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The History of Itachuna Jamindar Bari, Hooghly District

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ABSTRACT

The Itachuna Rajbari was built by the ancestors of shri Safallya Narayan kundu. Although the ancestors of the Kundu zamindars came to Bengal on the pretext of Bargi invasion , they started living here permanently. Gradually they began to learn Bengali manners and etiquette. Bengali became their mother tongue in a very short time. Kundu is a well-known Bengali surname although the real surname of these zamindars was not Kundu. Their real title was Kundan. In the middle of the eighteenth century, they built a huge building in the heart of the village of Itachuna in the present Hooghly district, known to the locals as the Itachuna palace.

KEYWORDS: Itachuna Rajbari, Kundu zamindars, Bargi invasion

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I. INTRODUCTION

India is an authentic documented country where we find several histories about the primitive constructions of social, economical, and natural diversity. The ancient monuments, temples, buildings, palaces and so many other places are still whispering their unexplored history and about the time they were built in. These historical sites and the stories behind them will definitely give you Goosebumps. One such edifice stands in Hooghly, West Bengal- the Itachuna Jamindarbari.



Itachuna is now a progressive and developed village. At a time some people of the village started the business of bricks (Int) and lime (Chun). Gradually their business developed and sprayed throughout the village. Many people then took up that business and gained much profit. For this reason the village was named so i.e. Itachuna. The other name of Itachuna Rajbari is 'Bargi danga'. The term has been derived from Bargi (Maratha warriors). The story behind that name took us back to that period in Bengal's history when Marathas attacked Bengalis repeatedly looking for its rich land and to collect the chouth(tax). At that time Bengal was ruled by Nawab Alivardi Khan. He fought heroically to save his kingdom but he failed to change the devastating consequences. Bengal was then going through a period of Famine and the inability to pay taxes to the bargis left people vulnerable. It was one of the mass violence and destruction in the history of India. The plundering and looting of Bengal continued for 10 years before the Nawab made a peace treaty with the Marathas. However, these attacks left a lasting impression on the mind of the common people.

There is a popular lullaby in Bengali: " Khoka ghumolo para jurolo, Borgi elo deshe, Bulbuli te dhan kheyechhe Khajna debo kise".

It means, when a kid falls asleep, silence sets in the town, and then the Bargis creep in. Birds have eaten all the grains, how can I pay the tax?

This rhyme indicates how Bargis attacked at night and wreaked havoc. However, like every other period

of history Marathas had also left a cultural mark in Bengal.

Ages after ages or periods after periods many foreigners moved place to place for the purpose of trade and commerce. Some foreigners came, stayed there for a year or so and left. But some of them came for the same purpose and stayed permanently.

It happened in the case of the Kundu Jamindar family of Itachuna. Taking the source of the attack of Bargi in Bengal, they came to Bengal and stayed permanently. They learned the manners and cultures of Bengali society. In course of time Bengali became their mother tongue.

Kundu is a well known Bengali title. But the title of the Jamindar(Landlord)of Itachuna was not Kundu. Their original title was Kundan. The Bengalis were not acquainted with the very title Kundan. The Jamindars took this Bengali title Kundu so that they could mix freely and easily with the Bengali society. They developed their own financial condition by trade and commerce in Bengal.

In the middle of the 18th century they built a large building at Itachuna, known to the local people as Itachuna Jamindar Building. The building was divided into five mahals- a village courthouse, a ballet dancing hall, Kitchen, guesthouse and an andar mahal for ladies. In one part of that Building the Jamindar family lived and the other part of that building was used as their main working place.

Before the Jamindar family came to Itachuna, the conditions of agriculture, roads, trade and commerce was very bad. At that time various classes of people such as - farmers, weavers, carpenters, fishermen, potters, blacksmiths, and sweepers lived in the village. Most of the villagers were poor and depended mainly on agriculture. Maximum people lived in mud houses.

The condition of education of the people was not so good. There were only a few schools. The importance of education was unknown to them.

The health condition of the people was the same. They were not concerned about their health and hygiene. They put on dirty clothes, slept on dirty beds, took food in dirty hands. They did not know the importance of cleanliness.

Basically for money deficiency the villagers used to live without education and proper treatment.

The Jamindar of Itachuna came to know all the conditions of that village and neighborhood areas and decided to stretch their hands to solve all those problems. They spent a lot of money for this purpose.

Actually they had done everything possible to improve the condition of that village.

Roybahadur Bijoynarayan Kundu was a reputed Jamindar of the village known for his kindness. Jamindar Bijoynarayan Kundu established a high school and a college in the village, Poor students of the village received education freely in that school and college. Bijoy Babu carried all these expenditures from his Estate. Bijoy babu tried hard to improve the agriculture and education in the village. For receiving agricultural education he also established a Model Farm. He also tried to improve the condition of the roads of the village. He engaged some workers for digging a few ponds. By the earnest effort and financial help of the Jamindars the condition in all aspects of the village and the neighboring area developed rapidly.

There was a college established in 1950 named Bijoynarayan Mahavidyalaya attributed to the name of the Zamindar, and there is a road also named after him. The name of this road is Bijoynarayan Kundu road. A hospital, a post office, a library, an English medium school, an upper primary school, religious buildings , the Probuddha Varat Sangha - all these were established in remembrance of Bijoy Narayan Kundu.

Now the Jamindar bari of Itachuna has become famous as a tourist spot. Every year many tourists come to visit the place and enjoy the beauty of royalty, though the Jamindari rules are abolished, the developmental works that the Jamindars of Itachuna had done will remain in the village as a remembrance of old heritage.

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