



P R E F A C E.

This is the first Gazetteer for Saharsa district. Saharsa was once a part of Bhagalpur district; she was first given the status of a sub-district and then that of a district. The hitherto unpredictable Kosi river had ruled the economy of the district for decades and had constantly ravaged the district till recently. Kosi river has now been tamed and the Kosi project will eventually change the face of the district. A Gazetteer of the district at this stage catching a glimpse of the past and featuring the present has a particular importance for the future. The district has a new look and a future.

The State Government of Bihar in the Revenue Department have undertaken the work of publishing a new series of Gazetteers of the districts as the books in the old series have become obsolete for many purposes. The last *District Gazetteer of Bhagalpur* did not give much space to the Saharsa area either. Saharsa was rather inaccessible before and a journey from Bhagalpur to the subdivisional headquarters in Saharsa area involved a journey by train, boat, trolley and partially on foot. The subdivisional headquarters had to shift several times because of Kosi ravages. Saharsa was almost a cinderella of the State.

This is the fourteenth District Gazetteer with me as the Editor. The District Gazetteers of Gaya, Hazaribagh, Muzaffarpur, Singhbhum, Saran, Champaran, Purnea, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Palamau, Darbhanga, Dhanbad and Santal Parganas have already been published. I had the privilege of organising this section from a scratch and the opportunity to collect, collate facts and features, write and edit the Gazetteers of all these districts.

Several years after the Revenue Department had taken up the work and entrusted it to me as the Editor, the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs (now merged in the Ministry of Education—Science) took up the matter and a scheme was drawn up for the re-writing of the District Gazetteers throughout India on a similar pattern. The State Government of Bihar had agreed to follow the pattern laid down by India as far as possible. Some independent field investigations were also done by the Gazetteers Revision Section and the results of some of the latest researches by others on the tribals have been included. The role of the district in the implementation of Government policies with reference to National Planning and

Community Development forms a particular item according to the Headings and Contents. A critical appraisal of some of the work done has been given and the observations made should be taken as personal and not at Government level. In the text on Places of Interest, an attempt has been made to include all places of historical and tourist interest, pilgrim, commercial and trading centres and other important villages.

The compilation of this District Gazetteer had posed a great problem. Materials were scarce and very often wrong data were supplied from sources which should have known better. There was a bewildering maze of wrong agricultural statistics made available that had to be screened. Unbeaten fields had to be covered in appraising recent development schemes. While writing the text on 'People' it was found that there was a very great drop in the population of the tribals in the recent Census of 1961 and the matter has been referred to the appropriate authorities for further investigation. There have been no recent Survey and Settlement Operations nor any socio-economic or technical survey of the district. The officers in key position probably due to their own problems could have very little leisure to give much contribution.

I was, however, able to enlist the help of a few collaborators. Particular mention has to be made of Prof. R. K. Choudhury, M.A., G. D. College, Begusarai and Shri P. C. Singh, Senior Deputy Collector of Bhagalpur. Prof. Choudhury helped me in the text on 'History'. Shri P. C. Singh, a keen photographer and a student of architecture had to face a delicate problem in getting the photo of the famous image at Mahishi village commonly worshipped as Ugratara and some other photos in the district. He confirmed my doubt that the image was not Ugratara and indicated that it was an image of Khadirvani Tara. Dr. Binoytosh Bhattacharaya, a recognised authority on Buddhist iconography was very kind to confirm later the image at Mahishi to be Khadirvani Tara and not Ugratara. The Central Gazetteer Unit of the Ministry of Education (Science) gave me some useful suggestions which were incorporated. Shri S. Roy, Deputy Director of National Archives of India, New Delhi, has been an unfailing source of information for this Gazetteer as he was for its predecessors. The Government Printing Press, Gulzarbagh, took personal care for the execution of the work. I acknowledge with thanks their kind help.

Great encouragement and help in scholastic discussions were received from Shri S. K. Chakravarty, Secretary of the Revenue Department, Shri B. C. Patel, Minister for Revenue

and Shri K. B. Sahay, Chief Minister. It was Mr. Sahay who as a Minister for Revenue had sponsored the compilation of the new series of the District Gazetteers of Bihar. Their confidence in me has been an inspiration.

I have attempted to present an objective book for a wide range of readers. The book is an investigation of the man and the district and the role of the district in the country. An up-to-date picture of the district has been made out knowing well that the district will undergo rapid changes in the coming two decades. I have enjoyed the exacting task and no one is more conscious than myself of the lacunae. It is for others to say if the work has been a contribution or not.

PATNA :

The 26th December, 1964.

} P. C. ROY CHAUDHURY.

