



**“The Bara-Bhuiyans and Their Times: A Study of the local
anti-Mughal Resistance in Bengal (1576-1612 A.C.)”**

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Supervisor's Certificate

It is hereby being certified that this thesis entitled “**The Bara-Bhuiyans and Their Times: A Study of the local anti-Mughal Resistance in Bengal (1576-1612 A.C.)**” has been prepared under my supervision for the award of the Ph.D. degree in Islamic History and Culture. It is based on the contemporary, the near contemporary and the later sources available in Persian, English and Bengali.

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Chapter I

The Background

Qutb al-Deen Aibak, laid the foundation of Muslim rule in Northern India in the opening years of the thirteenth century and he made Delhi his capital. Henceforth, the authority of Delhi over almost the whole of Northern India was firm till the first half of the fourteenth century. But in the last days of the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq began the declination of Delhi Sultanate and ultimately a number of independent kingdoms arose on the ruins of Delhi Sultanate in Northern and Southern India. Gujrat¹, Malwa², Jaunpur³ and Bengal⁴ were the notable among the Northern and Eastern Indian kingdoms. Though, Bahlul Ludi⁵ laid the foundation of Afghan rule in Delhi in the second half of the fifteenth century, it was not possible to re-establish the authority of Delhi over other independent kingdoms except Jaunpur before sixteenth century. There was no political unity among these independent kingdoms of Northern India and they were engaged in conflicts with one another. Taking advantage of this political disunity Mughal Badshah Babur attacked India in the sixteenth century. On the eve of the Indian expedition of Babur the Sultans, who ruled over Northern and Eastern India were Afghan Sultan Ibrahim Ludi of Delhi, Muzaffar Shah II of Gujrat, Mahmud Shah II of Malwa and Sayyid Sultan Nusrat Shah of Bengal.

Babur laid the foundation of Mughal rule in Northern India by defeating Afghan Sultan Ibrahim Ludi in the battle of Panipat in 1526 A.C. The rise of the Mughal power under Zahir al-Deen Muhammad Babur in the political arena of this sub-continent brought about an epoch making change in the political history of this country. Because, as a result of the defeat of Ibrahim Ludi to Babur, on the one hand, the

Afghans were compelled to yield the sceptre of India to the hands of the Mughals and on the other hand, this change of crown was followed by a bitter Mughal-Afghan contest. Indeed, the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy throughout the sixteenth century and Afghan infiltration into Eastern India added a stimulating chapter in the history of Muslim rule in India. This Mughal-Afghan contest of sixteenth century exerted profound influence over Bengal and it was the last centre of this contest.

As a result of the defeat of Ibrahim Ludi to Babur the Afghans were forced to seek asylum in Bengal⁶, just as Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur, who was compelled to take shelter in Bengal being defeated by Sultan Sikandar Ludi of Delhi. It may be mentioned here that Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur was forced to seek asylum in Bengal being completely defeated by Sultan Sikandar Ludi of Delhi, in 1495 A.C.⁷ Ala-al-Deen Husain Shah, the Bengal Sultan, received him with due honour and provided for his residence at Kahlgaon in Bhagalpur⁸. Sikandar Ludi sharply reacted to this by sending an expedition to Bengal under the command of Mahmud Khan and Mubarak Khan Nuhani. Ala-al-Deen Husain Shah also sent an army under his son Daniyal to intercept the Delhi forces. The two armies remained encamped face to face for some time at Barh, Bihar. Thus the Afghan Sultan of Delhi first came into contact with Bengal. Ultimately, negotiations were opened resulting in the signing of a non- aggression treaty. According to the terms of the treaty, it was decided that both parties should cease to attack each other and that they should not give protection to their mutual enemies⁹. After the conclusion of this treaty till the first quarter of the sixteenth century there was no news of conflict between the Ludi Afghan Sultan of Delhi and the Sultan of Bengal is found in history. Husain Shah's treaty with Sikandar Ludi had established a balance of power between Bengal and Delhi. But Babur's victory over the Ludis

destroyed that balance. Because, a large number of Afghan nobles found refuge with Nusrat Shah, the Sultan of Bengal¹⁰, after the defeat of Ibrahim Ludi by Babur in the field of Panipat. Babur's immediate attention was directed not towards the fugitive Afghans in Bengal, but to the formidable coalition of the Hindu Chiefs under Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar. The latter had hoped that Babur would break the Ludi kingdom for him and would then retire from India, as Timur had done. As that did not happen, Sangram Singh placed himself at the head of a coalition of some 120 Hindu chiefs and advanced against Babur with an overwhelming army including 80,000 horse and 500 war elephants. Under the circumstances Babur naturally wanted to prevent the accession of others like the Bengal ruler and the fugitive Afghans to the enemy camp. Hence, early in 1527 A.C. Babur sent an envoy to Nusrat Shah asking for his neutrality in the ensuing contest¹¹. Thus the Mughal ruler of Delhi first came into contact with the ruler of Bengal. Realising Babur's preoccupations, Nusrat Shah was in no hurry to give any positive reply. However, Babur was able to defeat Rana Sangram Singh in the battle of Khanua on 16th March, 1527A.C. Then he rounded off his victory by capturing the Chanderi fort from the Rajputs on 29th January, 1528¹². Thus Babur destroyed the chance of political revival of the Rajputs in India¹³.

After the suppression of the Rajputs, Babur turned his attention to the Afghans in Oudh and elsewhere and he sent an envoy to Nusrat Shah once again. Now, the latter thought it inadvisable to make further delay and professed neutrality by sending his envoy, Ismail Mitha, with presents to Babur¹⁴. Meanwhile, the Afghans in Oudh and South Bihar under their leaders like Mahmud Shah a brother of Ibrahim Ludi, Sher Khan (later Sher Shah) and Jalal Khan, attempted to organise themselves against the Mughals. But as soon as Babur advanced against

them they fell back. In order to haunt them down Babur now demanded free passage for his army through the trans- Ghagra territory of Nusrat Shah, as the latter hesitated and temporised, Babur applied force, defeated a contingent of the Bengal Sultan posted there and occupied the territory up to Saran. Further trouble was averted by the prompt conclusion of a treaty by Nusrat Shah's military governor of Monghyr who accepted on behalf of the Sultan all the terms dictated by Babur. Shortly afterwards the latter died in 1530 A.C. During the four years that Babur spent in India though, he was able to conquer a considerable portion of Northern India, it was not possible for him to subjugate the whole of Northern India. After the death of Babur his son Humayun gained a decisive victory over the Afghans at Daurah and drove out Mahmud Ludi from Jaunpur¹⁵. After that it was rumoured that Humayun was going to attack Bengal. To counteract this possibility Nusrat Shah sent his envoy Malik Marjan to Bahadur Shah of Gujrat with a view to concluding a friendly alliance with him. Bahadur Shah's response to this proposal was quite favourable for Nusrat Shah, for the former received the envoy of the latter cordially. But Nusrat Shah died before the alliance could materialise¹⁶. However, no more engagement took place between the Sultan of Bengal and the Mughals, during the lifetime of Nusrat Shah.

Giyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah, the last Husain Shahi Sultan of Bengal, ascended the throne at such a time when the political situation of Northern India was extremely enraged and the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy enter its acute phase under the leaderships of Humayun and Sher Khan (Shah) respectively. On the one hand, Humayun made unsuccessful attempts to subjugate Malwa, Gujrat and Bengal and on the other hand, he was expelled from India by Sher Shah. Both these leaders, particularly Sher Shah, wanted to draw Bengal into

the struggle and to use it as a stepping stone for gaining mastery over Northern India. Besides, the Portuguese increasingly pressed on from the sea-side and intruded into the Southern districts of Bengal. Above all, since Giyath al- Deen Mahmud occupied the throne of Bengal by killing Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah, son of Nusrat Shah, courtiers of the country became hostile to him and internal feud appeared in the country, Mahmud's brother- in- law and governor of Hajipur, Makhdum Alam, now turned a deadly enemy and allied himself with Sher Shah to bring about Mahmud's ruin. Consequently, Mahmud Shah locked in war with Sher Shah when he went to suppress Makhdum Alam. Sher Shah first defeated the Bengal army in the battle of Suraj Garh in 1534 A.C. and at last occupied Gaur the capital of Bengal in 1538 A.C.¹⁷ In this situation Mahmud Shah sent an envoy to Mughal Badshah Humayun, who was at that time halting at Barkunda after having captured Chunar, seeking his help and requesting him to attack the Afghans in Bengal¹⁸. Hence, as Badshah Humayun approached Gaur, Sher Shah retreated towards Bihar and Humayun entered the capital of Bengal unopposed in the middle of July, 1538 A.C.¹⁹ But after defeating Humayun in the battle of Chausa in 1539 Sher Shah re-occupied Gaur and ascended the throne of Delhi by defeating Humayun in the battle of Bilgram in 1540 A.C.²⁰ Consequently, on the one hand, the independent Sultanate of Bengal came to an end and Bengal was again yoked to the authority of Delhi, on the other hand, the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy came to an end for the time being.

The Afghan Sultan Sher Shah died after a very short reign of five years, that is, from 1540 to 1545 A.C. Though, within this short time he was able to establish his authority over Bengal, Bihar, Jaunpur, Malwa, Delhi, Agra and other places of India, Gujrat was out of control of Delhi even then. After the death of Sher Shah the Afghans were engaged in

internal quarrel once again. Sultan Islam Shah, son of Sher Shah, though, was able to protect the integrity of his father's empire, after his death the internal quarrel of the Afghans reached at the most critical stage and the Mughals made an endeavour to restore their lost territories taking advantage of this internal discord of the Afghans. Ultimately, they were able to snatch the sceptre of India from the Afghans once again. After Islam Shah's death his minor son Firuz Khan ascended the throne. But within a few days of his accession, Firuz was killed by his maternal uncle Mubariz Khan Sur who then ascended the throne and assumed the title of Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah. But it was not possible on his part to control the turbulent Afghan nobles. There was a faction fight at his court in his very presence, with heavy mutual slaughter among the Afghan chiefs. Of the survivors many took to flight to save themselves and broke out in rebellion in their respective provinces. For example, Taj Khan Kararani rebelled and established himself in South Bihar, Muhammad Khan Sur, the governor of Bengal, declared independence and assumed the royal title of Shams al-Deen Abu al- Muzaffar Muhammad Shah and prepared to make a bid for the sovereignty of Northern India, and Ibrahim Khan Sur and Ahmed Khan Sur rebelled and pretended for the Afghan throne²¹. When Adil was engaged in fighting these rebels and pretenders, Baz Bahadur, son of Shujaat Khan Sur, succeeded his father in the governorship of Malwa and assumed sovereign power in that province²². In this situation, at first, Sultan Adil defeated Taj Khan Kararani at Chapparamau, 40 *kos* from Agra and 30 *kos* from Kanauj, with the help of his commander-in-Chief Hemu. The defeated Kararani chief, joined by his brothers and other Afghans, established himself in South Bihar. Adil and Hemu again tried to suppress the Kararanis of South Bihar, but failed. About this time, the pretender Ibrahim Khan Sur had defeated Adil's general Isa

khan Niyazi in a battle near Kalpi and occupied Delhi, Agra and the neighbouring territories. Adil and Hemu tried to recapture Delhi and Agra, but failed and returned in a helpless state to Chunar, which he had made his capital²³. Ibrahim Khan Sur assumed the title of Ibrahim Shah and had his name entered in the *khutba* and on coins²⁴. Another pretender Ahmed Khan Sur had declared himself an independent ruler in the Panjab and assumed the title of Sikandar Shah and advanced towards Delhi and Agra. In the later part of 1554 A.C. a fierce battle took place at Farrah and Sikandar Shah obtained a decisive victory over Ibrahim Shah. He then occupied Agra and Delhi and pursued Ibrahim Shah from Sambal to Etawa. About this time, he received the news of Humayun's occupation of Lahore²⁵.

Ibrahim Shah now, collected a fresh army and advanced towards Kalpi. About this time, Adil sent his commander-in-Chief Hemu from Chunar with a large army to recover Agra and Delhi. When Hemu reached Kalpi, he resolved first to dispose of Ibrahim Shah. In a battle he defeated Ibrahim Shah and pursued him to Biana. Again in a battle in the outskirts of Biana, Hemu defeated him. As Ibrahim Shah took shelter in the fort of Biana, he besieged it and the siege continued for three months²⁶.

When Hemu was in Biana, Muhammad Khan Sur of Bengal captured Jaunpur and made for Kalpi and Agra. In this situation Hemu abandoned the siege of Biana. As he proceeded towards Kalpi, Ibrahim Shah followed him and at Mandagar, 6 *kos* from Agra, attacked his rear. Hemu, however, defeated him and drove him away. Ibrahim Shah first went to Alwar and then went to Patna²⁷. After his victory over Ibrahim Shah, Hemu joined Adil at Chapparghata, 15 *kos* from Kalpi and 15 *kos* from Agra, and in a battle in December, 1555, Hemu defeated and killed Muhammad Khan Sur. Then Adil occupied Bengal and appointed

Shahbaz Khan as the governor of Bengal²⁸. On the other hand, the defeated nobles and officers of the late Bengal ruler Muhammad Khan Sur assembled however at Joshi on the left bank of the Ganges opposite to Allahabad and crowned his son Khizr Khan as the Sultan of Bengal. The latter assumed the title of Giyath al- Deen Bahadur Shah. He captured Gaur by defeating Shahbaz Khan, immediately after his coronation²⁹.

When Adil was engaged in dealing with Ibrahim Shah and Muhammad Khan Sur, the fugitive Mughal Badshah Humayun occupied Delhi and Agra. Though, after 1552 A.C. Humayun dared not invade India so long as Islam Shah lived, the news of the death of that energetic Afghan Sultan, the feeble rule of Adil and the internal discord among the Afghans however encouraged him to make an attempt for the recovery of his throne. On November 12, 1554, Humayun marched from Kabul to invade India. Engrossed in civil wars the Afghans had neglected the defence of the north-west-frontier. So, Humayun crossed the Indus unopposed and made a swift attack on the fort of Rohtas and then on February 24, 1555 A.C. the Mughals captured Lahore by expelling the Afghans. From Dipalpur also the Afghan generals, Shahbaz Khan and Nasir Khan took to flight in great panic and confusion. At last on June 22, 1555A.C. Humayun was able to defeat Sikandar Shah in the battle which took place near Sirhind. Defeated Sikandar Shah fled to the Siwalik hills. Then on July 20, 1555, after fifteen years of exile, Humayun re-entered his capital Delhi. He then occupied Agra and the adjoining territories. His general Muhammad Khan Atka invested Biana. Being in a strained condition, Ibrahim Shah's father Gazi Khan Sur surrendered and he was killed by the Mughals. But Humayun did not long survive his restoration and he died

on January 28, 1556. On February 14, 1556, his son Akbar, who was in Panjab with his guardian Bairam Khan, was crowned at Kalanur³⁰.

Badshah Akbar took the leadership of the Mughals at such a time when the political situation of India was very confused and the Mughal supremacy over India was still far from being assured. At this time, each of the independent kingdoms in different parts of India was contending for power. In the north-west, Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Akbar's half brother, governed Kabul almost independently. In the north Kashmir was under a local dynasty and the Himalayan States were also independent. Sind and Multan had become free from the control of Delhi after the death of Sher Shah. Orissa, Malwa and Gujrat and the local chieftains of Gondwana were also independent. South of the Vindhyas the Vijayanagar kingdom and Khandesh, Berar, Bidar, Ahmadnagar and Golkunda were independent and they did not feel any interest in northern politics. Above all, the Portuguese had established their influence on the western coast by the possession of Goa and Diu. Humayun had been able to recover only a small fragment of his territories in India before he died. The Sur Afghans were still in occupation of the greater portion of Sher Shah's empire³¹. It was Akbar under whose leadership the last phase of Mughal-Afghan contest came to an end and he was able to establish the Mughal Empire in India on firm footing.

After the death of Humayun, Adil Shah sent Hemu with a large force towards Agra and Delhi and he himself stayed in Chunar. In October 1556, Hemu re-occupied Delhi by expelling the Mughals³². But on 5th November, 1556, the Mughals defeated the Afghan army under the command of Hemu in the battle of Panipat II and Hemu was killed by Bairam Khan³³. The battle of Panipath II was a decisive battle which led the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy to a conclusion.

In Hemu's death, Adil became helpless. On the other hand, though, the battle of Panipat had dispossessed the Afghans of the territories from the Panjab to Agra, still they held a large part of India³⁴. But on account of their factions, the Afghans could not see the long-term interest of the Indian Afghans. They continued to fight one another even after their great common calamity and thus prepared their own grave. A few Afghan chiefs fought individually against the Mughals and fell, while others remained passive spectators expecting to profit by the fall of the chiefs of their own race. However, when Adil's general Hemu was fighting at Panipat, Giyath al- Deen Bahadur Shah of Bengal occupied Bihar and advanced to revenge the death of his father against Adil. In April, 1557, Bahadur Shah with the help of Sulaiman Khan Kararani of South Bihar defeated and killed Adil at Fathpur, 4 miles west of Surajgarh³⁵. It was Akbar's good fortune that his Afghan enemies were fighting and killing themselves and thus facilitated the establishment of his supremacy in Northern India. On July 25, 1557, Sikandar Shah of Panjab was forced to surrender to Akbar. Besides, the Mughal army occupied Alwar and Mewat by expelling Haji Khan. On the other hand, Mughal general Khan-i -Zaman defeated and drove away Rukn Khan Nuhani from Sambal and he also defeated another Afghan chief Jalal Khan Sur near Lucknow in the same year. As a result of these defeats, the Afghans lost to the Mughals the territories from Sambal to Lucknow³⁶. In 1558 A.C. Khan-i-Zaman occupied Jaunpur by defeating Ibrahim Shah and the latter fled to Orissa. In the same year, Bahadur Shah of Bengal advanced towards Jaunpur intending to drive away the Mughals from Northern India. But Khan-i-Zaman drove him back to Bengal³⁷.

The Afghan chiefs continued their isolated efforts to recover Northern India. The partisans of Adil placed his son Sher Khan (called

Sher Shah II) on the throne at Chunar and in 1561, they proceeded to recover Jaunpur with a large force. Though, initially they were able to defeat Mughal general Khan-i-Zaman in an engagement near Jaunpur, in the end they were defeated by the Mughals. After this defeat, Sher Shah II took to the life of a recluse. On the other hand, feeling that the Afghan fortune was irretrievably shattered and ruined and it was impossible for him to continue the possession of Chunar, Fattu Khan Masnad-i-Ala a noble of Adil, surrendered to the Mughals and entered the service of Badshah Akbar³⁸. Besides, when the nobles of Adil placed his son Sher Shah II on the throne at Chunar, the supporters of the family of Islam Shah chose his son Awaz Khan as their king at Rohtas. They took advantage of Khan-i-Zaman's pre-occupation with Sher Shah II to siege some Mughal territories. Then in 1561 A.C. after Sher Shah II's defeat, they advanced towards Jaunpur with a large army. Though, in an engagement at Andhiari, the Afghans were able to defeat a detachment of Mughal general Khan- i Zaman, they could not retained this victory till the last. Awaz Khan's was the last attempt of the Afghans to recover their lost territories. After this, they ceased to launch any systematic offensive against the Mughals and they gave their attention mainly to preserving what they still held in India³⁹. But the intention of Mughal Badshah Akbar was not to allow them retain possession of any territory in India. So it is seen that the Mughals conquered Malwa from Baz Bahadur in A.C. 1561-1562 A.C.⁴⁰ Thus, Badshah Akbar taking the advantage of the internal discord among the Afghans snatched almost whole of Northern India except Bengal and Bihar from the Afghans. Akbar became irresistible in India by driving away his mighty opponent, the Afghans, from Northern India and occupied Chitor, Ranthambhor and other territories by defeating the Rajputs⁴¹. Besides, Akbar

established his authority over Gujrat by defeating Muzaffar Shah III in 1572 A.C.⁴²

Even after the loss of Northern India, the Afghans possessed Eastern India. From the beginning of his reign Badshah Akbar resolved to expel them from Eastern India, that is, from Bengal and Bihar. But he did not attack Bengal and Bihar, until Kararani Afghan ruler Sulaiman Khan had died in 1572 A.C. However, Giyath al- Deen Bahadur Shah, the Sur Afghan Sultan of Bengal, in 1558 A.C. being failed to capture Jaunpur from the Mughals remained content with his position in Bengal and Bihar. He died in 1560 A.C. and was succeeded by his brother Jalal al-Deen Sur, who assumed the title of Giyath al- Deen Abul Muzaffar Jalal Shah. The latter died in 1563 and was succeeded by his son, whose name is not known. After a reign of seven months and nine days, he fell a victim to the hand of a usurper, who assumed the title of Giyath al-Deen. The latter reigned one year and eleven days. In 1564 A.C. he was killed by Taj Khan who laid the foundation of the Kararani Afghan Sultanate in Bengal and Bihar⁴³.

In 1564 A.C. Taj Khan Kararani ascended the throne of Gaur. But in 1565, a few months after his accession, he died. After the death of Taj Khan, his brother Sulaiman Khan Kararani, the ruler of Bihar, succeeded to the Sultanate of Bengal and Bihar⁴⁴. As a result of the recovery of the throne of Delhi by Mughal Badshah Humayun and after his death gradual expansion of the Mughal Empire by Badshah Akbar when the Afghan power was decaying day by day, it was Sulaiman Khan Kararani who became the helmsman of the Afghan power in Bengal and Bihar. After the establishment of Mughal authority over Northern India, the defeated Afghans now came to Bengal and Bihar, and entered the service of Sulaiman Kararani. As a result, his strength increased gradually. He had a force of 3,600 elephants, 40,000 cavalry,

14,000 infantry and 20,000 pieces of cannon and several hundred war boats⁴⁵. He was not hot-headed like the other Afghans and in his foreign policy he showed great political wisdom and sagacity. As the Mughal authority was re-established in Northern India, he realised that it would not be possible for the quarrelling and hot-headed Afghans to stand against the Mughals. So, he decided to avoid conflict with the Mughals. In order to placate the mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar, he made an outward show of submission to him by making occasional presents and reading the *khutba* in the name of Akbar. Though, he was *de facto* sovereign of Bengal and Bihar, he did not assume the title of Shah or Sultan. He took upon himself the title of *Hadrat-i-Ali* or His Exalted Highness, like other Afghan nobles. Even he kept friendly relation with Khan-i-Zaman, the Mughal viceroy of Jaunpur. Thus Sulaiman Khan Kararani was able to protect Bengal and Bihar in the face of the opposition of mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar. Infact, during Sulaiman Kararani's lifetime Badshah Akbar did not try to conquer Bengal and Bihar⁴⁶ and this is the best result of his foreign policy. The most remarkable event of the reign of Sulaiman Khan Kararani is the conquest of Orissa in 1567 A.C. Because, no Muslim ruler was able to conquer Orissa before⁴⁷. He also attacked Kuch Bihar in 1568. But he settled the enmity with the Koch King and made amity. Because, he felt to secure the Northern frontier of his territory in the event of a Mughal invasion of Bengal and Bihar⁴⁸.

Sulaiman Khan Kararani died on 11th October, 1572, after a reign of about seven years with success⁴⁹. There were some reasons behind his success. Firstly, Mughal Badshah Akbar was at that time busy in consolidating his position in North-Western and Central India so that he could not turn any serious attention to Bengal and Bihar. Secondly, as the Mughal authority was established in Northern India, most of the

Afghan chiefs and nobles now came to Bengal and Bihar and gathered round their fellow clansmen there. With their help Sulaiman was able to build up a very strong army. Thirdly, he himself was wise and prudent man and he had a wise and distinguished minister, named Ludi Khan, who gave him proper advices. Fourthly, Sulaiman was very cautious and watchful. So, he did not assume any insignia of royalty to make Badshah Akbar angry. But after his death due to indiscretion, unworthiness and imprudence of his sons, the Afghans became divided once again and disorder appeared in the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India. Taking advantage of this disorder the Mughals attacked Bengal and defeated Daud Khan Kararani, the second son of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, on 3rd March, 1575 A.C. in the battle of Tukaroi⁵⁰. Being defeated in the battle, Daud fled to the fort of Katak. On reaching Katak he first intended to continue the battle, but at last he was forced to conclude a treaty with Munim Khan Khan-i- Khanan, the Mughal general. According to the treaty Daud Khan acknowledged the suzerainty of Mughal Badshah Akbar and he was given Orissa to rule as a Mughal vassal. This treaty is known as the treaty of Katak in history⁵¹.

Though, Daud Khan Kararani concluded the treaty of Katak with the Mughals, the Afghans in general did not accept the treaty. They continued to resist the Mughals in Bihar, Jharkand, Ghoraghat, Gaur and in other places. Daud Khan had no control over the Afghans⁵². On the other hand, the treaty of Katak could not achieve its object. Because, it secured for the Mughals neither peace nor an undisputed possession of Bengal. However, thinking that residence at Gaur would enable him to deal effectively with the Afghans of Ghoraghat, Munim Khan shifted the capital from Tanda to Gaur⁵³. Just a month later, after the transfer of the capital to Gaur, an epidemic, caused by bad climate broke out in the city which resulted in the death of a large number of Mughal troops.

Then Munim Khan ordered his men to return to Tanda. But he could not enter Tanda. In the outskirts of Tanda, he was taken ill and on October 23, 1575 A.C. he died⁵⁴.

Munim Khan's death encouraged Daud Khan to make a bid for the recovery of Bengal and Bihar. He broke the treaty of Katak and swiftly fell on the Mughal General Nadr Bahadur, defeated and killed him and occupied Bhadrak. At his approach, the Mughals fled away from Jaleswar and Tanda. Daud re-entered his capital and easily recovered Teliagarhi from the panic-stricken Mughals. At this time of confusion, Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala the chief of Bhati, fell upon Shah Bardi, the Mughal admiral, and drove him away from the vicinity of Sonargaon⁵⁵. It is noteworthy that Abul Fazl, the contemporary historian referred to Isa Khan here for the first time in his book the *Akbar Nama*. So, it may be mentioned here that the local Chieftains of Bengal began their anti-Mughal resistance for the sake of the preservation of the independence of their homeland thenceforth.

Notes and References

1. In 1401 A.C. Zafar Khan, who had been appointed governor of Gujrat in 1391 by Muhammad Shah, the youngest son of Firuz of the house of Tughlaq, formally assumed independence. Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C., Datta, Kalikinkar, *An Advanced History of India*, Second Edition (with correction), London, 1965, p.351; henceforth cited only as *Ad. Hist.*
2. Dilawar Khan Ghuri, who had been appointed governor of Malwa probably by Firuz of the house of Tughlaq, made himself independent of the Delhi Sultanate for all practical purposes in 1401 A.C. *Ibid.*, p.348.
3. During the period of confusion following the invasion of Timur in 1398 A.C., Khwaja Jahan threw off his allegiance to the Delhi Sultanate and founded a dynasty of independent rulers at Jaunpur, known as the Sharqi dynasty after his title "*Malik-ush-Sharq*". *Ibid.*, pp.336,347.

4. In 1342, 1346 and 1352 A.C., Shams al-Deen Ilyas Shah occupied Lakhnawati, Satgaon and Sonargaon respectively, and established the independent Ilyas Shahi dynasty in Bengal. Karim, Abdul, *Banglar Itihas (Sultani Amal)* [History of Bengal (Sultanic Period)], Second Edition, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, January, 1987, pp. 152,155; henceforth cited only as *Sultani Amal*.
5. Sultan Bahlul Ludi first established the Afghan Sultanate in India in 1451 A.C. In 1484 he defeated the Jaunpur Sultan Husain Shah Sharqi and brought Jaunpur under the authority of Delhi. Halim, Abdul, *History of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and Agra*, University of Dacca, 1961, pp.18-20, 44-45.
6. Salim, Ghulam Hussain, *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, Translated from the Persian by Abdus Salam, Reprint, Delhi, 1975, pp. 134-135; henceforth cited only as *Riyaz*.
7. Tarafdar, Momtazur Rahman, *Husain Shahi Bengal(1494-1538 A.D.): A Socio-Political Study*, Second Revised Edition, University of Dhaka, May 1999, p. 38; henceforth cited only as *Husain Shahi*.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39; Ali, Muhammad Mohar, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Vol. IA, First Edition, Riyadh, 1985, pp.191-192; henceforth cited only as *Muslims of Bengal*.
10. *Riyaz*, p.135.
11. *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.217-218.
12. *Ibid.*, p.218.
13. *Ad. Hist.*, p.429.
14. *Riyaz*, p.135; *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 218.
15. *Ad. Hist.*, p.433; *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 218; *Husain Shahi*, p.79.
16. Sarkar, Sir Jadu-Nath (Edited), *The History of Bengal*, Vol.II, Third Impression, Dacca University, August 1976, p. 157; henceforth cited only as *H. Bengal*; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp. 218-219; *Husain Shahi*, p.79; *Sultani Amal*, p.328.
17. For details see, Sarwani, Abbas Khan, *The Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, Vol. II, Translated from the Persian by Imamuddin, S. M., University of Dacca, 1964, pp. 44-78; henceforth cited only as *Tarikh*; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp. 223-224, 228.

18. *Ibid.*, pp.81-82; *Ibid.*, 228.
19. *Sultani Amal*, p.361; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.235.
20. For details see, *Tarikh*, pp.90-116; *Sultani Amal*, pp.362-364.
21. For details see, Rahim, Muhammad Abdur, *The History of the Afghans in India*, First Edition, Karachi, 1961, pp. 114-121; henceforth cited only as *The Afghans; H. Bengal*, p.179. Abul Fazl mentioned Taj Khan as Taj Kararani; *Akbar Nama* Vol. II, Translated into English by Beveridge, Henry, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted, 1998, pp.45,477.
22. *The Afghans*, p. 121.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-124.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125; *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 241.
29. *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 241.
30. *The Afghans*, pp.125-127.
31. *Ad. Hist.*, p.445.
32. *The Afghans*, p.127.
33. For details see, *Ibid.*, pp. 131-133.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134; *Sultani Amal*, p.369; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.241-242.
36. *The Afghans*, pp.134-136. Abul Fazl mentioned Rukn Khan as Rukn Khan Nuhani, Allami, Abu-l-Fazl, the *Akbar Nama*, Vol.II, Translated from the Persian by Beveridge, Henry, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted in 1998, p.45; henceforth cited only as *Akbar Nama*, Vol.II.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.
40. *Ad. Hist.*, p.350.

41. The Mughals occupied Chitor in 1567-1568 and Ranthambhor in 1569 A.C., *Ad. Hist.*, pp.449-450.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 353, 451-452.
43. *The Afghans*, pp.167-168.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174. Abul Fazl mentioned Sulaiman Khan as Sulaiman Kararani; *Akbar Nama* Vol. II, p.338.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 174; *Sultani Amal*, p.371.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179; *Ibid.*, p. 372.
47. *Sultani Amal*, p.372.
48. *Ibid.*, p.373; *The Afghans*, p.177.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Allami, Abu-l-Fazl, the *Akbar Nama*, Vol.III, Translated from the Persian by Beveridge, Henry, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted in 1998, pp.174-175; henceforth cited only as *Akbar Nama*; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.254-255.
51. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 182-185; Khan, Iqtidar Alam, *The Political Biography of A Mughal Noble: Mun'im Khan Khan-i-Khanan, 1497-1575*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973, pp.143-144; henceforth cited only as *Mughal Noble*; *The Afghans*, p.202; *Sultani Amal*, p.382.
52. *Sultani Amal*, p.382.
53. *Akbar Nama*, p.226; *The Afghans*, p.203; *Mughal Noble*; p.145.
54. *Ibid.*, pp.226-227; *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204; *Ibid.*, p.146.
55. *Ibid.*, pp.226, 228; *Ibid.*, p. 204; Chisti, A.A.Sheikh Md. Asrarul Hoque, *Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala: Jivan O Karmar Ekti Rajnoitik Bishleshon* (Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala: His Life and Activities: A Political Analysis), Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, March, 1998, Dhaka University, pp.93-94; henceforth cited only as *Masnad-i-Ala*.

Chapter II

The Bara-Bhuiyans and the places of their Origin and activities

Section I: The term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' explained

The *Bhuiyans* who fought against the mighty Mughals for independence in the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir under the leaderships of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan have been mentioned as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the contemporary writings and chronicles. The Mughal historians Abul Fazl¹ and Mirza Nathan² also have mentioned Isa Khan and Musa Khan as the leaders of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* fought gallantly during the reign of Badshah Akbar and the first part of the reign of Badshah Jahangir, and although they were forced to surrender in the end, they successfully retained the independence of the country, specially the region of Bhati, for more than three decades. The brilliancy of their achievements dazzled the eyes of their contemporaries and made them heroes of popular legends in their life time. But the history of the heroic struggle for resistance of these heroic sons of the soil is still gloomy.

The Muslims are known for consciousness of their history. They introduced a chronological and systematic history writing in Indian-subcontinent. The Muslim rulers of Delhi, both in the pre-Mughal and the Mughal period, had a number of contemporary histories written by scholars and also patronised other historians who undertook such tasks. But unfortunately no contemporary writer worth the name has written on the history of Bengal. Consequently, the history of the Sultanate period of Bengal and of the heroic struggle for resistance of the *Bhuiyans* remained obscure in many respects. So, for the study of the history of the independent Sultans of Bengal and of the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) it is

necessary to depend on the treatises written in Delhi and other places. Similarly, for the study of the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the principal and contemporary sources are the *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan, the Mughal historians. Abul Fazl in his *Akbar Nama* writes about the family of Isa Khan and the expeditions sent against him by the Mughals, the resistance offered by the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal under the leadership of Isa Khan, death of Isa Khan etc. Though, Abul Fazl's accounts appears to be biased and misleading in many respects, the *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* are the only contemporary sources for the study of the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar. On the other hand, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan is the only contemporary source-book for the study of the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. Apart from these, much information is being found concerning the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in different folk-songs, ballads and legends prevailing in the country. But these are full of fables and fictions³. So, it has been rather difficult to reconstruct the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But historians did not remain effortless to find out the truth and those who achieved some success in reconstructing the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* are James Wise⁴, Henry Blochmann⁵, Henry Beveridge⁶, S.C. Mitra⁷, N.K.Bhattasali⁸, M.A. Rahim⁹, M. Mohar Ali¹⁰ and Abdul Karim¹¹. These scholars have tried to explore the real history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But their writings have turned out to be inadequate and at the same time, it is evident from their writings that none of them could offer proper answers to the following questions concerning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*; (a) What is the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*?'; (b) Who are the *Bara-Bhuiyans*?; (c) When and how did they rise to power?; (d) Where were the territories of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* actually

located?etc.etc.Nevertheless, it is undeniable that their writings paved the way for the present generation of researchers in many respects. The main proposition of the present study is to reach a plausible conclusion on the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’, that is, to explain the term properly as far as possible by re-examining the writings of the afore-mentioned scholars and with the help of the *Akbar Nama*, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* and other historical sources.

During the 19th and the 20th centuries, many European (chiefly English) and Bengalee scholars have discussed more or less in different Journals and Books about the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But different scholars tried to explain the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ in various ways and also held mutually contradictory views regarding the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’. Now, a humble attempt is being made to solve this issue.

James Wise first attempted to recover the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he published an article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1874. In this article he provides the following information:

- a) During the period from 1576 to 1593, Bengal was ruled by twelve great princes or twelve *Bhuiyans*, hence Bengal was called as the *Barah Bhuya Mulk* (country of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*). Five of these ruled over southern and eastern Bengal.
- b) The terms *Bhuinhar*, *Bhumik* or *Bhuya* literally mean a landholder and *Bhumik* or *Zamindar* bears the same meaning. It is also a respectful term to address any landholder.¹²

It appears from the above information given by James Wise that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ was in vogue in Bengal during the period from 1576 to 1593. Though, James Wise mentioned that Bengal was ruled by

twelve *Bhuiyans*, he named only seven of them and dealt chiefly with five.¹³ On the other hand, he only explained the term '*Bhuiyan*'. But he did not explain the term '*Bara*'. So, it is not possible to reach a reasonable conclusion regarding the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' on the basis of the information given by James Wise, which necessitates to examine the writings of other scholars to explain the term properly.

Among the Bengali writers on *Bara-Bhuiyans* the first name worth mentioning is Kailash Chandra Sinha, who published an article in the Bengali Journal *Bharati* in 1287 B.S., Paush. In this article he says,

“Once upon a time Bengal was called the country of the Twelve *Bhumik* (*Bara-Bhuiyan Mulk*). Some historians imagine that the Gangetic-delta was divided into twelve divisions. The *Zamindars* of those divisions were known as the Twelve *Bhumik* or *Bara-Bhuiyans*...Infact during the Pathan (Afghan) rule Bengal was divided into twelve divisions. The *Zamindars* of those divisions were termed as the *Bhumik* or *Bhuiyan*”.¹⁴

Then he gave a list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.¹⁵

The above statement of Kailash Chandra Sinha is not supported by history in some respects:

Firstly, he mentioned that some historians imagine that the Gangetic-delta was divided into twelve divisions and the *Zamindars* of those divisions were termed as the Twelve *Bhumik* or *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But this statement is only an assumption without any direct historical evidence in its support.

Secondly, though, Sher Shah divided Bengal into a number of fiefs (*jagirs*),¹⁶ there is no proof that these fiefs were only twelve in number.

Thirdly, the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* given by him shows that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were spread throughout the whole of Bengal, which is not correct. Because, in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Bharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, while mentioning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, also

mention Bhati, that is, they limited the *Bara-Bhuiyans* within the region of Bhati. Besides, it will be seen later that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati. So, it is apparent that the statement of Kailash Chandra Sinha does not help to draw a conclusion regarding the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*'.

In 1905, E.A.Gait published his *A History of Assam*. In this book he writes,

“It is not clear why the number “twelve” should always be associated with them, both in Bengal and Assam. Whenever they are enumerated, twelve persons are always mentioned, but the actual names vary, just as in the case of the Muhammadan “Panch Pir”, different saints are counted by different people. It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Nar Narayan had twelve ministers of State; twelve chiefs or '*dolois*' administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jaintia's Dominions, and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal. The number may thus have become connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a Raja, and so have come to be used in a purely conventional sense.”¹⁷

It appears from the above mentioned statement of E.A.Gait that he assumes that the number 'twelve' was used in a purely conventional sense, which indicates that he takes the number 'twelve' for an indefinite number. But, though, he mentioned the practice of the number 'twelve' in the cases of the kings of Assam, Koch and Nepal, he did not cite any example of such practice of the number 'twelve' in the case of Bengal. So, the matter requires further investigation.

In 1906, Kedarnath Majumdar brought out his *Mayaman Singher Itihash (History of Mymensingh)*. This book contains following information:

When the rebellion in Bihar became firm and was spreading out the whole of Bengal, then the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were gradually rising to position and power in different parts of Bengal. At this time, those twelve *Bhumiks* or *Zamindars* of Bengal, who proclaimed independence,

are known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal. Among these twelve *Bhuiyans* Chand Rai and Kedar Rai of Bikrampur, Lakshman Manikya of Bhulua, Kandrappa Narayan of Chandradvip, Fazl Ghazi of Bhawal and Isa Khan of Khizrpur, these five *Bhuiyans* established five different domains in Eastern Bengal and were ruling Dhaka, Noakhali, Backerganj, Faridpur and Mymensingh.¹⁸

The main points of Kedarnath Majumdar are two:

Firstly, he says that during the rebellion of Bihar the *Bara-Bhuiyans* rose to position and power in different parts of Bengal.

Secondly, he is of the opinion that those twelve *Zamindars* are known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, who proclaimed independence. But he named only five of them.

The first point of Kedarnath Majumdar is not acceptable. For, it is known that the rebellion of Mughal Captains in Bihar and Bengal took place in 1580 A.C.¹⁹ and Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, in 1575,²⁰ prior to this rebellion, already gained enough strength to defeat the Mughal Navy under Shah Bardi. Besides, it is also known that ‘Twelve Chiefs’ of Bengal helped Daud Khan Kararani in 1573 in his expedition in Chittagong against Udaya Manikya, the King of Tripura.²¹

The first part of his second point indicates an important feature of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’, that is, the term applied only to those *Zamindars* who proclaimed independence. It may be acceptable and it will be discussed later. In the second part of his second point, though, he referred to twelve *Bhuiyans*, he named only five of them, which implies that in this case he just followed James Wise.

In Ashar, 1311 B.S., Nikhilnath Ray published an article in the Bengali Journal *Sahitya* entitled ‘Baro-Bhuiyan’. In this article he has given following information:

- a) So far it is known that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* originated during the reigns of Pala kings and probably they were treated as vassal kings under the Pala kings. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were mentioned along with the Pala kings in the *Dharmamangal* and they enjoyed their right hereditarily for a long time.
- b) It is probable that during the Afghan rule the original dynasty of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was abolished, and new *Bhuiyans* were appointed in place of them. Perhaps, their number might have varied. Nevertheless, they were named as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.²²

The above information provided by Nikhlnath Ray reveals that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* originated during the reigns of Pala kings in Bengal and *Dharmamangal* lends support to it. Though, their number was indefinite, they were named as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. It seems that Nikhlnath Ray took the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' for an indefinite number of *Bhuiyans*. Now the question is, if the number of *Bhuiyans* were indefinite, why then they will be called as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*? But Nikhlnath Ray gave no explanation for this. On the other hand, elsewhere he mentioned that among these twelve *Bhuiyans* nine were Muslims and three were Hindus,²³ which is apparently contradictory.

In 1318 B.S. Anandanath Ray published his book *Barabhuiyan* and he gives following information:

- a) In the middle of the Sixteenth Century a number of landholders of Bengal became unanimous and were determined to liberate themselves from the subjugation of the Delhi Emperor (Mughal Emperor). They are commonly renowned as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.
- b) The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were not merely the aggregate of twelve landholders. But it was like that of an act which is accomplished by

many people is said to be the act of *Panchayet* or *Bara-iyari* or a 'Twelve-men undertaking'.²⁴

The main points of Anandanath Ray are two:

Firstly, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were those who did not acknowledge the Mughal suzerainty.

Secondly, he takes the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' to mean many. But elsewhere he mentioned that among these twelve *Bhuiyans* nine were Muslims and three were Hindus.²⁵

His first point is acceptable and it will be discussed later. But his second point is contradictory and it appears that he only followed the previous writers.

In 1913 Rev. H. Hosten published an article entitled 'The Twelve Bhuiyas or Landlords of Bengal'. He wrote this article on the basis of the writings of the contemporary European writers Du Jarric, Sebastien Manrique and others. It is learnt from this article that Du Jarric says,

"This country of Bengala, which comprises about two hundred leagues of sea-coast, was inhabited partly by native Bengalis, who are generally Pagans, partly by Saracens... the Mogors attacked them, and, having killed their king and the chief of their leaders, they took themselves possession of the country. They did not keep it long, however; the twelve Lords, the governors of the twelve kingdoms, which the said king of the Patans possessed, leagued together, dispossessed the Mogors, and usurped each the state which they governed; so much so that they are now sovereign lords and acknowledge no one above them. Yet, they do not call themselves kings, though they consider themselves such; but, Boyons, which means perhaps the same as Princes. All the Patans and native Bengalis obey these Boyons: three of them are Gentiles, namely those of Chandecan, of Sripur, and of Bacala. The others are Saracens;"²⁶

He further writes,

"Of these twelve Lords nine are Mahometans, which much retards the progress of the faith."²⁷

In the above statements of Du Jarric there is reference to the twelve *Bhuiyans*. Of these *Bhuiyans* three were Hindus, those of

Chandecan (Jessore), Sripur and Bakla, the other nine were Muslims. But the names of the Muslim *Bhuiyans* and their territories are not given. So, his statements seem to be incomplete, which does not help to reach a reasonable conclusion.

The next European writer is Sebastien Manrique. He states that the twelve *Bhuiyans* were those of;

1. Bengala; 2. Angelim [Hijli]; 3. Ourixa[Orissa];4. Jassor [Jessore]; 5. Chandecan; 6. Midinimpur [Midnapore]; 7. Catrabo [Katrabuh]; 8. Bacala [Bakla]; 9. Solimanvas [Sulaimanabad];10. Bulva; 11. Daca; 12. Rajamol [Rajmahal].²⁸

It is seen in the above list given by Manrique that he refers to twelve *Bhuiyans*. But instead of giving the names, he has only referred to the territories of the *Bhuiyans*. Besides, his list is confusing. Because, he includes Orissa into the twelve kingdoms of Bengal, but at that time Orissa was a separate *Subah* in the Mughal administrative set-up. Manrique also includes Jessore and Chandican as two separate kingdoms, but Jessore and Chandican were one and the same place.²⁹ Moreover, though, Manrique gives the names of twelve kingdoms of Bengal, he includes Bengala in the list separately. The inclusion of Bengala separately again gives rise to suspicion about the authenticity of his statement. In this case, Rev. Hosten supported Manrique and tried to show that Bengala stands for Tanda. He says,

“I suggest then that the *Bhuiya* of Bengala in Manrique’s time governed the district of Tanda. It had become the capital of Bengal after Gaur, and was a favourite residence of the Moghul Governors of Bengal until the middle of the XVIIth Century.”³⁰

But this opinion of Hosten is not supported by the facts. Because, Tanda was the capital of Bengal *Subah* up to 1595, in which year, Man Singh transferred the capital from Tanda to Rajmahal.³¹ In 1610, Islam

Khan Chishti transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dhaka, and Dhaka was the capital up to Manrique's time and even later.³² So, it cannot be accepted that Bengala stood for Tanda. Above all, the list given by Manrique shows that the territories of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were spread throughout the whole of Bengal and Orissa, which is not correct. Because, the contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, while mentioning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, also mention Bhati, that is, they limited the *Bara-Bhuiyans* within the region of Bhati and it will be seen later that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati and they rose to power in Bhati.

In 1329 B.S. Satish Chandra Mitra published his *Jashohar-Khulnar Itihas* (History of Jessore and Khulna) Vol. II. In this book he has given some information regarding the origin of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*'. It would be better to quote him in translation as under:

"It is said that before or after the Mughal conquest of Bengal twelve such *Bhuiyans* came to prominence. So to say, they divided Bengal or the lower-southern Bengal among themselves. This is why Bengal was then called as the *Bara-Bhuiyan Muluk* (kingdom of the twelve *Bhuiyans*) or *Bara-Bhati Bangala* (Bengal of the twelve Bhaties). But it cannot be said that they were exactly twelve in number and all those twelve existed at the same time..."

As the number twelve was sacred to the Hindus, the assemblage of twelve Kings was also a peculiar feature of India. The tradition of twelve feudal lords has been continuing since very ancient times. In old book like *Manu-Samhita*, there is reference to twelve kinds of kings round the Chief or *Mandaleshor* king (emperor) holding different relations with him. The powerful kings spoken of in Old Bengali Literature sat in their Courts surrounded by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. In Assam also, like Bengal the country was not ruled without the help of twelve kings or ministers and as in the case of *Panch-Pir*, various scholars give the name of various *Pirs*. In Assam too, scholars give various names to complete the list of twelve kings. In Arakan and Siam also twelve feudal lords or *Bhuiyans* were required during the coronation of Chief King and at the same time these twelve *Bhuiyans* were also installed to office. Even now in our country no task can be

accomplished without the co-operation of twelve persons, the task which is accomplished by many people is called *Bara-iyari* (a twelve-men undertaking) or *Barowari*. There is no rule that exactly twelve persons are to take part in it. The case of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal is a similar one. Some leading *Bhuiyans* established authority over Bengal and they were therefore called the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Infact, it does not appear that they were exactly twelve in number....”³³

The main observations of Satish Chandra Mitra are as follows:

Firstly, he says that “twelve” is a sacred number to the Hindus and the tradition of twelve kings or feudal lords has been continuing from very ancient times. The evidences are found in old book like *Manu-Samhita* and also in old Bengali literature like *Dharmamangal*. But N.K. Bhattasali did not accept this observation of Satish Chandra Mitra (it will be discussed later).

Secondly, he has taken the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ for an indefinite number. But elsewhere he tried to give the names of twelve *Bhuiyans*, which makes confusion. Because, on the one hand, he assumes that the number of *Bhuiyans* were indefinite, on the other hand, he gave the names of twelve *Bhuiyans*. So, it appears that his second observation is confusing and though he referred to *Manu-Samhita*, *Dharmamangal* and a Bengali proverb like *Barowari*, he just followed the writings of previous scholars like E.A.Gait, Manrique, Rev. Hosten, Anandanath Ray and others.

N.K. Bhattasali published a series of articles entitled ‘Bengal Chiefs’ Struggle for Independence in the reign of Akbar & Jahangir’³⁴. In these articles he first evaluated the writings of previous scholars on the subject and then analysed the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. He also discussed the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ under the caption “How the number of the Chiefs came to be fixed at “Twelve”. He first quoted and then examined the statements of S.C.Mitra and says,

“In the passage quoted above, there is unfortunately a confusion of issues. Regarding the Bengal Bhuiyans, Which explanation is true? Was their number fixed at 12 because 12 is a sacred number to the Hindus and because there were, accordingly, 12 Chiefs exactly? Or does 12 signify an indefinite number?

I think Satish Babu is right in his second contention that number *twelve* is made to denote an indefinite number. It became a custom to speak of ‘Twelve’ Bhuiyans, whenever one had to refer to them, because their number was indefinite... But whence was this partiality for this particular number 12 derived even to signify an indefinite number? Are we justified in holding that it was the prescription of Manusamhita that an overlord should have 12 subordinate Chiefs under him that was obeyed in Bengal and continued down to the 16th century A.D.? Let us consider what was the condition of things before the rise of the so-called Twelve Bhuiyans.”

Then he reviewed the administrative system of the ancient period and observes,

“I do not find any place for “Twelve Chieftains” in this fabric of Government, nor is there any evidence to prove that the Vishayapatis or district officers were only twelve in number.”³⁵

Bhattacharya also reviewed the administration of the Muslim period and says,

“But we have no proof that this Jagirdars were only twelve in number. How is it possible then that just in the beginning of the Mughal rule, we meet with Manu’s number 12 in the enumeration of the Bhuiyans that held the country? Was there a Hindu Revival? This would have been a plausible supposition if all the Chiefs were Hindus...How then to account for this number 12? ³⁶

Henceforth, Bhattacharya discussed the history of Assam and Kuch Bihar and says,

“The intermediate territory between the Kingdom of Kamta on the west and the Chhutiyas and the Kachhari Kingdoms on the east was occupied by a number of petty principalities, and these were known as the Kingdoms of the “Twelve Bhuiyans”. These Bhuiyans were able to maintain their independence for a period of about 70 years.”³⁷

Bhattacharya then recorded two traditions regarding the origin of these *Bhuiyans*. The traditions are as follows:

“ One tradition says that when Ratna Simha, the son of Arimatta, the last Kshatriya prince of Kamrup (Assam), was dethroned by Samudra... the Kingdom of Kamrup passed on to Samudra's son Manohara. Lkshmi, the daughter of Manohara, obtained two sons Santanu and Samanta... Each of these two sons is said to have become the father of 12 children. Santanu's 12 sons gradually came to occupy the district of Nowgong, south of the Brahmaputra. Samanta's twelve sons, on the other hand, occupied Lakshmipur district, north of the Brahmaputra, and both of these sets came to be known as the Twelve Bhuiyans. During the reign of Sukhang-fa, the Ahom King (1293-1332 A.D.), these Bhuiyans submitted to him. These Bhuiyans are called the *Adi* or the original Bhuiyans.”³⁸

“Another tradition commemorates altogether a different set of people. The King who was on the throne of Kamta in 1314 A. D. is called Durllabha-narayana....In order to protect his Eastern frontier from the depredations of the Ahoms, he posted a number of Brahmin and Kayastha wardens of the marches over the frontier. Even in the time of Durllabha-narayana, they succeeded in founding petty semi-independent principalities. After Durllabha's death, they became completely independent and came to be known as the “Bara-Bhuiyans”. They maintained their independence for about two centuries and when Bisva-Simha founded the Kingdom of Cooch Behar by about 1515 A.D., he set about subduing these Bara-Bhuiyans one by one.... So the suppression of the Bara-Bhuiyans by Bisva-Simha is to be dated about 1515-1555 A.D. These Bhuiyans were without doubt different from the Bhuiyans of Central Assam, the descendants of Samudra and Samanta.”³⁹

Then Bhattasali says,

“The rise of the Bara-Bhuiyans of Bengal is to be dated from 1576 A.D., the year of the fall of Daud, the last Karrani King of Bengal. In Assam history, we find that when the overland (sic, overlord?) disappeared or became weak, a number of petty Chiefs arose and became independent. Their common appellation was Bara-Bhuiyan. When in 1576, with the fall of Daud, conditions became similar in Bengal, the suppression of the Bara-Bhuiyans of Assam by Bisva-Simha was still fresh in everybody's memory. And thus the independent Chiefs that arose in Bengal promptly received the name of Bara-Bhuiyans on the analogy of Assam. This appears to me to be the most plausible explanation of the nomenclature.”⁴⁰

He further says,

“The Bara-Bhuiyans of Arakan, however, appears to have been brought into existence, following the dictates of Manu, as Brahmanism was a late importation in Arrakan. It was considered an indispensable part of the fabric of the State to have exactly 12 Chiefs under the overlord. The Bara-Bhuiyans of Assam and Bengal are products of anarchy, whereas those of Arrakan were the products of peaceful Statecraft.”⁴¹

The main points of Bhattasali are as follows:

Firstly, Bhattasali controverts the opinion of S.C.Mitra regarding the origin of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’. S.C.Mitra says that it was a tradition continuing right from the *Manu Samhita*, but Bhattasali says that the appellation *Bara-Bhuiyans* came from the traditions of Assam and Kuch Bihar. This view of Bhattasali may be acceptable. Because, according to Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan there were Hindus and Muslims *Bhuiyans* among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* who fought against the Mughals during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Jahangir. So, it is reasonable to assume that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ did not derive from the prescription of *Manu Samhita*. On the other hand, Abdul Karim also accepts this view of Bhattasali and he thinks that the concept of *Bara-Bhuiyans* owes its origin to Eastern India and is specially connected with the thoughts of Kuch Bihar, Assam, Arakan and Eastern Bengal.⁴²

Secondly, Bhattasali agrees with S.C.Mitra and says that number twelve is made to denote an indefinite number. But according to Bhattasali himself, in the cases of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Assam, Kuch Bihar and Arakan the number of *Bhuiyans* was fixed at twelve. Now the question is why the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal should be an indefinite number? Bhattasali gives no explanation for this.

Thirdly, Bhattasali says, “The rise of the Bara-Bhuiyans of Bengal is to be dated from 1576 A.D., the year of the fall of Daud, the last Karrani King of Bengal.”⁴³ But this opinion of Bhattasali is not acceptable. Because, Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, gained strength

enough to defeat the Mughal navy under Shah Bardi even before the fall of Daud.⁴⁴ Besides, it is also known that ‘Twelve Chiefs’ of Bengal helped Daud Khan Kararani in 1573 in his expedition in Chittagong against Udaya Manikya, the king of Tripura.⁴⁵

Fourthly, Bhattasali discussed the issue of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* from a different angle of view. While giving the identification of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* he says,

“...we are concerned only with those who were really independent and had continuously fought with the imperial forces to maintain that independence. Only a few Chiefs pass this test...”⁴⁶

By omitting Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore and Raja Satrajit of Bhushna from the list of *Bara-Bhuiyans* he says,

“The omission of the well-known name of Pratapaditya will surprise many of my readers. As far as I have been able to understand and sift historical evidence, I have obtained no proofs to show that Pratapaditya ever fought with the forces of Akbar. Pratapaditya of Jessore and Anantamanikya of Bhulua appear to me to have fought the Mughals for the first and the last time in 1612 and 1613 in the reign of Jahangir when they had no other recourse but to fight, and they went down in the contest. Mukundaram of Bhushna never fought with the MughalsI have not included Pratapaditya of Jessore and Satrajit son of Mukundaram of Bhushna in this list as both of them were imperial partisans and saw Islam Khan with presents and offered him assistance...”⁴⁷

It appears from the passage quoted above that Bhattasali is of the opinion that only those *Bhuiyans*, who fought against the Mughals to protect their independence and freedom, should be termed as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But those *Bhuiyans* who did not fight against the Mughals to protect their independence cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. In this respect, Bhattasali’s opinion may be acceptable. Because, according to Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan the greatest obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal were the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and that is why the Mughal

Subahdars devoted their whole energy to subdue them (it will be discussed later).

In 1854 Saka, that is, 1931A.C. H.M. Chatterjee compiled his book *Vikrampur*, Vol.I (Bengali). This book contains following information:

Long before the Muslim rule, the Hindu emperors used to appoint Vassal rulers of different grades for the well governance of the empire. These Vassal rulers were generally called *Baro-Bhuiyan* (বড় ভূঞা), *Madhya-Bhuiyan* (মধ্য ভূঞা) and *Chhota-Bhuiyan* (ছোট ভূঞা). Possibly, the word *Baro-Bhuiyan* (বড় ভূঞা) was transformed into *Bara* (Twelve) *Bhuiyan* in the succeeding ages.”⁴⁸ This view is only an assumption without any direct historical evidence in its support. On the other hand, in the *Rajmala*, the Chronicle of Tripura, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* are mentioned as *Dwadash Bangla* or *Bara-Bangla* (Twelve *Bhuiyans*)⁴⁹. So, it would not be reasonable to assume that the word *Baro-Bhuiyan* was transformed into *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

In 1956 A.D. Syed Muhammad Taifoor published his book *Glimpses of Old Dhaka*. In this book he says, “The Bengal zeminders were then collectively known as ‘12 Bhuiyans’ (from Persian Bumiyan meaning landlords, number twelve being an imaginary number to denote a collective organisation)”.⁵⁰

It appears from the above statement of Syed Muhammad Taifoor that the number “twelve” has no literal significance. He takes the number “twelve” for an imaginary number to denote a collective organisation, which implies that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ (12 *Bhuiyans*) only signifies a symbol. In this respect Syed Muhammad Taifoor’s opinion may be acceptable. It will be discussed later.

In his book entitled *The History of the Afghans in India* M.A.Rahim says,

“The Bengali word ‘*Bara Bhuyans*’ literally means twelve *zamindars* or landlords. A good deal has been written about the implication of the word ‘*Bara*’ or ‘twelve’ associated with ‘*Bhuyans*’ by Prof. S.C.Mitra... and by Mr. N.K.Bhattachali... They reached the identical conclusion and held the view that ‘*Bara*’ or twelve denotes an indefinite number in Bengal. Indeed it is true that in the common phraseology in Bengal ‘twelve’ is conveyed to mean a number without limit, *i.e.*, many,... It is in this sense of ‘many’ that the word ‘*Bara*’ has been associated with the *Bhuyans*.”⁵¹

It appears from the passage quoted above that M.A.Rahim agrees with S.C.Mitra and N.K.Bhattachali. He has taken the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ to mean an indefinite number of *Bhuiyans*. But he does not discuss the origin and growth of the term. It seems that he agrees with Bhattachali, that is, the appellation *Bara-Bhuiyans* came from the traditions of Assam and Kuch Bihar.

In his book entitled *History of Bengal* (Mughal Period 1526-1765 A.D.) A.C. Roy says,

“So it is clear from the foregoing analysis that the number twelve as applied to *Bhuiyas* does not mean ‘twelve’, but an indefinite number.”⁵²

It appears from the above statement of A.C. Roy that he just followed the writings of previous scholars like E.A.Gait, S.C.Mitra, N.K.Bhattachali and others.

Dr.M.Abdul Qader has discussed the significance, origin and growth of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’.⁵³

The main points of Abdul Qader are three:

Firstly, he takes the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ for an indefinite number, that is, many, which indicates that he only followed the previous writers.

Secondly, he thinks that the real seat of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was the region of Bhati.

Thirdly, the concept of *Bara-Bhuiyans* owes its origin to Eastern India.

Abdul Qader's second and third points may be acceptable. Because, if the expeditions were sent against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by the Mughals during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir is reviewed it will be seen that the main theatre of their resistance was Bhati and the main source of power and strength of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was also the region of Bhati. On the other hand, modern historians Bhattasali and Abdul Karim suggest that the concept of *Bara-Bhuiyans* is Eastern Indian and is specially connected with the thoughts of Assam, Kuch Bihar, Arakan and Eastern Bengal.

M. Mohar Ali has also examined the writings of the previous writers and he observes,

“...the figure “twelve” is not perhaps just imaginary and that it has most probably some relevance to the number of units in the anti-Mughal confederacy under the leadership of Isa Khan and Musa Khan.”⁵⁴

He gives the following list of 12 units of *Bhuiyans*:

1. Masnad-i-Ala Musa Khan, together with his four brothers, Daud Khan, Abd Allah Khan, Mahmud Khan and Ilyas Khan, his chief officer in charge of the capital, Haji Shams al-Din Baghdadi; his minister Khwaja Chand; his admiral of the fleet Adil Khan; and his cousin Alaul Khan.
2. (a) Bahadur Ghazi; (b) Sona Ghazi; (c) Anwar Ghazi (most probably son of Bahadur Ghazi's brother Mahtab Ghazi).
3. Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul.
4. (a) Masum Khan Kabuli, his son (b) Mirza Mumin, together with (c) Darya Khan, relationship not known.
5. Kedar Rai.
6. Madhu Rai.
7. Binod Rai.
8. Pahlwan.

9. (a) Uthman Khan, nephew of Qutlu Khan Luhani of Orissa; his son (b) Mumriz Khan; and Uthman Khan's three brothers: (c) Malhi, (d) Wali and (e) Ibrahim
10. (a) Anwar Khan, his brother: (b) Husain Khan, with some other Afghans.
11. (a) Bayazid Karrani, his brother: (b) Yaqub Karrani, with some other Afghans.
12. Majlis Qutb.⁵⁵

He further says, "These were the associates and allies of Musa Khan whom Mirza Nathan and other contemporary sources call the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. If all the names are taken singly they would definitely be far more than twelve, but they together represent twelve families or units in the confederacy, as arranged in the above list. The term *Bara Bhuiyans* evidently refers to the heads of the families or groups;..."⁵⁶

It appears from the above statement of M. Mohar Ali that he takes the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' for twelve families or groups or units of *Bhuiyans*. But it cannot be acceptable on the following grounds:

Firstly, M. Mohar Ali says, "These were the associates and allies of Musa Khan whom Mirza Nathan and other contemporary sources call the *Bara-Bhuiyans*."⁵⁷

But there is no evidence of Usman Khan's (no.9) relationship with Musa Khan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. After Musa Khan's final defeat and surrender, and in connection with the expedition against Usman Khan and his brothers, it is recorded by Mirza Nathan:

"When all these numerous conquests took place and Musa Khan surrendered with all his brothers and the Twelve Bhuyans, it was decided that Musa Khan would personally remain at the Court (of the governor), and Mahmud Khan his younger brother with all the Zamindars would proceed with Shaykh Kamal against the rebellious Usman and his brothers..."⁵⁸

The statement clearly shows that Usman Khan was considered as "the rebellious Usman", not as the allies of Musa Khan or one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by Mirza Nathan. Besides, Mirza

Nathan did not mention the name of Usman Khan, when he gave the names of *Zamindar* allies of Musa Khan. Moreover, Abdul Karim says that there is no evidence of his (Usman Khan) good relationship with Musa Khan.⁵⁹ He further says that when the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were attacked by the Mughal forces, Usman Khan remained silent.⁶⁰ Therefore, Usman Khan cannot be counted among the allies of Musa Khan and his name must be excluded from the list of units of *Bhuiyans* prepared by M. Mohar Ali. Now, if the name of Usman Khan is not included in the list then the number of units of *Bhuiyans* will not remain fixed at twelve.

Secondly, M. Mohar Ali says,

“A little careful analysis of the contemporary sources, both Mughal and European, enables us to identify the following distinguishing features of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*... (c) Thirdly, they were persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals. (d) They followed the lead of Isa Khan and, after him, of his son Musa Khan;...”⁶¹

He further says,

“Keeping in view these characteristics it may be stated that the other individuals who are found to have carved out an independent existence in their respective localities...but who do not otherwise satisfy all the above mentioned characteristics, should not be counted among the *Bara Bhuiyans*...and were also anti-Mughal in their policies, but who did not follow the lead of Isa Khan or Musa Khan, should not be grouped with the *Bara Bhuiyans*.”⁶²

These statements of M. Mohar Ali clearly show that according to him the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were those who followed the lead of Isa Khan or Musa Khan. But there is no evidence in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that Bayazid Karrani (no.11) ever followed the lead of Musa Khan. So, it may be suggested that Bayazid Karrani cannot be grouped with the *Bara- Bhuiyans* and his name must be excluded from the list of units of *Bhuiyans* prepared by M. Mohar Ali. In that case the number of units of *Bhuiyans* will not remain fixed at twelve.

Thirdly, M. Mohar Ali says,

“...the figure “twelve” is not perhaps just imaginary and that it has most probably some relevance to the number of units in the anti-Mughal confederacy under the leadership of Isa Khan and Musa Khan.”

But there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Bahadur Ghazi (no.2) ever fought against the Mughals during the reign of Badshah Akbar or one of the members of the anti-Mughal confederacy under the leadership of Isa Khan. On the contrary, it is known that he was loyal to Badshah Akbar and also agreed to supply 35 *sundar* and *kusa* type of boats to Akbar.⁶³ Though, his name is seen among the names of *Zamindar* allies of Musa Khan, he was not persistent in his hostility towards the Mughals. So, he cannot be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar.

Fourthly, the list prepared by M.Mohar Ali does not represent the all allies of Isa Khan. It may be mentioned here that when Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan marched towards Bhati to subdue Isa Khan, a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal in 1578 A.C. Though, Isa Khan was initially defeated by the Mughals, they could not retain their victory longer, for the Mughals were counter attacked by Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap,⁶⁴ the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* respectively, the allies of Isa Khan and two bonafide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar. But there is no mention of these allies of Isa Khan in the list prepared by M.Mohar Ali. So, their names should be included in the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Above all, the list prepared by M. Mohar Ali does not represent separately the twelve units or families or groups of the time of Badshah Akbar and of the time of Badshah Jahangir. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to assume that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ refers to the

heads of the families or groups of *Bhuiyans* as claimed by M. Mohar Ali.

Abdul Karim one of the leading historians, who had a long discussion on the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and he says,

“...the Bara-Bhuiyans were people of Bhati...”⁶⁵ and “The number of these bhuiyans of Bhati was twelve and so they were called the Bara-Bhuiyans.”⁶⁶

He further says,

“It should be remembered that the Bara-Bhuiyans of the time of Akbar were not the same as those of the time of Jahangir.”⁶⁷

Then he gives two separate lists of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. The list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar is as follows:

1. Ibrahim Naral,
2. Karimdad Musazai,
3. Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala,
4. Majlis Dilawar,
5. Majlis Pratap,
6. Tila Ghazi,
7. Kedar Rai,
8. Sher Khan,
9. Bahadur Ghazi,
10. Chand Ghazi,
11. Sultan Ghazi,
12. Selim Ghazi,
13. Qasim Ghazi.⁶⁸

The list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir is as follows:

1. Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala,
2. Alaul Khan,
3. Abdullah Khan,
4. Mahmud Khan,
5. Bahadur Ghazi,
6. Suna Ghazi,
7. Anwar Ghazi,
8. Shaikh Pir,
9. Mirza Mumin,
10. Madhav Rai,
11. Binod Rai,
12. Pahlwan,
13. Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi.⁶⁹

Though, Abdul Karim says that the number of these *Bhuiyans* of Bhati was twelve, it is seen that there are thirteen names of the *Bhuiyans* in both the lists of the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. Abdul Karim explains the matter in the following words:

“Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan also speak of the thirteen bhuiyans; for example, Abul Fazl says; “Isa acquired fame... and made the 12 zamindars of Bengal subject to himself.” and Mirza Nathan always

stated “Musa Khan and his twelve zamindar allies.” So the number of bhuiyans was twelve, with the chief (Isa Khan in the time of Akbar and Musa Khan in the time of Jahangir), they were thirteen.”⁷⁰

The main points of Abdul Karim are two:

Firstly, he says that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were people of Bhati.

Secondly, he is of the opinion that the number of the *Bhuiyans* of Bhati was twelve and so they were called the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. In a word he takes the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ for number twelve. The first point of Abdul Karim may be acceptable and the matter will be discussed later. But his second contention cannot be accepted on the following grounds:

Firstly, agreeing with Bhattasali, Abdul Karim suggests that only those *Bhuiyans*, who fought against the Mughals to protect their independence and freedom, should be termed as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, those *Bhuiyans* who did not fight against the Mughals cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. By omitting Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore and Raja Satrajit of Bhushna from the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* Abdul Karim says,

“We do not consider Pratapaditya as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*...when Islam Khan Chishti reached Rajmahal and was planning to attack Bhati, Pratapaditya was the first man to send his envoy along with his younger son to Islam Khan professing loyalty and with presents and later Pratapaditya himself saw the subahdar with presents. So Pratapaditya was loyal to the Mughals from the beginning and the Mughals also considered him as one of their loyal vassals. Pratapaditya later fought against the Mughals, but for a different reason and to pay for his failure to keep the pledge he had given to Islam Khan. Raja Satrajit of Bhushna also fought one battle and then submitted and remained loyal to the Mughals throughout the rest of his life.”⁷¹

So, it is seen that like Bhattasali, Abdul Karim also applied the same criterion to judge the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But the criterion applied by Abdul Karim to judge the *Bara-Bhuiyans* has not been maintained by himself. Because, he included the name of Tila Ghazi (no.6) into the list

of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar, though he never fought against the Mughals and was a Mughal partisan. It is known from the *Akbar Nama* the Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan sent a large detachment against Isa Khan and a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal in 1578 A.C. Though, Isa Khan was initially defeated by the Mughals, they were counter attacked by Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* respectively, the allies of Isa Khan, and were badly defeated. If Tila Ghazi did not help the Mughals they would have been completely annihilated and could not retreat safely⁷². So, it is clear that Tila Ghazi did not fight against the Mughals, on the contrary, he helped them to retreat safely. Therefore, like Pratapaditya the name of Tila Ghazi cannot be included into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar for the same reason.

Secondly, according to the *Akbar Nama* Ibrahim Naral (no.1) also sent his son with presents to Khan-i-Jahan, the Mughal Subahdar, and sought protection and Khan-i-Jahan accepted his excuses.⁷³ So, it is apparent that Ibrahim Naral joined hands with the Mughals and his name also should be excluded from the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar.

Thirdly, in the *Akbar Nama*, Abul Fazl mentioned the name of Sher Khan (no.8) for one time only. Abul Fazl says,

“Sher K., the proprietor, then had the wisdom to wait upon the Rajah (Man Singh, the Mughal Subahdar of Bengal).”⁷⁴

The statement clearly shows that Sher Khan was loyal to the Mughals and he saw Man Singh and showed his allegiance. Therefore, Sher Khan cannot be regarded as one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* according to the criterion applied by Abdul Karim to judge the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Fourthly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Bahadur Ghazi (no.9) ever fought against the Mughals during the reign of Badshah Akbar. On the other hand, Abdul Karim himself mentioned that Bahadur Ghazi was a contemporary of Badshah Akbar and he was loyal to Badshah Akbar. It is also known that Bahadur Ghazi agreed to supply 35 *sundar* and *kusa* type of boats to Akbar.⁷⁵ So, his name cannot be included into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar.

Fifthly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Chand Ghazi (no.10), Sultan Ghazi (no.11), Selim Ghazi (no.12) and Qasim Ghazi (no.13) ever fought against the Mughals. Abdul Karim himself says, “It is not on record whether they ever fought the Mughals.”⁷⁶ So, for this reason they cannot be regarded as the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Sixthly, Abdul Karim did not include the names of Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan, the two sons of Isa Khan and brothers of Musa Khan, into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir. According to the *Akbar Nama*⁷⁷ and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*⁷⁸ Daud Khan played an important role in the anti-Mughal resistance during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. Their names should be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir. Because, if Musa Khan’s cousin Alaul Khan and his two brothers Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan each be considered as separate *Bhuiyans*, then his other two brothers Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan should also be treated as separate *Bhuiyan*.

Seventhly, according to Mirza Nathan Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi (no.13) was the chief officer of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala⁷⁹. But Abdul Karim counts him as a separate *Bhuiyan* in the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir and his name should be excluded from the list.

The above discussion makes it very clear that the criterion applied by Abdul Karim to judge the *Bara-Bhuiyans* has not been maintained by himself. Because, the reason he did not consider Pratapaditya as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, for the same reason the names of Tila Ghazi, Ibrahim Naral, Bahadur Ghazi and Sher Khan cannot be included into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar. So, if these names are not included into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar prepared by Abdul Karim then the number of the *Bhuiyans* will not remain fixed at twelve. On the other hand, if the names of Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan are included into the list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir then the numbers of *Bhuiyans* will not remain fixed at twelve and if the name of Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi is excluded from the list then the result will also be the same. Therefore, it may be suggested that the statement made by Abdul Karim, that is, “the number of these bhuiyans of Bhati was twelve and so they were called the Bara- Bhuiyans” is not justified.

In the foregoing discussion the writings of previous scholars on the subject have been presented and their opinions have also been examined as far as possible. Now, the statements concerning the matter given by the contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan in the *Akbar Nama* and *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* will be discussed here:

In the *Akbar Nama* Abul Fazl says,

“Isa acquired fame by his ripe judgment and deliberateness, and made the twelve (*dawazdah bumi* or *bumiyan* or twelve *Bhuiyans*) zamindars of Bangal subject to himself.”⁸⁰

The above statement clearly shows that Abul Fazl only refers to twelve *Zamindars* or *Bhuiyans*. But he does not definitely say who these twelve *Bhuiyans* were. On the other hand, if the expeditions were sent against Isa Khan and his allies by the Mughals during the reign of

Badshah Akbar is reviewed it will be seen that the number of allies of Isa Khan, who fought against the Mughals under his leadership, were less than twelve. According to the *Akbar Nama* and other sources at least four expeditions were sent against Isa Khan under the commands of Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan, Shahbaz Khan, Sadiq Khan and Man Singh in 1578, 1584, 1586 and 1597 A.C. successively⁸¹. At these times the allies of Isa Khan were Ibrahim Naral (who later submitted to the Mughals), Karimdad Musazai, Majlis Dilawar, Majlis Pratap, rebel Mughal General Masum Khan Kabuli, Khwaja Sulaiman Khan Nuhani, Khwaja Usman Khan Nuhani, Kedar Rai, and Chand Rai. But their number is by no means twelve.

On the other hand, in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* Mirza Nathan says, “Now I shall give a short account of Masnad-i-Ala Musa Khan and the Twelve Bhuyans (dawazdah *Bumias*).... he (Musa Khan) came in great haste with all the Zamindars whose names will be mentioned later on.... Musa Khan went with all his Zamindar allies to a place called Dakchara; during the night he constructed in this place a high fort and a deep trench on that bank of the river Padmavati,...he (Musa Khan) became ready for battle. Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, Alaul Khan, his cousin (maternal uncle’s son), Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan, the younger brothers of Musa Khan, Bahadur Ghazi, Suna Ghazi, Anwar Ghazi, Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul, Mirza Mumin, Madhava Ray, Zamindar of Khalsi, Binud Ray, Zamindar of Chandpratap, Pahlawan, Zamindar of Matang and Haji Shamsu’d-Din Baghdadi were in Musa Khan’s camp.”⁸²

The above statement clearly shows that Mirza Nathan has given twelve names of Musa Khan’s allies who were in his camp at Dakchara. He has also given the names of *Zamindaris* of Madhava Rai, Binod Rai and Pahlawan. But he did not mention the names of *Zamindaris* of Musa Khan’s cousin Alaul Khan, Musa Khan’s brothers Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan, Bahadur Ghazi, Sona Ghazi, Anwar Ghazi, Shaykh Pir, Mirza Mumin and Haji Shamsu’d-Din Baghdadi. On the basis of this statement of Mirza Nathan, Abdul Karim says,

“It is our firm belief that Mirza Nathan has given here the names of the Bara-Bhuiyans in the reign of Jahangir...”⁸³

But it would not be reasonable to assume that Mirza Nathan has given here all the names of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the reign of Badshah Jahangir on the following grounds:

Firstly, Mirza Nathan did not mention here the names of Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan, the two sons of Isa Khan and brothers of Musa Khan. According to the *Akbar Nama*⁸⁴ and the *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi*⁸⁵ Daud Khan played an important role in the anti-Mughal resistance during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. Nevertheless, his name is not seen in the names of Musa Khan’s allies mentioned by Mirza Nathan. So, it proves that Mirza Nathan did not mention here all the names of Musa Khan’s allies.

Secondly, if Musa Khan’s cousin Alaul Khan and his two brothers Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan each be regarded as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, then Musa Khan’s other two brothers Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan each should also be considered as one of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. In that case, the number of Musa Khan’s allies *Bhuiyans* will be more than twelve.

Thirdly, Haji Sham’s-ud-Din Baghdadi cannot be considered as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, Mirza Nathan himself elsewhere mentioned him as the chief officer of Musa Khan.⁸⁶

So, it may be suggested that Mirza Nathan has not given here all the names of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the reign of Badshah Jahangir. He only mentioned the names of those *Zamindar* allies of Musa Khan who were present at that time in Dakchara camp with him.

It is clearly evident from the above statements of Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan that they are completely unequivocal about the term “twelve” (*dawazdah*) and the term was in vogue before the Mughal

invasion of Bengal. Though, Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan made the “twelve *zamindars*” subject to himself and Mirza Nathan repeatedly mentioned Musa Khan and “Twelve Bhuyans”, neither Abul Fazl nor Mirza Nathan definitely mentions who were these “twelve *Zamindars*” or “Twelve *Bhuyans*”, that is, who these *Bara-Bhuiyans* were. On the other hand, the history of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir, as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, gives the clear impression that the number of the allies of Isa Khan is less than twelve and the number of the allies of Musa Khan is more than twelve. Most probably, these issues have made the modern scholars confused. So, they differ as to the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’, many of them holding that the term denotes an indefinite number, and among the others, one took the term for twelve units of *Bhuiyans*, one for exactly twelve *Bhuiyans* and at least one, took the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ for a symbol.

The above rather lengthy discussion makes clear the following points:

Firstly, the sources used by the previous scholars are mainly *Manu-Samhita*, *Dharmamangal*, the local traditions, Bengali Proverbs, the European writings, the *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazl and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan. Among these, the only contemporary sources are the European writings, the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. But the European writings have turned out to be confusing. On the other hand, it has been stated earlier that though, Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan made the “twelve *zamindars*” subject to himself and Mirza Nathan repeatedly mentioned Musa Khan and the “Twelve *Bhuyans*”, neither Abul Fazl nor Mirza Nathan definitely mentions who these *Bara-Bhuiyans* were. Moreover, the history of the

warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir, as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, gives the clear impression that the number of the allies of Isa Khan is less than twelve and the number of the allies of Musa Khan is more than twelve. Most probably, these matters have made the modern scholars confused. So, they differ as to the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' and different scholars hold different views.

Secondly, the literary meaning of the terms '*Bhumik*' and '*Bhuiyan*' is a landholder. The terms '*Bhumik*' and '*Zamindar*' also bear the same meaning.

Thirdly, E.A. Gait, N.K.Bhattsali, M.A.Rahim, M.Abdul Qader and Abdul Karim think that the concept of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* owes its origin to Eastern India and is specially connected with the thoughts of Kuch Bihar, Assam, Arakan and Eastern Bengal.

Fourthly, among the previous scholars E.A. Gait, Nikhilnath Ray, S.C.Mitra, N.K.Bhattsali, M.A.Rahim, A.C.Roy and M.Abdul Qader and others think that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' does not convey the literal meaning or does not denote exact number or does not mean twelve *Bhuiyans*. It was used to denote an indefinite number.

Fifthly, Syed Muhammad Taifoor thinks that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' (12 *Bhuiyans*) only signifies a symbol.

Sixthly, M.Mohar Ali takes the term for twelve units of *Bhuiyans*.

Seventhly, Abdul Karim has taken the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' for exactly twelve *Bhuiyans*.

Above all, N.K.Bhattsali, M.Abdul Qader, M.Mohar Ali and Abdul Karim suggest that only those *Bhuiyans*, who fought against the Mughals to protect their independence and freedom, should be termed as

the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, but those who did not fight against the Mughals to protect their independence cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

So, it is quite evident that the previous scholars are not in agreement about the meaning or significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*'. Almost, all of them think that the term "*Bara*" or "twelve" was used to denote an indefinite number of *Bhuiyans*. But they could not prove this opinion reasonably and also could not mention any contemporary historical source in favour of this opinion and they merely followed each other uncritically. Moreover, some kind of doubt has been already expressed earlier about this opinion and it has also been questioned as to why while in Assam and Arakan the number of *Bara-Bhuiyans* was fixed at twelve, in the case of Bengal it should be indefinite. On the other hand, though, M.Mohar Ali takes the term "twelve" for twelve units of *Bhuiyans* and Abdul Karim for exactly twelve *Bhuiyans*, their opinions have not been accepted on reasonable grounds. So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the previous scholars could not explain the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' satisfactorily. In the following pages therefore, a humble attempt has been made to explain the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' in the clearest possible way.

The term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' neither bears the literal meaning nor denotes an indefinite number. Infact, the term was not used in the numerical sense. But it was used to signify the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of the *Zamindars* of Eastern Bengal, specially of the region of Bhati. In favour of this proposition it may be mentioned here that according to contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' was in vogue before the Mughal conquest of Bengal. On the other hand, though, the previous scholars are not in agreement about the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*', almost all of them suggest that the concept of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* owes its origin

to Eastern India and is specially connected with the thoughts of Kuch Bihar, Assam, Arakan and Eastern Bengal. It becomes a custom among the Kings of Eastern India to appoint twelve Advisers or Governors or Ministers in the middle ages. For example, Nar Narayan, the Koch king, had twelve ministers of State, twelve chiefs or *dolois* administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jaintia's Dominions and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal.⁸⁷ Though, it was a custom to appoint twelve dignitaries, it, that is, the twelve dignitaries, also signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of respective kings.

Secondly, according to Bengali literature *Dharmamangal* the kings used to sit on the throne surrounded by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.⁸⁸ Here also, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of respective kings.

Thirdly, attendance of twelve vassals was necessary in the coronation ceremonies of the kings of Arakan and Siam. Fray Sebastien Manrique who himself attended the coronation of a king of Arakan who boasted of being "...not only Lord of the twelve Boiones [Bhuiyas] of Bengala, but of the twelve Kings on the crown of whose heads the soles of his feet always rested... On the day of the Emperor's coronation, these twelve vassal kings walked before him in procession and stood around his throne."⁸⁹ In this case twelve vassals or twelve *Bhuiyans* also signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige.

Fourthly, according to Abul Fazl, Isa Khan made the twelve *Zamindars* subject to himself⁹⁰. Here the twelve *Zamindars* also implies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of Isa Khan.

Fifthly, according to Bhattasali, the appellation *Bara-Bhuiyans* came from the traditions of Assam and Kuch Bihar. He records two traditions regarding the origin of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Assam. Of which one is as follows:

“The King who was on the throne of Kamta in 1314 A. D. is called Durllabha-narayana...In order to protect his Eastern frontier from the depredations of the Ahoms, he posted a number of Brahmin and Kayastha wardens of the marches over the frontier. Even in the time of Durllabha-narayana, they succeeded in founding petty semi-independent principalities. After Durllabha’s death, they became completely independent and came to be known as the “Bara-Bhuiyans”.⁹¹

A careful study of this tradition reveals that the Brahmins and Kayasthas, who were posted as wardens of the marches by Durllabha-narayana, came to be known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* after achieving the independent status. So, it may be assumed that on account of their independent status they have been regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Here the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ implies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those Brahmins and Kayasthas.

Sixthly, Kedarnath Majumdar thinks that those twelve *Zamindars* are known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, who proclaimed independence⁹². Here Kedarnath Majumdar applied the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ to those *Zamindars* who proclaimed independence. So, it seems that on account of their proclamation of independence, that is, their freedom-loving attitude, which denotes their power and position, they have been regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Here again the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those freedom-loving *Zamindars*.

Seventhly, Anandanath Ray says that in the middle of the Sixteenth Century a number of landholders of Bengal became unanimous and were determined to liberate themselves from the subjugation of the Mughal Emperor. They are commonly known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*⁹³. This statement indicates that those landholders of Bengal, who because of their freedom-loving attitude did not acknowledge the Mughal suzerainty, came to be known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Here their freedom-loving attitude implies their power and position. So, it can be

said that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those freedom-loving landholders.

Eighthly, S.C.Mitra says, "some leading *Bhuiyans* established authority over Bengal and they were therefore called *Bara-Bhuiyans*."⁹⁴ It appears from this statement that some leading *Bhuiyans* were called *Bara-Bhuiyans* because of their act of establishing authority over Bengal, which indicates their power and position. So, in this case the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies also the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those leading *Bhuiyans*.

Ninthly, modern historian Bhattasali is of the opinion that only those *Bhuiyans* who were really independent and had continuously fought against the Mughals to maintain that independence should be termed as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But those who did not fight against the Mughals cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*⁹⁵. So, it is clear from this opinion of Bhattasali that only those *Bhuiyans* were regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* who had independent status and fought against the Mughals to retain that independence. Their independent status and struggle against the Mughals implies their power and position, and therefore, it may be suggested that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies the symbol of their dignity, power and prestige.

Tenthly, Abdul Karim says,

"It is not true that the bhuiyans or zamindars who rose to power on the eve of the Mughal conquest, were all patriots or belonged to the Bara-Bhuiyans."⁹⁶ "Among the bhuiyans, Bara-Bhuiyans became very famous, they fought gallantly during the reign of Akbar and the first part of the reign of Jahangir, and although they were forced to submit in the long run, they were able to keep the independence of the country for long three decades."⁹⁷ He further says,

"The Bara-Bhuiyans fought against the Mughals for independence, those who did not fight cannot be regarded as the Bara- Bhuiyans. Infact, Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan give the impression that the greatest obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal were the Bara- Bhuiyans and

that is why the Mughal subahdars devoted their whole energy to subdue them.”⁹⁸

These statements clearly show that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* are only those who became very famous and they became very famous due to their having fought gallantly and were able to keep aloft the independence of the country for long three decades and proved to be the greatest obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. Here their independent status, heroic struggle for independence and their obstruction in the way of Mughal advancement in Bangal indicates their power and dignified position, which suggests that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’, signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion it is possible to reach this conclusion that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those *Zamindars* of Eastern Bengal, specially of Bhati, who by their independent status, freedom-loving attitude, patriotic zeal, indomitable courage and heroic struggle for independence against the mighty Mughals achieved that legendary dignity, power and prestige.

Section II

Identification of the Places of their Rise

It has been shown in the previous discussion that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those *Zamindars* of Eastern Bengal, specially of *Bhati*, who by their independent status, freedom-loving attitude, patriotic zeal, indomitable courage and heroic struggle for independence against the mighty Mughals achieved that legendary dignity, power and prestige. Now the question is where they have originated from? Although, it is true that there is dearth of source-materials regarding the history of the places of their rise, an attempt has been made to resolve the question on the basis of the *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan and the writings of the Europeans.

Among the European writers who have given the name of the twelve Kingdoms of twelve *Bhuiyans* (*Bara-Bhuiyans*) is Fray Sebastien Manrique and who stayed in India from 1628 to 1641A.C.⁹⁹ He states that the twelve *Bhuiyans* were those of:

1. Bengala;
2. Angelim [Hijli];
3. Ourixa[Orissa];
4. Jassor [Jessore];
5. Chandecan;
6. Midinimpur [Midnapore];
7. Catrabo [Katrabuh];
8. Bacala [Bakla];
9. Solimanvas[Sulaimanabad];
10. Bulva;
11. Daca;
12. Rajamol [Rajmahal]¹⁰⁰.

It appears from the above statement of Manrique that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were spread over the whole of Bengal and Orissa. This statement of Manrique greatly influenced the modern writers, such as, S.C. Mitra and Rev. H. Hosten. S.C. Mitra prepared his list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* chiefly on the basis of the list of Manrique¹⁰¹. S.C. Mitra's list also shows that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* spread over the whole of Bengal and Orissa. On the other hand, Hosten entitled his article "The Twelve

Bhuiyas or Landlords of Bengal”¹⁰². So, it is clear that S.C. Mitra and Hosten think that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* spread over the whole of Bengal. But the list given by Manrique is confusing on the following grounds: Firstly, he includes Orissa into the twelve kingdoms of Bengal, but at that time Orissa was a separate *Subah* in the Mughal administrative set-up¹⁰³. Secondly, the whole of Medinipur was not a part of Bengal *Subah* at the time of Manrique¹⁰⁴. Thirdly, he included Jessore and Chandican as two separate kingdoms, but Jessore and Chandican were one and the same place¹⁰⁵. Fourthly, though, Manrique mentions the names of twelve kingdoms of Bengal, he includes Bengala in the list separately. The inclusion of Bengala in the list separately gives rise to suspicion about the authenticity of his statement. In this case, though, Hosten tried to show that Bengala stands for Tanda, is not acceptable. He says, “I suggest then that the Bhuiya of Bengala in Manrique’s time governed the district of Tanda. It had become the capital of Bengal after Gaur, and was a favourite residence of the Moghul Governors of Bengal until the middle of the XVIIth century.”¹⁰⁶

But it is not true. Because, Tanda was the capital of Bengal *Subah* up to 1595 A.C., in which year, Mughal Subahdar Man Singh transferred the capital from Tanda to Rajmahal¹⁰⁷. In 1610, Islam Khan Chishti transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dhaka, and Dhaka was the capital up to Manrique’s time and even later¹⁰⁸. So, it can be said that the places of the origin of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* cannot be identified basing on the statement of Manrique.

Another European writer is the English traveller Ralph Fitch, who came to Bengal in February, 1586 A.C. and in November he was travelling in Eastern Bengal (Dhaka-Mymensingh zone) and reached Sripur on the 28th November, 1586, he took ship for Burma from Sripur¹⁰⁹. He says,

“... I went to Serrepore... the king is called Chondery. They be all hereabouts rebels against their king Zebaldin Echebar: for here are so many rivers and Islands, that they flee from one to another, whereby his horsemen cannot prevail against them... Sinnargan is a town six leagues from Serrepore... The chief king of all these countries is called Isacan, and he is chief of all the other kings.”¹¹⁰

The above statement of Ralph Fitch provides the following information:

- 1) Ralph Fitch travelled in Sripur and Sonargaon and these two towns are situated in Eastern Bengal.
- 2) The names of the *Zamindars* of Sripur and Sonargaon were Chand Rai and Isa Khan respectively.
- 3) They were all, that is, Isa Khan, Chand Rai and other *Zamindars* or *Bhuiyans* of that region rebelled against Mughal Badshah Akbar.
- 4) The chief of all other kings, that is, the chief of all rebels was Isa Khan, which indicates that they were engaged in rebellion against Mughal Badshah Akbar under the leadership of Isa Khan. Due to so many rivers and islands they (Isa Khan and his allies *Zamindars*) fled from one to another and the Mughal cavalry could not succeed against them. It may be mentioned here that according to the *Akbar Nama* Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan led two campaigns against Bhati from 1584 to 1586 A.C.¹¹¹ Ralph Fitch might have mentioned about these campaigns.

From the information provided by Ralph Fitch the following points are clear:

Firstly, the places (Sripur and Sonargaon) mentioned by Ralph Fitch are situated in Eastern Bengal, that is, in Bhati, and Isa Khan and Chand Rai were the *Zamindars* or *Bhuiyans* of that region.

Secondly, Isa Khan, Chand Rai and other *Bhuiyans* rebelled against Mughal Badshah Akbar and Isa Khan was the chief of all rebels. In this

case, though, Ralph Fitch did not mention the word *Bara-Bhuiyans*, he must have referred to the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Thirdly, Ralph Fitch says, “for here are so many rivers and Islands that they flee from one to another...” Here he speaks of the riverrine Eastern Bengal, that is, *Bhati*, and not of the whole of Bengal.

In the light of above discussion it may be concluded that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of riverrine Eastern Bengal, that is, of *Bhati* region.

In the *Ain-i-Akbari* Abul Fazl says,

“The tract of country on the east called Bhati, is reckoned a part of this province. It is ruled by Isa Afghan...”¹¹²

In the *Akbar Nama* he says,

“... Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai waited for an opportunity of making a disturbance in the country of Bhati, Isa the zamindar of that country spent his time in dissimulation.”¹¹³ He further says, “Isa acquired fame by his ripe judgment and deliberateness, and made the twelve *zamindars* of Bengal subject to himself.”¹¹⁴

In the first statement Abul Fazl mentioned Isa Khan as the ruler of Bhati, in the second statement as the *Zamindar* of Bhati and in the third statement he mentioned Isa Khan as the chief of twelve *Zamindars*, that is, *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal. Here Abul Fazl mentioned Isa Khan as the *Zamindar* of *Bhati* and the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal. So it cannot be said surely on the basis of Abul Fazl’s statements that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati or of Eastern Bengal. But, if the geographical location or the theatre of warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in 1578¹¹⁵ and 1584 A.C.¹¹⁶ led by Mughal Subahdars Khan-i-Jahan and Shahbaz Khan are examined carefully it will be seen that the battles took place in the *Parganas* of Sonargaon, Maheswardi, Joanshahi and Khaliajuri, which were surely situated in the

Bhati region. From this point of view it can be suggested that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati.

In the *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi*, Mirza Nathan says,

“After the rainy season he (Islam Khan) would personally march to Bhati in order to punish Musa Khan and the Zamindars of that region who were raising the head of arrogance...”¹¹⁷

“When the rainy season just set in, Islam Khan, at the advice of the imperial officers, kept the expedition to Bhati in abeyance and marched towards Ghoraghat, and decided to proceed with his campaign against Musa Khan and the Twelve Bhuyans at the first appearance of the Canopus.”¹¹⁸

“Now I shall give a short account of Masnad-i-Ala Musa Khan and the Twelve Bhuyans.”¹¹⁹

It appears from the above statements of Mirza Nathan that Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and the twelve *Zamindars or Bhuiyans*, that is, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati. So, in the light of above discussion it may be concluded that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati and they rose to power in Bhati, that is, the places of their rise were in Bhati.

Section III Identification of the Bhati region

It has been seen in the previous discussion that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati and the places of their rise were also in Bhati. Now, an attempt has been made to identify the Bhati region with the help of the writings of previous scholars, the *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl and the *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan.

According to H. Beveridge Bhati is derived from Bengali word *bhata* (ebb) and *bhati* (low-land)¹²⁰. James Grant includes Hijli, Jessore and Bakerganj within Bhati¹²¹. H. Blochmann thinks that the coast-strip from the Hugli to the Meghna is Bhati¹²². He further says that the name means “Low lands overflowed by the tide.”¹²³ Thus all previous scholars think that the whole tract of low land of Bengal is called Bhati. In fact, Bhati means low land and accordingly, the whole low-lying area of Bengal is Bhati. The aim of the present study is not to define the word-meaning of Bhati, but is only to identify the Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, which is the real seat of power of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

In the *Akbar Nama* Abul Fazl has defined the Bhati in the following words, “Bhati is a low country and has received this name because Bengal is higher. It is nearly 400 kos in length from east to west and about 300kos from north to south. East of this country are the ocean and the country of Habsha? West is the hill country where are the houses of the Kahin? tribe. South is Tanda. North also the ocean and the terminations of the hill-country of Tibet.”¹²⁴

The above statement of Abul Fazl is confusing on the following grounds:

Firstly, he says that the length of Bhati is 400 *kos* from east to west and the breadth of it is about 300 *kos* from north to south. But he himself, in the *Ain-i-Akbari* says,

“Its (Bengal *Subah*) length from Chittagong to *Garhi* is four hundred *kos*. Its (Bengal *Subah*) breadth from the northern range of mountains to the southern frontier of the *Sarkar of Mandaran*, is two hundred *kos*...”¹²⁵

So, it is clear from this statement of Abul Fazl that the region of Bhati is greater than the province of Bengal, which is not correct.

Secondly, Abul Fazl says that on the east of Bhati is the sea and on the north is again the sea, which is not also correct.

Thirdly, the boundaries for the country of Bhati given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* seemed confusing and unintelligible to modern writers¹²⁶. So, it may be suggested that the definition of Bhati given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* is confusing.

It has been seen that the definition of Bhati given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* is confusing, but when he gave the accounts of warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, he also mentioned the location of battle-fields in the *Akbar Nama*. On the basis of these accounts of warfare and the location of battle-fields the identification of Bhati region can be made.

In the *Akbar Nama* Abul Fazl first referred to Isa Khan, the chief of Bhati, after the death of Mughal Subahdar Munim Khan Khan-i-Khanan. After the death of Munim Khan on 23rd October, 1575 A.C., Daud Khan Kararani broke his treaty and fell upon the Mughals. At the same time Isa Khan Attacked the Mughal admiral Shah Bardi and defeated him. Here Abul Fazl did not mention the place of war between Isa Khan and Shah Bardi. Abdul Karim thinks that the battle took place somewhere in Eastern Bengal¹²⁷. But it has been shown in a recently research work that the battle took place in Sonargaon *Pargana* or in its

vicinity, which was then the *Zamindari* of Isa Khan¹²⁸. So according to this account of the *Akbar Nama Sonargaon Pargana* was within the territory of Bhati.

After the death of Daud Khan Kararani Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan led his Bhati campaign in 1578 A.C. Abul Fazl has given the account of this campaign in the following words:

“Among the occurrences was the arrival of a report from Khan Jahan. When by the glory of activity and skill the delightful country of Bengal had been cleared of the weeds and rubbish of the ingrates, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai waited for an opportunity of making a disturbance in the country of Bhati. Isa the zamindar of that country spent his time in dissimulation...The able servant (Khan Jahan) led an army thither...When the town of Bhawal became the station of the army, Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad and other Afghans of that country brought forward propositions of obedience and used the language of harmony. Isa however sate in the ravine of disobedience, and was presumptuous. A large force was sent against him under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli. It proceeded by the river Kiyara Sundar, and a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal? Isa was defeated and fled,...Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, who were landholders in that part of the country, suddenly brought out a crowd of boats from the rivers and channels and kindled the flames of contention. The warriors of the victorious army lost courage and turned to flee, and in that encounter some of the voyagers left their boats and fled...when the army was retreating, Tila Ghazi, a landholder, came and opened the hand of courage so that ...He proceeded to Sihhatpur which he had founded in the neighbourhood of Tanda...”¹²⁹

The above statement of Abul Fazl provides the following Information:

When Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai, the two Afghan chiefs, waited for an opportunity of making a disturbance in the country of Bhati and Isa Khan the *Zamindar* of Bhati spent his time in dissimulation then Khan-i-Jahan led an army against them and proceeded to Bhati. When he reached Bhawal Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad Musazai and other Afghans of Bhati submitted to Khan-i-Jahan. But Isa

Khan, the *Zamindar* of Bhati, did not submit. So, Khan-i-Jahan sent a large army under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli against Isa Khan. The Mughal navy proceeded and passing “Kiyara Sundar” reached Kastul and defeated Isa Khan. But, suddenly Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, two *Zamindars* of that region attacked the Mughal army and defeated them. With the help of another *Zamindar*, Tila Ghazi, the Mughals, somehow, succeeded in retreating. Thus the Bhati campaign of Khan-i-Jahan completely failed and he returned to the capital.

It appears from the above information given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* that he has mentioned the places of war between the Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jhan and Isa Khan and his allies *Zamindars* which would be helpful to identify the region of Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Firstly, the name of Bhawal mentioned by Abul Fazl must be the Bhawal of Bhawal *Pargana*. The headquarters of the Ghazis of Bhawal were at Chaura, near Kaliganj on the river Lakhia. Bhawal is at present known as Nagri.¹³⁰

Secondly, the name of “Kiyara Sundar” mentioned by Abul Fazl must be Egara Sindur of present time. The place is situated on the bank of the main channel of the Brahmaputra, opposite which the river Banar rises and where Tok another important place is situated. Egara Sindur is now in the Pakundia Upazila of the Kishoreganj district.¹³¹

Thirdly, Kastul is situated on the bank of the river Meghna, two miles to the west of Astagram. It was situated in the *Pargana* of Joanshahi and the place is at present known as Kathail.¹³² Here at Kastul Isa Khan was defeated by the Mughal navy. But two other *Zamindars*, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap defeated the Mughals. So, it is seen that the battle-fields were spread from Bhawal to Egara Sindur and Kastul, that is, the battle- fields were spread over the vast area watered by the rivers

Lakhia, Banar, Brahmaputra and Meghna and all the places mentioned above were within Bhati. The names of the *Zamindaries* of Isa Khan, Majlis Dilawar, Majlis Pratap and Tila Ghazi have not been mentioned specifically in the *Akbar Nama*. But it will be seen later that Isa Khan was at that time the *Zamindar* of Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap were the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* respectively and Tila Ghazi was the *Zamindar* of Talipabad *Pargana*. Here Sonargaon, Maheswardi, Joanshahi, Khaliajuri and Talipabad *Parganas* were within the territory of Bhati and Isa Khan, Majlis Dilawar, Majlis Pratap and Tila Ghazi were the *Zamindars* of Bhati.

The next Bhati campaign during the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar was led by Subahdar Shahbaz Khan in 1584 A.C. against Isa Khan and his allies *Bhuiyans*. But it was a complete failure. Abul Fazl has also given the detail account of this campaign in the *Akbar Nama*.¹³³ According to the account of Shahbaz Khan's Bhati campaign of 1584 A.C. given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* that the places of war were Khizrpur, Sonargaon, Karabhu (Katrabo), Bara Sindar, Totak, Kinara Sindar, Bajasrapur and Bhawal. The geographical locations of Bara Sindar or Kinara Sindar or Egara Sindur and Bhawal has been discussed previously, now the geographical locations of Khizrpur, Sonargaon, Karabhu, Totak and Bajasrapur will be discussed.

Khizrpur: Khizrpur is situated to the north-east of modern Narayanganj on the river Lakhia. Abdul Karim thinks that the fort of Khizrpur was first built by Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala.¹³⁴

Sonargaon: Sonargaon is situated three miles east to Khizrpur in between the rivers Lakhia and Meghna.¹³⁵

Katrabo: Karabhu or Katrabo is situated on the left bank of the river Lakhia in modern Rupganj Upazila of Narayanganj district. Now it is known as Masumabad¹³⁶.

Tok: Totak or Tok is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, just where the river Banar takes off.¹³⁷

Bajitpur: Bajasrapur or Bajitpur is an Upazila in modern Kishoreganj district.¹³⁸

So, it is evident that the battle-fields were spread from Khizrpur to Tok and Bajitpur, that is, the Bhati campaign of Shahbaz Khan in 1584 A.C. was extended throughout the rivers Lakhia, Banar, Brahmaputra upto the river Meghna. Here it is noteworthy that the battle of Khan-i-Jahan of 1578 and the battle of Shahbaz Khan of 1584 A.C. took place in the same geographical area and all the aforementioned places were within the region of Bhati.

In 1597 A.C. Mughal Subahdar Man Singh sent an expedition against Isa Khan in Bhati under his son Durjan Singh. Abul Fazl gave an account of this campaign in the *Akbar Nama* in the following words:

“... Rajah Man Singh sent off a force by land, and also sent some men by the river under command of his son Durjan Singh in order that the houses of the proprietors might be plundered... On the 25th the river-detachment plundered many places, and made an expedition against Katrabu. Six *kos* from Bikrampur Isa and M’asum arrived with a large number of war-boats. They surrounded the river detachment and after a hard contest the leader (Durjan) and many soldiers delivered up the coin of their lives. Some men were made prisoners, and some escaped.”¹³⁹

According to the above statement of Abul Fazl the places of war were Katrabo and a place six *kos* from Bikrampur, that is, the neighbourhood of Bikrampur. Here the first place mentioned is Katrabo which is situated on the left bank of the river Lakhia and was the capital of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. The second place mentioned is Bikrampur, which is situated on the bank of the river Padma and was the *Zamindari*

of Kedar Rai, one of the allies of Isa Khan. So, it is clear that this battle took place in the area between Katrabo and Bikrampur, that is, within the *Zamindaries* of Isa Khan and Kedar Rai and Katrabo and Bikrampur were also within the region of Bhati.

In 1602 A.C. Man Singh further led an expedition to Bhati. Abul Fazl also has given a detailed account of this campaign in the *Akbar Nama*.¹⁴¹ According to this account the places of war were Bhawal, Bikrampur and Sripur, which was the capital of Kedar Rai. Needless to say that these places were within the region of Bhati.

Therefore, on the basis of the discussion of the accounts of wars of 1575, 1578, 1584, 1597 and 1602 A.C. given in the *Akbar Nama* it may be concluded here that Bikrampur, Khizrpur, Katrabo, Sonargaon, Bhawal, Tok, Egara Sindur, Bajitpur, Joanshahi, Khaliajuri and Astagram were all situated within the territory of Bhati.

In the *Ain-i-Akbari* Abul Fazl says,

“The tract of country on the east called *Bhati*, is reckoned a part of this province....Adjoining it, is an extensive tract of country inhabited by the Tipperah tribes.”¹⁴²

On the basis of this statement of Abul Fazl, Bhattasali says,

“This makes the situation of Bhati clear, and we can comprehend that the tract of country comprising of the eastern portions of Dacca and Mymensing and the western portions of Tippera and Sylhet is the region which has been designated by Abul Fazl as Bhati.”

On the other hand, Abdul Karim says,

“The low-lying area of the greater districts of Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tippera and Sylhet... constituted Bhati in the days of Akbar and Jahangir.”¹⁴³

But there statement cannot be acceptable on the following grounds:

Firstly, though, eastern portions of Dacca and Mymensingh and the western portion of Sylhet may be regarded as Bhati, the western portion

of Tripura or a part of Tripura district cannot be regarded as Bhati or a part of Bhati. Because, here Abul Fazl categorically mentioned that “Adjoining it (Bhati), is an extensive tract of country inhabited by the Tipperah tribes.” Which indicates that the kingdom of Tripura lies on the eastern frontier of Bhati. So, as district of Tripura was situated within the territory of the Kingdom of Tripura, Tripura district or a part of it cannot be within the territory of Bhati.

Secondly, while W.W. Hunter in his book *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. VI, indicating the boundaries of the district of Tripura says, “Tipperah is bounded...on the west by the river Meghna.”¹⁴⁴ It appears from this statement of Hunter that the western frontier of Tripura is the river Meghna, that is, Tripura lies on the eastern bank of the river Meghna and Bhati lies on the western bank of it. Therefore, no part of Tripura district or Kingdom of Tripura situated on the eastern bank of the river Meghna can be regarded as the part of Bhati.

Thirdly, if the encounters between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, mentioned in the *Akbar Nama* and *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* is reviewed, it will be seen that no battle took place in the district of Tripura.

On the basis of the above discussion it can be concluded here that the western portion of Tripura is not within the territory of Bhati as indicated by Abul Fazl and here Abul Fazl regarded the eastern portions of Dacca and Mymensingh districts and the western portion of Sylhet district as Bhati. So, it is clear that the eastern boundary of Bhati is the Kingdom of Tripura.

Mirza Nathan has also given the accounts of warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. By following these accounts of warfare the region of Bhati may be identified. According to Mirza Nathan Mughal Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti left Rajmahal with the intention of invading Bhati. Musa Khan

Masnad-i-Ala and his *Zamindar* allies first opposed the Mughals at Jatrapur, thirty miles west of Dhaka, on the bank of the river Ichamati. Jatrapur is situated in the *Pargana* of Chandpratap and Binod Rai was the *Zamindar* of this *Pargana*. Here at Jatrapur Musa Khan tried his best to check the Mughals and continued his fight for a long time. He posted his three *Zamindar* allies, Mirza Mumin, Dariya Khan and Madhava Rai at Jatrapur¹⁴⁵. Mirza Nathan says,

“Then all these three men were deputed (by Musa Khan to guard) to the *Mohana* of Isamati at Jatrapur and they were given much encouragement thus: - “Immediately after the arrival of the imperial army, you would find me at the aforesaid *Mohana* along with the Twelve Bhuyans.”¹⁴⁶

On the basis of this statement of Mirza Nathan, Abdul Karim thinks that Jatrapur was situated at the western frontier of the territory of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the western boundary of Bhati was the Chandpratap *Pargana*, or to be more specific, the river Ichamati¹⁴⁷. In this context Abdul Karim’s opinion may be acceptable. But this western boundary of Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was not always fixed. For, it is seen that during the reign of Badshah Akbar, Isa Khan and his ally Masum Khan Kabuli raided upto Ghoraghat¹⁴⁸ and Chatmohar, situated in the Sonabazu *Pargana*, the neighbouring *Pargana* of Chandpratap, was the capital of Masum Khan Kabuli. Besides, during the reign of Badshah Jahangir Sonabazu *Pargana* was under the authority of Mirza Mumin, son of Masum Khan Kabuli, Khan Alam Bahbudi, son of Dariya Khan and Madhava Rai, the *Zamindar* of Khalsi, before Islam Khan Chishti reached Katasgarh¹⁴⁹. After Katasgarh, situated the stronghold of Jatrapur of Chandpratap *Pargana* of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.¹⁵⁰

The southern boundary of Bhati can be determined with the help of another statement of Mirza Nathan. According to the latter when

Majlis Qutb, *Zamindar* of Fathabad (Faridpur), was attacked by the Mughals, he had written a letter to Musa Khan and other *Zamindars* thus:

“Up till now, whatever was possible to be done alone by me, has been done. Now I have been brought to this critical situation. If you help me, I will never betray you as long as I live, and I will join the fight. If you do not come to my aid and leave me in neglect, I shall be compelled to surrender to the imperial army and shall have to go forward with the imperial army from this side to Bhati.”¹⁵¹

It appears from this statement, particularly, “from this side to Bhati” that Fathabad or Faridpur was not within the territory of Bhati. So, it may be suggested that the southern boundary of Bhati was Faridpur, or to be more specific, the river Ganges (Padma).

Abul Fazl or Mirza Nathan did not mention the northern boundary of Bhati. But it may be assumed that the northern boundary of Bhati was the district of Mymensingh and it was extended towards north-east upto Baniachang in the western portion of the district of Sylhet.

Firstly, it is known that almost the whole of Mymensingh district was within the territory of Isa Khan, except a small portion (Bukainagar) of it, which was conceded to Khwaja Usman Khan by Isa Khan himself.¹⁵²

Secondly, according to Mirza Nathan, Anwar Khan, the *Zamindar* of Baniachang, was one of the allies of Musa Khan¹⁵³. Under the leadership of Musa Khan, Anwar Khan played an important role in the anti-Mughal resistance. So, Baniachang can be regarded as the north-eastern boundary of Bhati.

On the basis of above discussion the boundaries of the region of Bhati, ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, may be identified as follows:

The kingdom of Tripura in the east, the river Ichamati in the west, the river Ganges in the south and the northern boundary was the district of Mymensingh and it was extended towards north-east upto

Baniachang in the western portion of Sylhet. In a word, the districts of Dhaka, Mymensingh and western portion of Sylhet, watered and surrounded by the rivers the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and their numerous tributaries comprised of the region of Bhati, ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* rose to power in this region of Bhati and put up stubborn resistance to the Mughal aggressions.

Section IV

Identification of the Bara-Bhuiyans

Sub Section I

The Bara-Bhuiyans of the time of Badshah Akbar: A general Study

In the *Akbar Nama*, Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan made the “twelve *zamindars*” or *Bhuiyans* subject to himself¹⁵⁴. But he did not definitely mention the names of these twelve *Zamindars* or *Bhuiyans*. On the other hand, Mirza Nathan repeatedly mentioned Musa Khan and the “Twelve Bhuyans”¹⁵⁵ and he also did not definitely mention who these *Bara- Bhuiyans* were. Moreover, the contemporary European writings have also turned out to be confusing¹⁵⁶. So, the identification of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* is not an easy task. The main proposition of the present study is to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* on the basis of the writings of previous scholars and the accounts of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir as given in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by the contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan and other historical sources.

Among the previous scholars Kedarnath Majumdar¹⁵⁷ is of the opinion that those twelve *Zamindars* are known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, who proclaimed independence.

Secondly, Anandanath Ray¹⁵⁸ says that in the middle of the sixteenth century a number of landholders became unanimous and were determined to liberate themselves from the subjugation of the Mughal Emperor. They are commonly known as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Thirdly, modern historian N.K.Bhattachali¹⁵⁹ thinks that only those *Bhuiyans*, who were really independent and had continuously fought against the Mughals to maintain that independence should be termed as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But those who did not fight against the Mughals cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Fourthly, M.Abdul Qader¹⁶⁰ says,

“The principal characteristic of the historic Bara Bhuyans was their opposition to the progress of Mughal arms in Bengal.”

He further says,

“It is apparent that the real seat of the Bara Bhuyans was the Bhati country inundated by the Brahamaputra and the Meghna...”

He also thinks that Isa Khan and Musa Khan were their chiefs.

Fifthly, according to M.Mohar Ali those *Bhuiyans*, who were allied with one another forming a sort of anti-Mughal confederacy, who were persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals, who followed the lead of Isa Khan and, after him, of his son Musa Khan and who belonged generally to eastern Bengal which was the main theatre of their resistance, were the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. He also says,

“Keeping in view these characteristics it may be stated that the other individuals who are found to have carved out an independent existence in their respective localities by taking advantage of the troublous and unsettled conditions of the time but who do not otherwise satisfy all the above mentioned characteristics, should not be counted among the *BaraBhuiyans*.”¹⁶¹

Sixthly, Abdul Karim¹⁶² says,

“It is not true that the bhuiyans or zamindars who rose to power on the eve of the Mughal conquest, were all patriots or belonged to the Bara-Bhuiyans.” “Among the bhuiyans, Bara-Bhuiyans became very famous, they fought gallantly during the reign of Akbar and the first part of the reign of Jahangir, and although they were forced to submit in the long run, they were able to keep the independence of the country for long three decades.”¹⁶³ “...the Bara-Bhuiyans fought the Mughals, those who did not fight cannot be regarded as Bara- Bhuiyans. In fact Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan give the impression that the greatest obstacle to the

Mughal conquest of Bengal were the Bara- Bhuiyans and that is why the Mughal subahdars devoted their whole energy to subdue them.”¹⁶⁴ “So we conclude without any hesitation that the Bara-Bhuiyans were people of Bhati.”¹⁶⁵

He also says that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* followed the lead of Isa Khan in the time of Akbar and Musa Khan in the time of Jahangir.

From the above mentioned observations the following distinguishing features of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* can be identified: (a) The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were those who were really independent and had continuously fought against the Mughals during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir to retain that independence and proved to be the greatest obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. But those, who did not fight against the Mughals, cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. (b) They established rapport with one another and forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance and followed the lead of Isa Khan and, after him, of his son Musa Khan. (c) They were the people of Bhati which was the main theatre of their resistance and (d) They were persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals.

These characteristics of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* that emanated from the observations of the previous scholars may be acceptable on the following grounds:

a) It has been previously shown that the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’ signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those *Zamindars* of Eastern Bengal, specially of Bhati, who by their independent status, freedom-loving attitude, patriotic zeal, indomitable courage and heroic struggle for independence against the mighty Mughals achieved that legendary dignity, power and prestige.¹⁶⁶

b) It may be mentioned here that the contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, while mentioning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, also mention Bhati¹⁶⁷, that is, they limited the *Bara-Bhuiyans* within the region of

Bhati. Besides, the history of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, gives the clear impression that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati and they rose to power in Bhati and they followed the lead of Isa Khan and, after him, of his son Musa Khan and they jointly resisted the Mughal aggression.

c) It will be seen later that many of the *Bhuiyans* did not fight against the Mughals and some were also not persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals and some did not follow the lead of Isa Khan or of Musa Khan. So, they cannot be counted among the *Bra-Bhuiyans*.

Therefore, to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* the above mentioned characteristics should be taken into consideration. Apart from these, there are other elements which should also be taken into consideration. Firstly, it should be remembered that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar were not exactly the same as those of the time of Badshah Jahangir. Because, some died in the intervening period and some remained out of trace. For example, Isa Khan died¹⁶⁸ in the reign of Badshah Akbar and was succeeded by his son Musa Khan, who took up the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Besides, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas*, were two important allies of Isa Khan, and bona fide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, who fought against the Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan in 1578A.C.¹⁶⁹ in the reign of Badshah Akbar, but in the reign of Badshah Jahangir no trace of them is found. Secondly, some *Parganas* changed hands in the mean time. For example, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur and Sripur¹⁷⁰, who fought against the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan, and died during the reign of Badshah Akbar. Their *Parganas* are found in the hands of Musa Khan

during the reign of Badshah Jahangir¹⁷¹. Thirdly, it has been stated earlier that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati, they rose to power in Bhati and Bhati was the main theatre of warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. So, to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* they should be looked for in the region of Bhati.

In the following pages a humble attempt has been made to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar on the basis of the accounts of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in Bhati as given in the *Akbar Nama*.

According to Abul Fazl Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan(1575-1578A.C.) first led the expedition against Bhati in 1578 A.C. and he proceeded up to Kastul.¹⁷² Abul Fazl gives a description of this expedition in the following words:

“When by the glory of activity and skill the delightful country of Bengal had been cleared of the weeds and rubbish of the ingrates, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai waited for an opportunity of making a disturbance in the country of Bhati. Isa the zamindar of that country spent his time in dissimulation....The able servant (Khan Jahan) led an army thitherWhen the town of Bhawal became the station of the army, Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad and other Afghans of that country brought forward propositions of obedience and used the language of harmony. Isa however sate in the ravine of disobedience, and was presumptuous. A large force was sent against him... and a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal? Isa was defeated....Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, who were landholders in that part of the country, suddenly brought out a crowd of boats from the rivers and channels and kindled the flames of contention. The warriors of the victorious army lost courage and turned to flee, and in that encounter some of the voyagers left their boats and fled....One of the wonderful results of daily-increasing fortune was that when the army was retreating, Tila Ghazi, a landholder, came and opened the hand of courage....He (Khan Jahan) proceeded to Sihhatpur which he had founded in the neighbourhood of Tanda...”¹⁷³

It appears from the above account of Abul Fazl that Khan-i-Jahan's first opponents were Isa Khan, the chief the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and

two Afghan chiefs Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai, and later Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap. When Khan-i-Jahan reached Bhawal Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai submitted to the Mughals without offering any resistance. But Isa Khan did not submit. So, Khan-i-Jahan sent a large force against Isa Khan. As a result a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastul and Isa Khan was defeated. But suddenly Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, two *Zamindars* of that region, counter attacked the Mughal army and badly defeated them. With the help of another *Zamindar* Tila Ghazi the Mughals somehow managed to retreat. Consequently, the Bhati campaign of Khan-i-Jahan completely failed and he was compelled to return to the capital.

Here, it may be pointed out that Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad Musazai, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap were all the allies of Isa Khan, the chief the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. At that time, Isa Khan was the *Zamindar* of Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*,¹⁷⁴ Majlis Dilawar was the *Zamindar* of Joanshahi *Pargana*,¹⁷⁵ Majlis Pratap was the *Zamindar* of Khaliajuri *Pargana*¹⁷⁶ and Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai, the two Afghan chiefs, had no *Zamindari* of their own. Then, they were staying in the *Zamindari* of Isa Khan and were engaged in the anti-Mughal activities being aided by Isa Khan. So, it is clear that the *Zamindars* of Sonargaon, Maheswardi, Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* were the main opponents of Khan-i-Jahan and all these *Parganas* were situated in the region of Bhati.¹⁷⁷ Though, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai were the allies of Isa Khan, they cannot be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, they submitted to the Mughals as soon as Khan-i-Jahan reached Bhawal without offering any resistance. It is also known that Ibrahim Naral sent his son with presents to Khan-i-Jahan and asked for protection while he was retreating from Bhati¹⁷⁸. Therefore, it may be suggested that Ibrahim Naral and

Karimdad Musazai were not persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals and they do not satisfy all the above- mentioned characteristics of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and they cannot be ranked with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Apart from this, Tila Ghazi, the *Zamindar* of Talipabad *Pargana*¹⁷⁹, with whose help the Mughals were able to retreat, was a Mughal partisan.

On the basis of above discussion it may be mentioned here that when Khan-i-Jahan led the expedition against Bhati in 1578 A.C. the main opponents of the Mughals, that is, the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, were Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his allies Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, who jointly fought against the Mughals and compelled them to leave Bhati.

The next Bhati campaign was led by Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan during the reign of Badshah Akbar in 1584 A.C.¹⁸⁰ At this time, the battle fields were spread from Khizrpur¹⁸¹ to Tok¹⁸² and Bajitpur¹⁸³ and all these places were within the region of Bhati and the main opponent of Shahbaz Khan was Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Abul Fazl did not mention any other names of Isa Khan's allies except Masum Khan Kabuli¹⁸⁴. Though, the latter was one of the allies of Isa Khan, he cannot be regarded as one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were landholders, their source of power was land and they never served under the Mughals. But Masum Khan Kabuli was a Mughal officer, he rebelled against Badshah Akbar and fought against the Mughals till his death.

In 1585A.C. Shahbaz Khan and Sadiq Khan and in 1586 Shahbaz Khan led two expeditions against Bhati¹⁸⁵. On both occasions Isa Khan was the main opponent of the Mughals and Masum Khan Kabuli was his ally and the battle fields were limited within the region of Bhati. Though, Abul Fazl did not mention any other names of Isa Khan's allies

in the *Akbar Nama* except Masum Khan Kabuli, the English traveller Ralph Fitch saw Chand Rai in Sripur in 1586, who was at that time engaged in fighting against the Mughals as well as Isa Khan. Ralph Fitch says,

“I went to Serrepore...the king is called Chondery. They be all hereabouts rebels against their king Zebaldin Echebar.... The chief king of all these countries is called Isacan...”¹⁸⁶

This statement of Ralph Fitch indicates that at this time Chand Rai was engaged in fighting against the Mughals as well as Isa Khan. According to Abul Fazl Chand Rai was the son of Kedar Rai¹⁸⁷, one of the allies of Isa Khan. They were the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur and Sripur. Both Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were contemporaries of Badshah Akbar and they fought against the Mughals jointly with Isa Khan. So, it may be suggested that Chand Rai was one of the allies of Isa Khan and he may be regarded as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

On 17th March, 1594 A.C. Raja Man Singh Kachhwaha was appointed Subahdar of Bengal and on 4th May Badshah Akbar sent him to his new province¹⁸⁸. The main task in Bengal for Man Singh was to subjugate Isa Khan and his allies *Bhuiyans* and others. On arriving at Tanda, the capital of Bengal, he took preparations for resuming the offensive against Isa Khan and his allies. As preparatory measures he sent a few reconnoitering expeditions in all directions and also transferred the capital from Tanda to Rajmahal on 7th November, 1595 A.C.¹⁸⁹. From the new capital, Man Singh himself proceeded on 7th December, 1595, to conquer Bhati from Isa Khan and his allies¹⁹⁰. At his approach Isa Khan retreated beyond the Brahamaputra¹⁹¹. At last, in September, 1597 Man Singh sent two large forces by both land and water against Isa Khan¹⁹². The Mughal army under the command of Durjan Singh, son of Man Singh, attacked Isa Khan's capital Katrabo¹⁹³.

But finally on 5th September of the same year a fierce naval-engagement took place 12 miles off from Bikrampur¹⁹⁴. This resulted in the death of Durjan Singh¹⁹⁵ and the ruination of the Mughal army. Thus Man Singh's much prepared expedition against Isa Khan and his allies ended in failure. So, being depressed Man Singh left Bengal for Ajmeer in 1598 A.C.¹⁹⁶

It may be mentioned here that the main opponent of Man Singh was Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and his allies were Masum Khan Kabuli, Khwaja Usman Khan and his brother Khwaja Sulaiman Khan¹⁹⁷, the nephews of Qutlu Khan Nuhani of Orissa, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur, and the main battle fields were Katrabo and Bikrampur and these places were within the region of Bhati. Though, Khwaja Usman Khan and his brother Khwaja Sulaiman Khan were allies of Isa Khan, they cannot be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were people of Bhati and they rose to power in Bhati. But Khwaja Usman Khan and his brother Khwaja Sulaiman Khan came to Bengal driven away by Man Singh from Orissa and the latter also assigned them fiefs in the Faridpur (Khalifatabad) district of Eastern Bengal¹⁹⁸. So, here only Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur, may be regarded as the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* among the allies of Isa Khan.

At the end of 1600A.C. Man Singh returned to Bengal and defeated the Afghan rebels in the battle of Sherpur Atai on 12th February, 1601A.C.¹⁹⁹ In 1602 Man Singh engaged in several battles in Bhati. Among these, he first marched to Dhaka and tried to win Kedar Rai over to the Mughal side, but failed²⁰⁰. Then Man Singh himself came to Bhawal from Dhaka to punish Usman Khan, who drove back the Mughal *thanadar* Baz Bahadur Qalmaq of Mymensingh to

Bhawal²⁰¹. So, Man Singh attacked Usman Khan on the bank of the river Banar and defeated him²⁰². From there Man Singh came to Dhaka and sent a detachment across the river Ichamati to punish Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his brother Daud Khan, the sons of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, who died in September, 1599 A.C. and after his death his eldest son Musa Kha Masnad-i-Ala took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico –military alliance, that is, the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and also against Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Bikrampur. But Musa Khan's brother Daud Khan and his allies *Bhuiyans* closed the ferries and prepared for war²⁰³. So, Man Singh himself came up from Dhaka to Shahpur. At his approach they retreated to Sonargaon²⁰⁴. Then Man Singh came to Burhanpuri and Tarah, where Sher Khan, a local *Zamindar*, waited upon him.²⁰⁵

In 1603A.C. Kedar Rai joined the Maghs and attacked the Mughal outpost of Srinagar, to which Man Singh had to send relief with artillery²⁰⁶. Near Bikrampur a great battle took place in which Kedar Rai was wounded and captured and he died soon later²⁰⁷. During the rainy season of 1604 Man Singh went to Nazirpur to take rest and in February, 1605, he left Bengal for Agra²⁰⁸. Thus ended Man Singh's viceroyalty of Bengal during the reign of Badshah Akbar.

It appears from the accounts of Mughal warfare which took place in Bhati from 1602 to 1603 that the main opponent of Man Singh was Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his allies were his brother Daud Khan and Kedar Rai. It may be pointed out here that though, Abul Fazl mentioned Sher Khan as a local *Zamindar*, he cannot be regarded as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, it is seen that he submitted to Man Singh without offering any resistance. So, here only Musa Khan, his brother Daud Khan and Kedar Rai were among the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Now, on the basis of the above discussion the following list of the *Bara-i-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar may be prepared:

1. Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*;
2. Majlis Dilawar, the *Zamindar* of Joanshahi *Pargana*;
3. Majlis Pratap, the *Zamindar* of Khaliajuri *Pargana*;
4. Chand Rai, the son of Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Sripur and Bikrampur;
5. Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Sripur and Bikrampur;
6. Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, who took up the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* after the death of his great father Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala
7. Daud Khan, another son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan.

Though, Abdul Karim counted Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad Musazai, Tila Ghazi, Sher Khan, Bahadur Ghazi, Chand Ghazi, Sultan Ghazi, Selim Ghazi and Qasim Ghazi²⁰⁹ among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar, they cannot be ranked with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, they do not satisfy all the above-mentioned characteristics of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Firstly, it has been seen in the previous discussion that Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai submitted to Khan-i-Jahan without offering any resistance. It is also known that Ibrahim Naral sent his son with presents to Khan-i-Jahan and sought protection and the latter accepted his excuses. So, it is evident that Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai were not persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals. Secondly, Tila Ghazi was a Mughal partisan and he did not fight against the Mughals. On the contrary, he helped Khan-i-Jahan to retreat safely from Bhati in 1578 A.C. Thirdly, Abul Fazl mentioned the name of Sher Khan for one time only in the *Akbar Nama* and he says, “Sher K., the proprietor, then had the wisdom to wait upon the Rajah²¹⁰.” The statement clearly shows that Sher Khan was loyal to the Mughals and he saw Subahdar Man Singh and showed his allegiance.

Fourthly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Bahadur Ghazi ever fought against the Mughals during the reign of Badshah Akbar. On the other hand, Abdul Karim himself mentioned that Bahadur Ghazi was a contemporary of Badshah Akbar and he was loyal to Badshah Akbar²¹¹. It is also known that Bahadur Ghazi agreed to supply 35 *sundar* and *kusa* type of boats to Akbar²¹². So, he was a Mughal partisan. Fifthly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Chand Ghazi, Sultan Ghazi, Selim Ghazi and Qasim Ghazi ever fought against the Mughals. Abdul Karim himself says, “It is not on record whether they ever fought the Mughals.”²¹³ So, they cannot be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar.

In the light of above discussion it may be concluded here that the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar are Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Majlis Dilawar, Majlis Pratap, Chand Rai, Kedar Rai, Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, who took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance, that is, the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, after the death of his great father Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, and Daud Khan, another son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan.

Sub Section II

The Bara-Bhuiyans of the time of Badshah Jahangir: A general Study

In the foregoing discussion it has been tried to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Akbar. Now, an attempt has been made to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir on the basis of the accounts of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in Bhati as has been described in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by Mirza Nathan.

Badshah Akbar died on 15th October, 1605 A.C.²¹⁴ On his death his son Jahangir ascended the throne on 24th October, 1605.²¹⁵ After his accession Badshah Jahangir sent back Man Singh to Bengal. The latter remained in Bengal this time for only one year and he was finally recalled from Bengal in September, 1606. After Man Singh's recall there followed two equally short viceroyalties, those of Qutb al-Deen Khan Koka (1606-1607) and Jahangir Quli Khan (1607-1608 A.C).²¹⁶ After the death of Jahangir Quli Khan, Badshah Jahangir appointed Islam Khan Chishti as the *Subahdar* of Bengal on 6th May, 1608.²¹⁷ Towards the early part of June, 1608, Islam Khan reached Rajmahal, the then capital of Bengal.²¹⁸ He came to Bengal with the sole resolution to crush the independent pretensions of the Bengal *Zamindars* and to impose a uniform administrative system over the entire province. Accordingly, on reaching Rajmahal he prepared his plan of operation for the subjugation of the whole of Bengal and began preparations for going to Bhati against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, he realised that the chief obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal were the *Bara-Bhuiyans* holding Bhati under their command. He also realised that the foremost enemy of the Mughals is Musa Khan Masnad-i- Ala, the acknowledged

leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he should be crushed first, otherwise it would be extremely difficult to subdue the other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*). So, Islam Khan decided to march and wage war against Bhati and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. On 7th December, 1608, he left Rajmahal for Bhati and reached Shahzadpur²¹⁹ through Ghoraghat.²²⁰ Then he marched to Baliya²²¹ by land and instructed Ihtimam Khan, the Mughal admiral, to proceed at once to that place with the fleet and the artillery.²²²

At Baliya, Islam Khan took important decisions. He ordered Ihtimam Khan and his son Mirza Nathan to go to the Mohana of Khal Jogini²²³ and to erect forts and to halt there. On the other hand, Islam Khan himself decided to march to the Mohana of Katasgarh,²²⁴ from where he would issue orders to Ihtimam Khan and others for necessary action.²²⁵ Ihtimam Khan reached the Mohana of Khal Jogini and built there forts on the three mouths of the rivers. He then joined with Islam Khan at Katasgarh.²²⁶ Now, the Mughals came face to face with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, the impregnable fort of Jatrapur²²⁷ of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, was not far from Katasgarh. Islam Khan planned to conquer the fort of Jatrapur by the combined attack of land and naval forces.

In this situation Musa Khan also did not sit idle and he took preparation to resist the Mughal attack together with his allies *Bhuiyans* and constructed a high fort and deep trench at Dakchara.²²⁸ According to Mirza Nathan on this occasion Musa Khan's allies were Musa Khan's cousin Alaul Khan (maternal uncle's son), Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan, the younger brothers of Musa Khan, Bahadur Ghazi, Sona Ghazi, Anwar Ghazi, Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul, Mirza Mumin, Madhava Rai, *Zamindar* of Khalsi, Binod Rai, *Zamindar* of Chandpratap, Pahlwan, *Zamindar* of Matang and Haji Shamsu'd-Din Baghdadi.²²⁹

It may be mentioned here that on the basis of these names of Musa Khan's allies given by Mirza Nathan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Abdul Karim says, "It is our firm belief that Mirza Nathan has given here the names of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the reign of Jahangir."²³⁰ But it would not be reasonable to assume that Mirza Nathan has given here all the names of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the reign of Badshah Jahangir on the following grounds:

Firstly, Mirza Nathan did not mention here the names of Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan, the two sons of Isa Khan and brothers of Musa Khan. According to the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi* Daud Khan played an important role in the anti-Mughal resistance during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir.²³¹ So, the names of Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan should be included among the names of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the reign of Badshah Jahangir. Secondly, Haji Sham's-ud-Din Baghdadi cannot be regarded as one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, Mirza Nathan elsewhere mentioned him as the Chief Officer of Musa Khan²³². Thirdly, though, Mirza Nathan mentioned Bahadur Ghazi as one of the *Zamindar* allies of Musa Khan, he cannot be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, it has been seen in the previous discussion that he was a Mughal partisan during the reign of Badshah Akbar. On the other hand, it is also known that when Islam Khan Chishti sent his general Abdul Wahid against him, he made terms with Abdul Wahid and surrendered to Islam Khan without offering any resistance.²³³ So, he was not persistent in his hostility towards the Mughals. Therefore, it may be suggested that Bahadur Ghazi does not satisfy all the aforementioned characteristics of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he cannot be ranked with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Now, on the basis of the above discussion the following list of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir may be prepared:

1. Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*;
2. Alaul Khan, Musa Khan's cousin;
3. Abdullah Khan, son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan;
4. Mahmud Khan, son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan;
5. Daud Khan, son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan;
6. Ilyas Khan, son of Isa Khan and brother of Musa Khan;
7. Sona Ghazi, the name of his *Zamindari* is not given by Mirza Nathan;
8. Anwar Ghazi (Anwar Khan), the *Zamindar* of Baniachang;
9. Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul, the name of his *Zamindari* is not given by Mirza Nathan;
10. Mirza Mumin, son of Masum Khan Kabuli;
11. Madhava Rai, *Zamindar* of Khalsi;
12. Binod Rai, *Zamindar* of Chandpratap and
13. Pahlwan, *Zamindar* of Matang.

Though, some previous writers²³⁴ counted Pratapaditya of Jessore, Mukunda Ram and his son Satrajit of Bhushna, Kandarpa Narayan and his son Ram Chandra of Bacla, and Lakshmana Manikya and Ananta Manikya of Bhulua among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, they cannot be ranked with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, they do not satisfy all the characteristics of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* as mentioned erstwhile. Firstly, it is known that Pratapaditya was loyal to the Mughals and he was the first among the *Zamindars* (*Bhuiyans*) of Bengal to send his envoy and son to Islam Khan. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* he sent his younger son Sangramaditya with his envoy Shaykh Badi with large gifts on Islam Khan's arrival at Rajmahal.²³⁵ Later, Pratapaditya himself came and paid his respects to Islam Khan. It is known that on 26th April,

1609 A.C., when Islam Khan reached Bajrapur, Pratapaditya came and presented six elephants, some precious articles, camphor, aguru (aloe wood) and about Rupees fifty thousand in cash as his tributes.²³⁶ Islam Khan also received him cordially and he was presented with a horse, a grand robe of honour and a bejeweled sword-belt. Thus Pratapaditya was converted into a loyal officer²³⁷. Besides, he entered into a covenant with Isalam Khan and he agreed to send military assistance in the projected campaign against Musa Khan and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.²³⁸ So, it is clear that Pratapaditya was loyal to the Mughals from the beginning and the Mughals also considered him as one of their loyal vassals. Though, he later fought against the Mughals, for a different reason, that is, to pay for his failure to keep the pledge he had given to Islam Khan. Modern scholars N.K.Bhattachali, M.Mohar Ali and Abdul Karim do not consider him as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Abdul Karim says, “His (Pratapaditya) activities do not prove that he was a patriot...”²³⁹ So, Pratapaditya cannot be ranked with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Secondly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Mukunda Ram ever fought against the Mughals. During the reign of Badshah Jahangir the *Zamindar* of Bhushna was Mukunda Ram’s son Satrajit. According to Mirza Nathan, Islam Khan sent a detachment against Satrajit. Though, the latter initially decided to resist the Mughals, in the end he entered into an agreement with the Mughals and remained loyal to them throughout the rest of his life.²⁴⁰ So, he was a Mughal partisan. Thirdly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that Kandarpa Narayan ever fought against the Mughals. During the reign of Badshah Jahangir the *Zamindar* of Bakla was Kandarpa Narayan’s son Ram Chandra. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* Ram Chandra submitted to the Mughals on the first onslaught.²⁴¹ Fourthly, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* or in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that Lakshmana Manikya of

Bhulua ever fought against the Mughals. On the other hand, Ananta Manikya fought against the Mughals for the first and the last time in 1611 A.C. in the reign of Badshah Jahangir when he had no other recourse but to fight.²⁴² Moreover, the history of the subjugation of Bengal by Islam Khan Chishti, as described in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, gives the clear impression that Pratapaditya, Satrajit, Ram Chandra, Lakshmana Manikya and Ananta Manikya had no contact with Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Not only that when Musa Khan was attacked by the Mughals they did not come to his aid and remained silent. Therefore, they cannot be regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

In the light of above discussion it may be concluded here that the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir are Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Alaul Khan, Musa Khan's cousin, Abdullah Khan, Mahmud Khan, Daud Khan and Ilyas Khan, the sons of Isa Khan and brothers of Musa Khan, Sona Ghazi, Anwar Khan, Shaykh Pir, Mirza Mumin, Madhava Rai, Binod Rai and Pahlwan.

Notes and References

1. *Akbar Nama*, p.648.
2. Nathan, Mirza *The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Vol.I &II Translated from the original Persian by Dr.M.I.Borah, Gauhati, Assam, 1936, Vol.I, p.56; henceforth cited only as *Baharistan and Baharistan II*.
3. Sree Khitishchandra Moulik (Edited), *Prachin Purbabanga Gitika* (Bengali), Vol.VII, "Dewan Isha Khaner Pala", First Published, Kolkata, 1975,pp.159-240.
4. James Wise first attempted to recover the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he published an article titled "On the Barah Bhuyas of Eastern Bengal" in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, No.III, 1874, pp.197-214, henceforth cited only as *Wise*.

5. Henry Blochmann died on 13th July, 1878, at the early age of 40 years only. He edited the vast text of the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abu-l-Fazl Allami and he also translated the first volume of the *Ain-i-Akbari* into English from the Persian, *Ain-i-Akbari* Vol. II, Second Edition, corrected and further annotated by Sir Jadu-Nath Sarkar, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted in 1997, p.III; henceforth cited only as *Ain*. Blochmann published a series of articles titled “Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal” in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vols.XLII, 1873; XLIII, 1874; XLIV, 1875.
6. Henry Beveridge published an article titled “On Isa Khan, the ruler of Bhati, in the time of Akbar” in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, No. I, 1904, pp.57-63.
7. Satish Chandra Mitra published his book titled *Jashohar-Khulnar Itihash* (History of Jessore and Khulna), Vol., II, in 1329 B.S. (1922 A.D.). In this book he deals in detail with Pratapaditya and more briefly with all the *Bhuiyans*; henceforth cited only as *Jashohar-Khulna*.
8. Nalini Kanta Bhattasali published a series of articles titled “Bengal Chiefs’ Struggle for Independence in the reign of Akbar & Jahangir” in *Bengal Past & Present*, Vol.35, 1928; Vol. 36, 1928; Vol. 38, 1929; henceforth cited only as *B.P.P.*
9. Muhammad Abdur Rahim published his book titled *The History of the Afghans in India* in 1961 from Karachi, henceforth cited only as *The Afghans*.
10. Muhammad Mohar Ali published his book titled *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Vol. IA and Vol. IB, from Riyadh in 1985, henceforth cited only as *Muslims of Bengal and Muslims of Bengal* Vol.IB respectively.
11. Abdul Karim published his books *History of Bengal (Mughal Period)*, Vol.I and *Banglar Itihash Mughal Amal*, Vol.I (in Bengali) in 1992 from the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi, Bangladesh, henceforth cited only as *Mughal Period* and *Mughal Amal* respectively.
12. *Wise*, pp.197-198.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-214.
14. Choudhuri, Kamal (Edited), *Banglar Baro Bhuiya O Maharaj Pratapaditya* (Landlords of Bengal and Maharaj Pratapaditya), a collection of the writings of different scholars on the *Bara-*

Bhuiyans, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata, 2005, p.45 ; henceforth cited only as *Baro Bhuiya*.

15. *Ibid.*
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17. Gait, E.A, *A History of Assam*, Second Edition Revised, Calcutta and Simla, Thacker, Spink & Co, 1926, pp.38-39; henceforth cited only as *Assam*.
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22. *Baro Bhuiya*, pp.98-99.
23. *Ibid.*, p.99.
24. *Ibid.*, pp.291-292.
25. *Ibid.*, p.297.
26. S.J., Rev. H. Hosten, "The Twelve Bhuiyas or Landlords of Bengal", in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, No.10, November, 1913, pp. 437-438; henceforth cited only as *Landlords of Bengal*.
27. *Ibid.*, p.438.
28. *Ibid.*, p.439.
29. H. Hosten himself agrees with the identification of Chandican with Jessore, *Ibid.*, pp.441-442.
30. *Ibid.*, pp.445-446.
31. *Mughal Period*, p.102.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Jashohar-Khulna*, pp.20-22, and also quoted and translated by N.K.Bhattachali and Abdul Karim, *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, No.69, p.30; *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

34. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, No.69, pp.25-39, Vol.XXXV, No.70, pp.135-142, Vol.XXXVI, No.71, pp.32-50 and Vol.XXXVIII, No.75, pp.19-47.
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36. *Ibid.*, p.31.
37. *Ibid.*, p.32.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, pp.32-33.
41. *Ibid.*, p.33.
42. *Mughal Amal*, p.39.
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57. *Ibid.*
58. *Baharistan*, p.101.

59. *Mughal Period*, p.666.
60. *Ibid.*, p.346.
61. *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.293-294.
62. *Ibid.*,p. 294.
63. *Mughal Period*, p.92.
64. *Akbar Nama*, pp.376-378.
65. *Mughal Period*,p.113.
66. *Ibid.*,p. 123.
67. *Ibid.*,p. 114.
68. *Ibid.*,pp. 114-115.
69. *Ibid.*, pp.116-117.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
71. *Ibid.*,p. 47.
72. *Akbar Nama*, pp.376-378.
73. *Ibid.*,pp. 377-378.
74. *Ibid.*, p.1215.
75. *Mughal Period*, p.114.
76. *Ibid.*, p.115.
77. *Akbar Nama*, p.1215, Abul Fazl says, “The wicked Afghans leagued with Daud, the son of Isa...and closed the ferries and prepared for war.”
78. Mirza Nathan says, “...it was decided that ...and Mirza Nathan should be sent to Katrabu against Dawud Khan...”, “Nathan proceeds against Dawud Khan”, “Plan of attack on Dawud’s position,” “Dawud’s position carried” etc. *Baharistan*, pp. 79, 80, 81.
79. *Ibid.*, p.85.
80. *Akbar Nama*, p.648.
81. *Ibid.*,pp.376-378,648-651,660,672,674,676,693-694,695-696, 697,701,721-722, 779, 1031.
82. *Baharistan*, pp.56-57; *Baharistan*, II, p.799.
83. *Mughal Period*, p.116.
84. *Akbar Nama*, p.1215.

85. *Baharistan*, pp.79-81.
86. Mirza Nathan says, "Haji Shamsu'd-Din Baghdadi, the chief officer of Musa Khan, came to see Islam Khan." *Ibid.*, p.85.
87. *Assam*, p.39.
88. Quoted by Satish Chandra Mitra, *Jashohar-Khulna*, p.20.
89. *Landlords of Bengal*, p.447.
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91. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, No.69, p.32.
92. *Moymonsingher Itihash*, pp.31-32.
93. *Baro Bhuiya*, pp.291-292.
94. *Jashohar-Khulna*, p.21.
95. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, No.69, p.32.
96. *Mughal Period*, p.39.
97. *Ibid.*, p.29.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 48; *Mughal Amal*, p.39.
99. *Muslims of Bengal*, p.289.
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101. For details see, *Jashohar-Khulna*, pp. 27-28.
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104. *Ibid.*
105. H. Hosten himself agrees with the identification of Chandican with Jessore, *Landlords of Bengal*, and pp.441-442.
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111. For details see, *Akbar Nama*, pp.648-651,658-660, 721-722.

112. *Ain*, p.130.
113. *Akbar Nama*, p.376.
114. *Ibid.*, p.648.
115. *Ibid.*, pp.376-378.
116. *Ibid.*, pp.648-651,658-660.
117. *Baharistan*, p.9.
118. *Ibid.*,p.28
119. *Ibid.*,p.56
120. *Akbar Nama*, p.376, f.n.2; *Mughal Amal*, p.88; *Mughal Period*, p.108.
121. *Ibid.*, pp.645-646, f.n.3; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
122. *Ain*, p.130, f.n.4; *Mughal Amal*, p.88.
123. *Ibid.*, p.130.
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125. *Ain*, pp.129-130.
126. *Mughal Period*, pp.107-108; *Mughal Amal*, pp.87-88.
127. *Ibid.*, p.108.
128. *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.93-94.
129. *Akbar Nama*, pp.376-378.
130. *Mughal Period*, p.147.
131. *Mughal Period*, p.109; *Mughal Amal*, p.89.
132. *Ibid.*, p.148.
133. *Akbar Nama*, pp.648-651, 658-660.
134. *Mughal Period*, p.173.
135. *Ibid.*
136. *Ibid.*, p.174.
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Ibid.*
139. *Akbar Nama*, pp.1093-1094.
140. *Mughal Period*, p.68.

141. *Akbar Nama*, pp.1214-1215.
142. *Ain*, p.130.
143. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.75.p.26; *Mughal Period*, p.111.
144. Hunter, W.W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol.VI, First Print, 1876, Reprinted, 1973, p.356.
145. *Mughal Period*, p.111; *Baharistan*, p.55.
146. *Baharistan*, p.55.
147. *Mughal Period*, p.112.
148. *Mughal Amal*, p.153; *H.Bengal*, pp.211-212.
149. For details see, *Mughal Amal*, pp.185-187.
150. *Ibid.*, p.192.
151. *Baharistan*, p.59.
152. *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.128, note, 68; *The Afghans*, pp. 227-228.
153. *Baharistan*, pp.105-106.
154. *Akbar Nama*, p.648.
155. *Baharistan*, p.56.
156. In 1913 Rev. H. Hosten published an article entitled “The Twelve Bhuiyas or Landlords of Bengal”. He wrote this article on the basis of the writings of the contemporary European writers Du Jarric, Sebastien Manrique and others. It is learnt from this article that Du Jarric referred to the twelve *Bhuiyans*. According to him of these *Bhuiyans* three were Hindus, those of Chandecan (Jessore), Sripur and Bacla, the other nine were Muslims. But he did not mention the names of the Muslim *Bhuiyans* and their territories. So, his statement seems to be incomplete, which does not help to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. On the other hand, another European writer Sebastien Manrique also refers to twelve *Bhuiyans*. But instead of giving the names, he has only referred to the territories of the *Bhuiyans*. Besides, his list of the twelve *Bhuiyans* is confusing. Because, he includes Orissa into the twelve kingdoms of Bengal, but at that time Orissa was a separate *Subah* in the Mughal administrative set-up (*Mughal Period*, p.101). Manrique also includes Jessore and Chandican as two separate kingdoms, but Jessore and Chandican were one and the same place (*Mughal Period*, p.101). Moreover, though, Manrique gives the names of twelve kingdoms of Bengal, he includes

Bengala in the list separately. The inclusion of Bengala separately again gives rise to suspicion about the authenticity of his statement. For details see, *Landlords of Bengal*, pp. 437- 449.

157. *Moymonsingher Itihash*, pp. 31-32.
158. *Baro Bhuiya*, pp.291-292.
159. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, p.33.
160. *Historical Fallacies*, pp. 30, 40.
161. *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.293-294.
162. *Mughal Period*, p.39.
163. *Ibid.*p.29.
164. *Ibid.*p.48.
165. *Ibid.*p.106.
166. See Section I.
167. See Section III.
168. *Akbar Nama*, p. 1140.
169. *Ibid.*pp.376-378, *Mughal Period*, pp. 146-150.
170. Chand Rai was killed by Khwaja Usman Khan and his brother Khwaja Sulaiman Khan, nephews of Qutlu Khan Nuhani of Orissa, on 11th February, 1593 A.C., *Akbar Nama*, pp. 968-969; *H.Bengal*, p.210; Kedar Rai died in 1603 A.C. during the reign of Badshah Akbar, *Akbar Nama*, p.1235; *MughalPeriod*, p.69.
171. *Mughal Period*, p.114.
172. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 376-378. Kastul is situated on the bank of the river Meghna, two miles to the west of Astagram. It was situated in the *Pargana* of Joanshahi, and the place is at present known as Kathail, *Mughal Period*, p.148.
173. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 376-378.
174. *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.96.
175. *Ibid.*p.95.
176. *Ibid.*
177. These *Parganas* are now situated in the districts of Narayanganj, Narsinghdi and Kishoreganj.
178. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 377-378.

179. *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.95.
180. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 648-651, 658-660; *Mughal Period*, pp. 169-175.
181. Khizrpur is situated to the north-east of modern Narayanganj and about 9 miles off from Dhaka, *Mughal Period*, p.173.
182. Tok is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, just where the river Banar takes off, *Mughal Period*, p.174.
183. Bajitpur is an Upazila in modern Kishoreganj district.
184. Masum Khan Kabuli was a military captain of the time of Badshah Akbar. In 1580 A.C. Badshah Akbar introduced Din-i-Ilahi, and at about the same time, the regulations of branding the horses were strictly enforced and the field allowances of soldiers of Bengal and Bihar were reduced. As a result discontent prevailed among the field officers and soldiers, and discontent turned into an open rebellion in Bengal and Bihar. The rebels established contact with Mirza Hakim, brother of Badshah Akbar, and conspired to place him on the throne. Masum Khan Kabuli was one of the leaders of the rebels. The rebellion was suppressed, but Masum Khan Kabuli did no more submit to Badshah Akbar. He declared independence and joined with Isa Khan Masnad- i- Ala and continued his war against the Mughals till his death in 1599A.C., *Mughal Period*, p.62; *Akbar Nama*, p. 1130.
185. For details see, *Akbar Nama*, pp.672-674, 676,694-697, 701,721-722,779; *Mughal Period*, pp.175-184.
186. *Mughal Period*, p.104; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.116.
187. *Akbar Nama*, p.969.
188. *Ibid.* pp.999-1001; *H. Bengal*, p.211.
189. *Ibid.* pp.1042-1043; *Ibid.*
190. *Ibid.* p.1043; *Ibid.*
191. *H.Bengal*, p.211.
192. *Akbar Nama*, pp.1093-1094; *H.Bengal*, pp.211-212.
193. *Ibid.*, p.1093. Katrabo is at present known as Masumabad, a village of Rupganj Upazila of Narayanganj District, *Mughal Period*, p.174.
194. *Akbar Nama*, p.1093; *H. Bengal*, p. 212.
195. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
196. *Ibid.*,p.1140; *Ibid.* p.213.

197. Khwaja Usman Khan and his brother Khwaja Sulaiman Khan, these two Afghan Chieftains were driven out from Orissa by Man Singh, the Mughal general, in 1592 A.C. and went to the fort of Bhushna, where they engaged in conflict with Chand Rai and his father Kedar Rai and killed Chand Rai. Later, Isa Khan made a settlement between the two parties and as a result Kedar Rai appointed Khwaja Sulaiman Khan Commander-in-chief of his army and Isa Khan established Khwaja Usman Khan in his own *Zamindari* of Bukainagar. After this, these two Afghan Chieftains engaged themselves in the anti- Mughal resistance jointly with Isa Khan, *Akbar Nama*, pp.968-969; *Mughal Period*, p. 95.
198. *Akbar Nama*, p.968; *H.Bengal*, p. 210.
199. *Ibid.*, p.1174; *Ibid.*, pp.213, 229.
200. *Ibid.*, p.1213; *Mughal Period*, pp.200-202; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.299.
201. *Ibid.*, p.1214; *H. Bengal*, p.214.
202. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
203. *Ibid.*, pp.1214-1215; *Mughal Period*, pp.202-203.
204. *Ibid.*, p.1215; *Ibid.*, p.203; *H.Bengal*, p.214.
205. *Ibid.* Barhanpuri and Tarah, none of which cannot be identified, *MughalPeriod*, p.203.
206. *Ibid.* p.1235; *Mughal Period*, p. 205.
207. *Ibid.* p.1236; *Ibid.*
208. *Ibid.* pp.1240, 1256-1261; *Ibid.*pp.205-206.
209. *Mughal Period*, pp.114-115.
210. *Akbar Nama*, p.1215.
211. *Mughal Period*, p.114.
212. *Ibid.*, p.92.
213. *Ibid.*p.115.
214. *Ibid.*, p.206.
215. *Ibid.*, p.217.
216. *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 300; *H.Bengal*, p.229.
217. *Mughal Period*, p.222.

218. *Ibid.*
219. *Ibid.*, pp. 226, 228. Even now Shahzadpur is an important place in Pabna District on the west bank of the river Karatoya.
220. On 2nd June, 1609A.C. Islam Khan Chishti reached Ghoraghat, *Mughal Period*, p.227.
221. Jadunath Sarkar thinks that Baliya is situated about 10 miles south-east of Shahzadpur, *H.Bengal*, p.253.
222. *Baharistan*, p.51.
223. *Ibid.*, p.53; *Mughal Period*, p.245. *Mohana* Khal Jogini cannot be located in modern map; it must have been washed away by the rivers. Abdul Karim thinks that *Mohana* Khal Jogini was near Katasgarh and Baliya, *Mughal Period*, p. 283, note, 87.
224. At present Katasgarh is known as Kashtasagar. The place is situated in the Ulail Union of Shibaloy Thana of Manikganj District, *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.287, note, 8.
225. *Baharistan*, p.53; *Mughal Period*, p.245.
226. *Ibid.*, p.54.
227. Jatrapur is situated about 30 miles west of Dhaka and a road from this place goes to Dhaka via Nawabganj, *Mughal Period*, p. 283, note,91.
228. *Baharistan*, p.56. At present Dakchara is known as Dhakijora and it is situated in the Shimulia Union of Harirampur Thana of Manikganj District, *Masnad-i- Ala*, p.287, note, 11.
229. *Ibid.*,p. 57.
230. *Mughal Period*, p. 116.
231. For details see, *Baharistan*, pp.79-81; *Akbar Nama*, p.1215.
232. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
233. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 88.
234. Kailash Chandra Singh, Satish Chandra Mitra, Nikhil Nath Rai, Anandanath Rai and others. For details see *Baro Bhuiya*, pp. 45, 83-85, 98-126, 297, 349, 357, 363, 369.
235. *Baharistan*, p.14.
236. *Mughal Period*, p. 344.
237. *Baharistan*, p.27.
238. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

239. *Mughal Period*, p.346.
240. *Baharistan*, pp.18-19.
241. *Ibid.*, pp.131-132.
242. *Ibid.*, pp.96-98; *Mughal Period*, pp. 269-271.

Chapter III The Rise of the Bara-Bhuiyans

Section I The Cause of Their Rise

In the previous discussion it has been tried to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the times of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir. Now the question is what was the cause of their rise? The following causes can be traced for the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*:

Firstly, to trace the cause of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, it would be relevant here to give an idea of the land-revenue system of the pre-Mughal Bengal, that is, of the Bengal Sultanate. The land-revenue was the principal source of income for the government of pre-Mughal Bengal. According to Minhajus-s-Siraj, after ascending the throne of Lakhnauti the Rais of the surrounding places sent presents and tribute to Ali Mardan Khilji.¹ Sultan Fakhr al-Deen Mubarak Shah realised the land-revenue from the outskirts of Sonargaon². Some of the rulers even issued special coins out of the land-revenue of specific territories. For instance, Sultan Mughith al-Deen Yuzbak issued coins from the land-revenue of Nadia and Burdwan, and Sultan Rukn al-Deen Kaikaus issued coins out of the land-revenue of Bang (east Bengal)³. Apart from these, Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi proclaimed a general remission of land-revenue in course of his expedition against Bengal in order to win the support of the land-owners (*Zamindars*) in general⁴. So, it appears from these instances that the rulers of pre-Mughal Bengal realised the land-revenue regularly.

Now, the question is what was the method of land-revenue collection, was the collection made directly by the government, or it was

done through the intermediaries? There are many contemporary references which show that the collection of revenue was done by the government through *Zamindars*, *Ijaradars*, and other revenue agents, besides, the *Amil*, *Shiqdar* and other government officers⁵. The *Amils* or *Shiqdars* were direct revenue collecting government officers. Generally the collection of revenue through *Amils* or *Shiqdars* operated in the *ryotwari* system which linked *ryots* directly with the government in matters of land and revenue⁶. On the other hand, the collection of revenue from the *ryots* through such middlemen as *Zamindars* and *Ijaradars*, may be termed as the *Zamindari* or *Ijaradari* system⁷. There were two classes of *Zamindars* in Bengal, (i) *Peshkash* or tribute paying *Zamindars* and (ii) *Ijaradars* or revenue contractors or agents, who in course of time became permanent and hereditary revenue farmers⁸. The tribute paying *Zamindars* had their origin from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. They were petty Hindu Rajas who submitted to Muslim rulers. The Muslim rulers allowed these *Rajas* to continue as *Zamindars* in their territories on their promise to pay regular tribute and remain loyal to the established government. The Muslim writers called them by the name of *Zamindar*⁹. The existence of a powerful class of *Zamindar* in the earlier period of Muslim rule in Bengal is shown by the proclamation of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi issued to the *Zamindars* and influential section of Bengali people on the eve of his campaign against Sultan Haji Shams al-Deen Ilyas Shah of Bengal. It is also known that several *Zamindars* of Bengal joined Firuz Shah in his campaign and many Hindu *Zamindars* fought in the side of Ilyas Shah¹⁰. It is to be noted here that Raja Kans, *Zamindar* of Bhaturia, acquired so much power in the state that he ousted Ilyas Shahi dynasty and became the practical ruler of Bengal¹¹. The Vaishnava literature of the sixteenth century mentions of a large number of Hindu *Zamindars* in Bengal¹².

There were many *Zamindars* both Muslims and Hindus during the Afghan rule in Bengal¹³. All these *Zamindars* did not have their origin from early Muslim time. Many of the old *Zamindars* had disappeared and new ones appeared in their places. Some of the *Zamindars* had their rise as a result of contract with Muslim rulers in the collection of revenue¹⁴. Among them some were Muslim *Zamindars*. It is but natural to expect the rise of some Muslim *Zamindars* after the Muslim conquest of Bengal.¹⁵

The *Zamindars* thus included both *Peshkash* paying *Zamindars* and *Ijaradars*, who later on came to be known as *Zamindars*¹⁶. Originally name *Zamindar* was applied to small Hindu Rajas, who submitted to Muslim rulers and paid *Peshkash*. Later on the name included also revenue farmers who became permanent and hereditary in this office by regular collection and payment of Government revenue¹⁷. There are evidences of *Ijaradar* turning *Zamindar*. For example, Hiranyadas was a *Zamindar* of Satgaon during the reign of Ala al-Deen Hussain Shah. He was originally a *Chowdhury*.¹⁸ The government granted him a *sanad* for Satgaon territory on his agreeing to pay twelve lakhs of rupees as state revenue. Thus he became a *Zamindar* of Satgaon¹⁹. It is also known that Muslim rulers generally granted contracts to Hindu officers, such as *Qanungoes* and *Chowdhuries* for the collection of revenue. If these contractors paid the government revenue regularly, they were allowed to continue permanently. Such revenue farmers were dignified with the name of *Zamindar*.²⁰

So, it is clear from the above discussion that there were a large number of *Zamindars* in pre-Mughal Bengal, which indicates that the collection of revenue through these middlemen was the prevailing practice in pre-Mughal Bengal. For the sake of convenience, this system

of collection of revenue through the middlemen may be termed as *Zamindari*²¹. There are some special reasons for Muslim rulers to prefer this system. Firstly, they did not oust Hindu chiefs who submitted and promised to pay tribute and remain loyal to the Muslim government. Secondly, Muslim rulers needed the co-operation of Hindu chiefs in the consolidation of their power. Thirdly, they did not want to disturb the tradition and introduce an experiment in the revenue system of Bengal. They found collection through existing *Zamindars* most convenient and economical. So, the revenue was collected mostly through *Zamindars*, and the collection by *Amil* or *Shiqdars* was confined to a limited area.²²

The following points are clear from the above discussion:

- a) The land-revenue was collected mostly through the *Zamindari* system in pre-Mughal Bengal.
- b) On the basis of this system of land-revenue collection there raised a large number of *Zamindars* and
- c) The existence of a large number of *Zamindars* shows that their *Zamindaries* comprised a large part of Bengal.

Thus the *Zamindars* continued through centuries in this country and they formed a powerful aristocracy of the Bengali society in Muslim period and they also exercised a great influence on the politico-economic as well as socio-cultural life of their times²³. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to assume that some of them were the ancestors of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* who defied the Mughal authority. For example, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Sripur in Bikrampur, played a notable role in the history of Bengal. The family tradition of this house traces its origin to one Nim Rai. According to the family tradition collected by James Wise, Nim Rai was the founder of this *Zamindar* family. He migrated from the Carnatic and settled at Ara

Phulbari in Bikrampur, 150 years before the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar. He acquired a *Zamindari* and obtained the sanction of the reigning Sultan. Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were his descendents²⁴. They were the bonafide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and fought under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala against the establishment of Mughal sovereignty in Bengal.

Secondly, the geography of the country, such as the natural barriers on the borders, the innumerable rivers through its plains, the marshes and swamps in many places and the reportedly bad climate, which frightened the people of Northern India, had far-reaching effects on the history of Bengal and the life of its people²⁵. These geographical and natural features of Bengal facilitated her to maintain an isolated and independent political life for several centuries. It is also noteworthy in this connection that natural features were largely responsible for the growth of the sense of isolationism and such other notions in the political life of the people of Bengal. They had a special charm for the beauties of the nature around and developed a romantic love for rivers and rains. The green plains, monsoonic weather and river highways fostered a sense of local patriotism and spirit of freedom in the people of this country. So, they were always opposed to the rule of an outsider²⁶. On the other hand, the alluvial plain, monsoonic weather and network of rivers contributed to the fertility of the soil and prosperity of the people of Bengal. The prosperity of the people and the wealth of the country enabled its rulers to maintain an independent existence²⁷. A part from these, the natural barriers accounted for its inaccessibility and they also acted as its first line of defence against any outside invader. For example, a small Bengal force could stay a big invading force at the passes in the northern frontier. Further, the rivers, rains and marshes

provided Bengal with a second line of defence. Because, it was not easy in those days for an enemy force to cross the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Mahananda, the Kosi and their numerous tributaries and distributaries. The long rainy season and the inundated plains were uncongenial for the Northern Indian soldiers to carry on warfare in this country. In addition, the climate of the country which was thought, without justification, to be hellish, served as a third line of defence against an outside attack.²⁸

Moreover, because of the existence of the rivers and waters all around, the Bengali people naturally became expert in boatmanship and naval warfare. While speaking of the use of boats and boatmanship of the Bengalis, Abul Fazl observes,

“Travelling is by boat, especially in the rains, and they make them of different kinds (of boats) for purposes of war, carriage or swift sailing. For attacking a fort they are so constructed that when run ashore, their prow overtops the fort and facilitates its capture.”²⁹

It is to be noted in this connection that the early Muslim governors of Bengal, who aspired for an independent dominion in this province, realised the advantage of naval warfare and accordingly developed the navy and trained their people in the art of naval warfare. They also laid greater importance to the naval warfare rather than to fighting on land. Because, the Bengal soldiers and sailors could move swiftly in the waters, attack the enemy at the vantage places and easily score the victory against the Northern soldiers, who had little experience of boatmanship and naval warfare. On many occasions, a small naval force of the Bengalis achieved decisive advantages over a large enemy force. It was because of the naval superiority of the Bengalis and the impossibility of the cavalry movement during the six rainy months, abundance of trees and shrubs favourable to ambushes and surprise

attacks that the Bengal governors defied the Delhi Sultans and even *Zamindars* like Isa Khan and his allies maintained their independence in this province in the face of the strong opposition of Badshah Akbar³⁰. So, it is seen that Bengal had a fleet of war-boats from the beginning of Muslim rule. The independent rulers of Bengal and even *Zamindars* used it as a powerful force in maintaining their independence against the north.³¹

On the basis of above discussion it may be said that the geography and natural features of Bengal made it inaccessible to the outside invader and her people freedom-loving, wealthy and expert in boatmanship and naval warfare, which substantially helped Bengal in maintaining an independent political career for several centuries.

In fact, the geography, nature and riches of Bengal facilitated its governors to rebel and to become independent. Once the governor had rebelled, his fellow chiefs also were seized with the ambition for the sovereign power of the province. Thus there were frequent strifes among the Khilji chiefs for attaining the supreme power in Bengal³². So, Barani writes,

“Shrewd and knowing people had given to Lakhnauti the name of Bulghakpur (the city of strife), for since the time when Sultan Muizzu-din Muhammad Sam conquered Dehli, every governor that had been sent from thence to Lakhnauti took advantage of the distance, and of the difficulties of the road, to rebel. If they did not rebel themselves others rebelled against them, killed them, and seized the country. The people of this country had for many long years evinced a disposition to revolt, and the disaffected and evil disposed among them generally succeeded in alienating the loyalty of the governors.”³³

Abul Fazl also holds the same view about Bengal and observes,

“...a country which from old times was called a house of contention (*bulghak-khana*). That is to say, the dust of commotion was always being stirred up in that country by wicked men.”³⁴

The kings and emperors of the north found it difficult to impose their authority on the rulers of this country in the Hindu as well as in Muslim times. Even if they somehow occupied Bengal, they could not keep their hold on it for long. Because, favoured by the natural advantages the governors of Bengal easily threw off the yoke and set up an independent rule in the province³⁵. So, it is seen that Bengal enjoyed an independent status throughout the Hindu period, with the exception of a few years under Asoka and about a century in the reigns of the imperial Guptas. In the Muslim period also, Bengal remained practically independent, ever since its conquest by Ikhtiyar al-Deen Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji. Of the Delhi Sultans, only Iltutmish, Balban, Ala al-Deen Khilji and Ghiyath al-Deen Tughlaq, could exercise control over the Turkoman governors of Bengal. But in the later part of the reign of Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, Fakhr al-Deen Mubarak Shah established an independent kingdom in East Bengal with Sonargaon as his capital. From this time Bengal drifted away from the Sultanate of Delhi and severed even the nominal tie of subordination to the rulers of Northern India. After this, Bengal developed completely a separate political career under the rule of Ilyas Shahi dynasty, the Abyssinian family and the Sayyid dynasty of Ala al-deen Husain Shah.³⁶ After these, Bengal lost her sovereignty to the Sur Afghan leader Sher Shah and again became a province of the Sur Afghan Sultanate of Delhi. But later on, Bengal got back her independence under the Sur and Kararani Afghans successively.

Bengal thus enjoyed an independent status for more than two centuries. In this period the geographical and political unity of Bengal

was established, which gave rise to a sense of patriotism and regional sovereignty among the people of this country. Though, the history of the independent Sultanate of Bengal closed with the defeat and death of Daud Khan Kararani in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576 A.C. at the hands of Mughal Badshah Akbar's general Khan-i-Jahan, the conquest proved to be a nominal one. Because, inspired by local patriotism the Bengali *Zamindars* (*Bhuiyans*) continued the struggle for anti-Mughal resistance under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and after him, of his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and defied the Mughal authority successfully and maintained their independence in their respective territories for more than three decades.

Therefore, on the basis of above discussion it may be concluded here that the geographical and natural features of Bengal was one of the causes of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Thirdly, the Afghan rule in Bengal was particularly favourable for the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and their coming into prominence. Because, the feudal character of the Afghan system of political and social organization largely accounted for the rise of the *Zamindars* to such prominence. The Afghan rulers favoured the growth of the *Zamindaries*, as they preferred the government by *jagirs* as the most convenient one to them. In view of the rebellion of his governor (Khizr Khan) and troubles in Bengal and the distance of Bengal from the seat of the imperial authority at Delhi, even Sher Shah, who was opposed to the system of feudal government, adopted this expedient in the administration of this province. Sher Shah divided Bengal into a number of smaller areas, most probably *sarkars*, and gave them to the tribal chiefs of the Afghans³⁷. This suggests that several Afghan *Zamindars* had their origin from this time. For example, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis

Pratap are mentioned in the *Akbar Nama* as the *Zamindars* of Bhati, who compelled the Mughal general Khan-i-Jahan to retreat to Sihhatpur in 1578 A.C.³⁸ These *Zamindars* flourished during the time of the Afghan rule³⁹. It has been stated earlier that they were the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* and were the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Another great *Zamindari* is found existing from the time of the Mughal conquest of Bengal in the reign of Badshah Akbar⁴⁰. This was the *Zamindari* of Sripur in Bikrampur under Chand Rai and Kedar Rai. Ralph Fitch, who visited Sripur in 1586 A.C. found Chand Rai ruling there. The former referred to him as a rebel against Badshah Akbar. This *Zamindar* family had its origin in the pre-Mughal period⁴¹. According to the family tradition, Nim Rai was the founder of this *Zamindari*. He migrated from the Carnatic and settled at Ara Phulbari in Bikrampur, 150 years before the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar. He acquired a *Zamindari* and obtained the sanction of the reigning Sultan. Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were his descendents. They flourished in the period of the Kararani Sultanate in Bengal⁴². It has been mentioned earlier that they were the bona fide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and fought under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala against the establishment of Mughal sovereignty in Bengal.

The most powerful and influential of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala of Sonargaon. His father Sulaiman Khan was originally a descendant of an Afghan chief, who came from the region of the Sulayman Mountains of Afghanistan. Sulaiman's grand father first came to India during the reign of Sultan Bahlul Ludi of Delhi, who gave him a *jagir* and he settled in India. But the Afghans lost their kingdom of Delhi Sultanate with the defeat of Sultan Ibrahim Ludi in

the battle of Panipat in 1526 A.C. and this time Sulaiman Khan along with the family of Mahmud Ludi, brother of Ibrahim Ludi, took shelter in Bengal. Nusrat Shah, the Sayyid Sultan of Bengal, was sympathised to these Afghan refugees. He established marital relationship with them and gave *jagirs* to many of them. Among these Afghans Sulaiman Khan also settled in Bengal permanently. He married a daughter of Sultan Nusrat Shah and became a member of the Sayyid family. But after the death of Sultan Nusrat Shah, his brother Giyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah occupied the throne of Bengal by killing his son and successor Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah, which led to the internal feud. At this time the partisans of Firuz Shah along with Sulaiman Khan and other members of his family took shelter in the region of Bhati for the sake of self-defence. After this Sulaiman Khan gradually gain strength and with the help of the nobilities of the dethroned royal family and by organising the other Afghans he established a small domain in the inaccessible region of Bhati surrounded by the rivers and canals. After the death of Sher Shah, during the reign of Islam Shah, Sulaiman Khan revolted twice to re-establish the rule of Husain Shahi dynasty. But finally he was defeated and killed by Taj Khan and Dariya Khan, the generals of Islam Shah. After the death of Sulaiman Khan his son Isa Khan was brought up by under the tutelage of his paternal uncle Qutb al-Deen in the Bhati region. Subsequently, Isa Khan regained his father's domain by the grace of Taj Khan Kararani, the founder of the independent Kararani Afghan dynasty in Bengal in 1564 A.C. This suggests that Isa Khan started his career as a feudatory of the Kararani Afghan rulers of Bengal. He remained a loyal vassal of the Afghan rulers down to the end of the Kararani Sultanate and gradually increased his strength under the umbrella of Kararani rulers and finally became the chief of the *Bara-*

*Bhuiyans*⁴³. So, it appears that the Afghan rulers of Bengal favoured the growth of the *Zamindaries*, which gave rise to the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Therefore, it may be suggested that the land-revenue system of pre-Mughal Bengal, the geographical and natural features of Bengal, which gave rise to a sense of patriotism and regional sovereignty in the minds of the people of Bengal, and finally the tribal and feudal character of the Afghan system of political and social organisation, were the most plausible causes of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Section II

The Period of their Rise

In the previous discussion it has been tried to trace the causes of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Now the question is, when did they rise? In this section a humble attempt has been made to answer the question on the basis of the writings of the previous scholars and other relevant source-materials.

Bhattacharya says,

“The rise of the Bara-Bhuiyans of Bengal is to be dated from 1576 A.D., the year of the fall of Daud, the last Karrani King of Bengal. In Assam history, we find that when the overland (sic, overlord?) disappeared or became weak, a number of petty Chiefs arose and became independent... When in 1576, with the fall of Daud, conditions became similar in Bengal,... The Bara-Bhuiyans of Assam and Bengal are products of anarchy...”⁴⁴

According to this statement of Bhattacharya the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bengal were the product of anarchy. Taking advantage of the absence or weakness of the central government *Bara-Bhuiyans* arose and became independent. Such conditions arose in Bengal after the fall of Daud Khan Karrani, the last Karrani Sultan of Bengal in 1576 A.C.

On the other hand, Abdul Karim thinks that when due to having absence or weakness of the central government confusion prevailed in Bengal, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* rose to power. Such confusion arose in Bengal after the fall of the two hundred year old independent Sultanate of Bengal, when Sher Shah occupied Gaur, the then capital of Bengal, by defeating Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah in 1538 A.C. and turned Bengal into a province of his Delhi Sultanate.⁴⁵

There appears similarity and dissimilarity between the statements of Bhattacharya and Abdul Karim. The dissimilarities are:

- a) Bhattasali thinks that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* spread throughout the whole of Bengal, on the other hand, according to Abdul Karim the *Bara-Bhuiyans* rose to power in Bhati. Here the opinion of Abdul Karim may be acceptable. Because, it has been seen earlier that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati and they rose to power in Bhati.
- b) Bhattasali is of the opinion that the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* is to be dated from 1576 A.C., the year of the fall of Daud Khan, the last Kararani ruler of Bengal. But Abdul Karim does not agree with him and says that Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, gained strength enough to defeat the Mughal navy under Shah Bardi even before the fall of Daud⁴⁶. Here also the opinion of Abdul Karim may be acceptable. Because, it is learnt that Isa Khan first obtained the *ikta* of Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas* from Taj Khan, the founder of the Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal in 1564 A.C.⁴⁷ and in 1571 he gained the authority to rule the region of Bhati from Sulaiman Khan Kararani and Abul Fazl mentioned him as the ruler of Bhati in the *Ain-i- Akbari* ⁴⁸. After the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani during the reign of Daud Khan Kararani, Isa Khan gained more strength and was one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* who helped him actively in his expedition in Chittagong against Udayamanikya, the king of Tripura, in 1573 A.C.⁴⁹ Moreover, according to the *Akbar Nama* Isa Khan defeated the Mughal navy under Shah Bardi in 1575 A.C.⁵⁰ So, it cannot be said specifically that the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* is to be dated from 1576 A.C. But it may be suggested that the process of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had started long before the fall of Daud Khan Kararani in 1576.

- c) According to Bhattasali the *Bara-Bhuiyans* arose during the time of confusion and this confusion arose after the fall of Daud Khan Kararani in 1576. On the other hand, Abdul Karim says that such confusion arose in Bhati after the fall of the two hundred year old independent Sultanate of Bengal, when Sher Shah occupied Gaur, the then capital of Bengal, by defeating Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah in 1538 A.C. and turned Bengal into a province of his Delhi Sultanate.

Both of these scholars similarly agree that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* arose during the time of confusion, which arose due to having absence of the strong central government. This observation may be acceptable. But the question is, when did such confusion arise? According to Bhattasali such confusion arose after the fall of Daud Khan Kararani in 1576 and Abdul Karim says such confusion arose after the fall of Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah in 1538 A.C. But this chaotic condition had started even before the fall of Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah when the latter killed his nephew Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah, son of Nusrat Shah, and occupied the throne of Bengal in 1533 A.C.⁵¹ Not only that this chaotic condition did not come to an end with his accession to the throne of Bengal and it continued till 1564 A.C. with some intervals. A study of the history of Bengal from 1533 to 1564, the year of the foundation of the Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal under the leadership of Taj Khan, reveals that during this chaotic condition different freedom-loving chiefs often rebelled against the central government.

In 1533 A.C. Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah killed his nephew Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah and then ascended the throne of Bengal. Though, the former succeeded in capturing the throne, the time and circumstances were against him. Because, some external and internal troubles appeared during his reign in full force which made the central

government of Bengal unstable. For example, Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy entered its acute phase under the leadership of Mughal Badshah Humayun and Sher Khan (Shah) respectively during this time. Both these leaders, particularly, Sher Khan, wanted to draw Bengal into the struggle and to use it as a stepping stone for gaining supremacy over Northern India. Besides, the Portuguese increasingly pressed on the sea-side and intruded into the southern districts of Bengal⁵². On the other hand, by killing Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah, Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah created enemies among the nobilities and sown seeds of internal feud in his own territory. It is noteworthy that after the death of Sultan Nusrat Shah the nobilities of Bengal were also divided among themselves on the question of succession, one section supported Mahmud Shah and the other stood by Firuz Shah⁵³. Now, with the death of Firuz Shah this feud reached its climax. In this context it may be mentioned here that at this time the partisans of Firuz Shah along with Sulaiman Khan, father of Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and brother-in-law of Firuz Shah, and other members of his family took shelter in the region of Bhati for the sake of self-defence. After this Sulaiman Khan gradually gain strength and with the help of the nobilities of the dethroned royal family and by organising the other Afghans he established a small domain in the inaccessible region of Bhati surrounded by the rivers and canals⁵⁴. Apart from this, Mahmud's brother-in-law and governor of Hajipur, an immensely powerful man, Makhdum Alam, now turned a deadly enemy and refused to recognize his accession and on the pretext of avenging Firuz's death, he allied himself with Sher Khan, the deputy of the Nuhani ruler of Bihar, to bring about Mahmud's ruin and prepared for rebellion⁵⁵. Moreover, another noble named Khuda Baksh Khan, who was most probably a governor or general in the Chittagong region, assumed independence in

the tract between the Karnafuly River and the Arakan hills⁵⁶. These developments undoubtedly created a difficult situation for Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah, which consequently turned out to be an irreparable damage to him and his family.

It is not clear whether Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah took any measures against Sulaiman Khan and Khuda Baksh Khan. But it is apparent that Khuda Baksh Khan could maintain his authority until Bengal was finally occupied by Sher Shah in his estate⁵⁷. On the other hand, Sulaiman Khan also retained his authority even after the death of Sher Shah⁵⁸. Having rebelled against Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah, Makhdum Alam, the governor of Hajipur, entered into a friendly alliance with Sher Shah. Thus in subduing Makhdum Alam's rebellion Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah entered into direct conflict with Sher Shah, which ultimately caused the final defeat of Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah at the hands of Sher Shah, who captured Gaur, the then capital of Bengal on 6th April, 1538 A.C.⁵⁹

History reveals that at least five engagements took place between Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah and Sher Shah from 1533 to 1538 A.C. The latter fought the first battle against the Bengal army in June-July of 1533 and Qutb Khan, the governor of Munghyr, was the commander-in-chief of Bengal army. Sher Shah defeated and killed Qutb Khan and captured a large quantity of treasures and military stores belonging to the Bengal army⁶⁰. After this, Sher Shah fought the second battle against the Bengal army at the end of 1533. In this battle Sher Shah did not join personally, he sent his general Mia Hassu to the assistance of his ally Makhdum Alam. The battle which followed ended in latter's defeat and death⁶¹. The third battle took place in 1534 A.C. on the plains of Surajgarh, resulted in the defeat and death of Ibrahim Khan, the

commander-in-chief of Bengal army, and Jalal Khan, the Nuhani ruler of Bihar, had to go back to Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah⁶². The defeat at Surajgarh marks the beginning of the end of the independent Muslim Sultanate of Bengal. Until now, Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah followed aggressive policy, but henceforth, Sher Shah led expeditions against Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah⁶³. Consequently, the fourth battle took place between them. After the battle of Surajgarh Sher Shah waited for some time to watch the movements of Mughal Badshah Humayun. Taking advantage of Humayun's preoccupation with Bahadur Shah of Gujrat Sher Shah marched against Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah and suddenly appeared in Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in 1536 A.C. At this juncture, Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah contended Sher Shah by offering 13 lacs of gold coin and the latter went back to Bihar⁶⁴. At the end of 1537 A.C. Sher Shah again attacked Gaur and finally succeeded in capturing it on 6th April 1538 A.C.⁶⁵ Being defeated and wounded Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah fled with his followers towards north Bihar. From there he sent an envoy to Mughal Badshah Humayun, who was at that time halting at BarKunda after having captured Chunar, seeking his help and requested him to attack the Afghans in Bengal. Joining Humayun at Darweshpur, Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah now proceeded towards Bengal. Arriving at Kahlgaon, Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah came to know of the execution of his two sons by the Afghans at Gaur and died in grief and affliction⁶⁶. With the defeat and death of Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah Bengal lost her sovereignty to the Sur Afghan Leader Sher Shah.

So, it is evident that the reign of Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah was full of chaos and conflict. During this time the governmental machinery was out of gear⁶⁷. Moreover, it seems that Ghiyath al-Deen

Mahmud Shah could not pay special attention towards the outlying areas on account of his engagements with Sher Shah. Therefore, it may be assumed that Sulaiman Khan, father of Isa Khan, carved out a small domain, taking advantage of this chaotic condition in the region of Bhati.

The defeat and death of Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah did not serve to remove the chaos and confusion in Bengal. Sher Shah first occupied Gaur, the capital of Bengal, on 6th April, 1538 A.C. But after a few months, in July 1538, Mughal Badshah Humayun captured Gaur and he stayed there about nine months, during this time he abandoned himself to pleasure⁶⁸. In the mean time, taking advantage of Humayun's merry-making in Gaur, Sher Shah blocked his passage to north India and when Humayun proceeded towards the capital Agra, Sher Shah began to harass him by constant flank attacks from the rear. At last Humayun was defeated by Sher Shah on 26th June, 1539, at Chausa⁶⁹. Then Sher Shah hastened to Bengal to deal with the Mughal viceroy Jahangir Quli Beg, where he defeated the latter and reoccupied Gaur in October, 1539A.C.⁷⁰ After this, by defeating Humayun in the battle of Bilgram on 17th May, 1540, Sher Shah occupied the throne of Delhi⁷¹. So, it is clear that the period from 1538 to 1540 A.C., was full of troubles. During this period neither Sher Shah nor Humayun could establish authority in the whole of Bengal. Their administration centred round the capital city of Gaur, the outlying area must have been outside their effective control.⁷²

Sher Shah introduced his administration in Bengal by appointing Khizr Khan as governor and he engaged himself in consolidating his newly acquired empire. But the conquest of Bengal did not give him much relief. For, Khizr Khan, the governor of Bengal, started to show

signs of disaffection. He married the daughter of ousted Bengal Sultan Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah and began to behave in the fashion of the Bengali Sultans. Consequently, Sher Shah quickly marched from the Salt Range to Gaur in 1541, where he threw Khizr Khan into prison and set to organise the government of Bengal in such a way that the possibility of the rebellion of the governor in future might not arise. At this time, Sher Shah divided Bengal into several smaller governorships internally independent of one another and appointed Qazi Fazilat as *amin* of Bengal to supervise their work⁷³. Apart from this, another noteworthy event of this time is the discovery of two coins, one of which bears the name of a Sultan named Barbak Shah and the coin was issued in 1542-43 A.C., that is, during the reign of Sher Shah. The first coin was discovered from Jasodal in Kishoreganj, that is, heart of Bhati, and the second coin was discovered from Sonakhira in Sylhet. By connecting these two events Abdul Karim thinks that Sher Shah had no control over the region of Bhati at least by 1542-1543 A.C.⁷⁴ In support of his this observation he mentioned that there were no mints of Sher Shah in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet or in the region of Bhati and the region east of the Meghna upto Chittagong. So, the absence of Sher Shah's coins from any mint in the region of Bhati, and the discovery of these two coins together reveals the fact that in the region of Kishoreganj and Sylhet, that is, in the region of Bhati, there was a resistance against Sher Shah and he had no control over Bhati. Abdul Karim further thinks that there was unrest, instability and chaos in Bengal, that is, in Bhati. In support of this observation by referring Abbas Khan Sarwani he says that Sher Shah turned Bengal into a *Muluk-ut-tawaif*. Then he takes the term *Muluk-ut-tawaif* for disorder, chaos and disintegration⁷⁵. In this regard it cannot be agreed with him. Because, among the modern scholars N.B. Roy translated the term by

saying that Sher Shah divided Bengal into a number of fiefs (*jagirs*) under his favourites⁷⁶, Iqtidar Hussian Siddiqui says that Sher Shah parceled out Bengal into pieces of well-defined boundaries and posted a *muqta* in every one⁷⁷ and S.M. Imamuddin translated the term by saying that Sher Shah divided Bengal into several smaller governorships internally independent of one another⁷⁸. So, it is clear that all the modern scholars took the term *Muluk-ut-tawaif* for the decentralization of Bengal administration. In the *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, Abbas Khan Sarwani says, *Mulk Bangalah Muluk-ut-tawaif Sakht*⁷⁹ which means Sher Shah makes country of Bengal *Muluk-ut-tawaif*. According to the Persian-Bengali-English Dictionary, edited by Ali Avarseji and published by Cultural Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dhaka, Bangladesh, the meaning of the term *Muluk-ut-tawaif* is feudal system,⁸⁰ which indicates that Sher Shah introduced a new administrative system in Bengal instead of existing one. In a word he decentralized the Bengal administration to remove the possibility of the rebellion of the Governor of Bengal. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to take the meaning of the term *Muluk-ut-tawaif* for disorder, chaos and disintegration as mentioned by Abdul Karim. But it may be assumed that Sher Shah could not pay special attention towards the outlying areas of his empire, particularly, to the region of Bhati, of his Bengal province, on account of his very short reign of five years, most part of which he engaged himself in consolidating his newly acquired empire, and the vastness of his territory. Consequently, the inaccessible region of Bhati surrounded by the rivers and canals may have been out of his effective control. In support of this contention here it may be noteworthy that it is not known whether Sher Shah took any action against Barbak Shah, whose coins had been discovered from the region of Bhati. On the other hand, history reveals that after the death of Sher Shah during the reign of his son

Islam Shah, Sulaiman Khan, the father of Isa Khan, twice revolted in the area of Bhati against the Delhi authority to restore the Sayyid Sultanate in Bengal⁸¹. So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that there was some sort of unrest and instability in the region of Bhati during the reigns of Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah.

Islam Shah Sur died on 30th October, 1553 and was succeeded by his minor son Firuz Khan. After the death of the former came the dissolution of the new Afghan Empire and Bengal was one of its first limbs to break off⁸². Islam Shah's son Firuz Khan was murdered after only a few days of kingship by Sher Shah's nephew Mubariz Khan, who then ascended the Delhi throne under the title of Mohammad Shah Adil, which caused rebellions and gave rise to chaos and anarchy in the provinces of the Sur Afghan Empire⁸³. At this time the Sur Afghan governor of Bengal Muhammad Khan Sur, who was the supporter of the ousted family, declared himself as a sovereign ruler of Bengal and assuming the title of Shams al-Deen Muhammad Shah Ghazi. He struck coins in his own name⁸⁴. Thus Muhammad Shah Sur laid the foundation of independent Sur Afghan dynasty in Bengal. The most important events of Muhammad Shah's rule were an expedition against Arakan, his march towards Northern India to make a bid for the Sultanate of Delhi and conquest of Chunar, Jaunpur and Kalpi and finally his defeat and death at the hands of Adil's general Hemu at Chapparghata, 15 *kos* from Agra, in December, 1555 A.C.⁸⁵

After the death of Muhammad Khan Sur, Muhammad Shah Adil occupied Bengal and appointed Shahbaz Khan as his governor. On the other hand, the defeated nobles and officers of the late Bengal ruler Muhammad Shah Sur assembled at Jhusi, opposite to Allahabad, and crowned his son Khizr Khan as the Sultan of Bengal. The latter assumed

the title of Ghiyath al-Deen Bahadur Shah. Then he marched against Adil's governor Shahbaz Khan in Bengal. Shahbaz Khan was defeated and slain in the battle field and Bahadur Shah captured the city of Gaur in 1556 A.C. and issued coins and had the *khutba* read in his name⁸⁶.

In the meantime the fugitive Mughal Badshah Humayum had reappeared on the Indian scene and after having recaptured the Panjab and Delhi from the Sur Afghan Sultan Sikkandar Sur, he died on 26th January, 1556, and his minor son Akbar was crowned by the Mughal nobles as the Badshah of Delhi. Afterwards, Akbar's general Bairam Khan finally defeated the Sur Afghan army under Hemu in the famous second battle of Panipat on the 5th of November. Adil's general Hemu was killed in the battle. Driven out of Agra, Adil now retreated towards the east. This gave Ghiyath al - Deen Bahadur Shah the opportunity to avenge his father's death. He marched out against Adil, and assisted by Sulaiman Kararani of South Bihar, defeated and killed him in the battle of Fathpur, four miles west of Surajgarh, in April, 1557 A.C.⁸⁷

After this Ghiyath al- Deen Bahadur Shah resolved to expel the Mughals from Northern India and to recover the lost sovereignty of the Afghans. In 1558 he advanced towards Jaunpur with 30,000 horses and was defeated by Mughal general Khan-i-Zaman, then posted in Oudh. This first encounter with the Mughal forces gave Bahadur Shah an idea of their superior strength and thenceforth, he maintained friendly relations with the Mughal Viceroy in Oudh.⁸⁸ Bahadur Shah died in 1560 and was succeeded by his brother Jalal al- Deen Sur, who assumed the title of Ghiyath al- Deen Abul Muzaffar Jalal Shah. Jalal Shah died in 1563 and was succeeded by his son, whose name has not been mentioned by the contemporary historians. After a reign of seven months and nine days he fell a victim to the hand of a usurper, who also

assumed the title of Ghiyath al-Deen. The latter reigned for one year and eleven days. In 1564 A.C. he was killed by Taj Khan, who established the independent Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal.⁸⁹

So, it appears that during the period from 1553 to 1564 Bengal passed through almost troublous times. Because, after the death of Islam Shah in 1553 the Sur Afghans of Delhi entered into fratricidal wars among themselves which gravely affected the political situations of Bengal. Secondly, at this time the Sur Afghans of Delhi and Bengal appeared into the contest for supremacy. Thirdly, the Mughals under the leadership of Humayun reappeared and drove the Sur Afghans from Northern India, which ultimately caused a threat to Bengal. Moreover, this period was also marked by frequent changes on the throne of Bengal, which undoubtedly impaired the strength of the Bengal Sultanate. Therefore, it may be suggested that it was not possible for the Sultans of Bengal to pay proper attention to the outlying areas of Bengal like Bhati, surrounded by rivers and canals, during this period. For example, Bijaymanikya, the king of Tripura, raided Bengal in 1559 and proceeded up to Maheswardi, Sonargaon and Bikrampur, that is, the region of Bhati, through old Brahmaputra, Lakhia and river Padma without any opposition⁹⁰. This proves that the Sultans of Bengal did not have firm control over the region of Bhati. In these circumstances, it does not seem that the freedom-loving *Bhuiyans* of Bhati remained idle. In support of this observation it may be mentioned here that Ghiyath al-Deen Bahadur Shah sent several expeditions against the petty local chiefs during the last years of his reign⁹¹.

In the light of above lengthy discussion it may be suggested here that after the killing of Sultan Ala al-Deen Firuz Shah by Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah in 1533 A.C. an era of chaos and confusion

emerged in the history of Bengal and it continued till 1564 A.C. with some intervals, which undoubtedly weakened the central government of Bengal. Consequently, the Sultans of Bengal could not pay due attention to the outlying areas like Bhati surrounded by rivers and canals. Taking advantage of this situation the *Bara-Bhuiyans* arose in the region of Bhati during this period. So, the period from 1533 A.C. to 1564 can be termed as the rising phase of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

The Kararani rulers, particularly, Sulaiman Khan Kararani brought about order, peace and prosperity in Bengal by putting end to the period of chaos and confusion which had started after the killing of Sultan Ala al- Deen Firuz Shah by his uncle Ghiyath al- Deen Mahmud Shah. It is also noteworthy that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* flourished during this period. This was possible on account of the following reasons.

In the first place, a sizable Afghan people made Bengal as their home during their own rule. Not only that after the loss of Northern India to the Mughals the Afghans treated Bengal as their seat of power and home and they have become amalgamated with other local people⁹². Secondly, in the face of growing Mughal threat the Afghans have to identify their interests with the local people and helped in their progress in various ways to draw their support. Thirdly, the Afghan rulers favoured the growth of the *Zamindaries* as they preferred the government by *jagirs* as the most convenient one to them. For example, in the days of Sher Shah, Bengal was divided into a few parts and these were given to the tribal chiefs. The Sur and Kararani rulers gave *jagirs* to their kinsmen. The tribal chiefs, who owed allegiance to the king and helped him with their tribal force in times of need and paid him the stipulated amount of tribute, ruled in practical independence in their respective territories.⁹³

It was because of the above mentioned reasons that many of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* like Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, Majlis Dilwar and Majlis Pratap flourished during the reign of the Kararanis. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* who flourished during this period were naturally grateful and loyal to their benefactors. They rendered them military service whenever they were called upon to do so by their Afghan suzerains. For example, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* joined as loyal vassals with their forces in the Chittagong expedition of Daud Khan Kararani against Udayamanikya, the ruler of Tripura⁹⁴. Isa Khan and other landlords fought against the Mughals for the interest of the Afghan Sultanate. They fell upon the Mughal officers and forces in east Bengal when Daud Khan Kararani attacked the Mughals in North and west Bengal after the death of Munim Khan the Mughal General⁹⁵. So, it is clear that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* co-operated with their Kararani Afghan suzerain against the king of Tripura and the Mughals. Thus the *Bara-Bhuiyans* remained loyal to the Kararani Afghan rulers down to the end of the Kararani Sultanate. They did not owe any allegiance to the Mughal Badshah after the fall of the last Kararani Sultan Daud Khan in 1576 A.C. and emerged as the independent rulers in their respective territories.

Therefore, it may be concluded here that the period from 1533 to 1564 was the rising phase of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. They flourished during the period from 1564 to 1576 and they emerged as independent rulers after 1576 A.C.

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Chapter IV

The Bara-Bhuiyans and their neighbouring Chieftains: A Study of their mutual relationships

It is learnt from the previous discussion that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were those who were really independent and had continuously fought against the Mughal forces during the reigns of Badshaha's Akbar and Jahangir to retain that independence and proved to be the greatest obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. Besides, it is also known that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* established rapport with one another and forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance with Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of Bhati, as their leader, during the reign of Badshah Akbar and after him, his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. Apart from the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leaderships of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan there were some other Afghan Chieftains and *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Jahangir. Some of them fought against the Mughals and some of them are seen taking side with the Mughals directly. The main objective of this chapter is to portray the relationships between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leaderships of Isa Khan and Musa Khan and these Afghan Chieftains and *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* on the basis of the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* and other relevant source-materials. In this connection discussion is being made firstly on the relation between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan and the neighbouring Afghan Chieftains and *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* of the time of Badshah Akbar.

It is learnt from the *Akbar Nama* that Isa Khan was an astute and foresighted politician, which made him the leader of the *Bara-*

*Bhuiyans*¹. He realised that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* could not solely face the mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar with their relatively limited resources for long. So, he tried to keep good relation with the neighbouring Afghan Chieftains and the *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)*. Not only that, Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, also made friendship with Amar Manikya and Raghu Dev the neighbouring kings of Tripura and Kamrup respectively, so that in time of need they could get help from them.

Apart from the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan there were some other Afghan Chieftains who fought against the Mughals during the reign of Badshah Akbar. Among them Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad Musazai, Khwaja Usman and Khwaja Sulaiman were notable. Besides, it is also seen that Masum Khan Kabuli, the rebel Mughal General, fought against the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala.

Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai were two Afghan Chieftains. According to the *Akbar Nama* they were engaged in the anti-Mughal activities aided by Isa Khan in 1578 A.C. when Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan made his first campaign against Bhati. But when Khan-i-Jahan reached Bhawal, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai submitted to the Mughals without offering any resistance². After that nothing is known about them.

Usman Khan (Khwaja Usman) and Sulaiman Khan (Khwaja Sulaiman) these two Afghan Chieftains were the sons of Isa Khan Mian Khel, the minister and brother of Qatlu Khan Nuhani of Orissa. They were driven out from Orissa by Mughal General Man Singh in 1592 A.C. and went to the fort of Bhushna, where they engaged in conflict with Chand Rai and his father Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Sripur and

Brikampur, and the two important members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the allies of Isa Khan, and Killed Chand Rai³. It will be seen later that Isa Khan made settlement between the two parties and as a result Kedar Rai appointed Khwaja Sulaiman commander-in-chief of his army and Isa Khan established Khwaja Usman in his own *Zamindari* of Bukainagar⁴. After this, these two Afghan Chieftains engaged themselves in the anti-Mughal resistance and Khwaja Sulaiman died in the battle of the fort of Bhushna in 1596 A.C. at the hands of the Mughals⁵. On the other hand, Khwaja Usman is found fighting against the Mughals during the reign of Badshah Jahangir.

Masum Khan Kabuli was a military captain of Mughal Badshah Akbar. In 1580 A.C., Badshah Akbar introduced *Din-i-Ilahi* and at about same time the regulations of branding the horses were strictly enforced and the field allowances of soldiers of Bengal and Bihar were reduced. As a result discontent prevailed among the field officers and soldiers and discontent turned into an open rebellion in Bengal and Bihar. The rebels killed Muzaffar Khan Turbati, the then Subahdar of Bengal. Masum Khan Kabuli was one of the leaders of the rebels. Though, the rebellion was suppressed, Masum Khan Kabuli did no more submit to the Mughals and took shelter with Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and continued his war against Akbar till his death in 1599 A.C.⁶ After the death of Masum Khan Kabuli, his son Mirza Mumin continued the war joining with Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, son of Isa Khan and is found fighting against Islam Khan Chishti, Subahdar of Bengal, during the reign of Badshah Jahangir.

So, it is clear that there was a sort of mutual relationships between the *Bar-Bhuiyans* and the neighbouring Afghan Chieftains. At this time

the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the only safe shelter for the anti-Mughal Afghan Chieftains.

Apart from the above mentioned Afghan Chieftains there were some other neighbouring *Zamindars* contemporary of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Among them Pratapaditya, *Zamindar* of Jessore, Tila Ghazi, *Zamindar* of Talipabad *Pargana*, Bahdur Ghazi, *Zamindar* of Bhawal, Sher Khan, *Zamindar* of Barhanpuri and Tarah (two small places between Narayanganj and Surajadi)⁷, Lakshmana Manikya, *Zamindar* of Bhulua, Mukunda Rai, *Zamindar* of Fathabad and Kandarpa Narayan, *Zamindar* of Bakla were notable. But among them nobody is found fighting against the Mughlas for the sake of the preservation of the independence of their home-land and there is no reference in the *Akbar Nama* that they ever fought against the Mughals. On the contrary, it appears that some of them were Mughal partisans. For example, Tila Ghazi, *Zamindar* of Talipabad *Pargana*, is seen taking side with the Mughals directly and he helped Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan during his retreat from Bhati in 1578A.C.⁸ On the other hand, Sher Khan, the *Zamindar* of Barhanpuri and Tarah submitted to Mughal Subahdar Man Singh without offering any resistance⁹. Besides, it is known that Bahadur Ghazi was a contemporary of Akbar and was loyal to him and he agreed to supply 35 *sundar* and *kusa* type of boats to the Mughals at a cost of rupees 48,379¹⁰.

So, it is apparent that among the contemporary *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) only the *Bara-Bhuiyans* fought gallantly against the mighty Mughals for the sake of the preservation of the independence of their home-land. Though, it is not known how was the relation between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the afore mentioned *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*), it is

known that Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* graced by his presence many festivities at the court of Pratapaditya, *Zamindar* of Jessore.¹¹

According to the *Rajmala*, the history of Tripura, and the *Akbar Nama* there was a good relationship between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and Amar Manikya and Raghu Dev, the neighbouring kings of Tripura and Kamrup. It is learnt from the *Rajmala* the history of Tripura, Amar Manikya had started the excavation of a big tank called *Amara Sagara* in 1500 *Saka*, that is , in 1578 A.C. At this time he needed a large number of labourers and sought help from the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Eastern Bengal. On the request of Amara Manikya, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* extended their hands of help by sending him labourers¹². It is known to all that several engagements took place between the rulers of Bengal and Tripura from the time of the Sayyid Sultans of Bengal for gaining supremacy over Chittagong and continued to the reigns of Sur Afghan and Kararani Afghan rulers of Bengal. In 1573, it is seen that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* helped Daud Khan Kararani the Kararani Afghan ruler in Bengal, in his expedition in Chittagong against Udaya Manikya, the King of Tripura¹³. So, it appears that there was a hostile relation between Bengal and Tripura for a long time. But on the one hand, Udaya Manikya died in 1576 A.C. and in 1577 Amar Manikya ascended the throne of Tripura and it is not recorded whether any engagements took place between Amar Manikya and the ruler of Bengal¹⁴. On the other hand, in 1576 A.C. Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan finally defeated and killed Daud Khan the last Kararani Afghan Sultan of Bengal and with the defeat of the latter the Kararani Afghan rule of Bengal came to an end and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* raised arms against the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. In this

changed circumstances being an astute politician, Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, forgot the previous hostility between Bengal and Tripura and considered to establish a new relationship with the King of Tripura. That is why the *Bara-Bhuiyans* responded to the request of Amar Manikya. Besides, Isa Khan realised that it would not be wise to fight the mighty Mughals leaving behind the enemy. So, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* helped Amar Manikya by sending labourers, which proves their good relationship with the king of Tripura.

The chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Isa Khan, also had a good relation with Raghu Dev, the king of Kamrup. It will be seen later that the former was looking for an opportunity to keep the Mughals busy towards Kuch Bihar to take away their eyes from Bhati to elsewhere. On the other hand, according to the *Akbar Nama* there was a domestic quarrel between Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar and his cousin Raghu Dev, the king of Kamrup. The later implored assistance from Isa Khan and he extended his hands of help to Raghu Dev. Consequently, a good relation was established between them. In this connection Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharyya says, "...the new alliance was purely defensive in character"¹⁵. It is noteworthy that Raghu Dev aided by Isa Khan attacked Lakshmi Narayan more than once and gained some success and recaptured Bahirband from Lakshmi Narayan. On the other hand, Lakshmi Narayan being attacked by Raghu Dev sought assistance from Mughal Subahdar Man Singh and the latter also helped the former. Thus, the Mughal army marched towards Kuch Bihar more than once in aid of Lakshmi Narayan and fought against Raghu Dev. On 3rd May, 1597 the Mughal army defeated the latter. At this time Isa Khan set out to help Raghu Dev. Man Singh countered this move by detaching a force by land and river against Isa Khan under his son

Durjan Singh¹⁶. Consequently, Isa Khan could not help his ally Raghu Dev in spite of his good will. But Isa Khan's object was realised. Because, the Mughal army could not make any attack against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in Bhati for about one year due to having their business in the Kuch Bihar front.

On the basis of above discussion it may be suggested that among the contemporary *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* and Afghan Chieftains only the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala played the leading role in the anti-Mughal resistance during the reign of Badshah Akbar. In this connection it may also be mentioned that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* made effort to maintain amity with the neighbouring *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)*, Afghan Chieftains and the kings of Tripura and Kamrup with a view to consolidate their position against the mighty Mughals. As a result a good relationship developed between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the neighbouring Afghan Chieftains and the king of Tripura and Kamrup, which brought mutual benefit for all parties.

Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala died in 1599 A.C.¹⁷ and on his death his eldest son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance. Musa Khan was undoubtedly the worthy successor of his father who successfully continued the task undertaken by his father and gallantly checked the Mughal advance in Bengal for more than a decade during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. During this period there were some other Afghan Chieftains and *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* apart from the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Among the Afghan Chieftains Khwaja Usman Afghan and Bayazid Kararani were notable. Khwaja Usman's identity has been mentioned earlier. Usmans were five brothers, Khwaja Sulaiman, Khwaja Usman, Khwaja Wali, Khwaja

Malhi and Khwaja Ibrahim. Khwaja Usman had two sons, Khwaja Mumriz and Khwaja Yakub. All the brothers of Khwaja Usman came to Bengal, but Khwaja Sulaiman died in the battle of the fort of Bhushna in 1596 A.C. leaving his son Khwaja Daud. Khwaja Usman came through Satgaon and Bhushna and ultimately settled at Bukainagar aided by Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. He was a man of indomitable courage, his aim was fixed and his love of freedom was unquestioned. His brothers Wali, Malhi and Ibrahim, his sons Mumriz and Yakub and his nephew Daud gave him ungrudging support. He fought against the Mughals till his death and was succeeded in resisting them for about a year. But in the long run he died on 3rd March 1612 in the battle of Daulambapur in Sylhet. After the death of Khwaja Usman his sons, brothers and other Afghans submitted to the Mughals and they were presented before Badshah Jahangir on 13th September, 1612 A.C. Khwaja Usman had good relations with Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, but no evidence is available about his relationship with Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Though, S.N. Bhattacharya is of the opinion that Khwaja Usman continued his political alliance with Isa Khan's son Musa Khan and proved always eager to attack the Mughals in the course of their campaign against Musa Khan,¹⁸ he is found completely inactive during Islam Khan's warfare with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. On the other hand, there is no evidence in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that he took any step in support of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Moreover, Abdul Karim is of the opinion that it is also not known whether Khwaja Usman had any intention to keep contact with Musa Khan and his allies, the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.¹⁹

The names of Bayazid Kararani and his brother Yakub are found only in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. In the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* also there

is an account of the Mughal warfare against Bayazid Kararani²⁰, but how and when he had established a kingdom in Sylhet or what is his pedigree, is not mentioned. Only the family or tribal epithet suggests that he was a Kararani Afghan. Abdul Karim is of the opinion that he had connections with the Kararani Sultans of Bengal and after the fall of Daud Khan Kararani, some Afghans under Bayazid Kararani fled to Sylhet and carved out an independent kingdom for themselves²¹. They were allies of Khwaja Usman Khan. They offered a brave resistance to the Mughals. But after the fall of Khwaja Usman they submitted to the Mughals. It is not known whether Bayazid Kararani had any relation with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Apart from the above mentioned Afghan Chieftains there were some other neighbouring *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* contemporary of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Among them Pratapaditya of Jessore, Satrajit of Bhushna, Ram Chandra of Bakla, Ananta Manikya of Bhulua, Dariya Khan, son of Khan-i-Alam Bahbudi, Raja Rai of Shahzadpur, Bahadur Ghazi of Bhawal, Majlis Qutb of Fathabad and Raja Raghunath of Shusang may be mentioned.

The *Zamindari* of Jessore founded by Sri Hari Bikramaditya, a minister of Daud Khan Kararani, the last Kararani Afghan Sultan of Bengal. Realising that the fall of Daud Khan was imminent, Sri Hari established contact with the Mughal generals Khan-i-Jahan and Raja Todarmal, handed over to them the Afghan records and necessary information and thus got an assurance from them, of assigning him the *jagir* of Jessore. After the fall of Daud Khan, Sri Hari established the *Zamindari* of Jessore and the Mughal authority also allowed him to stay there in peace. The treasures of Daud Khan were also in the hands of Sri Hari. After the fall of the former the latter appropriated to himself the

whole treasures and with these he enhanced the prosperity of his *Zamindari*. The generals of Badshah Akbar did not interfere in Jessore even in the later period, and in the early years of the reign of Badshah Jahangir also there is no evidence of Mughal interference in Jessore. After Sri Hari's death his son Pratapaditya succeeded to the *Zamindari*²². He was also loyal to the Mughals as his father was. Pratapaditya was the first among the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal to send an envoy pledging loyalty to the Mughal Subahdar on Islam Khan Chishti's arrival at Rajmahal. He sent his younger son Sangramaditya with his envoy Shaikh Badi with large gifts and a few elephants to Islam Khan Chishti. Later he himself came and paid his respects to the Subahdar on 26th April, 1609, when Islam Khan reached Bajrapur. He also entered into a covenant with the Subahdar and agreed to send military assistance in the projected campaign against Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*²³. So, it is clear that Pratapaditya was loyal to the Mughals from the very beginning and the Mughals also considered him as one of their loyal vassals. Though, he later fought against the Mughals, for a different reason, that is, to pay for his failure to keep the pledge he had given to Islam Khan. The Mughal army moved towards Jessore in the second week of December, 1611 A.C. and by the first week of January, 1612 the conquest of Jessore was accomplished. Pratapaditya submitted to the Mughal officer Ghiyas Khan at the Mughal camp at Kagarghata. Then was presented before Islam Khan Chishti in Dhaka and was put into prison²⁴. It is not known whether Pratapaditya had any mutual contact with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

During the reign of Badshah Jahangir, Satrajit, son of Mukanda Rai, was the *Zamindar* of Bhushna. He submitted to the Mughals without offering any resistance and remained loyal throughout the rest

of his life and is seen fighting for the Mughals against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and Kamrup and Assam²⁵. So, he was a Mughal partisan.

During the reign of Badshah Akbar Bakla was ruled by Raja Kandarpa Narayana. By 1600A.C. Kandarpa Narayana was dead and was succeeded by his son Ram Chandra. The latter married the daughter of Pratapaditya of Jessore. He treacherously murdered Lakshman Manikya of Bhulua. Islam Khan Chishti sent an expedition against Bakla simultaneously with the expedition to Jessore and Sayyid Hakim was given the chief command of this expedition. When the Mughal army reached the vicinity of Bakla, Raja Ram Chandra, on the advice of his Brahmin ministers decided to offer resistance and raised a fort. But after some resistance Ram Chandra submitted and was escorted by Satrajit to Dhaka where he was kept confined. Abdul Karim assumes that the conquest of Bakla was accomplished in the month of December, 1611A.C.²⁶ There is no evidence in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that Ram Chandra had any relation with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

During the reign of Badshah Jahangir Bhulua was ruled by Ananta Manikya. After the defeat of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, Islam Khan Chishti sent a large expedition against Ananta Manikya under the command of Shaikh Abd al-Wahid. Ananta Manikya made an attempt to oppose the Mughal forces on the bank of the river Dakatia, but being deserted by his chief minister Mirza Yusuf Barlas, who came over to the Mughal side, first retreated to his capital and then escaped to Arakan. Abdul Karim assumes that Bhulua was conquered just before the rainy season of 1611A.C.²⁷ It is not known whether he had any contact with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Dariya Khan was the son of Khan Alam Bahbudi. His *Zamindari* probably lay near Shahzadpur of Pabna. He was one of the close followers of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and fought against Islam Khan Chishti under his inspiration and guidance. While Islam Khan was proceeding against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the latter were also preparing to resist the Mughal aggression, Mirza Mumin, son of Masum Khan Kabuli, got Dariya Khan murdered for an improper act on the part of the latter²⁸. Nothing more is heard of about Dariya Khan. He used to keep close contact with Musa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Raja Ray was the *Zamindar* of Shahzadpur in the north-east of the Pabna district. He is found fighting against the Mughals. But after some resistance he submitted to Islam Khan Chishti and joined hands with the Mughals.²⁹

Bahadur Ghazi belonged to the well-known Ghazi family of Bhawal. It has been mentioned earlier that he was contemporary of Badshah Akbar and was loyal to the Mughals. There is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* that he ever fought against the Mughals. But in the *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi* it is found that he was an ally of Musa Khan and fought jointly against the Mughals. Abdul Karim assumes that towards the end of the reign of Badshah Akbar, or after Akbar's death, Bahadur Ghazi withdrew his allegiance and rebelled against the Mughals and joined hands with Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala³⁰. But when Islam Khan Chishti sent his general Abdul Wahid against him he made terms with him and surrendered to Islam Khan without offering any resistance.³¹ So, he was not persistent in his hostility towards the Mughals.

Majlis Qutb was the *Zamindar* of Fathabad. He was in close contact with Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and fought against the Mughals.

After the defeat of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala he also surrendered to Islam Khan Chishti.³²

Raja Raghunath, *Zamindar* of Shusang, whose territories covered the north-east border of Mymensingh district. He readily submitted to the Mughals and rendered long and devoted service to the Mughal cause in Bengal and Kamrup. He participated in the campaigns against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.³³

It appears from the above discussion that among the neighbouring Afghan Chieftains and *Zamindars* only Dariya Khan, Bahadur Ghazi and Majlis Qutb had some contact with the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the time of Badshah Jahangir. On the other hand, the history of the subjugation of Bengal by Islam Khan Chishti, as described in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, gives the clear impression that there were no mutual relationships among the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) or among the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) and the Afghan Chieftains, because when one was attacked by the Mughals others did not come to his aid. But there was close co-operation only among the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* with Majlis Qutb and Dariya Khan. It may be mentioned here that there were three great powers in contemporary Bengal, these were, the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the Afghan Chieftains under the leadership of Khwaja Usman and Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore. If Khwaja Usman and Raja Pratapaditya kept contact with the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and fought jointly against the Mughals the course of the history of Bengal would have been different. But when the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were attacked by the Mughals Khwaja Usman and Raja Pratapaditya did not come to their aid and remained silent, when Khwaja Usman was attacked, Raja Pratapaditya was silent³⁴. So, the Mughals were able to defeat them one by one easily.

Notes and References

1. *Akbar Nama*, p.648.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 376-378.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 968-969; *Mughal Amal*, p.76; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.283.
4. *The Afghans*, pp.227-228.
5. *Akbar Nama*, p.1059; *H. Bengal*, p. 211.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 1130; *Mughal Period*, p.62.
7. *Ibid.*, p.1215; *H.Bengal*, p.214.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.376-377.
9. *Ibid.*, p.1215; *H.Bengal*, p.214.
10. *Mughal Period*, pp.92, 114.
11. *The Afghans*, p.228.
12. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXVIII, No. 75, p.41; *Mughal Period*, p.78; Sen, Kali Prasanna, Edited, *Sri-Rajmala*, vol.III.1336-41 Tripurabd, pp. 87-90, 128-135; henceforth cited only as *Rajmala*.
13. Rahim,M.A., Chittagong Under the Pathan Rule in Bengal, *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Letters, Vol.XVIII, No.I, 1952, pp.21-30; *The Afghans*, p.226; *Sultani Amal*, pp.301-313,328.
14. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXVIII, No. 75, pp.39-40.
15. Bhattacharyya, Sudhindra Nath, *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, Dacca, January, 1929, p.119.
16. For details see, *Akbar Nama*, pp. 1066-1068, 1081-1082, 1093; *H.Bengal*, p.212; *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.135-136.
17. *Ibid.*, p.1140.
18. *H.Bengal*, p.241.
19. For details see, *Mughal Period*, pp. 287-289, 325,332.
20. *Baharistan*, pp. 160,163, 171-173,195-196.
21. *Mughal Period*, pp.93, 332-333.
22. *Ibid.*, p.343.
23. *Ibid.*, p.344; *Baharistan*, pp.14, 27-28.

24. For details see, *Ibid.*, pp.344-356; *Ibid.*, pp. 28,121, 126-130, 134-138; *Mughal Amal*, pp. 263-274.
25. *Ibid.*, p.65; *Ibid.*, pp.18-19.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.65-66, 359-360; *Ibid.*, pp.131-132.
27. *Ibid.*, pp.269-271; *Ibid.*, pp.96-98.
28. *Ibid.*, p.63; *Ibid.*, pp.54-56.
29. *Ibid.*, pp.64, 240; *Ibid.*, p.32.
30. *Ibid.*, p.92.
31. *Baharistan*, pp.80, 88.
32. *Ibid.*, p.88; *Mughal Period*, pp.64-65.
33. *Ibid.*, pp.40, 61; *Ibid.*, pp. 283,note,82, 242,247,251,257,334; *Baharistan II*, p.807; *H.Bengal*, p.252; *Muslims of Bengal*, 317.
34. *Mughal Period*, p.346.

Chapter V

The Mughal conquest of Bengal: The preliminary phase

Section I

Mughal restoration in Northern India: Badshah Akbar and his imperialistic design

There are three apparent phases in the history of the establishment of Mughal Empire in the Indian-Subcontinent. The first phase is from 1526A.C. to 1530, which was preoccupied with the subjugation of the Afghans and the Rajputs and the foundation of Mughal Empire in Northern India by Zahir al-Deen Muhammad Babur. The second phase from 1530 to 1540, which covers the history of the rule of Babur's son Humayun, his futile attempts to conquer Malwa, Gujrat and Bengal and at last his expulsion and revival of Afghan power in India by Sher Shah. The third phase from 1545 A.C. to 1556 witnessed the restoration of Mughal Empire in Northern India by Humayun and its consolidation by his son Akbar¹. In this phase that Akbar laid the foundation of Mughal rule in Bengal. But the Mughal rule was firmly established in Bengal by his son Jahangir. The history of the restoration of Mughal Empire in Northern India is now being discussed in the following pages.

It is known that Mughal Badshah Humayun had to leave India defeated by Afghan Sultan Sher Shah in the battle of Kanauj or Bilgram on the 17th May, 1540 A.C. From this time he had to lead the life of a wanderer for about fifteen years². The victory at Bilgram enabled Sher Shah to establish the Afghan rule in India once more replacing the Mughals. After ruling India peacefully and gloriously Sher Shah died on 23rd May, 1545 A.C.³ But after the death of Sher Shah the Afghans of India entered into internal feud once more. Though, Islam Shah, son of

Sher Shah, was able to maintain the integrity of his father's empire, after his death the internal feuds of the Afghans reached its climax on the one hand, and on the other hand, taking advantage of this internal feuds of the Afghans, the Mughals ventured in re-capturing their lost territories under the leadership of Humayun and in the end they were able to snatch the sceptre of India from the hands of the Afghans once more.

On Sher Shah's death, his second son, Jalal Khan, ascended the throne of Delhi under the title of Sultan Islam Shah, commonly known as Salim Shah, on May 28, 1545A.C. He was an efficient ruler like his father. Islam Shah Sur died on 30th October, 1553A.C.⁴ and the disorders appeared in the Afghan empire and the Sur Empire was running towards the decline. On the death of Islam Shah, his son Firuz, a boy of twelve, was placed on the throne and was killed by his maternal uncle Mubariz Khan Sur, a son of Sher Shah's younger brother Nizam Khan Sur, on the third day of his accession⁵. Then Mubariz Khan Sur ascended the throne assuming the title of Sultan Muhammad Adil Shah. But it was not possible on his part to establish his control over the turbulent Afghan chiefs and within a short time the different Afghan chiefs rebelled in different parts of the Afghan empire and there arose a number of rival claimants for the throne. Most of the contemporary historians are of the opinion that Adil's murder of Firuz and usurpation of the throne, his elevation of low-born Hindu Hemu to the supreme position in the Sultanate, the repugnance of the Afghan chiefs to obey a Hindu and Hemu's insolent behaviour towards the Afghans accounted for a widespread rebellion in the Afghan empire⁶. Within in a short time Bengal and Malwa passed out of Adil's hand, his own relatives rebelled against him and his authority was also challenged by Ibrahim Khan Sur, who assumed the title of Ibrahim Shah, and Sikandar Khan Sur (Ahmad

Khan Sur), who assumed the title of Sikandar Shah, the two nephews of Sher Shah, who asserted their claims to the Afghan throne⁷. Ibrahim Shah had defeated Adil's general Isa Khan Niyazi in a battle near Kalpi and occupied Delhi, Agra and the neighbouring territories⁸. But soon afterwards Sikandar Shah occupied Delhi and Agra by defeating Ibrahim Shah in a fierce battle took place in Farrah in the later part of 1554A.C.⁹

On the other hand, Humayun continued to keep the chaotic situations of the Afghan Sultanate under his vigilant eyes. Though, he dared not invade India so long as Islam Shah lived, the news of the death of Islam Shah, the feeble rule of Adil and the internal discord among the Afghans encouraged him to make an attempt for the recovery of his throne. On November 12, 1554, Humayun marched from Kabul to invade India. Engrossed in civil wars the Afghans had neglected the defence of the north-west frontier. So Humayun crossed the Indus unopposed and made a swift attack on the fort of Rohtas. Tatar Khan Kasi, Sikandar Shah's governor of the Panjab fled without offering any resistance. On February 24, 1555 A.C. the Mughals captured Lahore by expelling the Afghans. From Dipalpur also the Afghan generals, Shahbaz Khan and Nasir Khan took to flight in great panic and confusion. At last on June 22, 1555A.C. Humayun was able to defeat Sikandar Shah in a fierce battle took place near Sirhind. Defeated Sikandar Shah fled to the Siwalik hills then on July 20, 1555, after fifteen years of exile, Humayun re-entered his capital Delhi¹⁰. He then occupied Agra and the adjoining territories. His general Haidar Muhammad Khan Atka invested Biana. Being in a strained condition, Ibrahim Shah's father Gazi Khan Sur surrendered and he was killed by the Mughals¹¹. Thus Humayun had been able to recover only a fragment

of his territories in India. But he died on January 28, 1556A.C. before consolidating the Mughal Empire.¹²

After the death of Humayun on February 14, 1556, his son Akbar, who was in the Panjab with his guardian Bairam Khan, was crowned at Kalanur¹³. But the Mughal supremacy over India was still far from being assured. As a matter of fact, India in 1556 “presented a dark as well as a complex picture.” While the country had ceased to enjoy the benefits of the reforms of Sher Shah through the follies and quarrels of his successors, it was subjected at the same time to the horrors of a terrible famine. Further, each of the independent kingdoms in different parts of India was contending for power¹⁴. In the north- west, Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Akbar’s half brother, governed Kabul almost independently. In the north Kashmir was under a local dynasty and the Himalayan States were also independent. Sind and Multan had become free from the control of Delhi after the death of Sher Shah. Orissa, Malwa and Gujrat and the local chieftains of Gondwana were also independent. South of the Vindhya the Vijayanagar Kingdom and Khandesh, Berar, Bidar, Ahmadnagar and Golkunda were independent and they did not feel any interest in northern politics. Above all, the Portuguese had established their influence on the western coast by the possession of Goa and Diu. Humayun had been able to recover only a small fragment of his territories in India before he died. The Sur Afghans were still in occupation of the greater portion of Sher Shah’s dominion.¹⁵

The news of Humayun’s death and the accession of a boy on the throne induced Adil to send Hemu towards Agra and Delhi. Then Hemu defeated the Mughal army under Tardi Beg and occupied Delhi on 7th October, 1556A.C.¹⁶. But the victory of Hemu did not last long. Because, on 5th November, 1556, he was defeated by Akbar in the

second battle of Panipat and was killed by Bairam Khan¹⁷. The second battle of Panipat was a decisive one. By winning this battle Akbar was able to recapture Delhi and Agra, the centre of the Mughal Empire. This victory of the Mughals sealed the fate of the Afghan supremacy in India for ever and the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy in India came to an end.¹⁸

The battle of Panipat dispossessed the Afghans of the territories from the Panjab to Agra. But still they held a large part of India. For example, the Siwalik hills of the Panjab remained under Sikandar Shah. Rukn Khan Nuhani, an *amir* of Adil, held Sambal. Haji Khan governed Alwar and Mewat. Adil retained his hold on the territories from Luknow and Gwalior to the borders of Bengal. Baz Bahadur and Bahadur Khan Sur ruled Malwa and Bengal respectively. Thus the territories under the Afghans were twice as extensive as the empire of Akbar and their united action still have retrieved the situation even after the disaster of Panipat¹⁹. But on account of their factions, the Afghans could not see the long-term interest of the Indian Afghans. They continued to fight one another even after their great common calamity and thus prepared their own grave²⁰. Taking advantage of the defeat of Hemu at Panipat Giyath al- Deen Bahadur Shah of Bengal occupied Bihar and advanced to revenge the death of his father against Adil Shah. In April, 1557, he defeated and killed Adil at Fathpur, 4 miles west of Surajgarh. It was Akbar's good fortune that his Afghan enemies were fighting and killing themselves and thus facilitated the establishment of his supremacy in Northern India²¹. Taking this opportunity Akbar defeated Sikandar Shah of Siwalik hills of the Panjab, Haji Khan of Alwar and Mewat, Rukn Khan Nuhani of Sambal and other Afghans and occupied the territories from Sambal to Luknow within 1557 A.C.²² On the other hand, Sikandar

Shah also being defeated by Mughal general Khan-i-Zaman fled to Orissa and in 1558 the latter occupied Jaunpur²³. Even after this, the other Afghan chiefs continued their isolated efforts to recover Northern India. But after the defeats of Sher Shah II, son of Adil, and Awaz Khan, son of Islam Shah, at the hands of Mughal general Khan-i-Zaman in 1561 A.C., the Afghans could not take any systematic offensive against the Mughals²⁴. In a word, there was none noteworthy left among the Sur Afghans to oppose the Mughals in Northern India. Then, the Afghans gave their attention mainly to preserving what they still held in India. Even after the loss of Northern India, the Afghans possessed Eastern India²⁵ and Bengal and Bihar of Eastern India became the last stronghold of the Indian Afghans.

It is seen in the foregoing discussion that Mughal Badshah Humayun was compelled to cede the sceptre of India to the hands of Afghan Sultan Sher Shah being defeated in the battle of Bilgram. But after the deaths of Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah the Afghans were again locked in internal feuds which caused disorders in the Afghan Sultanate. Taking this opportunity Humayun succeeded in recapturing the fragments of his lost territories. After the death of Humayun the Afghans tried to recapture Northern India. But Mughal Badshah failed their attempt by defeating Hemu, the general of Sur Afghan Sultan Adil Shah, in the second battle of Panipat in 1556 A.C. Then Akbar gradually succeeded in restoring Mughal sovereignty over Northern India by defeating the quarelling Afghan chiefs and after consolidating his position on firm footing he turned his attention to conquest.

Badshah Akbar was undoubtedly a man of strong imperial instincts, and wished to make himself the supreme ruler of India. With this object in view he set himself to the task of destroying the

independence of every state in India, and this policy was continued until 1601, when the capture of Asirgarh was accomplished²⁶. Interested in warfare imperialist Akbar himself held that, “A Monarch”, “should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him.”²⁷ Akbar was able to free himself from the influences of his guardian and protector Bairam Khan in 1560 and from his foster-mother Maham Anga and her son Adam Khan and others by the month of May 1562 A.C.²⁸ Then he himself took the charge of the empire and commenced the task of expansion of his territory.

After the second battle of Panipat, between 1558 and 1560, Gwalior, Ajmeer and Jaunpur were incorporated into Mughal Empire. In 1561, Akbar sent a large army under Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad Shirwani against Malwa and they defeated Baz Bahadur and occupied Malwa. But in 1562 Baz Bahadur recovered Malwa. Akbar immediately sent Abd Allah Khan Uzbek to Malwa. As resistance to the mighty Mughal force was beyond his power, Baz Bahadur left the country without an engagement with them.²⁹

In 1564 Akbar sent Asaf Khan, governor of Kara and the eastern provinces, to conquer the kingdom of Gondwana in the Central provinces. The Mughals defeated Rani Durgavati and her minor son Bir Narayan in a battle between Garah and Mandala in the modern Jabbalpur district and occupied the kingdom.³⁰

Though, defeated in the battle of Khanua in 1527 A.C. at the hands of Babur, the Rajput power of India was not totally eclipsed. Rajputna still formed a powerful factor in the history of India. Gifted with the true insight of a statesman and liberal in outlook, Akbar realized the value of Rajput alliance in his task of building up an empire

in India for his dynasty. Accordingly, he tried as far as possible, to conciliate the Rajputs and secure and ensure their active co-operation in almost all his activities. Akbar won the hearts of most of them by his wise and liberal policy and was able to gain their valuable services. In 1562, Raja Bihari Mall, of Amber (Jaipur), tendered his submission to Akbar and cemented his friendship with him by a marriage alliance. Not only that Raja Bihari Mall was given a command of 5000 and his son Bhagwan Das and his grandson Man Singh were granted commissions in the Mughal army³¹. But Udai Singh, the king of Mewar, did not bow his head in obedience to the Mughal Badshah. As a result, Badshah Akbar seized the fort of Chitor in October, 1567 A.C. Udai Singh fled to the hills, leaving his capital to its fate. But Jaimall and Patta, two of his brave followers, offered a stubborn opposition to the Mughals for four months. With the deaths of Jaimall and Patta the fort of Chitor came to the hands of the Mughals.³²

Struck with terror at the fall of Chitor, the other Rajput chiefs, who had so long defied Akbar, submitted to him. In February, 1569, Rai Surjan Hara of Ranthambhor surrendered to Badshah Akbar and entered into the imperial service. Raja Ramchand, the chief of Kalinjar in Bundelkhand, followed suit in the same year. In 1570 the rulers of Bikaner and Jaisalmer not only submitted to the Mughals but also gave their daughters in marriage to him.³³

Thus, one by one, the Rajput chiefs acknowledged Mughal sway, but Mewar still refused to own it. Though, Udai Singh had lost his ancestral capital Chitor, he retained his independence. After the death of Udai Singh on the 3rd March, 1572, his son Rana Pratap Singh took the leadership of the Rajput and he also refused to own the Mughal sway. In April, 1576 A.C., Mughal Badshah Akbar sent Man Singh of Amber and

Asaf Khan against Rana Pratap Singh. A fierce battle took place at the pass of Haldighat near Gogunda and being defeated the latter retreated into the hills and the Mughal army captured his strongholds one by one. But he could not think of submission even in the midst of the direful adversity. He died on the 19th January, 1597, at the age of fifty- seven. After his death his son Amar Singh, tried to carry out the behest of his father but was attacked by a Mughal army under Man Singh in 1599 and was defeated after a gallant resistance. Akbar could not undertake any other invasion of Mewar owing to illness. ³⁴

After annexations of Ranthambhor and Kalinjar in 1569, the Mughals subjugated Gujrat. In 1572 Akbar marched in person against Gujrat and by defeating Muzaffar Shah III, conquered the country. Then he captured Surat on the 26th February, 1573A.C. and returned to his headquarters at Fathpur Sikri. But no sooner had Akbar reached at Fathpur Sikri than trouble broke out afresh in the newly conquered province. Akbar marched hurriedly to Ahmadabad and thoroughly vanquished the insurgents in a battle near Ahmadabad on the 2nd September, 1573. As a result, Gujrat came under Akbar's authority.³⁵

Thus Badshah Akbar established the Mughal sway in Northern India by defeating the Afghans and was able to secure and ensure the future of Mughal Empire in India through establishing the control over the Rajput power. Then he turned his attention to the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India, that is, Bengal and Bihar.

It is known that as a result of the defeat of Ibrahim Ludi in the first battle of Panipat in 1526 A.C. the Afghans ceded the scepter of India to the hands of Mughal Badshah Babur. Afterwards Sher Shah was able to reinstate the Afghan rule once more. It is noteworthy that

during the time of the reawakening of the Afghan power in India under the leadership of Sher Shah, he first established his authority over Eastern India, specially, on Bengal, and then he established his authority over Delhi by using Bengal as his foothold. Not only that after the deaths of Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah, though, the Afghans were expelled from Northern India, they had a stronghold in Eastern India. But the Afghans lost their authority over the whole of India as soon as they lost their authority over Eastern India, that is, over Bengal and Bihar. On the other hand, though, the Mughals snatched the authority of Northern India from the Afghans, the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India, that is, Bengal and Bihar appeared to be a great threat to the Mughal sovereignty. The Mughal imperialist Badshah Akbar could not become the supreme ruler of the whole of India until he established his authority over Eastern India, that is, over Bengal and Bihar. So, it may be said that, Bengal had a great importance to both the nations the Afghan and the Mughal. The two main causes of such importance of Bengal are; firstly, its geographical and natural conditions. Secondly, its proverbial wealth.

Realising the importance of Bengal for its geographical and natural conditions and proverbial wealth, Sher Shah, a wise and far-sighted politician, decided to make it, the citadel of the last Afghan power in India³⁶. It is known from the accounts of the foreign travellers who visited Bengal during the Muslim rule and from other sources that Bengal was fabulously rich. Ibn Battuta, who visited Bengal in 1346 A.C., spoke in glowing terms of the general prosperity of the country³⁷. He remarked that nowhere in the universe did he see a country where commodities sold so cheap as in Bengal. Ibn Battuta wrote that it abounded in rice and was full of all good things. The Italian merchant

Varthema was struck by the abundance of everything he saw all around in this province and observed that it was the best place to live in³⁸. It is because of the comfortable living in Bengal that a proverb was in common use among the Portuguese, English and Dutch that ‘the Kingdom of Bengale has a hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure.’³⁹ The Mughal Badshah Babur has recorded that there was great hoard of wealth in Bengal. Humayun was struck by the prosperity of Bengal and he called it Jannatabad. After the occupation of Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in 1538 A.C., Sher Shah engaged more than two hundred horses and camels to transport its gold and precious metals to Rohtas fearing Humayun’s invasion of the province. It is also known that every Mughal soldier who came to serve in Bengal at the time of Akbar returned to Northern India rich and prosperous with the gold of this country⁴⁰. So, it appears that Bengal was a land of plenty and proverbial wealth during the Muslim rule.

Besides, its wealth, Bengal also possessed a notoriously bad climate on account of its swamps and marshes⁴¹. According to the contemporary reports, these marshes and swamps bred foul climate and diseases⁴². Abul Fazl observes, “For a long time past, at the end of the rains, the air had been felt to be pestilential and seriously affected animal life...”⁴³ All the Muslim historians of the earlier period have also depicted Bengal as a land of plague, malaria and other diseases. In their statements, they have expressed the idea of the upcountry people about the climate of Bengal. This is best reflected in the writings of Ibn Battuta, who informs that the people of Khurasan called Bengal as a ‘*duzakh-i-pur niamat*’ or a hell of all good things. The people of Northern India were frightened of the climate and rains and generally avoided serving and staying in Bengal. After the capture of Gaur,

Mughal Badshah Humayun appointed Zahid Beg as the governor of Bengal. Far from being grateful to the Badshah for appointment to such a high office in a prosperous province, Zahid Beg said, “Your majesty could not find a better place to kill me than Bengal.” Even in the early part of the reign of Badshah Akbar, the Mughal soldiers did not like to serve in Bengal, although they were offered double the salary⁴⁴.

So, it appears that the people of Northern India possessed an unfavourable attitude towards the climate of Bengal. But the climate of the whole of province was not so bad and unwholesome as it was supposed in those days. It is true that the climate of a few places, such as Gaur and Pandua became bad, on account of the receding of the river from near these cities and also because of the rise of marshes and swamps⁴⁵. Indeed, Bengal had such a climate that was perfectly natural in a country of rivers, rains and waters. The climate was strange to those, who were strangers to such kind of natural environment.⁴⁶

The geography of the country, such as the natural barriers on the borders, the innumerable rivers through its plains, the marshes and swamps in many places and the reportedly bad climate, which frightened the people of Northern India, had far-reaching effects on the history of Bengal and the life of its people. The natural barriers accounted for its inaccessibility and they also acted as its first line of defence against any outside invader. For example, a small Bengal force could stay a big invading force at the passes in the northern frontier. Further, the rivers, rains, marshes and swamps provided Bengal with a second line of defence. Because, it was not easy in those days for an enemy force to cross the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Mahananda, the Kosi and their numerous tributaries and distributaries. The long rainy season and the inundated plains were uncongenial for the northern

Indain soidiers to carry on warfare in this country. In addition, the climate of the country which was thought, without justification, to be hellish, served as a third line of defence against an outside attack⁴⁷. These natural conditions of Bengal facilitated its governors to rebel and to become independent. Once the governor had rebelled, his fellow chiefs also were seized with the ambition for the sovereign power of the province. Thus there were frequent strifes among the Khalji chiefs for attaining the supreme power in Bengal⁴⁸. So, Barani writes,

“Shrewd and knowing people had given to Lakhnauti the name of Bulghakpur (the city of strife), for since the time when Sultan Muizzu-din Muhammad Sam conquered Dehli, every governor that had been sent from thence to Lakhnauti took advantage of the distance, and of the difficulties of the road, to rebel. If they did not rebel themselves others rebelled against them, killed them, and seized the country. The people of this country had for many long years evinced a disposition to revolt, and the disaffected and evil disposed among them generally succeeded in alienating the loyalty of the governors.”⁴⁹

Abul Fazl also holds the same view about Bengal and observes,

“...a country which from old times was called a house of contention (*bulghak-khana*). That is to say, the dust of commotion was always being stirred up in that country by wicked men.”⁵⁰

Realising the importance of Bengal for its wealth and climate, Sher Shah, from the beginning of his career, made repeated attempts to conquer it and in 1538 succeeded in occupying its capital Gaur⁵¹. Before the battle of Chausa, Mughal Badshah Humayun wanted to leave Sher Shah Bihar and other territories except Bengal. The latter did not agree; he was willing to cede to the Badshah all his territories, but not Bengal. On this occasion, Sher Shah said, “For five and six years I have exerted myself and conquered Bengal by my sword. Many of my soldiers have been killed in this conquest. So I shall not give Bengal to anyone.”⁵² This expresses how great an importance was attached by Sher Shah to

his possession of Bengal, on account of its geography, nature and also riches. It is known that the wealth of Gaur enabled Sher Shah in recruiting a large force and defeating Humayun at Chausa and Kanauj⁵³. So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Bengal was the pivot of Sher Shah's power. Because, the treasure of Bengal strengthened his position against Mughal Badshah Humayun. Consequently, he was able to reinstate the Afghan rule In India once more by defeating Humayun.

During the reigns of Sher Shah and his son Islam Shah Bengal was a province of Delhi Sultanate. But after the death of Islam Shah, came the dissolution of the Afghan Sultanate of Delhi and Bengal was one of its first limbs to break off. Islam Shah's son Firuz was murdered by Sher Shah's nephew Mubariz Khan, who then ascended the Delhi throne. At this time, the governor of Bengal Muhammad Khan Sur declared himself as sovereign ruler of Bengal and struck coins in his own name. Thus he laid the foundation of independent Sur Afghan rule in Bengal, which continued till 1564 A.C. In 1564, Taj Khan established the independent Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal. After the death of Taj Khan his brother Sulaiman Khan Kararani ascended the throne of Bengal. The conquest of Orissa is one of the important events of his reign in Bengal, which enabled him to become the paramount ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, that is, the ruler of Eastern India. In 1572, after the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, his eldest son Bayazid Kararani succeeded him in his possessions in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. But he had a very short reign and was killed by an Afghan named Hansu, who was his cousin and brother-in-law. Shortly afterwards, Daud Khan Kararani, the second son of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, was installed on the throne of Bengal. During his reign Mughal Badshah Akbar invaded Bengal.

The Mughals fought against the Bengal army during the reign of Sultan Nusrat Shah on 5th May, in 1529 A.C., under the leadership of Babur for the first time. Though, the Bengal army was defeated in this battle, peace was restored between both the parties in the end⁵⁴. After the death of Babur, his son Humayun succeeded in capturing Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in July, 1538 A.C. But in the end he had to leave the authority of Bengal to the hands of Sher Shah⁵⁵. Mughal Badshah Akbar, the son of Humayun, from the very beginning of his reign was bent on the conquest of Bengal and Bihar in order to destroy the stronghold of the Afghans⁵⁶. Because, he greatly disliked and distrusted the Afghans. Besides, one of his main objects was to become the paramount ruler of India and the Afghan leader Sulaiman Khan Kararani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was the greatest obstacle in his way. In view of the strength and the resources of Sulaiman Khan Kararani and also his own troubles in the empire, Akbar could not realise his objects⁵⁷. Indeed, Badshah Akbar waited only for a favourable opportunity to destroy the Afghan power in Eastern India. The death of the powerful Afghan ruler Sulaiman Khan Kararani gave him the much looked for opportunity. Accordingly, as soon as the news of the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani reached Akbar, he ordered Munim Khan to advance at once to conquer Bihar and Bengal.⁵⁸

The Mughal army under the command of Munim Khan, on March 3, 1575 A.C., in the battle of Tukaroi and under the command of Khan-i-Jahan, on July 12, 1576, in the battle of Rajmahal, was finally able to defeat Daud Khan Kararani, the last independent Kararani Afghan Sultan of Bengal. With the defeat and killing of Daud Khan, the independent Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India, centred in Bengal, came to an end. After the battle of Rajmahal the Mughals occupied Afghan

possessions in Bengal and Bihar⁵⁹. But all these events did not immediately confirm the Mughal sovereignty over the whole of Bengal. In fact, Badshah Akbar died in 1605 A.C. before Mughal rule was established in the whole of Bengal⁶⁰. On the other hand, Qatlu Khan Nuhani, the treacherous general of Daud Khan Kararani, received from the Mughals the territory of Orissa, as a reward for his treachery in the battle of Rajmahal. But in 1592, Mughal general Man Singh finally incorporated Orissa in the Mughal Empire.⁶¹

In 1580 A.C. the Mughal armies of Bengal and Bihar revolted against Badshah Akbar for different causes. The rebels killed Subahdar Muzaffar Khan on April 19 and immediately formed a government in Bengal. They also declared Mirza Muhammad Hakim, the step-brother of Akbar, as Badshah and *khutba* was read in his name⁶². Inspired by this event and instigated by some discontented officers of the court, like Khwaja Mansur, the *Diwan* of the Empire, and others, he cherished the ambition of seizing the throne of India for himself and even invaded the Panjab. In this circumstances Akbar marched from his capital on February 8, 1581 A.C., towards Afghanistan. Mirza Muhammad Hakim, on hearing of Akbar's advance, fled from the Panjab to Kabul without offering any resistance. Hereafter, on August 9, 1581, Badshah Akbar entered Kabul and was able to defeat Mirza Muhammad Hakim. But Akbar pardoned his offences and Kabul was entrusted to him on condition that he would remain faithful to him⁶³. Kabul was formally annexed to the Mughal Empire after the death of Mirza Muhammad Hakim in July, 1585 A.C.⁶⁴

After the conquest of Kabul Badshah Akbar first defeated and destroyed the turbulent Afghan tribes of the frontier, such as the Uzbeks, the Yusufzais and the Roshnias to ensure the security of the North-

West frontier⁶⁵. Hereafter Akbar was able to annex Kashmir in 1586, Sindh in 1590-1591 and Bilochistan and Qandahar in 1595 A.C. to the Mughal Empire⁶⁶. Thus Mughal Badshah Akbar made himself undisputed ruler of the area extending from the Himalayas to the Narmada and from Hindukush to the Brahmaputra, with the exception of a narrow strip of the tribal area beyond the Indus and a few other tracts within 1595 A.C.⁶⁷

Having thus consolidated his authority over Northern and Central India, Akbar decided to extend his sovereignty to the Deccan. Mainly, with the ideal of an all-India Empire, he naturally sought to bring the Deccan Sultanates, Ahmadabad, Bijapur, Golkunda and Khandesh, under his leadership. Akbar first tried to extort from them a formal acknowledgement of his suzerainty over the Deccan by sending ambassadors to their respective Courts in 1591 A.C. But all, except Khandesh, returned evasive answers to his proposals. Henceforth, Ahmadnagar was besieged by the Mughal army under the commands of Prince Murad, second son of Badshah Akbar, and Abdur Rahim, son of Bairam Khan, in 1595 A.C. The city was defended with splendid courage and extraordinary resolution by Chand Bibi, a dowager-queen of Bijapur and daughter of Husain Nizam Shah. The besiegers concluded a treaty with Chand Bibi in 1596, whereby Berar was ceded to the Mughals and the boy king of Ahmadnagar promised to recognise the overlordship of Akbar. But after the murder of Chand Bibi the Mughal army captured Ahmadnagar in 1600 A.C.

Mian Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Khandesh, refused to submit to the Mughal authority. So, Badshah Akbar himself marched to the south in July, 1599. He soon captured Burhanpur, the capital of Khandesh, and easily laid siege to the mighty fortress of Asirgarh. Finally, Akbar

succeeded in capturing Asirgarh in 1601 A.C. This was the last conquest of Akbar. The Deccan campaigns of Badshah Akbar resulted in pushing the Mughal frontier from the Narmada to the upper courses of the Krishna River.⁶⁸

Section II

Mughal attitude to Eastern India and its rulers

After the first battle of Panipat the Mughals came into contact with the Eastern India, that is, Bengal and Bihar, under the leadership of Badshah Babur for the first time. At that time Nusrat Shah was the Sultan of Bengal and Bihar was under the rule of Nuhani Afghan. The battle of Panipat made a few Afghans, including Ibrahim Ludi's brother Mahmud Ludi and some members of his family flee to Bengal. Sultan Nusrat Shah gave *Parganas* and towns for their maintenance and married a daughter of Ibrahim Ludi⁶⁹. Besides, some Afghans found refuge with the Nuhani and the Farmuli Afghans of Bihar and Jaunpur⁷⁰. At this time Babur got involved in battle with the Sultan of Bengal in the course of suppressing the Afghans under the leadership of Mahmud Ludi in Bihar. But at last, peace was established between both the parties⁷¹. After the death of Babur, his son Humayun entered Gaur, the capital of Bengal, in response to the appeal of Ghiyath al-Deen Mahmud Shah, the last Sayyid Sultan of Bengal, in the middle of July, 1538 A.C.⁷² But after defeating Humayun in the battle of Chausa on June 27, 1539, Sher Shah established his authority over Bengal once more.⁷³

In the sixteenth century, the general attitude of the Afghans to the Mughals was one of hostility. Babur and Humayun sought to win them over by following a conciliatory policy⁷⁴. This policy left the Nuhani and Sur Afghans undisturbed in Bihar⁷⁵, which turned out to be suicidal for the Mughals. Since, Babur and Humayun left the Afghans undisturbed in Bihar, which turned out to be suicidal for the Mughals. Since Babur and Humayun left the Afghans undisturbed in Bihar, they were able to

occupy Gaur under the leadership of Sher Shah and strengthened themselves with the wealth of Bengal. At last Sher Shah was able to drive out Humayun from India by defeating in the battles of Chausa and Kanauj and established Afghan rule in India once more.

The Afghans however, lost the sovereignty to Humayun in 1555 and finally to Akbar in 1556 A.C. Nevertheless, they did not except the authority of Akbar and created troubles throughout his reign. In the period from 1556 to 1561, the Afghans made several attempts to recover their sovereignty, but failed. After these failures, the Afghans seem to have realised that the recovery of their power was an impossible task and they made effort to maintain their sovereignty in Bengal and Bihar.⁷⁶

Badshah Akbar thoroughly disliked the Afghans as a body. In view of their past conduct to Babur and Humayun and their hostility towards his own rule, he also distrusted them. Akbar could not certainly forget that the Afghans had deserted Humayun and caused his expulsion from India⁷⁷. So, it is seen that from the very beginning of his reign, Badshah Akbar was eager to expel the Afghans from Bihar and Bengal and showed an aggressive attitude towards the Afghan rulers of Bengal and Bihar. Firstly, when in 1557, Sikandar Khan Sur surrendered Mankot, Akbar issued a *farman* giving him a temporary *jagir* in Jaunpur and promising him one permanently in Bengal as soon as Khan-i-Zaman would conquer it from the Afghans⁷⁸. Secondly, in 1563 A.C., when appointing Khan-i-Zaman a second time to the viceroyalty of Jaunpur, Akbar promised him Bengal, if he could conquer that country from the Afghans⁷⁹. Thirdly, in 1565, when Khan-i-Zaman rebelled in Jaunpur, Akbar feared that as Sulaiman Khan Kararani was friendly with the powerful viceroy, he might help him in his rebellion. To prevent such a

development of military combination, Akbar sent Haji Muhammad Sistani as an envoy to the Afghan ruler Sulaiman Khan Kararani of Bengal. Not only that he also sent another diplomatic mission led by Hasan Khan Khanzanchi and Mahapatra to the Raja of Orissa to persuade him to an agreement that if Sulaiman Khan Kararani helped the rebel viceroy Khan-i-Zaman, he would invade Bengal and Bihar. The Raja received the envoys with honour and formed an alliance with Akbar. He agreed to put forth Ibrahim Khan Sur, who was a refugee at his court, as a rival claimant for the throne of Bengal and Bihar, and to fight for his cause against Sulaiman Khan Kararani⁸⁰. Fourthly, it is also known from the writings of Mughal historian Abul Fazl about the attitude of Badshah Akbar towards Eastern India and its Afghan ruler. He writes,

“One of the occurrences of this time was that Sulaiman Kararani who exhaled the breath of power in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar departed this life. Ascetic sages, and politicians who had regard to the repose of mortals, which is bound up with one rule, one ruler, one guide, one aim and one thought, recognised in the emergence of this event an instance of the helps of fortune, whilst those who were void of understanding and who made the agitation of the black-fated Afghans in the eastern provinces an argument in support of their own views, and opposed the expedition to Gujrat, were by this event cast into the pit of failure. Another faction whose narrow intellects could not comprehend the idea of marching to Gujrat and of overcoming it, and which indulged in foolish prattle, made the event a pretext for prating and urged the propriety of marching to the eastern provinces. As the God-worshipping Khedive reflected that the oppressed ones of Gujrat should be brought into the cradle of grace he did not give ear to these futilities and said with his holy lips that it was good that the news of Sulaiman’s death had come during the march to Gujrat, for had it come while he was in the capital, assuredly he would, out of deference to the opinions of most of his officers, have addressed himself in the first place to an expedition to the eastern provinces. What necessity was there now for the Shahinshah’s personal visit to these countries after Sulaiman’s death? Now the conquest of that country would be accomplished by the skill and courage of the officers. Accordingly an order was sent to Munim

Khan Khan-Khanan that he should conquer Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in concurrence with the other officers.”⁸¹

Besides, Abul Fazl also explains Akbar’s motive for the conquest of Bihar and Bengal saying,

“... so should justice- loving rulers not be satisfied with the countries of which they are in possession, but should set their hearts upon conquering other countries and regard this as a choice form of Divine worship...Hence it is that the Adorner of fortune’s parterre in our age is continually engaged in the conquest of other countries.”⁸²

The above statements of Abul Fazl undoubtedly proved the imperialistic attitude of Badshah Akbar towards Eastern India, that is, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and its Afghgan ruler.

Therefore, it may be said without hesitation that from the very beginning of his reign, Badshah Akbar fostered an imperialistic and aggressive attitude towards Eastern India and its Afghan rulers and was eager to establish his authority over Eastern India. But due to having different adverse circumstances he could not realise his objects. Firstly, the independent Sur Afghan and the Kararani Afghan rulers of Bengal maintained good relations with the Mughal viceroys Khan-i-Zaman and Munim Khan of Jaunpur. Secondly, within this time Khan-i-Zaman rebelled against Badshah Akbar more than once⁸³.As a result, the situation was not in favour of Badshah Akbar to invade the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India. Thirdly, in view of the strength and resources of Sulaiman Khan Kararani and also his own troubles in the empire, Badshah Akbar could not materialize his objects. Fourthly, Sulaiman Khan Kararani was a shrewd and prudent ruler. So, he did not assume any insignia of royalty to enrage Mughal Badshah Akbar.

In the light of above discussion it may be said that from the very beginning of his reign, Badshah Akbar fostered an aggressive attitude towards Eastern India and its Afghgan rulers and was waited for an

opportunity to invade Eastern India. But due to above mentioned circumstances he could not invade Eastern India till the reign of Sulaiman Khan Kararani. As soon as the news of the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani reached him, he sent a *farman* to Munim Khan ordering him to advance atonce to conquer Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This order undoubtedly reveals the imperialistic and aggressive attitude of Badshah Akbar towards Eastern India and its rulers.

Section III

Mughal Empire on its march towards Eastern-India up to 1576 A.C. and the reaction of the local Chieftains

It has been discussed earlier that from the very beginning of his reign, Badshah Akbar was so eager to occupy the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India and was waited for a favourable opportunity. In October, 1572, the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, the independent Afghan ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, gave him that opportunity and he ordered Munim Khan, the Mughal viceroy of Jaunpur, to advance at once to conquer Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.⁸⁴

In 1572 A.C., after the death of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, his eldest son Bayazid Khan Kararani succeeded him in his possessions in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa⁸⁵. But due to his imprudence he was killed by the Nuhani Afghans under the leadership of Hansu, the son-in-law of Sulaiman Khan Kararani, within a few days of his accession⁸⁶. The murder of Bayazid unchained the spirit of discord and factious fight among the Afghans; the interested chiefs set up three rival candidates for the throne. The Nuhani Afghan chief Qatlu Khan Nuhani raised Hansu and Ludi Khan, who had the supreme authority in the state, installed Sulaiman Kararani's youngest son Daud Khan Kararani on the throne. On the other hand, in Bihar, Gujar Khan Kararani placed a son of Bayazid Kararani as a rival candidate for the Sultanate. Daud and Ludi Khan fought against Hansu and killed him. Being hard pressed, the Nuhanis submitted to Daud. Then Ludi Khan proceeded from the capital Tanda to deal with Gujar Khan Kararani in Bihar⁸⁷. About this time, under the instruction of Badshah Akbar, Mughal general Munim Khan advanced from Chunar towards Bihar to invade the Afghan territories.

He sent Tengri Quli, Farrakh Irghliq and Payanda Muhammad Sagkash and others against Hajipur and Talibi, Mirza Ali, Nadim Beg and others against Patna⁸⁸. Under these circumstances, Ludi Khan, the *wazir* of Daud Khan, realised the importance of this invasion of Munim Khan. So, he made up the quarrel with Gujar Khan and bought Munim Khan with valuable presents. Thus Ludi Khan impeded the first Mughal expedition.⁸⁹

Ludi Khan, the *wazir* of Daud Khan, understood that, though, Munim Khan had made peace with the Afghans, Badshah Akbar would never be satisfied until Bengal and Bihar had been annexed to his empire. So, he tried to strengthen the Afghan position and create trouble for the Mughals⁹⁰. About this time, Munim Khan was busy in dealing with the rebellion of Sulaiman Uzbek's son Yusuf Muhammad in Gorakhpur. Ludi Khan availed this opportunity to march towards Jaunpur and occupy the fort of Zamaniya. After defeating Yusuf Muhammad, Munim Khan proceeded to meet Ludi Khan. Then, Ludi Khan and Munim Khan confronted each other near Ghazipur. Ludi Khan's strategy placed the Mughal army in a very precarious position. In despair, Munim Khan made proposals for peace. Though, initially Ludi Khan did not agree, a peace was concluded between both the parties in the end⁹¹. Then, probably, some time in the beginning of March, 1573, the Afghan army got back to Patna from Ghazipur.⁹²

After his return from Gujrat in June, 1573, Badshah Akbar finally decided to annex Bengal and Bihar without further delay. Orders were sent to Munim Khan to take steps in this direction. Distinguished nobles like Khan-i-Alam, Ashraf Khan, Qasim Ali Khan, Muinuddin Ahmad Khan and Mirza Ali were sent to assist him. A few days later, Raja Todar Mal arrived from Agra with verbal instructions for Munim Khan

in connection with the impending expedition. Todar Mal returned to Agra after reviewing the troops and made a favourable report to Badshah Akbar about the loyalty and the preparedness of army. Accordingly, the mind of Badshah Akbar was set at rest⁹³. The stage was thus set for an invasion of Eastern India by the Mughal. But it could not be undertaken immediately due to the renewed of disturbances in Gujrat, which necessitated a brief expedition by Akbar to Ahmadabad in August 1573 A.C.⁹⁴

In October 1573, Akbar returned from Ahmadabad and as soon as he reached the capital he sent Lashkar Khan, the *mir bakhshi*, and Parmananda to Jaunpur with a flotilla. Orders were issued to the *jagirdars* of the east to act harmoniously together and follow strictly the orders of Munim Khan.⁹⁵

On the other hand, listening to the evil counsels of Qatlu Khan, Srihari and Gujar Khan Kararani, Daud Khan distrusted his *wazir* Ludi Khan. His evil counsellors made him understand that Ludi Khan, who had been an old servant of Taj Khan Kararani and had also affianced his daughter to his son Yusuf, would soon set him aside in favour of his son-in-law. Believing their allegations, Daud went from Bengal to Munghyr and imprudently put Yusuf to death and planned to destroy Ludi Khan. As soon as the news reached Ludi Khan he left Daud and made peace with Munim Khan. Then Ludi Khan turned against Daud, who in great panic, retreated from Munghyr to Bengal. In order to keep the Afghans by his side, Daud distributed the treasures of his father among them. About this time Jalal Khan Sadhauri and Kala Pahar left Ludi. This obliged Ludi to retreat to the fort of Rohtas and he sought the help of Munim Khan⁹⁶. In response to his appeal Munim Khan sent Hashim Khan, Tengri Quli Khan, Bari Tawachi-bashi and Moulana

Mahmud Akhund with a force to assist him against Daud Khan Kararani. Munim Khan also moved himself from Jaunpur to Rohtas⁹⁷. These developments were reported to Akbar some time before February 8, 1574 A.C. Akbar, who had already made up his mind to annex the Afghan Sultanate of Eastern India, ordered Munim Khan to invade Bengal immediately. To ensure the smooth course of the expedition, Raja Todar Mal was appointed to look after matters concerning the discipline and organization of the army. Todar Mal joined Munim Khan on the way to Bihar at Tromohini. Then Munim Khan advanced against Daud Khan Kararani with fullest enthusiasm.⁹⁸

In this circumstances, Daud Khan remembered Ludi Khan once more. After a long discussion a peace was established between Daud Khan and Ludi Khan by the efforts of Gujar Khan⁹⁹. Ludi Khan then marched against the Mughals and effectively checked Munim Khan's forces on the bank of the river Son. To avert any further invasion of the Mughals, Ludi Khan proposed peace to Munim Khan agreeing to pay to Badshah Akbar a tribute of two lacs of rupees in cash and one lac of rupees in stuffs. In recollection of the old friendship with Sulaiman Khan Kararani and Ludi Khan, Munim Khan made peace with the Afghans of Bihar and Bengal and returned to Jaunpur¹⁰⁰. But shortly after this, at the instigation of his evil counsellors, Daud Khan imprudently imprisoned Ludi Khan and put him to death.¹⁰¹

The death of Ludi Khan induced Munim Khan to invade Bihar. Crossing the river Son, he advanced within the striking distance of Patna. Though, Daud had a large army, yet he retreated to Patna and shut himself up in the fort¹⁰². Towards the end of February 1574, Munim Khan besieged the fort of Patna¹⁰³. In spite of a siege lasting three months, Munim Khan failed to dislodge Daud Khan from Patna¹⁰⁴. At

last Badshah Akbar himself arrived at Patna on August 3, 1574 A.C.¹⁰⁵ He realised that the fort of Patna drew its support and supplies from the subsidiary fort of Hajipur on the north bank of the Ganges facing Patna. Therefore, on August 5, he sent an well-equipped force supported by war-boats to capture Hajipur and after a fierce resistance the town was occupied by the Mughals.¹⁰⁶

The fall of Hajipur broke the spirit of the Afghan resistance to the Mughals. The Afghan chiefs, particularly, Qatlu Khan Nuhani, advised the evacuation of Patna. As Daud could not be persuaded to leave the fort, at night Qatlu administered a narcotic to him and carried him senseless by a boat to the capital Tanda. Daud's minister Srihari placed his master's treasures in a boat and followed him to Bengal. On the other hand, Gujar Khan Kararani evacuated the fort with the army and elephants. The night was very dark and the rivers were swollen and the country around was flooded. So, Daud's army suffered terribly in the evacuation. A large number of them were drowned in the ditch round the fort. A few were trampled to death by the frightened elephants. Many more were drowned owing to the collapse of the bridge over the river Pun Pun.¹⁰⁷

On the morning of August 8, 1574, Badshah Akbar entered Patna with his army. Then he pursued the fleeing Afghans and chased them upto Daryapur. Munim Khan joined Akbar at Daryapur about 12th August¹⁰⁸. Akbar entrusted Munim Khan with the task of completing the conquest of Bengal and left for the capital. It was towards the middle of August 1574 A.C. that Munim Khan started from Daryapur to invade Bengal. The first stronghold of the Afghans which he came across was Surajgarh. The Afghan garrison gave it up without offering any resistance and fled eastward. Next, Munghyr was also taken without any

fighting. From Munghyr, the Mughal army pushed on towards Teliagarhi, passing through Bhagalpur and Khalgaon. On September 2, 1574, the Mughal army occupied Teliagarhi. Towards the end of September, Munim Khan occupied Tanda and Daud Khan fled to Satgaon without making any attempt to defend his capital.¹⁰⁹ Then, Munim Khan sent several detachments of his forces against the Afghans in different places of Bengal. One division under Muhammad Quli Khan Barlas pursued Daud to Satgaon and another under Majnun Khan Qaqshal and Baba Khan Qaqshal advanced to Ghoraghat, where Kala Pahar, Babui Mankali and Sulaiman Mankali had taken shelter. A third division under Murad Khan was sent to occupy Fathabad and Bakla and a fourth under Itimad Khan to acquire Sonargaon¹¹⁰. Munim Khan himself stayed at Tanda and directed these operations¹¹¹. To mobilize the local resources for the struggle against the Afghans, the territories which had already come under the control of the Mughals in Bengal were immediately given as *jagirs* to the officers, who buised themselves in collecting revenues and re-equipping their contingents.¹¹²

Of the expeditions which were sent against the Afghans in different parts of Bengal, the one to Ghoraghat met with swift success. Majnun Khan Qaqshal, who was sent Ghoraghat succeeded in defeating the Afghans of Ghoraghat under Sulaiman Mankali, who died in the fight, and the Mughal army occupied Ghoraghat. On the other hand, at the approach of the Mughal general, Muhammad Quli Khan Barlas, who was sent against Daud Khan, Daud retreated from Satgaon to Orissa¹¹³. About this time, his minister Srihari escaped to Jessore with his treasures. Daud entrenched himself at Debra Kesai, 15 miles east of the Midnapur town, to fight the Mughals. But when Muhammad Quli Khan Barlas, reinforced by Todar Mal, advanced from Mandaran to Kulia, 23

miles north-east of Midnapur town, he fell back on Garh Haripur, 11 miles south-east of Danton station on the B.N.R.¹¹⁴

In the mean time, Daud's cousin Junaid Kararani, a son of Imad Kararani, was causing great trouble to the Mughals. He plundered the Mughal possessions in Bihar and continued successfully his plundering and devastating incursions into the Mughal Territories. It was at the advance of a superior army under Todar Mal that he retreated to the Jungles of Jharkhand.¹¹⁵

In 1575 A.C., Munim Khan and Raja Todar Mal took up the plan of a vigorous campaign against Daud¹¹⁶. Todar Mal reached Cheto on 13th February, 1575, from Mandaran. About this time Munim Khan received an explicit order from Badshah Akbar and he also reached Cheto on 16th February, 1575¹¹⁷. On the other hand, Daud encamped himself at Garh Haripur and fortified his camp by digging trenches and throwing breastworks. He also barricaded at strategic points the regular road from Midnapur to Garh Haripur. Munim Khan marched out from Cheto on 18th February. At Nanjura, 11 miles east of the Danton Railway Station, it became known that Daud was advancing to give battle. On 3rd March, the two armies met at Tukaroi, 9 miles east of Danton and 3 miles west of Nanjura¹¹⁸. At the initial stage of the battle the Mughal army was disarrayed and was about to meet defeat at vigorous attack of the Afghans. But in the end the Mughals fortunately won the battle. Being defeated in the battle Daud fled to the fort of Katak. The Mughals pursued and slaughtered the Afghans and captured a large number of them. Munim Khan vented his wrath by making eight minarets reaching to the skies, with the heads of the Afghan prisoners¹¹⁹. This battle is renowned as the battle of Tukaroi or Mughalmari¹²⁰. Though, on reaching Katak, Daud Khan first wanted to continue the

battle, he made proposal to Munim Khan for peace in the end. In spite of the strong disapproval of Todar Mal, Munim Khan entered into a treaty with Daud Khan Kararani. The latter submitted to Badshah Akbar and Orissa was left to him to be held as a vassal of the Mughal. This treaty is known as the treaty of Katak.¹²¹

Though, Daud Khan Kararani concluded the treaty of Katak with the Mughals being defeated in the battle of Tukaroi, the Afghan chiefs and the *Bhuiyan-Zamindars* of Bengal did not accept the treaty. They continued to resist the Mughals in different places of Bihar and Bengal. The Afghan chiefs maintained their hold on Rohtas, Chaund and Sahsaram. From his stronghold in Jharkhand, Junaid Kararani raided south Bihar. Kala Pahar, Babui Mankali and Jalal al-deen Sur drove away Majnun Khan Qaqshal from Ghoraghat. They also expelled the Mughals from Gaur and recovered the whole of North Bengal. They even pursued the Mughals to Tanda. The timely arrival of Munim Khan, however, saved the situation. He relieved the capital Tanda, and then hastened to Gaur and recaptured it. He sent Majnun Khan Qaqshal with a large army to Ghoraghat. After a fierce fighting he recovered Ghoraghat. Still the Afghans continued to give trouble to the Mughals in North Bengal and south Bihar.¹²²

Thinking that residence in Gaur would enable him to deal with the Afghans of Ghoraghat and also being attracted by the magnificent buildings of the old capital of Bengal, Munim Khan shifted his capital from Tanda to Gaur¹²³. Just a month later, after the shifting of capital at Gaur, an epidemic, caused by bad climate, broke out in the city, which resulted in the death of a large number of Mughal troops. Then Munim Khan ordered his men to return to Tanda. But he himself could not reach

Tanda. In the outskirts of Tanda, he was taken ill and on October 23, 1575 A.C., he died.¹²⁴

The death of Munim Khan encouraged Daud Khan to make a bid for the recovery of Bengal and Bihar. He swiftly fell on the Mughal General Nadr Bahadur, defeated and killed him and occupied Bhadrak. At his approach, the Mughals fled away from Jaleswar and Tanda. Daud re-entered his capital and easily recovered Teliagarhi from the panic – stricken Mughals. At this time of confusion, Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, fell upon Shah Bardi, the Mughal admiral, and drove him away from the vicinity of Sonargaon. In a word, panic and confusion prevailed among the Mughals everywhere and, leaving Bengal; they proceeded towards Bihar by the way of Purniya and Tirhut.¹²⁵

When the news of the death of Munim Khan reached Badshah Akbar, he sent Bairam Khan's sister's son Husain Quli Khan entitled Khan-i-Jahan as Subahdar in Bengal. Raja Todar Mal was appointed to assist him in recovering Bengal from the hands of the Afghans. In November 1575 A.C. they left Agra and near Bhagalpur they met the Mughals officers and soldiers fleeing from Bengal. With great difficulty, Khan-i-Jahan and Todar Mal persuaded them to turn towards Bengal. At Teliagarhi, their advance was opposed by 3000 Afghans under Ayaz Khash Khail. In a fierce engagement, the Mughal generals overpowered the Afghans and Teliagarhi again passed into the hands of the Mughals¹²⁶. Then Khan-i-Jahan advanced towards Tanda. Daud, however, blocked his passage at a narrow place, situated between the Ganges on the north-west and the hills on the south-east, in Rajmahal. In this Rajmahal pass, he had fortified his position and held up the Mughals for seven months from December 1575 to June 1576 A.C.¹²⁷

In spite of his best efforts, Khan-i-Jahan could not make his way through the pass. On the other hand, his position became weaker day by day. The rains, the interception of the supply of his provisions by the Afghans in Bihar and the difficulties of the place unnerved the Mughal soldiers. Besides, the *Sunni* Mughals did not like to fight under a Persian *Shia*, Khan-i-Jahan. Moreover, the Afghans were daily increasing in number and Daud had diplomatically caused the desertion from Mughal service of Raja Gajapati, the *Zamindar* of Patna and Hajipur and induced him to create trouble for the Mughals in Bihar and Ghazipur¹²⁸. Being in a precarious position, Khan-i-Jahan sent urgent representations to Badshah Akbar for food and re-inforcements. Akbar despatched boat-loads of food from Agra and ordered Muzaffar Khan to advance immediately from Bihar to the assistance of Khan-i-Jahan. On July 10, 1576, Muzaffar Khan, with his men and supplies, joined the Mughal forces at Rajmahal¹²⁹. Khan-i-Jahan then arranged his forces in battle array and, on July 12, 1576, a fierce battle took place between the Mughals and the Afghans in the field of Rajmahal¹³⁰. The Mughal army won this battle as well as the Tukaroi. Daud Khan Kararani fled from the battle-field. But his horse, in course of his flight, was stuck fast in a quagmire and he was brought a captive before Khan-i-Jahan. The latter ordered his immediate execution. Daud was beheaded and his head was sent to Badshah Akbar and his body was affixed to a gibbet in Tanda, the capital of Bengal.¹³¹ Thus with the fall of Daud Khan Kararani ended the independent Afghan Sultanate in Eastern India, that is, in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.¹³²

The Afghan historian Nimat Allah says that the Afghans lost their Sultanate in Eastern India on account of Qatlu Khan Nuhani's baseness. According to this Afghan historian, on the eve of the battle of Rajmahal,

Qatlu formed a treasonable connection with Khan-i-Jahan. On condition that some *parganas* of Orissa would be given to him, he promised to take such a position in the battle as to render Daud's defeat unavoidable. Accordingly, after the battle of Rajmahal, the Mughals occupied the Afghan possessions in Bengal and Bihar. But Qatlu Nuhani was remained undisturbed by the Mughals in Orissa. On the other hand, Srihari achieved the *Zamindari* of Jessore as the reward of his treachery with Daud Khan Kararani¹³³. However, In December 1576, Todar Mal and Itimad Khan Khwajasara went to see Badshah Akbar and met him at Banswara in Rajputna and they presented him the booties, which were gathered from Bengal. They also informed Akbar the accounts of battle against the Afghans.¹³⁴

After the battle of Rajmahal nothing is on record in the *Akbar Nama* about Bengal. It seems that then nothing noteworthy happened in Bengal to be recorded in the *Akbar Nama*. It may be assumed that after the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani the local Afghan Chieftains and the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal became astonish and they took some time to settle their next step. On the other hand, Khan-i-Jahan was busy during this time in consolidating his position round about Tanda.¹³⁵

Notes and References

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4. *H.Bengal*, p.179.
5. *The Afghans*, p.114.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121; *Ad. Hist.*, p.443.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.
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11. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.
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21. *Ibid.*
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30. *Ad. Hist.*, p. 448; *Short Hist.*, p.345.
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34. *Ibid.*, pp. 450-451.
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37. *Ibid.*
38. *Cultural Hist.I.*, pp.404-405.
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41. *The Afghans*, p. 162.
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43. *Ain*, pp.132-133.
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50. *Akbar Nama*, p.256.
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54. *Sultani Amal*, p.326.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 361-363.
56. *The Afghans*, p. 192.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 192,248; *Sultani Amal*, p.376.
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59. *Ibid.*, pp. 195-209.
60. *Mughal Amal*, p. 25.
61. *The Afghans*, pp. 209, 247.
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63. *Ad. Hist.*, p. 453.
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67. *Ibid.*, p.455.
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70. *Sultani Amal*, p. 319.
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72. *Ibid.*, pp.347, 361.
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74. *The Afghans*, p. 235.
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76. *Ibid.*, pp.242-243.
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79. *Ibid.*
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81. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 5-6.
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86. *Ibid.*; *Akbar Nama*, p. 28.
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89. *Ibid.*; *Sultani Amal*, p.376; *H. Bengal*, p. 185; *The Afghans*, p.187.
90. *The Afghans*, p.194.
91. *Ibid.*; *Sultani Amal*, pp.376-377; *Akbar Nama*, pp. 29-31.
92. *Mughal Noble*, p. 118.
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94. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.62.
95. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, pp.91, 97.

96. *Akbar Nama*, p.31; *The Afghans*, pp.187-188.
97. *Ibid.*, p.98; *Mughal Noble*, p. 131.
98. *Ibid.*, pp.98-99; *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*, p.99.
100. *The Afghans*, pp.188-189; *Sultani Amal*, p. 377.
101. *Akbar Nama*, p.100.
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103. *Mughal Noble*, p. 132.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*, p.134; *Akbar Nama*, p.135.
106. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, pp.135-137; *Sultani Amal*, p. 378; *The Afghans*, pp.195-196; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.251-252.
107. *Mughal Noble*, p. 135; *The Afghans*, p.196.
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*, pp.135-138; *The Afghans*, p.198; *Akbar Nama*, pp.144, 150-153.
110. *The Afghans*, p.198.
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114. *The Afghans*, p.199.
115. *Ibid.*; *Akbar Nama*, pp.169-170.
116. *Ibid.*, pp.199-200.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 200; *Mughal Noble*, pp. 141-142.
118. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.142; *Akbar Nama*, p.174.
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120. *Sultani Amal*, p.379.
121. *Ibid.*, p.382; *Akbar Nama*, pp.182-185; *Mughal Noble*, pp. 143-144. *The Afghans*, p.202.
122. *The Afghans*, p.203.
123. *Ibid.*; *Akbar Nama*, p.226; *Mughal Noble*, p. 145.

124. *Ibid.*, pp.203-204; *Ibid.*, pp.226-227; *Ibid.*,p.146.
125. *Ibid.*, p.204; *Ibid.*, pp.228-229; *Masnad-i-Ala* pp.93-94.
126. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*,pp.229-230.
127. *Ibid.*, pp.204-205.
128. *Ibid.*, p.205; *Akbar Nama*, pp.238-241.
129. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.252.
130. *Akbar Nama*, pp.252-253.
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132. For details of the battle of Rajmahal see, *B.P.P.* Vol.XXXVI, pp.41-50; *The Afghans*, pp.204-209; *Sultani Amal*, pp.382-384.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47; *Ibid.*, p.209.
134. *Mughal Period*, p.143; *Mughal Amal*, p.116; *Akbar Nama*, p.277.
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Chapter VI

The Bara-Bhuiyans in Action: Their struggle against the Mughals for the perpetuation of independence and sovereignty

Section I

The Age of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala (1576-1599 A.C.): The Local Resistance of the Bara-Bhuiyans under his leadership

Phase I: The Bara-Bhuiyans Versus Badshah Akbar's Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan (1576-1578 A.C.)

It is true that with the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani, the last independent Kararani Afghan ruler, in the battle of Rajmahal, the independent Afghan Sultanate of Bengal has come to an end. But it is also true that the defeat of Daud Khan did not immediately confirm Mughal sovereignty over the whole of Bengal and the local Chieftains, particularly, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, did not acknowledge Mughal suzerainty. Though, the Mughals broke the Afghan central power, it was not easy for them to establish their rule in the whole province. Because, the defeat of Daud in the battle of Tukaroi and the treaty of Katak concluded by him with the Mughals were not only denied by the Afghan chiefs and the *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* of Bengal, but the local Chieftains also did not acknowledge defeat even at the fall of Daud in the battle of Rajmahal. In the absence of Daud Khan Kararani they continued the anti- Mughal resistance under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Indeed, after the battle of Rajmahal the struggle for resistance or the struggle for independence of the local Chieftains of Bengal commenced directly.

It has been seen in the previous discussion that many of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* like Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, Chand Rai,

Kedar Rai, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap flourished during the reign of the Kararanis. Naturally they were grateful and loyal to their benefactors¹. They also rendered them service whenever they were called upon by their Afghan suzerains. They did not owe any allegiance to the Mughal Badshah after the fall of the family of their benefactors. On the contrary, after the battle of Rajmahal they emerged as independent rulers in their respective territories and continued their struggle for independence against the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala.

Though, the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani stunned the local Afghan Chieftains and the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*), particularly the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, sparing no time settled their next step. They decided to continue the struggle for resistance to preserve the independence of their homeland, rather than acknowledging Mughal suzerainty. They also realised that it was not possible for each one of them to face individually the mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar with their relatively limited resources for long. So, they established rapport with one another and forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance with Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of Bhati, as their leader. Now they are making effort to prepare for the struggle of resistance against the Mughal aggression under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, in the region of Bhati, particularly in Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*, the *iktas* of Isa Khan. Consequently, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* appeared in the struggle of resistance against the Mughals in 1578 for the first time. For the history of the Mughal campaigns in Bengal and the resistance offered by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala during the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar, the only contemporary source is the *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazl. But the statements of Abul Fazl regarding the campaigns sent

against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by the Mughal generals are not always unbiased. Because, it appears from his statements that the Mughal army won against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in almost all campaigns. On the other hand, relying on him modern historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar also speaks of the success of the Mughal generals. Besides, it is evident from the accounts given in *The History of Bengal*, Vol.II edited by Jadunath Sarkar regarding the conflicts between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan and the Mughal generals Khan-i-jahan, Shahbaz Khan, Sadiq Khan and Man Singh that he only repeated the accounts of Abul Fazl given in the *Akbar Nama*^{1(A)}. Moreover, relying on Abul Fazl he praised the Mughal army by saying “Shahbaz Khan pacifies Bengal: 1586-87,”² “His (Man Singh’s) vigorous measures,”³ “the flames of disturbance in deltaic Bengal were quenched”⁴ etc. But if the accounts and results of the struggle of resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan against the Mughal army in the region of Bhati of 1578, 1584, 1586 and 1597 A.C. are examined carefully it will be seen that the statements of Abul Fazl or Jadunath Sarkar are not correct. Because, though Abul Fazl and Jadunath Sarkar repeatedly mentioned the success of the Mughals, Isa Khan and his allies are seen remained safe in their respective territories. In a word, Jadunath Sarkar reiterated the statements of the Mughal court historian Abul Fazl. Even it appears from his writings that he only recorded history of the Delhi based territorial expansion of the Mughal empire in Bengal, the history of the struggle of resistance against the Mughal aggression of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* of Bhati, that is, the history of the struggle for independence of the local Chieftains of Bengal did not receive due attention in his writings. Because, it is seen that Jadunath Sarkar showed an unfavourable attitude to the patriotic feelings and heroic resistance of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* and questioned their patriotism. Not only that, he is

reluctant to term the struggle of resistance against the Mughals of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* as the struggle for independence. He has also mentioned the *Bara-Bhuiyans* as “upstarts,” “captains of plundering bands,” “usurpers,” “the enemies of Mughal peace and unification” etc. He further says that, Pratapaditya and Kedar Rai, Isa Khan and Anwar Khan (Ghazi) were not tribal heads, nor scions of any old and decayed royal house⁵. But, in this context the statements of Jadunath Sarkar is not completely acceptable. Because, if observed carefully the way the *Bara-Bhuiyans* concertedly fought shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy and aggressor the Mughals during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Jahangir under the leaderships of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan respectively, there can be no doubt regarding the freedom-loving attitude of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. It would not be possible for them to check the Mughal advancement for more than three decades if there was no co-relation between their personal interest and patriotism. Besides, modern historians acknowledged the freedom-loving attitude and patriotic feelings of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* without any hesitation. Even they termed the anti-Mughal struggle of resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leaderships of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Jahangir as the struggle for independence. In this context the statements of N.K. Bhattasali and Abdul Karim is worth mentioning. Regarding the patriotism of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Bhattasali says,

“...I cannot but say that the thirty-eight years (1575-1612 A.D.) struggle for independence of the Bengal Chiefs has not received the recognition it deserves. Rana Pratap of Mewar spent his whole life in fighting Akbar and ended his days sword in hand and independent. We have almost deified Rana Pratap and there is no name more honoured from one end of the country to the other than Rana Pratap’s. But what then have the Bengal Chiefs done to deserve this oblivion? They did the same: they

fought with the greatest generals of Akbar, the very generals who had fought Rana Pratap. Rana Pratap was strong in cavalry, the Bangalees were strong in war-boats. The imperial generals were defeated again and again and driven out of Bengal. Bengal was never at peace and constant guerilla warfare was maintained throughout the reign of Akbar, with occasional disasters to the imperial arms. It was not before 1613, in the reign of Jahangir that Bengal was completely subjugated. And all these the Bengal Chiefs accomplished with the children of the soil of Bengal and not with hirelings from Nepal or Rajputana. Yet Bengalees are a non-military race unworthy of receiving a soldiers training, though their Chiefs and their forefathers had fought and maintained their independence for more than a third of a century.”⁶

On the other hand, Abdul Karim says,

“If they were not lovers of freedom, why did they shed their blood with huge loss of men and materials?... To say that the Bara-Bhuiyans were not patriots is to deny them their due; compared to the Mughal power, they were insignificant. They had neither wealth, nor manpower, nor even equipments enough to face the Mughals, but they had indomitable courage and valour and above all they were fired with patriotic zeal.”⁷

So, according to the aforementioned statements of Bhattasali and Abdul Karim it may be said undoubtedly that, it would not be just to question the patriotism and the freedom-loving attitude of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Secondly, it cannot be said that Isa Khan was an upstart or he and his son Musa Khan were not connected with blood with the old royal house. Because, it is known that Isa Khan’s father Sulaiman Khan was married to the daughter of Nusrat Shah, the Sultan of Husain Shahi Dyansty of Bngal, and Isa Khan was a grandson of Nusrat Shah. It is also known that he was born in Bengal and was a son of this soil. He spent his childhood, early youth and youth in the region of Bhati and he also regained his father’s domain by the grace of Taj Khan Kararani, the founder of Kararani dynasty, which is located in the region of Bhati. Isa Khan began his career as a feudatory of the Kararani rulers and

remained loyal to them down to the end of the Kararani Afghan dynasty. He did not owe any allegiance to the Mughal Badshah even after the fall of the family of his benefactors. On the contrary, after the fall of Daud Khan Kararani in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576, he emerged as an independent ruler and the undisputed leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and along with the *Bara-Bhuiyans* he took a stern vow to preserve the independence of their homeland⁸. So, it would be tantamount to oppose the historical truth if Isa Khan is termed as an upstart or usurper and captain of a plundering band and to question his freedom loving-attitude and patriotism.

Now, the events of the first struggle for resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan against the Mughals is being discussed as follows:

In the later part of 1578, under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala in the region of Bhati, particularly, in the Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*, Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad Musazai and other Afghans making to prepare the struggle for resistance against the Mughals. Even they were able to bring the Mughal admiral Shah Bardi on their side. Consequently, Mughal Subahdar Khan-i- Jahan led an expedition towards Bhati against Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and his allies. Mughal historian Abul Fazl gives a long description of this expedition in the following words:

“When by the glory of activity and skill the delightful country of Bengal had been cleared of the weeds and rubbish of the ingrates, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazi waited for an opportunity of making a disturbance in the country of Bhati. Isa the zamindar of that country spent his time in dissimulation. Shah Bardi also, the admiral (*mir nawara*), raised the head of presumption. The able servant (Khan Jahan) led an army thither.... (When Khan Jahan marched to Bhati) Shah Bardi, who was a vagabond in the desert of insubordination, accepted good counsels and became loyal. When the town of Bhawal became the station of the army, Ibrahim Naral, Karimdad and other Afghans of that

country brought forward propositions of obedience and used the language of harmony. Isa however sate in the ravine of disobedience, and was presumptuous. A large force was sent against him under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli. It proceeded by the river Kiyara Sundar, and a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal? Isa was defeated and fled, and much valuable booty fell into the hands of the warriors for dominion. Inasmuch as pride increases the blindness of the heart and eyes, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, who were landholders in that part of the country, suddenly brought out a crowd of boats from the rivers and channels and kindled the flames of contention. The warriors of the victorious army lost courage and turned to flee, and in that encounter some of the voyagers left their boats and fled. Muhamad Quli in his activity and courage threw himself upon the enemy's boats and carried on the fight. He contended as much as he could and then was made prisoner. One of the wonderful results of daily-increasing fortune was that when the army was retreating, Tila Ghazi, a landholder, came and opened the hand of courage so that in despairs midday the lights of victory revealed themselves to the imperial servants. Together with abundant booty they gained their object...Just then Ibrahim Naral sent his son with choice products of the country and asked for protection. The general (Khan Jahan) accepted his excuses and returned. He proceeded to Sihhatpur which he had founded in the neighbourhood of Tanda,...”⁹

The above statement of Abul Fazl furnishes the following information:

Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai, the two Afghan chiefs, had leagued themselves with Isa Khan and began rebellious activities in the region of Bhati. The Mughal admiral Shah Bardi also showed refractoriness. So, Khan-i-Kahan came out of the capital Tanda and proceeded to Bhati and reached Bhawal. At his approach Shah Bardi repented and rejoined the Mughals. Not only that when Khan-i-Jahan encamped in the town of Bhawal, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazi and also other Afghans submitted to Khan-i-Jahan. But Isa Khan did not submit. So Khan-i-Jahan sent a large army under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli. The Mughal army proceeded by the river Kiyara Sundar and a hot engagement took place on the borders of Kastal. Isa Khan was defeated and fled and much valuable booty fell into the hands

of Mughal soldiers. In as much as pride increases the blindness of the heart and eyes, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, two *Zamindars* of the locality, suddenly brought out a crowd of boats from the rivers and channels and kindled the flames of contention (which means, after the defeat of Isa Khan, when the Mughal soldiers were taking part in looting in Kastul, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap two *Zamindars* of that locality, suddenly brought out a crowd of boats from the innumerable streams and canals of the region and fell on the Mughal *nawara*). As a result the Mughal soldiers lost their courage and turned to flee. But Muhammad Quli, one of the Mughal admirals, fought bravely and was ultimately taken prisoner. In a word, the Mughals were badly defeated. But with the help of another *Zamindar*, Tila Gazi, they were succeeded in retreating and Khan-i-Jahan was able to return to Sihhatpur, a town which he had founded near Tanda.

Now, an attempt has been taken to discuss the courses and results of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and Mughal Subahdar Khan-i Jahan. But to determine the actual location of the war field the places mentioned above like, Bhawal, Kiyara Sundar and Kastal should first be identified.

Bhawal: Henry Beveridge takes Bhawal to be Ran Bhawal. But according to N.K. Bhattasali and Abdul Karim this identification is not correct. They think that Ran Bhawal is in greater Mymensingh, whereas Bhawal is in greater Dhaka. Ran Bhawal is a jungly place, whereas Bhawal is situated on the bank of the river. Khan-i-Jahan proceeded by boats on the river, so he could not go to Ran Bhawal, but he reached Bhawal. Moreover, on his retreat Khan-i-Jahan was helped by Tila Gazi, the *Zamindar* of Talipabad. So, Bhawal of *Akbar Nama* must be the Bhawal of Bhawal *Pargana*. The headquarters of the Ghazis of Bhawal were at Chaura. Chaura is situated on the bank of the river Lakhia near

present Kaliganj. Now it is known as Nagri.Chaura the capital of Bhawal is situated one mile to the north of Kaliganj, half a mile to the north of Tongi-Bhairab Bazar section of the railway line and about one and a half mile south-east of the present Arikhola railway station.¹⁰

Egara Sindur: Bhattasali and Abdul Karim think that Kiyara Sundar is identical with Egara Sindur of greater Mymensingh district. Egara Sindur is situated on the eastern bank of the main stream of the Brahmaputra, just in front of the place on the western bank from which the river Banar rises and where Tok another important place is situated. Egara Sindur is now in the Pakundia Upazila of the Kishoreganj district.¹¹

Kastul: Kastul is situated on the bank of the Meghna, two miles to the west of Astagram. It was situated in the *Pargana* of Joanshahi and the place is at present known as kathail, where the hot engagement took place between Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the leader of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* and the Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan.¹²

However, Khan-i-Jahan came out of the capital Tanda and proceeded to Bhati. First he reached Goash¹³. From Goash he advanced towards Bhati and encamped in Bhawal. Abul Fazl did not mention whether he halted on the way. It appears from his encampment in Bhawal that he proceeded through the river Lakhia and reached Bhawal, that is, Chaura, which is situated on the bank of the Lakhia. Though, at first sight, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazi were the first opponents of Khan-i-Jahan, Isa Khan was the leading force behind them. Because, it appears from the accounts of Abul Fazl that Ibram Naral and Karimdad Musazai, the two Afghan chiefs, were staying in the *Zamindari* of Isa Khan at that time and they had no *Zamindaries* of their own¹⁴. So it can be said without hesitation that they were engaged in the anti-Mughal activities being sheltered and aided by Isa Khan. It is

known that at that time Isa Khan was the *Zamindar* of Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap were the *Zamindars* of Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* respectively¹⁵ and they were the members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. According to Abul Fazl immediately after the defeat of Isa Khan in the battle of Kastul Majlis Dilawar and Majlish Pratap fell upon the Mughals. It seems that other members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* also took part in the struggle for resistance against Mughal aggression under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. In a word, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai the two Afghan chiefs, Majlish Dilawar and Majlish Pratap the two bonafide members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* were his stalwart allies at that time which means, the *Zamindars* of Sonargaon, Maheswardi, Joanshahi and Khaliajuri *Parganas* were the opponents of Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan. So, it appears that the *Zamindars* of vast area watered by the rivers Lakhia, Banar, Brahmaputra and Meghna put up resistance against the Mughals. Even they were able to bring Mughal admiral Shah Bardi on their side. However, when Khan-i-Jahan encamped in the town of Bhawal Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai and some other Afghans submitted to Khan-i-Jahan. Shah Bardi also rejoined the Mughal forces. But Isa Khan, the main opponent, did not submit. So, Khan-i-Jahan sent a large detachment against Isa Khan under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli. It is learnt from a recent research work that, in this situation, Isa Khan retreated from his *Zamindari* when the news of the advancement of Mughal army reached him. This retreat was a war strategy of Isa Khan. Because, he realised that to be successful against that very Mughal army under Khan-i-Jahan, which defeated Daud Khan Kararani in the battle of Rajmahal, he should select such a strategic place from where he might have maximum advantages for his war-boats, the backbone of his military power, and could be able to move

away safely from that place if necessary. It is worth mentioning that war-boats were the most vital element of warfare in East Bengal, that is, in the region of Bhati, which was full of rivers and canals at that time. These war-boats were the main base of the military power of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and they were skilled in naval war. On the other hand, the main strength of the Mughal army was cavalry. Probably, for this reason Isa Khan did not want to face the Mughal army in land-fight. Moreover, the main object of Isa Khan was to take the Mughal army in such a strategic place where their main strength of cavalry will be of no use and they will be compelled to engage in naval war. Considering these points, Kastul was such a place situated on the bank of Meghna two miles west of Astagram, where land-fight was not possible in any way. Because, in the Joanshahi *Pargana*, Kastul situated in such a place, which is full of swamps and marshes¹⁶, and it is only for those to be successful in wars, who are well acquainted with the rivers and canals of this region. It would not be wrong to say that for these reasons Isa Khan selected Kastul as his war place¹⁷. However, the Mughal army under Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli reached Egara Sindur through the river Lakhia and proceeded towards Joanshahi *Pargana* through Brhamaputra and Meghna. Thus, when the Mughal army reached the boarder of Kastul, Isa Khan checked their advance. Consequently, a fierce engagement took place between both the parties. Isa Khan left the battle field being defeated. It is noteworthy that though, Abul Fazl mentioned the defeat and flight of Isa Khan, he did not mention where he fled. In this context, Bhattasali and Abdul Karim quoting *Rajmala*, the history of Tripura, opined that Isa Khan went to Tripura by the way of Meharkul being defeated by the Mughals and sought help from Amara Manikya, the king of Tripura¹⁸. But their observation cannot be accepted. Because, it is learnt from a recent research work that Isa Khan never went to Tripura

and also never sought help from Amara Manikya.¹⁹ Besides, in this context, the fact is that though, Isa Khan left the battle field being defeated, he did not go to Tripura, it was natural for him to take shelter in the Khaliajuri *Pargana*, the *Zamindari* of Majlis Pratap, one of his allies and the members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. For, the battle took place in Kastul, situated in the Joanshahi *Pargana*, the *Zamindari* of Majlis Dilawar, one of the members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*, and Khaliajuri *Pargana* situated to the north of Joanshahi *Pargana*, was free from war and also was safe, because it was full of marshes. So, it is more reasonable for him to take shelter in the *Zamindari* of his ally, which is full of marshes, than to take shelter in a foreign territory. Therefore, it may be assumed that Isa Khan retreated towards further north leaving Kastul being defeated in the battle and took shelter in Khaliajuri *Pargana*. This flight or retreat was also a war strategy of Isa Khan. Because, Abul Fazl did not mention that whether Majlis Dilawar, *Zamindar* of Joanshahi *Pargana* and Majlis Pratap, *Zamindar* of Khaliajuri *Pargana*, situated to the north of Joanshahi *Pargana*, played any role when Isa Khan was engaged in fighting with the Mughals in Kastul of Joanshahi *Pargana*. But, after the defeat of Isa Khan, when the Mughal soldiers were engaged in looting in Kastul, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap brought out a crowd of boats from the rivers and canals of that region and suddenly attacked the Mughals. It appears that according to previously set plan they might have been observing the courses of battle between Isa Khan and the Mughals halted in a place nearby and after the defeat and retreat of Isa Khan, when the Mughal soldiers were engaged in plundering they suddenly attacked the Mughals taking advantage of their carelessness. The reason for this assumption is that Isa Khan might have been previously set such a scheme with his allies that he himself would first face the Mughals and leave the battle field if

he could not resist them. Since, Isa Khan was the main opponent of the Mughals, his defeat and retreat would create a sense among the Mughal soldiers that they have won the battle and when they will be engaged in plundering then Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap will suddenly launch an attack on them. This sudden attack will stun the Mughal army and they will be compelled to flee being defeated. There is an instance in history that the opponent had won the battle in such a careless moment. In this context, mention may be made of the initial stage of the battle of Tukaroi in 1575 A.C. between Daud Khan Kararani and Mughal general Munim Khan. At the initial stage of the battle of Tukaroi the Mughal army was scattered and Mughal general Munim Khan left the battle field wounded in the face of severe Afghan attack. In this situation, the Afghans thinking that they have won the battle and engaged in plundering. Consequently, there were disorders in the Afghan army. The Mughals took full advantage of this situation and Kiya Khan and other Mughal generals re-organised their army and attacked the indisciplined Afghan army. As a result, the Mughals won the battle²⁰. Needless to say that, the consequences of the Mughal army in the battle with the *Bara - Bhuiyans* were the same as that of the Afghan army mentioned above. Because, it is seen that when the Mughal soldiers engaged in plundering, thinking that they have won the battle, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap took full advantage of the careless Mughals and suddenly inflicted an attack on them. As a result, the Mughal army was severely defeated and the Mughal soldiers losing courage compelled to flee and their admiral Muhammad Quli was also captured in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Had not Tila Gazi, the *Zamindar* of Talipabad, helped the Mughals to escape they would have been completely destroyed. So, it appears that the war strategy of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* was successful, which proves the astuteness of their leader Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Though, Abul Fazl

mentioned that the Mughal army was able to return with their booty and the enemies, that is, the *Bara- Bhuiyans* became dishearten, in fact, Khan-i-Jahan was compelled to return to Sihhatpur with the devastated army. Thus successfully ended the first struggle for resistance, that is, struggle for the preservation of independence of the freedom- loving *Bara- Bhuiyans* of East Bengal, that is, Bhati under the leadership of Isa Khan.

It appears from the above discussion that though, Daud Khan Kararani was defeated in the battle of Rajmahal, the *Bara -Bhuiyans* of Bhati did not acknowledge the suzerainty of Mughal Badshah Akbar. Although, they were stunned at the downfall of Daud for the time being, they soon organised themselves under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and settled their next step. Accordingly, they endeavoured to prepare for the struggle of resistance against the Mughals in Sonargaon and Maheswardi *Parganas*, the *iktas* of Isa Khan. Even they were able to bring Mughal admiral Shah Bardi on their side. In this situation Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan led a campaign from the capital Tanda towards Bhati. Initially Khan-i-Jahan's opponents were Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai, the two Afghan chiefs and later Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, two bonafied members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. When Khan-i-Jahan encamped in the town of Bhawal, Ibrahim Naral and Karimdad Musazai and other Afghans immediately submitted to him. Shah Bardi also rejoined the Mughal camp. Albeit, the main opponent Isa Khan did not submit. Consequently, a large detachment under Muhammad Quli and Shah Bardi was sent against him. Isa Khan was defeated at the initial stage of the battle of Kastul, but in the end the Mughal soldiers fled away being severely defeated by Isa Khan and his allies Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Pratap, who resorted to a remarkable

war tactics. As a result, Khan-i-Jahan, who came to subdue the *Bara - Bhuiyans*, was compelled to return to Sihhatpur leaving Bhati being himself harassed by them. Few days after returning from Bhati Khan-i-Jahan died in December 1578, in Sihhatpur²¹. On the other hand, resisting successfully this Mughal onslaught under Khan-i-Jahan, Isa Khan and other members of the *Bara -Bhuiyans* remained safe in their respective *Zamindaries*. In conclusion, it may be said that due to extraordinary talent, worthy leadership and remarkable war strategy of Isa Khan the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were able to drive away the army of mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar from East Bengal, that is, from Bhati for the first time, despite having relatively limited resources. This victory over the mighty Mughal army undoubtedly enhanced their mental strength, which accelerated their freedom- loving attitude. Consequently, the the *Bara-Bhuiyans* became the formidable obstacle against the Mughal expansion in Eastern Bengal, that is, in the region of Bhati. So it is seen that Badshah Akbar subsequently sent his famous generals in Bhati expeditions to subdue the *Bara-Bhuiyans* several times.

Phase II

The Bara-Bhuiyans Versus Badshah Akbar's Subahdars Shahbaz Khan and Sadiq Khan (1578-1586A.C.)

It has been discussed in the previous section that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* successfully resisted the Mughal onslaught under Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan in 1578. Since then, they did not have to face any Mughal attack before March-April of 1584. But it does not mean that as a result of the lamentable defeat of Khan-i-Jahan the imperialistic attitude of Mughal Badshah Akbar has been changed or the Mughals have accepted the freedom loving- attitude of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Infact, none of these happened. On the contrary, it is seen that the Mughals led their second campaign against Bhati under Shahbaz Khan in 1584²². It proves that even after the disastrous defeat of Khan-i-Jahan the Mughals did not change their policy of aggression and also did not leave the design of the Bhati campaign. But after an interval of a few years attacking Bhati for the second time, it may be assumed that despite having eagerness the Mughals could not invade Bhati on account of adverse situation in these interim years. Firstly, probably, it was not possible on the part of the Mughals to lead expedition again towards Bhati immediately on account of the death of Khan-i-Jahan within a few days of his unsuccessful return from Bhati. Because, they might have been waited for the next order of Badshah Akbar or for the arrival of a new Subahdar. After about four months of the death of Khan-i-Jahan the new Subahdar Muzaffar Khan Turbati reached Bengal in April, 1579A.C.²³ Immediately after his arrival in Bengal most of the Mughal officers in Bihar and Bengal became rebellious against Mughal Badshah Akbar. From the very beginning he had to face the rebels and was killed by them on 19th April, 1580A.C.²⁴ As a result, he did not get any

opportunity to lead expedition against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. On the other hand, after killing Muzaffar Khan, the rebels formed a government in Bengal and they ruled Bengal for two years, that is, from 1580 to 1582A.C. Badshah Akbar did not have any authority over Bengal during these two years²⁵. Badshah Akbar appointed Khan Azam Mirza Aziz Koka Subahdar of Bengal on 6th April, 1582. He continued his office in Bengal till May, 1583²⁶. He also could not invade Bhati due to his pre-occupation with the rebels. After Mirza Aziz Koka, Badshah Akbar appointed Shahbaz Khan Subahdar of Bengal on 18th May, 1583. He took his office after five months of his appointment²⁷. Soon after his appointment Shahbaz Khan engaged himself in subduing the rebels and on 15th November, 1583, in a fierce battle the head of the rebels Masum Khan Kabuli being defeated by Shahbaz Khan fled towards Bhati²⁸ and met with the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. Taking advantage of the situation Shahbaz Khan captured Ghoraghat and Sherpur Murcha the main strongholds of the rebels. Thus, the Mughal authority was re-established in the region up to the west bank of the river Jamuna within 1583²⁹. Hereafter, Shahbaz Khan intended to invade Bhati and he finally did that in March-April, 1584³⁰. So, it appears that the Mughals could not invade Bhati due to their preoccupation in subduing the rebel Mughal generals. It is known that this rebellion of the Mughal generals against Badshah Akbar shook the foundation of the Mughal Empire. However, in a word, the Mughals were so busy in managing their internal affairs that they could not pay attention to the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in these interim years. Secondly, on the other hand, Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, did not sit idle during this time. Taking advantage of the internal quarrels of the Mughals he gradually increased his strength and became so powerful that Abul Fazl, the Mughal court historian, designated him as the ruler of Bhati at this time³¹. Even he led a successful expedition to

Koc (Kuch Bihar) during this time and returned with a large and well equipped army³². Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to assume that the Mughals might have been thinking of the power and strength of Isa Khan did not send any expedition against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* before organising themselves.

However, after achieving some success against the Mughal rebels Shahbaz Khan turned his attention towards the occupation of Bhati and he commenced his Bhati campaign in March-April of 1584. Abul Fazl writes about this campaign as follows:

“When the bank of the river Ganges near Khizrpur became an imperial camp, there were strong forts on the two sides of the river ... In a short time both of these were taken with severe fighting, and Sonargaon came into the possession of the imperial servants. They also reached Karabuh? Which was his (Isa’s) home. That populous city was plundered. A force was sent against Bara Sindar, which is a large town, and much plunder was obtained. From there they came to the Brahmaputra ... After a little fight, which took place with the scouts (qarawalan), Masum lost firmness and took refuge in an island. He was nearly made prisoner. At this time Isa, who had gone to Koc (Cooch Bihar) arrived with a large and well equipped army. The imperial servants took post at Totak on the bank of the said river and opposite the city of Kinara Sindar and established a fort there. On both sides there were hot engagements by land and water. The imperialist were continually successful. They sent to Tarsun K. and directed that he should make a demonstration at Bajasrapur and so distract the enemy (lit. make them of two minds or hearts). Two roads led from the town of Bhawal (i.e. Nagari). One was far away from the enemy and the other was by the river bank, and this was very near them. By heaven’s decree Tarsun K. took the latter route. Masum K. heard of this and marched rapidly with a large force. Shahbaz K. sent Muhibb Ali K., Rajah Gopal, Khangar and others. He also sent a swift courier to warn him and to bid him take up a strong position until the reinforcements arrived. He (Tarsun) did not believe the message and grieved for Shahbaz K., thinking (or saying) that the rebels had committed a fraud, and had by this contrivance separated a body of troops from Shahbaz. As the courier was very urgent and his

companions represented the advantages of caution and the evils of carelessness, he set about looking for a shelter and found a suitable place. But as he in no way believed what the courier said he did not halt there but went on towards the camp (of Shahbaz). Just then news came that an enemy was approaching. He cast away the thread of farsightedness and concluded that it was the reinforcement, and was preparing to receive it with hospitality. He had gone some steps when the tumult of the foe filled with dust the field of his security. Though his well-wishers urged him to hasten to the shelter until the men should come from the camp (of Shahbaz) and urged that possibly the officers of the reinforcement might come up, it was of no avail. He set himself with a strong heart and a tranquil mind to engage in combat. Some went off, alleging that they were going for arms. Though not more than fifteen men remained with him, he boldly took the field. Faridun Husain, and Ali Yar, who was related to him, were favoured by fortune and bought eternal fame with the money of life. Tarsun K. was wounded and made prisoner. Masum K. ... put him to death,”

“When he went there, he encamped on the bank of the Panar which is a branch of the Brahmaputra. He occupied himself in sending messages and in giving counsels. The suggestion was that he (Isa) should deliver up the rebels, or drive them away from his presence. Isa had recourse to coaxing expressions, and for a time indulged in plausible speeches. When it appeared that his tongue and his heart were not in accord, there arose the turbulence of battle. For seven months there were victories from time to time, and the evil-doers were put to shame and suffered failure. It was a time when both parties (Shahbaz and his officers) should have lighted the lamp of discernment, and have practised conciliatory measures. But from somnolences of intellect, there was an increase of blindness, and arrogance rose high. From self-conceit Shahbaz K. vexed people and his officers snapped the thread of moderation and behaved in a silly manner. The evil-doings of the enemy increased. Death made his appearance and the stock of life became dear. The enemy relied upon the circumstances that the rainy season was at hand, and that the victorious troops would be compelled to return. Fortunately the rainfall was less than usual, and so they had to wait in a shameful condition for the dark days. They collected a number of diggers (*bildar*) and cut the (bank of) river Brahmaputra in fifteen

places. The water rushed upon the camp and the batteries were submerged. The enemy brought large war-boats, which had very high and long bows, and in the country-language are called *pitara*, and took them close to Shahbaz K.'s fort. On both sides there was firing of artillery and muskets. The warriors were somewhat disconcerted, but by heavens aid the enemy's leader was struck by a bullet and killed, and some boats were broken to pieces, and all at once the waters decreased, and the enemy had to fly. A large amount of booty was obtained, and many of the enemy were drowned... But the foe prevailed against Saiyid Husain, the thanadar of Dacca, and he was made prisoner. Isa awoke from his heavy sleep of ignorance and set afoot negotiations for peace through the instrumentality of his prisoner. Shahbaz K. accepted them. Isa bound up the waist of obedience, and thought that by service he would obtain deliverance. He agreed that a royal *daroghah* should be appointed in the port of Sonargaon, and that Msaum should be sent to the Hijaz. He also sent presents and *peshkash* and won over the hearts of the officers by large gifts, and the victorious army retired. When Shahbaz K. had crossed the rivers and reached Bahwal, and was looking for the fulfilment of Isa's promises (lit, for words to be converted into deeds), wicked men in the army in improper language made Isa doubtful in his mind. He changed his language, and brought forward conditions. The commander of the army was indignant, and said that to make confusions on every occasion and to introduce new clauses was not the rule with right-minded persons. He became stern and spoke harshly. Preparations were made for battle, and on 19 Mihr, divine month, 30 September 1584, that crooked-minded one ('Isa) came forward to fight. The officers from short-sightedness saw their gain in what was their loss, and thought that the defeat of Shahbaz K. would be an advantage to themselves. The first to go off without fighting was Muhibb Ali K. Everyone left his place and went a road less road. Shah Quli K. Mahram made some stand and fought, but from being unsupported and from being wounded he left Bhawal. Shahbaz K. awoke from his sleep of haughtiness and made some effort to win the affections of his officers, but misplaced repentance is of no avail. He was obliged to march for Tanda. All his collections were lost, and the sons of Mir Adila and others were made prisoners. S. Muhammad Ghaznavi and others were killed.”³³

The above statement of Abul Fazl furnishes the following information:

Shahbaz Khan encamped on the bank of the river Ganges near Khizrpur. There were two strong forts on both sides of the river at this place. After a fierce battle the Mughal army captured the forts. Then they took the possession of Sonargaon. They also went to Katrabo (Karabuh), the home of Isa Khan, and plundered that populous city. From there Shahbaz Khan sent a force against Egara Sindur (Bara Sindar), which was also a large town and it was also plundered. Then the Mughal army came to the Brahmaputra through the Lakhia, where Masum Khan Kabuli came to oppose them. But he was defeated and took refuge in an island between the Lakhia and the Brahmaputra. During this time Isa Khan was away in Kuch Bihar, he returned with a large and well equipped army. In this situation, the Mughals encamped at Tok (Totak), on the bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite the city of Egara Sindur (Kinara Sindur), and built a fort there. On both sides there were hot engagements both by land and water. In these battles, according to Abul Fazl, the Mughals were continually successful. In this situation, Shabaz Khan sent a detachment under Tarsun Khan (then he was at Bhawal) to Bajitpur (Bajasrapur) and directed him to make demonstration with a view distracting the attention of the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans). There were two roads from the town of Bhawal (i.e.Nagari) towards Bajasrapur. One was away from the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans), but the other was by the bank of the river and this was very near the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans). Tarsun Khan took the latter route. When Masum Khan heard of the advance of Tarsun Khan, he marched rapidly with a large force against him. Shahbaz Khan came to know of this and sent Muhibb Ali Khan, Raja Gopal, Khangar and others to the aid of Tarsun Khan. He also sent warning to Tarsun Khan about the

advance of Masum Khan Kabuli and advised him to take up a strong position until the reinforcements arrived. But Tarsun Khan did not believe this, rather he thought that the rebels (Isa Khan and his partisans) tried by this trick to separate a body of troops from Shahbaz Khan. So, he neither took shelter in a safer place, nor halted where he was awaiting the arrival of reinforcements. Soon news arrived that an enemy was approaching, but Tarsun Khan thought that the reinforcements sent by Shahbaz Khan were coming to his aid, and was preparing to receive them with hospitality. He had gone some steps when he realised that the enemies were approaching. In this situation his well-wishers advised him to hasten to a safer place till the arrival of reinforcements, but it was of no avail. He set himself with a strong heart and a tranquil mind to face the enemy. In This situation some of his soldiers left the field on the plea that they were going to bring arms. Though, not more than fifteen soldiers remained with him, he boldly took the field. Faridun Husain and Ali Yar, who was related to him, lost their lives. Tarsun Khan was wounded and made prisoner and was killed by Masum Khan Kabuli.

At this time Shahbaz Khan encamped on the bank of the river Banar (Panar), which is a branch of the Brahmaputra. From there he was leading the army. He also sent a proposal to Isa Khan that he should either deliver up the rebels (Masum Khan Kabuli and others) to the Mughals or should drive them away from his territory. But Isa Khan persuaded him by blandishments. When Shahbaz Khan realised that Isa Khan was not sincere in his heart, he ordered the army to fight. Clashes continued for seven months but none proved decisive. But at this time there appeared signs of dissensions and disaffection between Shahbaz Khan and his officers due to “self- conceit” of Shahbaz Khan, and his officers began to behave in a silly manner. On the other hand, the

enemy, that is, Isa Khan and his partisans, accelerated their activities. Besides, the break out of pestilence reduces the numbers of Mughal soldiers. In this situation, the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans) thought that the rainy season was imminent and the Mughal army would be compelled to return. But the rainfall was less than usual and the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans) adopted different strategy. They collected a number of diggers and cut the bank of the river Brahmaputra in fifteen places. Consequently, water rushed upon the Mughal camp and submerged the batteries. Isa took full advantage of the situation, he and his partisans brought large war-boats and took them close to the Mughal camp. Then there was firing of artillery and muskets on both sides. Though, the Mughals were somewhat disconcerted, fortunately the leader of the fleet of Isa Khan and his partisans was hit by a bullet and killed and the water of the river also decreased suddenly. So, the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans) had to fly, some of them were drowned and a large booty fell into the hands of the Mughals. But the enemy (Isa Khan and his partisans) were able to make Saiyid Husain, the *thanadar* of Dacca, a captive. Now Isa Khan sent proposals for peace through him, and Shahbaz Khan also accepted the proposals. The terms of peace are, (a) The Mughals would post a *daroghah* in the port of Sonargaon and (b) Masum Khan Kabuli would be allowed to go to Hijaz. Isa Khan also sent presents and tributes (*Peshkash*) to Shahbaz Khan and won over the Mughal officers by large gifts. Then Shahbaz Khan being satisfied crossed the river and reached Bhawal and was looking for the fulfilment of the proposals. But the improper language of the “wicked men in the army (Mughal army)” made Isa Khan doubtful. Now he changed his mind and brought forward further conditions. Consequently, Shahbaz Khan became angry and said that to make confusions on every occasion and to introduce new clauses was not the

rule with right-minded persons. Then he ordered for battle and on 30th September, 1584, Isa Khan also came forward to fight. But in the meantime, the Mughal officers had been alienated from Shahbaz Khan; they did not like his haughty nature and were eagerly waiting for his defeat. The first officer to go off without fighting was Muhibb Ali Khan. Others then followed him. Only Shah Quli Khan Mahram fought for sometime, but as he was not supported by others, he became wounded and left Bhawal. At last Shahbaz Khan came to his senses and made some efforts to win the affections of his officers, but it was of no avail. Consequently, he was compelled to march towards Tanda and lost all his collections and the sons of Mir Adila and others were made prisoners and Saiyid Muhammad Ghaznavi and others were killed.

Now, the courses and results of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan is being discussed in the light of the information given by Abul Fazl. But to determine the actual location of the war field the places mentioned above need proper identification.

Khizirpur: The first place mentioned is Khizirpur. Sir Jadunath Sarkar says that Shahbaz Khan entered Isa Khan's country of Bikrampur³⁴. But in the *Akbar Nama* there is no reference to Bikrampur. Abul Fazl says clearly that "When the bank of the river Ganges near Khizirpur became an imperial camp ..." Khizirpur is situated to the north-east of modern Narayanganj and about 9 miles off from Dhaka. It is on the river Lakhia. Khizirpur was a very prominent place and considered as a very important military outpost during the whole Mughal period. According to Abdul Karim the fort of Khizirpur was first built by Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala.³⁵

Sonargaon: Sonargaon is situated three miles to the east of Khizirpur and in between the rivers Lakhia and Meghna³⁶. Once

Sonargaon was the capital of Isa Khan and the English traveller Ralph Fitch met Isa Khan in this Sonargaon in 1586 A.C.³⁷

Katrabo: Karabuh or Katrabo is identical with the village named Masumabad, on the river Lakhia and in the Rupganj Upazila of Narayanganj district.³⁸

Kuch Bihar: The kingdom of Kuch Bihar is situated on the north-east frontier of Bengal.

Tok: Totak or Tok is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, just where the river Banar takes off.³⁹

Bajitpur: Bajasrapur or Bajitpur is an Upazila in modern Kishoreganj district.

However, towards the first half of 1584, taking the opportunity of Isa's preoccupation with Kuch Bihar expedition, Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan invaded the region of Bhati. Though, Abul Fazl did not mention from where Shahbaz Khan started his march towards Bhati, it may be assumed that he started from the capital Tanda. Shahbaz Khan commenced his Bhati campaign towards March-April of 1584. Though, it seems that Shahbaz Khan invaded Bhati chasing the rebel Mughal general Masum Khan Kabuli, Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, was his main opponent. Because, regarding the motive of Bhati campaign of Shahbaz Khan, Abul Fazl says that,

“His idea was to test Isa K. the ruler of that country, who was always expressing his loyalty. If he delivered up Masum K. and the other rebels, his lips and his heart would accord. Otherwise the veil over his conduct would be removed, and his wickedness would have its retribution.”⁴⁰

It appears from this statement of Abul Fazl that in order to put pressure on Isa Khan to deliver up the rebel Mughal general Masum Khan Kabuli and other rebels, Shahbaz Khan invaded Bhati. Secondly,

though, Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan always expressed his loyalty to the Mughals, there is no mention in the Akbar Nama as to why and when he acknowledged loyalty to the Mughals after the return of futile Bhati campaign of Khan-i-Jahan in 1578. It indicates that to test Isa Khan's loyalty was only a plea of Shahbaz Khan's Bhati campaign. So, it would not be unreasonable to say that in order to subdue Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the leader of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* and the main obstacle in the way of establishing Mughal supremacy in the region of Bhati, Shahbaz Khan invaded Bhati. At this time no other names of the allies of Isa Khan or the names of the members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* are found except Masum Khan Kabuli in the *Akbar Nama*. But it may be assumed that Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur, might have been with Isa Khan at that time. Because, it is seen in the previous discussion that they were the allies of Isa Khan and the bonafide members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* and when English traveller Ralph Fitch visited Sripur, the capital of Bikrampur, in 1586, saw them at war against the Mughals⁴¹. However, Shahbaz Khan encamped in Khizrpur at the initial stage of his Bhati campaign. Taking advantage of Isa Khan's absence the Mughal army captured the forts of Hajiganj and Nabiganj⁴², situated on both sides of the river Lakhia, near Khizrpur, and they also took the possession of Sonargaon. Then the Mughal army reached Katrabo, the capital of Isa Khan, and this populous city was also ravaged by them. Then Shahbaz Khan sent a large force to Egara Sindur, which was also a large town and it was also plundered. From there the Mughals came to Brahmaputra through the Lakhia where Masum Khan Kabuli came to oppose them. But he was defeated and took shelter in an island between the Lakhia and Brahmaputra. Just then Isa Khan appeared in the battle field with a large and well-equipped army. The appearance of Isa Khan in the battle field soon after the defeat of

Masum Khan Kabuli gives the impression that hearing the news of the Mughal army he hastened from Kuch Bihar and halted in a place nearby observing the activities of the Mughal army. Besides, the almost uninterrupted advance of the Mughal army up to Khizrpur, Sonargaon, Katrabo and Egara Sindur appears that Isa Khan himself allowed them to advance well inside the region of Bhati surrounded by rivers and canals, so that he could face them at the time and place of his choice. At the arrival of Isa Khan, Shahbaz Khan encamped at Tok on the bank of the Brahamaputra, on the opposite side of the town of Egara Sindur, and built a fort there. On the other hand, Isa Khan aided by the other members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and Masum Khan Kabuli also prepared himself for war against the Mughals. After that both sides engaged in a fierce battle both on land and water. In this context though, Abul Fazl stated about the continuous success of the Mughal army, still then the result of the battle remain unresolved. In this situation, Shahbaz Khan sent a detachment under Tarsun Khan from Bhawal towards Bajitpur in order to distract the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Hearing this news Masum Khan swiftly advanced against Tarsun Khan. At this, Shahbaz Khan also sent Muhibb Ali Khan, Raja Gopal, Khangar and others in the aid of Tarsun Khan. Even he sent a curier to warn Tarsun Khan. But the latter did not believe this and ignored the warning. Masum Khan Kabuli attacked Tarsun Khan before the arrival of the Mughal reinforcements and he defeated and captured Tarsun Khan and killed him in imprisonment.

On the other hand, at this time, Shahbaz Khan encamped on the bank of the river Banar. From there he sent proposals to Isa Khan that either he should deliver up the rebels, that is, Masum Khan Kabuli and others to him or he should drive them away from his shelter. But Isa Khan adopted the tactics of gaining time by delusive promises. Consequently, war broke out between the two parties and lasted for

seven months and the results remained unresolved. But Isa Khan's tactics of gaining time proves successful. Because, it is seen that at this time dissensions broke out between Shahbaz Khan and his subordinates due to his rude behaviour on the one hand and also the arrival of the expected rainy season on the other. But though, the rainfall was less than usual in that year, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* faced the situation designing a new strategy, which made Shahbaz Khan disconcerted. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* collected a number of diggers and cut the bank of the river Brahmaputra in fifteen places. Consequently, water rushed upon the Mughal camp and submerged the batteries. Then the *Bara-Bhuiyans* took full advantage of the situation and they brought large war-boats and took them close to the Mughal camp and started firing of artillery. At this, the Mughal soldiers were dispersioned. But the death of one of the leaders of the fleet of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* hit by a bullet of the Mughal army and sudden decrease of the water level of the river caused the *Bara-Bhuiyans* leaving the battle field. Thus, Shahbaz Khan was fortunately saved on this occasion. But, Saiyid Husain, the Mughal *thanadar* of Dacca, was defeated and imprisoned by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. In this situation, according to Abul Fazl, Isa Khan sent proposals for peace to Shahbaz Khan through Saiyid Husain. Shahbaz Khan also accepted the proposals. But this statement of Abul Fazl is not beyond doubt. Because, though, Shahbaz Khan was saved from severe disaster despite water rushed upon the Mughal camp and submerged the batteries and the Mughal army was dispersioned at the fierce onslaught of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the water of the river being fortunately reduced, which caused the leaving of the battle field of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and although, the Mughal *thanadar* of Dacca Saiyid Husain was imprisoned at the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, is it not unreasonable to think that being in a relatively advantageous position Isa Khan sent proposals for

peace to Shahbaz Khan? Infact, it was Shahbaz Khan who sent proposals for peace to Isa Khan. Because, on the one hand dissensions between Shahaz Khan and his subordinates reached its climax and the embarrassment of the Mughal army at the hands of the *Bara- Bhuiyans* on the other, left Shahbaz Kahn into a trouble. Consequently, he was forced to sue for peace proposals to Isa Khan. Besides, Ahsan-Jan-Kaisar opined that it was Shahbaz Khan who sent proposals for peace to Isa Khan. He says, “Eventually, Shahbaz was forced to sue for peace.”⁴³ So, It would not be unreasonable to say that it was Shahbaz Khan not Isa Khan, who sue for peace. Above all, even if Isa Khan sent proposals for peace to Shahbaz Khan, it was also his tactics of gaining time. For, it is seen that Isa Khan later procrastinated in fulfilling the terms of peace. This also proves that Isa Khan was not bound to send the proposals for peace. It was settled according to the terms of peace that a Mughal *daroghah* will be posted in Sonargaon and Masum Kahn Kabuli will be sent to Hijaj. Besides, Isa Khan sent presents and tributes to Shahbaz Khan and won over the Mughal officers by large gifts. Then Shahbaz Khan crossed the river and reached Bhawal and was looking for the fulfilment of the proposals. But Isa Khan procrastinated in fulfilling the terms of peace and brought forward further conditions. This made Shahbaz Khan angry and he took preparation for battle. As a result, the peace negotiation was broken off and a battle took place on 30th September, 1584. But in the meantime, the Mughal officers were vexed due to Shahbaz Khan’s rude behaviour (self-conceit) and many of them left the battle field and were eagerly waiting for the defeat of Shahbaz Khan. Though, Abul Fazl mentioned ‘self -conceit’ of Shahbaz Khan as the cause of the vexation of Mughal officers, there are also other causes behind it. On the one hand, the Mughal army lost their moral courage for not being able to defeat the *Bara- Bhuiyans* fighting utmost for a

long time, and death of many Mughal soldiers at the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, on the other hand, the appearance of pestilence and the climate and rains of Bengal, particularly of Bhati, which frightened the Mughal soldiers of Northern India, made them intolerable for staying here long and they were eager to return to Delhi as soon as possible. So it may be said that the hostile environment of Bengal was one of the reasons for the vexation of the Mughal soldiers. As a result, it is seen that many of them left the battle field.

The first officer to go off without fighting was Muhibb Ali Khan. Shah Quli Khan Mahram also fought for some time, but as he was not supported by others, he became wounded and left Bhawal. At last, Shahbaz Khan came to his senses and made some efforts to win the affections of his officers, but it was of no avail. Consequently, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* completely defeated the Mughal army and Shahbaz Khan was compelled to march towards Tanda, leaving behind all his accumulations and many of his men as prisoners. On his way, he first reached Sherpur Murcha of Bogra and tried to make preparations to march again to Bhati. But his companions were disgusted with his bad manners and did not agree to accompany him. At last, he returned to Tanda⁴⁴. Thus, under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala the second anti- Mughal struggle of resistance, that is, struggle of independence of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of East Bengal, that is, of Bhati ended with great success.

It is known from the above discussion that after an interval of a few years of the futile Bhati campaign of Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan in 1578 A.C. the Mughal army invaded Bhati under the leadership of Subahdar Shahbaz Khan once more in 1584 A.C. At this time, though no other names of the allies of Isa Khan or the names of the members of

the *Bara-Bhuiyans* are found except Masum Khan Kabuli, the rebel Mughal general, in the *Akbar Nama*, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur, might have been with Isa Khan at that time. The battle field was extended throughout the rivers Lakhia, Banar, Brahmaputra up to the river Meghna at that time. Taking advantage of Isa Khan's preoccupation in Kuch Bihar expedition Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan invaded Bhati and the Mughal army was able to advance up to Khizrpur, Sonargaon, Katrabo and Egara Sindur almost unopposed. Though, Masum Khan Kabuli tried to check the Mughal advance, he was defeated. But immediately after the defeat of Masum Khan Kabuli, Isa Khan appeared in the battlefield with a large and well-equipped army and checked the Mughal advance effectively. Isa Khan with his allies put up vehement resistance against the Mughal army both on land and water. On the face of his fierce attack, the Mughal army could not endure and they were disastrously defeated in the battles of Egara Sindur and Bhawal, and were forced to turn back to Tanda the then headquarters of the Mughal authority. Though, Abul Fazl repeatedly mentioned about the victories of the Mughal army, infact Isa Khan and his allies won the battles. Because, the Mughal army could not able to establish the authority of Badshah Akbar over a fragment of the region of Bhati. Even, they could not able to dislodge Isa Khan and his allies from their firm positions. So, it may be said that due to Isa Khan's discreetness and new war tactis the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were able to defend themselves and their homeland from Mughal aggressions for the second time. This victory over the mighty Mughal army undoubtedly enhanced their anti-Mughal attitude and it will be seen later that at the instigation of Isa Khan, Masum Khan Kabuli proceeded to Sherpur Murcha in Bogra and others took possession of the country upto Malda, only

twelve *kos* off from Tanda. As a result, the Mughal authority in Bengal was contracted once again.⁴⁵

However, it is seen that Shahbaz Khan's Bhati campaign of 1584 was a complete failure and he was forced to turn back to Tanda. On arriving at Tanda, he proposed to other Mughal officers that they should again invade Bhati. But they could not agree to the proposal. Then, they decided that the matter should be referred to Badshah Akbar. On hearing the disastrous result of Shahbaz Khan's Bhati campaign Badshah Akbar became angry with the Bengal officers. He also issued an order to Saiyid Khan and other fief-holders of Bengal and Bihar to act in concert and put down Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*⁴⁶. Nevertheless, Shahbaz Khan could not convince his officers on a unified action. It appears from the narratives in the *Akbar Nama* that as the officers did not agree with him, Shahbaz Khan decided to go to the court. When he reached Bihar, Badshah Akbar's messengers met him and they turned Shahbaz Khan back to Bengal and made the fief-holders of Bihar to accompany him. Badshah Akbar also issued an order to Shahbaz Khan to the effect that if he wanted more troops, Raja Todar Mal, Muttalib Khan, Jamal Bakhtiyar and other able and zealous officers would be sent to him. Shahbaz Khan replied that he had enough troops, and on 28th December, 1584 A.C. he again entered Bengal and applied himself to the conquest of Bhati.⁴⁷

Isa Khan did not sit idle in the face of this danger. He made all possible preparations and organised his allies for defence. He designed two-fold policies to face this danger. Firstly, inspired by previous victory Isa Khan adopted attacking policy against the Mughals. But, in this context Isa Khan himself did not take part in open fight against the Mughal army. On the contrary, he instigated Masum Khan Kabuli and his other allies to attack the Mughals in order to keep them busy, so that

they would not get any chance to invade Bhati. Accordingly, Masum Khan Kabuli proceeded up to Sherpur Murcha in Bogra and the others took possession of the country up to Malda, only twelve kos off from Tanda⁴⁸. On the other hand, Shahbaz Khan proceeded to Bhati and when he reached the bank of the river Ganges he learnt that Masum Khan Kabuli had halted at Sherpur Murcha. Shahbaz Khan then crossed the river and advance against Masum Khan Kabuli. On his approach, Masum Khan Kabuli left Sherpur Murcha without fighting and went to Fathabad, modern Faridpur district. As a result, the Mughals took possession of Sherpur Murcha once again⁴⁹. After that, the Mughal army was divided into two parts. On 1st March, 1585, Wazir Khan, along with a number of officers proceeded against Masum Khan Kabuli and Shahbaz Khan along with other officers remained where they were, that is, at Sherpur Murcha⁵⁰. When the first division of the army proceeded against Masum Khan Kabuli, the latter went to Trimohini, and built two forts there and prepared himself for battle. There are differences of opinions about the location of Trimohini among the scholars. According to Abul Fazl Trimohini is situated in the meeting place of the Ganges, the Jamuna and the Sakni rivers⁵¹. Beveridge identifies the Trimohini with Tribeni in Hugli district⁵². Jadunath Sarkar also supported this view⁵³. But Abdul Karim thinks that Trimohini should be identified with one of the Trimohinis of Jatrapur, Katasgarh and Khal Jogini. Masum Khan Kabuli built forts in one of these three Trimohinis⁵⁴. However, he built two forts in Trimohini and left there Beg Muhammad, Ulugh Beg and some other *Bhuiyans*. He designed that they should be his bulwark and he himself took a lower place and prepared for battle. The Mughal officers also prepared for battle under Wazir Khan. In these circumstances Isa Khan sent proposals for peace to the Mughal generals. But the Mughals paid no heed to his proposals and engaged themselves

in occupying the forts. After a fierce battle Mughal army captured the two forts and when they marched against Masum Khan Kabuli, the latter fled away through the river being failed to resist the Mughal onslaught⁵⁵. Although, Abul Fazl did not mention where Masum Khan Kabuli fled, it may be assumed that he took shelter under Isa Khan in Bhati. Because, he attacked the Mughal army at the instigation of Isa Khan. So, it was natural to take shelter under Isa Khan after his defeat. Although, Masum Khan Kabuli was defeated at the hands of the Mughals, the objective of Isa Khan was successful in many parts. Because, the Mughal army did not get any chance to attack Bhati for a while on account of their engagement with Masum Khan Kabuli.

Secondly, Isa Khan adopted the tactics of preventing the Mughals from attacking Bhati by sending proposals for peace and valuable presents and tributes to the Mughal Subahdars and officers and by pretending to be loyal to the Mughals. Accordingly, he sent proposals for peace to the Mughal Subahdar. At this time, dissensions broke out between Shahbaz Khan and Sadiq Khan and Badshah Akbar sent Khwaja Sulaiman to Bengal in order to give them advice. Badshah Akbar also issued an order to the effect that whoever assumed the administration of Bengal should surrender Bihar to the other officer and they will settle themselves who will stay in Bengal and who will go to Bihar. Khwaja Sulaiman first went to Sadiq Khan and the latter agreed to stay in Bengal, so he was entrusted with the charge of that province. Consequently, Shahbaz Khan became annoyed and left Bengal forthwith⁵⁶. However, on the eve of the departure of Shahbaz Khan from Bengal Isa Khan sent proposals for peace to Sadiq Khan. He agreed that he would send Masum Khan Kabuli to the Hijaz and would send one of his relations and valuable presents to the court of Badshah Akbar. Even he proposed to return whatever he had taken from the Mughal army in

1584. But he changed his mind on account of sudden departure of Shahbaz Khan, Saiyid Khan and other officers from Bengal and did not send Masum Khan Kabuli to the Hijaz or any of his relations to the Mughal court. At the same time he also did not allow Masum Khan Kabuli to create any trouble, for the Mughals, that is, he prevented the latter from leading any attack against the Mughals. Isa Khan also showed some obedience to the Mughals. On the other hand, Sadiq Khan ceded some territory to Isa Khan. In return Isa Khan also sent elephants, guns etc. to Badshah Akbar, which he had seized from the Mughals during the Bhati campaign of 1584. Badshah Akbar accepted these things. But he did not approve of leaving of Mughal officers from Bengal⁵⁷. Here it is noteworthy that Abul Fazl mentioned the peace proposals of Isa Khan as his “submission” to the Mughals. But in reality it cannot be treated as ‘submission.’ For it is seen that Isa Khan did not fulfil the promises he made to the Mughals except giving back the elephants, guns etc. which he had seized during the campaign of 1584. Besides, if he surrendered to the Mughals, Badshah Akbar would not send Shahbaz Khan against Isa Khan once again. So, it can be said that Isa Khan only sent peace proposals to the Mughals, by no means had he submitted to them. In other words, according to his pre-planning, Isa Khan only pretended to be loyal to the Mughals. Though, Isa Khan succeeded in preventing the Mughals from attacking Bhati for the time being and managed to acquire some territory from them by following the tactics mentioned before, but this understanding did not last long. For it is seen that Badshah Akbar sent again Shahbaz Khan from Bihar to Bengal.⁵⁸

In January, 1586, Shahbaz Khan took the charge of Bengal once again.⁵⁹ In these circumstances Isa Khan resorted to his previous tactics of sending peace proposals to the Mughals. In course of his discussion

regarding this matter Abul Fazl mentioned first that Bengal was pacified. Then he says,

“He (Shahbaz Khan) sent off troops to Bhati’ to punish ‘Isa K. Owing to the wondrous fortune of H.M., ‘Isa had not the courage to fight, and the territory which Sadiq had surrendered according to the peace, came into possession. The conquests extended up to the port of Chattagong, and things were satisfactorily arranged. ‘Isa sent rare presents, and used conciliatory language. He represented that as Masum had, from ill-fatedness, taken the path of ingratitude, he (Ma’sum, apparently) trembled for himself, and wished to do good service at a distance. He was now sending his son to Court. The answer was given that it would be good if he (Ma’sum) would go to the Hijaz, and come from there to Court.”⁶⁰

The above statement of Abul Fazl is not fully acceptable. For, he mentioned the pacification of Bengal by Shahbaz Khan in such a manner, which seems that Isa Khan lost his courage and submitted to the Mughals without offering any resistance or became eager to come to terms with them as soon as Shahbaz Khan sent troops to Bhati. But, where Khan-i-Jahan in 1578 and Shahbaz Khan himself in 1584 were compelled to leave Bhati being defeated by Isa Khan, it is not credible that Isa Khan would accept the suzerainty of the Mughals without offering any resistance as soon as Shahbaz Khan sent troops to Bhati in 1586. Secondly, He says that Mughal conquest was extended up to the port of Chattagong. This statement is also not true. Because, it is known that Chittagong was never under Mughal authority before Shaista Khan had conquered it in 1666A.C.⁶¹ Thirdly, it is seen that in November, 1586, Shahbaz Khan was appointed Bakshi in Bengal with Wazir Khan as Subahdar by Badshah Akbar⁶². So, it may be said that if Shahbaz Khan pacified Bengal, he would not have been posted to a subordinate position. Fourthly, Subahdar Man Singh’s campaign against Isa Khan in December, 1595, Ghoraghat invasion of Isa Khan and Masum Khan

Kabuli in 1596 and Bhati campaign of Man Singh's son Durjan Singh in 1597 and his defeat and death at the hand of Isa Khan, all these things prove that Shahbaz Khan could not establish peace in Bengal in 1586. So, although Abul Fazl mentioned that Bengal was pacified by Shahbaz Khan, the fact was different. For all practical purposes realising the importance of Shahbaz Khan's return to Bengal and his sending troops to Bhati Isa Khan avoided direct confrontation with the Mughals and he resorted to his previous tactics. Accordingly he sent proposals for peace to the Mughals by returning the territory which he had acquired from Sadiq Khan, sending rare presents, promising to send a son of Masum Khan Kabuli to the Mughal court and using 'conciliatory language'. Since, no confrontation with the Mughals took place around this time it may be assumed that they accepted the proposals for peace of Isa Khan. The best testimony of this is that the Mughals did not send any expedition against the *Bara -Bhuiyans* in Bhati during the times of Wazir Khan⁶³ and Said Khan⁶⁴, the Subahdars of Bengal after Shahbaz Khan. At this time the relationships between Isa Khan and his allies and the Mughals were relatively peaceful and it is seen that Isa Khan once sent presents to Badshah Akbar through Said Khan.⁶⁵

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that Isa Khan was able to prevent the Mughals from attacking Bhati for more than a decade, that is, from 1584 to 1595, without direct confrontation with the Mughals, by instigating Masum Khan Kabuli and his other allies to attack Mughal territory in order to keep the Mughal army busy, sending presents to the Mughal Subahdars and generals and pretending to be loyal to the Mughals. Within the mentioned period, particularly, after concluding peace with Shahbaz Khan in 1586 up to December, 1595, Isa Khan and his allies, that is, the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, virtually remained almost undisturbed in their own territories, that is, in Bhati.

Phase III

The Bara-Bhuiyans Versus Badshah Akbar's Subahdar Man Singh Kachhwaha (1586-1599 A.C.)

Though the Mughals accepted the proposals for peace of Isa Khan in 1586 and also refrained from invading Bhati for the next few years, they subsequently did not accept it as a permanent agreement. Because, it is seen that Badshah Akbar appointed Raja Man Singh Kachhwaha Subahdar of Bengal instead of Said Khan to subdue Isa Khan and his allies and sent him to Bengal with many wise counsels as to the administrative policy to be followed there on 4th May 1594⁶⁶. On arriving at Tanda, the capital of Bengal, he took preparations for resuming the offensive against Isa Khan and his allies. As preparatory measures he sent a few reconnoitering expeditions in all directions and also transferred the capital from Tanda to Rajmahal on 7th November, 1595, in order to protect it from naval attack. The new capital was given the name of Akbar Nagar⁶⁷. Meanwhile, one of the reconnoitering expeditions under Man Singh's son Himmat Singh captured the Bhushna fort from Kedar Rai, one of the bonafide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, on 2nd April, 1595⁶⁸. From the new capital, Man Singh himself proceeded to conquer Bhati from the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.⁶⁹

In the face of this danger Isa Khan also did not sit idle. He made all possible preparations and organised his allies to resist the Mughal attack. At this time noteworthy among the allies of Isa Khan were Khwaja Sulaiman and Khwaja Usman sons of Khwaja Isa, the minister and brother of Qatlu Nuhani of Orissa, Masum Khan Kabuli, the rebel Mughal general, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, *Zamindars* of Bikrampur, and two bonafide members of the *Bara -Bhuiyans*. It may be mentioned here that after the submission of the Afghans of Orissa Man Singh gave

Khwaja Sulaiman, Khwaja Usman, Sher Khan and Haibat Khan fiefs to Faridpur (Khalifatabad). But later Man Singh took away their fiefs and called them to his presence. Consequently, they became rebels and went on plundering and reached Satgaon. But failing to capture Satgaon they advanced to Bhushna, the *Zamindari* of Chand Rai. At the advice of his father Kedar Rai, Chand Rai invited them and tried to intern them tactfully. But Khwaja Sulaiman and Khwaja Usman failed the attempt of Chand Rai and on 11th February, 1593, captured the fort of Bhushna by killing Chand Rai. In the end there was a settlement between both the parties at the arbitration of Isa Khan and the Afghans returned the fort to Kedar Rai, the father of Chand Rai. Besides, Isa Khan appointed Khwaja Sulaiman as the general of Kedar Rai and gave Khwaja Usman the *Zamindari* of Bukainagar⁷⁰. Thus, Khwaja Usman and Khwaja Sulaiman became the allies of Isa Khan and they participated in the anti-Mughal resistance with Isa Khan hereafter.

However, from the new capital Man Singh himself proceeded against Isa Khan and his allies, that is, the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, on 7th December, 1595. At Man Singh's approach Isa Khan resorted to his old tactics and retreated beyond the Brahmaputra. In this context Abul Fazl mentioned that much of Isa Khan's territory came into the possession of the Mughals⁷¹. But this statement of Abul Fazl is not true. Because, there is no evidence in the *Akbar Nama* in favour of this statement. On the arrival of the rainy season Man Singh encamped at Sherpur Murcha (in the Bogra district) and built a mud-fort there which he named Salimnagar and spent there the rainy season⁷². On the other hand Khwaja Sulaiman and Kedar Rai, the allies of Isa Khan, recaptured the Bhushna fort from the Mughals. So, Man Singh sent an expedition under his son Durjan Singh against them. After a hard fighting the latter succeeded in recapturing the fort on 20th June, 1596. In course of

investing the fort a gun exploded which cost the life of Khwaja Sulaiman and wound of Kedar Rai, who took shelter with Isa Khan⁷³. Now, Isa Khan planned to attack the Mughal camp at Ghoraghat. When Man Singh encamped at Ghoraghat (in the Dinajpur district) in the rainy season of 1596, that is, July-September, he fell very ill. Just at this time Isa Khan along with Masum Khan Kabuli attacked Ggoraghat and came within 24 miles of the Mughal camp. But due to paucity of rains and as the water-level in the river became low they had to retreat. Immediately of his recovery, Man Singh sent a detachment under his son Himmat Singh against Isa Khan and his allies. At Himmat's approach Isa Khan repaired to Egara Sindur.⁷⁴

Afterwards, Isa Khan resorted to different tactics to resist the Mughal onslaught. In order to divert the Mughal attention from Bhati he planned to keep Man Singh busy towards Kuch Bihar. Fortunately, the internal fued between Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar, and his paternal uncle's son Raghudev gave some opportunity to Isa Khan to achieve his end. It is noteworthy here that Nara Narayan (Mal Gosain) the father of Lakshmi Narayan, appointed his brothers son Raghudev (Pat Kunwar) as his heir, when he was without a son. But after the death of Nara Narayan, Lakshmi Narayan became the king of Kuch Bihar. As a result, Raghudev revolted against him. In this situation, Isa Khan extended his hands of co-operation to Raghudev. When Raghudev attacked Lakshmi Narayan aided by Isa Khan, the latter asked for help to Man Singh⁷⁵. It may be mentioned here that Nara Narayan, the King of Kuch Bihar, erstwhile sent presents to the Mughal Badshah Akbar⁷⁶. Besides, the military importance of Kuch Bihar, lying to the north -east frontier of Bengal was immense to the Mughals. For, it is seen that different Afghan Chieftains and Mughal rebels took shelter in Kuch Bihar after being defeated at Ghoraghat and they launched attack on the

Mughal army at Ghoraghat from there at their opportune moment⁷⁷. Now, Man Singh realised the appeal of Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar, with great importance and went to Anandapur⁷⁸ from Salim Nagar to help him. There Lakshmi Narayan welcomed Man Singh on 23rd December, 1596, and later gave his sister in marriage to Man Singh. On the other hand, Raghudev retreated hearing the news of Man Singh's arrival⁷⁹. But Raghudev again attacked Lakshmi Narayan aided by Isa Khan as soon as Man Singh returned from Kuch Bihar and Lakshmi Narayan again appealed to Man Singh for help. This time Man Singh sent a detachment under Jajhar Khan and Fath Khan Sur to help Lakshmi Narayan. On 3rd May, 1597, the Mughal detachment reached there and after a heavy encounter Raghudev was defeated⁸⁰. At this time Isa Khan himself tried to advance to help Raghudev, but Man Singh sent an expedition to Bhati against him⁸¹. Consequently, Isa Khan could not advance in aid of his ally Raghudev despite having a wish on this occasion. But his objectives became successful in many parts. For it is seen that as many times Raghudev attacked Lakshmi Narayan aided by Isa Khan, he asked for help to Man Singh and the latter also repeatedly came to help Lakshmi Narayan. As a result, the Mughal army was compelled to abstain from attacking Bhati directly from after September, 1596, to on the eve of September, 1597, due to their engagements in Kuch Bihar aiding Lakshmi Narayan against Raghudev. So it may be said that the new tactics of Isa Khan brought some success for him.

In September, 1597, Man Singh sent two large forces by both land and water against Isa Khan in Bhati. The Mughal navy was under the command of his son Durjan Singh, who plundered some places of Isa Khan's territories and even attacked his capital Katrabo. Isa Khan was also prepared and in this situation he along with his allies Kedar Rai and Masum Khan Kabuli appeared six *kos* off from Bikrampur with a large

number of war -boats and encircled the Mughal troops. On 5th September, 1597, a fierce naval engagement took place between both the parties, which resulted in the death of Durjan Singh and many Mughal soldiers. Besides, many of the Mughal soldiers were captured at the hands of Isa Khan and his allies and many of them fled away⁸². Thus, Isa Khan and his allies firmly resisted the much prepared expedition sent against him by Man Singh and completely destroyed the Mughal army. But Abul Fazl to save the prestige of Badshah Akbar says, “Though there was a disaster, yet the ruler of Koc was saved from injury. Isa, from farsightedness, had recourse to blandishments and send back his prisoners.”⁸³ Following this statement of Abul Fazl, Sir Jadunath Sarkar also says, “Isa Khan, however, thought it wiser to make peace; he set the prisoners free, gave up his attack on Lakshmi Narayan and offered submission to the Emperor.”⁸⁴ But the statements of Abul Fazl and Jadunath Sarkar are not completely acceptable. Because, in a battle where many Mughal soldiers died alongwith their commander and the Mughal army was completely ruined and Isa Khan won convincingly is it not unreasonable to think that he submitted to the Mughals after that battle? Secondly, in a battle where it was not possible for the Mughal army to conquer even a part of Bhati it is not at all reasonable that Isa Khan who was relatively in a better position, submitted to the Mughals after that battle. Thirdly, the attitude of submission to the Mughals never appeared in Isa Khan. If so, he would have submitted to the Mughals before the battle and did not consider it necessary to submit to the Mughals after winning the battle throwing his life at risk. So, it can be said without hesitation that Isa Khan did not submit to the Mughals. But it would not be unreasonable to assume that though, there was no peace treaty concluded between Isa Khan and Man Singh, a sort of understanding was seen between both the parties for the time being,

since no punitive expedition was sent against Isa Khan immediately after this battle, the departure of Man Singh⁸⁵ from Bengal, the release of Mughal prisoners by Isa Khan and not attacking again Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar. This sort of understanding between Isa Khan and Man Singh was not at all impossible. Because, on the one hand, Man Singh became down-hearted due to the severe defeat of the Mughal army and the deaths of his two worthy sons⁸⁶ and he might not had the mental strength to send any expedition against Isa Khan immediately. On the other hand, Isa Khan was also interested to reach an understanding with Man Singh. Because, as Isa Khan became aged⁸⁷ at this time, he might also wanted to spend the rest of his life peacefully and independently avoiding any confrontation with the Mughals, releasing the Mughal prisoners and leading no expedition against the king of Kuch Bihar. It may be assumed that as the Mughal army did not send any expedition against Bhati immediately there was an understanding arrived at between both the parties for the time being. There is no doubt that Jadunath Sarkar took this understanding as the submission of Isa Khan to the Mughals. Isa Khan died in September, 1599, two years after this battle,⁸⁸ and no more expedition was seen to be launched by the Mughals against Bhati during the lifetime of Isa Khan. So, the above mentioned battle was the last struggle of resistance, that is, the struggle for independence of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan against the Mughals.

It is seen in the above discussion that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were able to defeat the Mughal army in the last battle under the leadership of Isa Khan by his extraordinary heroism and newly invented war tactics as before. As a result, not an inch of territory under the possession of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was conquered by the Mughals, Isa Khan and his allies remained where they were and Isa Khan himself breathed his last as an

independent sovereign. In a word, it can be said that to preserve the independence of his motherland against Mughal imperialism Isa Khan died keeping his sword aloft.

Section II

The Age of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala: The Local Resistance of the Bara-Bhuiyans under his leadership

Phase I

The Bara-Bhuiyan's Versus The Subahdars of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir (1599-1608A.C.)

It has been discussed earlier that the much prepared Bhati campaign of Man Singh of 1597 under his son Durjan Singh was a complete failure and Durjan Singh himself was killed along with many others. Being depressed Man Singh left Bengal for Ajmeer towards the end of 1597 or the beginning of 1598 A.C. Badshah Akbar ordered Jagat Singh, the eldest son of Man Singh, to go to Bengal as deputy of his father. But he died of heavy drinking at Agra on 6th October, 1598, and Maha Singh, the son of Jagat Singh, was sent to Bengal to serve as deputy of his grand father⁸⁹. In Bengal, Masum Khan Kabuli, the ally of Isa Khan, died on 10th May 1599⁹⁰ and after a few months in September, 1599, Isa Khan Masnad-i- Ala also died⁹¹. From September, 1597 to September, 1599, the Mughals did not send any expedition against the *Bara- Bhuiyans* of Bhati. After the death of Isa Khan his eldest son Musa Khan took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance, that is, the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and it is seen in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* that like his father he assumed the title of Masnad-i-Ala⁹². Musa Khan was undoubtedly the worthy successor of his father and it will be seen later that he successfully continued the task undertaken by his father.

It has been stated earlier that Man Singh left Bengal for Ajmeer towards the end of 1597 or the beginning of 1598 and he was away from Bengal when Isa Khan died in September, 1599. This was of some

advantage to Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his allies as it offered them a respite to get over the first shock of Isa Khan's death. At this time, among the noteworthy allies of Musa Khan were his brother Daud Khan and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Bikrampur, and one of the bonafide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and trustworthy ally of Musa Khan's father Isa Khan. Musa Khan knew that Man Singh's withdrawal was only temporary and that the offensive against them would soon be resumed. Accordingly, he took all possible steps to strengthen their position and to strike the Mughals in Bengal during Man Singh's absence. His objectives were somewhat facilitated by the rebellions of the Afghans of Orissa and of the different places of Bengal. During Man Singh's absence in 1600 A.C. the Afghans of Orissa under Usman and Sajawal defeated the Mughal army led by Maha Singh, the grand son of Man Singh, and Pratap Singh, a younger son of Man Singh, at Bhadrak in the Bengal-Orissa Border. On the other hand, the Mughal arms in Bengal also suffered a number of other reverses at the hands of the Afghans at different places⁹³. In view of these developments Man Singh hurried back to Bengal and defeated the Afghan rebels in the battle of Sherpur Atai on 12th February, 1601⁹⁴. In 1602 the Mughals in Bengal were engaged in several battles. This time Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Sripur and Bikrampur and one of the bonafide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, created trouble for the Mughals. So, Man Singh marched to Dacca and tried to win Kedar Rai over to the Mughal side. But he failed and Kedar Rai remained steadfast in his alliance with Musa Khan. On the other hand, rebellion broke out in north-Bengal centering round Malda. So, Man Singh sent his grand son Maha Singh from Ghoraghat against some Afghan chiefs like Jalal Khan and Kazi Mumin who raided north-Bengal upto Malda. After a hard fighting Maha Singh succeeded in driving out the Afghan leaders from that region⁹⁵. Besides, Khwaja

Usman of Bukainagar came out with a large force, crossed the river Brahmaputra and drove back the Mughal *thanadar* Baz Bahadur Qalmaq of Mymensingh to Bhawal. At this turn of events Man Singh hurried up from Dacca to Bhawal and inflicted an indecisive defeat upon Usman Khan (Khwaja Usman). Taking advantage of Man Singh's preoccupation with the Afghans of Orissa and of the different places of Bengal Musa Khan united his allies against Man Singh. So Man Singh had to face a serious situation. Because, now Daud Khan, brother of Musa Khan, Kedar Rai, and other *Zamindars* united under the leadership of Musa Khan on the bank of the river Ichhamati and they jointly and collectively rose against Man Singh and closed the ferries, so that the Mughal army could not move against them. As a result, another indecisive encounter took place on the bank of the river Ichhamati between Man Singh and the combined forces of Musa Khan and his allies⁹⁶. Though, Abul Fazl mentioned that the Mughal army 'defeated the enemy,'⁹⁷ that is, Musa Khan and his allies, in reality, Man Singh gained nothing and Musa Khan and his allies remained where they were.

In 1603 Kedar Rai again created trouble for the Mughals. Now, he joined the Maghs with his own powerful fleet and attacked the Mughal outpost of Srinagar, to which Man Singh had to send relief with artillery. A great battle was fought near Bikrampur, in which Kedar Rai was wounded and captured, but died before he was taken to Man Singh⁹⁸. Thus, passed away one of the powerful and trustworthy allies of Isa Khan and his son Musa Khan and also one of the bonafide members of the *Bara- Bhuiyans*. Before Man Singh could utilise this victory in further pressing on Musa Khan and his allies, however, Badshah Akbar fell seriously ill and summoned his trusted officers back to Agra in March 1605. Man Singh remained there till the death of Badshah Akbar, on 15th October, 1605⁹⁹. So, it is evident that the battle of 1603 was the

last encounter between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Mughal Badshah Akbar. In this battle the Mughal army succeeded in defeating Kedar Rai, but failed to pacify Bengal.

After his accession Mughal Badshah Jahangir sent back Man Singh to Bengal. The latter remained in the province this time for only one year which was uneventful. After his recall there followed two equally short Subahbaries (viceroyalties), those of Qutb al-Din Khan Koka, 1606-1607, and Jahangir Quli Khan, 1607-1608¹⁰⁰. During their period no expedition was sent against the *Bara- Bhuiyans* of Bhati by the Mughals.

From the above discussion it is evident that during the period from 1599 to 1608, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had to face the Mughal onslaughts twice, in 1602 and 1603, during the Subahdari (viceroyalty) of Man Singh. In other words after taking the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by Musa Khan Masnad-i Ala, Man Singh led two expeditions against Bhati. According to Abul Fazl he defeated the enemy, that is, Musa Khan and his allies, extinguished the flames of disturbance in Bengal, pacified Bengal and conquered the whole area and established *thanas* at strategic places¹⁰¹. Jadunath Sarkar also accepts these statements of Abul Fazl as true¹⁰². But the testimony of Abul Fazl is not completely acceptable. Because, later events show that Bhati remained outside Mughal control as it was before and the whole of Bhati is found in the hands of Musa Khan and his allies, that is, in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Infact, Man Singh achieved nothing in Bengal, particularly in Bhati. The only achievement of Man Singh was the murder of Kedar Rai. So, it is seen that like his father Musa Khan also succeeded in checking the Mughal advance in Bengal.

Phase II

The Bara-Bhuiyans Versus Badshah Jahangir's Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti (1608-1612 A.C.)

It has been stated earlier that the battle of 1603 was the last encounter between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Badshah Akbar. The latter died on 15th October, 1605 and prince Salim ascended the throne on 24th October with the title of Nur-ud-Din Muhammad Jahangir¹⁰³. After his accession Badshah Jahangir sent back Man Singh to Bengal. The latter remained there for only one year and it was uneventful. After his recall there followed two equally short Subahdaries, those of Qutb al-Din Khan Koka, 1606-1607, and Jahangir Quli Khan, 1607-1608¹⁰⁴. During their period no expeditions were sent against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati by the Mughals. So, the period from 1603 to 1608, Musa Khan and his allies were free from Mughal onslaught. But the former knew that the offensive against them would soon be resumed by the Mughals. Accordingly, they did not sit idle during these years and they took all possible steps to strengthen their position in order to preserve their independence.

On the receipt of the news of the death of Jahangir Quli Khan, Badshah Jahangir appointed Islam Khan Chishti, then *Subahdar* of Bihar to Bengal on 6th May, 1608 A.C.¹⁰⁵ The new *Subahdar* was young and energetic, being only 38 years of age at that time of his assumption of office, and was determined to establish the Mughal authority over Bengal¹⁰⁶. On receipt of the order, Islam Khan proceeded towards Rajmahal, the then capital of Bengal, and reached there towards the early part of June, 1608¹⁰⁷. On reaching Rajmahal he prepared his plan of operation for the subjugation of Bengal and began preparations for

going to Bhati against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. According to Abdul Karim his plan of operation is as follows:

Firstly, Islam Khan realised that a well-trained, loyal and dutiful armed force was needed to establish Mughal authority in a rebellious province like Bengal. The old officers who proved dishonest and treacherous should be replaced by a new set of honest, loyal and efficient officers.

Secondly, he also realised that the chief obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal was Bhati and her *Bara-Bhuiyans*. So, he decided to march and wage war against Bhati and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Thirdly, Bhati is a low-lying area, full of rivers, streams and canals. The effective means of warfare in Bhati is a strong fleet of war-boats. So, Islam Khan decided to reorganise and strengthen the navy.

Fourthly, the capital city of Rajmahal was situated in the western corner of Bengal, and was far away from the troublous Bhati region. It was not possible to keep the distant places under control from this capital. So, he decided to shift the capital to a centrally situated place.

Fifthly, though Islam Khan realised that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati were the chief obstacles to the establishment of Mughal authority in Bengal, he also did not fail to note the contemporary political geography of Bengal. There were various *Zamindars (Bhuiyans)* to his rear or on his way to Bhati who might attack the Mughal army from the back. So, he took necessary steps to be sure of the allegiance of the *Zamindars (Bhuiyans)* of his rear on his way to Bhati.¹⁰⁸

Drawing up his plan, Islam Khan Chishti sent a representation to Badshah Jahangir in the following words:

“The management of the affairs of this province should receive the attention of the officers of the State. The office of the Diwan should be given to a man of integrity. Ihtimam Khan who is one of the most

efficient officers of the imperial Court, or some one else as competent, should be sent as the chief officer of the fleet and the artillery. All the old officers who proved to be dishonest and treacherous and who are unfit for service in this province should be recalled to the Court.”¹⁰⁹

Badshah Jahangir also accepted the representation and ordered as follows:

“Wazir Khan, the former Diwan of the province, the sons of Msaum Khan, and Lachi Khan Qaqshal who were the leaders of the mischief in that country are to be taken into custody and sent to the imperial Court. Any one of these old officers who takes recourse to his old habits and courses of action against your orders and advice, should be discharged from service. Whoever is wanted by you from the Court, we shall appoint him in that place.”¹¹⁰

Simultaneously, Badshah Jahangir appointed Abul Hasan Shihab Khani (his title is Mutaqid Khan) as *diwan* and Ihtimam Khan as *mir bahr* or admiral of the fleet¹¹¹. Ihtimam Khan was ordered to take with him to Bengal army of the previous Subahdar Raja Man Singh, and the cannons that were brought from Bengal and Rohtas¹¹². These were to be used in the service of Bengal. He was also ordered to carry with him the artillery to Bengal from Rohtas and Chaund¹¹³. Ihtimam Khan was also ordered to take into possession the two big cannons which were brought from Bengal by the wife of Jahangir Quli Khan, the deceased Subahdar. So, it appears that Badshah Jahangir provided Islam Khan with all necessary supports in army, navy and war equipment.¹¹⁴

At Rajmahal, Islam Khan awaited the arrival of the new *diwan* and new admiral (*mir bahr*)¹¹⁵. When Mutaqid Khan, the *diwan*, and Ihtimam Khan¹¹⁶, the *mir bahr* reached Rajmahal, Islam Khan made a review of troops and fleet of boats¹¹⁷. Thus Islam Khan took all possible preparations for resuming the offensive against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati.

Though, the chief sources for the history of Bengal in the reign of Mughal Badshah Jahangir are the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* of Badshah Jahangir and *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan, Badshah Jahangir did not pay due attention to the Mughal campaigns in Bengal and the resistance offered by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati under the leadership of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala during his reign. Even he did not mention the names of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his *Zamindar* allies. Besides, he did not also mention the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' in the *Tuzuk*. Above all, the names of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, Ramchandra of Bakla, Ananta Manikya of Bhulua, Raja Satrajit of Bhushna, Majlis Qutb of Fathabad and many other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) who submitted to the Mughals also did not appear in the *Tuzuk*. For the study of the history of the Mughal campaigns in Bengal and the resistance offered by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati under the leadership of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala during the reign of Mughal Badshah Jahangir, the only contemporary source is the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan. Because, the accounts of the warfare between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals have been discussed in great details only in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. The *Baharistan* gives the impression that Islam Khan correctly realised that the chief obstacle to the Mughal peace in Bangal were the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Although, the Afghan leader Usman Khan (Khwaja Usman) of Bukainagar and other hostile *Zamindars* created troubles for the Mughals, Islam Khan thought that unless the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were suppressed, it would not be possible to suppress Usman Khan¹¹⁸ and other hostile *Zamindars*. So, Islam Khan left Rajmahal with the intention of going to Bhati and to suppress the *Bara-Bhuiyans* first, and his first point of attack was Bhati and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Mirza Nathan Writes:

“After the rainy season he (Islam Khan) would personally march to Bhati in order to punish Musa Khan and the Zaminadars of that region who were raising the head of arrogance due to their false hopes; and he proposed to bring them to their senses from their idle dreams, with the infliction of necessary chastisement”.¹¹⁹ And again

“Departure of the Imperial officers to the expedition of Bhati against Masnad-i-Ala Musa Khan and the twelve famous Bhuyans of Bengal...”¹²⁰

During the stay of Islam Khan at Rajmahal, two important events occurred. The first was a surprise attack on the Mughal *thanah* of Alapsingh (the seat of a big *Pargana* along the right bank of the Brahmaputra in Mymensingh) by Usman Khan of Bukainagar who, captured it and killed the *thanahdar* Sazawal Khan, and occupied that region. Islam Khan took prompt action. He sent a strong force under the command of his brother Shaikh Ghiyas-ud-din to recover the *thanah* (out-post). The latter rendered splendid services and recovered the *thanah* Alapsingh. So, Badshah Jahangir honoured Shaikh Ghiyas-ud-din with promotion of rank and the title of Inayet Khan.¹²¹

The other event was the submission of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore. Just before leaving Rajmahal, Islam Khan received Shaykh Badi, the envoy of Pratapaditya, who came with Sangramaditya, the younger son of Pratapaditya, and with a large gift to Islam Khan. Islam Khan gave him leave to return to Raja Pratapaditya on the agreement that Raja should present himself before Islam Khan at Alaipur with sufficient war equipments to show his loyalty to Mughal Badshah.¹²²

On 7th December, 1608, Islam Khan left Rajmahal with the avowed intention of suppressing the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Bhati was far away from Rajmahal and Islam Khan was going there by river through zigzag way via Ghoraghat. There were the territories of many other *Zamindars* both in his front and rear, he was not sure about their

loyalty¹²³. Because of this, on his way to Bhati, Islam Khan had to send numerous re-connoitering expeditions against some *Zamindars* to ensure undisturbed progress of the Mughal army towards Bhati.

Coming out of Rajmahal, when Islam Khan reached a place in the *Pargana* of Gaur, he despatched a force of two thousand cavalry and four thousand infantry under Shaykh Kamal against Bir Hamir of Bir Bhum, Shams Khan of Pachet and Salim Khan of Hijli. Instructions were given to Shaykh Kamal that if they submitted, they should be given protection and brought to the Subahdar with comfort, but if they took recourse to impertinence, their territories should be conquered, and the *Zamindars* should be brought as prisoners. If they were killed in battle, their heads should be brought to the Subahdar.¹²⁴

First, Shaykh Kamal went to Birbhum, the territory of Bir Hamir, the latter submitted without offering any resistance and came before Shaykh Kamal. Not only that, he also led Shaykh Kamal to Pachet, the territory of Shams Khan. The latter, after a fortnight of hard fighting, was forced to submit. Shaykh Kamal then marched to Hijli against Salim Khan, who offered his submission without fighting¹²⁵. In the meantime, Islam Khan arrived at Alaipur early in 1609A.C. At Alaipur Bir Hamir, Shams Khan and Salim Khan, the *Zamindars* of Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli respectively, arrived in the company of Shakyh Kamal, and tendered personal submission to Islam Khan, who, dealt with them very leniently, allowed them to hold their own territories as *jagirs*, and exempted them from personal service.¹²⁶

After the submission of Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli, there were two other big *Zamindars* in south Bengal, Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore and Raja Satrajit of Bhushna. It has been stated earlier that Pratapaditya sent his envoy and son with presents to the Subahdar at Rajmahal. Then when the Subahdar was crossing the river at Goash, Pratapaditya sent

his petition requesting to know whether he should personally visit the Subahdar, ¹²⁷ during this time, Raja Satrajit of Bhushna also sent his brother with elephants to visit the Subahdar¹²⁸. Islam Khan became sure of the loyalty of Pratapaditya, but probably he was annoyed with Satrajit, because he did not himself come to the Subahdar's camp. So, reaching Alaipur, Islam Khan sent an army against Satrajit under the command of Iftikhar Khan. He was instructed that if Satrajit submitted, he should be given the hope of the grant of his territory as *jagir* to him and he should be brought before Islam Khan, otherwise he should be punished. Satrajit at first contemplated offering some resistance, but when the Mughal forces entered his territory he submitted without any fight. Islam Khan restored to him his lands and enlisted him in the Mughal service. Thereafter he is always found on the Mughal side fighting against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and others.¹²⁹

Islam Khan halted at Alaipur for about two months¹³⁰. From Alaipur, Islam Khan sent Mirza Nathan with an adequate force to crush Mirza Mumin, son of Masum Khan Kabuli, Dariya Khan, son of Khan Alam Bahbudi, and Madhava Rai, the *Zamindar* of Khalsi, one of the allies of Musa Khan, who made a combined attack on the *Pargana* of Sonabazu¹³¹. It may be mentioned here that Ihtimam Khan, the admiral, was given the Jagir of Sonabazu *Pargana* by Islam Khan¹³². When Ihtimam Khan was at Titulia, in the Malda District, he got disquieting news from the revenue collector of the *Pargana* of Chilajuwar¹³³ that the neighbouring *Pargana* of Sonabazu, had been seized, the local agents killed, and Chatmohar, the seat of the agents captured by three *Zamindars* who had a permanent hold over the *Pargana* of Sonabazu- Mirza Mumin, Dariya Khan and Madhava Rai. Ihtimam Khan at first sent a force against the *Zamindars*, but when this proved ineffective, he appealed for help to Islam Khan¹³⁴. So, Islam Khan sent Mirza Nathan

in response to the appeals for help from Ihtimam Khan. Mirza Nathan himself first went to Chilajuwar and then to Chatmohar. Later, Islam Khan sent reinforcement to Mirza Nathan. At the latter's approach, the *Zamindars* left the area and went to Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala at Sonargaon.¹³⁵

It is noteworthy that when Ihtimam Khan was given the *jagir* of Sonabazu *Pargana*, at the same time, Tuqmaq Khan was given the *jagir* of Shahzadpur. It may be remembered that after the conquest of Alapsingh *thana* (*Paragana* in Mymensingh), all the imperial officers at Alapsingh were ordered by Islam Khan to return to their respective *jagirs* and to make their arrangements to proceed to Bhati. Accordingly, Tuqmaq Khan came to his *jagir* in Shahzadpur on the bank of the Karatoya, about 20 miles east of Chatmohar and about 26 miles north-east of Pabna town. He was suddenly attacked by the local *Zamindar* Raja Rai with a large number of war-boats and besieged the fort of Shahzadpur. But ultimately Raja Rai suffered a defeat and was driven away.¹³⁶

Another Mughal officer, Mirak Bahadur Jalair had to face a more severe and organised attack on his *jagir* of Chandpratap made by Binod Rai, *Zamindar* of Chandpratap, an ally of Musa Khan, aided by Mirza Mumin, Dariya Khan and Madhava Rai. The hostile *Zamindars*, with a large force of cavalry, infantry, and a large number of war-boats, fell upon the fort of Chandpratap. Reinforcements coming from Shahzadpur, forced the *Zamindars* to hastily withdraw.¹³⁷

The above mentioned three battles were fought at the *Pargans* of Sonabazu, Shahzadpur and Chandpratap and all three *Parganas* were within the Sarkar Bazuha. Sonabazu and Shahzadpur were situated to the south-east of Pabna. Chatmohar where the first battle was fought was the capital of Masum Khan Kabuli, father of Mirza Mumin.

Pargana Khalsi was situated five miles off Jafarganj, near the confluence of the rivers Padma and Dhaleswari, and the *Pargana* of Chandpratap is in the present Manikganj district, stretching on both sides of the Dhaleswari. These *Parganas* were very near the Bhati of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and Chandpratap was actually within the region of Bhati. Islam Khan did not till then fight against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, he was only preparing himself to go against them. But it may be noticed that Ihtimam Khan and other Mughal officers were given *jagirs* in these places. They were given *jagirs* there either to keep the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under threat or to keep the Mughal officers ready to fight against the *Zamindars*, that is, the allies of Musa Khan. That the *Zamindars* invaded the Mughal *jagirdars* time and again shows that they were alive to the situation, and were prepared to face the impending Mughal attack.¹³⁸

It has already been stated that Islam Khan made his right, left and rear clear of enemies on his way to Bhati. Now he took the initiative to be sure of the attitude of the northern frontier kingdoms of Kuch Bihar and Kamrup. It may be mentioned here that on 2nd March, 1609, Islam Khan left Alaipur and reached Ghoraghat on 2nd June, 1609, through Fathpur¹³⁹, Rana Tandapur¹⁴⁰, Bajrapur¹⁴¹, Shahpur¹⁴² and ¹⁴³Nazirpur¹⁴⁴. After reaching Ghoraghat, Islam Khan sent envoy to the Rajas of Kuch Bihar and Kamrup. Lakshmi Narayan, the Raja of Kuch Bihar expressed his loyalty through Raja Raghunath of Shushang (who had already accepted vassalage) and sent a suitable *Peshkash*. But Parikshit Narayan, the Raja of Kamrup, neither sent any envoy to Islam Khan nor showed signs of co-operation and loyalty. So, Islam Khan despatched an army against the Raja of Kamrup under the command of Shaykh Abdul Wahid. The latter was easily defeated by Parikshit Narayan. As his chief aim at this time was to conquer Bhati, Islam Khan postponed his Kamrup invasion for this time.¹⁴⁵

Islam Khan spent the rainy season of 1609 A.C. at Ghoraghat¹⁴⁶. In the mean time he completed all preparations for the expedition to Bhati. By diplomacy, persuasion, wars and battles, he made north, west and southern Bengal clear of enemies; the *Zamindars* and chiefs there either willingly submitted or were forced to submit. The *Zamindars* of Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli whose territories situated in the south-western corner of Bengal, tendered personal submission to Islam Khan. Raja Satrajit of Bhushna also submitted to the Mughals and he was allowed to go back to his territory and later he was ordered to act jointly with Shaykh Habib-ullah in his expedition against Majlis Qutb of Fathabad (Faridpur)¹⁴⁷. Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore came to tender personal submission to Islam Khan at Bajrapur on his way to Ghoraghat. He was allowed to go back to Jessore and was ordered to send his son Sangramaditya with four hundred war-boats to join the imperial fleet and to stay with the admiral Ihtimam Khan immediately after his return to his kingdom. He was also ordered to proceed by the river Airal Khan to Sripur and Bikrampur to fight against Musa Khan with twenty thousand infantry, one hundred war-boats (to make the total of five hundred) and one thousand maunds of gunpowder, at the time of Islam Khan's expedition to Bhati.¹⁴⁸ Besides, the Mughal army defeated the allies of Musa Khan in the battles of Sarkar Bazuha. Above all, Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar, and Raja Raghunath of Sushang were submitted to the Mughals. Thus, being free from anxieties from all sides, right, left and the rear, Islam Khan came out of Ghoraghat on 15th October, 1609, in his expedition to Bhati.¹⁴⁹

Islam Khan first sent an order to Ihtimam Khan, the admiral, to come to Siyalgarh on the Karatoya with the imperial fleet of war-boats. Ihtimam Khan passed the rainy season with the fleet at *Pargana Amrual* at the confluence of the rivers Jamuna and Atrai. So, he was asked to

come to Siyalgarh through the Kudia Khal. Next Islam Khan sent his trustworthy officers to different places to recall the imperial officers from their respective places and *jagirs* to join him in the expedition to Bhati. Then he sent a large force against Majlis Qutb, *Zamindar* of Fathabad (Faridpur), under his brother Shaykh Habibullah. Mubariz Khan, Bahadur Beg and Buzakhur, and Islam Khan's personal officer Shaykh Ismail were also ordered to accompany Shaykh Habib-ullah. Then he wrote to Raja Satrajit of Bhushna to join Shaykh Habibullah with his navy, artillery and land forces¹⁵⁰. Hence, Islam Khan reached Siyalgarh from Ghoraghat and halted there for a week awaiting the arrival of the fleet under Ihtimam Khan. From Siyalgarh Islam Khan wrote a letter to Ihtimam Khan urging his immediate arrival and himself marched to Shahzadpur. On the other hand, Ihtimam Khan started for Siyalgarh and entered the Kudia Khal with his fleet, but proceeding upto a distance of two stages he found that the water was too shallow. He was neither in a position to go with the boats to Siyalgarh nor was it possible for him to go back to the river Atrai. In this situation Ihtimam Khan consulted with his son Mirza Nathan and decided to act according to his advice. At last Ihtimam Khan and Mirza Nathan reached Siyalgarh with the imperial fleet. From Siyalgarh, Ihtimam Khan went with the imperial fleet to Shahzadpur and met Islam Khan there. At Shahzadpur, the imperialists celebrated the Eid-ul-Fitr festival on 28th December, 1609. The imperialists took about two months and a half to reach Shahzadpur after leaving Ghoraghat on 15th October, 1609.¹⁵¹

At Shahzadpur Islam Khan reviewed the imperial fleet and the personal boats of Ihtimam Khan and the boats of other imperial officers. Mirza Nathan arranged the boats like a moving bridge. Islam Khan and other imperial officers became happy after the review and praised both Ihtimam Khan and his son Mirza Nathan. Islam Khan then marched to

Baliya¹⁵² by land and instructed Ihtimam Khan to proceed at once to that place with the fleet and the artillery. Islam Khan along with the imperial officers reached Baliya in three marches by land route and crossed the river by constructing a bridge with the boats of traders. On the other hand, Ihtimam Khan also proceeded with the fleet and the artillery, but owing to a zigzag course in the rivers he had to spend fifteen days on the way.¹⁵³

At Baliya, Islam Khan took important decisions, that is, he planned a double pronged attack on Musa Khan's position. Firstly, it was decided that Ihtimam Khan and Mirza Nathan would go with the fleet to the *Trimohana* of Khal Jogini¹⁵⁴ and erect forts and halt there and Islam Khan himself would go to the *Mohana* of Katasgarh¹⁵⁵ in order to attack Musa Khan from the west by the way of Jatrapur¹⁵⁶. Secondly, the most important decision taken by Islam Khan was to send a detachment to Dhaka to distract the attention of Musa Khan and to terrorise the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Accordingly, Shaykh Kamal, Tuqmaq Khan and Mirak Bahdur Jalair were sent to Dhaka with twenty war-boats, one thousand musketeers, fifty cannons of small and big size, one hundred maounds of gun powder, one hundred maounds of lead and other necessary requisites for expedition. They reached Dhaka in six marchers and became engaged in construction of the fort of Dhaka. Meanwhile admiral Ihtimam Khan reached the *Trimohana* of Khal Jogini and built three forts on the three mouths of the rivers. From Baliya Islam Khan also reached the *Mohana* of Katasgarh and he ordered Ihtimam Khan to join him there.¹⁵⁷

Now, the Mughal army came face to face with the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, Musa Khan's impregnable fort of Jatrapur lay near Katasgarh. It may be mentioned here that Musa Khan inherited from his father Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala a vast territory comprising a considerable

part of Dhaka District, almost the whole of Mymensingh District and some portions of Tripura, Pabna, Rangpur, Bogra and Dinajpur Districts¹⁵⁸. After the death of his father his cousin Alaul Khan and his younger brothers Daud Khan, Abdullah Khan, Mahmud Khan and Ilyas Khan joined with Musa Khan in his stubborn struggle for independence. Besides, Musa Khan also united his allies against the Mughals and built a number of fortified posts in different places of military importance to defend his territory, from the Mughal attack and to strengthen his position. The fort of Jatrapur is one of the most important fortified posts of Musa Khan and also his main fortified position on the Dhaka-Rajmahal river route. So, the immediate objective of the Mughals is the capture of the fort of Jatrapur and on his arrival at Katasgarh Islam Khan concentrated all his energies on the capture of the fort of Jatrapur. Musa Khan did not sit idle in the face of this danger and he also made preparations to face the Mughals and sent Mirza Mumin, Dariya Khan and Madhava Rai, *Zamindar* of Khalsi to defend the fort of Jatrapur, situated on the Ichhamati, about 30 miles west of Dhaka¹⁵⁹. Musa Khan also told them: "Immediately after the arrival of the imperial army, you would find me at the aforesaid *Mohana* along with the Twelve Bhuyans."¹⁶⁰ Mirza Mumin continued to hold the fort along with Madhava Rai. But there was an untoward incident in the fort of Jatrapur. Owing to some mischief of Dariya Khan, Mirza Mumin and his sons killed him. As a result, there was chaos and confusion in the fort of Jatrapur. After the murder of Dariya Khan, Mirza Mumin came to his senses and he became extremely perplexed at this rash act and he was particularly afraid of Musa Khan. At this time, Madhava Rai, apprehending that Mirza Mumin (out of fear of Musa Khan) could join hand with the imperialists. So, he wrote to Musa Khan about the state of

affairs. On the other hand, the news of chaos in the fort of Jatrapur reached Ihtimam Khan. He represented to Islam Khan saying,

“The death of Dariya Khan created a great confusion in the navy of the Zamindars stationed at Jatrapur. If I am permitted, I will immediately despatch the fleet to Jatrapur. If Mirza Mumin takes recourse to battle and violence, I will bring his head with the aid of the Merciful Lord; otherwise I will present him before the imperial officers as a prisoner with chains on his neck and hands.”¹⁶¹

Although, Mirza Mumin also feigned submission through his envoys, Islam Khan did not agree to the proposal of Ihtimam Khan. Instead he accepted the proposal of Raja Raghunath, *Zamindar* of Susang (who was always with Islam Khan) and formulated the following plan for the campaign. They should construct block houses from the *Mohana* of Katasgarh to the *Mohana* of Jatrapur and keep the land force ready in them for battle, and behind them fleet should be posted by the side of the river and thus the *Mohana* of Jatrapur should be conquered¹⁶². On the other hand, when the letter of Madhava Rai reached Musa Khan, the latter came in great haste with all his allies and with a fleet of seven hundred war-boats consisting of *kusa*, *Jaliya*, *dhura*, *sundara*, *bajra* and *Khelna*. At this time among the allies of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, Alaul Khan (cousin of Musa Khan), Abdullah Khan and Mahmud Khan (younger brothers of Musa Khan), Bahadur Ghazi (of Chaura), Sona Ghazi, Anwar Ghazi (Anwar Khan, *Zamindar* of Baniachang, Sylhet), Shaykh Pir, son of Haji Bhakul, Mirza Mumin, Madhava Rai, *Zamindar* of Khalsi, Binod Rai, *Zamindar* of Chandpratap, Pahlwan, *Zamindar* of Matang, and Haji Shams-ud-din Baghdadi (Chief officer of Musa Kahn) were in Musa Khan's camp. At night Musa Khan went with all his allies to a place called Dakchara¹⁶³ and during the night he constructed in this place a high fort and a deep trench on that bank of the river Padma, in which the Mughal army was

halting. Musa Khan then arranged his artillery and the weapons of defence of the fort and became ready for battle. It seems that Musa Khan's policy was to keep his Jatrapur fort safe from the attack of the Mughal army. Besides, the building of the Dakchara fort on the same bank of the river on which the Mughal army was halting shows that Musa Khan was preparing for an offensive battle¹⁶⁴.

On the other side, Islam Khan came to know of the building of the Dakchara fort by Musa Khan and he realised that Musa Khan was becoming ready for battle. He ordered the admiral to bring the fleet into the Ichamati river under the protection of the bank, so that they might obtain their object without fighting. In the morning Islam Khan, riding on a horse began to inspect the trenches of the imperial army. He first came to his special trench and then inspected the trenches of Abdul Wahid, Khawaja Tahir Mohammad Bakhshi, Ihtimam Khan, Mirza Hasan, Mutaqid Khan Diwan, Iftikhar Khan and all others. After inspecting the trenches, when Islam Khan was having his breakfast (Mirza Nathan says dinner) Musa Khan began to fire cannon. The first shot of Musa Khan broke Islam Khan's all the utensils and the crockery and killed about twenty to thirty of his servants. The second shot wounded the arm of Islam Khan's standard-bearer, who was sitting on an elephant's back. He was hit in such a way that he was shattered to pieces along with the standard. Then a great commotion arose and the battle continued up to mid-day. From the high bank, the Mughal artillery men began to fire and they killed and wounded many a men of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* fleet and several *kusas* of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were sunk by the cannon shots. The son of Madhava Rai and the brother of Binod Rai were killed by the shots of the cannon. After mid-day, Musa Khan and his allies went back to the other side of the river and Islam Khan

returned to his camp. The Mughal officers remained in their trenches up to the next morning.¹⁶⁵

In the following morning, Islam Khan came to inspect the trenches according to his usual practice. Musa Khan also again came forward and began to fire his cannon. Madhava Rai and Binod Rai, who had lost their son and brother respectively, on the previous day, rushed with their boats towards the bank with a spirit of vengeance. Alighting from their boats they offered a hand to hand fight with the Mughal army. Every time the allies of Musa Khan advanced and launched an attack, the Mughal army met it by a counter-attack and drove them back to a considerable distance on the bank of the river. At the time of the third assault, the Mughal army repulsed the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in such a way that they could no longer make any advance and many of them were drowned in the river and many of them were trampled to death by the war elephants of the Maghals. In this context, Mirza Nathan says that the Mughal army achieved a great victory. But, indeed, the battle of Islam Khan with the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was yet indecisive and the Mughal army could not capture the fort of Dakchara and also could not dislodge the *Bara-Bhuiyans* from their position. Both the parties remained in the same position where they were.¹⁶⁶

It may be remembered that coming out of Ghoraghat, Islam Khan sent his brother Shaykh Habibullah to lead an expedition to Fathabad. When the battle of Islam Khan with the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was yet indecisive, Shaykh Habibullah gained a victory over Majlis Qutb of Fathabad. Shaykh Habibullah occupied the *Mohana* of Matibhanga and looted a large territory of Majlis Qutb and besieged the fort of Fathabad. In this situation, Majlis Qutb tried to defend his fort and wrote to Musa Khan thus:

“Up till now, whatever was possible to be done alone by me, has been done. Now I have been brought to this critical situation. If you help me, I will never betray you as long as I live, and I will join the fight. If you do not come to my aid and leave me in neglect, I shall be compelled to surrender to the imperial army and shall have to go forward with the imperial army from this side to Bhati.”¹⁶⁷

Musa Khan on receipt of the letter sent a number of *Bhuiyans* under Mirza Mumin with a force of two hundred fully equipped war-boats to the aid of Majlis Qutb. Mirza Mumin and his force proceeded at mid-night and passing below the trenches of the Mughal army at the other side of the river and attacked the fort of Shaykh Habibullah and the Mughal army and offered a hand to hand fight. But in the meantime, according to previous covenant Raja Satrajit of Bhushna had come to join the Mughal army and had erected three forts in the *Mohana* of Matibhanga. He offered a brave re-sistance to the allies of Musa Khan, that is, to Mirza Mumin and other members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, who also offered a hard battle. For three times, Mirza Mumin attacked the fort of the Mughal army, particularly, that of Raja Satrajit, but all the times the Raja and his soldiers drove them back. When Mirza Mumin and other *Bhuiyans* found that nothing could be accomplished by them, they thought it prudent to return to Musa Khan. So, they returned to Musa Khan by the same route by which they went¹⁶⁸. Therefore, the aid sent by Musa Khan did not accomplish its ends.

Now, Islam Khan decided to occupy the fort of Dakchara by assault. With the approval of the Mughal officers, he appointed Iftikhar Khan to the command of one thousand cavalry, three thousand musketeers and the whole herd of personal and imperial elephants and ordered him to demolish the fort of Dakchara. But the task was not so easy. Because, the Dakchara fort was surrounded on one side by the river and on the other three by a marsh and so it was impossible for the

cavalry to move to the fort. The war-boats also could not approach the fort, because there was no water-way from the place where the Mughal war-boats were kept. At this stage Raja Raghunath of Sushang gave the following advice:

“There is a canal between the trenches of Iftikhar Khan and Mutaqid Khan which has dried up and a large heap of sand has blocked its mouth; if it is dug and the imperial navy is made to enter the river Isamati through this canal then this fort as well as the fort of Jatrapur may be occupied without a battle.”¹⁶⁹

Islam Khan accepted the advice and divided the area of that canal among Mughal officers for excavation. After three days, Islam Khan inspected the progress of the work of excavation, but found that the progress was not satisfactory. Mirza Nathan was then deputed to do the work. He engaged ten thousand boat-men to do the work of excavation and he personally supervised the work and cheered up the boat-men by distributing among them copper coins, rice, *bhang* (Indian hemp) and opium and finished the work within a short time.¹⁷⁰

Now, Musa Khan seriously considered his own position vis-a-vis the Mughal power. He thought that it would not be possible for him to resist the Mughal attack. So, he thought of surrendering himself to Islam Khan and sent envoys to Iftikhar Khan, Ihtimam Khan and Mutaqid Khan with proposals of peace. These three Mughal officers went to a place in between the Mughal trenches and the Dakchara fort of Musa Khan to hold discussion with the latter. Musa Khan also reached that meeting place with his brothers. The Mughal officers gave Musa Khan assurance of his personal safety by touching the Holy Quran. Though, his brothers did not agree, Musa Khan relied on the assurance given by the Mughal officers and accompanied them to Islam Khan's camp. Islam Khan treated him very sympathetically and after dinner and the sprinkling of the otto of roses, he bestowed upon him a robe of honour,

a be-jewelled sword belt, an Iraqi and a Turkish horse, a falcon and sparrow hawk. Thus Islam Khan pacified Musa Khan and gave him leave to return to his camp. Musa Khan returned with a happy heart and urged upon his brothers to come to terms with the Mughals. Next morning Musa Khan again met Islam Khan and returned to his camp. But on the third meeting Musa Khan heard many unpleasant and painful remarks from Islam Khan. The reason was as follows: The husband of a dancing girl was serving under Musa Khan and this man had received certain injury at the hand of Musa Khan. Then the dancing girl came to Islam Khan for redress. The latter, forgetting the high rank of Musa Khan abused him sharply. When Musa Khan returned to his camp, he decided not to go to Islam Khan again; rather he strengthened his fort, renewed his hostility and determined to take revenge on the Mughals.¹⁷¹

Sir Jadunath Sarkar thinks that the dancing girl was that of Islam Khan¹⁷², but in the *Baharistan* it is not clear. As Islam Khan was hot tempered and dictatorial in nature, so it was not improbable that he abused Musa Khan on the complaint against him by a dancing girl¹⁷³. S.N. Bhattacharya thinks otherwise; he says:

“Musa Khan, at this stage, made overtures for peace, obviously for the purpose of gaining time in order to make better preparations for war. He visited Islam Khan’s camp and carried on negotiations for three days. The peace move soon broke down as Islam Khan saw through the designs of Musa Khan and did not take him seriously.”¹⁷⁴

It was not improbable for Musa Khan to feign submission; if he submitted at that time his whole territory and all his forts would have remained in his possession and he could have risen again against the Mughals by gaining strength. But the terms of peace between Islam Khan and Musa Khan are not known in the *Baharistan*, even there is no indication about the terms of agreement. It may be that the terms of

peace were not acceptable to Musa Khan, and so he renewed hostilities.¹⁷⁵

Now, Islam Khan changed his plan, instead of trying to occupy the fort of Dakchara, he now planned to make a night attack on the fort of Jatrapur. While Mirza Nathan was busy in excavating the canal, Islam Khan ordered Iftikhar Khan, Mutaqid Khan and other Mughal officers to proceed to the fort of Dakchara and to go to an eminent place, from where an attack can be launched on the fort of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Then Islam Khan sent orders to Shaykh Kamal at Dhaka to send Mirak Bahadur Jalair to the *Mohana* of Kathauriya¹⁷⁶ with twenty imperial war-boats and to send Tuqmaq Khan to the *Mohana* of Kudaliya¹⁷⁷. Shaykh Kamal was ordered to stay at Dhaka and to make necessary arrangements for its defence. Islam Khan took Abdul Wahid with him and went to the *Mohana* of Kathauriya from Katasgarh. Mirak Bahadur Jalair also reached there with his war-boats. Then Islam Khan began to cross the river Ichamati with the help of those twenty war-boats. As soon as the news of this move of Islam Khan reached Musa Khan, the latter at once rushed to the place with his war-boats. Islam Khan then made his soldiers cross the river on elephant's back and before the arrival of Musa Khan's war-boats, the Mughals went to the other side of the river. The boats of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* then came and began to fire, but it was of no avail. Islam Khan fell upon the fort of Jatrapur. The attack was so surprise that Musa Khan and his allies being unable to stand it, boarded their boats and took to flight and they crossed over to the other side of the river Padma and the fort of Jatrapur was occupied by the Mughals. This happened in early June, 1610A.C.¹⁷⁸

Immediately after the occupation of the fort of Jatrapur, Islam Khan concentrated all his efforts to capture the fort of Dakchara. He ordered Shaykh Abdul Wahid, Mirak Bahadur Jalair, Shir Khan Tarin

and Bayazid Khan Pani to cross the river Ichamati and to besiege the fort of Dakchara. Although, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* opposed them, they were able to cross the river and besiege the fort. In the meantime, Mirza Nathan had completed the excavation of the canal, so it became easy for the Mughal fleet to cross the canal and reach the river. Now, Islam Khan ordered Mirza Nathan to lead the attack on the fort of Dakchara. It may be remembered that Iftikhar Khan and other Mughal officers were staying there from before. But Mirza Nathan led the attack in a new plan. He felt the necessity of advancing with his soldiers and led them towards the trenches of the Mughal officers. He ordered his subordinate officials to lay a heap of three thousand rupees on the ground, and he began to distribute them in handfuls among his wounded soldiers and the relatives of those who had been killed in the battle. Thus his soldiers felt encouraged to advance forward in the face of gun-shots from the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Mirza Nathan began to prepare barricades for their defence on the ground which they had occupied in the first assault, then they made the second assault and prepared barricades for the defence of the ground which they had occupied and then they made the third assault and in this way they proceeded towards the fort of Dakchara. All the while, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* also showered arrows and cannon shots from the ramparts of the fort and from the boats in the river. Now, Mirza Nathan ordered wagons kept on the boats to be brought down, he also kept grass and earth on the boats. One group of boat-men brought grass and another group earth and placed the grass and earth in the wagons and thus made them like walls. The soldiers took their stand under the cover of these artificial walls and continued their attack on the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Although, many of them were killed or wounded, they continued the fight. The Mughal officers, who were staying there for 35 days, remained silent spectators and indifferent to the efforts of Mirza

Nathan. When Islam Khan heard about the indifference of the Mughal officers, he sent men to every Mughal officer urging upon them to cooperate with Mirza Nathan. On the other hand, Musa Khan did not sit idle. Though, his fort was surrounded by deep trench, as additional defensive measures he fixed bamboo-spikes around the fort to serve as barriers to the Mughal army. Thus he tried to make his fort impregnable. In this situation, Mirza Nathan ordered his boat-men to bring five thousand bundles of straw and five thousand basketfuls of earth and they first covered the bamboo-spikes then filled up the trench with earth and straw. Then Mirza Nathan led the final assault with the aid of elephants and elephant drivers. Though, Musa Khan and his allies launched a counter attack, could not long withstand the assault. Many of his men fell in the attempt to save the fort, and at last towards the end of the night he abandoned the fort and withdrew to the other side of the river Padma. The Mughal army demolished the wall of the fort and entered the fort of Dakchara after a siege of more than a month on 15th July, 1610.¹⁷⁹ Thus the Dakchara fort of Musa Khan was occupied by the Mughal army.

The accounts of the occupation of the forts of Jatarpur and Dakchara has been given above on the basis of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. Though, the Mughal army defeated the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the way they resisted the Mughal attack show their indomitable courage and unprecedented war tactics. For example, the location of the fort of Dakchara was very important and it was situated in a strategic place bounded on three sides by marsh and one side by the river and so it was not easily accessible to the Mughal army. Musa Khan deserves credit for selecting such a site for building the fort of Dakchara. As additional defensive measures he fixed bamboo-spikes around the fort, which is also praise-worthy. On the other side, the policy adopted by Mirza

Nathan by filling up the bamboo-spikes and trench with straw and earth also deserves to be praised. Besides, this was an unequal war. Because, on the one side, there was the Subahdar of Bengal with active support of the mighty Mughal Badshah Jahangir and on the other, there were a few *Zamindars* of a part of the Subah. Islam Khan made preparations for the expedition to Bhati for one year and a half, that is, from December 1608 to the middle of 1610. He was assisted by a large number of generals, a large number of cavalry and war-boats. There were twelve thousand boat-men in the fleet of Ihtiman Khan alone. It is not possible to fix the exact number of boats in the Mughal fleet, because the number of imperial boats and those of *mansabdars* is not separately mentioned. But it may be assumed that Islam Khan had with him six to seven hundred boats. While proceeding to Bhati from Rajmahal, Islam Khan had elephants with him. But the number is not given in the *Baharistan*. On his way from Rajmahal to Ghoraghat, the *Zamindars* (who showed their allegiance to Islam Khan) presented Islam Khan with one hundred thirty six elephants and eighty *tangan* (hill ponies) horses. Islam Khan caught thirty two elephants according to Abdul Latif, and one hundred thirty five elephants according to Mirza Nathan, in the kheda operations at Nazirpur. So, it may be assumed that during this time, Islam Khan had with him about two hundred elephants¹⁸⁰. Islam Khan fought against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* with a large number of cavalry, infantry, musketeers, about six to seven hundred war-boats and about two hundred elephants. He had no dearth of war equipments, cannon shots, gun powder and lead. On the other hand, Musa Khan and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had seven hundred war-boats under them. There is no evidence that they had elephants or a large cavalry. They were strong only in navy. But above all they had their indomitable courage and patriotism and love of freedom, with which they resisted the mighty Mughal army for about

three months. There is no comparison to the courage shown by Musa Khan in his first assault. His first shot broke the tent, utensils and crockery of Islam Khan, his standard bearer and twenty to thirty servants were killed and the standard was torn to pieces. What a perfect aim! If Islam Khan was killed at that time, the history of Bengal would have been written in a different manner. ¹⁸¹

With the occupation of the forts of Dakchara and Jatrapur by the Mughals, the first phase of the war between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was over. As a result of this, Islam Khan's route to Dhaka became clear. So, he proceeded to Dhaka with a happy heart for attacking the centre of Musa Khan's power. In the meantime, the Mughals had occupied Fathabad, so, Mubariz Khan came and met Islam Khan on the way. Mubariz Khan was appointed to the charge of the fort of Jatrapur. Islam Khan then reached Kathauriya, where Ilyas Khan, son of Isa Khan, left the company of his brother Musa Khan and surrendered to the Mughals and joined Islam Khan¹⁸². Next morning Islam Khan reached Balra¹⁸³, where he came to know that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had a fort at Kalakupa¹⁸⁴. So, he despatched a large naval force under the command of Mirza Nathan to Kalakupa. Next morning Mirza Nathan reached Kalakupa and found that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had already evacuated that place. So, Kalakupa was occupied by the Mughals without any battle. After reaching Kalakupa, Islam Khan sent Iftikhar Khan to Sherpur Murcha, Bogra, to watch the state of affairs at Ghoraghat and other places of that region, and to keep watch over the movement of Khwaja Usman. Then Subahdar Islam Khan started for Dhaka with Mutaqid Khan, Khwaja Tahir Muhammad Bakhshi and other *Mansabdars*. Before departure, he sent the fleet and the artillery by the river Ichamati under the command of Ihtimam Khan in the following order. Mubariz Khan, Mir Bahadur Jalair, Shir Khan Tarin,

Jahan Khan, Bayazid Khan Pani and Raja Raghunath were sent by the right side of the fleet towards Sripur and Bikrampur under the command of Shaykh Yusuf Makki, brother of Islam Khan. The land force of Ihtimam Khan along with five hundred of his own (Islam Khan's) horsemen were sent by the left side of the fleet towards Kudalia under the command of Shaykh Abdul Wahid. Ihtimam Khan was ordered to proceed to the *Mohana* of Patharghata¹⁸⁵ with great care and vigilance by posting himself in the centre of the fleet and the artillery. Mirza Nathan was to be in the advance reserve. Islam Quli with the fleet of Baz Bahadur was to be in the van and the rear, the right and the left wings were to be formed by the boats of nobles. Ihtimam Khan was ordered to report to Islam Khan on his arrival at Patharghata and to stay there with his fleet and officers till a fresh order arrived from Islam Khan. Next day the Mughal fleet and the land-force encamped at Patharghata.¹⁸⁶

Islam Khan reached Dhaka towards the end of July 1610¹⁸⁷. He realised that until Musa Khan was defeated the conquest of Bhati will remain incomplete and the Mughal authority in Bengal will also be not firmly established. So, he began preparations for the second phase of war against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he settled a fresh plan of military operations and posted his officers at different strategic points. Accordingly, he himself stayed in the fort of Dhaka. Mirak Bahadur Jalair and Shir Khan Tarin were ordered to proceed to Sripur; Mubariz Khan, Bayazid Khan and Jahan Khan Pani were asked to go to Bikrampur. On the other hand, Ihtimam Khan, Shaykh Abdul Wahid and the rest of the officers were ordered to go to Dhaka. When they reached Dhaka, Islam Khan posted Ihtimam Khan and his son Mirza Nathan to take charge of the two forts of Beg Murad Khan, situated on either side of the *Mohana* of Demra Khal¹⁸⁸, where the river Dulay¹⁸⁹

divides into two branches, one flowing towards Khizrpur and the other towards Demra.¹⁹⁰

It may be mentioned here that after the loss of Jatrapur and Dakchara Musa Khan took shelter at Katrabo. Now he made necessary preparations for the second and final phase of war making the river Lakhia as his base of defence. He established small *chawkis* (guard-stations) at Bikrampur and Sripur. Musa Khan himself took position at the mouth of the Bandr Canal, which flowing by Sonargoan and joined the river Lakhia opposite Narayanganj. At present this canal is known as Tribeni Khal. Musa Khan built two forts on each side of the canal and himself took position in one fort and his cousin Alaul Khan was posted at other fort. Musa Khan ordered Mirza Mumin to stay behind him with war-boats. Of his brothers Abdullah Khan was placed in charge of the fortified post at Qadam Rasul, opposite Narayanganj, Daud Khan in charge of Katrabo, their family residence, north of Qadam Rasul, Mahmud Khan in charge of another post at the point where the Dulay joined the Lakhia at Demra four miles above Narayanganj, while Bahadur Ghazi was stationed with 200 war-boats further up the Lakhia, at Chaura one mile north of modern Kaliganj. It appears that Musa Khan laid stress on the defence of the river Lakhia and the town of Sonargaon. But he did not take steps to defend Khizrpur which commanded on the one side the river Lakhia and on the other the Bandar Canal.¹⁹¹

While Musa Khan was thus ready for battle, Islam Khan also re-arranged his land and naval forces. He instructed Ihtimam Khan to stay at the *Mohana* of Demara Khal and Shaykh Kamal and Mirza Nathan were ordered to proceed in advance to Khizrpur and Kumarsar¹⁹². Accordingly, Mirza Nathan with a large land and naval force started with Shaykh Kamal and Mirza Nathan reached Khizrpur and Shaykh Kamal Kumarsar and began to construct forts in their respective places.

Shaykh Kamal built his first fort at Kumarsar and on the second day he raised another wall in the middle and then built a third battlement on the bank and thus strengthened his position. On the other hand, when Mirza Nathan started building his fort, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* came to fight with their fleet and began to fire. The Mughal army also discharged their big cannon which resulted in much casualty on the side of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and some of their boats were sunk. Towards the end of the day Mirza Nathan completed the construction of his fort on the bank of the river. He made the mosque of Khizrpur his head quarters and took necessary steps to protect the fort. After placing the artillery in different positions Mirza Nathan posted his subordinate officers in the following order:- Muhammad Khan Pani was posted at the *Mohana* of Khizrpur, which is the confluence of the rivers Dulay and Lakhia, with five hundred horsemen, and a bridge was constructed at the mouth of the river with *katari* and *maniki* boats of the artillery. On the left of the bridge, Shahbaz Khan Barij and a troop of fifty men were kept in charge of an entrenchment and on their left Shaykh Sulayman Usmani and a group of forty horsemen were posted. Ilahadad Khan Kasi with seventy horsemen was posted behind them. Shaykh Chamru Bakhtiyar with ninety men, Mirza Fath-jang, son of Yul Baba Khan with one hundred and forty men, and Aqa Numan Bakhshi with two hundred horsemen were posted in successive lines behind Ilahadad Khan. Besides, the elephants were kept at a safe distance. It is evident that Mirza Nathan strengthened the *Mohana* of Khizrpur with fort and bridge and by posting the army to defend them. Because, he realised that the battle with Musa Khan and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was imminent and he also correctly realised that in the war Khizrpur would play a very significant role. From Khizrpur the Mughals could attack the *Bara-Bhuiyans* both to the right and left with great success.¹⁹³

From the preparations of Musa Khan and Islam Khan and their posting of army, it appears that Musa Khan only defended the left bank of the river Lakhia and his strategy was defensive, on the other hand, Islam Khan strictly confined himself to the right bank of the river and he took offensive steps. But, though, Musa Khan's strategy was defensive, he did not take steps to defend Khizrpur. By leaving Khizrpur undefended he committed a great mistake. On account of its strategic position he should have held and fortified Khizrpur, because it afforded the link between Katrabo and Chaura on one side and Sonargoan and the Bandar Canal on the other. By allowing the Mughals to hold in possession of Khizrpur, Musa Khan allowed them to take a commanding and vantage position over both wings of his army and naval installations. It will be seen later that from Khizrpur the Mughals attacked the *Bara-Bhuiyans* both to the right and left with great success.

The day following the construction of forts at Khizrpur and Kumarsar, Islam Khan accompanied by Ihtimam Khan came to inspect the forts. First of all, he went to Kumarsar and expressed satisfaction over Shaykh Kamal's arrangements and then he came to Khizrpur to inspect the arrangements of Mirza Nathan. There at Khizrpur, Islam Khan sat in the mosque and held a council of war. There it was decided that Ihtimam Khan should take command of Khizrpur and Mirza Nathan should go to Katrabo against Daud Khan, Shaykh Rukn to Demra Khal against Mahmud Khan, and Abdul Wahid to Chaura against Bahadur Ghazi. Besides, Islam Khan confirmed his previous order appointing Shaykh Kamal at Kumarsar, Tuqmaq Khan at the mouth of Kudaliya, Mirak Bahadur Jalair at Sripur, Jahan Khan and Bayazid Khan Pani at Bikrampur. Thus satisfied, Islam Khan then returned to Dhaka.¹⁹⁴

According to the decision made by Islam Khan, Mirza Nathan reached the west bank of the river Lakhia and built a fort opposite that

of Daud Khan at Katrabo, and excavated deep ditch around it. Islam Khan took Ihtimam Khan with him and went to inspect the fort of Mirza Nathan. As it was the day of the New Year's Festival, Mirza Nathan arranged a dinner for his guests. After dinner Islam Khan stood behind the wall of the fort and inspected the work of the artillery and become highly pleased. Then, Mirza Nathan put before the Subahdar his plan to carry on a sudden night attack on the fort of Katrabo and sought permission of the Subahdar. Islam Khan first hesitated to permit, but as he had confidence on Mirza Nathan, he gave the permission and asked the latter to execute the work in such a way that no fatal misfortune might happen. After this Islam Khan returned to Dhaka, Ihtimam Khan left for Khizrpur and Mirza Nathan proceeded to accomplish his plan.¹⁹⁵

Mirza Nathan held a council of war and discussed the plan of action. As the discussion was going on, a merchant came in a *khelna* boat (half-*kusa*) fleeing from the side of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* camp towards the camp of Mirza Nathan. Some of the guards and watchmen arrested him and brought him before that assembly. Mirza Nathan asked the merchant about the movement of *the Bara-Bhuiyans*. The merchant said that Daud Khan had heard that Bahadur Ghazi has made terms with Abdul Wahid and that he was taking precautions so that Abdul Wahid's army could not cross the river and attack him. Daud Khan was not worried about attack from the side of Mirza Nathan, because he had no sufficient army with him and the Mughal fleet also would not move out of the river Dulay. Mirza Nathan thought that the time was opportune for him to attack, when Daud Khan was not vigilant. So he made his plan for the surprise attack on the position of Daud Khan at Katrabo. Then Mirza Nathan sent news to his father Ihtimam Khan at Khizrpur through the merchant.

Mirza Nathan divided his army into three divisions, one division under Shahbaz Khan Barij was asked to cross the river after midnight with one hundred and forty picked horsemen and three hundred expert infantry. When this division crossed the river, Mirza Nathan himself decided to cross the river on elephant's bank and the men, that is, the swordsmen, of his division about one thousand were asked to cross the river by floating on the plantain tree procured from the region. The third division was posted in the fort. Shahbaz Khan Barij was asked to beat the imperial trumpet and thus forward to the fort of Daud Khan to divert his attention so that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* cannot attack the elephants from the bank of the river. Those posted in the fort were asked to keep watch over the river while Mirza Nathan and his party would cross the river, if the fleet of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* happened to come, they (the army posted in fort) were to attack the fleet by cannon shots. Mirza Nathan led his expedition on 12th March, 1611 A.C. In the meantime Musa Khan became aware of the move. He despatched his war-boats and they arrived at a time when Mirza Nathan was in the middle of the river with his elephants. As Ihtimam Khan was informed of Mirza Nathan's plan he also sent twenty war-boats for the aid of his son and they reached at this critical moment. The army posted in the fort began to fire cannon to the boats of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the boats sent by Ihtimam Khan also attacked the boats of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* from the flank. So, Mirza Nathan and his soldiers reached the other bank of the river safe and led his men towards the side where the clarion was sounded to attack the fort of Daud Khan. A great battle took place and after a hand to hand fight Daud Khan was compelled to evacuate the fort and flee to Musa Khan and the Mughal army occupied the fort of Katrabo.¹⁹⁶

After the victory at Katrabo Mirza Nathan heard that his father Ihtimam Khan had proceeded to the *thana* of Qadam Rasul from

Khizrpur with his whole fleet against Abdullah Khan. Then Mirza Nathan sent a detachment for the defence of Katrabo and ordered his men of the fleet to transport the horses by their own boats as well as by the boats captured from the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Within a very short time two to three hundred horses along with a large number of infantry, musketeers and archers were transported to the other side of the river. Then Mirza Nathan started for Qadam Rasul and arrived at a place near Ihtimam Khan. There he saw that though, the Mughal army won the battle, the fleet pursued the soldiers of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in a disorderly state without permission of the Mughal admiral Ihtimam Khan. When the soldiers of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* found the Mughal fleet in a disorderly state they counter attacked the Mughals. As a result the fleet of Baz Bahadur under Islam Quli was seriously damaged and fell back and came to the trench of Tuqmaq Khan. In this situation Tuqmaq Khan came out with his cavalry and aided the Mughal fleet by shooting arrows. Thus the battle was carried on in co-operation with the Mughal cavalry and the war-boats. But the condition of the Mughal disorderly fleet deteriorated by the counter attack of the soldiers of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. At this time Ihtimam Khan ordered Mirza Nathan to go to the aid of the fleet. The latter decided to attack the fort of Musa Khan and Alaul Khan. Because, he realised that if the fort of Musa Khan was attacked the soldiers of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* would leave this battle and run to the help of their chiefs. He further realised that if the Bandar Canal could be captured than a heavy defeat might be forced upon the fleet of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. So, he suddenly attacked the fort of Musa Khan. When the Mughal elephants arrived near the fort of Musa Khan, he in order to save himself left the fort without offering resistance and fled away. Seeing this, Mirza Mumin also followed Musa Khan on a boat. Mirza Nathan then crossed the Bandar Canal and attacked the fort of

Alaul Khan, who also followed Musa Khan and fled on a boat. But in the meantime, the Bandar Canal had been filled up with the flow-tide of the river and it became difficult for men and horses to cross back. So, Mirza Nathan ordered to draw together the boats left behind by the *Bra-Bhuiyans* and lying about in the canal. These boats were arranged like a bridge and the soldiers were ordered to carry saddles on their heads and shoulders and make the horses swim to the other side of the canal by holding their reins. The infantry also crossed the canal in that way. Seeing this pitiable condition of the Mughals the *Bara-Bhuiyans* again attacked the troops that had already crossed to the other side of the canal. Bayram Beg and Rustam Beg, two Mughal officers, offered a great resistance. But the former was killed and the latter was wounded and many other Mughal soldiers lost their lives. In this situation Mirza Nathan counter attacked the *Bara-Bhuiyans* with soldiers and elephants and defeated them and they took to flight. A large number of boats and artillery of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were seized by the Mughals. Musa Khan withdrew his all brothers and allies to Sonargaon. Mirza Nathan then attacked Sonargaon and occupied the place and many of Musa Khan's belongings fell into his hands. Musa Khan retreated to the island of Ibrahimpur¹⁹⁷, and then he summoned Mirza Mumin from Sonargaon to come to him with all his belongings. Musa Khan's chief officer Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi submitted to Islam Khan and formally handed over Sonargaon to the Mughals in April 1611A.C.¹⁹⁸ In the *Baharistan-i.Ghaybi* there is no account of the warfare during the occupation of Sonargaon by the Mughals. So, it appears that Musa Khan did not make any attempt to defend Sonargaon. He lost his courage and war materials being repeatedly defeated and "with a burning heart and weeping eyes he ran to the Island of Ibrahimpur".¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Musa Khan's brother Daud Khan continued to fight for the recovery of Katrabo. But

the Portuguese pirates made a sudden night attack on his post and killed him unrecognised.²⁰⁰

Though, Musa Khan was very much upset at the death of his brother Daud Khan, he decided to launch another vigorous attack on the Mughals and planned to proceed by building fort after fort. He first occupied a deserted fort built by the king of Arakan, during the time of Subahdar Raja Man Singh. Musa Khan came with all his *Zamindar* allies with a large fleet and began fortifying the fort. Ihtimam Khan, the Mughal admiral, came to know of this and he passed this news to Mirza Nathan. The latter having equipped a large force went to fight against Musa Khan. But after a short skirmish Musa Khan being defeated again retreated to Ibrahimpur. So, he could not achieve his object for this time also.²⁰¹

Islam Khan having received this news sent his Bakhshi Muhammad Zaman to Mirza Nathan with a letter of encouragement. Now, the Subahdar made some official changes and he sent Tuqmaq Khan to Alapsingh to help Ghiyas Khan and Shaykh Rukn was appointed in place of Tuqmaq Khan at the fort of Kudalia. Shaykh Rukn was a drunkard. So, after a week when Musa Khan heard the news of the appointment of Shaykh Rukn in place of Tuqmaq Khan, he decided to attack the fort of Kudalia. Musa Khan brought his boats close to the bank and his soldiers attacked the outpost of Shaykh Rukn and he was about to defeat. At this time, Mirza Nathan came to know of Musa Khan's attack and he came to the aid of Shaykh Rukn. He ordered his cannoniers to discharge the big cannons against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and to keep them out of the Bandar Canal until the arrival of the Mughal imperial fleet. After the arrival of the Mughal fleet the Mughals attacked Musa Khan from three sides. In this situation, Musa Khan left Kudalia canal and attacked the fort of Mirza Nathan. The latter ordered his

matchlock-men to block the bank of the river and not to allow the boats of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* to come to the shore. Then the Mughal army began to shot from their guns like hailstones at the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But the *Bara-Bhuiyans* fought gallantly, they brought their boats to the bank of the river by firing their cannon and pushed the Mughal musketeers back. Meanwhile, Mirza Nathan sent Mirza Fath -jang Uzbek and Mirza Sultan Murad, son of Muhammad Murad Uzbek, with two hundred soldiers to the aid of the musketeers. They arrived at this critical moment and a great battle was fought by both the sides. Mirza Nathan sent another reinforcement of two hundred and fifty soldiers under the command of Shahbaz Khan Barij. On the other hand, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* also exhibited great courage and dexterity. Then Mirza Nathan came forward with his huge elephants and he reached at a time when the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were almost overthrowing the Mughal force. Mirza Nathan then made a fresh attack on the *Bara-Bhuiyans* with the elephants, which turned the course of the battle infavour of the Mughals. Though, Musa Khan and his allies fought vigorously against the Mughals, unfortunately they were defeated and were compelled to retreat again and took shelter in the island of Ibrahimpur.²⁰²

This was Musa Khan's last battle against the Mughals and after this battle he lost his fighting capacity. Infact, the fall of Sonargaon practically marked the end of Musa Khan's resistance. Nevertheless, it is seen that he made three more attempts to recover some of his lost grounds, but each time he was repulsed by the Mughals. Now, Islam Khan realised that he has no more need of sending expeditions against Musa Khan. So, he diverted his attention to elsewhere. It may be remembered here that Abdul Wahid was sent against Bahadur Ghazi at Chaura, where Bahadur Ghazi submitted to the Mughals without offering any resistance. Islam Khan received him well and assigned him

his own territory as his Jagir. But his fleet was impressed into the Mughal imperial service. On the other hand, Majlis Qutb of Fathabad also surrendered to the Mughals and Islam Khan left his territory to him as his *jagir* and his fleet was employed in the Mughal imperial service²⁰³. So, it appears that the defeat of Musa Khan paved the way for the Mughals to subdue the other *Zamindars*.

After the defeat of Musa Khan, Islam Khan sent an expedition against Ananta Manikya of Bhulua. From the point of view of strategy, it was right step taken by Islam Khan. Because, he knew that after the defeat of Musa Khan his next expedition would be directed against Usman Khan (Khwaja Usman) of Bukainagar, so before sending that expedition, he wanted to keep his rear clear of the enemies. On the other hand, though Musa Khan was defeated, he had not yet surrendered and his alliance with Ananta Manikya of Bhulua could not be ruled out. So, Islam Khan arranged to guard the out posts evacuated by Musa Khan and kept his experienced officers like Shaykh Kamal, Mirza Nathan and Shir Khan Tarin in-charge of those posts. While these officers kept on guard against Musa Khan, Islam Khan made preparations to attack Usman Khan and sent a large expedition against Bhulua under the command of Shaykh Abdul-Wahid, assisted by Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi, the chief officer of Musa Khan, who had already submitted to the Mughals, and other Mughal officers. In this situation, Ananta Manikya strongly fortified the fort of Bhulua with the support of the Magh king of Arakan and made an attempt to oppose the Mughal forces on the bank of the Dakatiya²⁰⁴ canal, but being deserted by his chief Minister, Mirza Yusuf Barlas, who came over to the Mughal side, first retreated to his capital Bhulua and then escaped to Arakan. The Mughal forces seized all his elephants and took possession of a large booty. Thus Bhulua was conquered and became a part of the Mughal

territory. The Mughals established two *thanas*, one at Bhulua and the other at Jugdia, on the Bank of the Big Feni River.²⁰⁵

In the mean time, the rainy season started. So, Islam Khan made necessary arrangements for protectiong his *thanas* (military outposts) against the possible attacks of Musa Khan and his allies. But being dispirited by the defeat of Ananta Mahikya and the success of the Mughals, Musa Khan now decided to surrender and opened negotiations with Islam Khan through the mediation of Shaykh Kamal and ultimately he surrendered to Islam Khan in July, 1611 A.C. at Jahangirnagar with all his brothers and *Zamindar* allies (except Anwar Khan of Baniachang and Pahlwan of Matang). After giving much consolation to Musa Khan and his *Zamindar* allies, Islam Khan kept Musa Khan along with his family and all his younger brothers under surveillance. The estates of each of them were given back as their *Jagirs* for their maintenance. Mahmud Khan, the other brother of Musa Khan and all the *Zamindars* were enlisted in the imperial service and they were sent later to join the expedition against Usman Khan of Bukainagar²⁰⁶. With the surrender of Musa Khan the second phase of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals was over. Though, the defeat and surrender of Musa Khan marked the end of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals, Anwar Khan of Baniachang and Pahlwan of Matang two of his allies and bona fide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, still remained to be subdued.

It may be mentioned here that when Musa Khan and his allies submitted to the Mughals, Anwar Khan of Baniachang and Pahlwan of Matang were in their respective territories. They were with Musa Khan at the Dakchara fort but after the first phase of the war, when Musa Khan fortified his defence in Sonargaon and on the river Lakhia, they returned to their respective places and fortified their positions. After the

submission of Musa Khan when Islam Khan sent expedition against Usman Khan of Bukainagar and the Mughal army was proceeding from Hasanpur building fort after fort, Anwar Khan came with his brother Husayn Khan and made submission to Islam Khan and promised to support the Mughals in their attack upon Usman Khan and his partisans²⁰⁷. Because, he found that Musa Khan and his *Zamindar* allies had submitted, and the Mughals had proceed against Usman, so he was despaired and thought it prudent to offer submission. Islam Khan, considered it to be a favourable turn of the events, accepted Anwar Khan's surrender and granted him his whole territory as *jagir*. Islam Khan then sent Anwar Khan to Sylhet under the command of Islam Quli, a slave of Baz Bahadur; Anwar Khan was very much aggrieved at being made subordinate to a slave. When he reached Egara Sindur a letter from Islam Khan came to the effect that Mubariz Khan was appointed to the command of the regiment and Anwar Khan would hold the command till the arrival of Mubariz Khan. But when Mubariz Khan reached Egara Sindur Islam Khan sent another letter saying that as he was himself coming to Tok, Mubariz Khan should stop there and the army should proceed under Islam Quli. So, Anwar Khan again became disturbed at Islam Khan's behaviour. Now, he hatched a conspiracy against the Mughals and he wrote thus to Mahmud Khan (at this time Mahmud Khan was in the Mughal camp), brother of Musa Khan,

“As the whole of the imperial army is engaged in this expedition and the rest is with me and the strength of Islam Khan's force is also known, you do ally yourself with Usman, and securing a solemn covenant from him ask him to come and attack from outside. You, with all the *Zamindars* fall upon the imperial army from within and put them to severe straits till the arrival of Usman, who will slaughter and imprison them. And here, I shall imprison all the *Sardars* of the army and carry them off to Baniachang with me. In short, Ghiyas Khan, immediately on receipt of this news, will fly from Shah Bandar and I will imprison

Islam Khan alive at Dhaka. Musa Khan will also be released with his family and thus the whole of Bhati (Eastern Bengal) will be freed and will again come under the sway of the Zamindars.”²⁰⁸

Accordingly, Mahmud Khan accepted these terms, conspired with the *Zamindars* and sent the news to Usman Khan. The latter also, being satisfied with the words and promises of Mahmud Khan and began preparations for attacking the fort of the Mughals²⁰⁹. This conspiracy may be treated as the last effort of the allies of Musa Khan against the Mughals.

According to the plan, Anwar Khan invited Mubariz Khan, Islam Quli and other Mughal officers to a banquet. Though, Mubariz Khan accepted the invitation, owing to indisposition he did not go. On the other hand, Islam Quli and Raja Rai, *Zamindar* of Shahzadpur, who had submitted to the Mughals earlier, also made excuses for Mubariz Khan's absence and did not go. But Anwar Khan came personally and arrested both Islam Quli and Raja Rai and fled to Baniachang with the captives. In the mean time, Islam Khan came to know of this and got scent of the conspiracy and particularly of the complicity of Musa Khan. So, he immediately sent order to Shaykh Kamal to kill Mahmud Khan and Bahadur Ghazi and imprison the other *Zamindars* who were involved in the conspiracy. He sent Raja Satrajit, *Zamindar* of Bhushna, against Anwar Khan and later Mubariz Khan was also sent against the former. On the other hand, Shaykh Kamal imprisoned Mahmud Khan and Bahadur Ghazi, but without killing them he sent them in chains to Islam Khan, who in the mean time reached Tok. Other *Zamindars* were also imprisoned and kept under trustworthy persons. Islam Khan kept Mahmud Khan and Bahadur Gazi in fetters in safe custody.²¹⁰

Going to Baniachang with the captives Anwar Khan kept them in confinement and himself prepared for battle. Though Raja Satrajit attacked him, could not force him to submit. But when Mubariz Khan

reached their Mughals began the attack with renewed vigour and pressed Anwar Khan hard. Then Anwar Khan made overtures for peace and showing his submissiveness to the Mughals induced them to a cease fire. But his real intention was to gain time and to see the result of the battle between Usman Khan and the Mughals²¹¹. But when he came to know of the Usman Khan's evacuation of the fort of Bukainagar, Anwar Khan thought that he would not be able to resist the Mughals. So, he surrendered to Islam Khan through the mediation of Mubariz Khan and Raja Satrajit. Islam Khan imprisoned Anwar Khan in chains and his brother Husayn Khan was also imprisoned²¹². Subsequently, Islam Khan ordered both Anwar Khan and Alaul Khan (cousin of Musa Khan) to be blinded and both of them were sent to the fort of Rohtas.²¹³

On the other hand, Husayn Khan, brother of Anwar Khan, was always planning to get out of captivity. He prepared bread and sweets with *dhutura* (a poisonous drug) and entertained the guards and the custodians of the prison with them. When the guards became unconscious at night, Husayn Khan came out of the fort of Dhaka and boarded a *khelna* boat at Chandnighat which was kept ready for him by his men and fled to his own territory of Baniachang. Reaching there he killed his wives and daughters and those of his brother Anwar Khan and thus freed from care, he mobilised his fleet and artillery and his people flocked round him. When in the morning, Islam Khan came to know of his escape, he punished the guards and then sent a force of two hundred war-boats against him under the command of Raja Rai, *Zamindar* of Shahzadpur. Reaching Baniachang, Raja Rai thought that Husayn Khan had not yet been able to collect a sufficient force, so he proceeded without caution. In this situation, Husayn Khan sent a few *khelna* and *dingi* boats loaded with troops and instructed them to begin the fight and then to retreat. He himself remained in ambush in a canal with twenty

boats fully equipped. When Raja Rai defeated the small number of boats, which were sent by Husayn Khan earlier, and pursued the fleeing boats in a disorderly way, taking advantage of this Husain Khan attacked Raja Rai severely. Though, Raja Rai was able to flee with his life, his boats and artillery was captured by Husayn Khan. When this news reached Islam Khan, he sent for Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and rebuked him and said: "This is a rose sprung from your garden. Husayn Khan is your product and now you must exert yourself to dispose of him."²¹⁴ Musa Khan became perturbed at these words of Islam Khan and he took a *dao* (big knife) and a piece of *pan* (betel leaf) from Islam Khan, implying his determination to accomplish the task, and sent two hundred war-boats against Husayn Khan under the command of Alu Khan Afghan, a trustworthy officer of Musa Khan. Alu Khan reached Baniachang and attacked Husayan Khan. There was a severe battle and Husayn Khan put up a stiff resistance. Alu Khan himself was killed in the battle, but in the end the soldiers and the officers of Musa Khan won the battle and brought Husayn Khan alive as a captive to Islam Khan. Husayn Khan was again put to strict confinement²¹⁵. Thus Baniachang, one of the strongholds of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was finally captured by the Mughals.

It has been stated above that Anwar Khan of Baniachang surrendered to the Mughals and Islam Khan imprisoned him in chains. Then Islam Khan sent an army under the command of Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi and the three brothers of Mirza Saqi, Baqi and Pattani against Pahlwan, *Zamindar* of Matang and one of the allies of Musa Khan Masnad-i Ala. Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi first invaded Taraf²¹⁶ and achieved victory and then proceeded against Pahlwan of Matang. Pahlwan was a valiant warrior and he had a number of faithful brothers who were also great fighters. A great battle took place between both the

sides. But none could achieve victory. In this situation, Pahlwan suddenly threw a javelin to Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi which struck his chest. Simultaneously, Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi also aimed an arrow at the chest of Pahlwan. Both proved fatal and both the commanders died in the battle field. Then, Qurban Ali, an adopted son of Haji Shamsud-Din Baghdadi collected the troops and put up a strong fight against the troops of Pahlwan. After a severe fight the troops of Pahlwan took to flight²¹⁷. Thus Matang, the last stronghold of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was captured by the Mughal army.

Thus the glorious resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati under the leadership of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala against Mughal aggression came to an end. It has been stated earlier that the war of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* against the mighty Mughal Badshah and his Subahdars was an unequal war. But the way the *Bara-Bhuiyans* resisted the mighty Mughals show their indomitable courage and patriotism. They showed their great skill in the battles of Dakchara and the Bandar Canal. The Mughals were almost going to be defeated in these battles, and, but for the elephants, the Mughals would have been defeated. Though, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were defeated and were forced to submit, they resisted Mughal aggression successfully for one and half year. Their defeat and submission were not inglorious, the glory lies in the fact that none of them submitted to the Mughals without offering stiff battle.

With the defeat and submission of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Islam Khan became free from the threat of the most formidable enemy of the Mughals and turned his attention to the subjugation of Usman Khan of Bakainagar. It may be mentioned here that after Musa Khan's surrender Islam Khan sent an expedition against Usman Khan. The expedition was sent under the chief command of Ghiyas Khan and the leadership of Shaykh Kamal and Shaykh Abdul Wahid. Islam Khan knew that Usman

was a great warrior, so he planned the attack in a grand way. Along with the commanders a number of Mughal officers were sent and they were Qaza Khan alias Mir Sharif Gulabi, Mubariz Khan, Ihtimam Khan, Tuqmaq Khan, Mirak Bahadur Jalair, Mirza Nathan, Mirza Kazim Beg, Hatim Beg, Mirza Kachkana, son of Mirza Yusuf Khan, Abdur Razzak Shirazi, Mirza Quli, Mirza Beg Aymaq, Khuja Asl and Adil Beg. With this army Islam Khan sent his own one thousand cavalry under his personal officer Shaykh Ismail and in addition to the matchlock men of the fleet, he sent five thousand musketeers. In addition to the war-boats of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, three hundred Mughal imperial war-boats were sent with heavy artillery under Ihtimam Khan. Three hundred war elephants were also despatched with the army. After making these preparations, Islam Khan also drew up a plan of operation. Ghiyas Khan was at that time at the *thana* of Alapsingh and he was asked to come to Shah-Bandar²¹⁸ to take the chief command of the army. He was instructed to stay there and Shaykh Kamal and Shaykh Abdul Wahid, with all the officers, *Zamindars (Bhuiyans)* were to begin operations from Hasanpur²¹⁹.

After making all preparations the officers were ordered to march to Hasanpur. In October, 1611 A.C. the Mughal army reached Hasanpur²²⁰. Reaching Hasanpur they began to cut the bank of the river Brahmaputra and made all possible efforts to inundate the plain with the water of the river to such a level that the fleet could be carried with ease to Bukainagar to launch a naval attack on the fort of Usman Khan. But in the mean time, the water of the river began to decrease and within three days and nights, it diminished to such an extent that it became impossible for the fleet to reach Bukainagar. So, the project of naval attack was failed and Islam Khan directed his generals to attack Usman's position by land. According to the instructions of Islam Khan

the Mughal army proceeded to Bukainagar by raising block house or fort after fort. In the mean time, Usman Khan did not sit idle, he often came out with the intention of offering resistance, but feeling the strength of the arms of the fort builders, he fell back. But often the brothers of Usman Khan and other Afghans came and attacked and unable to gain anything they used to return. In this way when the Mughal camp was pitched at the eleventh fort, Usman himself came to oppose, and one of his officers, Tatar Khan Naghir attacked the Mughal camp with boldness. A hot engagement took place between both the sides. But Tatar Khan being mortally wounded, died. With the death of Tatar Khan, his soldiers left the field. The Mughals sent the dead body of Tatar Khan to Usman Khan with due honour and solemnity. When the eighteenth fort was built Usman Khan attacked the Mughals. But after a short skirmish he had to retreat and the Mughals gained the victory. After this, during the month of *Ramazan*, there was a cessation of fighting and both party remained in their respective forts. When the new moon (of the month of *Shawwal*) was sighted, the Mughal trumpet was blown and all the fire arms of the artillery were discharged simultaneously. On the day of the Id, the Mughals got the news that Usman Khan had evacuated the fort of Bukainagar. It so happened that two Afghan chiefs Nasir Khan and Dariya Khan Pani of Tajpur²²¹, who were Usman's associates, left him and joined the Mughals. When Usman Khan came to know of it left Bukainagar and retreated into Sylhet via Laur²²² hills and established himself in a place named Uhar²²³. On the other hand, the Mughal generals Shaykh Kamal and Shaykh Abdul Wahid occupied the vacant fort of Bukainagar on 7th December, 1611 A.C. ²²⁴

After Usman Khan's evacuation of Bukainagar, his brother Malhi and son Mumriz went to Taraf. On the other hand, after the capture of

Bukainagar Islam Khan decided to launch a double campaign, one against Malhi and Mumriz, stationed at the fort of Taraf, and the other against Pahlwan, *Zamindar* of Matang (which has been discussed earlier), as also to expedite the campaign already begun against Anwar Khan, *Zamindar* of Baniachang (It has also been discussed earlier). Islam Khan sent a strong force under the command of Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi and the three brothers Mirza Saqi, Baqi and Pattani and they proceeded to Taraf and reaching there built a fort, with deep trenches and waited there fully equipped for war. They also began to plunder the villages on both sides of the fort. When news of their activities reached Mumriz and Malhi they decided to attack the fort of Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi. So, they marched against the Mughals and attacked the fort of Haji Shams-ud-Din Baghdadi. A serious battle took place between both sides. But in the end the Afghans failed to stand against the Mughal attack and fled away. Thus the Mughals won the battle and occupied the fort of Taraf²²⁵. With this battle the first phase of war against Usman Khan was over. After this battle, Islam Khan postponed the expedition against Usman Khan and turned his attention to Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore and Raja Ram Chandra of Bakla.

Before undertaking the final expedition against Usman Khan of Bukainagar, Islam Khan wanted to secure his hold in the rear, particularly over Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, who had not kept his promise of personally joining with his forces in the campaign against Musa Khan. It may be mentioned here that Pratapaditya was the first among the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal to send an envoy, pledging loyalty, to Subahdar Islam Khan on his arrival at Rajmahal. He sent his younger son Sangramaditya with his envoy Shaykh Badi with a large gift to Islam Khan on the December, 1608, when Islam Khan was about to proceed to Bhati, Pratapaditya's envoy and son met

him. Islam Khan sent them back to their territory with orders that the Raja should present himself before Islam Khan at Alaipur with sufficient equipments as a proof of his loyalty to Mughal Badshah²²⁶. Then, when Islam Khan was crossing the river Ganges or Padma from Goash to Alaipur, the envoy of Pratapaditya submitted a petition before Islam Khan; Pratapaditya wanted to know whether he should come personally to see him²²⁷. Later Pratapaditya himself came and paid his respects to Islam Khan. On 26th April, 1609 A.C., when Islam Khan reached Bajrapur, Pratapaditya came and presented six elephants, some precious articles, camphor, aguru (aloe wood) and about Rs. fifty thousand in cash as his tribute²²⁸. Islam Khan received him cordially and for the sake of drawing attention of the *Zamindars*, and also in consideration of his high position among the *Zamindars* of Berrgal, bestowed honours upon him. On the first day, he was presented with a horse, a grand robe of honour, and a bejewelled sword-belt²²⁹. Then Islam Khan gave leave to Pratapaditya to return to Jessore, but before leaving the Raja entered into a covenant with Islam Khan with the following terms:

- (a) Immediately after his return to his own territory, Pratapaditya would send his son Sangramaditya with four hundred war-boats to join the Mughal fleet and to stay with the Mughal admiral Ihtimam Khan.
- (b) Pratapaditya himself, at the time of Islam Khan's expedition to Bhati, would proceed by the river Andal Khan (Arial Khan) to Sripur and Bikrampur to fight against Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and the other *Zamindars*, with twenty thousand infantry, one hundred war-boats (to make the total of five hundred) and one thousand maunds of gunpowder.²³⁰

On returning to Jessore, Pratapaditya did not keep his word; he did neither send Sangramaditya with war-boats, nor did he proceed himself with infantry, war-boats or gunpowder against Musa Khan as

promised. So, Islam Khan now decided to punish Pratapaditya. Because, he had proved guilty of disloyalty and disobedience as a vassal.

On the other hand, after the surrenders of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Majlis Qutb of Fathabad, Ananta Manikya of Bhulua, and after Usman Khan's evacuation of Bukainagar, Pratapaditya came to his sense²³¹. He realised that Islam Khan was a man of different build, different from the previous Mughal generals, he was not a man to return without subjugating Bengal. Pratapaditya also realised that Islam Khan had come to Bengal with the determination of subjugating it and the Subahdar would soon fall upon himself, and so he tried to amend his past folly. Mirza Nathan says,

“Raja Pratapaditya scrutinized the record of his own actions and apprehending a very dark future for himself, repented very much for his negligence. He sent his son Sangramaditya who came on a previous occasion also, to Islam Khan with eighty boats for imperial service and prayed for pardon for his past errors.”²³²

But Islam Khan had already made up his mind to invade Jessore and to punish Pratapaditya for breaking his promise. He entrusted those boats sent by Pratapaditya to the inspector of buildings and ordered him to wear them off by carrying loads of timbers, thatches, bricks and stones for the buildings and made preparations for an immediate expedition against Pratapaditya²³³. To provide against any surprise move by Usman Khan, Islam Khan kept Shaykh Kamal, Shaykh Abdul Wahid and Other officers posted with a strong force at Egara Sindur, backed by a part of the navy under Ihtimam Khan. Then towards the second week of December, 1611 A.C., Islam Khan sent an expedition against Pratapaditya²³⁴. The chief command of this expedition was given to Islam Khan's brother Ghiyas Khan and he was to be assisted by Mirza Makki, Mirza Nathan and other officers. They were given one thousand picked cavalry, a large force of *Mansabdars* and other officers,

five thousand matchlock-men, three hundred fully equipped war-boats and the fleet of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and other *Zamindars*. The command of the war-boats was given to Mirza Nathan²³⁵. Islam Khan knew that Raja Pratapaditya was a rich and powerful *Zamindar* and he had a large army and navy, so he made adequate preparation before sending the expedition. The only possibility of Pralapaditya's receiving help was from his son-in-law, Raja Ram Chandra of Bakla, the two kingdoms had common border. So, Islam Khan decided to send an expedition against Raja Ram Chandra of Bakla, so that the two Rajas remained busy at the same time and one could not proceed to the help of the other. The chief command of the expedition against Ram Chandra of Bakla was given to Saiyid Hakim.²³⁶

Ghiyas Khan proceeded from Shah Bandar, near Egara Sindur and reaching Alaipur crossed the river Ganges (Padma), then he passed by the river Jalangi and by its branch Bhairab and reaching Mahadpur-Baghwan²³⁷ waited till the arrival of other generals with their army. On the other hand, after defeating Pitambar and Ananta, *Zamindars* of Chilajuwar, and Ilah Baksh, *Zamindar* of Alaipur, Mirza Nathan came and joined Ghiyas Khan and other Mughal officers also came and joined by that time²³⁸. Then the Mughal army marched south-eastwards towards Jessore along the Bhairab and the Ichamati and passing by Bongaon reached the confluence of the rivers Jamuna and Ichamati. Here at Salka²³⁹ Udayaditya, eldest son of Pratapaditya erected a lofty fort to engage the Mughals in a naval battle²⁴⁰. Mirza Nathan gives a good account of Pratapaditya's defensive arrangements against Mughal general Ghiyas Khan at the Salka fort and he says,

“When Ghiyas Khan arrived near the territory of Jessore, Raja Pratapaditya sent his eldest son Udayaditya to a place called Salka with five hundred war-boats under the command of Khwaja Kanwal

(Kamal?) and one thousand horsemen and forty heated elephants under Jamal Khan, son of Qatlu Khan. Udayaditya after his arrival constructed a lofty fort there and the trenches around it were arranged in such a way that one side of the fort became protected by the river, the other two sides by an extensive *jalah* or marsh, and on the forth side a deep ditch was excavated to such an extent that water came out of its bottom. Its breadth was more than that of a rivulet and the water of the river was connected to it by a breach in its bank and it was also joined with the aforesaid *jalah*. Having water on all the four sides of the fort, he took his stand with full strength without any fear. He aranged his fleet in the river and the land-force in the fort.”²⁴¹

In this situation, Ghiyas Khan, in consultation with Mirza Nathan, prepared a plan for attacking Pratapaditya’s fort. They decided to divide the land-force into two regiments and the two to proceed by two banks of the river. In the river the boats will proceed in to rows, keeping contact with the land force. If Udayaditya comes out of the fort, he will be attacked; otherwise the Mughals will try to occupy the fort of Salka by driving away their fleet with the aid of artillery. According to plan, Mirza Nathan was given command over a land force on the other side of the river (left side or the side of the fort). The land force of the right bank of the river was commanded by Ghiyas Khan himself and Lachmi Rajput was given the command over the war-boats. The Mughals advanced according to plan, but Udayaditya did not come out of the fort nor did he let loose his boats to oppose them. The Mughals, therefore, posted ten boats of each row as advance party against the boats of Udayaditya, and ordered the boatmen of the rest to build two forts on both sides of the river facing Udayditya’s fort of Salka. When half of the construction of the forts was accomplished Udayaditya suddenly appeared on the scene and launched a vigorous attack on the Mughals. Leaving Jamal Khan in charge of the garrison and the elephants at Salka fort, he advanced with the entire fleet putting Khwaja Kamal in the van

with the stronger and more powerful war-boats and floating batteries (*ghurabs*), and himself leading the centre with other types of boats²⁴². Consequently, a combined land-cum-naval battle took place on both sides, in which Jamal Khan and Khwaja Kamal on Udayaditya's side, and Mirza Nathan on the Mughal side played prominent parts. Though, the Jessore fleet of war-boats commanded by Khwaja Kamal was much larger and stronger and gained an initial victory over the Mughals, the Mughal land-forces, operating from the river banks, turned the scale in favour of them. Khwaja Kamal fell in course of the fighting. The fall of the latter resulted in a route of the fleet, and Udayaditya hastily fled. Though, Mirza Nathan pursued Udayaditya, could not capture him on the other hand, at the death of Khwaja Kamal and the flight of Udayaditya, Jamal Khan, who was guarding the fort of Salka, also evacuated it and fled with all the elephants. Then the Mughals entered the fort and occupied it.²⁴³

The battle of Salka, which closed the first stage of the campaign against Pratapaditya, had important consequences. On the one hand, though, Pratapaditya engaged his full force in the Salka fort, the defeat of his son Udayaditya in this battle ruined his prospect. On the other hand, the success in this battle encouraged the Mughals and their prospect of winning became brighter²⁴⁴. After the occupation of Salka fort the Mughals spent the night there. Next morning Ghiyas Khan marched with his force and reached the fort of Budhan and encamped there²⁴⁵. Then the Mughals proceeded from Budhan and pitched their camp in a place ahead of it²⁴⁶. In the meantime, the army under Saiyid Hakim, Mirza Nurud-Din and Raja Satrajit, also came to attack Jessore after accomplishing the task of subduing Raja Ram Chandra of Bakla. It may be mentioned here that when Islam Khan sent expedition against Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore he also sent an expedition against Raja

Ram Chandra of Bakla at the same time. In the time of Badshah Akbar, Bakla was ruled by Raja Kandarpa Narayan, the kingdom comprised of a large part of the district of Bakerganj, bounding on the kingdom of Jessore of Pratapaditya. During the time of Islam Khan, Bakla was ruled by Raja Ram Chandra, son of Kandarpa Narayan. He was a tender-aged boy and was the son-in-law of Raja Pratapaditya. Islam Khan sent expedition against Raja Ram Chandra of Bakla under the command of Saiyid Hakim and he was assisted by Saiyid Kasu, Mirza Nurud-Din, Raja Satrajit and Islam Quli. A large fleet, three thousand matchlockmen, twenty famous elephants and other necessary equipments of war were deputed to this expedition. Accordingly, Saiyid Hakim and his force marched against Raja Ram Chandra and when they reached the vicinity of Bakla, Raja Ram Chandra, on the advice of his Brahmin ministers decided to offer resistance and raised a fort opposite the Mughal entrenchments. Though, the mother of the Raja, from the beginning was not agreeable to the proposal of offering resistance, the son without paying heed to the wise counsel of his mother fought courageously for a week. But at last when the fort was captured by the Mughals and they advanced forward, the Raja tried to oppose them again, the mother of the Raja wanted to take poison as a protest against the action of her son. The Raja then came forward and offered submission to the Mughals. When the news of this victory reached Islam Khan, he ordered the officers to send Ram Chandra in charge of Raja Satrajit to Dhaka and asked other officers including the chief, Saiyid Hakim to proceed against Pratapaditya. Saiyid Hakim and other acting according to this order marched for the expedition to Jessore. On the other hand, Raja Satrajit took Ram Chandra to Islam Khan at Dhaka. Islam Khan assigned as much of the territories of Ram Chandra to him as was necessary for the maintenance of his fleet and the rest was

attached to the state. Ram Chandra was put under surveillance. Islam Khan sent Raja Satrajit to join Saiyid Hakim in the expedition to Jessore. It may be assumed that the conquest of Bakla was accomplished in the month of December 1611 A.C.²⁴⁷

Now, Pratapaditya reviewed the situation. His son Udayaditya had been defeated in the battle of Salka and the Mughals had no other obstruction in their way to his capital. Apart from this, the other force under Saiyid Hakim had also arrived after the conquest of Bakla. So, Pratapaditya had no other alternative, but to gird up his loins for another battle by constructing a fort far from the fort of Jessore. But he needed time to construct the new fort, and to dupe the Mughals, he came out by a canal to the fort of Budhan and started negotiations with the Mughals. He thought that while he would thus engage the Mughals in negotiations, construction of his new fort would be complete. He sent his envoy to Mirza Nathan saying, "As your father calls me a son, so I consider you as my brother. I request you to introduce me to Ghiyas Khan."²⁴⁸ So, Mirza Nathan stopped Ghiyas Khan from marching forward and informed him of the representation of Raja Pratapaditya. Ghiyas Khan probably came to know of the real intention of Pratapaditya through spies, so he sent a message to Pratapaditya saying, "I cannot agree to tricks. If you are true to your words then see me to-morrow; otherwise I will march to Jessore the day after to-morrow and will be your guest; you will meet me there."²⁴⁹ Pratapaditya tried to delay a few days more by playing such tricks, but Ghiyas Khan did not give him time. Being sure through the spies, about Pratapaditya's tricks, Ghiyas Khan marched from there on the third day towards Jessore and reached Kharawan Ghat²⁵⁰ the next day.²⁵¹

Pratapaditya raised a very strong fort similar to the fort of Salka at a place between the rivers Jamuna and Kagarghata canal²⁵². Innumerable

boats were kept ready for battle in the river and Pratapaditya himself took his position inside the fort with cannon, a huge army, elephants and infantry and thus prepared himself for the battle. In this situation, Ghiyas Khan laid out a plan for attack in the same manner as he attacked the fort of Salka. He himself proceeded by the left side of the river and asked Mirza Nathan to go by the right side. The war-boats were asked to proceed by the river in two rows, with the support of the land force on the bank. Pratapaditya's fleet was posted at the mouth of the river Jamuna²⁵³ which flows towards Jessore. Early in the morning of a day at the beginning of January 1612 A.C. the Mughals began the battle by an attack on the fleet of Pratapaditya²⁵⁴. As a result a severe battle took place and a large number of men were wounded and killed on both sides. But as the fort was attacked on two sides, by Mirza Nathan on land and by the fleet on water, Pratapaditya failed to resist any more and took to flight. Then the Mughals occupied the fort of Kagarghata.²⁵⁵

This defeat sealed the fate of Pratapaditya. The latter with a dejected heart and weeping eyes fell back to Jessore and joined Udayaditya. But Jamal Khan, his commander-in-chief decided not to rejoin his master. He perceived that the fall of Pratapaditya was imminent, more over his family and belongings were at Kagarghata. So, he left Pratapaditya and joined the Mughals on the other hand, just at this time spies brought the news that the army under Saiyid Hakim had reached. In this situation, in consultation with his son Udayaditya, Pratapaditya decided to give up further resistance and also to tender submission to the Mughals. Accordingly, Pratapaditya lost no time in tendering submission to the Mughal commander Ghiyas Khan at Kagarghata. Then Ghiyas Khan started for Dhaka with Raja Pratapaditya. When Ghiyas Khan reached Dhaka, he presented Raja Pratapaditya before Islam Khan. The latter put Pratapaditya into prison

and the administration of the territory of Jessore was assigned to Ghiyas Khan²⁵⁶. What became of the fate of Pratapaditya after being imprisoned is not mentioned in the *Baharistan* or in any other source. The whole operations against Jessore and Bakla were completed within a month from the second week of December, 1611 A.C. to mid January 1612.²⁵⁷

Islam Khan now turned his attention to the final subjugation of Usman Khan. It may be mentioned here that after having withdrawn from Bukainagar the latter had taken his position in Uhar. On the other hand, after the capture of Bakainagar dissension appeared among the Mughal officers and Islam Khan realised that Usman Khan could not be pursued and defeated due to weakness of leadership and dissension in the Mughal army²⁵⁸. Infact, there was no senior Mughal officer in Bengal at that time, all were almost of similar rank, and the Mughal officers had reservation to serve under the Subahdar's personal officers²⁵⁹. So, Islam Khan made a representation to Badshah Jahangir to send Shujat Khan²⁶⁰ to Bengal²⁶¹. Badshah Jahangir accepted his appeal and recalled Shujat Khan, who was in the Deccan and sent him to Bengal. Shujat Khan took along with him his sons and brothers; Kishwar Khan (son of Qutb-ud-din Khan Koka, a former Subahdar of Bengal and cousin of Islam Khan) from Rohtas; Qasim Khan (brother of Islam Khan) from Monghyr and came to Bengal. Others who came to Bangal with Shujat Khan were Mukarram Khan and his other brothers (sons of Muazzam Khan), Shaykh Achha and Saiyid Adam.²⁶²

When Shujat Khan reached Dacca with his sons and brothers and other officers, Islam Khan received them cordially and then sat together to draw a plan of operation against Usman Khan. Islam Khan asked the opinion of all and all agreed to send an envoy to Usman with a letter asking him to surrender and thus to avert war. He was told that

“The well-being of both the worlds consisted in this that, keeping aside his self-conceit and arrogance, he should make himself eternally happy by being loyal to the Court of the protector of the world. And he should not deceive himself by hazarding the lives and properties of so many thousands of people.”²⁶³

Usman sent spirited reply and said:

“In spite of all my pride, after tasting many vicissitudes of fortune, I have retired to a corner. If I am allowed to stay in this corner of contentment it is well and good. If, on the other hand, you desire to taste the trials of battle by compelling me to move, and not satisfied with all your territories, you want to seize this corner of mine also, and bring about a war, then only two ways will be left open. You win, if fortune helps you; on the other hand, if I am favoured by fortune I shall see where it leads to.”²⁶⁴

Receiving this reply, Islam Khan began preparations to send expedition against Usman Khan. But he realised that it would be impolitic to send expedition against Usman alone, simultaneously an expedition should also be sent against Bayazid Kararami of Sylhet, another Afghan leader²⁶⁵. It has been stated earlier that after evacuating Bukainagar, Usman established himself at Uhar in southern Sylhet, but northern Sylhet was at that time under Bayazid Kararani and his brothers. In the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, the political geography of Sylhet was as follows: during this time North Sylhet was under Bayazid Kararani, south Sylhet was under Usman Khan, Baniachang was under Anwar Khan (one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*), Taraf was under Usman’s son Mumriz and brother Malhi and towards the east of Taraf, Matang was under Pahlwan (one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*). It has been discussed earlier that Anwar Khan surrendered to the Mughals and he was blinded and sent to the fort of Rohtas, Pahlwan was killed in battle by Haji Shams-ud-din Baghdadi at the order of Islam Khan and Mumriz and Malhi were also defeated by Haji Shams-ud-din Baghdadi. So, Usman Khan, his sons and brothers and Bayazid Kararani

remained to be subdued. Islam Khan also realised that both these powers should be attacked simultaneously so that one could not go to the aid of the other.

So, Islam Khan planned two expeditions, one to be led by Shujat Khan against Usman and the other to be led by Ghiyas Khan against Bayazid Kararani. The following officers were attached to Shujat Khan: Mutakid Khan Diwan, Iftikhar Khan, Kishwar Khan, Saiyid Adam, Shaykh Bayizid, the elder brother of Shujat Khan, Shaykh Achha, Saiyid Husayni, Mirza Qasim Khazanchi, Tatar Khan Miwati, Shaykh Ashraf Hansiwal, Mirza Akbar Quli, Mirza Beg, Shaykh Qasim, son of Shujat Khan, Shaykh Isa, nephew of Shujat Khan, Shaykh Mumin, son of Shaykh Ambiya, Shaykh Idris, son of Shaykh Maruf, Shaykh Masum, Sabit Khan and Mustafa, sons of Nasib Khan Turkman, Shaykh Farid Dana and Mirza Nathan. They were given five hundred cavalry of Islam Khan and four thousand matchlock-men. Besides, the elephant force of Ihtiman Khan, twenty elephants of the Mughal imperial stable were attached to them. The whole Mughal imperial fleet and artillery in charge of Ihtiman Khan were also despatched in aid of the army. On the other hand, the officers who were ordered to accompany Ghiyas Khan were Shaykh Kamal, Mubariz Khan, Tuqmaq Khan, Mirak Bahadur Jalair and Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi. This party was given a large number of the foot soldiers of the nobles and one thousand cavalry of Islam Khan, four thousand matchlock-men, one hundred Mughal imperial elephants and also the fleet of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Mir Ali Beg was appointed *bakhshi* of this force²⁶⁶. It was decided that both chief commanders would depart from Khizrpur at the same time. But Ghiyas Khan was diffident of himself and expressed his inability to command the army, so the command of the expedition against Bayazid Kararani was given to Shaykh Kamal.²⁶⁷

Shujat Khan and his officers and fleet left Khizrpur and first went to Egara Sindur and from there they went to Sarail. Then the army marched forward and reached Taraf and halted there for a day for vigilance and precaution. Here Shujat Khan left a regiment for keeping guard in the rear. Then the army proceeded further and pitched their camp below the mountain and the pass of Tupia²⁶⁸. The first engagement with a Usman Khan was expected at this strategic point as it was being guarded by Khwaja Wali, brother of Usman Khan. Hence Shujat Khan thought it expedient to raise a strong fort below the pass and to guard it with vigilance so that Khwaja Wali, who was staying at the fort of Tupia, might not come down by any trick. Mirza Nathan was entrusted with the task and he completed the construction of the fort with deep trenches around. Big cannons were posted on its wall and towers and he remained ready for battle during the whole night. Towards the end of the night, Mirza Nathan sent a detachment of his troops to terrorise Khwaja Wali and his men. But they brought the news that Khwaja Wali had already left the fort of Tupia and had gone to join his brother Usman Khan. As a result the Mughals easily occupied the vacant fort of Tupia. Shujat Khan halted for a day at the fort of Tupia for celebrating the festival of Id-i-Qurban, that is, Id-al-Adha. On 4th February, 1612 A.C. the Mughal army resumed their march forward from the fort of Tupia.²⁶⁹

While the Mughal army was staying at the fort of Tupia, Mirza Hasan Mashhadi came from Islam Khan with a plan for the battle order of the Mughal army in their final battle with Usman. The Mughals prepared the battle order as follows: The command of the centre was entrusted to Shujat Khan along with Mutaqid Khan and Ihtimam Khan, the command of the vanguard was given to Mirza Nathan aided by Saiyid Adam, Saiyid Husayni, Shaykh Achha, Mustafa and others, the command of the right wing was entrusted to Iftikhar Khan with his own

troops, the command of the left wing was given to Kishwar Khan with his own men and the command of the advance reserve was given to Shaykh Qasim, son of Shujat Khan. Having thus formed the battle order the Mughals resumed their march. At the news of the advance of the Mughal army towards his capital, Usman marched forward to face them in the following order. He himself led the centre with a force of 2000 cavalry, 5000 infantry and forty elephants. Khwaja Wali, younger brother of Usman, was placed on the left wing with 1000 cavalry, 2000 infantry and thirty elephants and Shir Maydan, a slave of Usman, was given the command of the right wing with a force of 700 cavalry, 1000 infantry and 20 elephants. The vanguard was assigned to his two brothers Khwaja Malhi and Khwaja Ibrahim, and Khwaja Daud, son of his elder brother Khwaja Sulaiman, with a force of 1500 cavalry, 2000 infantry and 50 elephants. From his capital Uhar, Usman marched and reached Dawlambapur²⁷⁰ and pitched his camp there. On the other hand, the Mughal army pitched their camp at a distance of half a *kos* from those of Usman.²⁷¹

When both the parties were thus ready for battle the Mughals opened the attack on the right wing of Usman under Shir Maydan on 12 March, 1612A.C.²⁷² As a result a great battle took place between Usman and the Mughals. At the initial stage of the battle Usman Khan and his men displayed their valour and proved their superiority against the Mughal army. But at the point of victory Usman Khan was mortally wounded by an arrow which passed through his left eye into the brain. The arrow was shot by Shaykh Abdul Jalil, a devoted soldier of Iftikhar Khan, the commander of the Mughal right wing. Usman Khan also succeeded in killing his assailant, but he soon died on the battle field. His son Mumriz quickly carried his dead father to the camp, kept the news of his death carefully concealed and continued the battle

successfully till the end of the day. When the Mughals returned to their camp at night they were still unaware of the death of Usman Khan and spent the night with much vigilance and anxiety for the coming day as their loss in men and officers was heavy. Infact, with the death of Usman the life and soul of the Afghan resistance was gone. In the Afghan camp the sons and brothers of Usman, along with other leading nobles, decided to withdraw quietly to the capital and to reorganise themselves under the leadership of Usman's son Mumriz for renewing the battle. Accordingly they left the field with there forces after mid-height. In the morning the Mughals found that the Afghans had retreated. As the fate of Usman was not yet known, and the Mughals were very much weakened by the previous day's fighting, Shujat Khan did not want to undertake an immediate pursuit. But the task for the Mughals was made easier by the dissenssions which soon developed among the Afghans. Wali, brother of Usman Khan, aspired after the leadership and refused to cooperate with Mumriz. In the meantime, fresh reinforcements having arrived, Shujat Khan advanced towards the Afghan capital Uhar. As he approached it, negotiations were opened by Wali Mandu Khel, Usman's minister, and on 14 March 1612 A.C. Usman's brothers Khwaja Wali, Khwaja Malhi and Khwaja Ibrahim and Usman's sons Khwaja Mumriz and Khwaja Yakub and Usman's nephew Khwaja Daud, together with other nobles tendered their submission to Shujat Khan. Thus the battle of Dawlambapur though began well for the Afghans, ultimately ended in disaster to them. Shujat Khan posted troops at Uhar, made arrangements for the administration of the territory, and then taking the Afghan leaders with him started for Dacca where he reached on 8 April 1612 A.C.²⁷³ Islam Khan kept Usman's brothers and sons in confinement and sent a detailed report about the campaign and victory to Badshah Jahangir who was much

happy and relieved to know about Usman Khan's final defeat and death. Badshah Jahangir records in his memoirs:

“When the joyful news reached in Agra this supplicant at the throne of Allah, he performed the prostrations of gratitude, and recognized that the driving away of this description of enemy was brought about simply through the unstinted mercy of the Almighty Giver.”²⁷⁴

It has been stated earlier that the day Shujat Khan left Khizrpur to march against Usman Khan, Shaykh Kamal also left Khizrpur to march against Bayazid Kararani of Sylhet. After marching with great care and vigilance, Shaykh Kamal reached the vicinity of Sylhet. While marching he plundered and pillaged the villages till he arrived at the bank of the river Surma which flows by the side of Sylhet. As the Mughal forces approached Bayazid Kararani's capital Sylhet he sent his younger brother Yaqub with a strong force to oppose the Mughals. Yaqub erected a fort on the bank of the river Surma. At this news Shaykh Kamal despatched a contingent under Raja Satrajit, the *Zamindar* of Bhushna, to make a fort on the bank of the river Surma, on the opposite side of the fort of Yaqub and in front of Kadamtala²⁷⁵ which was outside the town of Sylhet, and to take the fort of Yaqub by assault. Accordingly, Satrajit completed the construction of the fort and after a week's continuous fighting the Mughal forces succeeded in capturing the fort of Yaqub. The latter ran to his brother Bayazid Kararani who was guarding another fort. But soon Yaqub received reinforcements, from the Raja of Kachar who sent a large force to the aid of Bayazid. So, Yaqub renewed his onslaught on the Mughals and drove them out of the fort with heavy loss. Some more fightings followed in which the Mughals were being successively beaten back. At this stage the news of Usman's death and the surrender of his sons and brothers reached Sylhet. This completely dispirited Bayazid Kararani and his men.

Bayazid now begged for peace and handed over his elephants to Shaykh Kamal, and also proposed to accompany him to Dacca to tender submission to Islam Khan. Shaykh Kamal accepted the offer and after placing an officer and a contingent of force there, returned to Dacca, bringing with him Bayazid, his brother Yaqub and other Afghan chiefs. Shaykh Kamal reached Dacca by the middle of April, 1612 A.C.²⁷⁶ Islam Khan kept Bayazid, his brother and the other Afghan chiefs in close custody. With the submission of Bayazid Kararani the whole of Sylhet came under the authority of the Mughals and the Mughal supremacy was established over almost the whole of Bengal.

In the light of the above discussion it may be concluded here that Islam Khan was able to remove almost all obstacles easily in the way of Mughal advancement in Bengal by March, 1612 A.C. after the defeat of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Musa Khan.

Section III

The Bara-Bhuiyans and the Mughals: A Study of their relative advantages and disadvantages

It would not be an exaggeration to mention here that the war of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* against the mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar and Jahangir and their Subahdars was an unequal war. Because, on the one side, there were the Subahdars of Bengal with active support of the mighty Mughal Badsha Akbar and Jahangir and on the other, there were a few *Zamindars* of a part of the *Subah*. Besides, there was a large number of generals, a large number of cavalry, war-boats and war-elephants. Under the Mughal Subahdars there were twelve thousand boat-men in the fleet of Mughal admiral Ihtimam Khan alone. It is not possible to fix the exact number of boats in the Mughal imperial fleet, because the number of imperial boats and those of *Mansabdars* is not separately mentioned. But it may be assumed that during the reign of Badshah Jahangir Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti had with him six to seven hundred war boats. While proceeding to Bhati from Rajmahal, Islam Khan had elephants with him. But the number is not given in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. On his way from Rajmahal to Ghoraghat, the *Zamindars* (who showed their allegiance to Islam Khan) presented Islam Khan with one hundred thirty six elephants. Islam Khan caught thirty two elephants according to Abdul Latif and one hundred thirty five elephants according to Mirza Nathan, in the kheda operations at Nazirpur. So, it may be assumed that Islam Khan had with him about two hundred elephants²⁷⁷. In a word, the Mughals fought against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* with a large number of cavalry, infantry, musketeers, about six to seven hundred war-boats and about two hundred elephants. The Mughals had no dearth of war equipments, cannon shots, gun

powder and lead. Besides, the Mughal Subahdars, many Mughal generals were also seen fighting against the *Bara-Bhuiyas*. During the time of Mughal Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan notable Mughal generals were Shah Bardi and Muhammad Quli, during the time of Shabaz Khan, Tarsun Khan, Muhibb Ali Khan and Shah Quli Khan Mahram, during the time of Man Singh, his sons Himmat Singh and Durign Singh and Jajhar Khan and Fath Khan Sur and during the time of Islam Khan Chishti, admiral Ithimam Khan, Mirza Nathan, Mutaqid Khan, Abdul Wahed, Ghyias Khan, Shaykh Kamal and Shujat Khan. Apart from these, there were many generals in the Mughal army. On the other hand, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* did not have generals like the Mughal Subahdars they themselves acted as generals. It is not known whether the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had cavalry or war elephants. But they had a fleet of seven hundred war-boats²⁷⁸. Above all, Mughal Badshah Akbar and Jahangir are seen very often taking necessary steps for enhancing the strength of the Mughal Subahdars. It is noteworthy here that after the return of Shabaz Khan's futile Bhati campaign in 1584, Badshah Akbar directed Said Khan and other Mughal *Zamindars* of Bengal and Bihar in this regard that they should work together in order to subjugate Isa Khan, the chief of Bhati and the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Apart from this, Badshah Akbar sent Raja Todar Mal, Muttalib Khan, Sayid Jamal Bakhtiyar and other able officers in aid of Shahbaz Khan²⁷⁹. It is seen that Badshah Jahangir also sent reinforcements in aid of Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti to subjugate Musa Khan and his allies the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. On the other side, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had no source to get such additional help. Therefore, in terms of wealth, manpower and war equipments the Mughals were relatively in advantageous position than the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But despite that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had some sorts of geo-strategic advantages which enabled them to resist the Mughal aggression

for more than three decades effectively. It is noteworthy here that inspite of having abundant of wealth, manpower and war-equipments, the Mughal army had to face many adversaries fighting against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the latter made proper use of the adversaries of their opponents.

At the very outset the Mughal army faced natural barriers in their campaigns against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, the innumerable rivers, marshes and swamps of Bengal at that time acted as the main obstacle in the way of Mughal campaigns coming from north India. The Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and their innumerable tributaries and distributaries strengthened the defence of Bengal, specially of Eastern Bengal, that is, the region of Bhati. The region watered and surrounded by these three great rivers and their numerous branches constituted Bhati and the main stronghold of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was also stationed here. In the rainy season these rivers specially the Ganges and the Brahmaputra became dreadful and it was not easy to cross and attack or defeat the *Bara-Bhuiyans* on the part of the Mughals. Besides, the Mughals were then not well acquainted with the rivers and the routes of Eastern Bengal. On the other hand, as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati, which was full of rivers, marshes and swamps, every thing of this region was at their fingertips and it was somewhat easy for them to resist the Mughal attack. Secondly, it was well known that the people of Northern India were frightened of the climate and rains of Bengal. The Mughals were no exception to this. Many Subahdars and soldiers among the Mughals did not like to serve and stay in Bengal. In this context some events can be mentioned. After the capture of Gaur, Badshah Humayun appointed Zahid Beg as the governor of Bengal. Far from being grateful to the Badshah for appointment to such a high office in a prosperous province, Zahid Beg said, "What! could Your Majesty

find no other place to kill me than in Bengal.”²⁸⁰ It is also known that as Khan-i-Azam, Subahdar of Bengal, disliked the climate of Bengal, he made an appeal to Badshah Akbar to transfer him elsewhere. Badshah Akbar accepted his appeal and he was replaced by Shahbaz Khan²⁸¹. Apart from this, Raja Man Singh was also frightened of the climate of Bengal²⁸². Even the Mughal soldiers grumbled at going to Bengal. So, Badshah Akbar increased by 100 percent the pay of the soldiers serving in Bengal²⁸³. In this context, Abul Fazl says, “...because that country is by its climate inimical to horses, and some parts of it also are injurious to men...”²⁸⁴ So, it is clear that the Mughal Subahdars and soldiers were frightened of the climate of Bengal. There were also some reasons to be frightened of the climate of Bengal. The Mughals coming from north India were not acquainted with the long rainy season the swift flowing rivers, travelling by boat etc. of this country and they were not also accustomed to live under such conditions. Because, they were for generations accustomed to live under the conditions of dry climate, and were quite naturally afraid of living in the rainy and wet climate of this province. Above all, the epidemic of this province was also a cause of the frightened of the Mughals. Because, it is known that a great plague broke out in Gaur at the time of the viceroyalty of Munim Khan in 1575A.C. and this epidemic carried away a large number of Mughal generals, officers and soldiers. Besides, during the viceroyalty of Shahbaz Khan a large number of Mughal soldiers were also died due to an epidemic²⁸⁵. Naturally, these deaths arouse horror in the minds of Mughal soldiers. The horror of Bengal climate dejected the Mughal soldiers and it was undoubtedly an advantage for the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Thirdly, the main strength of the Mughal army was their cavalry. But the region of Bhati full of rivers and channels, swamps and marshes, trees and shrubs was not favourable for the easy movement of the Mughal

cavalry. Therefore, in most cases the Mughal army had to fight against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in naval-warfare instead of land-warfare. But the Mughal army did not gain success in naval warfare against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because of the existence of the rivers and waters all around, the people of this land naturally became expert in boatmanship and naval-warfare, that is why it was possible on the part of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* to build a strong fleet. Apart from this, the soldiers and sailors of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* could move swiftly in the waters, attack the Mughal army at the vantage points and easily score the victory against them, who had little experience of the boatmanship and naval-warfare. Above all, for here are so many islands the naval soldiers of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* could easily flee from one to another, that is why, it was not possible for the Mughals to trace them. So, it is seen that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan were able to defeat miserably the Mughal admiral Shah Bardi, Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan, Shahbaz Khan and general Durjan Singh in the naval warfare in 1575, 1578, 1584 and 1597 A.C. successively. Consequently, the Mughals could not establish their authority over the whole of Bengal for more than three decades, that is, from 1576-1612 A.C. Fourthly, Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, was one of the illustrious warriors and generals of that time. In military organisation, generalship and chivalry, he surpassed even the best generals of Badshah Akbar, such as Khan-i-Jahan, Shahbaz Khan, Sadiq Khan and Man Singh. He cleverly built up a military confederacy of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under his leadership and inspired them to fight against the mighty Mughals for the independence of their homeland. Consequently, they fought courageously, defying the Mughal authority in the province for many years. Moreover, Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the son of Isa Khan, who took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance after the death of his father, was

undoubtedly the worthy successor of his father and he inherited his father's ability, ambition and military talents. Musa Khan was understandably a great military organiser and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* fought against the mighty Mughals under his inspiration and guidance and gallantly checked the Mughal advance in Bengal for more than a decade during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. Fifthly, the army of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was well-organised and well disciplined in comparison to the Mughal army. Because, it is often seen that there were dissensions and disunity among the Mughal Subahdars and the other officers. In this context, it may be mentioned about the dissensions between Subahdar Shahbaz Khan and other Mughal officers, Shahbaz Khan and Sadiq Khan and between Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti and other Mughal officers. As to the dissension between Subahdar Shahbaz Khan and other Mughal officers Abul Fazl says,

“It was a time when both parties (Shahbaz and his officers) should have lighted the lamp of discernment, and have practiced conciliatory measures. But from somnolences of intellect, there was an increase of blindness, and arrogance rose high. From self-conceit Shahbaz K. vexed people, and his officers snapped the thread of moderation and behaved in a silly manner.”²⁸⁶

He further says,

“The officers from short-sightedness saw their gain in what was their loss, and thought that the defeat of Shahbaz K. would be an advantage to themselves. The first to go off without fighting was Muhibb Ali K. Every one left his place and went a roadless road ... Shahbaz K. awoke from his sleep of haughtiness and made some effort to win the affections of his officers, but misplaced repentance is of no avail. He was obliged to march for tanda.”²⁸⁷

Because, of the dissension between Shahbaz Khan and Sadiq Khan, Badshah Akbar sent Khwaja Sulaiman to Bengal to make understand them. In his connection Abul Fazl says,

“... the Bengal officers out of conceit and selfishness severed the thread of singleness of heart. Sadiq went off with some men in one direction, and Shahbaz went off in another... They withdrew their hands from work and indulged in mutual animosity. Khwaja Sulaiman was sent to them from court to give them advice, and an order was given that it was not right to do one work in two divisions.”²⁸⁸

So, it is seen that there were dissensions among the Mughal officers during the reign of Badshah Akbar. The reign of Badshah Jahangir also marked indiscipline and dissension in the Mughal camp in Bengal. Mutual jealousies among the Mughal officers hampered to a considerable extent the progress of the Mughal arms against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. The inordinate pride and arrogance of Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti also caused much trouble in the Mughal camp during the early years of Badshah Jahangir’s reign. In the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Mirza Nathan frequently mentioned about the dissension and disunity among the Mughal officers under the following captions; “Quarrel between Nathan and Ilahyar”, “Disagreement between Ihtimam and Nathan”, “Islam Khan’s displeasure on Ihtimam Khan”, “Dispute between Nathan and Iftikhar”, “Calumny against Ihtimam Khan” and “Discord among the imperial officers.”²⁸⁹ Therefore, it is evident that there were dissensions and disunity among the Mughal officers, which was undoubtedly an additional advantage for the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Sixthly, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* had indomitable courage, valour, the ability of the innovation of most various war tactics and above all they were fired with patriotic zeal. This is why, inspite of having relatively limited resources they never turned back to fight against the Mighty Mughals. Above all, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the *Bara-Bhuiynas* obtained the help, support and assistance of the people of this country. Because, it is not possible to continue the struggle for independence on the part of anybody with limited resources against any

mighty ruler for long without help, support and assistance of general people. It is not known whether they helped the *Bara-Bhuiyans* against the Mughals. But it is known that the people of this country were patriotic and there is instance in the history that they supported the freedom-loving ruler of this country against the Sultan of Delhi. While Sultan Ghiyas-al-Deen Balban of Delhi roamed about in search of Tughral, the ruler of Bengal, no one of this country gave him any information about the whereabouts of the Bengali governor. Even the two *beparis* (small traders), who were returning from the camp of Tughral, expressed their ignorance of him, when they were questioned by the captains of the Sultan. It was when one of the *beparis* was put to death that the other, in fear of losing his life, gave the information about the place where Tughral and his men were encamped²⁹⁰. Therefore, it may be assumed that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were also supported by the people of this country like Tughral and this support was also one of the worth mentioned additional advantages for the *Bara-Bhuiyans* against the Mughals.

Section IV

Final outcome of the struggle: Extinction of The Independence of Bengal

It has been seen in the previous discussion that the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani in the battle of Tukaroi and the treaty of Katak concluded by him with the Mughals were not only denied by the Afghan chiefs and the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal, but these local Chieftains of Bengal, particularly, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, also did not acknowledge Mughal suzerainty even at the fall of Daud Khan Kararani in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576 A.C. In the absence of Daud Khan the *Bara-Bhuiyans* continued the anti-Mughal resistance to preserve the independence of their homeland under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-Ala, the chief of Bhati. Consequently, Mughal Badshah Akbar sent repeated expeditions against Bhati to subjugate Isa Khan and his allies. The Mughal army first led the expedition against Bhati in 1578 A.C under the command of Subahdar Khan-i-Jahan and they proceeded up to Astagram in the district of Kishoreganj. Though, the Mughal army initially achieved some success, in the end they were severely defeated by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and were compelled to return to Sihhatpur leaving Bhati. After an interval of a few years the Mughal army attacked Bhati in 1584 A.C. for the second time under the command of Subahdar Shahbaz Khan. This time the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were also able to defeat the Mughal army completely as before. As a result, their second attempt was also foiled extremety. In 1586 A.C. Shahbaz Khan led an expedition against Isa Khan and his allies for the third time. In this connection, though, Abul Fazl mentioned that Bengal was pacified by Shahbaz Khan, infact, it was not possible for Shahbaz Khan to do anything against Isa Khan and his allies. Hereafter, in 1597 A.C. Subahdar Man

Singh sent an expedition against Bhati under the command of his son Durjan Singh for the fourth time. This resulted in the death of Durjan Singh and the ruination of the Mughal army at the hands of Isa Khan and his allies. So, the Mughal campaign of Bhati went in vain for this time also, Though, Abul Fazl repeatedly mentioned about the success of the Mughal army, infact, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* foiled every attempt of the Mughals under the leadership of Isa Khan. Consequently, the Mughal army could not able to establish the authority of Badshah Akbar over a fragment of the region of Bhati during the life time of Isa Khan. Even they could not able to dislodge Isa Khan and his allies from their firm positions and Isa Khan himself breathed his last as independent sovereign. In a word, it can be said that to preserve the independence of his motherland against the Mughal imperialism Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala died keeping his sword aloft. Isa Khan died in September, 1599 A.C. After his death his eldest son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance, that is, the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. After taking the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by Musa Khan, Man Singh himself led two expeditions against Bhati in 1602 and in 1603 A.C. Though, Abul Fazl mentioned that Man Singh defeated the enemies, that is, Musa Khan and his allies, extinguished the flames of disturbance in Bengal, pacified Bengal and conquered the whole area and established *thanas* at strategic places, later events show that Bhati remained outside Mughal control as it was before and the whole of Bhati is found in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Infact, the Mughals achieved nothing in Bengal, particularly in Bhati on these occasions. So, it is evident that like his father Musa Khan also succeeded in checking the Mughal advance in Bengal. Consequently, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* succeeded in maintaining their independence against the Mughal onslaughts for about three decades

and Badshah Akbar could not establish Mughal authority over the whole of Bengal and died in 1605 A.C. It may be mentioned here that during the reign of Badshah Akbar, Mughal control in Bengal was limited to only a small portion centering round the city of Tanda, from Rajmahal in the west to Ghoraghat in the north and Sherpur Murcha (Bogra) in the east, and Burdwan and Satgaon in the south. But the region of Bhati remained completely out of Mughal control.

After the death of Akbar his son Jahangir ascended the throne and appointed Islam Khan Chishti as the Subahdar of Bengal on 6th May, 1608 and towards the early part of June, 1608, he reached Rajmahal, the then capital of Bengal. Islam Khan Chishti came to Bengal with the sole resolution to crush the independent pretensions of the Bengal *Zamindars* and to impose a uniform administrative system over the entire province. On reaching Rajmahal he prepared his plan of operation for the subjugation of the whole of Bengal and began preparations for going to Bhati against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, at this time the whole of Bhati is found in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and he realised that the chief abstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal were the *Bara-Bhuiynas* holding Bhati under their command. He also realised that the foremost enemy of the Mughals is Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the acknowledged leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and he should be crushed first, otherwise it would be extremety difficult to subdue the other *Zamindars* of Bengal. So, Islam Khan decided to march and wage war against Bhati and the *Bara-Bhuiynas*. On 7th December, 1608, Islam Khan left Rajmahal with the avowed intention of suppressing the *Bara-Bhuiynas* of Bhati. Bhati was far away from Rajmahal and Islam Khan was going there by river through zigzag way via Ghoraghat. There were the territories of many other *Zamindars* both in his front and rear and he was not sure about their loyalty. Because of this, on his way to Bhati,

Islam Khan had to send numerous reconnoitering expeditions against some *Zamindars* to ensure undisturbed progress of the Mughal army towards Bhati. Consequently, Bir Hamir, the *Zamindar* of Birbhum, Shams Khan, the *Zamindar* of Pachet, Salim Khan, the *Zamindar* of Hijli, Raja Satrajit, the *Zamindar* of Bhushna, Raja Raghunath, the *Zamindar* of Shushang, and Lakshmi Narayan, the king of Kuch Bihar, submitted to the Mughals. Thus being free from anxieties from all sides, right, left and the rear, Islam Khan came out of Ghoraghat on 15th October, 1609 A.C. in his expedition to Bhati and reached Shahzadpur on 28th December of the same year. Then Islam Khan reached Baliya.

At Baliya, Islam Khan took important decisions, that is, he planned a double pronged attack on Musa Khan's position. Firstly, it was decided that Ihtimam Khan and his son Mirza Nathan would go with the fleet to the *Trimohana* of Khal Jogini and erect forts and halt there and Islam Khan himself would go to the *Mohana* of Katasgarh in order to attack the *Bara-Bhuiyans* from the west by the way of Jatrapur. Secondly, the most important decision taken by Islam Khan was to send a detachment to Dhaka to distract the attention of Musa Khan and to terrorise the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Accordingly, a detachment was sent to Dhaka. On the other hand, Ihtimam Khan reached the *Trimohana* of Khal Jogini and built there forts on the three mouths of the rivers. Islam Khan also reached the *Mohana* of Katasgarh and he ordered Ihtimam Khan to join him there. Now, the Mughal army came face to face with the *Bara-Bhuiynas*. Because, Musa Khan's impregnable fort of Jatrapur lay near Katasgarh. The fort of Jatrapur is one of the most important fortified posts of Musa Khan and also his main fortified position on the Dhaka-Rajmahal river route. So, the immediate objective of the Mughals is the capture of the fort of Jatrapur and on his arrival at Katasgarh Islam Khan concentrated all his energies on the capture of the

fort of Jatrajpur. Musa Khan did not sit idle in the face of this danger and he also made preparations to face the Mughal onslaught and sent three of his allies *Bhuiyans* to defend the fort of Jatrajpur situated on the river Ichamati, about 30 miles west of Dhaka. Besides, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* constructed a high fort and a deep trench at Dakchara on the same bank of the river Padma on which the Mughal army was halting. Musa Khan then arranged his artillery and the weapons of defence of the fort and became ready for battle. It was Musa Khan who first resumed his assault on the Mughal entrenchments at Katasgarh with great vigour and gained initial victory over the Mughals. But the latter soon made a vigorous counter attack and at last succeeded in defeating the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and capturing the fort of Jatrajpur in early June, 1610 A.C and the fort of Dakchara on 15th July, 1610. Though, the Mughals defeated the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the way they fought against the Mughals show their indomitable courage and unprecedented war tactics.

With the occupation of the forts of Dakchara and Jatrajpur by the Mughals, the first phase of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals was over. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* now retreated to Katrabo and began preparation for the second phase of war. On the other hand, Islam Khan's route to Dhaka became clear and he proceeded to Dhaka for attacking the centre of Musa Khan's power. Islam Khan reached Dhaka towards the end of July 1610. He realised that until Musa Khan was defeated the conquest of Bhati will remain incomplete and the Mughal authority in Bengal will also be not firmly established. So, he began preparations for the second phase of war against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and settled a fresh plan of military operations and posted his officers at different strategic points.

The news of the Mughal preparations put Musa Khan also in action and he made sufficient preparations for his second fight. He left

his capital Sonargaon in charge of his chief officer Haji Shams-ud-din Baghdadi and himself came out to face the Mughals making the river Lakhia his main line of defence. He took position at a central strategic point at the mouth of the Bandar Canal and posted his three brothers Abdullah Khan, Daud Khan and Mahmud Khan at the three strategic points, namely Qadam Rasul, Katrabo, their family residence, and Demra. Musa Khan concentrated his forces on several strategic points on the left bank of the river Lakhia. Besides, he retained a few posts at Sripur and Bikrampur. Thus Musa Khan became ready for battle. But despite comprehensive endeavor he was defeated by the Mughals in several naval engagements. Consequently, the Mughal army occupied the fort of Katrabo and then his capital Sonargaon in April, 1611 A.C. and he was compelled to retreat to the island of Ibrahimpur. On the other hand, Musa Khan's brother Daud Khan continued to fight for the recovery of Katrabo. But he was killed by the Portuguese pirates. Musa Khan was very much upset at the death of his brother Daud Khan. In fact, the fall of Sonargaon practically marked the end of Musa Khan's resistance. Nevertheless, he made three more attempts to recover some of his lost grounds, but each time he was repulsed by the Mughals and retreated to the island of Ibrahimpur. On the other hand, Bahadur Ghazi of Chaura and Maqlis Qutb of Fathabad submitted to the Mughals. Moreover, after Musa Khan's retreat to the island of Ibrahimpur the Mughals defeated Ananta Manikya of Bhulua.

After the defeat of Ananta Mahikya of Bhulua, Musa Khan sitting at Ibrahimpur thought over his own state of affairs. He lost his courage and war materials being repeatedly defeated and was ousted from his territories. Thus being dispirited he lost all hope in his struggles and found no other way than to surrender to the Mughals. In July, 1611 A.C Musa Khan surrendered to Islam Khan with all his brothers and

Zamindar allies and with that the second phase of the war between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals was over. Though, the defeat and submission of Musa Khan marked the end of the local anti-Mughal resistance in Bengal, two of his bonafide allies and the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Anwar Khan of Baniachang and Pahlwan of Matang are yet to be subdued and they continued their fight against the Mughals. But very soon they were also defeated and the Mughals captured Baniachang and Matang, the last two strongholds of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were defeated and were compelled to surrender to the Mughals, but they exhibited great courage and dexterity in the battles of Dakchara and Bandar Canal. The Mughals were almost going to be defeated in these battles had not they have war elephants in their contingent.

It may be mentioned here that Musa Khan was undoubtedly the worthy successor of his father, who successfully continued the task undertaken by his father and gallantly checked the Mughal advance in Bengal for more than one decade even after the death of his father. Infact, with the defeat and submission of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Islam Khan bacame free from the threat of the most formidable enemy of the Mughals. Because, this enabled Islam Khan to concentrate his attention upon the other *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)*. Not only that after the defeat and subjugation of Musa Khan and his allies *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the suppression of the other *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)* became comparatively easy. So, it is seen that Islam Khan was able to subjugate Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, Ram Cahndra of Bakla, Usman Khan, who after having withdrawn from Bukainagar had taken his position at Uhar in southern Sylhet, his sons and brothers and Bayazid Kararani of nothern Sylhet by March, 1612 A.C. In a word, within less then a year after the defeat and subjugation of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati the Mughals

subjugated the other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal. So, it is evident that none could stand long against the mighty Mughals after the defeat and submission of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Islam Khan conquered almost the whole of Bengal. It may be chronologically mentioned here that he conquered Bhati of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, Fathabad of Majlis Qutb, Bhulua of Ananta Manikya, Jessore of Pratapaditya, Bakla of Ram Chandra, Bukainagar and Uhar of Usman Khan, and northern Sylhet of Bayazid Kararani. It may also be mentioned here that when Islam Khan sent reconnoitering expeditions against the *Zamindars* on his way to Bhati to ensure undisturbed progress of the Mughal army towards Bhati, Bir hamir, Shams Khan, Salim Khan and Raja Satrajit the *Zamindars* of Birbhum, Pachet, Hijli and Bhushna respectively, submitted to the Mughals. Now the whole of Bengal from Ghoraghat in the north to the sea in the south, and from Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli in the south- west and Rajmahal in the west to Bhulua in the south- east and Sylhet in the north- east were conquered by the Mughals. In a word, the whole of *Subah* Bangalah of Abul Fazl's description except Chittagong was easily brought under the Mughal rule after the defeat and subjugation of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Therefore, it may be mentioned here that with the defeat and the subjugation of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati ended the long struggle for the perpetuation of independence of the local Chieftains of Bengal and for all practical purposes Bengal lost its independence to the Mughals.

In the light of above discussion it may be concluded here that with the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani, the last independent Kararani Afghan Sultan of Bengal, in the battles of Tukaroi and Rajmahal in 1575 A.C. and 1576 A.C. respectively, ended the independent Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal. But the defeat of Daud Khan did not immediately confirm the Mughal sovereignty over the whole of Bengal.

Because, the local Chieftains of Bengal, particularly, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, sparing no time decided to continue the struggle for resistance to preserve the independence of their homeland, rather than acknowledging Mughal suzerainty. They also realised that it was not possible for each one of them to face individually mighty Mughal Badshah Akbar with their relatively limited resources for long. So, they established rapport with one other and forged an anti-Mughal politico military alliance with Isa Khan Masnd-i-Ala, the chief of Bhati, as their leader. Under the leadership of Isa Khan they brilliantly resisted the Mughal aggressions and succeeded in maintaining their independence for a quarter of a century. Indeed, as against their protracted resistance Mughal Badshah Akbar failed to establish his authority over the whole of Bengal during his life time. On the contrary the *Bara-Bhuiyans* established their authority over the whole region of Bhati and ruled their respective territories as almost practically independent chiefs and turned out to be the chief obstacle to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. After the death of Isa Khan in September, 1599 A.C. his eldest son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal politico-military alliance, that is, the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, and he successfully continued the task undertaken by his father and gallantly checked the Mughal advance in Bengal for more than a decade. But in the end Musa Khan and his allies the *Bara-Bhuiyans* suffered repeated defeats due to relatively limited wealth and manpower and they lost courage and were compelled to surrender to Islam Khan Chishti, the Mughal Subahdar of Bengal, in July, 1611 A.C. in the reign of Badshah Jahangir. This enabled Islam Khan to subjugate the other *Zamindars* and conquered almost the whole of Bengal by March, 1612 A.C. Though, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati were forced to surrender and Bengal finally lost its independence to the Mughals, they brilliantly resisted the

Mughal aggression and successfully retained the independence of the country for more than three decades. Because of their protracted resistance the Mughals could not establish their rule over the whole of Bengal till March, 1612 A.C.

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* proved themselves to be the indomitable politico-military force in the struggle for the preservation of the independence of Bengal against Mughal imperialism and aggression in the period from 1576 to 1612 A.C. This turned them to be the central figures and pre-eminent personalities of Bengal in this time. It would not be an exaggeration to designate them as the greatest national heroes in recognition of their uncompromising and glorious heroism which they demonstrated for the sake of the preservation of the regional sovereignty of Bengal in a transitional phase, that is, during the period from 1576 to 1612 A.C.

Notes and References

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- 1(A). *H.Bengal*, pp.194-212.
2. *Ibid.*, p.205.
3. *Ibid.*, p.213.
4. *Ibid.*, p.215.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.225-226.
6. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXV, No.69, pp. 29-30.
7. *Mughal Period*, p.31.
8. For details see, *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.67-108.
9. *Akbar Nama*, pp. 376-378.

10. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.75, p. 44, Note, 15; *Mughal Period*, p.147; *Akbar Nama*, p. 377, note, 1.
11. *Ibid.*, p.45; *Ibid.*, pp.109, 147.
12. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.148; *Mughal Amal*, p.121.
13. *Mughal Period*, p.148. It is in Murshidabad district, and is a very large and well-known *Pargana*. *Akbar Nama*, p. 376, note, 4.
14. For details see, *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.95-96.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Joanshahi and Khaliajuri, both the *Parganas* were full of swamps and marshes. N.K. Bhattasali, *Bharatbarsha* (Bengali), Bangiya Bhaumikganer Sahit Mogoler Sangharsha, *Bhadra*, 1336 B.S., p.378.
17. For details see, *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.96-97.
18. *B.P.P.*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.75, p. 45; *Mughal Period*, p.149; *Mughal Amal*, pp.121-122.
19. For details see, *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.84-91, 259-265.
20. *Sultani Amal*, pp. 380-381.
21. *Akbar Nama*, p. 381.
22. *Mughal Amal*, pp.137-140.
23. *H.Bengal*, p.195.
24. *Akbar Nama*, p. 449, Note, 3.
25. *Mughal Amal*, p.159.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.135-137; *Akbar Nama*, p.567.
27. *Ibid.*, pp.137-138; *Ibid.*, p.594.
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29. *Ibid.*, pp.139-140; *Akbar Nama*, pp.619-622; *Mughal Period*, pp.169-170.
30. *Ibid.*, p.142.
31. *Akbar Nama*, p.645.
32. *Ibid.*, pp.649-650.
33. *Ibid.*, pp.648-651, 658-660.
34. *H. Bengal*, p.203.
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36. *Ibid.*; *Mughal Amal*, p.142.
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39. *Mughal period*, p.174.
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41. *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.116.
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43. Qaiser, A.J., 'Shahbaz Khan Kambu', *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol. One, Aligarh, 1969, p.67.
44. *Akbar Nama*, p.660.
45. *Ibid.*, p.672; *Mughal Amal*, p.144.
46. *Ibid.*, p.660.
47. *Ibid.*, p.672; *Mughal Amal*, pp.144-145.
48. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.144.
49. *Ibid.*; pp.673-674; *Ibid.*, p.145.
50. *Ibid.*, p.676; *Mughal Period*, p.177.
51. *Ibid.*, pp.693-694.
52. *Ibid.* note, 5.
53. *H. Bengal*, p.204.
54. *Mughal Amal*, p.146.
55. *Akbar Nama*, p.694; *Mughal Period*, p.178; *Mughal Amal*, p.146.
56. *Ibid.*, pp.695-696.
57. *Ibid.*, pp.696-697.
58. *Ibid.*, p.701.
59. *Ibid.*, p.721; *Mughal Amal*, p.148.
60. *Ibid.*, pp.721-722.
61. *Mughal Amal*, p.168, note, 98.
62. *Ibid.*, p.150; *Akbar Nama*, p.779.

63. In November, 1586, Akbar reorganised the administration of several provinces including Bengal. As Shahbaz Khan was failed in his Bhati campaigns, he was relegated to a subordinate position. Wazir Khan was appointed Subahdar of Bengal and Shahbaz Khan was appointed *bakshi* of Bengal. Wazir Khan was an inhabitant of Herat and was a trusted officer of Akbar. In August, 1587 A. C., he died of diarrhoea at Tanda. *Akbar Nama*, p.779; *Mughal Period*, p.184.
64. After the death of Wazir Khan, Badshah Akbar appointed Said Khan Subahdar of Bengal. He occupied the post for six years from 1588-1594. These six years are uneventful. Because, there is no reference to his warfare in Bengal in the *Akbar Nama*. Therefore, it appears that he did not send any expedition against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. *Mughal Period*, pp.184, 188.
65. *Akbar Nama*, p.1031.
66. *Ibid.*, pp.999-1001; *H. Bengal*, p.211. Raja Man Singh belonged to the Kachhwaha branch of the Kshatriya. The Kachhwahas claim their descent from Kush, the second son of Raja Ram Chandra of epic fame. R.N. Prasad, *Raja Man Singh of Amber*, First Published, Calcutta, January, 1966, p. 1; 90; henceforth cited only as *Man Singh*.
67. *Ibid.*, pp.1042-1043; *H. Bengal*, p.211; *Man Singh*, p.91.
68. *Ibid.*, p.1023; *Ibid.*; *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.229, note, 196.
69. *Ibid.*, p.1043; *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, pp.968-969; *Ibid.*, p.210; *The Afghans*, pp.227-228.
71. *Ibid.*, p.1043.
72. *Ibid.* Beveridge thinks that this Sherpur was the Sherpur of Mymensingh. But Abdul Karim thinks that Sherpur is Sherpur Murcha in Bogra district. He further opined that Man Singh did not build any fort named Salimnagar. The fort was already there. Perhaps Man Singh renovated the fort. *Mughal Amal*, p.153.
73. *Akbar Nama*, p.1059; *H. Bengal*, p.211; *Man Singh*, p.92.
74. *Ibid.*, p.1063; *Ibid.*, pp.211-212.
75. *Ibid.*, pp.1067-1068.
76. *Ibid.*, p.349. Abul Fazl mentioned Nara Narayan as Rajah Mal Gosain.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 622, 625.

78. Jadunath Sarkar and Abdul Karim Mentioned this place as Govindapur. *H.Bengal*, p.212; *Mughal Amal*, p.154.
79. *Akbar Nama*, p.1068; *H.Bengal*, p.212.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 1081-1082.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 1093.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 1093-1094; *H.Bengal*, p.212; *Mughal Amal*, p.154.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 1094.
84. *H.Bengal*, p.212.
85. Man Singh left Bengal towards the end of 1597 or the beginning of 1598 A.C. Badshah Akbar also ordered Jagat Singh, eldest son of Man Singh, to go to Bengal as deputy of his father. *Mughal Period*, p.196.
86. Man Singh's son Himmat Singh died of cholera in Bengal on 16th March, 1597 A.C. and the other son Durjan Singh died in battle with Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. *Akbar Nama*, p.1093; *H.Bengal*, p.212.
87. At this time Isa Khan was perhaps 67 or 68 years old. *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.234, note, 216.
88. *Akbar Nama*, p.1140. According to Syed Muhammad Taifoor Isa Khan died in Katrabo. *Glimpses of Dhaka*, p.71.
89. *Mughal Period*, p.196.
90. *Ibid.*, p.196; *Akbar Nama*, p.1130.
91. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.1140.
92. *Baharistan*, pp.55-56.
93. *Akbar Nama*, p.1151; *Mughal Period*, p.197; *H. Bengal*, p.213; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.299.
94. *Ibid.*, p.1174; *Ibid.*, p.199.
95. *Ibid.*, pp.1213-1214; *Ibid.*, p.202; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp.299-300; *H.Bengal*, p.213.
96. *Ibid.*, pp.1214-1215; *Ibid.*, pp.202-203; *Ibid.*, pp.299-300.
97. *Ibid.*, p.1215.
98. *Ibid.*, pp.1235-1236; *Mughal Period*, pp.204-205; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.300; *Mughal Amal*, pp.158-159; *H. Bengal*, pp.214-215.

99. *Ibid.*, pp.1260-1261; *Ibid.*, p.206; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.159; *Ibid.*, p.215.
100. *Muslims of Bengal*, p.300.
101. *Akbar Nama*, pp.1215, 1236, 1240.
102. *H. Bengal*, pp.213-215.
103. *Mughal Period*, p.217; *Mughal Amal*, p.171.
104. *Muslims of Bengal*, p.300.
105. There are disagreements among the scholars about the date of Islam Khan's appointment as the Subahdar of Bengal, since Mirza Nathan did not mention the date in the *Baharistan*. Jadunath Sarkar mentioned that Badshah Jahangir appointed Islam Khan as Subahdar of Bengal on 26th April, 1608 A.C., (Sarkar, Jadunath, 'Banglar Swadhin Zamindarder Patan', *Prabasi*, Bhadra, 1329 B.S., p.638; henceforth cited only as *Prabasi*). But he did not refer to any authority in favour of his statement. On the other hand, Dr.M.I.Borah opined that Islam Khan was appointed as Subahdar of Bengal in May, 1607 A.C. (*BaharistanII*, pp. 791-792). But this date is not acceptable. Because, it is learnt from the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* that the date Badshah Jahangir received the news of the death of Jahangir Quli Khan, the predecessor of Islam Khan, on the same date he appointed Islam Khan Subahdar of Bengal. The news of the death of Jahangir Quli Khan reached Badshah Jahangir on Tuesday, the 20th Muharram, 1017 A.H., that is, on 6th May, 1608 A.C. On this occasion Badshah Jahangir Says, "I was much grieved at his death. I bestowed the rule of Bengal...on my *farzand* Islam Khan..." From this statement it is evident that Badshah Jahangir received the news of the death of Jahangir Quli Khan on 6th May, 1608 A.C. and on the same date he appointed Islam Khan Subahdar of Bengal. On the other hand, modern scholars Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharya and Abdul Karim also suggested that the actual date of the appointment of Islam Khan to his office in Bengal was 6th May, 1608A.C., who discussed the matter in great details. See, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* or *Memoirs of Jahangir*, Translated by Alexander Rogers, and Edited by Henry Beveridge in 2 Vols. bound in one. Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted, 1999, Vol.I, pp. 141-143; henceforth cited only as *Tuzuk*; *H. Bengal*, pp.270-272; Karim, Abdul, 'A Fresh Study of Abdul Latif's Diary (North Bengal in 1609 A.D.)', *Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies*, Rajshahi University, Vol.XIII, 1990, pp, 31-33; henceforth cited only as *Diary*; *Mughal Period*, pp.221-222.

106. *Muslims of Bengal*, p.301.
107. *Mughal Period*, p.222.
108. *Mughal Period*, pp.222-223; *Mughal Amal*, pp.174-175.
109. *Baharistan*, pp.3-4.
110. *Ibid.*, p.4.
111. *Ibid.*, p.4; *Tuzuk*, pp.139, 142. According to the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* Islam Khan was appointed as the Subahdar of Bengal on 6th May, 1608 A.C. and Ihtimam Khan was also appointed as *mir bahr* or admiral of the fleet of Bengal on the same date (*Tuzuk*, p.144).
112. *Mughal Period*, p.224. Rohtas is situated on the Son in the district of Shahabad. Originally fort of Rohtas was built by a Hindu Prince named Rohitaswa after whom it derives its name which was corrupted into Rautas and Rohtas. *Baharistan II*. p.791.
113. *Mughal Period*, p.224. Chaund was the name of a *Pargana* situated to the west of Sasaram. *Baharistan II*. p.791.
114. *Mughal Period*, pp.224-225.
115. *H. Bengal*, p.248.
116. Ihtimam Khan whose name was Malik Ali was a commander of 250 horses during the reign of Badshah Akbar. *Baharistan II*. p.790.
117. *Baharistan*, p.15; *Mughal Period*, p.225.
118. *Mughal Period*, p.225.
119. *Baharistan*, p.9.
120. *Ibid.*, p.15.
121. *Ibid.*, p.9; *Mughal Period*, p.234; *H.Bengal*, p.248.
122. *Ibid.*, p.14; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
123. *Ibid.*, p.15; *Ibid.*; pp.233-235; *Ibid.*, p.249; *Mughal Amal*, p.181; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.302. It may be mentioned here that Mirza Nathan did not give the date of Islam Khan's leaving Rajmahal in the *Baharistan*. According to Abdul Latif the date was 7th December, 1608 A.C.; *Diary*, p.25; Sarkar, Jadunath, 'A Description of North Bengal in 1609 A.D.', *Bengal Past & Present*, Vol.XXXV, Nos.69-70, 1928, p.143; henceforth cited only as *North Bengal*; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.117.
124. *Ibid.*, p.18; *Ibid.*; p.235; *Mughal Amal*, p.183.

125. *Ibid.*, p.19; *Ibid.*; pp.235-237; *Ibid.*; pp.183-184; *H. Bengal*, p.249; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.302.
126. *Ibid.*, pp.19-20; *H. Bengal*, p.250; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.302; *Mughal Amal*, p.183.
127. Sarkar, Jadunath, Pratapaditya Sambandhe Kichu Natun Sambad, *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326 B.S. p.552; henceforth cited only as *Prabasi*; *Mughal Period*, p.238; *Mughal Amal*, p.185.
128. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
129. *Baharistan*, pp.18-19; *Mughal Period*, pp.238-239; *Mughal Amal*, p.185; *H. Bengal*, p.250; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.302.
130. *H. Bengal*, p. 250; *Mughal Period*, p.226. Alaipur is a village situated opposite Sar-daha (Sarda) on the Ganges, 12 miles south-east of Putia in Rajshahi district. *Mughal Period*, p.279, note, 25.
131. *Mughal Period*, p. 239; *History of Bengal*, p.66. Sonabazu is a *Pargana* in Sarkar Bazuha. It is in Pabna, situated to the north of Pabna town. *Mughal Period*, p. 282, note, 72.
132. *Baharistan*, pp.12-13; *Mughal Amal*, p.185; *H. Bengal*, p.249.
133. Chilajuwar was a part of the *Pargana* of Bhaturiabazu. It is situated on the Ganges near about the station of Sara-ghat. *B.P.P.*, Vol. XXXV, No, 69, pp.36-37.
134. *Baharistan*, p.16; *Mughal Period*, pp.239-240; *H. Bengal*, p.249.
135. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 21-22; *Ibid.*, p.240; *Ibid.*, p.251; *Mughal Amal*, p.186.
136. *Ibid.*, p.32; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, p.252.
137. *Ibid.*, pp.32-33; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*
138. *Mughal Period*, pp.240-241; *H. Bengal*, p.252.
139. *Ibid.*, pp.226-227.
140. It was situated in between Natore and Suktigacha. *Mughal Period*, p.279, note, 27.
141. Bajrapur was situated 25 miles north of Natore town and 4 miles south of Suktigacha. *Mughal Period*, p.279, note, 28.
142. It is thirty five miles south-west of Ghoraghat. The river at its foot is called Jabuna (Jamuna). *Mughal Period*, p.279, note, 29.
143. There is a Nazirpur near the head-quarters of the Patnitola police station of Rajshahi. This must have been the place where Islam Khan Chishti made Kheda operations. The place was formerly

- included in the Dinajpur district. *Mughal Period*, pp.279-280, note, 30.
144. *Mughal Period*, pp. 226-227. The dates of Islam Khan's leaving Alaipur for Nazirpur and reaching Ghoraghat was not furnished by Mirza Nathan in the *Baharistan*. But these two dates were given only by Abdul Latif; *Diary*, p.26; *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326 B.S., p.553; *Bideshi Parjatak*, pp.118-119; *North Bengal*, pp.144-145.
 145. *Ibid.*, pp.242-243; *H.Bengal*, p.252; *Mughal Amal*, pp.188-189; *Baharistan*, pp.39-41.
 146. *Ibid.*, pp.227, 243.
 147. *Baharistan*, pp.18-19, 45.
 148. *Ibid.*, p.28; *Mughal Period*, pp.344-345; *Mughal Amal*, p.189; *H.Bengal*, pp. 251-252; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.303.
 149. *Mughal Period*, p.243; *Mughal Amal*, p.189; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.120.
 150. *Ibid.*; *Baharistan*, pp.41, 45; *Bengal*, p.252; *History of Bengal*, p.67.
 151. *Baharistan*, pp.45-48; *Mughal Period*, pp.243-245. According to Abdul Latif, Islam Khan left Ghoraghat on 15th October, 1609, *Diary*, p.26; *North Bengal*, p.145; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.120. But Mirza Nathan did not furnish any date in the *Baharistan*.
 152. Baliya has been identified with Bowleah six miles south-west of Shahzadpur. *H.Bengal*, p.253, foot note, 1.
 153. *Baharistan*, pp.48-53; *Mughal Period*, p.245; *Mughal Amal*, p.191.
 154. *Mohana* of Khal Jogini cannot be located in modern map, it must have been washed away by the rivers. But from the narratives in the *Baharistan*, it appears that the place was near Katasgarh and Baliya. *Mughal Period*, p.283, note, 87.
 155. At present Katasgarh is known as Kashtasagar. The place is situated in the Ulail Union of Shibaloy Thana of Manikganj District, *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.287, note, 8.
 156. *H. Bengal*, p.254; *History of Bengal*, p.68; *Mughal Period*, p. 245.

157. *Baharistan*, pp.53-54; *Mughal Period*, pp.245-246; *Mughal Amal*, p.191; *H.Bengal*, p. 253; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.304; *History of Bengal*, p.68.
158. *Masnad-i-Ala*, pp.121-122; *H.Bengal*, p. 238.
159. *Baharistan*, pp.54-55; *Mughal Period*, p.247; *Mughal Amal*, p.192; *H.Bengal*, p. 254; *History of Bengal*, p.69.
160. *Ibid.*, p.55.
161. *Ibid.*, pp.54-55; *Mughal Period*, p.247; *Mughal Amal*, p.192.
162. *Ibid.*, p.56; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*; *H.Bengal*, p. 254; *History of Bengal*, p.69.
163. At present Dakchara is known as Dhakijora and it is situated in the Shimulia Union of Harirampur Thana of Manikganj District, *Masnad-i-Ala*, p.287, note, 11.
164. *Baharistan*, pp.56-57; *Mughal Period*, p.248.
165. *Ibid.*, pp.57-58; *Ibid.*, pp.248-249.
166. *Ibid.*, pp.58-59; *Ibid.*, p.249 ; *Mughal Amal*, p.193; *H.Bengal*, pp. 254-255; *History of Bengal*, pp.70-71.
167. *Ibid.*, p.59.
168. *Baharistan*, pp.59-60; *Mughal Period*, pp.249-250; *Mughal Amal*, pp.193-194; *H.Bengal*, pp. 252-253; *History of Bengal*, p.68.
169. *Ibid.*, p.61.
170. *Ibid.*, p.62; *Mughal Period*, pp.250-251.
171. *Ibid.*, pp.62-63; *Ibid.*, pp.251-252.
172. *Prabasi*, Bhadra, 1329 B.S., p.641.
173. *Mughal Period*, p.252.
174. *H.Bengal*, p. 255.
175. *Mughal Period*, p.252.
176. Kathauriya is the old name of the Kirtinasha, i. e. the portion of the Padma which passes through Bikrampur and joins the Meghna, *Baharistan II*, p.812, note, 12.
177. There is a village named Kudaliya near Narayanganj and also a place called char Kudaliya on the northern bank of the Dhaleswari, north of Patharghata. One of these places is probably meant, *Baharistan II*, p.812, note, 13; *Mughal Period*, p.284, note, 105.

178. *Baharistan*, pp.63-64; *Mughal Period*, pp.252-253; *Mughal Amal*, p.195; *H.Bengal*, p. 255; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.306; *History of Bengal*, p.71.
179. *Ibid.*, pp.65-69; *Ibid.*, pp.253-255; *Ibid.*, pp.195-197; *Ibid.*, pp.255-256; *Ibid. Ibid.*, pp.71-72.
180. *Mughal Period*, p.256; *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326 B.S., p.553; *North Bengal*,p.144; *BideshiParjatak*, p.119; *Baharistan*, p.23.
181. *Ibid.*, p.257.
182. *Baharistan*, p.70.
183. Balra is on the bank of the river Ichamati, about 24 miles west of Dacca, *Baharistan II*, p.812, note, 14.
184. Kalakupa is on the bank of the Ichamati river, about 17 miles to the south-west of Dacca, *Baharistan II*, p.812, note, 15.
185. Patharghata is on the south bank of the river Dhaleswari, about six miles south of Dacca, *Baharistan II*, p.813, note, 17.
186. *Baharistan*, pp.70-75; *Mughal Period*, pp.257-258.
187. *H. Bengal*, p.257; *Mughal Amal*, p.199; *History of Bengal*, p.72. Abdul Karim suggested that Dhaka became the capital on Islam Khan's entry into the place or after he fixed his residence there. The name of Dhaka was changed to Jahangirnagar during the same time (*Mughal Period*, p.234; *Mughal Amal*, p.199).
188. Demra Khal is situated to the north-east of Dacca at the confluence of the Lakhia and the Baloo rivers, *Baharistan II*, p.814, note, 20.
189. Dulay river rises from the river Baloo and falls in the Buri Ganga near Faridabad of Dacca. It is more of a canal than a river. One branch of it passes through the city of Dacca and joins with the Buri Ganga near Babu Bazar, *Baharistan II*, p.815, note, 21.
190. *Baharistan*, p.76; *Mughal Period*, p.258; *H. Bengal*, p.257.
191. *Ibid.*, p.77; *Ibid.*, pp.258-259; *Ibid.*, pp.257-258.
192. Kumarsar is surrounded on three sides by the rivers Dhaleswari and Lakhia and by a small stream on the west. *Mughal Period*, p.284, note, 114.
193. *Baharistan*, pp.77-78; *Mughal Period*, pp.259-260.
194. *Ibid.*, pp.78-79; *Ibid.*; pp.260-261; *H. Bengal*,p.258.
195. *Ibid.*, pp.79-80; *Ibid.*; p.261.

196. *Ibid.*, pp.80-82; *Ibid.*; pp.261-262; *H. Bengal*, p.258.
197. Ibrahimpur is an island in the Meghna which cannot be traced now. *H. Bengal*, p.259.
198. *Baharistan*, pp.82-86; *Mughal Period*, pp.262-264; *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 307.
199. *Ibid.*, p.85.
200. *Ibid.*, pp.85-86; *Mughal Period*, p.264; *H. Bengal*, p.259.
201. *Ibid.*, p.86; *Ibid.*, pp.264-265.
202. *Ibid.*, pp.86-88; *Ibid.*, pp.265-266; *H. Bengal*, p.259.
203. *Ibid.*, pp.88-89; *Ibid.*, p.266.
204. The Dakatiya river rises from the hills of Tripura and falls into the Meghna near Chandpur, *Mughal Period*, p.286, note, 132.
205. *Baharistan*, pp.96-98; *Mughal Period*, pp.269-271; *Muslims of Bengal*, p. 308.
206. *Ibid.*, pp.98-100; *Ibid.*, pp.271-272; *Ibid.*; *H. Bengal*, p.261.
207. *Ibid.*, pp.104-105; *Ibid.*, p.272.
208. *Ibid.*, p.106.
209. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106; *Mughal Period*, pp.272-273.
210. *Ibid.*, p. 107; *Mughal Period*, pp.272-273.
211. *Baharistan*, pp.108-109.
212. *Ibid.*, pp.113-114,117; *Mughal Period*, pp.273-274.
213. *Ibid.*, p.140.
214. *Ibid.*, p.141.
215. *Ibid.*, pp.140-142; *Mughal Period*, pp.274-275.
216. To the south-east of Baniachang and north of Matang, lay the hilly tract of Taraf, *H. Bengal*, p.240.
217. *Baharistan*, pp.117-119; *Mughal Period*, p. 275.
218. Shah Bandar was somewhere near Egara Sindur on the Brahmaputra, *Mughal Period*, pp.336-337, note, 7.
219. *Baharistan*, pp.101-104; *Mughal Period*, pp. 289-290. Hasanpur is situated on the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra; its present name is Haibatnagar, *Mughal Period*, p.337, note, 8.
220. *Mughal Amal*, p.221; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.309.

221. There is a place known as Kella Tajpur, six miles north-east of Bukainagar, there are ruins of an old fort made of mud-wall in this place. Nasir Khan and Dariya Khan were probably rulers of this Kella Tajpur, *Mughal Period*, p.337, note, 11.
222. Laur hill is to the north-west of Sylhet, and fourteen miles west of Sunamganj town. Laur was strategically important even in the Sultanate period, *Mughal Period*, p.337, note, 12.
223. It was situated in southern Sylhet, to be specific in modern Maulvibazar district, *Mughal Period*, p.338, note, 13.
224. *Baharistan*, pp.104-110; *Mughal Period*, pp. 289-291.
225. *Ibid.*, p.117-118; *Ibid.*, p.295.
226. *Ibid.*, p.14; *Ibid.*, p.344.
227. *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326, B.S., p.552.
228. This date is not given by Mirza Nathan, but only Abdul Latif furnished the date; *Prabasi*, Aswin,1326, B.S., p.553; *North Bengal*,p.144; *Prabasi*,Kartik, 1327 B.S., p.2; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.119; *Mughal Period*, p.344.
229. *Baharistan*, p.27.
230. *Ibid.*, p.28; *Mughal Period*, pp.344-345.
231. *Ibid.*, p.121.
232. *Ibid.*
233. *Ibid.*
234. *Mughal Period*, p.347.
235. *Baharistan*, pp.121-123; *Mughal Period*, pp. 347-348.
236. *Ibid.*, p.131; *Ibid.*, p.348.
237. There is a place named Baghwan on the Bhairab, twenty miles north of Krishnanagar, and another place named Mahatpur orMahadpur, six miles north of Krishnanagar, *Mughal Period*, p.386, note, 19.
238. *Baharistan*, pp.123-125; *Mughal Period*, p. 348; H. Bengal, p.265.
239. Salka was ten miles south of Bongaon and twenty two miles north of Buranhatty, *Mughal Period*, p.386, note, 21.
240. *Baharistan*, pp.124-126.

241. *Ibid.*, p.126.
242. *Ibid.*, p.127; *Mughal Period*, pp.349-350; *H. Bengal*, p.266.
243. *Ibid.*, pp.126-130; *Ibid.*, pp.349-351; *Ibid.*, pp.266-267; *Muslims of Bengal*, pp. 311-312.
244. *Mughal Period*, p.352; *H.Bengal*, p.267.
245. *Baharistan*, p.130; *H. Bengal*, p.267. Budhan is situated on the east of Fort William at a distance of 38 Miles. The river Ichamati flows by its eastern side, *Mughal Period*, p.387, note, 27.
246. *Baharistan*, p.134.
247. *Ibid.*, pp.131-132; *Mughal Period*, pp.359-360.
248. *Ibid.*, p.134.
249. *Ibid.*
250. Kharawan Ghat is the name of a *ghat* or ford on the Ichamati river on the north-east of the fort of Jessore, *Mughal Period*, p.387, note, 30.
251. *Baharistan*, p.134; *Mughal Period*, pp.352-353.
252. Kagarghata is situated at a distance of 40 miles from Mirza Nagar of Jessore. Here the river Ichamati is divided into three branches, one of these may be named as Kagarghata, *Mughal Period*, p.387-388, note, 32.
253. Nathan calls it Bhagirathi, *Baharistan*, p.135.
254. *H.Bengal*, p.268.
255. *Baharistan*, pp.135-136; *Mughal Period*, pp.353-354.
256. *Ibid.*, pp.136-137, 143; *Ibid.*, pp.355-356.
257. *Mughal Period*, pp.347, 356; *H.Bengal*, p.270; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.312.
258. *Baharistan*, p.110; *Mughal Period*, pp.295-296.
259. *Mughal Period*, p.296.
260. Shaykh Kabir, entitled Shujat Khan was an old soldier; he entered into Mughal service in the reign of Badshah Akbar, and was placed under Prince Salim. When the prince revolted against his father, he was in favour of the prince. When the prince occupied the throne, his rank was raised, and he got the title of Shujat Khan, *Mughal Period*, pp.298-299.
261. *Baharistan*, p.158.

262. *Ibid.*, pp.158-159; *Mughal Period*, pp.296-297; *Tuzuk*, pp. 192,209.
263. *Ibid.*, p.159; *Ibid.*, p.299; *Ibid.*,p.209.
264. *Ibid.*, p.160.
265. *Ibid.*
266. *Ibid.*, pp.160, 162-163; *Mughal Period*, pp.301-302.
267. *Ibid.*, p.163; *Ibid.*, p.302.
268. It is situated 7 miles east of Habiganj and beyond it is the range of Satgaon hills, *Mughal Period*, p.339, note, 40.
269. *Baharistan*, pp.165, 167-170; *Mughal Period*, pp.303-304; *H.Bengal*, p.274; *History of Bengal*, pp.92-93.
270. This village Daulambapur is to the north of Hail Haor at a distance of one or one and a half miles, to the south of Maulvibazar, *Mughal Period*, p.307.
271. *Baharistan*, pp.170-171, 173-174; *Mughal Period*, pp.304-305, 307; *H.Bengal*, pp.274-275; *History of Bengal*, pp.93-94.
272. *H.Bengal*, p.275; *History of Bengal*, p.95; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.313; *Tuzuk*, p.210. But Abdul Karim thinks that the date of the battle of Daulambapur was 3rd March, 1612 A.C. For details see, *Mughal Period*, pp.322-325.
273. For details see, *Baharistan*, pp.175-195; *Tuzuk*, pp. 209- 214; *Riyaz*, pp.173-179; *Mughal Period*, pp.309-330; *H.Bengal*, pp.275-279. Abdul Karim thinks that Shujat Khan reached Dhaka on 9th April, 1612 A.C.; *Mughal Period*, p.330.
274. *Tuzuk* , p.214.
275. Kadamtala was somewhere near the town of Sylhet by the side of the river Surma, but the place cannot be identified now, *Mughal Period*, pp.341-342, note, 96.
276. *Baharistan*, pp.171-173, 195-196,199; *Mughal Period*, pp.332-335; *H.Bengal*, pp.280-281; *History of Bengal*, pp.103-105; *Muslims of Bengal*, p.316.
277. *Diary*, pp, 23-46; *North Bengal*, p.144; *Mughal Period*, p.256.
278. *Mughal Period*, p.256.
279. *Akbar Nama*, pp.660, 672.
280. *The Afghans*, p.162.

281. *Akbar Nama*, p.594.
282. *Prabasi*, Bhadra, 1329 B.S.p.637.
283. *Akbar Nama*, p.431.
284. *Ibid.*
285. *Akbar Nama*, pp.226-227, 658.
286. *Ibid.*, p.658.
287. *Ibid.*, pp.659-660.
288. *Ibid.*, p.695.
289. *Baharistan*, pp. 25, 30,33,69,71, 110.
290. *Cultural Hist.*, Vol. I, pp.367-368.

Chapter VII

A general survey of the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Bengal during the period under review

It is evident from the previous discussion that with the defeat of Daud Khan Kararani, the last independent Kararani Afghan Sultan of Bengal, in the battles of Tukaroi and Rajmahal in 1575 A.C. and in 1576 A.C. respectively, ended the independent Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal. But the defeat of Daud Khan did not immediately confirm the Mughal sovereignty over the whole of Bengal and Badshah Akbar died in 1605 A.C. before his desire was fulfilled. It was only in the reign of the next Badshah Jahangir that Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti could consolidate the Mughal position and could bring almost the whole of Bengal (except Chittagong) under Mughal control in 1612 A.C. The period of more than three decades, that is, from 1576 to 1612 A.C. the *Bara-Bhuiyans* fought gallantly against the mighty Mughals and appeared to be the chief impediments to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. Though, they were forced to submit in the long run, they were able to retain their independence during this period. Even, they established their authority over the whole region of Bhati and ruled their respective territories as almost practically independent rulers. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* played a very significant role in the politico-economic as well as socio-cultural life of their times. The main proposition of the present study is to make a general survey of the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Bengal during the period under review on the basis of the *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazl, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan, the contemporary historians, the accounts of contemporary and near contemporary foreign travellers and other historical sources.

Discussions on the socio-economic and cultural conditions are meant to cover Bengal in general and the region of Bhati in particular.

Now, an attempt has been taken to make a brief survey of the administration under the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and socio-economic and cultural aspects of Bengal during the period in question. Before going into discussion on socio-economic and cultural conditions it would be pertinent to throw some light on the administration under the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Because, they were, at the top of the political and social life of their times.

Section I: Administration under the Bara-Bhuiyans

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* introduced in Bengal the experiment of a new system of government¹, that is, the government of a military confederacy of independent *Zamindars*. In absence of central government they governed their respective territories as independent rulers. In this connection Tapan Ray Chaudhuri remarks, “The rule of the *bhuiyas*, no doubt, had given that part of Bengal the character of a confederation of autonomous states...”² For the purpose of common interest and defence of their independence against the Mughal Empire, they forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance and acknowledged the leadership of Isa Khan and then of his son Musa Khan.

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the fountain head of all powers in their respective territories. Their main functions were the protection of their territories, the collection of taxes, maintaining peace and order and looking after the public interest in their respective territories. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* had an organised administration in their respective *Zamindaries*. They had several officials who helped them to conduct the

administration. For example, Khwaja Chand was a minister of Musa Khan, Adil Khan his admiral and Ramai Lashkar and Janaki Vallabh his commanders of the army. Haji Shams al-Deen Baghdadadi was his chief officer³. Khwaja Sulaiman Khan was a general of Kedar Rai, the *Zamindar* of Bikrampur.⁴

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* had a well organised army and it was mainly composed of infantry, artillery and navy. The navy was the most vital element of the army of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. They had a fleet of seven hundred war-boats. There were various types of war-boats, such as *kushas, jalia, dhura, sundara, bajra, khelna, piara, balia, pal, ghurab, machua, pashta, sloops, patita, ulakh, mayurpankhi, ghardur, chalkar, pannshi, palwar*, etc.⁵ In their swift war-boats, the Bengali soldiers, who were noted for their boatmanship and clever naval tactics, enjoyed great superiority over the Mughal forces. They appeared suddenly to surprise the Mughal forces and disappeared before their opponents could prepare themselves for retaliation. Skilled in rowing as well as swimming, they were also ingenious in improvising newer tactics of warfare.⁶ In appreciating the skill of the Bengali boatmen, Mirza Nathan says that they also excelled in building ingenious forts over night. Such a fort they constructed at Dakchara to resist the Mughal forces. It was covered by the river on one side and marshes on the other three.⁷

The boatmanship and naval tactics of the Bengali soldiers accounted for their great advantages in the warfare in Bengal. It is noteworthy in this connection, that Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, drove away the Mughal *nawara* from the waters of Bhati in 1575 A.C.⁸ His brilliant naval victory near Bikrampur over the Mughal fleet is a remarkable distinction of the naval force of Bengal in the sixteenth century⁹. Besides, Musa Khan, the son of Isa Khan who took the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* after the death of his father, showed

his great skill in the naval engagements of Dakchra and Bandar Canal during the reign of Mughal Badshah Jahangir¹⁰. It was because of this naval superiority the *Bara-Bhuiyans* could defy for many years the might of the powerful Mughal Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir and their veteran generals.

The land-revenue is the principle source of income for the government of Bengal. In absence of central government the *Bara-Bhuiyans* themselves collected the land revenue from the peasants in their respective *Zamindaries*. Now the question is what was the method of land-revenue collection. According to Abul Fazl in pre Mughal period the peasants paid their annual land-revenue in eight monthly installments and they paid it directly to the government in cash¹¹. Though, modern scholars do not agree with Abul Fazl in some respects, it is learnt that the peasants paid their annual land-revenue in cash during Isa Khan's time.¹²

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were interested in public works of different kinds. For example, Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, excavated canals, for the supply of water. Among those, the Canal of Akal was famous¹³. He also constructed a bridge on this river. He helped the people immensely by providing these public works.

In fact, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* introduced such an administration that was beneficial to the people. They always kept vigilant eyes on people's safety and welfare. So, people lived happily under their paternal rule.¹⁴

Section II: Economic Conditions

The period under review, that is, from 1576 to 1612 A.C., that is, the end of the Afghan rule and the commencement of the Mughal rule was a transitional phase in the history of Bengal. During this period

Bengal witnessed many wars, campaigns, rebellions and a succession of Mughal generals and viceroys. In a word, during this period the Mughals were fully engaged in suppressing the *Bara-Bhuiyans* on the one hand and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were also busy to resist Mughal aggression on the other. Consequently, these socio-political forces, perhaps had no scope to bring about any substantial change in the economic life of Bengal and it was the continuation of the economic life of the past. But Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, in spite of his preoccupation with the Mughals, was very careful about the economic ease, progress and prosperity of his people.

Bengal could derive her wealth mainly from three sources, namely agriculture, trade and industry¹⁵. As the society of medieval Bengal was basically agricultural, people living in villages must have outnumbered those of towns and cities¹⁶. During the time of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* there were innumerable villages in the region of Bhati. These villages were separated by the rivers, canals and marshes¹⁷. Rural settlements contained, in addition to habitations, roads and paths, tanks with bathing *ghats* which supplied water to the people, jungles serving the purpose of the pasture-land and canals forming a sort of drainage system for the village¹⁸. During this time the roads were very narrow. Among the canals of Bhati, particularly, the region of Sonargaon, the Menikhali, Timohini Khal, Nalkhali, Issapura Khal, Pankhiraj Khal were very famous¹⁹. Among the tanks, Khas Nagar Dighi and Pajghater Dighi of Sonargaon were famous²⁰. There were arable land and fallow land. Some of the villages had local markets or *hats* where people used to go to buy and sell the necessities of life²¹. Peasants used to carry their crops to *hat* or bazar by horses and boats²². It is known that rural areas had fertile land (*urvara bhumi*), pasture land (*gocharan bhumi*), place for religious sacrifice (*vedi bhumi*), bazar (*vikrayasthana*), lake (*hrada*),

barren land (*usara bhumi*), cross way (*chatuspatha*) and crematorium (*shamshana*). Thus the disposition of land in rural settlements conformed, in many respects, to the needs of the people²³.

Considered from the point of view of its economic structure, the village in medieval Bengal did not differ much from its modern counterpart. It had a number of inter-dependent, socio-economic groups which lived and functioned for sustaining the life of the entire rural population. The cultivator needed the service of the carpenter and the blacksmith who used to supply ploughs and iron implements for cultivation. All sections of people were dependent on the potter who was the traditional maker of earthen utensils prepared and designed to fulfill the kitchen requirements. Similarly, other groups of people had direct connection with the economic framework of the village. In a word, “The rural settlement was, more or less, a self-contained unit of habitation.” The peasant could, without much difficulty, exchange his surplus product in the local market for salt, oil, cloth and other necessities of life. Though mainly based on land and its produce, the village had thus a limited amount of trade and commerce.²⁴

During the time of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* there were some towns and cities in the Bhati region, namely, Sonargaon, Katrabo, Sripur, Egara Sindur, Khizrpur and Dhaka. These towns and cities were brought into being by political, commercial, strategic and military considerations. People gathered in these towns and cities with the object of associating themselves with administration, trade and commerce. According to Abul Fazl Katrabo was the capital and family residence of Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. It was a populous city²⁵. Katrabo is identical with the village named Masumabad, on the river Lakhia and in the Rupganj Upazila of modern Narayanganj district²⁶. It served as a political centre. So this city had considerable importance from the point of view of

administration. Khizrpur was a fort city. It is situated to the north east of modern Narayanganj and about nine miles off from Dhaka. It is on the river Lakhia and about three miles from Sonargaon. Khizrpur was a very prominent place and considered as a very important military outpost during the whole Mughal period. According to Abdul Karim the fort of Khizrpur was first built by Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala²⁷. Therefore, Khizrpur had a great importance from the strategic and military point of view.

Sonargaon is situated three miles to the east of Khizrpur and in between the rivers Lakhia and Meghna. Several factors account for the importance of Sonargaon. Firstly, it was the capital city of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. The latter transferred his capital from Katrabo to Sonargaon after it was plundered by Mughal Subahdar Shahbaz Khan in 1584²⁸. The English traveller Ralph Fitch met Isa Khan in Sonargaon in 1586 A.C.²⁹ Sonargaon continued as the capital city during the time of Musa Khan even after the death of his father Isa Khan. Secondly, it was a port city. Sonargaon port facilitated the sea-borne trade of Bengal for a long time. Entering Bengal at the point of Chittagong, sea going ships could go as far as Sonargaon following the course of the river Meghna³⁰. According to Ralph Fitch the cotton cloth and rice of Sonargaon were exported to India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and other countries³¹. So, it may be said that as a port city, capital and trade centre Sonargaon had a great importance during the time of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Sripur was situated on the river Padma. It was the capital city of Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur. Towards the end of the sixteenth century it became a prominent trade centre³². Ralph Fitch visited Sripur in 1586³³. So, Sripur had a great importance as a capital city and a trade centre during the time of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

The fort town of Egara Sindur is situated on the bank of the main channel of the Brahmaputra, opposite which the river Banar rises and

where Tok another important place is situated. Egara Sindur is now in the Pakundia Upazila of the Kishoreganj district³⁴. In the *Akbar Nama* Abul Fazl very often referred to the city of Egara Sindur. It was strategically very important during the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, built a fort there, which was almost impregnable³⁵. About the town of Egara Sindur Bhattasali says, “The town of Egarasindur must have been a considerable one at the time of its highest prosperity. Toke, on the opposite side, was a big mart, and seems to have been to Egarasindur what Howrah now is to Calcutta.”³⁶

On the basis of the statement of Bhattasali it may be assumed that Egara Sindur was not only a fort town, it had some sort of trade and commercial importance during the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

Dhaka was a place of some importance in the pre-Mughal Muslim period. The discovery of a few mosques and inscriptions at the city belonging to the Sultanate period proves that it was an important place with a sizeable Muslim population³⁷. The Mughals first established a *thana* (fortified post) at Dhaka to guard the imperial positions against the incursions of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Raja Man Singh in his expedition to Bhati, made Dhaka as his base of operations³⁸. It has been mentioned earlier that during the reign of Badshah Jahangir Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti sent a detachment to Dhaka to terrorise the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. At this time the Mughals built a fort there. In 1610 A.C., Islam Khan Chishti transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dhaka³⁹. In 1629 the Portuguese traveller Fray Sebastien Manrique came to Bengal and he visited Dhaka⁴⁰. He mentioned that Dhaka was the chief city of Bengal. On account of its vast trade and commercial activities many foreigners came here and settled permanently. Every year hundreds of ships full of great variety of commodities were exported from Dhaka city. Noteworthy among these commodities were rice, sugar, butter, wax and

cloth⁴¹. So, it is evident that during the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* Dhaka was strategically, militarily and commercially an important city.

The above mentioned cities and towns served as the centres of administration, military outpost, trade and commerce during the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Among these habitations, particularly, Sonargaon, Sripur and Dhaka played important role in the economic life of Bengal.

While the towns and cities were serving as the centres of trade and commerce, agriculture could flourish only in the rural areas which provided lands for cultivation and pasturage. It can be inferred here that lands were generally classified into two categories, waste land and arable land. The government appears to have assessed only the lands under cultivation⁴². Nothing is clearly known as to the rate or rates of the revenue. I.H Qureshi thinks that in pre-Mughal period there were several rates ranging from one half to one fifth of the total produce⁴³. But whatever the rates of the revenue may be, it was extremely cheap during the time of Isa Khan, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and peasants used to sing his praise in verse. “*Kani Kshet lagila chaudda burhi (pice)*”⁴⁴. It appears from the above verse that the land-revenue of one *kani*, that is, 1920 square yards of land⁴⁵ was fourteen *paisa*.

Since Bengal is primarily an agricultural country, it may be reasonably assumed that a vast number of people belonged to the peasantry. But although, agriculture was the backbone of the economy of this country, it was surely of a primitive nature. Implements used in those days did not differ from those used in recent times. These included the plough and the yoke drawn by cows, scythe and others⁴⁶. Very often the cultivators had to depend on the mercy of rain. There was no properly developed irrigation system. But it is known that Isa Khan, the

chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, excavated canals and tanks for the supply of water to the cultivable lands.⁴⁷

The Bhati region of Bengal which is proverbially fertile used to produce numerous crops. Paddy was generally planted in the month of *Shravana* and the reaping of harvest was possible in the month of *Agrahayana*⁴⁸. In this connection Abul Fazl says, “It is sown and reaped three times a year on the same piece of land with little injury to the crop.”⁴⁹ Rice was of various kinds. Abul Fazl mentioned that a large vase would be filled up, if a single grain of each kind were collected⁵⁰. There were other agricultural products among which cotton, sugarcane, ginger, long pepper, turmeric, betel-nut, betel-leaf, radish, pulses, lentil, mustard, jute, millet, sesame, beans, onions, garlies and cucumbers may be mentioned. Most of the fruits which are found today were available in those days also⁵¹. Abul Fazl states that flowers and fruits were in plenty in this country⁵². The agriculturist had to face certain difficulties such as draught and famine. In this connection it may be mentioned here that there broke out a famine during Isa Khan’s time. At this time he helped the people in various ways.⁵³

Because of the great surplus of the agricultural and manufactured articles and the new maritime spirit brought about by the Muslims stimulated to the expansion of Bengal’s sea-borne trade⁵⁴. The commercial activities led to the development of many sea ports and river ports in Bengal. During the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* Sonargaon was an important port. Entering Bengal at the point of Chittagong, sea going ships could perhaps go as far as Sonargaon following the course of the river Meghna⁵⁵. Referring to the export trade of the port of Sonargaon Ralph Fitch mentioned that the cotton cloth and rice of Sonargaon were exported to India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and other countries⁵⁶. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Sripur became a

prominent trade centre and was visited frequently by the foreign merchants and travellers⁵⁷. According to Ralph Fitch the cotton cloths were produced abundantly in Sripur⁵⁸. During the period under review Dhaka came into prominence as trade centre. According to Sebastien Manrique many foreigners came here in order to trade and commerce and settled permanently. Every year hundreds of ships full of great variety of commodities were exported from Dhaka. Noteworthy among these commodities were rice, sugar, butter, wax and cloth. But cloth was the most profitable commodity. The cotton cloth of Dhaka was very fine and well-decorated. The finest quality of *muslin* of Dhaka was exported to Khorasan, Persia, Turkey and other countries⁵⁹. Most of the commodities of Bengal sold at an incredibly higher price in the foreign countries. Bengal cloth was in a very high demand all over south Asia so that it used to sell at a very high price in Malacca⁶⁰. Abul Fazl mentioned that salt, diamonds, emeralds, pearls, cornelians and agates were among the imported commodities in Bengal⁶¹. The list of exports and import shows that the things brought to Bengal were mostly luxury goods and that the exports included food and other necessaries of life.

It appears from the above discussion that the commodities produced in Bengal were exported to different countries through the sea-borne trade during the period in question. So, it may be mentioned that the sea-borne trade was a very prominent feature of the economic life of Bengal.

The commercial activities discussed above indicate the growth of industry in this country. As a matter of fact Bengal, particularly, Sonargoan, Sripur and Dhaka, important trade centres of Bhati region made considerable progress in respect of industries like textiles, sugar and others.

The variety and richness of the textile manufacture of Bengal attracted the attention of the foreign travellers who have given valuable information about the textiles that obtained in the country. Barbosa mentioned about different kinds of fine cloth such as *estravantes* used as headdress by the Portuguese ladies and as turbans by the Arabs and the Persians, *mamonas*, *duguazas*, *choutares*, *sinabafa* and *beatilha*, each of these pieces measuring 3 by 20 or 4 by 20 Portuguese yards⁶². Varthema who wrote about Bengal in the first decade of the sixteenth century, mentioned about the varieties of fine cloth such as *bairam*, *mamone*, *lizati*, *caintar*, *douzar* and *sinabaff*. He also mentioned that nowhere in the world he found such abundance of cotton cloth as in Bengal.⁶³ Bengal, particularly, Sonargaon of Bhati region, produced the finest quality of cotton known as *muslin*. Abul Fazl says,

“The *Sarkar* of *Sonargaon* produces a species of muslin very fine and in great quantity. In the township of *Egara Sindur* is a large reservoir which gives a peculiar whiteness to the cloths that are washed in it.”⁶⁴

According to Ralph Fitch the cotton cloths were produced abundantly in Sripur, another important city of Bhati, Sebastien Manrique mentioned that the cotton cloth of Dhaka was very fine and well-decorated. The finest quality of *muslin* of Dhaka was exported to Khorasan, Persia, Turkey and other countries.⁶⁵

Thus it is fairly certain that Sonargaon, Sripur and Dhaka of Bhati region played an important role as the centres of textile manufacture. Cotton produced in the extensive fields of the country, was generally made into finished goods by the local artisans. Clothes were generally “spun in wheels by men and woven by them.”⁶⁶

The spinning and weaving were considered as an honourable profession at that time. The spinners of Bajitpur and Jangalbari in Bhati used to make super fine thread. The spinners earned a decent income.⁶⁷

Sugarcane was one of the important agricultural products of Bengal. Basing on it sugar manufacture developed into an important industry in the Muslim period. About this industry of Bengal Barbosa observes,

“White sugar of very good quality is made in this city, but they do not know how to join it to make loaves, and so they pack it up in powder in stuff covered over with raw hide, well sewn up. They load many ships with it and export it for sale to all parts.”

In Malabar and Cambay it sold at a high price⁶⁸. According to Sebastien Manrique sugar was exported from Dhaka.⁶⁹

Like other industries, metallic industry also flourished at least in some parts of Bengal. There were iron mines in the *Sarkar* of Bazuha⁷⁰ (part of Rajshahi, Bogra, Mymensingh and Dhaka districts). There were many blacksmiths and goldsmiths in the country. The agriculturists of Bengal must have needed the services of blacksmith for manufacturing and repairing agricultural implements. According to Barbosa and Ralph Fitch the women used to wear gold, silver and copper ornaments⁷¹. So, it may be reasonably inferred that making of ornaments constituted a profession for a considerable number of people. On February 12th, 1909 A.C. seven brass cannon were discovered by some men who were excavating earth in the village of Diwan Bagh, seven miles off to the north-east of Narayanganj. In one cannon, the name of Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, his title and date are inscribed in Bengali⁷². The cannon is now preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka⁷³. This certainly gives a clue to the development of metallic industry during the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the region of Bhati.

The construction of the numerous brick buildings of the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, must have provided occupation to a good number of architects and brick-workers.

Thus it is evident that various industries played an important role in the economic life of the people during the period in question.

With the progress of civilization, the system of barter began gradually to recede into the background yielding place to money. In fact, the Muslim rulers of Bengal issued gold coins and silver coins of various sizes and weights and a large number of coins have been discovered. Though Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, issued coin⁷⁴, no coin of Isa Khan's has been discovered yet. So, it may be certainly mentioned that the coins of the past were in circulation during the period in question. The cowries which represented money of the lowest denomination were in circulation down to the eighteenth century and their use lingered in rural areas till the end of the nineteenth century. The use of cowries may be explained by the extreme cheapness of commodities so that the people did not have to use even silver coins (which were undoubtedly of a higher value) in buying the necessaries of life. As cowries could be used most conveniently in day to day affairs, the use of coins must have been very restricted. Coins were used only in large scale transactions which inland and foreign trade involved⁷⁵.

There were the cultivators who were directly connected with the production of wealth, could be divided into several categories and that the big farmers and landless labourers were not absent in the country. The weavers and the producers of different cloths were numerous. The weavers formed a major section of Muslim population in rural area. They were economically self sufficient, if not also affluent. As a class of artisans they must have acquired considerable specialisation in their professional activities. The looms were supplied by a group of people called *shanakar* or maker of looms. It has been noticed earlier the growth of metallic industry which must have involved the labour of

various classes such as goldsmiths and blacksmiths. There were other professional classes among which fishermen, woodcutters, potters, barbers, carpenters, milkmen may be mentioned. Above all there were a good number of architects and brick workers. The above mentioned professional groups clearly indicate that Bengali society was growing to its full economic stature⁷⁶.

Thus, it is evident that the country enjoyed agricultural, industrial and commercial prosperity during the period under study. It is known that Isa Khan assumed a friendly attitude towards the Portuguese settlers in expectation of increased trade⁷⁷. Trade, commerce and industry flourished in this time as witnessed by Ralph Fitch who visited Sonargoan in 1586 A.C. and was struck by the prosperity of the city and he observes,

“Sinnergan is a town six leagues from Serrepore, where there is the best and finest cloth made of cotton that is in all India. The chief king of all these countries is called Isacan... Many of the people are very rich... Great store of cotton cloth goeth from hence, and much Rice, wherewith they serve all India, Celon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and many other places.”⁷⁸

As to the economic condition of the general people during the period under consideration, it may be mentioned that they led a life of economic ease. The foreign travellers referred to the abundance and cheapness of food- stuffs and other necessities of life. Visiting Bengal about 1640 A.C., Sebastien Manrique wrote that in every mart or town here was such super-abundance of food-stuffs, house-hold, necessities and manufactured articles, such as cotton cloths, that each of these articles of one mart could load several vessels. He observed that prices were so low in the cities of Bengal specially of food-stuffs that he was tempted to have many meals a day⁷⁹. In spite of Isa Khan’s preoccupation in military pursuits it is evident that his people had

comparative ease and prosperity and it is said that rice was sold at four *maunds* to the rupee⁸⁰. This speaks of the security which his strong hands could give to his people and the interest he took in the welfare of his people.

To conclude, it may be said that during the period under review Bengal, particularly, the region of Bhati enjoyed prosperity in agriculture, industry and commerce. The life of even the most ordinary people was easy, because of abundance and cheapness. They had fewer needs and their life was simple.

Section III: Society and Culture

It is necessary to form an idea about the society and culture during the period under study. Islam and Hinduism were the two main component elements which constituted the whole socio-religious structure of the country⁸¹. The advent of the Muslims is an important landmark in the social and cultural history of Bengal. By the immigration of the foreign Muslims and by the acceptance of Islam by many non-Muslim, the number of Muslims had steadily increased in Bengal. There was also higher birth rate among the Muslims. The *sufis* and *ulema* had the most significant role in the spread of Islam and the development of the Muslim community in Bengal. The *khanqahs* and *madrasahs* acted as powerful integrating forces of the Muslim society⁸². Living side by side for centuries, the Muslims and the Hindus naturally influenced one another. The liberalism of the Muslims with their ideas of social equality and brotherhood in every field, the simplicity of their religion and life and their enlightenment and culture reacted the Hindus in many ways. The Hindus came in contact with the Muslims either as

courtiers and officers of the Muslim rulers or as neighbours of the Muslim population. Naturally the Hindus were greatly influenced in many fundamental aspects of their life by the superior ideas and culture as well as the etiquette and ways of life of the Muslims⁸³. But the latter did not react much to the traditions of the former. The simple faith and the democratic social set-up of the Muslims had practically nothing to take from the complex, caste-ridden and priest dominated Hindu society. Yet centuries of contact could not but leave behind some influence of the Hindus on the social life of the Muslims⁸⁴.

One remarkable aspect of the social life of the Bengali people during the period of Muslim rule was the promotion of the feeling of understanding and co-operation between the Hindus and the Muslims. In fact, as a result of social intercourse and exchange of ideas, the Hindus and the Muslims came to form a better understanding of each other. The Muslim interest in the knowledge of the Hindu scriptures naturally evoked the reverence of the enlightened Hindus to the religious works of the Muslims. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that by their enlightened patronage, the Muslim rulers made significant contribution to the development of the Bengali literature. Not only that the Muslim rulers were keenly interested in the religious knowledge of the Hindus and they were the first to popularise the teachings of their scriptures among the Hindus in general by providing for the translation of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavada* into Bengali. The Hindu *sastras* were discussed in the courts of the Muslim rulers and governors⁸⁵. This really helped in bringing about a better social and cultural understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims and in building a common cultural platform of the two communities of Bengal. As a result, an atmosphere of harmony and amity prevailed in the Hindu- Muslim relations and this accounted for the peace and prosperity

in Bengal and also for the development of several common cultural institutions of these two communities of Bengal. It is to be borne in mind that although, the socio-cultural life of the past continued during the period under review, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* emerged as a new socio-cultural force in the history of Bengal.

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* were at the top of the society in their respective territories during the period under consideration. Their wealth, position and power caught the imagination of the people and they followed the lead of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. The halo which gathered round the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in the eyes of the people was sung in local ballads and their names are enshrined in local traditions of the province⁸⁶. These express their powerful impression on the minds of the people and social life of the time.

The upper class of the Muslim society was composed of the Saiyids⁸⁷, Mughals, Pathans⁸⁸ and the high government officials⁸⁹. In speaking of the respectable Muslims, Barbosa referred to their luxurious life. In towns and cities they lived in brick-built houses which had flat roofs and flights of steps. They had great bathing tanks attached to their houses⁹⁰. They used to have at their table varieties of dishes of fowl, mutton and meat, both roasted and soaked. Different kinds of sweets and fruits formed part of the menu⁹¹. They used to put on very thin, white, long garments reaching to their ankles with girdles of clothes beneath them and silk scarves over them. They wore rings studded with jewels, and turbans, and publicly carried daggers in their girdles⁹². Drinking wine was common in the upper class circles⁹³. But it was not a common practice of all the people of the upper classes. It was confined to a few and was never done in the public⁹⁴. Barbosa has incidentally mentioned a kind of wine prepared from the palm and used by respectable ladies.⁹⁵

The wealthy Muslims had their occasional social gatherings which were rendered quite lively by music and dance. On such occasions, they invited musicians and dancing girls whose coloured dress and dazzling ornaments added much to the pomp and grandeur of the festivities.⁹⁶

Polygamy was widely practiced by the wealthy Muslims and the number of their wives was possibly without any limit. While confining these women to their respective houses, they did not forget to behave well with them, “giving them great store of gold, silver and apparel of fine silk.” The female folk used to meet only at night, the occasions being attended by “great festivities, and rejoicings and superfluity of wines.” They could skillfully play on different musical instruments. Barabosa has mentioned gold, silver and apparel of fine silk which clearly indicate that the ladies of the upper class used to put on gold and silver ornaments and silk clothes⁹⁷. In the light of above discussion it may be mentioned that the upper class Muslim enjoyed complete economic affluence and spent their lives in state of luxury and extravagancy.

The cultivators, weavers and those who had adopted similar other professions, belonged to the lower class of the Muslim society. Some of them were converts from Hinduism or the descendants of such converts. Certain professions were monopolised by the Muslims. Even the Hindus had to depend upon Muslim tailors. The tailor class of Bengal was mostly composed of Muslims. The broad economic divisions of the Muslims including the *pithari* (cake seller), *kabari* (fish seller), *kagazi* (the maker of paper), *rangrez* (the cloth dyer), *hazam* (those whose profession was to circumcise children), *kasai* (butcher) and *shanakar* (the Maker of looms) bear out the truth of the conclusion that the

economic structure of the Muslim society had grown almost to its full stature towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁹⁸

The lower class people, living in towns and cities, were greatly influenced by the upper class whom they used to imitate in their day to day affairs. Put on short white shirts which come half way down their thighs, and on their heads little twisted turban of three or four folds, and also used well wrought and gilded sandals and shoes⁹⁹. It is also known that the common people particularly the cultivators and labouring class put on *lungi* (a cloth like skirt), *nima* or a small half shirt and a cap¹⁰⁰. The lower class people lived in houses built of bamboo with straw thatchings¹⁰¹. Bengali food has not changed materially in the course of the last few centuries. Rice, as now, was the staple food of the people. Rice soaked in water (*pantabhat* or *amani*) was the breakfast not only of the poorer class as now, but the richer section of the community also used to take it with relish¹⁰². It is known that the Muslims of Bengal favoured fowl, mutton and meat curries. Besides, rice, fish and vegetables were the common food of the people. The common people among the Muslims could prepare sundry fish and vegetable curries for their meal. *Khichri* (a preparation of rice and pulse usually with ghee or oil) was a favourite dish of the people. Even the upper class people had special liking for it.¹⁰³

Widow remarriage was a common institution at least among the Muslims of lower classes. The Muslim widows mourned their husband's death by abstaining from taking meat or fish for at least a week¹⁰⁴.

The Muslims of Bengal followed the ideal of education of the early Muslims. The Muslim rulers, nobles, officers and well-to-do persons were devoted to learning and exerted themselves for the spread and progress of education in every possible way. The *ulema* and *sufis* promoted the cause of learning among the Bengali people. As a result, a

large number of *madrasahs*, academies and schools developed in towns and important localities. The sayings of the prophet (Sm) were inscribed on the *madrasahs* and educational institutions to impress upon the Muslims the significance of education in their mental and moral advancement.¹⁰⁵

Primary education was common among the Muslims during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal. This was particularly because, Muslims regarded education of children as a religious duty. Education of Muslims under the Muslim rule was a political and administrative necessity. It was also held as a social distinction. The founding of institutions of education was considered as service in the way of Allah and a pious deed. The education of the Muslim children began in the *maktab*, which was attached to every mosque and also to the house of a rich man, so that every town and even village had many primary schools.¹⁰⁶

Religious teaching formed the basis of the primary education. Every Muslim child, boy or girl, was taught the fundamentals of religion and the precepts of the faith¹⁰⁷. Besides, religious knowledge, other subjects were also taught in the *maktab*. The students, in the primary schools had to learn three languages Arabic, Persian and Bengali. For the reading of the *Quran* and *Hadith* the learning of the Arabic language was essential. Persian was the language of the court and culture throughout the Muslim period. Hence the study of the Persian language and literature was indispensable for employment in the government or any other institution. Bengali was the mother tongue of many Muslims as well as of the non-Muslims. Hence the Bengali Muslims could not have neglected the learning of the Bengali language. Indeed Bengali played a significant part in the literary and cultural life of the Muslims of Bengal.¹⁰⁸

Secondary education was imparted in the *madrasahs*. Many *madrasahs* were set up in the province and most of the towns and important Muslim localities had a secondary school¹⁰⁹. The secondary course included the *Quran*, the *Hadith*, theology, jurisprudence and other Islamic subjects. Secular sciences, such as logic, arithmetic, medicine, chemistry, geometry, astronomy and others were also taught in the *madrasahs*.¹¹⁰

In discussing the higher education, it is noteworthy that chemistry, medicine and natural sciences were taught in the *madrasahs* of Bengal as in other parts of this subcontinent. The *Unani* and *Irani* medicine was studied and practiced in this province¹¹¹. Seats of higher education developed in many towns and important localities. Several *khanqahs* of the celebrated *sufi*-scholars also formed the nucleus of illustrious seats of learning. The *khanqah* of the vastly learned *sufi* Shaikh Al al- Haq and his distinguished son Shaikh Nur Qutb Alam was a renowned seat of learning as well as spiritual knowledge. Hadrat Nur Qutb Alam built a great *madrasah* and hospital at Pandua¹¹². Up to the Mughal times Lakhnawti (Gaur), Pandua, Mahisun, Sonargaon, Satgaon, Nagor, Mandaran, Bagha, Rangpur and Chittagong were some of the centres of higher learning. Many of these seats of education continued their career of the diffusion of knowledge in the period of the Mughal rule in Bengal. It may be mentioned here that Sonargaon continued to be an intellectual centre during the Muslim rule. Shaikh Ala al-Haq, his grandson Shaikh Badr-i-Islam and great grandson Shaikh Zahedi, who were noted for their learning, lived in this city several years. It was the abode of a great jurist and *muhaddith* of the sixteenth century, Taqi al-Din who was regarded as the chief of the lawyers and teachers of the *Hadith* literature. Sonargaon was a flourishing port city and the capital of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief

of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Many nobles and eminent persons lived in this city. As such, the tradition of Sonargaon as an educational centre continued throughout the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, if not later¹¹³. It may be mentioned here that Sonargaon was the only notable seat of learning in the region of Bhati during the period under study.

The teachers appointed by the rulers were perhaps well-versed in certain subjects including law and enjoyed much prestige in the society. Taqi al-Din, one of these teachers, whose name is recorded in the Sonargaon inscription of Nusrat Shah, had the high sounding title of *malik-ul-umara wal-wazara*, and was regarded as the chief of the lawyers and teachers of traditions of the sixteenth century¹¹⁴. The teacher of the primary school held a place of special importance in the social and cultural life of village. The students also had great respect and attachment for their teacher and served him with devotion. The teachers of the *madrasahs* and other educational institutions were provided for their subsistence from the rent free endowments which were granted to every institution either by the state or by some well-to-do Muslims. The teacher was also the *imam* or the guide of the Muslims of the village in their rituals ceremonies and festivities. He conducted such ceremonies as marriage, etc. For this he used to get gifts from the people. The students also would make presents to him after the successful completion of the primary education¹¹⁵.

From the facts discussed above, it appears that the Bengali Muslims attached great value to education and there was urge for the acquisition of learning in the Bengali Muslim society. It is also to be noted in this connection that the Muslims of the Mughal Bengal were comparatively wealthy and prosperous, and hence they had better facilities for the education of their children. All these factors contributed

to the progress of learning among the Muslims of Bengal. As a result, a large number of works on various branches of knowledge were compiled by the celebrated scholars of Sultani Bengal. This trend also continued till the period under study. It may be mentioned here that Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, son of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, was a patron of learning and men of letters. He gave his patronage to Pandit Nathuresh in compiling a Sanskrit dictionary called *Shabdha Ratnakari*.¹¹⁶

It is learnt from the writings of the contemporary Bengali poets that the Muslim society was noted for its religious character and the Muslims regulated their life in accordance with the *Quran* and the *Hadith* (Prophetic traditions). They were punctilious in the performance of their religious rites and ceremonies. Even in their dress and manners, they followed the tradition of the early Muslims. A glimpse of the religious character of the Muslim society may be obtained from the writings of Mukundaram, who says, “they (Muslims) rise early in the morning and, spreading a red *pati* (mat), say their prayers five times a day. Counting on the *Sulaimani* beads, they meditate on the *pir* and *Paighambar* (Prophet) and illuminate the seat of the *pir*. Ten or twenty of them sit together to decide cases. They always recite the *Quran* and the *kitab* (religious book).” The poet also adds, “They are very wise, they care for none (except God) and they never give up fasting (*roza*) even to the last breath.”¹¹⁷ So, it is evident that the Muslims had strong religious feeling. The Muslims of Bengal were also very particular about their dress and habits. The pious Muslims used to shave their heads, wear beards, and put on the *ijar* (trouser), turban and cap. While meeting one another, they did not forget to exchange *salam* (Islamic Salutation). In fact, mosques and *maqams* (shrines of the *pirs*) were the meeting places for them. The picture of the pious Muslims of Bengal, as

depicted in the Bengali literature, does not fundamentally differ from that of the religious minded Muslims residing in other parts of the world.¹¹⁸

The Muslims of Bengal celebrated some religious festivals among which *Id al-Fitr*, *Id al-Azha*, the Birthday of the Prophet (Sm), *Shab-i-Baraat*, the *Ashura* of *Muharram* and a ceremony known as *Bera* festival may be mentioned.¹¹⁹

A notable trait of Muslim religious life of mediaeval Bengal was the influence of *sufi* mysticism. Of the numerous Indian *sufi* orders, at least seven are definitely known to have entered Bengal in different periods. These seven orders are the Suhrawardia, the Chishtia, the Qalandariyah, the Madariyah, the Adhamiyah, the Naqshbandia and the Qadiriya. Several of these orders had considerable influence during the Muslim rule in Bengal¹²⁰. These *sufi* orders played an important role to build up the Muslim society in Bengal. It may be mentioned here that in earlier period *sufism* maintained its orthodox character and its impact was deeply felt in the Hindu society. But from the sixteenth century onwards it fell increasingly under the influence of Hindu *yogism* and *trantrikism* and degenerated into heterodox mysticism. The monism of Hindu mystics made way into the Muslim mysticism. Un-Islamic ideas and practices prevailed in the society throughout the sub-continent. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), known as the *Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani*, aimed at purifying the Muslim society of these evils and re-establishing the orthodox faith and *sufism*.¹²¹

It may be said that the above mentioned religious features of the Muslim society of Bengal remained almost unchanged during the period under review.

Hindu society was based on the caste system and they were divided into four castes, the Brahmin, the Kayastha, Vaisya and Sudra. There were, besides, many sub-castes and sects among them. The social barriers between different castes and even sub-castes continued to exist and deny social intercourse with one another¹²².

The Brahmins, during the Hindu rule, maintained their position of precedence in the Hindu social life. But the Muslim rule and their social ideals greatly relieved the lower class people from the domination and exclusiveness of the Brahmins and accorded them many rights and facilities to improve their life and status in the society. The Brahmins however lost the monopoly of the rights and privileges and were virtually faced with the condition of competition from the Hindus of other castes in intellectual, political and social life with the establishment of the Muslim power in Bengal. Being thus denied of the monopoly of the privileges in the State, the Brahmins took to different professions. These professions decided their status in the society. Thus the Brahmins were divided into several sections on the basis of their occupation and they also lived in separate quarters of the villages or towns¹²³.

The Kayasthas lived in one side of the town or village and represented the middle class in the Hindu society. Under the Muslim rule, they got opportunities to show their talents and attainments. They excelled in learning and intellect and qualified themselves for a dignified position in the state and society. Because of their learning and devotion to government and the patronage of the Muslim rulers, the Kayasthas prospered in government service and also as revenue farmers and *Zamindars*. Indeed they occupied a position of pre-eminence in the Hindu society in consequence of their rise to office and wealth during the period of Muslim rule in Bengal.¹²⁴

The Vaisays were mostly cultivators and traders. The Vaisays lived in one part of the village or town, on the lines of their occupations. The Vaisays cultivators lived in one quarter and the trading Vaisays of various categories were settled in their neighbourhood. There were also various classes of manufactures and artisans among them.¹²⁵

The Sudras were either cultivators or labourers in the society. They were divided into many sub-castes on the basis of their occupations. One class ploughed land and another caught fish. There were weavers, barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, washermen and other classes of Sudras. They lived in one extremity of the town or the village.¹²⁶

On the eve of the Muslim conquest of Bengal, the Hindu society was demoralised. But after the Muslim conquest of Bengal, there was moral and cultural development of the Hindu society, as a result of the religious and social influence of the Muslims.¹²⁷

The rich, both Hindus and Muslims, used to live in brick built houses and the poor had their houses built of bamboo with straw¹²⁸. The *dhuti* was the common dress of the Hindus. The upper class people wore an *angarakhi* or a long coat reaching the knee-joint and fastened in the neck and breast. There was also the use of *chadar* and turban in the aristocratic and educated circles. The wealthy Hindus, particularly the merchants, put on necklace, ear-ring, and rings of diamonds and precious metals. The common dress of the women was *sari*. There were different kinds and qualities of *saries*. Sack-cloths or jute *saries* were worn by women of the poorer class. The women of well-to-do families generally put on *kanchuli* (tight-breast) and *orna* (scarf). They adorned themselves with various ornaments, such as necklace, bracelet, bangles, ear-ring, nose-ring etc. They put on *nupur* or anklet in their feet. The use of vermilion marks was common among all classes of women. They

used scents of musk and sandal-wood.¹²⁹ Abul Fazl remarks that the men and women of Bengal for the most part went naked, wearing only a cloth (*lungi*) about their loins. Ralph Fitch also had similar reflection about the Bengali people he says, “They go with a little cloth before them, and all the rest of their bodies is naked.”¹³⁰ The statements of Abul Fazl and Ralph Fitch should not be accepted in their literal meaning. It was not that the Bengalis were poor and could not afford to buy clothes. But in view of the rains, waters and mud, trouser, shirt etc., were inconvenient for work in the field in Bengal. A small *dhuti* was therefore the most convenient dress for the cultivators and labourers working in the soil of this riverine province.¹³¹

Rice and fish were the chief food of the Bengali people. According to the accounts of Ralph Fitch, there was a section of the Hindus who were strictly vegetarians. Regarding the people of Sonargaon, this English traveller writes “Here they will eat no flesh, nor kill a beast. They live on rice, milk and fruits.”¹³² The people in general took rice, fish and vegetables. On festive occasions however they used to take flesh.¹³³

In the pre-Muslim Bengal education was confined mostly among the Brahmins and the lower class Hindus were denied the right to any kind of knowledge whatsoever. But from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal the lower class Hindus found scope for acquiring learning and improving their life¹³⁴. Because, the Muslim rule opened equal opportunities to all classes of people Muslim and non-Muslims, high or low, for advancement, spiritual, material and intellectual. The system of education followed in the Hindu society was different in many respects from its modern counterpart. Village schools were common in those days. They were attended by a large number of students coming not only from the richer class in the society but also from the poorer section as

well. The education of the Hindu boy began with the ceremony called *hatekhadi* and he used to learn the alphabets possibly at his own home. When this initial stage was over the boy could go to join one of the neighboring *tols* conducted individually by a Brahmin *Pandit* (scholar). Since the pattern of education was thoroughly classical, he had to learn grammar, logic and rhetoric. It seems that the *Vedas* together with their commentaries were taught at a higher stage of the student's intellectual maturity. The different systems of Indian philosophy such as *Nyaya*, *Samkhya*, *Patanjala*, *Mimamsa* and *Vaishesika* were also studied by the advanced students¹³⁵. Bengali and Persian were also taught in some of the *tols*. There were several centres of Sanskrit learning in Bengal in the Muslim period. The most celebrated of these was Navadvip. It was a great seat of learning in the Hindu times. In the Muslim period it developed into a brilliant centre of the New School of philosophy (*Navya Nyaya*) and attracted students from all parts of India.¹³⁶

During the period of the Muslim rule in Bengal, the Hindu society, apart from the various castes and sub-castes was divided into many religious groups and sects. Among these the *Vaishnavas*, the *Dharma* cult, the *Saivas*, the *Saktas*, the *Sahajiya*, and the *Avadhuta* may be mentioned. The Hindus observed many religious rites and ceremonies. Besides, the worship of Siva and Kali, they worshipped many gods and goddesses. The worship of the goddesses Manasa and Chandi occupied a prominent place in the Hindu society from the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the worship of Durga became common among the Hindus. There were also *Laksmi puja*, *Saraswati puja*, *Vasuli puja*, *Sasthi puja* and *Charak puja*, etc., in the Hindu society. The Hindus of the time regarded it as a religious duty to bathe in the Ganges and the Barhmaputra rivers. Bathing in a holy river on the seventh of the Bengali month *Magh*, was known as *Maghi Saptami*

Snan, *Dolyatra*, *Rathayatra* and *Holi* festival became very common in this period. In course of time the *Holi* formed a common festival of the Hindus. It was performed amidst great rejoicings. The Muslims patronised and even participated in this festival of the Hindus.¹³⁷

The customs of the Hindu society were intermingled with prejudices. It was believed that musical performances would lead to the increase of the price of paddy and create famine in the country. If the pitcher that used to be kept on the exit-door (*yatraghat*) was broken by any accident, or if the head touched the upper doorframe, the journey was considered to be inauspicious. There appears to be no end of inauspicious signs. The chirping of the house lizard on the left side, the movement of the snake on the right and the howling of jackals, were all considered as indicating that the journey would not be an auspicious one. The falling of vermilion from women's head and of bracelets from their hands and the breaking of *shankhas* were regarded as inauspicious signs. In the morning people did not like to look at the face of a childless man who was believed to be helpless in the next world¹³⁸. Some of these beliefs are still lingering in a modified form in the society of modern rural Bengal.

The above mentioned characteristics of the social life of the Hindus remained unchanged during the period under study.

The social and cultural understanding that developed between the Muslim and the Hindu communities during the Sultanate period in Bengal continued during the period under review. For example the *Bara-Bhuiyuans* derived from both Hindu and Muslim communities. Among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the Hindu *Bhuiyans* were Chand Rai and Kedar Rai, the *Zamindars* of Bikrampur and Sripur, Madhava Rai, the *Zamindar* of Khalsi and Binod Rai, the *Zamindar* of Chandpratap. They were the bona fide members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and they followed the

lead of Isa Khan and, after him, of his son Musa Khan. So, it is evident that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were derived from both Hindu and Muslim communities. Not only that, the Muslim *Bhuiyans* had Hindu high officers under them and the Hindu *Bhuiynas* had Muslim high officers. For example, Ramai Lashkar and Janaki Vallabh were commanders of Musa Khan's army¹³⁹ and Sulaiman Khan was a general of Kedar Rai¹⁴⁰. So, the Hindus and Muslims joined in their resistance against the Mughals. It is learnt that in Bengal, during the Sultanate period also, the Hindus joined the Muslims in resisting the aggression of the Sultans of Delhi. At that time, the Hindus served under the Muslim rulers, but now they joined the Muslims to preserve their independence against the Muslim Mughals, the joint effort of the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal against the Muslim Mughal aggression, ushers in a new chapter in the socio-cultural history of Bengal.

The Hindu *Zamindars* celebrated *pujas* and other socio-religious rites and festivities in great pomp and the Muslim *Zamindars* participated in these ceremonies. It is learnt that Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, graced by his presence many festivities at the court of Pratapaditiya of Jessore¹⁴¹. Thus the *Bara-Bhuiyans* continued the socio-cultural harmony and amity between the Hindus and the Muslims which had developed during the Sultanate period in Bengal.

Like the Sultans of Bengal, Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, the chief of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, and his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, who took the leadership of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* after the death of his father, were patrons of learning and men of letters. Under their patronage there was some progress of literatures. In a cannon the name of Isa Khan has been inscribed in Bengali¹⁴². This fact, though small in itself, is significant, as

it is related to the position of the Bengali language. The Hindu rulers used to have their inscriptions in Sanskrit. The Muslim rulers issued their inscriptions either in Arabic or in Persian. Sher Shah was the first ruler both among Muslims and Hindus to issue an inscription in Bengali¹⁴³. Isa Khan followed this great Afghan Sultan in according a status to the Bengali language. Isa Khan's son Musa Khan gave his patronage to Pandit Nathuresh in compiling a Sanskrit dictionary called *Shabdha Ratnakari*.¹⁴⁴

The *Bara-Bhuiyans* had also some contributions to the field of architecture. Some mosques and forts were built during their times, among which the Mosque of Katrabo, the Mosque of Qutub Shah, the Mosque of Jangalbari, the Mosque of Musa Khan, the Fort of Katrabo, the Fort of Khizrpur, the Fort of Qadam Rasul, the Fort of Sonakanda, the Fort of Egara Sindur and the Fort of Jangalbari may be mentioned.¹⁴⁵

To conclude, it may be mentioned here that the characteristics of the healthy society and culture that had developed during the time of the Sultans of Bengal continued to flourish during the period under study. In absence of any central government the *Bara-Bhuiyans* emerged as the independent rulers and became fountainheads of all powers in their respective territories. Not only that, they were the virtual protectors and guardians of the society of their times. They added a new social element and cultural force to the province. They supplied a class of influential aristocracy to the Bengali people and contributed to the vigour and progress of the society in many ways.

Notes and References

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86. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.206. For details see, Dewan Ishakhaner Pala, Moulik, Sree Khitishchandra (Edited), *Prachin Purbabanga Gitika*, Vol. VII, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 159-240.
87. The *Shaikhs*, *Saiyids* and *Ulama* were an influential upper class of the society. Although they might not have possessed official status or wealth, they were held in the highest esteem by the people in general, because of their piety, learning and exemplary character. Their position of honour and respectability gave them a high social status. The *Saiyids*, the descendants of the Prophet (Sm), always commanded the special reverence of Muslims, *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.174, 176; *Aurangzib's Reign*, p.231; *Banglar Itihash*, p.141.
88. Pathan is no doubt the general term used in the Indian subcontinent for the Afghans, Karim, Abdul, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal* (Down to A.D. 1538), Third Edition and Jatiya Grantha Prakashan Ist Published August, 2001, p.176.
89. *Hussain Shahi*, p.341.
90. *Ibid.*, p.338.
91. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.290.
92. *Hussain Shahi*, p.338; *Bideshi Parjatak*, pp.42, 108.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.259.

95. *Hussain Shahi*, p.338; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.108.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Ibid.*, pp.339-340; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.108.
98. *Ibid.*, p.341; *Bengal Under*, p.225; *Aurangzib's Reign*, pp.239-240; *Banglar Itihash*, pp.146-147.
99. *Ibid.*; *Bideshi Parjatak*, pp.108-109; *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.264.
100. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.292.
101. *Hussain Shahi*, pp.355-356; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.116.
102. *Ibid.*, p.357; *Bengal Under*, p.223.
103. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.291.
104. *Hussain Shahi*, p.342.
105. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, pp.161-162.
106. *Ibid.*, p.188; *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.305.
107. *Ibid.*, p.191.
108. *Ibid.*, pp.191-192.
109. *Ibid.*, p.195.
110. *Ibid.*, p.196.
111. *Ibid.*, p.197.
112. *Ibid.*, p.177; *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.289.
113. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, pp.288-290.
114. *Ibid.*, p.290; *Hussain Shahi*, p.343.
115. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, pp.207-208.
116. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.207.
117. Mukundaram, *Chandikavya*, quoted and translated by Rahim, M.A., *Cultural Hist* Vol.I, p.271.
118. *Hussain Shahi*, pp.341-342.
119. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, pp.274-280.
120. *Bengal Under*, p.175.
121. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.341.
122. *Ibid.*, p.357; *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.341.
123. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, pp. 341-342.

124. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.344.
125. *Ibid.*, p.347.
126. *Ibid.*
127. *Ibid.*, pp.347-348.
128. *Hussain Shahi*, p.355.
129. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, pp.357-358.
130. *Ain*, p.134; *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.116.
131. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.358.
132. *Bideshi Parjatak*, p.116.
133. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.358.
134. *Ibid.*, pp.202-203.
135. *Hussain Shahi*, pp.360-361.
136. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.I, p.205.
137. *Ibid.*, pp.350-356.
138. *Hussain Shahi*, p.359.
139. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.201.
140. *The Afghans*, pp.227-228.
141. *Ibid.*, p.228.
142. *Sixteenth Century Cannon*, pp.367-375.
143. *Cultural Hist.* Vol.II, p.206.
144. *Ibid.*, pp.206-207.
145. For details see, *Isakhan*, pp.51-75.

Chapter VIII Conclusion

Mughal Badshah Akbar got a foothold in Bengal after Daud Khan Kararani, the last independent Afghan Sultan of Bengal, was defeated and killed in the battle of Rajmahal in 1576 A.C. But though, the Afghan ruling power was crushed, the Mughals could not consolidate their position over the whole of Bengal and Badshah Akbar died in 1605 A.C. before his desire was fulfilled. It was only in the reign of the next Badshah Jahangir that Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti could consolidate the Mughal position and could bring almost the whole of Bengal (except Chittagong) under the Mughal control within 1612 A.C. The period of more than three decades, that is, from 1576 to 1612 A.C., cannot be properly regarded as the Mughal period in Bengal. Because, during this time different parts of Bengal were under the control of different Afghan Chieftains and *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)*. They both jointly and / or severally resisted the Mughal aggression and ruled almost practically as independent rulers in their respective territories. Among the *Bhuiyans (Zamindars)*, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati became very famous, because they fought gallantly during this period and although they had been forced to submit in the long run, they were able to preserve the independence of the country for more than three decades and they turned out to be the chief obstacle to the Mughal bid for the conquest of Bengal. Not only that they were also at the top of the political, administrative and social life of this period.

It may be quite in place to mention here that a good number of pioneering scholars also has tried to reconstruct the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. But most of their writings appeared to be somewhat inadequate and at the same time, it is evident from their writings that

almost all of them could not offer proper answers to the following questions concerning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*; (a) What is the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’?; (b) Who are the *Bara-Bhuiyans*?; (c) When and how did they rise to power?; (d) Where were the territories of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* actually located? etc. etc. In this dissertation it has been tried to solve these questions on a rational basis. At first it has been tried to reach a plausible conclusion on the significance of the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’, that is, to explain the term properly as far as possible. The previous scholars have also tried to explain the term ‘*Bara-Bhuiyans*’. But they explained the term in various ways and also held mutually contradictory views regarding the significance of the term. Among the sources used by the previous scholars the only contemporary sources are the European writings, the *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazl and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* of Mirza Nathan. The European writings have turned out to be confusing. On the other hand, it is clearly evident from the statements of Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan that they are completely unequivocal about the term “twelve” (*dawazdah*) and the term was in vogue before the Mughal invasion of Bengal. Although Abul Fazl mentioned that Isa Khan made the “twelve Zamindars” subject to himself and Mirza Nathan repeatedly mentioned Musa Khan and “Twelve Bhuyans”, neither Abul Fazl nor Mirza Nathan definitely mentions who these “twelve Zamindars” or “Twelve Bhuyans” were, that is, who these *Bara-Bhuiyans* were. Besides, the history of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir, as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan respectively, gives the clear impression that the number of the allies of Isa Khan is less than twelve and the number of the allies of Musa Khan on the contrary, is more than twelve. Most probably, these

issues might have made the modern scholars confused. So, they differ as to the significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*', many of them holding that the term denotes an indefinite number, and among others, one took the term for twelve units of *Bhuiyans*, one for exactly twelve *Bhuiyans* and at least one, took the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' for a symbol. So, it is quite evident that the previous scholars are not in agreement about the meaning or significance of the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*'. Almost, all of them think that the term "*Bara*" or "twelve" was used to denote an indefinite number of *Bhuiyans*. But they could not prove this opinion reasonably and also could not mention any contemporary historical source in favour of such opinion, rather they merely followed each other uncritically. On the other hand, though M. Mohar Ali takes the term "twelve" for twelve units of *Bhuiyans* and Abdul Karim for exactly twelve *Bhuiyans*, their opinions cannot be accepted on reasonable grounds. However, it is interesting to note that there are clear indications in the writings of the previous scholars that term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige. On the other hand, the contemporary historians Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, while mentioning the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, also mention Bhati, that is, they limited the *Bara-Bhuiyans* within the region of Bhati. Moreover, the history of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir, as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* by Abul Fazl and Mirza Nathan, gives the clear impression that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were the people of Bhati, they rose to power in Bhati and Bhati was the main theatre of their resistance. On the basis of these facts the conclusion is drawn that the term '*Bara-Bhuiyans*' signifies the symbol of dignity, power and prestige of those *Zamindars* of Eastern Bengal, specially of Bhati, who by their independent status, freedom-loving attitude,

patriotic zeal, indomitable courage and heroic struggle for independence against the mighty Mughals achieved that legendary dignity, power and prestige. Secondly, here an attempt has been made to identify the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and in so doing it has been marked that those *Bhuiyans* were regarded as the *Bara-Bhuiyans* who were really independent and had continuously fought against the Mughals during the reigns of Badshah's Akbar and Jahangir to retain that independence and that it proved to have been the greatest obstacle to the Mughal bid for the conquest of Bengal. These local veterans established rapport with one another and forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance and successively followed the lead of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and, after him, of his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. But those who did not fight against the Mughals and also those who were not persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals and did not follow the lead of Isa Khan or Musa Khan, are not to be counted among the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Thirdly, it has been tried to identify the region of Bhati which ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reigns of Badshah's Akbar and Jahangir. In this study identification of the eastern boundary of the region of Bhati by such modern scholars as Bhattasali and Abdul Karim has not been accepted because of reasonable grounds. Fourthly, though in the *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Mughal rule in Bengal starts after the fall of Daud Khan Kararani, it is found in the present study that actually the Mughal rule in Bengal started during the reign of Badshah Jahangir when Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti was able to finally subdue the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, and by taking this advantage he was further able to defeat other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal. Thus he was able ultimately to establish Mughal authority over the whole of Bengal (except Chittagong) within 1612 A.C. It has also been seen in the present study that during the reign of Badshah Akbar Mughal control

was limited to a very small area and for a time there was a rebel government formed by the rebel Mughal officers in Bengal for about two years when Badshah Akbar did not have any effective authority over Bengal. At that time Bhati virtually remained outside Mughal control as it was before and the whole of Bhati is found about this time in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Moreover, it is also found in the present study that the anti-Mughal resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati did not come to an end with the death of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, as it is wrongly understood; rather it continued under the leadership of his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala for more than a decade. The period from 1576 to 1612 A.C., that is, more than three decades the *Bara-Bhuiyans* successfully checked the Mughal arms in Bengal and ruled their respective territories as practically independent rulers and there was no central government and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* introduced in Bengal, particularly, in the region of Bhati a new system of government, that is, the government of a military confederacy of independent *Zamindars*. So, this period cannot be properly considered as the Mughal period in Bengal. As the *Bara-Bhuiyans* were at the top of the political, administrative and social life of this period, this period may be termed as the period of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

In fact, a significant feature of the period, 1576-1612 A.C., is the conflict of two politico-social forces in the history of Bengal. It opens with a conflict of the idea of an independent politico-social life of the province with the new scheme of political unity of the whole of the sub-continent and the imperial social system as projected by the Mughals. After a protracted struggle of more than three decades the imperial social system and the force of political unity triumphed over the regional sovereignty and national development of Bengal as a distinct region. As

a result, Bengal, no doubt, lost its independence and therewith any further scope for its national development.

It is to be noted that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* did not easily submit to the Mughal authority. In their eagerness and earnestness to maintain the independence of this region, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* devised a new experiment in their politico-social life. This was a system of the confederacy of independent *Zamindars*. They governed their respective territories as independent rulers. For the purpose of common interest, the defence of their independence against the Mughal imperial aggression, they forged an anti-Mughal politico-military alliance and acknowledged the leadership first of Isa Khan and then of his son Musa Khan. They fought against the great strength and resources of Mughal Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir for more than three decades and in the end were militarily forced to submit. But they represented the spirit of independence which had characterised the Bengali people throughout centuries. Bengal was always opposed to the sovereignty of Northern India and asserted the independence every time when the authority of Delhi was to be imposed on it. The *Bara-Bhuiyans* maintained this tradition of the independent political life of Bengal by opposing the establishment of Mughal rule in Bengal. Their spirit of independence lingered on in the soil of Bengal even during the 19th and the 20th centuries.

Like the Mughals the Bengali people too did not acknowledge the alien British suzerainty as was manifested in different movements like the Faraidi¹ and Titumir's² movements in the 19th century Bengal. Both the movements marked direct resistance to the imperialistic and colonial tendencies of the foreign rule.

In the 20th century after the partition of British India and the birth of Pakistan the people of Bengal, particularly of Eastern Bengal,

continued to assert their rights of autonomy against the Pakistani colonial rule. Here also the freedom-loving spirit of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* which they kept aloft for quite some time and which lingered through centuries found a fitting expression in the emergence of independent Bangladesh in 1971 A.C.

For this grand achievement the *Bara-Bhuiyans* aptly deserve to be remembered as the symbol of independence of the Bengali nation through centuries and their heroic struggle profoundly stirred the mind of the Bengali people. This has been reflected in different ballads, dramas, novels and patriotic songs composed during the later centuries. One such patriotic song that profoundly inspired the freedom fighters of Bangladesh during the war of liberation of 1971 needs special mention. The song is as follows:

“সোনা সোনা সোনা লোকে বলে সোনা
সোনা নয় তত খাঁটি
বল যত খাঁটি তার চেয়ে খাঁটি
বাংলাদেশের মাটিরে আমার বাংলাদেশের মাটি
আমার জন্মভূমির মাটি....
এই মাটি তলে ঘুমায়েছে অবিরাম
রফিক শফিক বরকত শত নাম
কত তিতুমীর কত ঈসা খান
দিয়েছে জীবন দেয়নিকো মান....”³

“sona sona sona loke bole sona
sona noi tato khanti
bolo jato khanti tar cheye khanti
Bangladesher mati-re aamar Bangladesher mati
aamar janmobhumir mati....
aai mati tale ghumaeche abiram

Rafiq Shafiq Barkat shato naam
kato Titumir kato Isa Khan
dieche jivon deyniko maan...”
“Gold, gold, gold, people say gold
Gold is not so pure
Purer than it is said, pure is
The soil of Bangladesh Oh my soil of Bangladesh!
The soil of my motherland...
Underneath this soil lie in eatearnal rest
Hundreds of persons bearing names
such as Rafiq, Shafiq, Barkat and so on
So many Titumirs, so many Isa Khans
Sacrificed their lives but did not surrender the
Prestige of their motherland...”

It is quite evident from the above song that Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, was one of the heroic sons of the soil, who consistently fought all his life against the Mughals but did not allow the prestige of his motherland to be reduced to dust. This proves that the *Bara-Bhuiyans* are treated as the source of inspiration to the freedom-loving people of Bengal over the centuries and as a sequel to it they will continue to inspire the Bengali nation for ever afterwards.

Notes and References

1. For details of the Faraidi movement see, Islam, Sirajul (Editor), *History of Bangladesh 1704-1971*, Vol.III, First published, September, 1992, Third Edition, April, 2007, pp.153-163.
2. For details of Titumir’s movement see, *Ibid.*, pp.163-170.
3. This song in Bengali was sung by renowned lyricist and singer Abdul Latif (now late) and others in a chorus.

Appendix Review of Sources

The sources utilised in preparing the dissertation entitled “The Bara-Bhuiyans and Their Times: A Study of the local anti-Mughal Resistance in Bengal (1576-1612 A.C.)” are well-known to the scholars and historians. Nevertheless, it would not be irrelevant here to attempt a brief review of these sources. Because, some information of these sources either escaped the sight of the previous scholars and historians, or did not receive their due attention, wherefore their evaluations regarding the period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, the identification of the region of Bhati, identification of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the resistance offered by them against Mughal aggressions do not appear to be quite appropriate and easily convincing.

For the study of the history of the Mughal campaigns in Bengal and the resistance offered by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala during the reign of Badshah Akbar, the only contemporary source is the *Akbar Nama* written in the Persian by Abul Fazl¹. But the accounts of the warfare between the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the Mughals given by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* appeared to be biased and misleading in many respects. Because, he repeatedly mentioned about the success of the Mughal army against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, submission of their leader Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his defeats. But it has been seen by careful examination of the accounts and the results of the warfare as has been described in the *Akbar Nama* that under the leadership of Isa Khan the *Bara-Bhuiyans* have won against the Mughals in almost all the battles and Isa Khan and his allies, that is, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* remained safe in their respective territories and Isa Khan never acknowledged Mughal suzerainty. Nevertheless, relying on

the statements of Abul Fazl modern historian Jadunath Sarkar also mentioned that “Shahbaz Khan Pacifies Bengal”², “His (Man Singh’s) vigorous measures,”³ “the flames of disturbance in deltaic Bengal were quenched,”⁴ “Much of Isa Khan’s territory fell into Mughal hands,”⁵ “Isa Khan... offered submission to the Emperor ,”⁶ etc. without any proper consideration. But infact, it has been found that during the reign of Badshah Akbar Bengal could not be pacified and Mughal control in Bengal was limited to a very small area. Not only that the whole of the region of Bhati remained outside Mughal control as it was before and the whole of Bhati is found in the hands of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. So, it could not be relied upon the *Akbar Nama* of Abul Fazl and the statements of Jadunath Sarkar completely. In spite of that the *Akbar Nama* is the only contemporary source where much valuable and important information regarding the Mughal campaigns in Bengal, the period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and the resistance offered by the *Bara-Bhuiyans* under the leadership of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala against the Mughal aggressions during the reign of Badshah Akbar are found. It may be mentioned here that though, modern scholar Bhattasali used the *Akbar Nama* in his writings, regarding the period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* he mentioned that “The rise of the Bara-Bhuiyans is to be dated from 1576 A.D., the year of the fall of Daud, the last Karrani King of Bengal.”⁷ But he did not notice that Isa Khan, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, had gained strength enough to defeat Mughal navy under Shah Bardi even before the fall of Daud Khan in 1576. According to the *Akbar Nama* Isa Khan defeated the Mughal navy in 1575 A.C.⁸ So, it is evident that this information of the *Akbar Nama* escaped the attention of Bhattasali and that is why his statement regarding the period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* could not be accepted. Considering from these

points of view in reconstructing the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Badshah Akbar there is no substitute of the *Akbar Nama*.

The second notable primary source in reconstructing the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* during the reign of Badshah Akbar is the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl⁹. It is not a treatise of political history, but an administrative manual of the reign of Badshah Akbar. Information found in the *Ain-i-Akbari* bears special importance regarding the identification of Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. In the *Ain-i-Akbari* Abul Fazl says, “The tract of country on the east called Bhati, is reckoned a part of this province....Adjoining it, is an extensive tract of country inhabited by the Tipperah tribes.”¹⁰ This statement of Abul Fazl categorically indicates that the country of Tripura lies on the eastern frontier of Bhati. So, no part of Tripura be regarded as Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. Whereas, modern historians Bhattasali¹¹ and Abdul Karim¹² despite utilising the *Ain-i-Akbari* in their writings suggested that the western portion of Tripura district was within the region of Bhati ruled by the *Bara-Bhuiyans*. So, it appears that they did not pay due attention to above mentioned information of the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Besides, the *Ain-i-Akbari* provides valuable information on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of contemporary Bengal. Therefore, in reconstructing the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* the importance of the *Ain-i-Akbari* is also very significant.

Another conspicuous primary source is the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*¹³ written in Persian by Alauddin Ispahani alias Mirza Nathan. This source-book is the most authentic account for the reconstruction of the history of Bengal in general and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* in particular during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. It was written by an officer who passed his military career in Bengal and he wrote not on the basis of reports received from other officers, but from his own experiences. The

historical narratives given by him were closely associated with his life and career. He actively participated in almost all the campaigns and battles that were led to Eastern-India during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. He was one of the distinguished Mughal generals of contemporary Bengal. He actively participated in the battles against the “Twelve Bhuyans”, that is, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati and other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal. He adopted the pseudonym of *Ghaybi* (invisible) ¹⁴, and that is why the name of the book is *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. The *Baharistan* covers the history of Bengal during the reign of Badshah Jahangir from the appointment of Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti in 1608A.C. to the departure of the rebel prince Shah Jahan from Rajmahal to the Deccan in 1625A.C.¹⁵

The book is divided into four *daftar*s or books, each dealing with the period of different Subahdars (governors) who ruled Bengal during the reign of Badshah Jahangir. The first *daftar* deals with the Subahdari (governorship) of Islam Khan Chishti and is named *Islam Nama*¹⁶. In this dissertation the first *daftar* has been utilised only. This volume starts with the appointment of Islam Khan Chishti as the Subahdar of Bengal and ends with the appointment of Qasim Khan as the Subahdar of Bengal¹⁷. For the study of the history of the struggle for independence of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati this volume is the only contemporary source and there is no substitute of this volume. Because, it is learnt only from this volume that the anti-Mughal resistance of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* did not come to an end with the death of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, rather it continued under the leadership of his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala for more than a decade. It is also known only from this volume that Musa Khan assumed the title of Masnad-i-Ala like his father Isa Khan and the latter had five sons including Musa Khan,

named Abdullah Khan, Daud Khan, Mahmud Khan and Ilyas Khan, which is not known from any other source.¹⁸

Apart from the names of Musa Khan and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, the names of other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal, particularly, the names of Ananta Manikya of Bhulua, Ramchandra of Bakla, Satrajit of Bhushna, Shams Khan of Pachet, Bir hamir of Bir Bhum, Salim Khan of Hijli and Majlis Qutb of Fathabad are only learnt from this volume. The name of Bayazid Kararani of Sylhet is known only from this volume. Though, the names of the Afghan chief Usman Khan and his brothers are known through the *Akbar Nama*, the death of Usman Khan and the surrender of his brothers are known through the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*¹⁹ and the *Riyazu-s-Salatin*²⁰, their activities are discussed only in this volume in great details. The name of Raja Prapaditya of Jessore was known, but his history was overshadowed by myths, legends and fantastic stories. Many of the previous scholars thought that he was contemporary of Badshah Akbar and was defeated by Raja Man Singh and sent in an iron cage towards Delhi, but he died on the way at Kashi or Benares. Pratapaditya was also known to be a great patriot and a great national hero, to whom was ascribed the dream of an independent Bengal²¹. But it is learnt from the *Baharistan* that he was contemporary of Badshah Jahangir and was the first among the *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal who showed his allegiance to Subahdar Islam Khan Chishti. Later he was defeated by the latter. Though, many of the previous scholars considered him as one of the members of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, there is no evidence in the *Baharistan* that he had any contact with Musa Khan Masnad-i- Ala, the leader of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, rather it is known that when Musa Khan was attacked by the Mughals he did not come to his aid and remained silent. So he was not considered as one of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*.

The accounts of the Mughal campaigns against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati, the resistance offered by them and the activities of other *Bhuiyans* (*Zamindars*) of Bengal are found only in the *Baharistan* in great details. The accounts of the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* appeared to be credible and dependable. Only in one place Mirza Nathan's narratives seemed to be biased. For example, at the initial stage of the Dakchara battle he mentioned that "The clarion of victory was sounded and the disheartened enemy (Musa Khan and his allies) lost their courage to renew their attack"²². But indeed, the later events show that the battle of the Mughals against the *Bara-Bhuiyans* was yet indecisive and the Mughal army could not capture the fort of Dakchara and also could not dislodge the *Bara-Bhuiyans* from their position where they were. On the other hand, Mirza Nathan also praised the *Bara-Bhuiyans* by saying, "... the enemy (*Bara-Bhuiyans*) showed great dexterity"²³ and also gave credit to the *Bara-Bhuiyans* and says, "He (Mirza Nathan) reached at a time when the enemy (*Bara-Bhuiyans*) was at the point of overthrowing the whole force (Mughal army)"²⁴.

Apart from the accounts of the warfare, Mirza Nathan gave the actual locations of different places. For example, the locations of Dakchara and Jatrapur forts of Musa Khan, Khizrpur, Demra Khal, Katrabo, Bandar Canal, Qadam Rasul, Bhawal, Tok, Egara Sindur, Bukainagar, Uhar, Sylhet, Taraf, Matang, Jessore, Bakla, Bhulua etc. has been given accurately and modern scholars have been able to identify the actual locations of these places on the basis of the descriptions of the *Baharistan*.

The *Baharistan* is very deficient in dates. There are only four complete dates (complete date means day, month and year) in the whole book. The first three dates are of during the period under review. The first date is that of giving leave to Ihtimam Khan, the newly appointed

Mughal admiral of Bengal, to depart to Bengal by Badshah Jahangir (5th *Rabi-ul- Awwal*, 1016 A.H., that is, 30th June, 1607 A.C.)²⁵, the second date is that of reviewing the fleet of Ihtimam Khan by Badshah Jahangir (9th *Rabi-ul- Awwal*, 1016 A.H. that is, 4th July, 1607 A.C.)²⁶ and the third date is that of entering the Mughal fleet to the river Ichamati (27th *Rabi-ul- Awwal*, 1017 A.H., that is, 11th July, 1608 A.C.)²⁷. But these three dates are proved wrong by the modern scholars²⁸. Besides, Mirza Nathan did not give the dates of Islam Khan Chishti's appointment as Subahdar of Bengal, Ihtimam Khan's appointment as admiral of the Mughal fleet of Bengal, Islam Khan's leaving of Rajmahal for Bhati, Islam Khan's leaving of Alaipur for Nazirpur, Islam Khan's reaching Ghoraghat, Islam Khan's leaving of Ghoraghat for Bhati etc. in the *Baharistan*. These dates are very important in reconstructing the chronology of various events in Bengal of the early years of the reign of Badshah Jahangir. Nevertheless, there is no substitute of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* in reconstructing the history of the heroic struggles for independence of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati during the reign of Badshah Jahangir and they would have remained completely in obscurity without the *Baharistan*.

The next important source utilised in the present enquiry is Abdul Latif's Diary or travel account of Abdul Latif. Abdul Latif was a favourite retainer of Abul Hasan Shihabkhani, diwan of Bengal. It is learnt that when in 1608 A.C. Badshah Jahangir appointed Islam Khan Chishti as Subahdar of Bengal Abul Hasan Shihabkhani was also appointed as diwan of Bengal at the same time²⁹. Abdul Latif, son of Abdullah Abbasi of Ahmadabad accompanied his master Abul Hasan Shihabkhani to Bengal. Abdul Latif left a Diary of his journey³⁰, first from Ahmadabad to Agra and then Agra to Bengal. The Bengal portion of the Diary contains an account of the journey of Islam Khan Chishti

from Rajmahal to Ghoraghat. The Diary is very short and it starts with Islam Khan's departure from Rajmahal for Ghoraghat and ends with Islam Khan's departure from Ghoraghat for Bhati. But Abdul Latif furnishes many important dates regarding Islam Khan's journey from Rajmahal to Bhati. For example, he furnishes the date of Islam Khan's leaving of Rajmahal, dates of haltages at various places in between Rajmahal and Ghoraghat and the date of Islam Khan's departure from Ghoraghat for Bhati against the *Bara-Bhuiyans*³¹. These dates are very important in reconstructing the chronology of various events in Bengal of the early years of the reign of Badshah Jahangir. But Mirza Nathan did not give these dates in the *Baharistan*. This deficiency has been filled up by the dates given in the Diary of Abdul Latif. The Diary also gives important information of the Chiefs and *Zamindars* of Bengal visiting Islam Khan Chishti and offering submission with presents to the Subahdar. It may be mentioned here that Pratapaditya of Jessore presented Islam Khan Chishti six elephants, some precious articles, camphor, *aguru* (aloe wood) and about Rupees fifty thousand in cash as his tribute³². This information is known only through Abdul Latif's Diary. Even Mirza Nathan did not mention it in the *Baharistan*. Therefore, the historical value of Abdul Latif's Diary is significantly high.

The next important source is the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* of Badshah Jahangir³³. Though, the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* is one of the most important sources for the study of the history of Bengal during the reign of Badshah Jahangir, there is no reference to the warfare between the Mughals and the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati. Even the names of Musa Khan and his allies and the term "Twelve Bhuiyans" or *Bara-Bhuiyans* are not mentioned in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. But there is reference to the fall of the Afghan chief Usman Khan in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*³⁴.

Nevertheless, this book has some sort of historical importance. Because, it is an acknowledged fact that the *Baharistan* is very deficient in dates and there are no dates of Islam Khan's appointment as Subahdar of Bengal and also Ihtimam Khan's appointment as admiral of the Mughal fleet of Bengal. These two dates are very important in reconstructing the chronology of various events in Bengal of the early years of the reign of Badshah Jahangir. These two dates has been fixed with the help of the accounts of the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*.³⁵

Another notable source used in preparing this dissertation is *Riyazu-s-Salatin* of Ghulam Hussain Salim Zaidpuri³⁶. The latter was of Zaidpur in Oudh. He migrated to Malda in Bengal, and held the office of *Dak Munshi* or Post Master there, under Mr. George Udny. Ghulam Hussain died in 1817A.C.³⁷ He completed this historical work in 1788 A.C.³⁸ *Riyazu-s-Salatin* is the first historical work dealing with the Muslim Bengal and it covers the history of the whole Muslim period from Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest upto a few years of the English rule in Bengal. But the resistance movement of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of Bhati under the leaderships of Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala and his son Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala against Mughal aggressions which forms an important chapter of the history of Bengal during the reigns of Badshah Akbar and Badshah Jahangir is totally absent in the *Riyazu-s-Salatin*. Even the names of Isa Khan's allies, Musa Khan and his allies are missing in this book. In one place the name of Isa Khan has only been mentioned as Isa Khan Afghan³⁹. There is also reference to the fall of the Afghan chief Usman Khan in this book⁴⁰. However, *Riyazu-s-Salatin* has some historical importance. Because, the history of the preceding period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, that is, history of the fall of the Husain Shahi dynasty of Bengal at the hands of Sher Shah, history of the contest for supremacy between the Sur Afghan Leader Sher Shah and Badshah

Humayun, history of the establishment of Sur Afghan rule in Bengal and Delhi, history of the independent Sur Afghan and the Kararani Afghan rule in Bengal are learnt through this book. It may be mentioned here that it is found in the present study that during the reigns of the Sur Afghan and the Kararani Afghan the *Bara-Bhuiyans* rose to power and flourished and after the fall of Kararani Afghans in 1576 A.C. they emerged as independent chiefs.

Last but not least, the discussible source is the *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* or the *Tuhfah-i- Akbar Shahi* of Abbas Khan Sarwani⁴¹. The latter served under Badshah Akbar and the name of his father was Shaykh Ali Sarwani. Abbas Khan Sarwani had written this book in 1586A.C.⁴² In the present enquiry volume II (English Translation) has been used, but Volume I (Persian Text) has also been used at least on one occasion⁴³. The *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* is basically an extensive history of the reign of the Sur Afghan Sultan Sher Shah. Though, this book does not provide any information about the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, it has a great importance. Because, the history of the preceding period of the rise of the *Bara-Bhuiyans*, that is, the history of the fall of the Husain Shahi dynasty of Bengal at the hands of Sher Shah, history of the contest for supremacy between the Sur Afghan Leader Sher Shah and Badshah Humayun and the history of the establishment of Sur Afghan rule in Bengal and Delhi are learnt through this book. It may be mentioned here that under the Kararani Afghans, the successors of the Sur Afghans, the *Bara-Bhuiyans* flourished and after the fall of the Kararani Afghans in 1576 A.C. they emerged as independent chiefs.

The original sources mainly in their English translation as utilised in this dissertation have been briefly reviewed above. The attempt here has been to try to reconstruct the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* of the

Bhati region and throw as far as possible some light on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Bengal during the period under review.

However, with the synthesis of the information gleaned from the aforementioned primary sources in particular and other sources in general, the effort of the reconstruction of the history of the *Bara-Bhuiyans* has been attempted.

Notes and References

1. Allami, Abu-l-Fazl, the *Akbar Nama*, Vol.III, Translated from the Persian by Henry Beveridge, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted in 1998.
2. *H.Bengal*, p. 205.
3. *Ibid.*, p.213.
4. *Ibid.*, p.215.
5. *Ibid.*, p.211.
6. *Ibid.*, p.212.
7. *B.P.P.*, Vol. XXXV, No.69, p.32.
8. *Akbar Nama*, p. 228.
9. Allami, Abu-l-Fazl, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II. Translated into English from the Persian by Colonel H.S. Jarrett, Second Edition, corrected and further annotated by Sir Jadu- Nath Sarkar, Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted in 1997.
10. *Ain*, p.130.
11. *B.P.P.*, Vol. XXXVIII, No.75, p.26.
12. *Mughal Period*, p.113; *Mughal Amal*, p.93.
13. Mirza Nathan, *The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Vol. I &II Translated from the Original Persian by Dr.M.I.Borah, Gauhati, Assam, 1936.
14. Mirza Nathan, *The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, Vol.I, translated into Bengali by Khalequeddad Chowdhury, published by Bangla Academy, Dacca, First Edition, 1978, pp. 10-13; *Baharistan II*, pp. xviii-xix.
15. *Ibid.*, p.3; *Mughal Period*, p. 8.

16. *Ibid.*, p.13; *Baharistan* II, pp. xxiii-xxiv.
17. With the death of Islam Khan Chishti the first *daftar* of *The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, that is, Islam Nama came to an end, *Baharistan* (Bengali Translation), p.244.
18. *Baharistan*, pp.57, 70, 77.
19. *Tuzuk*, pp.209-214.
20. *Riyaz*, pp.173-179.
21. For details see, *B.P.P.*, Vol. XXXV, No.69, 1928, pp.27-28; *Baro Bhuiya*, pp.11, 255, 385; *Mughal Period*, p.37.
22. *Baharistan*, pp.58-59.
23. *Ibid.*, p.88.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p.5.
26. *Ibid.*, p.6.
27. *Ibid.*, p.64.
28. For details see, *Diary*, pp. 31-33; *H.Bengal*, pp.270-272; *Mughal Amal*, pp.9-10,179-181; *Mughal Period*, pp.10-11,228-233.
29. *Mughal Period*, p.18.
30. A copy of the Diary was made available to Sir Jadunath Sarkar by his friend Professor Abdur Rahman of Delhi. Jadunath Sarkar translated the Diary from the Persian into both in English and Bengali. The English translation was published in the *Bengal Past & Present*, Vol.XXXV, Nos.69-70, 1928, pp.143-146, under the title 'A Description of North Bengal in 1609 A.D.'and the Bengali translation was published in *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326 B.S., pp.552-553, under the title 'Pratapaditya Sambandhe Kichu Natun Sambad'.The English and Bengali translations have been reprinted by Wakil Ahmed in his book *Banglay Bideshi Parjatak*, Second Edition, Dhaka, October, 1990, pp. 56-61,117-122.Besides, on the basis of Abdul Latif's Diary Abdul Karim also wrote an article entitled 'A Fresh Study of Abdul Latif's Diary (North Bengal in 1609 A.D.)' in the *Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies*, Rajshahi University, Vol.XIII, June, 1990, pp.23-46. In this dissertation the English and Bengali translations of the Diary by Jadunath Sarkar, reprinted copies of Wakil Ahmed and the article of Abdul Karim have been used.

31. For details see, *North Bengal*, pp.143-146; *Bideshi Parjatak*, pp. 117-122, 56-61; *Diary*, pp. 23-46; *Prabasi*, Aswin, 1326 B.S., pp. 552-553.
32. *North Bengal*, p. 144; *Bideshi Parjatak*, pp. 119.
33. The *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* or *Memoirs of Jahangir*, Translated by Alexander Rogers, and Edited by Henry Beveridge in 2 Vols. bound in one. Low Price Publications, Delhi, Reprinted, 1999. In this dissertation only Vol. I has been used.
34. *Tuzuk*, pp.209-214, 141-144.
35. *Tuzuk*, pp. 141-144.
36. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, Translated from the Persian by Abdus Salam, Reprint, Delhi, 1975.
37. *Riyaz*, p.2, note, 4.
38. *Ibid.*, pp.4, note, 1, 398.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-179.
41. Abbas Khan Sarwani, *the Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, Vol. II, Translated from the Persian by S. M. Imamuddin, University of Dacca, 1964. In the present enquiry volume II (English Translation) has been used, but Volume I (Persian Text) has also been used at least on one occasion.
42. *Tarikh*, pp.V, 1.
43. *Tarikh*, Vol. I (Persian Text), p. 172.

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