

Chapter - II

Historical overview of Nadia i.e. Santipur and Phulia as a centre of Cotton Weaving Industry

SANTIPUR :

NAMING : If we delve into the history of Nadia we shall find many political changes, devastations and attacks have ripped through the place yet its development was uninterrupted be it in the fields of education, religion or industry. The primary base of the economy was upon agriculture and cottage industry. The facts related to ancient history of Nadia are mostly lost hence there are much confusion relating to its name and origin.

There is no mention of Nadia village in the travel or other documents of the ancient foreign travellers and historians. Even the ancient Greek and Roman documents are silent to its origin. There is no hint of Nadia, Nabadwip in the works of Chinese globetrotters Fahien or Hiu-En-Tsang where they had mentioned about Bengal. Either the places did not exist then in their present identity or they were not so remarkable to find a place in history. But in the Baisnab literature there has been mention of Nadia. The chants prove it further.¹ It is assumed that Nadia was then part of 'Samatat' or 'Banga'.

The historians have concluded that Nadia and Nabadwip were synonymous then. But which name actually acceded to the current name is unknown.²

It is true that Nabadwip meant Nadia in earlier time.³ Nadia could have become Nabadwip as a result of malapropism. In times of Gour kingdom northern part of Nadia was part of the kingdom.⁴ During the Pal dynasty the rulers had set up another capital. Raja Laksman Sen had set up his capital at Nabadwip (1179-1206 AD). The muslim historians had mentioned that the king had his capital named as Nadia. Hence Nadia and Nabadwip are same places.⁵ Later it must

have become Nudia or Nadia.

Many people conclude several meanings to these two names. Nabadwip is called as the collection of 9 islands by the famous writer on Baisnab culture Narahari and many other authors. He has mentioned in his book 'Nabadwip Porecromapadhyati' :

|| *"Nadia Prithak Gram Noi
Nabadwipe Nabadwip Bestito Je Hoi"* ||
"Noi Dwip E Nabadwip Naam"
"Prithak Prithak Kintu Hoi Ek Gram" ||
*"Joiche Rajdhani Kono Sthan
Jodwopi Onek Totha Hoi Ek Naam"* ||

According to Some Scholars, the meaning of Nabadwip is new island (dwip=island). In earlier days it was an island in the middle of Ganges surrounded by Ganges and Jalangi Rivers. Later the river had changed its course and the island extended further. Gradually it changed into populated place that became the capital of kingdoms. The new village that was established upon the island was called 'Naba-dwip'.⁶

Some say that the name Nadia is derived from the collection of 9 lamps (dia or pradip).⁷

According to Dr. Khudiram Das, Nadia is the derivative from the spelling of Nabadwip=n=0-di-o-Nadiaa=Nadia. The maiden mention Nadiaho or Nudia is in the muslim literary work Tabakat-I-Nasiri (1250 A.D.). As per the documents of Dr. Khudiram Das Nabadwip is actually an island surrounded by Jalangi and Bhagirathi rivers and the name Nadia was derived from it which later was identified with the entire district.⁸

FAME OF NADIA : The history of Nadia is just not of Nabadwip. The history starts from the time of decline of the capital Nadia of Lakshman Sen.⁹

This is because history of Nadia during the medieval age is in total darkness. No body could say since when it was identified as a distinct place of importance. In the prehistoric time Nadia was supposed to be under the sea as assumed by the geologists. The deposition of silt by the Ganges and other rivers had given rise to this delta with silt, sand and gravels. In this regard the excerpt from J. H. E. Carrett is relevant – There can be little doubt that the delta through which the ganges flows was built up from the sea in prehistoric times by the silt which the various distributaries of that river brought down from the plain and mountains for island.¹⁰ Historian Ptolemy has asserted the same in the map he had drawn in the 2nd century. In those times Nadia was a marshy land and crisscrossed by many small rivers.¹¹ In the words of Carrett - “This marked the first stage in the reclamation of the land from the sea, and Nadia in those days appears to have been a fen country intersected with rivers and morasses, and probably inhabited by a few scattered settlements of fishermen and boatmen.”¹² It is evident that even in ancient time Nadia was part of Bengal though it did not have any separate identity as at present.

When the Maurya Empire was founded whether Nadia was part of its kingdom or not is not known. During the rule of Chandra Gupta - II, Bengal came under the rule of the Gupta Empire. After Skandagupta, the decline of the Gupta Empire had started. Independent Bengal was created between 525-75 AD. It is accepted that the present Nadia was a part of the independent Bengal then. In 750AD during the reign of raja Gopaldev Nadia was a part of his kingdom. Presence of many idols and evidences of Buddhist sanghas from the time of Pal dynasty proves that it was under the rule of the Pal dynasty.¹³ Later during Sen rule and from the time of the muslim rule, the history of Nadia began.

The history of Nadia can be divided into three phases. The 1st phase is between the times of attack by Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khalji to the arrival of Sri

Chaitannya from 13th to 16th century AD. The history of the Nadia's education in the society to Krittibash Kahini of Phulia marks the 2nd phase 16th –18th century AD. The frequent change in the historical context--rise of Baro-Bhuiyan, decline of sultanate, rule of subedars under Mughal empire and beginning of Nawabi rule and later the advent of the British rule and how all these have affected Nadia cannot be known in detail. But what can be known is how the Bhuiyans of Jessore had helped Mansingh against Pratapaditya and was Bhabananda Majumder was awarded the Farman (1606, 1631 forman granted by Mughal Emperor) or title to the place and this led to the establishment of the royal kingdom of Krishnanagar according to 'Khitish Bangshabalicharit'. The famous Krishnanagar royal family had produced equally prominent kings like Raja Krishnachandra who had patronized poet Bharatchandra the composer of 'Annadamongol'.

The history of 17th and 18th century is the details of the kingdom and dynasty established by Bhabananda. In 1765 after the grant of Diwani Nadia came under the occupation of the British.¹⁴

Boundaries-Geographical position :

While writing the history of Nadia the foremost challenge is to define its boundaries. It has constantly changed with time. There are many reasons to that. The boundary that was till 16th century had extended further with the establishment of royal kingdom in the 1st half of the 17th century. Earlier it has been mentioned that Bhabananda Majumder had secured title to Nadia, Mohotpur, Marupdaha, Lepa, Multanpur, Kashimpur, Boyesha, Mosunda etc of total 14 parganas in 1606Ad and established his rule.¹⁵ From this time Nadia was ruled independently by this dynasty. Again the boundaries changed between 1765-1883.¹⁶ In 1772 AD the map of Renell shows a bigger place as Nadia and included the current North 24parganas, Hooghly, Jessore (Bangladesh) and

parts of Murshidabad. In 1793 parts of Basirhat, Jessore district, Anarpur, 24 parganas were added. Like this in 1795 Burdwan and Hooghly, 1796-Murshidabad, 1835-Barasat, 1882-Jessore again, 1888-Burdwan again and parts of Nadia were added. In 1947 out of five mahakuma or divisions of Nadia, Kusthia, Choyadanga, Meherpur were added to East Pakistan. The independent India formed Nadia with the remaining two divisions Krishnanagar and Ranaghat. Under the rule of Pakistan the divided parts of Nadia was also called Nadia district in that country. The Indian side named the Nadia district as Nabadwip district. Later when the Pakistani side was named as Kusthia in Bangladesh India renamed the counterpart as Nadia. During the rule of Krishnachandra it had Plassey in the north, Bay of Bengal in the south, dhuliapur in the east, Bhagirathi in the west. Nadia was then formed with the 84 parganas. Currently Nadia is only 3927 square kilometer.¹⁷

It has Bangladesh to its east, Murshidabad in the northwest, Burdwan and Hugli in the West, North 24 parganas in the South and the southeast. . The district is cut across by the tropic of cancer in two equal parts. It is situated between the latitude 24°11" and 22°53" and longitude 89°22" and 88°9". It has mainly alluvial, sand and laterite soil. It is situated at an altitude of 46ft above the sea level.

For official work Nadia got its identity as a separate in 1787, 5yrs after the death of king Krishnachandra.

The district shares boundary with Bangladesh border for 265km. It has 17 blocks of which 7 blocks are on the Bangladesh border and they are Karimpur-I, Karimpur-II, Tehatta-I, Ranaghat-II, Chapra, Krishnaganj, Hanskhali.¹⁸

Administrative divisions : Nadia has 4 Mahakumas, Krishnanagar (sadar or head quarter), Tehatta, Ranaghat, Kalyani.

Number of town-1

Townships or ganj-16.

According to latest data of 2002 January west Bengal has 19 districts divided into 3 divisions

- : Burdwan
- : Presidency
- : North Bengal

Of which Nadia belongs to Presidency division.¹⁹

Population :

2001 was the year we had the last census and with this we shall compare the figure 100 days or more before census. In 1872 first census was done but it revealed many mistakes. In 1881 another census was done which is considered authentic.

According to the census between 1870 and 1911 figures are given revealing how the population has increased (+) and decreased (-) in the Nadia district.

Year AD Total population comparison with yr inc/dec

1911	1,617,846	1901-1911	49,645-
1901	1,667,891	1891-1901	23,583+
1891	1,644,108	1881-1891	18,687-
1881	1,662,795	1872-1881	1,62,398+
1872	1,500,397		

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According to census 2001 the population of Nadia is 46,03,756. of which 23,65,054 are men and 22,38,702 are women. The ratio between men and women is 1000 : 947. About 78.73% live in rural areas and 21.27% live in urban areas.

Person per square kilometer is 1172.²¹

Currently 6% of the total populations of West Bengal stay in Nadia. After partition population has quadrupled. In 1952 population is 11,44,924 and it is ever increasing.²²

Municipality :

According to Carrett (1990) Nadia has 9 municipalities- they are Krishnanagar, Santipur, Ranaghat, Nabadwip, Kusthia, Kumarkhali, Meherpur, Birnagar, Chakdah.²³ Currently Nadia has 8 municipalities.²⁴

Rivers :

Bhagirathi, Jalangi, Bhairab, Churni, Mathavanga, Ichamati, Anjana.²⁵

Santipur is a very traditional ancient place. Many times the change in rule, change of culture, system, inhabitation of different people with varied culture has enriched it with rich traditions and colourful heritage. After discussing Nadia it is important to know about Santipur and its origin or else it will not be possible to judge its cultural aspects. At the very outset we would discuss how did the place earn its name.

Naming Santipur :

The name of Santipur seems very common, as there are at least 8 places of that name of which 7 are in Bangladesh/Bengal and 1 in Nepal creating confusion for us while discussing the origin of our Santipur.

The Santipur villages are

1. Near Pandua on the west of Madhaipur
2. In the district of Dacca a village named so
3. A village on the South of Debagram in Nadia district
4. South of Kolaghat in east Medinipur district a village named so
5. Village on the West of Hooghly district
6. Village in Burdwan district
7. On the bank of Bhagirathi in Nadia district
8. In Swambhu in Nepal- "Santipur" Ashram.²⁶

The mention of the place Santipur in different literary works like Baisnab literature,

Mangal Kabyo, Padabali and other literature with the glimpse of glorious and rich culture, education, religion, commerce and literature is none other than the one situated on the banks of the Bhagirathi or Nade Santipur and we can start from here.

The history says that the name is derived not from any individual name but meaning profound peace.

The probable origin of the name follows as below:

In the times of Adisur by the name of hermit Shantipan

According to Charyapad composer Shantipada (Shantacharya)

By the name of Addaitya Shantacharya

Name of Saibya Shatomuni

Name of mohanto Shanto

Hermit Shantomuni.²⁷

Some says that the Hindus used to bring their dying parents here at Santipur. Ones who recovered did not go back home in fear of any harm to the household and detached from all worldly affairs spent the rest of the life here in peace and hence the name Santipur.²⁸

But it is found that Santipur is more known as the seat of the hermit 'Shanti' than anything else.

Historical anecdotes say Emperor Asoka's son and daughter Mahendra and Sanghamitra had travelled down the Bhagirathi on the south of Gangetic plain (now Santipur then not named) for spreading Buddhism to Singhal. Later during the reign of Adisur one of the 5 Brahmins who had arrived from Kanyakubja named Guru Shantacharya of (Vedagarva) had settled down in the eastern part of this Gangetic plain. King Prachandadev Rudra ruled this land. According to the records of Pandit Amulyacharan Bidyavushan and Haraprasad Shastri, excerpts from history of Nepal it is known that the above king had gave up his

royal status and kingdom adopted the name Siddhyacharya Shantidev and left for Nepal and founded the land Swambhuksetra and built 4 buildings on four sides. One of this buildings or ashram was named Santipur. He had breathed his last here. The place is still considered a holy place for people in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibetans and Buddhists.²⁹

So we conclude from this that the name was derived from the name of the Siddhyacharya. Siddhyacharya Shantidev by the name of Shantipada had composed several verses of Charyapada. Later the land was named by the name of one of the descendents (of the same royal family) king Dibya Singha as his capital Dibyadanga. Later it is said that another guru had turned into his devotee and followed his principles and beliefs. So it is evident that Santipur had earned its name much prior to the Turkish invasion.³⁰

Another story says about two kilometers north of Santipur a teacher Bedacharya named Shanta used to reside at Babla near Nijhor. He was popularly known as Shanta muni from which maybe the name Santipur was derived. But time and evidence do not agree with the above fact, as the name Santipur had existed much before the time of Shanta muni. He was contemporary of Adwaitacharya and name Santipur existed prior to that time. Further evidence proves that Grandfather of Sri Adwaitacharya had come to the Badshah of Gour for work and settled at Santipur that is after the name Santipur was already popular.³¹

So we may conclude that name Santipur was originally derived from the name of the founder of traditional Buddhist centre Adiguru Shantacharya though later we find the word 'Shanti' being attached to the names of different Mahanta, Saibya, Baisnab, hermits etc which can be overlooked avoiding confusion. So we can say that 'Santipur' was named by the link of the Siddyachariya Adi Santideb (Santipad).³²

Origin of Santipur :

There are different opinions regarding the origin and founding of Santipur. Anecdotes claim that in ancient time Santipur and its neighbourhood was under the Ganges. Deposition of river silt has given rise to places like Santipur, Phulia, Belagarh, Ula (Birnagar) and Ambika Kalna which is still evident from the fact that the ground is still full of sand and digging exposes at least 5/6 feet of alluvial clay. Mostly it is sand covered area dotted with clay.³³

The origin of this landscape is supposed to be as following:

Firstly: Santipur originated during the time of Adisur

Secondly: Santipur originated during the time of Raja Prochondodev

There is confusion regarding the timing of Raja Prochondodev. History hints of the presence of three other Singha kings from this family later. During the time of Narendra Dev Singh (1190 A.D.) Lakshman Sen was the ruler of Gour.³⁴

Documents state that the remains of his fort could be found at the time of Narendra Dev Singh.

1. Sutragarh-where the fort area starts

2. Saragarh- where the fort area ends

In the words of Haraprasad Shastri- Bengal had a town called Santipur. It had forts on three sides; now such a fort-surrounded place could not be found anywhere else other than Santipur.

It still has Saragarh at its east, Sutragarh on the west. The fort on one side has vanished due to change in the course of Bhagirathi. Even the medieval period records prove the presence of a fort in this area that was built before the 10th century AD. Probably it was reduced to ruins at the end phase of the Pal period. This proves the antiquity of Santipur and its rich legacy.³⁵

Thirdly, some say in 1194AD during the rule of Raja Lakshman Sen when Army General of Mohammad Ghori, Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khalji conquered

Nadia (Nodiah) and Santipur was founded after that. It is said that he had crossed the Ganges between Santipur and Boura and went to Nabadwip. A part of the riverbank is still known as "Bakhtiyar ghat". This proves that the place existed even a little more than 700 yrs ago.³⁶

Fourthly : The antiquity of Santipur and its history is further asserted in the documents of Bholanath Chandra.

He has depicted in his book "Travels of A Hindoo (1869)" - "Most probably Santipur existed from a remote ages. The Ganges flooded immediately below Santipur. Now in front of the town there is a large sand bank...the Chinese traveler Fa-Hien returned home by this way across the sea in the 5th century A.D. The earliest known voyage down the Bhagirathi was made in the age of Asoka who sent his son, Mahendra on a mission to the king of Ceylone in the third century B.C."

From the above description it is clear that from the remote ages of 3rd century B.C. to the starting of 12th century A.D. is the time of origin of Santipur. It is also obvious that even during Asoka's time settlements existed at Santipur, south of which flowed the Ganges connecting to the sea. It was across this Ganges that Asoka's son and daughter had travelled to Ceylon from Pataliputra. It is still under dark what exactly was the place called then but certainly it was Santipur that is beyond any doubt.³⁷

All this proves Santipur had originated much prior to the Turkish invasion as already stayed before.

Brief History of Santipur And Its Boundaries And Physical Features :

Before discussing the boundaries of Santipur it is important that we discuss how such boundaries were made.

During the time of Adwaityacharya (1434-1558) Santipur was under the occupation of Badshah of Gour Sujan Shah. As per the opinion of Acharya

Sen, Dinesh Chandra a Kaji (muslim priest) named Gorai used to rule Santipur. His residence was near Sutragarh at Kulia. Later it came under the rule of Pathans and Mughals.³⁸ From the preserved panja-s at Santipur, of the Mughal guru Ghondkar descendents that Mughal emperor Humayun had granted his guru Ejrat Shah Dewan (also known as Sayeed Mehbub Alam) 13000-bigha land to settle under Hatiarpur mouja. At this time the boundaries of Santipur was Ganges in the south, Nijhor at North, Saragarh in the east and Gorpheya in the west.³⁹

Let us discuss the presence of Ganges in the landscape of Santipur. From the ancient description it is found that Santipur was surrounded by water on all three sides that is also referred in Adwaityamangal. Ganges used to flow by the eastern, Southern and western sides of Santipur. Evidences of the above facts are still present at Santipur. From Nabadwip Ganges had flown south keeping ambika-Kalna and guptipara to its right and has flown down the south of Santipur to the east by the side of Phulia, Boyra and met the Ganges at Calcutta.⁴⁰ The course has still the same for the river till date; only the eastern part of the course is changed. Still the gullies, ponds and depressions prove the point till date. Rest is all filled up with alluvial soil and are fertile agricultural land or settlements today.

The ganges flow from the north east part of Santipur through Babla village and Banak to the National Highway at Saragarh under the pool and meets the mainstream of Ganges. The mention of this course of the river is found in Brindaban Das's 'Chaitanya Bhagabat'. It is known that Bakhtiyar Khalji had come with his army to the confluence part of two distributaries of the Ganges that is still popular as Bakhtiyar Ghat. Ganges flows east to the Nabadwip thus this is the ancient course of Ganges to the heart of Santipur.⁴¹

While discussing the ancient course of the Ganges it can be said that during the

time of Adwaityacharya or even before the Ganges used to flow by the southern part of Santipur even during the time of Humayun the same path continued. But later from the map of Rennell it is found Ganges had shifted to further south and this change of course is still on.

Humayun had sent 700 rajputs and 600 pathans with arms/ammunitions to protect his property at Santipur. The descendents of this army still reside here at Rajputpara, Pathanpara and arms/ammunitions; canons were preserved in an area that is called 'Topkana para'.⁴²

In 1606 after helping Mansingh Bhabananda Majumder had secured 14 parganas as award from the Mughal emperor and eventually his descendents rose to power. In 1676 during the rule of Rudranarayan when Sutragarh was still beyond his domain but later it got separated from Harinadi and attached to Santipur which was then under the domain of king of Nadia.⁴³

Same year Emperor Aurangzeb's grandchild Sayeed Din Mohammad Sufi had taken back the sanad of Humayun and instead awarded Ekramaml sanad. This made the Ghndkars owner of 13000 Bigha sadatmay lakhoraj properties. At this time the Bengal nawab under the instruction of Delhi Durbar renewed the panja that was in Persian language. Later in 1930 it was translated into Bengali at the Ranaghat court.

Translation was as below:

Niskar: sanad or Jaidad Sayeed Shah Alam

Dakhlikar: Sayeed Kajem Hussain Ghondkar

Father-late Sayeed Naqeebuddin

New no. 657

Old : not available

List of Lakheraj land: Lakheraj properties carried by Madatmay Pirowor

Donor: Nawab Jafar Khan

Donee: Najrat Sayeed Shah Dewan

Present owner: Sayeed Wajed Ali alias Panchu Mia, self or of his descendents generation wise

Nam Pargana: Sutragarh

Measurement of land: Ek mouja 13000 bigha.⁴⁴

After Din Mohammad Sufi his son Sayeed Malik (1622-1725) inherited the entire property of his father (13000 bigha of Sutragarh + 1000 bigha of Chandpur). After Sayeed Malik his son Sayeed Darbesh inherited (1700-1768) the property. At this time in 1757 the battle of Plassey was fought which marked the decline of the Khundkars.⁴⁵ By the Sunset law passed by the British all landlords were stripped of their rights. In 1768 Sayeed Darbesh expired and his son Sayeed Wajed Ali became the owner (alias Panchu Ghondkar 1735-1884)⁴⁶. After the Permanent Settlement the picture of land reform completely got transformed. All lakheraj, debottor and Pirottor lands were confiscated.

In 1848 Sadhu Panchu Ghondkar died without any male descendent. His only daughter Nichha bibi got married to Sayeed Naqeebuddin of Khondokosh, Burdwan. Their only son Sayeed Kajem Hussain (1828-1932) had some dispute with the king of Nadia over properties and they went into legal intervention. The ruler Maharaj Kshitish Chandra Roy (1890-1911) brought against Sayeed Kajem Hussain 471law over the Sutragarh property at the subcourt of Nadia. Accusation no. 12, June 2nd, 1899.⁴⁷

The Maharaj had won the case and took custody of the property. In 1932 after the death Sayeed Kajem Hussain his child Sayeed Mojammal Hussain despite all efforts could not revive the properties.

The ownership to the properties of Santipur had reached hands of the descendents of Bhabananda Majumder after many other owners. He had secured in 1606, 14 parganas and 4 farmans from the Mughal emperor of which Nadia,

Machlandpur, Marokdaha were remarkable. Again in 1613 he had secured Ukhra, Ismailpur, Bhaluka parganas. Later his son Gopal in the middle of 17th century had secured from emperor Jahangir, right to the parganas of Santipur, Sahapur, Rajpur.⁴⁸ According to 'Annadamongal' during the reign of Raja Krishnachandra Nadia and Ukhra, Santipur were included among the 49 parganas. Later in 1758 April revenue from Burdwan and Nadia went under the British custody. Owing to defaulting to pay revenue on time Nadia Raj's property was put to auction. Eventually the Nadia comprised of 84 parganas was reduced to a smaller dimension. Eventually "Santipur" the favourite region of Raja Krishnachandra turned into the British main Kuthi of cotton textile for export.⁴⁹

According to Hunter's statistical accounts the geographical position of Santipur at latitude 23°14'24" north and longitude 88°29'6" east.⁵⁰

According to Nadia District Gazetteer (1990) it is located at latitude 23°15" north and longitude 88°27" east. The amazing fact is that the first municipality of Nadia was established at Santipur (1865, 11th January) with jurisdiction of 7 square mile. But on investigation from the municipality authority it is clear that land for settlement amounts to 9 square mile.⁵¹ Besides the land appurtenant to the riverbank under the municipality when added to it amounts to about 13 or 14 square miles. It has a stretch of 21 miles of concrete road and 82 miles of mud road.

The boundaries of Santipur municipality is like below :

Gobindapur in the North, depressed lands of Babla and Nijhor also in the North: depressed lands of Nijhor also in the east traced by Kontkhola, Choto Ranaghat, Ghoralia, Beharia, Phulia, Boyra (Badarika), Malipota etc. in the south Bhagirathi flows with its plain. In the west it has Haripur canal, Haripur, Bramhasashan, Raghunathpur, Baghachra.⁵²

Religion :

In the last decade of the 12th century army general of Mohammad Ghori Ikhtiyaruddin Bakhtiyar Khalji had attacked Nabadwip and landed at Santipur. Raja Narendra Dev Singh who was a Buddhist then ruled Santipur. Owing to the strained relationship of the Buddhists with the hindus Narendra Singh did not come to the support of Lakshman Sen, a Hindu king, at the time of Turkish invasion. Post Turkish invasion the Buddhists were forcibly converted to Muslims. Thus the number of Buddhists was reduced drastically and Buddhism almost disappeared from Santipur. Santipur went under Muslim rule. The Muslim traditions and customs intervened into its living and culture. Again at the time of Sri Chaitanya and Adwaitacharya the influence of Baisnab cult was profound in the culture of Santipur. Its wide outlook and simplicity had attracted many irrespective of caste and creed, both Hindus and Muslims. During the rise of the royal family of Krishnanagar the dominance of Muslim was considerably reduced. Maharaj Krishnanchandra was a Hindu Samajpati. He rolled Hinduism back to its glory in Bengal.

At Nadia during the rule of Krishnachandra, after the battle of Plassey when Bengal's political scenario was devastated, British started ruling the country and Santipur came under its domain. During the British rule the Christian missionaries became very active in spreading literacy in the area and they had set up many missionary schools in this region. They also took active role in converting Muslims and Hindus into Christians but the latter was not very effective. At Chapra there are still a few Christian families, they also have a church in that region. Santipur has thus become the seat of varied culture and religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baisnabism, Islam and Christianity and all have mingled into to form Santipur's own identity, own culture where all religions are respected equally. This culture or ethnicity cannot be identified with any

single culture or religion for that matter.⁵³

The inhabitants of Santipur :

After 16th century with the advent of Baisnab culture Santipur came to be recognized as the epitome of culture, traditions and Baisnab cult. But the history of its populace is very ancient and colourful. The archaeological evidences and other proofs indicated by the specialists despite the dominance of the Brahmins in the society and rich cultural development Santipur that is dotted with rivers, forests was primarily inhabited by the age-old natives of the place. Till now the tribal community of Orao, Rajowar, Munda, Santhals, Bagdi, Sardars inhabit different parts of Santipur.

Population of Santipur :

The Population of Santipur has kept varying over different period of time. It has varied over the years with the varying boundaries and dimension of Santipur. It was considered a pargana during the time of Jahangir and its area was pretty huge. It was one jojan of area at the time of Adwaityacharya. Later the dimension of Santipur was reduced but the region along with other areas in the surrounding was collectively called as Taraf Santipur consisted of 38 moujas.⁵⁴

In the beginning of the 19th century the population of Santipur was more than 52000.⁵⁵

In 1822 it was 50000. Number of household was 20000.⁵⁶

According to Nadia District Gazetteer the population is: 1st census report

1872-28,635

1891-30,437

1901-26,898.⁵⁷

1921-27,300.⁵⁸

The present population (1901): Hindus, 18,219, Muhammadans, 8672, Christians-6, and other religions-1.⁵⁹

Population according to 1991 census report:

Urban Population: 1,67,594

Rural Population: 1,09,911

Female: 1,35,038

Male: 1,42,471

Scheduled caste: 83,812

Scheduled tribe: 16,727

Ward: 25

Concrete road: 60,356 Km

Brick road 51,181 Km

Mud road: 91,018.⁶⁰

Weather :

It is predominated by monsoon winds of the south from Bay of Bengal. The rainfall is found during winter. The rainfall during 1990-91 is 1685 mm and 1234 mm respectively. Average rainfall 1401mm.

1990 highest temperature: 36 degree Celsius lowest 8 degree Celsius

1991 highest temperature: 43 degree Celsius, lowest 8 degree Celsius.⁶¹

Rivers : Bhagirathi

Port : Harinadi Bandar

PHULIA :

At present Phulia is under Santipur police station within 54 no. mouja and situated on south east of Santipur (6.4km). Phulia is situated on the west of 34 National Highway. But old Phulia was on the south of the NH-34.

Initially Phulia was comprised of Tarapur, Udaypur, Lalmath, Nilnagar, Pumulia, Kuthirpara, Ranidanga, Boyra, Malipota, Beharia, Gobarchor, Gangadharpur, Belgaria, Ghusra etc. the Ganges used to flow by the south-west of Phulia.

Gradually with the change in the course of the Ganges the geographical position of Phulia has changed. In the last 500 years many places went under the river like Ranidanga, Kuthirpara, Gobarchor, Gangadharpur, Ghusra, parts of Boyra which was once very developed.⁶²

Baisnab Kulaguru Sri Addaityachariya used to walk on foot every morning from Santipur to Phulia to take lessons of Sastra from the famous professor then Shantacharya. Phulia was then the abode for many scholarly men and had some chatuspadi as well and the place was then an epitome of culture, tradition and rich legacy.

The village Fullabati at the time of Adwaityanama was later named as Phulia. It is known that the place had flower gardens hence the name. It was also the birthplace of renowned poet Krittibas at Boyra adjacent to Phulia.⁶³

Gradually the changed course of Ganges leading to geographical changes, urban oriented development, famines Phulia started losing its grandeur with people moving out to other places. History reveals after the arrival of Krittibash (1398/99),⁶⁴ Sri Chaitanya and Sri Addaityachariya no other remarkable event has taken place at Phulia in these 500 years. Before partition the population at Phulia was small and scattered all over the place and engaged mainly into animal husbandry and agriculture.

It is amazing that Post partition scenario have drastically changed Phulia developing into a busy township with handloom as the primary means to livelihood. Let us now discuss how it all happened.

In 1947 after the partition the refugees from Bangladesh started pouring in Phulia and its adjacent areas. With the increased number of refugees it became imminent to arrange shelter, employment, land, setting up cottage industry and supply basic raw materials, set production and distribution and sell of such products in order to rehabilitate this community. Jawaharlal Nehru the Prime

Minister of India then understood the gravity of the situation and came Calcutta with the honorary advisor of Rehabilitation department, Government of India, Sri K. Dey. They had long discussion with the Chief Minister of West Bengal Sri Bidhan Chandra Roy.

Meanwhile in 1947, August rehabilitation project had advanced appreciably in Kurushetra relief camp with refugees from West Punjab, Northwest boundary of India, Sindh. Also lots of development with the extended rehabilitation programs was done in Nilokheri in Karnal district under the guidance of Sri S. K. Dey. Primarily on the same line and principle Composite Township alias Rural Cum Urban Township was agreed to be taken up in West Bengal. Initially it was agreed that a pilot scheme will be made which was approved by the chief minister then later 9/10 other such townships were proposed to be built. Sri S. K. Dey was entrusted to chose the locations of such townships.⁶⁵

In this regard an article by Manindranath Majumder is very relevant.

“In the first half of 1946 my elder brother Kulda Prosad Majumder had left our village in Pabna district (under the police station Iswardi) and after roaming across many places came to Buicha village buying 33 acres of land very cheap and settled here at Raiti Sthitibash with family and relatives.

In 1947-49 many people had arrived in this village (Buicha mouja), bought land and settled here. The land in and around Phulia was mostly forest-clad wasteland. All of us bought land out of such territory according to our capacity and made it suitable for agriculture and living. But it was totally secluded devoid of settlements, facilities of market, education or any basic amenities. There was an advertisement given in the Anandabazar Patrika that government would adopt all wastelands and distribute it among the refugees from East Bengal.

Inspired by the advertisement hoping for a bright future with opportunities for better education, culture and economic developments we prepared a map of a

huge mass of wasteland in the parts of Buicha, Udaypur, Belgaria, etc about 3500 bigha and submitted a mass application in the office of the Minister Of Rehabilitation under the State Government through the District Magistrate and pleaded with the ministry for rehabilitation process and make arrangements for dignified, cultured and healthy economic living for all of us. We were instructed to prepare a map with 5000 bigha of land for approval to Central Government. We followed instruction and prepared a second map with a total of 5000 bigha of land (including the previous 3500 bigha + another 1500 bigha) and it was sent to the Rehabilitation Department ,Central Government.

This was followed by the visit of Director to Development Technical Advisor Commissioner (Sri S. K. Dey) had investigated the land affair and initiated the rehabilitation process here.⁶⁶

Under The Nadia Scheme development of Phulia Township had started. The township is symbolized by Nataraj idol which was placed at the entrance to the township by the National Highway on the left side and engraved below were the words "Majdur Manjil".⁶⁷

The rehabilitation process was started in 1950 on 15th June under the supervision of Sri. S. K. Dey with the state government identifying it as a place for rehabilitation.⁶⁸ Gradually the forest clad waste land transformed into a township with Phulia Polytechnic, Phulia Primary School (later upgraded to Secondary School), Institute of district Seed centre for Agro-technological Development, District Technical Institute, Haringhata Dairy Farm (branch), Rural library and Group Development Office or Panchayat Samity etc.⁶⁹

Among all cottage industries handloom industry is the foremost and vital of all, though production of shoes, baskets are still on. The development of handloom industry at Phulia is by itself a major accomplishment in the history of Nadia handloom industry. Santipur being the centre of handloom industry then the

refugee weaver under its influence were driven to handloom production. Many a time in the struggle of the weavers of Santipur when weavers of Phulia had joined in it had given a different dimension to such protest and the identity of the weaver community was greatly restored. The initiatives of the refugee community of weavers are remarkable as they developed the co-operatives (mentioned earlier) mainly the contribution of the Basak community. They have overwhelmed the moneylenders with their commitment and helped the weavers. At present population at Phulia is more than a lakh with improved economic condition with hardly any instance of major unemployment. Gradually Phulia is evolving as a complete city equipped with state of the art amenities.⁷⁰

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