



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

History Of Administrative Changes In The Islampur Subdivision Of Uttar Dinajpur District : From The Colonial To The Post-Colonial Period

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Abstract: Administrative Changes in any area are quite common in the current time. This administrative change significantly affect people's lifestyles. During the Mughal period, most of the areas of this subdivision were included in Tajpur Sarkar and Surjapur Pargana of Subah of Bengal. Administrative changes can bring about various transformations at the societal level, compelling people to think about life in new ways. In 1770 AD, the British took over the administration of the undivided Purnea district. Lord Cornwallis introduced the permanent settlement in 1793 AD and many small zamindari system developed in the area. Sued Fakhruddin Hossain was the Nawab of Khagra Estate. At this time, according to the permanent settlement, the revenue of this Pargana was Rs.2,46,226. Through multiple administrative changes, the characteristics of the current Islampur Subdivision have evolved. The current form of Islampur Subdivision has been shaped through various administrative changes. Before 1956 AD, Islampur Subdivision was part of the undivided purnea district, which is an important part of history. This area was ruled under many kings during the epic era, which allowed various cultures and traditions to flourish here. Many Hindu rulers , Muslims rulers and the British have ruled this area, which has influenced the history of the area. On November 1, 1956 , the Islampur Subdivision joined West Bengal from the undivided purnea district of Bihar, marking an important moment between the two area.

Keywords: Purnea , Surjapur, Kishanganj, Islampur, British, Administration etc.

Introduction:

The current Islampur Subdivision was a part of the undivided Purnea district of Bihar before 1956 AD. Therefore, linguistic and cultural similarities can be observed between the people living in Bihar and Islampur Subdivision. The Islampur subdivision of the undivided Purnea district belonged to the Surjapur Pargana. Surjapur Pargana was formed with the north-eastern part of the undivided Purnea district. The language of the Surjapur Pargana was Surjapuri language and the script was Kaithi. Surajapuri language survives today but the Kaithi script is not used. On November 1, 1956 AD, on the recommendation of the 'State Re-organization Commission' this Surjapuri Nations with an area of 759 square miles were included in West Bengal from Purnea district. In 2011, a survey by an organisation called "TASO"(ransferred Area Surjapur Organisation) revealed that, 3,95,138 people of the present Islampur Subdivision registered Surjapuri language as their mother tongue.

Islampur Subdivision in Epic Era:

The present Islampur Subdivision is linked with many mythological tales, which are an important part of local culture and heritage. The information from the undivided Purnea district of Bihar is crucial for researching the historical background of the present Islampur Subdivision. Currently, to the west of Islampur subdivision was the Angas and to the East was the Pundras, both of which have a rich culture history between them."The earliest inhabitants of the district are believed to have been Angas to the west and Pundras to the East." ¹ During the era of the Ramayana, the Mithila Kingdom was an important cultural center, of which this area was a part. "The boundary of Mithila comprises the modern districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Champaran and parts of the districts of Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Purnea."² During the Mahabharata era, this area was part of a Virat Kingdom, which is an important aspect of history. "Local tradition still speaks of the struggles and conquerors of the Kiratas, and a Kirata(Kiranti) women from the Morang or Tarai is said to have been the wife of Raja Virat, who, according to legend, gave shelter to Yudhishtira and his four Pandav brothers during their 12 years exile. The site of his fort is still pointed out at Thakurganj in the north of the district."³ During the Mahabharata period, the current area of Karandighi police station was under the jurisdiction of the King Karna of Angas

Islampur Subdivision in Ancient and Mediaeval Period:

The rulers of the Magadha Empire expanded their political influence in this region through their activities. "It was said by those whom we consulted that this country formerly contained part of the two old divisions of India called Matsya and Mithila, and the whole of Gaur "⁴ The Gupta rulers also governed this area , which is an important part of ancient Indian history. The ruler Baladitya of the Magadha worked diligently for the development of the Kingdom. "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 Yaso-dharman of central India, defeated and captured the Hun King , Mihiragula."⁵

Sasanka, the ruler of Gaur , also ruled in this area. He was a devotee of Shiva and was strongly opposed to Buddhism. "At the beginning of the 7th century the tract now included in the district seems to have been under Sasanka, the powerful king of Gauda(Gaur)."⁶ This area has been governed under the rule of Harshavardhana. After the death of Harshavardhana, the area was re-included in the Magadha Empire. The

ruler of the Magadha, Aditya Sen, governed this area. "After the death of Harsha, his empire was dismembered; and it seems likely that Purnea became a part of the Magadha Kingdom under Aditya Sena (circa 660 AD)."⁷ This area was also governed under the Pala and Sena Kings later. "The Pal Rajas possessed the whole of Mithila, and confined the Kiratas within the limits of their mountains."⁸ Lakshman Sen, the king of the Sena dynasty, ruled the area and built a city in his own name. "Lakshman, on the conquest, added the new province of Mithila to his dominion, and in the territory of Gour built a great city which he called after his own name and made the principal seat of his government."⁹

At the end of the 12th century, Bakhtiyar Khilji captured Bengal, which was a significant event in history. As a result, the roots of Muslim authority in this area became more solid. After this area was ruled by the Mughal for a long time. The Mughal rule period was an important chapter in the history of this area. Shershah defeated Humayun and captured this area. During the Mughal period, this area was included in the Surjapur Pargana. The replacement of Humayun Sukhdeo with Saiyad Khan Dastur led to a change in governance in this area. Assigning government to Saiyad Khan Dastur has restructured the political framework of this area. "According to its chronicles, the founder of the family was Saiyad Khan Dastur, who did good service under the emperor Humayun in the war against Sher Shah and was rewarded, in A.H. 962, i.e., 1545 A.D., by the grant of a Sanad confirming on him, together with the title of Kanungo, the Zamindari of Surjapur, which was formerly held by a Hindu Raja named Sukhdeo."¹⁰ Faujdars ensured the administration and security of this region during the Mughal Era. "During the Mughal rule Purnea formed a great military frontier province under the rule of a faujdar, who was nominally subordinate to the Subahdar."¹¹ This area was under the Tajpur Sarkar and Surjapur Pargana. The eastern part of the Mahananda river was included in the jurisdiction of the Tajpur Sarkar of Bengal Sabha. "The present district was included in Sarkar Tajpur east of the Mahananda."¹² Ostwal Khan was appointed faujdar in this area. Saif Khan was appointed governor in 1722 AD. It is clear that part of present day, some parts of Bangladesh was included in the Surjapur Pargana. "The present Pargana of Surjapur touches the district of Dinajpur."¹³ Murshid Quli Khan and Ali Vardi Khan were renowned Muslim rulers of that time, and ruled in this area. Mohammed Ali Khan was the last Muslim ruler of this area, who was removed from power by the Britishers.

Administrative System of Colonial Period in Islampur Subdivision:

In 1770 AD, a terrible famine occurred in Bengal, and many lives were endangered. A large part of the population in Bengal were forced to suffer. The economy of this area had been severely disrupted due to the Bengal famine. The impact of this famine in Bengal has been felt at various levels of Society. At this time, changes in the administrative system of this area occur; this change certainly impacts the lives of the local people. On this occasion the Britishers removed the last Muslim ruler and established their power. "The last of the Governors was Muhammad Ali Khan, who was replaced in 1770 by Mr. Ducarrel, the first English supervisor or collector"¹⁴ The entire Purnea district was divided into three Subdivision. Such as -Purnea, Araria and Kishanganj Subdivision. Chopra and Goalpokhar were the outpost of Kishanganj Subdivision. Gopalpur (Karandighi police station) was the Thana of Purnea Subdivision. "For administrative purposes the district is divided into three Subdivisions, viz, Purnea, Kishanganj and Araria, with an area of 2,571, 1346, and 1077 square miles, respectively."¹⁵ 1817 AD, Purnea was placed under the authority of Bihar and Benaras Board of commissioners. In 1872 the district was transferred to the control of the Calcutta Board of revenue along with some other districts. Purnea continued to be under the Rajshahi Division till 1893 AD when it was again transferred to the Bhagalpore Division. In 1905 AD Purnea district was again placed

under the Rajshahi Division. The Nawas of Khagra had a good relationship with the Britishers, which were beneficial for both.

There were Dakbanglow for various activities of the English in this Subdivision. In debiganj, Goalpokhar police station, there were an English Dakbanglow from where the British conducted their activities. Raja P.C. Lal's Kachcharibari was an important center for his activities.¹⁶ In this subdivision, there was also an British Dakbanglow in Dalkhola , which served as an important administrative center at that time. In these Dakbanglow seniors officials of the English discussed various topics.¹⁷

Raja P.C. Lal, son of Dharam Chand Lal of Purnea, was an important figure in Islampur Subdivision. He purchased many Zamindaris from the Khagra Estate, which helped expand his influence. This subdivision had a zamindari in Jagtagaon, Goalpokhar, and Karandighi.¹⁸ He had his Kachcharibari in these areas, which served as the center of his estate mangement. He showcased his skills by assisting the British administration. These Kachcharibari have become symbols of Farmer oppression and was a part of the history of Farmers struggles.

The local people actively participated in India's Freedom Movement. The Civil Disobedience Movement played an important role in this Subdivision. The impact of the Quit India Movement has led people to change change many things. The Tebhaga Movement was a major struggle for the rights of the Farmers. The Anti-British Movement against British rule took a strong form the undivided Purnea district, led by Bidhubhushan Nath of Nandoi Village, Khagendra Nath Mandal of Ramganj, Andharu Singha of Atgharia, and Fanibhushan Karmakar and Pratik Narayan Singha of Khabargaon, Pradhan Chandra Singha of Jagtagaon, and others.¹⁹ Anath Kanta Basu was the president of Congress in the undivided Purnea district at the time. Satinath Bhaduri was an influential leader who held Anti-British meetings with the people of this area. Through participation in the Tebhaga Movement of 1946 AD, the local people fought for their rights under the leadership of Bachcha Munshi, a larger farmer movement began in Chopra, which was a historic moment for farmers rights. Dr. Shamsuddin Ahmed, Golam Rabbani, Abdul Alim, Zainuddin, Majiruddin were associated with the Bachcha Munshi.²⁰ Additionally, Dhairyeshwari Singha of Bانشbari, Dhakeshwari Singha of Betbari, Rangali Singha of Birnakundi were among those who participated in the Tebhaga Movement.²¹ Many among the Freedom fighters of this Subdivision have been imprisoned and have fallen victim to the atrocities of the British police.

Administrative System of the Post- colonial Period in Islampur Subdivision:

Although the country gained independence on August 15 1947, the issue of state reorganisation was still unresolved. Discussions on state re-organisation became an important part of the political landscape of the country after independence. On August 15, 1947, the country achieved independence and the administration of India was entrusted to the Indians. Even after independence, the leaders of Islampur Subdivision relied on the Bihar Government to solve local issues. Shree Krishna Sinha was the first chief minister of Bihar and Dr Bidhan Chandra Ray was the first chief minister of West Bengal. During the tenures of these two chief ministers, Islampur subdivision was connected to West Bengal from Bihar. In 1956, the merger movement of Bengal and Bihar also took place in the Islampur Subdivision, marking an important political event. "A corridor was needed to contact North Bengal with south Bengal. This, in 1956 AD, the 'State Re-organisation Commission' decided to merge Islampur of Bihar with West Bengal."²² Many people

joined in support of and against this movement. "People like Swadesh Sen of Islampur and Panchkari Mandal of Manora led this movement in support of the movement."²³

As a result of this movement, on November 1, 1956 AD, the Islampur Subdivision was separated from Bihar and joined to West Bengal. Chopra, Islampur, Goalpokhar and Karandighi police stations (759 square miles) were merged to West Bengal from Bihar.²⁴ Currently, the Islampur Subdivision is known as a 'Transferred Area' due to its relocation from Bihar to West Bengal.

Conclusion:

The history of the current administrative system of Islampur Subdivision was centered around Bihar. Islampur Subdivision was part of the Subah of Bengal. In 1912, a political division occurred between Bihar and Bangal. Bengal, Bihar and Odisha were part of the same Subah, thus cultural parallels are observed here. On the first of November in 1956, the Islampur Subdivision was separated from Bihar and joined to West Bengal. At the result, the loss of many past records is making it difficult to understand the history of the Islampur Subdivision. Especially, land related issue have assumed a larger scale recently. Since 1956 AD, the administrative system of the Islampur Subdivision has developed in the structure of Bengal and is a crucial part of local development. Also, the re-organisation of the administration in the Islampur subdivision in 1956 brought changes to the lives of local people.

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