
Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

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***Abstract:** 'Freedom is the birthright of mankind' Indians who believed in this principle also engaged themselves in a larger movement to free themselves from the British. The present work attempts a detailed study of the freedom movement in the Uttar Dinajpur district with special reference to Transferred Area . Initially, the Surjapuri People did not participate widely in the Freedom Movement of India. But in Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement Surjapuri people participated extensively. After the establishment of the Indian National Congress, the sense of nationalism became stronger. Considering it their duty to expel the British, they indulged in various Anti-British activities. The district was greatly influenced by Nationalist thinking. Many Surjapuri people followed the Congress ideology causing headache to the British. The Freedom Movement became the Nature of the surjapuri people. People of all castes participated in the Freedom Movement as a result of oppression and exploitations by the British. Countless men and women stood up against the British rule. Many surjapuri people of Transferred Area actively participated in the civil disobedience movement and Quit India Movement. They sacrificed themselves for India's Independence.*

***Keywords:** Language, Nationalism, Surjapuri People , Transferred Area, Violent etc.*

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Introduction

Naming is an important issue. The name of any place becomes the destination of many people. A place is named after rulers, population and mythological events etc. This Surjapur pargana is also named for one of the reasons mentioned above. But there is no historical evidence. The possible reasons for the naming of this

Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

Surjapur pargana could be as follows. On November 1st, 1956, on the recommendations of the "State Reorganisation Commission" this surjapuri tribe with an area of 759 square Miles was included in West Bengal from Purnia district of Bihar. Thakurganj, Islampur, Chopra, Kishanganj, Goal Pokhar and karandighi police stations belonged to surjapur pargana. About surjapur paragana prof. Dr. Partha Sen said- "Buchanan's information shows that one Saiyed Ahmed Khan dastur helped Emperor Humayun when Humayun was busy recovering his lost Kingdom in 1545 AD. As a reward, Emperor Humayun gifted surjapur pargana to Saiyed Ahmed Khan Dastur ". It is not easy to find out where this 'surjapur' nomenclature came from. However, it is assumed that the first king of Surya dynasty was Ikshaku. He had three sons, Namely - Vibukshi, Nimi and Danda. Vibukshi was the king of Ayodhya and Nimi was the king of Mithila. After them, many kings of this clan ruled the country. It is known that this area was under the rule of Mithila sometime between 1100-500 BC. This area was ruled by king Videha of Mithila, whose other name was Janak. Or at other times some other Surya dynasty King ruled this Area. It is believed that from that time the people here started calling themselves 'Surjapuri'. It may also be that the kingdom of Aditya sur expanded here after the rule of the Sur dynasty began in the Gour country. The boundary extends to the other side of the karatoya river. From this Sur may come the name Surya and the introduced 'Surjapuri'. It is also not impossible that there was tribal influence in the region. These tribes worshipped the Sun and the Moon. Surjapur may be named from this sun.

Similarly, Languages are named after a place or people. When the majority of people in a place speak the same Language, the Language is named after the place. The Language of the people of this Surjapur pargana is similar to other languages but has some differences. People prefer to call their language 'Surjapuri' after the name of Surjapur pargana. The language spoken by Surjapuri people is called 'Surjapuri' language". This language is a variant of the Kamtapuri language of North Bengal. Phonetics, syntax and vocabulary are all almost similar to the Kamtapuri language. The people here call this language as 'Surjapuri' even though it has similarities with the Kamtapuri language. There is no written historical evidence about Surjapuri people and Surjapuri language. But people here called themselves Surjapuri and language they spoke as Surjapuri language. In 2000, the late parliamentarian Priyaranjan Das Munshi addressed the parliament on this language and culture and in 2009 UNESCO registered the naming of the language 'Surjapuri'. Looking for the family of this language, we see that the language family of this language is - Indo-European>Indo-Iranian>Indo-Aryan>East Bengal - Assamese>Kamtapuri>Surjapuri. So this language has gained a social identity. According to W.D. Whitney, 'Language is a social Institution'. Surjapuri language has phonemes like other language. Which was written in *Kaithi script*. However, the kaithi script is not used nowadays. Official documents were written in Kaithi script and in one word was the official script in this area.

Background of the Freedom Movement in Transferred Area

People want to live unhindered or free. Whenever their freedom is disturbed, they become rebels. This personal freedom gradually became National freedom. The people of this Surjapur pargana were oppressed and exploited by landlords, zamindars and the British for a long time. Maybe they have been fighting for their personal freedom for a long time but without success. When discussing politics in Surjapuri society, it can be seen that in the past politics here was centered on Purnea, Katihar and Kishanganj. However, the politics of two neighbouring parganas, Dehatta and Baikunthapur parganas, came to Chopra and Islampur

Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

Areas. The district became a military base in the arena of politics. The region became a military base since the Mughal period, " During the Mughal rule Purnea formed a great military Frontier province under the rule of Faujdar, who was nominally subordinate to subahdar". This area has been invaded several times by tribal rulers and some parts have been captured. Their boundary pillars can still be seen in Sonakhoda village of Islampur City. In 1757, when Nawab Sirajudullah captured Calcutta, the ruler of purnea revolted. When Bengal came under the control of the East India company in 1765, the area came under the company's rule. On February 10 ,1770 , the East India company formed the Purnea district with a large part of the Surjapur pargana and some other parts. All the present transferred area i.e. the present entire Islampur subdivision and 19 Mauzas of Phanshidawa police station also under in this district. The effects of Jalpaiguri rebellion were felt in Chopra police station and its surrounding areas. As a result, the British government was forced to deploy troops in this area. " Since that year the peace of the district has only been broken by Mutiny of 1857. On its out break, there was no little anxiety regarding the loyalty of the troops. Stationed just across the border at Jalpaiguri, viz. the 73rd Regiment of native infantry and a detachment of the 11th irregular cavalry". Although not indirect conflict with the government, the tension in this area is understandable. In 1925, Gandhiji held a meeting in Kishanganj. Also Rajendra Prasad, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Ali brothers were able to assure Independence through their valuable speeches in this arena. The people of this arena found their leaders. Therefore, although there was no large participation of the people in the Freedom Movement in the beginning, the participation of Surjapuri people in the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement can be seen. Although Chopra police station was associated with a Surjapur pargana since ancient times, it had more contact with Jalpaiguri and Baikunthapur . Any Movement in Jalpaiguri always had an impact on Chopra police station in Surjapuri paragana. Due to the failure of the Sepoy rebellion, the pro -independence forces throughout the country weakend. But political unrest in surjapur paragana continued. Surjapuri people actively participated in the movement led by Gandhiji. The influence of the Indian National Congress was profound on the people of Surjapuri. Several Surjapuri people took charge of the Congress Movement in the area. Surjapuri people also participated widely in the organised Agrarian Movement after Gandhiji. There is a discussion here on the contributions of the people of Surjapur to the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

Civil Disobedience Movement in Transferred Area

People of surjapur Pargana joined the Congress party, participated the several association and were imprisoned. The Movement of the Congress in Surjapur paragana was not confined to the locality. This movement was able to assert its position and presence at the national level. In 1925, Gandhiji came to Kishanganj and held a meeting. " Mahatma Gandhi visited Purnea in 1925 and had addressed crowded meeting at various places including Kishanganj, Bishnupur, Araria and Purnea etc. At Bishunpur in Dhamdaha PS there was a large gathering and the people had presented a substantial purse for the Desha Bandhu Memorial Fund. Mahatma Gandhi's second tour from the 11th January ,1927 was in connection with the collection of money for Charka and khadi". Not only Gandhiji, Rajendra Prasad, Khan Abdul Gaffar khan and other leaders came in front of the freedom minded people in this area and gave their valuable speeches. Gandhiji started the Dandi Padayatra or Salt Satyagraha on 12 March, 1938 AD. The participation of Surjapuri people can be seen in the Civil Disobedience Movement. " There were several searches in

Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

Kishanganj and Araria subdivision. The enthusiasm of the people to implement the dictates of the Congress could be estimated from the fact that arrests for breaking the salt law in Purnea district in the course of 6 months and Salt Satyagraha came to 716 in numbers". Inspired by Gandhiji, the people here sacrificed themselves for the freedom of their country. Anath Kanta Bose was the President of Indian National Congress in Purnea district. He used to come to Islampur and held meetings with many Surjapuri People . Anath Kanta Bose used to meeting Congress leaders like Vidhu Bhushan Nath of Nandoi Village, Pradhan Chandra Singha of Jagtagaon, Pradeep Narayan Singha of Khabargaon, Khagendra Nath Mandol of Ramganj, Fanibhushan Karmakar of Jagtagaon, Andharu Singha of Atgharia Village, Lachhu Nath of Khunia Village , Piyal Ali Munshi of Ambari , Dr. Dabir Choudhary of Panchi, Samser Ali of Pahakata and formulated a program of Anti-British activities. Each of them took leadership for the Congress in their respective villages. They encouraged the people of the village to do Anti-British work. Each of them used to go to haat-bazar(market) to propagate Congress program and Anti-British program. Literary Satinath Bhaduri also used to visit Pradhan Chandra Singha's house. He was also associated with the Congress organisation. Satinath Bhaduri was in close contact with Vidhu Bhushan Nath, Shripati Joadar, Anath Kanta Bose and Khagendranath Mandal. Vidhu Bhusan Nath encouraged local weavers to cut yarn and weave cloth. The people of his house also used to cut the thread and weave it into cloth. He went to village to village and held Anti-British processions with the local youth. In Andharu singha's village Atgharia, Congress leader Anath Kanta Bose used to hold Anti-British political discussions. Islampur zamindar Abhak Chaudhury encouraged and helped them in various ways. Jagannath Prasad Chaudhury felt the need for Khagendranath Mandal to strengthen the Anti-British Struggle in the Ramganj region and assigned him important duties. Khagendranath Mandal was given the task of hoisting the National flag at Purnea in Bihar. The revolutionary who was with him lost his life while raising the National flag there. Khagendranath Mondal also had to endure police Lathi charge. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, Pradeep Narayan Singha used to go from haat to haat(market)raising slogans of boycotting foreign goods and adopting indigenous goods. Chuha Lal Singha of Tunibhita village of Karandighi police station embraced Gandhiji's ideals wholeheartedly. And joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. Nichit Lal Singha of Jadavpur and Jeetu Lal Singha Chapaichandi stayed with Chuhahalal Singha and propagated Anti-British activities. They held the National flag and chanted "Vande Mataram" slogans. Charka used to spin yarn themselves and encouraged others to spin yarn. In defiance of the British government's declaration, Gandhiji went around wearing a cap. Chuhahalal Singha even stopped paying rent for his cultivated land. When he was offered to withdraw from the movement, he rejected it. Gopal Chandra Ghosh of Bikor village also participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Quit India Movement in Transferred Area

When the Quit India Movement was launched on august 9 ,1942 ,at the call of Gandhiji the people of this place specially participated. " When in August, 1942, there was a mass arrest of the leaders throughout India including Gandhiji and an outbreak of a violent lawlessness against the constituted authority, Purnea district was also the scene of intense activities in which the different section of the people had participated. The student community and Congress workers throughout the district, mill and factory hands of Katihar and Kishanganj took the lead in the upsargs". Important leaders of all areas including Kishanganj were arrested in the movement. It is known that on Anath Kanta Bose of Kishanganj , Lachhu Nath of Khunia village of

Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

Chopra police station and many other people were arrested. Some revolutionaries including Pradeep Narayan Singha joined the Anti-British program at Darivit Haat. When they raised slogans of boycotting foreign goods and adopting indigenous goods, they were arrested and severely beaten by the police. The Congress office at Kishanganj was occupied by the British rulers. On August 18, 1942, about 500 Rajbanshi mobs and many Surjapuri people rescued the office. Pradhan Chandra Singha led the movement for the Rajbanshi in this Movement. Later he was arrested and imprisoned for 6 months. Anath Kanta Bose of Kishanganj, Lachhu Nath of Khunia village of Chopra police station and many other were arrested. The momentum of this movement was so strong that thousands of people gathered in Kishanganj town to participate in the marching and hartal. Most proudly, the people of Surjapuri removed the British Government flag from Kishanganj court and hoisted the Indian congress flag there. " Almost simultaneously there were large processions, hartal and demonstration at various places in the district from the 11th August, 1942. The congress flag was forcibly hoisted on the court buildings at Kishanganj". Vidhu Bhushan Nath of Nandoi gave a fiery speech against the British government at a meeting in Sonapur of Chhapra police station. The British government announced his arrested. Under his leadership, a large crowd threw down several sleepers on the railway line from Islampur to Toyedpur. The British government announced a reward of 500 rupees and a price of Rs 1000 on his head for anyone who could capture him and hand him over to the British police. He was eventually caught and spent two years in Kishanganj, Purnea and Alipore Jails. Lachhunath of Khunia village took a leading role in creating village to village anti british organisation in Chopra police station to expel the British from India. Moreover, Naku Mahaliya of chutiyaKhor, Hari Mohan Malakar of Dolua Saraswati, Hurmat of Toteswari, Kuntha Singh of kamargachh etc. established contact with revolutionaries and held anti british meetings, marching, picketing and striking. Especially, these revolutionaries used to shout slogans like "Leave British India" in the haat, road, office and kachhari of Chopra area. Sometimes he used to enter the office and kachhari and destroy the documents. Somewhere they cut the railway line and somewhere they burnt the British flag. Khagendranath Mondal of Ramganj was arrested by the British police from MandalPara while cutting the railway line of Islampur. Khagendranath Mandal and Pradhan Chandra Singha were imprisoned together. Also, the names of Ashilal Singha of Chopra and Dayalal Singha of Islampur are particularly noteworthy. Khantalal Singha and Ashwini Kumar Das of goalpakhar participated in this movement. All of them also held meetings against the British in different haat(market). Chuhahal Singha and Sabu Singha and many others actively participated in the Quit India Movement at Karandighi police station. The revolutionaries destroyed post offices, telegraphs and railway lines to cut off British communications. That Chuhahal Singha went to Barsoi in Bihar and started destroying the railway. The police arrested him and kept him in Purnea jail for 6 months. Sabu Singh also did the same at Karandighi police station.

Conclusion

Purnea district of Bihar was a border district of Bengal. The Transferred Area was part of Purnea district. So Bengal and Bihar were areas influenced by many revolutionaries. Like other districts, the movement in this district was non-violent in the beginning. Many Surjapuri people of this area involved themselves in the Anti-British Movement. Anath Kanta Bose was the Congress President of purnea district. Most of the Surjapuri people in this area were influenced by the Indian National Congress. They participated extensively

Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case Study in Trasfered Area of Uttar Dinajpur District (1930-1942)

in Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement. At that time, the Anti-British Movement turned violent. Such as, removing railway lines and occupying offices. As a result, Many Surjapuri people were imprisoned for a long time. The contribution of Surjapuri people to India's independence was undeniable.

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**Contribution of the Surjapuri People in Freedom Movement: A Case
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