

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

Goalpara was the most important trade centre of Bengal and Assam before the ascendancy of British East India Company. It became a part of Bengal when Koch ruler was defeated in the hands of Mughal Empire. Afterward, it passed into the hands of British East India Company in 1765. The main motive of territorial expansion of British East India Company was for trade and commerce. With this aim they had established a trading centre at Goalpara. British merchants exported their merchandise through Goalpara to Assam and in return they imported raw materials from Assam. Free-lance European merchants carried out trade with Assam traders at Goalpara town, Jugighopa and Rangamati.¹ All major trade centres of Goalpara district were situated near the Brahmaputra river for better transportation facilities. The British East India Company entrusted trade agencies to conduct trade to the far flung areas of Bengal. After that, trade agencies of Company proceeded to Goalpara where they carried out trade of various items like salt, ivory, agor etc.

Salt was a valuable article in the markets of Assam as the people of Assam considered salt as gold because of non-availability of salt in Assam.² But limited brines had been imported from Naga Hills.³ Insufficient supply of salt from Naga Hills compelled Assam to depend on salt of Bengal. Mughal traders carried out salt trade at Goalpara and exported it to Kandahar *Chowky* of Assam before the establishment of political power of British East India Company in Bengal.⁴ The British East India Company came to know that if they conducted salt trade in Assam, they could earn handful amount.⁵ So, Company deployed private trade agencies at Goalpara with the aim

for carrying salt trade with the traders of Assam. The trade agencies could not do proper trade in Goalpara because of the servants of Company had already captured the markets of salt. The Company's servants illegally misuse the *dastak* for their personal trade, which created problem to the trade agencies. As a result, Court of Director banned all trades carried by the servants of Company and trade of Goalpara solely handed to trade agencies.

By 1870, Imperial Forest Department realized that huge revenue could be fetched from the forest of Assam.⁶ Sal trees of Goalpara forest had been targeted by Eastern Bengal Railway for making sleeper of railway track. In 1879, the extraction of Sal timbers was started in forest of Goalpara in order to supply wood sleeper to railway department for installation of track. Extracted Sal timbers were transported from Haltugaon and Kochugaon reserve forest to Sapatgram, Bogribari, Bilasipara and Dhubri through river. Besides, minor forest resources also came under the commercial purview.

In 20th century, British India comes to notice that huge acres of fertile land lying vacant in Goalpara district. So, British authority encouraged the cultivators of Goalpara district to grow more commercial crops on the fertile land to meet the demand of markets. Varieties of crops like rice, mustard seed, sesame, koun, pipali, jute and others were grown in the district of Goalpara. During the colonial period, jute became second important raw material next to cotton in British markets.⁷ The sack mend of jute basically used for packaging of cotton, sugar, coffee, guano, cements and other commodities. Such jute sack became helpful for the transportation of commodities from the centres of production to consumers.⁸ The demand of raw jute in the markets of Goalpara district was increased with the establishment of jute industries in Bengal.

Zamindars of Goalpara district also asked the cultivators to cultivate jute at large scale for the payment of land dues to British. *Char* land of Goalpara district was suitable for cultivation of jute because of availabilities of water and modest moisture. Extensive jute cultivation had been carried out in Jamadhar *Hat* and Manikachar of Goalpara district.⁹

The frontier trade of Goalpara district had been carried by the Bhutanese and Garos of Garo Hills. Right from the establishment of colonial power in Bengal, several attempts had been made to have commercial contact with Bhutan but it was vehemently rejected by the Raja of Bhutan which led to Anglo-Bhutan war in 1865. Anglo-Bhutan war was concluded by the treaty of Chinsulla in 1866. All *Duars* of Bhutan were handed

over to British India by Bhutan as per the provisions of treaty of Chinsulla.¹⁰ *Duars* which were situated to the east of Sonkosh river and west of Manas river comprised of five *Duars* namely Guma, Ripu, Chirang, Sidli and Bijni which came to be known as Eastern *Duars*. Eastern *Duars* were ceded to Goalpara district for administrative convenience in 1868.

The Bhutanese regularly came down to the plain area of Goalpara district through *Duars* with their commodities like gold dust, rock salt, musk, cow tails, blankets, knives, rubber, elephant tusk, ponies, Chinese silk, woolen cloth to barter or sale. In return, they went back with the goods like rice, dried fish, cotton cloth, glass, breads, salt, utensils, brass metal, *endi* clothes from Goalpara.¹¹ The district authority of Goalpara organized trade fairs at Dotma and Dhubri to maintain trade relation between British India and Bhutan. The periodical trade fairs could not supply sufficient commodities to the Bhutanese traders. As a result, the district authority and forest department opened several markets at Raimona, Kochugaon, Serfanguri, Dotma, Patgaon, Sidli and Bijni.

Like the Bhutanese, the Garos of Garo Hills also came down to plain areas of Goalpara district to sell their commodities. *Chauduries* of Koraibari, Kalumalupara, Mechpara and Habragahat *Pargana* had established 14 *hats* (weekly market) below the Garo Hills. The hats were located at Nibari, Luckichar, Jerah, Singimari, Damrah, Rangjuli, Rajaballa, Bangal khatta, Tikri, Salmara, Mankachar, Bahadur Khatta, Putimari and Parakhaslana.¹² In the frontier markets, cotton occupied major item of the trade, which was sold by the Garos.¹³ Cotton was bartered with rice, cattle, pigs, goats, salt, cotton clothes, ornaments, brasswork and weapons.¹⁴

The trade in salt, timber and jute brought lots of changes in the economic life of the people of Goalpara district. As a result, some towns were grown in the district where merchants and businessmen had started to live. The employees of British India were also residing in Goalpara district for running colonial administration. In 20th century, British authority invited manual labours from neighboring districts of Bengal for extracting of timber from the thick and remote forest. The forest labours did not return to their homeland after the end of contract work.

Colonial authority welcomed Muslim peasants of East Bengal to Goalpara district to grow more commercial crops to meet the demand of jute industries of Bengal. *Char* and wasteland of Goalpara district were occupied by landless peasants of East Bengal for cultivation of jute. On the other hand, *Zamindars* of Goalpara also had given land to

Muslims immigrants of East Bengal on rent for the purpose of enhancement of land revenue.

Geographical Background of Undivided Goalpara District

Undivided Goalpara district was located on the western part of Assam. Goalpara district was situated on both banks of the Brahmaputra river with longitude 25° to 27° on the north and 90° to 91° longitude on the east and latitude of 26° 10" 25" on the north and 90° 40" 50" longitudes on the east.¹⁵ Goalpara district was divided into two geographical zone i.e. north and south by Brahmaputra river.¹⁶ It was bounded by Bhutan Hills on the north, district of Kamrup on the east, Garo Hills on the south, districts of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Koch Behar on the west.¹⁷ The area of Goalpara district was 3,954 square miles.¹⁸

Soil: The soil of Goalpara district a was mixed of sand and clay. The soil of riverine area of Brahmaputra river was varied of pure sand and clay. *Duars* area was covered by sandy and gravelly soil.¹⁹ Numerous outliers of gneissic rock had been found in the soil of Hills.²⁰

Millions of years back, the Brahmaputra valley was emerged by alleviating the mountain chain of the Himalayas on the north block and Shillong plateau to the south.²¹ The origin and development of Brahmaputra valley was linked with the phases of uplift glaciations and erosion of the Himalayas and basement tectonics affecting the Shillong massif.²² Brahmaputra valley started to sink side by side by sedimentation.²³ Soil of hills and higher level consisted of red ochreous earth, interspersed with large blocks of granite and sandstone.²⁴ Numerous low hills called Achaean inselbergs were found near Dhubri, Goalpara, Jugighopa, Bilasipara, Abhayapuri and other parts of the district of Goalpara.²⁵

Climate: Undivided Goalpara had four seasons in a year.²⁶ The seasons had been classified on the basis of weather. Winter season started from the month of December, which continued up to February. March to May was the season of thunderstorms. The monsoon season covered June to September. The post monsoon season fall in the month of October and November.²⁷ There was scanty of rainfall during the post monsoon.

In the month of June, temperature turned warmer which remained up to the month of August in Goalpara.²⁸ In winter season, slight rainfall was occurred.²⁹ Wind blew from the southwest in the month of February and March, sometimes cause considerable damages to lives and properties of the people of Goalpara district.³⁰

Water logging was a common phenomenon in Goalpara district which created problem in the life of common people.³¹ Many diseases like malaria, diarrhea, dysentery, rheumatism, chest pain were infected to the people during rainy season due to excessive rainfall. Besides, epidemic diseases like Cholera and *Kala-Azar* (black water disease) were also very common.³² Five thousand peoples were suffered from Cholera in 1834, out of that 300 people were died.³³ In 1881, around twelve to thirteen people per thousand lost their lives due to epidemic diseases.³⁴ The northern part of Goalpara district below the foothills of Bhutan and Tarai area in southern part of below the Garo Hills became the malaria zones which affected many people of those areas.³⁵

Rainfall: Annual rainfalls of eight years prior to 1873 are given below:

Month	Amount of rainfall
January to May	20·56 inches
June to September	72·40 inches
October to December	5·79 inches

Monthly wise rainfalls in the year 1873 are as follows:

January and February	nil.
March	2·42 inches
April	10·29 inches
May	7·85 inches
June	21·40 inches

July	10·84 inches
August	8·32inches
September	7·09 inches
October and November	nil.
December	0·12 inches

In 1873, total average of rainfall was 68·33 inches or 30·42 inches and 97·57 inches of rainfall was recorded in 1875.³⁶ In 1880-81, rainfall was 100·46 inches and 97·54 inches at Dhubri. However, rainfall of Goalpara had decreased to 72·66 inches and 62·66 inches in Dhubri in later years.³⁷ In 1901, annual rainfall was 140 or 160 inches in Eastern *Duars*.³⁸ Average rainfall of Goalpara district was 139 percent during 1901 to 1950.³⁹

Forest: Varieties of trees were found in the forest of Goalpara district. The trees of Goalpara reserve forest can be classified as under,⁴⁰

- (i) Pure Sal Forest (163 square miles).
- (ii) Mixed Sal Forest (45 square miles).
- (iii) Mixed Forest (178 square miles).
- (iv) Evergreen forest (83 square miles).
- (v) Sisu Forest (4 square miles).
- (vi) Khair Forest (9 square miles).
- (vii) Sisu and Khair Forest (26 square miles).
- (viii) Grassland (180 square miles).
- (ix) Land reserved for forest villages nearly all grass (66 square miles).
- (x) Rivers and Swamps (24); others land (6 square miles).

Major forests of Goalpara district were situated at Ripu, Guma, Chirang, Bengtol and Bijni. Numbers of timbers like Sal (*Shoria Robusta*) Gambhari (*Gmelina arborea*) Pama (*Cedrela toona*), Chama, Shilika (*Cetrena*), Uriam (*Andrachne trifoliata*), Jaambora, Kadam (*Naudea kadamba*), Singari (*Castanea*), Odal (*Sterculia urens*), Gandh Sarai (*Camphora glandulifera*), Bargachh (*Ficus elastica*) and Simul (*Bombax*

Malabaricum) and other minor forest products were available in the forest of Goalpara district.⁴¹

Hills: Many low hills were found in Goalpara district.⁴² Tukureswari, Phoponga, Jajang-Khadoram, Ajhagar, Deoli and Donpal were low hills ranging from Garo Hills to Goalpara town.⁴³ On the other hand, Rokha, Matia, Rendu, Andharmua and Pancharatna were standing on the northern side of Agia.⁴⁴ On the western part of Pancharatna hill, Paglatak hill stood near Goalpara town which close to Brahmaputra river. Raikhusi hill appeared on the southeastern site of Goalpara town in front of Satali hill.⁴⁵ On the northern side of Brahmaputra river, Lengtia and Mahadeo hills were standing on the eastern side of Jugighopa. However, Mahai hill appeared to the north of Mahadeo hill. Several hills like Phagkati, Narikola, Sonamukhi, Chitonsilla, Bhamani Pani and Lathur hill were found near Abbhoyapuri. Chakrasilla, Dumeswar, Bhaokungri, Nadagiri, Rajasula, Bairab and Narikola hills were situated on the north of Jugighopa.⁴⁶ Channder Dinga, Sonamukhi and Tokrabandha hills were located to the west of Jugighopa. Mahamaya hill of Bogribari and a hillock at Gauripur were the last hills of western part of Goalpara district.⁴⁷ Sri Surjya Pahar was a famous hill of Goalpara district, which was supposed to be used by Hindu astronomers in ancient days as a site of observatory.⁴⁸

Fauna: The fauna of Goalpara district consisted of elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, leopards, bears, bison, buffalos, golden langur, monkey, deer, etc.⁴⁹ Some small game birds like partridges, jungle fowl, florican, wild duck, quill, peacock were also found.⁵⁰ Various types of reptiles including tortoise, crocodiles, lizard, snake and python were also available in the forest of Goalpara district.⁵¹

River: The Brahmaputra is the biggest river in northeastern India.⁵² It flows down through the heart of Goalpara district.⁵³ The Brahmaputra river took a new name as Meghna after joining with the Padma river (Ganges) of Eastern Bengal. The Meghna river flow down into the Bay of Bengal.

In Goalpara district, number of tributaries are connected to the Brahmaputra river. Manas river originated from Bhutan Hills then it flows down through Bagh *Duar* to Goalpara district.⁵⁴ Several streams like Dalani, Buri-Ai, Pomajam, Bhandura, Koijam, Makra, Kanamukra and Chaulkhoa joined together and formed a river called Ai. It is

connected with Manas river, which is connected with the Brahmaputra on the opposite to Goalpara town.⁵⁵

Champamati river (Champabati) is located in the western side of Ai river. Leupani, Dholpani and Bhur river jointly formed a river known as Champabati.⁵⁶ River Champamati also joined with the Brahmaputra river below Bilasipara town.

Saralbhanga (Swrmanga) river flows from the foothills of Bhutan and it reach to the plains of Haltugaon reserve forest after passing through the stair hilly region of Ripu reserve forest. Some small rivers of Sidli *Duar* namely Dekadamra, Samuka and Tarrang are connected to Saralbhanga river near Kokrajhar which is known as Gaurang river. Gaurang river joined to Brahmaputra below Bilasipara town.⁵⁷ Gongia, Hel, Langa, and Gurufella (Jakati) rivers are also major rivers in the western side of Saralbhanga river. Bairali, Malbog and Polo rivers formed Gongia river below the Tram Bridge of Malbog river. Gongia river fell into Hell river below the Tram Bridge. Besides, Longa river joined into Gongia river near Dotma. The joint rivers of Gongia, Hell and Longa is known as Gongia river.⁵⁸ Janali and Jakati rivers took a new name as the Gurfela river after joining each other above the North Trunk road. Gurfela and Gongia river joined together and formed a river name called Tipkai river below Sapatgram railway station.⁵⁹ Tipkai river connected to Brahmaputra river near Bogribari.⁶⁰ Bamnai river of Guma forest also joined with Gadadhar river.

Gadadhar river originated from the Bhutan hills. It flows through Guma forest and joined with Brahmaputra river on the east of Dhubri town.⁶¹ Sonkosh or Suvarnokos river is the biggest river of western boundary of Goalpara district which also originated from the Bhutan Hills. It has two banches namely Sonkosh and Gangadhar. The two branches of Sonkosh river meet again at Patamari where it assumed a new name as Dhudkumar and fell into Brahmaputra river below Dhubri.⁶²

Rivers like Karnai, Phulnai, Kalpani, Dhudnai are major rivers of southern part of Goalpara district. All the rivers joined with Brahmaputra river. River Krishnai and Jinari flow from the Garo Hills, which also joined with mighty Brahmaputra river. Lastly, Jinjiram river which rose from the Urpada *Bil* is also connected to the Brahmaputra river after few miles parallel drift.⁶³

Bils (Lakes): Large number of *Bils* (Lakes) were found in Goalpara district. Dalni and Tamranga *Bils* were the largest lakes situated below the Bhairab hill in Kuntaghat

Parganas.⁶⁴ Urapad was another largest *Bil* located on the southwest of Goalpara town.⁶⁵ Sara *Bil* of Porbotjuar was also one of the important *Bil* of the district.⁶⁶ Dhir *Bil* was situated on the southeastern of the Baokhungri hill and Dhiple *Bils* (Diblai) was situated below the foot hill of Baokhungri. Several small *Bils* namely Jaligaur, Kumaria, Badkul, Dighaldubi, Kisia, Padmapara, Kadamtola and the Hasila were existed in Goalpara district.⁶⁷

Mineral resources: There were very limited mineral resources in Goalpara district to compare to others district of Assam. A little amount of coal was found near Rajabala and Gauripur estate.⁶⁸ Low quality coal was also found in Koraibari estate of Garo Hills and Koriapara of Bijni *Duar*.⁶⁹ On the other hand, small amount of limestone quarries were also available in the vicinity of coal beds of Koraibari estate.⁷⁰

General landscape: Landscape of Goalpara district consisted of high and low. All low land came under agriculture field. But most of the low lands were usually affected by flood, densely grass and reeds.⁷¹ Besides, the high land of the southern side of Goalpara district interconnected with Garo Hills.⁷² Whole lands of the Eastern *Duars* were covered by densely forests.⁷³ Semi tropical weather welcomed a scenic beauty of the snow-clip range of the Himalaya.⁷⁴

Earthquake: From the available sources, earthquake usually occurred in Goalpara district.⁷⁵ The earthquake took place on 1 July, 3 August, 6 August, 30 September, 19 October, 21 October, 6 November in the year of 1834 and 8 January, 6 February, 11 February, 23 March and 30 April in the year of 1835.

Earthquakes were basically shaken from western to eastern with a howling like cloud clapping thunder. M. Cosh stated that earthquakes which occurred during 1834 - 1835, gave a great alarm to the people of Goalpara district. During that episodes, people ran away from their respective houses to the open places or street to save their lives till the end of the jolt. It did not bring much serious damaged but light collision of old walls and plaster houses were seen. It is reported that only one old man died in the earthquake of 1834 - 1835.

The quake of 5 and 12 June of 1897 had damaged many walls of Sub-divisional officer's Bungalow, circuit house, treasury, schools and Post and Telegraph offices. But only five lives were lost as per government record.⁷⁶

Historical Background of Undivided Goalpara District

Origin of the term of Goalpara: There are two opinions regarding the origin of Goalpara. Firstly, in 13th century, Madhumathana Deva had established a Deva kingdom with its capital at Bikrampur near Munshigonj sub-division of Eastern Bengal after defeating Sena dynasty. The Deva kingdom was comprised with the present districts of Tippera, Noakhali and Chittagong.⁷⁷ The territory laid on the northern part of Eastern Bengal was under Vaidyadeva, the King of Kamrupa but it was subjugated by Vijayasena of Eastern Bengal.⁷⁸ During the reign of Dasaratha Deva, the descendent of Madhumathana Deva occupied a small portion of land of Kamrupa kingdom. It was handed over to Isanadeva, a deputy administrator.⁷⁹ Isanadeva granted a plot of land to a monk in *Gwalipitika* after he was influenced by Buddhism.⁸⁰ So, the term of Goalpara originated from *Gwalipittika* which literary means village of milkmen.⁸¹ Goalpara seems to be associated with the term *Gwali* or *Goal*, which means milkmen. Second opinion is that a big *Char* (alluvial land) was existed on the southern side of joint river basin of Manas and Brahmaputra. In course of time, this *Char* land became a grazing place for cattle. As a result, many *Goalas* (milkmen) settled down along with their cattle in that area which turned into a colony of milkmen. This colony was locally known as *Goaltuli*. It is believed that the name of Goalpara seems to be a corrupt form of *Goaltuli*.⁸² Thus, the name of Goalpara originated from the term of *Goals* or *Guwali*.⁸³

History: Goalpara is mentioned in the Mahabharata and Ramayana as an integral part of legendary Kingdom of Pragjyotisha. Assam was known as Pragjyotisha in Mahabharata and Kamrupa in Puranas and Tantras.⁸⁴ Pragjyotisha was ruled by kings of Non-Aryan tribes who were descendant of Danavas and Asuras.⁸⁵ Mahiranga Danava was considered to be the earliest ruler of this region. He was followed by Hatakasura, Sambasura, Ratnasura and Ghatakasura. King Ghatakasura was killed by Narakasura, a prince of Videha.⁸⁶ Narakasura established a capital at Pragjyotishpur (modern Guwahati).⁸⁷ He was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta who participated in Kurukshetra war on the side of Kaurava.⁸⁸ Greater part of modern Assam, Bengal district like Jalpaiguri, Koch Behar, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensingh, Dacca, Tippera, some part of Pabna and eastern Nepal were included in Pragjyotisha kingdom.⁸⁹ Bhagadatta was succeeded by his son Vajradatta. Pragyotisha kingdom was ruled by nineteenth descendants of Naraka. Sahabu and Suparna were last rulers of Pragyotisha.⁹⁰ Thus,

about a thousand years before Christ, Goalpara formed a part of a powerful kingdom of Pragyothisha which was ruled by a line of non-Aryan rulers.⁹¹

The word of Kamrupa was used from the 1st century B.C.⁹² According to Puranas, the boundary of Kamrupa kingdom was extended up to Karatoya river in the western side; Dikhu river in the east; Kanjangiri mountain to north; confluence of the Brahmaputra and Lakhya rivers to the south including Brahmaputra valley, Rangpur, Cooch Behar, North West Mymensingh and Garo hills.⁹³ On the other hand, Kalika Purana stated that Kamrupa was situated to the east of Karatoya river in triangular shape, 100 yojanas in length and 30 yojanas in breath which bounded by Dikkarvasini (modern Dikrai river) in the east.⁹⁴ According to Yogini Tantra, old Kamrupa was divided into four portions namely (1) Kampith - from Karatoya to Sonkosh (2) Ratnapith - from Sonkosh to Rupahi which included erstwhile district of Goalpara (3) Suvarnapith- from Rupahi to Bharali, and (4) Saumarpath - from Bharali to Dikrong.⁹⁵

Till the 12th century, Goalpara remained as a part of ancient Kamrupa, which was ruled by three dynasties: - Varman, Salastambhas and Palas.⁹⁶ Toward the end of sixth century, Mahasena Gupta of Magadha belonged to Gupta dynasty became a powerful king. He made an alliance with Sasanka of Gauda to conquer Pundravardhan Bhukti (North Bengal) from Kamrupa kingdom during the reign of Susthita Varman.⁹⁷ Sasanka Deva became sovereign authority of Gauda as far as Pundravardhan after the death of Mahasena Gupta. Bhaskar Varman ascended to the throne of Kamrupa after the death of his brother Supratisthita Varman in 594 A.D. He became a powerful king of Eastern India. In the mean time, Sasanka Deva killed Rajyavardhana, the elder brother of Harshavardhan. Therefore, Harshavardhan of Kanauj made an alliance with Bhaskar Varman to check the growing power of Sasanka Deva of Gauda. Significantly, the alliance power overthrew Sasanka from Gauda and Karnasuvarna (comprises modern district of Burdwan, Birbhum and Murshidabad).⁹⁸ Bhaskar Varman died in 650 A.D. without natural heir.⁹⁹ Immediately, the throne of Kamrupa was occupied by Salasthamba who was a lord of Mleccha family.¹⁰⁰ Salasthamba was a Governor of Nalanda during the reign of Bhaskar Varman.¹⁰¹ He captured the throne after the death of Bhaskar Varman and founded Salastambha dynasty in Kamrupa. The meaning of Salastambha was regarded as pillar of Sal timber.¹⁰² There were twenty one rulers during 650 A.D. to 990 A.D. They all belonged to Salastambha dynasty.¹⁰³ Tyaga Singha was the last Salastambha ruler who died without natural heir. So, people elected Brahmapala as the king of

Kamrupa, who was scion of Naraka.¹⁰⁴ Brahmapala re-shifted the capital from Huruppesvara to Pragjyotishpur near Guwahati.¹⁰⁵ The capital of Kamrupa was transferred from Pragjyotishpur to Huruppesvara during the rule of Balavarman III of Salastambha dynasty.¹⁰⁶ Huruppesvara was the capital city of second line of Salastambha dynasty which was located at Dah-Parpatiya in the vicinity of present Tezpur.¹⁰⁷ Brahmapala was succeeded by Ratnapala who refortified the Pragjyotishpur and renamed it as Sri Durjaya which means unconquerable. Ratnapala was succeeded by his son Purandarapala. He was succeeded by Indrapala to the throne of Kamrupa who ruled from 1040 A.D. to 1064 A.D. During the reign of Indrapala, the boundary of Kamrupa was extended up to Pundravardhan (North Bengal) in the west.¹⁰⁸ Gopala, the son of Indrapala succeeded on the throne. During his reign, Pundravardhan was occupied by Jata Varman of Vikramapur. Harshapala, the son of Gopala became ruler of Kamrupa from 1080 A.D. to 1095 A.D. He recovered some territories of Pundravardhan from Jata Varman of Vikramapur. In the meantime, Vikramaditya VI of Chalukya dynasty proceeded toward Kamrupa Kingdom and a war was broke out near western boundary of Kamrupa between Harshapala and Vikramaditya VI.¹⁰⁹ Dharmapala, the son of Harshapala became a powerful king of Kamrupa from 1095 A.D. to 1120 A.D. and restored all lost glories of the kingdom after the conquest of Pundravardhan (North Bengal). He extended the boundary of his kingdom as far as to the sea in the south - west.¹¹⁰ Dharmapala was succeeded by Jaypala, a powerful ruler of Kamrupa but he was defeated by king Ramapala of Gauda. As a result, Ramapala besieged the lower part of Kamrupa and appointed Tingyadeva a vassal ruler of the occupied territory.¹¹¹ Tingyadeva wanted to become an independent king of the occupied territory which hurted Kumarapala, the successor of Ramapala. Kumarapala sent Vaidyadeva, the military general to punish Tingyadeva.¹¹² Accordingly Vaidyadeva killed Tingyadeva in battle.¹¹³ Thereafter, Vaidyadeva became powerful independent ruler of Kamrupa after the death of Kumarapala.¹¹⁴ During the reign of Vaidyadeva, Kamrupa was invaded by Vijayasena of Bengal.¹¹⁵ Vaidyadeva was succeeded by Riyarideva, Udayakarna and Vallabhadeva respectively.¹¹⁶

Prithu (Britu) was a popular king of Kamrupa who is mentioned in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj.¹¹⁷ He earned fame after defeating two Muslims invader namely Bhaktiyar in 1205-06 and Sultan Giasuddin in 1226. At last, he was overthrown by Nasiruddin, the son of Iltumish in 1228.¹¹⁸ Raja Prithu was followed by Sandhya who was an important ruler of Kamrupa from 1250 to 1270.¹¹⁹ Sandhya could not resist the

military contingent which was dispatched by Sultan Mughis-uddin in 1255.¹²⁰ Sandhya was compelled to shift his capital from Guwahati to Kamatapur near present Koch Behar.¹²¹ Since 1260, old Kamrupa was known as Kamata including the present Goalpara, Kamrup district and other part of northern Bengal and Mymensingh.¹²² According to Mahapurushia tradition, Goalpara subsequently formed a part of Kamata kingdom.¹²³ Sandhya was the first king of Kamata kingdom who was succeeded by Sindhu, Rup, Singhadhaj, Pratapdhaj, Dharma Narayan, Dhurlab Narayan and Indra Narayan.¹²⁴ Indra Narayan was the last king of Kamata kingdom, who ruled upto 1365. During the reign of Dhurlab Narayan, Kamrupa, Goalpara, Koch Behar and Jalpaiguri were under Kamata Kingdom.¹²⁵ Dhurlab Narayan was succeeded by his son Indra Narayan. After Indra Narayan, there was chaos and disorder in Kamata till the rise of Khen dynasty.¹²⁶

In 1440, Niladhaj, a Bhuiya chief founded Khayan or Khen dynasty after overthrowing Vallabhadeva, the last descendant of Pala dynasty.¹²⁷ Niladhaj consolidated Khen power at Kamatapur. He was succeeded by his son Chakradhaj. Chakradhaj was followed by his son Nilambar, the last king of the lineage.¹²⁸ Nilambar extended his kingdom as far as Barnadi to the east and Koratoya river to the west. At last, Nilambar lost his kingdom in the hands of Hussain Shah in 1498.¹²⁹ Hussain Shah conquered whole of Kamatapur kingdom up to Barnadi. He left his son Daniel in Hajo as a governor of the conquest areas.¹³⁰ During that time, several Bhuiya chiefs rose to power in Kamatapur with small principalities.¹³¹ Lastly, Muhammadan tried to annex Ahom territory but it caused devastation to the Muhammadan army. Meanwhile, all Bhuiya chiefs of Kamatapur jointly stood against Muhammadan army and killed Daniel.¹³²

Koch was the next powerful dynasty in Koch Behar. The origin of Koch dynasty can not be drawn without mentioning Goalpara. Haoria Mech was the progenitor of Koch king whose residence was at Chikanagram village under Kuntaghat *Pargana* of Goalpara district. He was a chief of the twelve leading families of Meches. The twelve men of leading families were Panbar, Phedela, Phedphedo, Barihana, Kwthia, Guabar, Megha, Bwisagu, Jagai, Gurikata, Jugbar and Dukharu.¹³³ Haoria Mech married two sisters namely Hira and Jira, the daughters of Haju. Both of them delivered male child each. They were Bisu and Sisu. During that period, Kamata kingdom was subjugated by the Muhammadan under Husain Shah but he left it in the confusion without establishing the Muhammadan power. As a result, Kamata kingdom was split into numerous petty

principalities, each under own chief known as Bhuiya. Bisu, the son of Hira was a man of unusual enterprise and courageous who rose into power in Kamata after defeating the local Bhuiya chiefs of Phulguri, Bijni and other places of Goalpara.¹³⁴ Gradually, he extended his rule as far as Karatoya river in the west and Barnadi in the east.¹³⁵ Bisu established a kingdom at Chiknagram in 1515.¹³⁶ Some Brahman heard the news of the establishment of new Kingdom in Kamata by two powerful brothers. Bisu and Sisu were entitled as Kshatriyas clan and recognized as son of Brahman by offering sacred threads on their body. Bisu declared himself, the son of Siva but not humble Haori Mech. He also believed that Lord Siva appeared in the form of Haoria Mech who had intimate physical relation with his wife Hira who was recognized as incarnation of Parbati, the wife of Siva.¹³⁷ After that, Bisu assumed new name Biswa Singha and his brother Sisu took the new name Sib Singha.¹³⁸ Biswa Singha moved his capital from Chikanagram to Koch Bihar, where he built a fine city.¹³⁹ He passed away in 1540.¹⁴⁰ His first son Malladeva ascended to the throne of Koch Kingdom who assumed new name Nar Narayan and second son Sukladhvaj was known Chila Rai (Kite King).¹⁴¹ Chila Rai became the prime minister as well as military general of Koch kingdom.¹⁴² Koch kingdom rose to greatest power in North East India under the leadership of Chila Rai.¹⁴³

Nar Narayan came into conflict with Ahom King Suklenmung for giving shelter to a Bhuiya chief, who conspired to attack over Koch kingdom. In 1546, an expedition was dispatched against the Ahom under the command of Chila Rai from the north bank of Brahmaputra river as far as Dikrai river. Koch kingdom constructed 360 miles long road on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river from Koch Behar to Narayanpur in the south west of present North Lakhimpur Sub-Division under the supervision of Gohain Kamala for military operation against the Ahom ruler.¹⁴⁴ The road passed through Goalpara district which still bears under name Gohain Kamala Ali.¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Chila Rai was suffering from small pox during the course of the second expedition against Gauda ruler. He died in 1575 on the bank of Ganges and left a son named Rughdev.¹⁴⁶ After that, no war had been declared by Koch power because of Nar Narayan devoted his life to religion and public welfare works. Nar Narayan was childless till later life but he was blessed with a son, whose name was Lakshmi Naryan. Raghudev, the son of Chilarai came in doubt that his dream to become king of Koch Kingdom would not turn into real. Raghudev left Koch Behar with few royal officials for Barnagar which was located on the river bank of Manas where he declared himself as king.¹⁴⁷ Nar Narayan never prepared war against his own nephew. He gave all the area to the east of

Sonkosh river including Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang to Rughudev. The remaining territory to the west of Sonkosh river was kept under him.¹⁴⁸ Rughudev acknowledged the suzerainty of his uncle and paid tribute. He minted coins in the name of Nar Nayaran.¹⁴⁹ Lakshmi Narayan succeeded to the throne of Koch Behar after the demise of Nar Narayan and declared himself as an independent ruler. Rughudev refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of Lakshmi Narayan.¹⁵⁰ Lakshmi Narayan hatched a conspiracy against Raghudev by using Parikshit who the son of the first wife of Rughudev.¹⁵¹ Parikshit came under influence of Lakshmi Narayan to rebel against his own father. He managed himself to escape to Koch Behar from the attacked of own father Raghudev.¹⁵² Rughudev wanted to be a ruler of undivided Koch Behar and made friendly relation with Isha Khan, a famous Afghan ruler of Eastern Bengal with the aim to get support. Isa Khan was a Bhuiya of Khizrpur, near Narayanganj in Dacca. He became chief of Afghan in the eastern part of Bengal after overthrowing Jahah Khan.¹⁵³ On the other hand, Lakshmi Narayan declared himself as a vassal ruler under the Mughal Empire in 1595.¹⁵⁴ In 1597, Lakshmi Narayan gave his sister in marriage to Raja Man Singh, the governor of Bengal. In the meantime, Rughudev attacked on Bahirband without much difficulty and advanced toward the capital of Koch Behar. Lakshmi Narayan could not face the burnt attacked of Raghudev and fled away to a fort. So, Raja Man Singh immediately dispatched a military troop to restore Lakhmi Narayan from fort which was surrounded by Raghudev forces. In fact, Isha Khan was also hastened to help Rughudev but it was blocked by Raja Man Singh. Isha Khan defeated Raja Man Singh but he could not help Rughudev.¹⁵⁵ The dream of Rughudev to become a king of undivided Koch Behar was shattered with the slur of defeat at the hands of Koch-Mughal alliance.¹⁵⁶ He died in 1603.¹⁵⁷ Rughudev was succeeded by his second wife's son Indra Narayan with the help of nobles in absence of Parikshit Narayan who was in Koch Behar. Parikshit Narayan rushed to Barnagar after he heard the news of his father demise. Indra Narayan was killed by Parikshit Narayan. Like father Rughudev, Parikshit Narayan also refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Lakhmi Narayan which again created fresh war between two powers. Parikshit started to keep good relation with Ahom by giving his own daughter Mangal Dahi to Pratap Singha in marriage in 1608. But Ahom abstained from interference in Koch affairs because of engaging war with Kachari ruler.¹⁵⁸

Quarrel between Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit continued till 1612. In 1612, Lakshmi Narayan went to the court of Dacca to beg support from Nawab Sheik Alauddin Fathpuri Islam Khan. Raghunath, the Raja of Shushang (near Koraibari) also made

complaint to the Nawab about ill treatment of Parikshit to peasants.¹⁵⁹ The Nawab of Dacca dispatched Mukarram Khan with 300 elephants, 6000 cavalry, 10,000 to 12,000 infantry and 400 or 500 warships for invading the Koch Hajo.¹⁶⁰ Parikshit was surrounded by the force of Mukarram Khan at Dhubri fort.¹⁶¹ He sought military assistance from Ahom but Ahom Raja couldn't help due to continuing war with Kachari ruler. So, Parikshit alone fought against the Muhammadan power without the assistance of Ahom. However, Muhammadan power could not continue war for observing Ramazon day (month of fasting) at Dhubri. After Ramazon, Mukarram Khan sent additional force under Sattrajit to help Lashmi Narayan. Thus, Parikshit's force retired from Dhubri to northern river bank of Gadadhar.¹⁶² Again, he sent his son-in-law Dumaria with a naval force to remove all blockades of Dhubri. Dumaria's force attacked on Dhubri at night and captured 250 war boats and damaged the garrison which was constructed by the Muhammadan.¹⁶³ The temper of battle continued till the evening without any decisive result due to absence of Parikshit in Dhubri. Parikshit reached Dhubri at night where he found exhausted military position. For that reason, his forces retreated to Barnagar.¹⁶⁴ Lastly, Parikshit was caught by the Muhammadan force. He was taken away to Dacca and then to Delhi. Fortunately, Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor restored his kingdom against the payment of a sum of four lakhs rupees. Parikshit fell ill and died on the way when he returned to home from Delhi.¹⁶⁵ His dominion as far as Bar Nadi was annexed by Mughal and all Mughal garrisons of Goalpara were handed to Abdus Salam. In 1616, Mughal Emperor appointed Makarram Khan as the governor of Mughal garrison after the death of Abdus Salam.¹⁶⁶

Bali Narayan or Boldeo fled away to Ahom Kingdom, when his elder brother Parikshit was caught by the Mughal. The Ahom installed Boldeo as tributary Raja of Darrang with a new name Dharma Narayan.¹⁶⁷ He defeated the combined force of Muhammadan and Chandra Narayan.¹⁶⁸ He erected a fort at Jugighopa on the eastern frontier of Goalpara.¹⁶⁹ In 1637, Dharma Narayan died at Singri of Darrang. In 1637, a peace treaty was concluded at Barnadi between Muhammadan and Ahom raja. As per the peace treaty, Kamrup and Darrang became a fixed boundary between two powers.

Muhammadan ruled over Goalpara for twenty years. In 1658, Raja Pran Narayan, a descendant of Laksmi Narayan of Koch Behar shook off the Mughal vassal of Goalpara when war of succession broke out after deposition of Shah Jahan.¹⁷⁰ The Mughal governor fled away to Dacca by boat due to the attack of Pran Narayan on Goalpara. At

the same time, the Ahom also dispatched their military to Guwahati to attack on Mughal power.¹⁷¹ The Ahom force advanced toward Brahmaputra valley and seized Goalpara after driving out Pran Narayan.¹⁷² Thus, Ahom occupied Goalpara for three years but they compelled to retreat because of the advancement of Mughal army under Mir Jumla, the military general of Mughal.¹⁷³ Rashid Khan, a military Commander of Mughal was posted at Goalpara for receiving back the imperial lands of eastern countries. When Ahom Raja Jayadhavaj heard the news of retreat of Ahom troops, he arrested two Phukans who were responsible for it and put them into jail. He appointed Baduli Phukan as Commander-in-Chief of Ahom military.¹⁷⁴ Jayadhavaj ordered Baduli Phukan to strengthen the fort of Jugighopa and also entrusted him to build a new fort on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra river.¹⁷⁵ Ahom Raja Jaydadhvaj sent a letter to Rashid Khan asking him to withdraw the Mughal military from Goalpara after completion of military fort.¹⁷⁶

Aurangzeb ordered Mir Jumla to punish lawless *Zamindars* of Eastern Province, especially those of Assam and Magh (Arakkan). Mir Jumla occupied Koch Behar but he failed to capture Raja Pran Narayan, who escaped to Bhutan. On 4th January 1662, Mir Jumla advance to invade Assam after positioning of five thousand armies at Koch Behar.¹⁷⁷ Rashid Khan joined with Mir Jumla at Rangamati but the local *Zamindars* kept aloof as they thought that it was impossible to defeat the Ahom owing to the dense jungle and numerous rivers, which created deadly journey. So, Mughal force could march only four or five miles in a day.¹⁷⁸ On 19 Jamadiussani (20th January 1662), the fort of Jugighopa came under Mughal without bloodshed.¹⁷⁹ Mir Atallah, who was the attendant of Nawab, became *Thanedar* of Jugighopa.¹⁸⁰

To save the losing dignity of Mughal Empire in Goalpara, Mir Jumla, a well known army general of Aurangzeb advanced to Goalpara in 1663. With the arrival of the said army general, Goalpara town became the permanent frontier of Muhammadan power. Mughal army was stationed at Rangamati on the north bank of Brahmaputra river, where they planted trees and reeds as natural protection against the Ahom.¹⁸¹ When Guwahati was occupied by the Ahom in 1667, Aurangzeb sent a large army under the command of Ram Singh, who arrived at Rangamati in February 1669. But Ram Singh's forces was defeated in the famous battle of Saraighat and retreated to Rangamati.¹⁸²

Sheik Ibrahim Kakori, a Mughal revenue officer established a fiscal division at - Hajo. Hajo region was divided into four divisions (*Sarkars*) such as *Sarkar* Bongalbhumi,

Sarkar Dhekeri, *Sarkar* Kamrup and *Sarkar* Dakhinkul. The *Sarkar* Dhekeri covered almost all areas of Goalpara which formed a easternmost tract of Mughal rule with the rest of Bengal. Both side bank of Brahmaputra was occupied by the Mughal, where they established headquarter at Rangamati.¹⁸³ All *Zamindars* of Goalpara used to pay a small tribute and certain number of elephants or small quantity of precious agar wood to Mughal *Faujdar* of Rangamati.¹⁸⁴ Hence, Goalpara came under Mughal dominion till the rise of British East India Company power in Bengal. According to Rajen Saikia, ‘with the grant of *Dewani* 1765, Sylhet, Goalpara and the western frontier of the old Ahom kingdom passed into the hands of British East India Company’.¹⁸⁵

British East India Company in Goalpara

On August 12, 1765, the titular Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II granted the *Dewani* right over the Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the British East India Company.¹⁸⁶ The British East India Company established the *de-facto* authority over the three regions which led closed to the five states of eastern frontier namely Koch Behar, Brahmaputra valley of Assam, Jaintia, Cachar and Arakan.¹⁸⁷ Goalpara was situated to the east of Koch Behar, which was a part of the Rangpur district of Bengal in the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁸ Afterwards, Goalpara formed a colonial district under the Chief Commissionership of Koch Behar.¹⁸⁹ It was ceded to Assam province in 1784.

Zamindars of Goalpara district were passed into the hands of British East India Company after getting the *Dewani* right from Mughal Empire. *Zamindars* of Goalpara used to pay revenue in kind in beginning but cash payment was accepted after the establishment of Decennial Settlement in 1793.¹⁹⁰ Goalpara district was divided into two parts namely Dhubri - Karaibari tract and Eastern *Duars* tract for the revenue collection. Eastern *Duars* consisted of five *Duars* like Guma, Ripu, Chirang, Sidli, and Bijni but only Raja of Sidli and Bijni was retained under the hereditary *Zamindars*.¹⁹¹ They paid fixed rental to the British East India Company.¹⁹² Under the Non-Regulation Act of 1822, twelve *Chaudharis* of the estates and sixth *Zamindars* were paid nominal tax to British East India Company.¹⁹³

The details of the various Permanently Settled estates as well as *Zamindaries* are given below: ¹⁹⁴

Name of the Proprietors	Name of estate	Areas and Acres	Revenue		
			Rs. A.		P.
Bijni	1. Khuntaghat.	6,03, 283.20	2,355	10	0
	2. Habraghat.				
Gauripur Raj	Ghurala, Jamira, Makrampur and Aurangabad.	27,1,065.20	3,299	11	0
	Kalumalupura.	35,187.20	1,706	11	0
	GolaAlamganj.	8,473.60	21	6	0
	Kayarp.	---	13	8	0
	Noabad Futuri.	---	11	10	0
	Dhubri.	---	25	10	0
	Total	31,6,447.00	5,078	10	0
Mechpara	9. Mechapara.	2,55, 494.60	2,105	10	0
	10. Taluk Goalpara.	---	59	14	0
	11. Dekdhoya.	---	25	0	0
	12. Dhar Brahmaputra.	---	45	0	0
	Total	2,55,494.60	2,2350	8	0
Chapar	13. Chapar Kasba-Gilla.	12,954.60	603	13	0
	14. Kajipara	---	22	6	0
	Total	12,954.60	626	3	0
Porbotjoar	Porbotjoar	1,76,569.60	547	10	0
Karaibari	15. Karaibari- 12 annas.	37, 120.00			
	16. Karaibari- 4 annas				

Gauripur	17. Taria	12,230.40	98	7	0
Porbotjoar	18. Settled invalid Lakhiraj, Uchit Balajan		447	3	0
	19. Resumed Lakhiraj, Khata Sukuni		21	15	0
	Grand Total	1,53,0100.20	11,410	9	0

The rise of *Zamindaries* in Goalpara district can be traced back to the Kamata Kingdom. The Bhuiya chiefs who were similar to the feudal lord sprang up in Goalpara in the later part of fifteen century.¹⁹⁵ All *Zamindars* of Goalpara district were local gentry. All local gentries were recognized as *Zamindars* during the Mughal rule.¹⁹⁶ After the dead of Parikshit, Kabindra Patra, a *Quanango* was promoted to *Zamindar* of Gauripur by the Emperor Jahangir under the Imperial *Sanads* of 1606.¹⁹⁷ The position of *Zamindaries* and *Chauduries* of Goalpara district remained under hereditary system till the merger into Indian union.¹⁹⁸

In the early British administration, Goalpara was maintained as an integral part of Rangpur district of Bengal.¹⁹⁹ Initially, the area covered by the jurisdiction of three *Thanas* of Goalpara, Dhubri and Koraibari formed part of the permanently settle tract of Rangpur district of Bengal.²⁰⁰ By the regulation X of 1822, Goalpara, Dhubri and Koraibari were formed a new district known as North East Rangpur. The Garo Hills was also attached to newly created North East Rangpur district under the administration of David Scott, joint Civil Commissioner of Koch Behar.²⁰¹ He was first officer who took responsibility of land revenue in Goalpara district.²⁰² On February of 1825, North East Rangpur district was renamed as Goalpara district. David Scott was appointed as Assistant Commissioner in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara district.²⁰³ Goalpara district came under Judicial Commissioner of Assam in 1826.²⁰⁴ In 1866, Eastern *Duars* of Bhutan came under the district administration of Goalpara. In 1867, Goalpara district was retransferred to Koch Behar for its geographical continuity. It again came under the administration of Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1874.²⁰⁵

In the beginning of seventeenth century, Bhutan occupied some territories of Koch, which were situated below the foothills of Bhutan.²⁰⁶ Bhutan established sovereign power over the whole tract of frontier of Sikkim as far as to Darrang of Assam and tried

to enforce their suzerainty over the enfeeble State of Koch Behar. However, they could not occupy *Duars* tract permanently but collected heavy taxes from the inhabitants.²⁰⁷ An excessive land revenue and inhuman activities of the Bhutanese compelled the Raja of Koch Behar to make an agreement with the British East India Company in 1772. As per the agreement, Koch Behar came under company's protection. *Duars* of Bhutan remained as a state of anarchy for nearly a century. Thus, to solve the disorder situation of *Duars*, British India sent an Ambassador to Bhutan in 1863 to settle the dispute but no positive response was received. In December 1864, four strong military companies were dispatched to Bhutan which occupied the low land area and the hills.²⁰⁸ *Duars* of Bhutan on the side of Bengal were annexed by British India in 1866. Bhutan *Duars* was divided into two namely Western and Eastern *Duars* for the administrative convenience. Western *Duars* was ceded to newly created Jalpaiguri district and Eastern *Duars* were attached to Goalpara district due to their geographical fitness. Eastern *Duars* were bounded on the north by the hills of Bhutan; on the east by Manas river; on the south by the main portion of Goalpara District and on the west by the Gangadhar or Sankosh river.²⁰⁹

Duars like Guma, Ripu, Chirang, Sidli and Bijni formed as Eastern *Duars* which were lying below the foothills of Bhutan.²¹⁰ In 1864, Mr. I.B. Geddes was appointed as Deputy Commissioner of Eastern *Duars* with the headquarter at Dotma in Khuntaghat *Parganas* of Goalpara district. By the provision of a government notification dated 3rd December 1866, Goalpara district was separated from the province of Assam and placed it under the Commissionership of Koch Behar.²¹¹ Commissionership of Koch Behar was formed in the first month of 1867 and in the same year Eastern *Duars* were ceded to Goalpara district.²¹² On 10, August of 1868, Goalpara district came under the Judicial Commissioner of Assam but the civil administration remained under the Commissioner of Koch Bihar.²¹³ For administrative convenience, Garo Hills was separated from Goalpara and formed a district by the Act XXII of 1869.²¹⁴ Eastern *Duars* were de-regularized by the Act XVI of 1869.²¹⁵ Under this act, all matters relating to the immovable properties and revenue came under the district civil courts.²¹⁶ Finally, Goalpara district was incorporated to the new province of Assam in 1874.²¹⁷ The head quarter of district which was initially located at Goalpara and it was transferred to Dhubri in 1879.²¹⁸ The present districts like Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Chirang constituted as Goalpara district in the past.

Peoples: The Rabha and Mech (Kachari) were aboriginal tribes of Goalpara district. The Garos inhabited on southern part of Goalpara district. A great bulk of semi-Hindu group called Koch Rajbangsi was also considered as an indigenous tribe of Goalpara district.²¹⁹ There were some Rajputs and Kayasths belonging to the Vaidic sect.²²⁰ The Kaibarttas caste of Bengal also lived in the district.²²¹ The Kalitas of Goalpara were represented as priestly group. There were very few Jain families in the district.²²² According to census report of 1818, Muslims maintained second largest population in the district.²²³ The Santhali tribes were also migrated to Goalpara from Bihar as tea labours. According to W.W. Hunter, some Bhutanese were also living below the foothills of Bhutan.²²⁴

Economic Condition: Rice was the staple food and main agricultural crop in Goalpara district. Three types of rice cultivation namely Ahu, Roa, and Bao were practiced. Nursery of Roa rice was planted in month of May which was transplanted in the month of June. It was harvested in month of October and November of the year. *Ahu* rice was planted on the highland in the month of March which was harvested in the middle of July. *Bao* or long-stemmed rice was sowed in marsh land in the month of March and harvested in the month October. Roa haimantik, sali or aman rice were sown in lowlands in the month of June and transplanted in month of July which was reaped in the midwinter. Jute and Mustard were largely cultivated in *Chars* and alluvial accretion land of Brahmaputra river. Jute cultivation rapidly increased in Goalpara due to the demand of foreign markets. On the other hand, the hilly areas of Bijni and Sidli *Parganas* witnessed two types of cotton such as the Borkopah and Saru Kopah.²²⁵ The crops like pulses, wheat and sugar-cane were also grown in Goalpara district.²²⁶ Moreover, others cash crops like tobacco, vegetable, pan or betel-vine and Areca palm were also found available.²²⁷

Tea: In 1904, there were four tea gardens at Lalkura, Marnai and Tamai in Goalpara district.²²⁸ It was estimated that 700 acres of land was under cultivation, which yielded 213,000 lbs. of tea.²²⁹ In 1913, total acre of land for plantation of tea was 707 acres and total output was 276,290 lbs.²³⁰

Industries and Manufactures: No big industries was found in Goalpara district but small scale industries of making brass, utensils, gold and silver ornaments, bamboo basket, potteries, oil pressing, carpentry and the weaving of *endi* clothes were existed.

The traditional handloom industry flourished in Assam as well as in Goalpara. The Kachari women wove silk-clothes with the threads of the cocoon of *endi* and *muga*.²³¹ Woven clothes were sold in weekly markets.²³² In Eastern *Duars*, boats making industries was carried out by the Kachari or Mech.²³³ Among the imported materials, the safety match became most important daily need base item but its import duty charge was more. Thus, British India established a safety match industry at Dhubri in 1924.²³⁴

The tributaries of Goalpara district were useful for transporting of articles from one place to another in the rainy season. Goalpara became the military station since the time of Mughal invasion. On the other hand, Bengal traders were also stationed in Goalpara to carry out trade in Assam. As a result, Bengal and Assam traders came up to Hadira *Chowky* where both the parties exchanged their cargos. By the treaty of Allahabad in 1765, Goalpara came under the control of British East India Company and *Zamindars* of Goalpara who were also enjoying land right by paying nominal land tax to the Company. After that, the British East India Company used Goalpara as politically strategic and transit point for trades to expand their influence towards eastern countries.

Scope of the Study: No serious research based study on the trade of undivided Goalpara district has been seen so far by utilizing all the available sources both primary and secondary. However, some scholars carried out research work on the trade of colonial Assam with the slight introduction of Goalpara's trade. So, details on the trade of Goalpara during the colonial period is still obscure and needs to be brought into light by conducting scientific research and thorough investigation to present an accurate picture of the subject concern.

Objectives: - The objectives of the present study are:

- i. To highlight the Geographical and Historical background of the undivided Goalpara district in the context of trade.
- ii. To study British trade settlement in undivided Goalpara.
- iii. To study on the development of transport and communication in undivided Goalpara.
- iv. To study on the trade of undivided Goalpara.

- v. To study on the frontier trade of undivided Goalpara.
- vi. To study the impact of trade.

Survey of Literature: *Economic History of British India* written by R.C. Dutt, elaborates the trade and economy of the whole provinces of British India. He discusses about the tea cultivation and industry of Assam without referring the trading position of Goalpara. H.J. Tozer's, *British India and its trade*, highlights on export and import of goods between India and England. *History of British India* wrote by P.E. Robert touches the history of European trade settlement in India as well as political settlement of the British East India Company in Bengal which is related to the trade of Goalpara district. *India* written by John Strachey deals with the revenue and taxation of India as well as imposition of salt duty in Assam. *Jute in India* written by B.C Kundu, K.C Basak, and P.B Sarkar discusses on jute cultivation and establishment of jute industry in India. E.B Stebbing's *The Forest of India, The forest of India, Volume III*, deals with entire history of forest in India. He briefly highlighted regarding the Sal timber trade in Goalpara district. *Salt Industry of Bengal 1757-1800*, written by Balai Barui, deals with the salt production and trade in Bengal since the Mughal rule to the British East India Company. *Jute in Bengal* by Nibarana Chandra Chaudury highlights the jute cultivation in Bengal and Assam. He slightly narrates about the growing of Kanya Bombay jute in Goalpara. *The Economic History of Bengal (From Plassey to Permanent Settlement) Volume-I* by Narendra K. Singha, gives detail on the trade agencies that carried out salt trade in Goalpara under the banner of British East India Company. *Changing Profile of the Frontier Bengal (1751-1833)* of Binod S. Das highlighted that the agrarian life of the frontier areas of Bengal. On the other hand, he also discussed about the salt production and distribution in Bengal. *Anglo-Assamese Relation 1771-1826* of S.K Bhuyan described the European trade settlement in Goalpara and salt trade with Assam's traders. This book is a magnificent piece which gives the picture of Company's trade settlement as well as political power establishment in Assam. William Robinson's book, *A descriptive Account of Assam*, mentioned that the Assam exported Muga silk both raw and manufactured to Bengal. All export and import goods were checked at Hadira Chowky of Assam. *Eastern frontier of British India 1784-1826* of A.C. Banerjee has discussed on the establishment of warehouse and factories of salt at Goalpara to extend their business towards eastern countries. *David Scott in North East India*, written by

Nirode K. Barooah gives an account on the works of David Scott who laid the foundation of British administration in Assam. In this book, author describes about how David Scott drafted Non-Regulation Act for establishment of North East Rangpur district. *Becoming Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India* written by Sangamitra Misra highlights about the changing of the geographical boundaries of Goalpara due to occupation of several rulers which impact on social, political and economy of the region. She also discusses about peasant migration from East Bengal to Goalpara for the purpose of growing more crops. *Social and Economic History of Assam (1853-192)* of Rajen Saikia has pointed out the socio economic condition of Assam. He has discussed about the handloom, handicraft, agriculture, social change and the rise of the middle class in Assam. He mentions the people of Assam bought brine of Borhat and Sadiya for domestic consumption. Insufficient supply of brine made Assam to depend on the salt of Bengal. The importance of salt in Assam can be appraised as a gift of salt is given equal value to that of gold. *Forest and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000* of Arupjyoti Saikia has discussed about the natural resources of Assam and especially on the forest which was naturally grown. By 1874, British India established Imperial forest department in Assam for future exploitation. *British Forest Policy in Assam* by Rajib Handique deals with the establishment of forest administration and conservation in Assam. He slightly discusses about timber trade of Assam and exploitation of Sal timber in Goalpara forest. *Colonial Legacy and Environmental Crisis in North East India* by A.C Singha discusses on the establishment of forest administration, forest conservation and timber trade of Assam. H.K Barpujari's book *Comprehensive history of Assam Volume – III* is written about internal and external trade of medieval and modern period of Assam. He highlighted the trade relation between British East India Company and Rajas of Assam. He has given preference to Goalpara where salt trade was carried out with Assam traders. *A History of Assam* of Edward Gait simply mentions about the British trade settlement, trading activities and revenue settlement in Goalpara district. *Assam in the Eighteenth Century* written by Ramesh Chandra Kalita describes on commercial interest of British East India Company in Assam. No doubt, salt was primary article for trading in Assam during 18th century. The European and Indian merchants collected gold dust from Assam traders. Company authority of Calcutta established monopoly right on salt trade in Goalpara from where it was supplied to Assam. *Trade and Colony: The British Colonization of North East India* of J.B. Bhattacharjee deals with the trade activities of the company in Goalpara. In

fact, present Goalpara town, Rangamati and Jugighopa always formed an eastern trade outpost of Bengal. He also mentioned that the trade was carried by European traders, particularly by French under the leadership of Duplex before coming of English. *The Railway in Assam 1885-1947* of Sarah Hilaly mentions all relevant issues of transport and communication especially railway. She highlights Sal timber and jute trade of Goalpara district. Lastly, she summarized with the coming of Muslim peasants for jute cultivation in Goalpara. *The History of Assam- from Yandaboo to partition, 1826-1947* of Priyam Gossami highlights on the polity, society and economy of Colonial Assam. She briefly discussed on trade of timber, salt, tea and jute. *An Economic History of North-East India (1826-1947)* written by Jalad Baran Ganguly highlighted the economic condition of Assam during the colonial period. He drew on the development of tea cultivation in Assam. Besides, he didn't forget to highlight regarding the colonial exploitation of forest resources of Assam. *Transport System and Economic Development in Assam* by Dr. Shyam Bhadra Medhi, discussed the development of transport system in Assam. He narrated details about the development of water transport, road transport and railway in Assam. *Making of British Assam* is another book of J.B. Bhattacharjee discusses on salt trade before the establishment of British trade in Goalpara. *Muslims in Assam Politics* of M. Kar discusses on the social mobility and peasant migration into Goalpara district from Eastern Bengal. Sanjib Barua in his book *India against itself: Assam and politics of Nationality* highlights the allotment of waste land to East Bengal Muslim peasants for growing commercial crops and enhancement of land revenue in Assam. *Encyclopedia of North East India* of H.M.Bareh discussed the factors responsible the growth of population in Assam during colonial period. He did not forget about the kind hearted attitude of political leaders towards immigration.

The above mention renown historians and scholars have supplied lots of valuable information on the subject concern. Besides, some scholars also incidentally made very few references to the trade of Goalpara district during the colonial period. However, the trade of Goalpara district during the colonial period was not their concern theme of studies. As a result of which the trade of Goalpara district in colonial period remain a space for proper treatment, investigation and scientific inquiry by utilizing all the available sources.

Methodology: The methodology of the proposed study is historical one, based on primary and secondary data. The primary data includes archival sources, Gazetteers,

official records of the British India. The secondary data are published books, journal and proceeding, etc. The purpose of the study is to explore the trade activities during the colonial period and to bring to light the commercial value of undivided Goalpara district. Various primary and secondary data also have been collected from Assam State Archive, Bengal State Archive, Asiatic Society of Bengal and National Library of Kolkata to bring to light the accurate picture of the subject. Comparative study is also made whenever it is necessary.

Highlighting of the Chapters: The work is divided into six chapters in order to study the trade of undivided Goalpara district during Colonial period.

Chapter one is introduction which deals with the trade activities, geographical background, history, people, economic condition, industries and manufacture.

Chapter two is on British trade settlement in undivided Goalpara district.

Chapter three is on transport and communication which deals with Waterway, Roadway, Railway and Tramway.

Chapter four deals with trade in undivided Goalpara district. Herein salt trade, forest trade and jute trade are discussed.

Chapter five gives detail on frontier trade of undivided Goalpara district in which the trade activities with Bhutan and Garo have been studied.

Chapter sixth deals with the impact of trade. This chapter discusses the economic transition and migration in undivided Goalpara district.

Chapter seventh is conclusion which contains the findings of the research work.

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