

BRAHMINS WHO REFUSED TO BEG

BRIEF HISTORY OF BHUMIHARS,
'AYACHAK' BRAHMINS OF EAST INDIA



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INDIA • SINGAPORE • MALAYSIA



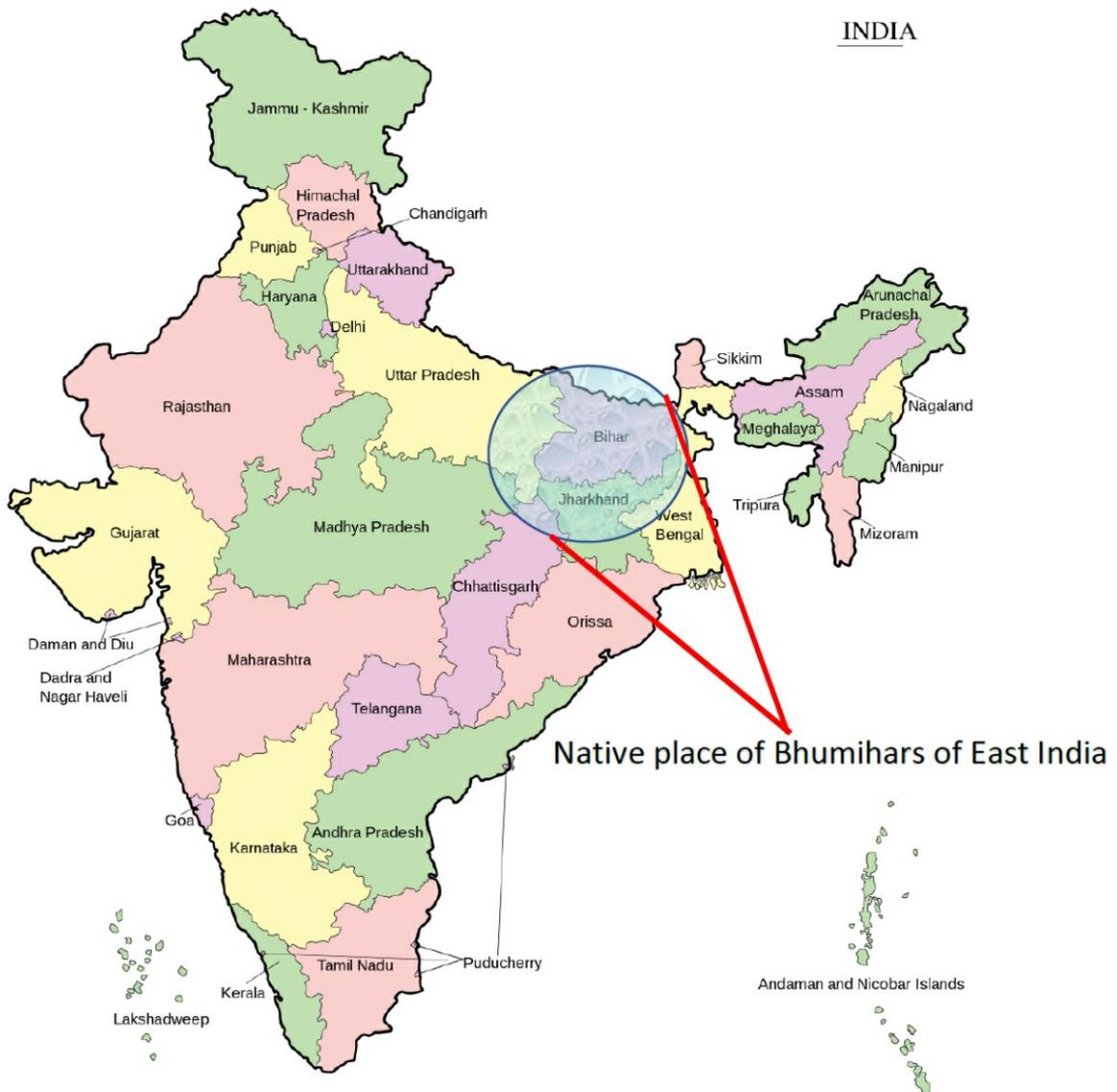
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Dedicated
to
My parents, my wife, my kids
and to our ancestors.



TRADITIONAL ABODE OF BHUMIHARS OF EAST INDIA

CONTENTS



My Motivation

Introduction

Yachak & Ayachak Brahmin Traditions

Origin of Bhumihar Brahmins

Alternate Origin Theories: Truths & Myths

Struggle to Reclaim Brahmin Status

Internal Caste Structure

Bhumihar Brahmin Kings & Warriors

Battles Fought by Bhumihar Brahmins

Bhumihars in the British Army

Mangal Pandey: Catalyst of 1857 Revolt

Sahjanand Saraswati: the Father Figure

Bhumihars in the Freedom Struggle

Role in Post Independence Politics

Reforms and Socio-Political Movements

Contribution in The Field of Literature

Collage of Pathbreakers

Bhumihar Diaspora

Conclusion

Select Bibliography

MY MOTIVATION



In today's globalized world, full of nuclear families, each one is virtually on his own. Class and caste barriers are melting away, and rightly so. Clinging on to parochial caste loyalties is futile. I must make an honest disclosure before proceeding further. I am not a caste bigot. I don't endorse the idea of using caste as a tool for self-empowerment or for cornering of state's resources in today's day and age of democracies and transparent governance systems. I feel that caste concerns should be purely restricted to personal and family matters in today's world. However, I don't share the liberal take, probably shaped by the West's condescending view of India, of caste being a source of all the evils that plague India. On the contrary I strongly believe that caste holds the tale of our roots, who we are and where we come from.

For me it began as a quest to discover my roots after a dismayed realization that how little I knew about my lineage, my ancestry, my community, my caste. In short, apart from anecdotal titbits, I knew very little about my roots. Caste system in Indian society has fascinated many scholars, both western and Indian. It has been a subject of many sociological and anthropological studies. A treasure trove of information exists on the subject, especially those collated by British & other European scholars in pre-independence India. Though it is very valuable in terms of the information offered, but the interpretations made by most western scholars are largely superficial, shaped as it were by their disdain towards Indian society. Moreover, Western philosophy and World View is largely shaped by a conflict-based approach (*dvand*) whenever faced with the other, be it other race, religion or culture. That explains their history of colonization, proselytization, slave trade and near complete annihilation of indigenous populations in the Americas and Australia. For the Western mind, the unique Indic concept of a coordination-based approach (*samanvay*), as an effective tool for conflict management and co-existence, is probably too abstruse a concept to absorb. No wonder they tended to look at caste only through a prism of the "oppressor" and the "oppressed". During my research on the subject, I have borrowed extensively from the works of two Indian scholars, Swami Sahjanand Saraswati's "*Brahmarishi Vansh Vistar*" and Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya's "*Hindu Castes & Sects*". Where they differ from the western scholars and a bunch of "western world view" besotted Indian scholars, is in their unapologetic stance towards caste system, while not desisting from critically analysing it on facts.

Swami Sahjanand Saraswati pioneered research work about the origin and evolution of community structure of Bhumihar brahmins of East India. This information is to be found in his book "*Brahmarishi Vansh Vistar*". He explains that social and religious norms of Sanatan Dharma were framed by Rishis (sages) in ancient times within the framework of certain knowledge and context. Any analysis of our religious and community practices by ordinary men should be done with that reference in mind and not be criticized blindly based on modern logic-

based interpretations alone. Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya, in his book *“Hindu Castes and Sects”*, has this to say about Sherring & Wilson, two British authors, who perhaps have done most comprehensive compilation about caste system in India. Bhattacharya writes *“Mr Sherring, who may be regarded as one of the chief authorities on the subject, characterises our social mechanism as a “monstrous engine of pride, dissension and shame” and generally has not one good to say with reference to it or to its authors, the Brahmans.”* Bhattacharya further writes *“Dr. Wilson also condemns the caste system in toto, though in milder terms.”*

My own take on the caste system overlaps with Swamiji’s and Bhattacharya’s views. While western scholars did stellar work in collating and publishing many of Sanatan Dharma’s scriptures and practices, their views were generally shaped by a victor’s condescending view of the vanquished. It was further biased by their Christian beliefs which regarded the native Hindu practices as pagan and therefore inferior. So, while the information gathered by them about ancient and medieval India is priceless, I often take their interpretations with a pinch of salt.

Starting from ancient times to the current modern times, human history has pined for a just and equitable world. Lofty as it may sound, the idea has largely remained a utopian pipedream. Bloody wars and killings have taken place across the globe to prove one’s superiority based on race, religion, class, nations. The war goes on even today, maybe little less bloody than in the past. The modern world as we know, is often seen through separate lenses of “first” and “third” world. In fact, as I write this book in 2022, Russia, a stronger nation, has invaded Ukraine, its relatively weaker neighbour, because Ukraine refused to toe its line. And much of the civilized “first” world has chosen to look away without intervening. It is therefore not hard to imagine that before the advent of modern world order post WW2, might was right for most part of human history. The physically or intellectually weak class had little chance of survival in the brutal ancient and medieval world. This is borne out by the destruction of civilizations and annihilation of races across the globe. Civilizations, as great as Greek and Roman, withered under brutal invasions because they did not amass the requisite military might to preserve their greatness. Near complete annihilation of aboriginal populations in the American and Australian continents, under the brutal waves of western invasions, driven by their insatiable lust for resources, are to be found in the not-so-distant history. Arab tribes were at each other’s throat as recently as a century ago. Amidst all this chaos, Indian subcontinent based on a complex system of castes, managed to fit the weak and the strong, the bright and the not so bright into a massive jigsaw puzzle. Caste system provided a delicate balance which allowed various groups of people to coexist peacefully, without descending into anarchy for several thousand years. It was not perfect, far from it. It was exploitative at times for sure. But in the ancient and medieval world of “might is right”, it managed to find an equilibrium that offered a chance for the weak to survive alongside the strong and not be decimated. To me that is the single most valuable contribution of caste system, else our subcontinent would have descended into bloody conflicts, social anarchy and chaos as seen elsewhere in the world of those times.

As mentioned earlier, melting of caste barriers is inevitable in modern times. However, it is often said *“where you are coming from often decides where you will go”*. Caste does define our roots in that sense, and it is fascinating how it crystallized down the ages, morphing into its current form, while facing multiple challenges like class conflicts from within and brutal invasions from outside. The subject is fascinating to say the least. What started for me as a quest to discover my roots, transformed into a desire to write a book on the subject, after I discovered

how little I knew. For example, I did not know that Bhumihars, often vilified as a feudal caste, played a stellar role in reformist Kisan (agrarian) movements and abolition of Zamindari system in Bihar. I did not know that the reformers from the community led the Dalit temple entry movements in Bihar. I did not know that one of great Bhumihar Kings of Kashi, Raja Chait Singh, fought pitched battles against the British and managed to arrest Warren Hastings, one of the foremost British Generals of his times. I did not know that a music loving Bhumihar King, the Raja of Bettiah, introduced the famous “Bettiah” gharana, thereby enriching the Dhrupad classical singing traditions of India.

While many scholarly works on history of Bhumihar brahmins, written by minds far greater than mine, do exist but they are often too theoretical and pedantic. I felt that we owe it to our children to provide them a glimpse of their roots in a simple “easy to understand” format. Otherwise, such information might be lost forever for the generations to come. That was my prime motivation to write this book.

INTRODUCTION



Sometimes ordinary folks end up accomplishing extraordinary feats. Feats which often turn the tide of history forever. Though these men may be relegated to the footnotes of history, but one often marvels at what pushed those seemingly ordinary men to perform extra-ordinary tasks. Let's take a quick look at the tales of two such men who turned the tide of the Indian independence struggle against the British forever.

Mangal Pandey: Catalyst Who Ignited 1857 Revolt

Mangal Pandey was an Indian soldier in the army of the British East India Company. He played a key part in the events immediately preceding the outbreak of the Indian rebellion of 1857. He was a sepoy in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) regiment of the British East India Company. On the afternoon of 29th March 1857, Lieutenant Baugh, Adjutant of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry, then stationed at Barrackpore, was informed that several men of his regiment were in an excited state. Further, it was reported to him that one of them, Mangal Pandey, was pacing in front of the regiment's guard room near the parade ground, armed with a loaded musket, calling upon the men to rebel and threatening to shoot the first European that he set his eyes on. Baugh soon accosted Pandey but he was attacked and grievously injured by Pandey. Later a British Sergeant-Major named Hewson charged towards Pandey as he was fighting with Lieutenant Baugh. While confronting Pandey, Hewson was knocked to the ground from behind by a blow from Pandey's musket. The British Indian sepoys witnessing the incident just froze on seeing the raw courage of sepoy Mangal Pandey. When facing imminent capture, Pandey shot himself but was not mortally wounded. He was overpowered and captured and soon sent to the gallows after a quick trial by the British Army. The revolt of Mangal Pandey is widely acknowledged as the opening scene of what came to be known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Knowledge of his action spread like wildfire amongst his fellow soldiers and is widely considered as one of the key factors leading to the general series of mutinies that broke out during the following months.





MANGAL PANDEY: CATALYST THAT IGNITED 1857 REVOLT

Mangal Pandey provided the much needed a spark for the 1857 sepoy mutiny, which many experts acknowledge as the first organised war of independence against the British.

Rajkumar Shukla: Man, Who Turned Gandhi into Mahatma

Rajkumar Shukla, a small farmer from Champaran, Bihar, convinced Gandhiji to visit Champaran in 1917, which later led to the Champaran satyagraha. Champaran was Gandhiji's first satyagraha against the British in India, after his return from South Africa. It turned Gandhiji into a feisty freedom fighter who later took on the might of the British for many just causes. Gandhiji first met Shukla, a representative of the farmers of Champaran, at the 1916 Lucknow Congress session. Shukla requested Gandhiji to come and see for himself, the miseries of the indigo ryots (tenant farmers). The farmers were forced, against their will, to plant Indigo on three out of every 20 parts of their land and handover the indigo to the British as rent under the oppressive "tinkathiya" system. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography "*I must confess that I did not then know even the name, much less the geographical position, of Champaran, and I had hardly any notion of indigo plantations.*" Gandhiji was not too keen about visiting Champaran any time soon. He thought that Shukla, a village bumpkin, would soon forget about it. But Rajkumar Shukla, the simpleton from Champaran, was made of sterner stuff. Shukla had heard about Gandhiji's successful protests in South Africa. Rajkumar Shukla was more confident about Gandhiji's ability to take on the might of oppressive British empire on the issue of exploitative

indigo plantation than probably Gandhiji himself. Gandhiji soon forgot about the meeting with Shukla at Lucknow. But Shukla was not one to give up easily. He followed Gandhiji to Kanpur and later to Calcutta. Shukla continuously pestered Gandhiji to visit Champaran. Gandhiji admits in his autobiography that he was pleasantly surprised by the dogged determination and genuine concern for fellow farmers, displayed by Shukla. In fact, that is what made him to relook at the Champaran farmer's issue in right earnest and convinced him to visit Champaran to have a first-hand account of the plight of the indigo tenant farmers there. Rest as they say is history. *Champaran Indigo satyagraha turned Gandhij into Mahatma and Shukla was the chief catalyst for this metamorphosis.*



RAJKUMAR SHUKLA: WHO TURNED GANDHI INTO MAHATMA

One may ask, what was common between Mangal Pandey and Rajkumar Shukla? Well, perhaps their roots, their genes, where they came from. Mangal Pandey, the soldier brahmin, was born in a BHUMIHAR BRAHMIN family in Nagwa Village of Ballia district in present day Uttar Pradesh. Rajkumar Shukla, the dogged farmer brahmin, was born in a BHUMIHAR BRAHMIN family in Champaran district of present-day Bihar. Both men, semi-literate at best, carried on the valorous traditions of their ancestors, Bhumihars, “ayachak” brahmins of East India, **brahmins who refused to beg**. A community, though constituting small fraction of the region's population, has always punched way above its weight in diverse fields from poetry to politics. It has consistently thrown up both heroic warriors as well as resolute reformers. A community whose stalwarts have not shied away from swimming against the tide and fight lonely battles based purely on the strength of their convictions.

YACHAK & AYACHAK BRAHMIN TRADITIONS



Who is a Brahmin?

जन्मनाजायतेशूद्रःसंस्कारात्भवेत्द्विजः|वेद-पाठात्भवेत्विप्रःब्रह्मजानातीतिब्राह्मणः|

English transliteration: "Janmana jayte shudra sanskara bhaveti dwija. Ved pathat bhaveti vipra, brahma janati ti brahmanam"

English translation: Every person is a shudra by birth, becomes a dwija (twice born) after ceremonial initiation into learning, becomes a vipra (learned man/pandit) by reading the vedic scriptures and becomes a brahmin by knowing the "brahm".

The literal meaning of the word Brahmin is "*He who has gained Supreme Self-knowledge (Brahma)*". It can be seen from the above Vedic hymn that the founding forefathers of Sanatan Dharma, commonly referred to as Hinduism today, had envisaged that actions and knowledge alone, not birth, were the criteria for assignment of brahmin status to an individual.

According to *Brihadaranyakopanishad* all men are born as equals and a TRUE Brahmin is one who has acquired brahmin hood not by birth but through his noble actions. Brahmins are those who are inclined towards acquiring and disseminating sacred knowledge. Vedas and other epics proclaim at several places that there is no caste differentiation in the Brahminic (self-realized state) state. In fact, two of the greatest Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were written by Rishi Valmiki and Rishi Ved Vyasa respectively, both born in lower castes but who attained the status of Rishis (Sages) by the sheer dint of their intellect and wisdom.

Evolution of Caste System

Manusmriti declares "*Knowledge uplifts a man to brahmin hood; skill in arms makes a Kshatriya; enhancement of wealth moulds a Vaisya, whereas Sudra's qualities are congenital traits.*" Brahmins are those who have an inclination towards acquiring and disseminating sacred knowledge; Kshatriyas are those who have an in-built capacity to provide social security and peace; Vaisyas have a born tendency for trade and agriculture; and finally, Sudras are persons willing to render services as in carpentry, black smithy, moulding, gold smithy, ploughing and the like requiring manual labour. These were merely trade-based nomenclatures. In the *Shanti Parva* of Mahabharata, it is stated that no caste is superior to any other. It further contends that God's creations are equal, and the classification of castes is based on individual tastes. And these were not empty words. Our ancient society walked the talk. Apart from the examples of Rishi Valmiki and Rishi Ved Vyasa, Sanatan Dharma's history is replete with many other such examples where men born in lower castes moved to revered status by the dint of their actions and knowledge. Perhaps the best example is Lord Krishna, who is adored by all Hindus including brahmins. Lord Krishna was born in Yadav caste, a backward class of the present age. Sage

Aitareya, the author of *Aitareyopanishad*, was the son of a low caste woman. He was designated as a Brahmin. Rishi Viswamitra, a born Kshatriya, turned Brahmin through his severe penance and austerities. Vidura, of Mahabharata, was born to a palace worker. He became a Brahmin purely based on his boundless knowledge. Mythologies cite several instances of one offspring crowned as a king and another offspring of the same mother anointed as a priestly Brahmin, classic example being, King Santanu and his brother Devapi. It is interesting to note that this principle applied in reverse too. Someone born in higher caste could be demoted as well, if his actions were not commensurate with those prescribed for his caste. Ravan, often acknowledged as a “Prakaand Pandit” (brahmin scholar), is reviled by all Hindus, including brahmins, for his evil actions against Lord Ram and Mata Sita. In fact, Ravan is often referred to as an Asur. Assignment of caste system by heredity and conferring of brahmin hood to the undeserving, seems to be later day folly that crept into the system, obviously due to selfish filial bonds.

Evolution of “Yachak” & “Ayachak” Classifications within Brahmins

It is evident that actions decided the social status and caste of a group of people in ancient India. This rule was applicable even within the castes itself. Any specific caste or community was never a monolithic structure. With the passage of time and evolution of society, not every person belonging to a particular caste would end up doing the type of work assigned to that caste. After all we are talking about human beings and not robots. Each with his own personality, disposition and inclination. So too happened within the brahmin community with the passage of time. Not everyone born in the brahmin community would dedicate his life strictly to the defined duties. Many would venture into other professions and activities. Lord Krishna says in Bhagvad Gita “*Even learned people cannot desist from doing fine or medium grade of work as every human being is controlled by their inherent nature, which will not let them stop indulging in other professions.*”

When organised caste system took shape during Vedic era, brahmins were divided into the following two broad categories, based on the activities that they undertook.

“*Pravrit*” brahmins – those performing worship rituals and sacrifices on behalf of “Yajmaan” (client) and accepting gifts/donations etc as a means of livelihood. This group came to be referred as “Yachak” or gift/donation accepting brahmins in later period.

“*Nivrit*” brahmins – leading life by pursuing other moral activities like agriculture, commerce etc as a means of livelihood. This group came to be referred as “Ayachak” brahmins i.e., one who stopped accepting gifts/donations and took up secular professions like agriculture, business, warrior duties etc for subsistence.

Rishi Manu had assigned following “Shatkarmas” or six basic duties for brahmins.

1. Reading sacred texts
2. Teaching sacred texts
3. Performing Yajana (worship rituals) for self
4. Giving alms, gifts, and donations
5. Performing Yajna (worship rituals) for others
6. Accepting alms, gifts, and donations

“Ayachak” brahmins did perform all the above duties except 2, 5 & 6, i.e., they did not teach

others, did not perform worship rituals for others and did not accept alms, gifts, and donations in lieu of performing ritual worship for others. In short, Ayachak brahmins refused to live on alms. It was not a rigid classification. In fact, Bhumi-har brahmins are referred to as “*Trikarmi*” brahmins (brahmins performing only three basic duties) in the Mithila region of Bihar. There could be Yachaks within the Ayachak brahmins or vice versa. People would also move from one group to the other seamlessly. This is evident from the fact that in several temples like Sun Temple in Gaya and at Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, ayachak Bhumi-har brahmins have performed the temple priest (Purohit/Panda) duties for centuries.

Evidences of Yachak and Ayachak Brahmins in Indian History

In the year 331 BC, Aristotle wrote about India during Alexander’s invasion thus:

“Now the ideas about castes and professions, which have prevalent in Hindustan for a very long time, are gradually dying out. The brahmins, neglecting their education, live by cultivating the land and acquiring territorial possessions, which is the duty of the kshatriyas. If things carry on this way, then instead of being masters of learning, they will end up being masters of land only.”

Fa-hian, a Chinese traveller, who visited Magadh in 399 A.D., wrote in his travelogue: “owing to families of kshatriyas becoming almost extinct, great disorder has crept in. The brahmins having given up ascetism, are ruling here and there in place of the kshatriyas, and are called the “Sang He Kang”.

Hoffman, a British scholar, translated “Sang He Kang” as the land seizer. It is evident that “Yachak” & “Ayachak” brahmin traditions have existed within the Brahmin community across India for at least two thousand years, if not more. It is also evident that many ayachak brahmins, who gave up traditional professions of learning and rituals, acquired land and became cultivators and some became Kings and rulers too.

M. A. Sherring in his book “Hindu Tribes and Castes” published in 1872 acknowledges the presence of Yachak and Ayachak traditions within the Brahmins across India. He writes

“Great important distinctions subsist between the various tribes of Brahmins. Some are given to learning, some to agriculture, some to politics and some to trades. The Maharashtra Brahmin is very different being from the Bengali, while the Kanaujia (Kanyakubja Brahmins) differs from both. Only those Brahmins who perform all six duties are reckoned perfectly orthodox. Some perform three of them and omit the other three. Hence Brahmins are divided into two kinds, the Shat-karmis and the tri-karmis or those who perform only three. The Bhumi-har brahmins for instance are tri-karmis and merely pay heed to three duties.”

Adoption of Warrior Traits by Ayachak Brahmins

As they joined the ruling class, ayachak brahmins trained themselves for warrior duties as well. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador of Alexander, wrote in 300 BC that

“King’s councillors and judges formed a separate class. It is evident that they also classed brahmins, who exercised civil and military functions, with the castes to whom these functions properly belonged.”

Megasthenes meant to say that learned brahmins involved in counselling and judicial duties for the kings, were classed separately. He was probably referring to the yachak brahmins, still pursuing duties of knowledge and rituals. He further says that warrior brahmins, probably

referring to ayachaks, were classed separately with kshatriyas, as the original warrior class.

Megathenes further observed about the ayachak brahmin warrior class in Magadh, most likely latter day Bhumihar brahmins of the region, that

“They appear to possess separate villages as early as the time of Alexander, to have assumed military character on occasions, and known to defend themselves with fury and desperation which was uncharacteristic of general Hindus. Their interference in politics was likewise exhibited by their instigating Sambus (a Greek warlord) to flee from Alexander and Musicanus to break peace with the conqueror.”

It is evident that ayachak brahmin class in those days was not only brave in wars but also had the political acumen to instigate resistance against the mighty Alexander. A class of brahmins, the ayachaks, had given up their traditional duties of pursuing knowledge and performing rituals and were involved in cultivation and warrior duties. They also become the rulers at several places at least two millennia ago. It is therefore no surprise to find that most zamindari estates and small kingdoms in Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh were controlled by Bhumihar brahmin rajas even during British times and beyond. Prominent Bhumihar brahmin estates are discussed in details later.

Ayachak Brahmins Across India

Bhumihar brahmins were not the only “ayachaks”, brahmins in the Indian sub-continent. In fact, ayachak brahmins were not limited to East India either. Many such groups of ayachak brahmins, cultivator-warrior communities, existed across the Indian subcontinent since ancient times. There are ample examples of “ayachak brahmins” spread across the length and breadth of the country. Common feature that binds these brahmin communities was their giving up of priestly duties and non-acceptance of alms in lieu of performing rituals. Cultivation, warrior duties were common professions taken up by these communities across India. Most of these communities traced their origins to the warrior sage Lord Parshuram who was supposed to have distributed seized land to them as per mythology. Few prominent ayachak brahmin communities of India are discussed below.

Mohyal Brahmins of Punjab

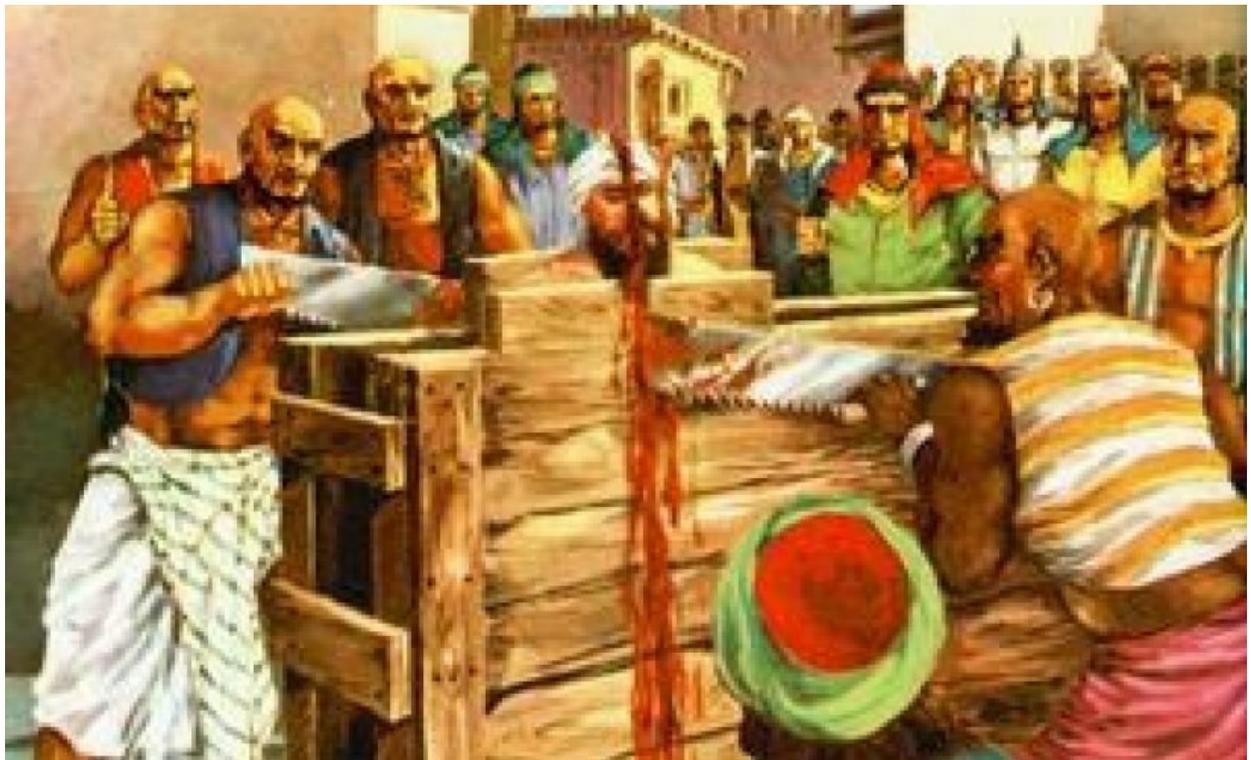
Mohyals are an Indian sub-caste of Saraswat Brahmins with origins in the Punjab region. Like Bhumihars, Mohyals also stopped performing priestly duties and took up martial professions. They are sometimes referred to as ‘warrior brahmins, along with the Bhumihar Brahmins of East India. The members of this sub-caste originate from the broader Saraswat Brahmin group and comprise seven sub-clans named Bali, Bhimwal, Chhibber, Datt, Lau, Mohan and Vaid. Each claim their lineage from one of seven different Brahmin rishis. Mohyal clans had the privilege of using court titles like Bakshi, Raizada, Jaitly, Bhai, Chaudhri, Dewan, Malik and Mehta; which were bestowed on them by the Mughal emperors and the Sikh rulers. These epithets have a Persian connotation and imply a high-class status.

Mohyals have a very proud military history. When Alexander, the Greek conqueror, attacked India, he was stopped at the northwestern gates of India by the brave Mohyal King, Porus. Although Porus was defeated, but Alexander lost a big part of his army in the counterattack by Porus’ army. Ultimately Alexander left his dream of invading mainland India and returned back via river Indus. While returning back, Alexander’s army was confronted by Bali and Dutt Mohyal

soldiers of Multan. This was the most destructive war for Alexander. He lost many of his army men in this war and he was also injured.



GREAT WARRIOR BABA BANDA BAHADUR



BHAI MATIDAS: LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE TO SAVE DHARMA

Mohyal Greats in History

A very small minority of Mohyals also have an association with Shia Muslims because they helped Imam Hussain in the Battle of Karbala. In honour of those brave memories, Mohyal Brahmins are called “Hussaini” Brahmins as well. In 680 AD, army of a Yazidi king trapped Imam Hussain – the grandson of Prophet Mohammed along with his army. In helpless condition Imam Hussain sought help from various kings to fight against Yazidi. Rahab Dutt was one such Mohyal who along with his army participated in the Karbala war and lost his seven sons for the sake of truth. The battle field where Dutt Mohyals confronted the army of Yazidi is called as Darya-a-Hind. Next year they took revenge of Imam Hussain killing by conquering the fort of Yazidi.

With the rise of Sikhism, many Mohyal brahmins started revering Guru Nanak. When the brutalities and excesses of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb crossed all limits, Sikhs along with Marathas mounted stiff resistance. Brave Mohyals joined the Sikhs against the Mughals. The famous Sikh general, Baba Banda Bahadur, was born as Lakshman Dev, a Mohyal Brahmin. He was born in 1670 at Mendher, Poonch. He joined the army of Guru Govind Singh. He took revenge for the killing of the sons of Guru Govind Singh by killing Serhind’s Mughal Governor Wazir Khan under the feet of elephant in 1710. Sikh army was known for many Mohyal warriors like Baba Praga Chhibber, the Bisham Pitamah, who with the orders of Guru Har Govind fought and destroyed the large army of Shahjahan at the age of 131 years. The brothers Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Sati Das, who both died alongside the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, for protecting Hindu religion from Islamic invaders, also belonged to this community. As the family of the latter Gurus and the Chhibber family were close, Bhai Chaupa Singh Chhibber became a caretaker of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru.

The Mohyals have carried on with their rich warrior brahmin traditions and many have earned laurels fighting wars in British and modern-day Indian army. For those interested in the proud military history of the Mohyal Brahmins, it is recommended to read renowned defence analyst Major Gen (retd) Dr G.D. Bakshi’s book “GUARDIANS OF THE GATE: MILITARY HISTORY OF THE MOHYAL FIGHTING BRAHMINS” on the subject.

Tyagi Brahmins of Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana

Tyagi Brahmins, originally called Taga Gaur, is a class of Adi Gaur Brahmins also known as Haryanvi Gaur. The landholding community is confined to Western Uttar-Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan. They are often considered the highest of the agricultural castes in this region. Ibbelstone, the 19th century British ethnologist, had this to say about the Tyagi brahmins of Western Uttar Pradesh.

“They are said to be Gaur Brahmans by origin, and to have acquired their name because they abandoned (tag dena – give up) priestly functions and took to agriculture. Tagas are probably the oldest inhabitants of the upper Yamuna khadar (river bank), holding villages which have been untouched by the change in the course of the stream for a far longer period than most of their neighbours. The local tradition is that in Janamajaya’s time there were no Gaur in this country, so he summoned many from beyond the sea. As half of them would not accept money for their services, he gave them 184 villages, and so they resolved to take no offering in the future.”

About Tyagis of UP, H. R Neville, author of Meerut gazetteer, said the following about them:

“They claim to be a branch of the Brahmins and explain their position analogous to the Bhumihar of the eastern districts.”

Tyagis, like other ayachak brahmins, revere Lord Parshuram, who they believe gave the lands won from wayward Kshatriya Kings to ayachak brahmins across India. Tyagis also claim their mythological origins from the post Mahabharat war era. King Janmajeya, grandson of Arjun, ruled over the Kuru kingdom. He mounted a campaign to destroy the Nag Vansh (clan) to avenge the killing of his father Parikshit. Overcome by the guilt after the bloodshed in the war, he decided to perform Nag Yagya (worship ritual) as penance. Scholarly Bhumihar brahmins were called for performing the rituals. Pleased with the brahmins he tried to give gifts and money for their efforts. But being ayachak brahmins, they refused accepting alms. King Janmajeya then gifted them 2500 villages around the Kuru kingdom for sustenance. Probably that is why most Tyagis are concentrated in the fabled Kuru land around Delhi.

Tyagis are a landholding community, owning vast tracts of fertile agricultural land in the districts of Muzzaffarnagar, Meerut, Saharanpur, Budhana etc. They also join the armed forces and the police services in numbers. It is believed that when Taimur, the Lame, a blood thirsty Muslim general of Samarkand, attacked India and killed around one million people in Delhi in the 14th century, Tyagis were involved in the resistance to Taimur in the holy city of Haridwar. They were part of the Sarv Khap army, a joint army of all 36 castes inhabiting this region, trying to protect the Holy city of Haridwar from rape and plunder during Taimur’s crusade.

Namboodri Brahmins of Kerala

The ayachak brahmins of Kerala are known as Namboodris. Historical evidence as well as their own traditions suggest that they came from North India and settled down in Kerala, migrating along the West Coast. It is believed that they constitute links in a long chain of migration along the West Coast of India. According to the legendary *Keralolpatty* (a traditional account of Kerala history, set down in writing in the eighteenth century), these brahmins were brought to the southwest coast of India by the sage-warrior Parasurama (Lord Parshuram), and they settled in thirty-two grammam (from Sanskrit grama, “Community”) in the South Kanara District of Karnataka State and in thirty-two grammam in what is now Kerala. In fact, one sees this tradition all along the West Coast from Saurashtra onwards; and the Brahmanical traditions in the Canarese (Karnataka) and Malabar Coasts are nearly identical to one another. According to that tradition, Parasurama created the land between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari and settled Brahmanans (Brahmins) there. As a result, the Brahmins of Kerala share several common features with the Brahmins of the Canarese coast; this also distinguishes them from their counterparts in the rest of South India. Namboodris were often able to exercise considerable indirect power because of their status as the highest spiritual authorities in Kerala. Traditionally, the Namboodris derived their subsistence from farming. They did not perform worship rituals for others unlike other yachak Brahmins of South, reinforcing their ayachak roots. Few Namboodris did perform temple rituals though temple worship duty was mostly performed by Embrandiri Brahmins from South Kanara District of Karnataka State and by Pattar Brahmins from Tamil Nadu.

Under the traditional land tenure system prevalent in Kerala, the Namboodri Brahmins held land primarily as the rulers or as a direct grant from a ruler. They did not carry out agricultural duties themselves, preferring to leave agricultural management to tenants and subtenants, a

feature that they share with Bhumihaar brahmins of East India, who are not allowed to touch the plough themselves. Another element which helped them gain in power was the curious practice of bearing arms which a section of Namboodri Brahmins in Kerala had. Known variously as the Chatter or Chattirar, these arms-bearing Brahmins are seen in records from different parts of India from the post-Gupta period onwards. It is from Kerala that we have the clearest information about them. We hear about the significant institutions called Salais, which imparted military training to these Brahmin youth in different parts of Kerala. Some of them were viewed by the neighbouring rulers as a veritable military threat to them. They had no pretension of Vedic scholarship, but on account of their muscle power, they became a considerable force in society and politics. Clearly the Namboodris of Kerala constituted a warrior brahmin segment of ayachak brahmins.

Adi Shankaracharya (Adi Shankara), the 9th century saint and scholar who systemised the Vedanta school of Advaita philosophy, was a Namboodri brahmin, philosopher and theologian who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta. He is credited with unifying and establishing the main currents of thought in Hinduism. His works in Sanskrit discuss the unity of the Ātman and Nirguna Brahman “brahman without attributes”. He wrote copious commentaries on the Vedic canon (Brahma Sutras, Principal Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita) in support of his thesis. His works elaborate on ideas found in the Upanishads. Shankara’s publications criticised the ritually-oriented Mīmāṃsā school of Hinduism. He also explained the key difference between Hinduism and Buddhism, stating that Hinduism asserts “Atman (Soul, Self) exists”, while Buddhism asserts that there is “no Soul, no Self”. His untiring efforts reinvigorated Hinduism across the sub-continent after staving stiff challenges from Buddhist influence.

Shankara travelled across the Indian subcontinent to propagate his philosophy through discourses and debates with other thinkers. He established the importance of monastic life as sanctioned in the Upanishads and Brahma Sutra, during a time when the Mīmāṃsā school established strict ritualism and ridiculed monasticism. He is reputed to have founded four mathas (“monasteries”), which helped in the historical development, revival and spread of Advaita Vedanta of which he is known as the greatest revivalist. Adi Shankara is believed to be the organiser of the Dashanami monastic order and unified the Shanmata tradition of worship.

The Namboodri community is known for its scholarship and political and administrative acumen. They are also known for pursuit of literary and artistic vocations. The community has produced many leading thinkers, artists, jurists, and administrators. The list includes E.M.S. Namboodripad, Marxist leader and first Chief Minister of Kerala, Padmanabhan Subramanian Poti, Chief Justice of Kerala High Court and Gujarat High Court, Chandramana Govindan Namboothiri, prominent Kathakali artist etc, just to name a few among a long list of notables.



TRADITIONAL NAMBOODRI WITH PURVASHIKHA OR FORELOCKS



ADI SHANKARA, MAN WHO REUNITED HINDUS
Namboodris of Kerala

Anavil Desai Brahmins of Gujarat

Anavil Brahmins are a community of Brahmins who, despite not being numerically superior, are particularly dominant in the Surat and Bulsar districts of south Gujarat, India. They have been significant land-owners of the region and have an influential role in politics. The Anavils played a big role in India's freedom struggle. During Mahatma Gandhi's famous Dandi March, the Navsari district was the hub of the struggle when hundreds of people, young and old, bore British

torture in support of Mahatma Gandhi.

As per Anavil Desai mythology, when Lord Ram was returning from Lanka with Sita after killing Ravana, he came to the ashram (hermitage) of Agastya. It was situated in a dense forest on the southern slopes of the Vindhya Hills. At the sage's bidding, Lord Ram decided to perform a solemn act of expiation at Anadisidha, for the slaying of Ravana, a Brahmin. But as there were no Brahmins, without whom he could not perform the yajna, some ayachak Brahmins were summoned from the North. Lord Ram offered them a handsome 'dakshina' but they would not accept it, being ayachaks. Lord Ram then donated several villages to them for subsistence. It is believed that Anavil Desais are progenies of those Brahmins settled by Lord Ram.

The Anavil brahmins do not perform priestly functions, a feature they share with other ayachak brahmin communities across India. An important sub-group is called Desai. Historical records show that Anavil Brahmins were a ruling class and also carried on administration duties for other rulers too. Their administrative acumen can be gauged by the fact that during the Mughal period, seven forts in south Gujarat were in their charge – Saler, Muller, Gambhirgadh, Suvarnagadh, Rupgadh and Anaval. They also acted as tax farmers during the era of the Mughal Empire, and developed into one of the dominant land-owning groups in South Gujarat. They eventually underwent a process of Sanskritization that saw them conform more closely to the classical Brahmin practices.

In fact, this small community of this ayachak brahmins has given a former Prime Minister to India. Shri Morarji Desai was born in a Gujarati Anavil Brahmin family. Morarji Ranchhodji Desai (29 February 1896–10 April 1995) was an Indian independence activist and politician who served as the 4th Prime Minister of India between 1977 to 1979, leading the government formed by the Janata Party. During his long career in politics, he held many important posts in government such as Chief Minister of Bombay State, Home Minister, Finance Minister and 2nd Deputy Prime Minister of India. Desai joined the freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi and joined the civil disobedience movement against British rule in India. He spent many years in jail during the freedom struggle and owing to his sharp leadership skills and tough spirit, he became a favourite amongst freedom-fighters and an important leader of the Indian National Congress in the Gujarat region. On the international scene, Desai holds international fame for his peace activism and created efforts to initiate peace between two rival South Asian states, Pakistan and India. After India's first nuclear test in 1974, Desai helped restore friendly relations with China and Pakistan. Morarji Desai is just one among a long list of notables from the small Anavil Desai community of Gujarat.

Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra and Konkan

The Chitpavan Brahmin or Konkanastha Brahmin is a Hindu Maharashtrian Brahmin community inhabiting Konkan, the coastal region of the state of Maharashtra. The community came into prominence during the 18th century when the heirs of Peshwa from the Bhat family of Balaji Vishwanath, a Chitpavan brahmin, became the de facto ruler of the Maratha empire. Chitpavans were the one of the first Hindu communities of the region to flock to western education in the Bombay Province of British India.

Like most other ayachak brahmin groups, Chitpavan brahmins also trace their legendary lineage to Lord Parshuram. The etymology of their name is given in the chapter

citpāvanabrāhman.otpattih. i.e “Origin of the Citpāvan brahmins” in the Hindu Sanskrit scripture *Sahyadrikhanda* of the Skanda Purana. According to this chapter, Lord Parshuram, who could not find any Brahmins in Konkan, found sixty fishermen flocked near a funeral land, who were purified and Sanskritized to Brahmin hood. ‘Chita’ also means ‘mind’ in Sanskrit and the term Chitpavan refers to those “pure of mind”. Another lesser-known theory of their origin is also quoted. As per Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova, the Parashuram mythological story of shipwrecked people is similar to the mythological story of the Bene Israel Jews of Raigad district. According to the historian Roshen Dalal, similarities between the legends may be due to a connection between the Chitpavans and the Bene Israel communities.

The Chitpavans considered themselves to be both warriors and priests. Their involvement in military affairs began with the rise of the Peshwas and their willingness to enter military and other services earned them high status and power in the Deccan. Very little is known of the Chitpavans before 1707, when Balaji Vishwanth Bhat, a Chitpavan brahmin, arrived from Ratnagiri to the Pune-Satara area. He was brought there on the basis of his reputation of being an efficient administrator. He quickly gained the attention of Maratha King Chhatrapati Shahu ji Maharaj. Balaji’s work so pleased the Chhatrapati that he was appointed the Peshwa or Prime Minister in 1713. He ran a well-organized administration and soon became de-facto ruler during the Maratha resurgence in post Shivaji Maharaj era. By the time of his death in 1720, he had laid the groundwork for the expansion of the Maratha Empire. Since that time until the fall of the Maratha Empire, the seat of the Peshwa was held by the members of the Bhat family of Chitpavan brahmins. With the ascension of Balaji Baji Rao and his family to the supreme authority of the Maratha Empire, Chitpavan immigrants began arriving en masse from the Konkan to Pune. Richard Maxwell Eaton states that this rise of the Chitpavans is a classic example of social rank rising with political fortune. As per the 1901 census, about 5% of the Pune population was Brahmin and about 27% of them were Chitpavans.

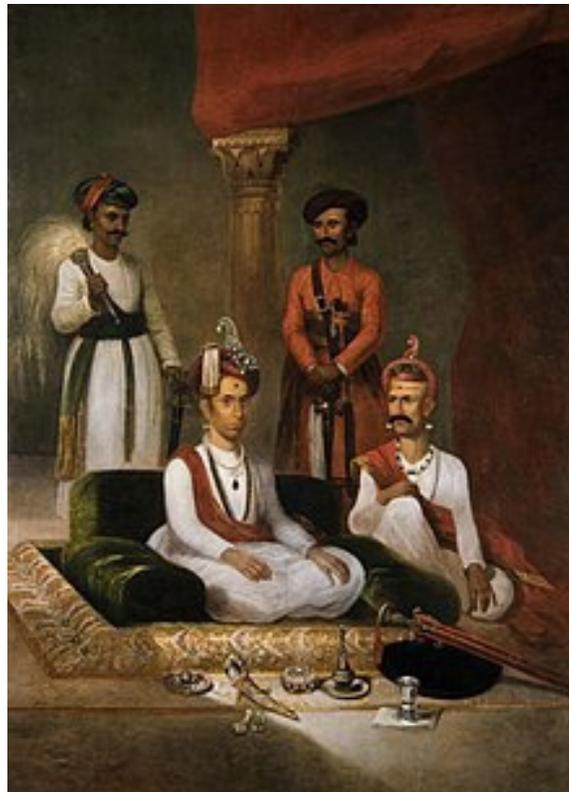
Some of the prominent figures in the of the 19th and 20th centuries came from the Chitpavan Brahmin community. These included Dhondo Keshav Karve, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar. The community led the freedom movement against the British with great gusto too. Two major politicians in the Gandhian tradition came from the Chitpavan brahmin community. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged as a preceptor, and Vinoba Bhave, one of his outstanding disciples. Gandhi describes Bhave as the “jewel of his disciples”, and recognised Gokhale as his political guru.

But perhaps the tallest freedom fighter and thinker from the community was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, popularly known as Lokmanya Tilak. He was part of the of the famous “BAL-LAL-PAL” triumvirate of Congress then. Tilak is often regarded as the first leader of the Indian independence movement. The British colonial authorities called him “The father of the Indian unrest”. Tilak joined the Indian National Congress in 1890. He opposed its moderate attitude, especially towards the fight for self-government. He was one of the most-eminent radicals at the time. He was imprisoned on a number of occasions that included a long stint at Mandalay. He was also conferred with the title of “Lokmanya”, which means “accepted by the people as their leader”. Mahatma Gandhi called him “The Maker of Modern India”. Tilak was one of the first and strongest advocates of Swaraj (‘self-rule’) and a strong radical, seeped in Indian consciousness. He is known for his quote in Marathi: “Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it!”. He formed a close alliance with many Indian National Congress leaders including Bipin

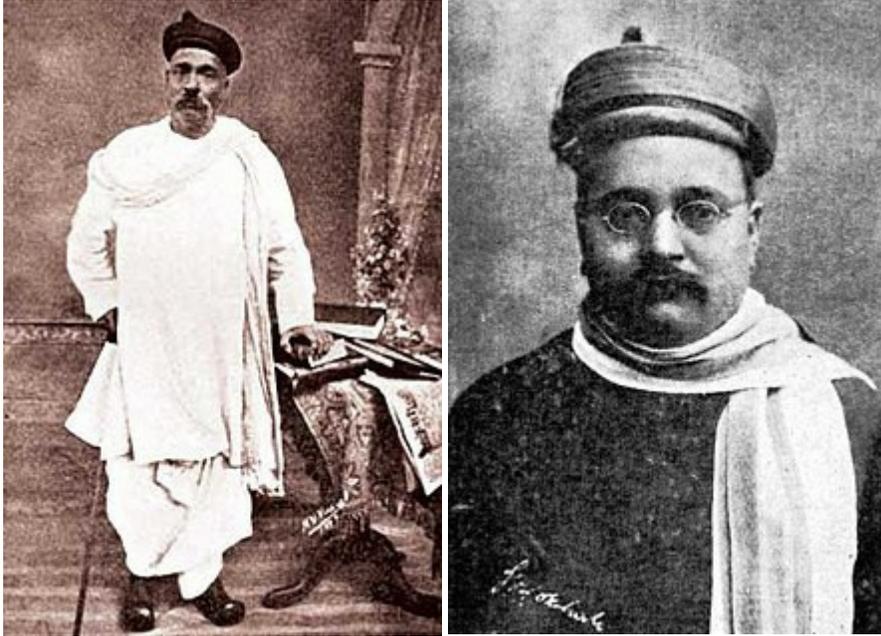
Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai.

Chitpavan brahmin community also produced one of the foremost thinkers of Right-wing Hindu nationalism. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, known among followers as Veer Savarkar, was an Indian politician, activist, and writer. He developed the Hindu nationalist political ideology of Hindutva while imprisoned at Ratnagiri in 1922. Savarkar joined the Hindu Mahasabha and popularized the term Hindutva (Hindu-ness), previously coined by Chandranath Basu, to create a collective “Hindu” identity as an essence of Bharat (India). Savarkar began his political activities as a high school student and continued to do so at Fergusson College, Pune. He and his brother founded a secret society called Abhinav Bharat Society. When he went to the United Kingdom for his law studies, he involved himself with organizations such as India House and the Free India Society. He also published books advocating complete Indian independence by revolutionary means. One of the books he published called “The Indian War of Independence” about the Indian Rebellion of 1857 was banned by the British colonial authorities. In 1910, Savarkar was arrested and ordered to be extradited to India for his connections with the revolutionary group India House. On the voyage back to India, Savarkar attempted to escape and seek asylum in France. However, he was deported back by the French. On return to India, Savarkar was sentenced to life terms of imprisonment totalling fifty years and was moved to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, known as the dreaded Kaala Paani in popular parlance.

In their original home of Konkan, the primary occupation of Chitpavan brahmin community was farming, while some earned money by performing rituals among their own caste members. The historical language of the Chitpavans was primarily Chitpavani/Chitpavani. Though now, Chitpavan Brahmins in Maharashtra speak Marathi as their language.



PESHA MADHAV RAO II HOLDING COURT IN PUNE IN 1792 AD



TILAK GOKHALE SAVARKAR

Chitpavan Greats in History

Niyogi Brahmins of Andhra and Telangana

Niyogi Brahmin is a Telugu Brahmin subcaste native to the Indian States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangan, but are spread throughout South India and Maharashtra. The traditional occupation of the Niyogi Brahmins is settled cultivation. But majority of them took up various secular vocations including military activities and government administrators. They were associated with administration, economics, literature, music composing, politics, scholarly, defence careers. They are an ayachak brahmin community and are also referred to as “Laukik” brahmins or worldly brahmins.

India’s second President, Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishna, renowned freedom fighter and scholar,

belonged to the community of Niyogi Brahmins. Dr Radhakrishnan was born in a Telugu-speaking Niyogi Brahmin family, in Tiruttani of Madras district in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. Dr Radhakrishnan was awarded scholarships throughout his academic life. One of the most distinguished twentieth-century scholars of comparative religion and philosophy, Dr Radhakrishnan held the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science at the University of Calcutta from 1921 to 1932 and Spalding Chair of Eastern Religion and Ethics at University of Oxford from 1936 to 1952. Radhakrishnan's philosophy was grounded in Advaita Vedanta, reinterpreting this tradition for a contemporary understanding. He defended Hinduism against what he called "uninformed Western criticism", contributing to the formation of contemporary Hindu identity. He has been influential in shaping the understanding of Hinduism, in both India and the West, and earned a reputation as a bridge-builder between India and the West. Radhakrishnan was awarded several high awards during his life, including a knighthood in 1931, the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award in India, in 1954, and honorary membership of the British Royal Order of Merit in 1963. Radhakrishnan believed that "teachers should be the best minds in the country". Since 1962, his birthday has been celebrated in India as Teachers' Day on 5th September every year.

ORIGIN OF BHUMIHAR BRAHMINS



Bhumihars are a prominent “ayachak” brahmin community of eastern India. Found mainly in Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh (Purvanchal), Jharkhand, the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, and Terai region of Nepal. Bhumihars were referred to as “Military Brahmin” by Francis Buchanan and as “Magadh Brahmin” by William Adam in 1883. William Crooke in his book, “Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh”, has mentioned “Bhuinhar” as an important tribe of landowners and agriculturists in eastern districts and that they are also known as Babhan, Zamindar Brahman, Grihastha Brahman, or Pashchima or ‘western’ Brahmans.

Mythology

As is the case with most “ayachak” brahmin communities across India, Bhumihar brahmins also trace their lineage to the great Brahmin sage, Lord Parshuram. Lord Parshuram, the warrior sage, is believed to have defeated and taught lessons to the Kshatriya Kings and brought them to justice whenever they strayed from the path of “dharma” or righteousness. Going by legend, Bhumihars believe that Lord Parshuram handed over the seized lands from the fallen kings to them for tilling and safe keeping. Bhumihar brahmins carry the erudition and scholarship of traditional brahmins and a warrior disposition, a trait tied to their lineage link with Lord Parshuram.

Lord Parshuram: The Warrior Sage and the Advent of Warrior Brahmin Tradition

According to Hindu mythology, Lord Parashuram was the sixth incarnation (avtar) of Lord Vishnu of the Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh trinity, who is responsible for operating the universe. Brahma being the creator and Mahesh (Lord Shiva) being the destroyer. This is the core of Hindu belief system. Lord Vishnu had taken 9 incarnations while the arrival of the 10th one i.e., Kalki is awaited. J B S Haldane, famous evolutionist of the previous century, had a very curious observation about the evolutionary progress of Lord Vishnu’s incarnations. Haldane had noted the sequence of Hindu incarnations represented the flow of evolution itself on our planet starting from fish to mammals to humanoid dwarf to stone age man to full human form with sage Parshuram. Out of first five incarnations, three were animals (Matsya – fish, Kurma – Tortoise, Varaha – boar) and last two were dwarf humanoid (Vamana) and half man-half lion (Narsimha). It was only with the sixth incarnation, Lord Parshuram, the axe wielding brahmin sage, did we get a full human form with an evolved intellect. He used his axe not only to kill his foes but also to reclaim the forests for cultivation as people in the sub-continent moved away from hunting to agriculture for subsistence.

Lord Parshuram is regarded by various ayachak brahmin groups, the farmer warrior brahmins, across the Indian sub-continent as their fore father. He was the great grandson of Rishi Bhrigu. Parshuram was the youngest of the five sons of Rishi Jamdagni and Renuka, daughter of King

Prasenjit. In spite of being born in a Brahmin family, he was fond of weapons and war craft from an early age and developed great physical strength. He would also fly into rage very quickly.

Krityavir Arjun, a tyrant king of the Haihyas clan, ruled most of North India in those days. His warriors roamed and killed at will. The other rulers of those times had aligned themselves with the Haihyas as no one dared to oppose them. They had defeated the Suryavanshis (solar clan) of Ayodhya and wreaked havoc in the kingdom. Once Krityavir Arjun along with his army came to Rishi Jamdagni's ashram. Rishi's sons were away in the jungle to collect firewood at that time. Krityavir demanded food and welcome for himself and his troops. Rishi Jamdagni happily obliged. The King was amazed at the never-ending flow of milk. He wanted to know how Rishi Jamdagni managed it. The innocent Rishi proudly displayed his magical cow Kamdhenu and its calf. The King demanded that the Rishi handover Kamdhenu to him. Rishi Jamdagni tried to reason out that he needed Kamdhenu to perform certain rituals, but to no avail. Rishi Jamdagni and his followers were mercilessly beaten, and the King walked away with Kamdhenu. Hearing of the commotion, Parshuram rushed to the ashram only to discover that it lay in ruins. Parshuram vowed to avenge this insult of his father and his followers. Thus began the enmity between the Haihyas and the Bhargavas.



LORD PARSHURAM: THE WARRIOR SCHOLAR SAGE

Legend has it that Parshuram performed rigid penance-based worship (tapasya) of Lord Shiva which pleased the Lord. Lord Shiva handed over his Parshu, the magical axe, and the dreaded

Brahmastra (guaranteed 'shoot to kill' weapon) to Parshuram. In fact, Lord Parshuram, wielder of Shiva's magical Parshu (axe), derives his name from his weapon's name. Empowered by Lord Shiva's blessings, Lord Parshuram raised an army of Brahmin warriors and charged at Krityavir. A fierce battle followed. Lord Parshuram slaughtered Krityavir's army and killed Krityavir after a fierce battle. He reclaimed Kamdhenu and returned triumphantly to his father's ashram. However, the wily Haihyas were still not done. Krityavir's sons and his clansmen attacked the ashram when Lord Parshuram was away. The Rishi was killed in a brutal manner. When Lord Parshuram came back, he was accosted by his grieving mother. Lord Parshuram flew into a fit of rage and vowed to annihilate the Haihyas from the face of the earth. Legend has it that Lord Parshuram undertook 21 campaigns to exterminate the Haihyas. He also carried out the Ashwamedha yagya challenging all other rulers to either accept his mastery or come out for a fight. Those who dared to fight were annihilated by the warrior sage. During various expeditions Lord Parshuram became the master of vast tracts of land across the Indian sub-continent. He distributed the land to his brahmin warriors for safe keeping and administration. Thus, a chunk of brahmins, otherwise known for scholarly pursuits, first took up warrior duties and became land owners under the guidance of Lord Parshuram. This included, among others, the Bhumihars of East India, Mohyals of Punjab, and Tyagis of Western Uttar Pradesh.

After consolidating his rule in the North, Lord Parshuram went to different places in India defeating those Kings who have strayed away from the path of Dharma or righteousness. He distributed the conquered land among his brahmin warriors. It is said that he reclaimed the Konkan region from the seas and gave it to Chitpavan Brahmins of the region. He also fought wars in Karnataka and Kerala against the Nagas and gave the won over land to Namboodri brahmins of the region. Interestingly, just like the Mohyals, Tyagis and Bhumihars of North India, the Chitpavan brahmins and Namboodri brahmins of West and South also have a warrior disposition, are landowners and revere Lord Parshuram till this day.

Etymology

The word "Bhumihar" is a union of the words "bhūmi" (land) and "hāra" (maker), referring to the caste's landowner status. In the Indian feudal setup, "Bhum" was a name given to royal tenures like "Jagir" and "Mansab" during Mughal rule. By a "Bhum", according to the Rajputana gazetteer, a hereditary, non-resumable and inalienable property in the soil was inseparably bound up with a revenue free title. Bhum was given as a compensation for bloodshed, to quell a feud, for rendering of warrior services to protect the motherland. As seen with the meaning of the designation "Bhuinhar" as stated above, it can be concluded that Bhumihar brahmins referred to those brahmins who held grants of land, rendered for secular services. Similarly, where Kshatriyas held such grants, they were referred to as Bhuinhar kshatriyas like the Bhumia rajahs of Ajmer and Bengal.

Historical Evolution of the Community

Even though traditionally the Kshatriyas were the rulers in India, India's ancient and medieval history has seen several warrior brahmin rulers too. Guru Dronacharya, a direct disciple of Lord Parshuram, and his son, Ashwathama, are two brahmin warrior rulers who come to mind from the epic Mahabharata.

Ancient India

Brahmin scholar cum warrior Chanakya, political strategist par excellence, is credited with training Chandragupta Maurya and raising an army that overthrew the unjust rule of Nandas and also drove away Greek generals ravaging the North-West of India after Alexander's invasion in 327 BC. The Mauryan army had recruited many from the brahmin warriors of Magadh region (latter day Bhumihars) and from brahmins of the North West. Chanakya is discussed in greater details later. As the Mauryan rule declined, various principalities under the Mauryan empire raised a banner of revolt. Pushyamitra Shunga, a Brahmin general of Brihadartha, the last Mauryan King, was dismayed at the Brihadartha's apparent sell-out to the Greeks of the North West. He staged a military coup and killed Brihadarth in 184 BC. He established the Shunga dynasty which ruled for 112 years. Pushyamitra Shunga is discussed in greater details later.

The Kanva dynasty, another warrior brahmin dynasty, overthrew the Shungas and established their reign in the North. Other brahmin kingdoms of India included the Satvahanas (236 BC to 230 AD) and the Vakatakas of the south, the Rashtrakutas of Maharashtra, the Chalukyas of Deccan etc, just to name a few. Brahmins also occupied positions of power in the Gupta kingdom. Chief commanders of great Gupta Kings Samudragupta and Vikramaditya were both brahmins, namely Harisena and Virsen. It is believed that these warrior brahmins of the North and East India were the forefathers of latter day Bhumihar brahmins of the region.

The term Bhumihar seems to be word of recent coinage. It does not find mention in our ancient and medieval Indian literature and scriptures. Kumar Nirmalendu, in his book "Magadhnama", has dedicated a chapter "Magadh ke Babhan: Bhumihar brahmin" to the community where he traces the evolution of Bhumihar brahmins of Magadh region in the ancient and medieval periods. He explains that in the Kanyakubj Vanshali it is mentioned that in 1527 AD an unprecedented battle took place between the Yavans (muslims) and the brahmins of Madaradipur (Madarapur), which the brahmins lost after putting up a brave fight. After this battle the brahmins left Madarapur and fanned eastwards. They established fiefdoms and Zamindaris in East India and were referred to as Bhuinhars, which seems to be a slang for Bhumihars. In fact, Bhumihars are regarded as a sub-caste of the kanyakubj brahmin community. In the following shloka from "Kanyakubj Vanshali", five branches of kanyakubj Brahmins includes Bhumihars explicitly.

Saryupareen Sanadhyascha Bhumiharo JijhoutayahPrakritashcha Iti Panchabhedastasya Prakartitah

Meaning: Kanyakubj stream of brahmins has 5 branches namely saryuparin, sanadhya, bhumihar, jijhautia, and kannaujia. First modern Indologist of Indian origin, and a key figure in the Bengal Renaissance, Rajendralal Mitra, also writes about the five branches of Kanyakubja Brahmins as Saryupareen, Sanadhya, Bhumihar, Jujhoutia and Prakrit Kanaujia or Kanyakubj proper.

In fact, in Kanyakubj Vanshavalis it is mentioned that Kashyap gotra Bhumihar Brahmins are ancestors of Kashyap gotra Kanyakubja Brahmins, making Kashyap gotra Sanadhya Brahmins also as descendents of Kashyap gotra Bhumihar Brahmins. In the 1934 edition of Kanyakubj Mahti Sabha's mouthpiece "Kanyakubj", Pt Laxminarayan Dikshit had written an article describing Bhumihar brahmins as the group of brahmins who could take control of vast tracts of land using arms and war. It was merely a difference in profession between Kanyakubja proper

and Bhumihaar Brahmins where they kept moving from ayachak (Bhumihaar) to yachak (Kanyakubja) and vice versa from time to time. Inter-marriages between Bhumihaar brahmins and Kanyakubja brahmins is common occurrence in the region.

M A Sherring writes that Bhumihaars were a clan of Kannoja (Kanyakubj) brahmins of "sarwaria" roots. Kashi Naresh was also a Bhumihaar brahmin of sarwaria clan (mul). With passage of time, various other ayachak brahmin communities from across India, who settled in the region, were accepted within the fold of Bhumihaar brahmins and the community kept growing. A classic example is of a group of Bhumihaar brahmins whose root (mul) is "Chitpaonia", a reference to their Chitpavan ayachak brahmin roots from Maharashtra. Another group of Bhumihaars of the "Eksariya" mul is believed to have descended from the Mohyals of Punjab.

In the Magadh of the Gupta period, a major change was introduced in the cess collection scheme of the kingdom. They began a practice of giving a piece of land to various officials and subjects to collect revenue on behalf of the king in lieu of their salaries. While the vassals initially restricted themselves to collecting and depositing the revenue in the royal coffers, keeping for themselves only that which was equivalent of their salaries. But with passage of time, as the central grip of the kings weakened, many of the vassals started exercising greater control over their fiefs and took up day to day duties of administering their fiefdoms. Brahmins also received fiefs in lieu of their services in East India under the Gupta period. The Satvahanas of Deccan started the practice of giving land as grants to brahmins in the seventh century. But this practice attained broad acceptance under the Guptas. In his Nalanda inscriptions, Samudragupta mentions about granting land (Bhumidaan or Agrahar) to brahmins. Such brahmins who received land grants were referred to as "Agrahars" in the North India and "Brahmadeya" in the South India. With time these Agrahar brahmins started exercising more and more control over their fiefdoms and evolved into landlords and princely states of modern India. During the reign of King Harshvardhan, this practice of giving land grants to the brahmins continued. Acharya Hajari Prasad Dwivedi has referred to such class as "Bhumi Agrahar Bhoji Brahmin Samant". It seems that this group later evolved into the Bhumihaar brahmins of East India. With passage of time these feudal brahmin landlords became more powerful and this community of warrior brahmins became a force to reckon with in the region. It is therefore no surprise to find various clans of Bhumihaar Rajas and Zamindars ruling over vast territory in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh during Mughal and British period. Princely estates & Zamindaris of Bhumihaar brahmins are discussed later.

Medieval India

History writing in chronological order has never been a forte of Bharat. It is either captured in cryptic "sholkas" i.e., couplets or available through symbolic inscriptions. Mythology and history are at times hard to distinguish. Foreign travellers' and invaders' account often provide better historical details. But these foreigner accounts often missed local perspectives and finer details. Also, under the brutal Islamic invaders, the Indic scholarship faced threats like never before. Destruction of great universities like Nalanda and Taxilla bear this out. Thus, Indic scholars withdrew inwards and most of their works were not freely available or lost with time. So, much of the history of local communities had to be deciphered from hints and clues and not explicit sources. But clues do exist.

Goswami Tulsidas, author of one of the most revered epics of India, Ram Charit Manas, was a contemporary of Mughal King Akbar.

Tulsi Das ji has described “Warrior farmer brahmins” in his epic Ram Charit Manas as follows:

Bhujbal bhumi bhup binu kinhi, bipul bar maheedevan dinhee.

Meaning: With the divine blessings of Mahadev (Lord Shiva), Brahmins with the strength of their swords, became lords of vast tracts of land without being born as Kings (Kshatriyas)

In fact, Goswami Tulsi Das had the protection of his dear friend and patron, Todar Mal (different from Akbar’s navratna), a prominent Bhumihar brahmin Zamindar of Benares. Todarmal’s progenies are still found as Chaudharys of Bhadaini, Nadesar, Surhi and Nai Basti. They are Kashyap Gotri Bhumihar brahmins. In fact, Tulsi Das ji was the “Panch” (chief arbiter) in a dispute between Todar Mal and his grandson. The panchayat was held in Vikram Samvat 1661. The written “Panchnam” (sanskrit judgment) of the case was preserved by the Todarmal family for generations and later gifted to Kashi Naresh. This rare piece of history is still preserved by the Kashi Naresh family.

Ain-i-Akbari, written by court historians of Mughal King Akbar, explicitly mentions about brahmin Zamindars of Ghazipur & Mohammedabad, contributing infantry & horsemen to the Mughal army as tributes. This is discussed in detail later. Mr Neville, a British scholar and gazetteer, studied and translated *Ain-I-Akbari* from Persian to English. While explaining Akbar’s administrative management in Ghazipur and Mohammedabad, he concludes with conviction that the brahmin zamindars mentioned in the book were Bhumihar brahmins and not any other brahmins.

Maharaja Kam Dev Misr, a sakarwar Bhumihar ruler of the Pahargarh Estate (consisting maily of cities of Morena, Gwalior, Jhansi, Shivpuri) took on the might of the Mughals, led by Babur, during the medieval period in the battle of Madarpur (near Kanpur). He also assisted brave Rajput King Rana Sanga in the famous battle of Khanwa that he fought against Babur. This is discussed in detail later.

Bhumihars in British India

The 1865 census of Eastern India reports 68 types of brahmins in the region. Bhumihars are mentioned in the 58th place in the list. Sir Henry H Elliott mentions that there is no difference between other brahmins and Bhumihar brahmins except that Bhumihar brahmins bore arms and led a life of warriors and fighters. Buchanan, who compiled information on the traditions of Central and Eastern India, mentions Bhumihars as “Military” brahmins. It can thus be concluded that Bhumihars were a prominent ayachak brahmins community mainly settled in East India, with agricultural and warrior traditions.

ALTERNATE ORIGIN THEORIES: TRUTHS & MYTHS



Bhumihar brahmins being a small group of ayachaks within the larger yachak Brahmin community in the region, with distinct warrior traditions, uncharacteristic of traditional brahmins, have always evoked a sense of awe and scepticism. More so, since in recent times, general awareness about yachak and ayachak traditions within brahmins, is not commonly known. So, falling prey to canards about Bhumihar origins, or for that matter origins of other ayachak brahmins across India, is very easy. Traditionally the larger Brahmin community has always thought of ayachaks as one of their own. But foreign invaders, especially the British, harassed and harried by the warrior Bhumihar brahmins in battles, played the old trick of sowing seeds of doubts and divisions. They started placing Bhumihars as a separate caste entity in various census leading to social discord and fuelled sense of superiority in one group or the other. Various theories about origin of Bhumihar brahmins is floating around and it is imperative that the community is aware of the background of these theories, some true but mostly canards.

Buddhist Influence and the Gharwapsi (Home Coming) Theory

Dr. Harprasad Shastri, renowned historian and Indologist of pre-independence India, had stated that “Bhumihars were formerly Buddhists and were later on gradually absorbed back into the fold of Hinduism.” Dr Harprasad Shastri found Bhumihars as quite a different race of people on account of their physical feature, their stalwart physique, sturdy build, broad forehead, aquiline nose, cheek and jaw bones and most importantly their intelligence & their Aryan origin. Several historians also believed that the Bhumihars, especially of the Magadh and Vikramshila region of Bihar, came under the Buddhist influence during the early phase of Buddhism during and after the lifetime of Lord Buddha. This theory seems plausible as Lord Buddha was born and preached mostly in this area. Many brahmins of Magadh accepted Buddhism as they felt stifled in the over-orthodox and ritualistic practices of Hinduism of those times. Later, with the downfall of Buddhism, they came back to the fold of Hinduism. This process of return was slow and long drawn. While the initial chunk of returnees was accepted back as equals within the Vedic brahmin fold, gradually under the influence of jealousy of the entrenched brahmin class, later returnees were classed as an inferior group of brahmins by the entrenched orthodox vedic brahmin community. They started referring to this group as Magadh brahmins, or Paschima brahmins. Babhan, a term used for Bhumihars in this region which finds mention in various Pali scriptures, seems to be slang for the Magadh Brahmins who reconverted back to Hinduism from Buddhism. The community had to fight a battle to restore their place of pride among the brahmins of the region during the British era, led ably by Swami Sahjanand Saraswati.

While it is possible that some of the Bhumihars in the area around Magadh and Vikramshila, were brahmins who became buddhists and later came back, but bulk of Bhumihars in East India were ayachak brahmins since time immemorial. Their brahmin roots is indicated by the fact that

even when Bhumihar brahmins established themselves as a strong community of landlords, they did not move away from traditional priestly duties completely. Babhans (Bhumihars) of Magadh performed priestly duties at the famous Vishnupad temple in Gaya. Babhans have also been “Khsetra Purohits (Area Priests) of Gaya for a long time. Till the 1960s, Babhans remained priests of Dev’s Surya Mandir. In fact, Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar restored the Kashi Vishwanath temple in 1777 after the brutal Muslim invasion of Kashi. However, the traditional brahmins of the region were so fearful of incurring the wrath of Muslim kings, that none of them came forward to perform the pran-prathishtha of the restored deity and to perform regular priestly duties at the temple. Compelled by circumstances, she had to invite Bhumihar brahmins, fearless by nature, to perform priestly duties at the newly restored Kashi Vishwanath temple. This fact is mentioned in the royal literature at the Indore state museum.

Mixed Race Theories

Broadly two mixed race theories about the origin of Bhumihar brahmins were propounded in the past. Bhumihar community itself vehemently opposed all theories of hybridity and always claimed brahmin status.

Owing to their warrior disposition, one theory considered them offspring of mixed parentage of brahmins and khsatriyas. We will deal with this theory later. Another less bandied theory was that Bhumihar brahmins originally belonged to castes lower in the social hierarchy. They propound a story that a king’s minister, under royal orders to assemble a certain quorum of brahmins for some ceremony, assembled people from non-brahmin castes and passed them off as brahmins when he could not find the required number of “true” brahmins. However, this theory is junked by Shri Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya in his book “Hindu Castes & Sects”, while writing about Bhumihar brahmins, thus –

“But this legendary theory is very strongly contradicted by the Aryan physiognomy of the Bhumihars who, in respect of personal appearance, are in no way inferior to Brahmans, and the Rajputs.”

Moreover, marriages between Bhumihar brahmins and other brahmins, most notably with Mithila brahmins, was common practice since ages. It is captured in a book titled “BRAHMAN”, published from Rameshwar press in Darbhanga. It classifies offspring from mixed marriages of ayachak Bhumihar brahmins & yachak Mithila brahmins as “Dogamiya” brahmins. The fact that matrimonial alliances were common and acceptable between traditional brahmins and Bhumihars, clearly indicates that historically they were not treated as a degraded brahmin group by the traditional yachak brahmins of the region.

The Brahmin-Rajput mixed parentage theory about the origin of Bhumihars was mainly based on following premise:

An important difference between Bhumihar brahmins and other brahmins of the region is that while the latter were divided only into exogamous clans called gotras, the former had a twofold division based on Gotra and territorial/tribal origin referred to as “mul”. This is a feature that Bhumihar brahmins share with the Rajputs. Probably this commonality formed the basis of the theory of Bhumihar brahmins belonging to Brahmin Kshatriya mixed parentage. But similar tribal/territorial divisions are found in traditional Mithila brahmins of Tirhoot and Saraswat brahmins of Punjab. Can it be then concluded that they are also of mixed origin?

Occurrence of martial titles like Singh, Sinha, Thakur, Shahi, Rai etc among some Bhumihar brahmins, like Rajputs, is another commonality. However, it is unwise to assume that within a same group of people (bhumihars) only a few would flaunt their royal titles while most others would hide behind regular brahmin titles like Pandey, Tiwari, Upadhyay, Sharma etc. After all a martial title is something to be flaunted and not hidden. The martial titles found among only a few Bhumihar brahmins is indicative of the feudal/landlord status & royalty of a few among the community, rather than indicating mixed Brahmin-Rajput parentage. Moreover, bearing of arms and performing duties is not unique to Bhumihar Brahmins only. It is common among many other ayachak brahmin communities across India like the Tyagis, Mohiyals and Namboodris. The war like disposition of Bhumihar brahmins alone cannot tie them to mixed Rajput-Brahmin lineage.

Conclusion

The word “Bhumihar”, in British writings and records, seems to be of relatively recent origin, first used in the records of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (Awadh) in 1865. The term Bhumihar brahmin was adopted by the community in the late 19th century to emphasise their claim of inclusion in the priestly Brahmin class, during British times. The community was historically referred to as “Babhans” in Bihar. They are also referred to as Paschima brahmins, Magadh brahmins at various places. Babhan is a word in Pali, a language which was prevalent in Buddhist era of Magadh. It is an “apbrahmsha” (slang) for brahmin. This indicates that Bhumihar brahmins were historically always a part of the Brahmin community of East India, albeit with “ayachak” traditions, as explained earlier. Siyaram Tiwari, the former dean at Visva Bharati University, stated that the Bhumihars are “landed” Brahmins who stopped taking alms and performing pujas and rituals. The Bhumihar brahmins observed all religious ceremonies including upnayan sanskar (sacred thread ceremony), like other traditional brahmins of the region, but they practised secular vocations like cultivation. Just like several other ayachak brahmins, many Bhumihar brahmins took up military duties too. Similarly, like other ayachak brahmins across India, Bhumihar brahmins also did not accept religious gifts (daan dakshina) and generally did not minister priestly services for others. Though cultivation was the primary occupation of the community, they differed from other traditional cultivator castes of the region. **Bhumihar brahmin, while being a cultivator community, is not allowed to touch his plough as per the community regulations.** This indicates that this land holding community was considered to be superior in status to other cultivator communities of the region. For ages, they have traditionally employed labour workforce to carry out farming on their behalf.

Pandit Naganand Vatsayan, in his book “Bhumihar Brahmin: Itihas ke darpan mei”, concluded that Bhumihar community is actually a congregation of ayachak groups from different brahmin denominations across the region and not a separate caste distinct from ordinary brahmins. Initially ayachaks coming from Kanyakubj brahmins were called Bhumihar brahmins. Later ayachaks from brahmin denominations like saraswats, mahiyals, saryuparis, maithils, chitpavans, kannads etc across India forged matrimonial alliances with this group and kept on merging into the Bhumihar brahmin community of East India.

STRUGGLE TO RECLAIM BRAHMIN STATUS



Staying true to their proven dictum of “Divide and Rule”, British were never short of machinations to sow seeds of discord in the Indian society and reap the rewards. After getting very little support from the Rajput and Brahmin Rajas in their 1781 revolt, Bhumihars Rajas and Zamindars generally stayed away from the 1857 revolt. It was largely led in East India by Rajput and brahmin Rajas of Bihar and Eastern UP. However, common Bhumihar people participated wholeheartedly in the 1857 revolt and rallied behind the brave old lion of Bihar, Babu Kunwar Singh. In fact, Mangal Pandey and his fellow Bhumihar brahmins soldiers of Bengal regiment of British army, provided the initial spark that ignited the revolt which spread like wildfire in North India within no time. However, Bhumihar Rajas either remained neutral or sided with the British. The British, in an act of ingratitude, perhaps fuelled by their anger at the role of Mangal Pandey and other Bhumihar Purbiyas in British army, rewarded the revolting castes by placing Brahmins as number one and Rajputs as number two in the provisional caste census of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in 1865. Bhumihars were relegated to the third spot, which the Rajas and the community took as a snub. The regular census was carried out in 1881 and Bhumihar community was dismayed to find themselves at the third spot once again.

Bhumihar Rajas of Benares, Hathua, Tekari, Bettiah, among others, reacted immediately. They felt that rather than being rewarded they were in a way punished by the British for their neutrality during the 1857 revolt. The Rajas and the community leaders came together to form the “Bhumihar Brahmin Mahasabha” in 1889. Benares being the capital of Hindus in the North, leadership of the movement to reclaim Brahmin status fell on the shoulders of Maharaja Prabhu Narayan Singh of Benares. The yachak (traditional) brahmins however vehemently opposed Bhumihar community’s claim. The harmony of the Hindu society was imperilled. Alarmed by the situation, the British engaged some leading ethnologists to look objectively into the claims of Bhumihars as equal brahmins. John Beams, a distinguished researcher and writer, maintained that Bhumihars were

“a fine manly race with delicate Aryan type of feature in full perfection. Their character was bold and overbearing and decidedly inclined to be turbulent. They claim to be Brahmins.” The traditional brahmins though strongly opposed Mr Beams’ statement. However other European scholars like Oldham, Ropper, Campbell, Risley and Temple were also veering towards Beam’s statement.

In the social sphere, Swami Sahjanand Saraswati spearheaded this cause of Bhumihars to reclaim their superior status alongside the traditional yachak brahmins. The Bhumihar Brahmin Mahasabha held annual sessions in different parts of present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. During the Balia session of 1914, Sahajanand defended the brahmin status of the Bhumihars, using quotes from Hindu scriptures to argue that priestly functions does not alone define

brahmins. To counter the resistance of brahmins, he did extensive research on the origins of Bhumihars. In 1916, he published a book *Bhumihar Brahmin Parichay* (“Introduction to Bhumihar Brahmins”), which outlined these arguments. He classified Brahmins into two categories – begging (yachak) and non-begging (ayachak) and stated that the Bhumihars were among the non-begging brahmins. He encouraged Bhumihars of Uttar Pradesh & Bihar to popularise the term “Bhumihar Brahmin” for the community. Pandit Suryanarayn Sharma also wrote a book “*Sainik Brahmin*” on the subject.

Risley, the then home secretary, was not inclined to accept the demand of the Bhumihar brahmins. Even Governor Curzon was not in favour of the Mahasabha’s demand. However, Minto, the Governor General, realized the gravity of situation and gave up the policy of dilly dallying, obviously under the pressure of the Bhumihar community. He was also keen to enlist the support of the Bhumihar brahmins of Bihar and UP in the Bengali dominated Congress. Minto accepted the decade old demand of the Bhumihar Brahmin community in 1905. In the 1911 census, Bhumihars were enumerated with Brahmins in UP. In Bihar, Bhumihars were enumerated separately though equal in status with the brahmins.

INTERNAL CASTE STRUCTURE



A major difference between Bhumihaar brahmins and majority of yachak brahmins of the region is that while latter are divided only into exogamous clans called “gotras”, former follow a twofold division system based on the eponymous divisions or gotras as well as their territorial roots or “mul”. Gotra literally means “Cow-Pen” or “Cow-Shed”. It probably refers to an extended family sharing a common cowshed of a Rishi or sage during ancient times. As with other brahmins denominations, Gotra of a clan refers generally to a Vedic Rishi, from whose extended family, the clan originally claims to have emerged. However, “mul” of a Bhumihaar clan refers to the territorial roots of their origin or early settlement or in some cases to the birthplace of the clan’s founder.

Exogamous Marriage Practices

Like majority of other Brahmins, Bhumihaar brahmin clans also follow exogamous matrimonial practices to prevent inbreeding and its associated debilities in their progeny. However, unlike other brahmin communities of the region, Bhumihaar brahmins follow two-fold exogamous practices in marriage matters. Marriage between same gotras is least desirable. But if marriage between same gotra becomes a necessity of circumstances, clan (mul) identity becomes the deciding factor. Marriages between same gotra is not desirable but still permissible, but marriages between same clan (mul) is strictly forbidden. Territorial divisions (mul) are held in higher esteem than the eponymous divisions (gotra) in the Bhumihaar brahmin community.

Bhumihaar brahmins follow the exclusivity of clans (mul) from both father and mother side of both bride and groom, while forming matrimonial alliances. A man is forbidden to take a bride who belongs either to same mul as the groom (groom’s father’s mul) or the same mul of groom’s mother. The is further extended so that bride’s mother’s mul is also taken into account. Marriage will be barred if bride’s mother belonged to the same mul as the bridegroom’s mother’s mul.

Gotra and Mul

As discussed, Bhumihaars are organized on both the eponymous (gotra) and territorial system of mul (root), with mul being held in higher esteem in matrimonial alliances. Bhumihaar brahmins also enumerate eighty-four regular brahminical gotras. Some of the commonly found gotras are Kashyap, Bhardwaj, Vatsa, Parashar, Shandilya, Vashista etc. The British census gives as many as 485 divisions, though gotras and mul are all mixed up. Some of the common Bhumihaar Brahmin gotras and associated mul are described below. It may not be a comprehensive list as it is compiled largely from available sources-

- Gautam – Pipramishr, Gotamiya, Datyayan, Vatsayan, Karmaisuraure, Badramiya.

- Shandilya – Dighwait, Kusumtiwari, Koranch, Nainjora, Ramiyapandey, Chiksaoria, Karmahe, Brahmpuria, Sihogia
- Vashisht – Kastuar, Darwalia, Marjanimishr
- Kashyap – Jathariya, Kinwar, Nohunliya, Baruar, Danswar Kudhuniya, Tatiha, Kolha, Karemua, Bhupali, Jijhautia, Trifala Pandey, Sahashraname, Dikshit, Babandiha, Mauar, Dhaulani
- Bhargav – Bhrigu, Kotha Bhardwaj, Aaswariya
- Bhardwaj – Jatharwar, Herapurpandey, Dumkatar, Belaunchi, Ambariya, Chakwar, Sonpakhariya, Machaiyapandey, Manachiya, Manaria, Sonwar, Seyni
- Katyayan – Vadrakamishr, Lamgodiva tiwari, Shrikantpur pandey
- Kaushik – Kusaunjhia, Nektivar, Pandeytekar
- Vats – Donwar, Sonbhadaria, Ganamishr, Bagauchia, Jalevar, Samseria, Hathoriya, Gangtikai
- Savarn – Panchobhe, Sobarniya, Bemuar, Tikrapandey
- Garg – Shukla, Basmait, Nagwashukla, Garg
- Sankrit – Sakarwar, Malaopandey, Fatuhavadyamishr
- Parashar – Eksariya, Sahadauliya, Surgame, Hastagame
- Kapil – Kapil
- Upmanyu – Upmanyu
- Agastya – Agastya
- Kaundilya – Atharva, Bijulpuria
- Vishnuvridhi – Kuthawait

Sub-divisions that emerged from the Kanyakubj brahmin branch of Bhumihars were Donwar, Sakarwar, Tatiha, Nanhuliya, Tiwaris of Vanshvar, Kudhaniya, Dasikar etc. Our rivers have been the cradle of Sanatan civilization as major settlements took shape along the river side. Sub-divisions based on river side settlements are also to be found in the territorial roots of Bhumihars. For example, the Saryu River side settlers were Gautam Kilha (Kashyap), Tiwaris of Nainijor, Parashar gotra Pandey's arriving from Pusaroad (Darbhanga) khiri, Garga gotra Shuklas of Muzzaffarpur, Bhardwajis of Ghazipur, Pandey's of Khor & Machiyaon, Sankrit gotra Pandey's of Malaon, Vatsa gotra Gana Mishra of Allahabad. Other mul's referring to riverside settlements were Sonbhadariya and Sonpakhariya etc. Bhumihar mul emerging from Maithil branch of brahmins were Savarna gotra Bemuwars, Shandilya gotra Dighway, Dighwait and Dighway Sandalpur, Chaudhary's of Bahadurpur. Eksariyas and Sahdauliyas are a Bhumihar mul emerging from Mohyal ayachak brahmins of Punjab. Legend has it that Mohyal brahmins from the Bali shakha (branch) came and settled in Eksar and later fanned to Muzzaffarpur, Gaureya Kothi, Parasgarh, Chainpur etc. They are present day Eksariya mul Bhumihars. Similarly, Chitapaonia mul Bhumihars, found in Patna, Bhojpur, Rohtas etc, emerged from the ayachak Chitpavan brahmins of Maharashtra. Legend has it that one Chitpavan brahmin Nyay Bhatt from Konkan came with family to Bihar for performing some Shraddh ceremony of their ancestors. They settled around the region after marriage alliances with Donwar Vatsas of the region. This clan came to

be referred as Chitpaonia mul Bhumihars of today. Some territorial roots or mul of Bhumihars are described in greater details below.

- Donwar – This sub-division claims their origin from Fatehpur Sikri (Vijaypur Sikri formerly). When they settled in Azamgarh, they were called “Bhaths”. They derive their name from their parent village Donauli. The ancestors of Donwars of a few villages in the area were in military services of a Delhi emperor. They received the title “Khan” for their valour, from the emperor. Descendants of those Bhumihars of the region carry the title of Khan till this day.
- Sakarwar – They also trace their origin to Fatehpur Sikri. In Ghazipur, they are generally rich and have retained their ancestral land holdings.
- Kinwar – It is claimed that they originated from Padampur in Karnataka. In Ghazipur, the Kinwar Bhumihars have three sub sections – Rajdhar, Mukund and Pithaur Rai.
- Bemwar – The Bemwar bhumihars came from Bempur and settled in Narwan in Benares. They are respectable, well to do community in the region.
- Gautam – The clan’s story is linked to the legend of a Gautam Gotri brahmin named Khattu Mishra who was vested with some divine prowess. He settled in Benares. He built a tank which is still known as “Mishra ka Pokhara”. According to British scholar Sherring, this clan belonged to Kauthumiya sakha or branch of Brahmins who followed rituals of Sama Veda. The clan intermarried with the Bhumihars of Madhyandina shakha of brahmins observing Yajurveda rituals.
- Manaria – Originally from Maner area of Bihar. The Raja of Maner was a Bhumihar brahmin. During the Islamic rule, they were compelled to leave Maner and settled in other areas such as Bihta and other adjoining areas of Patna district. Yours truly also belongs to the Manaria clan.
- Jujhotiya – The clan got its name from one of their ancient rulers, Jujhar Singh of Bundelkhand. Finding no brahmins in the area, they imported Kannaujias from the North of river Yamuna and settled them in Bundelkhand. Jujhotiya bhumihars assert their Kannaujia origins. Vishnu Dharm Puran calls the country between the Vindhya, river Yamuna and river Narmada as Yuddhesh and Jujhotiyas are mainly found in this ancient tract of land called Yuddhesh. Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, a modern-day father figure of the Bhumihar community, belonged to the Jujhotiya mul.

BHUMIHAR BRAHMIN KINGS & WARRIORS



Bhumihar brahmins have always taken pride in their warrior traditions just like the other ayachaks of North India, the Mohyals and the Tyagis. Like most ayachak brahmins of India, Bhumihars also claim to have inherited their warrior traditions from the brahmin warrior sage Lord Parshuram, considered as the sixth incarnation of Bhagwan Vishnu. Major General G.D. Bakshi, celebrated war veteran and the author of “Guardians of the Gate: Military history of the Mohyal Brahmins”, has devoted an entire chapter in his book (chapter title: The Bhumihars of the Imperial Mauryan Army and the Sunga Dynasty) to the Bhumihars and their evolution. General writes in his book

“Legend has it that Lord Parshuram metamorphosed these ayachak brahmins into a fine warrior brahmin clan. They were in a sense like the Japanese Samurai, the poet warriors, brave and tenacious fighters with a great tradition of soldiering and scholarship. Under Porus these ayachak brahmin warriors of North India fought the Greek armies of Alexander. After Alexander’s invasion, Chanakya recruited the Mauryan army from this region, which had suffered grievously from the brutal Greek invasion. They subsequently became the Bhumihar Brahmins who later settled in what is today Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and helped unify India under the Mauryan empire. The Tyagis and the Mohyals also form part of these clans of fighting Brahmins.”

These warrior brahmins of North India have a glorious history of fighting foreign armies who invaded India, from the mighty Greeks to the Islamic and Mughals of medieval India to British in pre-independence India. Various British scholars and chroniclers have recorded this aspect in their writings. Bhumihars were referred to as “Military Brahmin” by Francis Buchanan. M.A. Sherring, a British scholar, in his book “Hindu Tribes & Castes”, published in 1872, described Bhumihar brahmins as a weapon bearing warrior community. Mr Beames, another British scholar, had described Bhumihar brahmins as:

“a fine brave clan carrying all specialities of Aryan race”.

He further described them as fearless and domineering by nature. Megasthenes, a greek ambassador of Alexander, has mentioned in his writings about a community of ayachak brahmins with warrior traditions who gave a tough time on occasions in battles with Greek generals, settled in the region. These fighter brahmins being referred to by Megasthenes were most likely the forefathers of modern day Bhumihars of East India. In fact, legendary Magahi poet Mathura Prasad Navin’s famous lines below sum up the unique twin traits of bravery and scholarship that the Bhumihar brahmin community effortlessly carries.

“Hamar gaon hai aala babua,
Hamar gaon hai aala,
Beta hai bandook uthawale,

Baap jape hai maala”

Meaning: Our world is unique, where the son carries a gun while the father counts his religious rosary beads.

Chanakya

Bhumihars claim Chanakya, regarded as one of the greatest political strategists of ancient India, as one of their own. Chanakya's Arthashastra, a Sanskrit treatise on political science and military strategy, places him in the league of greatest political thinkers across the world and across ages. Chanakya was also known as Kautilya, a name probably derived from his Kaustya gotra, a gotra still found among some Bhumihars of the region. Chanakya (c.350 – c.275 BC) was born in Pataliputra, Magadh (modern day Bihar), and later moved to Taxila, in Gandhar province (now in Pakistan). Chanakya recognized the leadership skills of the great king Chandragupta Maurya at an early stage. He groomed Chandragupta to ultimately overthrow the Nand rulers of North India and the Greek rule in the Northwest and in establishing the vast Mauryan empire of North India.

Alexander the Great with his all-conquering Greek army had attacked India from the Northwest. Greek army was further bolstered by the joining of vanquished troops of the Iranians and other central Asian kingdoms. Ambhi, the valiant but treacherous king of Taxila, had also joined forces with Alexander to settle old scores with his arch foe, King Porus. It was a hopeless contest in terms of sheer numbers. King Porus fought Alexander in the battle of Hydapses (Jhelum River). He fought valiantly but lost as expected. However, Alexander was mighty impressed by Porus' bravery in the face of adversity. The Greeks also faced the amazing war machine, the war elephants of Porus' army, for the first time, and were almost annihilated. They were mighty terrified of the war elephants and only their numerical superiority carried them through.

However, it was not that India of those times had no ruler to challenge the advancing Greeks. The Nandas of Patliputra had the mightiest army of those times in India. King Mahapadma Nanda was ruling Patliputra at that time. His army was numerically and tactically superior to the Greeks, with a huge brigade of war elephants which terrified the Greeks like nothing else. India had many major and minor rulers in those times who were forever engaged in wars for petty political gains. Shielded as it was by Himalyas in the North and West and the seas in the South, the sub-continent had some clear-cut rules of war between various Hindu kings. Battles were fought between armies and civilian population was left untouched. In fact, it was considered unchivalrous and cowardly to kill innocent unarmed civilians. In the form of Greek invasion, India had seen the ravages of a foreign invasion for the first time with the marauding Greek army, having no war time scruples, gleefully killing and maiming the civilians, burning villages and pilfering riches wantonly. Chanakya a nationalist scholar warrior approached Mahapadma Nand hoping to urge him to lead a counter attack to save the honor of the motherland and civilizational values, facing destruction at the hands of the Greeks. However, Mahapadma Nand, drunk with the conceit of power, failed to rise above petty politics of the land and refused to oblige. In fact, legend has it that when chided by Chanakya for not rising to the call of national duty, he had Chanakya thrown out of his court held by the tuft of his hair. More than feeling insulted, Chanakya was dismayed at the fate that awaited his dear motherland if the marauding Greeks marched into the Northern plains. Chanakya took a vow to not tie his shikha

(tuft of hair) till he killed Mahapadma Nand. He also vowed to find a way to stop the marauding Greek invaders.

Chanakya lied low during Alexander's invasion and the battle of Hydapses. However, he created an intricate system of spies to gather as much details as possible about the strengths and weaknesses of the Greek army, which he wanted to push back some day. He also studied the strengths and weaknesses of the resistance forces led by King Porus. He got reports about the desperation and discontent setting into the Greek army which had been fighting incessant battles for almost a decade. He was also aware of the morbid fear of war elephants in the minds of the Greeks. It is believed that Chanakya with his network of spies, operating as commoners like snake charmers and traders, left no stone unturned to magnify this fear in the minds of the Greeks. Stories about the Nanda army having a much bigger and brutal war elephant brigade than Porus' army were planted continuously among the Greeks by Chanakya's spies. So much so that the Greek army lost the will to fight and revolted against the mighty Alexander. One General named Coenus was most adamant and urged fellow Greeks to refuse to go further into the Indian plains. Alexander had to in fact kill Coenus to quell the rebellion in the ranks. However, his troops were so adamant to return back that Alexander had to ultimately give in. He ordered his forces to commence homeward journey. Thus, Chanakya secretly and passively contributed to the withdrawal of Alexander's Greek army from the North western flanks of India, thus saving the massive population settled in the Northern plains from the horrors of impending destruction at the hands of the Greeks. The retreating Greek army installed several Greek satraps in the territories won by them in the North West. Selukus Niketor was left in charge of territory in Baluchistan and Afghanistan won by the Greeks.



CHANAKYA CHANAKYA & CHANDRAGUPTA MAURAYA

Chanakya's search for a worthy leader to raise an army and challenge the mighty Nandas ended when he met the extraordinarily gifted Chandragupta, son of a Maurya clan chief of Magadh. Chanakya trained Chandragupta to become a fierce warrior. He also groomed him in the art of statecraft and leadership. Together they travelled through the Northern plains and up the river Indus and convinced common people, ravaged by Nandas and the Greeks, to join up and raise a banner of revolt. General population, which had seen death and destruction up close, did not require much convincing. Many Mohyal Brahmin warriors of Punjab and Bhumihar brahmin warriors of Northern plains joined Chandragupta's nationalist imperial army. Chanakya wanted to unify India which was hamstrung by the lack of unity amongst various small and big rulers. He knew that to realize his dreams, the mighty Nandas of Patliputra had to be defeated. After defeating several small principalities on the periphery of Patliputra, Chandrgupta Maurya, under the able guidance of Chanakya, attacked and conquered Patliputra. Mahapadma Nanda was killed, and Chandragupta Maurya ascended the throne. However, Chanakya's dream of securing India from future foreign invasions was still not complete. He guided Chandragupta to mount a pre-emptive attack against the Greek satrap Selukus Niketor. In 305 BC, a mere 22 years after the invasion of mighty Alexander, the last Greek outpost on Indian soil was routed. Greeks had to cede the territories of Aria (Herat), Archosia (Kandahar) Parepanasadoi (Kabul) to the Mauryas. Thus, the threat of Greeks coming back again from the Northwest was sealed forever. Selukus offered his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta Maurya to buy peace. Thus began the famous Mauryan dynasty which produced further greats like Ashoka. The Mauryan dynasty ruled over the first Pan India empire extending over the better part of our civilisational nation, Aryavarta, barring territories south of Vindhya.

Chanakya was also the author of the well-known political treatise "Arthashastra", which he wrote as an instruction manual for the young Chandragupta on how to rule effectively. An interesting fact is that a group of Bhumihar brahmins called "Chanakiya" brahmins, a reference to their lineage link with the great Kautilya Chanakya, are found till this day in the Magadh region of Bihar. Bhumihars can be proud of the fact that one of their own is credited with grooming one of the greatest warriors of India, King Chandragupta Maurya.

King Pushyamitra Shunga

As the great Maurayan empire declined, the hard-earned gains of unifying India against foreign invasions were threatened once again. Brihadrath, the last Maurayn King, was a feeble ruler and lacked the will to fight. The Greek potentates settled on the periphery of the empire started making inroads once again. Brihadrath was ready to sign a peace treaty with the Greeks, which was seen as surrender by many. One of his generals named Pushyamitra Shunga, a Kashyap brahmin warrior, was peeved by Brihadrath's decision. He was also alarmed by the pacifist wave sweeping the Mauryan army under the rising influence of Buddhism, which started under King Ashoka. Pushyamitra Shunga perceived it as a weakness against external threats. He staged a coup and killed Brihadrath and took control of the empire in 184 BC. Demetrius, the Indo Bactrian Greek general had captured Taxila, parts of western Punjab and Mathura in the plains. He was knocking at the gates of Patliputra. King Pushyamitra Shunga launched a bold counter attack, killed Demetrius and pushed back the Greeks beyond the borders of Indian subcontinent once again in 175 BC. He thwarted an attack from the Kalinga king Kharavela. He also conquered Vidarbha.



PUSHYAMITRA SHUNGA SILVER COIN OF PUSHYAMITRA SHUNGA

Inscriptions of the Shungas have been found as far as the Ayodhya (the Dhanadeva-Ayodhya inscription). The Divyavadana mentions that his empire stretched as far as Sakala (Sialkot) in the Punjab region in the northwest. Some accounts portray him as a persecutor of Buddhists and a destroyer of stupas but there has been no authoritative evidence to back this claim. In fact, during his reign the Stupas at Sanchi and Barhut were renovated. He also built the sculptured stone gateway at Sanchi. He performed Vedic yagya (sacrifices) such as Ashvamedha, Rajasuya and Vajapeya. A revival of sorts of vedic Hinduism started under him. Pushyamitra Shunga patronised the Sanskrit grammarian, Patanjali. Panini, another great Sanskrit grammarian, was also his contemporary.

Pushyamitra founded the brahmin Shunga dynasty that reunified the empire in the post Mauryan era. According to the Puranas, his reign lasted for 36 years and the Shunga dynasty ruled for a period of 112 years (184-73 BC). Bhumihar brahmins trace their ancestry to the great Brahmin King Pushyamitra Shunga. Interestingly “Shunganiya” Bhumihar brahmins are found till this day in parts of Bihar. The name is regarded as a reference to their lineage link with King Pushyamitra Shunga.

King Agnimitra Shunga

Agnimitra succeeded his father King Pushyamitra Shunga. During Pushyamitra’s reign he subjugated King Yagyasen of Vidharbha and extended the boundaries of Shunga kingdom up to the banks of Varda River. This battle is described “Bhatvika Agnimitram”.

He was a contemporary of one of the greatest sanskrit poets and playwrights, Kalidas. In fact,

King Agnimitra Shunga was the chief protagonist in Kalida's first epic play "Malvika Agninetram". Agnimitra discontinued Mauryan era coins and introduced his own coins. They had inscriptions of Lord Mahadev and King Agnimitra on them. Some such coins were found in excavations around Rohelkhand. The Shunga kingdom, under Agnimitra and later King Vasujyestha, expanded up to Tibet in the North.

Kanva Dynasty

The Kanva dynasty or Kanvayana overthrew the Shunga dynasty in parts of eastern and central India, and ruled from 73 BCE to 28 BCE. The Kanva kings were also Brahmins (possibly Bhumihar brahmins of today). They were descendants of Sage Saubhari. Vasudeva Kanva was a brahmin minister at the court of Shungas. He killed Shunga King Devabhuti Shunga and established the rule of the Kanva dynasty.

Although the Puranic literature indicates that the Kanva Dynasty ruled from the former capital of the Shunga Empire in Pataliputra, Magadha in Eastern India, their coins are primarily found in and around the region of Vidisha in Central India, which had also been the capital of later Shunga rulers. The Kanva rulers allowed the kings of the Shunga dynasty to continue to rule in obscurity in a corner of their former dominions. There were four Kanva rulers. King Agnimitra was succeeded by his son Bhumimitra. Coins bearing the legend Bhumimitra have been discovered from Panchala region. Copper coins with the legend "Kanvasya" have also been found from Vidisha, as well as Kaushambi in the Vatsa realm. Bhumimitra ruled for fourteen years and was later succeeded by his son Narayana. Narayana ruled for twelve years. He was succeeded by his son Susharman who was the last king of the Kanva dynasty. According to the Puranas, their dynasty was brought to an end by the Satavahanas in 28 BCE.

Bhumihar Kings in Medieval India

History of medieval India was largely dominated by Mughals and other Islamic rulers. History is often written by the victors. Same was the case with the Islamic rulers where much of recorded history was written by historians and scholars of their court. While they acknowledged the Kings and braves amongst the Hindus, but for them they were just Hindus as their historians and scholars did not delve deep into caste details of the Hindu rajas and braves. So explicit mention of Bhumihars is hard to find. But acknowledgement of zamindar brahmins of Ghazipur, most likely Bhumihar Brahmins of East India, is to be found in Akbar's book "Ain-I-Akbari." In fact, Mr Neville, British scholar and gazetteer who studied and translated Ain-I-Akbari from Persian to English, while explaining Akbar's administrative management in Ghazipur and Mohammedabad, concludes that the Brahmin zamindars mentioned in the book were actually Bhumihar brahmins and not any other brahmins. This was also quoted in Swami Sahjanand Saraswati's seminal book "Brahmarishi Vansh Vistar". Neville wrote thus:

*"It was in Akbar's days that Ghazipur became recognized seat of government and the capital of a Sarkar in the province of Allahabad. The sarkar contained 19 mahals or parganas. The Ain-Akbari affords us considerable amount of information as to the state of the district at that time, showing the state of cultivation, the revenue and the principal landholders of each pargana. The mahals are Ghazipur Haveli, Pachotar, Bahariabad, Zahurabad, Dehma, Sahibabad, Bhitari, Khanpur and Mahaich. Zahurabad had 13803 bighas of cultivation paying 657808 dams. It was held by **Brahmans**, who contributed 20 horsemen and 500 infantry men. Mohammadabad*

Paharbari, as it was then styled, had 44775 bighs under cultivation and paid 2260707 dams. The land holders were Brahmans, which is the name always given to Bhumihars, and the military force consisted of 100 horse and 2000 foot. Zamania is shown under the old name of Madan Benares. It was held by Brahmans, or more probably Bhumihars, who paid 2760000 dams on 66584 bighas of cultivation and furnished 50 horse and 5000 foot soldiers. Saidpur Namadi had a cultivated area 25721 bighas, an assessment of 1250280 dams and the Brahman Zamindars contributed 20 cavalry and 1000 infantry. The remaining parganas were held mostly by Rajputs, while Bhitari by Ansari Sheikhs”.

Major Bhumihar Princely Estates & Zamindaris

Bhumihar brahmin Rajas controlled many small and big fiefdoms and zamindaris in Bihar, Jharkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. With the withering of Mughal rule in the North, they expanded their territories and sphere of influence and continued during the British rule. Some of the prominent ones were:

- Raja of Benaras
- Raja of Bettiah in Champaran
- Raja of Tekari, Gaya
- Raja of Hathwa in Saran
- Raja of Tamkuhi in Gorakhpur
- Vijaypur (Fatehpur) Sikri and Pahargarh estate in Uttar Pradesh
- Raja of Amawan (Old Monghyr)
- Zamindar of Sheohar
- Zamindar of Chainpur
- Zamindar of Pandooi
- Raja of Bansaon estate (later known as Dileepnagar estate)
- Raja of Madhuban raj
- Raja of Bagaura estate (Siwan)
- Udayni kothi estate
- Goreakothi estate
- Raja of Mahisadal in Midnapore, Bengal
- Raja of Pakur in Santhal Parganas, Bengal
- Raja of Maheshpur in Santhal Parganas, Bengal
- Lalgola estate, Murshidabad, Bengal

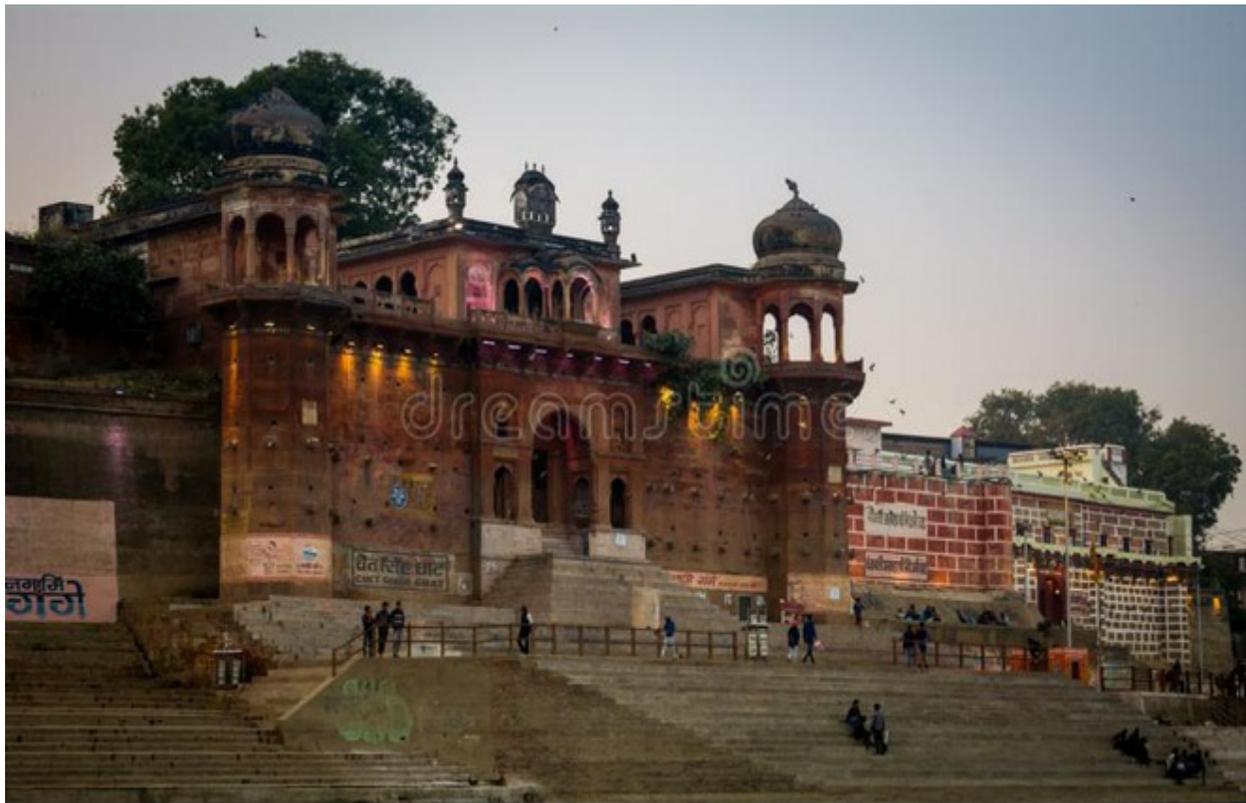
Benares State

Benares State was a kingdom and later princely state in today's Uttar Pradesh. On 15th October 1948, the 88th ruler of Kashi, Sir Vibhuti Narayan Singh, accepted the request of the first Indian Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and signed the accession to the Indian Union.

The state was founded by the local zamindar, Raja Balwant Singh, a prominent Bhumihar

brahmin landlord. Taking advantage of the withering control of the Mughals, he assumed the title of “Raja of Benares” in mid-18th century. There were as many as 100,000 men in his army, drawn mainly from his fellow Bhumihar brahmin community. Benares Rajas held sway over what later became the districts of Benares, Gorakhpur and Azamgarh. This proved a decisive advantage when the dynasty faced a rival, the Nawab of Oudh (Awadh), in the 1750s and the 1760s.

Kashi Naresh (King of Kashi) fought an exhausting guerrilla war against the Nawab of Oudh (Awadh) camp. Using his troops, he forced the Nawab to withdraw his main forces. His descendants ruled the area around Benares after liberation from Awadh and as feudatories of British East India Company. From 1737, the state included most of present-day Bhadohi, Chandauli, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, and Varanasi districts, including the city of Varanasi. Balwant Singh expelled Fazl Ali from present-day Ghazipur and Ballia, and added it to his domains. In 1910, Benares became a full-fledged state of British India. It was given the privilege of the 13-gun salute by the East India company, denoting significant might in the princely hierarchy of the region during British rule.





CHAIT SINGH PALACE, BANARAS RAMNAGAR FORT BANARAS



ROYAL ELEPHANT HOWDAH, BANARAS RAJ

Serious work on the Puranas began when the All India Kashiraj Trust was formed under the patronage and guidance of Dr. Vibhuti Narayan Singh, the Maharaja of Kashi, which, in addition to producing critical editions of the Puranas, also published the journal "Puranam". Even today

the Kashi Naresh (the titular ruler) is deeply revered by the people of Varanasi. He is a religious leader and the people of Varanasi consider him an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He is also the chief cultural patron and an essential part of all major religious celebrations in the city.

Tekari Raj Zamindari Estate

Tekari Raj (sometimes spelled Tikari Raj) was a zamindari estate belonging to a family of the Bhumihar brahmin community in South Bihar. They controlled 2,046 villages within their estate, which covered approximately 7,500 square kilometres, near the town of Gaya. The Tekari Rajas belonged to Drontikar (or Dronticar) clan (mul) of the Bhardwaj gotra of Bhumihar brahmins from the village of Tekar. They held their estates in Pachrukhi. Rajas of Tekari, like Raja Mitrajit Singh, were renowned for their scholarship and for their works of poetry and history.

The zamindari of Tekari owed its origin to an imperial grant made about the time when the Mughal empire began to decay. Dhir Singh played an important role in defeating the rebellious potentates in his neighbourhood. In recognition of the support, in 1719–20, the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah honoured him with a khalat and the title of Raja. The relationship between the declining empire and Tekari zamindars was, however, a complex one and not always harmonious. The family sometimes found themselves facing Mughal forces when they defied the imperial authority that was nominally vested in provincial governors. These local rulers needed the Zamindars to collect revenue, and the zamindars sought the legitimisation of that association with the empire, yet the Zamindars also generally refused to hand over the money they collected and they operated in a fairly lawless environment.

The Tekari family made large contributions in the social and cultural spheres of the area. The present day Tekari Raj High School and Tekari College owe their existence to their benevolence. The Gaya Public Library (the oldest District Library in Bihar) and the Gaya Club, which is the hub of social activity in Gaya town, stand on land donated by them.

Baghochia Dynasty

The House of Baghoch, commonly known as Baghochia, was the ruling dynasty of Hathwa Raj and Bansaon Estate (later known as Dileepnagar Estate) until 1947, when the states were abolished and merged into the newly formed Union of India. The house takes its name from Baghoch and Bharhichowra, the ancient seats of the rulers of Hathwa Raj and Bansaon Estate. The name Baghauch is associated with the clan (mul) of this Bhumihar brahmin family of rulers, to Bagh (Tiger) as the clan's totem. Based on the totem the name of the first capital was Baghauch. They are a sub-group of the Vats gotra Bhumihar brahmins. The founder of the dynasty was Raja Bir Sen who played an instrumental role in the invasion of the Sakyas by the Kosla Maharaj Virudhaka in 6th century BCE, and it is in the aftermath that Raja Bir Sen got part of the newly invaded country as his Raj. This makes the Baghochia dynasty one of the oldest and the longest ruling dynasty in the world and also a clan with one of the deepest genealogy.

Its cadet branches also held numerous Zamindaris, Ghatwali and Mulraiya in Bihar, Jharkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Some of the notable Zamindari estates held by cadet branches of Baghochia House includes Tamkuhi Raj, Salemgarh estate, Kiajori(Chakai) estate and Ledo Gadi. Kharna estate was another notable Ghatwali estate acquired by Babu Ananda Rai of Baghochia clan.

Hathwa Raj (Baghochia Dynasty)

Hathwa Raj was a chieftaincy belonging to Baghochia dynasty of Bhumihaar brahmins. It encompassed 1,365 villages. It was located in the Saran Division of Bihar. Earlier seats of the Raj included Huseypur, Kalyanpur, Balchowra and Baghoch. The Kalyanpur chieftaincy was subjugated by the Mughal Emperor Akbar during late 16th century. The first reference of the Kalyanpur family arises in 1539 when a Bhumihaar king Raja Jay Mal provided assistance to Humayun after his defeat in the Battle of Chausa. He provided Humayun with food and fodder for his troops. Once Sher Shah Suri fully established his control over North India, he took stern action against Jay Mal, who fled into the forest and engaged in rebellion. However, once Humayun re-established himself, he granted four parganas to Jay Mal's grandson, Raja Jubraj Shahi. Jubraj Shahi later engaged in a conflict with the Afghan chief, Kabul Mohammed whom he defeated and killed in battle. Due to its central location, Hathwa was the seat of the Raja's residential palace and its nearby villages housed most of the key retainers of the estate.

By the 1840s Hathwa was described as having large bazaars and bi-weekly markets. By the early nineteenth century, there were forts, palaces, and several temples constructed. An early twentieth-century account describes Hathwa as an impressive standard market, its shops offering a range of agricultural and consumer goods and its specialists providing a variety of services. The presence of schools and temples further accentuated its centrality in the locality. The estate collected professional tax from traders stationed at Hathwa.

Tamkuhi Raj (Baghochia Dynasty)

The Tamkuhi Estate is an ancient Raj, succession to which is governed according to the rule of lineal primogeniture. The family share Baghochia descent with the Maharajas of Hathwa, as well as Majhauri. The founder of the family was Babu Ranbahadur Shahi, younger son of Maharaja Fateh Shahi Bahadur of Huseypur (later Huthwa), who made Tamkuhi his capital in 1765. It became the seat of the Tamkuhi Raj, which later hosted important hospital, schools, colleges, government buildings as a temple and the old Palace of the early zamindars.

Bettiah Raj Estate

Bettiah Raj was the second-largest zamindari in the region of India now known as Bihar. It generated annual land revenue rentals of more than two million rupees. It was founded by Gangeswar Deo, a Bhumihaar brahmin of Jaitharia clan (mul), popularly known as Jaitharia brahmins. Gangeswar Deo's descendants are among the present day Kashyap Gotra of Bhumihaar brahmins and a branch of this clan also set up residence at a place called Jaithar Saran near Champaran, later moved east and established a state at Bettiah in Bihar. Bettiah Raj was the oldest in the region and had also been a branch of Raj Riyasat Sirkar of Champaran since the 16th century (the time of Shah Jahan) when the raja of Bettiah was Ugrasen Singh. Both the Madhuban Raj and Sheohar estates had broken off from Bettiah Raj. The Rajas of Bettiah had turbulent relations with Khandavalas of Mithila, who often assisted the Nawab of Bengal in subduing the hostile chieftaincy of Bettiah.

In 1765, when the East India Company acquired the Diwani, Bettiah Raj held the largest territory under its jurisdiction. It consisted of all of Champaran except for a small portion held by the Ram Nagar Raj (held by Shah Rajputs). Bettiah Raj also came into being as a result of

mallikana chaudharai and quanungoi, the connection with the revenue administration building on local dominance and the capability of controlling and protecting hundreds of villages. Internal disputes and family quarrels divided the Raj in course of time. Madhuban Raj and Sheohar Raj were created as a consequence. Raja Jugal Kishore of Bettiah was prominent Zamindar from Bihar supporting the 1781 revolt of Benares Raja against the British East India Company. His son, Raja Anand Kishor Singh, succeeded him in 1816 after agreeing to British terms of peace. Raja Anand Kishor Singh was a music lover. He started the tradition of dhrupad singing from Indian classical school in Bettiah. Later “Bettiah gharana” became an important dhrupad gharana in the Indian classical traditions.

The last zamindar of Bettiah was Harendra Kishore Singh, who was born in 1854 and succeeded his father, Rajendra Kishore Singh in 1883. In 1884, he received the title of Raja Bahadur as a personal distinction and a Khilat and a sanad from the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Augustus Rivers Thompson. He was granted a Knight Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire on 1st March 1889. He was appointed a member of the Legislative Council of Bengal in January 1891. He was also a member of The Asiatic Society. He was the last ruler of Bettiah Raj.



**RAJA MITRAJIT SINGH, TEKARI FORT, GAYA DIST
TEKARI STATE**



BETTIAH RAJ PALACE HATHWA RAJ PALACE

BATTLES FOUGHT BY BHUMIHAR BRAHMINS



Against Muslim Invaders

Maharaja Kam Dev Misr, also known as Karam Singh (b.1438-1532), was a sakarwar Bhumihar ruler of the Pahargarh Estate, which mainly consisted of four cities, Morena, Gwalior, Jhansi, Shivpuri. Kam Dev was the son of Maharaja Jay Raj Dev Singh who was the ruler of the Vijaypur Sikri estate (now Fatehpur Sikri), which was spread over 35,000 square km. He was a valiant fighter who took on the Mughals during the medieval period in the battle of Khanwa and Madarpur.

Role in the Battle of Khanwa under the Great Rana Sanga

The Battle of Khanwa was fought 60 km west of Agra, on March 16, 1527. It was fought between the invading Timurid forces of Mughal King Babur and the Rajput confederacy led by Rana Sanga for supremacy of Northern India. The battle was a major event in Medieval Indian history. Although Timurids had won at Panipat earlier but at the time, the sultanate at Delhi was a spent force that was long crumbling. On the contrary, Mewar kingdom, under the able rule of Rana Sanga, had turned into one of the strongest powers of Northern India. Therefore, the battle of Khanwa was among the most decisive battles in the Mughal conquest of northern India. During the battle of Khanwa, Dham Dev Misr, Kam Dev Misr, and Vikram Dev Misr not only joined the confederation of Rajputs, led ably by the great one eyed Braveheart Rana Sanga of Chittor, but also provided 11,000 troops with complete administrative support to the confederation. A 1.8 lakh strong Rajput army stayed at the Bahadur Garh fort of Raja Kamdev Misr. Enough rations were collected and stocked inside the fort because Rana Sanga planned to capture Agra.

Rana Sanga was confident that he would win because he had the full support of the whole Rajput confederation. Unfortunately, this couldn't happen since the Mughals were able to quickly capture Agra, and the Rajputs lost. The main reason for the sudden defeat was Salyaditya, a strong Tomar Rajput ruler, had left the Rajput confederation and had joined with Babur, providing him the advantage of 30,000 troops.

Rana Sanga was defeated. Thus, the command of the Rajput's withdrawing forces fell on the shoulder of Raja Dham Dev, which he conducted with a fair amount of discipline and control. The Bahadurgarh fort was burnt by the Mughal army. Babur also changed the name of Vijaypur Sikri to Fatehpur Sikri, both names have the same meaning, "the city of victory". Babur only changed the name of Vijaypur Sikri, the fiefdom of Bhumihar kings, to Persian. The defeat in the battle of Khanwa was a major setback in the history of the Rajputs. Babur, while describing the Battle of Khanwa in Baburnama, had mentioned Raja Dham Dev and Raja Kam Dev at least twice, along with Rana Sanga, Medini Rai, and Maldev Rathore.

Battle of Madarpur (Madaradipur)

The valiant brothers Maharaja Kam Dev Misr, Maharaja Dham Dev Misr and Maharaja Vikram Pratap Dev Singh Misr and their army of Bhumihar brahmin warriors again fought a pitched battle with the Mughals at Madarpur, near Kanpur, in 1528 (vikram samvat 1584). Mughal army was led by Babur's commander Mir Baqi, infamous for razing the original Ram Mandir at Ayodhya and building Babri Masjid over the ruins. Though outnumbered heavily, they fought valiantly but were eventually defeated and suffered major casualties. The survivors chose to migrate to Ghazipur and Benares in Uttar Pradesh and Begusarai in Bihar to preserve their Dharma rather than capitulating to the marauders. The braves of Madarpur merged with other Bhumihars of the region with the passage of time. The battle is mentioned in Kanyakubja Brahmin Vanshawali and Kanyakubja Prabodhini.

Minor Battles

The Bhumihar brahmin rajas and Zamindars fought valiantly against a series of Islamic invaders in the region thus checking and slowing down their otherwise rapid expansion. Most of the major estates and Zamindaris in the region were controlled by Bhumihar brahmins during the brutal waves of successive Islamic invasions.

Battle of Maner: At the advent of Muslim invasions in the region, Maner was ruled by brahmin Kings, most likely forefathers of Manaria mul Bhumihar brahmins of today. Available Muslim literature of the period acknowledges Brahmin kings ruling Maner and their kingdom extended up to Karmnasa river in Buxar. This fact is further reinforced by copper plates of Raja Govind Chandra of Gadhwal, Kannauj, found in excavations. The inscriptions on these plates mention that the region of Maner was donated to Brahmin Kings. During the period of early Turk invasion of North India, fakir Hazrat Momin was harassed and pushed back by the Raja of Maner. He went back to Medina and returned with an organised army and attacked the Raja. A fierce battle ensued in which Raja of Maner fought valiantly but lost his life after a bloody battle. Existence of large number of martyr graves of the Muslim army in Maner bears testimony to the fact that Turks had to pay a heavy price to win Maner. It is said that the famous sufi saint Haji Makdum Yahya, revered till today, was born in the palace courtyards of Raja of Maner.

Battle between Maharaja Jubraj Shahi & Kabul Mohammed: Jubraj Shahi Bahadur, 95th Maharaja, is said to have wrested Pargana Seepah around 1714 AD, which continued to be a part of Hathwa Raj during British times, from Afghan chieftain Kabul Mohammad of Barheria. Maharaja Jubraj Shahi defeated and killed Kabul Mohammed in a pitched battle. In fact, there is a legend associated with this battle. It is said that Maharaja Jubraj Shahi was defeated several times by Kabul Mohammed of Barheria, who was trying to assert himself by encroaching into Hathwa Raj territories. After his last defeat, Maharaja Jubraj Shahi had taken refuge in nearby jungles with only a handful of loyal troops, when Goddess Bhavani appeared in his dream and blessed him to take on Kabul Mohammed and liberate her from the rule of Islamic invaders. Legend has it that Goddess Bhavani told the Raja "Moment you commence your journey, you will see a jackal on the left and a serpent on the right. Bow down to the former and kill the latter." The Maharaja acted accordingly. A fierce battle took place between Maharaja Jubraj Shahi and Kabul Mohammed. With the blessings of Maa Bhavani, Maharaja Jubraj Shahi defeated and killed Kabul Mohammed. A big temple was built at the spot of Maharaja's dreams by the Hathwa

rulers. The temple, Thawe Durga Mata ka Mandir, still exists and the tradition of offering food to the jackals to seek blessings is carried out till today. A big fair is also held annually at the temple.

Against the British Raj

Guerrilla Warfare by Chakwars of Anga Desh

The Chakwars are a clan of Bhardwaj gotra Bhumihar brahmins. They are mainly concentrated on the both sides of the banks of river Ganga from Begusarai to Manihari block of Katihar district. They were the kings of Anga Region and were known as Anga Rai among local people. According to Muslim and British sources, the territory of the Chakwar kingdom extended from Rajmahal in the east and Darbhanga in the north. In 1720, Nasrat Khan was appointed the Mughal governor of Bihar. However, he was unable to subdue the Chakwars. The Chakwars began to grow in strength following the disintegration of the Mughal Empire and they asserted independence by issuing land grants with their own signatures and seals. These were issued by various Chakwar kings including Raja Bakhtawar Singh who ruled between 1718 and 1727. The strength of the Chakwars stemmed from the fact that they controlled various important river-routes across the Ganges and were able to extort a large amount of money from European traders. They also carried out raids on neighbouring regions. European sources from 1719 to 1721 note that skirmishes between Europeans and the Chakwars were common and many traders requested increased protection from Chakwar attacks. They were descendants of Great Chirayu Mishra as per their oral history and also published by Dr KK Dutta, a renowned historian. Chirayu Mishra came most probably from Madhubani district of North Bihar or Saptari district of Nepal and settled down in the area between pargana Chhai (Old north Bhagalpur region & Western Part of Purnea division) and Saraisa region (Samastipur-Begusarai) of North Bihar.

Chakwar Bhumihars were considered to be a powerful clan and fine military race. They fought on behalf of the Bettiah Raj against the East India company. Chakwar Bhumihars also helped Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi of Husseypur estate, when he declared war against the British. Chakwars also extended military help to the sanyasis of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh when they fought the British in Bengal during the famous Sannyasi rebellion. Chakwars launched many military raids in the region between South Bihar and Nepal Terai against the Mughals and the British. The Chakwar bhumihars of Sonbarsa village of Thana Bihpur also fought an armed struggle against the British planter Sir Grant, in which they killed 7 soldiers and wounded many of the Gorkha battalion.

Role in the Sanyasi Rebellion of Bengal

In the Eighteenth Century Pandit Bhavanicharan Pathak, a Bhumihar Brahmin from Jaso village of Buxar was the main hero of the 'Sannyasi Rebellion' against the exploitative British rule in the land of Bengal. A large body of Hindu sanyasis travelled annually from North India to different parts of Bengal to visit shrines. Enroute to the shrines, it was customary for many of these ascetics to be bestowed with religious grants from the headmen and Zamindars or regional landlords. In times of prosperity, the headmen and zamindars generally obliged. However, since the East India Company had received the diwani or right to collect tax, tax demands on zamindars increased and the local landlords and headmen were unable to pay both the ascetics and the English. British viewed these Hindu ascetics with suspicion and treated them like bandits. In 1771, 150 saints were put to death by the British, for no apparent reason.

This led to widespread revolt by Sanyasis of Bengal and Bihar. Many disgruntled Bhumihar zamindars, foremost being Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi of Husseypur and Raja Jugal Kishore of Bettiah, lent active support with men and money to the Sanyassi rebellion which smouldered for several decades. Sannyasi Rebellion was India's first major anti-British independence struggle in India. Perhaps, the best reminder of the Sanyasi rebellion is found in the Bengali novels, Anandamath(1882) and Devi Chaudhurani(1884), written by India's first modern novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The song, Vande Mataram, which was written in 1876, was used in the book. Vande Mataram was later declared as India's National song

Battle of Shivala (Benares), 1781

Maharaja Sri Chait Singh Sahib Bahadur, popularly known as Chait Singh, was the Bhumihar brahmin ruler of the Kingdom of Benares in Northern India. He succeeded his father, Maharaj Balwant Singh, in the year 1770. Benares Raj was under the suzerainty of the Nawabs of Oudh, though their power was waning under the British onslaught. Though the Nawab still wished to hold total suzerainty over the zamindari, the British authorities encouraged him to recognise Chait Singh as zamindar in 1773. Two years later, the Nawab, by now fed up with British interference, transferred the Benares domain to the Company under the direct control of the Governor-General of India, Warren Hastings. Under the new British terms, Chait Singh was forced to contribute cavalry and maintenance grants for the company's sepoy battalions. Chait Singh, fed up with the incessant harassment and haggling by Hastings, refused to contribute and began to secretly correspond with enemies of the Company in the hope of forcibly breaking the increasing control of Company in India. Chait Singh was issued an ultimatum by the British to either pay up or face the consequences.



RAJA CHAIT SINGH 1770-1781



BATTLE OF SHIVALA: WHEN CHAIT SINGH DEFEATED WARREN HASTINGS

On 15th August 1781, Warren Hastings arrived in Kashi and stayed at the famous “Madho Das ka Bagicha”. He was welcomed by several enemies of Chait Singh, most notably Chet Ram, Gopal Das and the Kubda (hunchback) Moulvi. Immediately upon his arrival, Hastings ordered the British Resident Mr Markhom to arrest Chait Singh and secure Company’s dues. Hastings felt that it was an opportune time to press Chait Singh as he believed that Chait Singh could not prepare for a battle at such short notice.

On 17th August 1781, Raja Chait Singh had arrived at his palace in Shivala, located on what is now called Chait Singh ghat on the banks of Ganges, from his Ramnagar palace, on the other side of Ganges, for performing some puja. British Resident Mukhorn sent several locals including Chet Ram to order him to pay up. Conceited by the swagger of the British support, Chet Ram began insulting Raja Chait Singh. When it became unbearable the Bhumihar sardars, loyal to Chait Singh, killed the delegation to avenge the insult. Stunned by the news of Shivala, Hastings sent two companies of British army under Lt Scott and Lt Symes to arrest the king. Lt Scott tried to forcibly enter the palace of Shivala. He was stopped by Chait Singh’s troops and soon the verbal duel escalated into full scale battle. Even though Chait Singh had come to Shivala with only a handful of troops, ably supported by locals, he fought a pitched battle. Lt Scott and Lt Symes, along with 200 British Indian soldiers, were killed on the spot. The news of the battle of Shivala spread like wildfire. Angered by the insult of their Raja, locals attacked British Resident’s house and killed many British soldiers in battle. When the news reached Hastings, he had to beat a hasty retreat. Assisted by Pandit Beniram and Bishwambar Das, it is said that Hastings escaped in a paalki dressed as woman to save his life. There is a famous saying in Kashi about the hurried escape of Hastings:

“Ghode par hauda, haathi par jin

Aise bhaga Warren Hasting”

Meaning: Elephant’s saddle on a horse and horse’s saddle on an elephant (denoting Hastings

disoriented state), Warren Hastings fled Kashi in a whiff.

Raja Chait Singh gathered his small forces, appealing for assistance against Britishers, from local rulers, most of whom refused, except a few. Maharaja Chait Singh's last hope was the Maharaja of Gwalior who had also signed a treaty in which Raja of Benares gave him land, protection and help for making ghats in Benares and in return King of Gwalior had promised to give troops when needed, but he did not help. Instead, Raja of Gwalior lured Chait Singh on pretext of helping him but had him arrested and detained in Gwalior. In various battles with the Company's forces, Chait Singh's troops were eventually defeated, the rebellion crushed with the help of traitors, while several patriot warriors fell in battlefield. The family members of these braves and their properties were confiscated and given to Avsaan Singh in reward for his treachery. But Raja Chait Singh was a popular ruler and soon the revolt restarted. The Company was forced to install the nephew of Maharaja Chait Singh, Raja Sri Mahip Narayan Singh Sahib Bahadur on 14th September 1781 and release his father Babu Durgvijay Singh, who was earlier arrested for assisting Maharaja Chait Singh and fighting against the Company. Chait Singh was granted a jagir for a while until it was later confiscated. Raja Chait Singh died in Gwalior on 29th March 1810, leaving three sons. His chattri is still at Gwalior.

Spread of 1781 Revolt

Ever since the British acquired Bihar after the Battle of Buxar, many of the Zamindars had been causing troubles for the administration by withholding revenue or participating in loot and plunder. The British therefore had to undertake frequent expeditions to bring them back under control. Among the Zamindars causing disturbances prior to the revolt were Jugal Kishore of Bettiah Raj, which was one of the largest Bhumihar estates in Bihar. After the Battle of Buxar, JWF James noted that the zamindars had become "restless".

The rebellion of Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras in August, 1781, affected the peace and tranquillity of Bihar. Following Chait Singh's rebellion in 1781 in Varanasi, many of the Zamindars in Bihar used this as an opportunity to regain their autonomy". At that time East India company's government in India, were at war with the French, the Dutch, the Marathas and Haider Ali. The pre-occupation of the English in these wars probably encouraged the Zamindars of Bihar to espouse the cause of Chait Singh. British government in Bihar was seized in panic in August, 1781, when a number of Zamindars rose in revolt at the clarion call of Chait Singh, the Raja of Banares. The Banares trouble spread into a regular conflagration in Bihar, or to be more precise in the districts between Allahabad and Monghyr (Munger).

Raja Fateh Bahdur Shahi's (Huseypur Estate) Revolt against the British

Fateh Bahadur Shahi was Maharaja of Huseypur Raj which was situated in today's Gopalganj district of Bihar. He belonged to the Baghochia clan of Bhumihar Brahmins, which controlled the Huseypur Estate, from which descended the Tamkuhi Raj of the Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh and the Hathwa Raj of Gopalganj district. Fateh Bahadur Shahi, along with the rulers of Dileepnagar Estate, waged a 20-year guerrilla war against the British East India Company from 1767 onwards. He was deposed by the British and compelled to flee into the forests with his followers. But Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi continued waging guerrilla ambushes against the British. The rulers of Dileepnagar Estate helped Fateh Bahadur Sahi from backstage in guerrilla war against the British. In 1772, he marched into Huseypur and killed Govind Ram, who was

appointed as the revenue farmer for the East India Company. In spite of this the company continued to try and bring Fateh Shahi into their fold as he held big influence among the Bhumihar Zamindars of the region. However he refused all such offers. By 1775, the British had been experiencing many problems in the region and taking advantage of this, Fateh Shahi once again marched into Huseypur and killed his cousin, Basant Shahi who had been placed as the puppet ruler of Huseypur by the British. His repeated incursions had crippled revenue collection in the area and exposed the weakness of British control in the locality. In 1777, after many successes, he marched on to the Company's Bairakh (military station), gained control of it and placed his own men in charge. In response, the British destroyed his fort and **they noted that Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi had caused more problems for the British than even the Peshwas in Maharashtra.** The saga of Fateh Bahadur Shahi's struggle and fight against East India Company is described in the poem "Meer Jamal Vadh".



RAJA FATEH BAHADUR SHAHI OF HUSSEYPUR

Raja Jugal Kishor's (Bettiah Raj) Revolt against the British

Raja Jugal Kishor ascended the throne of Bettiah Raj after the death of his maternal grandfather, Raja Dhruv Singh, in 1762. Raja Jugal Kishor started rebellion against the British East India company in 1766 by refusing to pay the revenues to them. He later joined ranks with Raja Chait Singh of Benares, in his revolt against the British in 1781. The revolt was put down by East India company, led by Colonel Barker. Colonel Barker attacked Bettiah. Raja Jugal Kishor lost after putting up a valiant fight and had to escape. British consolidated their hold over the entire Bettiah estate after this war. Raja Jugal Kishor died in 1784.

Conclusion

Chait Singh's Benares revolt, Fateh Bahadur Shahi's rebellion, Raja Jugal Kishor's battle against the East India Company and the Guerrilla warfare of the Chakwars were among the first of many rebellions against the Britishers in India. Though it was crushed, but these local revolts proved to be an important watershed in British Empire history in India. It had sown the seeds that led to the 1857 mutiny, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the East India Company, and forced the British to reorganize the army, the financial system, and the administration in India, through

passage of the Government of India Act 1858. India was thereafter administered directly by the British government in the new British Raj. On 1st November 1858, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation to Indians, which while lacking the authority of a constitutional provision, promised rights similar to those of other British subjects. These revolts of 1781 became the precursor to the 1857 rebellion against the British, often regarded as the first organised armed revolt against the British rule.

BHUMIHARS IN THE BRITISH ARMY



British were quick to identify the warrior clans in India and recruited them in numbers in the British Indian army across India. They had discovered the warrior traditions of Bhumihars in various struggles against the Bhumihar Rajas and Zamindars of East India. They decided to raise regiments in the British Indian army to recruit the braves from the Bhumihar and other brahmin communities of North India.

The 1st Brahmans

The 1st Brahmans was an infantry regiment of the British Indian Army. It was raised at Oudh by Captain T Naylor in 1776 for service in the army of Nawab Wazir of Oudh, and was known as the Nawab Wazir's Regiment. It recruited mainly from the Bhumihar brahmins of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and Kanyakubj Brahmins of Awadh. It was transferred to the East India Company in 1777. In 1922, it was designated as the 4th Battalion 1st Punjab Regiment. The regiment was disbanded in 1931. The 1st Brahmans were nicknamed as "Neelwar ki Paltan".

While in the service of the East India Company the regiment was awarded battle honours for service in the Second Maratha War 1803-05, the Anglo-Nepalese War 1814-16, the Second Anglo-Burmese War 1824-26, the Bharatpore Campaign 1826, first Afghan war (1839), third Anglo Burmese war (1885-87)

The 3rd Brahmans

The 3rd Brahmans was an infantry regiment of the British Indian Army. They could trace their origins to 1798, when they were the 1st Battalion, 16th Bengal Native Infantry. Over the years they were known by a number of different names. The 32nd Bengal Native Infantry 1824–1861, the 3rd Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry 1861–1885, the 3rd Regiment of Bengal Infantry 1885–1901 and finally, after the Kitchener reforms of the Indian Army when the names of the presidencies were dropped, they came to be called the 3rd Brahmans. Before being disbanded in 1922, they had taken part in the Second Anglo-Afghan War and World War I.

In 1914 the regimental centre of the 1st Brahmans was located at Allahabad and it was linked with the 3rd Brahmans. The regiment recruited mostly from agricultural Brahmins (Bhumihar-Babhans), Kanyakubj, Saryuparin and Gaur Brahmins of United Provinces, Garhwali Brahmins and Punjabi Brahmins (Mohyals). Full dress uniform of the sepoy included a high khaki turban with red fringe, a scarlet kurta (long coat) with white facings, white waist-sash, dark blue trousers and white leggings. The regiment spent part of World War I in India before being posted to Aden in Africa, then under threat from Ottoman forces. A second battalion raised in 1917 saw war

action in the Persian Gulf.

After the war, a major reorganization was undertaken in the Indian Army and the various single-battalion infantry regiments were grouped together to form larger regiments of four to six battalions each. The 1st Brahmans became the 4th Battalion of the 1st Punjab Regiment in 1922. It was disbanded in 1931 due to retrenchment in the Indian Army. Prior to 1857, the majority of Sepoys in Bengal Presidency (formerly 1st Brahmans) were Kanyakubja Brahmans from Awadh and Bhumihar brahmans from Eastern UP and Bihar and hardly any from Bengal. In fact, these Brahmin Sepoys won battles for East India Company prior to 1857 which paved way for the Raj. Britishers respected Brahmin soldiers but were certainly wary of them because of purabiya Bhumihar brahmans' role in revolt of 1857. So, they started recruiting soldiers mainly from other agrarian castes like Jats and Ahirs. They also came up with myth of martial races to justify their decision. I am calling it a myth because if Brahmans were not warriors how come out of 27 army chiefs of independent India, 10 were Brahmans from various parts of India. Surprisingly, at the start of every world war, Brahmans and Bhumihars in Awadh became martial again and were recruited in large numbers to serve the British war machine. One of the biggest reasons behind ultimate disbanding of Brahman regiments was fear in the minds of the British about a possible revolt by the brave but erudite Brahmans. This suspicion was fuelled in large measure by great martyr Mangal Pandey's (Bhumihar Brahmin from Ghazipur) role in igniting the 1857 rebellion.

1917 Ryabati Gungaden Ande Bala Train Sarajal Ande Longol Ande Armetkhuenden Khodoy Bassar Amirraim Nest



1917 Ryabati Gungaden Ande Bala Train Sarajal Ande Longol Ande Armetkhuenden Khodoy Bassar Amirraim Nest



OFFICERS & TROOPS OF 1ST BRAHMANS, 1904 DAPPER BRAHMANS



1ST BRAHMANS EMBLEM 3RD BRAHMANS, BENGAL INFANTRY

MANGAL PANDEY: CATALYST OF 1857 REVOLT



Most Bhumihar Kings and Zamindars generally did not actively participate in the revolt of 1857 against the British. However, the British East India Company army had substantial number of Bhumihar soldiers owing to the martial traits of the community. Of the 67,000 Hindus in the Bengal Army in 1842, 28,000 were identified as Rajputs and 25,000 as Brahmins, a category that included substantial number Bhumihar brahmins. The role of Mangal Pandey and other Bhumihar soldiers, serving in the British East India Company's army of Bengal, in providing the initial spark stands out. It ignited a wave of revolts across the East & North India. In 1772, when Warren Hastings was appointed India's first Governor-General, one of his first undertakings was the rapid expansion of the Company's army. Since the sepoys from Bengal, many of whom had fought against the Company in the Battles of Plassey and Buxar were now suspect in British eyes, Hastings recruited farther west from the high-caste rural Rajputs and Bhumihars of Awadh and Bihar, a practice that continued for the next 75 years. These soldiers were known as Purbiyas. In order to forestall any social friction, the Company also took action to adapt its military practices to the requirements of their religious rituals. Consequently, these soldiers dined in separate facilities. Overseas service, considered polluting to their caste, was not required of them, and the army soon came officially to recognise Hindu festivals. This encouragement of high caste ritual status, however, left the government vulnerable to protests, even mutiny, whenever the sepoys detected infringement of their religious prerogatives.

The final spark was provided by the ammunition for the new Enfield Pattern 1853 rifle musket. These rifles had a tighter fit than the earlier muskets, and used paper cartridges that came pre-greased. To load the rifle, sepoys had to bite the cartridge open to release the powder. The grease used on these cartridges was rumoured to include tallow derived from beef, which would be offensive to Hindus, and lard derived from pork, which would be offensive to Muslims. On 26th February 1857 the 19th Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) regiment became concerned that new cartridges they had been issued were wrapped in paper greased with cow and pig fat, which had to be opened by mouth thus affecting their religious sensibilities. Their Colonel confronted them, supported by artillery and cavalry, on the parade ground, but after some negotiation withdrew the artillery, and cancelled the next morning's parade.

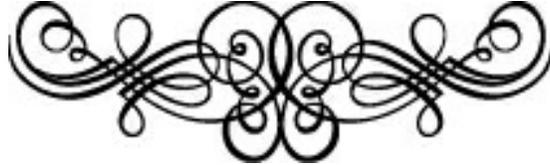
On 29th March 1857 at the Barrackpore parade ground, near Calcutta, 29-year-old Mangal Pandey, a Bhumihar brahmin from Ghazipur, serving in the British Bengal army, angered by the recent actions of the East India Company, declared that he would rebel against his commanders. Informed about Pandey's behaviour Sergeant-Major James Hewson went to investigate, only to have Pandey shoot at him. Hewson raised the alarm. When his adjutant Lt. Henry Baugh came out to investigate the unrest, Pandey opened fire but hit Baugh's horse instead.

General John Hearsey came out to the parade ground to investigate and claimed later that Mangal Pandey was in some kind of “religious frenzy”. He ordered the Indian commander of the quarter guard to arrest Mangal Pandey, but the Jamadar refused. The quarter guard and other sepoy present, with the single exception of one soldier Sheikh Paltu, drew back from restraining or arresting Mangal Pandey. With great difficulty, Mangal Pandey was restrained from continuing his attack. After failing to incite his comrades into an open and active rebellion, Mangal Pandey tried to take his own life, by placing his musket to his chest and pulling the trigger with his toe. He managed only to wound himself.

Mangal Pandey was court-martialled on 6th April and hanged two days later. The regiment was disbanded and stripped of its uniforms because it was felt that it harboured ill-feelings towards its superiors, particularly after this incident. Shaikh Paltu was promoted to the rank of havildar in the Bengal Army, but was murdered shortly before the 34th BNI dispersed. The community had to pay a price for their role in the mutiny as well. The Bhumihar brahmin presence in the Bengal Army was reduced in the late 19th century because of their perceived primary role as mutineers in the Mutiny of 1857, led by Mangal Pandey.

Sepoys in other regiments throughout the East and North India thought these punishments were too harsh. The demonstration of disgrace during the formal disbanding helped foment the rebellion in view of some historians. Disgruntled ex-sepoys, mainly Bhumihars and Rajputs, returned home to Awadh with a seething desire for revenge. The rebellion soon spread through the Agra, Allahabad and Ambala cantonments, culminating finally in Meerut cantonment and Delhi. Rest as they say, is history. The role of the fearless Bhumihar brahmin sepoy Mangal Pandey in sparking the 1857 rebellion, often acknowledged as the first organised revolt against the British in India, is undeniable and something to be revered and will be remembered till posterity.

SAHJANAND SARASWATI: THE FATHER FIGURE



Swami Sahjanand Saraswati did pioneer work in tracing the origins of Bhumihar brahmins and fought relentlessly so that the largely agrarian community, got its due under the ruling dispensation and in the social hierarchy of the region. Most Bhumihar brahmins looked upto Swamiji, and continue to do so till date, as a sort of father figure of the community.

Early Life

Swami Sahjanand Saraswati was born in Deva Village near Dullahpur, Ghazipur district in 1889 in a family of Jujhautiya Brahmins, a subsect of Bhumihar brahmins. He was the last of six sons and was named Naurang Rai before accepting monkhood. He laid the foundation of peasant movements in pre-independence India. His father, Beni Rai, was a cultivator and hence, stood away from priestly functions. His mother died when he was kid. He was raised by his aunt. The family survived on a small zamindari income that was carried from his grandfather's time. However, with time and extension of the family, the land was divided and the family had to take up cultivation to earn its living. However, this did not stop the family from sending Sahajanand to school. After receiving formal education in a primary school, he went to German Mission High School where he obtained his education in English medium. Since childhood, he was attracted towards religious practices. He objected to people believing in fake religious rituals and hence, opted for studying religious texts in order to find real spiritual solace by renouncing the world. He became a sanyasi and was initiated into holy order and given his "daand" (ceremonial stick) by his spiritual guru, Swami Achyutanand. He took the name of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. After adopting sanyas, he abandoned his formal education. But he spent the first seven years of monkhood studying religion, politics, and social affairs. In that regard, he was a self-trained scholar. Since he was a Daandi sanyasi hence he carried a long bamboo stick with him at all times.

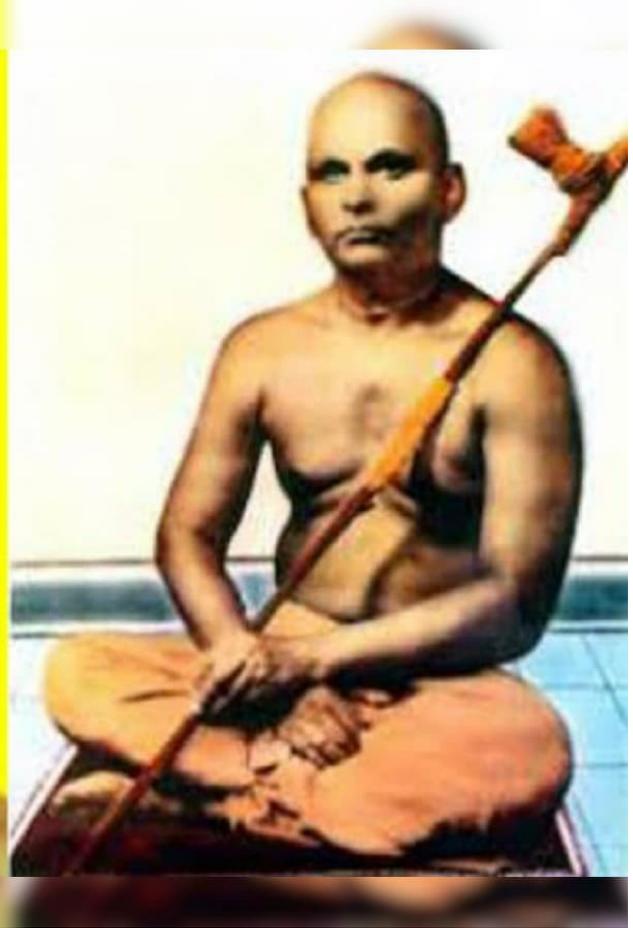
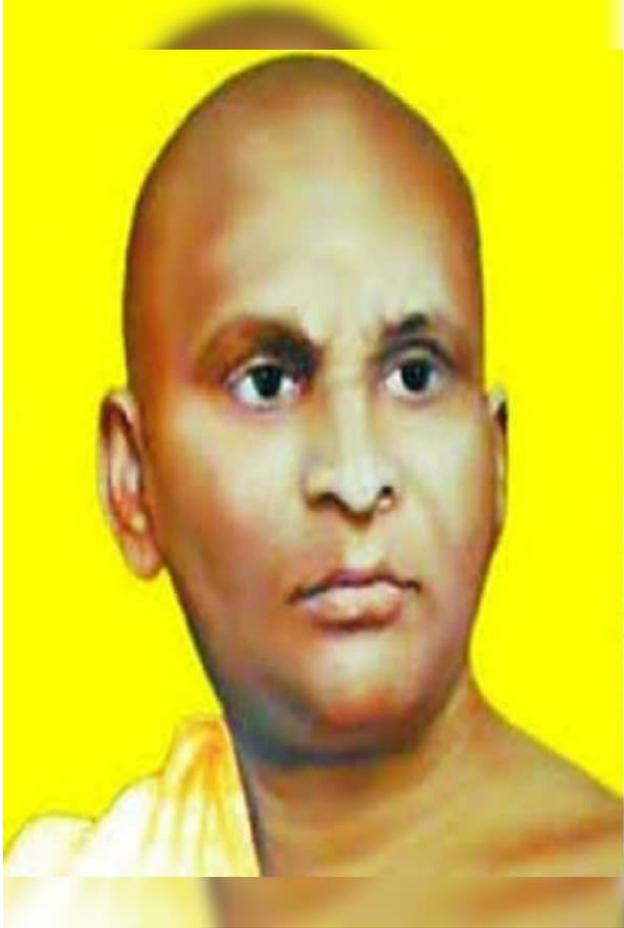
Political Career

As with most young freedom fighters of those days, Swami ji was attracted towards Congress and the incipient Peasant Movement. Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, he started serving in the Congress as a true Gandhian. By 1920, Swami Sahajanand plunged himself into the nationalist movement under Gandhi. But he was disgusted with the hypocrisy and false faces of Gandhians,

within his first 15 years with the party. The final break up with Gandhi came in 1934 when Bihar was hit by a massive earthquake. Although relief operations were carried out, Swami Sahajanand found that people were actually suffering due to the cruelty of the landlords rather than the earthquake. He complained to Gandhiji, whose reply was evasive, indicating to Swamiji to stay away from the issue as Gandhiji believed that the landlords will themselves handle the difficulties of the peasants. Thus, Swami ji ended his 14-year association with Congress freedom movement under Gandhiji, because Swamiji believed that Congress leadership professed pseudo-spiritualism, non-violence, and the general religious hocus-pocus. After the break up, he kept away from party politics and shifted his interest towards mobilizing the peasants.

Kisan Sabha

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati formed a smaller Kisan Sabha in Patna district with a formal organizational structure, though it was institutionalized only after a few years. Later in 1929, he established the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS). With this, he emerged as the foremost farmer leader in India. The membership of this Sabha was estimated to be 80,000 in 1935, with the numbers swelling to 2,50,000 by 1938, thereby making it the largest provincial body in India. The All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) was formed with some Congress socialists at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress on April 11, 1936. Swamiji was elected as its first President. The Sabha comprised of many eminent leaders, like N.G. Ranga, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Pandit Karyanand Sharma, Pandit Yamuna Karjee, Pandit Yadunandan (Jadunandan) Sharma, Rahul Sankrityayan, P. Sundarayya, Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, and Bankim Mukerji, to name just a few. It demanded the abolition of zamindari system and cancellation of rural debts. Thereafter, in October 1937, it adopted the red flag as its banner.



DANDI SWAMI SAHJANAND SARASWATI



POSTAGE STAMP OF SWAMI JI ISSUED BY GOI

With his high standards of speech and action, he was successful in creating a reputation for himself amongst the peasants. He communicated with them and assured them about improving their conditions. In a short duration, he earned love and respect of the peasants, but was equally

respected and feared by landlords, Congressmen, and British officials. Swamiji organised the Bakasht Movement in Bihar in 1937–1938. “Bakasht” means self-cultivated. The movement was against the eviction of tenants from Bakasht lands by zamindars and led to the passing of the Bihar Tenancy Act and the Bakasht Land Tax Act. His untiring efforts ultimately led to Bihar becoming among the among first few states of independent India, under the chief ministership of Shri Babu, to abolish zamindari system.

Swamiji’s Influence on Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas babu was hugely inspired by Swami Sahjanand Saraswati and never shied away from expressing his admiration for Swami ji. Subhash Chandra Bose said: *“Swami Sahajanand Saraswati is, in the land of ours, a name to contend with. The undisputed leader of the peasant movement in India, he is today the idol of the masses and the hero of millions”*. After quitting Congress, Subhash Babu formed the Forward bloc. He anointed Swamiji as the chairman of the reception committee of the “All India Anti Compromise Conference” held at Ramgarh, against the reconciliatory approach of Congress towards the oppressive British Raj. Enthused by Swamiji and his supporter’s participation in huge numbers in the conference, Bose said thus about Swami ji:

“It was indeed a rare fortune to get him as the chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh. For the Forward Block, it was a privilege and an honour to get him as one of the foremost leaders of the Left movement and as a friend, philosopher, and guide of the Forward Block itself. Following Swamiji’s lead, a large number of front-rank leaders of the peasant movement have been intimately associated with the Forward Block”.

On hearing of Swamiji’s arrest during the Quit India Movement, Subhash Chandra Bose and All India Forward Bloc decided to observe 28th April as All-India Swami Sahajanand Day in protest of his incarceration by the British.

Swamiji’s Research on Origins and Spread of Bhumihars in East India

The wily British, using their age-old trick of “divide and rule”, sowed the seeds of otherness among the Brahmin fold by slyly relegating the Bhumihars to the third spot in social hierarchy, behind traditional Brahmins and Rajputs in the provisional caste census of Bihar and UP in 1865. They treated Bhumihars as a separate entity from traditional brahmins of the region, thus sowing seeds of discord in a society, otherwise co-existing harmoniously for ages. Thus began the struggle of Bhumihar community to reclaim their Brahmin status, led by various Rajas under Maharaj of Benares and other social and political stalwarts, discussed in details separately. In the social sphere, Swami Sahjanand Saraswati spearheaded this cause of Bhumihars to reclaim their superior status. To counter the resistance of brahmins, he did extensive research on the origins of Bhumihars to assert the brahmin status of Bhumihars. Swamiji was a prolific writer about his community. Some of his works about Bhumihar origins, spread, social structure and position within the larger Brahmin fold are:

- Bhumihar Brahmin Parichay (Introduction to Bhumihar Brahmins), in Hindi.
- Brahmarshi Vansha Vistar in Sanskrit, Hindi and English.
- Brahman Kaun?

- Brahman Samaj ki Sthiti (Situation of the Brahmin Society) in Hindi.

Swami ji: A Prolific Author

Swamiji was a scholar and a prolific author. Apart from his well-researched books on Bhumihar brahmins, he authored several books and essays on myriad topics ranging from autobiographical to ideological to those related to peasant issues. As most of it was written in Bhojpuri, Hindi and Sanskrit, Swamiji's contributions and message did not get national or worldwide attention. A list of his select books and articles is presented below-

Autobiographical works

- Mera Jeewan Sangharsha (My Life Struggle), in Hindi.
- Kisan Sabha ke Sansmaran (Recollections of the Kisan Sabha), in Hindi.
- Maharudra ka Mahatandav, in Hindi.
- Jang aur Rashtriya Azadi
- Ab Kya ho?
- Gaya jile mein sava maas
- Samyukta Kisan Sabha, Samyukta Samajvadi Sabha ke Dastavez.
- Kisanon ke Dave
- Dhakaich ka bhashan

Ideological works

- Kranti aur Samyukta Morcha
- Gita Hridaya (Heart of the Gita)
- Kisanon ke Dave
- Maharudra ka Mahatandav
- Kalyan mein chapein lekh

Works related to peasantry and Zamindars

- Kisan kaise ladten hain?
- Kisan kya karen?
- Zamindaron ka khatma kaise ho?
- Kisan ke dost aur dushman
- Bihar prantiya kisansabha ka ghoshna patra
- Kisanon ki phasane ki taiyariyan
- On the other side
- Rent reduction in Bihar, How it Works?
- Zamindari kyon utha di jaye?
- Khet Mazdoor (Agricultural Labourer), in Hindi, written in Hazaribagh Central Jail.

- Jharkhand ke kisan
- Bhumi vyavastha kaisi ho?
- Kisan andolan kyun aur kya?
- Gaya ke Kisanon ki Karun Kahani
- Ab kya ho?
- Congress tab aur ab
- Congress ne kisanon ke liye kya kiya?
- Maharudra ka Mahatandav
- Swamiji ki Diary
- Kisan sabha ke dastavez
- Swamiji ke patrachar
- Lok sangraha mein chapein lekh
- Hunkar mein chapein lekh
- Vishal Bharat mein chapein lekh
- Bagi mein chapein lekh
- Bhumihar Brahmin mein chapein lekh
- Swamiji ki Bhashan Mala
- Krishak mein chapein lekh
- Yogi mein chapein lekh
- Kisan sevak
- Anya lekh
- Address of the chairman, Reception Committee, The All India Anti-Compromise Conference, First Session, Kisan Nagar, Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, 19 & 20 March 1940, Ramgarh, 1940.
- Presidential Address, 8th Annual Session of the Kisan Sabha, Bezwada, 1944.

Walter Hauser, professor of South Asian history at Virginia University, and Kailash Chandra Jha, a political adviser at the American embassy, translated Swamiji's work into English. Ramchandra Pradha, a Gandhian, translated his autobiography to English. Some of Swamiji's major works translated to English were:

- Swami Sahajanand and the Peasants of Jharkhand: A View from 1941 translated and edited by Walter Hauser along with the unedited Hindi original (Manohar Publishers, paperback, 2005).
- Sahajanand on Agricultural Labour and the Rural Poor translated and edited by Walter Hauser Manohar Publishers, paperback, 2005.
- Religion, Politics, and the Peasants: A Memoir of India's Freedom Movement translated and edited by Walter Hauser Manohar Publishers, hardbound, 2003.
- Walter Hauser, along with K.C. Jha, (editor and translator of Swami Sahajanand's

autobiography Mera Jivan Sangharsh – My Life Struggle) Culture, Vernacular Politics and the Peasants: India, 1889-1950, Delhi, Manohar, 2015.

- Ramchandra Pradhan (editor and translator), The Struggle of My Life: Autobiography of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2018.

Swamiji continues to inspire millions who dream of an inclusive society with farmers at its centre. He was the voice of the farmers of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh who protected them against exploitation by British rulers.

BHUMIHARS IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE



Rajkumar Shukla: Man, Who Turned Gandhi into Mahatma

Indigo (Neel) started being grown commercially in Bihar, United Provinces and Bengal Presidency in 1750. Being a cash crop which needed huge amount of water and usually left the soil infertile, local farmers usually opposed its cultivation, instead preferring to grow daily need crops such as rice and pulses. Hence, the East India Company issued policies designed to pressurize farmers to grow indigo, often by making this the condition for providing loans, and through collusion with local kings, nawabs, and landlords. The trade was lucrative and led to the fortunes of several Indian and European merchants and trading companies.

Rajkumar Shukla, a small Bhumihar brahmin farmer from Champaran, in present day Bihar, convinced Gandhiji to visit Champaran in 1917. This visit later led to the Champaran satyagraha. Champaran was Gandhiji's first satyagraha against the British in India, after his return from South Africa. It turned Gandhiji into a Mahatma, a feisty freedom fighter who took on the might of the British for just causes. Gandhiji first met Shukla, a representative of farmers of Champaran, at the 1916 Lucknow Congress session. Shukla requested Gandhiji to come and see for himself the miseries of the indigo ryots (tenant farmers), forced against their will, to plant Indigo on three out of every twenty parts of their land and handover the indigo to the British as rent under the oppressive "tinkathiya" system. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography "*I must confess that I did not then know even the name, much less the geographical position, of Champaran, and I had hardly any notion of indigo plantations.*" In fact, Gandhiji was not too keen about visiting Champaran any time soon. He thought that Shukla, a simple village farmer, would soon forget about it. But Rajkumar Shukla, the simpleton from Champaran, was made of sterner stuff. Shukla had heard about Gandhiji's successful protests in South Africa. **More than even Gandhiji's self-belief, Rajkumar Shukla was confident that only Gandhiji could take on the might of the oppressive British on the issue of exploitative indigo plantation.** Gandhiji soon forgot about the meeting with Shukla at Lucknow. But Shukla was not one to give up easily. He followed Gandhiji to Kanpur and later to Calcutta. Shukla continuously pestered Gandhiji to visit Champaran. Gandhiji admitted in his autobiography that he was pleasantly surprised by the dogged determination and genuine concern for fellow farmers, displayed by Shukla. In fact, that is what made him relook at the Champaran farmer's issue in right earnest and convinced him to visit Champaran to have a first-hand account of the plight of the indigo tenant farmers there. Rest as they say is history. Champaran Indigo Satyagraha turned Gandhiji into Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi arrived in Champaran, on 10th April 1917 with a team of eminent lawyers and intellectuals of the region. Several Bhumihar intellectuals joined the protest. These included Shri Krishna Singh (Shri Babu), Ram Dayalu Singh etc, to name a few. These leaders took full plunge in support of Gandhiji, not caring about the repercussions on their careers and legal practice.

Gandhiji and his team organised protests and strikes against the landlords, who with the guidance of the British government, signed an agreement granting more compensation and control over farming for the poor farmers of the region, and cancellation of revenue hikes and collection until the famine ended. It was during this agitation, that first time Gandhi was called “Bapu” (Father) and “Mahatma” (Great Soul).

Champaran movement concluded with the introduction of ‘Champaran Agrarian Bill’ by W. Maude, Member of Executive Council, Government of Bihar and Orissa, conceding almost all the recommendations Gandhi Mission had drafted it and it became the Champaran Agrarian Law (1918: Bihar and Orissa Act I). This was for the first time that civil disobedience in India made the British adjust their “solipsistic attitude”. While the British Government had crushed the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Satyagraha with its nonviolent communication confused the colonial government into believing that it would be unsuccessful. Rajkumar Shukla maintained a diary on the atrocities of Indigo planters inflicted on the poor peasants. This moving account of atrocities of Indigo planters was depicted in a poignant play “Neel Darpan” by Deen Bandhu Mitra. This play was also later translated in English by eminent poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

The Revolutionaries

Baikunth Shukla: Man, Who Killed Bhagat Singh’s Betrayer

Baikunth Shukla was an Indian nationalist and a revolutionary. He was hanged for murdering Phanindra Nath Ghosh. Ghosh had turned a government approver which led to the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. Baikunth Shukla, a Bhumihar brahmin, was born on 15th May 1907 in Muzzaffarpur. He took active part in Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 and was imprisoned in Patna Camp Jail. He was released along with other Satyagrahis after the Gandhi–Irwin Pact. In the jail, Baikunth was influenced by the spirited revolutionary Bibhutibhusan Das. This brought a basic change in his approach and outlook towards freedom movement. He felt that freedom couldn’t be achieved by bargaining and begging, rather it should be won by uncompromising revolutionary struggle. Later he came in contact with the members of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and became a revolutionary. The activities of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), under the leadership of Chandrasekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh, was spreading. They felt that individual episodes of heroism alone could help accomplish the objective of revolutionary movement. Open mass movement and open political organisation was the need of the hour. The HSRA decided to register its vehement protest against two black bills that were being discussed in the Assembly in Delhi. During the session Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt threw bomb in the Assembly in order to draw attention of the people of whole country and distributed leaflets containing their views. After throwing the bomb they voluntarily courted arrest and tried to utilize the trial court as a platform to propagate their views. Soon Sukhdev, Rajguru and other revolutionary fighters were arrested in Punjab charged in the murder case of Saunders in Lahore. Saunders was the deputy Commissioner of Police who carried the order of Police Commissioner Scott and conducted the brutal lathi-charge on highly revered leader Lala Lajpat Rai, which caused Lalaji’s death. While the trial of Assembly bomb case was going on, Bhagat Singh’s involvement in the murder of Saunders was discovered and his trial started. During the police raids, among other revolutionaries Phanindranath Ghosh was also arrested. He was a member of the Central Committee of the HSRA. During the formation of HSRA he was the representative of Bihar in its

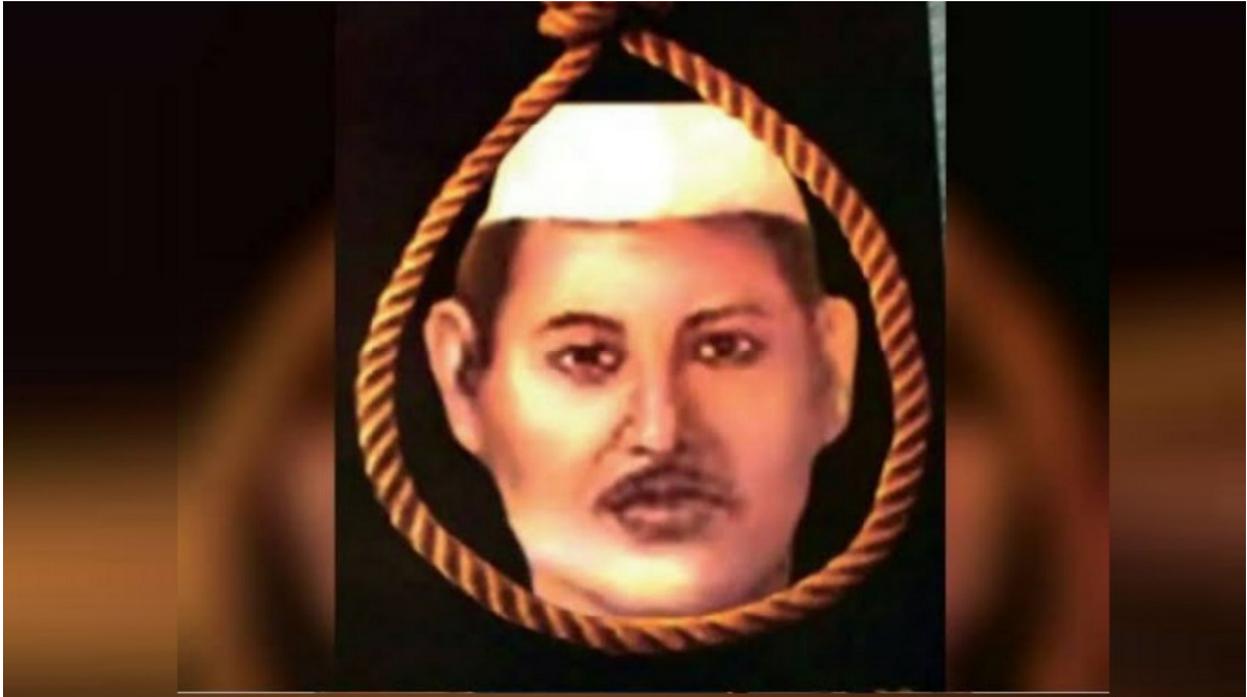
Central Committee. But, while in police custody, out of sheer cowardice and greed, he became main government approver in that case. After the conclusion of 'Lahore Conspiracy Case' in which death sentence was awarded to Bhagat Singh Sukhdev and Rajguru, Phanindranath Ghosh returned to his home town Bettiah in Bihar. Being a government approver, he received a large amount of money as 'reward' for his betrayal of Bhagat Singh and his colleagues. Ghosh started a business in Meena Bazar of Bettiah with the bounty money received.

This was a black spot and matter of shame for other revolutionary activists in Bihar. First attempt to execute Phanindranath Ghosh, the traitor, was made by Bhagwan Das and Sadashib Rao Malpurkar. But Phanindranath eventually escaped this attempt unhurt. Meanwhile, on 27th February, 1931 Chandrasekhar Azad died a martyr's death after a brave encounter with police in Allahabad. Jogendra Shukla was also arrested. In October of 1932, the revolutionaries of Punjab sent a message to the revolutionaries of Bihar with a question that whether they should continue to carry this shameful black spot of treachery on their forehead or obliterate it? The revolutionaries of Bihar called a meeting with the agenda of eliminating the traitor Ghosh, in which Kishori Prasanna Singh, Akhsaybat Roy, Suniti Devi, Baikunth Shukla, among others were present. Suniti Devi volunteered to execute the punishment order. But some other revolutionaries opposed it as she was the only lady in the leadership of the organisation and her absence would have costed it dearly. Then Baikunth Shukla took the opportunity to stake his claim. Others also volunteered for the same. Ultimately to break the deadlock, a lottery was conducted and Baikunth's name evolved through it.

When Phanindranath Ghosh first returned to Bettiah, there used to be police guard to protect him. But after a few months the guard was withdrawn after the administration became assured of his safety. In such a time, on 9th October 1932, Baikunth Shukla and Chandrama Singh executed the death penalty of Bhagat Singh's betrayer, Phanindranath Ghosh. Ghosh at that time was sitting in his shop in Meena Bazaar area of Bettiah. Although, Chandrama Singh was not directly involved in the revolutionary organisation and he was not supposed to go, but he was a very close friend of Baikunth and he voluntarily accompanied him in the dangerous action.

After killing Ghosh, both Baikunth and Chandrama Singh escaped from Bettiah on foot, swam across the Gandak river and moved to Malkhachak of Chhapra District and took shelter at Rambinod Singh's house. This house was a regular shelter of the revolutionaries because Rambinod Singh was a close friend of Bhagat Singh and strong well-wisher of revolutionary activities. The fearlessness and indifference of both of them towards their own life was expressed in many remarkable incidents. During the assassination of Ghosh, they left their bicycles and clothes at a place near Meenabazar, which they could not collect in the hurry to leave the spot. While staying at Rambinod Singh's house, when Baikunth mentioned that they had avenged the betrayal of Phanindranath but due the untoward situation could not collect their cycles and clothes, Rambinod became very anxious for their safety. They instantly said 'What will happen? At best we will be arrested and hanged. We are prepared for that'. But Baikunth said "*we must see to it that only one of us be arrested and face hanging and that should be me. Chandrama should be saved for the sake of his family.*" Chandrama claimed just the reverse. Then Rambinod resolved the dispute by lottery and Baikunth was chosen as the person to face trial if needed. Chandrama left the place and Baikunth stayed there. But fearless Baikunth did not stay in hiding. He openly moved in markets, roads and on some occasions, he even went to visit jail. Renowned freedom

fighter Basawan Singh wrote in his autobiography that while he was interned in Gaya Jail and admitted to jail hospital, one young boy came to visit him who was none other than Baikunth Shukla, absconding for the murder of government approver Phanindranath Ghosh. He admitted that on seeing Baikunth within jail premises he himself was trembling but Baikunth was serene and smiling. Tracing the link of cycle and clothes, Baikunth was arrested on 6th July 1933 near Hazipur Bridge. Meanwhile Chandrama Singh was also arrested in Kanpur following an encounter with police on 5th January 1933.



BAIKUNTH SHUKLA:MAN WHO KILLED BHAGAT SINGH'S BETRAYER



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After being convicted, Baikunth was sent to Gaya Central Jail. There, even in the condemned cell, he was always kept handcuffed and chained. Such was the stricture of authorities regarding him. One intern of the jail, revolutionary Bibhuti Bhusan Das, told in his autobiography that Baikunth was so simple, naïve and easy that even the jail guards were deeply impressed by his character. One Pathan Havildar once asked him if it was possible to get Baikunth released by appealing to the Queen or the authorities in England higher than even the Governor of India! He said he was ready to sacrifice his own life to save the life of Baikunth. On 14th May 1934, the day of hanging, when he finally came out of his cell, he shouted to all *'Brothers I am going. I also shall return, because India is still enslaved, Vande Matram'*. He requested Bibhutibhusan Das, his fellow revolutionary in jail, that he must fight out the curse of child marriage in the backward society of Bihar. The jail warden present at the time of his hanging told that when on the gallows, his face was being covered with black cloth, he requested not to do that. Jail Superintendent Pereira granted that request. When he passed final order, the henchman was hesitating to pull the lever. Baikunth shouted *'Why are you waiting?'* Then the lever was pulled, and the end came for this fearless revolutionary of Bihar. He was only 27 years old when he made the supreme sacrifice for his motherland's independence.

Perhaps the best tribute to Baikunth Shukla came from a constable at Gaya Jail, who while admiring Shukla's fearless character wrote thus in a letter:

“Babuji, I have seen many big heroes and warriors (Surmas), but never I have seen such a lion-hearted fellow. During the last war I took part in the battles of Jordan and Mesopotemia (Iraq), I had seen many bodies to kill and also to die but never had I seen such a valiant hero, never had I thought that anyone could possess such valour... The day in which his sentence for hanging became final, since that day his body started to shine like a colourful rose... it started to bloom like a rose, a red rose. Babuji I used to be perplexed seeing his appearance; I never have seen in my life such a smiling appearance. I had no idea how could a man be so broad-minded and how could he have so much joy in him. I can't think how such a sober boy can be so brave!”

Chandrama Singh

Chandrama Singh, another nationalist from Bhumihar brahmin family, was given life term imprisonment for being an accomplice with Baikunth Shukla in murdering Phanindranath Ghosh for his betrayal of Bhagat Singh, as discussed above.

Yogendra Shukla: Close Associate of Bhagat Singh

Yogendra Shukla (1896-1966), a Bhumihar brahmin, was among the greatest nationalists the country has produced. He served prison terms in the Cellular Jail, Andamans (Kaalapani). He was one of the founding members of HSRA (Hindustan Socialist Republican Army). He and his nephew Baikunth Shukla, were torch bearers of the revolutionary spirit of freedom struggle in Bihar. Young Yogendra made his greatest contribution to the cause of Indian freedom between 1930 and 1942. As one of the leaders of the revolutionary movement in Bihar and U.P., he became a legendary figure among the revolutionaries for his many exploits. He was a close associate of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. He had served prison terms for a total of more than sixteen and a half years for his revolutionary activities. During imprisonment in different jails of India, he was subjected to extreme torture, which could not corrode his steely resolve to continue fighting for his motherland.

Basawan Singh

Basawan Singh (23 March 1909–7 April 1989) was a freedom fighter and a revolutionary. He spent more than 18 years in prisons in British India as a consequence of his support for independence. Along with Yogendra Shukla, he was a founder member of the Congress Socialist Party in Bihar. Among his revolutionary colleagues and friends, he was called “Lambad” because he was very tall. Basawan Singh was born in a poor Bhumihar brahmin farming family in Jamalpur (Subhai), Hajipur.

During last two years of school he came in close contact with revolutionaries, with Yogendra Shukla of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), as his mentor. Soon after joining the HSRA in 1925, Singh was rusticated from G. B. B. College, thus ending his formal education. He was subsequently involved with Bihar Vidyapeeth at Sadakat Ashram in Patna, where he undertook intensive military training with a small group of youths.

Singh absconded in 1929 after the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He was co-accused in the Bhusawal, Kakori, Tirhut and Deluaha conspiracy cases. He carried on the movement along with Chandrashekhar Azad and Keshab Chakravarty. He was sentenced to seven years in prison but escaped from Bankipore Central jail in June 1930 after three days. He was re-arrested and sent to Bhagalpur Central Jail.

While at Bhagalpur, Singh undertook a fast unto death as a protest against what he thought were the prevailing inhuman conditions in jail. On the 12th day of the fast he was moved to Gaya Central Jail and kept in solitary confinement. Soon he was shifted to the jail's hospital. All efforts of force feeding him failed. People waited daily at the jail gate to receive Singh's body should he die. All political prisoners in the jail were also on fast for the last few days in solidarity with him. On the 58th day he broke his fast after being informed by Gandhiji that his demands had been met. He was active in the trade union movement from 1936 until his death in 1989.

Sheelbhadra Yajee

Sheel Bhadra Yajee (1906-1996), the fiery freedom fighter from Bihar was associated with both the non-violent and the violent form of freedom struggle. He was born in a Bhumihaar brahmin family at Bakhtiyarpur, Patna. As a mark of fond respect, Bhumihaar brahmins of this area are referred to as Yajee brahmins till today. Yajee's participation in the freedom movement began in 1928, when as a student he attended the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress. He joined the Congress Socialist Party four years later and became involved in the Kisan movement. Later, he came in close touch with Subhas Chandra Bose, as well as Mahatma Gandhi. In 1939 he joined Subhas Chandra Bose to found the All-India Forward Bloc. He was actively associated with the INA movement. Yajee raised his voice against caste prejudices and other social evils. He was a firm believer in the active participation of the peasants, workers and the middle classes in the struggle for the transformation of society. He authored several books like 'A Glimpse of the Indian Labour Movement', 'Forward Bloc and Its Stand', 'Is Socialism a Necessity to India', and 'True Face of Monopolistic American Democracy'.

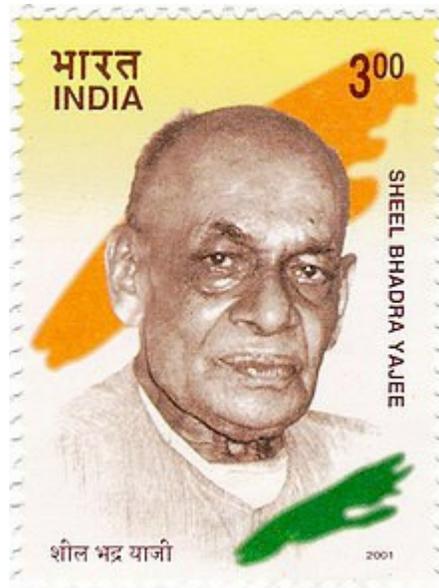
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POSTAGE STAMPS OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS BASAWON SINGH & SHEEL BHADRA YAJEE

Gandhian Freedom Fighters

Shri Krishna Singh (Shri Babu)

Shri Krishna Singh (21 October 1887–31 January 1961), also popularly known as Shri Babu, was the first chief minister of Indian state of Bihar, a post he served from 1946 till his death in 1961. Except for the period of World War II, Shri Babu was the chief minister of Bihar from the time of the first Congress Ministry in 1937. Shri Babu is regarded among the 'Architects of Modern Bihar'. Shri Babu was born on 21st October 1887, in Bhumihar brahmin family in the village of Maur, Barbigha in the Munger of present day Bihar (now part of Sheikhpura district). In 1906 he joined Patna College, which was then an affiliate of the University of Calcutta. He obtained a master's degree from the University of Calcutta and then doctorate of law from Patna University and started practicing in Munger from 1915. His role in the independence struggle and subsequently in shaping post-independence Bihar as well as in ushering in huge social reforms is par excellence. This section deals specifically with the first two. Shri Babu, the social reformer, is touched upon in a following section.

Shri Babu first met Mahatma Gandhi in 1916 at Central Hindu College, Benares. He gave up practising law in 1921 to participate full time in Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. He was arrested for the first time in 1922 when Congress Seva Dal was declared illegal. For this act of defiance, he was known as Bihar Kesari by the people of Bihar. He was released from jail in 1923 and on the day of Tulsi Jayanti performed in the play Bharat Darshan at Central School, Kharagpur. In the same year he became member of the All India Congress Committee. In 1927, he became member of the Legislative Council and in 1929 became General Secretary of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC). In 1930, he played an important role in the Namak Satyagrah (salt satyagraha) at Garhpura. He suffered severe scalding injuries to his hands and chest while being arrested. He was imprisoned for six months and was again arrested and imprisoned for two years during the civil disobedience movement. He was released after the

Gandhi–Irwin Pact and again started with his nationalist work and work with the Kisan Sabha. On 9th January 1932 he was sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000. He was released from Hazaribagh Jail in October 1933. He was involved in relief and rehabilitation after the 1934 Nepal–Bihar earthquake. He was the President of Munger Zila Parishad from 1934 to 1937. In 1935, he became member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly.

Shri Babu was also the President of the BPC in 1936, with A.N. Sinha as his deputy. In fact, Shri Babu and A.N. Sinha were the life and soul of the Provincial Working Committee and of the Congress organisation in the state for over thirty years. This long period of service at the helm of the state is a proof not only of the great popularity and confidence which he enjoyed in the party but it also symbolises his great qualities as a co-ordinator between party and government. On 20th July 1937, he became the Premier of Bihar province when Congress came to power. Under the Government of India Act of 1935, Shri Babu formed his Cabinet at Patna on the same day. Later Shri Babu and A.N. Sinha disagreed with the governor on the issue of the release of political prisoners and resigned. The Governor had to accede to their demands for release of prisoners from Cellular Jail (Kalapani) and Bihar Tenancy Act was reformed in favour of peasants. They then resumed office. But they again resigned in 1939, as did all Congress chief ministers, over the question of involving India in the Second World War without the consent of the Indian people.

Shri Babu was always interested in self-study and his ideas and speeches were noted for their wisdom. He was a staunch opponent of castes and defended the oppressed. Impressed by his courage, in 1940 Gandhi described him as “the first Satyagrahi” of Bihar. He was jailed for nine months (22 November 1940–26 August 1941). When the Quit India movement started in 1942, he was arrested on 10th August. He was released in 1944 from Hazaribagh jail after he became seriously ill.

Shri Babu became the member of Constituent Assembly of India which framed the Constitution of India. He served Bihar continuously from 1946 until his death on 31st January 1961 at the age of 73. In 1978, the Ministry of Culture established a science museum called Srikrishna Science Centre. The biggest conference hall in Patna, Shri Krishna Memorial Hall is also named after him.

Gauri Shankar Rai

Gauri Shankar Rai (10th June 1924–2nd May 1991) was a member of the 6th Lok Sabha during 1977-79, representing Ghazipur constituency of Uttar Pradesh. Earlier he had been member of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly (1957–62) and Legislative Council (1967–76). He served as the Leader of Opposition in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council.

He was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family of Karnai village in district Ballia, UP, on 10th June 1924. Rai had his primary and junior school education in his native village Karnai and neighbouring villages Apayal and Sukhpura. He was admitted in L.D. Meston School in Ballia. He was arrested on 14th August 1942, for participating in “QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT” of Mahatma Gandhi, as a student of class 9th class. He was president of district youth congress in 1945 and organised many agitations against British govt and local administration, along with his associates such as Chandra Shekhar (who later became PM of India), Kashi Nath Mishra and Vasudeo Rai. He passed his intermediate and B. A. From Satish Chandra College in Ballia (Agra

University) and B.Ed. from Benares Hindu University. During his student life, he organised an agitation along with his junior friends Chandra Shekhar and Kashi Nath Mishra, against Management of Satish Chandra College for their illegal action against its learned Principal Dr Sita Ram Chaturvedi and succeeded in compelling management to take back their illegal order and reinstate Dr Chaturvedi. Just after independence in 1947, he led an agitation, organised by student organisations of UP, against enhancement of school fees by UP Govt and was jailed with agitators in Lucknow. He was later freed after his demands were accepted by the Government. He was a teacher in Town College Ballia for some time but left the job due to his preoccupation in politics.

He was elected as Member of Legislative Assembly, as a Praja Socialist Party candidate, from Ballia Sadar Vidhan Sabha in 1957, where he defeated congress candidate. He joined Congress Party in 1964 along with Ashok Mehta when PSP merged itself with Congress Party. Pandit Nehru had declared Socialism as ultimate goal of congress and urged all socialists to join him and strengthen socialist movement. He was elected to UP Legislative Council, MLC, in 1967 as congress candidate, defeating a communist candidate supported by the then Government in UP. He was re-elected to UP Council in 1970 and continued up to 1976.

He joined JP Movement in 1974 against corruption and misrule of different state governments and also against Government of India. State office of JP Movement was opened at his official residence in Lucknow and his residence became centre of political activities during the JP movement.

Ramnandan Mishra:

Ramnandan Mishra was born in Darbhanga in 1905 in a Bhumihar brahmin family. He was a member of Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee from 1927–1934. He participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and was imprisoned between 1930–31. He was a founding member of the Congress Socialist Party from 1934–47 and then the Socialist Party from 1947–52. He was arrested for anti-war propaganda in 1940. He participated in the Quit India Movement and organized secret revolutionary centres. While visiting Madras, was arrested in Cuttack on 23rd August 1942. He was lodged in Cuttack jail, and later in Behrampur jail. When he tried to escape, he was transferred to Hazaribagh Central Jail in the last week of October, 1942. He escaped from Hazaribagh Central Jail along with Yogendra Shukla, Jayaprakash Narayan and others during November, 1942.

He was in charge of the revolutionary movement in Punjab where he was rearrested on 22nd February 1943 and released only in 1946. He was General Secretary of the Hind Kisan Panchayat, Bihar from 1949–52 and became a member of the National Executive of the Socialist Party in 1949.

He left politics for spiritual pursuits in 1952 and became a devotee of Lord Jagannath. He died on 28th August 1989.

ROLE IN POST INDEPENDENCE POLITICS



Gifted with the twin endowment of sharp intellect and an indomitable spirit, the Bhumihar community has produced many towering politicians of the region who have shaped the political and developmental trajectories of Bihar & Eastern UP. Only few notable ones are discussed below as including all of them would require several volumes, such has been the contribution of the community in shaping the polity of the region.

Shrikrishna Singh (Shri Babu): First Chief Minister of Bihar

Shrikrishna Singh (Shri Babu), the towering politician and freedom fighter that he was, straddled like a colossus over the pre & post-independence political and development landscape of Bihar. Shri Babu, was the first chief minister of the Indian state of Bihar (1946–61). In fact, except for the period of World War II, Sinha was the chief minister of Bihar from the time of the first Congress Ministry in 1937 until his death in 1961. Shri Babu along with Bihar Vibhuti Anugrah Narayan Sinha (A.N. Sinha), is regarded among the ‘Architects of Modern Bihar’. Shri Babu and Anugrah Babu shared a special rapport and were often referred to as “Ram Laxman” of Bihar. In fact, Anugrah Babu in his essay “Mere Shri Babu” wrote thus about Shri Babu: *“Since 1921, the History of Bihar has been the history of the life of Shri Babu”*

A spate of development projects was started in Bihar under the chief ministership of Shri Babu. It included several river valley projects from Koshi, Aghaur and Sakri to other such river projects. The first five-year plan period was given to the development in rural development works mainly in the agricultural sector. Bihar became the top state in the country’s first five-year plan. From the second five-year plan period, Shri Babu brought several heavy industries like Barauni Refinery, Heavy Engineering Corporation at Ranchi, Bokaro Steel Plant, Barauni Fertiliser Plant, Barauni Thermal Power Station, Damodar Valley Corporation, Patratu Thermal Power Station, Scooter Factory in Fatuha, Pyrite Phosphate Chemical Limited and Sulphur mines at Amjhaur, Sindri Fertiliser Plant, Kargali Coal Washery, Garhara locomotive shed. He wanted to build an industrial corridor from Begusarai-Bakhtiyarpur-Fatuha, so he looked to construct Rajendra Setu in Mokama but he died before its completion.

Shri Babu also made an immense contribution in the cultural and social development of the state. He established the Rajendra Chatra Niwas at Calcutta for Bihari students, the Anugraha Narayan Sinha Institute of Social Studies (ANSISS) at Patna, Netarhat school at Ranchi, Engineering college at Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Jamshedpur, Sindri, Gaya, Motihari, Lok Rangshala of the Bihar Bhartiya Nritya Kala Mandir, Sanskrit College at Patna, Rabindra Parishad at Patna. The statue of Buddha at Rajgir’s Venu Van Vihar, as well as an orphanage at Muzaffarpur were also built by him. **The then prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru sent Paul H. Appleby to assess the administration in states of India and in his famous report, he**

described Bihar as the best governed state in India due to the excellent leadership duo of Shri Babu and Anugrah Babu.

Shri Babu's contribution in the social sector of Bihar is also unparalleled. He was one of the first chief ministers independent India to abolish the Zamindari system. Coming from an agrarian community full of landed peasants and landlords, it is not difficult to imagine the enormity of this accomplishment. However, the respect that he commanded and his adroit handling of such a complex socio-political issue, helped Bihar in pulling off the abolishment of Zamindari system so quickly post-independence. So much so that Bihar became an example to emulate for other states as far as abolishment of Zamindari system was concerned. Shri Babu was a progressive leader who introduced substantive land reform legislations in the early period of Bihar's history. He favoured the growth of agricultural capitalism and he wanted to do away with the constraints and hindrances in the way of the growth of productive forces in agriculture. Bihar, under Shri Babu, also adopted post zamindari agrarian reforms like Bihar Land Tenancy Act passed in the early years of his chief-ministership. Shri Babu also transformed the state Police force, seen as a tool of oppression under the British. He emphasised that in democratic India, policemen symbolised efficiency, service, protection, and help to the people. Caste played no role in promotion, transfer, posting and in working relationship of police officials with ministers or the chief minister in the fifties. S.Q. Rizvi, a retired senior Indian Police Service official, said, *"About the qualities of head and heart of this great man, it could be summed up in three words, Humanism, Integrity and Secularism. Dr Shri Krishna Singh was a great leader and a great idealist endowed with great intellectual attainments. But what to me appeared the most prominent feature was that as a politician he had absolute integrity."* Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer paid a beautiful tribute to Shri Babu when he said that Shri Babu was among those who were "heavyweights in their own right and brought into political administration a texture of nationalism, federalism, realism, and even some touch of pragmatic socialism", and that he "lived poor, died poor and identified himself with the poor."



SHRI KRISHNA SINGH (SHRI BABU): 1ST CM OF BIHAR



Ram Dayalu Singh

Ram Dayalu Singh was born in Gangawa village of Muzzaffarpur in a Bhumihaar brahmin family. He was a supporter of Shri Babu from pre independence days. He was a Gandhian freedom fighter. Ram Dayalu Singh became the first speaker of Bihar assembly in independent India. There is a college (R.D.S. College) named after him in Muzzaffarpur. Ram Dayalu Singh obtained LLB degree from Calcutta university and plunged into independence movement. Swami Sahjanand had written about Ram Dayalu Babu in the 1944 edition of Hunkar journal describing that Ram Dayalu Singh was the main inspiration behind the Kisan Andolan.

Chandrashekhar Singh

He was deputy leader of the Communist Party of India group in the State Legislature of Bihar and a Member of the National Council of CPI, and its Bihar State Secretariat He passed away on the 20 July, 1976 at the age of 61. He was born in December 1915 in a Bhumihaar brahmin family. He was the son of Sri Ram Charitra Prasad Singh. Chandrashekhar Singh, graduated from Banaras Hindu University in 1937, and obtained his Master's Degree from Patna University in 1939. Chandrashekhar Singh came into prominence in politics through the National Liberation movement against the British imperialism in 1934. At that time, he was in the Congress Socialist Party. He was elected first General Secretary of the Bihar Students Federation in 1938. In 1940 he joined the CPI and was arrested by the British Government. In 1949 he was arrested in connection with All India Railway strike. He worked in the Kisan Sabha from 1949 to 1956. In 1956 by-election, he was elected on a Communist ticket to the Bihar Legislative Assembly. He was a member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly continuously since 1962. In 1967 he became Minister for Power and Irrigation in the SVD, Government. He was also Deputy leader of the CPI, Legislative Party.

Sri Indradeep Sinha

Born in 1914 in a Bhumihaar brahmin family, Indradeep Sinha had a brilliant academic career, securing a gold medal in his post-graduation in economics from Patna University. He chose to serve the people by fighting for political freedom of the nation and for social and economic justice of the common citizens. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1974-1986 (two terms) representing the Communist Party of India. He was also in the Bihar ministry in 1967 and 1977 governments in the capacity of Cabinet minister for revenue. His contribution in the peasant movement as general secretary of All India Kisan Sabha was tremendous. He wrote about 25 books and his writings are guidelines for the next generation committed to people's cause. His writings touched various subjects and were guidelines for the socio-political and economic movement in the country.

Shyam Nandan Prasad Mishra

He was born in Terai region of Nepal in October 1930 and was educated at Patna. Shyam Nandan Mishra took active part in the Indian Independence Movement and was imprisoned in connection with the Quit India Movement during 1942-1943. He was associated with various social and political organisations. He was also the editor of various publications like Liberator and Bihar Vaibhav. He was a member of the first Lok Sabha of independent India. He was a member of the 2nd, 5th & 6th Lok Sabha as well.

He was an Indo Nepalese politician, writer and co-founder of Nepal Sadbhawna Party. A well-travelled man, Mishra was member of various Nepali delegations of literature and represented the country at several NGO events. He also got many appreciations for his poem “Akhri Soch”.

Mishra died on 25th October 2010 at his residence, following a cardiac arrest. In his condolence message, the then health minister said “*The nation has lost a great patriot, a freedom fighter, a writer and a Congressman*”.

Digvijay Narayan Singh

Digvijay Narain Singh (1924–2 August 1991) was an Indian politician who served as a Member of Parliament. He was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family and was a scion of Dharhara, one of the richest zamindaris in Bihar. In fact, he was the great grandson of great educationist Babu Langat Singh.

He started his career as a member of the Indian National Congress, later joining Morarji Desai's NCO faction in 1969, and then the Janata Party. He represented Pupri, Muzaffarpur, Hajipur, Vaishali seats from Bihar in Lok Sabha from 1952 well into 1970s. He joined Janata Party in 1977 and was elected to Lok Sabha from Vaishali Lok Sabha constituency.

He was in Lok Sabha for 28 consecutive years (1952–1980). He represented Muzaffarpur from 1952 to 1957 and again from 1962 to 1971, Pupri from 1957 to 1962, Hajipur from 1971 to 1977, and Vaishali from 1977 to 1980. He lost from Muzaffarpur in 1980 as Janata Party's candidate against George Fernandes of Janata Party (Socialist).

He spent a lot of his inherited wealth for public good and never took any money from his party, the Indian National Congress, for fighting elections. He was a close friend of Sir Mark Tully, famous BBC journalist, who contributed one whole chapter on Digvijay Babu in his book “No Full Stops in India”. He was also a close friend of both Feroze Gandhi and Indira Gandhi. Morarji Desai treated him like his son. He died at Patna on 2nd August 1991 at the age of 67. He also served as secretary of Bihar Congress in 1950.

L P Shahi

Laliteshwar Prasad Shahi (1st October 1920–9th June 2018) was a politician of Indian National Congress from Bihar. He was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family. He joined Sri Babu ministry at very young age and served almost all Congress Ministries in Bihar. Later on, Sri Rajiv Gandhi included L. P. Shahi in his cabinet as HRD minister in 1985.

His son Hemant Kumar Shahi was Member of Legislative Assembly from Vaishali. His daughter-in-law, Veena Shahi, was a former MLA and co-operative minister in Bihar. L.P. Shahi died on 9th June 2018 after a prolonged illness.

Kalp Nath Rai

Kalp Nath Rai (4th January 1941–6th August 1999) was an Indian politician. Rai was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family and educated at Gorakhpur University in Uttar Pradesh. He had MA degrees in English and Sociology, as well as a LL.B. degree. He practised as an advocate at the Allahabad High Court.

He served as a member of the Rajya Sabha between 1974–80, 1980–86, and 1986–92, as well as

being elected on four occasions to the Lok Sabha from the Ghosi constituency in the state of Uttar Pradesh. He was a minister in various national Congress (I) governments. Rai is credited with giving Mau the status of a district during his days as an MP from Ghosi. He is still fondly remembered as the ‘vikash purush” of Mau (UP). Starting with the socialists, he moved to Congress and held various top positions within the party and the government till he breathed his last. He served as Joint secretary and later as General Secretary of AICC, highest decision-making forum of the Congress party. Within the government he served various ministries in the Congress governments of the 1980-90s under Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and P.V. Narsimha Rao. These included Parliamentary affairs ministry, Power ministry (multiple terms), Food ministry among others. Rai died at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi, on 6th August 1999, aged 58, from cardiac arrest.

Raj Narain

Raj Narain (23rd November 1917–31st December 1986) was an Indian freedom fighter and politician. He won in a famous electoral malpractice case against the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which led to her disqualification and imposition of Emergency in India in 1975. He defeated Indira Gandhi during the 1977 Lok Sabha elections.

Raj Narain, son of Anant Prasad Singh, was born on 23rd November 1917 in an affluent Bhumihar brahmin family in the village Motikoat in Varanasi. He was related to the Narayan dynasty, who were the royal family of the Benares State. In fact, Raj Narain was directly associated with the family of Maharaja Chait Singh and Maharaja Balwant Singh, who were the Maharajas of Benares State, over a century back. He was educated at Banaras Hindu University, and did M.A. and LL.B.



RAJ NARAIN, GIANTKILLER WHO DEFEATED MRS INDIRA GANDHI

भारत INDIA



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RAJ NARAIN

As a Political and Social worker he organized a school for adults, a girls school, a study centre and a labour organization and became member of Congress Socialist Party, in 1934, and National Committee of Students Federation, 1939–44. He was President of the Banaras University Mandal Congress Committee and Member of District Congress Committee. He was president of Student Congress during 1942 Quit India movement, and led protests in and around Varanasi district in UP. Initially he was “underground” for three months and later arrested on 28th September 1942, during Quit India Movement and detained till 1945.

When India became independent, Raj Narain joined Socialist Party, led by Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayprakash Narayan and Dr Rammanohar Lohia, and held many party positions including Secretary of UP Socialist Party during 1948–51. He was very close to his Guru Acharya Narendra Deva and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia. Dr Lohia described him as “*a person who has the heart of a Lion and practices of Gandhi*”. Dr. Lohia admired him a lot and even said that “*if in India there could be just three or four persons like him, dictatorship can never shadow the democracy*”.

Raj Narain opposed policies and practices of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and stood (against her) in 1971 Lok Sabha elections from Rai Bareilly as an Samyukta Socialist Party Candidate. Although he suffered a defeat in 1971 elections, he accused Indira Gandhi of corrupt electoral practices and filed a petition against her.

The Allahabad High Court on 12th June 1975 upheld the accusations and set aside the election of Indira Gandhi and also barred her from contesting Lok Sabha elections for next six years. This led to the imposition of Emergency in India. Nationwide protests erupted and the streets were flooded with people under the leadership of Loknayak Jai Prakash Narayan and Raj Narain. It was the biggest drama of Indian politics after independence, with Raj Narain as one of the main protagonists.

Known as the biggest critique and adversary of Indira Gandhi, upon imposition of Emergency, Raj Narain was immediately arrested and imprisoned on the same day, along with several leading opposition leaders including Jai Prakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Satyendra Narayan Sinha, Charan Singh, L. K. Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He was arrested without any advance notice and was confined mostly at undisclosed locations.

Mrs. Gandhi lifted the state of emergency in January 1977, dissolved Lok Sabha and ordered fresh elections. Narain joined with other opposition parties to form the Janata alliance to face Mrs. Gandhi’s Congress party. Narain once again stood against her from the Rae Bareilly constituency. He defeated her with a margin of more than fifty thousand votes. The Janata alliance also swept the election throughout North India to garner the majority in the parliament (Lok Sabha).

Kailashpati Mishra

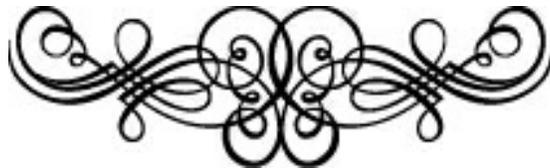
Kailashpati Mishra was born in Dudharchak, Buxar, Bihar, in a Bhumihaar Brahmin family on 5th October 1923. He took part in the Quit India Movement in 1942 and was arrested by the British Indian police. He was a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh from 1943. He was arrested for picketing at the main gate of his school at Buxar in support of 1942 Quit India Movement.

Kailash Pati Mishra contested 1971 Lok Sabha election on Jana Sangh’s ticket from Patna, but

lost. He later won the Bihar Vidhan Sabha election for Bikram seat in 1977, and was appointed finance minister in the Janata Party government of Karpoori Thakur. In 1980, he became the first BJP Bihar president when the party was founded. He also served as BJP national Vice President from 1995 to 2003. He was appointed governor of Gujarat in 2003. He was also appointed as a caretaker Governor of Rajasthan for a short duration, following the death of the incumbent Governor. After the BJP's government's defeat in 2004 polls, Mishra was removed from his post as governor by the Congress Government.

Known as the Bhishma Pitamaha of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Bihar, a lifelong bachelor, Mishra was away from direct political activities for the last two years of his life due to old age, but remained a source of inspiration for the party. He was also liked by the socialists due to his participation in JP's 1974 anti-Congress agitations.

REFORMS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS



Kisan (Peasant) Movement

In the 1930s, Indian peasants experienced a new nationwide awakening of their own strength and capacity to organise for the betterment of their living conditions. This awakening was largely the result of a confluence of economic and political events. The Great Depression, which hit India in 1929-30, and the Indian National Congress's new phase of mass struggle, which began in 1930. The Depression, which saw agricultural prices plummet to half or less of their previous levels, dealt a severe blow to the already impoverished peasants who were already burdened by high taxes and rents. The government was adamant in its refusal to lower its own tax rates or to ask zamindars to lower their rents.

Bihar was one of the epicentres of the incipient Kisan movement at that time. The largely agrarian Bhumihar brahmin community of East India threw up a spate of stalwart Kisan leaders in those times. The tallest amongst them being Swami Sahjanand Saraswati. The admirable part of their movement was that these Kisan leaders, while fighting for the poor tenant tillers, rose in revolt against powerful Zamindars, who were mostly their fellow caste men. These leaders did not let their caste loyalties come in the way of their larger struggle for a just cause of getting the poor farmers their dues. The untiring efforts of the Kisan leaders ultimately led to abolition of Zamindari system after independence. Bihar was amongst the first few states of independent India to do so.

The Kisan Sabha movement started in Bihar under the leadership of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, who had formed the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in 1929 to mobilise peasant grievances against the zamindari attacks on their occupancy rights, and thus sparking the farmers' movements in India. Gradually the peasant movement intensified and spread across the rest of India. All these radical developments on the peasant front culminated in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) at the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in April 1936. Swamiji was elected as the first President of All India Kisan Sabha. It involved prominent leaders such as N. G. Ranga and E. M. S. Namboodiripad. The Kisan Manifesto, which was released in August 1936, demanded abolition of the zamindari system and cancellation of rural debts. In October 1937, the AIKS adopted the red flag as its banner. Soon, its leaders became increasingly distant from Congress, and repeatedly came in confrontation with Congress

governments in Bihar and United Provinces (present day UP)

Swamiji organised the Bakasht Movement in Bihar in 1937–1938. “Bakasht” means self-cultivated. Bakasht lands were those that occupancy tenants had lost to zamindars due to non-payment of rent, mostly during the Depression years, which they continued to cultivate as share-croppers. The movement was against the eviction of tenants from Bakasht lands by zamindars and led to the passing of the Bihar Tenancy Act and the Bakasht Land Tax Act. He also led the successful struggle in the Dalmia Sugar Mill at Bihta, where peasant-worker unity was the most important characteristic.

On hearing of Saraswati’s arrest during the Quit India Movement, Subhash Chandra Bose and All India Forward Bloc decided to observe 28 April as All-India Swami Sahajanand Day in protest of his incarceration by the British Raj.

Karyanand Sharma

Karyanand Sharma was born in a middle class Bhumihaar Brahmin family of Sahoar village in Munger district of British India, now in Lakhisarai district of Bihar. Although, he started studying in 1906, he had soon to leave school and help the family in cultivation. However, between 1914 and 1920, he educated himself and matriculated in 1920 just in time to join the non-cooperation movement.

He was arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment. After release from jail, he became more and more involved in peasant issues. In 1927 he organized a struggle of the tenants at Chanan against arbitrary extortions by the zamindars. This was particularly directed against the Giddhaur Raj and Kaira estate. Since these zamindars and their minions were particularly oppressive, the local Indian National Congress leaders permitted Karyanand to carry on the struggle though they themselves did not extend much help. Nevertheless, because of the unity among the tenants, the zamindars had to bow down and this victory became a great morale-booster for the peasants in Munger.

After the famous Barahiya Bakasht Andolan in 1937-39, strictures were passed against him and in 1938 he was arrested by the then Congress government. After his release from prison when he joined the Kisan Movement he was jailed again and again. During these long sojourns he got a chance to read Marxist literature and joined the Communist Party of India although, until 1943 he remained a member of the All India Congress Committee. After independence, he became one of the top leaders of the Communist Party of India and leader of its legislature party until his death. It was under the able leadership of Karyanand Sharma that the Communist Party of India waged some important agrarian struggles in the 1950s, the most notable among them being Sathi farm struggles in Champaran.

Yadunandan Sharma

Yadunandan Sharma (1896–1975) was an Indian peasant leader and national liberation figure from Bihar. He had started a movement for the rights of tillers against the zamindars and Britishers at Reora, celebrated as the Reora Satyagraha.

Yadunandan Sharma was born in an ordinary Bhumihaar brahmin family in Manjhiyawan village, Gaya district, in 1896. The village was part of the Tekari zamindari. His father died when Yadunandan was aged three and he had to begin work as a cowherd while very young. This caused him to miss school and it was only in 1914 that, impelled by the desire to become literate,

he ran away to Benaras where he learned the alphabets.

He matriculated in 1919 from Tekari high school and became a teacher for one year in a village school. He worked also as a manager in a zamindari, getting a first-hand knowledge of the system. Not happy with it, he again went off to Benaras and joined Benaras Hindu University and studied until 1929 when he graduated. After his B.A. degree, he left education and joined Civil Disobedience Movement. He was arrested and sentenced for 16 months in 1930. After being released from jail, he joined the Kisan movement in 1933 and started the famous Sandako and Reora Satyagraha in the 1930s. He became the undisputed leader of peasants in the Gaya district and second in command to the legendary freedom fighter and peasant leader Sahajanand Saraswati. Most of his life was spent in the Neyamatpur village in an ashram from where he kept revolting against the British Rule and zamindari system. Pandit Nehru paid a visit to the Ashram in 1936 on a chilling winter night in December to meet him and address a mass gathering of the locals. He died in 1975.

Yamuna Karjee

Yamuna Karjee was born in a small village name Deopar near Pusa in Darbhanga District of Bihar in 1900. He came from Bhumihar brahmin family. His father Anu Karjee was a farmer who died when Yamuna Karjee was just 6 months old. From his school days itself, he was drawn towards India's freedom struggle and the Kisan Movement and Peasant movements under Sahajanand Saraswati's leadership. In the peasant movement he became a close associate of other revolutionary peasant leaders like Karyanand Sharma, Yadunandan Sharma and Panchanan Sharma.

For higher studies he went to the Presidency College, Kolkata, and also obtained a degree in Law. In Calcutta he came in contact with several freedom fighters and Congress leaders like Bidhan Chandra Roy, Shri Babu and Rahul Sankrityayan.

Spurning the offers of several government jobs, he became a Hindi journalist of repute. He joined the editorial wing of Hindi weekly Bharat Mitra published in Calcutta. He also took part in Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement from 1920–21 and was jailed in 1929-30 for taking part in civil disobedience movement and Namak Satyagrah. He won the first election for Bihar and Orissa Assembly in 1937 as a Congress candidate.

He along with Rahul Sankrityayan, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar and other popular Hindi literaries started publishing a Hindi weekly Hunkar from Bihar in 1940, guided by his respected Gandhian friend & relative Bashishtha Narayan Sharma, a Graduate from Presidency College Calcutta. Bashista who refused to join Bihar Provincial Services was popularly known as Guruji (Master Saheb). Hunkar later became the mouthpiece of the peasant and the agrarian movements in Bihar. Yamuna Karjee was also the President of the Kisan Sabha for some time.

He died in October 1953 at an early age of 53. After his untimely demise the peasant movement lost momentum in Bihar and became rudderless. His name also appears in Bipan Chandra's masterpiece "India's Struggle for Independence." There is a college near Muzaffarpur named after Yamuna Karjee.

Abolition of Zamindari System

Abolition of the zamindari system was one of the longstanding demands of the Kisan movements

in pre-independence India. A resolution for the abolition of the Zamindari system was passed by the Kisan Conference held in Allahabad in 1935 presided by Bihar Kisan Sabha leader Swami Sahajanand Saraswati among others. The zamindari system was finally abolished by law after independence. In 1951, the first amendment of the Constitution of India amended Article 19 and Article 31. The right to property was modified to allow the states to legislate on ending the zamindari system.

The process of abolition of Zamindari system began even before the enactment of the constitution of India. Bihar was one of first few states of independent India to initiate the process of banning the zamindari system under the able chief ministership of Shri Babu. He was instrumental in ensuring that the “Bihar Abolition of Zamindaris Act” was passed in 1949, despite facing stiff resistance from the rich zamindars most of whom were his fellow caste men. Shri Babu’s astute leadership ensured that the abolition was carried out on the ground with minimal social discord.

Role in the Temple Entry Movement

Throwing Open the Gates of Baba Dham

The temple entry movement was the Gandhian or nationalist approach to fight caste oppression. In the 20th century India, the people of lower caste were not allowed to enter temple premises in large parts of India. The movement to allow equal entry rights to all Hindus was started in Southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and soon found support across other parts of India. Shri Babu was a strong supporter of Dalit temple entry movement, which was seen as a potent symbol of upturning the Dalit oppression and their empowerment and ultimate awakening of Hindu identity. After becoming the first CM of Bihar in independent India, Shri Babu personally led the entry of Dalits into the Shiva temple at Baidynath Dham (Baba Dham in popular parlance), one of the twelve Jyotirlingas and considered most sacred abodes of Shiva. It is held in high religious esteem by the people of Bihar and Jharkhand, who carry kanwar yatra in the month of Shrawan every year. Throwing open Baba Dham’s gates to dalits would have been both a bold and a path breaking move in those times.

Kishore Kunal

The Dalit temple entry movement lost steam in the latter half of the 20th century in Bihar. Until it was revived by Kishore Kunal, a daring cop who turned towards spirituality. Kishore Kunal was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family in Bihar on 10th August 1950. He did his schooling at Baruraj village in Muzaffarpur district. In 1972, Kunal became an officer of the Indian Police Service in the Gujarat cadre. He later moved to Bihar on deputation. Kunal was appointed as the Senior Superintendent of Police at Patna, where he soon established himself as a dare devil cop. In 2001, Kunal retired from the Indian Police Service voluntarily. After retirement, he served as the chairman of the Bihar State Board of Religious Trusts. Kunal is also secretary of the famous Mahavir Temple Trust, Patna. The Government of V. P. Singh established an ‘Ayodhya Cell’ in 1990 under the leadership of the Minister of State for Home Affairs for handling the Ayodhya dispute. Kunal was appointed as an ‘Officer on Special Duty’ to assist in its functioning, a responsibility which Kunal ably carried. Kunal later published his own analysis of the evidence submitted by the parties, and other evidence that he unearthed on his own, under the title

“Ayodhya Revisited”. Kunal was called in as one of the key subject matter experts by the Supreme Court of India, before it passed the historical Ayodhya judgment, paving way for the construction of a grand temple of Lord Rama at Ayodhya.

Kishore Kunal, in his capacity as the secretary of the famous Mahavir (Hanuman) temple at Patna, appointed Phalahari Suryavanshi Das, a Dalit scholar, as priest of this famous temple on June 13,1993. Das was brought to Mahavir temple from Ravidas temple in Ayodhya. Das has been performing the puja rituals at the temple since then. Kunal also inspired the temple trust to appoint another Dalit, Sanjay Rajak, for the distribution of “charnamrit” at the temple. These steps reflect the strong conviction of Kunal towards the cause of dalit temple entry. It also shows his resolve to withstand backlash which is natural against such pathbreaking social reforms. Kunal continued pushing on with this reform after being appointed as the Administrator of the Bihar State Board of Religious Trusts (BSRT) in 2006. Chandeshwar Paswan was appointed by him as the first Dalit priest at Vishwanath Mahadev Mandir, Hajipur in 2007. In fact, the anointment ceremony of Paswan was carried out on the day of Maha Shivratri, a day when devotees throng the temple, in order to send a strong message of social reform to the society. Jamna Das, another dalit, was appointed as the head priest of Shiva temple at Bihta. Janardan Manjhi, a musahar dalit, was appointed as a priest at Ramjanki temple in Paliganj. Both these appointments were carried out in the same year in 2007. Even today Kishore Kunal soldiers on zealously with this reform apart from several charities that he runs.

Role in Education Sector

As one of the few communities of East India which recognised the value of modern education early, Bhumihar brahmins have never shied away from spreading the light of education among the masses. Several political and social leaders and the affluent from the community worked tirelessly to establish modern colleges and institutes of learning during British rule and continued after independence. Contributions of a few prominent ones are discussed below.

Babu Langat Singh

Babu Langat Singh was born in a poor Bhumihar brahmin family in Dharhara, Vaishali. He managed to educate himself despite hurdles and possessed extreme passion for spreading the light of education amongst the masses. He established the Bihar Scientific Society in Muzzaffarpur in 1868. Babu Langat Singh managed to convince Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the famous Aligarh University, to become Life Honorary Secretary of the Society. The Langat Singh College (L S College) in Muzzaffarpur was opened by Bihar Scientific Society in 1899, under the leadership and guidance of Babu Langat Singh.

The Bhumihar Brahman Sabha (founded by the Raja of Banaras in 1889) had its annual conference at Muzaffarpur in 1899. It was in this conference it was decided to open a college for higher education. Therefore, the Sabha deposited an amount of Rs. Fifty thousand to the Trust of the Bihar Scientific Society, Muzaffarpur. In July 1899, this college was founded and got the status of a “Second Grade College”(Pre-Graduate). In fact, it was called Grierson Bhumihar Brahmin college initially. Mahatma Gandhi stayed at Grierson Bhumihar Brahmin college in Muzzaffarpur on his way to Champaran for his first stayagraha in India. As a mark of honour to Babu Langat Singh, the college was later named as Langat Singh College, LS college in short. In the subsequent year i.e. in 1900 AD, it got the status of “First Grade” college i.e., Degree college.

In 1900, the college was affiliated to Calcutta University. It was declared a Government College in 1915 and subsequently affiliated to Patna University in 1917. In 1952, Bihar university was bifurcated from Patna University and L.S. college got affiliated to it. Subsequently, in 1960, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University was established with headquarters at Muzaffarpur and the college was then affiliated to it. Famous faculty members who served at the college included Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Acharya J.B. Kripalani and Rashtra Kavi Ramdhari Singh Dinkar among others.

Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh

Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh was born on 13th January 1868 in a Bhumihar brahmin family of Bihar. He was a lawyer, educationist and administrator during the British Raj. He did a lot to improve education and health services in the state of Bihar before independence. Sir Ganesh Dutt was Minister for Local Self Government of Bihar and Orissa under British rule. He was one of the major public figures of the province of Bihar.

Sir Ganesh Dutt made generous donations from his earnings and personal property for the development of several educational institutions. These included Darbhanga Medical College and Hospital, Ayurvedic College. Sir Ganesh Dutta donated his house Krishna Kunj to Patna University to start the Patna University Institute of Psychological Research and Service, one of the oldest psychological service centres in Eastern India, in 1945. He gave Rs. 100,000 to Patna University on 30th November 1931, and a further Rs. 200,000 on 27th May 1933. With this endowment the “Patna University Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh’s Trust Fund” was created, for funding loan scholarships for higher studies in industry, agriculture, science, medicine, engineering, etc. Sir Ganesh Dutt wanted that all else being equal, preference was to be given to the Dalit and backward castes for the scholarship.

He took keen interest in the development of Patna University. He donated some of his assets to the University. He worked towards abolishing the practice of appointing former Judges instead of scholars as vice-chancellors. His tireless efforts for this cause resulted in Sachchidanand Sinha, who was not a judge, becoming the VC of Patna University. Patna University awarded him the degree of Doctor Honouris Causa in 1933. A short film based on the life and works of Sir Ganesh Dutt was made by Prakash Jha.



BABU LANGAT SINGH LANGAT SINGH COLLEGE MUZZAFFARPUR



SIR GANESH DUTT SINGH THE EDUCATIONISTS

Krishna Kant Singh

Krishna Kant Singh, a minister in the Shri Babu cabinet, was the founder of Nalanda Medical College and Hospital (NMCH), Patna. In fact, he was referred to as the de-facto CM in the Bhola Paswan Ministry. He was the main initiator to establish Bhagalpur & Ranchi University as Education Minister in Bihar. He served as President of Gandhi Museum in Patna for many years and also served as BSFC chairman. He was the only son of Karm Yogi and Raj Rishi Narayan Babu from Goreakothi.

DGP Abhayanand of Super 30 Fame

Shri Abhayanand was born in a Bhumihaar brahmin family of Bihar. Following his graduation from Patna Science College, he was selected as an IPS officer in the Bihar cadre in 1977. He performed his police duties in various positions in Bihar with an impeccable record. He was appointed as the DGP (Director General of Police) in 2011. Apart from being a police officer, Shri Abhayanand is also a renowned educationist of Bihar. He, along with Anand Kumar, conceptualised Super 30 to train poor students to crack IIT JEE.

Super 30 is a free tutorial to coach 30 bright youngsters from underprivileged families of rural Bihar for the IIT entrance test. Both of his children went to IIT before Super 30 started. He wanted to give an opportunity to talented children from poor families to compete with the more privileged ones for the IIT Joint Entrance Examination. Students for this program were selected

through a competitive exam followed by an interview. The students who got selected then had to live at one place and prepare for the IIT-JEE under the academic mentorship of Anand Kumar and Abhayanad. He started this endeavour in 2003 when 18 children qualified for entrance test and these numbers kept on swelling in subsequent years.

However, he split from Kumar in 2007 as he wanted to take his social experiment to a wider forum so as to reach out to more under-privileged but talented children. He joined a program called Rahmani 30 headed by Maulana Wali Rahmani where under-privileged Muslim students were selected and then coached for the JEE. In the inaugural year of Rahmani 30 in 2009, all the 10 students who were part of this program cleared JEE. Abhayanand also provides academic mentorship to such programs run by CSR wing of various companies. These programs include Oil India Super 30 Assam (Guwahati/Jorhat/Dibrugarh), National Super 100 Delhi, GAIL Utkarsh Super 100 Kanpur. These programs are sponsored by various Indian PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) such as GAIL, PowerGrid, Oil India Limited. He is also associated with Magadh Super 30 and Triveni Super 30, both run on the lines of original Super 30 program. All the programs have had more than decent rate of success and have served to give wings to the academic dreams of many underprivileged children of Bihar.

Resistance to Maoist Violence and Left-wing Extremism (LWE)

Communist political movement, which first emerged in 1920, grew into many streams. While all of its proponents profess adherence to the ultimate goal of building a classless society, there are disagreements about the appropriate political strategy for achieving it. These vary from election-contesting political parties like CPI (Communist Party of India) and CPI-M (Communist Party of India-Marxist) to underground armed rebels like Communist Party of India (Maoist). CPI joined electoral democracy in 1951. However, some of the more radical elements broke away from the CPI in 1964 to form CPI-M. When CPI-M also embraced electoral politics, it was unacceptable to the more radical Maoist faction within CPI-M, who started the violent Naxalite movement. A new party called Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), CPI(ML), was formed in April 1969, with Charu Mazumdar at the helm. The CPI(ML) was totally opposed to the electoral process and advocated violent revolution as the only means of realizing its political objectives. Initially the Naxalite violence remained confined to West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. It was slowly subdued by the resolve of the government in the 70s, however it survived in fragments in various areas. This period was followed by a second phase of Naxalite violence, which will be referred to as Maoist violence in order to distinguish it from the earlier Naxalite violence. The origin of Maoist violence can be traced to two factions of Naxalites, namely, the People's War Group (PWG) of Andhra Pradesh and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) of Bihar, often referred to as Maowadis in Bihar.

The Maowadis of MCC unleashed brutal violence in Bihar in the 80s and 90s. Their advocacy of violent overthrow of the Landlords found resonance among the poor of Bihar. Bhumihar brahmins, being a major land holding community, was frequently in their cross hairs. As is often the case with left wing ideology, the causes they espouse are very noble, but their actions on the ground are at times most brutal. MCC struck fear across the landed farmers of Bihar and soon anarchy and lawlessness took over. A red flag planted in the fields was often enough to snatch away a farmer's land under duress. But as they say, every action has a reaction. After watching haplessly as the MCC cadres killed their kin and took away the land that belonged to them for

ages, many farmer communities started to organize resistance to MCC's violence. Various private armies of farmer communities emerged in Bihar to resist Maoist violence. This included Kuer Sena, Sunlight army etc. However, the major thrust of resistance to the Maoist violence and anarchy came from Ranvir Sena, a private militia of Bhumihar brahmin landlords of Bihar.

Emergence of Ranvir Sena

I am neither an advocate of the violent retributions unleashed by Ranvir Sena, nor do I intend to glorify them. But objectivity demands that history must be told in all its shades. I often wonder, why a community that voluntarily embraced the abolishment of Zamindari system under Shri Babu, a community that produced Swami Sahjanand Saraswati who espoused the cause of the poor tenant (rayat) farmers and opposed the Landlords within his own clansmen, a community that welcomed Land ceiling act, a community that gave up vast acres of land for the landless on just one call of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, had to take up arms and unleash violence to protect their land and their honor. In fact, the classless and casteless society espoused by the Communists had many supporters among Bhumihar brahmins in Bihar. Many stalwarts of communist movement in Bihar sprang from the community. But it was difficult to justify the violence and anarchy unleashed by MCC while the State chose to look away. It was probably a reaction of a section of the community when pushed against the wall.

Bhojpur uprising was one of the earliest incidents of Maoist violence in Bihar. It refers to the class conflict manifested in armed uprising of 1970s, that took place in the various villages of the Bhojpur district of Bihar. These clashes were part of the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in the state, which mobilised the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants against the landlords, primarily belonging to upper-castes. Initially it was restricted to rural areas of Bhojpur. According to the police records, the Naxalite movement in Bhojpur was spread across nine out of sixteen blocks of the district, and a total of 150 villages were affected by the armed uprising. It was Ekwaari village of the Sahar bloc in Bhojpur, which became the centre of organised armed movement. The local leaders of the movement were influenced by the successful uprising in the Naxalbari region of North Bengal, and began organising likeminded youths. On 23rd February 1971, the first individual assassination was witnessed in Ekwaari, when a lathait (stick-wielding assistant of the landlords), Sheopoojan Singh was assassinated and his dead body was found near Sone Canal. From 1971 to 1973, fifteen big Zamindars were assassinated. The police tried to control this movement by force which slowly pushed the Maoist movement into a spiral of police repression, followed by even more brutal Maoist retribution. With time, the struggle against the landlords spread to other regions. Jehanabad district of Bihar soon became a hotbed of Maoist violence. The poor labourers in the village sided with the Maoists and parallel Kangaroo courts were set up in the district by Maoists. The landlords were often tried for their atrocities in these Kangaroo courts. Upper-caste landlords, primarily Bhumihars and Rajputs, bore the brunt of Maoist inspired violence. With the State not able to come to their rescue, they started retaliating against the Dalits and Maoists, using their caste based militia.

Ranvir Sena was formed by Bhumihar landlords in 1994, with the aim to counter the violence of various left-wing militants and Maoist groups including the MCC in central Bihar. The origin of Ranvir Sena is shrouded in mystery. But it is fair to assume that the Bhumihars in Belaur village in Bhojpur district started the Ranvir Sena. From Bhojpur, over a period of time, the Ranvir Sena spread to Jehanabad, Patna, Rohtas, Aurangabad, Gaya, Arwal and Buxar Districts.

The name Ranvir comes from one Ranvir Baba, an iconic local hero of the Bhumihars. As the legend goes, during the late 19th century, Ranvir Choudhary, a retired Indian military man and a resident of Belaur village in Bhojpur district, protected the rights of the Bhumihars against the domination of the Rajputs. Due to the activities of Ranvir Baba, the Bhumihars asserted their power in Bhojpur district and established regional supremacy of the Bhumihars.

Rang Bahadur Singh is believed to be the first president of Ranvir Sena. He came from Ichari village, Jagdishpur, Bihar. Brahmeshwar Singh of Khopira, popularly revered as Brahmeshwar Mukhia or Mukhia ji, by Bhumihars of the region, became the group's leader a few months after it was formed. Brahmeshwar Mukhiya remained the Supreme Commander of the Ranvir Sena until he was arrested in Patna on 29th August 2002. He faced a number of criminal cases, which included those related to Ranvir Sena massacres.

On 11 July 1996, 21 Dalits were slaughtered by the Ranvir Sena in Bathani Tola, Bhojpur district. The stated aim of Ranvir Sena was to deter any future violence from the Maoists. Thus began a violent cycle of massacres from one side followed by the other, each more brutal than the previous, as illustrated below. Lot of innocent blood was shed from both sides. The State either looked away or connived with one side or the other based on political expediency. Sadly this political indulgence aggravated the mindless violence which otherwise could have been controlled much earlier.

1996:

- Nadhi (Bhojpur): 8 killed in CPI(ML) attack on Bhumihars.
- Nadhi (Bhojpur): 9 killed in attack by Ranvir sena on Dalits.
- Bathanitola (Bhojpur): 22 SCs killed by Ranvir sena, the worst of that year's many attacks

1997:

- Raghopur (Patna): 6 Bhumihars killed by CPI(ML)
- Haibaspur (Patna): 10 SCs killed by Ranvir sena
- Ekwari (Bhojpur): 10 SCs killed by Ranvir sena
- Khadasin (Jehanabad): 8 SCs killed by Ranvir sena
- Lakshmanpur-Bathe (Jehanabad): 61 Dalits killed in attack by Ranvir sena
- Chauram (Jehanabad): 9 members of Bhumihar killed in CPI(ML-Liberation) attack

1998:

- Nagri (Bhojpur): 10 SCs killed by Ranvir sena

1999:

- Shankarbigha (Jehanabad): 23 SCs killed by Ranvir sena
- Narayanpur (Jehanabad): 11 SCs killed by Ranvir sena
- Usri Bazar (Jehanabad): 7 bhumihar killed in attack by CPI(ML-Liberation)

- Senari (Jehanabad): 35 killed in attack on bhumihars
- Sendani (Gaya): 12 SCs killed by Ranvir sena

2000:

- Afsar (Nawada): 12 upper caste men, mostly Bhumihars, killed in attack by OBCs
- Miapur (Aurangabad): 32 OBCs allegedly killed by Ranvir sena in revenge attack.

With the increasing clout and greater unity amongst various Left-Wing extremist groups in the state, Ranvir Sena gradually declined. On 8th July 2011, Brahmeshwar Mukhia was released on bail after serving 9 years in jail awaiting trial for numerous cases. On 5th May 2012, Brahmeshwar Mukhia floated a non-electoral outfit named Akhil Bharatiya Rashtravadi Kisan Sangathan. However, he was shot dead less than a month later, on 1st June 2012, by unidentified gunmen in the town of Ara.

CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF LITERATURE



Being one of the early literate groups in British India, the Bhumihar community produced several literary giants. The genetic gift of erudition of Bhumihar brahmins has thrown up literary giants regularly. The illustrious list includes Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Rahul Sankrityayan, Rambriksh Benipuri and Gopal Singh Nepali, Nalin Vilochan Sharma to name just a few. In fact, with Sir V.S. Naipaul, a Bhumihar brahmin from the diaspora settled in the Caribbean, the community can lay claim to a Nobel laureate in literature as well.

Ramdhari Singh Dinkar

Ramdhari Singh (23 September 1908–24 April 1974), famously known by his nom de plume “Dinkar”, was a Hindi and Maithili language poet, essayist, patriot and academic par excellence. He emerged as a poet of rebellion as a consequence of his nationalist poetry written in the days before Indian independence. His poetry exuded *Veer Rasa*, and he has been hailed as a Rashtrakavi (‘national poet’) on account of his inspiring patriotic compositions. Dinkar was born on 23rd September 1908, in Simaria village of Begusarai district in Bihar in a Bhumihar brahmin family. Dinkar was greatly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore, Keats and Milton and translated works of Rabindranath Tagore from Bengali to Hindi. The poetic persona of the poet Dinkar was shaped by the pressures and counter-pressures of life during the Indian freedom movement.

In his adolescence, the Indian freedom movement had already begun under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1929, when he entered Patna College to study intermediate; this movement started becoming aggressive. Dinkar participated in the protests against Simon Commission in Patna. When Lala Lajpat Rai, the Lion of Punjab, was mercilessly beaten by British police and subsequently succumbed to his fatal injuries, youthful mind of Dinkar became increasingly radical due to these agitations. His emotional nature was charged with poetic energy.

Dinkar’s first poem was published in 1924 in a paper called Chhatra Sahodar (‘Brother of Students’). Chhatra Sahodar was a local newspaper established under the editorship of Narsingh Das. In 1928, the peasant’s satyagraha under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel proved successful in Bardoli of Gujarat. He wrote ten poems based on this Satyagraha which was published in a book form under the title “Vijay-Sandesh” (‘Message of Victory’). To escape the wrath of the government, Dinkar’s poems were published under the pseudonym “Amitabh”. On 14 September 1928, a poem of his, on the martyrdom of Jatin Das, was published. Around this time, he also wrote two small works of poetry called Birbala and Meghnad-Vadh, but neither of them is traceable now. In 1930, he composed a poem called Pran-Bhang (‘The Breach of Vow’), which was mentioned by Ramchandra Shukla in his book. So, the journey of his poetic career should be deemed to have begun with Vijay-Sandesh. His poems had become a frequent feature of the magazine Desh, published from Patna and of Pratibha, which was published from

Kannauj.

Dinkar's first collection of poems, *Renuka*, was published in November 1935. His works are mostly of *Veer Rasa*, or the 'brave mode', although "Urvashi" is an exception to this. Some of his greatest works are "Rashmirathi" and "Parashuram ki Prateeksha".

His "Kurukshetra" is a narrative poem based on the Shanti Parva of the Mahābhārata. It was written at a time when the memories of the Second World War were fresh in the mind of the poet. "Krishna Ki Chaetavani" (Krishna's warning) is another poem composed about events that led to the Kurukshetra War in the Mahābhārata. His "Samdheni" is a collection of poems reflecting the poet's social concern transcending the boundaries of the nation. In his "Sanskriti ke Chaar Adhyaya", he said that despite various cultures, languages and topography, India stands united, because "however different we may be, our thoughts are one and the same". His composition "Rashmirathi" is considered one of the best versions of the Hindu epic Mahābhārata.

He received awards from Kashi Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Uttar Pradesh Government and also an award by the Government of India for his epic poem Kurukshetra. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1959 for his work "Sanskriti ke Char Adhyay". He was also a recipient of Padma Bhushan in 1959 by the Government of India. He was awarded the LLD degree by Bhagalpur University. He was felicitated as Vidyavachaspati by Gurukul Mahavidyalaya. He was felicitated as Sahitya-Chudaman by Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur on 8 November 1968. Dinkar was awarded the Jnanpith Award in 1972 for Urvashi. He also became a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, in 1952. He is hailed as the greatest Hindi poet of 'Veer Rasa'. Harivansh Rai Bachchan wrote that for according proper respect, Dinkar should get four Bharatiya Jnanpith Awards – for poetry, prose, languages and for his service to Hindi. Rambriksh Benipuri wrote that Dinkar is giving voice to the revolutionary movement in the country. Namvar Singh wrote that Dinkar shone like the Sun on the firmament of Hindi literature of his times.

Rambriksh Benipuri

(23rd December 1899–9th September 1968) was a freedom fighter, socialist leader, editor and Hindi writer and playwright par excellence. He was born in a small village named Benipur in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar in a Bhumihar Brahmin family. He had spent nine years in prison while fighting for India's independence. He was the founder of Bihar Socialist Party in 1931 and Congress Socialist Party in 1934. He served as the president of Patna District Congress Committee of Indian National Congress from 1935 to 1937 and during the 1937 Indian provincial elections. He was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly (India) from Katra North in 1957.

Benipuriji's first writing was published in *Pratapa* of Kanpur in 1916. Since then, till the attainment of Independence of India, his was a life of political activities and struggle. Benipuri started his literary career in 1921 with a weekly Hindi journal *Tarun Bharat* of which he was an associate editor. He also worked as an associate editor of the *Kisan Mitra* weekly in 1922, *Golmal* in 1924 and as an editor of the monthly journal *Balak* in 1926, but the publication of *Yuvak* made him more popular. *Yuvak*, an illustrated Hindi monthly magazine, was launched in January 1929 by Rambriksh Benipuri.

Rambriksh Benipuri stands a class apart as a playwright. He wrote "Ambapalai" during his

detention in the Hazaribagh Central Jail. Later on he wrote a series of one-act plays and radio-dramas, more notable being: the Netra-dan, Tathagat, Sanghamitra, Singhal Vijay and Vijeta. Benipuri had a forceful pen and was a prolific writer. Main attraction of Benipuri's plays lies in his way of writing. There is a delightful mixture of romanticism and idealism in his plays. In most of Rambriksh Benipuri's short stories, pictures of rural life of north Bihar, especially that of Muzaffarpur district have been vividly presented. His "Mati ki Mooraten", though not a story book in strict sense of the term, actually presents persons of flesh and blood, each throbbing with life, on a rural canvas.

In 1999, Benipuri was one of the Hindi writers depicted in a set of commemorative postal stamps released to celebrate the "Linguistic Harmony of India," marking the 50th anniversary since India adopted Hindi as its official language.

Major literary works of Benipuriji

Memoirs and essays

- Patiton Ke Desh Mein-1930-33
- Chita Ke Phool-1930-32
- Lal Tara-1937-39

Lal Tara is the symbol of a new light of the morning. The light is very near and therefore the darkness has increased. The writer wants to say that the darkness would disappear within a short time and a new rising light would come out. There are 16 such sketches in the collection. Benipuriji tries to search out a new society, a new way of living and a new culture.

- Kaidee Ki Patni-1940
- Maate-1941-45
- Gehun Aur Gulaab – 1948–50

It was published in 1950. This composition also brought much laurels and fame to Benipuri and was welcomed in the Hindi world like the former two titles, "Lal Tara" and "Mati ki Murten".

- Zanjeeren Aur Deewaren
- Udate Chalo, Udate Chalo
- Dramas
- Ambpali-1941-46
- Sita Ki maan-1948-50
- Sanghamitra-1948-50
- Amar Jyoti-1951
- Tathaagat
- Singhal Vijay
- Shakuntala
- Ramrajya

- Netradaan-1948-50
- Gaa0 Ke Devata
- Nayaa samaaj
- Vijeta-1953.

Rahul Sankrityayan

(9th April 1893–14th April 1963) was an Indian independence activist, writer and a polyglot who wrote in Hindi. He played a pivotal role in giving travelogue a 'literary form'. He was one of the most widely travelled scholars of India, spending forty-five years of his life on travels away from his home. Sankrityayan is often called the "father of Indian travelogue. He was born as Kedarnath Pandey in a Bhumihar brahmin family on 9th April 1893 in Pandaha village. His ancestral village was Kanaila Chakrapanpur, Azamgarh district, in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. He went to a local primary school. Later he studied and mastered numerous languages independently, as well as learnt the art of photography. Initially he was a keen follower of Arya Samaj of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Then Buddhism changed his life. After taking diksha in Sri Lanka he became Rahul (son of Buddha) and also used his gotra (Sankritya) with his name and was called "Rahul Sankrityayan". He lost faith in God's existence but still retained faith in reincarnation. Later he became a Socialist and rejected the concepts of reincarnation and the afterlife. The two volumes of Darshan-Digdarshan, a collected history of the world's philosophy give an indication of his philosophy where the second volume is much dedicated to Dharmakirti's Pramana Vartika. This he discovered in a Tibetan translation in Tibet. Sankrityayan's travels took him to different parts of India including Ladakh, Kinnaur, and Kashmir. He also travelled to several other countries including Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Iran, China, and the former Soviet Union. He spent several years in the Parsa Gadh village in the Saran district in Bihar. The village's entry gate is named "Rahul Gate". While traveling, he mostly used surface transport, and he went to certain countries clandestinely. He entered Tibet as a Buddhist monk. He made several trips to Tibet and brought valuable paintings and Pali and Sanskrit manuscripts back to India. Most of these were a part of the libraries of Vikramshila and Nalanda Universities. These objects had been taken to Tibet by fleeing Buddhist monks during the twelfth and subsequent centuries when the invading Muslim armies had destroyed universities in India. Some accounts state that Rahul Sankrityayan employed twenty-two mules to bring these materials from Tibet to India. Patna Museum has a special section of these materials in his honor, where a number of these and other items have been displayed.

One of his most famous books in Hindi is "Volga Se Ganga" (A journey from the Volga to the Ganges) – a work of historical fiction concerning the migration of Aryans from the steppes of the Eurasia to regions around the Volga river; then their movements across the Hindukush and the Himalayas and the sub-Himalayan regions; and their spread to the Indo-Gangetic plains of the subcontinent of India. The book begins in 6000 BC and ends in 1942, the year when Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian nationalist leader called for the Quit India movement. It was published in 1942. A translation into English of this work by Victor Kiernan was published in 1947 as From Volga to Ganga. It was translated by K. N. Muthiya (Tamilputhakalayam) into Tamil as "Valgavil Irundu Gangai Varai" and is still considered a best-seller. The Kannada translation was carried out by B. N. Sharma and called "Volga Ganga". The Telugu translation, "Volga Nunchi Ganga

Ku”, inspired many readers. “Volga Muthal Ganga Vare”, the Malayalam translation, became immensely popular among the young intellectuals of Kerala and it continues to be one of the most influential books of its times. The Bengali version is “Volga Theke Ganga”, which is still acclaimed by the critics.

His most important travelogue literature list includes:

- Tibbat Me Sava Varsha (1933)
- Meri Europe Yatra (1935)
- Athato Ghumakkad Jigyasa
- Volga Se Ganga
- Asia ke Durgam Bhukhando Mein
- Yatra Ke Panne
- Kinnar Desh Mein

Several literary awards were instituted in his honour. These include “Rahul Sankrityayan National Award” for contribution to Hindi travel literature, given by Kendriya Hindi Sanstha Government of India, “Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan Paryatan Puraskar” awarded for contributing significantly in the field of travelogue and discovery and research in Hindi, for books written originally in Hindi on Tourism related subjects, given by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Gopal Singh Nepali

(11th August 1911–17th April 1963) born as Gopal Bahadur Singh, was an Indian poet of Hindi literature and a lyricist of Bollywood. He was born in Bettiah, Bihar, in a Bhumihar brahmin family. His association with Bollywood spanned around two decades, beginning in 1944 and ended with his death in 1963. He wrote lyrics of more than 400 songs in Bollywood, mostly on patriotic themes.

He was a poet of post-Chhayavaad period, and he wrote several collections of Hindi poems including “Umang” (published in 1933). The names of famous poetry collections such as Umang, Ragini, panchhi, Neelima, Himalaya ne Pukara etc. are notable in their important works. He also wrote collections of Nepali poem as ‘Kalpana’. He was also a journalist and edited at least four Hindi magazines, namely, Ratlam Times, Chitrapat, Sudha, and Yogi.

He was very respected along with his contemporaries Mahadevi Verma, Sumitranandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi, Ramdhari Sigh Dinkar etc. His works have been included in course of different universities of India. During Sino-Indian War of 1962, he wrote many patriotic songs and poems.

Some of his notable literary creations include:

- Umang (1933)
- Pancchi (1934)
- Raagini (1935)
- Panchami (1942)

- Naveen (1944)
- Neelima (1945)
- Himalay ne Pukara (1963)

Pandit Nalin Vilochan Sharma

Pandit Nalin Vilochan Sharma (1916–1961) was a professor of Hindi Literature in University of Patna. He started the *Nakenwad* movement in Hindi literature. He was the son of Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ram Avatar Sharma and was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family of scholars.

From an early age, Nalin's father taught him such Sanskrit classics as the Amarkosh, Kalidas's Meghdoot and Suryashatakam. Sharma joined Patna University as a lecturer in the Hindi department, same department that his father had helped build. Nalin had a critical and explorative mind and he was well versed in European literature. In Europe as well as India, Marxist poetry had swept the stage with an immensity that overwhelmed academia. In India the "Chayavaad" style of writing verse had dominated the scene between 1918 and 1936 when it started yielding place to "Pragativaad", or progressive poetry, between 1936 and 1950. The 1950s brought with it a new trend in thinking — a search for a middle path, an equilibrium, an understanding — and into this stepped Nalin Vilochan Sharma with his "Nakenwad".

Sharma was a revolutionary with a strange propensity, deeply influenced by Western thought and literature. He believed that the raw material of poetry should be drawn from the immediate past, the surrounding present, not necessarily the classic era. Nalin's thinking signifies a positive influence of Agyeya and his "Taar-Saptak". He believed that in poetry, words, music, rhythm and play of intonation mattered, and that the technique and diction of poetry mattered more than the content. This went against the established philosophy of poetics which had dominated Indian poetry, a philosophy which emphasised that content was of the greatest significance in poetry. Through Nakenvaad, (three poets had combined their work, "Na"lin, "Ke"sari and "N"resh, hence Naken) Nalin sought to extend his philosophy that words, if exact, rhythmic and lyrical in quality, could lend to poetry what words propped around subject could not.

Simplicity was Nalin's forte and he retained extensively the use of Sanskrit words, traditional concepts and images from daily life. Nalin Vilochan Sharma also left his mark as a dramatist. His unique contribution was the introduction of the chamber drama. One immortal work of his is entitled "Bibbo ka Bibbok". Bibbok is a word derived from Sanskrit dramatology and is a little known form of drama while Bibbo is the heroine's name, derived from that. But it was as a short story writer that Nalin attained his literary peak. He used to say that writing a good short story was a 'krichh sadhana' or walking along the edge of a sword. The time that Nalin made a mark as a short story writer was when post-Freudian psycho-analysis had not made its mark in Hindi writing. And when Nalin introduced the physical reality in its frailest of sumblime aspects it sent shock-waves round the Indian literary world.

Sir V.S. Naipaul (Vidhyadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul)

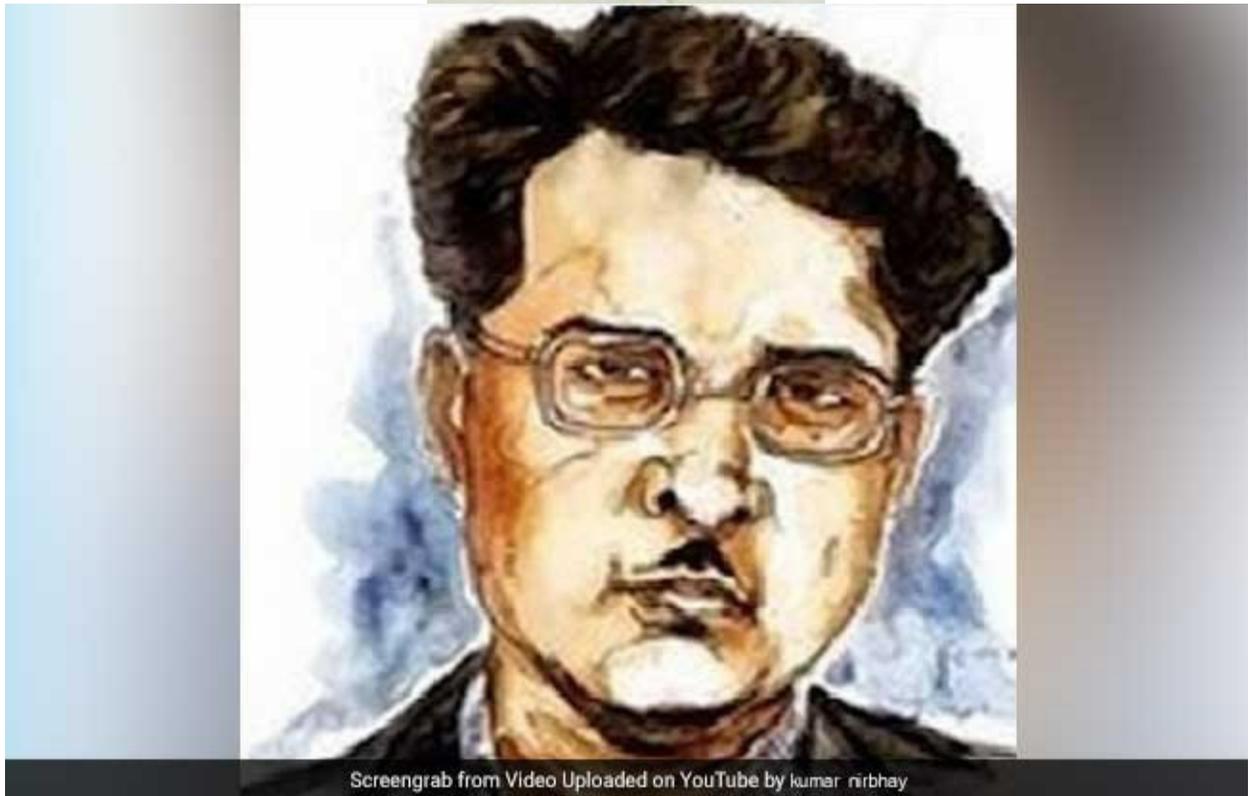
(August 17th 1932-August 11th 2018) commonly known as V. S. Naipaul and, familiarly as Vidya Naipaul, was a Trinidad and Tobago-born Indian descent writer famous for his works of fiction and nonfiction in English. He is known for his comic early novels set in Trinidad, his bleaker

novels of alienation in the wider world, and his vigilant chronicles of life and travels. He wrote in prose that was widely admired, but his views sometimes aroused controversy. He published more than thirty books over fifty years. Naipaul's breakthrough novel "A House for Mr Biswas" was published in 1961. Naipaul won the Booker Prize in 1971 for his novel "In a Free State". He won the Jerusalem Prize in 1983, and in 1989, he was awarded the Trinity Cross, Trinidad and Tobago's highest national honour. He received a knighthood in Britain in 1990, and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001. He remains the only writer of Indian origin (other than Rabindranath Tagore) to have won the Nobel Literature Prize.

V. S. Naipaul was born to Droopat and Seepersad Naipaul on 17th August 1932 in the sugar plantation-town of Chaguanas on the island of Trinidad. Naipaul's father, Seepersad, was an English-language journalist. In "A prologue to an autobiography" (1983), Naipaul describes how Seepersad's great reverence for writers and for the writing about life spawned the dreams and aspirations of his son. In the 1880s, Naipaul's paternal grandfather had emigrated from India to work as an indentured servant in a sugar plantation. In the 1890s, his maternal grandfather was to do the same. During this time, many people in India, their prospects blighted by the Great Famine of 1876-78, or similar calamities, had emigrated to distant outposts of the British Empire such as Trinidad, Fiji, Guyana, and the Dutch colony of Suriname. Although slavery had been abolished in these places in 1833, slave labour was still in demand, and indenture was the legal contract being drawn to meet the demand. According to the genealogy the Naipauls had reconstructed in Trinidad, they were Hindu brahmins (Bhumihars) from East India.



RAMDHARI SINGH DINKAR RAMBRISH BENIPURI



Screengrab from Video Uploaded on YouTube by kumar nirbhay

RAHUL SANKRITAYAYAN GOPAL SINGH NEPALI



SIR V.S. NAIPAUL
The Literary Giants

COLLAGE OF PATHBREAKERS



Being one of few communities of East India who took to modern education early, Bhumihar brahmins, hitherto agrarian community, responded to education like a fish responds to water. The community has a rich history of producing top notch professionals in myriad fields. Bhumihar brahmin community, gifted with scholarship and fearlessness, has produced many stalwarts in various fields. They are a natural in areas requiring leadership like the administrative services, the police, the army and politics. Being of scholarly disposition, the community has also produced many notable poets, authors, professors, and doctors etc. It is amazing that a numerically small community has produced poets like Dinkar and Benipuri, who still shine on the literary firmament of India. I have already dedicated a chapter on the poets of the community. In fact, if an attempt is made to include all the notables from the community, probably the book would run into several volumes. This chapter is just an attempt to capture the journey of a few who chose to walk on the less treaded paths and still carved a niche for themselves. I have included a section on healers (doctors) of the community as a tribute to the humane and sensitive side of the community. Moreover, it is just a collage, and omissions may be for reasons of brevity alone and are not deliberate.

The Music Maestros

Girija Devi

Girija Devi (8th May 1929–24th October 2017) was an Indian classical singer of the Seniya and Banaras gharanas. She performed classical and light classical music and helped elevate the profile of thumri. She died on 24th October 2017. She was awarded Padma Shri in 1972, Padma Bhushan in 1989 and Padma Vibhushan in 2017 for her yeoman services in the field of Indian classical music.

Girija Devi was born in Varanasi, on 8th May 1929, to Ramdeo Rai, a Bhumihar brahmin zamindar. Her father played the harmonium and taught music, and had Girija Devi take lessons in singing khyal and tappa from vocalist and sarangi player Sarju Prasad Misra. She started training at the age of five. She starred in the movie “Yaad Rahe” aged nine and continued her training under Chand Misra in a variety of styles. Girija Devi made her public debut in 1949 on All India Radio Allahabad. She gave her first public concert in Bihar in 1951. She worked as a faculty member of the ITC Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata in the 1980s and of the Banaras Hindu University during the early 1990s, where she taught several students to preserve her musical heritage. Girija Devi often toured and performed across the globe.

Girija Devi sang in the Banaras gharana and performed the purabi ang thumri style typical of the tradition, whose status she helped elevate. Her repertoire included the semi-classical genres

kajri, chaiti, and holi and she sang khyal, Indian folk music, and tappa. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians once stated that her semi-classical singing combined her classical training with the regional characteristics of the songs of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

She died on 24th October 2017 in Kolkatta. Apart from the Padma awards, she was honored with Sangeet Natak Akademy award in 1977, Sangeet Samman at Dover Lane Music conference and the GiIMA lifetime achievement award in 2012.





GIRIJA DEVI: THUMRI EXPONENT OF BENARAS



SHARDA SINHA: DOYEN OF BIHARI FOLK SINGING

The music maestros

Sharda Sinha

Sharda Sinha (1 October 1952) is a Bhojpur/ Maithili language folk-singer. She also sings in Hindi. She is known for her Maithili version of the Chhath Puja themed song “Ho Dinanath”. Sinha was awarded Padma Bhushan, India’s third highest civilian award, on the eve of Republic Day, 2018. In 1991, she received the Padma Shri award for her contribution to music.

Sinha was born in Hulas, Raghopur, Supaul district of Bihar in a Bhumihar brahmin family. Her in-laws home is in Sihma village in Begusarai district. She started her career by singing Maithili folk songs. Sinha sings Maithili, Hindi and Bhojpuri songs. Prayag Sangeet Samiti organised Basant Mahotsava at Allahabad where Sinha presented numerous songs based on the theme of spring season, where the advent of spring was narrated through folk songs. She regularly performs during Chhath Puja festivities. She performed when the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Navin Ramgoolam, came to Bihar. Sinha performed at Pragati Maidan at the Bihar Utsav, 2010, New Delhi. Sinha also sang the song “Kahe Toh Se Sajna” in the hit Bollywood movie Maine Pyar Kia (1989), “Taar Bijli” from Bollywood film Gangs of Wasseypur Part 2 and “Kaun Si Nagaria” from Bollywood film Chaarfutiya Chhokare.

Sharda Sinha is synonymous with Chhath songs.

In her songs with like “Supawo Naa Mile Maai” and “Pahile Pahil Chhathi Maiya”, Sharda is urging people to come to Bihar during Chhath. Other Chhath songs played during the festival include Kelwa Ke Paat Par Ugalan Suraj Mal Jhake Jhuke, Hey Chhathi Maiya, Ho Dinanath, Bahangi Lachakat Jaaye, Roje Roje Ugelaa, Suna Chhathi Maai, Jode Jode Supawa and Patna Ke Ghat Par. Though old, the songs are relevant and devotees play them every year.

Sharda's last album on Chhath, "Arag", had eight songs. In her entire career, she has sung 62 Chhath songs in nine albums released by T-Series, HMV and Tips. Sharda Sinha said:

"Through these songs, I have tried my level best to save our rich culture and tradition, there is a urban contemporary feel so that people can relate to it."

The Sports Gladiators

Ishan Kishan

Ishan Kishan (born 18th July 1998) is a cricketer currently playing for India. He plays for Jharkhand in domestic cricket and Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League (IPL). He is an attacking left-handed opening batsman and a wicket-keeper. He was the captain of India's victorious squad for the 2016 Under-19 Cricket World Cup which also included another current India star, Rishabh Pant. He made his international debut for the India cricket team in March 2021 against England.

Ishan was born in Patna, Bihar in a Bhumihaar brahmin family. His father Pranav Kumar Pandey, is a builder by profession. Ishan's brother Raj Kishan, supported him in pursuing cricket as career. Ishan has a deep connection with Aurangabad (Bihar) district. Ishan's ancestral residence is in Gordiha village under Daudnagar subdivision of Aurangabad district. Ishan's grandmother Savitri Sinha was a civil surgeon in Nawada. After retirement, his grandmother made her home in Nawada itself. While his parents were involved in the pharmaceutical business. Later they all moved to Patna and settled there. Due to registration issue between Bihar Cricket Association and the BCCI, Ishan started playing for neighboring state Jharkhand, based on advice from a senior player and friend. Ishan's idols are former Indian team captain M.S. Dhoni and former Australian wicket-keeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist.

On 6th November 2016, Ishan scored 273 runs against Delhi in the 2016–17 Ranji Trophy. This was the highest score by a player for Jharkhand in the Ranji Trophy. He was the leading run-scorer for Jharkhand in the 2017–18 Ranji Trophy, with 484 runs in six matches. He was the leading run-scorer for Jharkhand in the 2018–19 Vijay Hazare Trophy, with 405 runs in nine matches. In 2016, Ishan was bought by Gujarat Lions in the IPL auction. In 2018, he was bought by the Mumbai Indians in the IPL auction. He was the highest run-scorer for the Mumbai Indians in the 2020 IPL, with 516 runs from 14 matches and won the most sixes award of the season. For the IPL 2022, Ishan was bought by the Mumbai Indians for Rs 15.25 crores, making him the second-most expensive Indian player at the auction, behind Yuvraj Singh.

He made his T20I debut for India on 14 March 2021, against England, scoring 56 off 32 before getting out. India went on to win the game by seven wickets with Kishan being named as the man of the match. He made his ODI debut on 18th July 2021, against Sri Lanka, scoring 59 off 42 balls. Kishan has since played for India in the 2021 ICC Men's T20 World Cup. He is a regular in the current Indian team.





ISHAN KISHAN: TEAM INDIA & MUMBAI INDIANS CRICKETER

Media Mavericks

Anjana Om Kashyap

Anjana Om Kashyap is an Indian news anchor working with Hindi news channel “Aaj Tak” as a Senior Executive Editor. Kashyap started her journalistic career by joining the public broadcaster Doordarshan before moving to Zee News. She then went to News 24 before settling into Aaj Tak. Anjana was born in a middle class Bhumihar brahmin family in Ranchi. Her father, Mr Om Prakash Tiwari, was a doctor on short-service-commission with the Indian Army, and served during the Bangladesh War of Independence.

She had her initial schooling at Loreto Convent, a local Catholic school and then from Delhi Public School, Ranchi. She went on to pursue an honours in Botany from the University of Delhi. She was a prolific debater and exhibited strong leadership qualities. Later she enrolled at the Delhi School of Social Work which inculcated the spirit of public activism in her. Kashyap did her diploma in journalism, from Jamia Millia Islamia. Upon graduation, she joined Doordarshan, where she was assigned to the news-desk of Aankhon Dekhi, an investigative show but was also allotted infrequent reporting duties.

Within a year, she moved to Zee News. Whilst she always wanted to be an anchor; the channel

found her lacking in speaking finesse and employed her in producing roles. However, she was not one to give up on dreams so easily. She persisted in her attempts. In her later years at Zee, she successfully passed the auditions and was occasionally used as an anchor for special features. In 2007, she joined News 24, where she assigned a mainstream role at anchoring in the form of moderating an evening debate show for the first time. She left the venture in early 2012 and moved to Star News; however, it was shut down months later. Kashyap joined the iconic channel of hindi TV journalism, Aaj Tak in 2012. She is still working with Aaj Tak and is one of the star anchors of the channel till this day.

Shweta Singh

Sweta Singh is an Indian TV journalist and news presenter. She is a news anchor and Senior Executive Editor of Special Programming at iconic Hindi news channel Aaj Tak. Shweta was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family in Patna on 21st August 1977. She did her graduation from Patna Womens College. Shweta started her career while still in first year of graduate studies in Patna. She had several bylines to her name in The Times of India Patna edition and Hindustan Times Patna edition, before she switched to electronic media in 1998. She worked for Zee News and Sahara, before joining Aaj Tak in 2002. She is known for her expertise in covering sports-related news. Her show “Sourav ka Sixer” won the award for best sports programme by Sports Journalism Federation of India (SJFI) in 2005. She has also made appearances in some films, like “Chak De India” and “Chakravyuh” as an Aaj Tak news presenter. Singh also did the show “History of Patliputra” during 2015 Bihar Legislative Assembly election.



ANJANA OM KASHYAP



SHWETA SINGH

SM Influencers

Rahul Roushan

Rahul Roushan (born 29th January 1980) is an Indian blogger and businessman. He is prominent right wing SM voice and runs the right leaning “Opindia” site which has given a voice to the hitherto voiceless Indian right wing which was otherwise largely ignored by the MSM. In March 2020, he published his autobiography titled “Sanghi Who Never Went To A Shakha.” The book created a buzz and received positive reception from many including Kangana Ranaut, Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri and Madhav Sharma. Roushan comes from the city of Patna in Bihar. He was born in Bhumihar brahmin family. He graduated in Mathematics from Patna University in year 2001, and then received a postgraduate diploma in broadcast journalism from the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in New Delhi in 2002. Roushan is also an alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad with a Post Graduate Diploma in Management granted in 2007.

After graduating from IIMC, Roushan worked as a copy editor, bulletin producer, and news anchor with the Hindi news channel Sahara Samay for two and a half years. He left journalism to pursue higher studies at IIM Ahmedabad, wherein he turned an entrepreneur. While still being a student, he had launched crickstock.com, a virtual gaming website, ahead of the 2007 Cricket World Cup. Crickstock.com was later sold off to a US based online gaming company and Roushan chose a freelancing career as management consultant; one of his projects included helping the Bihar government set up a management institute in Patna, in 2008. In 2008, inspired by the American news satire website The Onion, Roushan started Faking News as a blog and wrote under the pseudonym Pagal Patraakar (crazy journalist). In 2009, the blog was turned into a full-fledged website. In 2013, Faking News was acquired by Firstpost, a news portal of the Network 18 group, for an undisclosed amount. Roushan went on to serve as its editor till September 2016, when he switched to Swarajya magazine as Chief Strategy Officer.

In November 2018, he became the CEO of a spin-off digital media startup – Aadhyaasi Media & Content Services, which took over the production of OpIndia from Swarajya. Ideologically oriented towards right-wing, OpIndia does fact-checking website and provides free platform to the right wing bloggers. It serves as a great balancing force to the hugely left oriented MSM in countering their deliberate spins.

The Healers

The community led in the field of medical studies, producing stalwart doctors, a trend which started under British India, and continues till this day. This section pays a tribute to a few giants from what is a long list of healers and life savers from the community who have saved lives and provided succour to millions in East India. Apart from being great doctors, several went on to establish leading medical colleges and labs in the region. One volume will not be enough to capture all the great doctors from the community, hence the author asks for pardon for omissions if any, readers should rest assured that they are not intentional.

Dr Sheetal Prasad Singh

One of the very first medicine expert from Bhumihar Brahmin community. His name is most respected in Bihar Medical Society.

Dr Vijay Narain Singh

Among the best surgeons in Bihar, he was longest serving HOD-Surgery of PMCH. After retirement he started a medical college with Krishna Kant Babu in Patna which is known as Nalanda Medical College.

Dr Anmola Sinha

“When You educate a man; you educate a man but when you educate a woman; you educate a generation”. Dr Anmola Sinha was probably the first Lady gynaecologist of Bihar. A bright student from early childhood, she was encouraged by her parents to take up medical studies during times when girls stepping out for higher studies was a rarity.

A rare intelligent doctor, native of Shahi Meenapur(Muzaffarpur), she was excellent gynaecologist & obstretician. It is said, she always got scholarship in education and she credits her father for her education. Her eldest daughter was a record holder in MBBS examination, to getting highest marks at All India level. While Another Doctor daughter is married to grandson of Radiologist Dr J P Sinha.

Dr K K Sinha

A neurosurgeon of Ranchi, is one of the major personalities in the medical profession of East India, particularly of Jharkhand and Bihar. Dr K. K. Sinha was a well-known name in the medical fraternity across the country. He completed his MBBS from Darbhanga Medical College, Bihar in 1953. He then completed his post graduate and Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians of London (FRCP) degrees at Edinburgh, UK. He joined Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), then called Ranchi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) in 1963.

In 1976, Dr Sinha left RIMS and started private consultations in Ranchi. For more than four decades, his residence was thronged by patients from across the country. His correct diagnosis and brevity of treatment catapulted his stature in the eyes of the ailing patients, many of whom who had lost hope otherwise. The waiting period for his appointment could be as much as 6 months. Dr K.K. Sinha passed away in 2019.

Padmashri Dr. Chandreshwar Prasad Thakur

Popularly known as Dr. C. P. Thakur, he is a former member of Rajya Sabha, a former minister in the Government of India, a physician and a leader of Bharatiya Janata Party. He was cabinet minister from 1999 to 2004 in the BJP government. Dr C.P. Thakur was born on 3rd September 1931 in Dubaha village of Muzaffarpur district in Bihar. He is a physician and had received the degrees of M.B.B.S., M.D., M.R.C.P., F.R.C.P. from Patna Medical College, Patna University, Royal College of Physicians, London and Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh and Royal College of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, London.

As a physician, Dr. Thakur did extensive research for the treatment of Kala-azar. In 2017, he became the first Indian medical scientist to receive a lifetime achievement award from the World Health Organization. Dr. C. P. Thakur, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Patna Medical College, Patna, has also received the Ranbaxy Research Awards award in the field of Medical Sciences (Clinical Research) by the then Hon'ble President of India, Dr. A.P. J. Abdul Kalam, presented the for his significant contribution towards the understanding of drug response in treatment of

kala-azar.

Dr A K N Sinha

Tallest figure in Indian Medical Association and also president of Commonwealth Medical Association and longest serving president of most powerful body Medical Council Of India(MCI) is Governing body of All Medical Colleges in India. He was also a famous Cardiologist.

Dr R B Sharma

Dr R B Sharma is most famous surgeon in the field of Neuro Surgery in Bihar and has served for many years in UK. He is native of Jihuli village and married to Dr Usha Sharma, granddaughter of Old Gaya's famous Politician and Philanthropist Khaderan Babu. Dr Usha Sharma is also an experienced gynaecologist & obstretician apart from having political interests.

Dr U N Shahi

Another rare surgeon that Bihar has produced. He was native of Shahi Meenapur, Muzaffarpur. His son Sri Pushkar Shahi is a famous lawyer in Patna.

Dr Priyamvada Tiwari

She retired as Director of IMS-BHU few years back. She is a well-known doctor in Varanasi. After retirement she opened her own hospital in Luxa Road near her residence.

Dr Shanti Roy

Dr Shanti Roy is one of the most famous gynaecologists & obstetricians of Bihar. She belongs to Goreakothi and married in Gopalganj. Her son Dr Himanshu Rai is also a noted infertility expert in Bihar. Dr Shanti Roy's younger sister Dr Anita Singh is also a noted gynaecologist.

The Technocrats

R.V.Shahi

Shri Ram Vinay Shahi or R.V. Shahi is fondly called the Power Man of India. He has held top positions with various power generating companies of India including NTPC, NHPC, Power Grid Corporation of India, BEST etc to name just a few. He ultimately rose to the position of Power Secretary, Government of India, in the Vajpayee government from 2002-2007.

He graduated in mechanical engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Jamshedpur. He then earned post-graduate degrees: industrial engineering, business management, and a diploma in advanced industrial management from Delft, Holland. He is a Fellow of the World Academy of Productivity Sciences, a Fellow of Institution of Engineers, a Fellow of International Institute of Electrical Engineers and a Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering.

He was Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Power, India from 2002–2007, the longest-serving Power Secretary in Indian history, and the Chairman and Managing Director of Bombay Suburban Electric Supply (BSES) Ltd. from 1994-2002 (the predecessor company to Reliance Energy). As Chairman and Managing Director, Shahi is known for transforming BSES Ltd. from a small power utility to one of the largest in the nation. As Secretary of Power, he is

widely credited for reforming and revitalizing the Indian power sector through the landmark Electricity Act of 2003, which liberalized the sector and initiated private investment in Indian Power sector.

Besides being responsible for the entire Indian Power Sector (168,000 megawatts or 225,000,000 horsepower capacity, including captive plants), as Secretary, Shahi was directly responsible for the central public sector undertakings viz. National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited, National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, Tehri Hydro Development Corporation, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation, Bhakra Beas Management Board and Damodar Valley Corporation. He was also President of the Governing Council of Central Power Research Institute, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Bureau of Energy Efficiency and Chairman of the Governing Council of National Power Training Institute, having 5 large training institutes in various parts of the country. He worked as Secretary to the Government of India for almost five years, until he relinquished the charge on 31 January 2007.

Prior to taking over the Indian Power Sector as Secretary, R.V. Shahi was Chairman and Managing Director of BSES Ltd (the predecessor company to Reliance Energy) from 1994 to 2002, which he transformed from a small distribution utility to a multi-unit fully integrated power utility having generation, transmission and distribution. BSES subsequently became Reliance Energy.

During the five-year tenure as Secretary, the Indian electricity sector witnessed a major restructuring of the power industry through formulation and implementation of several legislative and policy initiatives aimed at creation of a competitive market structure. These include the Electricity Act (2003), National Electricity Policy (2005), Electricity Tariff Policy (2006) and Accelerated Power Development Reform Programme (2002). There was also setting and operationalising of Bureau of Energy Efficiency under Energy Conservation Act (2001), Rural Electrification Policy (2005), Ultra Mega Power Project Policy (2006), Merchant Power Plant Policy (2006), the 50,000 MW Hydroelectric Initiative (2003), 100,000 MW Thermal Project Initiative (2004).

R.V. Shahi was awarded “BEST POWER MAN of the Millennium Year 2000” Award by National Foundation of Indian Engineers.

Other than being on the board of various companies and entities, Shahi sits on the Board of Governors of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow and Institute of Energy Management and Research (IEMR) Gurgaon.

The Entrepreneurs

Samprada Singh (Samprada Babu)

founder of Alkem Chemicals, a leading pharmaceutical company of India

Samprada Singh (1925–27th July 2019) was an Indian businessman, who was the founder and chairman emeritus of the renowned pharmaceutical company Alkem Laboratories. He led and shaped Alkem into a pharma giant which it is today In 2017, Samprada Singh had an estimated net worth of \$3.3 billion. He died on 27 July 2019.

Samprada Singh was born in Jehanabad, Bihar in an ordinary farmer family. But he had the fire

in his belly to do something big. He did his B.Com. degree from Patna University. He started his career as an ordinary salesman at a retail chemist shop in Patna. His journey from a salesman to the founder of a leading pharma company is awe inspiring and speaks volumes about his dedication and hard work. He founded Alkem Laboratories Ltd along with his younger brother Basudeo Narayan Singh, in 1973 and served as its chairman emeritus till his death. In 2017, Samprada Singh was ranked as the 43rd richest man in India by Forbes magazine. In 2018, Samprada Singh was the richest Bihari in India.

Alkem Laboratories Limited is an Indian multinational pharmaceutical company headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India that manufactures and sells pharmaceutical generics, formulations and nutraceuticals in India and globally. In 2006 anti-infective drug Taxim of Alkem became the first anti-infective drug in the Indian pharmaceutical industry to cross 1,000 million in terms of domestic sales in India. In 2014 Clavam another drug from Alkem crossed 2,000 million mark in terms of domestic sales in India. In 2007 the company filed its first ANDA for drug Amlodipine which was approved in 2009. Alkem has developed a portfolio of more than 700 branded generic drugs, with 13 of the brands featured among the top 300 brands in India. Alkem has 21 manufacturing facilities, 19 in India and 2 in US. 5 of the facilities are US FDA, TGA, UK MHRA approved. In terms of domestic sales, Alkem is the sixth largest pharma manufacturer in India.

Awards & recognitions: In 2009, Pharmaceutical Leadership Summit & Awards founded by Satya Brahma awarded Samprada Singh with a Lifetime Achievement Award for building Alkem as a top Indian Pharma Company.

In 2017, Samprada Singh received the Ernst and Young 'Entrepreneur of the Year in Healthcare and Life Sciences'.





SAMPRADA BABU: FOUNDER ALKEM LABORATORIES

The Entrepreneurs

Mahendra Prasad (King Mahendra)

Mahendra Prasad (8 January 1940–27 December 2021) owned two pharmaceutical companies, Aristo Pharmaceuticals and Mapra Laboratories Pvt Ltd. Aristo has consistently been in the top 20 list of Indian pharma industry. Mahendra Prasad was born at Govindpur village in the modern Indian state of Bihar. He belonged to Bhumihiar family. Mahendra Prasad, popularly referred to as King Mahendra in Bihar, also dabbled into politics and was a member of Rajya Sabha. He was the richest MP in the Indian parliament in those days. He started his pharma venture in partnership with Samprada babu but went on to set up his own company in 1971.

Ramakant Rai Sharma

Native of Gazipur, UP but brought up in Kolkata and has remained there ever since. He is owner of Reliance dyes and chemicals which is a very old company now. He also owns a few more business across India in Mumbai, Chennai etc. He was also president of Brahmarshi Samaj is Kolkata and is active both among Bhumihiar Brahmins of Kolkata and Gazipur.

Dr. Kalika Sharan Singh

A native of Nawalpur, Maharajganj, Siwan has been a successful medical practitioner. Later he resigned the government job to start his own Pharmaceutuical company M/s Hi-Tec Laboratories Limited, based at New Delhi with marketing network in four states namely Bihar, Jharkhand,

West Bengal and Orissa.

Sarvesh Shahi

A native of Ahiapur in Muzaffarpur, Sarvesh Shahi is the owner of Shahi Shipping Company with its headquarter at Mumbai. His elder brother Karunesh Shahi is a famous lawyer of Muzaffarpur.

Legal Eagles

Lal Narayan Sinha

An outstanding legal luminary who was the Attorney General of India during the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi. Born in Village Mussi (Belaganj, Gaya) he was regarded for his legal skills because of defending Emergency.

Chief Justice of India Lalit Mohan Sharma

Son of above-mentioned Lal Narayan Sinha, Lalit Mohan Sinha was also a reputed legal scholar. He was born on February 12, 1928, at Gaya (Bihar). Passed B.A. Hons. (Patna University) in 1946. Passed B.L. (Patna University) in 1948. Enrolled as articled clerk in High Court, Patna in 1949. Started practice in High Court, Patna as an Advocate – February 6, 1950. Enrolled as Supreme Court Advocate – March 6, 1957. Later nominated as Senior Advocate. Took charge (oath) as Judge, Patna High Court on April 12, 1973. Took charge (oath) as Judge, Supreme Court of India on October 5, 1987. Appointed Chief Justice of India on November 18, 1992. Retired on February 11, 1993.

Justice N.P. Singh

Born on 25th December 1931. Enrolled as an Advocate on 9th January, 1956; Appointed as the Judge of the Patna High Court on 12th April, 1973; Became the Acting Chief Justice of Patna High Court in 1991; On 4th February, 1992 took over as Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court; Appointed as the Judge of the Supreme Court on 15th June, 1992. Retired on 24th Dec 1996.

Justice Nagendra Rai

He was born on 31st Jan 1944. He was enrolled as an Advocate in 1966, and practised mainly in Criminal, Civil And Constitutional Matters in the Patna High Court. He became Judge of Patna High Court in the year 1990 and Acting Chief Justice in 2005, retired in 2006.

Justice Narayan Roy

He was born on 1st Feb 1947. He was enrolled as an Advocate in 1972, and practised mainly in Criminal, Civil and Constitutional matters in the Patna High Court. He became Government Pleader at Ranchi Bench of Patna High Court in the year 1986 and Government Advocate in 1990, became Permanent Judge of Patna High Court in the year 1991 and Acting Chief Justice on 16th Oct 2007. He Belongs to a Zamindar family of Giridih District, Jharkhand.

Vikas Singh

He is currently the Additional Solicitor General of India in the Supreme Court. Mr. Singh started working as an advocate in the Supreme Court since 1990 and was designated as Senior Advocate

in December 2004. He has handled constitutional, administrative, corporate, criminal and arbitration matters in the apex court and Delhi and Bombay High Courts. Vikas Singh appears frequently on leading TV news channels opining on various burning legal issues of the nation. He is also famous for representing Sushant Singh Rajput's family in their fight to get justice against Bollywood in the famous SSR suicide case.

Babu Hari Shankar Singh Vakil of Benares

Born in a family of agriculturists at village Belwa (near Babatpur airport) Varanasi, in the year 1901. He started his practice at civil side at Banaras District Court, attained highest regard in society and in Bar. He was amongst topmost lawyers of the time. Died in the year 1967. He left behind a family full of lawyers and judges. His two nephews' Sri S. N. Singh and Sri K. P. Singh became Judges of the Hon'ble Allahabad High Court. Babu Hari Shankar Singh's sons Sri Rajender Prasad Singh and Sri Rajeshwar Prasad Singh are practising advocates at Varanasi Civil Court. Both have earned great reputation as most honest advocates. Two grandsons of Hari Shankar Babu Vakil, Rajeev Kumar Singh & Sunil Kumar Singh are leading advocates at the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Dr Krishna Nandan Singh

He is the former President of Patna High Court Bar Association. A Doon School pass-out, who further did his doctorate from the Benares Hindu University. He has handled constitutional, administrative, corporate, criminal and arbitration matters in Patna and Ranchi High Courts primarily but also appears in matters in the Apex Court. Dr K.N. Singh belongs to the highly-respected family of Sheohar Raj which traces its ancestry to Bettiah Raj.

Statecraft Practitioners

Shri Manoj Sinha

Manoj Sinha (born 1st July 1959) is an Indian politician serving as the 2nd and the current Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. He served as the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Communications and Minister of State for Railways in the Government of India. Sinha was elected as Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, representing Ghazipur for three terms from the Bharatiya Janata Party. Sinha was in the race for the post of UP Chief Minister after 2017 Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly election.

He was born in a Bhumihar brahmin family. He has a B.Tech and M.Tech degree in Civil Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi (earlier called IT-BHU). During his student days, Sinha was the students' union president in the Banaras Hindu University. His political career began when he was elected as the president of Banaras Hindu University Students Union in 1982. He was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1996 and repeated the term in 1999. Sinha has been a member of the BJP national council from 1989 to 1996. He was elected to the Lower House for a third term in national politics when the BJP swept the Lok Sabha elections in 2014. Prior to joining active politics, he was a member of the General Council, School of Planning during 1999–2000. He has also been a member of committee on Energy and member of committee on Government Assurances.

He was elected for successive terms in 1996 & 1999 and again in 2014 to the Lok Sabha from Ghazipur Constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He was made the Minister of State for the Railways

Ministry in the first set of ministers inducted into Narendra Modi government in May 2014. In July 2016, during the second cabinet reshuffle, he was also made Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Communications Ministry. An agriculturalist at heart and a silent performer who consciously maintains a low profile, Sinha has been among the best performing members of Parliament in the 13th Lok Sabha in 1999. Recently, he was counted among the seven most honest MPs by a leading magazine. Sinha, a civil engineer and an IIT-BHU alumnus, has set a rare example by utilising his entire MPLAD Fund for the welfare of the people of his constituency.

He is both recognised for a strong ability to connect with masses, especially at the rural level along with being a firm administrator. Manoj Sinha was appointed as the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir by the President of India, a day after G. C. Murmu resigned. On 7 August 2020, Sinha took his oath of office and still serving as the LG of UT of J&K. With his able administrative skills and sharp political acumen, he is leading the revival of economy and politics in the post article 370 era.

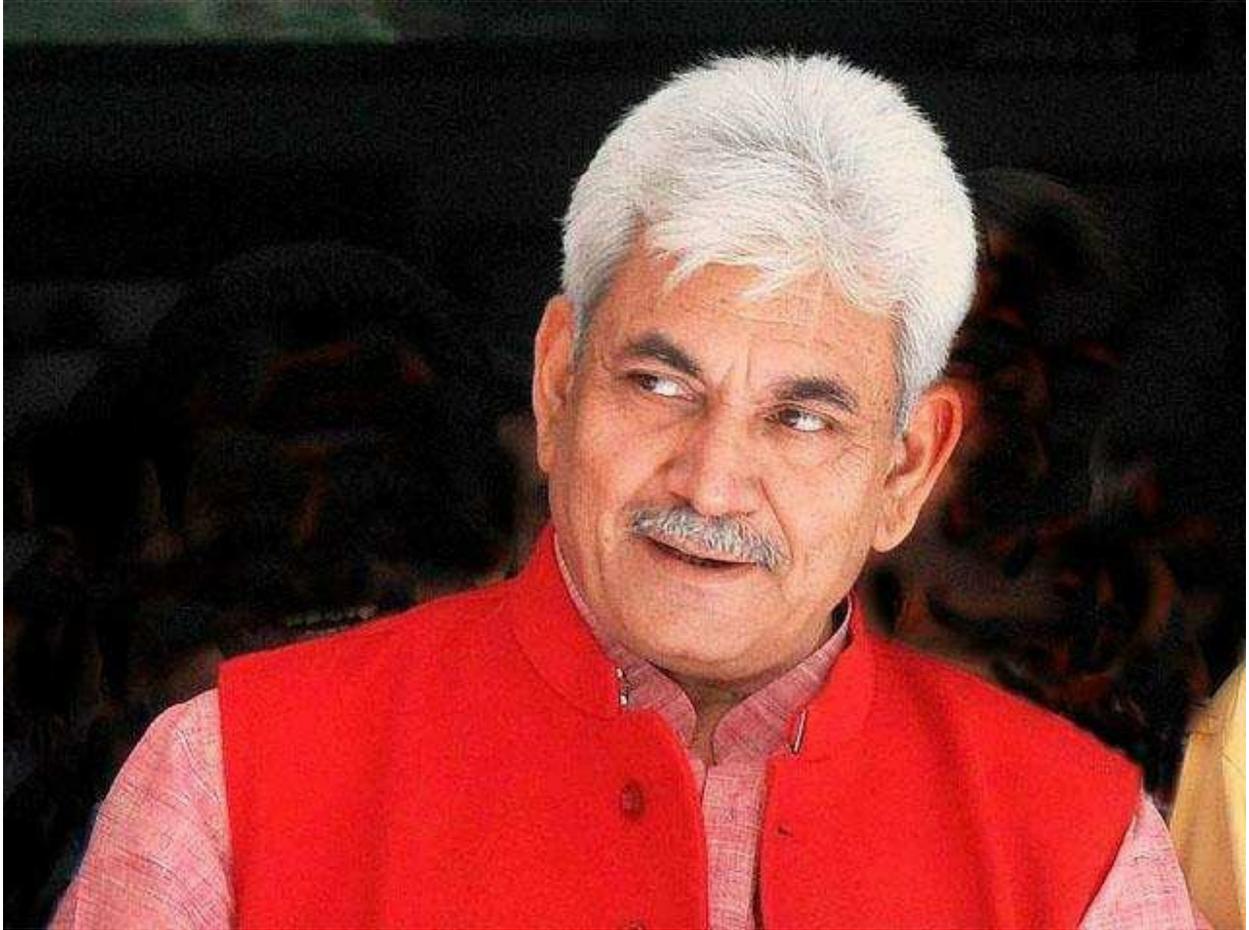
Shri Giriraj Singh

Giriraj Singh (born 8th September 1952) is an Indian politician and the Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department in the current Modi government. He is the Member of Parliament from the Begusarai Lok Sabha constituency in the 17th Lok Sabha. He has also formerly served as Minister of Cooperative, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Resources Development in the Government of Bihar.

Giriraj Singh was born in Barahiya town in Lakhisarai district of Bihar in a Bhumihar brahmin family. He graduated from Magadh University in 1971. Singh served in the government of Bihar as Co-Operative Minister from 2005 to 2010 and as Animal Husbandry minister from 2010 to 2013. He has been a staunch supporter of Narendra Modi from the beginning and is often referred to as Modi's Hanuman in the media. He publicly supported Modi's candidature for Prime Minister position for a long time. He was among the eleven BJP ministers who were dismissed by Nitish Kumar as a result of breaking the JDU-BJP alliance. He was a member of the Bihar State Bharatiya Janata Party's 16-member state election committee and a State Minister (independent charge) of the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, after winning parliament election from Nawada Constituency in 2014 Lok Sabha election. In May 2019, he became the Cabinet Minister of the newly formed Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries after defeating CPI candidate Kanhaiya Kumar in the 2019 Indian general election. In July 2021, he became Minister of Rural Development and Minister of Panchayati Raj in Second Modi ministry after the Cabinet reshuffle, post which he currently holding and ably serving the people.



GIRIRAJ SINGH: CABINET MINISTER



MANOJ SINHA: J&K GUV
The Statecraft Practitioners

BHUMIHAR DIASPORA



During the late 19th and early 20th centuries migration was encouraged by the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization of the British empire. However not all of it was for economic reasons and not all of it was voluntary either. British requiring cheap labour to fuel their rapid growth often forced this migration, a sort of modern day slave trade, often leaving the migrant no choice. A large part of such forced economic migration took place from East and South India possibly because of prevailing poverty as well its proximity to the ports of Calcutta and Madras. Interestingly most of these migrants maintained domiciliary roots alive and wherever possible, Mauritius Bhumihars being an example, their marital links with their motherland. The migrants from East India were referred to as “Girmitiyas”, a reference to the indentured labour agreements which they signed with the government (British). Government became “girit” in local dialect and those going overseas as indentured labour to foreign lands came to be referred as girmitiyas. British government promised them return at the end of the contract. However British reneged on their promise in most cases and only handful could return back. These poor migrants by the dint of sheer hard work and intellect soon carved a niche for themselves in foreign lands and today are a force to reckon with in their adopted lands. Being a hardworking and intelligent community of East India, Bhumihar brahmins formed a big part of the migrants from East India during British times. Ethnic Bhumihar migrant population in sizeable numbers are found in Mauritius, Suriname, Trinidad & Guyana to name a few countries. It is amazing to find that these ethnic Indian populations in remote lands have managed to preserve their language and cultural links with the motherland even after so many years. In fact, Indian Arrival Day is a holiday celebrated on various days in the nations of the Caribbean, Fiji, South Africa, and Mauritius, commemorating the first arrival of people from the Indian subcontinent to their respective nations. In Guyana, Mauritius, and Trinidad and Tobago, it is an official public holiday.

Mauritius

The Indo-Mauritians are people of Indian descent, represent a majority, comprising 68 percent of the population. Their total population is estimated to be 0.9 million. Mauritius is the only African country with Hinduism as its major religion. A majority of Indo-Mauritians are of Bihari descent. There is a significant migrant population in Mauritius of Bhumihar brahmins, who have made a mark for themselves in different walks of life. All but one Mauritian prime ministers have been of Bihari descent. They are still in touch with family members in India and there are many instances of marital relations between them, maintained in order to keep their cultural heritage intact. During the 70-80s, famous Indo Mauritian politicians vied with one another to get their daughters married in reputed Bhumihar families of Bihar.

Bihari Mauritians were mainly from the Gaya, Chhapra, Bhojpur and Gopalganj and East and

West Champaran districts. In those early days of Migration, the labourers referred Mauritius as 'Marich'. Renowned author Amitav Ghosh wrote an acclaimed novel set in this period, based on extensive research, called the 'Sea of Poppies'. This fictional account tells of a ship, called 'The Ibis', which brought the Bihari bonded labourers to Mauritius. It describes the devastation of the farming community in the region by the monopolistic British East India Company. According to the book, many small land owners were forced to cultivate poppies to produce the opium that was trafficked to China. This created a supply of hungry and impoverished Bihari migrants who were desperate enough to brave the hellish journey to Mauritius and even more distant colonies of the empire.

A wonderful study of Bhumihar migrants from Bihar to Mauritius particularly their care for domiciliary visits and cultural ties has been produced by Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff. "Across the Kalapani: The Bihari presence in Mauritius", a book volume by Marina Carter and illustrated by Neermala Luckeenarain, tells the story of migration from India to Mauritius, paying special attention to the populous state of Bihar. The journey to the port, the voyage across the kalapani, settlement on Mauritius and the cultural renaissance of the overseas Indians are detailed. The book analyses the roots of Bihari migration from the 19th century to the present day and depicts the uprooting and resettlement of the thousands of men, women and children who made their new home on the island. The blossoming of Bihari traditions in Mauritius is discussed alongside the restructuring and transformations in identity which crossing the kalapani has entailed. Prose, poetry and art are brought together in the volume to recreate scenes and events of Bihari history in Mauritius and to evoke the dramas of exile and settlement.

Fiji

Indo-Fijians, also known as Fiji Indians, are Fijian people of South Asian descent and include people who trace their ancestry to the Indian subcontinent. Although Indo-Fijians constituted a majority of Fiji's population from 1956 through the late 1980s, discrimination and the resultant brain drain resulted in them numbering only 37.6% in the 2007 census.

Although they hailed from various regions in the Indian subcontinent, the vast majority of Indo-Fijians trace their origins to the Awadh and Bhojpur regions of Bihar & UP. Indians in Fiji speak Fiji Hindi which is based on the Awadhi dialect with major influence from Bhojpuri. It is distinct to the modern standard Hindi spoken in India. The major home districts of Fiji's North Indian labourers were Basti, Gonda, Faizabad, Sultanpur and Azamgarh, in the present-day Awadh region of Uttar Pradesh and the present-day Bhojpur region of North Bihar. It is believed that a sizeable chunk of these ethnic East Indians were from the Bhumihar brahmin community.

The contracts of the indentured labourers, which they called girmits (agreements), required them to work in Fiji for a period of five years. Living conditions on the sugar cane plantations, on which most of the girmityas (indentured labourers) worked, had poor standards which resembled that of slavery. Public outrage in the United Kingdom at such abuses was a factor in the decision to halt the scheme in 1916. After a further five years of work as free labourer, they were given the choice of returning to India at their own expense, or remain in Fiji. The great majority opted to stay because they could not afford to return or were refused to be sent back. After the expiry of their girmits, many leased small plots of land from Fijians and developed their own sugarcane fields or cattle farmlets. Others went into business in the towns that were beginning to spring up.

With time they rose up in society by their hardwork and intellect and even rose to the occupy the Fiji's highest office. Mahendra Chaudhry became Fiji's first Indian-Fijian Prime Minister on 19 May 1999. Vijay Singh, nicknamed "The Big Fijian", was a Fijian professional golfer and a contemporary of Tiger Woods. He had won 34 events on the PGA Tour, including three major championships: one Masters title (2000) and two PGA Championships (1998, 2004). He is the first person of South Asian descent to win a major championship. He was elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2006.

Suriname

Suriname or Surinam, officially known as the Republic of Suriname, is a country on the north-eastern Atlantic coast of South America. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west, and Brazil to the south. At just under 165,000 square kilometres (64,000 square miles), it is the smallest sovereign state in South America. It has a population of little over 0.6 million, dominated by descendants from the laborers brought in from Africa and Asia. Most of the people live by the country's (north) coast, in and around its capital and largest city, Paramaribo. In 1954, Suriname became one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On 25 November 1975, it left the Kingdom to become an independent state. Suriname is considered a culturally Caribbean country, and is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

As a plantation colony, Suriname had an economy dependent on labour-intensive commodity crops. To make up for a shortage of labour, the Dutch recruited and transported contract or indentured laborers from the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia) and India (the latter through an arrangement with the British, who then ruled the area). The second largest ethnic group, after the Africans are the East Indians which form about 27.4% of the population. They are descendants of 19th-century indentured workers from India, hailing mostly from the modern Indian states of Bhojpuri speaking areas of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Eastern Uttar Pradesh along the Nepal border. A sizeable chunk of this labour force from East India was from Bhumihars of UP & Bihar. Hinduism is second most popular religion of Suriname after Christianity.

The ethnic East Indians have managed to preserve their mother tongue bhojpuri till this day, albeit in a masala form due to close interaction with other ethnic groups. Sarnami, a fusion of Bhojpuri and Awadhi, is the third-most used language. Holi-Phagwa is a popular festival amongst the east Indians of Suriname. In Suriname, Indian Arrival Day is celebrated on June 5, 1873. On this day a ship named Lalla Rookh, arrived in Paramaribo carrying the first batch of 399 Indian Indenture Labours, mainly from East India.

CONCLUSION



From ousting the Greek invaders in ancient times to fighting the Muslim invaders and British rule in the medieval times, Bhumihars have always led the fight to restore the honour of our mother land, Bharat. Even as the Greeks led by one of the greatest Generals in human history, Alexander the Great, were ravaging the north western flanks of India, a Chanakya was plotting a quiet pushback against the Greeks. When the successors of Great King Ashoka, smitten by the non-violent ways of Buddhism, were dilly dallying against the imminent threat of Greek resurgence, a Pushyamitra Shunga rose up to shake the warriors of the nation from their stupor of non-violence and pushed back the Greeks beyond the borders of Bharat forever. When the brave Rajputs of Mewar led by the one-eyed warrior king, Rana Sanga, were fighting the Mughals at the battle of Khanwa, a Raja Kamdev Mishr opened his heart and doors and put all his resources at the disposal of the brave Rana.

As the British Raj consolidated across India, most of the Indian royalty chose to submit to the British rule, but a Raja Chait Singh, a Raja Fateh Bahadur Shahi, a Raja Jugal Kishor decided to put up a fight. From arresting Warren Hastings to leading a guerrilla war against the British for decades, these brave Bhumihar Kings and Zamindars, refused to bend in front of the mighty British. When forced to use a rifle cartridge allegedly laden with beef starch, against their Hindu beliefs, a Mangal Pandey became the first one to rise up in protest and soon a nation followed. The indomitable spirit of the community has shone down the ages.

And they have not only inspired and dazzled with their bravery but with their scholarship and intellect as well. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar's pen, drenched in the patriotic fervour of Veer Rasa, inspired many mutinies and protests against the British rule. His poetry continues to inspire patriotism and chivalry in Indians till today. Dinkar also plucked the knowledge and inspiration of heroes in our epics and presented it in Hindi, the language of the masses. In a way reintroduced generations of youth to the glorious history of our blessed land, Bharat. In British times, when most intellectuals were attracted by Western thoughts and ideas, a Rambriksh Benipuri chose to talk about rural India-the real India, in his unforgettable plays and short stories. A Gopal Singh Nepali is still remembered for his patriotic poems written during the Sino-Indian war of 1962, when independent India faced one of its biggest external military threats. His poems inspired many in those testing times. Meanwhile, in faraway lands of the Caribbean, a V.S. Naipaul, carrying the genes of his Bhumihar brahmin lineage, decided not to wallow in the pain of his indentured labourer ancestry. He instead made his past as a reference to weave fantastic stories to dazzle the world with the magic of his pen. And dazzle he did, with a Booker prize among many others, finally culminating in a Nobel prize for Literature. Naipaul has his admirers and haters, both in good numbers. But no one denies his literary genius.

The community has not shied away from reforming itself from within either. A pre-

dominantly land holding community threw up many peasant leaders who, under the able leadership of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, fought incessantly for the rights of small, marginal and tenant farmers. The Kisan Sabha movement started in Bihar under the leadership of Swamiji. He had formed the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in 1929 in order to mobilise peasant grievances against the land lords, which inspired farmers' movements across India. The movement culminated in the abolition of Zamindari in Bihar in 1949 under the chief ministership of Shri Babu, another Bhumihar political stalwart of Bihar. In fact, Bihar, under the stewardship of Shri Babu, was among the first few states of independent India to abolish the zamindari system. Shri Babu must have staked all his political capital of support among his fellow caste men, who were primarily the land holders, when he abolished the Zamindari system. But such was his commitment to the cause of the poor and such was his standing among his followers that he pulled off this near miracle without any major protests.

Shri Babu was also at the forefront of the Dalit temple entry movement in Bihar. While it is normal today, it is not hard to imagine the kind of resistance that the Dalit temple entry movement must have faced in pre-independence Bihar among the orthodox Hindus. But such was his commitment to the cause that Shri Babu himself led the Dalit entry into the famous Baidynath Dham (Baba Dham) temple at Deoghar. Acharya Kishor Kunal, a super cop who turned spiritual, continued the tradition of Shri Babu when he trained and appointed a Dalit as the priest of the famous Mahavir Hanuman temple in Patna in 1993.

As India celebrates the Amrit Mahotsav (75th anniversary) of its independence, Bharat, i.e., India, is on a path of economic and cultural reawakening. It has recently become the 5th largest economy in the world, overtaking the economy of Great Britain, its erstwhile ruler not too long ago. As India will rapidly move from a developing to a developed economy in the coming few decades, the traditional power structures in politics and society will crumble. Caste barriers are melting and caste-based politics of sheer numbers is probably on its last legs. Talent, and not surnames, will matter in the days ahead as our democracy matures into meritocracy. The Bhumihar community youth, with their natural bravery and erudition, are tailor-made for innovations and enterprise, which will form the driving force of New India. I sometimes see youth of Bhumihar community getting disheartened with the loss of their social status and traditional sources of subsistence like agriculture. My message to them is that while we may have lost our traditional tools of subsistence, we still carry the twin endowments of indomitable spirits and intellect in our genes. A Mangal Pandey inspired a million mutinies just with his bravery. A Dinkar did not require political or social power to shine like a colossus in the field of Indian literature. A Shri Babu, with his selfless and non-partisan style of politics, was loved by one and all in Bihar. Let the loss of political power or social status not bog you down. No one can take away our genes, our lineage. Because we are Bhumihar Ayachak brahmins, brahmins who refused to beg.

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