all the three cinema halls of the town. We can say that the trades and services that require larger space to operate are situated on this highway as it the only
wide enough road of the town. A couple of hundred meters down, a road at right angle goes inside on the left and straight into the heart of the town, and comes out of Dibai on the eastern side (refer to maps). This can be called the main road inside Dibai. After coming inside on this road for about 200 meters or so, stands the Ghanta Ghar (clock tower) of Dibai. Behind it is the sabzi mandi (vegetable market) and a little ahead on the road is the old sarrafa bazaar (gold market), with only few gold shops left now. Another important lane goes on the right side from this clock tower and after piercing through the markets, and taking further right turn, connects with the highway towards the end of the town. At the end of the town on this road is Digamber Degree College and Kuber Inter College on the right side. And by these two roads, the main road and the lane just mentioned, are situated the main markets of Dibai. Moving straight ahead from the clock tower for about 100 meters, the lane again bifurcates into two, and at this point is a small park with the statue of the great freedom fighter - Chander Shekher Azad. One lane goes straight, and moving a little further there is the Municipality building on the right. Move a little further and you will come out of the town. Traveling on it for about 8km and you will reach the banks of the holy Ganges at Karanwas. Many shops of these markets still have old folding wooden doors, with the shopkeepers sitting on the floors and selling their merchandise. There are smaller streets and lanes in-between. These markets appears very busy and crowded, with locals and people from the near by villages. Being a small town, most of the local people know each other and are seen exchanging greetings. The market place is intertwined with residential settlements also, generally on the backside of the markets.

Both Hindus and Muslims (in minority) do their respective businesses side by side, but their residential localities are polarized. With the Hindu populace occupying the majority of the northern and central region of the town, Muslim mohallas (localities) start from south of the central region and stretches across the southeastern part of Dibai. This residential polarization grew stronger after
the communal riots of 1984 and then of 1992. Being close to a highly communally sensitive city of Aligarh, tension flare-ups here are immediate, in reactions to any untoward instances in Aligarh.

Although no greenery may be seen in the major part inside the town, it is generally pollution free except for the dust and dirt. Dibai has all the components of a rural township; nevertheless it also has all the basic modern day facilities at its disposal. People can be seen taking on the mobile phones, riding new two wheelers, their color TV’s have cable connections, cinema halls showing latest releases and so on. It is bustling with all sorts of activities in the mornings and afternoons. But as the evening approaches the pace of things get suddenly very slow. And as the night takes over, the streets and lanes starts getting deserted, with very few people roaming around. This is generally the time of power cuts also. Nevertheless, some activity could still be seen at sweets shops, where people could be found till late; drinking hot milk and at paan (beetle leaf) shops savouring paan, smoking and gossiping.

Dibai also bears a neglected look of a typical U.P. town. Neglected by the various governments which did little for its development and unable to provide employment to its people. There are no industries, big or small in or around this town and the poor people still have to struggle very hard and go to far off places to earn their daily meals. Please also note that this was the constituency of a former chief minister of the state.

On the contrary Dibai could have been a much developed and prosperous town. Despite of all its shortcomings, Dibai is not a sleepy town at all but a place bustling with all sorts of activities both commercial and social.

2.2 The region in Ancient Times

Kishore (1998) has thrown light over the historical importance of Dibai. The region, in which Dibai is situated, has a very ancient background. In the period of Mahabharata, this place was in the kingdom of the Pandawas. Just before the birth of Christ, Mitrawanshi king Gomitra was its ruler. From 176 to 76 BC
this place went in the hands of Kushan. In the Maurya period, 322 to 185 BC, this was the kingdom of Chandragupt Maurya and Ashoka the great. Then the Guptas dynasty kings, Samudragupt, Chandragupt, Vikramaditya and Kumargupt ruled this place from 320 to 545 AD. In Kheda, a village close to Dibai, a bronze plate, with engraved description of this period, was found, throwing light on the importance of this region.

The Rajput king Mahendra Bhoj (840 – 890 AD), was the first Rajput ruler of this place. In and around 1029 AD, this region became the stronghold of the Dhakara Rajputs. This place was under the control of Kannauj’s Gahdwal rulers from 1098 to 1193 AD (Kishore, 1998).

In 1193 AD, Qutubuddin Aibak brought this region under his kingdom and made Qazi Nasiruddin its governor. From 1211 to 1235 AD, Itumush was the subedar. 1290 to 1296 AD Jalaluddin was made the subedar, who established cantonments in this area. When Jalaluddin became the sultan of Delhi, he appointed his nephew Allauddin the subedar of this region. Moreover, after murdering his uncle Jalaluddin, Allaudin captured the throne of Delhi. It was from Dibai’s cantonment, that Allauddin called the forces for help, in the battle with the ruler Qutluk Khan near Delhi and Qutluk Khan was defeated.

1556 to 160 AD5 was the period of the great Mughal king Akbar, and Dibai gets mentioned in Aaen - e - Akbari (Luxman, 1872). Dibai then belonged to the district of Thana Farida in the Sarkar of Koil, in the Agra zone (Nevill, 1903). And the revenue collection from this area was more than twenty-one lakhsrupias (Luxman, 1872).

Dibai is said to have been built on the ruins of Dhundagarh. At the time of Sajid Salar Masud Gazi, in 420 hijri, the latter expelled the Dhakra Rajputs from Dhundagarh and destroyed the town. The place was afterwards called Dhundai and then Dibai (Luxman, 1872).

In 1746 AD, Ahmadshah Abdali attacked this region. He made Najab Khan the ruler of Delhi. Najab Khan ruled this area through subedar Afasayeb. Latter,
Najab Khan's grandson, Gulam Qadir occupied this region but Gwalior's maharaja Madharao Sindia's maratha forces killed Gulam Qadir and established their rule here (Kishore,1998).

In 1797 AD, a general by the name of Pairon was appointed and sent by the marathas to collect land tax from this region. But the British general Lord Lake brought him on his side, eventually in 1802, this region came under the British hand from the Marathas (Kishore,1998).

2.3 Dibai in the British Period

In 1803, the British appointed James Skinner to administer the area from Dibai to Aligarh. In this period, Dibai was included in the district of Aligarh. Later when in 1824 district Bulandshahr was formed, Dibai was assigned to it. In 1844, the Pargana boundaries were revised, 14 villages were added to Dibai from the neighbouring Parganas. Dibai was made the headquarters of the tehsil. The tehsildar resided in the old fort of the Maratha Amil. But in 1859 tehsil was shifted to Anupshahar (Nevill, 1903).

Due to a large increase in the population of the town, on 17th august 1860 AD, Dibai was converted into a municipality, but in June 1870 AD, due to insufficient funds, that were required to run the municipality, Dibai was again brought under the Chokidar Act of 1859 (Luxman,1872).

Dibai was an old and important town in the center of the pargana, lying on the north side of the road from Bulandshahr and Shikarpur to Ramghat. This was the southern pargana of the tehsil lying between Anupshahar and Shikarpur on the north and Atrauli tehsil of Aligarh district on the south. To the west was the pargana of Pahasu and to the east the boundary was formed by the Ganges, which separated it from the district of Badaun (Nevill, 1922). The town lands of Dibai covered an area of 3,430 acres and surrounded on three sides by the stream Choiyya (Fazli,1960). Two branches of this stream, Choiyya and the Nim nadi, united just below Dibai and flowed southwards into Aligarh. This formed a fairly efficient drainage channel. The town was surrounded by groves,
which covered 196 acres. The cultivated land was irrigated from wells, the cultivated class being lodhs, chamars, and sheikhs. The lands were assessed to revenue of Rs 7000 (Nevill, 1922).

In 1847 AD, there were 7,837 inhabitants, which in 1853 AD rose to 8,586 but fell in 1865 to 7167 AD. Since then the town has recovered rapidly. In 1872 AD, there were 7,732 people and in 1891 AD, the total rose to 8,382. The next census showed Dibai having a population of 10,579, of whom 5,500 were males and 5,079 females. Classified according to religion, there were 6,492 Hindus, 3,875 Muslims, and 212 Aryans and Jains (Nevill, 1922). The Zamindari of the town was divided into five shares. The Sheikhs held two and a half, Thakurs and Baniyas had one and half each and the remaining share was in the hand of the other Hindus (Nevill, 1922).

The road on both sides of the town was metalled. The principal entrance to the town was by a new metalled road from Bulandshahr, which was joined by a metalled road running north and south through the bazaar and represented a continuation of the old road to Anupshahr. The old road from Bulandshahr was now no longer in use. It formerly ran east and west through the center of the town and crossed the Anupshahr road in the center (Nevill, 1922).

The bazaar entirely composed of brick built houses and terminated in the north of the town beyond the police station. A fine tank was built here during the time of Mr. Growse, but had no water in it. It was hoped that it might be possible to connect it with the canal, which was not far off (Nevill, 1922). Dibai had its railway station at Kaser village, 3 miles on east, traversed by the Oudh and Rohilkhand railway from Aligarh to Chandausi.

In those days, Dibai possessed a police station, a post office, a dak bungalow, seven sarais, and an Anglo Vernacular school. This English school was attended by 150 boys and was supported partly out of the fees from the market, and partly from private subscriptions, contributed for the most part by the Thakur baniyas – an important family of the town (Nevill, 1922).
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Introduction of the town

*pargana* was a large and flourishing town, having considerable commercial importance being a busy center of cotton trade. The market days were Mondays and Thursdays of each week.

2.4 Dibai’s Role in the Freedom Struggle

In 1857 AD when the first freedom movement started, Dibai was not left behind. When A.P. Narayan (one of the freedom fighter) brought the flame of freedom and message of revolt from Aligarh, he was arrested on 20th May 1857, and was hanged, along with the other freedom fighters. Like other various places of Aligarh and Bulandshahr, Dibai also revolted. In November 1857, Dibai’s people refused to pay the taxes to the Britishers. To curb this revolt, general *Puth* was called. The general with his army came via Anupshahr and entered Dibai from *Karanwas* and inflicted great pain and suffering on the freedom fighters. Such an instance took place again on the 5th December 1857, when the British army came. After the failure of the revolt of 1857, the English police used to harass the freedom fighters and their families (Kishore, 1998).

On the no cooperation call in 1921 AD and salt *satyagrah* (Gandhiji’s movement for freedom) in 1930 AD, by *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Pyaray Lal* of Dibai along with many others got themselves arrested who were put in prison for months. Again, on the 4th January 1932 AD, when *Mahatma Gandhi* and *Sardar Patel* were arrested, along with whole of India, Dibai’s people came forward and got themselves arrested. Prominent leaders among them were *Abdullah Hakim* and *Dr. Shriram Goel*. They were sentenced to six months imprisonment (Kishore, 1998).

In 1934 AD, from 1st to 3rd June, under the leadership of *Asaf Ali barrister* (lawyer) a grand political rally was organised in Dibai. More than 20,000 congressional representatives and supporters took part in it. On April 1936, when the British government applied their constitution of 1935 AD over India, a strike was called in Dibai and people from every walk of life, came out in its support. In 1942 AD, after Gandhi Ji’s call of ‘Quit India’ and when he
called the nation for ‘karo ya maro’ (do or die), all Dibai’s nationalists jumped in the movement. To control the nationalist movement, the English police sealed the Congress office on the 9th August 1942 AD and confiscated everything from the office. Hence, Dibai proudly found itself in the thin and thick of the whole freedom struggle (Kishore, 1998). After independence, Mr Irtaza Fazli (younger brother of the researcher’s grandfather), a freedom fighter, and congress candidate became first MLA of the region.

2.5 Dibai at Present

The present day Dibai, is a typical Uttar Pradesh town, politically awake and active but economically backward.

The town is fully electrified but coming under rural area, it has to bear with its share of power cuts and load shedding. The internal roads and streets are metalled and the new ones being made are of concrete. The water supply is satisfactory and the supply timings generally depend on electricity timings. The water is supplied from the main overhead tank. Though being economically backward, Dibai has all the modern day amenities.

As Dibai lies on the Delhi - Badaun and Bharatpur – Moradabad highway, it is well connected with other important cities, by UP roadways and DTC bus services. And at a distance of three kilometres at Kaser village is Dibai’s railway station, on the Aligarh - Chandausi - Dehradun rail line. Apart from these passenger travel options, there are the frequent local bus services to the near by town and cities, such as to Bulandshahr, Anupshahr and Aligarh. Tongas (carts driven by horses), jugads (a locally assembled vehicle made by putting together generator engine, gear box steering wheel, brakes and accelerator) and bullock-carts, being cheap, are mainly used for local transportation in-between the town and villages.

2.5.1 Dibai Tehsil

In July 1997 AD Dibai was once again made a tehsil, as in earlier times, Dibai was a tehsil until 1859, after which it was shifted to Anupshahr. The tehsil of
Dibai has two blocks, Dibai block (22510-hectare land) and Danpur block. There are 167 villages under this tehsil, 90 villages with Dibai block, and 77 with Danpur block. Dibai has 54 Gram Panchayats (village administrative organizations) whereas Danpur has 66 Gram Panchayats. Each block has eight Nyaey Panchayats (administrative bodies related to justice). The eight Nyaey Panchayats of Dibai block are Surajpur Sakhena, Khushalabad, Bilonarup, Rajghat, Ramghat, Jaruanwan, Belon and Palakaser (Tehsil Records, 2005). The new tehsil building has been built at 4 kms from Dibai near the Dibai Doraha on the Aligarh – Anoopshahr road.

2.5.2 Climate and soil

The climate of the town is extreme. In the summers, temperature ranges between 30 to 40 degrees, but at times, it soars to as high as 45 degrees.

A decade earlier, people recall experiencing hot summer winds, locally called loo, which would blow at times even after sunset and sometimes in the night also. These winds, which usually blew in these parts of the plains, would continue for 20 to 25 day in the peak of summers, in May and June. Now a days these hot winds are experienced very rarely and for very brief periods only.

The winter ranges between 10 to 5 degrees and sometimes the mercury even dips to 3 degrees and lower. The monsoons, when are normal and arrives on time, the rainfall lasts for approximately 36 days. In the recent past, the area has not witnessed any acute drought as such.

The general surface of the area (dist- Bulandshahr) presents the look of an almost uniform level plain with an imperceptible gradual slope from north-west to southeast. The soil is entirely alluvium with the kankar (stone) embedded in abundance and the surface occasionally bears saline afforescences. The local name of the soil is sceta, dakra, pilota, khaddar, and reh. Sceta is good firm loam of the upland, dakra is ordinary clay found in depressions, pilota is the yellow, light sandy loam, bhur is mostly sand, khaddar is the river alluvium and...
reh is the diseased sceta and dakra loam serves almost 60% of the land followed by 20% sandy loam and 5% clay. The main soils are, domat, the sandy loam for cultivating bajra (millet), peanuts, and sweet potato, and clay for paddy (District Gazette, 1998).

2.5.3 Agriculture and irrigation

About 17,063 hectare of Dibai block is cultivated land and 386 hectare has orchards, mainly of mangos and some of guavas. Agriculture provides sustenance to the bulk of the population. The main crop seasons are kharif, rabi and zaid. The area under rabi crops accounts for the larger portion than that in kharif. The area under rabi crops accounts for about 48% against 47% under kharif crops of the total cropped area. Zaid crops claims 4% of total cropped area, which is sufficiently high in comparison with the state average. The most important crop is wheat than maize. These two crops claim nearly three fifth of the total cropped area. Sugarcane is the third important crop. No pulse crops are raised extensively. Oil seeds are not an important crop of this area.

The main crops, vegetations and fruits, cultivated and grown here are paddy, wheat, jaie, corn, sugarcane, maize, oat, saunf, peanut, methi, mustard, green pea, potato, brinjal, turai, lady finger, karela, radish, carrot, sweet potato, kharbuja, mango, guava, plumb, jamun, peanuts etc.

A river called Heerapur wali nehar flows between 3.5 km in the north and Ganges. This river flows by villages of Talwar, Ghosni, Herapur, Kherpur, Singhpur, Gangapur, etc. and provides water for thousands of hectare land for irrigation, for such villages near Dibai. In the east and west, irrigation is mainly done by private (nine) govt. tube wells. In the south, a small river provides irrigation for one season of kharib crop. Once an important source of irrigation, the Choiyya River is dry now and has water only in the monsoon season.

2.5.4 Commerce and economy

Mainly two bodies – Dibai Wayapar Mandal and Mandi Samiti, govern the economy of Dibai. The Wayapar Mandal has 1844 shops / stores as its
members, such as cloth shops, *kirana* stores (general merchant), iron fabricators, barber saloons, book, and stationery shops etc. Dibai’s *Wayapar Mandal* has about 150 villages under its umbrella. The tehsil President is the head of these villages. A collection of Rs. 500 is made from each village as the membership fee and in turn, it looks after their grievances. Rs.10 per month from each shop is charged as a membership fee of *Wayapar Mandal*. Apart from *Wayapar Mandal*, every business/trade has its own union or committee.

Trading is done at two levels of *Katcchi Aadath* and *Pakki Aadath*. The local *kissan* (farmer) sells his produce to *Katcchi Aadathi*, who further sells it in the local market or to *Pacca Aadati*. A *Pacca Aadati* (licensed wholesaler) has license to sell his product outside the local region, even to other states. Where as a *Katccha Aadati* (un-licensed) cannot do so, as he does not have the license.

The *Mandi Samiti* of Dibai came into effect on the 28 Jan 1969. The *Galla mandi* (crops market) has 5 shops of A class structure, 10 of B class, 55 of C class and 44 of teen shades. The *Sabzi mandi* (vegetable market) has 22 shops of class C, 2 godowns, 1 warehouse, and an auction plant. About 48 licenses have been issued to the wholesalers and 69 to commission agents.

Wheat and milk are the main produce of this region. Wheat is traded from here to other states, as far as to Gujarat. Large milk consumers such as Mother Dairy, Glaxo now Heinz, and Parag (names of different companies playing at national/international level) have three collecting centres here. Mustard oil is also produced in large quantity. Of the total local produce, about 75 per cent of paddy and 50 per cent of wheat is sold off to the markets of Gaziabad alone. Apart from these, *gur* (Jaggery), corn, maize, oat, *khand*, *jaie* etc. are also traded to far off cities and states.

Animal husbandry plays an important role in supplementing the income of the local population. Rearing of cattle, particularly the milk cattle is an important secondary industry of the local folk. The nearness of the metropolitan city of Delhi has given a great fillip to the proliferation of dairies in the area. The
largest number of the buffaloes followed by bullocks, which are largely used for agricultural purposes. The cattle here are largely of good breed and efforts are underway to further improve strain. Having little or no grazing ground in the area, cattle are generally supported by cultivation.

Tobacco *cheelams*, made of clay, for the *hukka* is a very old and famous local product of Dibai. There are many iron fabrication units of tractor trolleys. Earlier the customers being generally of the rural areas and of a low-income group, the sale of costly and high-end consumer products were very little. However, in the last couple of years the market has seen a sharp rise in the demand and sale of such products. This can be seen with the opening of two-wheeler's sales and service showrooms of companies like LML, Hero Honda, TVS etc. Earlier the local customers had to go to either Aligarh or Bulandshahr to buy the two wheelers, now this demand is catered to a large extent. There are also many shops selling TV’s, CD players, refrigerators, etc. and many other high-end durables. Though Dibai’s market has an annual turnover of more than Rs. 100 crores, there are no government or private mills, factories or industry of any type to provide employment to the local populace. This is the main reason that the educated and the upper-class families have migrated to other cities over the years. The case is true for both the Hindus and Muslims, because after education their children were not able to find employment in Dibai.

2.5.5 Medical and healthcare facilities

Dibai has a fair amount of medical facilities, with many doctors, *vaids* (practitioner of Ayurveda) and *hakims* (practitioner of Unani medicine). There are homeopathy, dental and eye clinics. Apart from medical clinics, there are maternity and nursing homes in plenty. The two among these are big private hospitals, with large patient take and in terms of facilities provided, they are – Dr. Singh Nursing Home and Rajjan Hospital. The town has more than sixty, big and small clinics, nursing homes and hospitals and more than thirty drug and medical shops.
In November 2003, a new government Community Health Centre started providing medical facilities to the people of Dibai and its surrounding villages. Earlier there were two government hospitals, one for female and one for male, which are now non-functional after the commencement of the new health centre. The facilities provided by the Community Health Centre are given below.

- No. of Beds - 30

- No. of Doctors - 3
  - Dentist
  - Physician
  - Lady doctor

- Facilities
  1. X. Ray Machine
  2. Pathology Unit
  3. Dots – Treatment free
  4. Polio Programs
  5. National Programs
  6. Family Planning
  7. Mother Child Care
  8. Pregnancy Vaccination
  9. Infant Vaccination
  10. Emergency Facility 24 Hours

- Doctors’ residence outside the hospital

Like commercial and trading hub, Dibai also acts as a healthcare center for the region.
2.5.6 Education

A city’s future can be bright if its human resources are well developed. This implies the development of full potential of every one irrespective of caste, religion, sex, and age group. This can be achieved by a system of education with the vision of learning society. The people of Dibai have realised the importance of education and boast of some good educational institutions in the area.

Kuber Inter College is the oldest study center in Dibai, established in 1885. Initially it was a Sanskrit Pathshala which in 1900 was made into a primary school. In 1908, it was named Anglo Vernacular Middle School, which went on to become Kuber High School. In addition, in 1942 it got the recognition of an intermediate college. The college got its name after Sri Kuber Nath, a popular capitalist of that time. After him, his son Sri Digamber Singh contributed generously towards the advancement of the institution. And in 1960 the college was awarded the status of a degree college.

The new degree college was separated from the old institution and was named Digamber Degree College, which has now become Digamber Postgraduate College. Presently, Sri Digamber Singh’s son Sri Subash Chand is the manager of both these institutions.

Sri Krishna Jaju Kanya Inter College (girls’ college) is Dibai’s only girls inter college. Established in 1920 as a small girls school and was named Marwadi Putri Pathshala. The school was running in a small place given for the purpose by Sri Ganga Sihaye. The school grew in strength and was shifted to a large area where it is present today. In 1929, it was registered and in 1936 it became a lower middle school, and later in 1940 it got the recognition of upper middle school. It was made a high school in 1951 and an intermediate college in 1960. The college is named after a famous philanthropist Sri Krishna Dasji Jaju. Educationally Dibai has done well, when compared to the
other towns of the region. It has literate population of 17,438, in which 10,709 are males and 6,729 are females.

There are about thirty-three big and small-recognised schools and colleges. Of these, seven are junior high schools, two high schools, four intermediate colleges and one postgraduate degree college, the remaining are primary schools. Three of these schools are English medium. There are few madarsas as well, and the oldest with most students is Mayeenuttaleem Asharfiya, and this a residential institute where students from far away towns, even from other states are enrolled.

But apart from these three old institutions no other higher education or professional training centres were established, either by the local governing body or by any of the governments that came to power.

2.5.7 People and population

In the census of 1971 the population of the town was 17041, in 1981 it became 22436, then in 1991 it rose to 27766 and according to last census held in 2001 the total population was 34853, of which 18346 are males and 16507 are females. Dibai has 21 mohallas, which are divided into 25 municipal wards. According to the census of 2001 majority of the population is backward 58.59 %, of the total population belong to backward classes (Table 2.1).

About 22 % is high-income group, 35 % is middle class, and the rest is lower income class, which also includes approximately 5 % people who are living below poverty line.

In Dibai, the main religions followed by the people are Hinduism and Islam. Nearly 84 % of population is Hindu and about 14% is Muslim. A few Jain and Sikh families also live in Dibai. Hindus and Muslims are further divided amongst themselves on the basis of castes.
### Table 2.1 Population of Dibai as per Wards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No. of Backward</th>
<th>Mahallah Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1049</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>Sarai Kishan Chand</td>
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<td>625</td>
<td>Sarai Bairuni</td>
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<td>955</td>
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Source: Municipality, Dibai

### 2.4.8 Religions and castes

The two main religions, which are followed by the people of Dibai are Hinduism and Islam. These religions are further divided on the basis of caste which are strictly followed.
Hindus follow and perform the Hindu rites and rituals devotedly. Irrespective of the caste, they believe in the in connotations of Vishnu.

The commonly worshiped Gods are Ram, Krishna, Mahadev, Durga, and Hanuman. The holy scriptures are read or recited in mostly all the homes. Poojas are performed on special occasions as well as special days of the week. There are a number of very old temples in the town, such as the Satyanarayan temple in chota bazaar, the Radha Krishna temple in namak mandi, Radha Krishna temple of chokh Durga Prasad and Dauji ka mandir at bazaar kalan.

However, the basic practice and belief of all the Muslims is the same that is prayers of five times and fasting in the month of Ramadan. The majority of the Muslim people here belong to the Barelvi school of thought, who strongly believes that the sufi saints or the godly persons are the intermediaries between Allah and mankind. Therefore the darghas (graves of great saints) are very much revered and strong faith is attached to it. The town has many mosques, one very old mosque, the Jama masjid is said to have been built in the time of Aurangzeb, the Mughal king.

2.5.8.1 Castes and socio-economics of Hindus

The major castes of the Hindus living in Dibai are divided into several upper, backward and lower castes (as per the Hindu caste ladder).

There are three main upper castes, the Brahmans (pundits – priests), the Kshatriyas (Rajputs – the warriors) and the Vaishyas (baniyas – the business class). These upper castes account to about 20 to 25 % of the Hindu population and the majority among them (10 to 12 %) are the Kshatriya Rajputs.

Next are the backward classes and the main among them are, the Lodhis (or Lodhas - small farmers), the Kumhars (earthen pot makers), the Dheemars (watermen), the Yadavs (cattle gazers and milkmen), the Jats (farmers), the Meena Rajputs (or Meos – an off shoot of Rajputs ), the Mallahs (fishermen
Chapter 2

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and boatmen) and the Naiies (barbers). The most dominant caste among these are the Lodhas who are in good number in this belt, especially along the Ganges. They are basically a sub caste of the Mallahs who were fishermen and owned boats. When their numbers rose, the fishing profession could not sustain their livelihood and so they took to farming and became small farmers. Lodhas are about 35 to 40% of the Hindu inhabitants.

The last on the Hindu caste ladder are the Shudras that is the schedule caste. The main ones are, the Jatavas (or the Chamars – shoe makers), the Balmiki (or the Bhangi – toilet cleaners), the Dhobhis (washer men) and the Khatiks (old and broken goods/items buyers). The Balmikis are in majority in this class.

There are also about 20 to 25 Punjabi families (Arora and Sahani), who had come to Dibai after the partition from Pakistani Punjab.

The Hindus of Dibai town are mostly orthodox and traditional, and follow the religion fundamentally. Majorities of the Hindus, especially upper castes, are literate and financially in good position as compared to the Muslims, whether in jobs or businesses. They own all the major businesses and trade of the town. The Hindu Punjabis also had done very well in business and control the cloth and textile trade of Dibai.

2.5.8.2 Castes and socio-economics of Muslims

Among Muslims, there are upper and backward castes as well; the main upper caste is that of the Sheikhs (nobles or rulers) in the sunni sect and the Saiyyads (descendents of the prophet) in the shia sect. These comprise only 2 per cent of the total Muslim population. Before the partition of India, these castes were in majority but migrated to Pakistan afterwards.

The main backward among in Muslims are the Naiies (barbers), the Dhobis (washer men), the Bhatyarey (cooks), the Gaddi (cattle gazers and milkmen), the Teli (oil extractors), the Ansari julahas (weavers), the Konjhaday (vegetable sellers), Qasai (Meat Sellers), and the Faqirs (alms takers).
Among these, the Telis are in majority. The Muslims are also very orthodox and conservative. The Sheikhs and Sayyads are educated and progressive but are very few in numbers. Before the partition, these castes were in a large numbers and were mainly zamindars and some held good offices. However, after the partition majority of these families migrated to Pakistan. Moreover, the ones who stayed back migrated to other big cities, either to provide education to their children or in search of good jobs and livelihood. Left behind in the town were mostly the backward classes. Telis are financially better off. A large number of Muslims of the town are either illiterate or very little educated and dropouts. This is largely due to their economic backwardness. There are few in small-scale businesses and others into petty jobs. A large number of Muslim youth usually earn by selling durries on commission basis, in the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Andra Pradesh, Maharashtra, etc.

2.5.9 Festivals in Dibai

Religion holds a very important place in the lives of the local populace. Their social and cultural activities are also attached with their respective faiths. The important festivals or the religious celebrations of Dibai are – Holi, Barahi, Durga-Ashtmi, Janamashtmi, Dussehra, Gangaasnan, Ramila, Kartika Purnima, Jeth Dussesra and Amkeshwar. Apart from these, there are Idd un milad un Nabi procession and Tazia procession in Moharram and various Urs (at Dargah) attracting large gathering.

Dibai witnesses a regular flow of devotees from outside places, which come to take holy dip and bath in the Ganges, which flows, close to the town. These devotees especially go to Karanwas, 5 kms from Dibai, which has ghats (shores) built by Raja Karan (described as a hero in great epic Mahabharata), on the banks of the holy Ganges. The other place close by is Rajghat, about 10 kms away. Dibai being surrounded by the holy Ganges on almost three sides, the town profits in many ways by the pilgrims, who visits or pass through it during the various Gangasnaans (holy baths).
There are few dargahs as well, one such very revered shrine is the dargah of Shahwilat Saheb, who was a sufi saint. It is said that Shahwilat Saheb had come to this place at the time of Raja Karan who was the ruler of this place. Though no correct year of the saint’s arrival is known, it is believed that in that period Dibai as a town was not in existence. Shawilat Saheb was a very popular sufi saint of that time and had a strong following of people cutting across caste and religion. The saint’s descendants are the caretakers of the shrine and organisers of the Urs festival, which is an annual affair. The Urs is held on the 7th day of barawafat of Islamic calendar, the day when this saint passed away. On this day chaddars, flowers and many such things are offered at the shrine by the saint’s followers, who come in hordes from far of places as well. People ask for their wishes to be fulfilled, especially for the birth of a child and for cure from sickness. In addition, when such wishes are rewarded, they come again for thanks giving. On the Urs night, amidst decoration and lightings, traditional qawwalis (praises by singing) are held all night long.

Idd un milad un Nabi (birthday of prophet pbuh) procession or Jhanda (the flag) as locally called, is another important festival of Dibai’s Muslim, which is celebrated with great enthusiasm. The Jhanda is taken out on the birthday of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) on the 12th day of barawafat of the Islamic calendar. This Jhanda procession was started in and around 1930, by the local sunni Muslims after they felt the domination of the shia Muslims, who at that period of time were in good numbers. And to restore their identity and make their strength felt the sunnis decided a new concept in the town, to carry out the Janda, with great fanfare.

Dibai always has been an inhabited place from the earliest of period, and had a distinct place in the Indian history and carried its importance in some form or the other in the olden times. And over the period of time and history, it has changed and moved on with the rest of the nation and finally evolved into what it is today. The populace of the town celebrate their festivals as dose the rest of the country and each community observes their respective rites and
rituals with utmost devotion and commitment. The people of Dibai actively participate in the democratic processes of the country. Though economically backward, there is no dearth of commercial activity in the markets of the town. The social fabric of the town is generally closely nit and peace loving.