Chapter - IV
CHAPTER - IV

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF
CACHAR UNDER GOVINDA CHANDRA

It has already been noticed in the previous chapters that the period of Raja Govinda Chandra was marked by political turmoil and upheavals. His preoccupation in dealing with internal revolt and invasion from the external forces made him so restless that he was unable to offer an efficient administration. Peace is the key factor for all-around economic development of a region, which is so necessary for moving the economy towards progress, but that peace always eluded him. It is observed from the discussions in the foregoing chapters that he had to remain preoccupied most of the time in quelling the revolt perpetrated against him by his Commander-in-Chief, Tularam and in fighting out the Manipuris and Burmese who invaded his territory. As such he was unable to take concrete steps for economic progress of his State (Cachar). An attempt has been made in this chapter to highlight the
economic conditions of Cachar under Govinda Chandra and the measures undertaken by him for the economic upliftment of his kingdom.

But, before initiating the discussion on the economic scene of Cachar under Raja Govinda Chandra, it would be appropriate to have a glimpse on all facets of the economy of the Kachari kingdom before his accession to the throne.

According to J. B. Bhattacharjee, the economic condition of the Kachari kingdom developed remarkably within 25 years of the shifting of its capital from Dimapur to Maibong. This can be established by the fact that even after his defeat against Chilarai, the then Dimasa king was economically strong enough to hand over to the king of Kochbehar 70,000 elephants and pay him the same amount of gold and silver coins as annual tax. ¹

After the shifting of the capital of the Kachari kings from Maibong to Khaspur, their economic structure took a new shape. In Cachar, there were two types of political institutions – “One following the traditional system of the Dimasa Government with its hierarchy of officials and the other as the socio-economic units of the
plainsmen who were ever growing in number and importance. The first consisted of the Barbhandari or Prime Minister, Patras or Minister, Senapati or Commander-in-Chief and Raj Pandit or Royal Priest, besides several others. The jurisdiction of these officers was mostly confined to the hill-Kacharis, i.e., Dimacas, Kukis and the Nagas.¹²

During the Dimasa rule at Khaspur, the land distribution system was known as Khel.³ Usually, the Raja did not interfere in the affairs of the khel. Mukhtar, who acted as the medium of communication between the Raja and the Raiyats, was responsible for execution of orders in the khel and collecting the government revenue.⁴ In the British records khel system was described in various forms like agricultural guild, corporation and commonwealth, formed primarily for agriculture.⁵ Khel was also formed for mining (salt wells), fishing and elephant catching.⁶ Such associations used to be formed for commercial purpose.⁷

With the passage of time, the number of khels increased. They joined together and formed larger units known as Raj.⁸ There were elected/nominated representatives in every khel. The key person of each khel
was given the title *Khel Mukhtar* and the members of the *khel* used to elect *Mukhtars*. The *Mukhtars* of the constituent *khels* elected a *Raj Mukhtar*. The members of the *khel* paid their revenue to the *Khel Mukhtar* who paid the total dues of his *khel* to the *Raj Mukhtar* who ultimately paid the total collected amount to the Royal Treasury.

A study on the economic condition of Cachar during the reign of *Raja* Krishna Chandra reveals that the agricultural land at that time was so fertile that it helped high growth of agricultural production. Famine was unknown to the people of Cachar at that time because yield of paddy crops was as high as 20 to 25 maunds per *bigha*, fishes were found in abundance in the rivers and lakes, and forests were found to be rich in numerous natural forest resources. Aguru was also available in abundance in the plains of Cachar. People were so self-sufficient in essential commodities that there was no necessity of buying or selling any food item. Milk and paddy were in everybody’s easy possession. However, during the Burmese invasion in Cachar, lower caste people started selling food items at the army camps and in this way the monetary business transaction was introduced in the plains of Cachar. Labour rate was only one *anna* per day, but it was
found to be more than sufficient for daily subsistence of a labour. 16

According to N. K. Barman, “After the treaty with East India Company, export of country’s wealth and import of unwelcome stuff began to thrive. To do away with the general aversion to buying and selling of the human folk of the soil, opium was introduced by the Britishers as successfully as they had done in China. Addicted heavily and transformed into the paradise of the opium addicts, the children of the soil began to export their country’s wealth heavily in order to enable them to buy opium more and more. Thus in the year of 1839-40 there was record of export to the extent of Rs. 19,850 and import, being chiefly opium and salt, to the extent of Rs. 36,800 annually.”17

Land revenue is a major source of income of a kingdom. But to ascertain the land revenue of a particular kingdom its system of land settlement needs to be ascertained first. The territorial land was subdivided into various holdings, and at the time of Raja Krishna Chandra the settlement of the land consisted of the following subdivisions.18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Subdivision</th>
<th>Dedicated in the name of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khelma</td>
<td>The king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahadevi</td>
<td>The Chief Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vichingsa</td>
<td>The Royal deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dekajurai</td>
<td>The crown prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrayala</td>
<td>Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangjurai</td>
<td>Princess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmottar</td>
<td>Brahmins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivottar</td>
<td>Lord Shiva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The revenue income from each of the above subdivisions goes to the benefit of the authority of each. According to U. C. Guha, there were 22 sources from where revenue was collected. Some of these sources were as follows:

1. Forest Royalty
2. Water tax for fisheries
3. Cattle cess
4. Salt mining
5. Land holding

6. House taxes from hilly tracts.\textsuperscript{21}

It needs mention here that revenues were collected not only in cash, but in kind too.\textsuperscript{22}

Apart from the aforesaid sources of revenue, the king used to direct his subjects at the time of various festivals and other occasions to donate different commodities and food items to the palace for \textit{puja} purposes. The custom of such donations/offerings was known as ‘Bandhan’. In fact, the king used to ask his representatives of different ‘uls’ (as explained in Chapter-II) to donate, out of his ‘uls’, a certain amount of paddy, milk, different kinds of meat within a certain period of time. The representative of the ‘ul’ on his part used to direct some leading people of his ‘ul’ to donate him those commodities and food items. Those leading people again on their part used to collect those commodities from the representatives of each \textit{khel}.\textsuperscript{23}

In order to enhance the revenue of the kingdom from trade and commerce, serious efforts were made by Raja Krishna Chandra to enlarge the quantum of trade with Bengal.\textsuperscript{24} He was unhappy with the obstructions imposed by the East India Company for free access of the
products of his kingdom to the British territories of Sylhet and other parts of Bengal. He complained to the then Governor General in 1796 A.D. over this obstruction of trade relations and appealed for his intervention in the matter. According to Rhodes and Bose, the British authority at Sylhet, at the time of Krishna Chandra, ordered the sepoys not to allow the exporters from Cachar to enter into British territory resulting in great revenue losses to the kingdom. The Raja wanted the Governor General’s intervention to allow the traders of Cachar free access to the British territory including ‘Kalikata’ along with goods for trade and commerce. In return, he offered free access to his kingdom (Cachar) for British Indian traders.

The Kachari kingdom was starved of hard cash, during the reign of Raja Krishna Chandra Narayana. To quote Capt. Pemberton, “During the reign Rajah Kishunchundruh, the revenue obtained from Kachar is said to have amounted to a lakh of rupees per annum, all of which, however, does not appear to have been collected in cash; but was made up of personal services, produce, and cash, the value of which was supposed to amount to that sum, the several divisions paying in the following proportions.”
As *Raja* Krishna Chandra was a very religious minded king, he visited a number of holy places like Varanasi, Prayag, Navadwip etc. To meet the expenditure of his pilgrimage he (Krishna Chandra) borrowed Rs. 80,000 from various sources. After coming back to Cachar he decided to cover up his loan by collecting money from his subjects by offering them titles in return. He thought that in this way he would be able to enrich his State exchequer. But unfortunately before he could implement this idea, he passed away in 1813 A.D.
The study on the economic scene in Cachar during the time of Raja Govinda Chandra reveals that he was unable to bring much change in the economic scene in Cachar; and that although the sources of revenue remained almost as it prevailed during the reign of Raja Krishna Chandra Narayana, actual revenue declined heavily. While Krishna Chandra’s territory yielded a revenue of Rs. 1,000,000, it came down to a paltry sum of around Rs. 20,000 both in cash and kind during Govinda Chandra’s rule. As in the case of his predecessors, land revenue remained the major source of income under the rule of Raja Govinda Chandra. During his regime Mukhtars of each khel were assigned the responsibility of collecting the revenue. Mukhtars used to discharge their duties with the help of their assistants, known as Chutiya Peadahs. The area of land available for land revenue had been 6,115 hal or 29,352 acres. Of those areas, revenue was actually collected from 4,289 hal or 20,663 acres of land. The rest portion of land, i.e., 1,826 hals, was a tax free land area, known as Buxa. Raja Krishna Chandra fixed 1/6th of the produce as the rent. All the factors regarding the land revenue system under Krishna Chandra’s regime continued during the
regime of Govinda Chandra, and it is but natural that he too
fixed the same amount of the produce as rent.

During Govinda Chandra’s regime, assessment of land revenue was made on the basis of *kulba* or *hal*. Land measuring one *hal* was equal to 14 *bighas* or 4.82 acres (approx.). “Again, the revenue of one *kulba* or *hal* was 12 *kahana* cowries, i.e., 15360 pieces of cowries. During that period, against one tanka, five to seven *kahana* of cowries (one *kahana* = 1280 cowries) were available depending upon demand and supply.”

As hinted in Chapter II, in Cachar, *khel* system received its final shape at the hands of Raja Govinda Chandra. He divided the plains of Cachar into 7 revenue districts (*khels*) which were as follows:


To supervise the activities of the above mentioned districts, an *Ujir* or Minister used to be appointed for each of the subdivisions or districts. In order to increase the revenue of his kingdom Govinda Chandra Narayana desperately attempted to take possession of the three revenue districts of North Cachar which were under
the control of Tularam Senapati, but in spite of his best efforts he was not successful in his mission.\textsuperscript{37}

In order to increase the revenue of his kingdom, \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra found the idea of \textit{Raja} Krishna Chandra, about selling of titles to his subjects, as a very pragmatic one; and as such, he took immediate measure to translate that idea into a reality. He performed a ceremony on 21 \textit{Sravan}, 1739 \textit{Saka} (1817 A.D.) where titles were sold for cash. \textsuperscript{38} Such titles were of Bengali origin. \textsuperscript{39} At first, these titles clung to the land and its representatives, but, curiously enough in course of time these titles became transferable at fixed prices. According to J. B. Bhattacharjee, the different titles were sold at following prices \textsuperscript{40}:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choudhury</td>
<td>Rs. 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazumdar</td>
<td>Rs. 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laskar</td>
<td>Rs. 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar Bhuiyan</td>
<td>Rs. 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majhar Bhuiyan</td>
<td>Rs. 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhota Bhuiyan</td>
<td>Rs. 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As observed by Rhodes and Bose, title of Mazumdar used to be sold for Rs. 80.41 “The titles became hereditary and by degrees the unions began to separate into classes.”42 According to Hunter, those who paid their whole revenue to the Raja were called Khelma, and their representatives were known as Khelma Laskar or Khelma Choudhury.43

During Govinda Chandra’s reign, revenue was also raised by leasing salt wells, selling of forest products, elephant catching and also by imposing taxes on trade and commerce. 44 Taxes were imposed on export of forest products, such as bamboo, cane, timber etc.45

In the Tilain Hills, salt used to be prepared by heating saline water raised from salt wells, commonly known in the then Kachari kingdom as ‘Khulis’. This saline water was sold to the public to enrich the exchequer of the kingdom. But subsequently, easy availability of foreign salt forced the closure of the local salt mills.46

The scrutiny of various letters written by Raja Govinda Chandra to the then Governor General reveals that, as a measure of appeasement, he offered a number of elephants to the East India Company as
presentation. The details of such presentation along with datewise break-up are outlined below:  

On 5th Poush 1734 Saka — 20 elephants and 2 tusks.
On 15, Kartik — 3 elephants
On 25 Poush, 1737 Saka — 5 elephants
From 15 Ashar, 1738 Saka — 5 elephants each year
On 7 Baisakh, 1740 Saka — 2 hats made of ivory chips.

The above chart indicates the fact that forest of Cachar was rich in elephant. Catching and selling of elephants and ivory products served as a significant source of revenue for the Kachari Raja Govinda Chandra Narayana.

In order to increase the revenue of his kingdom, Govinda Chandra exercised monopoly in trade on various articles, particularly grains. Grains could be sold by the individuals to the king at a price fixed by the king and eventually these were resold to the outside merchants at a higher price, thereby keeping a margin for the State. According to J. B. Bhattacharjee, “We do not have
sufficient data to measure the extent of the monopoly trade of the Raja. What is clear from the British records is that the principal item of such trade was rice. It also covered grass and bamboo. There was no restriction in trade in any item between the people of the State. It related only to export trade, precisely with the Sylhet district of Bengal. The custom duty was imposed on the river ghats like Bikrampur, Barkhala, Gumrah, Udharband, Madhuraghat, Sonabarighat and Sialtekh. Sialtekh, on Cachar-Sylhet border, was the most important transit station of Cachar. The duty imposed on transit was generally on timber and other forest products.

Other commodities that were also traded include ivory, lac, wax, silk, cotton, elephants, horses, copper, tin, lead, zink, silver, gold, etc. The profit earned by way of margin from trade is found to have subsequently enriched the royal treasury to some extent.

The analysis in the foregoing paragraphs centred round the economic scene of the Kachari kingdom with special reference to its various sources of revenue. It is worthwhile to mention here that since militarily Raja Govinda Chandra was too weak a king to defend his territory, he was constrained to seek British military help on various occasions thereby incurring a liability for paying the
salary of the hired soldiers. The letters written by him to the then Governor General on 17 Kartik 1737 Saka (Oct-Nov. 1815 A.D.); 25 Poush, 1737 Saka (January, 1816 A.D.); 15 Ashar, 1738 Saka (June/July, 1816 A.D); 7 Baishakh, 1740 Saka (April, 1818 A.D); 19 Bhadra, 1740 Saka (August/Sept. 1818 A.D) appealing for sending armed forces for the protection of his kingdom amply justify the statement. However, the East India Company did not comply with the request of Govinda Chandra and as such he was relieved of incurring any expenditure for hiring British soldiers. The State exchequer was, thus, relieved of further drainage.

An attempt will now be made to highlight the major expenditure that Raja Govinda Chandra had to incur and the measures undertaken by him to improve the financial condition of his kingdom.

Raja Govinda Chandra Narayana was found to remain busy more in performing religious rites than in directing his energy towards the all round development of his State. The study reveals that he was a God-fearing person and preferred to remain busy in worshipping various deities and celebrating religious functions amidst much fanfare. It is on record that the
expenditure he incurred annually for religious functions exceeded Rs. 10,000. It may thus be reasonably deduced that he was least interested in making the economy of his kingdom a vibrant one. According to Barpujari, “The revenue-paying Bengali Hindus of the plains who were attracted by the new influences for a time gave unstinted support to the royalty, but over-enthusiasm of the last two rulers Krishna Chandra and Govinda Chandra Narayana (1813 A.D.—1830 A.D.) towards Vaishnavism and their prolonged pilgrimages to holy places outside their kingdom, in utter neglect of their primary duties to the State, resulted in economic drainage and ruination of military efficiency which were very much essential due to the prevailing abnormal political situation faced by Cachar at the time.”

As hinted earlier in Chapter-II, when the Burmese Army reached Cachar Govinda Chandra preferred to go to Sylhet to meet the representatives of the Company Government to seek their military help. As a result, on March 6, 1824 A.D. a treaty, known as Treaty of Badarpur was signed between the Company Government and Raja Govinda Chandra. One of the terms of this treaty was that Raja was to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000.
Again, after the First Anglo Burmese War (1824 A.D.—1826 A.D.) Raja Govinda Chandra was re-instated to the throne of Cachar. But, as his capital was shifted to Haritikar, he had to construct a new capital there, obviously involving a vast expenditure. It may be pointed out here that “When Govinda Chandra returned to Cachar in 1826 most of the parganas were empty and none of them yielded any revenue.” So he had to take up the matter of construction of new capital in the midst of serious financial crisis. That Govinda Chandra was in a financial crisis can also be ascertained from the fact, as stated hereunder.

As per the Treaty of Badarpur, as stated earlier, although he got back the possession of Cachar in 1826 A.D., he was under obligation to pay the promised annual tribute of Rs. 10,000 with retrospective effect from 1824 A.D. The drainage of such a heavy amount with arrear from the State exchequer had a very bad impact on the overall economic condition of the kingdom. The study also reveals that northern part of Cachar was usurped by Tularam who had also appropriated to himself a sizeable portion of resources of the State. The King’s officers were prevented by Tularam from collecting revenue. More over,
on being attacked by the Manipuris and Burmese, a large number of inhabitants of South Cachar fled away. As a result, a vast area of land was thrown out of plough and a large number of those cultivators, who could not flee, were either killed or taken into captivity. Therefore, when Govinda Chandra was reinstated as the Raja of Cachar, most of the parganas were found to be empty and none of them yielded any revenue.62

Under such circumstances, Raja Govinda Chandra had no means to pay the arrears. Therefore, he appealed to the Calcutta authorities to grant him remission of tribute for two years 1825—26 A.D. and 1826—27 A.D.63 His remission was granted on the condition that he was required to construct a good road between Sylhet and Manipur across his territory (Cachar) at his own cost.64 Naturally, the construction of the road and the payment of tribute involved a vast expenditure which the Raja could not afford to pay. He also got an indication that the remission once granted would not be repeated, because the Company authorities in Calcutta had already made up their mind to annex Cachar at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, he undertook certain measures to improve his financial condition by raising additional revenue.65
Raja Govinda Chandra reduced the number of highly salaried ministers and judges from four to one and fifty to four respectively.\textsuperscript{66} Except the Barbhandari, services of the revenue officers attached to the members of the royal family including the queens, were terminated. The rent-free grants and immunities granted to high officials and dignitaries were withdrawn, and they were only granted fixed cash allowances.\textsuperscript{67} Taxes were also imposed on the cultivation of poppy, manufacture of salt, riding on \textit{dola} (palanquin), holding of titles, etc. The use of gold ornaments during marriage by the affluent section of the society was not at all permitted without the payment of taxes. Fees were required to be paid even for all kinds of musical performances or cultural functions on all important socio-religious occasions.\textsuperscript{68}

To increase the revenue of Cachar, stringent measures were adopted against the defaulters, such as restraint of property, and confinement; and in cases where land was laid in waste, collective fine was imposed on the whole \textit{khel}.\textsuperscript{69} Although the usual land revenue of Rs. 5 per \textit{hal} or \textit{kulba} (4.82 acres) was retained, but additional taxes were imposed on the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, etc. For all the export items custom duties were levied at the
river ghats, and these were "farmed out to the highest bidder." But all these measures very badly affected the interest of the primary producers. "The Raja enjoyed a monopoly of trade in certain commodities, particularly grain, which became an indirect burden on the consumers."^1

As a result of these measures, as stated above, undertaken by the Raja, his own financial problems were solved to a certain extent, but all sections of the people were hard hit which ultimately created widespread resentment.^2 East India Company’s pressure for annual tribute compelled Raja Govinda Chandra “to draw blood out of stone and his unsparing exactions on his own people affected the interests of his neighbours as well, and the imposition of heavy transit duties on all articles of merchandise almost killed the trade between Manipur and Sylhet.”^3

Sen observed, “The affluent members of the Kachari society kept their surplus money in earthen pots and buried them for safety as there was no custodian of money like modern banks. It is probable that some wealthy inhabitants might have worked as money-lenders to meet the requirements of the poor, and money-lending must have
turned into profitable business in the Kachari kingdom. We have instance of Umichand and Jagat Seth in Bengal who lent money even to the government of Nawab, but we do not find in record names of any such money-lenders in the Kachari kingdom. The circumstantial evidences indicate that fraud and mischief vitiated the entire credit system in the kingdom for a while and a royal control was considered necessary to channelise it in the right direction. Govinda Chandra, therefore, made provisions in the Rinadanbidhi, enacted in A.D. 1816, to regulate the credit system of his kingdom.”

As observed by Rhodes and Bose, “One of the important features of the Rinadanbidhi is that the quantum of interest, fine or compensation has been mentioned mostly in terms of cowries. This was solely due to the low costs of living as well as a lower price index that was prevailing in the kingdom. In Bengal, in 1757 A.D., wages paid by the East India Company to the labourers and craftsmen ranged between the Rs. 2 and Rs. 5 per month. In such a situation, a currency of extremely low value was required and cowries served the said purpose. These cowries became the popular and chief medium for small
change for various transactions. A table demonstrating the place of cowries in the prevalent economy is as follows.

4 Cowries = 1 Ganda

20 Gandas = 1 Pana, equivalent to 80 cowries.

16 Pana = 1 Kahana, equivalent of 1280 cowries

4 Kahanas = 1 Rupee or tanka, equivalent to 5120 cowries.

“The rate of exchange fluctuated significantly, and depended on supply and demand. In fact, 16 Pana theoretically represented one karsapana or one silver tanka. There was another dimension to the currency system. The rates of interest fixed on credit differed according to the caste of the borrowers. For example, in a particular type of credit, where loan was granted on mortgage of assets, the rate of interest per month, per karsapana, was fixed as per following table:

Brahmin Borrower = 4 gandas (cowries)

Khatriya = 6 gandas

Baishya = 8 gandas

Sudra = 10 gandas
“The staged interest rate indicates the rate of oppression on the lower strata of society with the Brahmans being the privileged group and the brains behind these rates, taking advantage of the system. An important provision of the Civil Code was that if money had been borrowed against the mortgage of slaves, cows, horses, boats and/or vehicles (manually driven) and the item had subsequently become unserviceable, due to fault of the mortgagee (lender), no interest would be payable on the principal.”

There were four kinds of payments in the Kachari credit system. If a person hired cows, oxen or horses for one day, the payment made by him for it was called ‘Kayeaka’. But if the payment was made on the monthly basis it was called ‘Kalika’. If a borrower paid the principal amount of the loan but some amount of the interest remained unpaid, a fresh deed had to be executed to collect the interest on the unpaid interest. It was called ‘Chakrabridhdi’. It is pertinent to note here, if a person was compelled to borrow money from a wealthy person to meet the urgent need and if the moneylender demanded an exorbitant rate of interest, the payment of such interest was called ‘Karita’, but in case, after some time the borrower
failed to pay the high rate of interest and the lender forced him to pay it at any cost, the law empowered the borrower to pay only a simple rate of interest fixed for his caste. Interest-free loan was termed as ‘akritabriddhi’. No further interest was permitted to be collected from any person on the value of gems, pearls and corals if the amount of interest already paid by him had totalled up to twice the value of the amount he borrowed. On the value of silver, fruits and woollen and silken clothes, maximum interest payable per year was double the amount of the principal amount. In the cases of cotton cloth and metal goods like copper, maximum interest was thrice the value of the principal amount; on the agricultural products, other than paddy and on sheaved wool, 4 times of the principal amount was fixed, on the pot herbs, 5 times; on the paddy and sugar cane 6 times of the principal; on the oil, liquor and salt 8 (eight) times of the principal amount was fixed as the maximum rate of interest per year. If anybody forcibly took away anything from a woman, according to the Rinadanbiddhi, the item needed to be returned to her with the interest to be fixed on the basis of its price.

The legal provisions for punishment for serious economic offences was humiliation in public, such
as getting the culprit’s head shaven clean and make him ride on a Donkey. For the breach of contract, creditor was not permitted to inflict punishment on the debtor. It was the exclusive prerogative of the king, and the creditor could only refer the case to the King’s Court.76

However, according to Amalendu Bhattacharjee, opinion differs as to the practical applicability of provisions of Rinadanbidhi as introduced by Raja Govinda Chandra, because Rinadanbidhi, the written fiscal policy, is found to be the exact replica of some of the provisions of ancient Manusmriti. The provisions contained in the Manusmriti, which is believed to be quite in tune with the social system prevalent in the ancient period, is unlikely to have any practical relevance in the social system of the days under Dimasa kings. 77 That Rinadanbidhi was the replica of ancient Manusmriti is reflected from the following examples.

(I)

vāladayadikāṁ riktaṁ tāvadrājānupālayet
yāvat sa syat samāvṛtto yāvaccātītaśaiśavaḥ//78
Rinadanbidhi:

Panchadash varsha paryanta bayashka pitrihin balakar pas haite rin parishodh karite pare nahi ebong oi balakete rinadi dite pare nahi eboong oi balak byabaharete ayogya prayukta pitririn dite o laite ebong apnar karyadir anupayukta kintu panchadash barsher par sarba karyer upayukta.⁷⁹

It means, no debt can be recovered from a boy who has lost his father and has not crossed the age of 15 years, nor can the boy issue a loan. He cannot recover what his father has lent and not under any obligation to requite what the latter borrowed. He is not eligible for entry into business deals. Nor can he manage his own affairs. But when his age crosses 15, he shall be considered to be able to look after everything concerning his interests.

(II)

arthe’pavyayamānantu karaṇena vibhāvitam
dāpayeddhanikasyārtham daṇḍaleśānca śaktitaḥ//⁸₀
Rinadanbidhi:

Dhanike dharite yadi rinike bale je ami tomar kono dhan na niyachhi tabe yadi pachhe sakshi dwara oi dhaner praman hoi tabe riner dwigun danda rajate diya rin parishodh karibek.\textsuperscript{81}

Meaning, asked to clear the debt, if the debtor says ‘I borrowed nothing from you’, but a witness evidence proves he did, the king shall punish him with a fine equal to twice of what the interest and the principal together amount to.

Study on economic scene during the regime of Raja Govinda Chandra cannot be complete unless some of the systems of weights and measures of his time are mentioned. As observed by Sen, “Articles of trade and other household commodities were weighed down with the prevalent north Indian system. They were weighed in terms of rati, tola, pal, druna, mustee and seers. A Gold coin was equal to eighty ratis. One pal was equal to three tolas (four tolas according to Amar Kosh) and one druna equal to one thousand twenty four Mustee or thirty-two seers.”
"... it is necessary for information of all that His Highness, the king... consulted Bibad Darpan, the penal Code of Kushala kingdom and enacted his own penal Code accordingly for punishment of those dealers who used weight below standard to weigh their commodity and sold it to their customers, and who took recourse to miscalculation of sale proceeds and maintained false records to cheat their customers and maintain their family." 

During the first few years of the reign of Raja Govinda Chandra everything went on, by and large, in right direction. Personal contact with the descendants of old Kacharis reveals that the public exchequer during the reign of Raja Govinda Chandra, although poverished was not to the level of worrying emptiness since the Raja used to issue heavy silver hair clips to the representatives of the Julus. As hinted in Chapter-II, Julu referred to the female clan of the Dimasas. A photograph of a hair clip used by Chandrabali Barman, a representative of the Diyungma Julu is reproduced in the appendix.

During the first few years of the period of Raja Govinda Chandra, as observed by Smt. Dey, the king is said to have attempted to undretake some constructive works for the welfare of his kingdom. As per records
“... it is necessary for information of all that His Highness, the king... consulted Bibad Darpan, the penal Code of Kushala kingdom and enacted his own penal Code accordingly for punishment of those dealers who used weight below standard to weigh their commodity and sold it to their customers, and who took recourse to miscalculation of sale proceeds and maintained false records to cheat their customers and maintain their family.”

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available in Deputy Commissioner’s Record Room, Silchar, Raja Govinda Chandra endeavoured to extract limestone from the mines. As revealed in the said records, having received the news that limestones were in stock, near the upper Madhura river, he engaged some persons to fetch those limestones. People were found to be scared to visit the mines to fetch limes for the kingdom due to rumour that they would be chased by a venomous snake if they dared to touch the limestone. As a result, the king engaged one brave young man of the Kachari tribe, named Dhaniram, for the purpose. Hearsay goes that no sooner had the young man approached the limestone then that snake rushed towards him making terrorising hissing sound. Dhaniram faced the snake boldly and cut the snake to pieces with his sword, but could not save himself from its venom that engulfed his body. He succumbed to the venomous effect as soon as he returned to King’s courtyard at Khaspur. It is not known whether there was any more attempt by the king to fetch the limestone. 86

From the above story it can be understood that sometimes superstitions stood in the way of introducing economic measures that could fetch revenue. However, the foregoing discussion reveals the fact that Govinda Chandra
undertook various measures, within his limitations, to revive the economy of Cachar. But all his attempts in that direction fell through due to the attack by the Manipuri conspirators and Burmese invasions as also due to other internal troubles that kept him busy in saving his life.

Notes & References:

5. Ibid, p-14.


15. Ibid., pp-80-81.

16. Ibid., p-81.


25. Ibid., p-51.


27. Ibid., p-51.


38. Ibid, p-88.
40. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no. 2, p-76.
42. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no.2, p-76.
45. Ibid., pp-208-209.
48. There is no mention of the year.
50. Ibid, pp-208-209.
51. Ibid., p-209.
52. Ibid., p-209.
58. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no. 44, p-207.
60. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no. 44, p-207.
61. Ibid., p-207.
64. Ibid., p-72; Bhattacharjee, J.B., no. 44, p-207.
67. Ibid., p-208.
71. Ibid., p-72.
72. Ibid., pp-72-73.
73. Ibid., p-73.
77. Ibid., pp-X-XI.
78. Manu Samhita, 8/27
80. Manu Samhita, 8/51
84. Appendix no. 12.1
86. Ibid, p-34