

CHAPTER: VI

IMPACT OF TRADE

The British East India Company came to India for the purpose of trading only but with the passages of time they established political power over India. They set up a new administrative system in India after subjugating numerous princely states from the Mughal Empire and brought a lot of changes in the field of political, social and economy of India. The British East India Company also established trade centre in Goalpara with the aims of conducting business with eastern countries.

VI. 1. ECONOMIC TRANSITION

The economic condition of Goalpara district was self sufficient. Agriculture was the main livelihood of the people of Goalpara district. The peoples of Goalpara district cultivated only food crops before the second half of 20th century. They did not know the commercial value of agricultural products but sometimes they sold their surplus products in the weekly markets. There were few markets in Goalpara district but the markets could not provide market facilities to the cultivators due to the lack of communication and location of far flung area. However, small numbers of Bengali *basania beparis* reached to the villages for buying garden products especially betel nuts and agriculture products in minimum rate. Beside the agricultural work, the Kacharis engaged in boats making. Bengal wood cutters and Meches extracted a small amount of timber from Eastern *Duar* forests

for making houses and boats. However, boat making industries were banned with the establishment of forest department in Goalpara by British India.

Various markets sprung up in Goalpara district due to extensive production of jute because it became an important article in European markets next to cotton. Gradually, whole production both garden and agricultural products came under commercial purview during the colonial period. Very few Kachari came out for doing trade in jute and timber etc. Whole trade in the market was control by handful Marwari merchants and petty Bengali traders.

(a) Development of Trade Centres and Towns in Goalpara District

The trade agency of British East India Company arrived in Goalpara after getting the *Dewani* right over Bengal, Behar and Orissa from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. The British East India Company extended their trading activities towards eastern countries with the establishment of trade centre at Goalpara. The demand of salt in the eastern countries and demand of tea, cotton, silk and ivory in the British markets led to the establishment of trade centre in Goalpara. The Goalpara district had rich forest and agricultural products. The products like timber, jute and others products were easily available in the markets of Goalpara in large quantity which gave an opportunity to the trader to conduct business. As a result of which some trading centres like Goalpara, Dhubri and Gauripur were turned into towns.

There were three major trading centres in the Goalpara district. They were Goalpara (present Goalpara town) which was situated on the south bank of Brahmaputra, Jugighopa and Rangamati on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Number of merchants both Indians and Europeans had established their trade agency at Goalpara, Jugighopa and Rangamati to carry out trade with Assam for which Hadira *Chowky* of Assam became the transit point of Assam - Bengal trade in the 18th century. Hadira *Chowky* was supervised by an officer known as Kandahar Barua or Dhuria Barua. Hadira *Chowky* was also popularly known as Kandahar *Chowky* or Assam *Chowky* in the records of Company. Martin Montgomery wrote that the conglomeration of European merchants at Goalpara made it resemble to European city. He further stated that Goalpara was the chief town containing of some good thatched houses and a street of shops, which was

looking upon as one of utmost elegance.¹ Franchis Hamilton visited Assam during 1808-1814. He mentioned that numbers of Europeans were settled at Goalpara and Jugighopa for doing trade with the traders of Assam.²

Goalpara district was the western most district of Chief Commissionership of Assam. Goalpara turned into a district which was known as North East Rangpur in 1822 under Regulation X of 1822. By the treaty of Sinculla, all Bhutan *Duars* came under British dominion. Eastern *Duars* were added to the district of Goalpara. In 1867, Goalpara district came under newly created Koch Behar Commissionership. Finally, Goalpara district was incorporated to new province of Assam in 1874. Undoubtedly, Goalpara had affinity with Bengal, its economy and culture was more akin to Bengal than Assam.³

The town of Goalpara was situated on Oblong hillock. It was selected by Captain Davidson for the headquarter of district administration after conquest of Assam.⁴ The town was built up in a regular manner and consisted of several large streets running parallel to each other with a crossroads at right angles. There was a main street nearby river which stood as market place. In fact, Goalpara had been commercially important since the pre colonial era. Ahom ruler posted security guards at Hadira *Chowky* which was situated opposite to Goalpara town for checking illegal trade activities. Goalpara town also became headquarter of three companies of the Assam Sebundy Corps.⁵ Magistrate's court, public buildings including a small jail, a high school, a hospital with eighteen beds, post and telegraph offices, a police station and a circuit house were set up by British in Goalpara town. In 1878, Goalpara town was constituted as Municipality under Act V (B.C) of 1876.

Dhubri town was situated on the north bank of Brahmaputra River. It provided better trade facilities to Goalpara district. In 1876, Dhubri town was constituted as Municipality under Act V (B.C) of 1876.⁶ Therefore, the district headquarter was shifted from Goalpara town to Dhubri town in 1879. Dhubri town had a common public office, a small church, a jail for 34 persons, a high school, a public library, a town hall and a marble statue of Queen Victoria.⁷ In 1902, Dhubri was connected by the railway line of Eastern Bengal Railway.

Gauripur was a small town situated on the east bank of Gadadhar river. It was formed a town by 1919.⁸ Gauripur town was a beautiful place where *Zamindar* of Gauripur resided. The colonial district authority established a High school, a dispensary, a post and telegraph office at Gauripur town. A considerable numbers of Marwaris had

come to Gauripur town for doing trade in jute, mustard seed, rice etc. Other groups of people like blacksmith, wheelwrights, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, shopkeepers and artisans were also resided in Gauripur town.⁹

Abhayapuri was a residential place of Bijni *Zamindar* which also turned into a small town after the establishment of an estate office during the colonial period. Lakiphur was also an important town where landlord of Mechpara resided. Bilasipara town was the residential place of landlord of Chapar. Raja of Sildi was resided at Bidyapur.

Many trade centres and markets were sprung up in Goalpara district during colonial period. Bagribari, Rupsi, Gauripur, Simluguri, Laksmipur, Bilasipara, Maijunga and Marnai were principal seats of the timber trade.¹⁰ Manikachar was situated on the extreme southwest of Goalpara district in Koraibari *Pargana*.¹¹ Cotton, jute, mustard and others products of Garo Hills were available in the markets of Manikachar.¹² A proper trading system came up in Manikachar and Singimari after the formation Garo Hills district. Patamari and Agomoni were also important market of Goalpara district. In Eastern *Duars*, numbers of weekly markets were organized in Sidli and Bijni by British authority where Bhutanese came down for marketing. Bijni was old residential place of pre-colonial. Due to legacy of *Zamindary* estate, Bijni emerged a small town with shops, educational institutions and railway station. Periodical markets (*hats*) were held at Jira, Nibari, Damra, Porakasu, Dalo, Mahendraganj, Rajabala and other places in the Garo frontier. These markets situated near the boundaries of *Zamindary* estate of Goalpara where considerable police personals were deployed to minimize the criminal activities during the harvesting season.

In 20th century, railway line had connected some major trading places like Sapatgram, Fakiragram, Kokrajhar, Basugaon, Bijni of Goalpara district. Earlier, Sapatgram was a small trade centre for timber and jute. It was transformed into a small town when railway station was established there.

In Kokrajhar, a weekly market was organized in every Sunday under the control of Sidli Raja. The Imperial forest department set a timber depot at Kokrajhar, where all timbers of Haltugaon forest were deposited for logging. During the first half of the 20th century, Kokrajhar was connected by the railway line and established an intermediate railway station to transport timber from Kokrajhar forest depot. Subsequently, Kokrajhar came up as small timber trading centre during colonial period. Initially, a Police station and Tehsilder office were established in Kokrajhar.

Gossaigaon was another place where weekly market was under Gauripur *Zamindar*. British India established the office of Tehsildar at Gossaigaon for collection of land revenue.

There were two small industries in Goalpara district for producing of tea and safety match.¹³ In 1860, *Zamindars* of Goalpara district set up a tea garden on the southern side of Brahmaputra river. In 1882, Norwegian Lutheran Mission established a tea garden at Guma. They also set up one more garden on the bank of Baonai River in 1886, which was known as Mornoi Tea Garden.¹⁴ A small match factory was established at Dhubri. It was operated by Swedish Company since 1815.¹⁵ In 1924, Swedish Company had started to produce safety match due to the increased of demand.¹⁶ The Swedish Company was renamed as Assam Match Company in 1926.¹⁷

(b) Development of Markets

During colonial period, many *hats* and weekly markets were coming up in Goalpara district. The name of markets and days of the markets are given below:

Thanas	S.1	Place where markets was held	Days of week on which markets held
Dhubri Sub-Division.			
Dhubri Thana	1	Dhubri	Monday and Tuesday
	2	Gauripur	Sunday and Wednesday
	3	Patamari	Tuesday and Friday
	4	Dhamsala(Haturhat)	Wednesday and Saturday
	5	Hasdaha (Kalurhat)	Tuesday and Friday
	6	Binnachara	Wednesday and Sunday
Golokganj Thana	7	Paglarhat (Village Kachukhana)	Wednesday and Sunday
	8	Pratapganj (Village Barundanga)	Tuesday and Friday
	9	Sobandha (Village Biskhowa)	Wednesday and Saturday

Golokganj Thana	10	Kaldoba	Tuesday and Friday
	11	Shahebjanj (Village Kagrabari)	Monday and Thursday
	12	Golokganj (Village Tokererchara)	Sunday and Thursday
	13	Futeniganj (Village Talli)	Wednesday and Saturday
	14	Pundibari (Village Chhagalia)	Sunday and Thursday
	15	Rupsi	Tuesday and Saturday
	16	Biskhowa	Monday and Thursday
	17	Kumarganj (Village Petla)	Tuesday and Friday
	18	Chatrosal (Village Ramrayerkuti)	Monday and Thursday
	19	Ranpaglir Hat (Village Jhaspabari)	Tuesday and Friday
	20	Dimakuri	Wednesday and Saturday
	21	Baterhat (Village Kaimari)	Tuesday and Friday
	22	Gaikhowarhat	Tuesday and Friday
	23	Harirhat (Village Raypur)	Wednesday and Saturday
	24	Agomani (Village Maisa)	Monday and Thursday
	25	Dhepdhepi (Village Hansdaha)	Monday and Thursday
26	Tamarhat	Monday and Wednesday	
Golokganj Thana	27	Mahamayarhat (Village Sonakhulo)	Wednesday and Saturday
	28	Abalerhat (Village Bhangadhuli)	Wednesday and Sunday
	29	Goperhat	Monday and Thursday
	30	Kalirhat (Village Ghaliardanga)	Sunday and Wednesday
	31	Dargarhat	Sunday and Wednesday
	32	Kherbari	Monday and Thursday
	33	Nowarhat(Village Kumari)	Tuesday and Friday
	34	Burarhat (Kubari)	Tuesday and Saturday

	35	Dumardaba	Tuesday and Friday
Bilasipara Thana	36	Bilasipara	Tuesday
	37	Bagribari (3- annas)	Sunday and Wednesday
	38	Bagribari (8- annas)	Monday and Friday
	39	Soulmari	Sunday and Wednesday
	40	Sapatgram	Tuesday and Saturday
	41	Bhawraguri	Monday and Thursday
	42	Dingaon	Tuesday and Saturday
	43	Kokrajar	Sunday
	44	Balagaon	Tuesday
	45	Basugaon	Tuesday and Saturday
	46	Raniganj	Sunday and Wednesday
	47	Lakhiganj	Monday and Friday
	48	Sualkocha	Sunday and Wednesday
	49	Chapar	Monday and Friday
	50	Dotma	Wednesday
51	Gossaigaon	Tuesday and Friday	
South Salmara	52	South Salmara	Monday and Thursday
	53	Fakirganj	Tuesday and Saturday
	54	Jamadarhat	Sunday and Wednesday
	55	Guthla	Sunday and Wednesday
	55	Badurkati	Sunday
	56	Manirchar	Sunday and Wednesday
	57	Hazirhat	Saturday and Tuesday

	58	Madererchar	Friday
	59	Sukchar	Monday and Wednesday
	60	Mahamayachar	Saturday and Wednesday
Mankachar	61	Kakripara	Saturday
	62	Mankachar	Wednesday
	63	Jhandangah	Friday
	64	Deaiah	Sunday
	65	Kukurmara	Wednesday
	66	Pipulbari	Thursday
	67	Bhurakhata	Saturday
	68	Oidubahat	Sunday

Thana			
Goalpara Sub-Division	S.1	Place where markets was held	Days of week on which markets held
Goalpara Thana	69	Nibari	Sunday
	70	Matia	Sunday
	71	Balijana	Tuesday
North Salmara	72	Abhayapuri	Monday and Tuesday
	73	Muligaon	Sunday and Wednesday
	74	Borghola	Sunday and Wednesday
	75	Kabaitari	Tuesday and Saturday
	76	Birjhora	Friday and Tuesday
	77	Lakhipur	Monday
	78	Nidanpur	Friday

Lakhipur	79	Chunari	Sunday
	80	Abirampara	Tuesday and Wednesday
	81	Roychanderchar	Friday
	82	Khushbari	Tuesday and Sturday
	83	Jaleswar	Wednesday
	84	Damra	Thursday
	85	Krishnai	Wednesday
	86	Rangjuli	Monday
	87	Dhupdhara	Tuesday
	88	Khekhuta	Saturday
Chapaguri	89	Chapaguri	Saturday
	90	Garagaon	Do
	91	Gurubhasa	Do

Assam District Gazetteers, Goalpara, Vol. III has furnished the list of villages with permanent shops as follows:¹⁸

Thana	Villages	Number of permanent shops
Dhubri Sub –Division Dhubri Thana	Gauripur	43
	Patamari	10
	Dhamsala	3
	Hansdala	3
	Binnachara	8
	Soulmari	3
	Dhubri	70

Dhubri Sub –Division Golokganj Thana	Kachakhana	7
	Barundanga	5
	Biskhowa	4
	Kaldoba	9
	Khagrabari	12
	Tokourchara	20
	Chhgolia	3
	Rupsi	8
	Pelta	6
	Ramrayerkuti	6
	Gaikhowa	3
	Maisha	5
	Sarakhuli	3
	Kanuri	7
	Dhubri Sub –Division Bilasipara Thana	Bilasipara
Bogribari (3- annas)		58
Bogribari (8- annas)		6
Soulmari		12
Sapatgram		21
Bhawraguri		5
Dingaon		9
Kokrajhar		12
Balagaon		11
Basugaon		14
Raniganj		4

	Lakhiganj	16
	Salkocha	9
	Chapar	17
Dhubri Sub –Division South Salmara Police Station	South Salmara	19
	Fakirganj	25
	Jamadarhat	9
	Guthla	3
	Badurkati	6
	Madrecher	6
	Hazirhat	5
	Sukohar	4
	Mahamayachar	3
Dhubri Sub –Division Mankachar	Kakripara	3
	Mankachar	96
	Deaiah	8
	Kukurmarah	6
Goalpara Sub-Division Goalpara Thana	Nibari	5
	Buduchar	3
	Mornai	13
	Dubapara	3
	Dalgoma	4
	Bahati	5
	Balijana	6
	Goalpara	160
Goalpara Sub-Division	North Salmara	3

North Salmara	Cholantapara	4
	Kakaijama	3
Goalpara Sub-Division	Jugighopa	3
North Salmara	Pachonia	3
	Malegor	3
	Abhayapuri	24
	Borogola	3
	Kabaitari	4
	Birjhora	13
Goalpara Sub-Division	Lakhipur	25
	Nidanpur	6
Lakhipur	Chunari	3
	Abirampa	6
Goalpara Sub-Division	Damra	--
	Krishnai	4
Dadni	Dhupdhara	4

A big market was come up at Kochugaon during the first half of 20th century in Goalpara forest division which was held every Sunday. The market was set up to meet the need of day to day commodities of the employees of forest and Tram. Many of the Bhutanese came to Kochugaon market to purchase their essential commodities. At the same time they also brought the production of Bhutan to sell in the market of Kochugaon.

(c) Development of Transport and Communication

The trade facilities of Goalpara district compelled the colonial administrator to build up good transport system. The traders were not avail to reach the markets of remote area where cultivators sold their agricultural products. The cultivators could not get rea-

sonable price of their products because of lack transport facility. Only some rivers were used for transportation in rainy season. The cultivators were made long journey by carrying their products on their shoulder to the markets. Very few people used bullock cart as a means of transportation. So, Government of British India constructed roads and provided steam service on the river for the purpose of trade activities in the district.

In the year of 1839, Assam Steamer Company started steamer services in Assam between Guwahati and Calcutta. The Steamers passed through Goalpara and Dhubri town. In 1860, Indian General Steam Navigation Company entered into a contract with the Government of British India to run a pair of vessels for six days in a week. Therefore, small boats of the government were withdrawn from the Brahmaputra river. The Steam navigation of Assam valley was handed over to Indian General Steam Navigation Company.

The district authority constructed many roads on the expense of Local Fund. Captain Jenkins suggested to British government for restoration of all old routes.¹⁹ Therefore, Public Works Department was set up in 1868 for construction of roads under the responsibility of Deputy Commissioner who was assisted by a committee. In 1880, Local Board was constituted by Government with the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of local roads. In 1890, the provincial roads and ferries came under the Public Works Department to execute all works at the expense of Rs. 50, 000.²⁰ In 1902, forest department established Tram in Goalpara forest to extract Sal timber from the forest. In 1924, Tram line was connected with the main line of East Bengal Railway at Fakiragram.

In 1902, the East Bengal Railway extended up to Gologonj, from where two railways had been constructed between Gologonj to Dhubri and Gologonj to Guwahati. The railway between Dhubri and Guwahati had been constructed on the northern part of Goalpara district. Gologonj, Balajan, Gauripur and Dhubri became railway station of Gologonj - Dhubri line. Gologonj, Motejhar, Basbari, Tipkai, Fakiragram, Seesapani, Kokrajhar, Basugaon, Bongaigaon and Bijni were the intermediate stations of Gologonj - Guwahati line.

(d) Banking System

The most important impact of trade in Goalpara district during the colonial period was credit facilities. In the early period of 20th century, the credit structure of Goalpara

district took concrete shape under Marwari merchants. The Marwari and Bengali merchants established commercial venture in different places of Goalpara district. The commercial venture of Marwari merchants and Bengali merchants reached up to the villages as well as to tea Garden. The merchant had enough money to lend to borrower on interest.²¹ They issued loan for short term period. Marwari firms and other money lenders also made advance for short term to village agriculturists against their crops.²² Especially, *beparis* borrowed money from big firms to give to cultivators as loan. They charged interest on the quality of crops in general. Sometimes, they also charged interest 50 to 75 percent interest on loan money.²³ The transaction of money had been carried out with *hundies*, cheque or drafts. This type of money transaction was secondary business to some merchants in those days. However, some businessmen were successful in mobilizing credit facilities in the rural areas. A Marwari merchant of Dhubri told to the Banking Enquiry Committee of Assam that “We accept deposits but pay no interest. There were some Marwari traders who pay interest at 9 to 11 per cent on deposit which are used by them in business”.²⁴ Passbooks were rarely issued under the credit system but issued deposit receipts regularly. The financial statement of banking was not maintained separately. No separate balance sheet of the losses and profits of banking business were prepared.²⁵

Before 1900, there was no pure banking system in Goalpara district. During that period, shopkeepers were very much closed to money lender and wealthy landholders. They played as middlemen between money lender and money borrower.²⁶ The Co-operative movement started in Assam after the enactment of Co-operative Societies Act of 1904. Therefore, few number of agricultural credit societies were grown up elsewhere in the Goalpara district.²⁷ The Co-operative Town Bank of Dhubri registered in 1909. It was the first organize banking institution in the cooperative sector of Assam. This bank provided credit facility only to Dhubri Municipal area. In 1917 Central Co-operative Banking Union of Dhubri was established. In 1922, Central Co-operative Banking Union was established in Bijni for financing to the Co- operative credit societies. The credit societies had good financial sources to give advance credit to their respective member in the rural areas. In 1929-30, there were seven loan offices in the district. The loan office of Dhubri became very active under Assam Valley Division. The United Bank of India opened its branches office at Dhubri on 26th September, 1938.²⁸

British India found different types of coins as a medium of exchange throughout the country which posed a problem for doing trade and commerce. Therefore, British East India Company introduced uniform legal tender money one rupee silver coin of 180 gram in Madras in 1818 for regular transaction. In 1835, it became a sole legal tender throughout the country.²⁹ In 1893, a rupee coin was minted for circulation. The exchange ratio of Indian rupee with British sterling was fixed at 1s.4d. per rupee in 1898. In 1914-19, the gold exchange standard was adopted and value of Indian rupee was retained at 1s.4d. in terms of sterling. The nickel coins of 2 *annas*, 4 *annas* and 8 *annas* were also in circulation along with 1 *paisa* copper coin.³⁰ Side by side, paper currency was introduced since 1861 and notes of various denominations such as Rs. 10, 20, 50, 100 were circulated. The lowest unit was copper coin of 1 *paisa* denomination, 4 *paisa* made 1 *anna* and 16 *annas* made 1 rupee. The nickel coin came with 2, 3, 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 *paisa* and 1 rupee. Lastly, 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 rupee paper notes denomination were in circulation.³¹ At present system 100 *paisa* makes 1 rupee.

(e) Beginning of Modern Education

Before the coming of British East India Company, there was no formal education system in Goalpara. However, *Zamindars* of Goalpara district had patronized some schools where Grammar, general literature, mythology, logic and law were taught. The education system of Goalpara district was practically stereotyped. Several Madrassas and *Moktab* were also established in Goalpara by the Muslim ruler. In the Madrassa only the Koran was taught.³²

The Charter Act of 1813 compelled British East India Company to introduce modern education system in India. The Company was directed by the Charter Act of 1813 to spend rupees one lakh each year for implementation of modern education in India. The effectiveness of education had not been seen until the reaching of Mr. Macaulay to India who was the President of general Committee of Public Instruction and law member of Executive Council of Governor General of British India. Mr. Macaulay made effort to promote the modern education and English literature.³³

Bengal government approved the education budget in 1826 under the Charter Act of 1813. Thereafter, David Scott made additional grants for the establishment of several

indigenous schools in upper and lower Assam. The British East India Company established 10 schools in Goalpara district. The schools were established at Goalpara, Mumoi, Kamarpotah, Jugighopa, Lakhipur, Singimari, Kakripara, Bilasipara and Garo School of Dhubri.³⁴ Out of 10 schools, only the school of Goalpara was supported by local fund and *Zamindars* of Goalpara also made donation of good amount of money for running the school. In this school only boy pupils were taught in English, Bengali and Persian. In Garo School, eight boys were admitted who were taught Bengali and Persian. This school got Rs. 50 as one time grant-aid from the government.³⁵ In 1856-57, numbers of schools had increased up to 15 (fifteen). In 1872-73, another 31 (thirty one) schools were opened in Goalpara district. Sir, Campbell granted Grant - in - Aid to the private schools which led to increase more numbers of schools in the district.³⁶ It was notable that Bengali language was the medium of instruction in the schools of Goalpara district.³⁷ In 1874-75, 80 (eighty) primary schools were established in Goalpara district.³⁸

Zamindars of Goalpara also established schools in some places of Goalpara district. Tarini Priya Barua, wife of Dhir Chandra Barua who was a *Zamindar* of Gauripur opened a *Chattuspathy* at Gauripur to encourage learning of Sanskrit literature. Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, *Zamindar* of Gauripur set up one Middle English School at Gauripur in 1899.³⁹ He also established three Middle English Schools at Sukchar, Patmari and Chatrasal.⁴⁰ He also founded a public library at Dhubri which was renamed as H.I.S. Cotton after the name Chief Commissioner of Assam.

During 1905, only four High Schools were established at Dhubri, Goalpara, Abhayapuri and Gauripur. These four High schools were recognized by Calcutta University. English language was the medium of instruction in these four High Schools. The vernacular language was employed in lower classes. Few Middle English Schools were established at Bilashipara, Bagribari, Mancachar and Dolgoma.⁴¹ 10 (ten) middle vernacular schools were opened at Sukchar, Patamari, Chhatrasal, South Salmara, Bijni, Atugaon, Putimari, Amguri, Goalpara and Dhubri.⁴² In 1900-1901, three H.S. School and 15 (fifteen) middle schools were set up.⁴³ In 1904, Abhayeswari H.S. & M.P. School was established in Abhayapuri and H.N. Seminary H.S. School of Bagribari was opened in 1914.

During 1936-37, there were 247 lower primary schools, 16 middle school and 4 High schools. In 1936, Sapatgram Bengali High School was established. Sapatgram

Amalgamated Academy was established in 1939. Basugaon and Gossaigaon H.S School High School were established in 1940 and 1947 respectively.

The Christian missionary also established numbers of schools in Goalpara district to impart western education as well as to spread the Christian religion. The Christian missionaries played a significant role for promoting vernacular education in Assam. They opened a school in Garo Hills for giving English education to hills tribes. In 1826, a school was established at Singimari in Goalpara district under the initiative of David Scott for imparting western education to 40 (fourth) Garo boys. But this school was shut down in the same year because of lack of suitable teacher. In 1868, the American Baptist Mission opened a school at Damra which was shifted to Goalpara town and then Tura.⁴⁴ Mrs. Keith initiated a new education programme for girls at Goalpara with a school in 1871 but unfavorable condition compelled to shut down the school. In 1881, the Lutheran Missionary arrived at Dhubri with few Santhal families from Bihar under an organization known as Santhal Mission of Northern Churches. This mission proceeded 40 Kilometers northern side of Dhubri and reached at Dingdinga where they made first Christian Colony in the district. After few years, they established Christian Mission and English School at Grahampur, Haraputa and Joyma respectively. Lastly, the Lutheran Mission established another mission at Gaurang in 1927, near the office of Eastern Range (Haltugaon) of Goalpara forest division.⁴⁵

Prior to 1946, there was no such institution in the district for imparting university education. Therefore, the students opted either to go to Calcutta or Cotton college of Gauhati which was established in 1901. Dhubri College was established in August of 1946 with the help of public charity. The *Zamindar* of Lakhipur got top on the list of donors and the *Zamindar* of Mechpara was the principal donor of the College. Later on, Dhubri College was renamed as Bola Nath College. Bola Nath was father of Mechpara *Zamindar*.⁴⁶ In present, this College is popularly known as B.N. College.

VI. 2. MIGRATION

With establishment of trade centre in Goalpara by British in 19th century, many traders like Marwari, Bengali had started migration to Goalpara for conducting trade. On the other hand, exploitation of forest resources of Goalpara became a big problem due to

lack of man power. Therefore, British authority invited tribal labour from the neighbouring district of Bengal to extract timber from the forest of Goalpara. A group of Santhal was brought by British to Goalpara from Chota Nagpur for plantation of tea. In a passage of time, the Santhals settled down on vacant land of forest area by rendering free manual service to the forest department. Most of the labours did not return to their homeland after the end of their contract work. In 20th century, commercialization of agriculture became a dominant colonial policy. They came to know that huge acres of fertile land lying vacant without crops because of less population. Frequent outbreak of epidemic disease like Cholera, Kala Azar and Diarrhea made depopulated elsewhere of the district. The colonial authority welcomed land hungry East Bengal peasants for cultivation of crops and allowed them to settle in *char* land of Goalpara. The *Zamindars* of Goalpara also encouraged the Muslims immigrants to cultivate more crops on the vacant land for the purpose of land revenue collection.

The migration is derived from Latin word ‘migrare’ which means change of residence. Literally, terms of migration denotes settlement or shifting of an individual or a group from particular area to other place in permanent or temporary. The migration of people happened in term of political factor, social factor and economic factor. In fact, the immigration into Goalpara district was solely economic factor. The immigrants of Goalpara were divided in two groups: (i) those who came from presidency of Bengal to take up wasteland for cultivation and (ii) those who came from distant places of central India for trading.⁴⁷ There were different phases of foreign immigration into Goalpara district during colonial period. In the first phase, outside traders came to Goalpara with the expansion of commercial boundary toward Assam. In the Second phase, Bengalee employees of British East India Company had come in Goalpara after the establishment of British administration. Lastly, in the beginning of 20th century, huge peasants form Eastern Bengal migrated into Goalpara for purpose of agricultural operation in the waste land of Goalpara.⁴⁸

Most of the Marwaris were traders and money lender by profession who served as intermediary in new foreign oriented commerce. Since the establishment of British trade in India, the Marwaris took a great responsibility for buying and selling of foreign goods in different parts of India. The Marwari traders were moving in nook and corner of India with British traders for transacting business.⁴⁹ A businessman whose name was Mahasingh Rai Meghraj Bahadur made journey from Jodhpur to Jaisalmer and then he

arrived at Calcutta in 1812. Afterward, he arrived at Goalpara as a clerk of district office.⁵⁰ The Marwari who were the owner of Murshidabad firms of Bengal had established many *ghola* (shops) in Goalpara. All the trade of Goalpara was conducted by Marwaris.⁵¹ The Oswal or Marwari was locally called *Kainya* in Goalpara and *Keya* in Assam.⁵²

Numbers of immigrant were increased in Goalpara with the establishment of colonial trade.⁵³ The people from Sylhet, Dacca, Mymensingh, Rangpur and central India came to Goalpara in search job in British administrative offices. The British East India Company had established many offices in the district to run smooth administration. Therefore, Colonial authority appointed many Bengalee educated people who were from Mymensingh, Rangpur and Sylhet district of Bengal. Most of the government servants were Bengali and high class people of central India. Major Jenkins stated that the district courts of Goalpara were filled with Bengalee employees who came from Rangpur. Moreover, police officers and judges of Goalpara district were Muslims, who were mainly came Burdwan and North-West Province of British India. The Bengalees of Rangpur and Mymensingh were appointed as revenue officers and treasurers.⁵⁴ Gradually, the government employees were settled down in Goalpara district to run smooth colonial administration.

The Christian missionary and Chief Commissioner of Assam were also responsible to bring the Santhals to Goalpara district. The Santhals were arrived at Guma *Duar* in Goalpara district through the agency of Norwegian Mission.⁵⁵ On February 8, 1881, Mr. Borression reached at Dhubri of Goalpara district with forty-two Santhal families. The forty-two Santhal families further proceeded to northern side of Dhubri. Finally, they arrived at Thakurpur of Dingdinga (present Gossaigaon Subdivision of Kokrajhar district).⁵⁶ Another 13 (thirteen) families were also came at the same place after a week. The Santhals formed five villages after clearing jungles in Guma *Duar*. In 1881, there were 53 (fifty-three) Santhals houses in Guma *Duar*. In 1888, the population of Santhals increased up to 600. They occupied 1,886 *bighas* of land. In 1910, the population of Santhal further increased up to 4486. The area occupied by them was estimated 12,280 *bighas* of land.⁵⁷ Gradually, Santhals moved to different places of Goalpara district like Grahampur, Srirampur, Haraputa, Kochugaon, Saraibil, Sapkata, Jaraguri, Gurufela, Padmabil, Hakma, Pakriguri etc.⁵⁸

The tea planters and railway department had engaged some *coolies* who were mainly from Kanpur, Allahabad, Purnia, Darbhanga, Chapra, Dacca and Santhal *Pargana*

of Bihar for plantation of tea and construction of railway line. 1,326 *coolies* were employed in the tea garden of Goalpara district.⁵⁹ In 1881, out of 62,432 immigrant populations, 31,076 numbers of coolies in the district of Goalpara.⁶⁰ The *coolies* did not return to their homeland after the termination of contract work. They settled down in vacant land as cultivators.⁶¹ The tea planters of Assam handed over the task of *coolies* supply to private recruiting agencies of Calcutta. The recruiting agencies utilized some professional native recruiters (*arkattis*) for supplying of *coolies* from Bihar and Orissa.⁶² According to census reports of 1931, 5,000 *coolies* were migrated to Goalpara district.⁶³

British India brought tribal labours from Jalpaiguri district of Bengal to control the state forest's resources of Eastern *Duars*.⁶⁴ By 1870, the timber became commercially important but it was very tough to extract from the thick forests without man power. The Imperial forest department started to exploit Sal timber of Goalpara forest for making railway sleeper. However, due to the shortage of labours, the forest department could not earn much profit. Therefore, the forest department brought tribal labour from Jalpaiguri district of Bengal to extract timber from the forest of Goalpara district. The forest department adopted a policy to solve the problem of the shortage of labour permanently by allowing the forest labourer to establish their own villages inside the forest area of Eastern *Duars*. The Imperial forest department granted forest waste land to labours in return of free service which was known as *Tangya* and *Begari system*. The grant of forest waste land to labourer was not only for enhancing cultivation but also to minimize the spread of fire inside the forest.⁶⁵ Due to the grant of forest waste land to the labourer, number of inhabitants in the forest area gradually increased. The Meches or Kacharis were migrated from permanent settle tract to virgin soil of Eastern *Duars* forest to cultivate cash crops.⁶⁶ During 1911-12, Rabha peasants of Jalpaiguri district of Bengal migrated to Eastern *Duars* of Goalpara district. It remarked that approximately 265 Rabhas families were migrated to Eastern *Duars* and each family got 12 *bighas* of land.⁶⁷

The Bihari or North Indian Muslims were migrated to Assam in search of livelihood during the later periods of British rule. They were mainly engaged in the occupations of butchers, barbers, tailors, carpenters, washer-men, earthwork and quilt-makers.⁶⁸

Some peoples from Assam came to Goalpara and settled there before the coming of British. A good number of peasants of Assam- Bengal borders were also moving to Goalpara when they were tortured by their landlords for arrears dues.⁶⁹ Some individual also came from Bengal, Central India and Assam to Goalpara for seeking job or trading

purposes but their numbers were very few that could not be called immigrants.⁷⁰ It is a fact that the immigrants were settled first in Goalpara districts and then they gradually moved to other parts of the Brahmaputra valley.⁷¹ A considerable number of Muslims peasants migrated to Goalpara during the period from 1872 to 1881. In 1872, the total number of Muslim migrants was 89,916.⁷² Besides, 50,305 Muslim immigrants also came to Goalpara in 1881.

Huge migration had taken place in South Salmara, Lakhipur and Bilasipara of Goalpara district. The industrious agriculturists of East Bengal had occupied large acres of fertile land.⁷³ In 1881, 1, 02,773 immigrants was recorded. The population of the district was increased by one point four percent during 1881- 1891. In 1891-1901, the total population of Goalpara district increased by 2 percent.⁷⁴ Edward Gait wrote in his Census Report of 1891 as follow:

“It might have been thought that the amount of cultivable land available, fertility of the soil, and the low rents prevailing would have induced some portion at least of the overcrowded cultivators of Bengal to find their way to Assam and take up land there. The coolies for the tea gardens come to Assam because they are more than usually indigent and are specially recruited and brought to the province at the expense of the person for whom they are to labour. No such inducements exist to bring ryots to Assam to take up land for cultivation and they therefore do not come. A certain number of person from neighbouring Bengal district of Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur have crossed the boundary and settled down in sylhet and Goalpara, but they can be scarcely be called immigrants. They have only moved a few miles from their original homes and the accidents of boundary alone has brought them within the limits of Assam”⁷⁵

In the 20th century, the colonial rulers pursued the policy of raising revenue collection by encouraging more cultivation of commercial crop on waste lands. British authorities came to know if the vast tracts of wasteland were brought under tillage, it would be benefited not only for government but also improve the economic condition of the people.⁷⁶ So, East Bengal peasants were allowed to enhance the commercial crops in the district.⁷⁷

The immigrants of Eastern Bengal introduced jute cultivation in Brahmaputra valley during the colonial period. Since 1880's, jute occupied very important place in international markets which led to increased the growing of jute.⁷⁸ In Goalpara, *Zamindars* had encouraged the East Bengal peasants to settle down on *Char* land of Brahmaputra river basin to cultivate jute. The peasants who were migrated from the district of Easter Bengal were subjected to an oppressive tenure system which guaranteed them little secu-

rity of occupation.⁷⁹ Goalpara district became main jute growing area in lower Assam owing to the settlement of immigrants in the district of Goalpara.⁸⁰

East Bengal cultivators had carried out jute cultivation on the *Chapori* land which was sold by local people to them.⁸¹ Jute became an important commercial crop in the international market next to cotton. Therefore, Bengal became the largest producer of jute and exported thousands of *mounds* of jute to the western countries. Jute was already grown in small quantities in the district of Sylhet and Goalpara as a natural extension of jute growing area of Bengal.⁸²

The Muslim peasants who came from Mymensingh and other neighbouring district of Goalpara occupied the *Char* land of river bank of Brahmaputra. In the beginning, only male immigrants came to Goalpara to occupy land. Thereafter, they brought their family where they established houses, which helped to increase population in the district. In the next decade, these Muslim peasants had spread to other districts of lower Assam.⁸³

During 1901-1911, peasants of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and some district of East Bengal came to Goalpara and settled in the *Char* lands of Goalpara.⁸⁴ The agriculture was the main factor for increasing foreign population in Goalpara, who were mostly Muhammadan cultivators from the neighbouring districts of Bengal. They secured the waste land and marshland from *Zamindars* by paying land revenue.⁸⁵ British authority took interest to collect land revenue from the peasants, which helped to occupy the land without hesitation.

The partition of Bengal of 1905 erased the boundary between Bengal's district and Goalpara, which gave an opportunity to the immigrants to come to Goalpara district. During that period, 85 percent Muslim peasants were settled down on the *Char* land of Goalpara.⁸⁶ The census report shows that the density of population of Goalpara jumped up to 30 per cent in 1901- 1911 due to overflow of immigrants from neighbouring district of Bengal. On the other hand, the natural growth of population was 15.6 percent in that decade. During that period, immigrant population was increased 49,059 to 1, 18,233.⁸⁷ As per the Census Report of 1911, the density of population was increased up to 151 percent on the basis of extraordinary influx of cultivators to the *Char* land of Goalpara from the adjoining districts of Bengal.⁸⁸ Golokgonj - Gauhati railway extension of Eastern Bengal Railway was completed in 1911. This railway communication opened a new traffic for Bengal peasants to Goalpara.⁸⁹

According to the Census of 1921, nearly 3, 00,000 cultivators were migrated to the province of Assam, of which 1, 41,000 were settled in Goalpara district.⁹⁰ Out of 1, 41, 00 peasant immigrants, 78,000 were from Mymensingh, 7,000 from Jalpaiguri district, 14,000 from Rangpur district, 31,000 from Pabna district, 3,000 from Bogra and 8,000, from Dacca district.⁹¹

Increase in the proportion of Muslim Population in Assam of 1901-1931.

District	1901	1911	1921	1931
Goalpara	27.76	35.19	41.48	43.92

During 1921-31, there was mass peasant migration to Goalpara from the district of Mymensingh to grab available *Char* land. In 1931- 41, the total population of Goalpara was increased by 48.3% of which 27.3% population was in Bijni and North Salmara.⁹² The Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara reported that there were very few immigrants in 1941-51.⁹³

The Line system was set up to check the immigration which was a serious issue of that period. British authority introduced Line System in Nowgong in 1916 to reduce the communal tension among the communities. It was implemented by 1920. By this system, the indiscriminate settlements of immigrants in the Assamese inhabited areas were prohibited. Under the line system, a boundary was demarcated for reducing the tension in between immigrants and indigenous people.⁹⁴ But the line system could not establish longer effectiveness for checking the immigrants from Eastern Bengal because of formation of Provincial Government in Assam. The immigrants received worthy support from Assamese and Bengali Muslim political leaders as they hoped that influx of immigrants would numerically strengthen the Muslim electoral politics. On 16 March of 1936, the Muslim leader demanded to abolish Line System as they stood in the way of absorbing the immigrants into the Assamese society.⁹⁵ But, the line system was not introduced in Goalpara district. So, huge immigrants settled down in Goalpara district without moving towards other districts because of the line system.

The following figure shows year wise population of immigrants in Goalpara.

Year	Population
1872	89,916
1881	102,773
1901-11	1,18,233
1914-15	22,580
1917-18	41,496
1920-21	141,000
1922-23	10,256
1933-34	42,992
1934-35	43,495

Thus, Company was responsible for increasing foreigner in Assam as well as in Goalpara. When Goalpara formed a district, many Bengali and North Indian employees were inhabited in Goalpara. Further, many literate persons arrived in Goalpara for seeking job in the government offices. Goalpara notably a trading centre and commercial transit point of Assam as well as eastern India which became a favourable trading point to the traders. Therefore, the traders and money lenders settled in Goalpara to conduct trade with eastern countries. By 1870, British East India Company came to know that Goalpara had good forest resources which could help to develop British India economy. As local peoples did not participate in the extraction of timber, the forest department compelled to bring tribal labours from Jalpaiguri district to extract Sal timber. Those tribal peoples who came to Goalpara for timber operation did not return to their original places. The forest department allowed them to settle down on marsh land to overcome permanently the labour problem. Moreover, the introduction of railway in Goalpara district opened a new gate for the people of neighbouring state to travel. As a result, large number of railway *coolies* came to Goalpara and settled down anywhere. The establishment of railway communication between Brahmaputra valley and Calcutta through the Gologonj near Dhubri automatically developed a commercial centre. The petty traders gathered in the district to do their business.⁹⁶

During 19th century, land became immovable public property under the permanent settlement. For payment of the dues, agriculture became very important to the people of permanently settled tract of Goalpara district. For the purpose of land revenue collection, *Zamindars* of Goalpara district allowed East Bengal peasants to settle on the *Zamindari* tract to carry out agricultural activities, which encouraged immigration in the

second quarter of 20th century. Accordingly, a good number of peasants were brought by colonial rulers to Goalpara from East Bengal to fulfill the colonial economic interest.

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