

THE PATRIARCHS OF OUR FAMILY*

Kuanr Singh Chettri

Born about the year 1709. He was one of the fourteenth Zamindars of Purnia District in Bihar whose annual revenue ranged from two lakhs to nine lakhs. The eighteenth century was a period of turmoil and disorder all over India. The Mogul Fauzadar of Keori, or Katori, in Bhagalpur had been pursuing a career of oppression and tyranny taking advantage of the prevailing weakness of the central government. The Zemindars entered into an armed confederacy to curb the growing exactions of the Fauzadar; and, in the conflict that followed, eight of them surrendered after their defeat, including Kuanr Singh, who lost his Zemindari in consequence, after it had remained in possession of the family for more than two hundred years. Kuanr Singh married the daughter of a very wealthy and respectable Chettri gentleman of Bhagalpur : she died on the funeral pyre along with her husband. They left three children,—Sahadeo Singh Chettri, Mangal Singh Chettri, and a daughter. Sahadeo Singh and his sister died soon after their parents' death.

Mangal Singh

Son of Kuanr Singh Chettri. Born about 1763. The family being reduced in circumstances, Mangal Singh was compelled to seek employment in the E.I.C.'s army in Bihar where his enterprise and gallantry won him rapid promotion. He came to Assam as Subedar in the expedition of Captain Thomas Welsh in 1792-94; and was one of the soldiers who were left behind in Assam, at the instance of its Raja, to train up the Assam forces on the Company's lines. The training camp was situated at Kandhulimari Chapari on the bank of the river Dikhow, where Mangal Singh was given lands and servitors by the Assam Raja. He married there a girl of Sani Bhuyan family of Sibsagar : she was popularly known as Saniani Ai : They had one son named Sibcharan, and one daughter named Duroli. About the year 1812, Mangal Singh proceeded at the head of a royalist contingent

*Based on a Note compiled by my father Srijut Rabibal Bhuyan. dated Nowoong, Assam the 20th June 1934. He had obtained the details from his father Srijut Sibcharan Bhuyan.

against the Baskatia rebels in North Lakhimpur. The insurgents were repulsed in the earlier engagements; but, in the final contest the Baskatias hemmed in the royalist troops at a place some nine miles to the north of the present site of North Lakhimpur town. Mangal Singh fell fighting in the battlefield at the foot of an Arjun tree. His widow and her two children continued to live under the protection of the members of Sani Bhuyan family. Mangal Singh was reputed for his prodigious strength.

Sibcharan

Son of Mangal Singh and Saniyani Ai. He was born about the year 1810. He was with his mother's family in their flight from Sibsagar during the Burmese disturbances of 1817-25. The family first settled at Kaliabar in Nowgong. Sibcharan served in the Police Department for thirty-four years, and took an active part in the establishment of the district headquarters at Khagarijan, the present site of Nowgong town. Sibcharan then fixed his home at Marikalang in the suburbs of Nowgong; and, about the 1850, he settled at Fauzdari Patti. Sibcharan married the two daughters of Bikaram Tamuli and Bajon Saikiani: the latter belonged to the Thukurial Mahajan family of Sibsagar. Sibcharan had three daughters by Pahita Ai, his first wife, —Kaniki, Anandi and Nandi; and, four sons and two daughters by Labita Mahi, his second wife, Rabilal, Matilal, Kanaklal, Deviprasad, Binandi and Rohini Aikan. He died at his Fauzdari Patti home on the sacred fullmoon night of Lakshmi Purnima in the year 1893.