

Rajshahi Zamindars : A Historical Profile in the Colonial Period (1765-1947)

**Thesis Submitted to the
University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, India
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, History**

by

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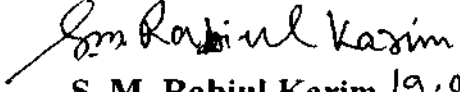
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Thesis entitled '**Rajshahi Zamindars: A Historical Profile in the Colonial Period (1765-1947)**' submitted by me for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of the University of North Bengal, is a record of research work done by me and that the Thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship and similar other titles.


S. M. Rabiul Karim 19.01.06

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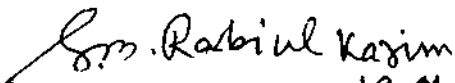
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May it be recorded that there may be some errors and mistakes for which the sole responsibility lies on me.


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Introduction

It is said that by the year 1790, a dozen of zamindar families emerged in Bengal and used to control more than half of the landed properties of Bengal.¹ Among these families the Zamindars of Rajshahi comprising of Puthia, Natore, Dighapatia, Taherpur, Dubalhati, Chaugram and so on played an important role in the economic life of Bengal. According to some the Rajshahi Raj (Natore) has been considered a single unit and has been taken to be the second largest - the first being the Burdwan Raj of Bengal.² It is something interesting that most of the Zamindars of Rajshahi assumed titles like '*Raja*', '*Maharaja*', '*Ray-Bahadur*', '*Khan-Chaudhury*', etc. and in some cases a few outstanding spouses of these Zamindars adopted the titles of '*Rani*' and '*Maharani*'. It is interesting to note that most of the available documents mention the Families of Zamindaris as '*Raj*', which seems to stand for zamindar. Thus, it may be noted that although the heads of these estates of Rajshahi were Zamindars they were never enjoying the status and dignity of a king or emperor in usual terms. Naturally the estates were simply Zamindaris and not '*Raj*' in any sense. In the present study all these terms have been used in the light of above explanation and meaning.

The Zamindars as a class played a significant role in Indian history right from the medieval time down to the British and even today, it is a fact that the surplus of agricultural production exacted from the peasants was being distributed among the Emperor, his nobles and the Zamindars, by virtue of their rights and position and they could also exercise unlimited power over agricultural products, trade and in some economic transactions although according to S.Narul Hassan, there was a continuous clash of interest between the zamindars and the Mughal Govt., for a greater share of produce, the two were virtually partners of economic exploitation.³ The situation of Rajshahi in terms of the origin and functions of the Zamindaris are

not different and in course of our study there would be an attempt to highlight the points in the light of the observation of S.Nurul Hassan.

As it is known that the zamindar has had a role in the management of land,⁴ the word '*zamindar*' is in fact, derived from a Persian word '*zamindar*' which stands for owner of land or '*zamin*'. But the status of a zamindar varied from time to time and for example, during the Mughals, they were not owners of land as like as Collectors of Revenue and accordingly they were simply caretakers and not absolute owners of land.⁵ It was customary that the zamindars would continue that position as long as the required land-revenues were paid to the state without fail. In addition to this custody they were also entrusted to look after local administration vis-a-vis law and order of his jurisdiction.⁶ Fact remains that this position of the zamindars began to change with the experiments of administrative setup under Murshid Kuli Khan with the beginning of 18th century.

As it has been stated above like other parts of Bengal, the zamindars of Rajshahi had a significant role in the economic transformation of Bengal under consideration. The history of the zamindars of Rajshahi is so fascinating that it links up the history of the Zamindari system introduced by the Mughals and blossomed during the British period. But unfortunately, very little attention has been given by the historians to explore a comprehensive study on them. There are, however, some stray references as to rise and fall of these zamindar families but unfortunately historians are silent about many facets of their interesting role they played in contemporary Bengal. For example, while we come across the history and various activities of the Natore Raj, Puthia Raj or that of Dighapatia, we find hardly any exhaustive account of the Dubalhati family in the historical works of the region. Over and above many of the issues like the interaction with the British and its consequences have neither been dealt with by the historians, nor even they have highlighted the internal crisis as well as the external forces which led to the ultimate extinction of these families.

Under such a position the present study is a humble attempt to explore some of the hitherto untouched aspects of the history of the zamindars of Rajshahi and how they played a significant role in the contemporary socioeconomic and political life of undivided Bengal and thereafter. In this study special attention has been taken to analyse the primary and secondary sources which have not been properly dealt by the scholars so far. The present work is, therefore, intended to embody the results of an intensive study of the rise of the zamindars in different pockets of the region namely, Puthia, Natore, Dighapatia etc. and side by side steps have been taken to highlight issues like zamindar-tenant relation and the forces that led to a the decline and fall of the zamindar families of Rajshahi. It may be noted that all the zamindar families were not rooted out at a time rather certain circumstances made them extinct and they ultimately became nonentity in the history of contemporary Bengal. It is a fact that the history of Rajshahi and the region proper as a whole have been reflected in various documents of both medieval age and British period. There are documents like Murshidabad Factory Records, Board of Revenue Proceedings, Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue in Calcutta, original minutes of the council of Fort William, Parliamentary Papers and so on which highlight the importance of the place and certain events and incidents centering the personalities of the families concerned. Apart from these sources, there are certain medieval document which equally highlight as corroborative source materials of the families of Rajshahi zamindars. A few Gazetteers and Journals published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Royal Asiatic society, Bengali : Past and Present, annual Reports of Rajshahi College, William Adam's Report on State of education in Bengal, 1835- 1838 which supply as many interesting additional information for our study. These documents are very much supplemented by a huge number of letters and correspondences made by the zamindars and their spouse, (*Ranis and Maharanis*).

Besides the sources mentioned above other materials which are generally considered to be pioneer but important works are :

- a) A. K. Moitra (Maitreya), *Short History of Natore Raj*, Natore, 1912.
- b) Abdur Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal*, Karachi, 1967.
- c) Shirin Aktar, *Role of the Zamindars in Bengal, 1707-1772*, Dacca, 1982.
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- f) S. A. Akanda, *The District of Rajshahi : Its Past and Present*, Rajshahi University, 1983.
- g) A.B.M. Mahmood, *The Revenue Administration of Bengal (1765-1793)*, Dacca, 1970.
- h) Kazi Muhammad Meser, *Rajshahir Itihas*, (Bengali), vols. I and II, Bogra, 1965.
- i) Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshahir Sankhipta Itihas* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1308B.S.

The number of such works may be multiplied but facts remains that most of these works are basically dissected to enlighten political events if not other important sights of the history of the Zamindaris under consideration.

With the above sources and documents we have tried to embark upon the present study of *Rajshahi zamindars – A Historical Profile in the Colonial Period (1765-1947)*. The present work consists of several chapters. The **Introduction** has been followed by a chapter named as **Historical Background** dealing with the physical features and location of Rajshahi which is intended to identify the place and people

of the region. Here an attempt has been made to trace in short some of the up-to-date historical information of the region in question. A section of this chapter is also devoted to highlight some relevant points as to the origin and rise of the Zamindars of Bengal nay India with special reference to Rajshahi.

The second chapter is captioned as **The Puthia Zamindari - Its Origin and Growth** which is said to have had its origin during the Mughals.⁷ From the available information we are reported that one pious Brahmin named Batsacharyya was the founder of this Estate.⁸ It is said that the members of this family had the opportunity to rule the zamindari from the beginning to the end. It may be noted that this zamindari came to the limelight of history by the achievements of Rani Sarat Sundari Devi and Rani Hemanta Kumari Devi who are said to have taken interest not only in the management of zamindari affairs but also devoted in various humanitarian works. The details of these works as well as the crises of the zamindari have been dealt with the relevant chapter of this dissertation.

The history of the Natore Raj family entitled as **The Natore Raj - Its Rise, Stability and Estate Management** has been put in the third chapter of the dissertation. The founder of this family was Kamdev Moitra (Maitreya) who was a *Tahshildar* under the Puthia Raj⁹ Later on, his son Raghunandan and Ramjiban were employed as lower officials under Raja Darpa Narayan of Puthia. It is said that by virtue of some human qualities Raghunandan enjoyed the favour of Darpanarayan and accordingly, being educated under the care of Raja Darpanarayan he was educated and got service in the Royal Office. Both these two brothers were recognized for their efficiency and in no time they were promoted to higher posts. It is also noteworthy that once, Raghunandan was appointed a lawyer on behalf of Puthia Raj in the Court of the Nawab of Dhaka.¹⁰

Raghuandan took lease of properties in the name of his brother Ramjiban. At that time when Raja Sitaram Ray of Jessore revolted sometime in 1714, Nawab of Murshidabad sent huge soldiers to suppress this rebel and when it was successfully done Raghuandan had an opportunity to command over the situation and since he was favoured by Diwan Dayaram of Natore (Dighapatia), he managed to receive the zamindari of Jessore in the name of his brother Ramjiban and nephew Kalikaprasad.¹¹ Within a short time Raghuandan managed some other Zamindaris as bases and these were the defaulters of Revenue payments.¹² In fact, the Natore Raj was founded by Ramjiban during the reign of Murshid Kuli Khan.¹³ The Natore Raj became famous during 'Rani Bhavani' when she could rule over Dinajpur, Bogra, Pabna, Kusthia, Jessore, Rangpur, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Malda (the last three districts are now in India). Many eventful incidents had taken place during the regime of Rani Bhavani and for her extraordinary sympathy for her subjects during the famine of 1770, she was called '*Annapurna Devi*'.¹⁴ She had many interaction with the East India Company and as such the contemporary history suggests that this noble lady had to pass her last days miserably.

The Dighapatia Raj which is the fourth chapter of the thesis has been presented here as **The Dighapatia Estate - A Historical Reconstruction of the Zamindari** is intended to discuss a comprehensive history and activities of this family. It deals with the details of the Raj and it has been seen that one Dayaram, the Dewan of Natore Raj was the founder of this Estate, and being a clever man of that time he managed to receive a few pieces of landed property of deceased Sitaram Ray and Natore Raj.¹⁵ From the available sources it appears that the members of Dayaram's family were much enlightened and their achievements have been reflected by their efforts to establish Rajshahi Association in 1872 and Varendra Research Museum in 1912. The present chapter also highlighted the achievements of the Zamindars of this family in terms of economic development namely agriculture, sugar mills and agricultural forms.

The fifth chapter entitled as **The Minor Zamindars of Rajshahi** is dedicated to carveout the history of a few minor Zamindars of Rajshahi. Among these, the family of Chougram, Karachmaria, Bishi Zamindar family of Joari, Balihar, Taherpur, Darikushi Zamindar family and so on have been taken into account. It may be noted that all these Zamindars were insignificant in comparison with the others, but attempt have been made here to focus the multifarious activities and events of these families.

The social character of the Rajshahi zamindars is one of the key points analysed in the sixth chapter of the dissertation. The main caption of the chapter is **Social Identity of the Zamindars of Rajshahi** which has been souht to analyse from two angles namely, **A. Social and Ethnic Composition of the Zamindars** and **B. Socio-Political Tensions and the Zamindars of Rajshahi** during the period under consideration.

The Zamindar- Tenant Relations have become the main theme of the chapter seven of the thesis. Here attempts have been made to present the condition of the tenants that prevailed under the respective zamindars.

The Zamindars of Rajshahi and the British Raj have been thoroughly discussed in eighth chapter of the dissertation. This has been judged from two stand points namely, the Condition of Zamindars and their interaction with the British in the pre-permanent settlement period, and the same issues that prevailed during the post-permanent settlement days.

The ninth chapter entitled as **Crises of the Zamindari Estates of Rajshahi - Decline** is to examine some fundamental issues which generated crises within the Zamindaris under consideration and effected the future of these Zamindar families. All these factors infact led to the ultimate extinction of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi. It is a fact that there were certain specific issues like over assessment, mismanagement, intrigue, *benami* purchases, and so on, which expedited the fall

of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi. There was, however, a factor like the policy of the British Government which equally intensified the crises of the Zamindaris and hastened the decline in the long run. The whole chapter is devoted to present an analytical explanation of the circumstances that sounded the collapse of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi.

A few Appendices form another interesting feature of the present work. Here attention has been made to present a few maps of Rajshahi, name of the founder, caste and location of the Zamindaris and also a genealogical list of the Zamindars of Rajshahi.

It may be noted that the main focus of the dissertation is to examine and analyse the Zamindaris of Rajshahi. Though the period of the investigation has been fixed up from the beginning of the '*Dewani*' (1765) of Bengal, some of the issues have been focused here before and after the specified period in order to have a clear idea of the tradition that had prevailed during the time of our study. In fact, the emergence of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi region can be traced from the time of the Mughals and a few of them like those of Natore and a few others came to the limelight of history during Murshid Kuli Khan, the Nawab of Bengal. Almost all these Zamindaris had some identities of their own but in course of time they had to face many problems and because of the change of the political scene of India i.e. coming of the British, they became victims of numerous crises which virtually the future of these families. An interesting point of the dissertation is to present a clear picture of a comprehensive history of these Zamindaris and the method they adopted independently or under pressure which in the long run intensified the crises that erupted only to be extinguished finally at a certain circumstances.

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2. *Loc.cit.*
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6. Anil Chandra Banerjee, *op.cit.* p.18.
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8. K.C. Mitra, *The Rajas of Rajshahi*, Calcutta Review, Vol. 56, Calcutta :1873, p.3; Kazi Muhammad Meser, *Rajshahir Itihas*, vol.2, Bogra, 1965,p.269
9. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p.10, also, A.K.Moitra (Maitreya), *A Short History of Natore Raj*, Natore, 1912, p.1.
10. Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshahir Sankshipta Itihas*, Calcutta 1308 (B.S), p.147
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Historical Background

A) Physical Features and Location of Rajshahi

Rajshahi was one of the leading districts of undivided Bengal. The location of the district seems to be southwest of the erstwhile Rajshahi division. This district lies between 24°3'0" and 24°59'0" north latitude and 88°20'45" and 39°23'30" east longitude. According to a record¹ the present area of the district, after partition of India spreads to 236082 sq. miles excluding the of river area and as per the Census of 1872, the total population of which was of 1310729 heads.² The number of population has varied time and after for example in 1911 we find the population to be 1480587 which has increased to 28,10,964 in the light of 1961 census.

At the time of partition of India in 1947, 5 police stations namely Nawabganj, Bholahat, Nachole, Gamastapur and Shibganj of Malda district were included within Rajshahi. It was done according to the awards of Sir C. Radcliffe Boundary Commission. Before Partition Rajshahi had three subdivisions and twenty two police stations and at present there are 4 subdivisions and 30 police stations within the district. The headquarters are at Rampur Boalia, a town on the left bank of the Ganges which is popularly known as the Padma. The postal and official name of the town is however not Rampur Boalia but Rajshahi.

The name 'Rajshahi' deserves a thorough study. In a distorted ways it is said that the district was given this designation of Royal territory because it was the home of many Rajas. The origin of the name is doubtful but a probable hypothesis established the fact that the origin of the place can be traced back to the beginning of the 15th century A.D. when this region was ruled over by one person called Raja Kans or Ganesh, a Hindu chief of Bhaturia (i.e. the country on both sides of the

river Atrai in Dinajpur and Rajshahi.)³ It is said that the Raja after dethroning the Sultan of Gaur, became the ruler of Bengal and as per the information given by Blochmann he was subsequently known as Raja-Shah i.e. Hindu Raja who occupied a Muslim throne and thus the territory got its name as 'Rajshahi'.⁴ It is fact that the river Ganges forms natural boundary to the south and south-west. The Ganges separates Rajshahi from the districts of Nadia and Murshidabad (West Bengal, India). The other neighboring districts are Dinajpur and Bogra on the north, Bogra and Pabna on the east Malda (India) on the west.

Up to the time of permanent settlement in 1793 A.D., Rajshahi formed one of the important administrative divisions of undivided Bengal. It could hardly be called a district as it was connected with the great Zamindari of Rajshahi and was estimated in 1786 to have an area about 13,000 sq. miles. In fact it corresponded to about five times the size of the present districts. Thus it is obvious that there were difficulties to administer the division by a single collector. As a result, the first change in the size of the district took place in 1793, a general policy of redistribution of Bengal districts was made by the government. The extensive tract of land located at south of the Ganges was then taken from the parent district and divided among the adjoining districts of Nadia, Jessore and Murshidabad. The question of law and order as well as of prevalence of crime in various parts of the districts made further division necessary. Accordingly, in March 1830, the police stations of Rahanpur and Champai were separated from Rajshahi and together with a few from Dinajpur and Purnia, were formed into the present district of Malda. In the year 1821, four police stations namely Nowkhila, Sherpur, Bogra and Adamdighi were separated from Rajshahi and along with two other police stations from Rangpur and three from Dinajpur formed the present district of Bogra. Again in 16th October 1828 steps were taken to form the District of Pabna taking five police stations from Rajshahi and three from Jessore.⁵ In 1875, there was further adjustment of the Pabna

and Dinajpur boundaries and in 1896-97 (or 1897-98) Mahadevpur Police Station from Dinajpur and portions of Adamdighi and Nawabganj were incorporated with the district of Rajshahi.⁶

Geologically Rajshahi is a part of the Indo Gangetic valley and also part of Assam, On the other hand, physiognomically, Rajshahi district can be divided into three broad divisions –

- i) The marshy areas of the *beel* region;
- ii) The barren region;
- iii) Alluvial region along the banks of the Padma.

In the *beel* areas, there are numerous *beels* whose size increases as one move from west to east and in the extreme east the whole boundary of the district is covered with a series of *beels*. There are debates on the formation of these *beels*. In some cases a number of *beels* are found along a line of drainage out of the Great River which might have dissected in earlier times its main chanel to flow along new ones in earlier times. In other cases there might be some depositional function of the rivers which over centuries have silt deposits.

In the case of Rajshahi district from west to east the first *beel* worth mentioning is 'Bhatia' of the Nawabganj subdivision. It is considered to be the largest *beel* that lies along the river Mahananda. Likewise in the barren region there are some important *beels* in Porsa Police Station Apart from Chakki, Manda, Bagsimuli Utrail, there are Angra, Podda, Ajum etc. which play a significant role in the life of the people of the region. The most reputed one and by far the largest amongst all is the Chalan *beel* with its numerous constituents extended over the adjacent districts named Rajshahi and Pabna. It lies between Singra Police Station (Natore subdivision) and the north bank of the river Gumani. It is said that the *Chalan beel* was

formed when the old Brahmaputra diverted its course into the new Channel called the Jamuna. The principal feeder of the *beel* is the river Atrai by name. The water of the Atrai passes touching the *chalan beel*. 'Varendra' in the Sanskrit literature and 'Barind' in modern term is a tract of comparatively high land which includes portions of Malda (India), Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Bogra districts. Geologically, Barind is the part of old alluvium of middle Pliocene age which has abundance of impure calcareous locally known as 'Kankar'. This portion of the district is physiographically rich with alluvial deposits along the banks of the Padma. Its soil is sandy to sandy loam grey in colour, absolutely different from the soil of the Barind.

In recent time, however, the whole of Rajshahi district has been divided into six physiographic units which are mentioned below:

- i) The *Barind* tracts
- ii) The Ganges river flood plains
- iii) The upper middle Atrai flood plains
- iv) The lower Atrai flood plains
- v) The little Jamuna flood plains
- vi) The Punarbhava flood plains.⁷

In fact all these units are of recent origin and have varieties of their own. Some of these surfaces are of *Kankar*, *Khair* and *Poli* and the fertility of this land is proverbial. Some of the regions under these divisions face insufficient rainfall a result of thin population. There are also *diar* (dry region) and *char* (alluvial land) adjacent to the large rivers and as the *chars* are fertile, variety of crops are found in its silty soil. In fine, the Rajshahi district or in the broad sense the division cell is a region with enormous varieties and excellence.

Rajshahi division or the region under consideration is endowed with several rivers. Except the Ganges or the Padma, most of the rivers like Mahananda and Atrai are inactive as most of them are moribund during all seasons other than the rainy season.

The River Padma has no important tributaries excepting the Mahananda. The Boral is the only tributary on the left bank which flows through the district to meet the Atrai and the Gumany. Among the rivers Jalongi and Mathabhanga the first one takes off from a point south-west of Sardah and the second one Mathabhanga about ten miles further down the stream.

Every year the river Padma is forming and cutting way land along its coast by constant alteration, deposition and erosion. Large island within the rivers, called chars are also formed, some of which extend over many miles. It may be noted that the river Padma, the portion of the Ganges which falls within Rajshahi is not considered as sacred, but it remains to say the Padma has all the attributes of grandeur and utility attached to the upper channel.

As we have seen that the river Mahananda is an important river of the district and is a major tributary of the Padma. The exact point of the origin of the Mahananda is still in confusion but it appears that it has originated some where in the district of Darjeeling (India) and after crossing the border it enters into Rajshahi near Bholahat.

After wards its flows through Nawabganj subdivision to meet the Padma near Nawabganj town. The portion of the Mahananda which falls within Rajshahi has Unique feature. Its banks are alternately sheer and slopping. The width of the river at this part is in between 400-600 yards and deep enough giving facility for cargo-boats. For a few miles it touches Rajshahi and the river has neither any tributary nor any distributary.

Another important river of this region is Atrai which is connected with Karotoya or Koratoya which is virtually designated as Atrai when it reaches Khansamea Police Station in Dinajpur. This channel is divided itself into two north west of Chirirbandar of Dinajpur district but again reunites in south west of Chirirbandar. The united channel is again named as Atrai and enters Rajshahi district at a point about eight miles north of Mahadevpur Police Station. When it enters into the Barind it receives many streams and rivulets and the width of the river expands to a few miles. The western Jamuna joins the Atrai near Suktigacha. A few miles further down streams the said channel again bifurcates into two parts and get there names as Gur and old Atrai. The southern channel is the old Atrai and when the river turns a little east it is joined by the Baranai. Two other rivers named Narad and the 'Nanda kuja', join the river from the south.

Before 1787 A.D., the Atrai was one of the great rivers of North Bengal and through this channel, the Tista used to discharge its water into the Padma. But in 1787 A.D., an unprecedented flood took place and as a result the Tista broke away from its old channel and found new course directed to eastward to be joined with the Brahmaputra instead of joining the Padma. In fact, since that time Atrai has lost its traditional glamour but still it is navigable by large country – boats during the rainy season.

The western Jamuna or sometime called as Jabuna is the leading tributary of the Atrai within the district of Rajshahi. This river takes its origin in Jalpaiguri district of India and having its directions more or less southwards through the eastern part of Dinajpur and western corner of Bogra enters into Rajshahi district. It passes by the town of Naogaon and joins the Atrai at Sulgacha. The Jamuna is also joined by some insignificant streams and one of them is Tulsiganga situated near the village Iterate. Tulsiganga enters Rajshahi from Bogra and it flows parallel to the western Jamuna.

One of the important distributaries of the Padma in Rajshahi is the river Baral. The Baral leaves the parent streams near the Charghat Police Station and having its direction to eastwards it passes into the Padma after touching the Atrai Gumani system. The Baral river has two off-shoots to the north namely, the Musakhan and the Nanda Kuja, a river of some magnitude which flows through a part of Natore and then joins into the *Chalan beel*.

It is a fact that 'Rajshahi' is a region with having huge natural varieties and in addition to the above mentioned rivers, there are some important rivers which have added much beauty to its treasure of natural varieties. Its flora and fauna, climate, temperature and even rainfall have drawn the attention of various scholars of India and abroad who have ever been attracted with the varieties of the region and left valuable account about the region and its people at large.

B) Rise of the Zamindars and Zamindari system in Bengal

- An overview

Agriculture started since the dawn of human civilization. In ancient times the farmer would clear the forest and cultivate the land. Because of the increase of population, the necessity of additional production of crops was seen and the demand of cultivable land also increased. On the other hand as a result of the emergence of feudalism and monarchy the ownership of land gradually went under their control.

The kings of the Western countries, to fulfil their administrative demand offered land to influential persons in exchange of civil and military support. Again in many cases local *Izaradars* were appointed to collect revenue from farmers. They were indeed a new class of employees who were faithful and obedient and they got a part of the collected revenue as salary. In the British period many persons described them as Zamindars.⁸

The word 'Zamindar' is originally a Persian word and the word 'Zamindar' was originated from it. The word *Zamin* means land and *dar* means lord, possessor,

owner or caretaker.⁹ According to the available dictionary meaning, he who is the owner of the land is the Zamindar. The word 'Zamindar' prevailing in the Persian language is converted into Bengali as 'Zamidar' and has become customary. Naturally a question arises whether those who are the owner of the land or a special class of persons who are the owner of a vast land or the persons who are involved in the revenue administration of a vast land are Zamindars.

According to a recent study on the land system of Bangladesh, the real owner of a vast land was called a Zamindar during the Muslim period.¹⁰ From another source it appears that the title of 'Zamindar' or 'Zamidar' means caretaker, occupant or employee-in-charge instead of the permanent owner.¹¹

While explaining the term what Zamindar or Zamindari stands for, Narendra Krishna Sinha, a reputed historian says, 'A Zamindar is a person possessing hereditarily on the conditions of obedience to the ordinance of government a tract of land under the denomination of a pargana or *chakla* subject to the payment of revenue. A Zamindari is that kind of land registered in the records of government in the name of such a person.'¹² The relation of the Zamindar with the British Govt. is again a matter of controversy. On this point it is almost certain that the relation of Zamindar to government and of a ryot to a Zamindar was neither that of a proprietor nor a vassal but a compound of both. The former is said to have acted as authority unconnected with property rights. The latter had rights without real property and the property of the one and the rights of the other were in a measure held at discretion.¹³

When the Zamindar of Mughal India is taken to be a owner of huge tracts of land, naturally a question arises, Who was really a Zamindar? Was he the owner of the land or the collector of revenue or the government employee who was supposed to collect revenue or the collector of revenue of the land or locality according to the

settlement made by the government? On this premise it may be than resolved that the Zamindar was the person who would collect revenue of a particular pargana according to the settlement made by the government, keep a definite portion of it for himself / herself and give the remaining portion of it to the government. He /she was not an employee of the government. The responsibility of the Zamindar was confined not only to the collection of revenue or sending it to the government but also he would maintain law and order, check crimes like stealing, robbery and perform development work like the construction of roads and high ways, dig canals, maintain bridges and culverts.¹⁴

It is, however, worthwhile to mention that with the passage of time 'Revenue Collectors' were being honored as Zamindars.¹⁵ Though this definition about the Zamindar was consistent prior to the British administration, their position began to change after 1765 when a series of experiments and short term settlements were made by the British after the Dewani of 1765,^{15(a)} The Zamindar got permanent ownership of the land and consequently the Zamindar could enjoy the Zamindari (estate) permanently if he /she would pay the fixed amount of revenue to the government regularly and in time.¹⁶ Provision was also there that if it would fail to comply with the specified condition i.e., regular payment of revenue in time the respective Zamindari (estate) would be put on auction.

From the above discussion some interesting characteristics about the responsibilities and duties of the Zamindar are found. The working sphere of the Zamindar may be divided into two categories (a) his/her work during the pre-British period, (b) his/her work after the grant of Dewani (stewardship) by the English East-India Company. Prior to the Dewani (stewardship) the Zamindar was a caretaker or owner of the land according to the settlement made by the government.

If he/she paid revenue fixed by the government regularly and was loyal to the government, he/she would remain Zamindar hereditarily. If he/she failed to pay the

revenue owing to natural calamity or other cause or because of revolt, the government would give him opportunity to pay the revenue later on. If he/she failed to pay the revenue consecutively or if he /she revolted, the government had the power to siege his/her estate. In some occasions, army was sent against a Zamindar in case he/she was a ruler and was brought and punished inhumanly for the offence. Here the case of Sitaram Ray, the Raja of Jessore may be cited as an example.¹⁷ If any obedient Zamindars died, their successors were expected to submit applications and they would be given the Zamindaris (estates) under the stipulated conditions.

The most important responsibility assigned to the Zamindar was to collect revenue from the tenant as fixed by the state and to keep a certain part of it as remuneration and pay the remaining amount to the government. It was the responsibility of the Zamindar to encourage the tenant to increase the production of the land and give security of life and property to the tenant under him. If the Zamindar failed to ensure security to the tenant, he /she would be called for explanation for it to the government.

The Zamindars were expected to contribute to the welfare work including the development of roads and high ways and even to take care of the local *hats* (markets) and bazaars. Sometimes the titles of 'Raja/Rani' or 'Maharaja/Maharani' were conferred on Zamindars for their respective efficiency and welfare work.

The Zamindar would assist the government with army during any fight or conflict with others, if necessary. The Zamindar was the mouth piece of the tenant to the government and the government was also as like as the bridge between the tenant and the Government.

It appears from the above study that during the pre-British period, the Zamindar had no right over the land he managed to cultivate but during the British rule he / she could enjoy a permanent right over land under certain conditions.

The Emergence and Development of the Zamindari System

The agriculture is an old profession and a source of economic growth. In ancient time, most of the land was covered with forest. The farmer cleared the jungle and cultivated the land and consequently he did not have to pay any revenue. Later on the feudal system emerged and the system of paying revenue and giving labour was introduced. Quoting Golam Hossain Salim, Dr. Ali Newaz holds that in Assam tenants did not have to pay revenue but one out of three persons of a family had to work for the king. If any body neglected the work, he was sentenced to death. It is not known whether such rule was introduced in Bengal after the establishment of the kingship. But it appears from the subsequent data that tenants were obedient and revenue was collected according to the amount of crops produced.¹⁸ It is difficult to conclude precisely who the owners of the land were during the pre-Muslim period, it is seen from the available data that management of land was not the same every where. In some places the owner of the land, was the farmer, in some other places the owner of the land was the king Zamindar and again in some other places the land was managed by joint ownership. But during the Pre-Muslim period there was no existence of intermediate class. There was direct relation between the king and the subjects.¹⁹

During the pre Muslim Period, Bengal was divided into five *Bhuktis* or administrative divisions. The *Bhuktis* were divided into *Mandals* (districts) and the *Mandals* were again divided into *Visayas* (subdivisions). Those who managed *Visayas* were called *Visayapatis*. They were some what like feudai kings or Zamindars who collected revenue form tenants and the government got a part of the same and the collector (*Zamindar/ Visayapati*) would get a fixed percentage of the remaining part.²⁰ Also during the reign of Sultans, the existence of a class of landlords can be noticed. As soon as Ali Mardan Khilji ascended the throne, the Hindu Zamindars began to pay land revenue to him.²¹ It appears from the same

available source that during the period between Firoz Shah Tughlaque, the Sultan of Delhi and Iliash Shah of Bengal, some Zamindars took the side of the Sultan and some others took the side of Iliash Shah.²² The existence of the system in the form of Zamindari can be noticed during the one of the obligations of the Pre Mughal Zamindari was, however to supply required any out their maintenance and the expenditure of the army. During the battle they assisted the Sultan with required army.²³ Most of the modern economic historians are inclined to pass such an opinion. It appears from such an analysis that the settlement of land on condition of regular payment of revenue and in some case supply of army was not at all a new tradition but prevailed in India some form or other over the ages.²⁴

It may be guessed from the above that during pre-Muslim period and Pre-Mughal period, revenue management was conducted through feudal chiefs and *ijaradars*. *Ijaradars*, Rajas and Zamindars worked as important part of the administration.

The evidence of the existence of some powerful landlords/Zamindars can be traced before the establishment of the Mughal administration. Those Zamindars were known as *Baro Bhuiyas* or *Bhumiyas* (Twelve landlords).

The *Baro Bhuiyas* conducted the administration of Bengal almost independently. They had their own administrative system and powerful army. Each of them conducted the administration almost independently though they could not form an united administrative system. They formed a strong defence against the Mughals at the point of theirs (i.e., Mughals) expansion towards Bengal region. The Mughals had to fight many battles to establish their supremacy in Bengal and the stiff resistance they received from the *Baro Bhuiyas* of Bengal.²⁵

The Mughal rule was partly established in Bengal as a result of the defeat of Daud Khan, the independent ruler of Bengal in 1575^{25a} In those days most of the regions of Bengal were under the control of the “*Baro Bhuiyas*”. To suppress or

root out the “Baro Bhuiyas”, Akbar and Jahangir had to take up many campaigns to suppress the Baro Bhuiyas. According to R. C. Majumdar “the conflict-between the Mughals and the Barobhuiyas may be taken to be a struggle for independence and that their position has been presented fairly by the writers of Bengali literature.

Abdul Karim in this regard says about the administration of the *Baro Bhuiyans* that they were the inheritors of the independent Sultans of Bengal for two hundred years.²⁶ But at long last they were defeated by the powerful Mughal army and lost their small territories²⁷

It may be noted that the history of the emergence of the Puthia Raj is still in obscurity and there is a legend as to the founder of this Raj. Some scholar is of the opinion that it was established some time during the time of Akbar, the great Mughal ruler of India.^{27a} But whether they had enjoyed the favour of the Mughals or the emperor himself and they were one of the Baro Bhuiyas of Bengal^{27b} are yet to be decided by any comprehensive reserch.

During the Mughal period, four settlements of land were carried out in the/ province of Bengal. There were : (a) the settlement of Todarmal, the minister of Akbar in 1582, (b) the settlement of Shah Suja, (c) the provincial governor of Bengal in 1668, the settlement of Murshid Kuli Khan in 1722. Sujauddin Khan again made some experiments in 1728.²⁸

A class of Zamindars was created during the reign of Murshid Kuli Khan. Those Izardars were not allowed to collect more revenue than what was fixed and they had to pay to the farthing of the revenue after their own part had been deduced.²⁹ If the Zamindars failed to pay the revenue properly, rigorous punishment was inflicted upon them.³⁰

Nawab Alivardi Khan followed the revenue management introduced by Murshid Kuli Khan and made settlement of revenue with Zamindars accordingly. During the conflict with the Marathas, Zamindars helped Nawab Alivardi Khan with additional money.³¹

It is guessed from the available data that during the reign of the Bengal Nawabs, the administrative system mostly depended upon the Zamindars.

After the defeat of Siraj-ud-daullah in the battle of Plassey in 1757A.D. and the occupation of the Dewani in 1765A.D. (stewardship) by the English, there was a radical change in the land administration of Bengal. Yearly, ten-yearly and later on Permanent Settlement were introduced. As a result of this Permanent Settlement 1793A.D., Zamindars instead of Izara or contract got the ownership of land.³² Consequently the Zamindars from this time onward could enjoy a full fledged right over land.

As a result of adopting different principles by the English at different times, many former big Zamindaries (estates) partly or entirely lost their Zamindari and many new Zamindaries (estates) were created. Some small land lords inferior to those of Zamindars like *Talukdars*, *pattandars* (lease holders), *Dar pattanidars* (sub lease holders), *gantidars* (small sub lease holders) emerged and they were known as petty Zamindars of Bengal. As a result, within hundred years after the Permanent Settlement, as per information, the number of Zamindars increased to near about 1.5 lakh.³³

The Zamindaries of Rajshahi occupied an important place in the rise and gradual development of Zamindaris (estates) of Bengal. The Zamindari (estate) of Puthia was very old and later on at the time of ten-year settlement when the number of large Zamindaries (estates) was twelve, the place of Rajshahi Raj (Natore Raj) was the second and the place of Puthia Raj was the 9th..³⁴

Among the Zamindaris (estates) of Rajshahi, Dubalhati was the oldest one but it was not as large as those of Natore and Puthia. Most of the other small Zamindaries originated during the British period. It may be said that the Zamindars of Rajshahi had also an important role in the collection of revenue of Bengal.

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Puthia Zamindari - Its Origin and Growth

The capital of the Zamindars of Puthia is situated one mile south of Rajshahi-Natore Highway, 18 miles and 10 miles from Rajshahi and Natore respectively.¹ On the east lies the Natore Sadar Police Station, on the west Paba and Boalia, on the north Bagmara and Durgapur Police Stations and on the south there is Charghat Police Station of the Rajshahi district. As it was the capital, it became the abode of different caste and creed including the Brahmin, the Kayestha, the Vaidya, and others.² On the east of Puthia at the village Paikpara a canal connected the Boral and the Hoja rivers. The southern part of that canal was known as Musa Khan. In the rainy season of 1838 A.D., the river Musakhan overflowed and submerged the south-eastern part of the Padma. Since then the Musa Khan and the Hoja were united and became familiar with the name of the Godai River³.

Puthia is surrounded by the river called Hoja on the north, the Narod on the south and the erstwhile Musakhan on the east. The river Narod came out of the Padma (Mahanada) and is united with the Nandakubja on the south of the head quarters of Puthia and Natore.⁴ Once these rivers were navigable. As a result, these rivers played a vital role in the communication system. Beside this, there were no metalled roads and as such the capital of Natore Raj Family flourished on the side of the rivers. Many other Zamindaries grew up along the rivers of which Puthia, Chapilla and Santul are remarkable. In course of time the rivers were silted up. At present a scanty flow can only be traced.

Among the ancient Zamindars of Rajshahi the Santul and the Tahirpur Raj families were famous.⁵ Of the zamindars of Rajshahi the family (Raj Family) of Puthia was one of the oldest. This Raj Family was founded during the reign of Emperor Akbar.⁶

A man named Sadhram Bagchi was the forefather of the Puthia Raj Family. Though he was not born in an aristocratic family, he was a scholar in Sanskrit and Persian languages. He had enough knowledge in Muslim and Hindu mythology and for this he became famous in the contemporary educated class. He had skill in composing poems and could recite poems both in Sanskrit and Persian languages. In this regard he could be called a man of literature.⁷ The son of Sadhubagchi was Laban, the son of Laban was Tripurary, the son of Tripurary was Chakrapani, the son of Chakrapani was Rupuzha and the son of Rupuzha was Rishi Dixit.⁸ The sons of Rishi Dixit were Siaia, Kiyaye, Gadadhar, Ahumitra and Suddhipandab⁹ respectively. Kiyaye had four sons: Harihar Agnihotri, Srikantha, Baikuntha and Madar Dixit. Balai was the son of Harihar and Dhiai (Dhai Bagchi) and Baman were the sons of Balai.¹⁰ Baman had his son named Durjadhan. The son of Durjadhan was Visnu and Sasadhar Pathak was his son.¹¹ Sasadhar Pathak was a sincere Brahmin. He had only one son named Batsacharyya.¹² This very Batsacharyya was the founder of Puthia Raj Family.¹³ He always remained busy in religious affairs from his boyhood. He had special knowledge in magic and astrology. He led the life of a saint.¹⁴ The original abode of Batsacharyya was the village of Chandrakola of Natore Sub-division (at present District) touching which the river Godai flowed and on the other side of the river was the Akhdia village.¹⁵ Later he started living at Puthia. No authentic document is available as to when he left Chandrakola and started living at Puthia.¹⁶ Of the seven sons of

Batsacharyya, all died premature death except Nilambar, Pitashshr and Pusparakkha.¹⁷

There is a hearsay regarding the foundation of the Puthia Raj Family. At that time a Pathan Jaigirdar named Laskar Khan ruled Puthia. It is said that after his name this area was named Laskarpur.¹⁸ Laskar Khan lived in a village named Alaipur. The village is under Charchhat Police Station. The village stands 12 mile south-east of Puthia. The mighty Padma flows near the village.

During the reign of Emperor Akbar, the Pathan leaders rebelled in Bengal. Realising the gravity of situation, the emperor sent an efficient general to suppress the rebellion.¹⁹ On their way they set up their camp at Chandrakola. The scholasticism and piety of Batsacharyya was widely known. The general was amazed at the magical knowledge of Batsacharyya after talking to him. Batsacharyya asked the general to explain the reason of his coming in detail. He told the general the way to suppress the rebellion.²⁰ Following the saint's advice the general won the battle and Laskar Khan, the Jaigirdar of Laskarpur Laskar Khan died without any successor. With the permission of the Emperor the general wanted to handover the Pargana of Puthia to Batsacharyya as a reward. The saint Batsacharyya was not interested in getting worldly gains, so he refused to take the Zamindari. His son Pitambar was intelligent and influential. He expressed his desire to take the Znamidari, At last the general gave the Zamindari to Pitambar.²¹

It may be noted here that in the family records some of the Zamindars of the family are found to have used the title Thakur and a few others have been mentioned 'Ray' as their family title. It is again interesting that most the Zamindars seem to have preferred a common end like 'Narayan' after their

name. The name of the rulers and their surnames have been followed here as per records.

Pitambar

Pitambar was the eldest son of Batsacharyya.²² He was a person with a temperament of worldly affairs. He got the zamindari at the favour of the emperor of Delhi.²³ After getting the zamindari of Laskarpur, he left his paternal land of Chandrakola and settled at Puthia. He searched for land for building the Rajbari. As the place which he selected to build the Rajbari was a low land he dug a pond on 7 acres of land on the north of the Rajbari. The tank is known as Shyam Sagar. Many believe that Pitambar and Shyam were the names of a same person. The Rajbari was constructed during the time of Pitambar.²⁴ For the security of the Rajbari (the house of the Rajas, he constructed huge canals on three sides of it. After his taking over the charge of zamindari, its area was expanded far and wide.²⁵

The Raja of Puthia was one of the 12-Bhuiyas of Bengal.²⁶ Historians differ as regards the exact number of the 12-Bhuiyas of Bengal. According to Abdul Karim the exact number and identity of the 12-Bhuiyas²⁷. His arguments seem to be authentic. In his description the name of Pitambar or the Raja of in conspicuously absent. From this it can be concluded that the Raja of Puthia was not enlisted among the 12 Bhuiyas of Bengal.^{27(a)}

As we have stated the Zamindari of Puthia was founded during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Pitambar did not revolt against Akbar because either he showed his gratitude and loyalty towards Akbar or he did not have enough force to do that at the early stage of his Zamindari. But later during the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627), we get an evidence of his revolt.²⁸ In 1609,

Jahangir sent Subahdar Islam Khan to suppress the 12-Bhuiyas of the Bengal. When Subahdar went ahead to subdue Pitambar, he took shelter at Alaipur, another zamindari of the region.²⁹ Though Ilah Bakhs, the Zamindar of Alaipur did not surrender, Pitambar surrendered and saved his life and Zamindari. After the defeat of Ilah Bakhs, his abandoned Zamindari was handed over to Pitambar.³⁰ No exact date is however, known about the death of Pitambar. Probably, he died sometime during the first half of the reign of emperor Jahangir.³¹

Nilambar

According to K.C. Mitra "When Pitambar died he had no successor. For this reason his younger brother Nilambar succeeded him in his *estate*".³² Being satisfied, Emperor Jahangir gave him the title of "*Raja*".³³ Incidentally among the members of the Puthia *Raj Family*, he was the first to get the title of "*Raja*". He became trustworthy to the Emperor by paying taxes regularly. He built a huge *Durgabari*³⁴ (the place to worship goddess Durga) the *Panchamundi Seat* where Batsacharyya succeeded in his meditation to commemorate Batsacharyya. When the *Durgabari* was destroyed, a tin-shed room was made in the form of Altar (*Mandap*). Later on the zamindari of Puthia divided in many divisions for the reason of hierarchy, and as everybody or every sharer used the *Mandap*, it was known as Sajor Bari.³⁵ In the altar of *Panchamundi* of this *Mandap* the *Mrinmaya idols* were set up and both *Durgapuja* and *Basantipuja* were held there every year. At the time of death, Nilambar left two sons. The sons were Anandaram and Puskarakh Majumdar.³⁶

Puskarakha

Puskarakha, the son of Nilambar lived at Ramrama, the headquarters of Tahirpur and looked after the zamindari. At that time there were two brothers

in Tahirpur Raj family. The younger brother was very affectionate to him. Younger Raja Hridoy Narayan had no son.³⁷ He had less affinity towards the worldly affairs. Leaving the illusion of the family he went to Benares. Before going to Varanashi he gave half of his property to his affectionate Puskarakha.³⁸ Laskarpur Zaminder was expanded (parts) including 22 paraganas of the Jaigir of Laskar Khan and Tahirpur.³⁹ Puskarakhs died leaving no son. During his lifetime, he became famous with *Barendra* community.⁴⁰

Ananda Ram

After the death of Nilambar his son was appointed the Zamindar. Ananda Ram used to help his father in the running of the zamindari during his father's (Nilambar) life-time. He was a great man. During his father's life-time he won the title of "Raja" from the Emperor of Delhi.⁴¹ When his brother Puskarakha died leaving no son, he inherited the property of the Tahirpur zamindari. As a result the command area of his zamindari expanded. No doubt, he was a good ruler. He maintained good-term with the Emperor of Delhi by regular payment of royal taxes. He died after a longer rule.

Ratikanta

Ratikanta was th only son of Ananda Ram. After his father's death he inherited the change of zamindari of Puthia. But unfortunately he was so efficient to run the administration of the Zamindari⁴². He could not assume the title 'Raja' due to some of his unpleasan works. He could, however, maintain the family tradition as being a member of the Brahmin family and he was known as 'Thakur' to the general public. After Ratikanta, the royal family of Puthia had been known as the 'Thakur Raj Family'.⁴³ Later on, this title was approved by the Subahdar of Bengal.⁴⁴ Ratikanta controlled over the

small zamindars and Talukders and influencing gradually he expanded his Zamindari on the one hand and on the other hand showed his wit and intelligence by subduing the powerful and rich landlords.⁴⁵ He had three sons named Ramchandra, Raghubir and Jadubir.⁴⁶ Raghubir and Jadubir died childless. Ratikanta died leaving his only son Ramchandra.

Ramchandra Thakur

As has been stated above Ram Chandra was the eldest son of Rati Kanta and when Rati Kanta died, Ram Chandra succeeded him as the zamindar of Puthia. After taking over of the zamindari he started philanthropic works for the welfare of the people. He set up the statue of 'Radha Gavinda'.⁴⁷ To the common people it was known as the statue of Gavindaji and it was Gavinda who had been accepted as the actual family god of Puthia Raj Family. It is proved by their efforts to put and write the epithet on the head of all th zamindari papers and documents of this family.⁴⁸

There is a legend with reference to the foundation of the Puthia Raj Family and this has been popularised in many documents including some contemporary book^{48(a)}. A Brahmin brought Radha Gavinda statue to Puthia from Bangarh (Kotivarsa) of Dinajpur and when he tried to take the statue from the place he was resting in, he failed to remove the statue. After rest when he tried to take away the statue, he failed. At last the Brahmin went away leaving shree Radha Gavinda there. But Thakur Ramchandra, the Raja of Puthia easily pulled up the statue and placed it in the royal temple.⁴⁹ Later on after building a new temple he installed the statue of Govindaji. Afterwards, all the shareholders worshipped the statue of Govindaji. After this daily worship, distribution of prasad (food offered to a god or goddess)

etc. became a normal practice centering the idol. Everyday one maund of *Atap* rice and other ingredients were used to prepare the Bhog (cooked rice offered to a deity).⁵⁰ Besides, they used to feed many Brahmin and took care of many poor people.⁵¹ In spite of giving gifts and doing a lot of religious works, Ramachandra had a bad name in the society. On his way back from Dacca when he came near the bank of the Santul Bandar (Port) of *Chalan Beel*, he became a victim of conspiracy and was forced to marry the daughter of Rameswar, the younger brother of Ram Krishna, the Raja of Santul. Because of this marriage, the image of the Puthia Raj Family got a set back and the whole family became a victim of a scandal locally known as "Pachuria".⁵² Ramchandra Thakur had four sons- Rupnarayan, Naranarayan, Darpanarayan and Jaynarayan.⁵³

Naranarayan

After the death of Raja Ramchandra, his second son inherited the Zamindari. Kamdev Moitra, the father of Raghunandan who was the founder of Natore Raj Family was a tax collector of Baruihati of Laskarpur Pargana under Naranarayan.⁵⁴ The Darpanarayan and Jaynarayan the brothers of Naranarayan were the founders of Chou Pukhuria and Seroil Raj families respectively. No evidence is found as to why Darpanarayan and Jaynarayan left Puthia or if they had taken with them any property of the time of departure. The most significant aspect of the temure of Naranarayan was the beginning of the Natore Raj Family in true sense.⁵⁵

Premnarayan

After the death of Naranarayn, his only son Premnarayan got the Zamindari of Puthia. No evidence of development is found during his tenure.

But he built the Temple of Radha Gavinda with bricks in various ornamentations in the style of rural Bangladesh the building found in.⁵⁶ But the temple was destroyed in the earthquake of 1304 (B.S.) (i.e. 1897). It is known from some of the slokas inserted on its wall that the temple was built in 1772.⁵⁷ Moreover, he built *Pancha Ratna Temple* (Five-jeweled Temple) of Gapalji. He died leaving his only son Anupnarayan.⁵⁸ Premnarayan (Thakur) was a scholar and a patron of education. He paid stipend to many educated Brahmins of his time.⁵⁹

Anupnarayan

After the death of Premnarayan as we have seen his only son Anupnarayan got the Zamindari of Puthia. Anupnarayan was a father of four sons. They were Narandranarayan, Rupendranarayan, Madnarayan and Prannarayan.⁶⁰ After the death of Anupnarayan, there was a difference of opinion among the brothers and the main reason was on the question of the division of the paternal property. For the division of the property among the brothers, holders were created in the Puthia Raj Family. During the Zamindari of Anupnarayan the Zamindari of Puthia was stretched over 15 parganas. During the time of Murshid Kuli Khan it was settled at the tax of Rs.1,25,516.00⁶¹. It is guessed that Anupnarayan died probably in 1743-44⁶².

Narandranarayan (Panch ani Raj Family)

Narendranarayan was the eldest son of Anupnarayan. After his father's death he went to the court of the Nawab of Bengal in Murshidabad to deprive his brothers of the property⁶³. When the other brothers guessed it, a conflict. The brothers obstructed the mission of Narendranarayan and everybody demanded the property. As a result, Narendranarayan was compelled to divide

the property. The division was done in 1744⁶⁴. The eldest brother demanded more and the other brothers agreed to give him half anas of their respective quarter shares. So Madanarayan, Rupendranarayan and Pranarayan got three and a half anas share and Narendranarayan got five and a half anas share including his four anas and one and a half anas from his brothers. Though Narendranarayan got five and a half anas and Rupendranarayan got three and a half anas, they came to be known as *Panch ana* and *Char ana* among the people.⁶⁵

The founder of *Panch ani* Raj Family was Narendranarayan. He was a successful ruler in comparison with others. He ran his zamindari as per expectation. He had five sons. They were Bhubanendranarayan, Shibendranarayan, Rudranarayan, Surendranarayan and Raghunarayan. Surendranarayan and Raghunarayan had premature deaths.⁶⁶ No exact date is known as to when Narendranarayan died. In 1793 his son Bhupendranarayan made a permanent settlement of Laskarpur Paragana with Lord Cornwallis⁶⁷. From this it is evident that he died some time before 1793.

Bhupendranarayan

Bhupendranarayan took the responsibility of the zamindari after the death of his father Narendranarayan. After their father's death Shibendranarayan and Rudranarayan also became the heirs of their father's property. Bhupendranarayan provided some Jaagir for the sustenance of Shibendranarayan.⁶⁸ The other brother Rudranarayan got the old house (Habli Adi) at Mathura.⁶⁹ It may thus be noted that he lived there enjoying a bit of small possessions of the zamindari. There is no evidence that he claimed a small share of his father's property.

Bhubendranarayan was a renowned zamindar. He bought Puluria Pargana at Rs. 62,100.00 in the name of his employee Panchanan Sarkar. He bought Dihi Deluabari, Dihi Fatepur in the names of his employees Ramkishore Moitra, Kali Prasad Mojumder and Dinanath. He also bought Kaligram Pargana, Dihi Darshana of Mohammadpur Pargana and Taraf Sripur of Mahadiar.⁷⁰ He bought a land from Ruplal Mitra and Brajalal Mitra at Shree Brindabon Dham (Bhramar Ghat) and set up a house in 1791. In that house there was arrangement for the worship of Shree Bhuvan Mahan Dev. To afford the expenditure of the worship, the property of Chatragacha and Chakdevpur under Durlavpur was donated with the letter dedicated to the gods (Debattar property) on *ashar* 6,1199 B.S. (i.e. 1792) which had Rs. 297.00 as its amount of donation. Besides, he bought a garden house at Durga Kundu near the Durgabari of Baranashidham, and many other houses in the Bengali populated area at Kashidham (Venares).⁷¹

Raja Bhupendranarayan and Anandanarayan (The son of Prannarayan, the younger brother of Narendranarayan who had a quarter share of the zamindari) signed a permanent settlement agreement of Laskarpur Pargana with Lord Cornwallis in 1793 at Rs. 1,89,592.25.00⁷². At that time Laskarpur Pargana stretched over Rajshahi, Bogra, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, Malda and Dhaka districts⁷³.

After running the *Zamindari* successfully, he had fallen into various problems at the end of his life. Dayamayee Devi, the wife of his brother Surendranarayan, filed a case against Bhupendranarayan in Rajshahi civil court demanding Rs.6,729.00 which constituted 9 *ana* as per her share in the property. At last a reconciliation was made between Dayamayee Devi and Bhupendranarayan. According to it, Dayamayee gave up his claim of the

property of her own accord getting Phulbari and Hashimpur Digar as the means of her sustenance. Both of them signed an agreement in this regard. For this agreement, the case was resolved in 1806⁷⁴.

He was not only one of the best zamindars but also a religious-minded man. In 1751 he built a four storied. Stage for Dol festival of Puthia⁷⁵. It still stands in a bit dilapidated condition.

Bhupendranarayan died in 1806 leaving his only son Jagannarayan.

Raja Jagannarayan

After the death of his father, Raja Jagannarayan got the zaimndari of Puthia. Just after getting the zamindari he faced multifarious problems. During his father's tenure, his uncle did not get their actual due of the property. After the death of his father and uncles, a dispute occurred with his cousins. After the death of his uncle Rudranarayan, his son Krishendranarayan demanded his father's share. A case was filed in the court and Krisnendranarayan got his desired share of the property⁷⁶.

Another uncle of Jagannarayan, Shibendranarayn got the area of Balidanga and Jaigir Hujurpara Digar for his sustenance and without demanding the appropriate share he was satisfied with that. After the death of Shibendranarayan, his son Rajibnarayan got the property in 1775⁷⁷. In 1784 he died, his mother Padmamoni Debba became the heiress Padmamoni Debba pledged to be satisfied with Rs.300.00 annually and a sum of Rs.4,000.00 at a time for her religious acts. She gave her received property (Balidanaga and JagirHijur para) to her widow daughter Champaklata as a life-time possession in condition that at her absence the property would go to Jagannarayan.

Padmamani Debba had given written document of it to Raja Jagannarayan on 10 *Baishakh* 1214 B.S. i.e., 1807⁷⁸.

Another uncle Surendranarayan received only a meagre quantity of land for his sustenance. He died childless. After his death his wife Dayamayee Devi gave up her claim in favour of Bhupendranarayan taking Phulbari and Hasimpur Digar to sustain herself.⁷⁹

Jagannarayan was an intelligent zamindar. He skillfully reconciled all the family disputes. He made an agreement with his cousin Krishnendranarayan in 1816⁸⁰. In this agreement he met up the dispute giving him some property. It was recognised that there was no debt till 1807⁸¹. For the division of the property *Panch Ani* side was divided in two parts (1) Barataraf (Bigger estate) and (2) Chhatataraf (Smaller estate)⁸².

Jagannarayan was a good scholar. He encouraged educated people and offered donation for their education. He was also pious a man. He got constructed a large bathing ghat and a guest house at Kashi dham (Venares). He also built a guest-house at *Gayadham*⁸³. He constructed a ghat on the bank of the river Dalgu in Bihar⁸⁴.

Raja Jagannarayan won the title of 'Raja Bahadur' from the British Government in 1809. The Government also declared that the sons and grandsons of the next generation of Jagannarayan would enjoy the title 'Raja Bahadur'⁸⁵.

He had a son and a daughter named Bishendranarayan and Kashimayee Devi respectively. His only son Bishendranath Ray was permanently sick. So he permitted Rani Bhubanmayee to keep an adopted child. Jagannarayan died in 1816. After three years of his death his son also died in 1819.⁸⁶

Rani Bhubanmayee

After the death of Jagannarayan, his widow Rani Bhubanmayee took over the charge of the zamindari. Rani Bhubanmayee was born at village Baladkhal in the Natore sub-division under Rajshahi district (Now Natore District). Her father was Shibram Chakravarty⁸⁷. Jagannarayan firstly married Jagadishawari Devi, the daughter of Nilkanta Sanyal of Puthia. When Jagadishawari Devi died, Raja Jagannarayan married Bhubanmayee⁸⁸.

She was the mother of two children in her married life. Kashishawari Devi was her daughter and Bishendranarayan was her son. Bishendranarayan was born in 1812. The son Bishendranarayan was permanently sick. Before his death Jagannarayan allowed to keep an adopted son. In 1819 after the her son's death Rani Bhubanmayee took Harendranath, the fifth son of Krisnanarayan Thakur as an adopted child. When he was adopted, Harendranath was four and a half years old⁸⁹. She took the charge of the Zamindari in the beginning of 1820 and she made an open declaration to this effect.

Raja Jagannarayan married his daughter Kashiswar Devi to Mansingh alias Manu Khan, the son of Kali Prasad Khan of Paraghati in 1809.

For the maintenance of the daughter and the son in law he consented an agreement to give a property the annal profit of which was about Rs.12,000.00. Rs.12,000.00 was given from the income of the property and cash money.

Rani Bhubanmayee gave two anas out of twelve Anas of Mymensingh pargana and one ana out of three anas of Laskarpur Durlavpur pargana. Besides, the Rani gave some other property to Kashiswar Devi and her grandson⁹⁰

Gavinda Prasad. To build a Shibmandir and for the placement of the idol of the god Shiva, the Rani sold three anas of Laskarpur and three anas of Dharbila For Rs. 18122.00 on 13 *Aswin*, 1235 B.S. i.e., 1828 and Hatrum Diagar of Laskarpur for Rs. 10,000.00 on 14 *Shravan*, 1233 B.S. i.e., 1826.⁹¹

Rani Bhubanmayee faced serious family troubles. During her husband's life-time she reconciled the family disputes with the son of her paternal uncle Krisnendranarayan Ray. On sudden death of Jagannarayan, this division of property was suspended. Rammohan Chawdhury, the minister of Rani Bhubammayee, tried to deprive Krisnendranarayan and did not pay attention to the reconciliation agreement. On the other hand after her husband's death, Bhumanmayee was living in *Kashi*. Krishnendranarayan also started for *Kashi* with Gurudev and a Raja of three ana share. They wanted a document to be signed again by Rani Bhubanmayee. Due to the conspiracy of the minister of the Rani all their objectives failed. As a result a great chaos and disorder started in the Raj family. Some holders joined together and decided that they would not allow the Rani to come back to Puthia again. At last to recover the property Krishnendranarayan filed a case in the court⁹². A confrontation was there as regards the occupation of the house of the Raja in 1819. Goods were seized by the criminal court. For the filing of the case, the Rani came to Puthia.

The sharers did not allow her to enter the Rajbari. At last she stayed at the garden of Gopal. In 1827 the distribution was completed. In the reconciliation deed Krishnanarayan got *two-fifteenth* of Laskarpur and one ana share of Pukhuria. The distribution being finished, the Rani entered the Rajbari.⁹³

When tax became due of Pukhuria pargana, a possibility of auction was anticipated. Of that property twelve Anas belonged to Rani Bhubanmayee and four Ana to the minor son named Bhairabnarayan, the son of Krishnendranarayn. She lodged a case against the government to save her property. In 1843 when the case reached the final, the Rani Bhubanmayee became the owner of 12 *anas* share of Pukhuria.⁹⁴

Rani Bhubanmayee was however, a benevolent woman of compassion. She set up the temple of Mahadev at Puthia. She donated land and money to many Brahmins.⁹⁵ Rani Bhubanmayee spent a lot of money to construct the ghats of Kashidham and Dashahamedh. She also made them beautiful and strong with valuable stones. Millions of people bathed in the ponds and praised the Rani. The Brahmapur Temple and Shibgenital that are found on the Dashahamedh Ghat are the immortal achievements of the Rani Bhubanmayee. The all-India famous '*Puthia Anna Chatra*' at Bangali Tola of Kashi is perhaps the best work of virtuous Rani Bhubanmayee. At that time she arranged food for the starving people. The widone garden house adjacent to the well-known '*Durgakunda*' near '*Puthia chatra*' in north-east side is also the property of Rani Bhubanmayee. She used to distribute clothes among the poor during the winter and supplied food for cattle and people during the rainy season.⁹⁶ She freed the persons who were imprisoned for debt, paying her own money.⁹⁷ In 1847 while going to Kashi she breathed her last in a place called Ishabpur near the bank of the Padma.⁹⁸

Harendranarayan

Harendranarayan was the adopted son of Rani Bhubanmayee. He married the daughter of Kantanath Bachospati of Majhgram (Rajshahi, present Natore)

named Durgasundari Devi. Harendranath and Durgasundari had two sons named Jogendranarayan and Debendranarayan respectively. The later died without being married.⁹⁹ Before his death on 25 Poush 1258 B.S. i.e., 1851. Harndranarayan appointed his wife a trustee for his two sons.¹⁰⁰ In her favour she also gave a permission letter to take separate adopted child. He also arranged and assigned Rs.200.00 as monthly payment in favour of Dugasundari during the minor period of his son. He gave her the dwelling house of Rammohan Choudhury and a pond and temple situated at Puthia on (2/11 land) garden and a pond of Tilipara included in Kandaroy and a dwelling house bought from Nanda Kishore Majumder at Bareipara.¹⁰¹

Rani Bhubammayee had a son and a daughter. Raja Jagannarayan gave all his property to his son Bishshedranarayan though a wil. Shishshendra Ray died a premature death and the Rani Bhubanmayee became the heir of the property. Although Harendranath was an adopted child, he did not get any share or possession of the property. So, he had to depend on the sympathy of Rani Bhubanmayee. On the other hand the Rani loved her daughter Kashishwari Devi very much. As a result, on 24 Kartik 1239 B.S. i.e., 1832 , she did tow registered deeds of division of the property. She gave 10 Ana to Harendranarayan and 6 Ana to her daughter Kashishwari Devi.¹⁰² grew older, a conflict grew between the mother and the son. After many events the conflict was reconciled between the mother and the son on 15 Poush 1249 B.S. i.e., 1842 ¹⁰³. In this way the conflict was removed.

Harendranath patronized learning and higher education. To encourage the culture of Snaskrit he donated open-handedly. During his time the renowned scholar Shibchandra Siddhanta set up a school (*Chatuspati*) at Puthia.¹⁰⁴

He was not only a patron of learning but also pious man. He had name and fame in nursing the guests. He appointed to employees to look after the well-being of the guests. Their responsibility was to make good arrangements for the guests.¹⁰⁵

Harendranarayan was an amateur too. In 1850 he bought a luxury boat from Brassford Shaheb of Kuthi Keulgachi.¹⁰⁶ Harendranarayan died at Murshidabad in 1851.¹⁰⁷

Jagannarayan

Jagendranath was born on 03 *Jaistha* of 1840¹⁰⁸ His father was Harendranarayan and mother was Durgasundari. Harendranarayan had two sons named Jogendranarayan and Debendranarayan. The later died in his boyhood without being married.¹⁰⁹ When his father died in 1851 Jagendranarayan was only 11 years old.¹¹⁰ At that time it was the rule of British India that if any zamindar died leaving his minor son or heir, the property will straightly go to the Court of Wards. The heir would get back the property when he would reach adulthood. That rule became applicable in case of Jogendranarayan. His property went under the jurisdiction of the Court of Words. In fact, those properties were not looked after rather the Court of Words leased them. Jogendranarayan's property of Mymensingh was settled with Mr. Feberdi and that of Rajshahi was with Wordson & Co. The manager of Jogendranarayan Sri Babu Prasanna Kumar Majumder spent for the royal family from the income of the leased land.¹¹¹

Jagendranarayan was very much loved by his mother because of his being the only son. He was kept in the royal house of Puthia till he became 14/15 years old. He could not improve much in his learning during his stay at

Puthia. Though his mother was not very interested in his education, she was concerned about the marriage of her son. In Baishakh of 1262 B.S. i.e., 1855 he was married to a 5 year 7 month old child-bride named Sharatsundari, daughter of Bhairabnath Sanyal of Puthia¹¹². The mother Durgasundari became very much happy having her tender aged daughter-in-law.¹¹³ After few days of the marriage Durgasundari died. Sharatsundari had no other guardian in her in-laws family after the death of her mother-in-law. So she became very lonely in her husband's house. Jagendranarayan himself started taking care of his child-bride. The situation was the property law with the Court of Wards on one hand, and the royal Rajbari was guardianless on the other hand. In this situation Jagendranarayan fell into a great danger. At last he kept Harsundari Devi, the sister-in-law of his mother's cousin to live with Saharatsundari¹¹⁴. Then the aunt became the guardian of Sharatsundari. Besides, her own aunt Shibsundari Devi occasionally came and stayed in the Rajbari. Sharatsundari respected both of them very much. They also treated her as her own daughter. Jagendranarayan also loved Sharatsundari very much. He also treated her as her own daughter. Jagendranarayan also loved Sharatsundari very much. He always kept a keen eye for the proper care of his wife in the royal Rajbari. When the early conjugal life of Jagendranarayan and Sharatsundari was becoming happy, a new problem emerged at the very time.¹¹⁵

As the Zamindari was at that time under the Court of Wards, in accordance with the contemporary law the responsibility went on the shoulder of the British Government to educate Jagendranarayan. At first he was taken to Rampur Boalia (Present Rajshahi) and was admitted into Rajshahi Collegiate school in a lower class. Later he was sent to Wordson Institution in Calcutta by the order of Board of Revenue. Then Sharatsundari was 9 years old. The

renowned scholar Dr. Rajendralal Mitra was then the Principal of the Institution.¹¹⁶

While his staying in Calcutta, Jagendranarayan always thought of Sharatsundari. He wrote letters himself from Calcutta and inquired about the well being of her. Sharatsundari could not write and so direct correspondence was possible between her and Jagendra Narayan. Thus she incurred displeasure of her husband. He decided that he would arrange education for Sharatsundari going back home during the vacation. With such determination, Jagendranarayan came back home and started educating Sharatsundari. Without a few days Sharatsundari improved much. As he had to go back to Calcutta, he gave the responsibility of educating Sharatsundari on a faithful royal employee named Ishan Chandra Sen.¹¹⁷ Sharatsundari achieved unexpected success in a very short time. She started writing letters for two years, and subsequently became well versed in many books and Bengali literature.¹¹⁸

During his study in Wordson Institution, Calcutta, he occasionally came to Puthia during vacation. Then his tenants came to him in groups and complained against the torture of the *Nilkar Shahebs (Indigo Planters)*. Many villages of Laskarpur paragana stood on both sides of the rivers Padma, Boral and Godai. In the silted areas on both sides of the rivers, *Nil* (indigo) grew very abundantly. It may be mentioned that the property of Jagendranarayan located in Rajshahi was leased in favour of Wordson & Company. For this the officers of the Company had a chance to torture upon the tenants of this region. This naturally shocked Jagendranarayan very much, but he had nothing to do with that property, as the property was then sealed under the Court of Wards. So he had to go to Wordson Institution in Calcutta with a heavy heart. This

situation had effected his concentration in study and the concern for his tenants disturbed his education considerably. ^{118(a)}

Raja Jagendranarayan got his maturity during 1859 and took over the charge to rule over his property in *Baishakh* of 1267 B.S. i.e., 1860. He was supposed to become adult in 1265 B.S., i.e., 1858, but the Principal of the Institution Mr. Rajendra Lal Mitra reported the Revenue Board that his age was shown more than his actual one. He appeared to be less in years because of his frail health. As per this recommendation of Rajendralal Mitra, he would become adult in Poush of 1266 B.S., i.e., 1859 Revenue Board accepted Rajendralal's report and kept the property in its charge for one year more. After that it was feared if the property would be returned to Jagendranarayan in the middle of the year, there would be problem in calculations and accounts. So the Zamindari was handed over to him on the first *Baishakh* of 1267 B.S., i.e., 1860. ¹¹⁹

Getting his property back Jagendranarayan did not get the actual accounts of it. The property of Rajshahi was leased to Wattson & Co. The duration of the lease was 7 years from 1852 to 1858 . Despite the expiry of the lease, Wattson & Co. kept some land with them. Besides, under the influence of 'Shutter' the Indigo Planters tortured the common people. ¹²⁰ They forced the subjects to cultivate indigo but did not pay substantial price. They also forced the wives and daughters of the farmers to wet and shake big cauldrons during the whole night. The Nilkuthi (Indigo Fort) became a centre of inhuman torture and suffing of the common people who were mostly farmars of the region.. Rape of women, was beating inhumanly very common affair of the day. The disobedient farmers were caught and brought to the Nilkuthi and were beaten up by sticks. ¹²¹

The farmers did not get any justice in spite of applying to the District Magistrate to get rid of the tortures of the Indigo Planters, rather the Magistrate used to favour the Planters in every occasion. The tenants and others applied to the Government of Bengal complaining against the partialty of the District Magistrate on the question of due justice. But it is a matter of regret that their appears were never taken into account.¹²²

The farmers could not bear the torture and came in groups to Jagendranarayan for justice and favour, if any. He advised the Planters to do their business without making any trouble to the subjects and ryots of the region. The Indigo Planters did not pay heed to his request, rather they tempted Jagendranarayan with huge money and Jagendranarayan not only refused but also decided to save the victims even at the cost of his life and property.¹²³

This situation was sufficient for a Peasant uprising and this occurred as a protest against the torture and in justice by the indigo planters. Jagendranarayan seems to be happy with this development and naturally encouraged his subjects to apply even physical force against the planters. Within a very short time thousands of people assembled in response to his call. The indigo planters hired *Lathials* (club men) to suppress the challenge of the peasants but they failed. At last they took help from the government, filed fake cases against the rebels, and put them into the prison.¹²⁴ In spite of that the rebellion could not be suppressed. The more the torture grew the stronger the movement had been. With the encouragement of Jagendranarayan some rebel farmers looted some indigo-kuthis. The looted seeds of indigo were thrown into the water of Shayamsagar of Puthia, and the water of it became discoloured and stinky. Some indigo centres including Chandrakola

became deserted.¹²⁵ The effort of Jogendranarayan became successful when the indigo planters stopped their tortures.

It is said that while fighting against the Indigo-planters, Jagendranarayan could not eat, sleep or rest properly. As a result he became sick. Moreover while staying at Wordson Institute in Calcutta, some of his friends induced him to some bad habits. Those friends made him addicted to wine. He left Calcutta but he could not give up wine. Excessive drinking of wine and irregularity in life-style drew him towards death. Because of the tortures of the English, at first, he did not agree to receive treatment of the doctor. Later at the request of his relatives he was taken to the Civil Surgeon of Rampur-Boalia (present Rajshahi) for treatment. He was treated there for 4/5 months,¹²⁶ but with no improvement of his health and at last he died at the age of 21 years 11 months only on 29 Baishakh of 1269 B.S., i.e., 1862.¹²⁷ At the time of his death no one of the royal family was present there. Only *patguru* of Rampur Boalia Durgadas Bhattacharaya, Dewan Giridhar Ray, an employee named Keshab Chandra Sanyal and an ordinary servant were present at his time of death¹²⁸.

Anticipating his imminent death, he prepared a draft of will. He wanted to sign it in presence of witnesses. No sooner had he written 'j' the pen fell down from his hand. He could not write any more. He transferred all his property in the name of his wife Sharatsundari.¹²⁹ Long before his death in 1855 he allowed his wife to keep an adopted child through a will.

Jagendranarayan was an extraordinary zamindar with many qualities of hearts. His personality was rare and the example he set in Puthia as well as in Rajshahi in reality a superb one and his concern and feeling for the welfare

of his subjects is exceptionally brilliant in the history of the zamindars of Rajshahi..

Maharani Sharatsundari

A Brahmin named Harinath Sanyal lived in a village called Tajpur under Singra police station of Natore district.¹³⁰ He had a daughter named Suryamayee. Suryamayee was married to Raja Rajendranarayan, Raja of four ana of Puthia. She became a widow at an early age and became an heir of his property. She was a tactical and intelligent woman. At her daughter's request Harinath Sanyal came to live at Puthia leaving the village Tajpur. He became the owner of a vast property within a very short time.¹³¹

The son of Harinath was Gopinath. He was also an intelligent person. By taking zamindari and lease he earned a property of about Rs. 25000.00. He became famous for his serving the guests. Besides, he used to spend a lot of money for social and religion festivals like *Dol* and the worship of goddess Durga.

He was father of two sons. After reaching adolescence he died.¹³² His younger son Bhairabnath became the sole owner of the property after his father's death. Bhairabnath was a conservative Hindu. Like his father he also performed all the religious rituals and served the guests. The name of his wife was Drabamayee. She was a shy, polite and virtuous woman. Sharatsundari was born to Bhairabnath and Drabamayee on the 20 Aswin of 1256 B.S, i.e., 1849¹³³. Bhairabnath had no son. After the marriage of Sharatsundari, Bhairabnath Sanyal became father of another daughter named Srisundari. Sharatsundari was very much loved by her parents. Sharatsundari was the only daughter in the family of the possessor of a huge property of Bhairabnath.

This is often found that the child of a well-to-do family becomes proud and juvenile. But Sharatsundari did not have a bit of pride. The human virtues like modesty, fellow-feeling, truthfulness were found in her.¹³⁴ The influence of the honest life of her parents induced her. When she was about 4/5 years old, she used to help her mother in different ways in the *Puja* (worshipping). She herself used to do worshipping of the gods, *Japa* and *Brata* while playing. She observed attentively all the *Pujas* that were held in the house of Bhairabnath and often she played the part of *Nittapuja* (daily worship) and *Japa* sitting in the style and posture of worshipping god. Discussions and debates on religion was a daily occasion in the house of Bhairabnath. In the nights of Thursday, the Hindu women sat together and talked on the legend of Laxmi. Only at the age five, Sharatsundari learnt many aspects of the character of Laxmi. She sought permission from her parents for fasting on the eves of *Shibratri* or *Janmastami*. Nobody allowed a tender-aged girl to fasting. Her love for religion was thus marked from her early childhood. She loved duck and pigeons in her childhood, but she preferred to collect flowers and worship of Thakur (Thakurpuja) more.¹³⁵

Bhairabnath had a guest-house which was visited by many people. Bhairabnath served the guests himself. Many guests also came to their house. Sharatsundari enjoyed the duty of distributing of foods among the guests. Those service to the guests induced many qualities in her. Sometimes, she gave away most part of her meal to others and used to eat the rest. She had no attraction to good and rich foods. She had also no fascination towards rich clothes.¹³⁶

She could not bear the sufferings of others.¹³⁷ Her parents tried to make her an ideal woman from the childhood. Though she had all the virtues, she

could not read and write. At that time girl's education was not in vogue in Puthia as well as in Rajshahi proper. A superstition then haunted in the minds of the people that if women were educated, they would become widow at an early age. Based on this superstition, Vairabnath did not educate his daughter.¹³⁸

She was plumpy. She was not beautiful, but for her body stature and delicacy anybody could not but be attracted to her beauty.¹³⁹

Considering the versatile genius of his daughter, Bhairabnath always thought of marrying his daughter off to an appropriate groom. All on a sudden a suitable groom was found for Sharatsundari and her nuptial bond was settled with Jogendranarayan, the Zamindar of Puthia. In Baishakh of 1262 B.S., i.e., 1855, when Sharatsundari was only 5 years and 7 moths old, she was married.¹⁴⁰

Sharatsundari had sharp intelligence. She could touch the feet of (*Pranam*) her mother-in-law without the identification of others at that tender age among the many women present there. Her mother-in law Durgasundari was pleased at that. She was passing her days happily with the affection of her mother-in-law in her in-laws house. But suddenly the mother-in-law died.¹⁴¹ After the death of his mother, Jogendranarayan brought one of her aunts to look after his wife.

Within a short time, she won the heart of her husband; her husband also provided her with better clothes and luxury goods. To make her husband happy she used them for some days and then gave them away to others, because she had no attention fascination towards clothes or luxury. Everybody was charmed at her simple and easy behaviour. In a short time, Sharatsundari trained herself up in all the household chores. She always kept the necessary

things of Jogendranarayan ready so that when they were wanted they could be supplied. For these acts of his wife, Jogendranarayan was attracted to his wife. Jogendranarayan had to go to Calcutta for education at the instruction of the Revenue Board. Then Sharatsundari had to pass her time alone.

At the behaviour of Sharatsundari, Jogendranarayan could understand that she had become adroit in house-hold affairs. She was only 9 years old when Jogendranarayan went to Calcutta. The officials and employees always took her permission in all matters. In complicated cases, she gave the solution on the basis of the previous system and on the opinions of the faithful employees. She never did anything that was disgraceful to anybody. As she was the Rani (the royal wife). She was needed to influence in serving the gods, and welcoming the guest and relatives.¹⁴² The Maharani arranged the cooking of all the orphans and widows who lived inside the palace. She also allowed cooking for some who wanted to eat differently, they had no bar allowed to cook separately.

Raja Jogendranarayan returned from Wordson Institution and was engaged in conflicts with the Indigo-planters. He had to work very hard for which he could not bathe, sleep or eat properly. He could not sleep for more than two or three hours and as a result his health broke down and died on 29 Baishakh of 1269 B.S., which has already been mentioned earlier.

When her husband died, Sharatsundari was only 13 years old. After becoming widow, she duly performed all the rituals including *Ekatyashi*, *Shravan Dadashi*, *Janmastami*, *Mahastami of Aswin and Chaitra*, *Ramnabami Shibratri and son*.¹⁴³ She saved her head and avoided using oil and followed it till her death. She learned all the formalities and rituals as may be expected

from an honest widow.¹⁴⁴ Surrounded by the other women of the royal family she lay and slept on the floor. In this way being loyal to her dead husband she passed her days. As regards food she had no luxury. What a Hindu widow should eat, she ate without any hesitation. She ate sitting on the floor and her food was served in a kodali (leaf of the banana tree) as the poor people do. He did not bother to eat together with other widows who were given shelter by her.¹⁴⁵

She was very respectful to her husband. She never lagged behind in following any rituals of Hindu religion as she had deep love and firm belief in the religion. She was so conservative that she hesitated meeting foreign men and women.¹⁴⁶

After the death of Jogendranarayan, the property went under the Jurisdiction of the Court of Wards. Though she did not get the direct Zamindari, she continued to serve the subjects as a full fledged zamindar. She could not make up with the allowance given to her from the Court of Wards, so from that earning of the property that she got as dowry during her marriage, she spent for the service of the guests, gods, sick and the poor. Observing these the district Collector gave Sharatsundari to look after the property of her husband when she was 15 years old.¹⁴⁷

Sharatsundari had no intention to take over the charge of zamindari, but at the request and insistence of her father as well as of the, faithful old employees and subjects, she took the responsibility of zamindari. Besides, she loved her subjects very much and considered the service of the subjects as her service to god. She saw her husband struggling against the indigo planters on behalf of the subjects. Thus it is likely that the unfailing devotion

to her husband induced her to take over the charge of the zamindari following the death of her husband.¹⁴⁶

After taking the charge of zamindari, Sharatsundari appointed her father Bhairabanth Sanyal as the honorary Manager of the estate. Bhairabnath ran the duties carefully assigned to him.

According to the permission letter of her husband she took Rajanikanta, the second child of Keshab Chandra Chakravarty of the village Gundighara of Rajshahi district as her adopted child in 1866. She distributed a lot on the occasion of the very day of adoption. She named the adopted child as Jatindranarayan on 27 Ashar of 1278 B.S., i.e., 1871 and spent about Rs. 30,000.00 for the ceremony of the adoption in Magh of 1281 B.S., i.e., 1874.¹⁴⁹

The Maharani Sharatsundari did everything to give her son the best possible education. When this son was 8/9 years old, she requested Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar to select and send a good teacher. Accordingly Vidyasagar selected a graduate of Sanskrit College and sent him as the house tutor for Jatindranarayan¹⁵⁰. But the said adopted son had no attention to study rather preferred passing time either playing with the pigeon or playing with the wicket boys. Sir Radharaman Sen did the job of a house tutor for a long time and tried to educate the Rajkumar but he could not succeed in that. Excessive motherly affection stood on the way for the future of the growing Rajkumar. The Rani loved the Prince more than a son of her own.¹⁵¹ For her excessive affection Sharatsundari had to suffer a lot. Once the Rajkumar Jatindranarayan fled away from home, which made the Rani much worried. Afterwards he was searched out from a place called Atrai, (now the district of Naogaon). Thus being involved in many unpleasant works and associations,

Jatindranarayan troubled the whole life of the Rani very much. In spite of suffering a lot in the hands of the Prince, the Rani affection had never diminishd.¹⁵²

Raj Kumar Jatindranarayan was married to Hemanta Kumari, the daughter of Bhuban Mohan Ray of vilage Dhulla of Manikganj sub-division (now district) on the 24 Falgun of 1287 B.S., i.e.,1880. The rituals of marriage were performed at Puthia. Bhuban Ray brought her daughter to Puthia to marry her daughter off.¹⁵³ The Maharani spent money more than one lakh and a half rupees in this marriage ceremony. More than one lakh rupees were spent for the help of the Pandits of Sanskrit scriptures, scholars and the poor people. Although a lot of money was also spent for the enjoyment of the subjects in the form of songs, concerts and enjoyment. On this occasion about one thousand and five hundred Brahmins were invited from Bengal and Kashi, Mithila, Konnakunja and many other places. Besides food, the scholars (Pandits) were served good accomodation and other best possible assenities. A huge amount was spent for the distribution of clothes and cash money among the poor and the needy.¹⁵⁴

At this stage Rai Sharatsundari could not or did not like the functions of the royal palace, So she proposed her father to arrange pilgrimage for her. When it was settled Sharatsundari started for Goyadham with her father in 1272 B.S., i.e., 1865. After performing religious rituals she went to Kashi on foot. She walked ten miles and performed her pilgrimage-bath, she went to Vanaras dham. Afterwards from there, she went to Prayag, Mathura, Vrindaban and again returned to Varanashidham. She travelled *Chaturshiti crose* to reach Vrindaban.¹⁵⁵ After returning to Kashi, Bhairabnath gradually became sick. he expressed his desire to stay at Kashi and insisted Sharatsundari to go back

to Puthia. But Sharatsundari did not agree to go back to Puthia thinking she would not be able to get the opportunity to nurse him before his death. She started to serve and nurse her father sitting at his feet. At last in Baishakh of 1273 B.S., i.e., 1866, his father Bhairabnath breathed his last in the lap of his affectionate daughter. Sharatsundari completed all the rituals of cremation at Kashidham.¹⁵⁶

Returning to Puthia Saratsundari ran her royal duties properly. The Maharani always looked after the well-being of her subjects. Being charmed at her rule the then Government wanted to award her with the title "The Rani" on the 2nd Chaitra of 1281 B.S., i.e., 1874. The Government let her know this through a letter. In reply to the letter the Rani informed that she was veiled women and thus it was not possible on her part to receive the title attending the court.¹⁵⁷ Later she was awarded with the title "The Maharani" being satisfied with her rule in 1284 B.S., i.e., 1877¹⁵⁸. The Maharani never hankered after title and worldly fame. Her only aim was to improve the condition of the people under the zamindari.

After marriage of the Prince, the Maharani was mentally preparing to go to Kashi leaving the royal power in the hand of the Prince. It was the Rani's desire to live in solitude being free from the territorial affairs. After the marriage, the father-in-law of the Kumar tried to influence his son-in-law. In many occasions he tried to poison the ears of the Prince against the Rani, his mother. As Prince Jatindranarayan was very respectful to his mother, often he did not pay heed to him; rather expressed his annoyance.¹⁵⁹ The father-in-law's desire was that the Rani might hand over the change of the zamindari on his son-in-law. But the Rani wished to hand over the power at the time of her son's maturity. At last when the Kumar became adult, the Rani handed

over the zamindari to him. But the mother-devoted Kumar was not ready to free his mother completely from the responsibility of looking after the estate. While in Puthia the Prince's health started breaking down. He also drank too much wine like his forefathers. As a result his health deteriorated quickly. Realising his condition the Kumar made a will at the suggestion of some faithful employees. It was written in the Will that in case of the demise of the prince Jatindranarayan, the power of looking after the estate of Puthia would remain under the charge of his mother, the Maharani (i.e., Sarat Sundari).¹⁶⁰

At last in the month of Ashar in 1290 B.S., i.e., 1883, when the Rani was determined to go to Kashi and remain permanently there a settlement on the valuation of the zamindari was signed between the mother and the son on 14 Ashar 1290 B.S., i.e., 1883.

The followings were the provisions of the said agreement :

a) The annual income incurred from the personal property (i.e., from the donation of her husband) was amounted to roughly Rs. 25,455.00. Out of this total amount the Rani would get Rs.20,000 after paying the tax Rs.5,455.00 to the Govt.¹⁶¹

b) From the additional property and out income the Rani would get Rs.800.00 (approximately) out of the total amount Rs.943.00 (approximately) and the rest one i.e., Rs.143.00 would be allotted for the payment of tax to the Govt.

c) After the calculation of the valuation of the property of the estate it was found that the Rani had a personal loan of Rs. 84472.00 and the Rani had deposited to the Kumar Rs. 182749.00. Thus it was decided that the Kumar

would pay back the loan out the deposited money and both the Kumar and the Rani would have no obligation of each other.¹⁶²

The Maha Rani started for Kashi on 20 *Augrahayana* of 1290 B.S. While setting out she did not meet the Kumar.¹⁶³ At Kashidham the Rani took her shelter at her own house which was acquired beforehand. Her sincere desire was that she would pass her days in solitude in her pilgrimage at Kashidham.¹⁶⁴

After the death of Kumar (Prince) the Maharani went to Puthia on many occasions.¹⁶⁵ After the son's death family disturbances increased a lot and to get rid of this unhealthy situation she set out for pilgrimage for the second time.¹⁶⁶ The Rani went to Kashi from Puthia in the first half of *Augrahayana* of 1292 B.S., i.e., 1885. Afterwards she went out for pilgrimage tour. While going on pilgrimage she left her daughter-in-law with the later's father and took her mother with her. She went to Ayodhya (Oudh) via Vrindachal and Prayag and travelled 28/30 miles on foot all around Ayodhya. Then when she had completed her travel of Elaban, Chitrakut, Onkareshwar, Narmadeswar, some parts of Dandakaranya, Naimisyabanna, Puskar, Kurukshetra, Haridwar, Kankhal, Kangra, Mathura, Vrindaban and many other places and came to Jalamukhi, her mother was attacked by cholera and died there. After that the Rani did not go for any more pilgrimage and came back to Varanashi and completed the death rituals of her mother as per customs. On her pilgrimage the Rani used give away donations entertained many saints in feasts in the holy places like Ayodhya, Puskar and many other.

Finishing her pilgrimage tour the Rani met her daughter-in-law staying at Varanashi. The Rani experienced the same conflict between the two groups after her pilgrimage that she found before going out for pilgrimage. Though

the daughter-in-law Hemantakumari was tender-aged, she was very intelligent. She requested the Rani to transfer some of the conspiring officials and to dismiss others. The soft hearted Maharani Sharatsundari did not dismiss anybody. From this point the Maharani decided to give up the charge of the zamindari. When she was coming back to Puthia, she wanted to bring her daughter-in-law with her, but as the paternal guardians of the daughter-in-law did not agree with the idea, the Rani came back to Puthia leaving her daughter-in-law and grand daughter with her parents.¹⁶⁷

In the month of Aswin of 1293 B.S, i.e., 1886, the Maharani came back to puthia. Just after coming to puthia she expressed her desire to give up the responsibility of the estate.¹⁶⁸ Everybody forbade her to give the charge. But she did not pay heed to anyone. She applied to the collectorate of Rajshahi to take the property under the charge of Court of Wards until the bride Hemanta Kumari reached puberty. The instruction was delaying. Meanwhile she started suffering from Piles, acidity, diarrhoea, Edema, slight fever. The doctors prescribed medicine for her cure, but due to hyper-acidity she vomited out everything. So she did not take any medicine.¹⁶⁹ The condition of the Maharani was deteriorating day by day and insisted on her going to *Kashi*. Without waiting for the instruction from the Court of Wards, she set out for *Kashi* on 10 Falgun 1293 B.S. i.e., 1886 and reached Varanahi on 15 *Falgun* of the same year. In her journey the Rani took her younger sister, brother-in-laws, wives of her *Gurus* (masters) and many other relatives. After staying 10 days of Varanashi the Rani breathed her last at 2. P. M. on 15 *Falgun* 1293 B.S., i.e., 1886. At the time of her death she was 37 years 05 months and 05 days old.¹⁷⁰

The Maharani Sharatsundari ran her zamindari of Puthia for 18 years from 1865 to 1883. During her tenure she not only property administered the estate but also expanded her land property by buying land worth about Rs. 10 lakhs. During her Zamindari the income became almost double.¹⁷¹

She was a successful Zamindar. She resolved the long standing conflict with the Wordson Company which started during her husband. She was compelled to file cases against the company on some issues at stake and she got the verdict in her favour. Her period of take-over of the estate witnessed an example how a female zamindar could be able to solve problem in favour of the tenants an poor people. During the famine of 1873 and 1874 she waived taxes of the ryots. She did not forfeit anyone's tax-free land. She considered possession of the land as the best document. Even if the land was found tax-free in the survey, she did never forfeit that or impose tax on that piece of land.¹⁷²

A terrible flood occurred in Rajshahi region in 1871 and people of the low regions came to the Rani for help. Rani Sharatsundari fed about four hundred people and many cattleheads for more than a month. Again during the famine of 1873-74 she fed about five thousand people everyday. Later when the number of people increased she paid money.¹⁷³ Many times during winter she distributed winter clothes and blanket among the distressed of Puthia, Rampur-Boalia (Rajshahi) and Varanashi through open ammuement. She also distributed shawl worth about Rs. 10,000 to the Pandas on pilgrimage at Kashidham.

The Maharani donated a lot for the religious matters. She used to invite sincere Brahmins and helped them to her best and invited scholars to the capital, fed them and paid them adequately. Only for the sake of donation she used to bear the expenditure of *Annapurnapuja* and *Jagatdatripuja* every year at Puthia. She build developed temples at Puthia, Vrindaban, Kashidhom spending a lot of money.¹⁷⁴

She spent a lot for the improvement of Medicare. She set up two first class hospitals at Lalpur and Zhaoil. The Rani appointed a good herbal specialist (Kabiraj) and a doctor at Puthia. She also appointed a kabiraj (i.e., Physician) for the treatment of the distressed at Kaligram¹⁷⁵. Besides, she donated a lot of money for the treatment of the sick.

As regards education, Maharani Sharatsundari was enthusiastic towards the spread of education. She introduced stipend to the students at Puthia and Madhukhali and set up minor school in Lalpur and Zhaoil villages. She also set up a Sanskrit school at lalpur, Puthia and Zhaoil. Many authors got her financial help for the printing of their books. Renowned Protap Chandra Roy CSI was greatly helped by the Rani for the publication of the Bengali translation of Mahabharata and succeeded in communicating with the public.¹⁷⁶ She also donated eleven thousand rupees at the time for the construction of the surrounding walls and the buildings of the Rajshahi College.¹⁷⁷

She did not only think of the well being of the common people but also tried ber best to keep good relation with the royal families. For various disputes the shareholders stopped going to each others' house. The Maharani herself visited all the families. She was very since in her manner with the shareholders.

She arranged monthly payment for the wife of the youngest shareholders Rani Brajasundari, wife of Bhairabnarayan. After the death of Brajasundari, she also arranged monthly payment for her daughter Sharatkamini. In the marriage of Gopalendranarayan of *Ek Ani*, the Court of Wards did not grant adequate money. So the Rani donated Rs. 6,000 in the marriage ceremony.¹⁷⁸

At the death of this Maharani the people of Rajshahi suffered a great loss. The life of this Maharani began with grief and ended in disaster. Because at the time of her death, she could not meet her only grandson. She came to her father-in law's house leaving her parents at the age of 05 years and 07 months. Her conjugal life lasted only 07 years and then she became a widow. After that she passed the life of a widow for a period of 24 years and 10 months. After getting the charge of zamindari, she conducted it smoothly for 18 years. During this period she donated a lot in various fields including education, philanthropic activities, religion, assistance to the poor. She never tortured her subjects. In recognition of her work, she got the title "Maharani" (The Great Rani) from the Government. But it can be said that her administration was largely dependent on bureaucracy. Her instruction was not always abided by. Especially when the Rani ordered for any donation, the bureaucrats gave only half the amount. Besides, when after her father's death she wanted to visit her ailing mother, she gave up her decision for the opposition of the bureaucrats. They argued that if she would visit the dilapidated house of her parents. This would amount to the violation of the royal dignity and purdah of the family. But when she went for pilgrimage on foot and bathed in the river it would never be considered a violation of the above tradition. It is evident that the violation of *Pardah* was more likely to be in the river-ghat than in her father's house. She did not go to visit her

mother acting upon the advice of the royal bureaucrats. Nevertheless when the Puthia Raj family was plunged in the various flaws and vices and it was difficult to keep the fame of the royal family, she succeeded in increasing the reputation of the royal family. From this point of view she can be called a successful ruler of contemporary Bengal may India.

Maharani Hemanta Kumari

The Maharani Hemanta Kumari was born at Dhulla village under Manikganj sub-division of Dacca district (Now Mainkgonj District) in 1869 A.D. Her father was Bhuban Mahan Roy and mother was Durgasundari Devi. She did not come from a well-to-do family. Durgasundari's father was a small zaminder of Hatipara. At that time Bhuban Ray had only a few thatched huts. Bhuban Ray and Durgasundari gave birth to three daughters named Basantkumari, Hemantakumari and Kusumkumari. They had their only born in 1888. Besides, two months before giving birth to a son, they took an adopted child named Hemchandra Bagchi, the youngest son of Govinda Bagchi of Dhulla. Later he named him Nagendra Mohan.¹⁷⁹ The first daughter Basantkumari was married to the Zamindar of Tatiband (Pabna), Gopal Govinda. This marriage ceremony took place in 1282. The brotehr of Gopal Govinda Kunjalal Bhaduri then served as an accountant of Panch Ani royal family of Puthia. Kunjalal Bhaduri proposed the marriage of kumar Jatindranarayan with Hemantakumari.¹⁸⁰ By the effort of Abani Mohan Bhattachorya and Kunjalal Bhaduri twelve year old Hematakumari was married off with Jatindranarayan on 14 Falgun of 1287 B.S., i.e., 1880.¹⁸¹

The father of Hemantakumari, Bhuban Mahan Ray brought his daughter to Puthia. The marriage ceremony was held at Puthia. Bhuban Ray did not

have to spend any money in his daughter's marriage. The Maharani bore all the expenditure of the marriage and made huge festivities.¹⁸²

After spending a very short time in conjugal life, Hemantakumari became a widow being pregnant of six months. When her husband died she was at Calcutta with her parents. Though Kumar Jatindranarayan was extravagant in his life-style, he loved his wife very much. After the death of Kumar, the Maharani called in the widow daughter-in-law along with her parents to kashidham and kept them in the garden-house of Durgakunda and herein was born the princess Surendrabala.¹⁸³

Before the death of Kumar Jatindranarayan, he bequeathed his property in the name of his mother Sharatsundari in 1882 (14 *Aswin* 1289 B.S.) that the Rani did not know. Later when she knew that his wife was pregnant, he code-sealed a copy of the will and preserved it with the Registrar of District Registry office in Falgun 1290 B.S. i.e., 1883. In the will the mother devoted Jatindranarayan kept the power of the running of the Estate in his mother's hand and vested the responsibility of his wife on his mother. According to the will the (Rani Mata) had to take the charge of the property.¹⁸⁴

Centering the will on running the Estate, opposition emerged among the supporters of the Rani and the daughter-in-law. As Hemantakumari was prematurely widowed, the Rani kept her in the garden house of Durgakunda with her relatives to give her peace and comfort. Rani Sharatsundari supported all the expenditure of the garden house of Durgakunda. Besides, acting upon the advice of Bhuban Mahan, Rani Sharatsundari arranged *Annaprasan* (ceremony of first feeding of rice) and marriage ceremony of Kusumkumari, the younger sister of the widow daughter-in-law here in the garden house of

Durgakunda.¹⁸⁵ After all an conflict grew in the royal family and this conflict was over after the death of the Maharani Sharatsundari.

After the death of Sharatsundari, according to the prevailing laws, the zamindari again went in charge of the Court of Wards. Because at that time Hemantakumari was a minor girl. Later Hemanta Kumar bacame matured and she applied to the Court to get back the property. For this application a confusion arose as regards the actual age of Hemanatakumari. In the Will of Raja Jatindranarayan, the age was mentioned twelve years, but in the application 16 year was mentioned. The Will was signed on 11 *Aswin* 1289, i.e., 1882. The question was raised on 1-4-87 with the Court. Advocate General Paul pleaded in favour of the Rani. He showed a number of arguments that the Rani had become adult and she was able to run the estate. He sought an investigation in this regard and the court approved it. Her party tried to its best to get the report of the investigation in favour of the Rani.¹⁸⁶ As the report came in favour of the Rani, she got back the property from the court in 1294 B.S. On 04 *Falgun* 1293 B.S., i.e., 1886. The Maharani Sharatsundari made a trustee and nominated the daughter in law Hemantakumari. If the Rani could not set up Sri Kali and Shib, then 75% percent of her property would go to Sri Jagannarayneshwar of Shib at Vanares Dham and 25% would go to serve the idol of Bhuban Mahan Ray. However, the dughter in law acted upon according to the Will.¹⁸⁷

When Hemantakumari took the charge of her property from the Court of Wards, she was only eighteen years old. Coming from an ordinary family she spent a very little time with her husband in the royal family and after her husband's death most of the time she spent outside of the capital. She could not have the clear conception of running the zamindari in this short period.

As a result, the charge of running the estate and other responsibilities fell upon her father Bhuban Mahan Ray and maternal uncle Bhairabendra. In fact, Bhuban Mahan Ray and Bhairabendra became the chief executives of the *Panch Ani* Estate. As her father and maternal uncle ran the estate, so most of the employees of all level of the estate came from the eastern Bengal. Everything even in terms of marriages of her own relatives, to all arrangements of stipend or livelihood were given by the Rani. She stopped many former stipend and misbehaved with many others. As a result, Hemantakumari had to felt into a great trouble later on.

The most remarkable event of Rani Hemantakumari's reign was the case of the abolition of the practice of adoption of Jaynath Chakravarty. This Jaynath Chakravarty was the maternal cousin of Raja Jagendranarayan. To establish his own successor, he filed a case against Kumar Jatindranarayan the Rajshahi Sub-Judge Court on the question of his illegal claim over the estate. Kumar Jaynath demanded that the mother Kumar Jatindranarayan and Raja Jagendranarayan belonged to '*Shandilya gotra*. Being a member of the community, adoption was not legal and so after the death of Rani Sharatsundari, the son of Jagendranarayan's aunt's son Jaynath would be the heir of the $\frac{3}{4}$ part of the estate. It was infact if the claim of the plaintiff (i.e., Jaynath). It is said that the anti-Rani group was behind the case¹⁸⁸. The case continued for a long time. Jaynath died during the case. His minor son continued to run the case. At last the dispute was reconciled. The casing side acknowledged the legality of the adoption of Raja Jatindranarayan. On the other hand, according to the condition of the reconciliation the plaintiff was to pay Rs. 4,000/-. Later on the son of Jaynath was given the post of Tax-collector. According to another document, the possession of Hemantakumari was acknowledged. As

a result of the agreement the flaws with regard to the succession question were removed¹⁸⁹. The case of adoption complication had a peaceful end. While the case was running, the father of Hemantakumari, Bhuban Mahan Ray died in Calcutta while he was under treatment.

Rani Hemantakumari led a very simple life. She donated a lot of money in worshipping and philanthropic work. Like the forefathers of *Panch Ani Raj Family* she continued to donate for worship and *Vog*.¹⁹⁰ The Maharani introduced annual *Jagaddatri Puja* at Puthia in 1913. She built a huge brass-built *Rath* and made it a permanent festival. She also built a beautiful temple spending about a lakh Rupees at Puridham (Orissa) in the style of Venares temples and allotted a property having an annual income worth Rs. 6,000.00 for the worship of the gods (Hemanthnath Idol). In Aswin of 1321 B.S. i.e., 1914, she went to her paternal area and invited many Brahmin and gave them adequate payment. She distributed a Benarasi sari, a brass plate, two brass bowls, some spices, and white bracelets and *sindur* for each bride, a *Garad* for each widow and a shawl for each men.¹⁹¹ Besides, she donated a lot of money to orphans, widows and poor people.

For her profound religious faith, she went on many pilgrimage in spite of her poor health condition. She travelled to many places including Haridwar, Shantipur, Nabadwip, Brindaban, Gaya, Kashi, Prayag, Ayodha, Kurusketra, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Shakshi Gopal, Rameswar, Setubandh, Chandranath, Sitakundu, Kamakhya.

After the building of Baikuntha Dharm at Puri the Rani used to go to Puri every Vaishakh and returned to Calcutta after Rathjatra. She used to go to Venares before the Durga Puja and returned to Calcutta after about two months. After that she spent most of the time at Puridham.¹⁹²

The Maharani was also very interested in education. She spent a lot of money for building schools and running them. For teaching Sanskrit literature and language she established Hemantakumari Snaskrit College under the administration of Rajshahi College in July, 1904.¹⁹³ At the time of the establishment of the college had no building, so classes were held in Rajshahi College Building. For constructing the College building the Rani donated Rs.17,000.00. Besides, for maintenance of the college she donated a property whose annual income was Rs.1780.00 ¹⁹⁴ After the name of the Rani, the College was named 'Maharani Hemantakumari Sanskrit College'.¹⁹⁵ At the primary stage the Rani Hematakumari used to bear all the expenses of the College. For the staying of the outside students, the Rani build a hostel named 'Maharani Hemtakumari Hostel'. There the students could live without any fees.¹⁹⁶ She set up 'Maharani Hemantakumari High English School at Zhawal of Mymensingh and a school named 'Maharani Hemantakumari School at Nandina (Mymensingh).¹⁹⁷ In Paush of 1326 B.S., i.e., 1919. Dhurla Middle English was renamed after her father's name "Bhuban Mahan High English School for the donation of the Rani. The Rani donated Rs. 20,000 for building the School-building. Besides, she used to help with Rs. 150 every month.¹⁹⁸ For the supply of pure drinking water in Rajshahi, the Maharani Hemantakumari allotted lands and for its construction, she donated Rs. 65,000. After the name of the Rani, it was named 'Maharani Hemantakumari Water Works'.¹⁹⁹

For the successful rule and profuse donation of the Rani, during the reign of Lord Carzon in 1308 B.S., i.e.,1901 , she was awarded the title "Rani" (Rani) and later on 1st January 1927 during the reign of Lord Irwin she was adorned with the title "Maharani (The Maharani).²⁰⁰

The Rani married off Princess Surendrabala with Viswasser Sanyal son of Princess Sharatkamini and grandson of late Raja Vhairabnarayan and Rani Brajasundari in 1895 (25 *Falgun* 1302 B.S.). The Rani spent huge amount of money in this marriage ceremony in the form of entertainment, donation and festivities. The Rani was very affectionate to Viswasser. She left Viswasser Babu as her representative to run the administration during her absence. After their marriage Princess Surendrabala and Viswasser Babu stayed in the Rajbari. Their conjugal life was happy. Princess Surendrabala was a very modest and gentle lady. Luxury, pride and boastfulness could never touch her. The Princess suddenly attacked by epilepsy in 1905 (*Poush* 1312 B.S.) and became senseless the nerve of the brain being severed. The noted doctors of Calcutta treated her. After remaining unconscious for three or four days, she breathed her last leaving her three sons named Amianarayan, Shachindranarayan and Nikhilesswarnarayan. On 18 *Poush* 1312 B.S., i.e., 1905.²⁰¹

The Maharani Hemantakumari loved her grandsons very much. After the death of the Princess the love increased. A complex situation arose whether the Rani would take an adopted child. A group was sympathetic towards the grandsons. Another group was selfish and wanted the Rani to take an adopted child. The Rani was very intelligent. She decided in her mind that she would make a Will in the name of her three grandsons, but she never disclosed it. Meanwhile a fake case was filed as regards taking adoption.²⁰² The case was proved fake. After the solution of the case, the Rani discussed with many barristers and pleaders, about the leaving of the property in favour of her grandsons. The Rani wanted not to divide the property while leaving the Will. Till the life-time of the Rani, she had her control intact. The management of running the whole estate remained in the common hand. According to the

conceding letter each grandson would get one-third of the property. She signed another agreement in which it was mentioned that the property would remain united but each would get his share of profit and their property would not be distributed during their life-time.

It was decided that each grandson would make own their own trustee and nominate the Rani and their father Viswessar Babu as their nominee. They would also arrange that the Maharani would get Rs.3,000.00, Viswessar Babu Rs. 300.00, Trust official Rs. 500, and their wives would get Rs.500.00 as monthly payments.²⁰³

The Maharani was suddenly attacked by paralysis after two/three years of her daughter's marriage. After a lot of treatment she regained a bit physical health and could move somehow. Her health started deteriorating gradually. She suffered from agony not only for poor physical condition but also for the internal conflict of the Rajbari. She was also attacked by diabetes. As a result her health became from bad to worse. In spite of much effort her condition did not improve. At last she died at the garden house near Durgakunda of Kashi in 1942.

She was one of the best zamindars of Puthia as well as Rajshahi region. In spite of being born in an impoverished Brahmin family, she had shown her aptitude in running of the zamindari. Though there were disputes and conflicts among the royal bureaucrats and relatives, she was not influenced by that at all. She was always unmoved in her own decision. Her sisters and paternal relatives forgot her help and engaged in intrigues and conspiracy. In spite of this she was sympathetic towards them. The contribution she had made towards the development of service to the subjects, religion, education and medicare,

the inhabitants Puthia and Rajshahi still bear the testimony of the glorious chapter of her reign. In recognition of her activities she was awarded the title "Maharani" (The Great Rani) from the Viceroy of India. In fact she was the fitting successor of her mother in law Sharatsundari.

The Last Phase of *Panch Ani Estate (Bara Taraf)*

The three grandsons of Hemantakumari – Amiyanarayan, Shachindranarayan and Nikhileswarnarayan became the owner of the property and took possession of it during the life time of the Maharani Hemantakumari. The Trust formed by the Rani continued functioning till the abolition of zamindari in 1951.

Prince Amiyanarayan was an very calm and quiet and sweet-spoken gentleman. Though he was reserved, he maintained courtesy. The Prince was married to Srimati Shantirani, daughter of Siddheswar Moitra of Allahabad.

Prince Shachindranarayan was married to Srimati Shatadal Vashini, the second daughter of one of the late zamindars of Puthia Bhavaprasad Khan Chaudhury.²⁰⁴ He was humourous, intelligent, witty, good speaker, enthusiastic worker, but very much extravagant. He was a member of the Provincial Council of United Bengal for a long time. After the partition of India by virtue of his extraordinary qualities and scholarship, he was elected a member of compiling the Constitution of Pakistan. He was a popular zamindar and is said to be a follower of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansadev.²⁰⁵

The youngest brother Nikhileswarnarayan was married to Princess Kohinoor Devi, the daughter of the Maharaja Shantikanda of Muktagacha, Mymensingh. He was a theist religious person. He was fond of Sri Ramkrishna

Paramhansadev. After getting the property he never took the charge of looking after the property. He had no attraction towards wealth and property. He preferred a life of visiting holy places and had pleasure in donating money to the people. While living at Puridham, he wrote and published "Geetabali" which was full of devotional humour.

Till the abolition of the zamindari, the three brothers administered the zamindari together peacefully. No conflict was arisen among them as regards property. Those three brothers was humble, polite, gentle and sophisticated. Like all other regions of Bengal, the Zamindari of Puthia was abolished when the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenenty Act 1951 was passed.

Panch ani (Chota Taraf)

The founder-person of *Panch Ani Chota Taraf* (Youngest side) was Rudranarayan. They were five brothers. The other brothers were – Bhubanendranarayan, Shibendranarayan, Surendranarayan and Raghunarayan. After the death of their father Raja Narendranarayan, Rudranarayan got *Habeli Adi* at Mathura. He left the authority of the zamindari on the eldest brother and took only a small amount for sustenance and possibly lived at Mathura. He never demanded a bit of his father's property during his life time. After the death of Rudranarayan, his only son Krisnendranrayan became the sole owner of the whole property. Krisnendranrayan claimed the portion of his paternal property from Jagannarayan (son of his uncle Bhubanendranarayan). For this Krisnendranarayan also filed a case in the civil court. Afterwards, both the sides reached on a reconciliation on 10 *Poush* 1223 B.S., i.e., 1816 and accordingly Krisnendranrayan got the following properties.

2 *anas* (Approximately) leased land at Laskarpur, 8 *anas* of Durlabhpur, 2 *anas* (approximately) of Bansibadanpur of Murshidabad, 01 *anu* of Khabida Pukuria of Rajshahi, 4 *ana* of Dihi Darshanpara, 2 *ana* (Approximately) of Dihi Deluabari and 4 *anas* of Dihi Fatepur. Besides, the Haveli of Mathura would remain under his jurisdiction.²⁰⁶ The other three brothers of Bhubanendranarayan took very little portion of land and signed no demand document that has been mentioned before.

Krisnendranarayan had no legitimate son. He decided that he would hand over his property to his nephew Vishendranarayan. When Visvendranarayan died a premature death, he changed his opinion. When a conflict and tussle took place between the Puthia estate and Junadaha of Narail, the events took a new turn.²⁰⁷ Raja Krisnendranarayan set out for Srikshetra to see Jagannath Dev. On the way of his return Krisnendranarayan died at Chunakhali of Murshidabad. In this journey he was accompanied by a brother of his Guru named Kashinath Bhaduri. To keep the continuation of the Raj Family he signed a letter of taking an adopted child before his death²⁰⁸. Just after the death of Krisnendranarayan, most of the property were lost. They were auctioned because of the simplicity of Krisnendranarayan²⁰⁹.

According to the letter of the permission letter of Krisnendranarayan, a confusion grew up between his two Ranis—Harasundari and Haripria. Rani Harasundari kept Bhairabendranarayan, the youngest son of Viswasser Moitra of Babultali Murshidabad as her adopted child. On the other hand the younger Rani kept the youngest son of Kamal Sarbabhauma of Puthia as her adopted child. At last a case was filed as regards keeping adopted child. In this case the adoption of the elder Rani was judged valid. As the case continued for a

long time, both the Ranis plunged into debt. The debt of his father and that of adoption put Bhairabendranarayan into great trouble. To repay the loan, he has to sell out a huge portion of his property. He further sold out his property and started a big business in Calcutta. He could make an advantageous position in business. He had 3/4 carts and 7/8 horses for his own use. Suddenly he was attacked by small pox and was died of that. His business assistant misappropriated all the wealth without considering the well-being of his family. Thus the royal family fell into a great crisis. During this financial crisis, the royal family had to live on depending on the Raja of Dighapatia Raja Prasannanath Ray Bahadur²¹⁰.

The Maharani Sharatsundari respected Rani Brajasundari and was devoted to her. Rani Sharatsundari had a good relation with Sharatkamini, the daughter of Rani Brajasundari. Rani Brajasundari used to render all sorts of help to her during her stay at Puthia. He made the arrangement of a monthly payment of Rs.100.00 for the royal family of Chota Taraf (younger side).

After becoming a widow, Rani Brajasundari stayed at the Rajbari of Puthia for some days. She stayed at Puthia at the invitation of Rani Sharatsundari on the occasion of coronation and marriage of Raja Jatindranarayan during the first half of 1861 she went to Kashi accompanying his daughter and son in law. After staying 4 or 5 months at Baluchar of Murshidabad, she started for Kashidham by train. Just after reaching Kashidham, she breathed her last there.

After the death of Rani Brajasundari, Princess Sharatkamini lived at Kashidham with her son Viswasser. Later on Viswasser was married off with Surendrabala, the daughter of Hemantakumari and left the charge of

the whole property on the three sons named Amionarayan, Shachindranarayan and Nikhileswarnaran of *Panch Ani Bara Taraf*. Till the abolition of the zamindari, the total property of *Chota Taraf* and *Bara Taraf* of *Panch Ani* was under their charge.

Three and a Half ana Raj Family (*Saretin ana Rajbansa*)

After the death of Anupnarayan his property was distributed among his four sons namely, Narendranarayan, Rupendranarayan, Madanarayan and Pranarayan.

For being the estate of Naraendranarayan, the other brothers gave up their each half of the share and the total property stood at five and a half Ana (*Sare Panch Ana*) and each brother became the owner of three and a half Ana. This distribution was completed in 1151 B.S., i.e., 1744.²¹¹

Sare Tin Ani Raj Family was evolved from Rupendranarayan Thakur (Tagore). As Rupendranarayan had no male-child, he took Rajendranarayan as his adopted son. After the death of Rupendranarayan, Rajendranarayan became the owner of his property. As the son of Madanarayan Rabindranarayan was childless, he donated one ana tree *gonda* one *Kora* and one *Kranti* share to Rajendranarayan. So the property of Rajendranarayan stood at 03 *anas* and a half plus 01 *ana* 03 *gondas* 01 *kora* 01 *ana*. Hence this Raj Family came to be known as *Char ana* Raj Family.

Rajendranarayan was an able zaminder. His skill and efficiency increased the fame of his zamindari. Being satisfied with his work the then English Government honoured him with the title Raja²¹². The other two brothers of Rajendranarayan also entrusted their property with Rajendranarayan, and so

he looked after 07 and a half Ana property including his own 04 and a half Ana. After running his administration very skillfully, he died in 1205 B.S., i.e., 1798 . Before his death he permitted his wife Suryamani to keep an adopted child.

Rani Suryamani

After the death of Rajendranarayan his widow wife Suryamani took the responsibility of the estate. She was the daughter of Harinath Sanyal. Her father Harinath Sanyal lived at Tajpur village under Singra Police Station of Natore district²¹³. She became the owner of her husband's property after the latter's death and ran his (Kurban's) zamindari with great skill.

As the Raja Rajendranarayan had no son, Rani Suryamani took Bhupendranarayan as her adopted son. When this son became adult, she did not give his adopted son the charge to look after the zamindari, and as a result there was a conflict of opinion between mother and the son. At last Bhupendranarayan lodged a case against his mother and after winning the case he took the charge of zamindari from his father.

After the death of Rajendranarayan Rani Suryamani disowned Rani Bhavani and Rani Mahamaya, the wives of Lakshminarayan from the shares of the property of their husband. So the Ranis filed a case in Rajshahi Civil Court to recover their property. When the judgment came in favour of Suryamani, the above Ranis appealed in the higher court and got back the property in the verdict of the higher court. In running this case, both the parties incurred a great financial loss. After being defeated twice in cases, Rani Suryamani left Puthia and went to Ziaganj of Murshidabad and while staying there she breathed her last.

Bhupendranarayan

Bhupendranarayan got the decree on the 25 *Aswin* of 1252 B.S., i.e., 1845 from the court and took the charge of the state in his own hand. She had two wives - Rani Shayamasundari and Rani Sarnamayee. Rani Shayamasundari begot two sons named Prasannanarayan and Pareshnarayan, and a daughter named Rai Kishari Devi. On the other hand Rani Sarnamayee gave birth to a son named Shrishnarayan. Prasannanarayan died on 24 *Shravan* in 1255 B.S., i.e., 1848. Shrishnarayan also died unmarried on 19 *Chaitra* in 1257 B.S., i.e., 1851. As Pareshnarayan was alive, he became the only heir of the property.

After taking the responsibility of the property Bhupendranarayan became sick. So he died after a few days of his taking over of the estate²¹⁴. After his death in 1847. Rani Shayamsundari and Rani Sharnamayee divided their property. No improvement is observed during the reign of Bhupendranarayan.

Raja Pareshnarayan Ray

When Bhupendranarayan died his son Pareshnarayan Ray was a minor boy. According to the prevailing law, the property went under the charge of Court of Wards and the Prince Pareshnarayan Ray had to go to Calcutta for education. Before completion of his education in Calcutta, he became adult. As a result before completing his education he had to take charge of his property (Zamindari).

He married Manamahini Devi of Ray family of Agdigha, Rajshahi. She gave birth to a son and two daughters named Jaysundari and Shibsundari. The son died just after the birth.

Raja Pareshnarayan was an enthusiast of education. He set up a Bengali junior school at Puthia in 1864. Later the school was upgraded to English School in 1868 and higher secondary English school in 1871. Besides he established schools at Kapasia, Zamira, Baneswar and many other places for the spread of education²¹⁵.

He was a sincere and plain-living Brahmin. For the proper medical treatment of his subjects he set up a charitable dispensary at Puthia.

Before his death on 07 Paush 1285 B.S., i.e., 1878, he made a Will. In his Will he empowered the Rani to take up an adopted child. Until the adopted child became adult, the charge of running the estate would remain in charge of the Rani. He sanctioned a monthly payment of Rs.1000.00 during the care-taking time.

On the 07 Paush of 1285 B.S., i.e., 1878. Raja Pareshnarayan died leaving his wife Manamahini and two daughters – Jaysundari and Shibsundari.

Like her husband Manamahini Devi had also interest in education. She donated Rs. 20,000.00 to open Law Classes in Rajshahi College²¹⁶. For the establishment of Diamond Jubilee Industrial School at Rajshahi she donated Rs.5,000.00²¹⁷. Rani Manamahini was very intelligent. She herself inspected the Royal Office. She re-excavated *Govinda Sagar* spending a lot of money. She arranged a concert at Puthia on the occasion of *Jagadhatni Puja* to give the people entertainment. Rani Manamahini died in the month of Aswin of 1308 B.S., i.e., 1901.²¹⁸

Raja Nareshnarayan Ray

After the death of Raja Pareshnarayan, Rani Manamahini took Sureshnarayan, the son of KrishnaSundar Moitra of Puthia as her adopted

child. Sureshnarayan died on 12 *Bhadra* 1304 B.S., i.e., 1897 at an early age. After the death of her adopted child, the Rani again took Nareshnarayan, the son of Maheshchandra Sharaswati of Tejnandi as another adopted child on 05 *Agrahayan* on 1304 B.S., i.e., 1897. The Rani died in *Aswin* of 1308 B.S., i.e., 1901 leaving Nareshnarayan under-aged. According to the prevailing law, the property went under the supervision of the Court of Wards. After becoming adult, he took the charge of the estate in his own hand.

Raja Nareshnarayan married Sureswari Devi, the granddaughter Raja Jagendranath of Natore younger Raj Family and second daughter of Raja Jitendranath²¹⁹. She gave birth to four daughters—Panna, Renu, Reba, Geeta. All of them were well-educated.

Raja Nareshnarayan was an educated person. He was very fond of study and he used to read many books sitting in his personal library. In his youth he was a good horse-rider and hunter. Often he hunted wild swine riding on horseback. He had also keen interest in hunting tigers. He was also not less addicted to Chess, dice and playing cards.

He was an ideal father. He married his daughters off to suitable grooms. He married off Panna to Doctor Bhupendranath Bhaduri of village Porjana of Pabna, Renu to Jaganindranath Moitra of Shitlai of Pabna, Reba to great Prince Shitansu Kumar Acharya Coudhury of Muktagacha of Mymensingh and the youngest Geeta to Ranendranath Moitra of Shitlai of Pabna²²⁰. Raja Nareshnarayan died at Maldah in his son-in-law's house in 1943 After his husband's death Rani Sureswar Devi took the responsibility of running the property. Zamindari of three half *ani* (puthia) was abolished. When the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenently Act 1951 was passed.

Saretin ani (three and a half) Raj Family

Prananarayan, the fourth son of Anupnarayan was the founder of *Sare tinani Raj Family*. Anandanarayan was the son of Prananarayan. He was the father of four sons. The sons were Maheshnarayan, Girishnarayan, Iswarnarayan and Ishannarayan. Anandanarayan was a skilled ruler. He signed the permanent settlement with Lord Cornwallis²²¹. During his life-time the Zamindari was run smoothly. In 1122 B.S., i.e., 1715 he built a beautiful small "Shib Mandir" (temple of Shiva) at Puthia. After the death of Anadanarayan the *Sare tinani* Raj Family was divided into four equal parts. as under :

a) Bara Taraf; b) Madhyam Taraf; c) Naya Taraf; d) Chhota Taraf.

Bara Taraf

After the death of his father, Raja Maheshnarayan became the owner of one-fourth of the total property. He married Bhagavati Devi who gave birth to a daughter. Mahesnarayan was not skilled in running the zamindari. Mahesnarayan gave settlement of 17 (ganda) and a half portion of his property to various people on lease basis and kept some for the service of the gods (Debseba). He leased the rest of the property to Gopinath Sanyal, the grandfather of Maharani Sharatsundari on 23 *Aswin* of 1248 B.S., i.e., 1841 in exchange of annual Rs. 10,725²²². Afterwards, when the property was auctioned for the due of royal tax, the father of Sharatsundari Bhairabnath Sanyal bought it. In this way Mhesnarayan lost all his property during his life-time and fell in utter misery. Luxury and unskillfulness in running the Zamindari can be mentioned as the causes.

Madhyam Taraf

Raja Girishnarayan was the second son of Raja Parnanarayan. The of Raja Girishnarayan was Rameshnarayan. The son of Rameshnaryan was Baikunthananarayan²²³. Hemendranarayan was the son of Baikunthananarayan. Raja Hemendranarayan married Hemanta Kumari alias Shashimukhi²²⁴. Raja Hemendranarayan died leaving his wife and a daughter. Rani Hemanta Kumari married off her daughter Prafulla Kumari to Sri Bholanath Choudhury, the superintendent of Puthia Centre of Panchani Side. Sri Bholanath Choudhury was an educated man. He passed B.A. and was promoted to the post of the Chief Superintendent by dint of his own skill. A few years before the death of Rani Hemanta Kumari, she handed over the charge of her property to Prafulla Kumari.²²⁵

Naya Taraf

The name of the wife of Raja Iswarnarayan was Rani Ramsundari. Raja Iswarnarayan and Rani Ramsundari had three sons named Nimnarayan, Ramnarayan and Taraknarayan. After the death of Raja Iswarnarayan, his three sons became the heir of the property.

The name of the first wife of Raja Nimnarayan was Rani Sharnamayee and that of the second wife was Rani Sharatsundari. The first wife gave birth to a son and he died in infancy. Before the death of Raja Nimnarayan his first wife and son both died. After the death of the Raja the second Rani Sharatsundari became the owner of his whole property. A quarter of her property was under lease settlement. After her husband's death she took the only son of Sri Khirad Chandra Choudhury, Purnendanarayan as an adopted child²²⁶. Purnendanarayan became the sole owner of the property of Raja Nimnarayan.

The name of the son of Raja Ramnarayan was Rangeshnarayan. He married Kamalmoti. Raja Rangeshnarayan died childless leaving Rani Kamalmati. Raja Rangeshnarayan was not a successful Raja because he failed to retain his paternal property. Before his death he bequeathed his property to Rani Kamalmati through a Will. For the unskillness of the Rani the property was almost lost.

The wife of Raja Nimnarayan Rani Sharatsundari (Maharani Saratsundary and Sharatsundary was not same lady) leased her property under *mourosi* settlement to *Charani* Raja Nareshnarayan on 07 Jaistha 1317 B.S. (i.e., 1910 A.D.) at Rs. 2970 annual profit. A condition was there in the lease document that Raja Rangeshnarayan and his wife would get Rs. 900 annually from the profit during their life-time²²⁷. Rani Kamalmati passed her last days in utter sufferings. That Rs. 900 was the only means of her sustenance.

Raja Taraknarayan had two daughters and a son. The name of the son was Shibeshnarayan who died unmarried. Raja Taraknarayan married her Daughter off to Puthia. One was married to Jogendranarayan Moitra and the other was to Sharat Chandra. Due to immature death of Shibendranarayan, the wifw of Sharat Chandra PutrabatiKanya became the owner of the property. After her death the property went down to her son which again went to Sharat Chandra after the son's death. The whole property was leased to *Charani* Raja at the annual profit of Rs.2000.00²²⁸.

Chhota Taraf

Raja Ishannarayan had two wives—Rani Radhasundari and Rani Tripurasundari. The Raja had only one son named Kedarnarayan. Raja Kedarnarayan married Rani Sharnamayee. Raja Kedarnarayan had a daughter

but no son. The daughter was Princess Hemangini. Having no son Rani Sharnamayee took Jatindranarayan as an adopted son. Prince Jatindranarayan died unmarried. As a result Rani Sharnamayee became the owner of the whole property. Princess Hemangini was married off to Vinodbihari Sanyal, an Advocate of Calcutta High Court²²⁹. The Princess was the mother of two sons named Sudhirendra Kumar Sanyal and Bimalendu Kumar Sanyal. After the death Rani Sharnamayee, the two grandsons became the owners of the whole property.

Saretin ani Raj Family

Raja Madanarayan had three sons named Lakshminarayan, Mahendranarayan and Rabindranarayan²³⁰. After their father's death they divided their property in equal parts. Each got three ana and a half portion of the property:

Ek ani (one ana) Raj Family evolved from Raja Lakshminarayan. His three and a half ana portion was known as *Ek Ani*. Detailed discussion will be done about *Ek Ani* Raj Family later on.

Raja Mahendranarayan had no son. he had a daughter named Satyavama. She was married off to Ramcharan Sanyal of Puthia. After the death of Mahendranarayan, Satyavama became the owner of the whole property. Zadabendranarayn Sanyal and his son Gajendranarayan Sanyal did not look after the property. As a result expenses could not be met up from the income and most of the property went away to others. After Gajendranarayan his son Ramendranarayan became the owner of the property. Ramendranarayan had three sons named Hemendranarayan, Bhabendranarayan and Ganendranarayan. Later they became the owners of the property.²³¹

As the youngest Raja Rabindranarayan had no child, he bequeathed his three and a half ana portion to Rajendaranarayan. Rabindranarayan accepted the Vaisnab religion and this abdication of property might be inspired by this acceptance.²³²

Ek ani Raj Family

Raja Lakshminarayan had two wives named Rani Bhavani and Rani Mahamaya.²³³ The son of Lakshminarayan, Galkendra Ray took loan mortgaging his property to Rani Bhubanmayee. To repay the loan he sold out three and a quarter portion of Taluk named Dharbila. Raja Galkendranarayan married Krishnamati, daughter of Krishnachandra Sanyal of Puthia. When Raja Galkendranarayan died without leaving a son, Rani Krishnamoti took Brajendranarayan, the son of Gopi Mohan Goswami of Lachangarh as her adopted child. Brajendranarayan dies on 27 Shraban 1279 B.S., i.e., 1872.

Raja Gopalendranarayan was the son of Raja Brajendranarayan. He was a sumptuous Zamindar. He became indebted for loans. He married Rani Kumudini. The Rani begot two sons named Nripendranarayan and Khagendranarayan and a daughter named Sarajini²³⁴. He married off Sarajini to Shisir Kumar Moitra of Ataikula, Rajshahi and gave away Rs.12,000.00 for the sustenance of the daughter. Gopalendranarayan died leaving his sons, daughter and wife. His elder son Nripendranarayan was not very expert in running the zamindari. As a result being plunged into loans, he lost his property. He started to live Khagra near Murshidabad at the favour of Manindranandi, the Zamindar of Kashimbazar. He passed his B.A. with the help of Manindranandi²³⁵. In his later life, Nripendranarayan lived in the cremation yard and led his life as a begger.

The other son of Gopalendranarayan, Khagendranarayan was not at all extravagant like his predecessors. So he died leaving a small property. After his death Rani Labanna Prava became the owner of the property. Like other zamindars, this Raj Family lost its Zamindari in 1951.

Like other parts of Bengal, the Zamindars of Puthia began their zamindari from the Mughal rule and trend went on during the British rule. The zaminders of these dynasties were engaged in religious and various kinds of developmental activities. They contributed much to the growth of education but a few of these zamindars became highly educated. In religious activities the zaminders and Ranis of these dynasties contributed a lot. They built many temples at Puthia. Besides, they also built a good number of temples at Venares, Goya, Kashi, Vrindaban and bore all sorts of expenditure of these temples. They built their temporary residents in those places and donated profusely. They donated more outside their zamindari than they had donated to their own subjects. If had donated more to their subjects, they could benefit their subjects more.

In the spread of education these dynasties contributed enough. Though the patronization of education is seen less in the early zamindars, it is seen more after the rule of Rani Sharatsundari. The Maharani Sharatsundari spent a lot of money in constructing the building and walls of Rajshahi College. The Maharani Hemantakumari contributed a lot to the establishment of Sanskrit College. Afterwards, Rani Manamahini Devi and Raja Pareshnarayan became ever memorable by establishing many educational institutions in their own zamindari including Puthia.

Many of the Rajas of Puthia Raj family were addicted to wine and other bad habits and they died premature death. For the extravagance and

characteristic flaws, many lost their Zamindari and passed their lives depending on the mercy of others.

A disciplined administrative structure grew up for the running of the zamindari in the Puthia Raj family. Each sharer had separate administrative system. A strong bureaucracy emerged from there. It was found that the bureaucrats ignored many instructions of the Rajas or Ranis. Without the clearance of the bureaucrats, the Rajas or Ranis could not perform a simple job. These royal employees were greatly responsible for the family disputes. A great diversity and dissention were found in the shareholder of Puthia Raj Family and as a result a number of cases were lodged in the court. A lot of money was spent for nothing. Tussles were fought among the shareholders on silly matters. Bureaucrats were behind all these disputes. Many bureaucrats managed money from here and bought zamindari and ran their zamindari smoothly.

Above all these dynasties have lots of contribution in various developmental programmes namely, building of religious institutions and in many other welfare oriented activities that the people of this area remember with gratitude even today. After passing the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1951, Zamindari of this family came to an end.

Notes and referances

1. Dharmanda Maha Bharati, *A Short History of Brahmin Rajas and Maharajas in Ancient and Modern Bengal*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 42.
2. Girish Chandra Laheri, *Maharani Saratsundarir Zibon Charit*, Calcutta, 1301, B.S. p. 7.
3. Bimala Charan Moitra, *Puthia Rajbangsha*, Calcutta, 1357 (B.S), p. 3.
4. Loc.cit.
5. Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshahir Shankshipta Itihas*, Calcutta, 1901, p.114.
6. Moksudur Rahman, *Natorer Maharani Bhavani*, Rajshahi, 1988, p.9.
7. Dharmmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p.37.
8. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.319.
9. Loc.cit.
10. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 335.
11. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.336.
12. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.4.
13. Nurul Islam Khan (ed.) *Bangladesh Zela Gazatteer Brihattar Rajshahi*, Dhaka, 1991, p. 367; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.122.
14. Gerish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 41.
15. Birmala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 4.
16. It may be assmed that after getting the estate he went to puthia with his sons.
17. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.41; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.*, p. 122; Sri Bimal Prasad Ray et el. (ed), *Natorer Katha O'Kahini*, Calcutta, 1981, p. 61;

Kazi Muhammad Meser, *Rajshir Itihas* Vol. 2, Bogra, 1965, p. 270; Sri Bimal Prasad Ray discuss two sons of Vatsacharyya and Kazi Muhammad Meser descuss three sons of Vatsacharyya.

18. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.*, p. 53; There is much controversy about the name of Laskarkhan, (Kazi Mustafizur Rahman is his unpublished thesis entitled '*Puthia Rajbangsha Itihas O Sthapatya Karma*' Rajshahi, 1996, p.17) mentioned the name of Laskar Khan as Ala Baksh Barkhurdar Laskari or Laskar Khan, It is assumed that this pargana was named Laskarpur after his name. When he revolted, Akbar, the Great Mughal Emperor sent an army against him and he was defeated. (For detail see Mirja Nathan, *Baharistan-I- Ghayebi*, Vol. 1, translated by M. I. Barah, Gauhati, 1936, pp.123-124).
19. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 123; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.15; Kazi Muhammod Meser, (Vol. 2), *op.cit.*, p. 269; Muhammad Abdus Samad, *Subarna Diner Bibarna Smriti*, Rajshahi, 1987, p.112, Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.53.
20. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.124.
21. K.C.Mitra, *Rajas of Rajshahi, Calcutta Review* Vol.56, 1873, p.2; Dharmananda Maha Bharati mention Nilambar as the founder of puthia Raj Family (Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 37); Bimala Charan Moitra and Kalinath Choudhury mentioned that Zamindari was given to pitambar (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 10; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.124); Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri mentioned that Jaiger was given to pitambar and Nilambar (Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.42).
22. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.11.
23. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.126.
24. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.12-13.
25. '*Varendrer Raja Zamindar*' (Henceforth *Varandrer Raja*) an article by Md. Mahabubur Rahman in *Varendra Anchaler Itihas* (ed) by Saifudding Choudhury, Rajshahi, 1998, p. 745.
26. Moksudur Rahman mentioned Zamindars of Puthia was one of the Twelve-Bhuiyas of Bengal (Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p. 9); It is mentioned that puthia estate was founded during the region of Akbar and at that time, Emperor

Akbar sent military expeditions again and again to suppress the rebels. Almost all the twelve independent land lords (Barobhuiyas) of Bengal were defeated in their battles with the Mughal but there is no mention of any battle with the Rajas of Puthia. It is assumed for it that the Raja of Puthia did not belong to Barobhuiyas or the twelve independent land lords of Bengal.

27. Mahabubur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 745.
- 27.(a). The Puthia family cannot be considered as one of the baro Bhuiyas because it was established by the Mughals after uprooting Laskar Khan, Jaigirdar of puthia.
28. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 61.
29. Cited in Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 61
30. Pitamber took Shelter to Ilah Boksh, After the defeat of Ilaboksh, pitamber took settlement of the whole estate, No data is available regarding the surrender of pitamber. So the matter remained in mystery.
31. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.62.
32. K.C.Mitra. *op.cit.* p.2.
33. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.13.
34. Loc.cit.
35. *Shajarbari* means combined property that can be by all the part owners.
36. Bimala Charan Moitra describes two sons of Nelambar (i) Ananda Ram and (ii) Puskara Kkha (Bimala Charan Moitra *op. cit.*, p. 14); Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, Samar Pal and Dharmanda Maha Bharati mentioned Puskarakkha as the son of Batsacharyya. (Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op. cit.*, p. 43; Samar Pal, *Tahirpur RajaVamsa*, Natore, 1990, (Henceforth Tahirpur) p. 20; Dharamananda Maha Bharati, *op. cit.*, p. 40); Bimala Charan Moitra mentioned the name of seven sons of Batsacharyya as follows; Pitambar Shrish Chandra Khan Srinath Nelambar Purandar Krishnananda Acharja. It may be ascertained from the description of Bimola Charan Moitra that Puskarakkah was not the son of Batsacharyya.
37. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur ...*, p. 20.

38. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 122; also Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 14.
39. Gerish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 43.
40. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 14.
41. K. C. Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 2; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.*, p. 126; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
42. K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 2.
43. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 38.
44. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 43.
45. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 38.
46. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 16.
47. K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 2.
48. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 17.
- 48(a).Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.5-10.
49. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.*p. 18.
50. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 127.
51. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 38.
52. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 9.
53. K.C.Mitra and Md. Moksudur mentioned that at the time of death Raja RamChandra left three sons namely Naranarayan, Darpanarayan and Jaynarayan. (K.C. Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 2; Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p.9; Dharamanada Maha Bharati and Bimala Charan Moitra maintained about 4 sons of Raja Ram Chandra (Dharmanda Maha Bharati, *op. cit.*p. 38; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 19) perhaps Rupnarayan died sonless before the death of his father.

54. K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* pp. 2-3; Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 10.
55. Moksudur Rahman mentioned Darpanarayan was the founder of Natore Raj family. (Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 9) Different writers wrote that Natore Raj family originated at the time of Darpanarayan, Darpanarayan was the founder of Choupukuria family, he was never, the Raja of Puthia Kazi Mustafizur Rahman mentioned Natore Raj family was originated in the time of Naranarayan. (Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 67).
56. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 28.
57. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 29.
58. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 69.
59. Dharmananda Maha Bharatis, *op.cit.* p. 38.
60. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 30.
61. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 4.
62. As the division of estate took place in 1744 it may be assumed that he had not divided his state among his sons before he died. It is sure that the estate was divided after he had died.
63. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.30.
64. Dharamananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p.41.
65. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.70.
66. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varandrer Raja* p.746.
67. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.71
68. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.35.
69. Loc.cit.
70. A suit was filed against Natore Raj regarding the property of Pukhuria (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.37).

71. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.37.
72. K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 3; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 34; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 127.
73. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 34.
74. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 38.
75. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 37.
76. Jagannarayan's father and uncle were four in number. According to legal distribution the property should be divided into four equal parts but Jagannarayan gave a small portion of the property to his uncles and took the remaining large portion of the property. Later on the heissa of other two uncles did not take there legal shares but made a deed of agreement in favour of Jagannarayan. As a result three parts out of four parts of the property should be owned by him. It krishnanarayan, the son of Rupnarayan filed a law swit in the court, he might have demanded only his father's share, he could not have demanded the shares of others. Mahabubur Rahman wrote that Krishnendranarayan got the half of the property. It can not be accepted that he had got the half of the property (Md. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja...* p.746).
77. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 39.
78. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 40.
79. *Loc.cit.*
80. With a view to gaining the property Krishnendranarayan filed a Law swit in the civil court. But the court dismissed the case directing to properly file a law swit of ownership in the civil court. As a result Jagannarayan and Shibendranarayan made an amicable settlement on 10 *poush*, 1223 BS. According to this amicable settlement, Krishnandranarayan got the following parganas of his father's property.
81. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 41.
82. *Varendrer Raja Zamindar* an article by Shah Anisur Rahaman in *Rajshahi Parichiti*, Varendra Academy, Rajshahi, 1980, p.177; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. Nurul Islam Khan (ed.), *Bangladesh Zela Gazetteer, Brihattar Rajshahi*, Dhaka; Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* p. 270.

83. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 38., p.
84. K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 3.
85. Mahabubur Rahman *Varendrer Raja ...* p. 746.
86. *Loc.cit.*
87. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 78; In one stage Bimala Charan Moitra, said that she was the daughter of sarkar family in another stage he mentioned Chakrabarti as he father tile.
88. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 46. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 78.
89. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 46.
90. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja...* p. 747; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.46.
91. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 80.
92. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 43.
93. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 44.
94. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 8.
95. Dhamanda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p. 39.
96. Kalinath Choudhury, *op cit.* p. 128.
97. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 42-43.
98. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 46.
99. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 49.
100. The date of the death of Debendranarayan, the son of Harendranarayan can not be found. During the year of the death of Harandranarayan, Durgasundari appointed gurdian of the sons of Dabendranarayan. From this fact it is assumed

that Debendranarayan, the son of Harandranarayan died in the same year of his father's death.

101. Raja Harandranarayan gave a property to Rani Durga Sundari by a registered deed with a power to sell it, on 18 Falgun, 1258 Bs; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 49.
102. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 46.
103. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p-47
104. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 48.
105. Loc.cit.
106. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 49.
107. Loc.cit.
108. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op. cit.* p.55 (Foot not)
109. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p.49.
110. Loc.cit.
111. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op. cit.* p.85.
112. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op. cit.* p. 40; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.131.
113. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.131.
114. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op. cit.* p. 45; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.131.
115. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op. cit.* p.85.
116. Other minor (Those who did not attain majority) Zaminders were kept at Watson Institution, Calcutta for educating them.
117. Ishan Chandra sen was Baidya by cast and his residence was in Puthia.

118. *Puthia Zamindar Bangsha abang Maharani Saratsundari* an article by Md. Mahabubur Rahman in Rajshahi Association Shahita Patrika (ed.), Tasikul Islam, Rajshahi 1994 (Henceforth Maharani Saratsundari) p. 111.
- 118(a) Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 60, 61.
119. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* pp. 55-56.
120. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 56.
121. Ibne Golam Samad, *op.cit.* p. 29.
122. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 87.
123. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 55-56.
124. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 64.
125. *Loc.cit.*
126. *Loc.cit.*
127. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja.....* , p. 748.
128. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 66.
129. *Loc.cit.*; Jagendranarayan wrote in the Will “my wife has attained puberty, she is good charactered and intelligent in deed and she will be able to conduct the administration of the estate excellently and so I cherish the desire that in my absence, the movable and immovable property left by me will not go to the “Court of wards”. He realized what difficulties had to be suffered if property once went under the management of the “Court of Wards”. So he declared that his wife attained majority though she was twelve and a half and his property would not go to the ‘court of wards’ without her wish. But his mission was not fulfilled in the end as the government took his property under the management of ‘Court of Wards’ after his death.
130. At present village Tajpur is 4 miles north west of singra Police Station under the district of Natore. Once many Brahmins of aristocratic family lived there.

131. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 18 (Foot note); Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 68.
132. Nothing could be known about the name of the eldest son. He died after attaining majority but no datum is available as to whether he got married or not.
133. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 18; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 68.
134. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 18.
135. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 69-70.
136. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 70.
137. One day Vairabnath fined one of his Brahmin cooks. The Brahmin was sad and began to weep. Saratsundari asked him the cause of his weeping. The Brahmin informed her about the cause of weeping and he further said that he had many dependants in his house and it was difficult for him to procure the fined money. Saratsundari's heart filled with pity at the word of the Brahmin. As she had no money with her, she borrowed Rs. 5 from a retired employee of her father and gave it to the Brahmin. At the time of giving him the money she warned the Brahmin not to disclose it. But after a few days Vairabnath heard it. Vairabnath repaid the loan to the employee. There are descriptions of many events like this (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.*, pp. 70, 71; Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-34).
138. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 39.
139. Mahabur Rahman, *Maharani Saratsundari*, p. 110.
140. In her childhood an astrologer foretold that Sarat Sundari would be a widow in her early age. So her maternal grandmother decided to give her a marriage when she would be aged. But suddenly she got a suitable bridegroom like Jagendranarayan and changed her decision. (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.*, p.72; Kalinath Chandhury, *op.cit.* p.137).
141. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.73.
142. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.75-76.
143. According to the tradition Hindu widow can not take food that particular night.

144. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.78-79.
145. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.80.
146. All expressed their opinion to meet the wife of Mr. Walles the then collector of Rajshahi and she would see how intelligent Sarat Sundari was at so tender age and whether she would be able to conduct the administration of the estate, but Saratsundari thinking how she could welcome a foreigner (non-Aryan) Women, expressed her inability to to meet her. The wife of Mr. Walles at that time went to puthia, Vairabnath went to her and expressed the inability of the Rani to meet her. The wife of Mr. Walles was a very gentle lady, she heard every thing she expressed her opinion, At last Saratsundari agreed to meet her. On a fixed date Saratsundari met her inside the house of the Rajbari of Puthia. The lady was much shocked to see the sick Rani bare headed, wearing a coarse cloth. By the by, the lady expressed that in their country a girl of tender age like her was not allowed to be married, she asked why she was obeying such hard, rules at such a tender age. She also expressed that there was a custom for remarriage of a widow of a tender age. Hearing this the Rani was much shocked, tears appeared in her eyes. Seeing this condition of the Rani the lady was ashamed and bade good bye to the Rani.
147. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.82.
148. Mahabur Rahman, *Maharani Saratsundari*, p.114.
149. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.*, p. 82; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.86-87.
150. Name of the teacher was Radha Mahan Sen. For detail see Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 87.
151. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 87.
152. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.96; At present Atrai is Situated in the district of Naogaon, A police station of the Naogaon district is situated on the bank of the river. At rai, there are a railway station and a hat (weekly market) here.
153. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.173; Maharani Saratsundari did not opine to this marriage. A man named Abani Mahan Bhattacharja lived for a few months in puthia, mixed with the friends of the Rajkumar and Convinced the Rajkumar to give his opinion to the marriage. As the Rajkumar agreed to marry, Hamanta Kumari could not but accept it because the Rajkumar once failed away from

home. If she did not give her opinion to the marriage, the Rajkumar might be displeased and might make a mishap. For this reason she did nothing against the will of the Rajkumar.

154. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.82; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.87.
155. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 83; Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.77; It might be difficult for Saratsundari to go on foot, so thin Raja Vairabnath arranged for a palanquin but Saratsundari did not ride it, neglecting the scorching sun rays of Bhadra (Bengali month) she walked. Some times gravels and thorns pricked her feet and she could not sleep at night.
156. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.*, p. 83; Saratsundari always repented that she could not nurse her husband Jagedranarayan at the time of his death. She thought that if she went away leaving her father. She would not be able to nurse her father, too. Thinking so she did not agree to return to Puthia.
157. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.97.
158. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.135; Shah Anisur Rahaman, *op.cit.* p.177.
159. To make a conflict between the mother and the son, the father-in-law of the Raj Kumar said to the Rajkumar that the Maharani would deprive him, she would not give him the property, she would donate it and she would give it to his sister and this she would exhaust all the property. He further said that he would bring men from Dacca and would have the property given to the Rajkumar and that Maharani did not understand worldly affairs (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.153.)
160. There was much idle talk among the employees and the common people of the Zamindar house about the will. The Maharani herself neither knew anything of the will nor she tried to know it. The Maharani herself was unwilling to conduct the administration of the property. The Raj Kumar kept the matter of the will secret lest the Maharani knew about the will after the death of the Raj Kumar.
161. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.158; It is mentioned in respect of revenue that s. 25455 and annas 7 and pies 3 and the amount was said to be equal to Rs. 21000.00 after deduction. But it was incorrect, the actual amount after deduction is equal to Rs. 2000.00
162. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 158-159.

163. The Rajkumar mixed with some dishonest persons and became dishonest and he was addicted to drinking. He was not present at the hour of departure of the Maharani. The Maharani started for Isabpur by palanquin. The Rajkumar returned home and heard that Maharani had already started her journey. He at once set out riding a horse and reached the palanquin of the Maharani. He had the palanquin got down and fell on the lap of the Maharani in *olrunkard* condition. The Maharani consoled her much and persuaded him to go home.
164. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 153-163.
165. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 163.
166. The Maharani loved Hamanta Kumari, her daughter-in-law as like as her own daughter and the daughter-in-law also loved her mother-in-law as like as her own mother, In the absence of the son two parties were created, one party conspired against the other party. The Maharani could not tolerate it.
167. Bimala Charan Maitra, *op.cit.* pp. 164-166; The father of Hemantakumari tried to backbite against Maharani Saratsundari even when her son was alive, but failed perhaps at his instigation Hemantakumari did not come to puthia.
168. She was so much angry that after returning from the pilgrimage she did not go to Zamindar house but stayed in the house of Vairabnarayan and some times lived in her father's house. At last when she was ill and was confined to bed, she came to the Zamindar house at the request of all.
169. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 166-167.
170. Shah Anisur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 177; Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p. 136; Muhammed Abdus Samad, *op.cit.* p. 117.
171. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 131-134.
172. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 155.
173. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.132-133; Maharani used to purchase straw at Rs. 4 per bundle and distributed amongst the flood affected people.
174. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* pp.92-95.

175. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* p.93.
176. Girish Chandra Lahiri, *op.cit.* pp.93-94.
177. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* p. 177; Muhammad Abdus Samad, *op.cit.*, p. 83.
178. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.141-142.
179. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.171,172,190.
180. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.172.
181. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.103.
182. It is guessed that Bhuban Mahan Ray did not have financial ability to spend money at the marriage in the Rajafamily, and perhaps because of this he brought his daughter to Puthia (The expenditure at the marriage has already been discussed).
183. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.104.
184. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.174,175.
185. As the Maharani herself bore the maintenance cost of the garden house of Durgakundu, it can not be imagined that she would not spend money at the ceremony of 'Anna prasan' (The ceremony of giving rice for the first time) of her only grand daughter Rajkumari Surendra Bala. Bhuban Mahan made the propaganda to defame the Maharani and to make Hamanta kumari angry with the Maharani Sartsundari.
186. Hamanta Kumari's Father's side requested Sri Girish Chandra Lahiri, the Zamindar of Kashim pur (Rajshahi) and came to Rajshahi with her group in Chaitra, 1293 Bs and Girish Chandra Lahiri consulted Bhuban Mahan Moitra, the famous lawyer of Rajshahi and met the white skinned authority. At last the collector was convinced and the wife of the collector was brought to meet the Badhurani. Because of the reputation and influence of Ray Bahadur, favourable circumstance was created for the BadhuRani; For detailed see Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.181-183.
187. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.105.

188. Mahendra Sanyal was a paid law year of 5 *ana* (the honour of part) side previously. After gaining the power by Hemanta Kumari, his pay was stopped from the Rajestate. As a law year of Rajfamily Knew many information of the Raj family. Many people think that it was Mahendra Babu who persuaded Jaynath to file a Law suit.
189. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.186-187.
190. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.228.
191. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp.228-229.
192. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.107, 108.
193. Rajshahi College Annul report 1933, pp.34-35; Muhammad Ahdus Samad, *op.cit.* p.177.
194. Rajshahi College Annul report 1933, pp.34-35.
195. Later on the College was closed in 1963 because the number of students decreased. At present in Rajshahi college, the department of Sanskrit is in Vogue. The building which was constructed is situated on the north east corner of Rajshahi collegiate school.
196. Muhammad Abdus Samad, *op.cit.*, p.117; At present the hustel is Known as Maharani Hemantakumari Hindu Hostel and it is situated at the western side of Rajshahi College Library.
197. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.108.
198. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.230.
199. Muhammad Abdus Samad, *op.cit.* p. 117; Kazi Muhammad Meser, (Vol. 1), *op.cit.*, p. 149.
200. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.266.
201. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.107.
202. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.207.

203. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p.263.
204. The Khan Zamindari of Puthia emerged during the tenure of Maharani Bhubonmayee. She gave her daughter in marriage to khan family and contributed a lot oproperty and there offer the family of Khan Zamindar was founded in puthia, (Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 45).
205. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 277.
206. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 41, 50.
207. There was a clash at Junadaha, a village belonged to the estate of Ratan Babu, the Zamindar of Narail with Puthia estate and Naroil estate and 14 persons were killed.
208. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 41, 52.
209. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 41, 51.
210. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 128. Saratsundari bore all expenses happily to enable the family of Vairabnarayan to live comfortably in the pilgrimage and she also bore all the expenses for marinating the family.
211. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 30.
212. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 284.
213. Loc.cit.
214. Before his death Raja Bhupendranarayan directed to divide his estate among his 3 sons equally and he also directed to give Rs. 100/- from every portion that is a total sum of Rs. 300.00 to his only daughter Rai Kishari Devi. Pareshnarayan became the only inheritor of the property as the other two sons died unmarried.
215. Shah Anisur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 177; Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 287.
216. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.*(Vol. 1) p. 116.
217. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* (Vol. 1), p. 127.

218. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 288.
219. *Loc.cit.*
220. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 122.
221. K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 3; K. C. Mitra mentioned Anandanarayan as the oldest person of Puthia Raj family and he also mentioned that the settlement for 10 years was made with him.
222. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 289-290.
223. No remarkable datum is available of the said few Rajas. It does not appear that they had any remarkable achievement.
224. Maharani Hemantakumari and Hemanta Kumari alias Shashimukhi, the wife of Harendranarayan were not the same person.
225. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 319.
226. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 290-291.
227. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 291.
228. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* pp. 211, 292.
229. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 292.
230. Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 217.
231. *Loc.cit.*
232. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 292.
233. Wife of Lakshinarayan named Rani Bhavani and Maha Rani Bhavani of Natore was not the same.
234. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 294.
235. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 295.

Natore Raj - Its Rise, Stability and Estate Management

Natore is situated near the main road leading to Dhaka from Rajshahi. It is 30 miles east of Rajshahi. Natore town stands on the Narad river at the degree of latitude 24-6" north and 89-1" east¹. Natore was an important administrative central point during the reign of the Nawabs of Bengal. At the time of the British regime Natore was an important town of Rajshahi district. Natore had great importance as a business center. A great number of Europeans lived at Natore. In 1825 the district head quarter was shifted from Natore to Rampur-Boalia(Rajshahi) because the river Narod was silted up and diseases like malaria and dengue prevailed terribly²... To realize the historical importance of Natore, it was made a subdivision in 1829³. This historical Natore was the capital of Natore Raj family Natore and Natore Raj family were related inseparably. The glory of this place faded since the time of the downfall of the Natore Raj Family.

Kamdev Moitra (Ray) was the ancestor of Natore Raj Family. At the beginning of tenth century, the Hindu Raja *Adisur* of Chandra family brought five well versed Brahmins in Bengal from *Kanyakubja*. This five persons were Narayan of Sandilya lineage, Dharadhar of Batsa lineage, Gautam of Bharadwaj lineage, and Parasar of Sadhan lineage and Susenmani of Kasyapa lineage. Kamdev Moitra was a member of the later generation of Susenmani of *Kasyapa* lineage⁴. Kamdev Moitra was the *tahsilder* at Baruihati- Pargana under Raja Naranarayan Thakur of Puthia⁵. His dwelling place was at the village Amhati situated near Natore town. He had no property other than three thatched huts and eight *bighas* of *Brahmattar* land given out to him at a rent of one rupee. While in service, he also engaged himself as a priest. He was not solvent in spite of doing two jobs simultaneously⁶.

Kamdev Moitra had three sons they were Ramjiban, Raghunandan and Vishnu Prasad respectively^{6a}. As a part of job Kamdev Moitra had to come and go to Puthia Raj Family frequently. At that time Puthia was the centre of learning and higher education. Kamdev Moitra sent his three sons to Puthia for study⁷. Among the three sons the second one Raghunandan was very talented and intelligent. Within a short time he earned knowledge in the Persian Language which was the then state language. The Raja Darpanarayan conducted the study of Raghunandan and Ramjiban with proper care. Ramjiban prayed for a job to the Raja Darpanarayan in order to remove his parents' financial crisis and their sufferings. The Raja Darpanarayan advised Ramjiban to continue his study. But Ramjiban informed the Raja modestly about their miserable financial condition. By getting a job he could remove his parents' sufferings. Raja Darpanarayan was convinced and appointed him a clerk in an office at a salary Rs. 7.00 per month⁸.

After getting the job, Ramjiban began to perform his duties very sincerely and did not accept any money unreasonably or illegally from the subjects. He got excess profit of Rs.30.00 per month though he did not earn money dishonestly⁹. Being a man of liberal temperament, Ramjiban never spent money without any reason, and led a simple life. He cooked food for himself. He was also a hospitable man, and when any guest came to his house he always treated him cordially. For the convenience of his work, he appointed a boy of *Tili* caste named Dayaram Ray of village Kalam of Singra Police Station as a servant at a salary of eight Anna per month¹⁰. Only within two years he paid off all his debts, he could prepare his own house properly, get married himself and his brother Raghunandan.

His brother Raghunandan had been studying attentively for four years and acquired a sufficient knowledge in Persian language. Being attracted with his merit, Raja Darpanarayan appointed him Mir-Munsi at a Salary of Rupee 50.00 per month¹¹. Raja is being satisfied with his work appointed him a representative and

pleader at the court of the Nawab of Dhaka¹². It is known, from the fifth report of Mr. Farminger, at that period the Rajas or Zamindars used to appoint pleaders and advocates to their side. Those legal practitioners explained finalization of all accounts at the *darbar* of the Nawab¹³. Appointment as a pleader for the Raja of Puthia was the main cause behind the rise Raghunandan. At that period Murshidkuli khan was the Nawab of Bengal. Within a short period Raghunandan attracted the Nawab by his work and skill and gained favour of the Nawab. It is said that as per Raghunandan's advice Murshidkuli khan shifted the royal court from Dacca (Dhaka) to Mursidabad¹⁴.

There were some causes behind the relation of Raghunandan with Nawab Murshidkuli khan. In 1701 A. D. Emperor Aurangzeb sent Murshidkuli khan as the Subahdar who was also a Dewan of Bangal. At that time Azim-us-Shan, the grandson of emperor Aurangzeb, was the Nawab Nazim of Bengal and Bihar provinces. The Emperor gave his grand son a letter that Nawab Nazim could not spend any kind of money without any consent of the Subahdar. Previously the periphery of work of the Nawab Nazim and that of the Subahdar was not separate. Subahdar used to collect the tax while Nawab Nazim ruled the same area of the country. Arriving in Bangal, Murshidkuli khan found a doubtful figure of tax here. He took some steps to change the tax system. He discontinued the *jaigir* system and brought all land under government's direct ownership. He had taken the permission of the Emperor and conferred *jaigir* to the army generals and courtiers to the hilly area of Orissa in lieu of Bengal. For this he could give the land revenue of one crore rupee to the Emperor of Delhi in the first year¹⁵. Naturally the Emperor of Delhi was satisfied with Murshidkuli khan for giving him so large amount of land revenue. Remaining the Dewan of Bangal he gave tax of Rupee one crore and three lakhs every year. The Nawab Nazim Azimussan of Bangal could never accept so good relation between Emperor Aurangzeb and Murshidkuli khan. He always

tried how to get Murshidkuli khan in trouble. Even he tried to kill Murshidkuli khan secretly. Knowing this news, Emperor Aurangzeb gave the order of transfer of Azimussan to Patna and asked Murshidkuli khan to show his financial accounts¹⁶. Just hearing this news Azimussan became anxious, he thought that if Murshidkuli khan met the Emperor in Delhi, he would tell the Emperor all matters in detail. So, he found the way to create hindrance in showing the accounts by Murshidkuli Khan. According to the rules of that period, the account papers were to be submitted to the Emperor of Delhi through the Nawab with the signature of the accountants. Azimussan told the accountants not to sign on the paper of accounts. Preparing the accounts Murshidkuli khan requested the first accountant Darpanarayan and the second accountant Jaynarayn to put the seal and signature. The first accountant Darpanarayan claimed three lakhs Rupees as commission. Murshidkuli Khan agreed it and promised to pay after returning from Delhi. Darpanarayan informed him that he would not sign without taking the money¹⁷. At this situation Murshidkuli Khan became very worried as without the signature of the accountants the accounts would not be acceptable. Moreover, there was enough probability to lose the post of Nawab. At last he sought the help of the accountant Raghunandan. With the effort of Raghunandan only, one accountant put signature and seal. At last Murshid Kuli khan went to Emperor with that accounts and huge gifts along with money. He even did not enquire the unsigned account papers. Upon receiving the tax and gifts the Emperor gave him a precious *Khilat* (valuable dress) as a symbol of the court and appointed him the only Nawab of Bengal and Orissa.¹⁸ To help Murshidkuli Khan in danger, Raghunandan got an unexpected favour of the Nawab and this made him a dignified man in the *darbar* of the Nawab. After the death of Dewan Bhupati Ray, the accountant Darpanarayan was given the post of *dewan* though he had not helped the Nawab in crisis^{18a}. After some days, when Darpanarayan died, Raghunandan was appointed Dewan and was given the title of "*Ray-E-Raiyan*"¹⁹. In this way Raghunandan became a leading figure and rose to this level from a

lower position. In Mughal period the Zamindaris of the rebel Zamindars or the Zamindars who did not pay revenue were seized and new Zamindars were appointed in their places. Raghunandan was clever enough to utilize this opportunity. He purchased in auction those Zamindaris of the unable Zamindars who were defaulters and made arrangements for purchasing in Ramjiban's name²⁰. In 1113 B.S., i.e., 1706 the famous Zamindars Bhagabat Charan Choudhury and Ganeshram were deprived of their Zamindaris for being failed to pay revenues in time. Raghunandan arranged to buy them on behalf of his elder brother Ramjiban tactfully. This was the first way of gaining Zamindaris by Natore Raj Family²¹. A Raj family was established at Santail belonged to Chatmahar Police Station of Pabna district. A Brahmin Raja named Ramkrishna was the Raja of Santail. He married Sarbani Devi of Ray family of Demra. After ruling the Zamindari for a long period he died in 1710 leaving behind Rani Sarbani Devi who was a childless woman. She conducted the Zamindari for many years²². Rani Sarbani Devi at first took Surjakanta as her adopted son and after the death of Surjakanta she also took Chandrakanta as an adopted son. But the adopted son Chandrakanta died after some years leaving behind his wife Satyavati. After three months' of Chandrakanta's death Rani Sarbani Devi died. At that period Dewan Ramdev Choudhury became almost the only powerful man of the Santail Zamindari. Ramjiban got his Zamindari with the cooperation of Dewan Ramdev after paying the unpaid rent²³.

Udaynarayan was the Raja of Rajshahi. The capital of the Raja Udaynarayan was at Baranagar near Murshidabad district. His Zamindari extended all over Rajshahi Chakla on both the banks of the river Padma. He displayed good performance in ruling Zamindari and fell into the favour of Nawab. Suddenly there started disturbances in the Zamindari of Udaynarayan. Knowing that, the Nawab sent two Zamindars named Golam Muhammad and Zamindar of Kalia to help him. Two hundred cavalry soldiers also accompanied them as per the instruction of the

Nawab. They were advised to follow the directions of Raja Udaynarayan. Zamindari was maintained in a proper way with concerted effort. The soldiers began to collect tax from the subjects for the non payment of their salary. The subjects were extremely annoyed with their oppression. They stopped giving revenue to the Nawab's *Darbar* for a long period. Nawab sent an army under the leadership of a soldier named Muhammad Jan. Golam Muhammad was defeated in the battle. As a result Udaynarayan lost his strength of mind and many people say that he committed suicide by taking poison. It is also known that Golam Muhammad wanted money as the payment was due of the armed. Udaynarayan refused to pay: Golam Muhammad launched revolt and Nawab Murshidkuli Khan sent soldiers to help Golam Muhammad²⁴. Some, however, hold that when Udaynarayan revolted, Nawab Murshidkuli Khan sent soldiers to give him punishment and he committed suicide for the fear of punishment. In whatever way he might die, after the death of Udaynarayan. Raghunandan arranged to settle that Zamindari for his brother Ramjiban in 1121 B.S, i.e., 1714²⁵.

The Zamindar Sitaram Ray of Jessore became rebellious. Murshid Kuli Khan sent soldiers against him. Dewan Dayaram Ray was sent from Natore to help the Nawab. In the fight that started Sitaram was defeated and was taken prisoner. After the death of Sitaram in Jail, Ramjiban arranged the settlement area of his Zamindari including Pargana Bhusana, Ibrahimpur in his name in 1714²⁶.

Being unable to pay the rent to Nawab, the Zamindar Enaetullah of Jalalpur sold his Zamindari to Ramjiban for payment of revenue to the Government.

In accusation of committing murder, Shamsar Khan, Kishore Khan and, Enayet Khan were arrested and the Nawab cancelled their Zamindari and gave it to Ramjiban the *mouzas* of Habilee, Mahmudpur, Sahuzian, Tungi and Suroppur. In 1122 B.S., i.e., 1715 the Nawab also gave the Zamindari of Naldaha Pargana to Ramjiban²⁷.

The social status of Ramjiban was upgraded because of the Zamindari at Rajshahi of Udaynarayan and helped him for economic prosperity. After this Zamindari of Ramjiban came to be known as Rajshahi Zamindari. The dignity of Ramjiban further increased as a result of gaining the Zamindari of Bhusana and Muhammadpur of Jessore and Shantole of Pabna respectively.

Raghunandan's contributions are worthy of mention for the establishment of the Natore Raj or Estate. But behind such a rise of a new Zamindari, the effective help of Bengal Nawab Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan can not be underestimated. It thus be taken for granted that Murshidkuli Khan was the main patron of Natore Estate²⁸. The Zamindari of Raja Ramjiban extended over 139 parganas during that time.

Raja Ramjiban divided his Zamindari into these following Parganas:

1. Rajshahi	68 parganas
2. Bhaturia	30 parganas
3. Bhusana	29 parganas
4. Bajemahal	12 parganas
Total	139 Parganas

The revenue from total 139 Parganas was Rs. 17, 41987.00²⁹. In addition to income through the Zamindaris he had about 35 lakhs yearly profit. Further, Ramjiban brought under his control other Zamindaris tactfully. To rule this extensive Zamindari and collect revenue properly, he divided all Zamindaris into three centers. These were Sherpur in Bogra district, Baranagar in Murshidabad district and Natore. Baranagar was located half a mile north of Azimnagar railway station by the administrative advantages. Rarely Raghunandan had to go to Nawab *Darbar*, so he stayed at Baranagar most of the time. Staying at Baranagar helped him to maintain the royal duty of Natore. The tax of Chakla and Rajshahi used to be collected from

the Baranagar. He built a *Kachari* house to collect the revenue from Sherpur. That *Kachari* house was called Baroduari and 5 lakhs Rupee of rent were collected there in among these centers, Natore was the main and central point of all.³⁰

Natore was selected as a suitable place for the capital. It was originally a *beel* which was known as Bhatjhara. The Bhatjhara *beel* was the property of Puthia Raj. During their tenure of Bhatjhara services at Puthia, Ramjiban and Raghunandan promised to Puthia Raj that they would not receive any property of Puthia after becoming Raja³¹. So they could never apply to the Nawab rather approached to the Zamindar of Puthia for this. So the revenue assigned for Bhatjhara was only Rs. 27 and 5 *anas*. Since Raghunandan and Ramjiban had a plan to construct house there, the Puthia Raj gave a piece of *Brahamattar* land³². As receiving rent from a Brahman was considered to be irreligious, they sent 100 gold coin as gifts to Darpanarayan³³.

All places of Bhatjhara *beel* (marshyland) were not a plain area, it was being over flooded during the rainy season within other thesis, water dried up and a vast area could be utilized as grazing land. So the Zamindars of Natore took initiative to dig tanks and lakes in order to make the place convenient for domestic purpose.

The *dighis* (lake) of Anandakali, Laldighi, Malpukur (pond), Tarakeswar, Jaltuli, Gopinath, Berchowki were thus excavated and they bear the testimony of the achievements of the Zamindar of Natore-Raj. The Rajbari (the house of the Raja) was built of a place surrounded by *dighis* and ponds. The ponds were dug in such a way that no invader could enter the Rajprasad (the palatial building of the Raja) easily. Arrangements of guards were made at the gate way of the Rajprasad. Perhaps the Rajbari was built during the period between the year 1706 and 1710 A.D. Just after the building of the Rajbari (the house of the Raja) many people including the officers and the employees of the Raja began to come and settle in the *beel* and the *beel* gradually was transformed into a town.

After establishing the head quarters at Natore, Ramjiban began to conduct the administration of the large Zamindari (estate) with much energy and confidence. He exercised his power from the Rajdarbar itself located at Natore. Dayaram Ray his competent Dewan and the founder of Dighapatia Raj family helped him much in this regard. According to a source, Raghunandan at Murshidabad was the creator of the Natore estate, Dayaram Ray only consolidated it, while one was Clive, the other was Hastings of the East India Company³⁴.

Though Raghunandan by the grace of Murshid Kulikhan laid the foundation of Natore estate, Ramjiban and Dayaram Ray protected and improved it upto mark. During the prosperous days of Natore Raj family, its real founder Raghunandan died in 1714³⁵ Ramjiban was much shocked at the death of his brother. In fact Ramjiban conducted the administration of the estate according to the advice of Raghunandan. The wise and experienced person like Raghunandan brought prosperity and fame of Natore estate. Some days after the death of Raghunandan, his only son Kalika Prasad died, again after the death of Raghunandan³⁶ Ramjiban's baby son died. The three deaths, one after another brought an adverse situation and affected the body and mind of Ramjiban. The only alive person in the family was then Deviprasad, the son of Visnuram.³⁷

Raja Ramkanta Ray

As Ramjiban had no male child, many persons advised him to take an adopted son, while many others advised him to give whole property to his brother's son named Deviprasad. At last the decision of taking adopted son was accepted. He took Ramkanta Ray, the youngest son of Raski Ray who was considered as the Brahmankulashrestha and an inhabitant of village Chougram under Singra Police Station. He gave Rasik Ray Chougram Pargana and Islamabad under the district of Rangpur for allowing him to take Ramkanta Ray as his adopted son. The yearly income of the two parganas was Rs. 7760.³⁸

Deviprasad could not appreciate at all the idea of adopted son. Since whole of the Zamindar for himself. At this juncture Ramjiban decided to offer Ram Kanta 10 *anas* share of the Zamindar and the rest (i.e., six *anas*) to Debiprasad. But Deviprasad did not agree to the proposal and so Ramjiban gave the entire property to Ramkanta Ray, the adopted son³⁹. Ramjiban died in 1730⁴⁰.

At the time of Ramjiban's death, Ramkanta was a minor child. As a result the responsibility to conduct the administration was vested in Dayaram Ray, the competent Dewan of Natore estate. Dewan Dayaram Ray carried on the responsibility vested in him very sincerely till 1734. Due to experience and ready wit of Dayaram Ray, Deviprasad, the claimant of the property was to materialize his conspiracies.⁴¹

When Ramkanta was 18 in the year 1738, Dewan Dayaram Ray handed over him the charge of conducting the administration of the estate. Raja Ramkanta was efficient and eleven enough to look after the administration and in this matter his trusty adviser Dayaram Ray was his right hand. He incorporated the Zamindari of two other new parganas " namely Patildaha and Swaruppur in 1740. During the tenure of Raja Ramjiban, the total number of Parganas was 139 and he paid the revenue of Rs. 17,41,987.00 to the Nawab. During the tenure of Ramkanta the area was increased to 164 Parganas in place of 139 Parganas. The revenue was fixed Rs. 18,53,325.00. This revenue was Rs.1,11,338.00 more than what had been paid previously.⁴² Mr. K.C. Mitra, the historian, called Raja Ramkanta "a pious man without worldly wisdom."

But if the tenure of Raja Ramkanta Ray is taken into account, it appears that Natore estate achieved its glory during his tenure. So the opinion of Mr. Moitra can not be accepted in this regard. Of course, it is true that at the end of his tenure, he showed negligence in his administrative work and mainly engaged in the work of gods and goddesses and religious activities.⁴³

Ramkanta Ray and Rani Bhavani

As soon as Ramkanta got his maturity, the proposal of his marriage began to come from different places. The competent Dewan of the Raja of Natore made arrangements of his marriage with Bhavani Devi, the daughter of Atmaram Choudhury of village Chhatiagram.⁴⁴ The name of Bhavani's mother was Joydurga. Bhavani's mother came from an aristocratic family. Hari Dev Thakur (Tagore) the father of Jay Durga was the second son of Raghav Thakur. The father of Jay Durga was the second son of Raghav Thakur of Pakuria.⁴⁵

At the time of her marriage Bhavani was 15 only and Ramkanta was 18. On the occasion of his son's marriage, Ramjiban was also present in village Chhatiagram⁴⁶. Atmaram Choudhury gave away a part of the village, as the dowry of the marriage⁴⁷.

In an auspicious day at the end of the marriage, all with the new couple returned to the head quarter at Natore. Since then Bhavani Devi became well known as Rani Bhavani. Raja Ramkanta was a simple natured man. On the other hand, Rani Bhavani possessed extraordinary talent. She was as experienced in worldly affairs as she was wise in religious deeds. Had Raja Ramkanta acted according to Rani Bhavani's advice from the very beginning, he would not have been removed from the estate⁴⁸.

Depriving of Raja Ramkanta Ray of the Estate

Alivardi Khan became the ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1740. Raja Ramkanta was surrounded by some dishonest officials and neglected the duties of the administration of the estate and as a result a lot of revenue fell arrear. He failed to pay the revenue in due time Dayaram Ray, his adviser then first advised him to pay the revenue regularly and to be attentive to the administrative duties of the estate. But Raja Ramkanta did not pay heed to it. This is because on one hand he was a juvenile youth and on the other hand he possessed much honour, influence

and power – all combined together and made him lost in himself. Thought after the death of his father Ramjiban, Ramkanta became the Raja, the real power was in the hand of Dayaram Ray. It was Dayaram Ray who looked after everything of the estate. Perhaps because of this the Zamindari (estate) was being conducted properly at the first stage of his receiving the Zamindari (estate).

The fact that the Zamindari (estate) was running well is proved by the fact that the estate was gaining other pieces of landed property. Dayaram Ray on one hand was old and he was eager to establish the new Dighapatia estate. On the other hand Ramkanta being surrounded by the flatterers neglected the advice of the old adviser Dayaram Ray and even he dismissed him from job⁴⁹. In these circumstances the estate was facing danger. Thought at the time of gaining power by Alivardi Khan, Raja Ramkanta helped him and lent him money from time to time. It was natural that the estate would not exist if revenue remained unpaid. Perhaps he was ousted from the estate for keeping the revenue unpaid.

On the other hand Rankanta's standing enemy, his nephew Deviprasad had always been trying to get the Zamindari (estate). When Ramjiban was alive, he did not try to claim it openly. Again there was still sufficient influence of Raghunandan in the court of Murshid Kuli Khan. Change of the Nawab and revenue being arrear brought opportunity for Deviprasad. He alleged against Ramkanta in the court of the Nawab of Murshidabad in different ways. As a result Alivardi Khan ousted Ramkanta from the Zamindari (landlordship)⁵⁰ and offered the Zamindari (landlordship) to Deviprasad by issuing a *Sanad* (certificate).

The above arrangement was so secretly that neither Ramkanta nor Rani Bhavani could know even a bit of it. When Raja Ramkanta realized the fact, he had nothing to do. Then Deviprasad entered the house of the Raja with his men and compelled Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani to leave the house of the Raja⁵¹. Deviprasad with his men plundered the house of the Raja. Though Raja Ramkanta was inside the

house, he had nothing to do. At that time Rani Bhavani was then pregnant and finding no alternative he left the house of the Raja with Rani Bhavani. The Rani had nothing but at last her wearing cloths only. She had much trouble to walk on for the reason stated above and had no vehicle even to travel upto Murshdabad. Other side the way was difficult to be traveled over. With much difficulty, however, they met Jagatseth in Murshidabad as requested for shelter⁵². They began to live in Murshidabad like with much poverty and led life just like poor men. The banker Jagatseth had much access to the Nawab. When the Zamindars of Bengal went to Murshidabad, they had much opportunities to assemble together of the house of Jagatseth and they were also appreciated in terms of covering reports of Bengal as a whole.

The *Punnah* celebration, the day on which Zamindars paid the first payment of their revenue to the Nawab was held in the house of Jagatseth in the month of *Jaistha* at the end of each year. After the end of the audit of accounts of one and all, Zamindaris were re-distributed⁵³. Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani went to the house of Jagatseth many times in various occasions. As there was a good relation with Jagatseth, the latter was their ultimate shelter.

Jagatseth's relation with the Nawab was very good. As a result it was difficult for the Nawab to refuse any request of Jagatseth. He requested the Nawab to give back the estate of Ramkanta to him. It was his effort that Raja Ramkanta was given back his Zamindari (estate) again⁵⁴.

As to the removal of Raja Ramkanta from the Zamindari, a group of scholars have the opinion that the reason may be sought in a plot hatched by Dayaram the Darbar of Murshidabad. In this light these scholar have the arguments that the question of the arrear of revenue and mismanagement in the work of the Zamindari (estate) had nothing to cause for the removal as has so far been recorded by the scholar⁵⁵.

After the removal of Raja Ramkanta from Zamindari, Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani begged for the pardon of Dayaram Ray for regaining the estate. Seeing the misery of Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani, Dayaram Ray's became soft and he again made effort in the court of the Nawab in favour of getting Zamindari (estate) back to Raja Ramkanta. With the effort of Dayaram Ray, Raja Ramkanta regained the Zamindari⁵⁶.

The opinion that Raja Ramkanta lost his Zamindari (landlordship) due to disagreement with Dayaram Ray can not be accepted. This is because in those days a Zamindar could enjoy Zamindari (landlordship) till his later generations if he paid the revenue regularly. Zamindaris were seized only from those Zamindars who were disobedient or unable to pay the revenue. Perhaps the root cause behind the seizure of Zamindari of Raja Ramkanta was non payment of revenue. Of course, it may be assumed that Dayaram Ray also had some contribution along with the contribution of Jagatseth to regain Zamindari by Raja Ramkanta. After regaining Zamindari, Dayaram Ray was reinstated to the post of the advisor⁵⁷.

Some days after regaining the Zamindari, Raja Ramkanta went to Bhavanidham with his wife Rani Bhavani and his son Kalu Tarkavagis. He stayed at Bhavanipur about one year and devoted himself to the worship and service of mother Bhavani. The large building lying in front of the temple of Bhavani was built by Raja Ramkanta. He built a bungalow and a temple to Bhavanipur. In the temple he established the idol of Viswanath Shiva in the name of his father Ramjiban. He also established another idol of shiva in the bungalow.⁵⁸ The retirement of Dayaram from the service had disturbed the smooth running of administration and Ramakanta was rather helpless in the functioning of the estate under the given circumstances.

Maharaja Ramkanta was the father of two sons and a daughter. Only Tarasundry, the daughter was alive and the two sons died an immature death.⁵⁹ As

there was no son alive, Raja Ramkanta permitted Rani Bhavani to keep an adopted son and died in 1748.⁶⁰

After the death of the Raja, Rani Bhavani became the only owner of the Zamindari (estate). Alivardi Khan entrusted Rani Bhavani with the charge of administering the Zamindari (estate). Rani Bhavani, too, showed her fitness and ability to the administration of Zamindari (the estate).

After the death of her husband and sons Rani Bhavani did not have much attraction towards wealth and property. Her only concern was to give her only alive daughter Tara in marriage to a suitable bridegroom and entrust the son-in-law with the charge of administering the estate. Rani Bhavani's all dreams cantered round Kumari Tarasundari. At that time female education was not so much in vogue. But in many cases it seen that in the ancient Raj families arrangements were made to educate their daughters.

Accordingly, education of all kinds were given to Rajkumari Tarasundari even from her childhood.⁶¹ Dewan Dayaram Ray was entrusted with the work of finding out a good bridegroom of a respectable family for Kumari Tarasundari. Khajura was a famous village under Natore Sadar Police Station. Many Brahmins of respectable family lived there. At last Dayaram Ray gave Tarasundari in marriage to Raghunath Lahiri of village Khajura.⁶² Tarasundari was only eight when she was married. Rani's intention was to entrust the administration of her estate with Raghunath, her son-in-law and had the name of Raghunath proclaimed in the court of the Nawab as the future Zamindar of the estate. The charge of administration of the estate was also entrusted on the son-in-law. But Raghunath Lahiri, her son-in-law died in 1758.⁶³ After the death of her son-in-law Rani Bhavani herself took over the charge of administration of the estate again.⁶⁴ Tarasundari became widow at an early age. As soon as she arrived at womanhood, she became more beautiful

and some rumors about. Tarasundari and Nawab Siraj-ud-daullah became popular in those days.⁶⁵ Only the conspirators against the Nawab and the Rani propagated these false stories to put the black stain of infamy on the character of the Rani and the Nawab.

Rani Bhavani's patriotism and love for subjects :

Alivardi Khan was a competent Nawab who was sympathetic to his subjects. He showed his affection to all without any distinction to Hindus and Muslims.⁶⁶ Just after taking the charge of administration, he first paid his attention to establish law and order of the country. Though he established law and order in the country, he failed to check the frequent inroads of the '*Bargi*' (the Maratha cavalry).⁶⁷ Consequently the effect of the inroads of the *Bargi* influenced the whole of the country. The effect of these inroads, however, disturbed the Zamindari of Rani Bhavani. The inroads of the *Bargi* had also been found before the reign period of Alivardi Khan but it was found more frequent and troublesome during his reign. Bhaskar Pandit, the commander-in-chief of Raghbir, the chief of Maharashtra came to attack Murshidabad with about forty thousand horsemen to collect choutha ($\frac{1}{4}$ th of the total crop). They suddenly attacked and went away after plundering. Public life was disrupted due to this kind of attack. In these circumstances, Nawab Alivardi Khan wanted, to make an amicable settlement with the '*Bargis*'. He voluntarily wanted to offer rupees one lakh but the demand of Bhaskar Pandit was rupees was more and of amounted to one crore.⁶⁸ So no amicable settlement was possible. Battles were being conducted in this way. In the absence of Alivardi Khan they entered Murshidabad and plundered the town. They entered the house of Jagat Seth, the banker and took away rupees two crores and some valuable things. Some parts of the town were also plundered.⁶⁹ Rani Bhavani tried her best for the security of life and property of the subjects. As a result of the attack of the *Bargi*, a part of

the estate (the region situated to the southern bank of the Padma) was affected. With the administrative policy of Rani Bhavani many parts of Rajshahi situated to the northern side of the Padma were protected.⁷⁰ Considering the point of security, Alivardi Khan transferred necessary papers and documents from Murshidabad to Godagari situated on the northern bank of the Padma. The members of his family were also shifted with furniture to Godagari under the leadership of Nawajes Muhammad Khan, the then Deputy Governor.⁷¹ During the attack of the Marhathas, Zamindars helped the Nawab with a lot of money. To cheek the attack of the Bargis, the Nawab collected additional amount of money from Zamindars. To protect the subjects from the attack of the 'Borgi', the Nawab was compelled to make the treaty with the 'Borgi' on the condition of paying the 'choutha' (1/4th of the crop) of Rs. 12 lakh annually. After consulting with Zamindars the Nawab fixed an extra tax called Choutha for the Marathas. This tax was collected from the Zamindars. At that time Rani Bhavani helped the Nawab with Rs. 3,02,480/-.⁷²

After the death of Alivardi Khan, Nawab Siraj-ud-daullah came to the throne, Siraj had to face different kinds of dangers and difficulties. The Zamindars of the country desired his fall, specially Raja Mahendra, Raja Ramnarayan, Raja Rajballav held a closed door meeting in the house of Jagat Seth. Raja Krishnachandra of Nadia played a leading role in the fall of Siraj. He decided that the help of the English was necessary to cause the fall a Siraj. So he chalked out the programme with Clive secretly.⁷³ Before the battle of Plassey, Rani Bhavani urged Raja Krishna Chandra and all other Zamindars of Bengal not to help Clive. Rani Bhavani was the first to realize that if Siraj was defeated it would bring unlimited troubles for the people of Bengal. She thought before hand that the English would gradually spread the net of power and the people of Bengal would become their slaves.⁷⁴ Rani Bhavani sent army to help the Nawab in the battle of plassey, but the Nawab had been defeated before the soldiers of the Rani reached there.⁷⁵

Rani Bhavani as an administrator

After the death of her husband in 1748 Rani Bhavani became the legal owner of Natore estate and was running the administration of the estate excellently. To conduct her administrative duty, her daughter Tarasundari and Dewan Dayaram Ray helped her in all respects.

Holwell, an English historian said about the estate of Rani Bhavani, "At Natore about ten day's travel, north-east of Calcutta reside the family of the most ancient and opulent of the Hindu princess of Bengal. Raja Ramkanta of the race of Brahmin Who died in 1748 was succeeded by his wife, a princess named Bhavani Rani whose Dewan or minister was Dayaram Ray of the *Tili* caste or tribe, they possess a tract of country about 35 day's travel and under a settled governments that Stipulated annual rent to the crown was 70 lakh of *sicca* rupees, the real revenue about one crore and a half".⁷⁶

It may be said that Rani Bhavani conducted the administration of her estate successfully. During the period of Rani Bhavani three kinds of rent were collected.

- i) Legal revenue for the land in possession;
- ii) Monetary fine as the punishment for committing crime;
- iii) *Abwab* or extra charges;
- iv) Miscellaneous.

During her tenure farmers had to pay very small amount of rent, but businessmen had to pay more.⁷⁷ At that time the rent for the homestead was of very small amount and nobody had to pay rent for the houses having doors at northern side. The causes for which *abwabs* extra charges were collected are as follows:

- i) Tax on the profit of business;

ii) A lot of taxes were collected on the social and family festivals like *annaprasan* (the ceremony of giving rice to a child for the first time), *churakaran*

(leaving a lock of hair uncut on the head), marriage, Shradhya of parents (ceremony in honour and for the benefit of dead parents)⁷⁸ The money collected in this way was spent on various religious and development works. When Rani Bhavani was running the administration of her estate beautifully, some unforeseen troubles occurred which have been stated above.

Rani Bhavani and Her Benevolent Works

Rani Bhavani was not only an administrator but also a well wisher of her subjects. Considering the all round development some scholars conclude that, "Rani Bhavani's tenure is the golden age for the welfare of the subjects. She administered a big Zamindari (estate) in Rajshahi with peace and order for a long period of 50 years. During her tenure the subjects were out of poverty and scarcity.

She spent about rupees fifty crores for donation and welfare works.⁷⁹ She was devoted to education. She conducted various primary schools and Chatuspathies (Sanskrit schools for teaching the four Vedas, grammar, philosophy etc.) in the district of Rajshahi. She offered stipends/scholarships for maintaining those primary schools and *Chatuspathies*. Sripati Vidyalankar was one of those who got scholarships from Rani Bhavani. He was the professor of the Chatuspathy of village Tajpur under Singra Police Station. To maintain Tajpur Chatuspathy, Rani Bhavani contributed Rs. 90.00 per year.⁸⁰ The scholars named Rudrakanta of Chougram, Ramanath Talukdar of Matikopa, Kalikaprasad Chakravarty of Amhati, Kashikanta, Panchanan etc. got scholarships from Rani Bhavani. Professor Rudrakanta Bhattacharya of the *Chatuspathy* of Bariagram under Singra Police Station got yearly scholarship of Rs. 60/- from Rani Bhavani.⁸¹ In 1752, a man named Gadadhar Siddhanta established a *Chatuspathy* at Amhati, Rani Bhavani granted there a monthly scholarship of Rs. 10.00. At that time Hindu law and logic were taught in various Toles (primary schools). From the description Mr. W.W.Hunter, it appears that in the toles of Belgharia and Amhati, Hindu Law and Logic were taught.⁸²

There were centres for teaching Sanskrit at Baria, Pakuria, Natore, Govinathpur, Amhati, Basudevpur, Malanchi, Baranagar, Debipur and Brindaban Akhra of Natore. With the money of Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani 33 Vaishnav Akhra (Monastery) and 83 toles (primary schools) were established.⁸³ According to an account of 1791, it appears that Rani Bhavani spent Rs.15583.00 and 5 *ana* annually for the stipend for Brahmins, Gangabasi and Muslim saints.⁸⁴ In the education of Sanskrit, Basudevpur, Kalam and Baidyabelghoria were so much advanced that they were called the Navadwip of North Bengal. She spent money for the education not only in Rajshahi but also in the chatuspathy of the district of Birbhum.⁸⁵ She not only patronised education but was also an erudite scholar. She was one of the educated ladies of those days.⁸⁶ In those days the system of female education was not prevailing in the country. Both Hindu and Muslim societies were lagging behind in respect of female education. Hindu families thought that if a girl was educated, she would be a widow just after her marriage. If girls were educated the complexity in the family would increase.⁸⁷

Rani Bhavani's inspiration for introducing widow marriage and for helping widows:

Rani Bhavani was a farsighted lady. She was the first to realise that Hindu widows should be remarried. Later on Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar introduced it in Bengal. Tarasundari, the daughter of Rani Bhavani became widow at her early age. Perhaps for this she took initiative for widower marriage. On the other hand Raj Ballav of Dhaka tried to introduce widow marriage because his daughter became widow. Rani Bhavani and Raj Ballav placed the proposal of their daughters' marriage before the pandits (scholars). In those days the Brahmin pandits of Vikrampur, Dhaka and Nadia were the sole authorities of the Hindu society. The pandits of Vikrampur gave opinion in favour of widow remarriage. But Raja Krishnachandra that widow marriage was not valid according to the doctrine of the religion. Because

of the opposition of Raja Krishnachandra it was not possible for the Rani to introduce and implement the idea of widow remarriage. Her proposal for widow remarriage showed her farsightedness.⁸⁸ Under the presidentship of T.B. Maccaulay in 1837, the Indian commission gave their opinion of remarriage of the Hindu women of high families and urged the government to implement law in this regard. But the Indian Dharma Sava (religious society) did not accept this opinion.⁸⁹

Rani Bhavani was kind enough to the widows. She offered monthly stipend to many widows. Rani Bhavani made a shelter for widows on the bank of the Ganges and made arrangements for their maintenance.⁹⁰ These widows earned their living by spinning thread of the cotton produced in the country.

Rani Bhavani made arrangements for the medical treatment of her subjects. She engaged eight *vaidyas* (country doctors) on the basis of monthly pay. Each of these eight *vaidyas* had two servants. The *vaidyas* used to go about 8 villages adjacent to Baranagar and give medical treatment to the patients and their servants cooperated with them in various ways. There were additional attendants to give diet to the patients. They used to carry rice, pulse of mug, sugar candy etc. Besides those of Baranagar, Rani Bhavani had several hundred of *Kavirajas* (native physicians) and *hekims* physicians using the Greek system of medical treatment). These physicians went from door to door from morning to evening and gave medicines.⁹¹ If a subject died in a village, Rani Bhavani would bear all the expenses of his/her funeral. She paid Rs.6.00 and Rs.3.00 for the Brahmin and the Sudra (the lowest caste Hindu) respectively.⁹² She distributed rice to the poor in the year 1176 B.S., i.e., 1769. When there was a pathetic famine in Bengal. This famine killed crores of people of Bengal and Bihar.⁹³ During this famine Rani Bhavani spent a lot of money to help her subjects. She bought rice from Rangpur at a high price and sold it to the people at a low price. To save the victimised people she opened gruel kitchens at different

places. Besides these, She contributed a lot of money to her subjects. She contributed money through her employees.⁹⁴

Though she was a woman, she showed had much credit in conducting the administration of her Zamindari (estate). She administered her estate properly and did her best to serve the people.⁹⁵

Contribution of Rani Bhavani in the field of Religion :

Rani Bhavani was not only a successful administrator but also was equally concerned about the religious upliftment of her subjects. She paid much attention to the spread of institutional religion and for this she encouraged establishment of temples in various parts of her Zamindari and beyond. To memorise her birth place at Chatiangram, her birth place, she built a beautiful temple. The name of th temple was given Jai Durga Mandir after her mother's name.⁹⁶ An idol was also installed inside it. Rani Bhavani had got constructed more temples in other places too and the following list bears the testimony of her credit to this effect.

Name of the Temple	Place/Location
1. Shiva Temple	Mammi Kalikapur, near Dasuria. ⁹⁷
2. Raghunath Temple	Mandapukur (Naogaon District) ⁹⁸
3. Bhavanipur Temple	Bhavanipur (near Bagura) ⁹⁹
4. Jaikalibari Temple and Tarakeswar Shiva Temple	Natore ¹⁰⁰

Maharani Bhavani's religious activities and favour did not only confine with Natore but crossed the border of the region. She was very much attracted to Kashidham and in order to memorise her link she built Bhavani temple there. As she followed a principle of placing idol inside, this temple had also the record of having an excellent idol inside it. At Kashi, she spent huge money for the Durga temple established in 1770 and in the same year the temple of Gopal was birth under her patronage.¹⁰¹

She also built many temples at Baranagar, Murshidabad. Bhavaniswar temple at Baranagar is a remarkable achievement of Rani Bhavani. She established the idol of Rajrajeswari in the temple of Rajrajeswari to the south of gopal temple established by her daughter Tarasundari to the west of Bhavaniswar temple. She established Charibangla temple to the south east of Madangopal temple situated to the south east of Rajrajeswari temple. This Charibangla temple is worth seeing. Each brick of the Charibangla temple is full of images of gods and goddesses.¹⁰² She built a temple in the name of Kirteswari at Baranagar. This temple was built in 1765.¹⁰³ She established the idol of Kasturiswar shiva after her mother's pet name at Baranagar¹⁰⁴ It is said that both the temples of Bhavaniswar shiva were built at the same time.¹⁰⁵

She waved Rupees one lakh and eighty thousand to Gangavasi and Khetravasi Brahmins, abbots of monastery and guests. With this huge amount of the Maharani the service of gods and guests and various religious deeds were performed. Besides giving stipend cash money, she also gave 5 lakh *bighas* of Brahmattar land (pieces of rent free land given away to Brahmins) and Debattar land (property endowed for defraying the cost of worshipping a deity) land to the people of four castes of Hindus of Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jessore, Dhaka, Murshidabad and Birbhum. Those pieces of land were rent free.¹⁰⁶ A.B.M. Mahmood, a reputed scholar in this field of study, quoting from the report of the Amini commission mentions that she donated a total area of 4,29,149 *bighas* of rent free Brahmattar land.¹⁰⁷

When a Brahmin named Ramanath came from Nastik Kanyakubja to Natore, she donated much land to him. Later on she appointed him as jailor.¹⁰⁸ She granted stipend of Rs. one lakh for the temples of Venares and neighbouring areas.¹⁰⁹ Shyam Ray's Seba (home) established by Rani Bhavani was a famous seba (home). For this purpose, the Rani donated huge plots of land an these landed properties were located mainly at the places namely Chougachha, Kaliganjer Dihi of Fulbaria etc.

For the service and worship of the idol of Shyam Ray, Rani Bhavani allotted one thousand *bighas* of cultivable land.¹¹⁰ She built 380 temples and guest houses in Venaras.¹¹¹ She again gave away huge amount of food to the poor. Every morning 8 mounds of grams were soaked in a stone made storage tank of water. Every day 25 mounds Tandul (much boiled rice) was distributed in the temple of Devi Annapurna. During every worship of gods and goddesses with much pomp and grandeur 4/5 thousand of people ate with much pleasure. When Rani Bhavani went to Kashi Dham for the first time, she had with her 1700 boats full of food stuff for giving away to the people. During her next visit she took with her 1000 boats full of food stuff for the same purpose.¹¹²

She donated not only for the Hindus but also for the Muslims.¹¹³ She established some Maktabas, too. The instance of her gift for the Muslim Saints may be found through *Pirattar* land (rent free land for the Muslim saints) of places like Naogaon and Patharghata. She is also remembered for the digging of a pond in the name of the saint Baba Adam of the district of Bogra.¹¹⁴ Rani Bhavani contribution is found not only to the field of religion but also in the construction of roads, digging canals and ponds. She dug a pond in Mummikalikapur village near Dashuria, Pabna to remove the scarcity of water of the people. A big pond was also dug at Handial. She had about 300 ponds dug at Pakuria, Singra Police Station. The credit of huge ponds numbering 9 along the road stretching from Natore to Bhavanipur, Bogra lies in her credit.¹¹⁵

For the development of communication the Rani has no parallel. She was very much concerned about the road conditions of the region and so she gave much attention to it. She made the road from Natore to Talam Shiva temple. Besides these, she constructed a road known as *Ranir Zangal* from Natore to Bhavanipur of the district of Bogra.¹¹⁶ The road runs from Natore to Bhavanipur via Chougram, Pakuria, Bingram, Bamihal and Ranirhat. She planted trees by the side of the road

and built rest houses for the convenience of the people. There are some small and large bridges on the said Ranir Zangal Road. At present the bridge stands as a testimony of Rani Bhavani's achievements.¹¹⁷ The road called Bombay Road at present, running from Howrah to Kashi Dham is due to the credit of Rani Bhavani. This road is called Rani Bhavani road or Vanaras Road.¹¹⁸

Personal Life of Rani Bhavani

Maharani Bhavani was very pious in her personal life. She passed her life in a strict disciplined way. Every night she used to get up from bed one hour and thirty six minutes before the night was over and finished her prayer. After this she entered her flower garden 12 minutes before the night was over and plucked flowers with her own hands. There after she took bath in the Ganges, sat on the river coast, for prayer again and continued her offers to Shiva up to 48 minutes after the day break. After wards she offered flowers to each of the temples of gods and goddesses and returned home and listened the stories of the *Puranas*, worshipped Shiva and '*Ista*' (desire). Then she cooked food herself and first fed 10 Brahmins and made arrangements of feeding the Brahmins of her own family and ate *Habishanna* (Rice and butter boiled together). In the end she went to the office of the Zamindari (estate) and gave the written orders to the employees. She used to examine everything carefully before putting her signature. She led a very simple life. In the later part of her life she lived in the ground floor of a house of Baranagar.¹¹⁹ She had a deep love and respect for her husband. For the *Shraddha* (funeral ceremony) of Raja Ramkanta, she spent about ten lakh rupees.¹²⁰ Though she was an woman, she proved her worth in running the administration of the Zamindari (estate). She conducted the administrative work skilfully. As a Maharani she was an impartial judge.¹²¹ Rani Bhavani had a very hard time during the fag end of her life. The Zamindari (estate) incurred serious loss due to the change of the revenue policy of the company^{121(a)}. In spite of being the owner of a large Zamindari (estate), she had to depend on the

stipend of the government in the later part of her life. The amount of this stipend gradually decreased and became Rs. 1000/- only in the end.¹²² She witnessed the glorious days of Natore estate and she also witnessed its days of down fall Not only the downfall of Natore estate came but also most of the outstanding Raj families (land lord families) ruined within the year 1802.¹²³ This dignified lady breathed her last at the age of 79 years.¹²⁴

Her intelligence, her skill for administration of the estate, her generosity, made her much respectful in the this society.¹²⁵ No sooner had the Rani died than the glory of Natore Raj family nay Natore came to an end.

Raja Ramkanta had no son and at the time of his death, he permitted Rani Bhavani to take an adopted son. As we have sun earlier, Rani Bhavani desired to give her daughter Tara in marriage and hand over the charge of Zamindari (estate) to her son in-law. She married her daughter Tarasundari to Raghunath Lahiri of village Khajura. Raghu Nath died an immature death. So according to the permission of Ramkanta, She took Ramkrishna, the third son of Haridev Ray of village Atgram of Naogaon, (Rajshahi) as her adopted son. The ancestor of Ramkrishna and that of Natore Raj family came of the same family.¹²⁶ In exchange of allowing his son Ram Krishna to be the adopted son of Rani Bhavani, Rani Bhavani gave Haridev Ray Atgram belonging to Amrul Pargana as reward.¹²⁷

At the time of 10 years' settlement in 1790, Ramkrishna got the estate. He got the title of Maharaja from the Mughal emperor Shah Alam.¹²⁸ Raja Ramkrishna was not a man of practical sense. In his wordly life he devoted himself to conducting the administration of the estate with his mother properly. Later on he kept himself aloof from everything. With a view to changing his mentality, Maharani gave him in marriage to the bride of the Majumdar family of Brikutsa.¹²⁹ But no change was found in him even after the marriage. Rani Bhavani decided to hand over the power of administration of the estate to Ramkrishna and led a religions life, Rani Bhavani handed over the power because of the conflict between the mother and the son.¹³⁰

During the administration of Raja Ramkrishna he faced two main problems and because of his failure to solve those problems he lost many parts of his Zamindari (estate) The first problem was the activities of the officers and the second one was the company's rule.

The influence of the officers increased so much that it was difficult for the Raja to conduct the work of administration independently. These officers were very much corrupt and involved in many illegal activities. They leased out pieces of land with higher price to their relatives at a lower price. In this regard *ijardar* Nandalal informed the company about Chand Thakur (Chakravarty), the chief adviser of Rani Bhavani that he leased out the village which might be leased out at Rs. 1000.00 / 1500.00 at the lower price of only Rs. 25.00/30.00 and thus gained much profit personally.¹³¹ Besides this Chand Thakur appointed worthless persons to the important posts like Chakladar, Amin, Naib etc.¹³² In 1792 people applied to the government to help them to get rid of the influence of those officers.¹³³ The officers misappropriated a lot of funds through corruption and deception and later on they bought new estates with the money collected thereby.¹³⁴ One of these officers was Kalishankar Ray, the founder of Narail family. Maharaja Ramkrishna sold Kadihati Pargana to Kalishankar and leased out to him the remaining part of Bhusana estate.¹³⁵ The lease was given out in 1793. In the first year of getting the lease, Kalishankar increased the revenue from Rs. 3,24,000.00 to Rs. 3,48,000.00 and consequently the revolt of the tenants was the outcome. As a result of the revolt, the rent fell arrear. Maharaja Ramkrishna, in order to get rid of the payment of revenue, made a deed of gift (*Heba*) in the name of Viswanath, his minor son.¹³⁶ The Government could not sell the property of a minor by auction. The property would go to the court of Wards for supervision. The government appointed a commissioner and a *Sazowal* or manager under him. Kalishankar tactfully influenced the government and had his son Ramnarayan appointed *Sazowal*.¹³⁷ In this way,

Kalishankar, after the permanent Settlement deceived his land lord and bought the profitable parganas of the estate in pseudonym.¹³⁸ Sometime after the Permanent settlement, when the vast estate of Natore Raj being sold part by part by auction, Kalishankar and other servants had the privilege to buy most of the land in pseudonym.¹³⁹

Sri Radharaman Shaha, the historian of the district of Pabna wrote that the ancestors of the Zamindars of Tarash had served as Dewan and Mutsuddis of the Raja of Natore and thus they emerged as Zamindars.¹⁴⁰

In the court of the Raja of Natore, the influence of Chand Thakur was unlimited. His real aim was to occupy the whole property with the help of a few officials who were disloyal to the estate. Many tenants fled away because of the oppression of Chand Thakur.¹⁴¹ In this way Chand Thakur established a maladministration. Raja Ramkrishna had no ability to control all these officers and take them into task. As a result, according to their ability these officers misappropriated money and brought about the decay and downfall of the Zamindari (estate).

The principle of the company, too, upset Raja Ramkrishna. The big Zamindars introduced the system of appointing Talukdars to collect revenue properly. Zamindars, in many cases, collected revenue through Talukdars. In 1793, the permanent settlement was made directly with Zamindars and Talukdars.¹⁴² As a result Zamindars sustained a loss. To get rid of the loss, Maharaja Ramkrishna applied to the council that Talukdars were appointed for the convenience of collecting revenue properly but if the Talukdars slipped out of his hand he would lose ¼th of his landed property.¹⁴³ In the words of Sirajul Islam, a reputed scholar in this area of study it was "In fact the Sadarjama of the Taluq as within his Zamindari amounted to Rs.371000.00 and all of them were separated."¹⁴⁴

In the district of Rajshahi 1603 Talukdars who were not under the Zamindars, were created.¹⁴⁵ There were 14500 Talukdars under 394 Zamindars and they were separated from the Zamindars. In Jessore 3444 Talukdars were separated from 122 Zamindars.¹⁴⁶

As the company fixed excess revenue, it was not possible for Raja Ramkrishna to pay the revenue. On the other hand, during the tenure of Raja Ramkrishna, the situation of law and order of the country deteriorated much. At that time, the police, the officer-in-charge of the police station, *Jamadars*, *barkandajes* and the officers of the court took bribe and as a result the antisocials got an upper hand at the cost of the lawlessness and disorder that followed.¹⁴⁷ Explaining the circumstances of the contemporary period Mr. K.C. Mitra writes, "In the time of Maharaja Ramksishna crime was very rife, there was little or no security of life and property. Thefts, burglary and dacoity were common and became a part of the public life".¹⁴⁸

In such a circumstances, farmers lost their energy and confidence of producing crops and failed to pay the revenue. And as a result it was not possible for Raja Ramkrishna, too, to pay the government revenue. In every year the revenue fell arrear gradually and in the year 1795, the amount of arrear revenue was Rs. 5,39,054.00 Raja Ramkrishna applied for the remission of arrear revenue but in vain.¹⁴⁹ Because of his failure to pay the arrear revenue, Mr. J.H. Harington, the then commissioner of Rajshahi put Maharaja Ramkrishna in jail on 6 March 1793.¹⁵⁰ On 15 March, 1793, the Governor General gave the Maharaja more time and ordered the commissioner to acquit the Maharaja if he signed an agreement to pay the arrear revenue in instalments. When the deed of agreement was signed on 18 March, Maharaja Ramkrishna was released from the Jail.¹⁵¹ Later on when the revenue again fell arrear, there was no alternative and some part of the estate was sold by auction. The sold Parganas were, Pargana Manikdihi, Pargana Ambari, Choughoria, Pargana Patiladaha, Pargana Kismat Katawali.¹⁵² Owing to the failure

of the payment of revenue in time, the Maharaja was sent to police custody on 12 September, 1793 and he had to stay there for two days and in the month of December of the same year he was sentenced to imprisonment.¹⁵³ He was released from the prison when he borrowed money and paid the arrear revenue. Afterwards he had to sell some more Parganas. The influence of the British administration not only fell upon the Raja of Natore but also upon other Zamindars. As a result of the Permanent settlement, the chief Zamindars like those of Burdwan, Nadia, Natore (Rajshahi) and Dinajpur were ruined and new Zamindars came into existence after buying land and Zamindaris which were sold by auction.¹⁵⁴

When Maharaja Ramkrishna took over the charge of the Zamindari (estate), British rule was firmly established in India. So Maharaja Ramkrishna had to struggle against unfavorable circumstances. Many people think that Raja Ramkrishna was not interested in worldly affairs, he led a saintly life and that was why he had to lose different parts of his estate. This opinion can not be accepted as Rani Bhavani, too, had to lose power at the end of her rule. In the contemporary period, other Zamindars of Bengal also could not conduct the administration of their estates independently. So Ramkrishna had nothing to do against the auction of his Zamindari (estate). In this regard, Mr. A K Moitra observes, "Ramkrishna could not save his Zamindari (estate) even if he was not heedless to worldly affairs and even if he was deeply concerned with worldly interests."¹⁵⁵

As the situation stands, it is likely that the observation of A. K. Moitra is justified. Though Raja Ramkrishna was not successful as a Zamindar, he was an honest man as per records. He was '*Shakti Sadhak*' (worshipper of divine energy under its female personification), as he was a scholar so he was a devotee and saint and possessed miraculous power.¹⁵⁶

He always liked to lead a life free from botheration. He used to sit for meditation at dead of night at the famous burning ground of Bagshore 5/6 miles away from

Natore. Bagshore was the place of meditation and the favourite place of wandering of Raja Ramkrishna.¹⁵⁷ He also sat for meditation at Bhavanipur, Bogra. His seat, for receiving sacrificial fire from the hole in the ground and another seat consisting of panchamundi (the names of five gods, sheva, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar and Ramchandra) were situated there.¹⁵⁸ He arranged the digging of the canal from Baranagar to the temple of Kiriteswari. This temple is situated at a place three miles from village Dahapara on the western bank of the Bhagirathi. Ramkrishna performed the meditation of Kali at Baranagar. His panchamundi seat was situated under a betel tree behind the temple of Gopal founded by Tara Devi.¹⁵⁹ This great saint like Zamindar died in 1795.¹⁶⁰ The Maharaja had two sons, Viswanath and Shivnath by name.¹⁶¹

After the death of Maharaja Ramkrishna, Natore Zamindari (estate) was divided into two parts. These two parts were known as Chhotataraf (smaller side) and Barataraf of Viswanath, was the first Raja of the Barataraf and Shivnath was that of the Chhotataraf.¹⁶²

Barataraf

Biswanath Ray

After the death of his father, Biswanath Ray took over the charge of Barataraf bigger side of the Zamindari (estate) as the first Raja. During the tenure of Raja Ramkrishna when many parts of his estate were being sold by auction, he made a deed of gift (heba) of Bhusana in the name of Biswanath.¹⁶³ When Biswanath attained maturity, he was given the estate of Bhusana. But Biswanath did not take the property as it was not considered profitable, it was marked out for auction in the following way :¹⁶⁴

Pargana	Revenue	Date of auction	Buyer
Habeli (Faridpur)	Rs. 36,613/-	15/02/1799	Ramnath Ray
Makimpur	Rs. 25,347/-	25/02/1799	Ramnath Ray
Nasibshahi	Rs. 16,937/-	25/02/1799	Bhairabnath

Satair	Rs. 39,968/-	28/02/1799	Shivprasad Ray
Naldi	Rs. 66,760/-	23/03/1799	Bhairabnath Ray

He took over the charge of Zamindari (estate) at the time of the down fall of Natore Raj. So it was not possible for him to check the ruin of the Zamindari (estate). He had three wives who were Rani Krishnamani, Rani Gavindamani and Rani Jaymani. His predecessors were Shakti Upasak, (the worshippers of divine energy) under its female personification. But Viswanath gave up Shakti Dharma and he was devoted to Vaishnava religion (freedom from all worldly desires). With their husband Rani Krishnamani and Rani Gavindamani were converted from Shakti Dharma to Vaishnava Dharma.¹⁶⁵ Rani Jaymani did not change her religious tenet. She left Natore to live at Baranagar. Rani Bhavani gave her some Debottor property.¹⁶⁶ Biswanath had no son. He could not run the administration of Zamindari (estate) for a long time. He gave his wives the permission to take adopted sons. According to the permission Rani Krishnamani took Govinda Chandra as adopted son in 1814. Rani Jaymani also took an adopted son.¹⁶⁷

Raja Govinda Chandra Ray

Govinda Chandra Ray, when he attained adult hood, took over the charge of Zamindari (estate). He ran the administration of Zamindari (estate) only for 7 years and there after he died in the year 1836.¹⁶⁸ During his tenure for a small period of time, he could not make any remarkable contribution for Natore estate nay the people of Natore. He had made two wills before his death. In one Will he permitted his wives to take adopted sons and in another will he gave the power of conducting the Zamindari (estate) to his mother Rani Krishnamayee.¹⁶⁹

After the death of Govinda Chandra, the mother Krishnamayee tookover the charge of the Zamindari (estate) according to the will she was an intelligent lady. The remarkable incident during her tenure was that she received decree in the law-

suits of landed property which was dispossessed. She regained those regions of the Zamindari afterwards.¹⁷⁰

She ran the administration of the estate with considerable success.¹⁷¹ But no data are found about the progress of the subjects.

Raja Gavindanath Ray

According to the will of Raja Gavinda Chandra Ray, Rani Shibeswari took Gavindanath as her adopted Son. After attaining his adulthood, he took over the charge of Zamindari (estate). During the period of running Zamindari, mother Shibeswari had a conflict with Gavindanath. Rani Shibeswari filed a law suit in the court of the District judge Rajshahi against the validity of adoption of Gavindanath as her son. According to the petition, the adoption was declared invalid.¹⁷² Gavindanath filed an appeal against the decision in the High Court. There the judgement came in favour of Gavindanath. The Privy Council retained the judgement of the High Court. Before receiving the decree of the High Court, the mother and the son died.¹⁷³

Raja Gavindanath was soft and modest. Like Krishnamayee he was expert in running the estate. He was a generous man. Raja Gavindanath married Brajasundari, the daughter of Golak Chandra Lahiri of village Hatikumrul under Raiganj Police Station. He had no son, he had only two daughters named by Girijabala and Saratsundari.¹⁷⁴ Before his death he permitted Brajasundari, his wife to take an adopted son.

Raja Jagadindranath Ray

According to her husband's will, Rani Braja Sundari took Jagadindranath as her adopted son.¹⁷⁵ Jagadindranath Ray was the son of Srinath Ray,¹⁷⁶ a Brahmin who came from a noble family of Harishpur, two miles to the east of Natore. The

name of his mother was Prasannamayee Devi.¹⁷⁷ He was born on Monday, 26 October 1868 A. D. His parents named him Brajanath.¹⁷⁸ He was brought to the Zamindar house of Natore after he had been taken as an adopted son at the age of 18 months only.¹⁷⁹ Rani Brajasundari named him Jagadindranath.¹⁸⁰ Mother Brajasundari loved Jagadindranath very much. She was very careful for her son's education. His education life started when he was 5 years and of was possible when a house-school was established for his education. Some students of neighbouring villages got themselves admitted in this school.

All students left school because of the hard and fast rule of the school. Consequently the school was closed.¹⁸¹ At that time an accident took place in the life of Jagadindranath. When he was eight, he became blind of both the eyes due to an unknown reason.¹⁸² He was sent to Calcutta for medical treatment. After returning from Calcutta, he started acquiring education at home for some days. Then he again suffered from malaria, gout and became disabled. As the condition of his health was not good at Natore, Jadav Chandra Moitra, the old Dewan advised to make arrangement for his education outside Natore.¹⁸³ According to the advice of the Dewan, Jagadindranath was admitted into Rajshahi Collegiate School in class V in 1879. He began to acquire education under the guidance of Srinath Chakravarty, a teacher of Collegiate High School. He obtained high marks in History, English, Sanskrit etc. but he could not make good result in Mathematics.¹⁸⁴ He passed the matriculation examination in 1886. But he could not get himself admitted into a college owing to his illness. Next year he got himself admitted in F.A. Class in the year 1886-87.¹⁸⁵ But owing to different unfavourable situations, it was not possible for him to continue his education.

He acquired vast knowledge in Bengali, English and Sanskrit.¹⁸⁶ For persuading Jagadindranath to lead a family life, his mother Brajasundari gave him in marriage in 1885 when he was only 17. The name of his wife was Maharani Shyammohini.¹⁸⁷

Jagindranath was a father of four children. At first a male child was born but died in infancy. The second issue was a female child, but it also died after 7 months of its birth. Later on he shifted his wife to Calcutta according to the advice of a physician. At first he hired out a house near Wellington Square and later on in 1896 he hired out a palatial house in 6 Lansdown street (Calcutta) and began to live there.

Later on Jagadindranath bought the same house by Rs. 80,000.00.¹⁸⁸ When his wife was residing in Calcutta his daughter Bivabati and son Jagindranath were born. Rajkumari Bivabati was married to Sriman Jatindranath Lahiri of Jamirta Pabna in 1905. Jatindranath Lahiri was a highly educated person. He passed M.A., B.L. and began to practise law in Calcutta High Court.¹⁸⁹

When Jagadindranath was 21, his mother Brajasundari entrusted him with the charge of conducting Zamindari (estate).¹⁹⁰ He was more successful as a man of literature than as a Zamindar (landlord). During his tenure much progress of Natore in art and literature is noticed. It was during his tenure that a large literary conference was held at Natore Court Compound.¹⁹¹ Regular meetings of men of letters were held at Victoria library, Natore. The Maharaja was the honorable president of the literary conference held on Sunday, 22 February 1914 in Pabna.¹⁹²

Maharaja also presided over the provincial meeting of literature held at Muktagachha Mymensingh.¹⁹³ Maharaja joined the meeting of literature held in 1924 in Munshiganj.¹⁹⁴

Maharaja himself was a good writer. Among his outstanding academic works mention may be made of 'Nurjahan' and 'Sandhatara'. He dedicated the book entitled 'Sandhatara' in the name of Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, the great historian. He also composed a good number of poems and the titles were like 'Atit Smriti', 'Anujog', 'Abhiman', 'Asamay', 'Akulata', 'Duti', 'Sangbad', 'Padaprakhalan',

'*Minati*' etc.¹⁹⁵ He also composed travel stories entitled '*Hyderabad*' and '*Sekendrabad*'. The Maharaja also wrote the preface of '*BrihatBanga*' (1328 B. S. i.e., 1921) by Dinesh Chandra Sen, *BangalirBal*, 1328 B. S. i.e., 1921 by Sri Rajendra Lal Acharaya.¹⁹⁶

He contributed huge amount of money to publish Kashikhanda and other books. He established Maharaja J.N. High English School.¹⁹⁷ In 1910, Maharaja Jagadindranath built the present building of the School.¹⁹⁸ He also donated much money for the Natore Girls' High School. He established a high school in the name of Rani Bhavani in Calcutta.¹⁹⁹

As a journalist he earned much reputation. He published the monthly newspaper entitled '*Manasi-o-Marmabani*' with the cooperation of Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee. In 1320 B. S., i.e., 1913 he took the responsibility of editing of the newspaper. After he had taken the responsibility of the edition of the news paper, its standard went on increasing gradually. While he was publishing this newspaper, he was acquainted with many reputed persons like Jaladhar Sen, Prabhat Kumar, Subadh Dutta, Subadh Banerjee, Charu Chandra Moitra, Amulaya Vidyabhusan and Sailenda Krishna Saha.²⁰⁰ Maharaja Jagdindra had intimacy with the Thakur (Tagore) family of Jorasanko Calcutta. There was always gathering of men of literature and Raja Jagadindra Nath would remain there with different talented persons. He added the music of '*Pakhwaj*' with '*Rabindra Sangeet*' (the songs composed by Rabindra Nath Tagore). He often discussed literature with Rabindra Nath.²⁰¹

He was a good sports man. A cricket team was established in Natore and he patronized it all along. The Maharaja contributed much money for the team.²⁰² He not only patronized sports and games but also was a lover of music. He played on '*Pakhwaj*' (an instrument of music of this sub continent) in many functions. He established several music schools to practice music.²⁰³ He also liked dramas and

acted in a good number of theatrical performances in his life.²⁰⁴ He also took part in politics. He was a high levelled worker of the Provincial Congress of Bengal. He was the president of Reception committee of the meetings of the Congress in Calcutta. The meeting of the provincial congress was held in Natore on 11, 12 and 13 June, 1897 Maharaja Jagadindranath was the President of the Reception committee of the said meeting.²⁰⁵

In 1901, Jagadindranath, Maharaja Surya Kanta Choudhury and Pramadanath, the Raja of Dighapatia jointly established "The Bengal Land holders' Association."²⁰⁶

In 1912, Jagadindranath was elected member of the new council established according to Montego-Ford scheme for the third time. Next year Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal was welcomed at the house of the Raja of Natore.²⁰⁷ Rajshahi Association was organised in 1872. Jagadindranath was the 5th President of the Association.²⁰⁸

As the recognition of his works, Lord Lytton, the then Viceroy of India approved the title of 'Maharaja' of Jagadindranath in 1877 in the first '*Darbar* of Delhi', In January, 1878 a '*Darbar*' was made in the camp at Jangli near Natore and the Maharaja was given the title and the certificate.²⁰⁹

In his personal life he was very much social and liberal. He could with all people without any reservation. He contributed much money to establish the Water Supply House for water in Natore.²¹⁰ He established a charitable dispensary in Natore and Madhupur (Mymensingh).

For the litigation of the share holders, Maharaja lived in Calcutta permanently. He used to come to Natore only on the occasion of the festivals. During his stay in Calcutta on 26 December, 1925, he was knocked down by a car while he was walking on the road near the Garer Math (field), Calcutta and was injured severely.

After his injury, he was alive for 10 days. He died on 5 January, 1926.²¹¹ At his death, Rabindra Nath, Mahatma Gandhi, Bande Ali Miah and many other persons sent letters of condolence.²¹² Lord Lytton, the viceroy of India sent a letter of condolence to Raj kumar Jagindranath. His private Secretary also sent a condolence letter. He was cremated at Kewratala cremation ground of, Calcutta.²¹³

Raja Jogindranath Ray

After the death of Maharaja Jagadindranath Ray, his son was assigned the Zamindari (estate).²¹⁴ No extraordinary contribution of Raja Jogindranath Ray can be found in running the administration of the Zamindari (estate). During his life time the prostitution in Natore spread by leaps and bound.²¹⁵ He lived in Calcutta almost permanently. He used to come to Natore only at the time of some occasions relating to festivals. As like as Jagadindranath, his father he was a patron of learning, a lover of music and a poet. The name of the book of verse composed by him is 'Rajanigandha'.²¹⁶ The Zamindari System was abolished during his tenure. He died in 1981. At the time of his death he left two sons named Jayantanath and Indrajit. Both of them lived in Calcutta.²¹⁷

Chhota Taraf

Raja Shivnath Ray

Shivnath Ray, the second son of Maharaja Ramkrishna was the first Raja of Chhota Taraf. As a votary Raja, he became the owner of the Debattar property (property endowed for defraying the cost of worshipping a deity).²¹⁸ He married nine women. He had no son.²¹⁹ His only daughter was Jay Durga. Jay Durga was married to Raja Rajendranarayan, the Raja of Balihar.²²⁰ Raja Shivnath died in 1224 B.S. i.e., in 1817.²²¹

Raja Anandanath Ray

After the death of Raja Shivnath Ray, Anandanath Ray, the adopted son of Shivnath became the owner of the estate.²²² He did not behave well with his

subjects.²²³ He was a patron of learning. He made much effort to spread education in Natore. He spent Rs.10,000.00 to construct the building of the Public Library which is situated at Gharamara (Rajshahi) and bought a large number of books and contributed them to the library.²²⁴ Previously the name of the library was Anandanath Library. The government conferred on him the titles of 'Raja Bahadur' and C.S. I in recognition of his work.²²⁵ He was the father of four sons and two daughters. His sons were Anandanath, Kumudnath, Nagendranath and Jagendranath respectively. His daughters were Sarnamayee and Mukta Lata.²²⁶ Kumudnath and Nagendranath died an immature death. He himself died in 1866.²²⁷

Raja Chandranath Ray

The eldest son of Anandanath Ray conducted the Zamindari (estate) after the death of his father. With the effort of Raja Chandranath Ray, Female Normal school was established in Rajshahi in 1869. He contributed Rs. 125/- for this institution.²²⁸ He also donated money to the Rajshahi Public Library.²²⁹ The British Government conferred on him the title of 'Raja Bahadur' in 1871.²³⁰ He served as a Deputy Magistrate when his father was alive. He was an attache of foreign department of the Government. He died in 1282 B.S. i.e., 1875 leaving his wife Basanti Kumari.²³¹

Raja Jogendranath Ray

Raja Jogendranath Ray was the younger son of Anandanath Ray. He took over the charge of the Zamindari after the death of his elder brother Chandranath. Raja Jogendranath was a contemporary of Raja Jagadindranath Ray of Barataraf. There was a conflict between Barataraf and Chhota Taraf over property for a long time.²³² Due to such a situation a person of Barataraf was even murdered and according to the order of the court Raja Jogendranath Ray was sentenced to imprisonment for two minutes.²³³ Jogendranath Ray was a whimsical man and so people called him *Pagla Raja* (Mad King). In the past, the Darjeeling Mail did not touch at Natore

Railway Station. The Raja thought that the train which used to run along his land would certainly have a station of its own. He brought an elephant from the Rajbari (Zamindar's house) and began to overturn the railway line. Later on the Government paid attention to it and consequently Natore Railway Station came into existence.²³⁴

He did not accept everything easily. He was very sad when Jitendranath, his son was attacked with Pneumonia and died before him.²³⁵ Family quarrel and law suit of murder, all combined together and changed his nature. The name of the wife of Raja Jogendranath Ray was Rani Kumudini. Babu Mohini Mohan, his father-in-law was a Zamindar and a famous pleader of Calcutta High Court. He gave his house of Rajshahi to his son-in-law (i.e., Raja Jogendranath Ray) when he left for Calcutta permanently. At present the said house happens to be the residence of the District Judge of Rajshahi.²³⁶

He was a generous and kind hearted man. He made monthly contribution to many distressed scholars, Brahmins and students. He founded the water supply centre of Natore, schools for teaching Sanskrit and dug many ponds.²³⁷ Raja Jogendranath Ray died on 8 Bhadra, 1301 B.S., i.e., 1894.²³⁸

Jitendranath Ray

Jitendranath, the son of Raja Jogendranath died in 1304 B.S., i.e., 1897 when his father was alive. He was the father of Birendranath. After the death of Raja Jogendranath, the charge of running Zamindari (estate) was entrusted with Hemangini, the wife of his son. She built an iron bridge over the river Narod to memorize the name of her husband.²³⁹ During her tenure, she established a charitable dispensary at Mangalpara in her estate. She used to offer stipend to the students of M.A. and B.A. classes of Calcutta University.²⁴⁰ For supplying pure water in Natore, Rani Hemangini gave away land by the side of Dighapatia Road, free of cost and contributed Rs. 1,000.00 for its construction.²⁴¹

Raja Birendranath Ray

Raja Birendranath Ray was a learned man. He obtained his Bachelor Degree from Calcutta University. He established a school at Chatmohar and a school for teaching Sanskrit in Natore. It was since his tenure, the condition of Chhotataraf began to be miserable. Like his grand father he was a whimsical Raja. He died in Calcutta in 1362 B.S., i.e., 1955.²⁴² He left his wife and 4 daughters when he died. All the daughters lived in Calcutta. As Raja Birendranath had no male child, the Zamindari of Chhotataraf abolished.

Natore Raj family conducted Zamindari (estate) for about two hundred years. The Zamindari of this family was very glorious. The tenures of Raja Ramjiban and that of Rani Bhavani is memorable in various respects. At the end of the tenure of Rani Bhavani, the downfall of this family started and this was due to the treachery of some unworthy persons and officials. It was also a fact that the Zamindar of Natore could pay off the revenue fully because of the death of a large number of people during the dreadful famine of 1770. The land policy of the East India Company Government was equally responsible for the financial crisis that prevailed upon the Natore Raj. Again the family conflict was also responsible for the decay of the Zamindari. The savings of the estate were misused when the estate came under the control of Deviprasad and his officers. Though Raja Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani regained the Zamindari after wards, they could not make up for the loss easily. Many Zamindaries (estates) were sold by auction or confiscated when the revenue could not be paid because familial feuds and natural calamities. Later on the Zamindari (estate) was divided into two parts and much money was spent in the law-suits because of the conflict between the claimants. This situation infact was sufficient to sound the death-knell of the Zamindari.

All the more, the Zamindari (estate) of Natore was abolished with all other Zamindaries of Bengal by East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1951.

Notes and references

1. Bimal prasad Ray, et el. *Natorer Kotha-O Kahini*, Calcutta, 1981, p. 21.
2. K.C, Mitra, *Rajas of Rajshahi*, Calcutta Review, vol.56. Calcutta 1873, p.24.
3. Moksudur Rahman, *Notore Maharani Bhavani*, Rajshahi, 1988, p. 7.
4. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 9; Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshahir Sangkshipta Itihas*, Calcutta, 1308 BS, p. 146; A. K. Moitra, (Akshay Kumar Moitreya), *Rani Bhavani* (ed.) by Nishit Ranjan Ray, Calcutta, 1990, p. 4; A,K, Moitra quoting his books, *Banglar Itihas*, Adisur first brought Brahmins to Bengal, before his there was no Brahmin, there was no culture of the Vedas. The genealogical books and the data contained in these books are not, at all historical. So the whole story seems be a myth. (For details see A.K. Moitra *op. cit.* p.18).
5. Dharmamanda Maha Bhrati, *A Short History, of Brahmin Rajas Maharajas in Ancient and Modern Bengal*, Calcutta, 1906 p. 35; A.K. Moitra, *A short History of Natore Raj*, Natore, 1912 (Hence forth *A short History*) p. 1; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 146; K.C. Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 31; Nurul islam Khan (ed.) *Bangladesh Zela Gazetteer, Brihottor Rajshahi*, Dhaka, 1991, p. 368.
6. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, Vol. 1. Natore, 1980, p. 2.
7. A.K. Moitra. *A short History*..... , p.1
8. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 14; At page 11 of the same book, Moksudur Rahman mentioned about obtaining the service by Ramjiban and Raghumandan, because of a trifling matter of taking them to task by their father, went to Puthia in search of a job and sought for the favour of their brother-in-law Ratneswar chakravarty, the worshiper of gods and goddesses, Puthia estate. At that time Ratneswar Chakravarty prayed to Raja for some days' leave. In response to his prayer the Raja informed him that it would only be possible to grant him the leave if he could manage a person to substitute for him during his absence on leave. Ratneswar substituted his brother-in-law for him and went home. In this way Rmjiban engaged himself in the work of collecting flowers for the worship of gods and goddesses. It is difficult to say whether Ramjiban got the service of collecting flowers for the worship of gods and goddesses or he got the service of a deed writer.
9. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 14, Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, p. 3.
10. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol. 1, p. 3; Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.14.

11. There was genuine cause of Raja Darpanarayan's too much favour for the two brothers Raghunandan and Ramjiban. Observing royal token in the figure of Raghunandan, Raja Darpanarayan said, "This boy will be a famous Raja in future". He advised Raghunandan not to interfere with anything relating to Puthia. Besides this there are two other traditional stories.; (For detailed See, A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani* p.6; Md. Moksudur Rahman *op.cit.* pp.12-16; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.146).
12. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el, *op.cit.* p.61, *Pabna Zela Gazetteer*, p. 38.
13. Cited in A.K.Moitra, *Rani Bhavani* p.11.
14. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.147
15. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani* ... p.16.
16. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, p.13.
17. Abdul Karim, *Murshid Kulikhan and His Times*, Dacca, 1963, p.66.
18. A. K. Moitra. *Rani Bhavani*, p.14.
19. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.148; The tile of Rai-e-Raiyan is similar to Raja Bahadur of the present time Rai-E-Raiyan is the chief employee of the province. The immediate superior of Rai-e-Rayyan was Dewan.
20. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.20-21.
21. K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p.6; Md. Moksudur Rahman mentioned Zamindari Settlement took place in the name of Ramjiban and Kalikaprasad. But Kalinath Choudhury and Bimal Prasad Ray et.el., mentions Zamindari settlement took place only the name of Ramjiban (Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.21; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.150; *Bimal Prasad Ray et el. op.cit.* p.63)
22. Radha Raman Shaha, *Pabna zelar Itihas*, Vol. 2, Pabna, 1330, B.S., p.72.
23. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.21-22; Kalinath Choudhury mentioned Raghunandan is the Dewan of Rani Sarbani (of Santoil). But there is some controversy, Radha Raman Shaha mentions that Dewan's name is Ram Dev. Besides that, it is mentioned that Raghuenandan served at puthia and in Murshidabad. It can not be accepted that he (Raghunandan) served at Santoil. (Kalinath Choudury, *op.cit.* p.150; Radha Raman Shaha, Vol.3. *op.cit.* p.111.)

24. H. Beveridge, "*The Original Rajas of Rajshahi*" Proceeding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1894, p.15; (For more detail Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.24-26; also Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.71.)
25. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.150.
26. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.151; Sri Rajendralal Acharjya, *Bangalir Bal*, Calcutta, 1328 B.S. pp.12-13.
27. Jadunath Sarkar, *The Hisotry of Bengal (Muslim period 1200-1757)* Vol. II, Dacca, 1976 (3rd ed) p. 414.
28. Shirin Akhtar, *The Role of the Zamindar in Bengal (1717-1772)*, Dacca, 1982, p.31; "*The Triennial Settlement of Rajshahi Zamindari and the Famine of 1770*", an articale by A.B.M. Mahamood, in *Studies of Modern Bengal*, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi 1981, p. 581.
29. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 152; A.K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani* p.152;
30. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 35; Kalinath Choudhury *op. cit.* p.155.
31. Bimala Charan Moitra, *Puthia Raj Bangsha*, Calcutta, 1950, p.23.
32. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.12; The settlement of lease was taken from the Raja of Puthia at a yearly revenue of Rs. 27 and anas 5. There are two traditional stories about the place of establishing the capital. (For details description see Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp. 34-35.)
33. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 34.
34. K.C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 8.
35. A.K. Moitra, *A Short History.....*, p. 5; Md. Moksudur Rahman discuss Raghunandan died in 1724-25 (see Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p. 36.)
36. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.36; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.155.
37. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.14; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.155.
38. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.156.
39. *Nurul Islam Khan (ed.) Bangladesh Zela Gazetteer, Brihotor Rajshahi*, Dhaka, 1991, p.371.

40. Different opinions are noticed about the death of Maharaja Ramjiban. A.K. Moitra has mentioned the year of his death as 1730; K.C. Mitra has mentioned it as 1737. There is a doubt about the year of death of Maharaja Ramjiban as given by K.C. Mitra because Samar Pal mentioned that Ramkanta, the owner of Natore estate being a minor, Dayaram Ray, the advisor conducted the administration of the estate from 1730-34 as a guardian after the death of Ramjiban, In this case the opinion of A.K. Moitra may be considered acceptable. (A.K. Moitra, *A Short History.....* p, 5; K.C.Mitra, *op.cit.* p.8; Samar Pal, Vol. I, *op.cit.* p.14.)
41. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.156.
42. A.K.Moitra, *Rani Bhavani ...* p. 61; M.A. Rahim, *Social and Cultureal History of Bengal*, Vol. 2, Karachi 1967, p. 128.
43. K.C. Mitra, *op. cit.* p.9; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.156.
44. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p.32; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.157; A.K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani.....* p.58.
45. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.38-39.
46. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.157.
47. Moksudur Rahman refers to a story about giving dowry that at the time of celebrating the marriage ceremony of Ramkanta, the adviser Dayaram Ray remarked that the marriage of the future Maharaja of Natore can not be held on the land of other Zaminder and so he proposed that the marriage festival should be held at Natore. On the other hand the maternal grand father of Rani Bhavani could not accept the proposal of Dayaram Ray. He argued "According to the Custom the marriage ceremony is held at the house of the bride. The violation of the marriage rule is ominous." At last Atmaram Choudhury gave Ramkanta one part of the village as dowry and this solved the problem, (Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.39; A.K.Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, p. 58
48. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.158.
49. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.17.
50. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, p.68.
51. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, pp.68-69.
52. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.44.

53. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.48.
54. A.K. Moitra *Rani Bhavani ...* p.79.
55. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.42.
56. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.159.
57. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.17; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.*p.159.
58. Tarinicharan Thakur, *Bhavanipur Kahini*, Calcutta, 1308, B.S., pp.147-148.
59. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.160; Name of the first son was Kashikanta he died when his age was 11 months. Name of the anathers son is unknown. He died before the name giving ceremony (i.e., *Annaprasan*).
60. A. K. Moitra *A Short History...* p,7.
61. A. K. Moitra *A Short History...* p.85.
62. Samar Pal. *op.cit.* p.18; also Kalinath Choudhury *op.cit.* p.160; Many stories are prevailing about the marriage though their authenticity is not found; For detail see Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.55.
63. K. C. Mitra. *op.cit.* p.10.
64. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.160.
65. Had the Nawab sent soldiers to Tara would have kidnapped her, But there is no such evidence that Nawab took her away. Had such incident taken place, the Nowab would have had term with Rani Bhavani. But he had always good term with the Rani Bhavani. During the battle of Plassasy, the other Zaminders of Bengal helped the English. But Rani Bhavani did not support the English. She strongly supported the Nawab. This fact clearly proves that this story is quite false. It is only a propaganda (For details see Moksudur Rahman *op.cit.* pp.60-62; Kazi Muhammad Meser *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p.274.)
66. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.49.
67. Maharastrio Soldiers is Known as "Borgi"
68. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.50.

69. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.51.
70. Kainath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.162; Here one thing is specially noticeable that it was difficult for the Marhathas to come riding their horses to the estate of Rani Bhavani as the northern side of the Padma because they had no boat. Perhaps because of natural protection Rani Bhavani's estate was saved from the attack of the 'Borgi'. But Rani Bhavani failed to protect the portion of her estate lying to the southern side of the Padma. So it may be concluded that only the Padma saved her estate.
71. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.21.
72. A. B. M. Mahmood, *Revenue Administration of Northern Bengal (1765-1793)*, Dacca, 1970, p.47.
73. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 64.
74. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 66.
75. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, pp. 21-22.
76. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el, *op. cit.* p. 66.
77. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 163.
78. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 164.
79. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 19; The description of Samar Pal can not be accepted without doubt because quoting Holwell he has mentioned in his book that actual revenue was Sikka rupees seventy lakh but the actual revenue collected was sikka rupees one crore and a half. If the tenure of the Rani was 50 years her income for the period was not more than sikka rupees 35 crores. Again the value of a sikka rupee was much less than an actual rupee. Then how she could spend rupees 50 crore? On the other hand the yearly revenue to be paid to the company by Rani was fixed at Rs. 76,000.00 for the year 1770-71 and Rs. 27,51,000.00 for the year 1771-72 and the Rani was unable to pay the aforesaid revenue as it was excessive. Then how it was possible for the Rani to spend Rs. 50 crores for the development activities.
80. William Adam's *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 & 1838)*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 167.
81. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op. cit.* pp. 50-51; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* pp. 67-69; William Adams report, *op. cit.* p. 167.

82. W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Accounts of Bengal* (Reprint) Vol. VIII, Delhi, 1974, p. 92.
83. Bimal Prasad Ray, et al, *op. cit.* pp. 50-51.
84. Bimal Prasad Ray, et al, *op.cit.* pp. 50.
85. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 26.
86. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 179.
87. William Adams Report, *op.cit.* pp. 187-188; K.K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 252.
88. M. A. Rahim, *op. cit.* p. 380; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* pp. 179-180.
89. About Hindu widow remarriage see, Nilmani Mukherjee, *A Bengal Zaminder*, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 140-145.
90. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, p. 27; Kalinath Choudhury *op.cit.* p. 180.
91. A. B. M. Mahamood, *op.cit.* p. 35.
92. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 180.
93. Suprakash Ray, *Bharater Kishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram*, Calcutta, 1980, p.13.
94. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 180.
95. K.K.Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939, p. 245.
96. A. K. Moitra, *A Short History...* p. 8.
97. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 165.
98. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* p. 24.
99. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 165.
100. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 156.

101. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 171.
102. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 170.
103. Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar, *Bangladesher Itihas*, Vol. 3, Calcutta 1381, B. S. p. 617.
104. *Bishokosh*, Vol. 13, p. 301
105. Nikhil Nath Ray, *Murshidabad Kahini*, Calcutta, 1950, (1978 reprint), p. 181.
106. Nilmoni Basak, *Nabanari*, Calcutta, 1272 (B.S.) p. 307
107. A. B. M. Mahmood, *op.cit.* p. 21.
108. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 180.
109. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 169.
110. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani ...* p. 103.
111. J. Westland. *A Report on the District of Jessore: Its Antiquities, its History and its Commerce*. Calcutta, 1878, p. 48.
112. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 172.
113. Pratibha Ranjan Moitra, *Murshidabader Itihas*, Murshidabad, 1979, p. 105.
114. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, p. 25.
115. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* pp. 165-167.
116. A. B. M. Mahamood, *op. cit.* p. 21.
117. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* pp. 165-167.
118. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, p. 23.
119. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* pp. 181.
120. Cited in Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p.182.
121. K. K. Dutta, *op. cit.* p. 245.

- 121(a) This issue has been discussed in detail in Chapter VIII.
122. Nikhilnath Ray, *op.cit.* p. 51.
123. *Changes in Land control in Bengal Under the Early Operation of Permanent Settlement*, an article by Serajul Islam in the *Jurnal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* Vol. 17. Dacca. 1980, p. 34
124. A.K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, p. 24; Pratibha Ranjan Moitra, *op.cit.* p. 108.
125. M. A. Rahmin, *op.cit.* p. 380.
126. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 182; Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, p. 31;
127. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 183.
128. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, pp. 31-32.
129. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 183.
130. A.K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani* , p. 159.
131. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 97.
132. Sirajul Islam, *The Permanent Settlement in Bengal A Study of its Operation 1773-1819*, Dacca, 1979, (Hence forth the permanent) p. 91.
133. *Loc.cit.*
134. It is noted that in those days the estate of those Zamindars who had failed to pay the revenue were sold by auction. Kalisankar Ray established Narail Zamindar family and Balaram established Tarash Zamindar family by purchasing those estate which were sold by auction.
135. Satish Chandra Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 967.
136. *Loc.cit.*
137. *Loc.cit.*
138. J. West Land Report, *op.cit.* pp. 90-93.

139. Satish Chandra Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 968.
140. Radha Raman Shaha, *op.cit.* p. 116.
141. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 129.
142. Before the permanent settlement there are two types of Talukdars, Markuzi Talukdar and Huzuri Talukdar. The Huzuri Talukdars collected revenues and sent it to the Government directly. On the other hand Markuzi Talukdars collected revenues and gave it to the Zamindars (Bamacharan Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83).
143. Sirajul Islam, *The Permanent Settlement* p. 38.
144. *Loc.cit.*
145. W. W. Hunter, *Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Rajshahi)* Vol. VIII, London 1876, p. 97.
146. Sirajul Islam, *The permanent Settlement* ... p. 39.
147. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 188.
148. K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 19.
149. Sirajul Islam, *The Permanent Settlement*, p. 86.
150. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 186.
151. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 187.
152. K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 23.
153. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 127.
154. Abdur Rahim, *Companir Amoler Banglar Musalman Zamidar, Bangladesh Itihas parisad patrika* (7th Borso, 2nd-3rd Vol). 1380 (B.S.) p. 141
155. A. K. Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, p.168.
156. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op.cit.* p.32.
157. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 134.

158. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 196.
159. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 35.
160. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 71.
161. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 97.
162. Satish Chandra Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 899; K.C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 27.
163. Satish Chandra Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 898; Sirajul Islam, *The Permanent Settlement*, p. 89; A. K. Moitra, *A Short History ...* p. 14.
164. Satish Chandra Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 899; K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 16.
165. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 197.
166. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. p. 147.
167. Govinda Chanda, the adopted son of Rani Krishna Mani was the son of the Rays of Atgram in Noagaon.
168. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 40.
169. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 72; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 97; K.C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 25
170. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 40; Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 148.
171. K. C. Mitra, *op.cit.* p. 25.
172. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 198.
173. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 148.
174. Sharatsundari the daughter of Gobindanath and Saratsundari the Rain of Puthia was not the Same Lady.
175. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 198.
176. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p. 42; Maharaja Jagadindranath Ray, an article by Ataur Rahman in *Natorer Gaurab* ed. by Moksudur Rahman, Natore 1989, p. 49.

177. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 149; Md. Aatur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 49.
178. *Smriti Sruti*, an article by Jagadindrajnath Ray in *Manasi Patrika*, Calcutta 1322 *Vaisakh*, p. 355; Fazlul Haque, *Maharaja Jagadindranath Ray*, Dhaka, 1992, p. 10.
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180. Fazlul Haque, *op. cit.* p. 10; Aatur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 48.
181. Jagadindranath Ray, *op.cit.* pp. 356-357.
182. Jagadindranath Ray (Ashar), *op.cit.* p. 357.
183. Jagadindranath Ray (Sraban), *op.cit.* p. 696.
184. Fazlul Haque, *op.cit.* pp. 13-14.
185. A. K. M. Hasanuzzuman, et el, (ed.), *Ayitijhye Rajshahi College Swarak Grantha*. Rajshahi, 2001, p. 428.
186. Fazlul Haque, et. al, *op. cit.* p. 15.
187. Fazlul Haque, et el, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Aatur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 50; *Barender Raja Zamindar*, an article by Mahabubur Rahman in *Varendra Anchaler Itihas*, ed. by Saifuddin Choudhury. et.el. Rajshahi 1998, p. 738.
188. Fazlul Haque, *op. cit.* p. 11.
189. Loc.cit.
190. Fuzlul Haque, *op.cit.* p. 16.
191. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* p. 43.
192. Mahabubur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 739; Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 153.
193. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.153.
194. Mahabubur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.739.
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196. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p.154.
197. M. A. Hamid, *Chalan Beeler Itikatha, Pabna, 1965*, p.273; Aatur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.70.
198. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p.56.
199. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 154.
200. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.43.
201. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.15
202. Aatur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.66.
203. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* pp.149-150.
204. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.150.
205. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.44.
206. Fazlul Haque, *op. cit.* p.22; Aatur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.53.
207. Fazlul Haque, *op.cit.* p.23.
208. Kalinath Choudhry, *op. cit.*, p.342.
209. *Jagadindranath Ray*, an article by Muhammad Abul Fazal in *Rajshahi Pratibha* (ed.) Saifuddin Choudhury, et.el. Rajshahi 2000, p.153; Fazlul Haque, *op. cit.* p.10.
210. Samar Pal, *op. cit.* Vol.1, p.16.
211. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 157.
212. Loc.cit.
213. Aatur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 73.
214. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 73.
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218. *Rajshahir Raja Zamidar*, an article by Shah Anisur Rahman in *Rajshahi Parichiti*, Rajshahi, 1980, p.185.
219. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.199.
220. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.48.
221. Shah Anisur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.186; Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.144.
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225. A. K. Moitra, *A Short History ...* pp.15-16; Mahabubur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 740; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.199.
226. M. A. Hamid, *op.cit.* p.273.
227. A. K. Moitra, *A Short History ...* p.16.
228. Kazi Muhammad Meser, (Vol. 1) *op.cit.* p.113.
229. W.W.Hunter, *op.cit.* p. 91.
230. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.50.
231. Shah Anisur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.186.
232. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.1, p.51.
233. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.145.
234. *Loc.cit.*
235. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* p.246.

236. M. A. Hamid, *op.cit.* p.274.
237. Loc.cit.
238. M. A. Hamid, *op. cit.* p. 274; Sri Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 74; A. K. Moitra *A Short History...* p. 18; Shah Anisur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 187.
239. A. K. Moitra, *A Short History...* p. 18.
240. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p. 46.
241. Moksudur Rahman, *op.cit.* p. 147.
242. M. A. Hamid, *op.cit.* p. 274.

Dighapatia Estate - A Historical Reconstruction of the Zamindari

Dighapatia Zamindar house is located about 3 miles north of Natore town on the northern side of Natore – Bogra highway. The founder of the Dighapatia estate was Dayaram Ray.¹ He was the most capable dewan of the Natore Raj. He was born in a village named Kalam under Singra Police Station of the then Natore sub-division.² Narsingha Ray was his father who belonged to *Tili* family.³ He was born in the year 1680. Sitaram was his only brother. They had lost their mother in their early childhood.⁴ In his early career, Dayaram Ray got appointed as an ordinary employee under the Raja Ramjiban of Natore Raj family when Ramjiban was in power.⁵ Later, by virtue of his merit and work efficiency he was raised to the position of Dewan of Natore Raj. Raja Ramjiban had a great faith in him because of his honesty and sense of responsibility.⁶ Despite having no formal education in the school, he was well-versed both in Bengali and Persian language to conduct the functions of the Zamindari estate. In fact, Natore began to emerge as an important Zamindari by dint of his hard labour. There was an influential landlord named Sitaram Ray at Bhushana, Muhammadpur under Jessore district. This Sitaram revolted and all on a sudden stopped paying taxes. To punish this landlord, one Raghunandan was assigned to send force against him. As Raghunandan was sick, Dewan Dayaram was sent to deal with this revolt.⁷ Sitaram was defeated and in the long last he was interned. Dayaram's talent – and diplomacy was the main reason behind Sitaram's defeat. Sitaram lost his whole property and his belonging too. While Dayaram was to take possession of Sitaram's belongings he took away the statue of Krishnaji with him and brought it to Dighapatia. He installed the statue as a family Bigraha and started^d worshipping it with much devotion.⁸ He later on established a big temple at Dighapatia.

Dayaram brought Sitaram as a captive and handed him over to Natore Raj. It was Natore jail where Sitaram breathed his last.⁹ There is, however, controversy about his death.¹⁰ As Dayaram brought Sitaram to the darbar of Nawab, he was honoured with the title “*Ray-Rayan*” by the Nawab¹¹ and at the blessing of Raghunandan he gained Ramjiban. In recognition of bravery and winning the fight against Sitaram. Ramjiban allotted Dayaram some portion of the confiscated territory of Sitaram as ordered by the Nawab.¹² This gifted property were identified as Taraf Silimpur, Pargana Bhaturia, Taraf Nanda-kuja of Pabna district. Taraf Maul Kalna, Taraf Dumai of Jessore district. Naukhila belonged to this Taraf Dumai. Some portion of Naukhila fell under Mymensingh and rest under Bogra district.¹³ It may be noted that all the Tarafs mentioned in the Dumrai was the most prominent one in terms of strengthening the economic foundation of Dighapatia. Incidentally, the collection of revenue during this time rose approximately Rs. 20000.00 from Rs.35000.00. Dayaram used to look after administrative matters of the Natore estate along with the supervision of his own Zamindari (i.e. Dighapatia) As a result, he emerged as one of the most influential personalities of Natore Raj. In course of time he became the most trustworthy person of Ramjiban and this was due to his extraordinary merit, perseverance and some human qualities. The Raja himself used to pay respect to Dayaram and rely on him in any circumstances. His worth was fairly known when he was empowered to sign the “Nuptial tie of Ramakanta and Rani Bhavani in 1137B.S. (i.e., 1730. He was also authorised to sign the deeds of the Brahmattara lands under the estate.¹⁴ After the demise of Ramkanta, Rani Bhavani took the full charge of administration of Natore Raj showing and respect to Dayaram. She is reported to have not taken any course of action without his prior permission.¹⁵ Dayaram used to perform the assigned responsibility with utmost sincerity. During the tenure of Dayaram, the name and fame of Natore Raj spread out far and near and nothing could impede its progress.

Ramkanta became Raja after the death of his father Ramjiban. As Ramkanta was very young in age, he failed to rule successfully rather indulged in prodigality. Dayaram tried to bring Ramkanta to right track but was humiliated and in the long run was removed from the office of the Dewan by young Ramkanta.¹⁶ Having failed to bring back the young Raja to the right path, Dayaram complained against Ramkanta to Alivardi Khan, Nawab of Bengal.¹⁷ Nawab Alivardi Khan removed Ramkanta from the office and gave the charge to Deviprashad who belonged to the same family. At the later stage, however, Dayaram helped reinstating Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani to power after seeing their distressful condition and sufferings. Eventually, Dayaram got back his post of Dewan.¹⁸ Dayaram was a devout Hindu. He constructed "Krishnaji" temple in his own capital Dighapatia and donated huge amount of land for the maintenance of the temple. Besides, he further constructed two temples named Krishnadev and Gopaldev at Mashudpur of Jessore and Binod of Murshidabad district respectively. He donated lands to look after the Brahmins there.¹⁹ Although Dayaram was not much educated, he was an enlightened man and showed interest in education. He arranged for learning Sanskrit and established many Chatuspatis for it. To meet up the expenditure of these academic centers, he arranged monthly and yearly donations. To deal with the scarcity of water, he arranged digging ponds in many areas with a view to removing the suffering of people.²⁰

In 1734, Dayaram handed over the power to Ramkanta and preferred retirement. He constructed Dighapatia palace (Rajbari) in the land, which he received from Ramjiban. The Zamindari of Dayaram became one of the leading Zamindaris during his time. He departed in 1760 at the age of 80 leaving behind his only son Jagannath Ray and other five daughters.²¹

Jagannath Ray

After the death of Dayaram, his only son Jagannath Ray inherited all the property, left by former. Jagannath Ray was just 15 years old when he took the

possession of the Estate (1776).²² Within a short time an unprecedented famine came over the whole of Bengal with a huge loss of human lives. During this famine, Rajshahi District suffered a lot²³. This famine also affected Dighapatia Zamindari like other parts of Rajshahi.

Due to this famine, it was not possible to collect the land revenue from the peasants of this region but timely payment of revenue to British company was customary failing which the Zamindari was to be auctioned. Under the given situation, Dighapatia Zamindari fell into a great crisis. The reserve fund Dayaram left behind was exhausted and this affected the future of the Zamindari of Dighapatia. At this juncture Jagannath decided to sell out some parts of his estate in order to get over the crisis and pay dues to the East India Company Government. During this critical period, Nandarani, wife of Jagannath Ray came forward as counselor to help her husband and took care to save the Zamindari. As per her advice, family expenditure was paid off from own farm and whole of the stock fund from Zamindari was used to settle the dues and taxes to be paid to the government.²⁴ With this timely precautionary step, Zamindari was saved from being put in auction. It is, however, true that there was hardly any development of the Dighapatia Estate during the Zamindari of Jagannath Ray. He did not take any effective steps during his tenure to help and change the fate of the people of Dighapatia. Many Zamindars of Bengal lost their Zamindaris as a result of the heavy burden of land revenues which could not be realized from the Zamindars. It was indeed an exceptional credit on the part of Jagannath Ray that he could save his Zamindars at this crisis moment. The role of his wife Nandarani in this respect was, however, a significant factor behind such an exceptional case that happened at Dighapatia. Jagannath Ray had 16 sons and daughters in all and excepting Prannath' all had their prematured death. Jagannath Ray breathed his last in 1790 at the age of 45 only.²⁵

Prannath Ray

Prannath Ray was the third Raja of Dighapatia Family. He was born in 1786. After his father's death, he was nominated the Raja of Dighapatia Estate. As he was a minor, the Zamindari fell into the hand of "Court of wards" with the demise of his father. He took the charge of Zamindari after reaching his adulthood. Prannath Ray was a trustworthy Zamindar. He used to love sports. He was also fond of animal husbandry. He used to rear up animals like elephants, horses, dogs and many other animals. During his tenure, there was, however, no development as such of the Zamindari. However, he was an open hearted man and is still remembered for his charity. He observed the *sraddha* of his mother with grandeur.²⁶ He had no son. He adopted Prasannanath as son. He died in 1827 when he was only 41 years old.²⁷

Prasannanath Ray

Prasannanath Ray, the fourth Raja of Dighapatia Family was born in 1826. He was the next ancestor of Dighapatia Raj after his father's death. The Zamindari again fell into the hands of "Court of Wards" as he was a minor child.²⁸

He studied in Rampur-Boalia (Now Rajshahi) Zela School.²⁹ Despite having education for quite a long time in the school, he failed to gather knowledge of English language. However, he was fairly expert with regard to Zamindari activities. He indulged in bad habits as he left his school. According to report, after leaving school he with some unsocial elements of the Europeans who tried to tempt him to several indulgences and fleece. But he soon shook off their influences and learned to think and judge for himself. He at last stumbled into the right path and found for himself a field for active usefulness.³⁰

He came back to right path at last being aware of his faults and concentrated in Zamindari. In fact, during his time onward the Family started prospering. Taking

charge of Zamindari he purchased many pieces of land of Jessore, Nadiya and Rajshahi and thus speeded up the development of the estate of Dighapatia. He was cheerful, amicable and the renowned hunter and he had inclination to education. He was keen at hunting birds, tigers and fishing.³¹ Raja Prasannanath had great contribution to the field of education. In 1851, the Deputy Magistrate of Natore established a school in Natore which later on merged with Prasannanath Academy at Dighapatia with the financial grant of Raja Prasannanath. The Deputy Magistrate of Natore sent special thanks to Prasannanath for such a great contribution. In his version it has been reported "Impressed with these sentiments, I hail the establishment of the Prasannanath Academy as a harbinger of better days for Rajshahi."³²

The officiating Magistrate of Natore Subdivision established a hospital at Natore in 1841. To meet the required expenditure relating to Dighapatia English School and Natore Hospital. Prasannanath issued a government promissory note of Rupees one lack including one-year interest to government through the Commissioner. Receiving this grant the government sent a letter to Commissioner on 16th July, 1851 appreciating this sacrifice of Prasannanath. The government formed a committee to run the school and hospital. The Commissioner, Judge, Collector and Magistrate were included in the committee as ex-officio members. The government further formed a sub committee electing officiating deputy Magistrate of Natore and other local elites as members.³³ Prasannanath was also honoured for his works of public welfare. Prasannanath constructed a number of roads within his Estate. The existing capital road from Dighapatia to Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi) was previously extended up to Natore. Later on the road was further extended up to Dighapatia and was connected with the road to Bogra. To repair that road Prasannanath donated a lumpsum of Rs. thirty five thousands.³⁴ He not only contributed to public welfare related establishment but also to religious establishment

as well. He established Prasannakali under his own name and arranged her lunch and dinner therein. Everyday one mound of rice was cooked during day and during night about 10-15 Brahman would take lunch with full satisfaction.³⁵

Prasannanath became immortal establishing Shivmandir at random in various places and all these bear the testimony about his great gesture. Besides, he used to help destitute people and excavated a pond to alleviate the scarcity of drinking water. The Government honoured Raja Prasannanath with the title "Raja Bahadur" in recognition British of his unparalleled contribution and good deeds. The then Viceroy Mr. Lord Dalhousie handed over the certificate for his title "Rajbahadur" at a Public Darbar in government House. In that Durbar many prestigious Rajas including Maharaja of Patiala and other local elites were present.³⁶

Having been satisfied with the performance of Raja Prasannanath, the government appointed him. Honorary Magistrate. He took over the charge of that prestigious post on 10th September 1857. 20 gunmen including a police jamadar were put under his command.³⁷

Most of the buildings and swinging structures were built at Dighapatia during his time. After the earthquake in 1897 most of these structures got destroyed. The cheerful Prasannanath died in 1861 only at the age of 35.³⁸ As he had no sons and daughters to succeed him, he took Pramathnath as his adopted son before his death.

Raja Pramathnath Ray

Raja Pramathnath Ray inherited his fathers Zamindari of Dighapatia after his father's death in 1861. It may be recalled here that Dayaram Ray was the founder of Dighapatia Raj and Pramathnath had a direct link to his daughter's family and then he came out as a family member of Dayaram-Daughter's family. Pramathnath was born in 1849 and since he was a minor, the Zamindari came under the custody of the East India Company as per 'Court of wards'.³⁹

Keeping pace with the family tradition for his education he was admitted into the Watson Institution in 1863.⁴⁰ His mother had a great affection for Pramathnath. She rented a house in Calcutta. During the vacation, he used to visit his mother's house and after completing the vacation he used to get back to his institute. From this institute Pramathnath got through his Entrance examination of the University.⁴¹ Later on, he was admitted into Presidency College of Calcutta when he became adult, he had to discontinue education and take interest in the affairs of the Zamindari. Within a short time, he could show his calibre as a Zamindar and by dint of his labour and wisdom he proved many excellencies of the estates. By his own effort he also captured several Zamindaris. Among these most notables were Seorafuly Estate which was included in Hugly and Habra, Dihi Shivpur, Taraf Bishalpur, Rampur Bowalia and Vaidya Belgharia which were included in Rajshahi District. He acquired the Zamindari of Muhammadpur which was included into Jessore District and he also occupied Telihati which was a part of Madhya Narail Zamindari and some of Nasrat Shahi's Zamindari. The area of the Dighapatia Zamindari became doubled when it incorporated the Zamindari of Shell Barsa, (in Bogra) Pratab Bazu Pargana (Bogra) and Dihi Ramchandrapur (Nadia). In this way the boundaries of Dighapatia Zamindari were extended upto Rajshahi, Faridpur, Pabna, Jessore, Murshidabad, Habra, Nadia and Hugli districts.⁴² What a contrast! When the Zamindari of Dighapatia was extending its territory, several renowned and mighty Zamindars including Natore Raj were going to loose their estate due to their inability to pay revenue in time. It was a single credit of Pramathnath who was able to run Zamindari facing all odds. During their tenure Dighapatia Zamindars had been richer than all other Zamindars of Rajshahi of their time.⁴³ Pramanathnath, although not only a successful zamindar but which stood for him for the better had some human qualities prospect of Dighapatia. He had an extraordinary thrust for English literature, Science and History. After lunch he used to pass his time by doing study.

In 1868, he donated six thousand rupees to Rajshahi Girls High School. Besides, in order to meet the expenditure of the school, he donated an annual government 'promissory note' amounting to Rs. 180.00 only. He arranged three scholarships for the development of this school.⁴⁴ In addition, he established several number of schools. He was the founder of Rajshahi Association.⁴⁵ He contributed Rs.1,50,000.00 with a view to developing Rajshahi college through Rajshahi Association.⁴⁶ In 1871 a Madhyamik School was founded at Noukhila (Bogra District) and it was directly patronized by Pramathnath. Thereafter in 1882, the school turned into as high school.

Pramathnath had also enough contributions in the medical sector. He donated Rs.10,000.00 for the construction of Rajshahi (Charity Medical Centre⁴⁷. The first building was constructed in the premises of existing Rajshahi College. During 1871, he founded a charity medical center at Noukhila of Bogra district.⁴⁸ He bore all the expenses like his father, for the renovation of the road which leads to Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi) from Dighapatia.⁴⁹ As a benevolent man he never hesitated to offer financial assistance to the distressed people. In 1871, the Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi wrote a letter to the Viceroy of India that the Government of India should offer him the title "Raja Bahadur" as a measure of recognition of his achievements as a zamindar. The Viceroy responded to this appeal and offered him the title "Raja" on behalf of the Government.⁵⁰

In 1877 Pramathnath was nominated a member of Bengal Law Committee. He took great initiative to pass the road tax act.⁵¹ He served the Rajshahi association as a President and obviously it was his brain child. He was as such a zamindar who always kept himself busy in thinking the betterment of his subjects. It was the reality that he increased the tax rate to his subjects but didn't torture them in respect of its realization. All the time he tried to create a congenial atmosphere so that his people could go through peacefully and happily. During his tenure, people would

pass their time without facing any trouble or hazardness. If he had come to know that one of his countrymen was being tortured having no particular reason by any of his employee, then he would take prompt initiative to stop the harassment without making any delay. He would not solely depend on the adviser regarding people's happiness.

Pramathnath constructed a building in Rajshahi. He passed away, when he was only 34, in 1883, he left four sons – Pramadanath, Basanta Kumar, Sarat Kumar, Hemandra Kumar and only one daughter Indraprava by name respectively.⁵² All of them were just minor children when he left this world. Before his death he made a Will. He endorsed Dighapatia Zamindari to his elder son as well as he handed over his self earned property to his rest of sons. Consequently, Dighapatia Zamindari was divided into two parts. Accordingly Barataraf used to link up with Dighapati and Chota Taraf with Dayarampur.⁵³

Pramadanath Ray

Pramadanath Ray was born in 1876. According to will, after his father's demise, he inherited the Zamindari of Dighapatia. During his underage Zamindari went away under the supervision of "Court of Wards". In 1894, when he became adult, he got the responsibilities to look after the Zamindari.⁵⁴

At first he studied at Rajshahi College and later on he studied at Presidency College, Calcutta. He was a knowledge seeker and had a great passion for education. He spent a lot of money for education purpose. He took over the charge of Dighapatia School so that it could run smoothly. He took over Noukhila school under his supervision which was founded by his father as well. He made a building that valued Rs. 6,000.00 (six thousand) for P N School, Rajshahi.⁵⁵ He donated property which was amounted to Rs.25 thousand to Rajshahi College. He started a scheme of scholarship for the student of M.A. of Rajshahi College which was amounted to

Rs.10.00 so that student could be inspired for higher education.⁵⁶ As a movement of Queen Victoria, Diamond Jubilee Industrial School was founded by Raja Pramathnath in 1898.⁵⁷ This school played a vital role for the development of silk industry. For this school, Raja Pramadanath donated 34 *bighas* of landed property in Rajshahi.⁵⁸ He established a library at Dighapatia as well. Raja Pramadanath Ray contributed a piece of land for the establishment of Rajshahi library. He donated some land for the foundation of Museum as well. For the bee breeding center, he donated 34 *bighas* of land which was amounted to Rs. 20 thousand for Rajshahi agriculture farm.⁵⁹ He donated Rs. 20 thousand to lady Duffrin Fund.⁶⁰ He contributed Rs. 25 thousand for Rajshahi Hospital. He donated Rs. 7 thousand for 'Natore charity hospital' that was established by Prasannanath. Apart from these, he used to spend about Rs. 25 thousand for charity purpose annually. He supervised Naukhila Charity Hospital which was founded by his father.⁶¹ He accepted the liabilities of spending all the required money for the renovation of Rajshahi – Natore Road.⁶² He was the president of Rajshahi Association in 1901.⁶³ To meet the expenditure of Rajshahi Association he donated Rajshahi Town Hall to Rajshahi Association.⁶⁴

To mitigate the water crisis of Natore's inhabitants he established "Natore water works" where he donated Rs. 1,500.⁶⁵ In 1901 "Bengal land Holder Association" was established by Raja Jagindranath Ray, Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya Chaudhury, Ashutosh Choudhury as well as Pramadanath.⁶⁶ During 1897 the summit of Bengal state congress had been started in Natore on 10th, 11th and 12th June respectively, Pramadanath bore a part of the entire expenditure of that summit.⁶⁷

Lieutenant Governor Sir Lancilot Hare came to Dighapatia in 1909 and planted a banyan tree as a mark of memory in front of Palace (the house of the Raja). He had been a member of parliament in 1909, 1920 and 1926 respectively. In 1922, he joined himself Delhi as member of parliament and was invited to Imperial Festival.⁶⁸

He was a successful zamindar no doubt. During his tenure, Dighapatia Zamindari made a considerable progress. His Zamindari was also found at Silimpur, Sara, Karanja and Bhulbariah in Pabna district.⁶⁹ He received an award from government as “Raj Bahadur” for his successful exercise of power and made people’s life style developed.⁷⁰

Dighapatia Rajbari and *mandir* were pulled down to the ground due to fatal earthquakes. Then he rebuilt Rajbari and made a beautiful garden. The Post office Library, Club, Daily bazaar, hat, Thakur Bari, medical Centre, Stable, Bungalow of Dighapatia are the marks of his achievements. He planted huge mahogany tree that helped to increase the elegance both of the school road and steamer *ghat*. He was as such zamindar who was lavish in manner. He had a recreation boat dubbed as “Nurjahan”. He died in 1925. He left six sons namely, Prativanath, Bijendranath, Sailesnath, Chanchal Kumar, Tushar Kumar, Surendranath and two daughters Ushaprava and Nilimaprava respectively.⁷¹

Basanta Kumar Ray

As per will, Pramathnath’s second wife lived at Dayarampur along with her sons Basanta Kumar Ray, Sharat Kumar Ray, Hemandra Kumar Ray. We may recall here that the previous name of Dayarampur was Chalk Abhirampur. The place was dubbed as “Dayarampur and it had been named as the name of the founder of Dighapatia Raja Dayaram.”⁷² The construction activities of Dayarampur Rajbari started in 1297 B.S., i.e., 1890 and ended in 1304 B.S., i.e., 1897. From the architectural view, the Dayarampur Rajbari has some exceptionality. New architectural design had been introduced in that building. The Rajbari was surrounded by high walls and inside the wall, several types of fruit and flower plants which were brought from different places, had been planted for the beautification of the building-complex.

The new state, which was situated in Dayarampur, had been dubbed as Dighapatia Junior Raj Dayarampur state". It was also known as Chotataraf of Dighapatia state. This Zamindari was divided into four parts i.e. (i) Dayarampur (Natore) (ii) Zhenidah (iii) Chota Pir (Dinajpur) (iv) Seaurafully (Hugly). There were different Sheresta for each and every estate. The main head office was in Dayarampur Rajbari.⁷³ The corporate income of these estates were Rs. 3,00,000.00 annually. There was a coal mine in Birbhum district which belonged to them.⁷⁴

Basanta Kumar Ray was the first Raja of Chhota Taraf of Dighapatia Raj. He obtained his M.A. degree in philosophy from Calcutta University and thereafter he obtained B.L.degree. He was a brilliant student and got the first place in M.A. examination. Like his father he was benevolent and a sound scholar. He lost his wife who is said to have expired at the time of giving birth of a child.⁷⁵ After wife's death, he did not get married for the second time and he lost his all interest from mundane activities like Zamindaris.

As a philanthropist Basanta Kumar Ray donated Rs.2,50,000.00 for the progress of agricultural education . His consideration was to boost up the economy of the country through the development of agriculture. He contributed the above mentioned amount on 11th August in 1920.⁷⁶ Thereafter, the supervisor of Bashanta Kumar Trust agreed to pay furthermore Rupees one lakh. Though the college didn't take shape at his existing period, it took shape in 1936.⁷⁷

He contributed Rs.15.00 monthly to Hamantakumari Sangskritik College (Rajshahi) for cultural education in Rajshahi.⁷⁸ He subscribed Rs. 20,000 for the construction of old Art building of Rajshahi College.⁷⁹ In 1928 Rajshahi P.N.Girls School turned into High School. Then, the responsibilities of officiating the school went to the Raja of Dighapatia so that the school could be developed. Basanta Kumar gave a company paper valued Rs.10,200.00⁸⁰ to the P. N. High school at a

time. A library was built in the Dayarampur Rajbari by the joint effort of Basanta Kumar and his brother. The library possessed several valuable and antique books.⁸¹ During the establishment of Rajshahi Museum he subscribed Rs.30,000.00 for the development of the Museum.⁸²

Sharat Kumar Ray

In 1876 Sharat Kumar Ray was born in the family of Dighapatia.⁸³ As per Will of his father, Pramathnath, Basanta Kumar, elder brother of Sharat Kumar, used to look after the Zamindari. Having no child and immature death of Basanta Kumar the responsibilities of looking after the Zamindari went to Sharat Kumar. He got married Srimati Kiran Rekha Ray who was the first daughter of Girish Chandra Majumdar and an inhabitant of Kalikapur village, Baraigram Police Station in 1901. His better half passed away in 1918.⁸⁴

The academic career of Sharat Kumar started from Rajshahi. After completing eight class from Rajshahi Collegiate School, he set out for Calcutta along with his brother for higher education. He passed his F.A. degree from Calcutta University. Then he got admitted himself in Ripan College, Calcutta. He passed his F.A. Examination successfully.⁸⁵ During his study at Ripan College Lal Gopal Chakrabarti, the then professor of that college was engaged as his house tutor. It is said that he got many information about Rabindranath from his tutor Lal Gopal Chakraborti. Thereafter, he took admission in Presidency College. Ramendra Sunder Tribedi get engaged as his house tutor during his study at Presidency College. Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose and Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray were his teachers as well. He passed honours from Presidency College and under the same college he completed his M.A. in Physics.⁸⁶

He had a passion for Literature. When he was at Presidency College, Calcutta, he became the member of Bangiya Shahitya Parishad. Then, Digendranath Tagore

was the president of that committee. The session of the Bangiya Shahitya Parishad used to take place at the residence of Raja Binod Krishna Ray in Sobhabazar. There Sarat Kumar got a chance of coming into close contact with several renowned writers poets⁸⁷ and intellectuals. There he got Nabin Chandra Sen who was well known as the poet of *Palasir Yuddha*, a famous book of Bengali poems. When he was at Calcutta, he also met Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya. For the first time Sharat Kumar met Rabindranath Tagore at the residence of Natore Raj which was located at Calcutta. Jagadindranath Ray got acquainted him with Rabindranath.⁸⁸

“*Bharatiya Sangeet Samaj*” was established by the joint initiative of Rabindranath, Jyatindranath, Jagadindranath of Natore and Dighapatia’s, Zamindar Pramadanath. The Sangeet Samaj was built in 1897. Sarat Kumar was one of its popular members. Here, a deep relationship was built up between Sharatkumar and Rabindranath.⁸⁹ Hemendra Kumar Ghosh was a class mate of Sharat Kumar. Hemendra Kumar’s residence was at 82, Sitaram Ghosh Street, Calcutta. Sharat Kumar used to visit Hemendra Kumar’s residence almost regularly. Suresh Chandra Samajpati, the editor of *Sahitya Patrika* had a common programme of gossiping at the residence of Hemendra Kumar and he wrote the criticism of literature there only. Suresh Chandra Samajpati used to criticize the writing of Rabindranath. Sharat Kumar would have to pay a rapt attention to the criticism and he took it by his heart⁹⁰ “Bangiya Sahitya Parishad” arranged the “Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan”. In 1908 the first session of Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan took place at the residence of Raja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Kasimbazar and the second session of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad took place at Rajshahi in the month of February, 1909. The session which was held at Rajshahi, Sharat Kumar was the president of the reception committee.

A Huge number of renowned and distinguished person took part in that conference. Among distinguished delegates worthy of mention were Maharaja

Manindra Chandra Nandi, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, Acharjya Prafulla Chandra Ray. They cordially accepted the hospitality of Sharat Kumar Ray. The third session of the similar conference took place at Bhagalpur in 1910. Sharat Kumar participated there. Akshay Kumar Moitra (Maitreya) and Ramprashad Chanda participated in the conference as representatives of North Bengal. Sharat Kumar's intention of collecting antiquities drew the attention of the delegates present in the conference. Sharat Kumar had the privilege to draw the attention of all the scholars and thereby he got an opportunity to spread education in the region vis-a-vis in India.⁹¹ Sharat Kumar built many libraries, education centers in different parts of the states. His elder brother was Basanta Kumar. After Basanta Kumar's death, Sharat Kumar built a school named "Kumar Basanta Kumar M.E. School" in memory of his elder brother. All the expenditure would have to bore from Zamindari state.⁹² Sharat Kumar made a library, which was big in size and enriched with valuable books at Dayarampur Rajbari (Palace). He had contributions to upgrade the public library of Rajshahi District. He served as a President of the library since 1925-1942⁹³ The Trustee will of Rajshahi General Library which came into bills in 1929. Sharat Kumar engaged himself as a member of the Trustee Board. After serving 18 years at a stretch as president, he tendered his resignation in 1942.⁹⁴ The pace of development of the library stumbled due to his absence. During his presidency, several discussion regarding several library work would took place there. Sharat Kumar had all along to take part in most of the academic discussions.

He not only established educational institutions, but was himself a lover of books by several renowned authors. Rabindranath, Bankim Chandra, Sharat Chandra, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Byron, P. B. Shelley, John Keats,⁹⁵ etc. were among his selections. He published a book named as *Tailik Jati*. Mahan Lal was his notable another work of creation. His wife, Kiran Rekha Ray, wrote two books entitled "*Varendra Randhan*" and "*Varendra Jalkhabar*" respectively.⁹⁶ She was

equally a dualist scholar and a writer with the joint initiative of the then Raj of Rajshahi, Zamindars and distinguished personalities, he built up a Association named Rajshahi Association in order to make Rajshahi district a popular and renamed center in any sense. Sharat Kumar was nominated as a special member of Rajshahi Association". Then, there was no provision for railway communication. To travel any where by rail, each and every one had to go to Natore district to catch up the train. Sharat Kumar made a move in this respect and he took the help of the Rajshahi Association for this. As a result of this initiative for the first time the first train plying in Rajshahi, started on 14th March, 1929, in Rajshahi district.⁹⁷ It was really breakthrough of the district so far as the communication system was concerned. There was no recreation or waiting room at Malanchi station, a railway station of Rajshahi. Sharat Kumar made a first class waiting room there from his own purse.⁹⁸ He spent a large amount of fund for the renovation of the road of that locality.

Philanthropic zamindar Sharat Kumar Ray realized that for the development of the agrarian based economy of the country as a whole effective steps should be taken for the all round development of agriculture. In this consideration, he built up an upto date and developed agricultural farm at Dayarampur which possessed 300 bighas of land. He named the farm "Rani Drabamai Farm" after the name of his mother.⁹⁹ He made a farm with an intention to create employment opportunity for the local youths and made the people aware regarding the advanced technology of cultivation. He constructed a canal from the Baral River in order to facilitate the irrigation of those farms". Not only this, he sent his son, Kumar Bibudhnath B.Sc., to America for higher education on agriculture. He also built up a poultry farm¹⁰⁰. He sent a man named Samarendranath Choudhury to Lucknow for the advanced training on poultry farm. It is noteworthy that he bore the expense of this training for Samarendranath Choudhury.

With a view to improving the overall conditions of the livestock of the country, he built up a cattle-breeding center under the close supervision of Drabamai Farm.¹⁰¹ He collected so many highly productive and developed livestock from several countries for this farm. In order to breed high breeding cattle he brought two developed and high productive oxen from Bhagalpur so that people could be inspired regarding the venture and initiative.

He established a sugar mill in Dayarampur. The sugarcane, what was produced in Drabamaie Farm, was used in this sugar mill.¹⁰² In fact there was no any sugar mill in the area as before. He planted several high productive and developed types of mango trees on 25 bighas of land, which was adjacent to the Rajbari. An agriculture farm was established at Rajshahi as well by "Rajshahi Association".

Sharat Kumar was such a man who had a fascination for travel. He set out for London along with his younger brother Hemandra Kumar after the completion of his Master degree in Physics. Incidentally, Jagadish Chandra Bose, the teacher of Sharat Kumar was going to London along with his better half by the same voyager.¹⁰³ Apart from visiting London, his extensive tours were included places and countries like Egypt, Italy and few countries of Europe. During traveling he visited several museums. As a result, he was motivated to know about Archaeology. Under such a background it may be said that, "Varendra Annusandhan Samity" was built up by the joint endeavour of Sharat Kumar Ray, Shashadhar Ray, Akshay Kumar Maitreya and Ramaprashad Chanda in 1910.¹⁰⁴ Later on, the famous historian Rakhal Das Bandhapadhya and Ram Kamal Singha joined "The Varendra Samity."¹⁰⁵ Then they contemplated themselves in searching operation in North Bengal. Within a short span of time several antiques and archeological assets were collected.¹⁰⁶ As a result, the necessity of establishing a Museum was failed and this hunt led them to seek the permission from the government of India to establish a non government museum at Rajshahi district on the date of 14th February, 1913.¹⁰⁷ Raja Pramadanath helped

to buy some land for Museum. The then Governor of Bengal Mr. Carmichael laid the foundation stone of the museum on 13th November in 1916.¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly the achievement most unmemorable achievements of Sharat Kumar was his initiative to found the Varendra Museum. Sharat Kumar himself contributed monthly Rs.200.00 as donation to meet the expenditure. The major cost of the books which were published from Varendra Anusandhan Samity, were borne by Sharat Kumar himself.¹⁰⁹ Sharat Kumar sent Nani Gopal Majumdar, the curator of Museum to get some modern and advanced training on archaeological excavation, which was under the direct supervision of the then Director General Sir John Marshal of Archaeological Survey of India.¹¹⁰ He also spent money for excavations in different parts of North Bengal.

Above all he was liberal zamindar with many human qualities. His temperament was advanced of his age. Religious superstitions couldn't touch him. Sharat Kumar engaged four Muslims as cook. They were i) Rajab Ali; ii) Tamej Ali; iii) Babar Ali; iv) Maser Ali. He also employed a cobbler named Budhan Ruidas whom he got trained in cooking from Calcutta.¹¹¹

He also introduced modern theatre at Rajbari for the recreation of the people and employees of the Rajbari. The employees of Rajstate used to take part in dramas and many recreational activities. He became sick just two days before his death in Dayarampur Rajbari. Dr. Kanailal Ray, the private doctor of Sharat Kumar, brought him Calcutta for his better treatment. He was under the treatment of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray. But all efforts were in vain. He breathed his last on 12th April in 1945.¹¹² At his death he left five sons – I) Kumar Amitav Ray (M. A.), ii) Kumar Mihir Bijay Ray (M. Sc.), iii) Kumar Arun Prakash Ray; iv) Kumar Bibudhnath Ray (B.Sc.), v) Kumar Tapan Bikash Ray.¹¹³

Hemendra Kumar Ray

Hemendra Kumar Ray was the youngest brother of Sharat Kumar Ray. He was a learned and well educated man. He played a significant role for the progress of education like other members of Dighapatia family. Hemendra Kumar donated Rs.1500.00 to Rajshahi College for procurement of apparatus for chemistry.¹¹⁴ He contributed Rs.10000.00 to Rajshahi P.N.Girls High School for the construction of office complex.¹¹⁵ He came forward to develop Haricharan Child School located in Rajshahi. He wanted to turn the backdated school into a modern one with maximum facilities. He purchased the movable and immovable properties of the school and he changed the name into Sabitri Siksha Vidyalaya.¹¹⁶ He turned the School into High School He served as president in the general library of Rajshahi for a short span of time.

Hemendra Kumar Ray was a famous painter. He used to live in Rajshahi where he built his own house. In his youth he traveled several places of Europe and visited several art museums. He had served the Varendra Museum as honorary keeper since 1923 to 24.¹¹⁷

With a view to developing the overall educational condition of Rajshahi District, he followed the examples of his predecessors. During Hemendra Kumar's death, he left only one son named Himadrinath.

Prativanath Ray

Prativanath Ray was born in Dighapatia's Raj family in 1894. He was the elder son of Pramadanath. After his father's death he had to look after the Zamindari. After the Partition of India, Prativanath stayed at Dighapatia. He went to Calcutta to get the medical treatment and he died there on 14th Ashwin in 1371 B.S., i.e., 1964.¹¹⁸ He left two sons named Prativanath and Bimalandunath.¹¹⁹ Prabhat Kumar

was the managing director of North Bengal Sugar Mill. After 1961 he migrated to Calcutta, but remained unmarried. Bimalendu Kumar stayed in Calcutta as well. His son was Biswanath.

Scores of educational institute of Rajshahi and Natore such as Rajshahi College, College Hostel, Varendra Museum, Town Hall, Hospital, P.N.Girls' High School, Sabitri Girls High School, Public Library, Dighapatia High School. Dayarampur M.E. High School, Bashanta Kumar Agriculture Institute, Rajshahi Agro Farm, Rajshahi Association are still bear the testimonials of his achievements.

1. Most of the Raja of this family or estate was well educated.
2. Most of the Raja contributed their all valuable times and money for the well being of people and locality.
3. No one Raja or member of this estate was luxurious and ever care for a disciplined life.
4. There is hardly any proof that the members of this great family invested their money in any way other than the development of the Zamindari.
5. They were the first among all other Zamindars who turned the agro economy of this region into industry based economy by setting a sugar factor. Introduction of technology and advanced method of cultivation was one of the main consideration of the leading members of this family.
6. They had a coal mine beyond the Zamindari.
7. Some of the measures of this family were above sectional views and they established an example of secular views on social relations.

As per Bengal Tenancy Act 1951, the term of Dighapatia Zamindari had come into end like other regions of present Bangladesh.

Notes and references

1. Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jessore-Khulnar Itihas*, Calcutta, 2001 (Reprint), p. 885; Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. 2, Dacca, 1974, p. 414; Kazi Muhammad Meser, *Rajshahir Itihas*, vol. 2, Bogra, 1965, p. 277; Also Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshahir Sankshipta Itihas*, Calcutta, 1308, p.202; Anil Chandra Banarjee, *The Agrarian System of Bengal*, 1582-1793, Vol. 4, Calcutta, 1980, p. 51.
2. Kalam (Gram) is a big village. It is situated by the bank of the river, 4/5 kilometers away south from Sigra Police Station. Several honest and elite Brahmins lived there. Among other ethnic groups people, Barber, Fishermen, Potters were worthy of name. Then, Kalam was known as a second Nabadwip as the place of that time was a great center for Sanskrit learning.
3. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, op.cit. p. 414.
4. Samar Pal. *Natorer Itihas*, vol. 2, Natore, 1984, p. 1.
5. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, op.cit. p.414; Bimala Charan Moitra, however, points out that when Ramjiban was employed under Putthia Raj and used to get Rs. 7 as salary, he appointed Dayaram as a servant by paying him a monthly salary of eight *anas* only. (*Bimala Charan Moitra, Puthia Rajbangsa*, Calcutta 1357 B.S. p.25) Kalinath Choudhury holds a separate view when he informs that on one occasion of *Jalbihar* at *Chalan bill*. Ramjiban found two boys near his boat anchored at Kalambazar. Having been impressed by the wit and promptness of Dayaram. Ramjiban brought him to Natore and thus a new chapter of Dayaram's career started at Natore Raj under the care of Ramjiban. Ramjiban got Rs.7.00 as salary, he was engaged under Puthia Raj. (Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 202)
6. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 202; Sri Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *Natorer Katha O Kahani*, Calcutta, 1981, p.75.
7. Satish Chandra Mitra, op.cit. p. 885; Dayaram was cunning. He played an obnoxious game and by tricks he assassinated Mrinal Ghosh alias Monahati commander – in chief of Sitaram Ray. He made an order by Nawab so that Sitaram wouldn't be able to receive any sort of help from adjacent and nearby Zamindar. Consequently, at the time of curbing insurgents none came forward to help Sitaram.
8. Enamul Haque, *Bengal Towards the Close of Aurangzib's Reign*, Dacca, 1974, p. 99 (Foot note); Satish Chandra Mitra, op.cit., p.888, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 203; K.C.Mitra, *Rajas of Rajshahi*, Vol.56. Calcutta Review, Calcutta, 1873, p.8.

9. Rajendralal Acharya, *Bangalir Bal*, Calcutta, 1328, p. 313.
10. There is different opinion regarding Sitaram's death. Sitaram was sent to Murshidabad from Natore and he was in jail for few months there. Satish Chandra Mitra mentioned in his book *Jassore O Khulnar Itihas* that Sitaram died in Murshidabad, Akshay Kumar Moitra (i.e., A.K.Moitra) on the other hand holds a view that Sitaram died at the Prison of Murshidabad after killing of poisonous ring (A.K.Moitra, *Rani Bhavani*, ed. by Nishit Ranjan Ray, Calcutta, 1990 p.32); K.C.Mitra, op.cit. p. 8, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 203; Fordetalil, M. Enamul Haque, op.cit. p.91; Satish Chandra Mitra, op.cit. pp.887-889.
11. Satish Chandra Mitro, op.cit. p. 888, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit, p. 203; K. C. Mitra,op.cit. p.8.
12. Kalinath Chaudhury, op.cit. p.203.
13. K.C.Moitra, op.cit. p. 29, Sri Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. op. cit, p. 76, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. pp. 203, 04; *Varendrer Raja Zamidar*, an article by Md. Mahabubur Rahman in *Varendra Anchaler Itihas*, ed. by Saifuddin Choudhury, et.el. Rajshahi,1998, p.774.
14. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit, p.203.
15. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.204.
16. Moksudur Rahman, *Natorer Maharani Bhavani*, Natore, 1988, p.46
17. Kalinath Chaudhury, op.cit. p.159.
18. K. C. Mitra. op.cit. p.9.
19. Kalinath Chaudhury, op.cit. p.204.
20. Loc cit.
21. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el. op.cit. p.77; 741.
22. One third people of Bengal died in the famine, For details see Suprakash Ray,*Bharater Krishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram* (3rd ed.), Calcutta, 1980, pp.12-15.
23. Mazharul Huq, *The East India Company's Land Policy and Commerce in Bengal 1698-1784*.Dacca 1964, p.133.

24. Bimal Prashad Ray, et.el. op.cit, p.77.
25. Samar Pal, vol. 2, op.cit. p.4.
26. K.C.Mitra, op. cit, p. 29, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.204.
27. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el. op.cit. p. 77; Md. Mahabubur Rahman, op.cit. p.741.
28. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 205.
29. Loc. cit.
30. K.C.Mitra, op.cit. p. 29.
31. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 208.
32. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el. op.cit.p. 58.
33. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 207, Samar Pal, Vol. 2, op.cit. p.7.
34. Bimal PrashadRay, et.el. op.cit. p.78; Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 206; Md. Mahabubur Rahman, op.cit. p. 742; Nurul Islam Khan, (ed.) *Bangladesh Zela Gazetteer Brihatara Rajshahi*, Dhaka, 1991, p.369.
35. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 207.
36. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 208.
37. Loc cit.
38. Samar Pal, op.cit. Vol.2, p.8; *Varendrer Raja Zamidar*, an article by Shah Anisur Rahman in *Rajshahi Parichiti* by Varendra Academy, Rajshahi, 1980, p.188.
39. Samar Pal, op.cit. Vol.2, p. 9, Court of Wards made a provision to supervise the minors zamindary under the direct supervision of Government.
40. The Indian Manager Act – 26 had been passed on 11th October in 1854. the latent intention of that Act was to arrange well and higher eructation for the minor zamindar who were under the supervision of “Court of wards”. The minors, whose age were from 8 to 14, was kept altogether in a separate building and all the facilities of their well education had been arranged there. Wardson institute was too in shape in 1856 in Calcutta. Dr. Ragendra Lal was engaged there as a director instead of Rs.300.00 monthly. It was closed in 1880.

41. K.C.Mitra, op.cit. p.40, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.209.
42. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.211, The territory of Dighapatia Zamindari had been doubled due to buy the stated Zamindari.
43. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.211.
44. K.C.Mitra, op. cit., p. 40, Sri Bimal prasad Ray, et.el, op.cit. pp.78-79, Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.212.
45. *Satabdir Aitihyabahi Shangathan : Rajshahi Association*, an articale by S.M. Abdul Latif in *Rajshahi Association Patrika* ed. by Tasikul Islam, Rajshahi, 1987 (henceforth *Satabdir...*), p105-107 ; Association is the remarkable association of the century. It was established on 21st July of 1872 and with a view to bringing economic as well as social emancipation of the people of this locality. Thereafter, this organization played a significant role for the development of Rajshahi.
46. Kazi Muhammed Meser, op.cit. p. 116; Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 212, *A.K.M.Hasanuzzaman et.el. Aitihye Rajshahi College Swarak Grantha*, Rajshahi 2001, p.5 Samar Pal op.cit., vol.2. p. 11; Sri Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. op.cit. p.79.
47. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 211, Regarding spending of Rs.12,00,000.00 has been mentioned in *Natorer Katha O Kahini* by Sri Bimal Prasad Ray et.el. op.cit. p.78.
48. Samar Pal, op.cit. p. 79.
49. Kalinath Choudhury, op. cit., p. 211; Shah Anisur Rahman, op.cit. p189.
50. Nurul Islam Khan, (ed.) *Banaladesh Zela Gazetter Brihatara Rajshahi*, Dhaka 1991 p.370.
51. M.A. Hamid, *Chalan Biler Itikatha*, Pabna 1967, p.279, Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. op.cit. p.79.
52. Samar Pal, op.cit. vol.2, p.11.
53. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. op.cit. p.79.
54. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p. 217.
55. Samar Pal, op.cit. vol. 2, p. 15.

56. Kalinath Choudhury, op.cit. p.218.
57. Samar Pal, op.cit. vol.2, p.13, This school had been established for the development of Silk Industry, Collector of Rajshahi, Nanda Krishna Bashu M.A.C.S. laid the stone of this school. Its contribution was very significant for the development of Bangladesh Sericulture Industry. At present the most of produced silk is being produced in Rajshahi.
58. Samar Pal, vol.2, op.cit. p.13; Shah Anisur Rahman, op.cit. p.190.
59. Bimal Prasad Ray, op.cit. p.79.
60. Loc cit.
61. Loc cit.
62. Samar Pal, op.cit. p.14.
63. After establishing Rajshahi Association, the people who chaired the post of president were Raja Pramathnath Ray (Dighapatia), Raja Krishnanandranath (Balihar), Raja Sashi Shekhareshar Ray (Tahirpur), Maharaj Jagadindranath Ray (Natore), Raja Pramadanath Ray (Dighapatia).
64. Raja Pramadanath Ray made a big building named *Victoria Ranga Mancha*. Then it turned into a cinema hall and it had been named as "Rupen Cinema Hall". Later on Alaka Hall and thereafter this Cinema hall had been named "Smriti Cinema Hall". At present the hall is in order. Engraved "Pramadanath Town Hall" is still existing at the top of this cinema hall. The office of existing Rajshahi Association has been established at the backside of this building.
65. Samar Pal, op.cit., Vol.2, p. 16.
66. Loc.cit.
67. Samar Pal, op.cit. Vol.2, p. 14; From all over India all the invited guests came to Natore. This conference had been taken place in Dompara Rathbari area which is located now by side of Dighapatia Road. On 12th June when the conference was going on. Acute earthquake hit Natore with its full force and plunged the city into debris. The whole city had been entirely demolished.
68. Bimal Prasad Ray et.al. op. cit. p. 80.
69. Radharaman Saha, *Pabna Zelar Itihas*, vol.3, Pabna, 1333 B.S., p. 163.

70. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 217.
71. Bimal Prasad Ray, *et. el.*, *op. cit.* p. 80; Samar Pal, *op.cit.* p. 17
72. M. A. Hamid, *op.cit.* p. 281.
73. *Varendrer Kriti Santan : Sharat Kumar Ray*, an Article by S.M. Abdul Latif, *Rajshahi Sadharan Granthagar Satabarsha Swarak Grantha*, Rajshahi, 1984, (Henceforth *Varendrer.....*), p. 20.
74. *Loc. cit.*
75. *Kumar Sharat Kumar Ray*, an article by S, M, Abdul Latif, in *Natorer Gaurab* (ed.) by Md. Moksudur Rahman, *Notore*, 1989, p. 97.
76. A. K. M. Hassanuzzaman, *et.el. op.cit.* p. 33,
77. A. K. M. Hassanuzzaman, *et.el. op.cit.* p. 33. At present the building is located at the northern side of the library. Thereafter, when the building became closed it has been named as B.K.Hostel.
78. A. K. M. Hassanuzzaman, *et.el. op.cit.* p.32.
79. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.2, p.18.
80. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* p.126.
81. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op.cit.* p.141.
82. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* Vol.2, p.18.
83. *Kumar Sharat Kumar Ray*, an article by Dr. Saifuddin Choudhury in *Rajshahir Pratibha*, (ed.) by Saifudding Choudhury, Rajshahi, 2000. p.3.
84. Mahabubur Rahman, *op.cit.* p.743.
85. Saifuddin Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.3.
86. *Loc.cit.*
87. *Loc.cit.*

88. S.M.Abdul latif, *Varendrer ... op.cit.* p. 22.
89. Loc.cit.
90. Loc.cit.
91. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Varendrer.....*, 23.
92. Mahabubur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 43.
93. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Satabdir*, p. 105.
94. Loc.cit.
95. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Satabdir.....*, p. 103.
96. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Satabdir*, p. 107.
97. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Varendrer.....*, p. 27.
98. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Varendrer.....*, p. 28.
99. Saifuddin Choudhry, *op. cit.* p. 10.
100. Loc. cit.
101. Loc. cit.
102. Loc. cit.
103. S. M. Abdul Latif, *Varendrer*, p.22, Sarat Kumar was a student of J. C. Bose during his study in Presidency College. Just completing his college life they were going to London altogether Sarat Kumar hoped that J. C. Bose would look after him. He was dishearten as J. C. Bose didn't look after him and he informed Pramadanath regarding the fact Raja Pramadanath was a student of J. C. Bose as well.
104. Samar Pal, *op.cit.* vol. 2, p.19.
105. Loc. cit.
106. He carried out a searching operation on the different places of North Bengal. He called on, the Zamindar of gulai. Hazi Lal Muhammad and he visited several places around

Gulai, such as, Deorapara, Palbari, Malanchi, Jagatpur, Chabbish Nagar, Talai and Maroil. Thereafter, he visited Kumarpur, Bijoyanagar, Khetur etc. There he got a statue of Chandismiriti and he also found 32 types of archaeological items. Historian Rakhil Das, the director of Calcutta Museum requested to donate these archeological object to Calcutta Museum. Ramprashad Chandra opposed the proposal. These collected antiques were kept in the residence of Raja Pramadanath Ray house, Choudhury Mahendra Kumar house who later on got married in Dighapatia Zamindar family. Some of them were also kept in Rajshahi Public Library. (For detail see Kazi Muhammad Meser, op.cit. (Vol. I) pp.138-139.

107. Kazi Muhammad Meser, op.cit., Vol.2, p.180.
108. Samar Pal, op.cit. p.19, Governor Lumiyé Dundus Earl of Ronalsay is said to have laid the foundation stone on 27th November, 1919.
109. Saifudding Choudhury, op.cit. p.9;
110. Loc. cit.
111. S.M.Abdul Latif, *Kumar Sarat Kumar ...*, pp.104, 105.
112. Samar Pal. op.cit. Vol.2, p.20.
113. S.M.Abdul Latif, *Kumar Sarat Kumar ...*, p.116
114. A. K. M. Hassanuzzaman, et.el. op.cit. p23.
115. Kazi Muhammad Meser, op.cit. vol.1, p.126.
116. Loc. cit.
117. Kazi Muhammad Meser,op.cit. p.131.
118. Samar Pal, op.cit., Vol.2, p.20.
119. M. A. Hamid, op.cit. p. 281.

Minor Zamindars of Rajshahi

The importance of the Zamindars and the historical role they played in India: socio-political and economic life is well known to the students of India's colonial past. No other social group apart from the Zamindars received so much attention by the British during the colonial period. In the above pages attempt has been made to study various aspects of a few leading Zamindars of Rajshahi. The present one is intended to carve out a comprehensive history of the minor Zamindars who enjoyed and maintained a considerable degree of importance during the period of our study. They kept their dignity intact and rose in prominence in the given circumstances. Although some stray references have already been made with reference to the presentation of the previous chapters it seems to be essential to underline an exhaustive history of the minor Zamindars who played no less a significant role side by side of their contemporaries. It may be noted that the minor Zamindars of Rajshahi had also some contribution to dominate and determine the history and society of Rajshahi during the colonial period.

Here eleven Zamindar families in total have been located and they were (1) Tahirpur Zamindar Family; (2) Chougram Zamindar Family; (3) Darikushi Zamindar Family; (4) Karachmaria Zamindar Family, (5) Joari Bishi Zamindar Family; (6) Dubalhati Zamindar Family; (7) Kashimpur Zamindar Family; (8) Raybahadur Zamindar Family of Kashimpur; (9) Balihar Zamindar Family; (10) Bagchi Zamindar family of Chamari (11) Choudhury Zamindar Family of Natore and so on.

Tahirpur Zamindar Family

Tahirpur is a renowned village of Baghmara Police Station under Rajshahi district. A river named *Barahi* flows beside the village on the west. There is a

village market at present. It is situated at a distance of 08 Kilometers east of the Natore-Santahar Railway line, 10 kilometres west of Madhnagar Railway Station and about 20 kilometres north of Puthia of Natore-Rajshahi highway. A metalled road leads from Puthia upto Tahirpur. On the eastern side of the *Barahi* river, there is a village named *Ramrama* which was the head quarters of Tahirpur Raj family. On the western side of the *Ramrama* village and *Barahi* River, the Rajbari (the palace of the Zamindars) of Tahirpur is situated. Recently, a college has been set up there.

The earliest founder of Tahirpur Raj family was a *Shandilya* Pandit (Hindu scholar) *Bhatta Narayan* or *Narayan Bhatta*. He was the son of Kshitish of *Shandilya* group.¹ According to the *Varendrakul* calendar, Bhatta Narayan was the first progenitor of the Varendra Brahmins. The 27th descendant of this family was Kamdev Bhatta². This Raj family from Bhatta Narayan to the immediate predecessor of Kamdev Bhatta used to cultivate religious philosophy and literature over the ages. But Kamdev Bhatta was a man of different nature. In spite of studying religious philosophy, he became skilled in shooting arrow, using sword and wrestling. Later he united a number of youths and made them expert in physical exercise and weapon training. Kamdev Bhatta had the credit of organising a group of youths and in course of time these youths became a fighting force in the region.³

At that time, a man named Tahir Khan ruled that region. After his name the *Pargana* was named as Tahirpur. Utilizing the weakness of Tahir Khan, Kamdev Bhatta attacked him with his organized force and after defeating him occupied the whole of Tahirpur region⁴. He got the approval of the then reigning emperor of Delhi.

The son of Kamdev Bhatta named Vijay Laskar was a man of very strong personality. When conflict grew between the Emperors of Delhi and the rebellious

rulers of Bengal, Vijay Laskar took the side of the emperor of Delhi. Because of the role played by Vijay Laskar the emperor was so happy that he conferred him the title of "Laskar" and gave him the region Laskarpur⁵. Laskarpur Pargana was extended to present Rajshahi, Murshidabad and a major part of Kustia⁶. After getting the Zamindari, Vijay Laskar built a palatial building at Ramrama. Vijay Laskar (sometime used Narayan) had three sons named Bhupnarayan, Hridaynarayan and Harinarayan⁷. For unknown reasons, the Zamindari was succeeded by Hridaynarayan in place of Bhupnarayan. Pusparaksha of Puthia Raj family had close ties with the youngest brother. He lived at Ramrama with Hridaynarayan. Hridaynarayan was childless, so he was not very much attentive to the worldly affairs. He cherished the desire to go to Venaras dham. Before going to Venaras, he gave away much of his possessed property to Pusparaksha⁸. After the death of Hridaynarayan, his younger brother Harinarayan got the Zamindari of Tahirpur. Harinarayan was a Zamindar and a man of outstanding personality. He himself was devoted to learning and encouraged others for it. When he died he left his son Raja Kansanarayan and daughter Karunamayee. Kansanarayan was a famous Zamindar⁹. During his time hindu religion was boosted up and this was due to his personal interest in this matter. His qualities of heart made him famous and his desire to perform "*Mahayanja*" (i.e., the great sacrifice) was opposed by the courtiers and the *Pandits*. They opined that he was a feudal Raja and as such he was not eligible to perform the "*Mahayanja*". Besides in the *Kaliyug* it was not suitable for a Raja to perform "horse sacrifice" or "cow sacrifice" in the name of *Mahayanja*. They advised him that it was better for him to perform "Durga Puja" introduced by Ranchandra of the Ramayana fame. He listened to the Pandits and arranged "Durga Puja" gorgeously. The present festival of Durga Puja in Bengal is largely due to his credit. Raja Kansanarayan spent almost Rs. 09 Lakh for the arrangement and grand festivities. At present estimation it stands not less than six hundred crores of rupees¹⁰. Raja Kansanarayan was a sincere Brahmin. At that time the economic condition of the

aristocrat Brahmins was deteriorating. He spent a lot of money to save those Brahmins. Besides, many historians anticipate that he had spent so huge amount of money in arranging "The Durga Puja" in order to show his grandeur. His system of celebrating 'The Durga Puja' is still in vogue. The sister of Kansanarayan, Karunamayee was married to Sri Krisna Bhaduri, the founder member of Chougram Raj family of Singra police station under Natore district. Sri Krisna Bhaduri was a Varendra Brahmin of "*Kashyapa*" community (*gotra*).¹¹

To reduce the gap between the castes of "*kap*" and "*Shrotriya*", he married off his two daughters to the son of Jibai Dhabar Sing and Sadananda, the son of Daor Majhi respectively. They were "*kap*" Brahmins. During his time the dignity of "*kap*" caste increased¹².

After the death of Kansanarayan, his son Udaynarayan took the charge of Zamindari of Tahirpur. The son of Udaynarayan was Indrajit. Indrajit was married to the daughter of Mallick Janaki Ballav, the Raja of 'Susanga'¹³. Raja Indrajit ran his Zamindari for a long time in peace and order. For the cooperation rendered to the Dewan Tadarmal of Akbar's revenue department, in survey work, Indrajit got 52 Parganas. These were under the '*Lakheraj*' land. Indrajit did not have to pay any revenue for this. At that time the annual revenue of Tahirpur was 5,05825 *Dam*¹⁴. The area of Tahirpur paragana was 129.60 square miles¹⁵.

Indrajit had two sons named Chandranarayan and Suryanarayan. Suryanarayan had conflict with the Mughai Emperor Shah Suja. As the aftermath of the conflict, Suryanarayan was attacked by the force of Shah Suja. Many members of the Zamindar family were killed by the army of Shah Suja. Only one of his sons Lakshminarayan was alive. Meanwhile, a change of power took place in Delhi and emperor Aurangazeb came to power. After assuming power, Aurangazeb reinstated Lakshminarayan as the Zamindar of Tahirpur. Aurangazeb awarded him the title

“Raja”¹⁶. But he did not recognise him as before. He was given the Zamindari on condition of paying annual revenue. Raja Laxminarayan shifted the office of Zamindari from Ramrama to Tahirpur and built a new royal palace there. The house of the Raja of Tahirpur was completed after 1660¹⁷.

Raja Lakshminarayan was married to the daughter of Raghunandan, the founder of Natore Raj family¹⁸. Owing to this marriage the relation between Natore and Tahirpur Raj family was created. Lakshminarayan was the father of four sons namely, Kandarpanarayan, Mahendranarayan, Rupendranarayan and Bhupendranarayan. After the death of Bhupendranarayan and Kandarpanarayan, the charge of Zamindari went over to Mahendranarayan and Rupendranarayan. According to the Will of their father, Rupendranarayan became the owner of 10 *ana* and Mahendranarayan got 06 *ana* property¹⁹.

10 *ana* Zamindar Family of Tahirpur

Rupendranarayan was the partners of 10 *ana* Zamindari of Tahirpur. He was a cunning and intelligent Zamindar. He had good relation with the Raja of Natore. During the reign of Murshidkuli Khan Rupendranarayan saved his Zamindari with the help of the Raja of Natore. Ranendranarayan was the son of Rupendranarayan and he took the charge of Zamindari after the death of his father. Ranendranarayan had no son, he had two daughters. At the time of his death, he left his wife Rani Sankari and daughters of his second wife and they were Uma Sundari and Durga Sundari²⁰. Before his death, Ranendranarayan made a Will of his property in the name of his wife Rani Sankari. Rani Sankari did not accept any adopted child²¹. After the death of Rani Sankari, her grandson became the owner of the whole property. Uma Sundari was married to Anandiram Ray and Durgasundari was married to Vinodram Ray. Anandiram and Vinodram were two brothers. They belonged to Chougram Raj Family²². Umasundari and Anandiram died childless.

Durgasundari and Vinodram gave birth to a child in 1782. The name of that son was Bireswar Ray. After the death of Ranisankari, Bireswar Ray became the owner of 10 *ana* of Tahirpur Zamindari. As Bireswar was minor, he made a permanent settlement with his father in 1793. Vinadram Ray was an intelligent but cunning man. This Vinadram Ray was the cleverest man of Tahirpur Raj family²³. He was an aristocrat of Bhaduri generation related to “*Nirabilpati*”. After the death of his father Vinadram Ray, Bireswar Ray became the owner of the property. He was very extravagant. Bireswar Ray was an ill-tempered Zamindar. By his instigation, the houses of the Tamali a (betel-leave sailor)²⁴ were looted. With the instruction of Bireswar, his subjects burned down the documents and other things of the Tamli. This incident speaks about the lawlessness of the region. When the government became active in this regard, a case was filed. Raja Bireswar had to undergo imprisonment for a day as the result of the case. More than a lakh Rupees was spent and he suffered from agony owing to the case. He had to plunge into debt for this case. As a result, he died leaving a huge amount of loan. Bireswar Ray had two sons name Chandrashekharesawar Ray and Maheswar Ray. Chandrashekharesawar Ray was an intelligent and pious. He was a sincere Brahmin and a successful Zamindar. He improved his Zamindari greatly and repaid the loans of his father. He set up a “*Sehabrtata*” (i.e., vow of social service) at Rajshahi in 1854. He introduced the system of daily feeding, monthly payment and donation on the day of Poush Sankranti. He paid a monthly payment of 04 *ana* to one Rupee to the poor. For the running of this “*Sehabrtata*” Raja Chandrashekharesawar Ray used to spent Rupees 1200 annually²⁵. He was very modest, and a man of loving personality in terms of the royal business. The two brothers Chandrashekharesawar Ray and Maheswar Ray were very friendly. Before his death Chandrashekharesawar Ray gave away half of his property to his younger brother Maheswar. Though Chandrashekharesawar Ray had no formal title as a ‘Raja’, his subjects used to address him as “*Raja*”.

He was a person who was interested in education. He also spent money for the spread of education. His interest in this matter is proved by his initiative to establish a school at Tahirpur. He allotted a monthly payment of Rupees 60 and 12 *ana* for the three schools of Dinajpur, Malda and Tahirpur²⁶. He also set up a charitable dispensary at Tahirpur for the health care of his subjects. He introduced the “*RathJatra*” and “*Mela*”. Raja Chandrashekhresawar Ray took three wives. As the first two wives did not beget any child, he married Rani Saudamani in 1856. She begot Shashishekhhar Ray in 1860. Chandrashekhresawar Ray died in 1865.

Shashi Shekaressawar was only five years old when his father died. According to the prevailing rule, the property/Zamindari went under the control of Court of Wards. In 1881 at the age of 21, he got the charge of Zamindari²⁷.

Shashi Shekhareswar was a clever zamindar and a man of practical sense. Most of the farmers of Bengal during that time were unhappy because of the policy of the Govt. of India. Shashi Shekhareswar realized the situation and took initiative to improve the condition by various policies and courses of action. First of all he set up an ‘Agricultural Association’ at Tahirpur. He arranged the supply of modern agricultural tools and high yielding varieties of seeds to the farmers. He edited two magazines on agriculture and industry. He wrote article on the management of agriculture and livestocks. He also published booklets on sericulture and a number of lyrics/short verses. The British Government awarded him the title “Raja” (the Raja) in 1889. He got the title “*Raja Bahadur*” in 1896²⁸. He was the fourth Chairman of the Rajshahi Association established in 1872.²⁹

Raja Shashi Shekhareswar was nominated as the non-official member of ‘Hemp Drug Commission’. While submitting the report of the Commission, he opined against the drugs like *ganja* (hemp). He protested against the running of such drug business under the patronage of the government³⁰.

Shashi Shekhareswar was a representative of the Bengal Legislative Council in favour of Rajshahi Division from 1898 – 1900. He was also the representative of Rajshahi District Board³¹. He had also a credit to become the president of the association named “*Bharat Dharma Mahamilan*”³²

He was a learned, wise, religious, benevolent and above all and noble hearted Zamindar. In 1889 he established ‘*Zamindar Panchayet Sabha*’³³. At the later part of his Zamindari, he did not stay at Tahirpur, he used to come occasionally. He came to Tahirpur in Aswin of 1345 B.S., i.e., 1938, for the last time. Perhaps he came to Tahirpur to attend the celebration of his family tradition the ‘*Durgapuja*’.

Shashi Shekhareswar died in 1928. He left three sons and two daughters. The sons were Shiv Shekareswar, Shanti Shekareswar and Shakti Shekareswar³⁴. The two daughters of Shashi Shekareswar were married to *Janardan Bati* of Khazura, Natore³⁵.

Shashi Shekareswar fell into financial crisis in his later life. He sold out a few *Moujas* (fragments of land) to Enaetullah Sardar of the village Kundals of Tarash Police Station under the district of Serajganj³⁶.

After the death of Shashi Shekareswar, his eldest son Shiv Shekhareswar got the zamindari. He was a tyrant zamindar. He was full of power and torture. Five kilometers west of Tahirpur, he looted Tamolis house and a murder took place³⁷. He demolished the houses of Zadu Mandal of Shukpara with his elephants. Later Zadu Mandal was killed. By the indication of oppressor Shivshekhar another murder was committed at Kashibari 10 kilometers away from Tahirpur³⁸.

He left the country within 24 hours by an order of the Government owing to his oppression. Later the charge of Zamindari fell on Shantishekhar. For the

dissatisfaction of the subjects and political situation he also left the country in 1930 A.D. transferring the charge on his official. Afterwards, there was no control of the Raj family on the subjects. The situation deteriorated after the division of the country in 1947. Later, after the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Acts was passed in 1951 and the Tahirpur Zamindari came into an end.

Though Tahirpur Zamindari continued for a long time, it could not contribute remarkably to the development of the subjects and that of Rajshahi like the other Zamindari of Rajshahi region. In spite of one or two proofs of development, the picture of torture and oppression was serious. Their stories of good deeds and torture will remain as a matter of discussion in the history.

Chaugram Zamindar Family

Chaugram Zamindari was situated on 04 kilometers north of Singra police station of Natore district and west of Natore-Bogra highway. On the west and north of Chaugram Rajbari (the house of the Raja) there are vast areas of Chalanbeel. Chaugram is situated at the center of Chalanbeel. A canal named '*Jangal*' dug by Rani Bhabani runs beside Chaugram via Pakuria to the Bhavanipur of Bogra district.

The founder person of Chaugram Raj family was Rasik Ray. He belonged to *Bhaduri* family of *Kasyap* caste. The ancestor of *Bhaduri* family was *Sukhen*. There was relation between the ancestor of Tahirpur Raj family and Chaugram Raj family. Karunamayee the sister of Raja Kansanarayan of Tahirpur, Karunamayee was married to Sri Krishna *Bhaduri*, the ancestor of Chaugram Raj family.³⁹ He was a Barendra Brahmin of *Kasyap* caste. He was the descendant of Pandit Udayanacharyya. The fifth descendant of Jagananda Ray was Rasik Ray⁴⁰. Rasik Ray had two sons. The name of the eldest son was Krishnakanta Ray and that of the youngest one was Ramkanta. As the Raja of Natore Ramjiban had no son, he decided

to take an adopted son. At last the Maharaja took the youngest son of Rasik Ray of Chaugram as his adopted son. This adopted son was the second Raja of Natore who was known as Ramkanta⁴¹.

For allowing the son of Rasik Ray as an adopted son to be taken by Ramjiban, Rasik Ray was given the parganas of Chaugram of Natore and Islamabad of Rangpur as gifts⁴².

The elder son of Rasik Ray, Krishnakanrta Ray built a *Rajbari* (palace) at Chaugram⁴³. the son of Krishnakanta was Rudrakanta. As Rudrakanta had no son, he took Rahinikanta as the adopted son. Again as Rahinikanta had no son, he took Ramanikanta, the son of aristocrat Kripanath Moitra of Nirabilpati as an adopted son.⁴⁴

As a Raja, Raja Rahinikanta became a famous zamindar. He established himself as a Raja of Chaugram. He set up many statues at Chaugram *Rajbari* (Palace). Rahinikanta married a Brahmin lady named Saudamini of the village Khajura. She was the grand daughter of Raghunath of Joari Bishi family. As she did not have any son, he again married the daughter of a Brahmin, named Baradasundari of Brikutsa of Natore district. The elder daughter of Rahinikanta had no son. She lost her husband at a tender age. The younger daughter of Rahinikanta became a widow with a daughter at the age of 17⁴⁵.

After the death of Rahinikanta, the Zamindari went under the charge of Court of Wards. Ramanikanta, the son of Rahinikanta took the zamindari when he became adult. He passed B.A. from Calcutta University⁴⁶. After getting zamindari, he set up a junior English School at Chaugram which became a High School later on. Many students were enrolled there and established themselves. He was a frugal zamindar and showed a lot of excellencies in his administration. During his tenure

the income of the zamindari increased a lot. He bought zamindari in Khalispur under Nadia district and Dakshin Shahbazpur in Barisal district and increased the area of his zamindari⁴⁷. He donated Rupees 500 for the establishment of Resham (silk) school there⁴⁸. Ramanikanta married a daughter of Krishnapur Zamindar family. He had three sons and daughters but all died in infancy. When his wife died he married a Brahmin lady named Brajabala Devi of Puthia. Three sons and three daughters were born to her. The daughters are Induprava, Motiprava and Mayaprava and the three sons were Rajeskanta, Rabindrakanta and Ramendrakanta⁴⁹. Ramanikanta bought a land at Landdown Road in Calcutta and built a house there the number of which was 44/2 Landsdown Road where he resided permanently. On the suburbs of Calcutta he bought a vast area of land for farming. Many talented students of Rajshahi studied in Calcutta living in this house. After completing education many of them established themselves in life. It is noteworthy that the owner of Calcutta Chemical Company named Birendranath Moitra was the relative of Kripanath Moitra, from the paternal side of Ramanikanta.

Outside his zamindari, Ramanikanta had interest in business and trade. He was the first Chairman of Hindustan Life Insurance Company. He was again the Director of Hindustan Bank⁵⁰. When the bank went into liquidation, he incurred a great financial loss. He set up Building Construction Company together with Brajakishore Ray Choudhury of Gouripur Zamindari (Mymensingh) in the name of "Ray Choudhury"⁵¹. Through this Company he constructed many buildings in south Calcutta. He bought a beautiful lodge at Darjeeling. During the tenure of Ramanikanta, the area of Chaugram Zamindari was 29,487 acres or 4607 square miles. Ramanikanta died in 1945 at the age of 80⁵².

Rajeskanta the eldest son of Ramanikanta, married Manju Devi, the daughter of the zamindar of *Kalipur* under Mymensingh district. Rabindrakanta and

Ramendrakanta married Shanti Devi and Usha Devi respectively, the daughter of Jatindranath Lahiri, the Zamindar of Naldanga of Rangpur. His first daughter Induprabha was married to Bimalendu Ray, the zamindar of Balihar of Naogaon. The second daughter was married to Haridas Chandra Lahiri, the zamindar of Naldanga of Rangpur district. The third daughter was married to Dr Dijendranath Bagchi.

His second and third sons had no child. After the death of his second son, he gave Islamabad and Shahbazpur parganas to the younger one of the living two sons and gave Khalispur pargana to Ramendrakanta⁵³.

Nirmala, the first daughter of Rajeshkanta, was married to Bibhuti Bhusan Ray, the zamindar of Rajshahi. Nirmal Ray died leaving two sons and a daughter. The younger daughter Nandita was married to Devnath Chatterjee, the eldest son of Barrister Nirmal Chatterjee. Nandita gave birth to a son and a daughter⁵⁴.

Chaugram High School still bears the testimony of their zamindari. Many meritorious students studied here and established in their career after wards. With the promulgation of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act was passed in 1951, this zamindari came to an end.

Darikushi Zamindar Family

On the eastern border of Rajshahi district (Natore) and on the west of Pabna district, is situated the Darikushi village. It is said that in ancient time a river flowed through the village. At present it has been dried up. A branch of the Padma named Baral is now flowing two miles away from the village. It is situated 22 miles away from Natore town and 09 miles away from Baraigram Police Station⁵⁵.

A person named Rajkishore Sanyal was the founder of this zamindar family. This zamindari was established during the later part of the 18th century⁵⁶. Rajkishore

Sanyal is said to have been a milkman by profession. For the maintenance of his cows, he got some land from the Raja of Natore. He became the owner of huge wealth and property within a short time. After having a lot of money, he occupied the property of the *Tamali* with his muscle-might⁵⁷. After getting the title of zamindar he took the title of '*Adhikari*' instead of 'Sanyal'. Rajkishore had two sons named Rajendra and Harendra⁵⁸. The wife of Harendra was Bhubanmoyee and the wife of Rajendra was Sarnamayee. They had no children. After the death of the two brothers both the wives took adopted sons. The name of the son of Swarnamayee was named Surendranarayan Adhikari and that of Bhubanmayee was Shivendranarayan. When these wives separated, two *Tarafs* (divisions) were created. The wife of Shibendranaryan was Kamalkamini who gave birth a child but died in infancy. A daughter named Kalisundari Devi became the heir of the property. Kalisundari was married to Surendranarayan Sanyal of Majhgram near Natore.

Surendranarayan had two sons named Bhupendranarayan and Narendranarayan. Bhupendranarayan had two sons and three daughters and Narendranarayan had also the same number of sons and daughters. Their maternal grandfather's house and father in law's houses were in Calcutta. That is why they spent most of their time in Calcutta. Bhupendranarayan who was also known as Malik Babu had two sons named Jatindranarayan and Haranchandra and the names of Naren Babu were Gupendranarayan and Upendranarayan. The elder brother Gupendranarayan took the job under the Nawab of Murshidabad and the younger brother alias Chuni Babu looked after the Zamindari with Bhupendranarayan Adhikari. As both of his sons lived in Calcutta, Bhupendranarayan gave all his property to his nephew Upendranarayan through a Will⁵⁹. Bhupendranarayan used to drink much. As the consequence of excessive drinking, he was attacked with a serious disease in his later life. He died on 16 Shrabvan of 1369 B.S. (i.e., 1962 A.D.) in the village Darikushi⁶⁰. He was burnt to ashes at Zonail burning yard.

These zamindars were very enthusiastic towards religion. There was a Shivmandir in the house of Zamindar. This Shivmandir was built in the later part of the 18th century. There was also a Kalibari in the neighbouring village under their zamindari. In this eight-roofed tin made Kali mandir festivities went on for seven days in the month of Bhadra. The Kali statue had wheels under it. Music, songs, etc gave people much enjoyment⁶¹.

Among the Zamindars of this family, Bhupendranarayan was a benevolent Zamindar. He got excavated many tanks including Bahari Pukur, Rani Pukur, Khirki Pukur, Jyathaimar Pukur and Rangmahal Pukur.

After the death of Bhupendranarayan, Upendranarayan sold out his land and went to Murshidabad⁶². Among the zamindars of Rajshahi, this zamindari was not so big. Their contribution is also not so remarkable to mention. But their activities and policies were matters of awe to the people of that time. They did not hesitate to materialize their aims and objectives by muscle power. Their conflict with the Bishi Family of Joari is an example of such policy. With the passing of the Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1951 passed the Zamindari of this zamindar family was also abolished.

Karchmaria Zamindar Family

Another zamindari was established in the village Karachmaria, 3 or 4 miles north-west of Chaugram. The founder of this zamindari was Nimai Chand Sarkar. The father of Nimai Chand lived in the village Chattardighi. He became the owner of some land by doing the business of taking mortgage of land and that of usury. He possessed landed property by the sanad (certificate of grant of land) offered by Rani Bhabani and Raja Ramkrishna⁶³.

After the death of his father, Nimai Chand Sarkar came to Karachmaria with his family members and started living there⁶⁴. He made huge wealth and property

within a very short time. To make his house secured, he ordered digging canals on all sides and built his house in its centre. At that time the village Karachmaria was under the possession of Ray family of Kalyannagar of Natore. The Ray family sold out their landed property experiencing frequent robbery and lawlessness everywhere. Nimai Chand Sarkar bought those pieces of land⁶⁵. With the possession of Zamindari, his influence and power naturally increased. He got some *Debattar* land and the statues of Gopinath from a *Kayestha* family of village Pratisar near Karachmaria. Leaving his son Ramkumar, Nimai Chand Sarkar died in 1850 A.D.⁶⁶

Ramkumar Sarkar got the Zamindari after his father's death. With the effort of Ramkumar his zamindari extended far and near. Ramkumar had two wives. As his first wife did not give birth to any child, at his father's request he got the second one and she was named as Krishnamayee. Ramkumar became a father of three sons and a daughter by his wife. The sons were Rajkumar, Nandakumar and Harakumar and the daughter was Harisundari⁶⁷. Leaving his wife and sons and daughters Ramkumar Sarkar died in 1857.⁶⁸

Rajkumar was the eldest among the sons of Ramkumar. He was a very brilliant student. Rajkumar began his education in Rajshahi town. He passed the Entrance Examination in 1857. Afterwards he got himself admitted into Bahrapur College (Murshidabad) for higher education⁶⁹. For the sudden death of his father he could not go ahead with his college education. He passed F.A. and was awarded for his excellent result in Mathematics. He had to go back to his village to look after the zamindari and then and thus another phase of his life started. Since he was a mere boy, the neighbouring zamindars took advantage of the situation and thus Rajkumar had no other alternative but to live in his native village Permanently. He developed his Zamindari and increased its name and fame. He was a modest and proficient Zamindar.

He built a palace-like residence in Rajshahi town. The members of his family used to lived there⁷⁰. While staying in Rajshahi, he had connection with many social welfare organizations. He was the Secretary of Rajshahi Association. He had a great contribution to the establishment of Rajshahi College. He was a Patron of Rajshahi Dharmasabha. He edited and published a monthly magazine entitled "Rajshahi Bashi" and the cost of its printing was being borne by him. On the beginning of the Twentieth century, he formed a political association named "Rajshahi People's Association".⁷¹

He had great intimacy with Pramathnath Ray, the Raja of Dighapatia. He served as the manager of the Dighapatia Raj Estate for a long time. He gave up this managership in 1899 at the age of 60⁷².

He was a Zamindar who had great thirst for knowledge. During the recess hours between the works of Zamindari, he spent time reading books. When high ranking Englishmen went to their country (i.e., Britain), they used to sell books to him. He bought those books and built a big library in his house⁷³. He set up a primary school in his own village and ran the administration of the school. He also set up a charitable dispensary at Karachmaria in order to take care of his subjects. He married Harisundari of the village Malanchi of Pabna district. Rajkumar was the father of seven sons and three daughters⁷⁴. Rajkumar Sarkar died on 18 July 1914 at the age of 74 years.⁷⁵

The most noted one among the sons of Rajkumar was his fifth son Jadunath Sarkar. Jadunath Sarkar was born at the village Karachmaria under Singra Police Station of Rajshahi district (Now Natore) on 10 December 1870 A.D.⁷⁶ He began his education at home. Then he read at the primary school set up by his father for two years. He was admitted into Rajshahi Collegiate School at the age of eight. After studying for some days there, he went to Calcutta for further studies. After

studying there for two years, he again came back to Rajshahi and re-admitted to Collegiate School. In 1887 he passed his Entrance Examination from Collegiate School and came 4th in the merit list. After passing the Entrance Examination, he got himself admitted into Rajshahi College in F.A. Class. He passed F.A. from Rajshahi College in 1889.⁷⁷

After his F.A. he got admission in B.A. in Calcutta Presidency College. He stayed at Eden Hindu Hostel. He studied there very attentively. Under the supervision of the students of the Hostel, a quarterly magazine called "*Suhrid*" was published. Jadunath wrote an article entitled "*The Fall of Tipu Sultan*" and it was published in that magazine. In fact he started writing as an author while staying at that Hindu Hostel. He passed his B.A. with honours in English and History standing second in 1891.⁷⁸ He stood second in both the subjects and received monthly scholarship worth Rs. 50.00.⁷⁹

He passed his M.A. in English from that college (Presidency College, Calcutta) and he stood first Class first in the examination. He obtained the marks 90, 92, 95 in three papers respectively in that examination.⁸⁰ After passing his M.A. in 1893, he joined as a professor of English in Calcutta Ripan College. He served there as a lecturer of English for three years. Later he served as a lecturer of English literature in Metropolitan College, Calcutta. For his outstanding result in M.A. the Government awarded him scholarship for higher studies in London. He could not avail himself of the scholarship for personal reasons. Afterwards, he received '*Premchand Raychand Scholarship*' in 1897 and got a gold medal and a award worth Rs.10,000.00. In spite of being a student of English, he started research on History. He published his thesis named "*India of Aurangzeb*"(Topography, Statistics and Roads) in the form of a book in 1901. It had drawn the attention of the scholars of that time.⁸¹

He joined Provincial Education Service in 1898 and was appointed a lecturer of Presidency College. He was transferred from Presidency College to Patna in 1899. He returned to Presidency College again in 1901 and after some years again went to Patna. He was appointed a lecturer of History in Kashi University in 1917.⁸² After serving there for two years he was transferred to Katak in 1919 and again returned to Patna and went to retirement from there in 1926.⁸³

After retirement he was appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University in 1926.⁸⁴ He served there for two years. Being satisfied with his performance the British Government awarded him with the title of C. I. E. in 1926 and Knight title in 1929. He became the fellow of Calcutta Asiatic Society in 1939. Besides, he was also elected members of the Great Britain and Irish Asiatic Society⁸⁵.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar earned name and fame not only in his service life but also in his research in History. His remarkable books are '*History of Aurangzeb*' (in five volumes), '*Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign*', '*Mughal Administration*', '*India Through the Ages*', '*Shivaji and His Times*', '*Fall of the Mughal Empire*' (in four volumes) and '*History of Bengal*', Volume II.

In personal life Jadunath Sarkar was a father of ten children. Of them three died in infancy and seven remained alive.⁸⁶ Studying History throughout his life, this noted person died in 19th may 1958.^{86(a)} He became famous as a Historian but no evidence of fame is found as a Zamindar.

The Zamindari of Karachmaria was small. But this Zamindari became more famous than the other Zamindari of Rajshahi as regards its patronage to education and culture. This Zamindari was abolished with passing of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1951.

Joari Bishi Zamindar Family

The village Joari stands in the Boraigram Police Station of Natore. The river Baral flows beside the village. Brahmins of Varendra and Vedic groups lived in this village⁸⁷. The village had a privilege become native place of many scholars was one of such a family.

The Bishi Raj family traces its origin to a person named Pipariya Ojha (Upadhyay), a man belonging to *Sandilya gotra* of the Brahmins who is said to have started his career in the court of Mughal emperor Akbar as a scholar and judge of Hindu law.⁸⁸ He was a renowned scholar of Hindu Shastras (religious laws and customs). It is said that his previous residence was at Agra. Emperor Akbar gave him the village Haribati and he came to live at Paridingi. For the service of the guests, Akbar gave him *parganas* of Hulikhali, Ziasindh, Khanda, Sindur, Kusumbi, Kaligaon, and Tegachi and a lot of Brahmattar land located in and around Pubna and Rajshahi. After being the owner of this huge property, this Pipariya Ojha constructed buildings, temples, sanskrit schools and guest houses at large. Many water resources were also dug to meet up the water scarcity of the area. Akbar gave Ozha blue stones from Agra which were set up at the front of the wall⁸⁹.

Satkari was the son of Pipiria Ojha. Harapria was the son of Satkari. Jadunath was the son of Harapria and Durgadas was the son of Jadunath. Durgadas had two sons named Ramhari and Gangahari. Both of them lived in Paraidingi the living place of their ancestors. Gangahari had a good connection with the Mughal Govt. There was a criminal court at Chapila under Gurudaspur Police Station At that time Chapila was an affluent village. Talpe Chapila or *Taraf Chapila* was an important area of administration during the reign of Murshidkuli Khan. Then its area was 389.84 square miles and 95 estates were under its jurisdiction. It was one of the 48 *parganas* of Rajshahi⁹⁰. At the favour of the Emperor of Delhi, Gangahari became the chief official of the *Chapila's* Criminal Court. While doing the job at Chapila,

he married a daughter of the Majumdar family of Joari. The father in law of Gangahari had no son. So after the death of his father in law, Gangahari became the owner of his whole property⁹¹.

When Gangahari died, his wife and sons went to Paraidingi, their native place. The brother of Gangahari was, Ramhari who lived in Paridingi usurped the whole property. Being deprived of the property, his nephews came back to Joari with their mother finding no other way. Thus wife of Gangahari had no alternative but to establish herself at her paternal property and lived at Joari permanently⁹².

Joari Bishi Zamindar family came into being from the Gangahari Bishi. The sons of Gangahari could not develop this Zamindar family very much. From the time of Darpanarayan, the great grandson of Gangahari, Darpanarayan the Zamindari of Joari Bishi Raj family came into prominence. He got the *beel* on the north of Joari and the property of Chakbhavani from Rani Sarbani of Satail⁹³.

Many researchers guess that as the family members of the Bishi Raj family were Brahmins, they might have got some property as donation from Rani Bhavani of Natore and bought Sonabaju Pargana at Rupees 32,000. Later they sold out 12 *ana* (75%) of the property to the Choudhuries of Dulai and Tantiband. The Bishi family of Joari seems to have originated from such a background.⁹⁴

Darpanarayan had three sons named Bhabani, Hariprasad and Balram. Bhabani died at a tender age without leaving any son. As a result the rest two brothers—Hariprasad and Balram became the owner of the whole property. From the time of Hariprasad and Balram, the Zamindari started flourishing.⁹⁵

After the death of Darpanarayan, the property was divided between the two brothers—Hariprasad and Balram and they came to be known as *BaraTaraf* and *ChotaTaraf* respectively⁹⁶. The founder of *BaraTaraf* was Hariprasad. He was a

scholar of Sanskrit. He had much knowledge in astrology and religion⁹⁷. Hariprasad had four sons named Shibnath, Haru, Ramdhan and Budhram. The eldest son Shibnath was a scholar in Sanskrit art and culture and astrology. He was not only an educated person but also a person with worldly affairs. He administered his Zamindari with utmost success. The area of Zamindari extended during his time. Shibnath had two daughters named Mahamaya and Brahmamayee. The later was married to Sri Girish Chandra Moitra, an aristocratic family of the village Italy of Singra Police Station. He gave him the property of an annual profit of Rs. 300. The other daughter Mahamaya was married to Radhamohan Sanyal of Naogaon. The promising son of that dignified family was Perimohan Sanyal who was the son of Radhamohan and Mahamaya. He was a reputed and popular man and at present the Perimohan Library has been set up in Naogaon after his name. Shibnath gave Mahamaya a property the annual profit of which was Rupees 1000.00 at Govindapur Kangardaha.⁹⁸

Shibnath had three sons named Shambhunath, Kalinath and Kashinath. Shambhunath was an educated man. He was the manager of Shatkuthi of Wardson Company. He also served as a Dewan at Natore Raj estate for some time. He saved a lot of money by doing job and bought huge landed property with that money. He was a liberal and generous zamindar of his time. He always tried to develop his own village. He constructed many roads in the village at his own cost⁹⁹.

The second son of Shibnath was Kaliprasad who was childless. He had only daughter named Gaurmani who was married to Gaurmani Anandanath Choudhury, the Zamindar of Kasimpur. As dowry he gave his daughter a property the annual profit of which was Rs. 600.00.¹⁰⁰

The third son of Shibnath was Kashinath. He married off his daughter Sudhamayee to Bholanath Khan, the Zamindar of the village Khajura near Natore.¹⁰¹

As dowry he gave his daughter the Zamindari of the village Bamangaon the annual income of which was Rs. 1000.00.¹⁰²

Shambhunath had three sons named Jaynath, Maheschandra and Ishanchandra. Joynath was well-versed in Sanskrit and Persian languages. He wrote several books in Bengali which include '*DeviYuddha*', '*PadmaPuran*' etc. Among his hobbies were travelling and pilgrimage. He made some property by doing jobs. For the development of the Bishi Raj family, Jaynath had great contributions.¹⁰³

Maheschandra, the second son of Shambhunath, had a daughter named Kumudkamini and a son named Kamadachandra. The daughter Kumudkamini was married off to Rohinikanta of the Raj family of Balihar.¹⁰⁴

Ishanchandra was childless. Jaynath had three sons named Jadunath, Zadavchandra and Madhavchandra and a daughter named Saradasundari. She was married to Ananda Mohan Choudhury of Kasimpur of Naogaon district. Jadunath, the first son of Joynath, was childless. He had education in Bengali and Sanskrit. Very quiet-natured Zadav died before his marriage¹⁰⁵.

Zadav was the second son of Jaynath and he was a member of the then District Board. He was very helpful to others. With his endeavour a Govt. charitable hospital was set up at Joari.

Madhav Chandra had no son. He had only two daughters named Hemlata and Banalata. Hemlata was married to the son of Ray Jogendra Kishore Choudhury Bahadur of Ramgopalpur. Banalata was married to Raja Krishnasingh of Susanga¹⁰⁶.

The third son of Shibnath was Kashinath. The only son of Kashinath was Shashinath and Shashinath had his only son named Gyanadanath. He lived in Natore. He had two sons named Pramathnath and Upendranath¹⁰⁷.

The second son of Hariprasad was Haru or Gangaprasad. The son of Haru was Raghunath. Raghunath had two sons named Golaknath and Baikunthanath.

Golokndranath had a son named Vijaynath and two daughters named Saudamini and Kalimahini Devi. Saudamini was married to Rohinikanta, the Raja of Chaugram. The second daughter Kalimohini was married to Girish Acharya of Muktagacha of Mymensingh district¹⁰⁸.

The third son of Hariprasad was Ramdhan and the later's son was Krishnapati. Keshabnath was the son and Shakhisundari was the daughter of Krishnadhan. Keshabnath was a student of Rajshahi Zela School. While studying in Rajshahi, he was introduced to the then Judge Louis Jackson. Later Louis Jackson became the Justice of Calcutta High Court. He was given the charge of the appointment of *munsiff*. After passing B.L. in 1872. Keshabnath met Jackson at Calcutta and got appointment as a *munsiff*¹⁰⁹. He died after a short time. By his initiative an English School was set up at Joari. He had no son. So his wife Anandamayee took Nalininath as her adopted son. The daughter Shakhisundari was married to Ishanchandra Moitra of the village Italy under Singra Police Station. Krishnadhan gave Ishanchandra a property of an annual profit of Rs. 700.00.¹¹⁰

Nalininath, the son of Keshabnath, was a very strong man. Nalini Bishi was the first graduate of Rajshahi district¹¹¹. He had four sons. They were Pramathnath Bishi, Prafullanath Bishi, Dhirendranath and Hirendranath. He was associated with Congress politics. He suffered imprisonment even at the old age for the struggle for independence of India¹¹².

Birendranath and Hirendranath became residents of West Bengal for a long time. Pramathnath Bishi was the guide of modern Bangla literature. He was born at Joari in 1901. He started his student-life in the minor school of Joari. When he was nine years old he was sent to Shantinikatan with his brother to study there. His father was Nalininath Bishi. In 1919 he passed his matriculation from Shantinikatan as a private candidate¹¹³. Besides his own education, he got the charge to teach the

students from Rabindranath. He passed his Intermediate in 1927 and passed his B.A. from Rajshahi College¹¹⁴. He also got himself admitted for M.A. in English. But for the imprisonment of his father, he had to leave the Calcutta University. To look after the property he came back to Joari leaving Calcutta. But he did not give up education. In 1932 he appeared as a private candidate and stood first class first in Bangla in M.A.¹¹⁵ He joined as a Ramtanu Lahiri researcher in 1933 in Calcutta University¹¹⁶. He was associated to this work till 1936. He wrote "*Rabindra Kavya Prabaha*" while working as a researcher there. The edition of the book was printed from Calcutta University. In this time he worked as an Editor of 'Bangla Spelling Reformation Association'. He joined Ripon College as a Lecturer in Bangla in 1936. He was associated with this College for ten years stretching from 1936 to 1946¹¹⁷. He published some books of poems, novels, stories, prose, research work and criticism during his stay at Ripon College.

He worked as an Associate Editor of *Jugantar patrika* in 1944. He also worked as an Assistant Editor of *Ananda Bazar patrika* from 1946 to 1949¹¹⁸. In 1950 he joined as a professor of Bengali in Calcutta University. He was the Rabindra-Professor and Departmental Head of the Bengali Department from 1963 to 1966. He got retirement in 1971. After being retired he was appointed the Honourable Professor of University Grant Commission¹¹⁹.

He wrote many books. These include "*Joradighir Choudhury Paribar*", "*Chalanbeel*", "*Padma*", "*Keri Shaheber Munshi*", "*Napoleon*", "*Bangla Gadyer Padanka*", "*Desh Shatru*", "*Chapati O Padma*", "*Dynamite*", "*Michael Madhusudan*", "*Hansa Mithun*", "*Ashshkher Abhisap*", "*Gali O Galpa*", "*Mouchake Dhill*", "*Shrikanter Pancham Parba*", "*Shrikanter Sastha Parba*" etc.¹²⁰

He became famous as a critic and adroit analyst of Rabindra literature. He criticized 11 books written on Rabindranath. The books are – "*Rabindranather Chotogalpa*", "*Shilaidhahe Rabindranath*", "*Rabindra Kavya Prabaha*", "*Rabindra*

Bichitra”, “*Rabindra Natta Prabaha*”, “*Maharashtra and rabindranath*”, “*Rabindra Kabye Bastu Bichar*”, “*Purana Diner Katha*”, “*Shuvakankhi Rabindranath*”, “*Rabindranath O Shantinikatan*”, “*Rabindra Smarani*”, and “*Rabindra Sahitya Samalochona*”. For these books and academic exercises Pramathnath still remains as one of the leading figures in Bengali literature.¹²¹

Besides he wrote several books, which include “*GandhiJivan Bhassya*”, “*Jaharlal Neheru*”, “*Byakti O Byaktitya*”, “*Bangalee O Bangla Sahitya*”, “*Chitra Charitra*”, “*Bangla Manisha and Bangla Sahitya*”, “*Bangla Sahitte Naranari*” etc.¹²²

In recognition of his work he received many awards and titles. He got “*Padmashri*” in 1971 and “*PadmaBhusan*” in 1978. Besides, he also got Sarajini Gold Medal, Prafulla Kumar Memorial Award, Rabindra Award, Sharat Award, Vidyasagar Award, Jagarini Award etc. during his life time. The authorities of VishvaBharati University and RabindraBharati University awarded him the honourable title of D.Lit. ¹²³

In his personal life Pramathnath Bishi was a plain and simple man. He was not very caring to wealth and property as may be expected from any member of a Zamindar. He married Suruchi Devi, the daughter of a noted Advocate of Rajshahi named Sudarshan Chakravarty¹²⁴.

Pramathnath Bishi was the father of four children. Among the four children the eldest daughter named Ujjwala died a premature death. Among the surviving sons and daughters we come to know about Kanishka Bishi, Milinada Bishi and the daughter Chirassi Bishi. They have also proved their worth as the children of the great Late Pramathnath Bishi.¹²⁵ This noble hearted man died in 1985 at the age of 84.¹²⁶

Pramathnath Bishi contributed much to art and literature but he could not do anything remarkable in his Zamindari. He only stayed in his Zamindari at the time

of imprisonment of his father. He spent rest of the time outside his Zamindari (estate). It appears that he had no such affinity towards wealth and property.

Prafullanath Bishi another member of this family was a first class honorary Magistrate of Rajshahi and was the Estate Officer of Rajshahi University. He became famous by writing many stories. His books entitled "*Russ Valluk*" (Bear of Russia), "*Vagya Chakra*" (*Wheel of Fortune*), "*Haradhan Kahini*" (*The Story of Haradhan*) and "*Maran Kamad*" (*Pain of Death*) are worthy of mention.¹²⁷

Chhota Taraf of Bishi Zamindar Family

Balaram was the founder of the Chhota Taraf (smaller Partner) of Bishi Raj family. Balaram Bishi was a competent person. He got appointment as Dewan in Natore Raj estate owing to his own aptitude. He became the owner of huge wealth and property working there¹²⁸. He was the father of a son named Ratan Krishna and a daughter named Jaysundari. He arranged the marriage of his daughter with Bireswar Ray, the Raja of Tahirpur Raj family. He died before the marriage. After the death of his father, the son Ratan Krishna finished the unfinished work of his father¹²⁹. He started the work of building a Shiv Mandir but he could not finish it. Later his son finished the work of the Mandir (Temple).

Ratan Krishna had two sons named Dwarakanath and Chandranath. Dwarakanath died childless. For the death of Dwarakanath, Chandranath became the owner of the whole property. Ratan Krishna married off his daughter to the aristocratic family of *Nirabil Pati*.¹³⁰

Chandranath took two wives each of whom gave birth to one child. The first wife gave birth to Mahini and the second wife gave birth to Chandranath. The first wife died leaving the son. On the other hand the son of the second wife died in infancy. After the death of the first wife Chandranath wanted to make 'Will' in favour of the second wife at her instigation. Considering the situation Mohini sought

help of Yadav of *Bara Taraf*. Mohini recovered the property with the help of Yadav and Vijay Govinda Choudhury the Zamindar of Tantiband (Pabna).¹³¹ Chandranath had two daughters. The elder daughter was married to Pramada Govinda, the Zamindar of Tantiband of Pabna¹³².

Chandranath gave both his daughters property, the worth annual income of which was Rupees 1200. After the death of Chandranath his son Mohini became the owner of the whole property. He was very pious. He arranged various types of worship in his house. During the tenure of Mohini, he had conflict with the neighbouring Darikushi Zamindari. The Zamindari suffered a great loss. Finally Moukhara and Goalfa Parganas were slipped out.¹³³ Mohini Bishi had four sons named Saileshnath, Gyanendranath, Satyendranath and Himadrinath. The eldest son Saileshnath was a good writer. He wrote various books including "*Salome*" "*Bolshevichbad*", "*Chityakatha*" etc.¹³⁴ Saileshnath and Himadrinath were newly recognized lawyers. Satyendranath was a famous painter. He was the superintendent of Calcutta Art College.¹³⁵

Joari Bishi Raj family could not contribute remarkably in the field of Zamindari. What they actually did were setting up an English School and a Charitable dispensary at Joari and one or two temples for the people. Though this Raj family could not improve in running the Zamindaris, they earned name and fame throughout Bengal by virtue of their contributions in art and literature. The people of Natore still remember their achievements in the field mentioned above. As this was a small Zamindari, many members of this Zamindar family lost their interest in it and concentrated on service and business.

Like other Zamindaris of Bengal, this Zamindari also came to an end with the passing of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1951.

Dubal Hati Zamindar Family

The village Dubalhati is situated five miles away from Naogaon town. As the village stands in the middle of a *beel*, it looks like an island. A beautiful Zamindar house had been built up there for the need of the Rajas. It has about 60 *beels* surrounding the area. Most of the *beels* were included within the Zamindari of Dubalhati.¹³⁶

Among the Zamindars of Rajshahi the Zamindar of Dubalhati was the ancient one.¹³⁷ A salt trader of Shunri (a lower caste of Hindi Community) caste named Jagatram Ray was the founder of this Raj family. His original house was at Jageswarpur of Murshidabad district. With the aim of doing business in this region he came to a village named Kasba near Dubalhati and settled there¹³⁸. He got lease of these *beel* areas. Jagatram was the half-independent land lord of this marshy *beel* areas. Later during the Muslim rule, tax was demanded of that region. In place of money 22 Kahan *Koi fish* (a popular fish of Bengal) was paid as tax according to some historians¹³⁹. The Dubalhati Zamindari consisted of Barbakpur Pargana¹⁴⁰. Kalinath Chaudhury, a researcher of this region, mentions that there were 54 generations from Jagatram to Ghanadanath Ray Chaudhury.¹⁴¹ In fact we come across the founding person and these is a gap of 44 persons of this family.

We do not thus have any chronological history before Krishnaram Choudhury. Krishnaram and Raghuram were two brothers. Krishnaram was the elder and Raghuram was the younger¹⁴². The two brothers lived together in Kasba village for some time. When conflict grew between the two brothers, they divided their landed property. Probably for the difference of opinion, the two brothers settled in two different places. Krishnaram Choudhury got 09 *ana* and the younger brother Raghuram Ray Choudhury got 07 *ana* share of the property. Krishnaram Choudhury began to live at the village Mainamgram near Balihar with his property. The younger brother Raghuram Ray Choudhury started living at Dubalhati with his property.¹⁴³

It can be easily guessed that the house of Raja of Dubalhati was built by Raghuram Ray Choudhury and his posterity.

The elder brother Krisharam Ray had no son. After his death his widow wife took four adopted sons one after another. But it was an irony of fate that each of them died. As a result the widow became averse to this world and property. On the other hand, as she had no good relation with the younger brother of her husband, Raghuram Ray Choudhury, she had sold out her 08 *ana* property to the Zamindars of Damnas and Balihar¹⁴⁴. With the selling of the property, the Raj family of Krishnaram Ray Choudhury came to an end.

The posterity of Raghuram Ray Choudhury started living at Dublahati. After the death of Raghuram Ray Choudhury, his son Raghunath became the owner of the whole property. No development of Zamindari was observed during the reign of Raghunath. Before his death Raghunath made a Will (Heba) in which he authorized his wife Bidyadhari Chowdhurani to enjoy 02 *ana* of property and the right to sell it. After the death of Raghunath his son named Parameswar became the owner of the rest 14 *ana* property.¹⁴⁵

Parameswar Ray had two sons. The elder one was Shibnath and the younger one was Kashinath. Shibnath took the charge of the estate after the death of his father Parameswar. After the death of Shibnath his son Krishnanath became the owner of his paternal Zamindari. During the reign of Krishnanath Choudhury a permanent settlement was signed with Lord Cornwallis in 1793 and an Annual tax of Rs. 14495.00 and 08 *anas* was fixed.¹⁴⁶

The son of Krishnanath was Anandanath who was a childless father. Before his death he permitted his wife Rupmanijuri to take adopted son. After Anandanath's death the charge of running the Zamindari fell on Rupmanjuri., No evidence was found as to any new Zamindar had taken over the power before this. Rupmanjuri

ran the Zamindari as per expectation. The Zamindari developed much during the tenure of this Rani who showed her efficiency in it. During her time Chakkalidaspur, Raghunathpur and Mahal Dewanpur were including in her Zamindari.¹⁴⁷ In spite of being a female Zamindar, it can be said that she was a successful Zamindar.

Acting upon the last wish of her husband, Rupmanjuri took Haranath as her adopted son. When the mother-adopted son relationship was deteriorated, she filed a case in Rajshahi Court to cancel the adoption. But both the lower and higher courts favoured the legitimacy of Haranath.

While the case was running in the higher court, the mother became sick and wished to meet Haranath. Responding to his mother's call Haranath met his mother and in 1853 took over the charge of the Zamindari. After a short time the mother Rupmanjuri died.¹⁴⁸

After taking over the Zamindari, Haranath improved it much. From Jagatram to Haranath their Zamindari was confined only in the Rajshahi district. Haranath extended the Zamindari to Bogra, Sylhet, Dinajpur and Faridpur outside Rajshahi.¹⁴⁹

Though Haranath Ray Choudhury was not educated, he administered his Zamindari with much skill. In running the Zamindari he was assisted by his qualified adviser Babu Shashibushan Ray and her eldest wife.

With the extension of the Zamindari he did many philanthropic works for his subjects. For the spread of education he started a free Junior English School in his own house.¹⁵⁰ To upgrade Rajshahi Zela School to College he donated a property of annual income worth Rs. 5000.00 to the Government on 21 January 1873.¹⁵¹ The valuation of that property was about one lakh Rupees. For the construction of the Hindu Hostel of Rajshahi College, he donated Rs.1000.00. Besides, he donated another Rs.1000.00 for building the Hindu Hostel of Eden College of Calcutta. For

the publication of the oldest Hindu *Ranjika* magazine, he donated a printing press the cost of which was Rs.2000.00.¹⁵² For the entertainment of the guests, he spent selflessly. He opened a Guest House at Dublahati. If any guest stayed in the Guest House for more than a month, he was never instructed to leave the Guest House nor was he shown any negligence on behalf of the caretaker and attendents. In the famine of 1874 he arranged food for huge number of victims.¹⁵³

He constructed a road from his own purse worth Rs.2000.00 from Naogaon to Dublahati for the facility of the movement of his subjects. To build the Government Court House in Naogaon Town, he donated 36 bighas of land.¹⁵⁴

For the social development activities of Haranath, the British Government gave him the title of honour "*Raja*" in 1875 and "*Raja Bahadur*" in 1877.¹⁵⁵ One of the events of the time of Haranath was revolt rebellion of his subjects. For the increased rate of tax, abnormal increase of price of leased land, various types of oppression and physical torture, about 50 thousand subjects rebelled against Haranath under the leadership of Astan Mollah of Hasaigiri in 1883 and the ryots did not pay any tax for seven years. This peoples protest came to an end with the mediation of settlement officer and through the apology of the two Ranis.¹⁵⁶

He ran his Zamindari for about 38 years extending from 1853 to 1891. Before his death in 1891, he made a Will. He left behind two sons named Kumar Ghanadanath Ray Choudhury and Krinkarinath Ray Choudhury and two daughters. As both the sons were minor at that time, his two widow wives named Rani Shaymasundari Choudhurani and Rani Umasundari Choudhurani took over the charge of the administration of the Zamindari.¹⁵⁷

In the Will of Haranath, he mentioned that his elder son would get 08 Ana and the younger son would get six *ana* of the property. According to the prevailing tradition, the property was supposed to be vested with the Court of Wards as the

two sons were minor, but it was mentioned in the Will that during that time the two Ranis would look after the property. Thus, according to the Will, his wives looked after the Zamindari. In running the Zamindari, the faithful and experienced manager Babu Shashibushan Ray assisted them.¹⁵⁸

These Ranis also patronized various development activities. They built the building of "Price Charitable Hospital" of Naogaon and excavated a pond with *pucca ghat* near the Court of Naogaon. Besides, they also dug many ponds for the use of the subjects. They too spent a lot of money for religion and for the service of the guests.¹⁵⁹

When the sons reached adolescence, they divided the property according to the Will. Though the Zamindars of this Raj family conducted zamindari for a pretty long time, no evidence is found about any Zamindar of this Raj family who did anything for the development of their subjects except Haranath Ray Choudhury and his wives. It can be said without any doubt that in spite of mentioning the contribution for the subjects of Dublahati, the peasant protest had disgraced his reign. He did all these development work by increasing the rate of tax from the subjects to please the British Government. Like other regions of Bengal, this Zamindari was abolished after the passing of the "East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1951".

Kashimpur Choudhury Zamindar Family

Kashimpur is situated six miles south of Naogaon town beside the river Yamuna. It is three miles away from Raninagar Railway Station. During the reign of Emperor Akbar a Pathan Jaigirdar named Kashim Khan lived there. After his name the place was named Kashimpur. The Maharaja Mansigh cancelled the Jaagir of Kashim Khan and settled it to a Hindu Brahmin. This Brahmin was the founder

person of the Choudhury Raj family of Kashimpur¹⁶⁰. Gangananda Sanyal lived in the village named Upailsar of Rajshahi. He belonged to Dharadhar Raj family. He was an aristocrat of *Nirabil Pati*. Kashimpur Raj family started developing from the time of Gangananda Sanyal.¹⁶¹

Ganganada Sanyal had four sons named Shivram, Shitaram, Ramnarayan and Devidas¹⁶². The present Chowdhuries of Kashimpur are their posterity. Shivram got the abandoned property of Kashim Khan worth Rupees 3 lakhs. After getting this huge jagirdarship, Shivram Choudhury settled at Kashimpur and increased the area of Zamindari. Shivram had two wives. The first wife gave birth to two sons named Joy Krishna Ballav and Visnu ballav and the second wife had a son named Shayam Mohan. The sons of the first wife started living at Kashimpur and the son of the second wife built a residence at Hazrahati leaving Kashimpur.¹⁶³

Braja Ballav was the son of Krishna Ballav. The Raja of Natore named Ramjiban got the Zamindari during the tenure of Braja Ballav. For the influence of Raja Ramjiban in the Nawab Government, he grasped all the regions of Zamindari of Braja Ballav except Kashimpur¹⁶⁴. On the other hand the posterity of Visnu Ballav, the second son of Shivram left Kashimpur and began to live at Joari. Among the descendants of Gangananda Sanyal, the zamindar family of Rudrakanta Choudhury was famous. The son of Rudrakanta was Harakanta. He was a pious man. He led a very plain and simple life. For the study of the '*Mahabharata*' and '*Purana*' he spent a lot of money. He went on many pilgrimage. Saradakanta was the son of Harakanta. He was an educated person.

The sister of Raghunath Choudhury was married to Gadadhar Lahiri of Zhikra. The descendants of Gadadhar Lahiri constituted the Lahiri zamindar family of Kashimpur.¹⁶⁵

The Ray Bahadur Zamindar Family of Kashimpur

The daughter of Raghunath Choudhury of Kashimpur was married to an aristocrat Brahmin named Gadadhar Lahiri. His original residence was at the village named Zhikra of Naogaon district¹⁶⁶. Gadadhar Lahiri died shortly after the marriage for his being sick. After the death of Godadhar, the son of his first wife named Ramkishore Lahiri came to Kashimpur. Rudrakanta Choudhury married off her sister to Ramkishore Lahiri, the son of Gadadhar Lahiri and gave him some land to live beside the river of Kashimpur. Some villages under his Zamindari were also given to him on easy terms and conditions. Getting the landed property at Kashimpur, Ramkishore Lahiri built his residence there. He was the founder person of the Lahiri Zamindar family of Kashimpur¹⁶⁷.

Ramkishore Lahiri was the father of three sons named Kalikanta, Kashikanta and Kalisankar. Kalikanta had no son. The second son Kashikanta had two sons named Kamalkanta and Rajanikanta. Kalisankar had only one son named Girish Chandra¹⁶⁸.

The three sons of Ramkishore Lahiri lived in a joint family at Kashimpur. At that time Natore was the Head Quarters of Rajshahi districts. Kalikanta lived in Natore and was associated with legal profession at the Natore Court. He served for the Chowdhuries of Kashimpur, Zamindars of Dihi Chatni, Muktagacha and Chota Taraf of Natore. Afterwards in 1825, when the Head Office was transferred from Natore to Rajshahi, he also went to Rajshahi and built a beautiful residence there¹⁶⁹. Kalikanta earned a lot of money by doing his profession as a lawyer. With the savings he earned by the profession he could tactfully purchase some small Zamindari of the region. By employing his intelligence he bought property of having a profit of about Rs. 80,000.00.¹⁷⁰ He was an intelligent and talented person. He got two wives. The name of the first wife was Kashiswari and that of the second one was Mrinmoyee. But none of the wives begot any son.¹⁷¹

The second son of Ramkishore Lahiri was Kashikanta. His wife and elder son died in a very short gap of time. The second son of Kashikanta named Rajanikanta was alive.

The third son of Ramkishore Lahiri was Kalisankar whose only son Girishchandra remained alive. As Kalikanta had no son, he took Rajaninkanta, the son of Kashikanta as his adopted son and named him Sardakanta¹⁷². After the adoption, Kalikanta and his second wife Mrinmayee Devi did not like their nephew Girish. On the other hand, the first wife of Kalikanta, Kashishwari Devi was very affectionate to Girish. At the advice of Mrinmayee Devi, Kalikanta tried to deprive Girish of the property by any means. In spite of tremendous effort, Girish failed to get the property. At last he succeeded in getting monthly grant of Rs. 900.00 for his mother from the court.¹⁷³

Before death, Kalikanta expressed his desire to hand over his wealth and property and the charge of the estate to his adopted son Saradakanta. The first wife of Kalikanta, Kashisawri Devi went to Kashidham accepting the monthly payment and the second wife Mrinmayee Devi died. After the death of Kalikanta, the adopted son Saradakanta became the sole owner of the Zamindari.¹⁷⁴ After some days, Saradakanta died childless. He permitted his wife to keep an adopted son and handed over all his property to his wife. Before keeping any adopted child, the wife died within a year. At that time Kashisawri Devi, the first wife of Kalikanta was living at Kashidham. She became the owner of the whole property. As she was very old, she had no passion for the property. Just after receiving the news of the death of Saradakanta, Girish went to Kashiswari Devi at Kashidham. The old wife loved Girish from the beginning. So she agreed to give Girish all the property in exchange of the annual payment of Rupees 900.00 and other necessary expenditure. As a result, Girish became the owner of the movable and immovable property of Kalikanta and took over the charge of the Zamindari.¹⁷⁵

None was in charge of the Zamindari during the time extending from the death of the wife of Sarada to the time before Girish took over the charge of the Zamindari and taking advantage of the situation the bureaucratic officials became the real masters. The dishonest officials misappropriated much valuable movable property¹⁷⁶. As a result Girish had to take the charge of power with a very little movable property. In this miserable condition of Zamindari, Girish needed money and as such he was forced to borrow. He was a man of worldly knowledge. By employing his intelligence and tactics, he became free from loan in a short time. As a Zaminder he was successful. He did not collect tax at the displeasure of his ryots in any sense.¹⁷⁷

Being a Zamindar he always thought of the well being of his subjects. In 1867 when water entered Rajshahi breaking the embankment at Boalia, many people sustained a loss. To help these flood victims, he sent food and other necessary things. For rendering medical help to the poor people he set up a third class charitable dispensary in his own village Kashimpur in 1872 . Later on this dispensary was upgraded to a first class dispensary in 1882.¹⁷⁸ In 1872 he was nominated a member of Road Irrigation Committee of Rajshahi district. In the same year he was also nominated a member of the District School Committee¹⁷⁹. In 1873 he was proposed to be appointed as an Honorary Magistrate of Rajshahi but as his residence was away from Rajshahi he did not accept the proposal¹⁸⁰. In 1874 he proposed to the government to build a railway station by donating some land of his own Zamindari at Chatiangram under Adamdighi Police Station of Bogra district. The Indian Government accepted his proposal and let him know about it.¹⁸¹

He had great attention to the development of education. For the education of the people of his own locality he set up a middle English school in Kashimpur at his own cost in 1867.¹⁸² He bore the expenditure of feeding clothing books paper, pen of the outside students and the tuition fees of the poor students were paid from

his own Zamindari. This school was a renowned Middle English school. Later the school became a high school. In 1875. He gave money for constructing the academic building of Rajshahi Madrasha¹⁸³. To set up Bogra Zela School he himself donated money and collected fund in 1876. In 1881 he donated money and collected fund for the building of Hindu Hostel in Calcutta¹⁸⁴. He had remarkable contribution to the development of the Public Library of Rajshahi. Besides, by writing the biography of Sharatsundari, the Rani of Puthia, he became famous.

In 1882 he donated money for the improvement of the drainage system of Rampur-Boalia (Rajshahi) town. At that time Mr. L Hare was the Joint-Magistrate of Rajshahi.¹⁸⁵

For his virtues and contribution, the Hon'ble Governor Sir George Campbell honoured him by conferring on him the title of "Ray Bahadur". He was greatly honoured in the Varendra Brahmin society for his work. He married off his five daughters to the members of aristocrat families and gave away some parts of Zamindari for their sustenance.

He breathed his last leaving a son named Kedar Prasanna Lahiri and five daughters. After his father's death, Kedar took over the charge of Zamindaris. He was also an ideal Zamindar. He supplied food to many people during the rainy season and famine. He also earned the title of "*Ray Bahadur*" from the British Government for his deeds.

This family came into being through many ups and downs. The early Zamindars of this family did not take part in any remarkable development activities. During the tenure of Girishchandra Lahiri and his son Kedar Prasanno Lahiri, this family had contributed much to the development of the subjects. The people of Kashimpur still cherish the memory of their contribution with pride.

Like the other regions of Bengal this Zamindari was abolished with passing of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1951.

Balihar Zamindar Family

The village Balihar is situated 11 miles west of Naogaon town and one mile north of Naogaon-Rajshahi Highway. Now a metalled road leads to Balihar from this Highway. In ancient Kulajna book the name of Balihar is mentioned as “*kurmile*” or “*Kurkuri*” Kurmile village was famous village in “*Kul*” book¹⁸⁶. Balihar village is famous for pond and tanks there are about 60 ponds in the same village¹⁸⁷. The houses of the Rajas of Balihar *pargana* were built in this village.

A descendant of Dharadhar, a Brahmin of Batsa caste, named Bardhawan lived in this Kurmile or Balihar village. The father of Bardhawan named Laxmidhar lived in a village named Sanjibini. Later, Bardhawan went to his father’s house at Sanjibini. Laxmidhar had two descendants named Ananta and Ramnath. The posterity of this Anantanath founded the Zamindar family of Balihar.¹⁸⁸ The descendants of Ramnath established the Zamindari of ‘Ray Choudhury’ of Dinhata of Rangpur district (present Coochbehar, West Bengal).

The founder of Balihar Zamindar family was Nri Singh Chakravarty. He married in the Khan Zamindar family of Balihar. After his marriage he came to Balihar leaving his previous residence at Bikrampur of Dhaka district. He got some leased (*Taluk*) property from his father in law and increased its area. Afterwards, he got the title of “Sanyal”. The son of Nri Singh Sanyal was Gopal and the son of Gopal was Kamkanta Sanyal¹⁸⁹. Ramchandra Sanyal got the title of “Ray” for his personal achievement. The Royal title of Ray was preserved and followed by this Zamindar house for a long time.

After NriSingh Chakravarty (Ray) the fame and might of Balihar Zamindar family were increased by his grandsons. The son of NriSingh Ray was Gopal and

the eldest son of Gopal was Ramkanta Ramkanta had four sons named Krishnadas, Prankrishna, Ramram and Visnuram. Visnuram died a premature death and the living three sons contributed much for the consolidation of the Zamindar family¹⁹⁰.

The eldest Krishnadev, son of Gopal married the sister of Satyavati, the Zamindar of Bahirbandar of Rangpur with reference to the marriage the other two brothers Prankrishna and Ramram started serving under the Rani Satyavati. Within a short time they played a very important role in various administrative work of the estate¹⁹¹. The husband of Rani Satyavati, Raghunath Ray died in 1310 B.S. (i.e., 1903 A.D.) and Rani Satyavati took over the charge of Zamindari. By marrying the sister of Satyavati, Krishnadev got the Zamindari of Laxmanpur under Swaruppur Pargana¹⁹². Rani Sattavati administered a huge Zamindari from 1130 B.S. to 1189 B.S. i.e., 1723 to 1782 .¹⁹³. By serving under Rani Sattavati, Prankrsihna became the Head of the employees and Ramram was appointed Dewan. Being satisfied with work of the two brothers, the Rani gave them VitarBandar Pargana in their father's name¹⁹⁴.

Afterwards Prankrishna and Ramram became the owner of this property. Ramram got 09 *anas* and Prankrishna got 07 *anas* ¹⁹⁵. For the division of this property, the Balihar Zamindari was divided between the *Bara Taraf* and *Chhota Taraf*. The posterity of Ramram was known to be *Bara Taraf* and that of Prankrishna as *Chhota Taraf*.

The Zamindari of Ramram was awarded the title of "Ray Choudhury" in Bangla in 1229 B. S., i.e., 1822.¹⁹⁶ Later on, the Zamindars of this Raj family built their house in *Bhitar Bandar* of Rangpur and started living there leaving Balihar.

Prankrishna was the founder of 07 *ana* Raj family. Prankrisna had two sons named Ramchandra and Gyananath. After their father's death Ranchandra got the Zamindari¹⁹⁷. The next generation of this Ranchandra built a huge Zamindar house

at Balihar. The son of Ramchandra was Nilkantha. Rajendra Ray was the son of Nilkantha¹⁹⁸. Rajendra Ray had great contribution towards the increase of the Zamindari and fame of the *Chhota Taraf*. He married in the Natore royal family. His father in law was Ramkrishna who was the son of the famous Rani of Natore, Rani Bhavani¹⁹⁹. Kashishwari Devi was the wife of Rajendra Ray. After marrying Kashishwari Devi, Rajendra Ray got a lot of land as dowry²⁰⁰. the area of Balihar Zamindari increased from his time. Kashishwari gave birth to a son and a daughter. The son died in infancy. The daughter named Shiveswari was married to Kaliprasad Lahiri of the village called Khajura of Natore²⁰¹.

Rajendra Ray was a sharp and intelligent Zamindar. He had great fondness for religious rituals. To make the *Rath* festival ever memorable, he made a huge *Rath* made of brass. The *Rathajatra* started to be celebrated grandly every year from the time of Rajendra Ray²⁰². He installed a ten-hand statue of *Raj Rajeswari* in his royal house. He contributed not only to religion but also to administration increasing the area of Zamindari. Probably, Rajendra Ray took three wives. The name of his first wife is not known. The name of the second wife was Umamoyee and that of the third was Anandamayee. During the life time of the Raja, the second wife Umamoyee died. As a result after the death of Rajendra Ray, the charge of running estate fell upon the third wife Anandamayee²⁰³. Rani Anadamayee was an accomplished woman. He ran the estate with great reputation. Like other Zamindars of Balihar, she had keen interest in religions matter. During her time more than a lakh of Rupees were spent for the reading of “*Mahabharata*” inviting the noted *Purahits* (priests) from all over the country. She installed a stone-statue called ‘*AnadaKali*’ in her house. She arranged daily worship of this statue and gave away *Bhog* (food of puja). At the time of death, Rajendranarayan allowed his wife Anandamayee to keep an adopted son. Anandamayee took Shivprasad as her adopted son. Shivprasad took three wives²⁰⁴. Nothing is definitely known about the first

wife of Shivprasad Ray. The daughter of Trilochan Lahiri of Balihar named Harasundari Devi was his second wife. His third wife was Sushila Devi. Leaving his wives Shivprasad died. According to the wish of mother in law Anadamayee, Harasundari Devi took Raja Krishnendra Ray Bahadur as an adopted son in 1252 B.S., i.e., 1845.²⁰⁵ The other wife of Shivprasad Sushila Devi took Harendra Ray as her adopted son. For the untimely death of Harendra Ray, Krishnendra Ray became the owner of the whole property. Krishnendra was the son of Shivchandra Lahiri of Khajura village of Natore²⁰⁶. The name of the mother of Krishnendra Ray is not known. His father was an aristocrat Brahmin of *Nirabil Pati*. He was born in 1241 B.S., i.e., 1834. He passed his remarkable period of boyhood in this Khajura village. Rani Harasundari Devi of Balihar took him as an adopted son when he was 11 years old²⁰⁷.

Raja Krishnendra Ray was brought up in the Zamindar house of Balihar with great care. The grandmother Anandamayee Devi took great care of the education of Krishnendra Ray. He was educated by a house tutor. He got enough knowledge of Bengali literature in a short time. He was also well versed English, Persian and Sanskrit. Though he did not get education in a school, he started reading Bangla books and newspapers by dint of his knowledge and perseverance²⁰⁸. He became a man of knowledge with his own efforts.

Raja Krishnendra Ray had two wives. The name of his first wife was Shivsundari Devi and that of the second wife was Rani Ganesh Janani Devi. Krishnendra Ray took his first wife after the choice of his mother Harasundari Devi²⁰⁹. Shivsundari Devi had mixed complexion. She had projected teeth. As Shivsundari could not give birth to any son, he took a second wife. The father of the second wife Janani Devi lived in a village named Borai of Bogra. Ganesh Janani looked very fair and beautiful. Raja Krishnendra married her after his own choice, but this second wife also failed to give him any children. Afterwards, he took his

brother's son Sarabindu Ray (son of Jogendrachandra Ray) as his adopted son on 20 *Shraban*, 1293, i.e., 1886.²¹⁰

Raja Krishnendra Ray had a bright career all along life. Before he reached adolescent, his grandmother Anadnamayee looked after the Zamindari. After becoming adult, he took the charge of Zamindari at the age of 21 in 1854. During his time, the Zamindari improved much. In 1876 there were 08 Estates in Balihar Pargana and the total area of Zamindari was 18,013 acres²¹¹. Besides Balihar, his Zamindari was extended to *Demajani* of Bogra district.

He was a benevolent Zamindar. Though he himself did not receive any formal education, he set up a middle English School in his village for the education of his subjects. He bore all the expenses of this school. The students of this school were provided with paper, pen, ink without any cost. Raja Krishnendra Ray set up a primary school at Balihar in memory of his second wife Rani Ganesh Janani Devi after her death. With the assistance of his private Pandit, he ran a reading room (*Chatuspati*) at Balihar. Besides his own Zamindari, Raja Krishnendra Ray spent a lot of money for the spread of education. He donated money for Naogoan High School building, some reading rooms, Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi) College²¹². At the time of the founding of Rajshahi College in 1973 his contribution played a remarkable role. He did not only spent money for the building of the educational institutions but also came to be known as a person interested in education and writer of that time. He wrote about 10 books.²¹³ Originality is noticed in his writing. Clear Philosophy and awareness of life are found in each of his writing. Such a noble deed had been made possible for his sincere effort.

He contributed not only in education but also in religious rituals. Raja Krishnendra Ray installed a "*Kali Murti*" (statue of Kali) in 1296 B.S., i.e., 1889 and arranged its *bhog* (food) and daily service. Besides, the statues including the

statue of “RajRajeswari, Anandakali’ and others that were previously installed in the house, he managed to continue the prevailing custom of worshipping. The *Rath* fair that was introduced by his grandfather, had been continued for a month in a very grand way. The Raja arranged foods for the people who came to the fair. During the fair, *Jatra* parties from different parts of the country were invited to come to Balihar. The local people enjoyed much during the fair. The Raja himself loved to listen to the *Kabigans* (the songs of the poets)²¹⁴.

For the communication facility of his subjects, he constructed 10 miles long road from Balihar to Prasadpur. He dug many pond and tanks for the removal of the water scarcity of the people. He excavated two big tanks at Saraswatipur and Baidyapur. On the occasion of the observing the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, he excavated the tank of Saraswatipur in 1887. The rest house and cowshed of the Raja were established by the side of this tank. “*BaniPuja*” of the Raja was held at Baidyapur. While going to his father in law’s house to Prasadpur, he stayed there for 10 to 12 days. A fair was held on the north of the Saraswatipur Tank. There were arrangements of amusement such as dance, songs, *Jatra* (theatre) etc. There was also arrangement of *Durga Puja*. The Raja had two mango groves at Prasadpur and Balihar. Besides, he planted mango saplings beside the road of Saraswatipur²¹⁵.

He set up a hospital at Balihar in 1878. He bore all the expenditure of setting up and running of that charitable hospital. That hospital was under the charge of a native doctor. Later it was entrusted with the Assistant Surgeon.²¹⁶

Besides feeding the poor people in the famine of 1874, he donated money in the fund of the Government. For the development of Rajshahi, the Zamindars of Rajshahi formed an association named “Rajshahi Association”. He ornamented the Association as the second Chairman. For his social and reformatory works, the British Government awarded him with the title of “Raja” in 1880 and “Rajabahadur” in 1887.²¹⁷

Raja Krisnendra Ray was a benevolent Zamindar. In his personal life he was an open-natured person. He always inquired about the well being of his subjects' neighbors. When a neighbour fell sick, he took initiative for the treatment.

Hunting was one of his hobbies. Many high ranking officials went hunting with him riding on the back of elephants. He earned much reputation by hunting many tigers. He made a zoo in his own house. He used to keep beasts and birds of various species there.²¹⁸

His tenure was the golden chapter in the history of the Zamindars of Balihar. His tenure improved much in skilled administration, art and literature, religion and many other aspects. He ruled his Zamindari very competently for long forty four years. He was attacked by a fatal disease in his later life and died at 6 a.m. in 1898 A.D. His dead body was cremated on the bank of the river 'Karotoa' six miles north from Balihar.²¹⁹

After the death of Raja Krishnendra Ray in 1898 his adopted son Saradindu inherited his property. The first wife of Krinendra Ray named Shivsundari Devi took the charge of looking after Rajkumar Saradindu Ray. On the other hand, the second wife of the Raja, Rani Ganesh Janani took the daughter of her sister named Kusumkamini as the adopted child.²²⁰

Rani Ganesh Janani wished to get her daughter Kusumkamini married to Rajkumar Saradindu Ray. The eldest Rani opposed the marriage. The mother of Krishnendra Ray also didn't support the marriage negotiations. However, afterwards Kusumkamini was married to Saradindu Ray. The marriage ceremony was completed on the 3rd *Falgun* of 1299 B.S., i.e., 1892 spending a lot of money in a very majestic manner.²²¹

For his physical illness, Rajkumar Saradindu Ray could not run the administration of his Zamindari very efficiently. As a result Kusumkamini Devi

administered the Zamindari. In 1328 B.S. Kusumkumari Saradindu Ray died. Prince Saradindu Ray donated Rs. 6000.00 for the development of Rajshahi College.²²²

After the death of Saradindu Ray, his son Rajkumar Bimalendu Ray took over the Zamindari. He passed his B.A. from Presidency College of Calcutta. He increased the income of the Zamindari. It is not known whether he did any philanthropic activities for his subjects. Kumar Bimalendu Ray was the last Zamindar of his royal Raj family.²²³ After the partition of the country he went to India and died there. After passing the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1951 and the Zamindari came to an end.

Bagchi Zamindar family of Chamari

Chamari was a famous village of Singra Police Station under Natore Sub-Division (Presently District). This village was situated beside the road of Nalbata-Bil-Dohar, 11 miles east from Natore town. There were a High School and a Post Office. The village was divided into two parts – Uttarpara and Dakshinpara. On the west of the Dakshinpara were Kaibartapara and Sutarpara (carpenter). Besides a number of Muslims lived there. The Bagchi Zamindar family lived in the Uttarpara.

No evidence is found as to when and how this Chamari Bagchi zamindar family rose into prominence. The founder of Bagchi Zamindar family was KaliKrishna. He was the father of six children named Madhusudan, Nilkanta, Bhupendranarayan, Satischandra, Jatindranarayan and Gyanendra Mohan²²⁴.

Madhusudan Bagchi's elder son was Gopendra Krishna Bagchi and the younger one was Jagadish Bagchi. Gopendra Krishna Bagchi was a highly educated person. He passed Entrance Exam from Natore Maharaja School and Intermediate from Rajshahi College with distinction. Afterwards, he went to Calcutta for higher education and studied M.A. and Law in Presidency College and passed with

distinction.²²⁵ After the completion of education, he started pleading in Bogra Court. But when this profession could not please him, he gave it up. He concentrated on business. He bought motor launch and introduced service from Bhangura to Shahzadpur. He failed in his business as he had little knowledge about business. But he did not give up the hope of business. For the manufacturing of boats, he took lease of one and a half Bighas of land by setting up a factory at Tiljola. An Engineer named Mr C E Kleghorn of R.V. Rada Company provided him with required assistance²²⁶. He brought many books from abroad and gathered a lot of knowledge. He faced loss at the very beginning of this business. This time he did not get disheartened and continued his business. Within a short time fortune smiled on Gopendra. After the ensuing of the second World War, the military authority ordered him a big supply. As a result he gained much profit in his business within a short time.²²⁷ He first introduced motor launch service from Kanning to Gosava. When a Launch Association was formed in the Sundarbans regions, he became the Chairman of the Association.

In his personal life he was fond of travelling. When he felt monotony in his work, he set out for traveling in the Sundarbans regions and hunted there. For traveling in the Sundarban regions, the roads, ways and canals and rivers of Sundarbans became familiar to him. He submitted a plan of the development of the Sundarbans regions to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal. For the sudden death of Dr Bidhan Ray, the plan was not implemented.²²⁸

In spite of being born in the Zamindar family, no evidence has been found that he ever did anything in running of the Zamindari. He was more attentive to business than to Zamindari.

Jagadish Chandra Bagchi, the younger son of Madhusudan Bagchi, was a successful man. He was an Engineer in his personal life. He served in many places

of India after he had passed Engineering from Jadavpur Engineering College. Outside India, he also served in Burma. He was the Chief Engineer of Orissa Cement Factory. For the deterioration of health, he went to retirement. In 1946 he opened a launch service from Gurudaspur to Lalore. In his business career Jagadish Bagchi met many rich businessmen. Dalmia, the famous industrialist of India was one of them.²²⁹

As Jagadish Chandra Bagchi had no son, he took Shyamakanta, the younger son of his elder brother, as his adopted son. Shayamkanta Babu was a Marine Engineer. He worked in a foreign Shipping Company.

The elder son of Gopen Babu, Rishikesh Bagchi was a meritorious student. He passed his Engineering from Jadavpur and afterwards went to London for higher education. He became expert in automobile and boat manufacturing in London. Coming back home, he devoted himself to his father's business and set up a large factory near Shivpur Botanical Garden.²³⁰

The third son of KaliKrishna Bagchi was Bhupendranath Bagchi (Bhupendranarayan). He was an amateur Zamindar. The fight of "Bulbul" (a kind of bird) was one of his hobbies. He used to invite the Zamindars and businessmen of Sherpur of Bogra for enjoying "Bulbul" fight²³¹. In the house of Bhupendranath at Kashidham, "Bulbul" was tamed. The house was known as "the House of Bulbul". He established a Theatre Party at Kashidham named "Bandhab Samity".²³²

Bhupendranath Bagchi died at an early age leaving two minor boys named Ramendranath Bagchi and Shivendranath Bagchi. After his death his sons were looked after by his other brothers.

The eldest son of Bhupendranath Bagchi named Ramendranath Bagchi was an active and brave man. Unlike other Zamindars, he did not stay at Calcutta, he stayed at Chamari most of the time. He was the Chairman of Chamari Union Board

for some time. He set up an M E School and a health center in his own village Chamari²³³. He also introduced a launch service.

He was an amateur Zamindar. Like his ancestors, he had hobby for hunting. He was very careful for the family. When his younger brother died, he looked after the whole family with outmost care during his life time. He passed the last part of his life at Calcutta and died there.

The house-god of Bagchi family was 'Sri Sri Gopal Narayan'. Besides regular worship of 'Gopal Narayan', the other pujas like *Dol*, Durga Puja, Basanti Puja etc. were celebrated in an impressive way. Drama was staged on the occasion of the Puja. Local people were entertained watching the drama. They had also interest in games and sports. They had a football team of their own. Santishekhari of Bagchi family was a noted player of that time²³⁴.

Though the Bagchi family ran the Zamindari, they did not do much for the benefit of the common people. We do not get any evidence about their activities in Zamindari.

This Zamindari was abolished for the passing of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1951 Zamindari became end.

Choudhury Zamindar Family of Natore

The ancestors of Choudhury Zamindar family of Natore were the inhabitants of Afghanistan Amanullak Khan, the founder of this Zamindar family came to Bardawan with his son Azam Khan in the 1st half of the 18th century. Later on Mohammad Zaman Khan of this family came to Nature being the *Nazir* of the Criminal Court of Natore. By doing the job, Zaman Khan became the owner of a huge property²³⁵. After the death of Zaman Khan, his son Dost Mahammad Khan

became the owner of his deposited wealth. Getting the deposited money of his father Dost Mahammad bought the Zamindari of Kalam, Piprul and Kholabaria of Rajshahi district (Presently Natore district).²³⁶ He was polite and frugal. In a short time he came to be known as a reputed Zamindar. He got the title “Choudhury” by the English Govt. in 1787. Dost Mahammad Khan laid the foundation of the Choudhury House of Natore²³⁷. He married the daughter of the caretaker (mutawalli) of the Waqf Estate of Bagha²³⁸. After the death of Dost Mahammad Khan, his eldest son Mahammad Ali Khan became the heir of this estate. Mahammad Ali Khan had two son named Rahid Ali Khan and Ershad Ali Khan. After the death of their father, Rashid Ali Khan became the owner of the estate. He set up a secondary school named Rashid Anglo Persian School at Natore in 1862²³⁹. After Rashid Ali Kahn, Ershad Ali Khan became the owner of the estate. After the death of their father, Rashid Ali Khan looked after the education of his younger brother Ershad Ali Khan. In those days of 19th century (Later part of 19th century) the interest of the Muslims increased to learn English side by side with Arabic and Persian. For the awareness of his brother, Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury learnt English. He was the Chairman of Natore Municipality in 1891. As he was associated with Natore Municipality for a long time, he contributed much to the development of Natore town²⁴⁰. When Head Quarters was shifted from Natore to Rampura Boalia (Present Rajshahi) for the breakout of malaria and dengue, he expressed his grievance. Along with the running of the Zamindari, he was also involved in politics.²⁴¹

He carried out the responsibility of Chairman of the reception committee of the 1st session of Muslim Education Association in 1903 held in Rajshahi.

Muslim League was founded in 1906 and when its branch was opened in Natore, Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury became its Chairman²⁴². He was elected a Member of the Bengal Management Conference as a Muslim representative of

Natore after 1919. He held the post for a long time. He had great contribution towards the awakening of the Muslims. He was elected a Member of Rajshahi Zela Board in 1926. Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury was known as a very polite and a generous Zamindar.

There was a branch of 'Anjumane Islamia' at Natore and it has been recorded in the correspondences of the same dated 9th June, 1900.^{242,43} Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury was associated with this organization. Syed Ameer Ali proposed to abolish Madrasha Education to replace it with English School in "All India Education Conference held in 1899". Muhammedan Literary Society opposed the proposal and distributed questionnaires to survey public opinion. Ershad Ali Khan supported the proposal of Muhammedan Literary Society and sent a letter to Abdur Rahman the secretary of the society.²⁴³ The wife of Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury died in 1921. After his wife's death he went to Calcutta and lived in the house of his Barrister son Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury, a barister, at House No. 60 of Lower Circular Road, Calcutta. In 1928, Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury died in this house. According to his previous instruction he was buried in the family graveyard of *Pirshaheb* (religious saint) at Midnapur²⁴⁴.

After the death of Ershad Ali Khan Choudhury, his only son Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury became the owner of his Zamindari. He was born in 1878. Her mother's name was Machirunnesa Khanam. Her father had Zamindari at Shahzadpur²⁴⁵. Being the only daughter of a Zamindar, she became the sole owner of the paternal property. As a result, his vast Zamindari was united with the Zamindari of Natore.

Ashraf Ali was a meritorious student from his childhood. There was Zamindari of Khan Choudhury in Rajshahi. To look after the Zamindari, there was a *Kachari Bari* (court) at the center of the town. He read in Rajshahi Collegiate School for some time staying in that house. There was a pond in front of the house²⁴⁶. (At

present the house and the pond have been sold out by the next generation. The buyers demolished the house and filled up the pond.) Later his father sent him to Calcutta for study. There he carried on his studies living in the house of his cousin sister and passed his Entrance and F.A. Examination. His cousin sister was the daughter in law of Nawab Abdul Latif. In 1886 A.D. only at the age of 18, he married a daughter of a Zamindar of Salar of Murshidabad according as per his father's wish. After three years, his wife died without having a child. Afterwards, he married the younger sister of his wife in 1902 as his father wished for²⁴⁷. In 1909, he went to London to study 'Bar at law' leaving his second wife under his father's care. He returned to the country in 1912 after being a Barrister and got the certificate to join Calcutta High Court²⁴⁸.

Along with the running of the Zamindari, the Choudhury family got involved in politics. The father of Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury was a Member of the Bengal Management Conference²⁴⁹. In 1928, Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury was elected a member of Bengal Management Conference from Natore. In 1937, he was elected a member of Bengal Legislative Council as a candidate of Muslim League. He was also elected the Deputy Speaker of Legislative Council.

The son of Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury was Ahmed Ali Khan Choudhury. Ahmed Ali Khan Choudhury joined Indian Army and was commissioned afterwards. In 1941 he died falling on an accident while playing Polo at Ambala. Ashraf Khan broke down at the death of his son. He died at 11 P.M. on 08 December in 1941, when he was the Deputy Speaker of Bengal Legislative of Assembly. He was buried in the family graveyard of *Pir Shaheb* at Midnapur (West-Bengal)²⁵⁰.

Among the noted sons of the Choudhury Zamindar family of Natore, the name of Abdus Sattar Khan Choudhury is specially known to the people of Natore. Abdus Sattar Khan was elected a member of the *Jatia Sangsad* (National Parliament) of

Bangladesh²⁵¹. The Choudhury family was associated with many development work of Natore. The people of this area still remember the contribution of the Choudhury family in the development of Natore as well as backward regions of the country. The old house of the choudhuries still bears the testimony of the past glory of the Choudhury family. For the multiple division of the property and for service and business many members of the family are living outside Natore.

The Zamindari of this family was abolished by the passing of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenant Act 1951.

The findings of the above study coverage to support the contention presented in the title of the Chapter, Captioned, Minor Zamindars of Rajshahi an important due to the fact that this efforts reveal some important issues which have not been highlighted so far. The average size of their estates, magnitude of the activities and the liability they maintained are the indicators how the respective Zamindars could perform their responsibilities in the prevailing economic and socio-political life of Bengal. Though many Zamindars were wealthy and rich many of them were highly cultured and patron of learning. But these minor or smaller Zamindars of Rajshahi failed to control on the family and also the timely need to took after the Zamindaries perfectly. The persistent problem of and ever increasing confrontation with the Positish precipitated the crises within the Zamindaris and ultimately the promulgation of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act was the final touch to bring about the complete collapse of these Zamindaris along with the big Zamindars of Rajshahi.

Notes and references

1. Samar Pal, *Taherpur Rajvamsa*, Natore, 1990, (Henceforth *Tahirpur...*) p. 3.
2. *Varendrer Raja* - an article by Md. Mahbubur Rahman in *Varendra Ancheler Itihas*, (ed.) by Saifuddin Choudhury, et.al. Rajshahi, 1998, (Henceforth *Varendrer*), p. 756
3. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur* p. 10.
4. Loc cit.
5. Surendranath Bhattacharya, *The Tahirpur Raj Family (A Short Sketch)*, Calcutta, 1915, p. 2.
6. Differences of opinion is noticed regarding the settlement of lease of Lashkarpur Pargana. Samar Pal has mentioned that the settlement of Lashkarpur pargana was made with the Zamindar of Tahirpur. (Samar Pal, *Tahirpur* p. 15); Bimala Charan Moitra is of the opinion that the aforesaid settlement was made with the Raj family of Puthia. It may be assumed that the settlement was made with the Rajas of Puthia because the house of the Raja of Puthia is situated at Lashkarpur pargana (Bimala Charan Moitra, *Puthia Rajbangsha*, Calcutta, 1357 B.S. p. 14).
7. Kalinath Chudhury has mentioned Udayanarayan as the son of Vijaynarayan (Kalinath Choudhury, *Rajshir Sangkshipta Itihas*, Calcutta, 1308 B.S. p. 112).
8. Bimala Charan Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 14.
9. Muhammad Abdus Samad, *Suborna Diner Bibarna Smriti*, Rajshahi, 1987, p. 111; Many historians mentioned Kansanarayan as Raja Ganesh. But infact Raja Kansanarayan and Raja Ganesh of Tahirpur Raj famiy were not the same person. Kansanarayan of Tahirpur appeared about 100 years after the tenure of Raja Ganesh.
10. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*, p. 33.
11. Samar Pal *Tahirpur*, p.34; Rajshik Ray who was the founder of Chougram Zamindar family he was the 5 descendent of Jagananda Ray.
12. 'Kap' and 'Shashrio'. There is a division of the Hind Cast system.
13. Dharmanda Maha Bharati, *A Short History of Brahmin Rajas and Maharajas in Ancient and Modern Bengal*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 85.

14. 8 Damri = 1 Dam, 40 Dam = 1 Rupees.
15. Samar pal, *Tahirpur* ... , p. 36.
16. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*..... p. 38.
17. Samar pal, *Tahirpur* p. 39
18. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit* p. 331.
19. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur* , p.40; Md. Mahabubur Rahman.*Varendrer Raja*...., p. 758.
20. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*....., p. 40.
21. She might have taken an adopted son if she desired. Rani Sankari did not agree to take an adopted son because no adopted son had been taken in the Tahirpur Raj family previously:
22. Samar Pal. *Tahirpur*, pp. 40-41.
23. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 119
24. Betel leaf sailor was called Tamuli. (for detail see, Samar Pal *Taherpur*... p. 42; Kalinath Choudhury. *op.cit.* p.119).
25. Md. Mahababur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja*, p. 759; Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*, p. 44. W.W.Hunter. *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol.viii, Delhi (Reprint), 1974, pp. 118-121.
26. Samar Pal. *Tahirpur*....., pp. 45-46.
27. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*...., p. 48.
28. *Sasisakhoreshor Ray* an article by Md. Mahabubar Rahman in *Rajshahi Pratibha* (ed.) by Dr. Saifuddin Choudhury et.el. *Rajshahi* 2000, p. 244.
29. *Satabdir Ayitijabahi Shanghaton* : *Rajshahi Association* an article by S.M.Abdul Latif in *Rajshahi Association Sahitta Patrika*, (ed.) by Tasikul Islam. *Rajshahi*, 1987, p. 15; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 342.
30. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*....., p. 41.

31. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur.....*, p. 49.
32. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*, p. 50
33. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur* , p. 49; It was the object of the Zamindar panchayct Sava (a council consisting of five or more members) to settle the dispute between Zamindars, to give legal advice to the Zamindars regarding rules and regulations and to increase income by imporving agriculture. But this council failed to gain effective result.
34. Md. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja.....*, p. 759.
35. Sri Bimal Prasad Ray, et el. *Natorer Kotha O Kahini*, Calcutta, 1981, p. 129.
36. M. A.Hamid, *Chalan Beeler Itikatha*, Pabna, 1967, p. 310.
37. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur.....*, p. 52.
38. Samar pal, *Tahirpur*, p. 53.
39. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur*, p. 34.
40. Samar Pal, *Tahirpur.....* p. 34; The three brothers named Subuddhi, Keshaband and Jagananda were born of Vaduri family of Kashyapa tribe. These three brothers were nephews of kansanarayan and later generation of Udayanacharya; Jogananda Ray has two great grand sons named panchu Ray and Vuban Ray. Of them Panchu Ray's son Rasik Ray was the founder of chougram Rajfamily.
41. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 239
42. A.K.Moitra, *A Short History of Natore Raj Family*, Natore, 1912, p. 5.
43. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 239.
44. Loc. cit.
45. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* pp. 176-77
46. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 239.
47. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el, *op. cit.* p. 117.
48. Kazi Muhammad Messer, *Rajshahir Itihas*, vol.1, Bogra, 1965, p.127.

49. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 177.
50. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 178.
50. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 178.
51. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* p. 177.
52. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol.2, Natore, 1985, p. 38.
53. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 178.
54. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 179.
55. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* p. 138.
56. Loc cit: According to many historians father and brother of Ramkishore established the Zamindari.
57. M.A.Hamid. *op. cit.* p. 304.
58. Bimal prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 138; But M. A. Hamid written one son named Rajkishore Adhikari; (M.A. Hamid, *op. cit.* p. 304.)
59. M. A. Hamid, *op. cit.* p. 304.
60. Loc. cit.
61. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el, *op. cit.* p. 138.
62. M. A. Hamid, *op. cit.* p. 305.
63. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* p. 171.
64. Loc. cit; A terrible robbery was committed in the house of Manikchand Sarker, the progenitor o Karachmaria Sarker family, a male child of Manikchand Sarker and a servent were killed, Manikchand Sarker was seriously wounded, he was brought to Kansat of Nawabganj district and died there. After this robbery, Nimaichand Sarker, the eldest son of Manikchand Sarker gave his three brothers the property of Chhatardighi. He settled at karachmari as with his wife and children.
65. *Rajkumar Sarker*, an article by Md. Mahabubur Rahman in *Rajshahi Prabha* (ed.) by Saifudding Choudhury et.el, Rajshahi 2000, p. 243.

66. Loc. cit.
67. *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, an article by Mahabubur Rahman in *Natorer Gourob* (ed.) by Moksurdur Rahman, Natore, 1989, p. 77.
68. Loc. cit.
69. Bimal prasad Ray, et el, *op. cit.* p. 172.
70. Mahabubur Rahman, *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, p. 78.
71. Loc. cit.
72. Mahabubur Rahman, *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, pp.77-78.
73. Mahabubur Rahman, *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, p. 78.
74. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* pp.172-173; son and daughter was stated below. Kumudnath. Susila Devi, Sukumari Devi, Jadunath, Bijaynath, Surobala Devi, Anidinath, Birendranath.
75. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 78.
76. Aniruddha Ray, *Jadunath Sarkar*, Calcutta, 1999. p.9
- 76(a). Mahabubar Rahman, *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, p.76, Bimal Prasad, et.el., *op.cit.*, p.173.
77. A.K.Hasanuzzaman, et.el, *Aytijhye Rajshahi College Sharwakgrantha*, Rajshahi, 2001, p. 428; he was placed in 10th position in that examination.
78. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el, *op.cit.* p.176; At that time a student could take more than one subject as his honours subject.
79. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 249.
80. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. p. 173.
81. Mahabubur Rahman, *Jadunath Jiban Katha*, p.80. for detail see, Moni Bagchi, *Acharyya Jagannath O Sadhana*, Calcutta, 1975, p.66. also, Aniruddha Ray, *op.cit.*, p.10
82. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op.cit.* pp. 173-74.

83. Bimal Prasad Ray, *op.cit.* p.174.
84. A.K.M.Hesanuzzaman, et.el. *op.cit.* p. 428.
85. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p.174.
86. Loc cit; Name of the sons and daughters are as shown, Abonindranath, Munindranath, Sattendranath, Priyangbada, Depika, Shudha, Rama.
- 86 (a). Anirudha Ray, *op.cit.* p.14.
87. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 59.
88. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 249.
89. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 250; Bimal prasad Ray, et el, *op.cit.* p.130.
90. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, (vol. 2), p.26.
91. Bimal Prasad, et.el. *op. cit.* p. 130; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 251.
92. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 251.
93. Bimal prasad Ray, et.el. *op.cit.* p.131.
- 93.(a) Loc.cit.
94. It has been mentioned that Hariprasad and Balaram, the sons of Darpanarayan had brought Sonabaju pargana and then they sold 12 ana ($\frac{3}{4}$ th) of it to the Zamindars of Tatiband, Haripur and Dulai (M.A. Hamid, *op. cit.* p. 302).
95. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 251.
96. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el, *op. cit.* p. 131.
97. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol. 2, p. 28.
98. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 253, Bimal prasad, et.el, *op. cit.* p. 131.
99. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 253.
100. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* pp. 253-254.

101. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 254, Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol.2, p. 29.
102. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol. 2, p. 29.
103. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 254.
104. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op.cit.* p.131; Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p. 254.
105. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 254.
106. Loc. cit.
107. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* p. 132.
108. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol.2, p.30.
109. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.255.
110. Loc. cit.
111. *Pramathnath Bishi: Jiban O Sahittakirtti* – an article by Amritalal Bala in *Rajshahi Association Sahitta Patrika* (ed.) by Tasikul Islam, Rajshahi, 202, p. 136; Kedarnath grandfather of Promothnath was the first graduate in Rajshahi District (Pramathnath Bishi: Varedrabhumir Anna Shahitta Sadhak (1901 - 1985) an article by Sureshchandra Moitra in *Natore gourob* ed. Moksudur Rahman, Rajshahi, 1989, p 150).
112. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, Vol.2, p.30; Nalini Bishi was a patriot Zamindar. When most of the Zamindars of Bengal were busy to please the Brithish, Nalini Bishi Joined the liberation struggle of India and was sent to jail.
113. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* pp. 136 - 137
114. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 137; It has been mentioned about his passing B.A with honours in 1936. Here Amritalal Bala's information is more accepted because it is natural that after passing intermediate one should pass B.A. in 1929.
115. Suresh Chandro Moitra *op.cit.* p. 151; Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p.137.
116. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 137; Suresh Chandra Moitra wrote. He joined as a Ram Tamu researcher at Calcutta University in the year 1932. (Suresh Chandra Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 151).

117. Suresh Chandra Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 151.
118. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 137; He was attached with the Jugantar Patrika since 1950.
119. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 137.
120. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* vol. 2, p. 31.
121. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 145.
122. Loc. cit.
123. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 143.
124. Suresh Chandra Moitra, *op. cit.* p.151.
125. Amritalal Bala, *op. cit.* p. 139.
126. Suresh Chandra Moitra, *op. cit.* p. 163.
127. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*. vol.2, p. 31.
128. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 256.
129. Loc. cit.
130. Loc. cit.
131. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol. 2, pp. 31-32.
132. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el. *op. cit.* pp. 132-33.
133. M.A.Hamid, *op. cit.* pp. 302-03
134. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* vol. 2, *op. cit.* p. 32.
135. Loc. cit.
136. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 58, Kazi Muhammad Meser, vol. II, *op.cit.* p.278; Though the area was like an island at present it became cultivable and a good number of people are living there. There is a bazar beside the Rajbari of Dubalhati. In the past it was very difficult to reach there from Naogaon. At present it is possible to go there from Hapunia by a pucca road.

137. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *Naogaon Mohukumar Itihas*, Naogaon, 1970, p.143.
138. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op. cit.* p. 278; Khan Shaheb Muhammad Afzal, *op.cit.* p. 143; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* pp.221-22.
139. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.224-25. The Raja told the Muslim rulers that as the area is full of forest and water, after paying the scheduled revenue he would have not got anything. Having believed the Raja, the Emperor asked him to send only 22 Kahan Kai fish. Khan Shaheb Muhammad Afzal, *op.cit.* opposed this opinion because there was no such instance/proof that the Emperors of Delhi and his courtiers used to ate fish. So it can not be believed. We should also notice the means of communication of that period. It is surprising to thing of a man going to Delhi only with 22 Kahon Kai Fishes. *op.cit.* has mentioned that during the period of Todor Mol, the revenue of land fixed and the revenue of Dubalhati was as small amount. He has mentioned the revenue of Barakpur Pargana was 84952 Dam.(Khan Shabebe Muhammad Afzal *op.cit.* p.144; Kalinath Choudhury *op.cit.* p.225).
140. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.* p. 144.
141. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 223; After the period of Jagathram to next 44 generations no name has been mentioned. It is difficult to understand on which basis he considered Tulshiram as 45 generation. This opinion can not excepted because there is authentic evidence.
142. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.226.
143. Mahababur Rahman. *Varender Raja.....* p.762
144. Kalinath Choudhury *op.cit.* p.226.
145. Kalinath Choudhury *op.cit.* p.227.
146. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op.cit.* p.144.
147. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.229.
148. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.228-229.
149. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja* p.763.
150. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.*, p.114.
151. Rajshahi College Annual Reort, Rajshahi, 1933, p.15; *Haranath Ray*, an article by Md.

Mahabubur Rahman in *Rajshahi Pratibha*, vol. I (ed.) by Saifuddin Choudhury, et.al. Rajshahi, 2000, p.241; Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

152. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.235.

153. Mahabubur Rahman *Varendrer Raja ...* p.763.

154. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.* p. 144, Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 235.

155. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 236.

156. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op. cit.* pp. 278-279. Ibne Golam Samad, *Rajshahir Itibrata*. Rajshahi, 1999, p. 40.

157. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 236.

158. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 237.

159. Loc cit.

160. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal. *op. cit.* p. 146.

161. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 240.

162. Loc cit.

163. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* pp. 240-241.

164. Raja Ramjiban in the house of Braja Ballav at kashimpur. Out of courtesy Braja Ballav presented him Kaligaon Pargana.

165. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* p.241.

166. Kalinath Choudhury, *op.cit.* 241-42, Mahabur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja ...*, p.765.

167. Kazi Muhammad Meser, vol.2, *op. cit.* p.279.

168. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* 243.

169. Loc cit.

170. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* pp.243-244.
171. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
172. Mahababur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja* p. 765.
173. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 245.
174. Mahababur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja*, p. 765.
175. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 246.
176. Mahababur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja*..... p. 765.
177. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 247.
178. Ray Kedar Prasanna Lahiri Bahadur, *Family History of the Ray Bahadoor Zaminder of Kashimpur*. Calcutta. 1911, p.9.
179. Loc cit.
180. Ray Kedar Prasanna Lahiri Bahadur, *op.cit.* pp.9-10.
181. Ray Kedar Prasanna Lahiri Bahadur, *op.cit.* p.10.
181. Two ustads used to catch two hundred Bulbulies at the beginning of Agrahayan and train them. Fasting coarse thread at the waste they were were set to sit an iron bar. They were fed different items to find to keep the healthy and strong. Keeping a hand they were made free of being afraid. In every Poush Sankranti this festival was held.
182. Ray Kedar Prasanna Lahiri Bahadur, *op.cit.* p.7.
183. Ray Kedar Prasanna Lahiri Bahadur. *op. cit.* p.10.
184. Loc cit.
185. Loc cit.
186. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.258.
187. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.* p.145.

188. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.258, Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krishnendu Ray*, Dhaka, 1993, p.10.
189. Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krishnendu Ray*, p. 10.
190. *Rajshahir Balihar Rajbangsher Kritipurush: Raja Krishnenda Ray* an article by Anik Mahmood in *Rajshahi Association Sahitta Patrika* (ed) by Tasikul Islam, Rajshahi 1994, p.80; Name of Ramkanta was not found.
191. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
192. Loc cit.
193. Rani Satya Bati was the wife of Raghunath, the Zamindar of Bhitband, Bahirbandh and Swaruppur of Rangpur. Rani Satyabati had Zamindari in eight parganas of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Bogra.
194. It is mentioned that Prankrishna and Ram Ram tactfully occupied Bahirbandh Pargana. Rani had not gifted it willingly.
195. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 258.
196. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar*..... p.81.
197. Ramchandra and Gyannath were the two sons of Prankrishna, Anik Mahmood, has told that somehow Gyan lost his property. It is not clear why he lost it. (Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krishnendu Ray*, p.81).
198. Dharmananda Maha Bharati, *op. cit.* p. 116.
199. Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.* p. 45.
200. Rajendra Ray got Dehi Chandan Nagar and Shapura of Rajshahi. Khidirpur of Pabna, Dihi Dari-gacha and Chumipara of Bogra, Lalgola, Domical and Mufatpur of Murshidabad from Natore Raj and expanded Zamindari.
201. Jadav Chakrabarti, *op.cit.* P. 39.
202. Khan Shalib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.* p.145.
203. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar*.... pp. 82-83; Mahbubar Rahman, *Varendrer Raja* p. 760.

204. Mahbubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja* P. 760.
205. *Loc cit.*
206. This village, Khajura, was mentioned in 'Kulango Shastra' as Khajuri. It was also known as 'Janardan Bati'. At present in the district of Natore is found. Many Brahmins lived in this village.
207. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshir Balihar* pp. 78-79.
208. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p. 262.
209. The residence of Shibsundari's father was at Prashadpur in Manda. She was a sophisticated Brahmin Lady. Her parents' names are not known. Her two nephews were Prafullah Chandra Choudhury and Hemchandra Choudhury.
210. Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krishnendu Ray*, p.16.
211. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja...*, p. 761.
212. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar.....* p. 87; Md. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja....*, p. 761.
213. He wrote some books : - *Kavya: Shitacharit, drama Sukhabhram, drama Adbhut, gitikavya: Banparajay, Jayantaparajay, Vrittasanyhar*, an Article 'AkhonAshi' 'Swabhavriti' *Sangit: Sitaharam Panchali and Gitavali*. His books have edited and printed several times.
214. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar ...* p. 88.
215. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar ...* pp. 86-87.
216. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar ...* p. 87.
217. Mahabubur Rahman, *Varendrer Raja.....* p. 761; Anik Mahmood, *Rajakrishnanda.....* p. 22; Khan Shahib Muhammad Afzal, *op. cit.*, p. 145, They, mentioned about his having the title Raja in 1878. It is not known when Raja Krishnendra Ray got the letter of title of the Lieutenant Governor. But it was published in the Gazzate in 1880. So Anik Mahmood wrote 1880 as his title.
218. Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krhsinendu.....* pp. 30-31.

219. Anik Mahmood, *Raja Krhsinendu*..... p. 32.
220. Jadav Mazumdar was the father of Kushum Kumari whose residence was Harishpur near Natore.
221. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar* p. pp. 85, 86.
222. Anik Mahmood, *Rajshahir Balihar* p. 88.
223. Khan Shahib Muhamood Afzal, *op.cit.* p.146.
224. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op. cit.* p.135.
225. Loc cit.
226. Rada Company is very much able to built ship.
227. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op. cit.* pp. 135-136.
228. Bimal Prasad Ray, et el, *op. cit.* p. 136.
229. Loc cit.
230. Loc cit.
231. Two Ustads (teachers) used to catch two hundred Bulbulies at the beginning of Agrahayan and train them. Fasting coarse thread at the waste they were were set to sit an iron bar. They were fed different items to find to keep the healthy and strong. Keeping in hand they were made free of being afraid. In every Poush Sankranti this festival was held.
232. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* p.137.
233. Loc cit; I ater on in 1969 that school was turned into a high school and at present no sign of that health center is found.
234. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.el. *op. cit.* pp.134-35.
235. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*, vol.1, p. 56.
236. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit.* p.264,
237. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* p.57.

238. Bimal Prasad Ray, et.al, *op. cit.* p. 81.
239. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* p.57.
240. *Uttar Banger Itihaser Ek Bichitra Adhyay : Barister Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhurir Jiban O Karma*, an article by Kamrun Rahman in *Natorer Gaurab* (ed.) by Moksudur Rahman Natore, 1989, p. 123.
241. Loc cit.
242. Loc cit.
- 242 (a). Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas*.... , p.58.
243. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* p. 58.
244. Kamrun Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 125.
245. *Ashraf Ali Khan Choudhury an article* by S. M. Abdul Lalif in *Rajshahi Pratibha*, (ed.) by Saifuddin Chudury, vol.1, Rajshahi, 2000, p. 259.
246. S. M. Abdul Latif, *op. cit.* p. 260.
247. Kamrun Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 127.
248. Loc. cit.
249. Kamrun Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 127.
250. S.M.Abdul Laif, *op.cit.* p. 264.
251. Samar Pal, *Natorer Itihas* Vol.1, p. 58.

Social Identity of the Zamindars of Rajshahi

a. Social and Ethnic Composition of the Zamindars

Zamindars of different stature and religious faiths held Zamindari in Rajshahi. Many of the Zamindars received the titles of *Raja*, *Maharaja*, *Ray Bahadur* and *Choudhury* as a mark of their recognition in lieu of their loyalty and obedience to the central authority - at first to the Mughals and then to the British. Again many small Zamindars could not gain any title. It can be noticed from the tradition that Zamindars were identified with Zamindars irrespective of having any title as such and their activities and obligations were the same. Their relation with the subjects however, remained unchanged.

In the present work there is a humble attempt to present fourteen families of Zamindars. It is found that out of fourteen families eight families were of Varendra Brahmin, one family was Vedic Brahmin while another was Kayestha and the rest were from the *Tili* and *Sudra* origin. There was also a family of the cowherd and the last one under consideration was a Muslim family. Beside these, one may come across other Zamindar families some of whom bore the family title *Talukdar*. (Owner of a *Taluk* or a few tracts of land)

Out of the Brahmin families two families came to the limelight of history. One of them which was identified within Varendra origin had the credit of founding the Raj family of Tahirpur. In fact this is the most oldest one amongst all the Brahmin families. Bishi family of Joari was of Vedic Brahmin group. The Zamindar family of Karachmaria belonged to Kayestha origin. The Zamindar family established in Dighapatia belonged to *Tili* community. The Raj family of Dubalhati was that of

the Sudra origin and by far the oldest of all under consideration. Being the Hindus of lower caste, the Zamindars of this family (i.e., Dubalhati) could not exert much influence over other Rajas and Zamindars. Darikushi Zamindar family also belonged to lower

The dynasties or the families which developed in Puthia, Natore Chougram, Baihar, Kashimpur (of the Lahiris), Chama'i were equally remarkable and played significant role in the socio-political life of the region.

Caste Hindu family. Khan Choudhury Zamindar family of Natore was the only Zamindar family that belonged to the Muslim community.

There was a devoted Brahmin named Shashadhar Pathak. He was well versed in Hindu *Shastras* and astronomy. Shashadhar Pathak had only one son named Batsacharya. Batsacharya was very pious even from his boyhood and he was devoted to the practice of *Yoga* (meditation). His knowledge on astronomy made him very famous during his lifetime.¹

Batsacharya, in the later part of his life, lived in his own house as a *sanyasi* (saint). When the Jaigirdar of Laskarpur revolted, the Mughul Emperor sent his general with army to suppress the rebellion. The general met Batsacharya who told him the means of suppressing the rebellion. After winning the fight the general wanted to offer Batsacharya some landed property. When Batsacharya refused to take it, the general gave Zamindary to his son Pitambar.² A question arises here – as to the social position of Laskar Khan, the Jaigirdar of Laskarpur Pargana. Kalinath Choudhury the author of the famous research work *Rajshahir Sangkshipta Itihas* (*A Short History of Rajshahi*) has commenced that when childless Laskar Khan died, the property was given to Batsacharya.^{2a} According to another source, the property was forfeited for the rebellion of Laskar Khan.^{2b}

On the basic of the above information it may be assumed that the property of the rebel Jaigirdar would be forfeited and the forfeited Zamindari would be settled to other person. Here the difference of opinion runs as: whether the first Raja of Puthia was Batsacharya or his son Pitambar. Bimalacharan Moitra, another scholar on this regional history, however, argues in favour of counting Pitambar as the first Zamindar of Puthia.³ Whoever might be the first Zamindar (sometimes called Raja) he gained it by dint of the deed of Batsacharya, and this point deserves a little elaboration.

The Rajas of Puthia who belonged to the Varendra Brahmin origin had much devotion to Hindu religion. The subsequent Rajas of this family were given the title of Thakur - the highest title of the Brahmin caste.⁴ The subsequent Rajas of this family used the title 'Thakur'.

In the field of religion, most of the Zamindars or Rajas of this family had influence over the other Rajas or Zamindars. In various worships of gods and goddesses, they contributed money without any hesitation and they built many temples for worship of various Hindu deities. The house god of this family was an idol named "*Gavindaji*".

"*Gavinda Jayoti*" - the victory of Gavindaji was used to be written on the top of the ledgers of accounts and on the papers of administration.⁵ The mention of a large number of examples of their contributions in the field of education and culture has been quoted in different sources.

The position of the Raja of this family was partly degraded because of marrying Lilabati, the bride of Santal Raj family of Pabna.⁶ Though they belonged to a Brahmin family, the people of different colours were involved in their administrative works.

It may specially be mentioned here that a *vaidya* (Physician practising *Ayurveda*) named Ishan Chandra imparted education to Maharani Sharatsundari. Many

examples are there as to the humanitarian works of the family. As like as the Raja of Puthia, Ramjivan's father Kamdev Moitra, the founder of Natore Raj family was a devoted Brahmin.⁷ He also belonged to the Varendra Brahmin family. He lived in the village Amhati near Natore. He had no property excepting a few thatched houses and a small plot of land. He was the *Tahsildar* of Baruihati within the jurisdiction of the Raja of Puthia.⁸ It is found from some sources that he started his professional career as a clergy man. Here a confusions arises as to whether he started his career as a *Tahsildar* or a clergy. The matter still remains under dispute.

Because of his poverty, he ran into debts. For the purpose of seeking their employment, he sent his sons to Puthia. Raghunandan and Ramjiban started their professional career as the detectors of lineage of the Raja of Puthia.⁹ By dint of honesty and competence they gained the favour of the Raja and acquired learning. Later on they went to Dhaka and thereafter to Murshidabad as the lawyers of the Raja of Puthia. For his efficiency and satisfactory works, Raghunandan in a short period of time gained the favour of Murshid Kuli Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal, as a higher officer who appointed him in the Revenue Department. Perhaps this record has led some scholars to conclude that the Natore Raj family was founded by the grace of Murshid Kuli Khan.¹⁰ By the influence of Raghunanadan's service in the Revenue Department, he used to settle the Zamindaris of other Zamindars to his brother Ramjivan when they were held in auction for non-payment of rent. In this way the Zamindari of Natore Raj family gradually became one of the greatest Zamindar families of the then Bengal.¹¹

It is worth mentioning that almost all the Zamindars of the Brahmin families had special contribution for the sake or religion. Rani Bhavani, for example, built many temples in Baranagar, Benaras and Kashidham.^{11a} Rani Bhavani of this family gave away a lot of *Brahmattar land* (rent free land given away to Brahmins) to the

Brahmins. Raja Ramkrishna of this family was a saint. He was always busy with religious worship. Raja Viswanath of this family was turned into a devout *vaishnava* from his allegiance of Shaktism.¹² The other Rajas continued their previous faith of Shakti Dharma, Biswanath had nine wives.¹³ It may be guessed from it that he was a pleasure - loving Zamindar. This family had kinship with different Raj families of Varendra. Though they were Brahmins, many people of other castes enjoyed higher posts in the administration. It is specially noted in this connection that Dayaram belonging to a Tili community was the *Dewan* of the Natore Raj.

Among the greatest Raj families of Rajshahi, the family of Dighapatia is remarkable one. Dayaram Ray, the founder of this family, belonged to Tili community.¹⁴ He stated his professional career as a humble servant of a poor salary of 8 *annas* (half of one rupee) only under the Raja of Natore. By dint of his own competence and perseverance, the *Dewan* of Natore Raj was able to establish another Raj family. When Sitaram, the Raja of Jessore was rebellious, he joined the army of the Nawab as the representative of the Raja of Natore to subdue Sitaram and defeated Sitaram. As a reward he got some landed property of Dighapatia and lease of Noakhila Pargana from the Raja of Natore and got the title of *Ray-e-Rayen* from the Nawab of Bengal.¹⁵ Dighapatia Raj family, founded by Dayaram Ray, in course of time emerged as the leading Raj family of Rajshahi. This Raj family played an important role in the field of development of Rajshahi. The Rajas of this family were more educated than the Rajas of other Raj families of Rajshahi. Their huge contributions in the field of religion and religious life of the subjects in general are noteworthy. After the defeat of Sitaram, he brought the idol of "*Krishnajee*" to Dighapatia, established the idol there and built a temple there.¹⁶ As the Raja of Puthia had family idol namely Govindaji likewise the Raja of Dighapatia had family idol called "*Krishnajī*". Though the Rajas of Dighapatia belonged to Tili community, they had a great respect for the Brahmins. For the maintenance of the Brahmins,

Dayaram gave away huge *Brahmattar* land in their services. Beside this he also donated a lot of *Brahmattar* land for various religious functions.¹⁷ This family had contribution not only in the field of religion but also in terms of education. They contributed huge amount of money to Rajshahi College. Beside this they patronised in various forms the P.N. Girls High School, Sabitri Girls High School, Basanta Kumari Agricultural College and a few other institutions.^{17a} In the field of religion too, they were very generous. In those days the division in the society on caste question was very strong. Raja Sarat Kumar Roy of this family, overcoming all the barriers of differences, engaged a few Muslims and a cobbler as his cook.¹⁸ The Zamindar of Karachmaria was Kayestha by caste. But the Raja of Dighapatia appointed him to a higher post. It is known from a source that most of the Zamindars of this family were highly educated in comparison with other Zamindars of Rajshahi. Though the founder of this family started his professional career as a humble servant, this family acquired the dignity of the greatest Zamindar family of Rajshahi. It is evident that when the property of the Raja of Natore was being sold by auction, the Raja of Dighapatia was extending the area of his Zamindari. It may be taken for granted that their position was recognised due to the honesty, integrity and service to the subjects at large.

Susen was the progenitor of the Tahirpur Raj family. The Rajas of this family were Brahmins by caste belonging to *Kasyapagotra* and their family title was Bhaduri.¹⁹ The ancestors of this family were always busy with religious work. Unlike his forefathers Kamdev Bhatt was not so interested in religion, philosophy and literature. He became expert in wrestling, sword fighting and shooting even from his tender age.²⁰ Tahirpur Raj family was founded in the 15th century. The founder of this family was Kamdev Bhatta.

The Tahirpur estate was assigned by the *Mughals* by up rooting one *Pathan* Jaigirdar named by Tahir Khan.²¹ It is found in this case also that a *Pathan* Jaigirdar

was deprived and Tahirpur estate was settled by Kamdev Bhatta as in the case of the Raja of Puthia who was given a estate by deposing a Pathan Jaigirdar.^{21a} It appears that Pathan rule was effective in this region before the *Mughal* rule. This Brahmin family of Varendra contributed sufficiently in the field of religion. Raja Kansa Narayan of this family spent about nine lakh rupees for the worship of Devi Durga.²² At that time Ramesh Shastri was the family priest or the head priest of the Raja. Later on the system of worship introduced by him was followed in the worship of Durga throughout Bengal.²³ It may be noted that there was remarkable influence of the Rajas of Tahirpur over the Zamindars of Varendra. They had kinship with the Zamindars of Chougram and those of Natore Raj. Though their Zamindari was not so extensive their position in the field of religion and the dignity of their family was high.

In respect of aristocracy, Chougram Raj family is held in high esteem (like Puthia, Natore, Tahirpur etc.) in the Varendra Brahmin society. The two great grand sons of Jagananda Ray were Panchu Ray and Bhuvan Ray. Rasik Ray, the son of Panchu Roy was the founder of Chougram Raj family.²⁴ Rasik Ray, in exchange of allowing his son Ramakanta to be the adopted son of Ramjiban, got the Pargana of Chougram (Present Natore district) and Islamabad of Rangpur.²⁵ Because of aristocracy and kinship between Tahirpur Raj family and Natore Raj family, they had sufficient influence over Varendra Brahmin society. Besides establishing a school at Chougram, they contributed money for the development of Rajshahi town as a whole. It can be concluded that this family had an aristocratic position long before the time of their recognition as Zamindars.

The Zamindar of Balihar was another remarkable family of the region. The Rajas of this family were Varendra Brahmins and the family title was Sanyal.²⁶ The progenitor of the family Dharadhar Sharma, a reputed scholar and a pious Hindu

belonged to the *Vatsa gotra* of the village Sanjibani somewhere of erstwhile Balihar (the village has yet not been identified). The founder of the Balihar Raj family was Nih Singha Chakravarty. He came from the family of one Ananta and he was the grandson of Ananta. He came from Vikrampur, Dhaka to Balihar and married a daughter of a Khan Zamindar and got landed property from the estate of his father-in-law. He got the title of Sanyal.²⁷ They had marital relation with the Zamindars of Natore. Ramakanta Sanyal of this family got the title of 'Ray' for the first time.²⁸ Krishnendu Ray, a member and one of the masters of this family was a great administrator. He made a remarkable contribution to literature side by side with his religious activities. He established educational institutions in his own estate and contributed money to the Rajshahi College. He founded a printing press called "*Sharadindu Press*". Books were printed in this press and were distributed among the common people free of cost.²⁹

The Bishi family of Joari was an outstanding one for many reasons. The Vedic Brahmins of Vashistha gotra of Joari were very famous. The *Pipariya Ojha* (Bishi) as they were called, belonged to *sandilya gotra*. The progenitor of this family was a courtier of Emperor Akbar and a judge of Hindu *Dayabhaga* Law. He was a great scholar of grammar, *Smriti*, *Veda*, the *six philosophies*, *astronomy* and scriptures.³⁰

The two brothers Ramahari and Gangahari, the descendants of the Pipariya Ojha lived in Paraidingi (not identified). Talpe Chapila was an important area during the reign of Murshid Kulikhan. Gangahari was appointed an employee of the Chapila court. During the period of his service, he married a bride of Majumdar family living near Joari.³¹ He became the owner of the whole property of his father-in-law as the later had no male issue. The Zamindari of Bishi family of Joari was flourishing since the tenure of Darpanarayan, the great grandson of Gangahari. This family had much fame in the field of education. Pramathanath Bishi of this family was a famous writer and essaist of Bengali literature.³²

The Raj family of Dubalhati is one of the oldest Zamindar families of Rajshahi.³³ Jagatram Roy, the founder of this family was a rich merchant belonging to *Shuli caste* of the Hindu community. He lived at Jageswarpur in the district of Murshidabad. He came to Dubalhati for commercial purpose and settled there. According to a source, it appears that Jagatram was the founder of this family.³⁴ The names of 44 successive descendants next to Jagatram can not be ascertained but members of this family from the 45th descendant are available. There is again confusion and doubt whether Jagatram as it is believed had the credit to be the founder of the family. Tulsiram Ray Choudhury was the 45th member according to the Chronology and in this situation it may be relevant to note that the Zamindari of this family started with Tulsiram Ray Choudhury. The title of Raja was conferred on many Zamindars of this family. Thus it may be concluded that because of being the Zamindars of low Hindu caste, the Zamindars of this family did not have much influence over other Zamindars of the contemporary Bengal. Many contributions of the Rajas of this family towards education and culture have been recorded in the contemporary documents. A great peasant movement had taken place in 1873 and the main issue was against imposition of heavy taxation the peasants of the region.³⁵ The reigning Zamindar at that time was, however, Raja Haranath. As a result of this rebellion, the collection of excessive rent was stopped. The record of the hospitality to the guests and relatives of this family is proverbial. Almost all the Zamindars were concerned about rendering service to the guests and they are said to have not made distinction of religion and caste.³⁶

The Ray Bahadur family of Kashimpur was equally a distinguished family. This family consisted of aristocrat Brahmins.³⁷ The greatest Zamindar of this family was Girish Chandra Lahiri (Ray Bahadur). He was a writer and his achievements are associated with the writing of the biography of Maharani Saratkumari of Puthia. Their contribution for the progress of education and literature are still known to

their posterity. This family became famous by rendering welfare activities to the subjects at large. The honourable Governor Sir George Campbell conferred on Girish Chandra Lahiri the title of "*Ray Bahadur*".³⁸ He married off his five daughters to the bride grooms of the aristocratic families of Nirabil, Rohila, Bhusana etc. and thus enhanced his social prestige in the society. Like his father, Kedar Prasanna Lahiri, the son of Girish Chandra Lahiri also received the title of "*Ray Bahadur*" by the British Govt.³⁹

The Bagchis of Chamari were Brahmin by birth. The Zamindari of this family was very small. They were much concerned about religious activities. The family god of Bagchi family was "Sri Sri Gopal Narayan". Beside the daily worship of Gopal Narayan, they spent money liberally during the *Dolejatra* and the Durgapuja. During the season of Basanti puja, they used to spend a lot of money on this occasion. Ramendra Nath Bagchi of this family established a school in Chamari.⁴⁰

A milkman named Rajkishore Sanyal of Darikushi village received a few *bighas* of land from the Raja of Natore as a help for the maintenance of his cows.⁴¹ He established himself as a Zamindar by occupying some landed property by force. He also acquired some lands by cash. Like all other Zamindars, they also took part in various religious activities. They arranged songs, music and *jatra* (drama) during the worship of goddess Kali.⁴²

Thus although the founder of the family started his career as merely a milkman, the members of the family gradually became Zamindar by virtue of their talent and as pirations.⁴³

Nimai Chand Sarkar was the founder of Karachmaria Zamindar family.⁴⁴ He carried on mortgage business and became the owner of huge amount of ready money. With such a cash he purchased the estate of Ray family of Kalyanpur. After the

death of Nimai Chand Sarkar in 1850, his son Ramkumar Sarkar established the Zamindari of Karackmaria. Again after the death of Ramkumar in 1857, Rajkumar Sarkar assumed the Zamindari. He looked after not only his own Zamindari estate but also the management of the estate of Dighapatia. He had been the manager of this Zamindari for a long time.⁴⁵

The Zamindars of Karachmaria were Kayestha by caste. Raj Kumar Sarkar, later on adopted *Vaishnava Dharma* (religion).⁴⁶ Viswanath of Natore Raj family also gave up Shakti Dharma and adopted unfaith of Vaishnavism. As the two Zamindars of neighbouring estates adopted Vaishnavism, it may be assumed that Vaishnavism was one of popular and flourishing faiths at that time. Raj Kumar Sarkar was broad-minded in respect of religion. Though he was a Vaishnav himself, he was nominated a member of the Trustee of the "Original Brahma Society".⁴⁷

Though the members of this family could not earn much fame as Zamindars, they are famous in the field of education and culture of Bengal nay of the Indian subcontinent. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, the famous historian was a member of this family.

Muhammad Azam Khan, the progenitor of Natore Chaudhury family came of Afgan Yusufzai family. He was originally from Afghanistan. Coming from his homeland he settled in Burdwan. Muhammad Zaman Khan, the son of Muhammad Azam Khan came to Natore as the Nazim of Natore Sadar Court during the reign of the East India Company in the later part of 18th Century.⁴⁸ He saved a lot of money by doing his service. He established his Zamindari at Nazirpur of (Gurudaspur Police station). Muhammad Zaman Khan was the founder of the Choudhury family of Natore.⁴⁹ After the death of Zaman Khan, his son Dost Muhammad Khan purchased the *mahals* of Kholabaria, Pipru!, Kalam etc. by his savings. The contribution of this family to the field of education is proverbial. Abdur Rashid

Khan of this family established Anglo Persian School at Natore. Many reputed sons of this family were connected with politics.⁵⁰

Discussing the administration of every Zamindar family it is found that men of all colours and faiths were associated with the administrative set-up. Because of the Brahmins having sufficient influence over the society and being educated they had the credit of establishing huge number of Zamindars.

b. Socio-political Tensions and the Zamindars of Rajshahi

As we have stated a considerable number of new Zamindars were created during the reign of Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan⁵¹. In course of time they were involved in the administration of Bengal-nay the political activities of the them Bengal. During the period of Murshid Kuli Khan and Alivardi Khan they could not much interfere in the administration. After the death of Alivardi his grandson Siraj-ud-dullah became the Nawab of Bengal. Ghasetti Begum his aunt (the wife of the Nawab of Dhaka) and his cousin Saukat Jung, by no means, could accept Siraj as the Nawab of Bengal. They formed an anti Siraj coterie and hatched a conspiracy against Siraj. Some high officials and Zamindars were also involved in this plot. It was not possible on their part to dethrone Siraj and so they secretly made adherence with the British East India Company. It may be noted that though Alivardi Khan with his firm determination was successful in controlling the aristocratic, he could not assure favourable circumstances to continue for his grandson Siraj-ud-dullah. Actually these aristocratic Zamindars later on hastened the battle of Plassey and it may be concluded that this sort of treachery and lack of farsightedness had paved the way for the from was the victory and rise of the British in India⁵². It is known from a source that Raja Krishna Chandra of Nadia made alliance with the English and plotted against Siraj. It was sole aim of Maharaja Krishana Chandra to dethrone Siraj. After the victory of the battle of Plassey Lord Clive as a token of gratitude,

conferred on him (Krishna Chandra) the title of Rajandra Bahadur from Delhi and presented him 12 cannons which had been used at the battle of Plassey.⁵³

Maharani Bhavani, of Natore requested the other Rajas of Bengal not to help the English at the battle of Plassey. Rani Bhavani presumed that Bengal and its people would suffer a lot if the English came into power.⁵⁴ She sent troops in order to help the Nawab. But the battle ended before the soldiers arrived.⁵⁵ Unlike Rani Bhavani, Tilak Chand, the Zamindar of Burdwan and Asaduzzaman of Birbhum did not join the battle of Plassey.⁵⁶

No evidence is, however, available as to whether any other Raja or Zamindar of Rajshahi joined in favour of the English or Nawab in the battle of Plassey. It is likely that other Zamindaris (estates) were smaller than that of Rani Bhavani and because of their position they were least concerned about the then Politics of Bengal.

The English became victorious at the battle of Plassey and consequently, it may be noted that change came over in political life of the country. Soldiers of Nawab who lost their service, had grouped themselves as the Fakirs and Sannyasis who revolted against the English immediately after the Plassey (1757). Later on many cultivators also joined this revolt. Governor General Warren Hastings ascribed the revolt of the cultivators as Sannasi revolt.⁵⁷ A rebellion took place in the year 1763 against the exploitation of the English, Zamindars, landlords and so on. This challenge to the British authority in Bengal continued roughly from 1763 to 1800 A.D.⁵⁸ Various types of facilities were given to the *Fakirs* during the rule of Shah Suja, the Subahdar of Bengal in 1759. Pieces of fallow land were given to the *Fakirs* in the different regions. *Fakirs* of this privileged class lost their facilities during the policy of the British. So they started plundering the stored corns of the British and their associate Zamindars. As a result, the situation of law and order deteriorated very much. The local cultivators assisted the *Fakirs* in the act of

plundering. Their number rose up to 50 (fifty) thousand.⁵⁹ The Fakirs attacked the Rampar - Boalia (Rajshahi) *Kuthi* (store house) and kidnapped Mr. Renate and later on killed him next year, i.e., in 1764 Rampur-Boalia *Kuthi* was plundered. Within a few days they spread their influence throughout the whole of North Bengal.⁶⁰ In this circumstances the English killed 150 Fakirs. Rani Bhavani, the Zamindar of Natore did not take much steps to stop the activities of the Fakirs. Even she did not assist the company to suppress the Fakirs. So it is presumed that Fakirs had much confidence on Rani Bhabani. Her relation can be guessed from a letter of Majnu Shah, the leader of the Fakir who wrote "we have for a long time begged and been entertained in Bengal and we have long continued to worship God at the several shrines and altars without ever once abusing or oppressing anyone. Nevertheless last year 150 Fakirs were without cause put to death. They had begged in different countries and the cloths and victuals which they had with them were lost. The merit which is derived and the reputation which is procured from the murder of helpless and indigent need not be declared. Formerly the Fakirs begged in separate and detached parties but now we are all collected and beg together. Displaced at this method they (English) obstruct us in visiting the shrines and other places - this is unreasonable. You are the ruler of the country, we are Fakirs who pray always for your welfare. We are full of hopes"⁶¹ It is easily presumed that the leaders of the Fakir had much confidence on the Maharani Bahvani. Simultaneously in 1780 the Fakirs demanded Rs.50,000.00 from Sri Krishna Choudhury, the Zamindar of Karai, (Bogra district) and they also declared that if they did not get the said money they would plunder his house. Zamindar Sri Krishna Choudhury fled with his family to the eastern side of the Brahamoputra.⁶² Under the leadership of Majnu Shah, the rebels Revolutionists plundered the wealth of the rich oppressor and the British followers of the region of Natore.⁶³ At the end of the March, 1787 they entered Rajshahi and attacked the Borkendas, Piadas, of Rani Bhavani and the

men of Rani Bhavin were defeated.⁶⁴ Bimal Prasad Roy et. el. wrote in the *Natore Katha O Kahini*, a famous document on the Fakir rebellion, that – “They had no intention to do the least harm to the Rajas of Natore. Their target of attack was those Rajas and followers who got the favour and support of the English⁶⁵ from another source we come to know, “A pitched battle took place between the army of Rani Bhavani and the Fakris, but Rani Bhabani had no interest in this battle. At that time the East India Company engaged some police and *barkandaj bahini* under the disposal of the Zamindars and most probably Rani Bhavani only used the *barkandaj bahani* under the guidance of the Company.⁶⁶ It this may be taken for granted that some insignificant battles took place between the Zamindars of Rajshahi and Fakirs but no fatal incident took place. The English Kuthi of Rajshahi was plundered but no evidence is found that any Zamindar house was looted. But the Zamindar of Karai of Bogra had to leave his house. The letter of Fakirs to Rani Bhavani reveals that the Fakirs had much regards for Rani Bhavani.

The stories of the oppressions of the English of *Neel kuthi* are very well known in the history of Bengal. They oppressed the peasants of Bengal in different forms. The demand of *Neel* (Indigo) increased in England, consequently many Europeans came here to carry on business of indigo. Besides, many service holders of the company started to deal in indigo as it was a profitable business. The indigo planter whowere British by birth and origin began to pay advance money to the cultivators. But the cultivators conceived were not in a position to pay back the money once they had received it previously. So farmers were compelled to cultivate indigo on the following years until they could repay their advance money.

From generation to generation they were compelled to cultivate (indigo) until they could repay their debts. The indigo producers were forced to sell their products to the British the indigo planters at the half or one third price of the actual market

price.⁶⁷ The financial condition of the farmers were very much effected due to the cultivation of the (indigo) their families were also victims as their daughters and sons had to work throughout the whole night at the indigo factory. Inhuman torture was made to the disobedient farmers.⁶⁸ They were beaten black and blue, rape of women (i.e., wife of the cultivator) was a common affair in the *Kuthi* and women had to lose their chastity at the *Kuthi*.⁶⁹ In many cases fine was imposed, crops were damaged, house were burnt, blood shed and murder were common events in the life of the indigo-farmers.⁷⁰

In the light of the statement made before the Indigo Commission by an eye witness Mr. Tower, the English magistrate, some one has observed that – “He saw with his own eyes that a subject was pierced with a spear and a few subjects were shot dead. A few others were at first pierced with a spear and then were kidnapped.”⁷¹ Again many housewives were detained in the *Kuthi*.⁷² It is known from the contemporary incident that the heads of the Tangail *Kuthi* kidnapped the wife of a man named Bishu.⁷³

It may easily be guessed that an opposition would develop as the farmers were oppressed in different ways. It is seen from the available sources that the farmers of Bengal formed an opposition movement and revolted and it is known as the ‘Indigo Movement’ in history.⁷⁴ Revolts against the oppression of the English Indigo planters was also made in the district of Rajshahi and the following *Kuthis* were plundered and Dewans and employees of certain *Kuthis* were killed.⁷⁵

The following *Kuthis* were attacked :

Nandakubja, Chandrapur, Gurudas Pur, Birabaria, Sidhuli, Naribari, Lalpur, Bilmaria, Kalidaskhali, Charghat, Namdan, gachi, Aranis Rajapur, Sardah. Baghacharkasari, Pananagar, Durgapur, Domdama, Biraldah, Namdanpur pathiljhara, Kanshat, Ramchandrapurhat of Nawabgonj^{75a}.

In order to face the situation the Government appointed 'Indigo Commission'. According to the recommendation of the Commission, the Government declared that indigo cultivation was optional for the farmers. As a result of the revolts of the farmers, the cultivation of (indigo) came to an end.

Thus it appears that most of the Zamindars of Rajshahi did not help the farmers against the English indigo planters. Exception, however, was Raja Jogendra Narayan, the Zamindar of Puthia who, inspired the farmers in their movements against the English planters (indigo planters) and the indigo producers of his jurisdiction attacked the Neel Kuthi (office cum residence of the European indigo planters) and formed the opposition movements.⁷⁶

During the period under review, the oppression of the European indigo planters was also noticed in the other Zamindari out side Rajshahi.

The native soldiers revolted in 1857 against the British rule and oppression. This revolt is known in the history as the 'Sepoy Mutiny' or First War of Independence of India. It has no doubt that this protest movement of India had weakened the foundation of the British rule considerably. The volume of this Mutiny was so alarming that the government was with the situation and had to seek possible assistance from the native rulers. Incidentally during this Mutiny, one Bijay Govinda, a Zamindar of Tantiband (Pabna) helped the Government. He made the arrangement of guards so that the *sepoys* might not go from Dhaka to western region. After the Sepoy Mutiny was over, the Government offered him a few cannons.⁷⁷ No clear evidence is, however, at our disposal as to whether any of the Zamindars of Rajshahi ever helped the British Government directly or indirectly against the *sepoys* during the Mutiny.

But that the Zamindars of Rajshahi enjoyed the confidence of the British is proved by the fact that they were conferred many titles like *Raja, Maharaja* etc.

during and after the Mutiny of 1857⁷⁸. This may be as a prize for their silence or inactive role on the eve of the great incident called the Sepoy Mutiny. Here the case of the Zamindar of Dighapatia may be mentioned as an example. In this family one Pramathnath is said to have been conferred the title of *Raja* in 1875. It is likely that if the Zamindars of this country would have helped the people and the sepoys during the Mutiny, the history of India would have been written otherwise. But this did not happen and possible cause might be the fear on the part of the Zamindars who seem to have presumed that the death-Knell of the British Raj or any crisis as such would mean the end of the Zamindari too. The Zamindars of Rajshahi followed the same principle and their loyalty was fairly proved during the Santal Rebellion when the Zamindars of Rajshahi helped the British with soldiers and elephants.⁷⁹ To protect their existence, the British Government conferred on the Zamindars high sounding titles in addition to undue privileges and thus tried to enjoy their support. From the contemporary historical developments it is likely that the Zamindars were fairly successful in their efforts to this effect.

For the convenience of the administration, the partition of Bengal in 1905 was an important issue. As a result of running Calcutta centered administration, a new class of officers and exploiters was created. Zamindars, Usurers, Marwari traders conducted their economic activities from Calcutta. As a result, traders of East Bengal and the Muslim Peasants in particular were being deprived. This victimised class of people welcomed the Partition of Bengal. On the other hand the Zamindar and the usurer class began to oppose it. It is known from a recent study that *Swadeshi movement* had taken place as a venture to oppose the partition cause of 1905 initiated by Lord Curzon and supported by the Muslims of Eastern Bengal and Assam.⁸⁰ It is known from the available source that the Rajas and Zamindars of Rajshahi acted against the partition of Bengal and cooperated with *Swadeshi Movement*.

Though the direct relation and the stand of the Zamindars with the anti-partition movement cannot be ascertained, it is possible that they had a tacit support of this movement. This can be assumed from their association with the Indian National Congress during the time. It is said that on the occasion of the provincial conference of the Indian National Congress held in the town of Natore from 10th June to 12th June 1897, Jogadindra Nath Ray of the Natore Raj family was the president of the Reception Committee.⁸¹ In addition to that, references are there as to the members of that committee who were selected from other Zamindaris namely Kumar Ramanikanta Ray of Chougram, Kumar Basanta Kumar Roy of Dighapatia, Gopal Landra Ray of Puthia, Kumar Kedar Prasanna Lahiri of Kashimpur and so on.⁸²

Thus it may be presumed that the Rajshahi as a whole had some sympathy for the anti-partition movement of 1905. At that time the Tagore family of Jorasanko, Calcutta could not avoid the spirit of the movement (anti-partition) and the support and association of the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore is a known fact^{82a}.

There may be confusion as to the participation of the Rajas and Zamindars of Rajshahi in the anti-partition movement. The most acceptable view is that the Zamindars lived in Calcutta with their business centres while the Zamindaris estates situated in East Bengal. Beside it was an apprehension of the absentee Zamindars that if partition became a settled fact, after it, "their Zamindaris might be abolished in the Muslim *Praja* dominated East Bengal"^{82b}.

It is found in the available data that many Rajas and Zamindars participated in the Indian freedom movement leading to the partition of India in 1947. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Rajshahi in 1925, Birendranath Roy, the Maharaja of Natore gave him Rs. 5000 as donation for the fund of the freedom struggle.⁸³ When Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose came to Natore in 1934, Pratibhanath Roy, the Raja of Dighapatia allowed Netaji to use his motor car.⁸⁴ Here it may be noted that the

Rajas and Zamindars of this region as a whole did not take part in the politics for the welfare of the subjects, but in every occasion they were guided by their self interest only. It is learnt from a source that "Maharaja Jagadindranath Roy while delivering speech at the Provincial Congress at Natore, said, "Recently few newspapers favoured by British officials advised the Rajas and Zamindars of this country to voluntarily keep away from politics. Rajas, Zamindars or officials whatever the rank they might be, if they kept themselves quite aloof from the politics, they would neither be able to protect their skin nor would they be able to make any welfare of the country. So in the present situation both to make welfare of the country and to ensure their existence unaffected, Rajas and Zamindars of the country must take part in the national movement along with the common people.⁸⁵ It is obvious from the remark of Maharaja Jagadindranath that they were infavour of active politics and that their existence langely depended on it .

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75. Kazi Muhammad Meser, *op cit.* (Vol. 2), pp.303-304.
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81. Bimal Prasad Ray, et. el. *op. cit.* p. 91.
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- 82(a). The attitude of Rabindra Nath Tagore can be understood by his participation in the Pabna Provincial Conference of the Indian National Congress held in 11-12 February, 1908 in which Rabindra Nath Tagore was one of the members and delivered a 'long address in his unique happy style in Bengali'. (For details see, Nityapriya Ghosh and Ashoke Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, *Partition of Bengal, significant signposts, 1905-1911*), Kolkata. 2005. pp.175-192; also Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*. New Delhi, 1973, p. 343).
- 82(b). *Attitude of the Bengali Intelligentsia Towards the Permanent Settlement : An Analysis of the Impact of British Colonial Policy on the Bengali Mind in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, an article by Amalendu De in *Western Colonial Policy*, Vol. - I ed. by N. R. Ray, Calcutta 1981, p. 72.
83. Ibna Golam Samad, *op. cit.* p. 91.
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The Zamindar-Tenant Relations

The Zamindar tenant relations are such important issues which help to understand the position of the zamindars in a particular region. The case of the zamindari of Rajshahi is not an exception. At the outset the matter may be considered from two angles : (a) It is to ascertain the Zamindar-tenant relation before the grant of '*Dewani*' by the East India company in 1765; (b) It is to observe minutely how the Zamindar-tenant relations developed in the light of the policy when they (East India Company) were granted the '*Dewani*' of Bengal in 1765.

During the Mughal period, the person who was given the responsibility of collecting revenue in the respective 'Subah' or province was called the provincial '*Dewan*'. Besides collecting revenue he had to supervise the transaction of money of the government treasury. No government officer could spend government money without his prior permission.

For increasing the collection of revenue, he used to encourage the cultivators to boost up the production of crops and tried to increase the number of dwellers in the villages. He used to pay attention so that the officers or revenue collectors might not collect excess revenue from the cultivators. He used to manage the recovery of the outstanding revenue which became arrear due to the negligence of the revenue collectors, at an easy instalment of five percent of the total amount during each harvesting season.

He used to manage recovery of *tacavi* (advance loan) which was given to the cultivators to help them for cultivating land during the natural calamity, in the first season of the subsequent year.¹

The employee called 'Patwari' used to preserve the deeds of lease containing the document showing the amount of revenue fixed for the villagers respectively with other accounts and help government officers to collect the revenue.²

During the Mughal period, the permanent tenants of land were the farmers who had been living in the homesteads for a long period of time. At the time of necessity, the government bought the land of the farmer concerned at a reasonable price. The farmers themselves could buy or sell land. But the new residents who newly settled on the newly reclaimed land and cultivated it did not have tenancy as like as those of the permanent tenants having deeds of lease and documents. At the time of the reclamation of land and getting permanent settlement on it, the local headman had an important role to play. In order to encourage the reclamation of land, the newly acquired land thereby was declared as rent free land for the first year and one-fifth land tax was fixed up in the second year of its cultivation. When the land gradually became cultivable within five years, land tax was fixed as per Govt. rules and regulations.³

In the Mughal revenue system, the Jaigirdar played a very important role. The Jaigirdars were interested in clearing land because it increased their income and the income of the empire. A Jaigirdar was made permanent on the basis of sincerity and honesty. In many cases after the death of a Jaigirdar, his son was appointed Jaigirdar. But the post of a Jaigirdar was not a hereditary one. Jaigirdars, however, could not impose tax at their discretion. Land revenue was assessed on the crops produced. The ownership of land was vested with the state. Subjects were permanent beneficiaries. There was no place of any

intermediary. In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazal mentions that the farmers of Bengal were not cunning or deceptive. Out of their own interest they used to pay off their annual revenue in eight instalments and in this way they became habituated.⁴ In those days the village headmen had sufficient importance, they got allotment of additional land for assisting in the collection of revenue. The headmen were also farmers. It was essential to take the approval of higher authority to cancel headmanship. The power of headmen was unlimited in the newly established village as the primary responsibility of collecting revenue lay on them. They were also judges of the villages and in any sense they were dignified persons. So there was little chance of non-payment of revenue. But if any land kept uncultivated without any natural calamity the revenue should be paid and if the land was not cultivated for several years, it was allotted to other person. If the original owner began to cultivate the land again, his ownership was revived. As a matter of fact, farmers were encouraged to cultivate their land.

The duty of a *Zaigirdar* was not only to collect revenue but also to dig canals, re-excavate canals, excavate estuary of rivers, keep watch for preventing exploitation of the farmers, prevent floods, protect crops from insects and diseases, prevent epidemics of the cows, diseases, maintain peace and order, prevent famine, build roads and high ways, build embankments, maintain drainage of water, give agricultural loan free of interest, supply seeds, impart education and so on. In those days there was a *Dharmagola* (godown for keeping crops) in every *mauza*. A portion of land revenue (in the form of crops) was stored in those godowns for carrying out the above mentioned welfare works. Water tax, road tax, development tax, education tax etc. were not sent to the royal treasury but were preserved in the local treasury of the

godowns. The portion of government due was deducted there from. Considering every thing, the land revenue in Mughal period was minimum; it was generally $\frac{1}{5}$ th to $\frac{1}{10}$ th of the crops produced. It could be paid either in the form of crops or in the form of cash money. The rate of land revenue was flexible.⁵

To help the farmers to increase their production, the facility of irrigation was given. The big canals were navigable and suitable for irrigation throughout the whole year. Net works of canals were created by digging numerous canals so that excess water could not stand on the cultivable land to damage crops. The local volunteers used to dig smaller canals and during the dry season the respective owners of nearby pieces of land would dig the silt of the canals according to the convention and put it on their land. As a result the canals were never silted up and the fertility of land also increased. Every year canals and estuaries of rivers were dug or re-excavated either with the money of the *Dharmagola* (godown) or with voluntary work and because of this, devastating flood was never seen in the country. For the work of digging or re-excavating canals, specialists were engaged.⁶

If necessary the emperor would buy a lot of land in urban areas from the common owners and used it for his own purpose. The emperor bought land even for constructing forts, mosques and cemeteries. It thus appears that the emperor was not the owner of land but only the recipient of revenue. In those days the Zamindar was the government employee who received the commission of 10% of the collected revenue and for maintenance received 1 % as various kinds of taxes. But the Zamindar was not the owner of the land given under his management.

Zamindar is a Persian word which means the manager but not the owner of the land.⁷ During the Mughal reign, it was more important for the rulers to hold the farmer on the land than to oust him from it. In those days the permanent and hereditary ownership of the farmer was admitted even by the emperor. The emperor directed not to oppress the tenant.⁸

During the conflict with the Twelve Bhuiyas – the twelve independent land lords – the Mughal emperor paid compensation for the damage of crops.⁹ From this it appears that the farmers were always busy with cultivation and production of crops. At this not only the farmers but also the empire was benefitted. As a result the farmers led a peaceful life in the Mughal period. The solvent farmers had sufficient dignity in the society. If any Zamindar revolted he was dismissed from Zamindari and was punished.¹⁰

After the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-daullah in the battle of Plassey, Mir Zafar Ali Khan and Mir Kasim became the Nawab respectively. During their tenure, revenue was increased much and the tenants were fully victimized by it.

The East India company got '*Dewani*' of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Mughal emperor Shah Alam in 1765. As a result the company got the power of collecting revenue: Lord Clive, the governor of the company instead of giving the responsibility of collecting revenue upon the employees, appointed a Naib Subahdar Reza Khan was appointed the Nayib Dewan of Bengal and Sitab Ray of Patna.¹¹ Reza Khan and Sitab Ray tortured and oppressed the tenants too much for collecting revenue. Later on in 1770, the power of Reza Khan was seized. The company in the first phase could not conduct the collection of revenue on a definite principle. So the lease was given for one year and then for five years and then

again for ten years. At that time a terrible famine broke out because of the corruption of the officers and natural calamity. About one third of the total population of Bengal died in the famine. Even in such a miserable condition, revenue from the tenants was collected by force. Helping hand was not extended to the suffering people rather excess revenue was collected from them. The sufferings of the tenants knew no bounds.

After 1765, the ten years' settlement was turned into permanent settlement in 1793. As a result of the permanent settlement, Zamindars became owners of the land for ever and farmers lost their ownership of land. In the permanent settlement there were definite ordinances about the Zamindars' duties and rights. But the government ordinance about the rights of the tenants were not, at all clear.

During the Mughal period there was clear mention of the rights of tenants on their land. In those days Zamindars could not evict any tenant from his land, rather it was the duty of a Zamindar to help the tenant in all respects. But in the permanent settlement Zamindars were made undisputed owners of the land. Farmers lost their rights and became tenants. As a result perpetual relation between tenants and Zamindars broke down only on the question of ownership of land.¹²

In the Permanent Settlement system, Zamindars were advised to behave well with the tenants without giving any right to the tenants. It was said Zamindars should not think tenants helpless and they were left at the mercy of Zamindars, if necessary, the government would come forward to protect the right of tenants. The government declared, "Whereas it is the duty of the government to protect the rights of all classes of people, specially those who

are comparatively weak and it is announced without hesitation that the Governor General, if necessary may implement laws to protect the rights of Talukdars and tenants under him and Zamindars are not allowed to oppose it".¹³

Zamindars were asked to write down the rights of tenants in the '*patta*' for the highest tenure of 10 years. Zamindars could offer '*Patta*' to tenants for not more than ten years. In that *Patta* the areas of land and the rate of revenue of the land under the tenants should be written clearly. Claiming revenue more than what was written in the *patta* was declared to be illegal and offensive.¹⁴

Zamindars should not impose any physical torture upon the tenants for collecting revenue, if any of them did so, the tenant had the right to file criminal case against the Zamindar. Laws were passed that Zamindars could not seize land or other property or cows or agricultural instruments. If any Zamindar had any legal claim, he could file civil suit without seizing the property of the tenant. It was the main effort of Cornwallis to establish the Zamindar-tenant relation on the economic basis.¹⁵

Zamindars could not be satisfied with those laws. In the eye of Zamindars tenants were those person whom they could arrest, imprison, inflict physical torture, evict from the homestead – in a word they were to be left at the mercy of Zamindars, they were to be treated as subjects without any right. In the laws of Permanent Settlement, Zamindars were not given arbitrary power. According to law it was punishable offence to arrest subjects or inflict physical torture upon them. Zamindars considered such provisions to be defamatory to their dignity and they started an opposition movement against those laws.

The complain of Zamindars was that as there was no provision of perpetual power given to Zamindars to compel tenants to pay revenue regularly, they became so daring that they were disobeying the order of Zamindars, trying to make the payment of revenue arrear and thus willing the fall of Zamindars. Zamindars argued that if revenue fell arrear the government had a right to realise the arrear revenue by selling the land at once, then why Zamindars should not sell the property of tenants for the same offence. As a matter of fact it was a trick of Zamindars to set aside the "sun-set-law". Zamindars had much local influence. It was not possible for any tenant to challenge it. If any tenants failed to pay the revenue regularly, it might be for other reasons, surely the new law was not responsible for it.

In the face of the pressure and temptation of Zamindars, many district collectors advised the government to accept the proposal of Zamindars. The government did not agree to set aside the "Sun-set-Law".

So without setting aside the original law, an amendment entitled amendment regulation No. 35 was made in 1935 giving Zamindars limited arbitrary power. The main sections of the amendment regulation are as follows: "(1) To collect the arrear revenue the property of the tenants shall be seized. But the seized property shall be sold under the guidance of the local government officer (section 5).

(2) If the revenue is not paid within three days of serving the notice, the Zamindar can apply to the District Judge to arrest the tenant (section 10, 11)

(3) After arresting the tenant through the District Judge, the Zamindar can seize the land (section 12).

(4) If the tenant think the proceedings of the Zamindar illegal, the tenant can file a case against it in the court (Section 18).¹⁶

Zamindars were not satisfied even with these laws because in these laws they got the power to seize the property of the tenant but they did not get the power of selling the property themselves.

They got the right of arresting the tenant but they should get the prior permission of the district Judge. The tenant got the opportunity of challenging the validity of arrest in the court. It was the demand of Zamindars to have full power over tenants. They thought the interference of the government with the Zamindar-tenant relation undesirable. That is tenants would be as like as the personal property of Zamindars. They should be treated as Zamindars liked them to be treated, this is what Zamindars demanded. Their demand was that they were to be declared as the only owner of the land in the Permanent Settlement and so, on what conditions tenants would cultivate land and what would be the relation of Zamindars with tenants would be decided by Zamindars alone and not by the government.

Since 1796, the Zamindar class had been forming a strong opposition to gain all powers. By filing thousands of false cases in the court and thus creating dead lock condition in the courts, by willingly keeping the revenue unpaid, buying own property by auction in the name of other person, not giving possession of the auctioned land to the buyer, instigating tenants against new Zamindars, deteriorating the law and order situation, indulging the robbers and terrorists and in various other ways they exerted a heavy pressure upon the government and created deadlock in the field of administration. At last the government was compelled to accept their unreasonable demand.¹⁷

In 1799, with the regulation No. 7, the Zamindar – tenant relation was radically changed. All the prohibitions imposed upon Zamindars according to regulation No. 17 of 1793, were withdrawn and Zamindars were given arbitrary authority. Several sections of the regulation No. 7 of 1799 are mentioned below:

“(1) The Zamindar can arrest a tenant without prior permission of the government (Subsection 1 of the section 15)

(2) The Zamindar can forfeit the property of the tenant while collecting the arear revenue. The tenant can not challenge it in the court (Subsection 6 of section 15)

(3) While collecting the unpaid revenue, the Zamindar can evict the tenant from his homestead, if necessary.

(4) The Zamindar can force the tenant to attend the Zamindari court. For this he can not file a case in the Criminal Court against the physical torture (subsec 8 of sec 15).”¹⁸

The officials of the company thinking about the right of the tenants withdrew the power of judgement from Zamindars to protect tenants from the oppression of Zamindars.

To observe the activities of Zamindars, at first supervisors and later on collectors were appointed. These may be considered as the better side of the company rule. On the other hand most of the Zamindars were the sons of this soil. No patriotic feeling was found in them. Their only motto was to earn moncy, legally or illegally, whatever it might be. So they never thought about the right of the people of the country or common tenants. Most of the tortures

were committed either by Zamindars or by their officers. For getting the power of oppression, they created pressure upon the government.

The government had nothing to do. At the beginning they could not acquire sufficient knowledge about land administration. They lacked in the knowledge of the native language and they lacked in extra man power. Extra man power was needed to extend their empire because they had not been able to conquer all India till them. So to make the British rule permanent in this country, they needed the Zamindar class as their collaborators and this is why they gave up all principles of humanity and basic human right and in the face of the pressure created by Zamindars they were compelled to implement the regulation No. 7 of 1799. To day in the age of civilization it can not be imagined how Zamindars could place those inhuman demands and how their British lords could act those hateful clauses.

The requirement of money of the company increased because of the fight against Tipu Sultan in the Deccan. So for the convenience of Zamindars to collect the outstanding revenue from tenants, Zamindars were given the right under the clauses of regulation 7 of 1799, to arrest, to seize the crops of their fields, ploughs, cows and other moveable property of tenants without the order of the court or the revenue authority. In that rule the magistrate was empowered to sentence the tenants to imprison or to impose fines on them if they fail to prove their allegation of torture by Zamindars or their employees and to pay compensation to employees of Zamindars.¹⁹ Owing to misuse of this law it became notorious and was called "*Haptam ain*" or notorious law. As a result of arrest of tenants, seizure of their movable property, cattle, crops of the fields, etc., the independent '*khudkasth*' tenants became virtually slaves

of Zamindars. In this law tenants were given the right to file case in the civil court against Zamindars if they unlawfully seize their property and sell the property by auction or illegally evict them from their land in possession. But in most of the cases it was not possible for the poor tenants to get relief in this way.²⁰ In this connection an incident described by Suprakash Ray, some tenants of Sirajganj deposited their original amount of revenue in the court. The Zamindar got a decree against them in the lower court. But the Zamindar's demand did not last in the appeal. It was proved in the court of the District judge that the excess revenue which the Zamindar had demanded from the tenants was unlawful and what they deposited in the Lower Court was the actual revenue.²¹ As the Zamindar lost the case, his employees became furious; they kidnapped one of the witnesses of the tenants on his way back home and hid him. In this respect Mr. Nolams, the S.D.O. of Sirajganj said, "Even after 20 days I can not find out the place where the man has been detained."²² From this it can be realized how difficult it was to file a case in the court against a Zamindar. Zamindar had a lot of money. On the other hand tenants were poor. So it was difficult for tenants to spend money to conduct a case in the court against Zamindar. Besides this many Zamindars had friendship with the magistrates.

So to prevent the misuse of this law, the power of Zamindars to arrest tenants was withdrawn by the regulation No. 5 of 1812. But for collecting the arrear revenue, the power of the Zamindar was retained to seize the property of the tenant and crops in his field if the tenant failed to pay the arrear revenue even after receiving the notice stating the amount of arrear revenue. This law was known as 'Panjam Law'. If that law the tenant was given the right to free his property from seizure by submitting a petition. But with that petition he

had to deposit *zamanat* to file the case against the Zamindar in the Civil Court within 15 days of submission of the petition. If the tenant failed to file the case within the specified period, summons were issued against the tenant and the person standing security.²³ It was about impossible for the illiterate and poor tenant to regain the property once seized by the Zamindar. The fear of the Zamindar and his armed men on one hand and inability of depositing money in the court and spending money for conducting the case on the other hand prevented tenants to go against the oppression of Zamindars. So in almost all cases the order of Zamindars to seize the property of tenants remained unaltered. Mr. Mesbahul Haque has written quoting from the magazine entitled *Tattabodhini*, how cruelly Zamindars oppressed tenants if they could not pay the revenue timely and how cruelly the Zamindars of 19th century oppressed the tenants. Perhaps the Bengali proverb "he who is the protector is the plunderer" might have originated from the torture of Zamindars upon their tenants. Tenants could not pass even a day in peace Zamindars had become the owners of land.

They were always afraid of unforeseen oppression that might befall them at any moment. Zamindars were not satisfied with collecting revenue only. They were determined to plunder all the property of tenants by hook or by crook to make them destitute. Their poverty stricken condition, Skeleton bodies, pale faces, patched clothes nothing could fill the stony heart of Zamindars with pity, nothing could fill their eyes with tears. Besides legal revenue, they gradually tortured tenants to collect various taxes, increased amount of unpaid revenue, increased taxes, subscription for ensuing festivals and so on.²⁴

A list of different kinds of oppressions executed upon tenants by the exploiting class of mediocrities men like Zamindars, *ijardars*, creditors as published in the magazine “*Tattvabodhini*” is given below:²⁵

- (i) whipping and caning;
- (ii) beating with sandals and shoes;
- (iii) rolling bamboos or thick sticks upon the chest of tenants;
- (iv) twisting ears or nose with a piece of broken earthen pot;
- (v) rubbing nose on the ground;
- (vi) bending hands behind the back and pressing with a piece of bamboo;
- (vii) rubbing poison ivy on the body;
- (viii) binding hands and feet with chains;
- (ix) compelling to hold ears and run;
- (x) binding two pieces of split bamboo at one end, placing hand between them and pressing the other end;
- (xi) compelling them to stand placing two feet apart in the scorching sun of the summer and placing bricks on the back and on the hands;
- (xii) immersing into water and throwing water on the body in the sever cold;
- (xiii) detaining into the granary and filling it with water;
- (xiv) binding with a tree or other place and beating;
- (xv) detaining in the granary of paddy in the month of *Bhadra* or *Aswin*;
- (xvi) detaining in the room of lime and spread the smoke of pepper in the room.

The Sirajganj revolution is a remarkable incident in the history of revolution of the farmers of Bengal. The root cause of this revolution is the arbitrary domination, exploitation and oppression of the Zamindar class. Farmers of this region of Pabna were excitedly revolted in 1873 against Zamindar when the newly established Zamindars were crazy to collect excess revenue at their will and conspired against farmers to evict them from their land.^{25(a)} It may be noted that sometime Pabna was under the Natore raj while some time it came under the jurisdiction of the others. However, this revolt exerted influence over the Zamindars of North Bengal nay Zamindars of Bengal and Bihar. As a result of this revolution, British government passed the Bengal Tenancy Act, VIII of 1885. This was the first step in the field of recognition of rights of possession of tenants on the land after the system of Zamindari had been introduced. This law of the right of possession of tenants on the land was very important. Before the implementation of this law there had been another law entitled as the "Law relating to land lords and Tenants Act VII of 1859". Later on it was named as "Bengal Tenancy Act, Act VIII of 1885."²⁶

Because of the principle of land revenue of the company, the old Zamindars were unable to pay revenue. Specially the condition became more acute for the outbreak of famine Yousuf Shahi pargana of Sirajganj Subdivision (at present Sirajganj district) of Pabna district belonged to the Zamindar of Natore. This Pargana was auctioned for arrear revenue. As a result several rich families of different districts bought the estate. These landlord families were:²⁷

- 1) the Tagore Zamindar of Calcutta;

- 2) the Banerjee Zamindar of Dhaka;
- 3) the Sanyal of Salop (In the pseu-do-nym of Bhattacharya)
- 4) the Bhaduri of Projana;
- 5) the Pakrashi of Sthal.

The tenants had been aggrieved for a long time. The new Zamindars adopted various policies for increasing revenue after buying the estates. They introduced new system of survey. Previously one cubit had been equal to 23¾" to 26½" in practice. Later on the new Zamindars tried to introduce the length of measuring one cubit equal to 18". As a result the area of land of tenants decreased. So tenants were aggrieved. In this connection we may quote a record which runs as : "The quarrel arose losing to the purchase, by absent land lords (zamindars) of lands, which formerly belonged to Natore Raj. From the first the relation between the newcomers and Rayots were unfriendly. The Zamindars attempted to enhance rents and also to consolidate customary cesses with rents and dispute arose over the proper length of the measuringt pole".²⁸

At that time as the Road-cess law was announced every where, Zamindars began to take from tenants the agreement of excess amount of rent in the pretext of road cess, by force. The revenue which was only one rupee during the period of Natore Raj was tried to be increased two rupees. The tenants bore witness before the Court that the officers of Zamindars had taken the deeds of agreement from tenants by force. About the cause of the revolt in Pabna, W.W.Hunter in his '*Statistical Account of Bengal, Pabna*' says: "These were the two original causer of the dispute: a high rate of collection as compared with other *Parganas* and an uncertainty as to how far the amount

claimed was due. The third and auxiliary cause is to be found in the violent and lawless character of some of the Zamindars and of the agents of others.”²⁹

The most unbearable taxes which were collected were called ‘*Abwab*’ (extra charges) or extra income. The extra charges were as follows:³⁰

- (i) *Tahury* (The extra payment for the officers) The extra amount of money was collected when the accounts of tenants were finalised at the end of the year.
- (ii) Money collected on the occasion of marriage ceremonies in the houses of Zamindars
- (iii) *Parbani* (Festival) : Tax was collected to meet the expenditure of Puja or worship and other religious festivals of Zamindar houses.
- (iv) School expenses: The money which the Zamindars donated to government schools was collected as tax from tenants
- (v) Pilgrimage expenses: The money spent when Zamindars or the members of their families went for pilgrimage was collected from tenants.
- (vi) Food expenses: The money spent for sending food items to magistrates, was collected from tenants.
- (vii) Village expenses : The money spent to meet all sorts of expenditure incurred for villages was collected from tenants.
- (viii) Postal expenses : The postal tax fixed by the government upon Zamindars was collected from tenants.
- (ix) *Bhiksha* : The money for repayment of loan of Zamindars was collected from tenants.
- (x) Police expenses: The money spent for the attendance of the police in the houses of Zamindars was collected from tenants.
- (xi) Income tax: The income tax which Zamindars had to pay was collected from tenants.

- (xii) **Expense for the feast** : The money required for all kinds of feast was collected from tenants.
- (xiii) *Selami* : When tenants built any house or took any lease of land, money was collected from them.
- (xiv) **Mutation in the rent roll**: While substituting the name of one tenant in place of another, money was collected from him.
- (xv) *Nazrana* (Honorarium) : When Zamindars or their agents went out for collecting revenue tenants had to pay *Nazrana*.

Before the revolt of the tenants of Pabna, besides giving regular taxes, tenants had to pay *Abwab* or additional taxes for the social occasions like *Annaprasan* (the ceremony of giving rice to a child for the first time), *Churakaran* (making a lock of hair uncut on the head), marriage, *Shradhya* (ceremony in honour and for the benefit of dead relatives).³¹

The only objective of the Zamindars was to collect excess revenue. When tenants in general were unable to pay the excess revenue and became the victim of the oppression of Zamindars in different ways, they had no way left for them other than revolt. Whatever might be the future position of the exploited, harassed and oppressed tenants they thought that revolt was inevitable for freedom. The influence of the tenant revolution of Pabana had effects on the Zamindari estates of Rajshahi.

Haranath Ray Choudhury, the Zamindar of Dubalhati, instead of following the existing survey, made a new survey with measuring pole shorter than previous measuring pole to collect excess revenue / rent from tenants. Consequently bitter feeling was created between the Zamindar and his tenants. When tenants protested against it, he did not pay heed to it.

As a result in 1893, about 50 thousand tenants under the leadership of Janab Astan Molla revolted against the Zamindar and barricaded the Zamindar house for three days. There revolted tenants had to face suit in the Court for about 7 years. But it did not bring any fruitful result.³²

Raja Haranath Ray Choudhury wanted to give Astan Molla, the rebel leader, vast rent-free landed property to keep him aloof from the protest movement of the tenants. But he refused to take it for the interest of the tenants. Rather he continued the movement. At last Shyama Sundari and Umasundari, the two wives of Raja Haranath came out of the Zamindar house riding on an elephant and requested the rebel tenants to cooldown the movement. They told that the problems of the tenants would be discussed. With this request the tenant leader Astan Molla, his chief assistant Naru Molla and more than one thousand tenants were sent to the court of the Raja. At last when the merganser of the estate begged pardon to the revolting tenants in the presence of a Govt. officer a compromise was made and the problem were solved thereby . To see such a defeat of the Raja of Dubalhati, the Zamindars of Balihar. Mahadevpur, Kansat Chougram etc. gave up their plan of new surveying and increasing revenue.³³

The mention of another revolt is found in Bilmaria under Lalpur Police Station of the district of Rajshahi (at present Natore). There was the estate of Midnapore Zamindari Company of the English at Bilmaria. In the past the Midnapore Zamindari Company used to plant indigo in this area. The story of their various types of oppression is well known. When the cultivation of indigo was stopped, the Zamindari Company began to oppress the tenants in different ways. More than 60 thousand tenants revolted and stopped paying

revenue. This movement became so severe that even washermen, barbers, cooks all went away leaving the *Kuthi* (house -cum office of the English). One of the leaders of this movement was Sri Someswar Choudhury, a student of Calcutta Medical College. Many rebel tenants including Someswar Choudhury were arrested because of the movement. Finding themselves in an awkward position, the Company was compelled to acquit Someswar Babu and to compromise with the tenants.³⁴

Another protest against the principle of Zamindars and the British Government is found at Natore. An organisation named "Krishak Sammeloni" was formed at Natore. Munshi Muhammad Mahsen Ullah was one of the founders of this Sommelani (assembly).

He not only organised the tenants but also published a Bengali book entitled "*Burir sutā*" in the year 1316 B.S. (i.e., 1909) This book helped the tenants to unite.³⁵ During the contemporary period, a movement was being conducted against the oppression upon tenants by the local Zamindar at Brikutsa, Natore. The leader of this movement was Prabhash Chandra Lahiri. Prabhash Chandra Lahiri was arrested because of this movement. Later on this movement was led by Sri Manas Govinda Sen, a reputed leader of Congress party. When he was also arrested, the leadership of this movement was given by Naimuddin Miah.³⁶ This time another tenant movement was organised cantering Manda. Beside these, movements against Zamindars and the British Government is noticed at Patnitala, Naogaon and Natore. The Mahammadan Association of Naogaon played an important role in these movements.³⁷

Information are also available of another movement against the Zamindar at Singra of Natore. The leadership of this movement was given by Jasimuddin, the teacher of Durmallika Primary School. He founded a peasant association with the deprived peasants. In the Raja and Zamindar dominated district (the then subdivision) of Natore, slaughtering or *Qurbani* of cows during the Eid-ul-Azha festival was prohibited in those days.

Jasimuddin, the most accepted leader started a strong movement against it. He discussed with the administrators of sub-divisional and district levels and made slaughtering cows in the villages and the system of *Qurbani* of cows during the Eid-ul-Azha festival, lawful. In those days *pikes* and *barkandazs* as (foot soldiers) of Zamindars used to snatch away the fruits of poor tenants by force. Even where the Zamindars had enough power they used to cut and take away the trees of helpless tenants. Under the leadership of Jasimuddin, poor and helpless tenants raised protest against this evil system. The Zamindars filed various false suits against Jasimuddin and they also tried to kill him, but they failed to do any harm to Jasimuddin. The Zamindar class made hundreds of efforts and measures to stop the Peasants but failed to do anything effectively against the activities this Peasant Association..³⁸

When the Zamindars failed to control him by means of applying torture and oppression, Ray Bahadur Rajani Kanta, the influential Zamindar of Chougram wanted to offer him a lucrative bait of higher service with better salary (Rs. 200/- of those days) in the office of the Zamindar of Chougram. Besides this they proposed to offer him some rent free land. But he refused to accept anything. He had every sympathy for the peasants and his only aim was to make good of the farmers..³⁹

Muslim tenants could never walk through the streets in the vicinity of the house of the Zamindar wearing shoes or carrying an umbrella over the head. Punishment for violating this order was either death or severe torture.⁴⁰ But there is no evidence as to any protest of such a custom or rule in the jurisdiction of the zamindars.

But it may be noted that they had much control over the tenants. Every Zamindar had his own lathial (armed with sticks) troops. And they collected high rate of revenue from tenants frightening them by showing their strength of lathi (Thick stick made of bamboo). In this way they collected *Abwabs* (illegal cesses) and *nazrana* (illegal gift) from tenants by force. If they refused to give it, they were beaten severely for such effesses.

Milkmen should give milk, fishermen should give fish, barbers should shave, coachmen should carry and shoe makers should give pairs of shoes without any price were some of the accepted norms and principles which were followed within the jurisdiction of almost each and every Zamindar of the time. There were also some prohibition and restrictions imposed on some particular communities. There was protest but no outburst against it.

However the book entitled "*Burirsuta*" (i.e., the cord of the old woman) contained many stories of these type of incidents and protest against these incidents, illegal construction of buildings, digging tanks illegally, cutting trees forcibly, taking he-goats forcibly to sacrifice during the worship, committing rape of beautiful women etc. which were written in the book with dates of occurrence.

From the above discussion, we may come to the conclusion that Zamindar-tenant relation was not at all praiseworthy. Zamindars considered their tenants as their personal property. They did not behave with them humanly although some educational and charitable institutions were established with their patronization and many tenants were educated from these institutions. They were able to improve their condition yet the fate of the tenants remained by and large unchanged.

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The Zamindars of Rajshahi and the British Raj

Pre permanent settlement period and Post Permanent settlement period.

After the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-daullah at the battle of Plassey, Mirzafar Ali Khan ascended the throne of Bengal with the assistance of Lord Clive. At that time a chaotic condition was prevailing in the country and Bengal worst sufferer. Even in such a situation, in 1760, Rani Bhavani was removed from her Zamindari by the conspiracy of Nanda Kumar. There was also a palace revolution in the Natore Raj family. The Nawab of Bengal gave the ownership of the Natore Raj to Gouri Prasad, the son of Devi Prasad. Devi Prasad, one of the family members of the Natore Raj conducted the Zamindari for a few months only ¹. Within a very short time all people were extremely fed up by the oppressive policy of Deviprasad. As he did not pay the revenue regularly it cautioned the Nawab and on this offence he was removed from power and the Zamindari was again given to Rani Bhavani.²

After the defeat of Siraj in the battle of Plassey in 1757, the English had placed Mir Jafar Ali Khan on the *masnad* of Bengal. He could not however enjoy the confidence of the English for long. During his short period of maladministration, the economic condition of the country turned worse and he failed to fulfil the demand of the English. So in 1760 the English dethroned him and installed Mir Kasim, his son-in-law on the throne of Bengal. Unlike Mir Jafar Ali Khan, Mir Kasim was not a stooge in the hands of the East India Company. He directed the native Zamindars to give extra rent for conducting campaign against the English. According to this order of Mir Kashim, the rent of Rani Bhavani was increased to the total amount of Rs. 35,58,485.00³. But the freedom loving temperment of Mir Kasim was not liked by the English and his confrontation on various issues led to the outbreak of the battles of Buxer and Udaynala respectively. Mir Kasim was defeated and ousted

from power. Mir Jafar Ali Khan had occupied the throne again but a clear picture of the then Bengal politics could not emerge till 1765 when the East India Company got the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

Though the English East India Company was gifted with the '*Dewani*' of Bengal, it was difficult for them to collect revenue because they did not have enough man power to supervise the collection perfectly. Moreover they could not understand the language of this country properly and all the more the rules and regulations associated with the system were unknown to them. So they decided to collect revenue through the experienced employees who were sons of this soil.

The management of collection of revenue was entrusted to the native Naib Md. Reza Khan and Sitab Ray. An agent of the company, staying at Murshidabad took account from Md. Reza Khan and Sitab Ray and worked as a liason between the Nawab and the Company. This arrangement was changed in 1769 and a new phase of Bengal history started.⁴ In the face of gradual deterioration of economic condition and consequently collection of revenue of the country, Resident Richard Baker advised to appoint in every district an European supervisor whose duty would be to collect necessary data about revenue and to observe the works of the native revenue officers.⁵ According to it Bouton Rause was appointed as the first supervisor of Rajshahi on 19 December 1769 and he came to Natore.⁶ These supervisors were the predecessors of the present district collectors. The works allotted to them were as follows :

- (i) composing a short history of the district with the description of its economic condition;
- (ii) Enquiring about the revenue, if fixed whimsically;
- (iii) keeping an eye on trade and commerce and activities of revenue collectors;
- (iv) making arrangement for impartial justice⁷

Appointment of these supervisors may be regarded as just. This is because it may be said that illegal collection of revenue would be controlled at least to some extent.

In 1770, according to the instruction of the Court of Directors, the post of Resident in Murshidabad was abolished and in that place two Councils of Revenue were established in Murshidabad and Patna respectively to supervise the works of *Naib Dewans* and Supervisors. But no solution of the old problems was found in the new arrangement. The situation was, however, unfavourable because of the difference of opinion among the three authorities – the Supervisor, the Revenue Council and the *Naib Dewan*. Consequently according to the order of the court, the Controlling Committee of Revenue was established in Calcutta in 1771. On 28 August, 1771, the Court removed Reza Khan and Sitab Ray and instructed to conduct the Dewani administration directly. According to the instruction, the Land Revenue Department was transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta on 11 May, 1772 and the company took over the charge of revenue administration in its own hand.⁸

As a result of such an unstable revenue policy, almost all estates of Zemindars of Bengal were affected adversely. The estate of Rani Bhavani had no exception of this outcome. Reza Khan made settlement with Rani Bhavani of the yearly revenue of Rs.24,51,022.00 for Rajshahi (Natore).⁹

As Rani Bhavani could not pay revenue properly, officers were appointed in Rajshahi estate. In 1768, the whole Zamindari (estate) was divided into 12 parts were respective officer was appointed to conduct the administration. At that time the officers collected the grand total amount of revenue of Rs. 26,94,604.00.¹⁰

The officers were permitted to collect revenue on the contract for one year. The officers oppressed the tenants inhumanly and collected revenue at increased rate and paid revenue to the company properly. The names of two officers are found in the estate of Rani Bhavani – Dulal Ray and Paran Bose. The leases of Bhaturia

and Bhusana were given to Dulal Ray and Paran Bose respectively.¹¹ Because of the collection of excess revenue and the torture of the revenue officers, people were bewildered. Dulal Ray collected much more revenue than what was fixed up by the company Govt. Dulal Ray collected Rs. 17,12,354.00 from Bhaturia Pargana but the revenue fixed by the company was Rs.10,31,276.00¹² Consequently there was much dissatisfaction among the *ryots*. As a result of such arrangement of engaging officers, the future of many big Zamindars of Bengal was sealed.¹³

The only aim of employing employees and *Naib Dewans* was to collect excess revenue. But they were not successful in their effort. Though *Naib Dewans* collected revenue at excessive rate, the company was not much benefited from it because most of the excess money collected by them was embezzled by them. The company doubted that *Naib Dewans* were collecting revenue behind their back. So their work should be supervised because their activities without any supervision was considered unsatisfactory.¹⁴ So Reza Khan and Sitab Ray were removed and the Court of Directors instructed the company to take the Dewani (the duty of collecting revenue) in its own hand. Warren Hastings constituted temporarily the Committee of Circuit consisting of himself and four members of his council.¹⁵

The main object of the company was to collect revenue in excessive rate. But much benefit could not be gained by changing the principle again and again and so they decided to make again the settlement for three years. This three years' settlement was experimental. The three years' settlement of Rajshahi and Purnia was finalised with Rani Bhavani, the Zamindar of Natore under the leadership of Beker, the royal representative of the English in Murshidabad, the three years' settlement for collecting revenue was made in the following rates:¹⁶

- | | | | |
|-----|---------|---|------------------|
| (a) | 1769-70 | - | Rs. 26,01,000.00 |
| (b) | 1770-71 | - | Rs.26,76,000.00 |
| (c) | 1771-72 | - | Rs.27,51,000.00 |

After the settlement was made the Rani was warned that if she failed to pay the revenue properly, she would be deprived of the right of conducting the Zamindari. Rani Bhavani agreed to the proposal of three years' settlement on the condition laid down by the company.¹⁷

Charles William Boton Raus came to Natore on 9 December, 1769 as the supervisor of Rajshahi. He was given the responsibility of supervising revenue collection. He came to Natore at a time when the whole of the region was affected by the great famine of 1770. It was not possible for him to collect revenue fully during the first year. He urged the company to be kind to tenants on the excuse of the famine.¹⁸ During 1769-70 i.e., in the first year, the fixed amount of revenue was Rs.26,01,000.00. Though revenue was not collected fully, the collected amount was Rs.24,38,342.00 and of was collected with much difficulties. Because of the serious drought collection of the full amount of revenue was not possible.

The revenue council got angry with Raus as the collection of revenue in 1770-71 was not more than Rs.21,46,274.00 and it was by and large due to the failure of full payment of revenue by Rani Bhavani. Raus was asked to give the lease of Rani Bhavani's estate to another person. Rani Bhavani informed the company that in the coming financial year she would be able to pay the revenue in full. Though the Rani was given the lease, Raus advised the company to sell the rent free land of the Rani by auction for collecting the arrear revenue.¹⁹ The council accepted the proposal of Rous and gave the order for the lease of the rent free land of the Rani. Of course it was also said that if the Rani wanted to take the lease again through the full payment of revenue, she would be given the lease. When she consented to give Rs. 30,000/- more than the fixed revenue, she was given the lease. During 1772 the total amount of Rs. 1,58,161/- remained outstanding.²⁰ Because of the famine, Rani Bhavani could not collect revenue from the tenants properly and she could not satisfy the company. The company tried to collect revenue through the *Najai* system

(non-realization system). The description of collecting revenue by the company up to 1768-72 is given below.²¹

(a)	1768-69	-	Rs. 26,94,602.00
(b)	1769-70	-	Rs. 24,38,342.00
(c)	1770-71	-	Rs. 21,46,247.00
(d)	1771-72	-	Rs. 26,12,391.00

The description of the amount of revenue fixed and the amount of revenue collected during the three years' settlement is also stated below.²²

Year	The amount of revenue fixed	The amount of revenue collected
1769-70	Rs. 26,01,000/-	Rs. 24,38,342/-
1770-71	Rs. 26,76,000/-	Rs. 21,46,471/-
1771-72	Rs. 27,51,000/-	Rs. 26,12,391/-

From the above mentioned data it may be guessed that the company did not show any mercy to collect the high rate of revenue even during the disastrous famine when $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total population died and many families were extinct. It is obvious that if they did not collect revenue at a very high rate, it was not possible for them to collect so much revenue from those who were alive. It can also be guessed easily that Rani Bhavani, too, collected excess revenue because of the pressure and obligation of the company. Not only the officials of the English company but also a class of greedy collaborators like the Naib Dewan of Bengal took part in the inhuman torture upon the tenants of this country. They became the owner of vast property by plundering the wealth of the people of this country.²³

After Cartier, Lord Warran Hastings took over the charge of the Governorship of Bengal on 13 April, 1772. After taking over the power he made some new experiments of the revenue administration. First of all he abolished the post of *Naib Dewan* and virtually the company itself was declared as the real *Dewan*. The

post of the supervisor was abolished and a collector was appointed in each district. He established a Civil Court and a Criminal Court in each district. The foundation of district administration was laid down in 1772 during the tenure of Warren Hastings.²⁴

In the past Zamindars Judged civil and criminal cases and they had their own prisons respectively and in the name of justice they put many people in the prison illegally by unfair trial. On 15 august, 1772, the judicial power of Zamindars was withdrawn.²⁵

One of the objectives of Warren Hastings was to collect revenue from Zamindars strictly. He formed a committee named the Committee of Circuit.²⁶ The main function of this committee was to travel from *pargana* to *pargana* and finalise long term (for five years) settlement of lease with Zamindars. The committee first went to Nadia and then to Krishnanagar. Revenue was fixed for Raja Krishnachandra and he was informed that his Zamindari (estate) would be given to another person if he failed to pay the revenue assigned to him. In this connection it may be mentioned that for the fall of Siraj-ud-daulah Raja Krishna chandra met Clive in Calcutta to make all plans. After the fall of Siraj-ud-daulah in the battle of Plassey Clive conferred on him the title of 'Raja Bahadur' and presented him a dozen of guns used in the battle of Plassey.²⁷ When the battle of Plassey was over, he raised up his two hands and blessed the English. But when he heard the word of his removal from his estate, he was at a loss. The members of the committee went from Nadia to Kashim Bazar and from there to Rajshahi. After discussion, the Rani was given lease for five years.

The revenue for five years was fixed at Rs. 52,81,997.00. The lease of *Purbabhog* (the eastern side) was also given to the Rani and the revenue for five years was fixed at Rs. 8,95,545.00. But it was not possible for the Rani to pay the revenue thus decided. Rani also could not pay the revenue of the three years term

settled previously. A list of fixed revenue, collected revenue and arrear revenue is given below.²⁸

District	Mahals	Year	Demand (Rs.)	Collection (Rs.)	Balance (Rs.)
Rajshahi	Bhaturia	1202	6,83,887.00	4,88,590.00	1,95,297.00
		1203	6,43,508.00	4,38,805.00	2,04,703.00
		1204	5,83,295.00	4,24,304.00	
Murshida	Neez	1202	2,40,476.00	2,21,090.00	19,386.00
	Chakla	1203	2,25,507.00	1,97,099.00	28,608.00
	Rajshahi	1204	1,43,796.00	84,287.00	59,509.00
Madia	Shajeal	1202	1,11,951.00	1,03,346.00	8,605.00
		1203	1,29,236.00	1,03,305.00	26,030.00
		1204	1,29,236.00	1,07,346.00	21,880.00
Jessore	Bhusana	1202	3,28,986.00	2,82,736.00	46,249.00
		1203	2,84,118.00	1,70,312.00	1,13,805.00
		1204	2,84,118.00	2,05,934.00	78,183.00
Total	1202 to 1204		37,88,320.00	28,27,059.00	9,61,260

The Rani hoped that though the three years plan failed, she would be successful by this time. But it was not possible for her to pay the revenue properly. As a result, the Revenue Council took the responsibility of collecting revenue in its own hand. At that time it was directed to stop the ownership of the Rani. For collecting revenue the company appointed Dulal Ray 'Sazawal' or Revenue collecting officer. Even after this arrangement, in 1774, the outstanding revenue was rupees eleven lakhs. It was decided to sell some *mahals* of the Rani. In 1774, the Zamindari (estate) of the Rani was leased out to Dulal Ray Also in 1775-76 and in 1776-77 the estate was leased out to Dulal Ray. Dulal Ray and his associate Paran Bose began to collect revenue mercilessly by means of untold oppression upon the people.

Rani Bhavani applied for the ownership of her estate but failed. Because of the inhuman torture of Dulal Ray, about five hundred tenants went to Calcutta on foot and complained against Dulal Ray, the *ijardar*.²⁹ At last after different disputes and arguments, the *ijardarship* of Dulal Ray was cancelled and Rani Bhavani regained

her Zamindari (estate). This time Ramkrishna, son of the Rani signed for Rani Bhavani the agreement of the last two years.³⁰ Again on 5 February, 1777 Rani Bhavani failed to pay Rs. 2,70,002.00 as the revenue of the last year of the 5 years (for the eastern part).³¹

Later on the company decided to lease out the estate for a short period. The court of Directors directed to collect revenue through the Zamindar and the Talukdar. If any Zamindar failed to conduct the Zamindari (estate) properly, either a salaried *Sazowals* or a member of the company would be appointed there. William Hosia was sent having given the responsibility of Bhaturia, Bhusana and Bajemahal. William Hosia established his head office at Natore. He came to Natore on 14 April, 1777. He sent for the chief officers of Rani Bhavani and wanted to know about the accounts. He warned that from 14 August, 1777, he would conduct the administration of Bhaturia, Bhusana and Bajimahahal which had been conducted by Rani Bhavani previously. To run the administration properly William Hosia appointed Lalaram *Chauth* as his Dewan.³² He appointed *Sazowals* at different centres of the Zamindari (estate). About 27 *Sazowals* were appointed in the eastern region.³³ The company was not benefited much by appointing *Sazowals*. Under the instruction of Hosia, amount of revenue collected in the eastern region i.e., Rajshahi in 1777-78 was not more than Rs. 19,00,000.00 in total.

The deficit payment of the Rani in three years was less than what was incurred by Hosia in one year.³⁴

In 1781, Hastings formed a Revenue Committee consisting of 4 members.³⁵ The main function of the Committee was to collect revenue and to decide the principle for the collection of revenue. The Committee directed the Zamindars and Talukdars to deposit the fixed amount of revenue in the treasury situated in Calcutta properly. In 1781-82 the revenue of the eastern region was fixed Rs. 25 lakhs. In 1781, to make the agreement of lease, Ramkishore, the Dewan of Rani Bhavani

was sent for. As the Dewan was late to make the agreement, the agreement of lease of the Zamindari (estate) of Rani Bhavani was made with another person named Nandalal at the yearly revenue of 25 lakh and 50 thousand. As a result Rani Bhavani lost the ownership of the eastern region of her Zamindari (estate) for the time being. On the other hand the employees of Rani Bhavani helped Nandalal in all respects. They gave Nandalal all papers relating to the conduction of Zamindari (estate). After gaining the responsibility of the Zamindari (estate), Nandalal established his Sadar Katchary (head office) at Amin Bazar.³⁶ He appointed subordinate *ijardars* for the convenience of work in the important parganas and appointed *nayeb*s in the less important parganas. He appointed Nanda Kishore Moitra, Chakladar for the whole of Rajshahi Division. He directed the subordinate *ijaradars* and *naibs* to deposit the revenue to Nanda Kishore, the Chakladar.

Similar arrangement was made for Bhaturia, Bhusana and Bajemahal. For conducting the administration of the whole Zamindari (estate), *ijaradar* Nandalal appointed Lokenath as *Sazawals*. But in spite of doing all these, the revenue of Rs.60698.00 fell arrear.³⁷ During the second year, the amount of arrear of revenue stood Rs.1,52,685.00. In July, 1782 the arrear stood Rs.1,86,079.00 At last the amount of arrear revenue stood Rs.3,87,445.00³⁸ At the end of 1781-82, the amount of arrear revenue stood Rs. 4,56,935.00.³⁹ This time he was able to pay only Rs.21 lakhs. Nandalal paid less amount of 2 lakh than what was paid by Rani Bhavani. He agreed to pay less amount of Rs. 3 lakhs and 50 thousands than what was agreed by Rani Bhavani. Considering all these the agreement with Nandalal for 1782-83 was cancelled. To collect the outstanding revenue from Nandalal his house in Murshidabad was sold by auction.⁴⁰

After cancelling the agreement of Nandalal the Zamindari (estate) of the eastern region of Rajshahi was divided into three parts.⁴¹

Only three persons came forward to take lease of the estate, they were Dulal Ray, Paran Bose and Ganga Prasad, the son of Gouriprasad. Judging their past

activities, their proposal was rejected. Later on three Sazowals were appointed for three divisions.

The list of the Sazowals and the amount of revenue fixed are given below:⁴²

Names of the Sazawals	Names of the regions	Amount of revenue fixed
(i) Jagu Mohan Ray	Rajshahi	Rs. 8,17,952.00 and 7 <i>anas</i>
(ii) Paran Bose	Bhaturia	Rs. 9,57,760.00 and 11 <i>anas</i>
(iii) Rupram	Bhusana and Bajemahal	Rs. 7,59,936.00 and 7 <i>anas</i>
	Total	Rs. 25,35,649.00 and 9 <i>anas</i>

Mr. Ivllion was given the responsibility to supervise the works of the *Sazowals* of the three divisions. But this time again it was seen in 1788 that the arrear revenue remained Rs. 2,96,572.00. After the failure of the three Sazowals, the settlement on lease was introduced again. The lease of Rajshahi was given for Rs. 8 lakhs on condition of joint agreement signed by some interested persons like Balaram Sharma, Jaynarayan Sen, Rudranarayan sen, Ramkanta Sharma and Kamal Choudhury. Similarly the settlement on lease was made for Bhusana, Bajemahal and Bhaturia. But in 1783, the arrear stood more than Rs. 2 lakhs. Afterwards for the year 1785, Hastings made settlement of lease again with Rani Bhavani for Rs. 24,00,000.00. In 1785-86 the arrear was Rs. 36,107.00. To collect the arrear revenue Pargana Sahujian was sold to another person by auction.⁴³

The company changed the principle of collecting revenue frequently and collected excess revenue without any survey and only because of this, Rani Bhavani could not pay the revenue properly. Beside this the other Zamindars of Rajshahi had to face the same problems as Rani Bhavani had to face. The situation became more serious at the time the famine broke out in 1770. Even after the famine was over, it was not possible to collect revenue as per direction and agreement. Moreover the revolt of Fakirs and Sanyasis had been still continuing. Consequently farmers

suffered from insecurity and could not pay attention to produce crops. Besides these, people were extremely annoyed with the torture of the dishonest employees of the company and collaborators of the country. For these reasons not only Rani Bhavani but also nearby *ijaradars* could not pay revenue properly. Maharaja Ramakanta faced various troubles in his time and he was even imprisoned by the company Govt. for his failure of payment.^{43a}

As like as the Natore Raj family, the other Zamindars also sustained a loss as a result of the rule of the English East Company. Among these the Zamindari estate of Nadia, Dinajpur and Burdwan estates are worth mentioning.

The English rule caused much harmful effect on Nadia Zamindari (estate). It appears from the available data that during the tenure of Raja Shibchandra, the Zamindar of Nadia Raj family, Pargana Kujebpur was sold by auction because revenue was not paid per expectation and agreement.⁴⁴

The English rule caused much harmful effect on Nadia Zamindari (estate). It appears from the available source that during the tenure of Raja Shibchandra, the Zemindar of Nadia Ray family, pargana kujebpur was sold by auction because revenue was not paid properly.⁴⁵

After Shibchandra, Iswarchandra, his son inherited the Zamindari (estate). The Company made 10 years' settlement with him from 1197 to 1206 B.S. (i.e., 1790 to 1799)

The revenue was fixed Rs. 84,602.00 for the first year. During 1206 B.S. i.e., 1799. the revenue was increased and was fixed Rs. 8,51,512.00. Later on, the 10 years' Settlement was converted into Permanent Settlement. Because of too much increase of revenue, it was not possible for Iswar Chandra to pay the revenue in time. As a result, the Zamindari (estate) started to be sold by auction. Girish Chandra, the son of Iswar Chandra, too, could not pay the revenue properly and as a result,

the Zamindari started to be sold by auction.⁴⁶ It may be assumed from the data available that the Zamindari (estate) started to decline since the tenure of Krishna Chandra and it continued to the tenure of his successors. The influence and dignity of the Zamindari (estate) started to decline because of insolvency. Like Natore Zamindari (estate), this Zamindari (estate), too, endured almost in a dead like condition.

Dinajpur Raj family of Bengal had another large Zamindari (estate). Too much revenue was also fixed on the estate of this Raj family. It was not possible for this Raj family to pay the excess amount of revenue and soon the Raj family began to suffer from economic crisis and as a result revenue fell arrear which could not be paid off and the estate started decline.

The Burdwan Zemindari (estate) also sustained a loss as a result of the English rule. In 1761 the revenue of Burdwan estate was increased from Rs.28 lakhs to Rs.30 lakhs by the English. An excess amount of Rs. 2.5 lakhs was added to the amount of revenue to maintain the military. In 1764 the revenue was increased again and it was fixed to Rs. 36,29,789.00 It was not possible for the Raja of Burdwan to pay off the increased amount of revenue and as a result the Zamindari (estate) had to face great difficulty.⁴⁷

The above story records a shocking picture of the revenue policy of the East India Company Govt. which only intended to collect excess amount of revenue without bothering about the condition of the people or the capacity of the respective Zamindar. The Company Govt. had no concern about the development of the Zamindari rather to pressurise for collection as much as was possible. The net result was as may be expected. This policy not only affected the future of the Zamindari but also precipitated the process of decline.

Though the Zamindaris (estates) of Dubalhati, Tahirpur and Puthia were established before the establishment of Natore Zamindari (estate), they were not as

large as that of Natore. No authentic and acceptable data are available about the effect of the rule of the English upon these Zamindar families. But it is noteworthy that rise and fall of these Zamindaris were connected with the consolidation of the company Govt. during the period under consideration.

Dighapatia Raj family faced great difficulty after the English had gained **Dewani**. It is a fact that these was the growth of the zamindari at the cost of the decline of the Natore Raj. The members of this family had to face economic crisis during the famine of 1770. but they could manage the situation by various means including selling the personal property. In our previous study we have shown how they could maintain their Zamindari till its abolition in 1951 by the Acquisition Act of the Govt. It is also a fact that the traditional Zamindar families of Rajshahi could not survive at any cost and a new development was the emergence of some petty Zamindars who were either service holder or businessmen and had the means to purchase the whole or a part of the Zamindaris in any favourable circumstances.

It may be said in conclusion that British revenue policy did not bring any welfare for the Zamindars or the people of Rajshahi nay Bengal rather because of their revenue policy, large Zamindars had to sustain loss and common people had to pay excess revenue. The great famine of 1770 was also one of the reasons of such a situation. If they did not stock food and face the famine by importing food from abroad, the famine would not have been so dreadful as it was experienced.

If the cause of this danger be analysed, it appears that three issues interacted together- (a) inexperience of the company to collect revenue, (b) eagerness of the Company to collect excessive revenue, and inability of the common people to pay revenue on account of the famine. As a result of the British rule, the large Zamindaris (estates) were ruined and small Zamindaris (estates) emerged.

Notes and references

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18. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit.* p. 82.
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21. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 60.
22. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit*, pp. 83-84.
23. Skuprakash Ray, *Bharater Krishak Bidraha O Ganatantrik Sangram*, Calcutta : 1980, p. 12.
24. Cited in Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit*. p. 85.
25. Md. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit*, p. 85; Hastings took a good step by withdrawing the Judicial power of Zamindars. If the judicial powers of Zamindars were not withdrawn, subjects would have been the victims of much more torture. Subjects were tortured even after the withdrawal of the judicial powers of Zamindars.
26. Warren Hastings appointed this committee with 4 members : Middleton, Daker, Lawrence and Graham.
27. Cited in Md. Moksudur rahman, *op. cit*. p. 65.
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30. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit*, p. 91.
31. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 96.
32. Loc. cit.
33. For detail list of the Sazawals see, A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, pp. 132-133.
34. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 128.
35. David Enderson was the *Chairman* and member was Jarsur, Sannual Kartar, Charls Crokts.
36. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 139; Aminbazar was situated near Murshidabad town.
37. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 140.
38. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 145.
39. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 147.

40. Moksudur Rahman, *op. cit*, p. 98.
41. Three Divisions are (a) Rajshahi Sadar (B) Bhaturia (C) Bhusana and Baja Mahals.
42. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, p. 150.
43. A.B.M. Mahmood, *op. cit*, pp. 168-69.
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44. Kalinath Choudhury, *op. cit*, p.177.
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Decline of the Zamindaris

The Zamindari system introduced by the East India Company had been operative for a long time. Zamindars conducted Zamindaris (estates) for roughly about 158 years with both credit and crises. Though there were various contributions of Zamindars in the socio-economic development of the country, their inhuman exploitation and torture upon their tenants during their tenure have tainted the pages of the history of this sub-continent.

Tenants also started various opposition movements. As a result of such movements not only Zamindars but also their masters i.e. the British Government were gradually compelled to accept their demands and passed various reformative laws. Common tenants reestablished their lost rights upon their land through struggle. But that was the end of the drama of the exploitation and torture of the Zamindars compelled the common tenants to organise protests for the abolition of the Zamindari (land lordship). At last exploited, deprived and tortured tenants became victorious and the Zamindari system was abolished.

If the causes of abolition of the Zamindari system are analysed, it may be found that the Zamindari was not abolished for a single cause. There were different causes behind it. Many Zamindaris were damaged by family quarrel and conflict, which may be the internal crises or factors while others declined because of the British policy and the protest movements of the peasants. The second one may be treated as the external factors.

Among the internal factors the most important were the family feuds leading to court cases and intervention of the legal authorities of India. Law suits were filed in the law courts against one another and thus the financial burden was to be borne by the estate treasury. Beside these the Zamindars spent money extravagantly for luxury and comfort. As a result many Zamindars had to lose their Zamindaris (estates) and depended on the charity of others. Here the condition of Puthia Raj family may be cited as an example. One may experience here how in the absence of Vairabendra, the Raja of Puthia Raj family, the members of his family had to depend on the monthly grant and charity of the Raja of Dighapatia and Saratsundari,¹ one of the partners of the Puthia Raj family. This was not at all a good sign for the prospect of the Zamindari concerned.

Because of the family conflict of the Raja of Natore, Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani had lost their estate and Deviprasad possessed it as a consequence.² Deviprasad occupied all the property of the said Rani. Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani went to Murshidabad empty handed. Again when Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani regained the Zamindari (estate), Deviprasad had to leave the house of the Raja and the estate. It may be said that huge loss was sustained by the estate on account of the transfer of power. This is because the employees of Deviprasad did not go empty handed while they left the Zamindar house. It is assumed that they took away all the money and movable assets which had been saved by Ramkanta and Rani Bhavani over the ages. Again after regaining the estate, Rani Bhavani had to face different problems. She could spend money to help her subjects during the famine if she had sufficient means in her hand. Again on the other hand Deviprasad and his inheritors lost the estate.

Due to the conflict among themselves, there were law suits and huge amount of money was to be spent from the treasury. As a result every Zamindari (estate) had to fall in crises and later on this caused their decline and downfall.

Situation changed when East India Company got Dewani (stewardship) of Bengal in 1765 from Shah Alam, the emperor of Delhi. They fixed revenue at a high rate and leased out estates to Zamindars. Zamindars also began to collect revenue from tenants at an increased rate. Fakirs (muslim saints) and Sanyasis (Hindu saints) were the first to protest against the collection of revenue fixed and collected on high rate. They could not admit the domination of the British too. Fakirs and Sanyasis attacked Zamindars because they helped the British. Hastings, the Governor General was the first man to name this peasant revolt as "Sanyasi Revolt"³ This revolt or uprising as is now known is said to have started roughly in 1763 against the misrule and exploitation of the East India Company, their agents namely the Zamindars and money lenders. This protest continued from 1763 to 1800.⁴ In 1659 during the regime of Shah Suja, the Subahdar (Provincial Governor) of Bengal. Fakirs (saints) were given special privileges and they got fallow land at various places as gift and had the privilege to cultivate lands. Though their profession was cultivation, their dress as well as their behaviour were as like Fakirs or Sanyasis⁵. They revolted when they were deprived of their rights and privileges during the reign of the company. They organised in a group and began to plunder the food grains hoarded in the store houses by Zamindars and money lenders who collaborated with the British. As a result there was alarming deterioration of law and order in the region. On the other hand because of the exploitation and oppression of Zamindari and money lenders and also the stepmotherly policy and attitude of the employees of the British, a terrible

famine broke out in Bengal. This famine killed one third of the total population of Bengal.⁶ As a result of the famine tenants, poor people and others suffered terribly but they had to pay revenue entirely and they were not exempted from paying current and arrear revenue and nothing remained unpaid.⁷

In these circumstances Fakirs and Sanyasis revolted and starvation forced them to plunder the houses of Zamindars and money lenders. In this plundering the local farmers helped them. Their number increased up to fifty thousands.⁸

Fakirs attacked the *kuthi* (office-cum-residence of the English) of Rampur Boalia (Rajshahi), kidnapped Mr. Renet an officer of the *Kuthi* and later on killed him. Next year in 1764, they plundered the *kuthi* of Rampur Boalia. Within a few days Fakirs spread their influence over the whole of North Bengal.⁹

In 1780 Shah Majnu demanded Rs. 50,000.00 from Sri Krishna Choudhury, the Zamindar of Karai of the district of Bogra and they declared that if they were paid the demanded money, Fakirs would commit robbery in their house. Out of fear Sri Krishna Choudhury, the Zamindar fled away to the eastern side of the river Brahmaputra with his family.¹⁰ In January, 1772, the rebels, under the leadership of Majnu, plundered the wealth of the Zamindar, the tyrant rich people and the followers of the British of Natore region and punished the collaborators of the British.¹¹

Though this rebellion was unsuccessful, yet it may be considered as the first organised protest against the exploitation of the British Raj and its agents of India. This protest no doubt encourage the after generation for fight against the colonial Government in the subsequent period.

In 1772, Mounshio Luis Bornad, a French merchant first started indigo cultivation in this country. On 1 November, 1788, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General declared in London that indigo of Bengal would be able to meet the demand of that item in the European market. Plenty of plants producing blue colour grew in the Indian subcontinent including Bengal and this blue colour (i.e. indigo) was exported to different parts of the world like England, France, Germany, Greece and Rome.¹²

The indigo of Bengal had sufficient demand in the world market.¹³ Since the demand of indigo increased in England, many Europeans came to this country to deal in indigo. Even the high officials of the company resigned their service and started indigo business. For the extensive business of indigo, the Europeans began to give advance to the farmers for the cultivation of this commodity. As a result of taking advance the farmers suffered serious economic loss. The indigo planters would give a small amount of advance money to farmers and compelled them to sign a deed of contract written according to the will of the indigo planters. According to this, he would have to cultivate indigo for them until his death. According to the 'Deed of Contract' farmers had to repay the advance money from the money out of his production and sale. But the conditions of the contract were so unfavorable that in almost all cases farmers could never repay their loans. And according to the conditions of the contract farmers were bound to cultivate indigo for the subsequent years. If the loan was not paid off, farmers had to cultivate indigo in their best land hereditarily. Advance taking farmers had to sell their indigo to the indigo planters at a price dictated by them.¹⁴

As a result of cultivating indigo the financial condition of farmers turned bad to worse. The wives and daughters of farmers from had to work at

Neelkuthi for the whole night. The disobedient farmers were brought to the *Neelkuthi* and were tortured inhumanly. They were beaten with “*Shyamchand*” (a cane covered with cow-skin).¹⁵ The rape of women was a very common feature in the *Neelkuthi*.¹⁶

Farmers could not tolerate the torture of the European indigo planters and revolted in 1859-60 which is known as the Indigo Revolt in Indian History.¹⁷

Another spontaneous outburst against the British Government and their agents can, however, be experienced in the Peasant Protest Movement of Pabna which started in 1873 against the excessive imposition of land taxes on the peasants of that region.¹⁸ This revolt was so terrible that Zamindars left their houses and took shelter at Pabna town. The houses of the Zamindars and their supporters were plundered and burnt to ashes. In the light of the gravity of this incident, it appears that the protest of the peasant of this stature was a dangerous move and the crises of Bengal Zamindari system was being fairly exposed.

It may be noted that the Government passed the Tenancy Act of 1885¹⁹ and it was partially a recognition of the rights of the tenants. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 had given enough power and rights to the Bengal Zamindars. But it was the first time in history when by virtue of such a movement, the Government was compelled to the Zamindars to reduce the tax rate and submitted to the demands of the peasants. The impact of this Pabna Movement on the Zamindars of Rajshahi in general that they brought down the amount of payable taxes and the excess imposition became out of question. There were law suits and in many cases the tenants got the verdict

in their favour. The net result from the interest of the Zamindars was that their image and dignity got stunted and the tenants in general lost confidence on them. The most significant result was that it became one of the factors that accelerated the process of the decline of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi.

After the Pabna Movement and its effects on the Zamindars of the Rajshahi region, a new phase started with the prominence of a few Muslim leaders who took up the cause of the Muslim peasants of the region. It may be noted that these leaders had to take steps against the Hindu Zamindars who are said to have exploited the Muslim peasants over the ages. It is a fact that the region under consideration had about 80% of the peasants from the Muslim community while most of the Zamindars belonged to the Hindu community.²⁰

But the protest of the Muslim leaders for the cause of the peasants, particularly of the Muslim peasants could not come to the limelight of Indian History before the beginning of the 20th Century. The name of A.K.M.Fazlul Haque in this respect is worthy of mention. It is a fact that the *Praja Andolan* (Peasant Movement) was organised against the exploitation of the Zamindar of Barisal. Incidentally, the Zamindar of Chougram had purchased a Zamindari of Sahabajpur of Barisal. It is likely that there was a movement against the exploitation of this type of Zamindar who might have tortured the Peasants like other fellow Zamindars of Bengal. Since the voice of the protest was same it is probable that A.K.M.Fazlul Haque and his followers took the cause of the peasants against the Zamindars of Barisal.²¹

Although no specific event or movement can be located for the decline of the Zamindars of Rajshahi, it is probable that before the passing of the Land Acquisition and Tenant Act of 1951, there were certain issues and

movement organised by the peasants which not only drew the attention of the colonial Government but also convinced them to consider the demands of the peasants. From the outbursts of the Faraizis, down to the *Tebhaga* Movement of 1946-47 the protest history of the Bengal peasants speaks the same story of Indian history. There was nothing but a protest against the oppression and torture of the zamindars and the issues of the peasants ignited all the victims under the circumstances. The appointment of the Flood Commission in 1940 was a measure to look after and consider the demands of the peasants of Bengal and the sufferers of the Rajshahi region must have a voice of protest along with their fellowmen. Since all peasants without any distinction of caste and religion united together against victimisation, the days and time of the Bengal Zamindars were sealed and their dominance ended in 1951 with the Land Acquisition and Tenant Act. The Rajshahi Zamindars who had some common crises and allegations, we have stated above seem to have no alternative but to respond to the call of the destiny in the long run.

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- 3 Suprakash Ray, *Bharater Krishak Bidraha O Gamatantrik Sangram*, Calcutta, 1980, p. 21.
- 4 Mesbahul Haque, *Plassey Juddhottar Muslim Samaj O Nilbidraha*, Dhaka, 1987, pp. 110-111.
- 5 Masbahul Haque. op cit., p. 21.
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- 15 Samachand is a troye of stick which covered by Lather.
- 16 Ibne Golam Samad, op cit., p. 29.

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Conclusion

In all the above chapters there is an attempt to analyse various aspects of the zamindars of Rajshahi and the main attention has been given to record the origin emergence of the Zamindaris and side by side the role of the Zamindars in the contemporary socio-economic and political life during the colonial period.

Fact remains that the Zamindars played an important role in the management of land revenue. They played a crucial role in this capacity during the precolonial period up to the time of the *Nawab*. Some of Zamindaris of Rajshahi district had been active before the formation of the Bengal *Subah* under Murshid Kuli Khan . We have shown in our study that the Zamindars of Dubalhati were the oldest one of the Zamindars of the district of Rajshahi and later on Zamindaris of Taherpur, Puthia and Balihar came into existence in course of time. During the time of Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan as has been stated, the Zamindaris of Natore and Dighapatia enjoyed the blessings of the Nawab (i.e. Murshid Kuli Khan) and as the records show, one Raghunandan was the founder of Natore Raj and said to have served under Murshid Kuli Khan. Murshid Kuli Khan had offered Zamindaris to the brother of Raghunandan. It may be noted that Raghunandan's brother Ramjiban took the possession of the Zamindaris on behalf of Raghunandan. Apart from these, there were many other small Zamindaris in Rajshahi namely Chougram family, Karachmaria Zamindar family, the Bishi family of Zoari, Choudhury and Ray Bahadur family of Kashimpur, the Choudhury family of Natore, the Zamindar family of Chamari and so on.

A significant change in the Zamindari management can be found after the grant of the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 to the East India Company. They started the tenure of the period for one year, five years and ten years respectively. Because of the new rule of the company, the Zamindars faced various

difficulties. The company hiked up the revenue rate and made various strict regulations. At this stage many old Zamindars failed to pay their revenues and consequently their Zamindaris were subject to auction, like other famous Zamindars of Bengal. Like other Zamindars, as the situation prevailed, the Zamindars of Natore began to be insignificant and the Zamindars were grappled with many problems. The Company was also in confusion regarding the collection of revenue and so it wanted to introduce a new land settlement which got its shape in 1793, when Bengal experimented a new land settlement named as Permanent Settlement. Before this settlement the owners of the land were the farmers. The farmers lost the ownership of land because of this settlement and the Zamindars became the owners of the land. In the pre-Mughal period, even in the period of the Nawabs, the farmers were the owner of land. The Zamindars were only assigned the right as collectors of revenues from them. The Zamindars collected revenues in a fixed rate, kept their share and paid the rest to the government. Because of the starting of the Permanent Settlement in 1793, the farmers lost their ownership, thus the Zamindars became the owner of land on behalf of the company government. Farmers lost their interest for better production and the situation of Rajshahi was not different.

The company had thought of two fold benefits from this settlement. They would not have to spend for the development of land and on the other hand they would get a set of obedient class to the British rule. This policy did not improve the fortune of the peasants rather intensified the hatred between the Zamindars and their tenants. In the case of Rajshahi it has been shown how this policy deteriorated the Zamindars tenant relation and in the long run became a cause of the fall of the Zamindars. Experiment failed because being owner of land, the Zamindars did not spend any initiative for the development of land. But the second motive of the company government had a meaning and brought favourable result for its future. The Zamindars of Bengal under the permanent settlement became the most obedient economic class to the British.

Because of the grant of Dewani and after the creation of the new Zamindars, the life of the cultivators became more miserable than ever. In fact after the battle of Plassey a political power of India was transferred to the British. After the Dewani, the company servants became involved in different type of share business. They earned a lot of money through illegal methods but the Zamindars of Bengal nay of Rajshahi became helpless witnesses of the situation. How this new economic policy affected the peasantry and their immediate bosses i.e. the zamindars has been elaborately discussed in the chapters VI and VII of the dissertation.

But the situation did not pass so easily as may be expected. A significant phase started in the history of Rajshahi when unlike other Zamindars of Bengal some of them specially those of Natore and Puthia came forward to save the victims of their region. But on the question of some privileges like *tacavi* or advance loan during the crisis period, under the company Government deprived the age-long privilege, whenever it is, of the zamindars who could not stand by the peasants in this crisis moment.

It appears from the present study that the Zamindar not only oppressed the tenants but also had a role for the cause of the socio-economic development of the region. At first Zamindars of almost all families were not initially interested in education, but in course of time a good number of their sons and daughters became interested in the pursuit of knowledge. It should especially be mentioned here the name of Sir Jadunath Sarkar of village Karachmaria under Singra Police Station He was not only a great historian but also the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University afterwards. Pramathnath Bishi of Joari Bishi family was a famous writer. In the chapter V of "Minor Zamindars" detailed History of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Pramathnath Bishi and Krishnendra Ray has been highlighted. Raja Jagadindranath of Natore Raj family was a learned man. He wrote the preface of a number of

books. Besides, he was the editor of the magazines ‘*Manasi*’ and ‘*Marmabani*’ published from Calcutta. Raja Krishnendra Ray of Balihar was a reputed writer. He composed many books, printed in his own press and distributed them among his tenants. Almost all the Rajkumars (sons of Rajas or zamindars) were given higher education. The name of Girish Chandra Lahiri of the Lahiri family of Kashimpur is similarly a renowned figure of this trend. All these aspects have been thoroughly discussed in the respective chapters of the present work.

For the development of the economy of their Zamindaris, some of the Zamindars were very much concerned and they took much initiative in this respect. Thus for the development of silk industries of Rajshahi, different local Zamindars patronised Diamond Jubilee Industrial school in Rajshahi. Many learners, after gaining knowledge from this school, played an important role in the development of silk industries. As a result Rajshahi became a centre of exporting silk. For agricultural education, Basanta Kumar Ray, the junior Raja of Dighapatia, established an Agricultural College in Rajshahi.

With the effort of the Zamindari of Rajshahi, the “Rajshahi Public Library” was established. This issue has been analysed with an extra ordinary attention. It appears that Zamindars contributed a lot of money to establish this institution and their role has fairly been discussed with documents. To recognize the contribution of Girish Chandra Lahiri, the Zamindari of Kashimpur, the hall room of this library was named Girish Chandra Hall after his name (which was engraved on the wall of white marble).

A great institution was established by the Rajas and Zamindari of Rajshahi together to preserve the culture of the country. The institution called Varendra Research Museum is a point under this ‘consideration’. We have noted the admirable contributions of the Raja Sarat Kumar of Dighapatia in this great venture. At the

time of establishing this museum, the local Zamindaris are also said have extended financial help. These sort of benevolent works have been asserted in the dissertation as it deserves.

The Zamindars of Rajshahi were also concerned about the progress of the society. In this respect their contributions for the foundation and development of the organisation called Rajshahi Association are worthy of mention. It has been stated how a group of Zamindars came forward to set up this organisation and patronised it at the best of their capability.

The Zamindars had much contribution to the medical treatment of the common tenants. Zamindari with their own effort established charitable dispensaries within their Zamindaris (estates). In this respect we have tried to record the contributions of the Zamindars of Natore, Dighapatia, Puthia, Dubalhati, Balihar and so on. The present Sadar Hospital of Rajshahi was established with their effort and later on it became the Medical College Hospital of Rajshahi. This was, infect, a direct contribution of the Zamindar of Dighapatia. The contributions of all the Zamindar families of Rajshahi for the development of Water resources, roads and canals and even for the better form of religions activities are remarkable. Most of the Zamindars took much care of these issues and did their best to materialize their plans according to the need of the time. The present dissertation has presented a thorough analysis of these items and efforts have been made to highlight these issues in the light of the available sources. The Zamindars and even their spouses (Ranis as they were called) not only spent huge money but also took much care about its maintenance.

Had Rajas and Zamindars been a little more careful for the welfare of the subjects, the socio-economic condition of the country would have changed as could be expected. But the matter was not that as may be thought of. The income of the Zamindari was more utilized for luxuries than constructive works and it intensified

the crisis of the Zamindaris which we have stated in course of locating the problems leading to the fall of the Zamindaris of Rajshahi. There were many items of industrial goods like silk, sugar, which had better prospects even for international trade. But in our studies we have shown most of the Zamindars were careless about this matter and their indifference proved to be a factor of their ultimate fall.

Though some Zamindars of Rajshahi were benevolent and concerned for the well being of the subjects, a few of them were responsible for a cursed life of the tenants. They were by and large exploiters and sought means to pressurize their subjects for more payment of land revenue. In this respect, they were not less betrayers than the foreign ruler (i.e., the British). The stories of tyranny of Devi Singh in Rangpur and Dinajpur regions still remain an example of terror to the people of these areas. Though Zamindars collected excess revenue by means of torture, the Britishers were not benefited. But they approved the illegal act of the Zamindars as legal. As a result anti British sentiment grew among the people for the activities of only a few Zamindars. This tendency had a fair out bursts in the subsequent time and we have discussed the issue in course of presenting the protest movements organised by the peasants.

On the question of the decline of the Zamindars of Rajshahi different factors have been identified in our study. Among these indisciplined way of living of some of the members of the Raj families, wastage of money and family disputes made them financially weaker day by day and this issue has been critically analysed in the chapter concerned. It is also shown how they took up the alternative by collecting excess amount taxes from the tenants (*abwabs*) and tortured them for the payment. The tenants had also the voice of protest and the series of movements during the company rule and after speak about the same story.

Thus the days of the Zamindars of Rajshahi were sealed and when their crisis got intensified their masters i.e. the colonial Government had no sympathy for

them. They did not hesitate even for putting the Zamindari in auction and these incidents had taken place in several occasions. In the 1940's of the last century, the crises of the Zamindars of Bengal were so alarming that there were numerous Peasant movements in those parts of Bengal where the peasants were the worst sufferers. Our study has shown how the region of Rajshahi also became a nerve centre of such protest movements. Incidentally, the Tebhaga of 1946 - 47 was an outburst of such a protest of the Peasants. After the Indian independence (1947) and Partition thereafter, the Government East Pakistan made a review of the whole situation prevailing during and after the partition and the background was prepared for the Land Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1951 which sounded the death - knell of all the Zamindars of Rajshahi. There is an initiative all along in the chapter IX to locate the issues of these crises and the circumstances that led to the downfall of all the Zamindars of Rajshahi.

Glossary

Amil	---	A revenue collector employed under the government.
Amin	---	A surveyor, A person who served under Revenue department
A sal Jaina	---	The original revenue (tax).
Abwab	---	Extra tax imposed on the Ryots in edition to regular tax.
Adalat	---	Court of Justice.
Argi	---	A petition to the authority.
Ana	---	It is one sixteenth part of a rupee.
Bazi Jama	---	Miscellaneous revenue in addition to rent for the use of land.
Bondobasta	---	Agreements or settlement between Zamindar and Ryots or Zamindar and Government.
Bar kandag	---	Watchman or an Armed guard.
Brahmattra	---	The use of Brahmins land free from tax.
Banian	---	A Hindu trader or European officer/trader.
Bazar	---	Daily market.
Bigha	---	One third of an acre (in Bengal).
Batta	---	Difference in Exchange.
Chakla	---	This is an administrative unit containing many parganahs.
Chakladar	---	The ruler of a chakla.
Chakran land	---	Land allotted for the maintenance of Public Officer and Survents.
Dihi	---	A village.
Darbar	---	A royal court.

Daftar	—	Office where public record are kept.
Devatra	—	For the religious purpose land is granted.
Dewan	—	Under the Mughal revenue system the Chief Revenue Officer called Dewan.
Diwani Adalat	—	A civil court.
Faujdar	—	An army officer, who has magistracy power.
Farman	—	A government order.
Faquir	—	A Muslim religious person, also a poor man who beg door to door.
Faujdari adalat	—	Criminal court.
Ghat	—	A landing place on the bank of the river where tolls are collected.
Gram	—	A village.
Gumoshta	—	An agent a steward.
Hasto-bud	—	A comparative amount prepared on the basis of the past and present produce of a Zamindari or any fiscal division.
Hat	—	Market in particular day of a week.
Ijara	—	Lease of land, a ghat etc. for a particular revenue.
Ijaradar	—	Lease holder.
Jaigir land	—	Land allotted to the Government Officer instead of salary.
Jaigirdar	—	The Officer enjoying Jaigir land.
Khas	—	Directly under Government management.
Kisti	—	Revenue is collected by an instalment from a zamindar or Ryot.

Kanungo	—	Type of officer in revenue department
Kistibondi	—	Revenue payment by instalment
Kachhari	—	Centure of revenue cullaction.
Khilat	—	A dress of honour given by emperor.
Lakharaj	—	Rent free land.
Munsif	—	Justice of civil court
Mal	—	Any properly.
Mahal	—	A zamindari of any description or a revenue division of a pargana.
Mouza	—	A village.
Nazim	—	An officer who look after criminal administration.
Nazrana	—	Fees for an office.
Nankar	—	Type of allowance, which was given by the government for collection of revenue.
Praja	—	Under the zaminder who cultivate land and give revenue to the zamindar.
Pandit	—	Learned Sanskrit teacher.
Pathsala	—	Small school.
Parganah	—	Local revenue unit, (During Mughal period).
Parwana	—	Type of official letter.
Patta	—	Type of deed of lease, a deed is given by the zamindar or government to the cultivator spacefing the condition.
Qazi	—	Muslim Judge.
Qabuliat	—	A written agreement, tenant give certain agreement to the zandar or government.

Ryot	—	A farmer, A Peasant.
Raja	—	A king (some time Zaminder got this tile from the government of India)
Rani	—	A Queen, wife of Raj a (wife of Zaminders called Rani in India).
Sanad	—	A written othority given by the emperor.
Sannyasi	—	Hindu religions vagaband.
Sadar cutcharly	—	Main revenue office of a Zamindari or of a district.
Sajawal	—	An officer of revenue department deputed by the government.
Subah	—	Province, It is big administrative unit of the mughal period.
Subadar	—	Ruler of a subah.
Tol	—	Sanskrit learning school run by the pandit.
Taqavi	—	Agriculture lone, this lon was given in the time of Adverse situation to the Ryots it was refundable.
Taraf	—	Signifies a division of a pargana or division of a Zamindari.
Tarafder	—	A revenue officer who is inchage of a taraf.
Tohsildar	—	Revenue collector, appointed by the government.
Vakil	—	Advocate or pleader.

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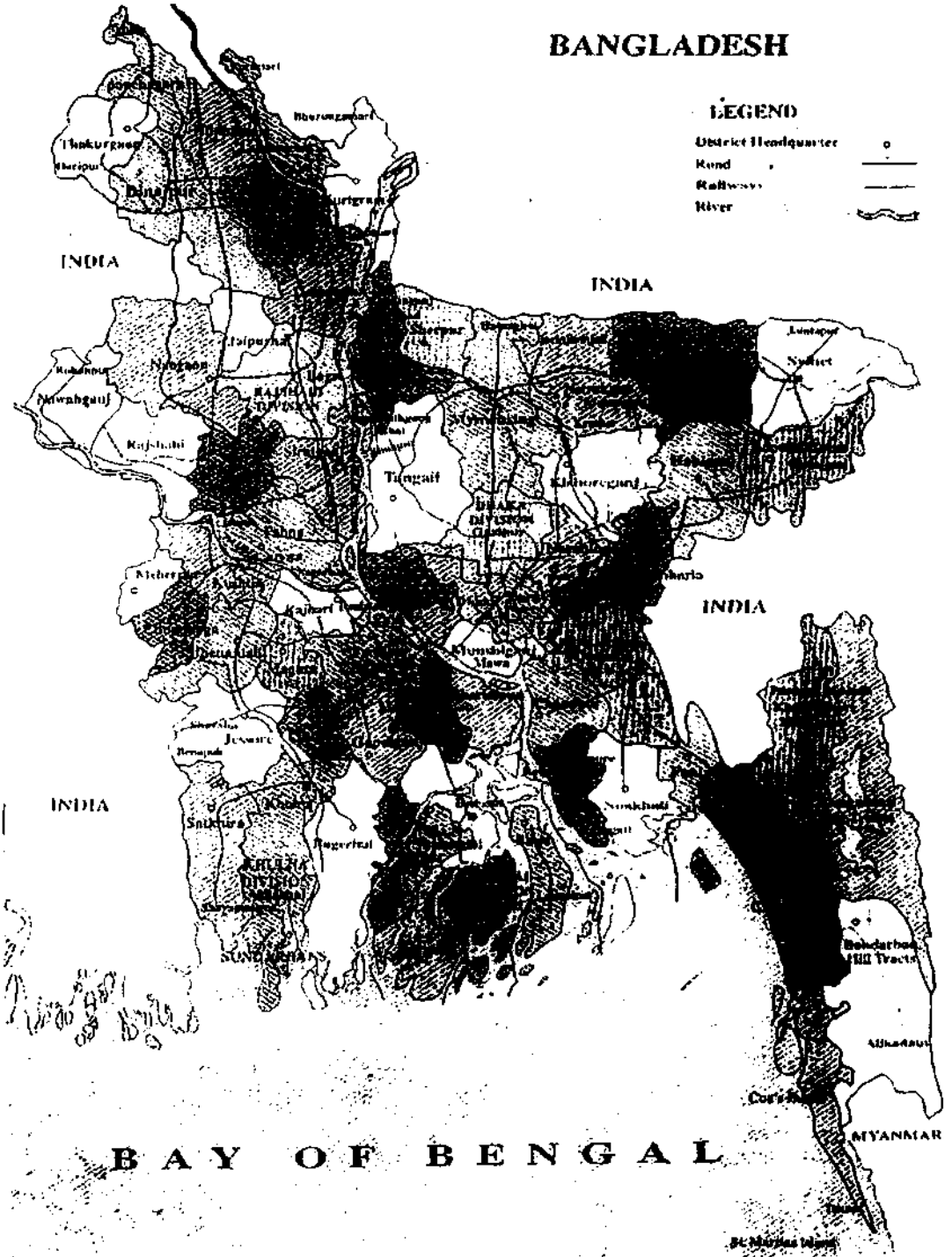
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Appendix - 1

BANGLADESH

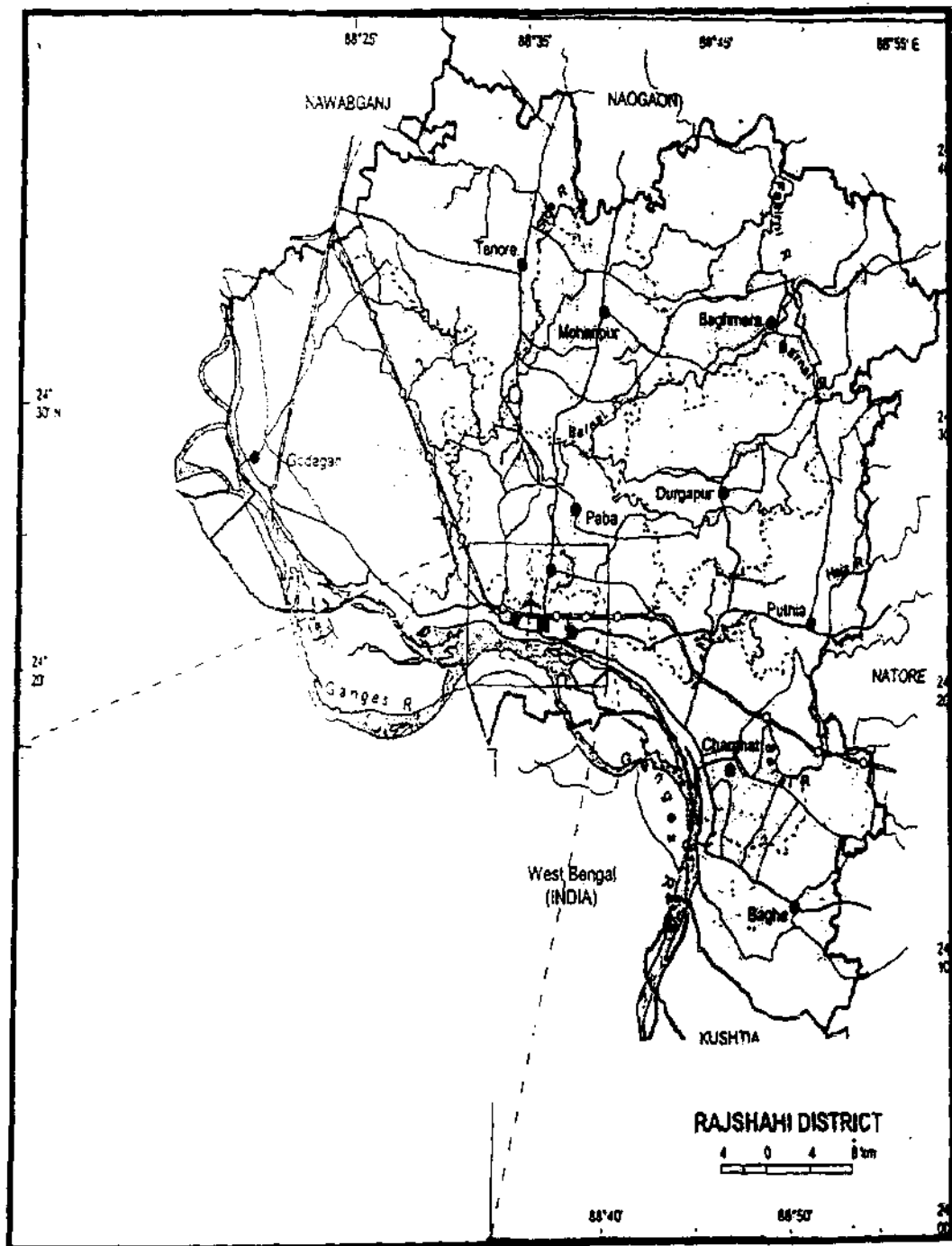
LEGEND

District Headquarter	o
Road	—
Railways	—
River	~



Appendix - 2

Map of Rajshahi District



Appendix - 3



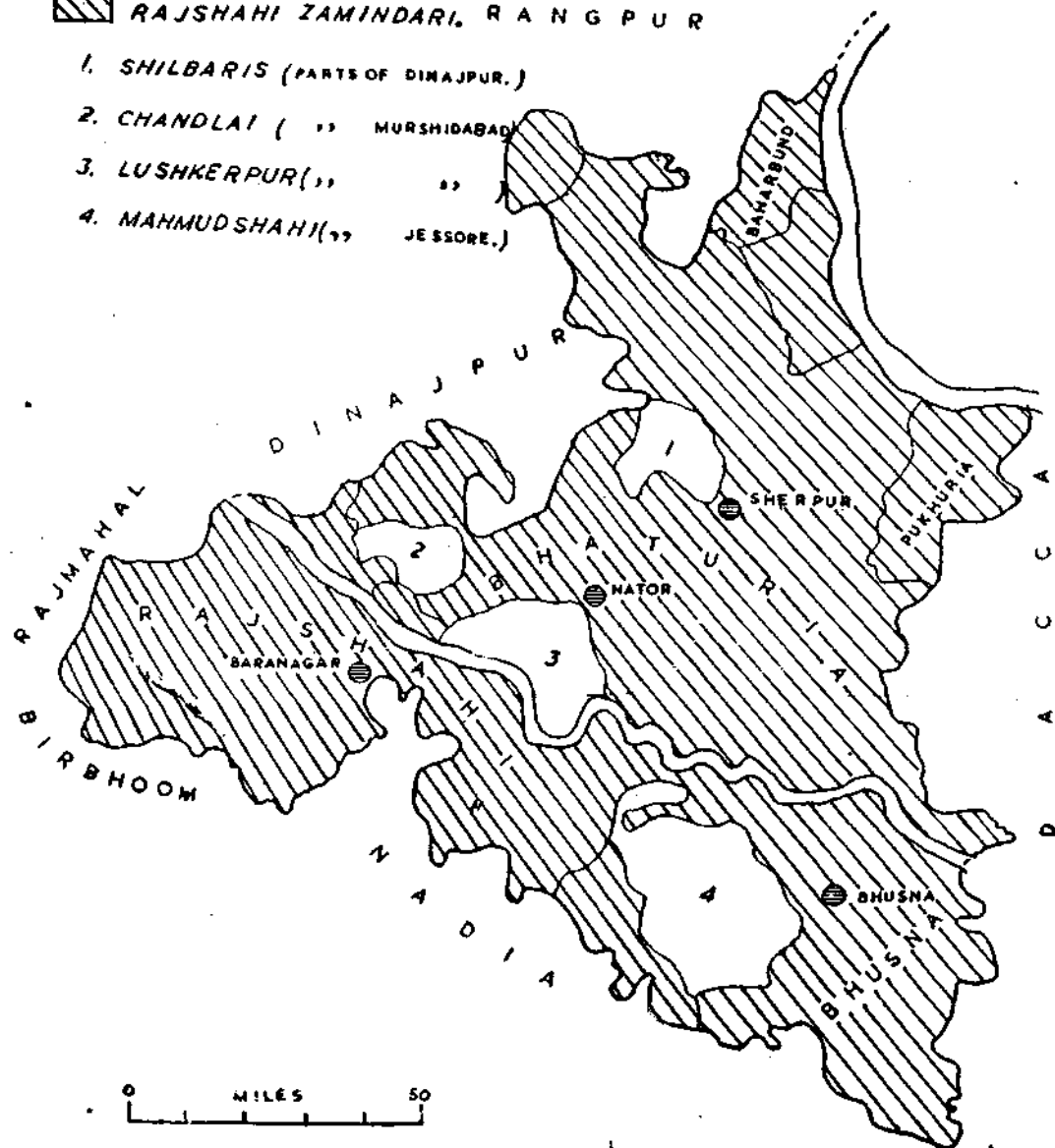
RAJSHAHI ZAMINDARI, RANGPUR

1. SHILBARIS (PARTS OF DIMAJPUR.)

2. CHANDLAI (" " MURSHIDABAD)

3. LUSHKERPUR (" " "

4. MAHMUDSHAHI (" " JESSORE.)



Appendix - 4

A. Big Zamindars

Name of the Zamindari	Founder	Cast	Location of the Headquarters
Puthia Zamindari	Batsacharyya	Barhmin	Puthia
Natore Zamindari	Ramjiban Ray	Brahmin	Natore
Dighapatia Zamindari	Dayaram Ray	Tili	Dighapatia

B. Minor Zamindars

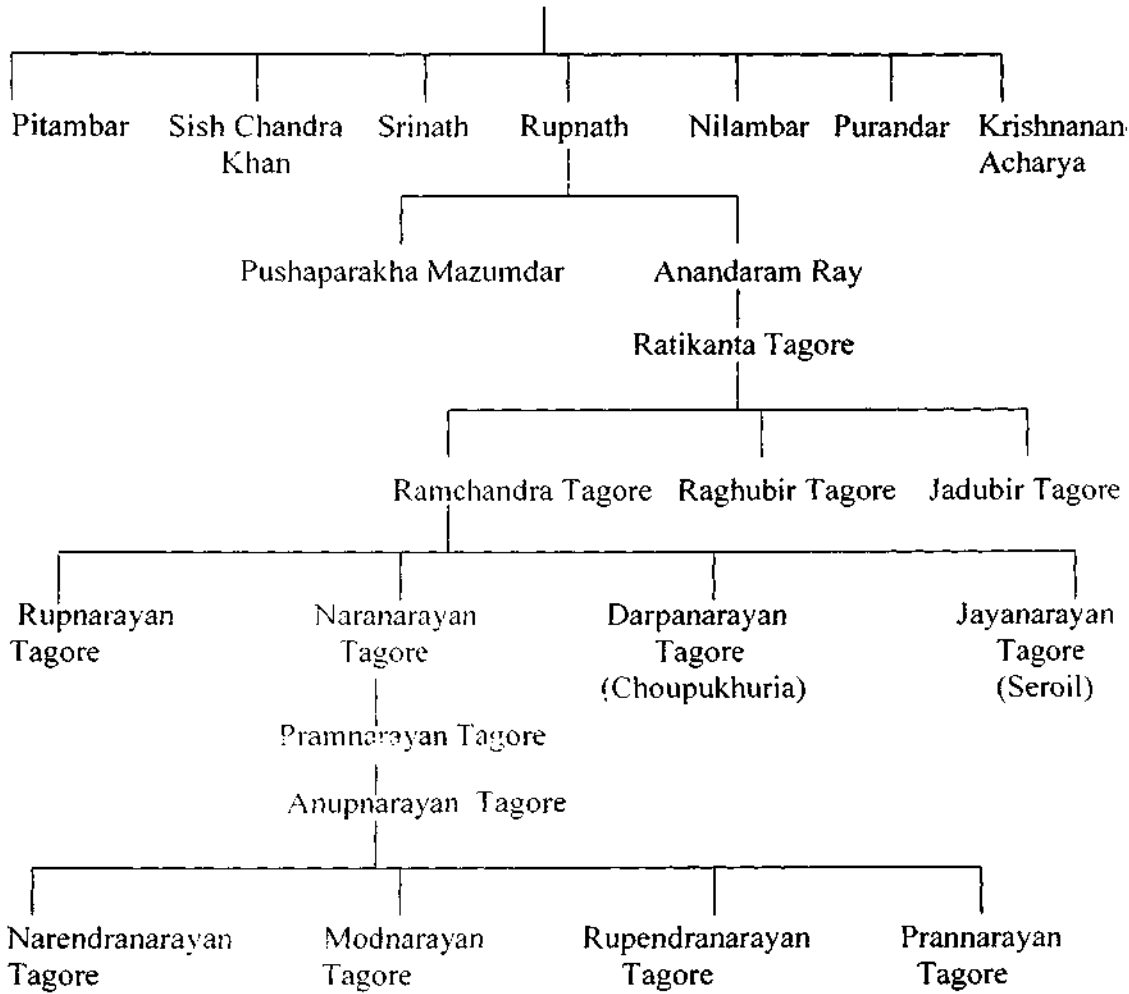
Taherpur Zamindari	Kamdev Bhatta	Brahmin	Taherpur
Balihar Zamindari	Nresingha Chakraborty	Brahmin	Balihar
Dubolehati Zamindari	Jagoth Ram	Suri	Dubalhati
Karachmaria Zamindari	Nimai Chand Sarkar	Kshatriya	Karachmaria
Chamari Zamindari	Kalikrishna Bagchi	Brahmin	Chamari
Natore Choudhury Zamindari	Zaman Khan	Muslim	Natore
Kashimpur Zamindari	Ramkishore Lahiri	Brahmin	Kashimpur
Darikushi Zamindari	Ramkishore Sanyal	Yadav (milkman)	Darikushi
Joari Bishi Zamindari	Gangahari Bishi	Brahmin	Joari

(Source: Relevant chapters)

Appendix-5

GENEALOGY OF THE PUTHAYA RAJ FAMILY

BATSACHARYYA



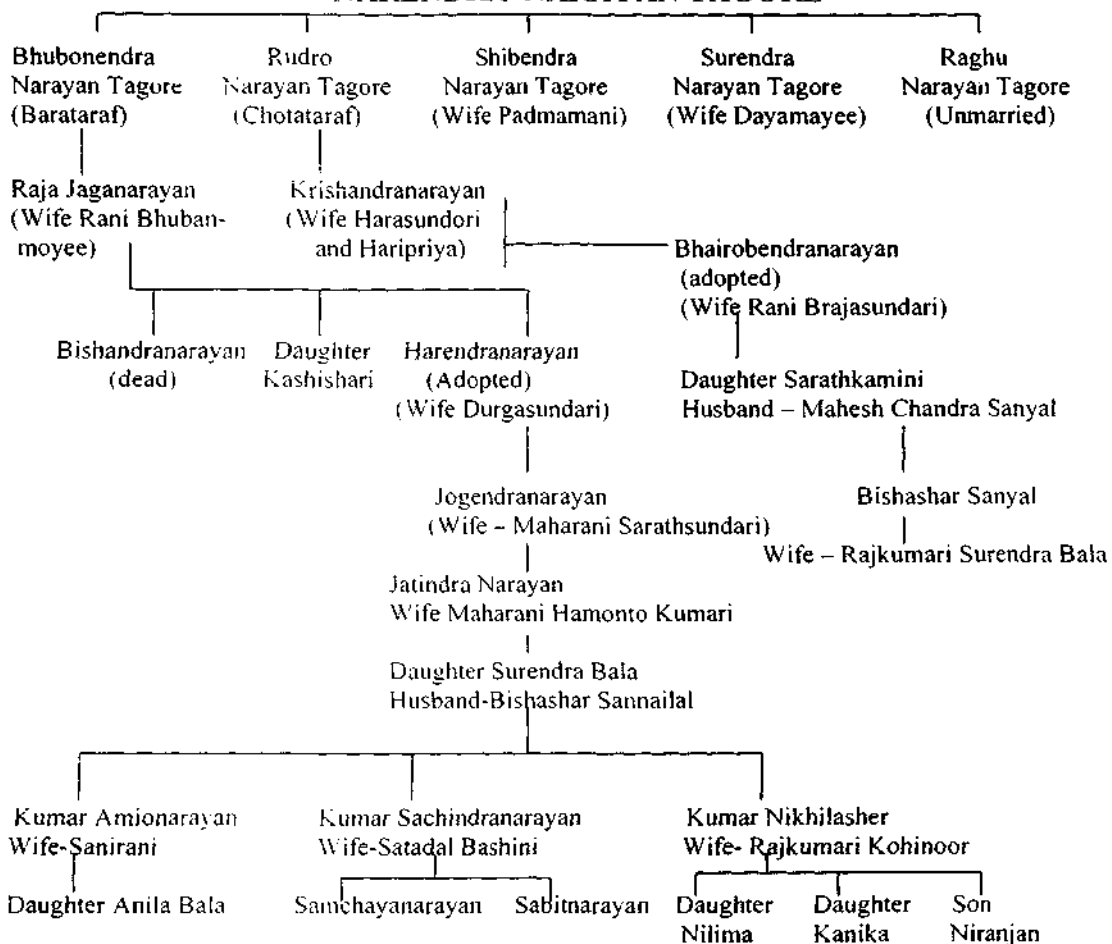
(Five Ani, actually (Three and half Ani) (Three and half Ani, (Three and half Ani)
 five and half Ani) after four Ani)

(Source: Bimata Giran Moitra. Puthi Rajbangsha Calcutta, 357 BS)

Appendix – 6

FIVE ANI RAJ FAMILY (PUTHIA)

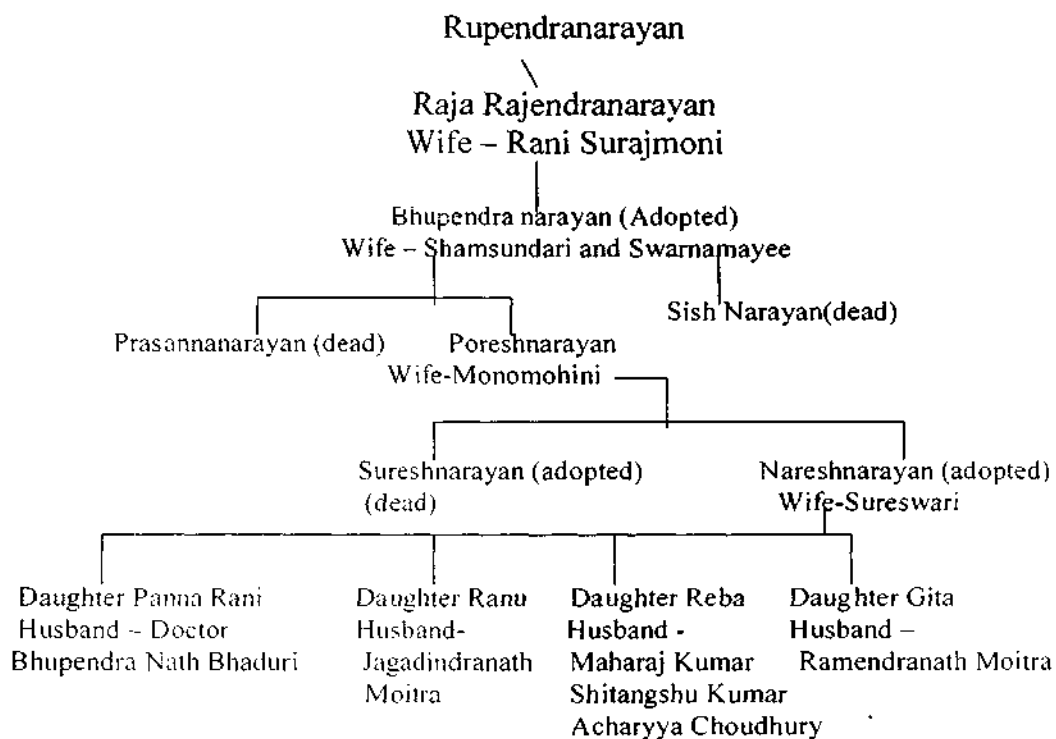
NARENDRA NARAYAN TAGORE



(Source: Bimalacharan Moitra Puthia Rajbangsha, Calcutta, 1357 BS).

Appendix-7

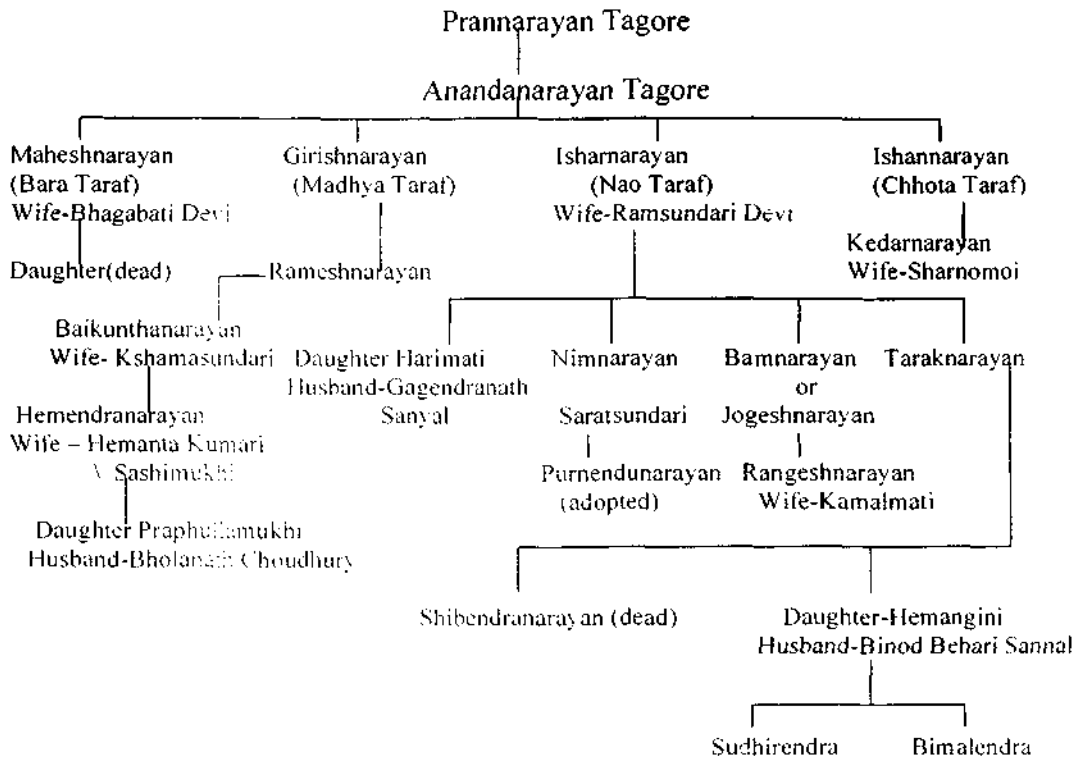
THREE AND HALF ANI RAJ FAMILY (PUTHIA)



(Source: Bimalacharan Moitra Puthia Rajbangsha. Calcutta, 1357 BS).

Appendix-8

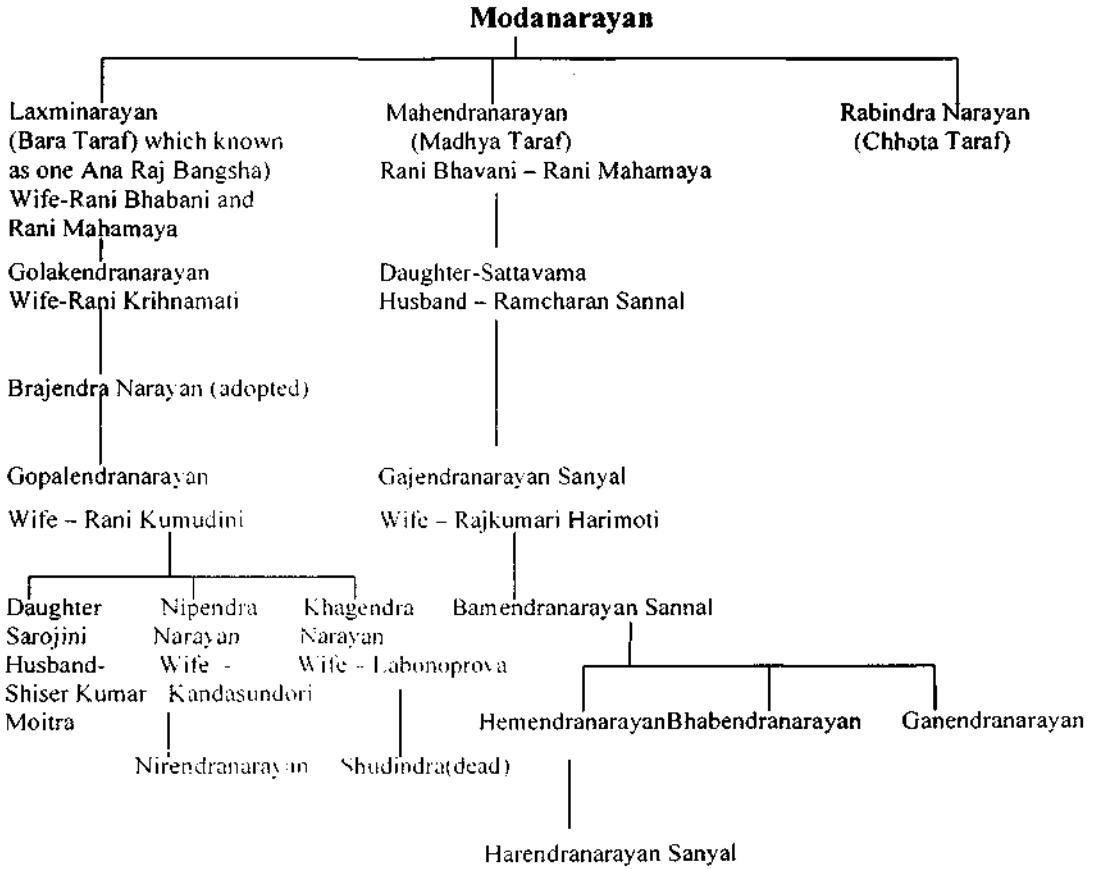
THREE AND HALF ANA RAJ FAMILY (PUTHIA) - 3



(Source: Binulacharan Moitra: Puthia Rajbangsha, Calcutta, 1357 BS).

Appendix-9

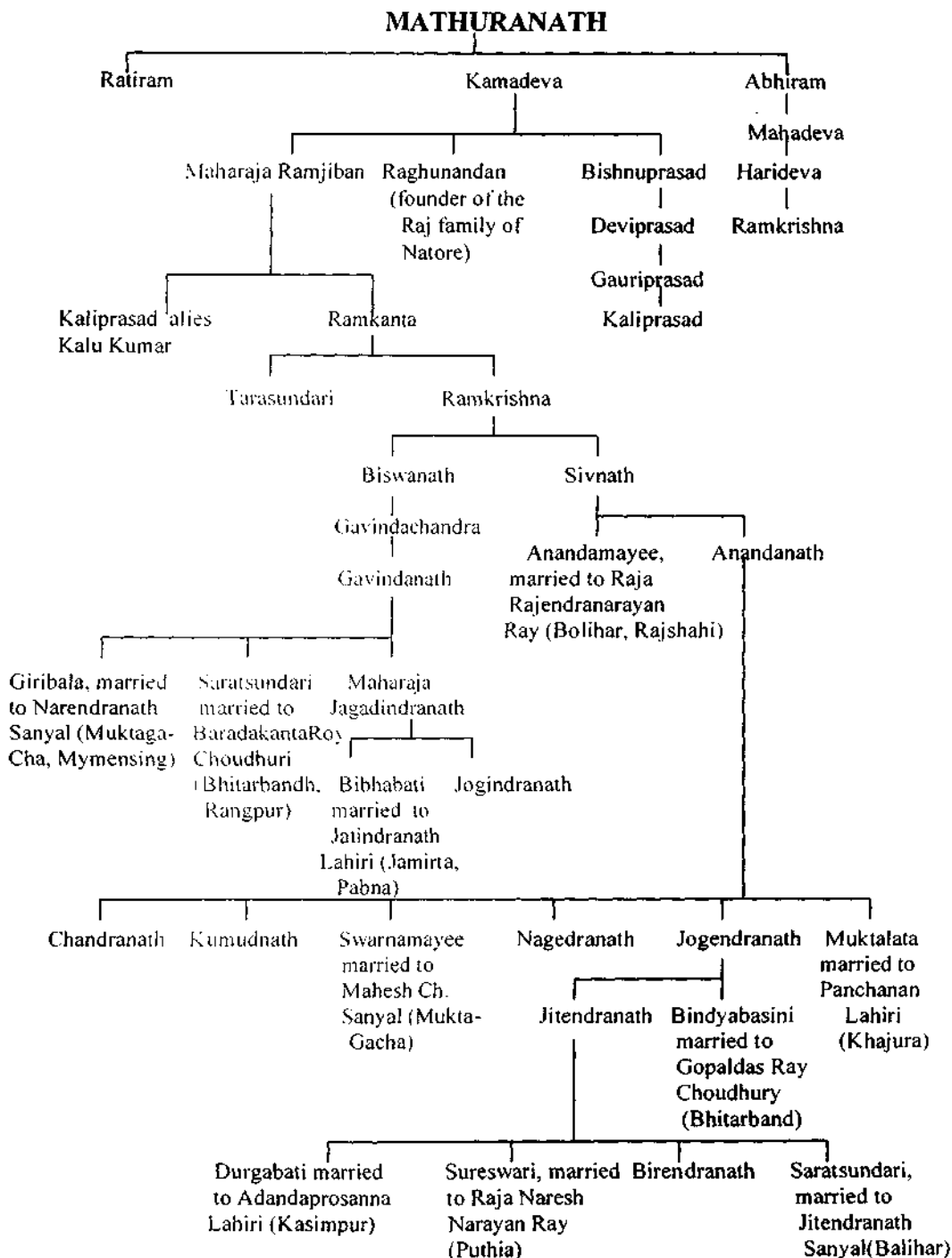
THREE AND HALF ANAS RAJ FAMILY (3)



(Source: Bimalacharan Moitra Puthia Rajbangsha, Calcutta, 1357 BS).

Appendix – 10

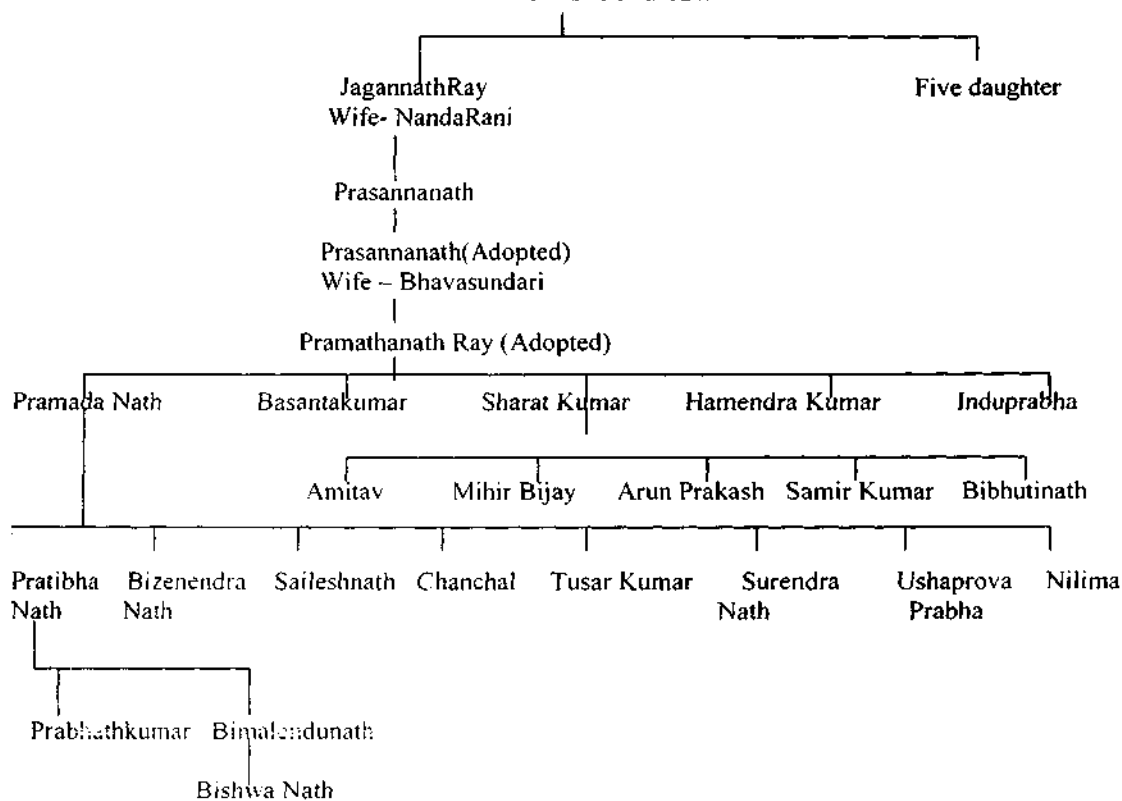
GENEOLOGY OF THE NATORE RAJ FAMILY



Appendix – 11

GENEOLOGI OF THE DIGHAPATIA FAMILY

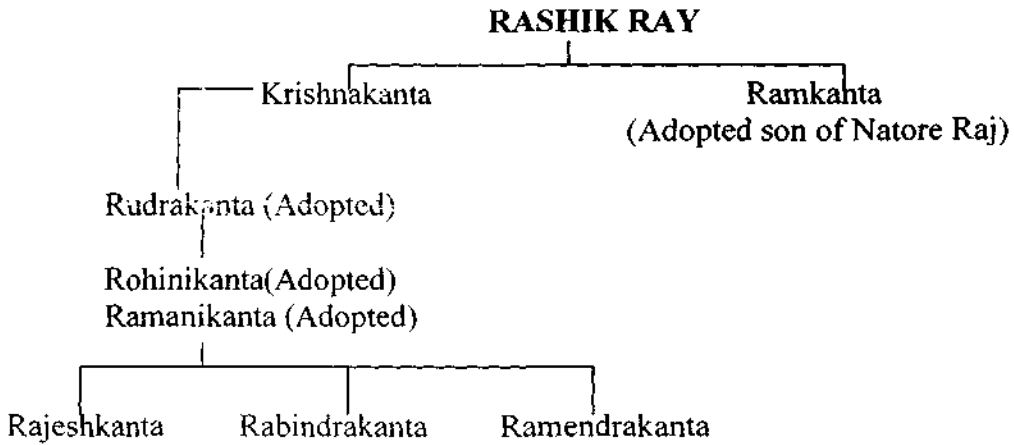
DAYARAM RAY



(Source: Samar Pal, Natorer, 16has, Vol-2, Natore, 1984).

Appendix-12

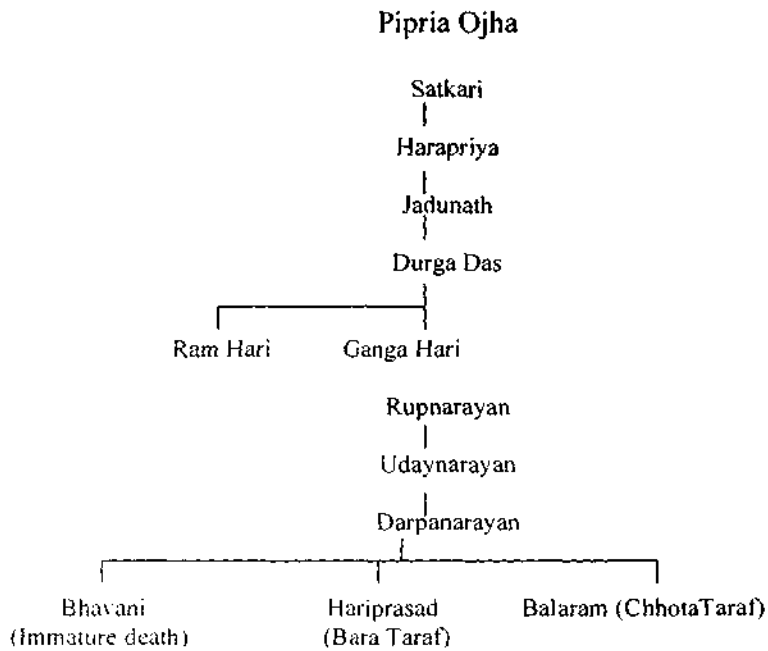
GENEOLOGY OF CHOUGRAM RAJ FAMILY



(Source: Samar Pal, Natorer Itihas, Vol - 2, Natore, 1984)

Appendix - 13

GENEOLOGY OF BISHI FAMILY



(Source: Samar Pal, *Natoreer Itihas*, Vol - 2, *Natore*, 1984)

Appendix 14

Dubol Hati Raj Family

1. Jagat Ram
45. Tulshi Ram Ray Choudhury
46. Mukta Ram Ray Choudhury
47. Krishna Ram Ray Choudhury
48. Raghu Nath Ray Choudhury
49. Parameshwar Ray Choudhury
50. Shib Nath Ray Choudhury
51. Krishnath Ray Choudhury
52. Ananda Nath Ray Choudhury
53. Raja Haranath Choudhury Ray Bahadur
54. Kumar Ghanada Nath Ray Choudhury | two brothers
55. Kumar Kingkari Nath Ray Choudhury

N.B. It may be noted that according to the available documents we do not come across the names of the zamindars from 2 to 44. We have however collected the rest of the names upto the Family member named Kumar Kingkari Nath Ray Choudhury.

Source : Kalinath Choudhury. Rajshirshangkhipto Etahas. Calcutta, 1308 B S

