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## **Sher Shah Abadi Community: A Study from Historical Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*The Sher Shah Abadi Community was the descendents of Afghan soldiers in general. However considering the Arabic influence on its dialect, it can be presumed that their forefathers were the people of Nuristan in Afghanistan. At first they might have migrated from an Arab region to Nuristan via Iraq, invaded Bengal as soldiers of Sher Shah and might have permanently settled in Shershahbad Pargana. They had been deprived of professions as soldiers and others officials during Mughal periods and continued to spend disastrous lives. They were also victimized by the British rules. The hostile attitude of British Power alienated them. Consequently they participated in anti-British Movements like Wahabi Movement and challenged the British oppressors in many ways. Even after 60 years of achieving independence, they are lagging behind others in respect of socio-economic conditions like education, government jobs, businesses etc.*

***Key Words: Bengal, Shershahbad Pargana, Sher Shah Abadi Community, Wahabi Movement.***

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**Introduction:** Bengal was one of the very prosperous states in medieval India. For such prosperity there were many foreign invasions and also immigrations had taken place. Among those invasions was carried out by Iktiyar uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar in 1203. It was the prelude of Muslim arrival in Bengal. The Gaur, Panduwa, Tanda, Tanrha, Ekdala, Devicourt etc. were the capitals of Bengal over the centuries. North Bengal was the first region exposed to Muslim conquest and rule as well as the Islamic cultural influence. Sher Shah and Sur dynasty lasted in Bengal for a quarter century. Within this period the soldiers of Sher Shah as well as the managerial officers and intelligentsia led to the creation of an innovative centre of population, who were originally assimilation of immigrants from Afghanistan and native inhabitants. This mixed Muslim inhabitant increasingly evolved into a divergent community particularly in the direction of the arrival of Mughals in North Bengal and were known as Sher Shah Abadi Community. Then, when the Mughals captured Bengal, they moved the capital of Bengal from Gaur to Dhaka. At that time the pre- Mughal soldiers and other administrative officials were removed from their jobs. And those jobless and deprived people gradually adapted cultivation as their profession and continued to live at Shershahbad Pargana at the confluence of the rivers Ganges and the Padma, it covered in the districts of Malda and Murshidabad of Bengal. They settled around the fertile lands of the rivers, canals, *khals* etc. They also prepared suitable agricultural lands by cutting jungles. They were kept out of Bengal politics. So no historical data about the Sher Shah Abadi Community of those eras are found. The documentary sources about this community are found in the British Period. The British surveyors defined this community as the descendents of Afghan soldiers of Sher Shah who were

settled in Shershahbad Pargana in 1540s. The people of this community suffered disastrously in Mughal as well as in British periods. They also participated anti British Movements. And because of government policies they remained backward in the Mughal and British periods and their fate did not change dramatically even after the independence of India.

**Shershahbad Pargana and Sher Shah Abadi Community:** The particular Muslim group of people whose forefathers had been living at so called Shershahbad Pargana are called as the Sher Shah Abadis. A geographical sketch is found about the Shershahbad Pargana through the statistical account of Maldah: “This Pargana which is the most extensive in the district, is very irregularly shaped, and has many detached fragments. One of these fragments is situated on the farther side of the Ganges, within the District of Murshidabad, and another on the eastern bank of the Mahananda; but the central portion lies between these two rivers, and surrounds the ruins of Gaur.”<sup>1</sup>

There are available historical data about the emperor Sher Shah and his invasions of Gaur, the capital city of then Bengal. He tried to capture Gaur several times and fought many diplomatic battles against Mahmud Shah, the independent king of then Bengal as well as Humayun, the emperor of Delhi. The following words throw a light on the historical background of Shershahbad Pargana: “In 1540 C.E. Sher Khan again defeated Humayun and made himself Emperor. He appointed Khizir Khan as his Governor in Gaur and on the attempt of Khizir Khan to make himself independent, Sher Khan defeated him and divided Bengal into several provinces to which he appointed his Lieutenants. In the reorganisation of the provinces, Sher Shah introduced the fiscal division of the pargana into Bengal: that in which Gaur lies bears the name Shershabad.”<sup>2</sup>

Available historical references exist regarding the Sher Shah Abadi Community and its relations with Shershahbad Pargana from the British period. As M.O. Carter maintains: “The name (Sher Shah Abadi) is derived from Shershahbad pargana of Murshidabad district from which they were forced to emigrate owing to the erosion of the Ganges. There are several theories about their origin. One is that they were originally Mahrattas, who came to Bengal with the Mahratta invaders. It is said that a number of them were made prisoners and forced to accept Islam. Their appearance however is unlike that of the typical Mahratta, and it seems more likely that they are descendants of the army of Sher Shah, one of the Afghan kings. Whatever their origin may be it is certainly not Bengali.”<sup>3</sup>

There exists another view about the origin of the Sher Shah Abadis: “Amongst the Mahomedans the differences of nationality are not so well defined but their affinities are for the most part with the castes of lower Bengal, though it is said that the Mahomedans of the Shershahbad pargana of Sibganj police-station, known as Shershahbadis, show traces of descent from the foreign immigration of the time of the Mahomedan dynasties”.<sup>4</sup>

In the context of Shershahbad Pargana and the migration period of the Sher shah Abadis of Murshidabad to Malda we can add the valuable reference: “Lately there has been a movement of

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<sup>1</sup> W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account Of Bengal, Maldah*, Trubner & Co., London, 1876 (reprinted by N. L. Publishers, page-126, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> G.E. Lambourn, ESQ., I. C.S. *Bengal District Gazetteers Malda*, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, 1918 (reprint by N. L. Publishers, page-22)

<sup>3</sup> M.O. Carter. M.C., I.C.S., *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda*, 1928-1935, Bengal Government Press, Alipore, Bengal, page-45, 1938

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, G. E. Lambourn, page- 29

immigration on the part of the Shershabadi Mahomedans, so called from the pargana of Shershabad where they are found in large numbers, into the duba and tal lands of the district.”<sup>5</sup>

Towards the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of Sher Shah Abadis of Murshidabad gradually migrated to Malda along the upward river-stream of the Ganges, resulting in sudden manifold increase in the population of Malda. As the Census of Malda in 1911 C.E. shows that “Immigration has been constant from the Sonthal Parganas and there has been a considerable increase of population in the Diara tracts, especially amongst the Mahomedans known as Shershabadis. The Ganges has also receded to the west with the result that large numbers of cultivators from Murshidabad have followed their Chars into the district”.<sup>6</sup>

It is also to be noted that most probably during 1910s the Sher Shah Abadis moved more upward river stream areas and gradually entered into greater Purnea (that included the present Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Soupal, Saharsa and Kishanganj districts in Bihar). G.E. Lambourn, in his book “Bengal District Gazetteers Malda”, made a mention of the migration as well as historical background of the Sher Shah Abadis, taking cues from the Census Report of 1911. Whereas, “The Bengal District Gazetteers Purnea”, published in 1911 by L.S.S. Malley, who himself acknowledged: “I have derived from the final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in Purnea (1901-1908) by Mr. J. Byrne, I.C.S., from which much of the information contained in this volume has been reproduced”<sup>7</sup>, did not provide any information about the Sher Shah Abadis. So it can be deduced that the Sher Shah Abadis migrated to greater Purnea after 1911 C.E. However, the historical evidence of the existence of this Community in greater Purnea in later years is available. As P.C. Roy Chaudhury in the “Bihar District Gazetteers Purnea”, writes: “It appears that they (Sher Shah Abadis) may have originally come from Western India, i.e. the East Punjab and West Pakistan”<sup>8</sup>

**Origin of Sher Shah Abadi Community:** The people of this community bear certain criteria. This community is far different from other Muslims in religious point of view. Almost all the descendents of Muslim dynasties of Gaur, Pandua, Tanda, Rajmahal i.e. the capital cities of Bengal in middle age, were Hanafis other than the Sher Shah Abadis. They prefer *Fiqhas* (religious doctrines) and *Mazers* (grave tombs) in their day-to-day rituals. But the Sher Shah Abadis prefer the holy Quran and *Sahi Hadiths* in their daily religious practices. In this context, we can refer to G.E. Lambourn, who maintains: “All the Mahomedans are sunnis, and with the exception of numbers of the Shershabadis, of the Hanafi persuasion. The prevailing doctrine amongst the Shershabadis is that known as Farazi, though different groups are known by such names as Lamazhabis, Wahabis, Hadayat. The common feature of these schisms is that they profess to base themselves on the text of the Koran and do not adhere to any of the regular schools of doctrine into which the Mahomedan religious world is divided.”<sup>9</sup>

The stated references imply that the Sher Shah Abadis have heritage mentality to admit documentary Islamic principles that might get directly from genetic infiltrations from the Arab regions. It is historically proved that from the very beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Muslims from

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 26

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, page 28

<sup>7</sup> L. S. S. O’ Malley. *Bengal District Gazetteers Purnea*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, preface, 1911

<sup>8</sup> P.C. Roy Chaudhury. *Bihar District Gazetteers Purnea*, Gazetteer Revision Section, Revenue Department, Bihar, Patna, page-151, 1963

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, G. E. Lambourn, page 31

Arab, Turk, Iran, Afghanistan came to Bengal. The invasion of Ikkhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji was the prelude to these immigrations. It is important to note that near about half century before of Sher Shah's invasion to Gaur, the capital of Bengal, many Abyssinians also came to Bengal and they established Habsi dynasty (1486-1519 C.E.) in Bengal. Among them Alauddin Hosain Shah (1493-1519) was of Arabian origin. However, the Muslim immigrants loved this country wholeheartedly. Never thinking to return elsewhere they adopted this country as their permanent abode.

When the rule of Husain shahi dynasty (1493-1519) ended in Gaur and the political power gradually passed into the hands of Sher Shahi rulers, the numbers of Afghan, Pathan soldiers along with other immigrants increased astonishingly to high numbers. But after a few decades the empirical army of Akbar, under the command of Man Singh, captured not only the capital cities of Gaur and Pandua but almost the entire Bengal. But it looks like that the Mughal army who was not interested in incorporating the Afghan soldiers and other earlier immigrants, who were employed previously by Bengal sultans and Sher Shahi rulers of Bengal. Then they slowly and gradually started dispersing around the fertile land on both sides of the Ganges at so called Shershahbad Pargona. During the Mughal rule nothing usual development happened among the Sher Shah Abadis, who seemed to remain in the periphery of Bengal politics, mainly due to shifting of capital to Dhaka far away from Gaur, the earlier pre-Mughal capitals of the Bengal. So, hardly any historical records are found about the Sher Shah Abadis during these eras.

The available mentioned data of the British period indicate that the Sher Shah Abadi community were the descendents of the Afghan soldiers who lived in Shershahbad pargana that Sher Shah established for the settlement of his army in 1540s. The British surveyors were unable to define the actual origin of Sher Shah Abadis. While tracing the origin of this Community the British surveyors laid emphasis on their physical appearance & traits, and while doing so they completely ignored the language used by the Community. Had their survey been based on linguistic aspects, they could have successfully traced the origin of the Sher Shah Abadi Community. The profuse use of Arabic vocabularies in their language is indicative of their Arab origin.

The investigations of the British period almost confirmed that the forefathers of Sher Shah Abadis came to Bengal from Afghanistan, but the exact part of Afghanistan could not be ascertained. Our research work make us presumed Nuristan as the exact place of their origin. Although it is not possible for us to undertake field work to know about the language of the people of Nuristan, because it is in foreign country but we have gathered secondary source of data about socio-cultural conditions of Nuristan that relates with the Sher Shah Abadi Community. In this regard a reference can be made to "Abdur Rahman Kilani, who mentioned in his book, 'Sargujaste Nurishthan', page no 37-41, that the people of Nuristan claim themselves as Quraish-origin, of present Saudi Arabia. They are Ahle Hadith in Islamic faith. Nuristan is situated on the Eastern sides of Afghanistan, consisted of 12 thousands square miles areas of Kunar and Lugman states."<sup>10</sup>

We also came to know about their migration period as "The forefathers of the people of Nuristan started to escape from Mecca during the conquest of Mecca by the Prophet Muhammad in about 631 C.E. At first they took shelter in Iraq and from there they reached to Kunar and Lugman states of Afghanistan."<sup>11</sup> Although these people earlier did not accept Muhammad as the prophet of Islam and

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Asadullah Al-Ghalib, *Ahle Hadeeth Andolon; Utpatti O Krama Bikash; Dakkhin Asiar prekkhit Shaha* (Ahlehadeeth Movement: It's origin and development; with special reference to the south Asian region), Hadeeth Foundation Bangladesh, page-287, 2011

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, page-499

during the victory of Mecca escaped from there, but later, by the will of Allah they adopted pure Islamic principles without any compromise with others. They have separate language that differs from other Afghani languages. A comparative analysis of that language and Sher Shah Abadi dialect may clear by established the relations between the people of Nuristan & the Sher Shah Abadi Community.

It is also may be presumed that the Sher Shah Abadis are not the descendents of other Afghani, Iranian, Persians originated soldiers and other administrative officials rather they may be the descendents of the soldiers of Nuristan in Afghanistan. This can be said because there are many descendents of different races who till now exist in Bengal bear their forefathers' *Majhabi* (division of four schools in Islam), *Shreiki* (considering anyone or anything as a power of fulfillment of any requirement except Allah), *Beedati* (innovation and corruption in Islamic practices) activities in their religious practices, except the Sher Shah Abadis. They have no mentality to reform and accept true Islamic principles. On the other hand, the Sher Shah Abadis have a mindset to adopt true Islamic fundamental laws. The people of Nuristan are much pious, orthodox as Sher Shah Abadis. Socio-cultural lives are also very simple like them. Naturally there are many similarities in religious point of views between them. Mr. M.O. Carter also mentions the religious qualities of Sher Shah Abadis that: "In religious matters they are pious and orthodox."<sup>12</sup>

**Role of Sher Shah Abadis in Wahabi Movement :** When the East India Company captured Bengal after the battle of Palasi in 1757 C.E., the Sher Shah Abadis as well as other farmers were the victims of unreasonable taxes. So the oppressed farming population were more closely consolidated under the banner of Wahabi Movement & this movement continued up to freedom struggle against the colonial power that exploited all the existing resources of the Sher Shah Abadi population in various forms. This movement gave the Sher Shah Abadi community a particular identity. During colonial period, the name Sher Shah Abadi was applied by the British, both officially and unofficially.

Colonial rules brought a disaster to their natural way of living and they also faced frequent feminine every now and then. The hostile attitude of colonial power alienated them. Very few of Sher Shah Abadi adopted regular education offered by the Government institutions in British period. Thus the ratio of unemployment always remained high in this community and very few of them ascended to lucrative high government positions.

Sher Shah Abadis of Panka, Narayanpur, etc. and its surrounding villages that were adjacent areas of Shibganj police station of south Maldah, established anti British outpost in about 1840s C.E. Many fighters and funds from Bengal were being supplied to 'Sittana', the battle field of Wahabi movement. During the *Dawa* Mission of Enayat Ali, Maulana Rafi Mondal, a famous Sher Shah Abadi personality, was appointed as the leader of Narayanpur Maldah District Centre. It was Rafi Mondal who got the responsibility of spreading the Movement as well as reforming the Muslim society from *Beedat* and superstitions in North Bengal.

Narayanpur, under Shershahbad Pargana, was situated near the bank of the river Padma and was a well-connected place in northern Bengal. Freedom fighters, funds, ammunitions etc. were collected from wide areas by boat through river ways and were gathered at first in Narayanpur centre and then forwarded to Patna centre by board.

Rafi Mondal was so energetic figure that a considerable number of fighters were increased by his active efforts within a few years in 1843 C.E. We can guess his activeness from Hunter's reports where he says: "The head of the Bengal police reported that a single one of their preachers had

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, M.O. Carter, page- 45  
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gathered together some eighty thousand followers, who asserted complete equality among themselves looked upon the cause of each as that of the whole sect, and considered nothing criminal if done in behalf of a brother in distress. (letters, no- 1001, dated 13<sup>th</sup> may, 1843, and no 50 of 1847, from the commissioner of police for Bengal)”<sup>13</sup>

Here Rafi Mondal was referred to as “the single preacher”. Although he was a member of Sher Shah Abadi community but he did not confine himself to his community rather he led an anti-British Mission almost all over the Bengal. He was also involved in indigo revolt. At last he was targeted by the British government in 1853. As Hunter reported that “...For many year he carried on his business undisturbed, but about 1853, the magistrate’s suspicions were aroused.....and his connection with the Holy war.”<sup>14</sup> He was arrested and after a few days he was released. Criticising the British Government for such a light punishment, Mr. Hunter arouse: “The District-Centre was arrested, but with our usual contempt for petty conspirators, was shortly afterwards released.”<sup>15</sup> After getting released from jail, Rafi Mondal handed over his responsibility of organizing the Movement to his son Amiruddin. Hunter also mentioned this in his report. As “...and resigned his office as religious tax-gatherer to his son (Maulavi Amiruddin of Maldah)”<sup>16</sup>

The distance between Bengal and Sittana, the battle field of Wahabi Movement, is more than two thousand kilometres. Yet Sher Shah Abadi as well as other Muslim fighters and different voluntary subscription of Muslim Funds was sent there regularly from various parts of Bengal. Rafi Mondal’s successors led the Wahabi Movement in Malda to a great extent in about 1866 C.E. and consequently it became a mass-revolt. According to Lambourn: “With the exception of Wahabi Movement, in the course of which some men were prosecuted in 1866 for waging war against the Queen, no political movement appears to have affected the district during British rule till the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 C.E.”<sup>17</sup>

There is no complete written history of the activities of the Sher Shah Abadi leaders of Wahabi Movement, like Rafi Mondal and Amiruddin, except the ones penned by the British historians. Although Mr Hunter ascribed Rafi Mondal and his son Amiruddin as religious tax collectors who used to send funds to Sittana through Patna centre very systematically. In this regard, the relation between the Narayanpur, Malda District Centre and Patna main centre is proved by Hunter’s report: “...the state Trial at Patna in 1865 disclosed the Malda District Centre’s share in the general conspiracy. In spite of this warning, however, he (Amiruddin) continued his levies of money and men for the Frontier war; openly went from village to village preaching rebellion”<sup>18</sup>

The mentioned reference addresses the activities of Maulavi Amiruddin. He was a very brave Sher Shah Abadi personality and having immense management capability that really deserves admiration. His most favourable supporters were Muslim farmers, i.e. the Sher Shah Abadis. In this context the following data can be added:

“His jurisdiction extended over three separate districts (Including the whole of Maldah, and parts of the Districts of Murshidabad and Rajshahi); and for several days journey down the Ganges the ignorant Musalman peasantry on both banks, and on the islands which the river has thrown up in its

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<sup>13</sup> W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, London, Trubner and Company, Third edition, Page-100, 1876

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, page-79

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, page-80

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, page-80

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, G. E. Lambourn, page-37

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, *The Indian Musalmans*, page-80

bed, owned his control. The number of recruits whom he sent to the Frontier Camp can never be ascertained; but at a single one of the Traitor outpost on our Frontier, containing 430 fighting men, more than ten percent had been supplied from his jurisdiction.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the fact is not clearly expressed in Hunter’s report, the above mentioned geographical areas were the abodes of Sher Shah Abadis. The Muslim farmers who lived in the village adjacent to both sides of the Ganges were dominated only by the Sher Shah Abadis. They developed systematic collections of *Zakat, Osor, Fitre*, and other voluntary subscriptions from these areas. They also invented a new system of collecting fund, i.e. ‘*Mutthi*’. Mr Hunter addressed Patna *Kalif* as the inventor of such kind of subscription. Hunter Maintains: “...He also invented a new tax, from which even the poorest could not escape. He commanded every head of a family to put aside a handful (*Mutthi*) of rice for each member of his household at every meal, and to deposit it after the Friday prayers with the village collector. In this way stores of grain were gathered together, and publicly sold on behalf of the Holy war”<sup>20</sup>.

The ‘*Mutthi*’ is not the principle of Islamic *Sharia* like *Zakat, Osur, Fittre* etc. It was only invented for the cause of developing fund to launch anti-British Movement. From that time onwards this system of collecting handful of rice (*Mutthi*) still exists in Sher Shah Abadi villages. But now this fund of *Mutthi* is spent to pay the salary of the Imam of the Masques and to run *Maqtabas* and *Madrasas*.

Although, the Wahabi movement spread all over Bengal and more or less all the District Centres were providing funds and freedom fighters to the Frontier. But the British government was particularly anxious about the people of lower Bengal & the north-west part of Bengal. Of these areas, the Sher Shah Abadi populated Narayanpur, Maldah District Centre was turned out to be very dangerous for the British. This Centre was the heart of seditious activities against the British in Bengal. As Mr Hunter mentioned: “...and formed a halting place for every seditious preacher who travelled up and down.”<sup>21</sup>

It can be said that the compact-populated Sher Shah Abadi areas of Narayanpur and its surrounding areas of Murshidabad that belonged to Shershahbad Pargana were culturally developed. Mr Hunter referred Narayanpur as town. He gives a vivid description of the Narayanpur, Malda District Centre & its earlier location and the post destructed condition of those places: “...His town (Narayanpur) formerly lay on the right bank of the Ganges, at a distance from the Head quarters of the District, or from any police village belonging to it. Even the great convulsions of nature which destroyed the town helped to spread the cause. The Ganges, in one of its huge writhing backward and forwards across the country, ate away the land on its right bank, so that not a vestige of the Wahabi settlement remains. The inhabitants dispersed, some to a newly formed island near the left bank of the river, others to various inland hamlets; and wherever they went, each little party became a centre of sedition. As the river throws new land, a Wahabi colony immediately takes possession, and forms the nucleus of a new village.”<sup>22</sup>

The above mentioned descriptions present the situation of Sher Shah Abadis very clearly. Although, Mr Hunter did not refer to the population as Sher Shah Abadis, rather he mentioned them as Wahabis. But the localities of that particular places and the geographical situation define the Sher

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, The Indian Musalmans, page-81

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, Page-82

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page-83

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, The Indian Musalmans, page-83

Shah Abadis beyond doubt. The British government was so afraid about the above mentioned localities of the Sher Shah Abadis that we can guess from the comment, mentioned below: "It may well be supposed that so permanent and so widely spread disaffection has caused grave anxiety to the Indian government"<sup>23</sup>

The contribution of the Sher Shah Abadis to anti British movement, like Wahabi Movement, is proved through the references of the imprisonment of their leaders, as in the conspiracy case of Malda September 1870. In that case, Moulabi Amiruddin was sent to Andaman in exile, in 1872 C.E.<sup>24</sup>. After 11 years he was released on January in 1883 C.E.<sup>25</sup> He died at Narayanpur, a village of Sahebganj district in Jharkhand. His descendants till now have been living in the same place.

Due to the erosion of the Ganges the Narayanpur, Malda District Centre was totally demolished. After that Delalpur Centre gained prominence in anti-British activities. It was established in 1850s C.E by Ibrahim Mandal who took pledge from Rafi Mandal. The surrounded areas of Delalpur are dominated by the Sher Shah Abadis. It is situated presently at Sahebganj, the district of Jharkhand. The conspiracy case of Rajmahal, October 1870 proved the role of the Sher Shah Abadis in such anti British Movement. In that case, the famous Sher Shah Abadi Wahabi leader of Dilalpur centre, Ibrahim Mandal was awarded lifetime exile to Andaman. He was charged with supplying immense funds to Frontier battle-field. He was so honest and pious in his areas that the government was unable to manage witness against him. He was freed by the order of Lord Liton in 1878 C.E.<sup>26</sup> Till now the generations of Ibrahim Mandal are living at Islampur under Barhawra Block in the district of Sahebganj, Jharkhand.

During the suppression period of the British government, the Sher Shah Abadis began to migrate from their formative areas (i.e. Narayanpur and its adjacent areas that were under Shershabad Pargana) to backward & far flung areas, full of jungle, bushy, marshy, uncultivated lands, near rivers, canals, hills etc of north-western Malda. They chose such kind of place where administration could not reach comfortably. A group of the generations of Amiruddin, son of Rafi mandal reached to then Dumka. Till now his generation exists at Agloi, Narayanpur in the district of Sahebganj, Jharkhand. On the other way a large number of the Sher Shah Abadis moved towards greater Purnea, even they reached to Shunsari district of Nepal. Another group moved to Dinajpur and even they reached to Jhapa, a district of Nepal. In this regard, it can be noted that the generation of Rafi Mandal are now living at Shrimantapur, the village under Itahar Block in the district of Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal. Among them, Maulana Ahmad Hossain Shrimantapuri was a well-known personality.

It is also to be noted that a large number of Sher Shah Abadis occupied the Tal, Diar areas and its nearby places of Malda. The Tal area is defined by geographical sketch, as approximately bordered by three rivers--the Fulhar is on the western side, the Mahanada is on the eastern side and the Kalindri is on the southern side. Manikchak, Ratua and Harishchandrapur police stations of Malda almost cover the *Tal* and *Diar* areas. These areas are almost dominated by the Sher Shah Abadis. Before the advent of the Sher Shah Abadis, these areas were uncultivated and almost full of jungle. They took shelter there and formed new centre or Wahabi outpost. According to A.K. Bhatyachariya there were many Wahabi outposts in Northern Malda but following are the Sher Shah Abadi Wahabi out posts: "Mathurapur, Kamalpur, and Bhutnidiyara etc. were in Manikchak, Samsi, Kandaron,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page-83

<sup>24</sup> Amolendu Dey, *Bangalee Budhijibi O Bichhinnotabad*, Calcutta, page-118, 1987

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, Ahle Hadeeth Andolon, page-419

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, Amolendu Dey, page-119

Sambalpur, Batna, Maharajpur, Gobindapur etc. were in Ratua, Maliour, Talsur, Belsur, Talbanguara, Daulatpur, Islampur, Kumedpur, Talgram etc were in Harishchandrapur.”<sup>27</sup>

**Sher Shah Abadis during Post Independence period:** Almost all the Sher Shah Abadis of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Nepal got absorbed in cultivation whole heartedly. During the partition of India, they unlike many other Muslims did not move to East Pakistan. Rather they supported the National Congress and remained there forever. Once they sacrificed their lives, wealth and energy to free India from the British rule and challenged the foreign oppressors in many ways. About seventy years of the independence of India have passed but they are lagging behind others in respect of socio-economic condition like education, government jobs, businesses etc.

After the independence of India the anti-Muslim organisations very cunningly hatched conspiracy against the Muslim, especially against the Sher Shah Abadis in Bihar. So they faced many difficulties, as the allegation of outsider or Bangladeshi was imposed upon them. Very shamefully being influenced by the conspirators the Bihar government directed the Sher Shah Abadis to prove their nationality. At that period, Mubarak Hussain, then M.L.A of Katihar constituency led a movement to face all kinds of allegations and formed “All Bihar Sher Shah Abadi Association” in 1982 C.E. Under the banner of this association, the Sher Shah Abadis assembled frequently and lunched conventions for mass gathering to challenge all the allegations against them. They proved their nationality to the ministers of Bihar government with the historical documents that satisfied the queries of the state and central government. Later on, they also got the reservation of O.B.C category by the approved of the government. After that, the Sher Shah Abadis of West Bengal also acquired the same facility of achieving O.B.C reservation. But, due to the official complexities of getting O.B.C. certificates and the lack of proper implementations of reservation policies, the Sher Shah Abadis are depriving to take the reservation facilities. Moreover, the people of this community have begun to realize the importance of getting establishment in various fields like education, economy and politics etc.

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