

CHAPTER: II

BRITISH TRADE SETTLEMENT IN UNDIVIDED GOALPARA DISTRICT

In colonial period, Goalpara became a transit point from where Bengal goods were supplied to different part of Assam. European merchants, trade agencies of the British East India Company and Indian merchants stationed at Goalpara to carry out considerable trade with the traders of Assam. The trade agencies of British East India Company exported salt, broad clothes and others finish products to Assam and they imported muga, silk, ivory, gold dust and other raw materials from Assam. Assam did not produce salt since ancient days; therefore, Assam had to depend on salt of Bengal, which was affordable and cheap in price. In order to carry salt trade, many private traders and trade agencies of British East India Company came to Goalpara. Salt was kept in the warehouse of Goalpara, Jugighopa and Rangamati from where salt was supplied to Assam.

When Assam came under British East India Company, Goalpara district became a part of Assam province. All natural resources of Goalpara district were exploited by Company for commercial purpose. The timber of Goalpara forest was a major source of income, as the demand of timber was very high in the markets of Bengal for industrial work as well as construction of houses. By 1870, the forest department extracted Sal timber from Kochugaon and Haltugaon reserve forest for making railway track sleeper. The forest division of Goalpara supplied huge Sal timber to Railway department for

making track sleeper. In 20th century, jute became an important commercial fibre in the markets of Europe for making bags, carpets, rugs and other goods.

Englishmen in India: European countries had attempted to expand their trade towards eastern countries. In 16th century, European countries like Spain, Portugal, France and England were trying to establish colonial empire in India. Thomas Stephens was the first Englishman who arrived in Goa. He was appointed as Rector of Jesuit College of Goa in 1579. In 1583, two Englishmen namely Ralph Fitch and Newberry, who were accompanied by William Leedes (a jeweler) and James Story (a painter) reached India. Unfortunately, all of them were arrested by Portuguese at Ormuz and put them into prison of Goa. But they were released after few years of imprisonment. After that, James Story became a monk, Leedes entered into Mughal service and Newberry died on the way to return home. Lastly, Ralph Fitch remained as an adventurous who visited throughout Bengal, Burma, Malacca and Ceylon and went back to his home in 1591. He circulated the information regarding trade opportunities in India and inspired his own countrymen to do trade exploration towards eastern countries.

English Trade in India: The merchants of London held a meeting on 22nd September, 1599 at the Founder Hall in London for the formation of trade association to conduct direct trade with India. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Lord Mayor and Sir Stephen Soame was also present. A joint stock company was formed on 31st December, 1600 under the title of “The Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies” which was known as English Company.¹ On 13 February 1601, five Vessels fleets (including largest ship *Red Dragon*) were dispatched under the command of James Lancaster who was famous merchant and mariner. The fleets arrived at Achin in Sumatra without having any accident in search of pepper. Sumatra was an island in which pepper were grown in abundance. But no English merchants had carried out pepper trade in Sumatra. James Lancaster was warmly welcomed by the Sultan of Sumatra. No doubt, the English Company set up good relation with the Sultan of Achin in terms of trade. Afterward, James Lancaster proceeded to Bantam and obtained trading privileges from the Sultan of Bantam. He returned to England on September 1603 due to growing of unavoidable circumstances and ship accidents. Middleton, the commander of second voyage visited Bantam, Spice Island, Amboyna, Ternate and Tidore without touching India. Lastly, Captain Hawkins, the commander of third voyage landed in Surat in 1608. He visited the court of Jahangir, the

Mughal Emperor for the purpose of trade. But he could not conduct trade because the markets of India were already dominated by Dutch and Portuguese. In 1615, James I, the king of England sent Sir Thomas Roe as an ambassador to the court of Jahangir to submit trade proposal of the Company.² Sir Thomas Roe appeared in the royal court with the trade proposal which was accepted by Mughal Emperor. The English Company secured liberty of trade and right to establish factories anywhere of Mughal Empire. Further, the English Company also got permission for landing their goods at major ports of Mughal on payment of fixed duties. After the payment of duties, English goods could be transported freely to any other English factories and English Company also could buy goods from anywhere of Mughal Empire. The rate of customs duty on English import goods was 3½ per cent and 2 per cent on bullion.³ Sir Thomas Roe came to know that the English Company was a minor which needed long time to survive in India. He ordered all servants of the Company that they should not interfere in the internal affairs of India which might be damaged the trade of Company. So, the English Company followed in the formative period of their trade without any circumstances.⁴ As a result, the English Company strengthened the trade position in Bengal with the help of corrupt royal officials.⁵

English Company in Bengal: On 14 May 1633, the English Company established the first factory at Hariharpur in the Delta of Mahanadi from where Ralph Cartwright, Edward Peterford and William Withall proceeded to a country known as 'Bengalla'.⁶ They reached at Balasore at the end of June 1633.⁷ The English Company had received an important commercial concession on 2nd February of 1634 from Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for recovery of his burned daughter (badly burned by catching fire on her clothes) under the medical treatment of a skillful English surgeon Mr. Gabriel Boughton. As a reward of medical treatment, Emperor Shah Jahan granted permission to Company for the establishment of a factory at Hughli. Accordingly, a factory was established in 1651. After a few years, the English Company again received most important Nishan or Seal (Officials Symbol) concession from Prince Shuja, the Governor of Bengal. After obtaining Nishan, English Company freely conducted their trade in Bengal without any custom duties and any other restrictions, but they had to pay Rs.3, 000 only as an annual fee of the seal.⁸ In 1656, the superintendent of English factories received another seal concession from Prince Shuja. With this seal, English Company became free from the payment of custom duty for import and export of goods. Moreover, English Company

could buy and sell goods without impediment at any port of Bengal.⁹ The English Company also could build their factories or warehouse in any part of Bengal.¹⁰ In 1657, Prince Shuja went to Delhi to contest for the throne after the death of his father Shah Jahan. He left Bengal as a state of disorder, which badly affected to the English trade.¹¹

After leaving of Prince Shuja for Delhi, Mir Jumla, the military general of Mughal became the Viceroy of Bengal who established good trade relation with English Company.¹² But the trade relation between Mir Jumla and English Company was deteriorated due to the war of succession over the throne of Mughal Empire, even though English Company had maintained good trade position in Bengal with the help of some royal officials.¹³ During that period, silk of Bengal became an exportable article to European countries. Therefore, English Company had established a silk factory at Kasimbazar in 1658. In addition to that, Patna and Singiya were also became chief centres of saltpetre trade in Bengal. In 1668, English Company had set up factories at Dacca, Rajmahal and Malda respectively.

In 1678, the seal concession was re-examined by Shaista Khan, the new governor of Bengal. In the meantime, Aurangzeb issued a *farman* in 1680, according to which 3½ percent duties should be imposed on all English goods. But English Company could not bear the said custom duty which led to deadlock to the Company's trade in Bengal.¹⁴ For the protection of Company trade in Bengal, English constructed military port at the mouth of Ganges river to secure their trade in Bengal. But they came to know that without royal support no handsome profit could be earned. Thus, English Company bowed down before Ibrahim Khan, the new Governor of Bengal on 23rd April of 1690. As a result of which an Imperial order was issued on 10 February 1691 which permitted English Company to carry out trade in Bengal with the payment of Rs.3, 000 annually.¹⁵

In 1693, Old English Company lost its license. But they gave bribe of £90,000 sterling to the Privy Council for extension of their trade period in India. Besides, British Government has already granted trade license to a newly established London Company.¹⁶ In 1702, Old English Company and London Company amalgamated under the title of "United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies" which came to be known as "The Honorable East India Company" or British East India Company.¹⁷

Till the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, English Company could not maintain good commercial position in Bengal. When Furuksiyar succeeded on the throne of Mughal Empire, Murshid -Kuli- Khan became *Dewan* of Bengal as well as *Subahdar*. He earned

high esteem from Mughal Emperor because of his efficiency in the collection of revenues and timely dispatch the revenue to Delhi.¹⁸ During that period, East India Company sought more trade concession from Mughal Emperor to move their trade freely all over the country.¹⁹

Farukshiyar, the Mughal Emperor granted a *farman* to Company in 1717 as a reward of medical skill of William Hamilton, a surgeon of Calcutta Embassy who cured the Emperor from dangerous malady.²⁰ The medical skill created a friendly atmosphere between Mughal Emperor and British East India Company.²¹ The British East India Company obtained a *farman* (royal charter) from Mughal Emperor which made exemption of payment of duties on export and import. In return of that a lump sum amount of Rs. 3,000 was paid to Mughal by British East India Company annually.²² After obtaining *farman*, the British East India Company could import and export goods throughout the country without duties.²³ All goods of Company with the seal of president or chief of the factories could pass without inspection at any *Chowkies* or toll stations. At last, this *farman* could not run longer period in Bengal because of strict supervision under Murshid-Kuli-Khan, the *Subahdar* of Bengal.

Murshid-Kuli-Khan was succeeded by Shuja-ud-Daula on 30 June 1724. At that time, British East India Company made offer valuable articles to Shuja-ud-Daula for executing all the provisions of *farman* of 1717.²⁴ Shuja-ud-Daula was succeeded by Sarfaraz Khan in 1739. So, the British East India Company wanted to keep good relation with new Nawab to restore all the clauses of *farman* but they could not manage the Nawab. When Ali Wardi Khan became the Nawab of Bengal in 1740, he restored all commercial privileges for British East India Company and also removed all commercial barriers imposed by earlier Nawabs of Bengal. Ali Wardi Khan was succeeded by Shiraj-ud-Daula who suppressed all the disagreement activities of British East India Company by killing 170 Britishers, which came to be known as Black Hole tragedy. For that reason, British hatched conspiracy against the Nawab by bribing some officials of Nawab. The Company brought Mir Jafar, the military general of Nawab of Bengal on their side by offering the throne of Bengal. Finally, the battle of Plassey took place at Plassey field in 1757, where Siraj-ud-Daula was brutally defeated due to inactiveness of Mir Jafar.

The victory over battle of Plassey raised the prestige of British East India Company in Bengal.²⁵ Mir Jafar became the Nawab of Bengal, who was a mere puppet in

the hands of Company.²⁶ He removed all duties of import and export trade of Company. Most of the servants of Company concentrated in private trade. They demanded more duties exemption on their transportation of goods entire Bengal.²⁷ In 1760, Robert Clive replaced Nawab Mir Jafar by Mir Kasim due to non fulfillment of demand of the Company. They tried to clutch more concession from Mir Kasim but he show himself strong ruler and check all malpractices of servants of the British East India Company in inland trade. In July 1763, Mir Kasim was replaced by Mir Jafar who became second time Nawab of Bengal. Once again, Mir Jafar granted more privileges to Company.²⁸ He also promised to pay indemnity to Company which was lost in the hands of Mir Kasim.²⁹ The demand of excessive concession of Company from Mir Kasim created fresh conflict between two powers. So, Mir Kasim fled away to Oudh where he formed an alliance with Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Oudh and Shah Alam II. As a result of the alliance, Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II offered military assistance to Mir Kasim. Alliance power stood against the British East India Company. A battle broke out at Buxer in 1764 where a great victory was achieved by British East India Company. As a result of victory, the British East India Company got the right of revenue collection of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from Shah Alam II which was known as *Dewani*.³⁰

After getting *Dewani* right, British East India Company strengthened their power and position in the field of politics and economics. Gradually, they captured the markets of cotton, silk goods, raw silk, saltpetre, sugar, opium, pepper, ginger, turmeric, ghee, oil, wax, spices, gunny bags and rice in Bengal. The British East India Company established a factory for silk at Kasimbazar in Bengal. Silk factory of Kasimbazar came under the purview of Council of Fort William, Calcutta. Many silk trade centres come up at Kasimbazar, Bauleah, Jangipur, Kumarkhali, Malda, Radanagar, Rangpur and Rangamati of Bengal.³¹ On the other hand, saltpetre of Patna occupied a good market in Bengal and it was exported to Europe for making gunpowder. Muslin clothes of Dacca became famous which was exported to abroad during the second quarter of eighteenth century. Lastly, Opium of Bengal became an important article for foreign markets.

Salt was a valuable article for internal and external trade especially in eastern countries of India. The trade in salt gave huge profit to Mughal before the coming of British. Salt was manufactured in Bengal along the coastal line between Balasore and Chittagong. The Nawab of Bengal regulated salt trade for revenue.³² After the battle of Plassey, Company servants captured the trade of salt in Bengal against the payment of

nominal duty. The profit of salt compelled Robert Clive, the military officer of Company to establish a private trade association in Bengal which was known as “Society for Trade” in 1765.³³

British Trade Settlement in Goalpara: Numbers of European merchants had concentrated in Goalpara for doing trade with Assam traders before the coming of British East India Company. Richard Edward, a European merchant and some English merchant of Kasim Bazar sent their merchandise to Guwahati in the early period of 1670.³⁴ In 1722, Colonel James Mill came to India under the banner of Ostend East India Company but this company was terminated in 1732.³⁵ After that, Colonel James Mill became as free - lance merchant of Bengal who had visited different part of Goalpara and conducted salt trade there.³⁶

In 1738, Dupleix, the governor of French East India Company, Elliot, an English merchant and Dechlerman, a Dutch merchant jointly formed a trade association.³⁷ Under this trade association, French, English and Dutch came together for doing trade in Assam.³⁸ But they did not have idea regarding commercial venture in Assam. Therefore, Dupleix made an agreement with Colonel James Mill, who had trade expertise in Assam. James Mill accepted all the proposal of Duplex for making preliminary commercial trip to Assam on the basis of profit sharing. In the last month of 1738, Colonel James Mill made a trip to Assam who was accompanied by Goodingt, a Dutchman.³⁹ It was a successful trading trip to Assam where they sold diamond ornaments.⁴⁰ On May 1739, second trip was prepared under Col. James Mill, Goodingt and Mathie (*A French trade agent*) with merchandise of broad clothes, vermilion and corals including jewellery of Rs. 80,000. They also brought a horse to present to Raja of Assam.⁴¹ Dupleix lost private trading enterprise in Assam due to shipping accident. He ordered Mathie to leave all unsold goods at the hand of Gopal Chand, a French *gomastha* of Dacca.⁴² In 1755, French East India Company deputed Jean Baptist Chevalier at Goalpara to conduct salt trade with Assam traders. He established a trade outpost of salt at Goalpara.⁴³ In 1757, all trade activities of French East India Company in Bengal were stopped by British East India Company. Jean Baptist Chevalier did not leave Goalpara because of huge profit of salt trade. So, he became a trade agent under English merchants to carry out trade with Assam traders. In 1763, he left Goalpara and all assets had been delivered to John Robinson.⁴⁴ Other prominent French merchants namely Laval, Giblot and Campagnae were also doing salt trade in Goalpara.⁴⁵ Paul Richard Pearkes, an English merchant had

established regular trade with Assam traders and erected a salt factory at Jugighopa.⁴⁶ In the meantime, two English merchants namely Hugh Baillie and John Robinson reached at Goalpara and Rangamati respectively. John Robinson was the agent of Johnstone, Hay and William Bolt. Hugh Baillie did salt trade in Goalpara on behalf of Henry Vansittart, the Governor of Fort William of Bengal.

The British East India Company enjoyed the *de-facto* authority over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa after obtaining the *Dewani* right from Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II, which brought trade contact with neighboring independent or semi-independent states. In the eastern frontier of Bengal, there were five independent states namely Koch Behar, Assam (the Brahmaputra Valley), Jaintia, Cachar and Arakan.⁴⁷ Goalpara which was situated on the east of Koch Behar and west of Assam came under the trade influence of British East India Company. For the purpose of the collection of revenue and expansion of trade towards eastern countries, Goalpara was made a *Thana* under the Rangpur district of Bengal Government in 1813 circa. During that time, present Goalpara town maintained steamer *ghat* where considerable import and export of goods had been carried out. Since the time of Mughal rule, Goalpara and Jugighopa upheld military and trade outpost under the *Subah* of Bengal

The British East India Company always attempted to establish their trade centre in Goalpara for conducting business with the traders of Assam. However, it was not possible to control the trade of Goalpara because of far location from Calcutta. As a result of which, Robert Clive founded a trade committee known as “Society for Trade” in 1765 with the view to carry out trade in remote places of Bengal. On November 1st of 1765, the trade society appointed eleven agents to transact their business in different frontier areas of Bengal. Out of eleven, three agents namely Hugh Baillie, Tom Lewis, Hargreaves were appeared at Goalpara, Rangpur, Hargreaves and Chialmari respectively.⁴⁸ Hugh Baillie already was an important trade agent who carried out salt trade on behalf of Henry Vansittart till 1763 before the appointment as a trade agent under Society for Trade.⁴⁹ When Henry Vansittart was succeeded by Robert Clive, Hugh Baillie was posted to Goalpara. After some year, Nawab Mir Kasim imposed strict duties on articles of inland trades and suppressed all illegal trade of Europeans in Goalpara. But Hugh Baillie had been carrying regular trade in Goalpara without any hindrances by paying regular duties to the Nawab of Bengal. No doubt, the agency of Hugh Baillie at Goalpara supplied inland articles to Assam and imported large quantity of betel nut and

tobacco from Assam.⁵⁰ Later on, Society for Trade started concentration on salt trade which became most important inland trade article in Assam.⁵¹ During that period, salt of Bengal and European broad clothes became major merchandise in Assam.⁵² The trade agency of Huge Baillie had earned handful profit compared to other agencies of Society for Trade.⁵³ In 1768, Society for Trade was terminated by the Court of Director of British East India Company. Significantly, Court of Director declared all monopoly trade of Company servants and creation of private trade agencies under the influence of Company as illegal.⁵⁴ Court of Director opened all trades to private agencies with condition to maintain trade balance of the Company. Court of Director considered it was better to offer the trade of Goalpara to private agencies because it was too far from Company's controlled. So, many free merchants and private trade agencies came to Goalpara for the purpose of trade in Assam.

In 1769, George Lear, an English trade agent came to Goalpara to carry out trade with Assam.⁵⁵ He built an independent salt factory and salt emporium at Goalpara town at the cost of rupees 21,742.⁵⁶ He founded salt warehouses and godowns at Dacca which became the headquarter of his business.⁵⁷ Daniel Raush also an English private merchant who did salt trade in Goalpara without license from the government as an agent of David Killican, a civil servant of Company as well as a merchant of Calcutta. When David Killican was removed by the Court of Director, Hugh Baillie purchased Killican's factory with all appendages. He became a principal merchant in Goalpara who entered into an agreement with Dhuria Baruas of Kandahar *Chowky*. He enjoyed an exclusive privilege by supplying large quantities of salt to Assam which passed through the hand of Duria Barua.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Williams, Wheatland, Cator and Jonh Taylor were English merchants appeared at Goalpara to carry out salt trade.⁵⁹

Regulating Act of 1773 created a new history in Bengal in the field of trade. Regulating Act had abolished all monopoly trade conducted by the servants of British East India Company by misusing the *Dastak* (trade permit). Under the *Dastak*, British East India Company was entitled to trade in Bengal without paying custom duty. As per the Regulating Act, all trades of remote areas were tendered to free merchants and private trade agencies on contract basis under the protection of British East India Company.

William Dow, an English merchant came to India in 1773 with Colonel Dow to carry out trade on clothes and *Jar* in Goalpara with due permission of Warren Hasting, the Governor General of India.⁶⁰ Robert Bigger and Bernard Mac Cullam were well

known English merchants who were engaged salt trade with the merchants of Assam by residing at Goalpara. Robert Bigger could not carry out trade successfully; however, Bernard Mac Cullam was a successful trader in Assam.

As per the order of Court of Director, Calcutta Council formed “Board of Trade” in 1774 to conduct smooth trade in Bengal. Gradually, Board of Trade came into action to secure the investment by contract.⁶¹ The Board of Trade made contract system for chiefs of subordinate factories.⁶²

The Board of Trade opened inland trade of Bengal to all individual merchants of English, Indian and other Europeans. Hugh Baillie arrived at Goalpara with the help of Richards Barwell, newly appointed member of the Calcutta Council.⁶³ He conducted salt trade with Assam traders and Bhutanese too. He also did salt trade in Khuntaghat and Habraghat *Pargana* of Bijni estate.⁶⁴

Goalpara, Jugighopa and Rangamati were three principal commercial centres in the district of Goalpara where the trade agencies of Company and merchants of Bengal conducted their trade with Assam traders. Goalpara town was situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Besides, Jugighopa and Rangamati were situated on the north bank of Brahmaputra River, which formed as eastern boundary of British Bengal. Important transit point was situated at Hadira which situated on the side of Assam, opposite to Goalpara town. It was known as Kandahar *Chowky* or Assam *Chowky*.⁶⁵ This *Chowky* was established by Laxhmi Narayan Brahmacharin during the reign of Gaurinath Singha.⁶⁶ It was supervised by Kandahar Baruah or Duria Baruah.⁶⁷

In the early part of 19th century, salt became as major import goods of Assam which was exchanged with Muga, silk, mustard seeds, ivory, gold and slaves of Assam.⁶⁸ Thus, number of famous Indian merchants namely Sooberam Palit, Ghanashyam Sarkar, Ganga Narayan Roy and Jagat Seth were concentrated in Goalpara for salt trade. Sooberam Palit and Ghanashyam Sarkar received the *perwana* from Muhammad Reza Khan, the *Naib Dewan* of Bengal for three year monopoly of salt trade in Goalpara.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Ganga Narayan Roy a Bengali merchant also received the *rawanah* for Assam. Robert Bigger became an agent of Ganga Narayan Roy who erected a factory at Goalpara with the permission of Governor General.⁷⁰ Jagat Seth who was a loyal merchant of British East India Company had established his business at Goalpara, Jugighopa and Guwahati. He had an agency house in Murshidabad and also an intimate relation with Duria Baruah of Hadira *Chowky*.⁷¹

By 1813, British Government abolished monopoly trade of British East India Company. Obviously, the volume of trade between India and England gradually increased as the business was opened even to all private traders. The British East India Company extended their trade boundary towards Assam to sell finish goods and to extract raw materials from Assam. An outrage broke out between *Zamindars* and tribes who were living on the frontier of Rangpur. Because of the outrage, Company had faced difficulties to expand their trade to eastern countries.⁷² Therefore, David Scott was appointed as joint Civil Commissioner of Koch Behar as well as Joint Magistrate of Rangpur district in 1816. He tried to bring all *Zamindars* of northern and eastern frontier of Rangpur under Bengal Regulation (Permanent settlement Act of 1793). But there was a problem about the implementation of Bengal Regulation in frontier *Zamindars* due to absence of land bidders and bad socio-economic background of Goalpara.⁷³ He suggested that Bengal Government should introduce a 'Non-Regulation Act' in frontier areas as per as their economic condition. He also proposed that new administrative system should be vested to special Commissioner.⁷⁴ Thus, on 19 September 1821, David Scott drafted a Non-Regulation Act which contained twenty six sections including civil, criminal, revenue and police administration. Non-Regulation Act was something different from Bengal Regulation of 1793, which gave better revenue administration in the region. Under the Non-Regulation Act, existing *Zamindars* of Goalpara retained their position after paying fix land revenue to Company.

As per the section II of Regulation X of 1822, the *Thanas* of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari separated from district of Rangpur and formed a district called North East Rangpur with Goalpara as headquarter.⁷⁵ On 15 November 1823, David Scott was appointed as Joint Commissioner of the district of North East Rangpur with the additional office of Agent to Governor General for North East Frontier of Bengal. In 1829, David Scott was appointed as Revenue Commissioner of Assam.⁷⁶ Thus, Goalpara was upgraded from status of trade centre to an administrative centre during nineteenth century.⁷⁷

The relation between the Britishers and the Burmese was not cordial in Assam which created problem to do trade. On 21st June 1822, the Burmese defeated Chandrakanta Singha, the Raja of Ahom and they established strong position in Assam.⁷⁸ Chandrakanta Singha fled away to British territories somewhere in Rangamati, Chilmari or Singimari. In the interest of extending commercial boundary towards Assam, David

Scott offered help to Ahom Raja to expel the Burmese from Assam. The Burmese was defeated in 1826 by British East India Company and signed a treaty called treaty of Yandaboo. According to the provision of treaty, Assam came under the British East India Company.

Trade of British East India Company flourished in India till 1857. Entire trade and political power of British East India Company had passed into the hands of British Crown after the revolt of 1857 and new administrative system started in India under new nomenclature as British India or Government of British India. British parliament established "Office of Secretary of State" in India for proper administration. Thereafter, a new economic system started in India, which came to be known as free trade. Under the free trade system, all taxes came under revenue department.⁷⁹ The custom duty was levied on imported articles and excise duty was also levied on home products.⁸⁰

The British East India Company was trying to set up commercial relations with Bhutan from 1771 to 1866. Several trade missions were sent to Bhutan but no good result had been yielded.⁸¹ Because of the failure of trade mission Anglo-Bhutan war was broke out in 1864.⁸² Anglo-Bhutan war of 1864 was concluded by the treaty of Chinculla of 1866.⁸³ The treaty of Chinculla compelled the Bhutan to surrender all eighteen *Duars* of Assam and Bengal to British India. Among the eighteen *Duars*, Guma, Ripu, Chirang, Sidli and Bijni *Duars* were adjacent to Goalpara district which was popularly known as Eastern *Duars*. Significantly, these five *Duars* were added to Goalpara district for administrative convenience.⁸⁴ The treaty of Chinculla opened the frontier markets below the foothills of Bhutan. The colonial government organized trade fair in several places of *Duars* which also became helpful to maintain peace between Bhutan and British India. The Bhutanese used to visit trade fairs to exchange their forest products with salt and other edible goods. The Bhutanese came down to Goalpara district with the hill products like gold dust, rock salt, musk, cow tails, blankets, knives, rubber, elephant tusks, ponies, Chinese silk and woolen clothes. They bartered the products with rice, dry fish, cotton cloth, glass, salt, utensils, brass metals, etc. The Bhutanese purchased *endi* clothes which were woven by Kachari women.⁸⁵ The Bhutanese traders used to visit Kachari villages to collect *endi* clothes or *endi* cocoon. The total value of trans-frontier trade was very small in colonial period.⁸⁶ The Bhutanese trade caravans appeared in Rangpur in February and March in every year and return to their country in May and June.⁸⁷ With a view to keep friendly relation with Bhutan, the Government of British India established many frontier

markets at Dotma, Kochugaon, Serfanguri, Sidli, Chirang and Bijni under the district administration and forest department.

Nibari, Luckichar, Jerah, Singimiri, Damrah, Rangjuli, Rajaballa, Bengal khatta, Tikri, Salmara, Mankachar, Bahadur Khatta, Putimari and Parakhaslana were frontier *hats* (Market) below Garo Hills.⁸⁸ These *hats* were established by *Chaudhuries* of Koraibari, Kalumalupara, Mechpara and Habragahat estates.⁸⁹ The Garos regularly came to those *hats* with hills products like cotton, chillies, wax, lac, rubber, timber, etc. to sell or barter. When return, they took away cows, pigs, goats, fowls, salt, earthenware pots, swords, spearheads and broad clothes.⁹⁰ The Garos supplied cotton extensively to Goalpara, Salmara, Mankachar, Mahendraganj and Rowmarighat. The cotton of the Garo Hills was exported to Dacca and Calcutta by river route and then to England.⁹¹

In early 19th century, timber became an important item for trading. Sal (*Soria Robusta*) trees were found extensively in the forest of Goalpara division of Assam. Sixth types of trees grown in Goalpara forest are given below:⁹²

1. Sal forest may be divided as under:
 - (a) Bhabar Bamba Sal forest.
 - (b) Terai Sal forest.
 - (c) Evergreen Sal forest.
 - (d) Xerophytic Sal forest.
 - (e) Lateritic Sal forest
2. Mixed deciduous forest.
3. Evergreen forest.
4. Savannaha:
 - (a) Dry.
 - (b) Wet.
5. Riverain forest.
6. Machilus -Eugenia Associes.

Before the establishment of forest department in Assam, Sal trees were exploited by *Zamindars* and private traders in the form of *dhum* for making of boats and

construction of house.⁹³ In rainy season, timber traders of Dacca and Mymensingh were arrived at Goalpara by boats to buy Sal timber.⁹⁴ The timbers were tied with boat and floated it up to Narayanganj near Dacca where it was sold.⁹⁵ In 1864, Imperial forest department was established in Assam and did extensive survey on the forest of Goalpara including *Duars* forest. An extensive Sal trees (*Soria Robusta*) were found in Goalpara forest which occupied a good market in the district. In 1875, the forest department had started to sell timber to timber contractors at the rate of Rs. 10 per tree.⁹⁶ In 1897, the forest department commenced sleeper operation in order to supply wood sleeper to the Eastern Bengal Railway. Railway sleeper required hard timber such as Sal timber to fix the track with earth.⁹⁷ Assam - Bengal Railway Trading Company took an advantage for making railway track sleeper with Sal wood.⁹⁸

During the second half of twentieth century, British India earned handsome profit from agricultural products. Jute became an important commodity next to cotton in markets of Europe. Jute sacks were used for packaging of cotton, sugar, coffee, guano, cements and other commodities. Jute was grown in India in abundance especially in Bengal, Assam, Koch Behar and Nepal.⁹⁹ The Goalpara district became the largest producer of jute among the districts of Assam.¹⁰⁰

Thus, since the Mughal rule, Goalpara formed as an eastern frontier of Bengal. The local chieftains of Goalpara were under the control of the Mughal but the administration of this tract was left in the hands of the local chieftains who paid nominal tribute to the Mughal Emperor.¹⁰¹ The *Dewani* right of 1765 made British East India Company strong which brought all *Zamindars* of Goalpara district under their influence.¹⁰² Thereafter, British East India Company had established trade centre at Goalpara to transact business with the traders of Assam. They made Goalpara as a strategic point for the expansion of political influence towards eastern countries. Goalpara district was attached to Assam in 1874. Thereafter, whole natural resources of Goalpara had been exploited under the British Administration.

Endnotes

¹ R. W. Frazer, *British India*, London, T. Fisher, Unwin, 1896, pp. 28 - 29.

-
- ² W. W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. VI*, Second Edition Trubner Co., London, 1886, p. 367.
- ³ W. W. Hunter, *History of British India, Vol. II*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1919, p. 52.
- ⁴ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The East India Company and the Economy of India, from 1704 to 1740*, Luzac and Company, Russell Street, London, 1954, p. 19.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* p. 20.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Sukumar Bhattacharya, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 22.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 24.
- ¹⁶ R. W. Frazer, *Op. cit.*, p. 47.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Narendra K. Singh, *Economic History of Bengal, Vol. I*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 65.
- ²³ Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule From The Rise Op The British Power In 1757, From the Accession of Queen Victoria in 1837*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner Co. Ltd, London, 1906, p. 18

-
- ²⁴ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *Op. cit*, p. 40.
- ²⁵ Romesh Dutt, *Op. cit*, p. 4.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 18 - 19.
- ²⁸ P. E. Robert, *History of British India*, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2012, p. 153.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ H. K. Barpujari (Ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. III*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2007, p. 130.
- ³¹ Narendra K. Singh, *Op. cit*, p. 179.
- ³² *Ibid*, p. 205.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ J. B. Bhattacharjee, *Trade and Colony*, (the British colonization of north east India) , NEIHA, Shillong, 2000, p. 18.
- ³⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo - Assam Relation*, LBS Publication, Guwahati, New Delhi, 2008, p. 63.
- ³⁶ Amalendu Guha, "Duplex's Trade Mission to Assam," *Studies in the Economic History of North East India (1738- 40)*, Har Anand Publication, 1994, p. 171.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 172.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 173.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid*, p. 175.
- ⁴³ J. B. Bhattacharjee, *Op. cit*, 2000, pp. 18 - 19.
- ⁴⁴ S. K Bhuyan, *Early British Relation with Assam*, EBH Publisher, Guwahati, 2013, p. 7.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ S. K Bhuyan , *Op. cit*, 2008, p. 64.

-
- ⁴⁷ A. C. Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India 1784-1826*, Calcutta, 1946, p. 1.
- ⁴⁸ *Committee of Trade to Clive, Nov 1, 1765, committee's fourth report App.41*, ASA, pp. 15 & 31.
- ⁴⁹ S. K. Bhuyan, *Op. cit*, 2008, p. 94.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 68
- ⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 97.
- ⁵² Ramesh Chandra Kalita, *Assam in the Eighteen Century*, Omsons, New Delhi, 1985, p. 54.
- ⁵³ H. K. Barpujari, *Op. cit*, p. 131.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, *Op. cit*, 2008, p. 97.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁸ A. C. Banerjee, *Op. cit*, p. 7.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁶⁰ S. K. Bhuyan, *Op. cit*, 2008, p. 75
- ⁶¹ Narendra K. Singh, *Op. cit*, p. 21.
- ⁶² *Ibid*.
- ⁶³ Orchid Baruah, *British Administrative Centres in Nineteenth Century Assam*, Phd Dissertation, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 2014, p. 80.
- ⁶⁴ S. K. Bhuyan, *Op. cit*, 2008, p. 141.
- ⁶⁵ Ramesh Chandra Kalita, *Op. cit*, p. 58.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 55.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 58.
- ⁶⁸ Binod. S. Das, *Changing Profile of the Frontier Bengal (1751-1833)*, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1984, p. 185.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Ramesh Chandra Kalita, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁷² S. K. Bhuyan, *Op. cit.*, 2008, p. 456 - 457.

⁷³ Orchid Baruah, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷⁴ N. K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 57

⁷⁵ Edward Gait, *History of Assam*, Bina Library, Guwahati, 2008, p. 283

⁷⁶ N. K. Barooah, *Op. cit.*, p. 8

⁷⁷ Orchid Baruah, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷⁸ S. K. Bhuyan, *A History of Assam 1681-1826 A.D.*, D.K.F., Trust , Delhi, 1933, p. 213

⁷⁹ C. J. Hamilton, *The Trade Relations Between England and India (1600-1896)*, Calcutta, Thacker, Spink And Co., 1919, p. 237.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Santiswarup Gupta, *British Relation with Bhutan*, Phanshaseel Prakasan, Jaipur, 1974, p. 74.

⁸² A. J. Laine, *An Account of the Land Tenure system of Goalpara*, ASOF, 1917, p. 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Srimiti Das, *Assam - Bhutan Trade Relation 1865-1947*, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, 2005, p. 29.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁶ B. C. Allen, E.A. Gait, C.G.H. Allen & H.F. Howard, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India*, Mittall Publication, New Delhi, 2012, p. 519.

⁸⁷ R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bhutan, Indian Studies Past and Present*, 1961, p. 77.

⁸⁸ Manjula Borthakur, *Periodic Markets in Tribal Areas: A Case Study of Meghalaya* Unpublished M. Phil dissertation, NEHU, Shillong, 1989, p. 37.

⁸⁹ Angira Dev (Kar), *The Garo Frontier Market in the Nineteenth Century*, Unpublished M. Phil dissertation submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1992, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

-
- ⁹¹ *Report on Cotton Marketing in Assam*, Assam Secretariat Printing Press, Shillong, 1942, p. 14.
- ⁹² W. F. Lloyed, *Working Plan of the Goalpara Sal forest, Goalpara Division. Goalpara Division*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1894, p. 6.
- ⁹³ W. F. Perree, *The Second Working Plan for the Goalpara Forest Division, Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1908, p. 9
- ⁹⁴ Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland (The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India)*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011, p. 68.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ W. F. Lloyed, *Op. cit*, p. 6.
- ⁹⁷ A. C. Singha, *Colonial Legacy and Environmental Crisis in the North East India*, EBH Publisher, Guwahati, 2012, p. 20.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁹ *Indian Trade Enquiry, Reports on Jute and Silk*, London, 1921, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁰ Rajen Saikia, *Social and Economic History of Assam (1853-1921)*, Monohar Publisher & Distributor, New Delhi, 2001, p. 90.
- ¹⁰¹ A. J. Laine, *Op. cit*, pp. 2 - 3.
- ¹⁰² Priyam Gossami, *The History of Assam- from Yandaboo to Partition, 1826-1947*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2012, p. 12.