Chapter - II
CHAPTER - II

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCENE OF CACHAR UNDER GOVINDA CHANDRA

A. POLITICAL CONDITION:

After the death of Raja Krishna Chandra, his younger brother Govinda Chandra Narayana ascended the throne of Cachar. People of Cachar expected that the reign of Raja Govinda Chandra would bring around development of Cachar. But all their expectations were belied. The new Raja, from the very beginning of his accession to the throne had to face lots of trouble, both internally and externally. He was not a very capable king, but at the same time he was found to be tyrannical and avaricious in nature. For all these reasons he was getting unpopular among his subjects.
day by day. The common people became very much dissatisfied and felt themselves insecure under the rule of Govinda Chandra. The ‘nobles’ were also not at all happy with the king. The dissatisfaction of the ‘nobles’ and the people at large reached its zenith when Govinda Chandra married Induprabha, the widow of his elder brother Raja Krishna Chandra Narayana, so much so, that gradually he lost the proper co-operation and support of those holding the various important administrative positions of the kingdom. This anomalous socio-political condition encouraged Kahi Das also known as Kaso Dau/ Khasadeo/ Kashi chandra/ Kashi Das/ Kohi Dhan, the Revenue Collector in North Cachar, to revolt against Raja Govinda Chandra; and eventually proclaimed independence by setting up a principality of his own. But Kahi Das was soon arrested and put to death under the orders of the Raja. When the news of the assassination of Kahi Das reached his son Tularam, who was the Commander in Chief of the Raja’s army, he fled away and continued to disturb the Raja like his father through constant raids and plunders. When Tularam rose in revolt against Govinda Chandra, other officers of the Kachari kingdom like Sanandaram, Ramjay and Dharamdeo or Demradeo came for his help. Tularam
embezzled the revenue of the State (Cachar) and advanced towards Jayantiapur where he and his associates received full support of the Jayantia king, Ram Singha II. From Jayantiapur, Tularam along with his associates moved to Dharampur pargana in the northern frontier of Cachar. The rebel leaders asked the Zamindars and local Chiefs not to pay the revenue to the Raja of Cachar.11

By going through the various letters of Raja Govinda Chandra an interesting fact has been revealed which needs special mention here. Two such letters, written by Raja Govinda Chandra to the then Governor General on 25 Poush, 1737 Saka (1815/16 A.D.), and 1Falgoon, 1737 Saka (1816 A.D.), narrating the nefarious designs of his Commander-in-Chief Tularam and his father Khasadeo or Kahi Das against him, seems to contradict the statement of various scholars and historians who were unanimous in one point that Tularam revolted against Raja Govinda Chandra after the assassination of his father Khasadeo or Kahi Das. From these letters, one point is very much clear that Tularam’s father Khasadeo or Kahi Das was alive when Tularam revolted against him (Govinda Chandra). This has also a reference in the book Cachar District Records12 from which it is evident that Khasadeo or Kahi Das was
assassinated after Govinda Chandra had written the said letters to the Governor General. The copy of the letter written in Bengali along with the comments of Debabrata Datta, a well-known historian of this region, are reproduced in the appendix.\textsuperscript{13}

It is, thus, evident that hostilities against Govinda Chandra continued. Recalcitrant Manipuris also renewed their hostilities in Cachar which proved advantageous for Tularam. Tularam took the opportunity of such chaotic situation and was determined to establish his authority over Cachar.\textsuperscript{14} The indisciplined, untrained and unorganised army of the king not only failed to check the rapid advancement of Tularam and his associates, but also failed to tackle the tensed situation. Under the circumstances \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra had no other alternative but to seek help from the British.\textsuperscript{15} On 17 Kartik, 1737 Saka (1815 A.D.), \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra wrote a letter to the Governor General of Bengal describing his critical condition and requested him (Governor General) to send some sepoys in Cachar to meet the ongoing challenge.\textsuperscript{16} But the British turned down the \textit{Raja}'s request. As a result, harassment of the \textit{Raja} by his enemies continued.
Meanwhile, two exiled Manipuri princes, who took shelter in Cachar during the reign of Raja Krishna Chandra, became very hostile towards Govinda Chandra. Gambhir Singha and Chaurajit Singha approached Govinda Chandra to help them in their fight against Marjit Singha, the king of Manipur who was ruling his State with the help of the Burmese. Initially Govinda Chandra refused to help Chourajit stating that as both the Manipuri brothers were related to him (Govinda Chandra) in same degree, his siding with either was never justifiable. As a result, Chourajit became furious and made an alliance with Jayantia Raja Ram Singha II to attack Govinda Chandra. Govinda Chandra wrote to the Governor General that Ram Singha II, had resolved to seize his territories from as far as Mauza Tarapur, Pargana Kalain which from time immemorial was under the control of the Kachari kings. But Gambhir Singha stayed in Cachar and promised to provide all kinds of help to the Raja. Govinda Chandra appointed Gambhir Singha as the Commander-in-Chief of the Cachar Army at a monthly salary of Rs. 50.

But Raja Govinda Chandra did not know that much more critical problems were waiting for him. He was taken aback when the king of Manipur, Marjit Singha, with
a large contingent of strong army suddenly invaded Kachari kingdom in December 1817 A.D. Govinda Chandra’s weak and incompetent army could not put any resistance before the Manipuri army. At that point of time Govinda Chandra’s only expectation rested on the British. Accordingly he was constrained to write a letter to the then Governor General in April, 1818 A.D. In that letter Raja Govinda Chandra described the uneasy situation of Cachar. The text of his letter as translated by S. N. Sen is reproduced below:

“Though the demise of his late brother, Maharaja Krishnachandra Narayan, left him alone and unprotected, he runs the government of his country in reliance of the patronage and protection of his lordship. His lordship has always afforded him his protection and his confidence in him is therefore unlimited. His lordship has been previously informed of the perfidious conduct of his disloyal servants. Recently the deposed Raja of Manipur, Chaurjit Singh, being worsted in his fight for the throne with his brother Marjit Singh, came to the writer’s country and sought his help. The writer’s refusal gave him offence and he went to Calcutta but as his petition met with no approval there he returned by way of Sylhet and stationed
himself within the territories of the Raja of Jaintiapur. On the 3rd of Paush, corresponding to 6 December 1817, Raja Marjit Singh suddenly invaded the writer’s territories with a large force. Mr. Carey does not know how to fight. He retreated in shame and went away without the knowledge of the writer. He and his general Gambhir Singh, however, fought the invaders. At that juncture Captain Davidson arrived at thana Badarpur from Sylhet for guarding the frontiers of the Honourable Company’s territories. Marjit Singh was defeated and forced to return to his own country. Subsequently the aforesaid Chaurjit Singh entered into a league with Tularam and Sanandaram, turned a freebooter and won over the writer’s general Gambhir Singh to his side. They set fire to the houses of the writer’s subjects, plundered their property and are now devastating the country. Has no one to look up to for protection except the English. Hopes that his lordship will give him a passport for importing 200 Hindustanis and one Englishman for his protection and it will be a great favour if some of the Company’s troops are lent for the suppression of his enemies. He will bear their expenses and pay an annual tribute in addition. Refers him to his vakils, Kalidas Banerji and Gaursundar Chatterjee, for particulars. Sends two hats.
made of ivory chips and hopes his lordship will be pleased to accept them.”

All these incidents in Cachar made the East India Company officers alert and the Magistrate of Sylhet T. French immediately sent Capt. Davidson with a large force to Cachar to protect the British frontier. By this time Marjit Singha virtually made himself the master of Cachar. To get the favour of the British, he (Marjit Singha) wrote a letter to the Magistrate of Sylhet requesting him to appoint a British Officer so that Govinda Chandra and Gambhir Singha could be kept in check and Manipur would remain safe from the onslaught of the *Kachari Raja.* The Magistrate did not comply with the request, but assured Marjit Singha that if he did not create problem in the British frontier the Company would never enter into any dispute with him. Nevertheless Marjit Singha became so powerful that Govinda Chandra and Gambhir Singha did not feel secure in Cachar and retired to a defensive position on the bank of the river Barak. Within a short period of time Govinda Chandra in association with Gambhir Singha arranged a strong force and made an attack on Marjit Singha to reoccupy his lost territory. He became successful
in his mission and Marjit Singha had to retreat from Cachar.\textsuperscript{27}

Although Govinda Chandra was able to drive out the invaders from Cachar, yet the safety and security of the kingdom fell in danger once again. After making alliance with the Jayantia Raja Ram Singha II, Tularam senapati also joined hands with Chourajit Singha. Chourajit now started to instigate Gambhir Singha against the Kachari Raja. Ultimately, Chourajit’s game plan was met with success. All of them (Chourajit Singha, Gambhir Singha, Tularam, Sanandaram, Ram Singha II) jointly attacked Cachar. To mitigate this renewed crisis, Govinda Chandra, besides writing letter to the Governor General, also sent two of his vakeels, Kalidas Banerjee and Gour Sundar Chatterjee, to meet him (Governor General) in Calcutta and explain the chaotic condition of Cachar.\textsuperscript{28} The two tried their best to make him (Governor General) realise the utmost necessity of the British interference in the matter. But the British tactically kept silent and observed the deteriorating situation as silent spectator.\textsuperscript{29}

The indifferent attitude of the Company authorities towards the request of Raja Govinda Chandra proved beneficial to his enemies. The atrocities against the
king continued and at a point their outrage reached to such an extent that they eventually made a night attack at Raja’s palace in June 1818 A.D. The Raja somehow managed to save his life and fled away. Ultimately, he took refuge in Sylhet. Now the possession of Cachar very easily came in the hands of the rebels. The plains of Cachar was taken away by the Manipuri brothers and northern hills of Cachar came under the clutches of Tularam. Meanwhile, the Burmese conquered Manipur and the Manipuri king Marjit Singha had to flee away from his capital and took shelter in Cachar in 1819 A.D. In Cachar, Marjit got warm reception from Gambhir Singha and Chaurajit Singha. They divided Cachar into 3 parts, and started to rule over Cachar from three capitals; Gambhir Singha ruled from Gumrah, Marjit from Hailakandi and Chourajit from Dungurirpar near Sonaimukh.

On the other side, Govinda Chandra was continuously trying to reoccupy his lost power and territory. He repeatedly appealed to the Company authorities to help him. At last, he prayed them to return him the Shirispur pargana. Shirishpur, which originally belonged to Cachar, was taken away by the authorities of the East India Company in Sylhet, and in exchange, they had offered the
Raja same portion of land elsewhere. But then, Raja refused that offer. He was ready to become the landlord of the Shirispur pargana under the British. The main reason as to why Govinda Chandra was eager to get back the Shirispur pargana was that he was passing through great economic crisis and at Shirispur the cost of essential commodities was much cheaper. But unfortunately, none of his appeals was accepted by the Company government. However, in early part of 1820 A.D., the poor Raja made an attempt to reoccupy Cachar, but he could not proceed beyond Katigorah. From Katigorah the Manipuris forced him to retreat to Sylhet.

Here in Cachar also political condition was not at all very congenial. The internal situation in Cachar took a new turn when conflict broke out among Manipuri brothers. Circumstances compelled Chourajit to leave Cachar and to take refuge in Company’s territory in Sylhet. Taking advantage of the situation Marjit Singha and Gambhir Singha divided the whole Cachar between themselves. Hailakandi was occupied by Marjit Singha and rest of South Cachar came under the possession of Gambhir Singha. Now, Govinda Chandra proposed to merge Cachar with Sylhet. But the Company authorities did not agree to
his proposal. Although a chaotic condition was prevailing in Cachar, Company authorities, to take advantage from the mess did not do anything for the improvement of the situation and continued to follow the policy of non-intervention.

Meanwhile, the success over Manipur encouraged the Burmese to extend their aggression over the Brahmaputra Valley (Assam) and by the year 1821 A.D. they easily established their full control over it (Brahmaputra Valley). On the other hand, when all the prayers and petitions of Govinda Chandra were turned down by the Company authorities due to their policy of non-intervention, he (Govinda Chandra) found a golden opportunity to get back his lost territory with the help of the Burmese. Govinda Chandra now appealed to the Burmese to rescue him from the clutches of the Manipuri rulers. The Burmese responded favourably to Govinda Chandra’s appeal, because they too were very much interested to establish their control over Cachar. In fact, Govinda Chandra’s appeal encouraged them to translate their desire into reality. Accordingly in 1823 A.D., they proceeded towards Cachar with a large number of trained army. The war cry of the Burmese made Govinda Chandra panicky
and totally forgot the fact that it was he who invited the Burmese army to help him to recover his lost territory. Being perplexed with the situation he fled away to Sylhet.\(^{46}\)

The advancement of the Burmese force towards Cachar sounded an alarm to the Company officers stationed at Sylhet. They could realise that if the Burmese succeeded to occupy Cachar, their next attempt would definitely be to extend their authority over the British Indian territory in Sylhet. This new development compelled the Governor General Lord Amherst to deal with the matter seriously.\(^{47}\) Eventually the “Council at Calcutta”\(^{48}\) took full responsibility of tackling the problem of Cachar. After a prolonged discussion, the Council took the resolution of accepting Cachar as a ‘tributary’ kingdom and restoring Govinda Chandra to his ancestral throne in case he decided to stay within the British territory.\(^{49}\) The Governor General Lord Amherst also supported the decision of Calcutta Council that Govinda Chandra should be restored as the Raja of Cachar, and instead of direct Company rule, Cachar would only remain under the protection of the East India Company.\(^{50}\) It was also decided to give Tularam a due place in the general administrative arrangements.\(^{51}\) By this time, the Burmese occupied Shahpuri (now in Bangladesh) in
November 1823 A.D. giving a clear indication that Burmese were determined to invade the British Indian territory.52

In 1824 A.D., the Burmese invaded Cachar which was then ruled by the Manipuri princes. The British became alarmed at the Burmese attack and they made up their mind to protect Cachar. Capt. David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam53 and “Agent to the Governor General for the whole eastern frontier from Cachar and Sylhet in the south to the Sikkim country in the north,”54 was asked to take necessary measures for removing the Burmese from Cachar. “Accordingly, Major Newton, Commandant of the British troops, was advised to launch the offensive before the rival forces had joined hands. Scott established his temporary headquarters at Badarpur to keep himself available for Newton’s guidance.”55

Newton marched against the Burmese force on 17 January 1824 A.D. and at Bikrampur the British defeated the Burmese and drove them out of the territory of Cachar.56 The situation was now congenial for Govinda Chandra to stage a come back under the British protection. He immediately came back to Cachar, then a desolate and devastating country.
When the British achieved success in expelling the Burmese from Cachar, it paved the way for a political settlement of Cachar between Raja Govinda Chandra and the East India Company. Lord Amherst was determined to establish the British influence over Cachar and reinstate Govinda Chandra on the throne of Cachar. On the instructions of the Governor General Lord Amherst, David Scott entered into a treaty with Govinda Chandra on March 6, 1824 A.D. at Badarpur. It was known as the Treaty of Badarpur. According to the terms and conditions of the treaty, the Raja recognised the supremacy of the British and agreed to place Cachar under the protection of the Company. In return, Company promised to protect the Raja from foreign invasion and “to arbitrate in case of any differences that may arise between the Raja and other States.” The Raja also agreed not to keep any contact with any other foreign power except the British. It was also decided in the peace treaty that the Raja would conduct the internal administration of his State in his own way and the British Court of Justice would never interfere over it. Along with many other terms and conditions of the treaty, the Raja agreed to pay an annual sum of Rs. 10,000 as tribute to the East India Company. The Company also promised to
provide maintenance for the Manipuri princes lately occupying Cachar.\textsuperscript{60}

A similar treaty was made by the Company authorities with \textit{Raja} Ram Singha of Jayantia. To quote, S. K. Barpujari, "The two principalities, Cachar and Jayantia, were thus brought under the Company’s general system of defensive arrangement of the North East Frontier of Bengal. The Burmese, however, were still in possession of Manipur and the valley of the Brahmaputra. Even before the conclusion of the treaty with the Raja of Cachar, the Burmese forces had proceeded towards Cachar from Nagaon in the north, the Jayantia hills in the north-west and Manipur in the east with the avowed pretext of restoring Govinda Chandra to the throne of Cachar and to seize his Manipuri rivals. In the middle of January 1824 the British and the Burmese forces clashed near Vikrampur where the latter was defeated. The British troops withdrew from Cachar and concentrated at Badarpur; the Burmese troops also retreated towards Manipur from which they were finally driven out by Gambhir Singh with his irregulars the \textit{Manipur Levy}. When the war was renewed in the Assam Valley, the Burmese hastily retreated and were compelled to capitulate at Rangpur. In the Burmese front where the
main operation was carried on, the British troops successfully advanced as far as Yandabo when overtures were made by the Burmese and peace was concluded on 24 February 1826. According to the terms of the treaty signed at Yandabo, the King of Ava surrendered among others his claim over Assam and the neighbouring states of Cachar, Jayantia and Manipur to the British Government. After the expulsion of the Burmese forces and the Manipuri usurpers Cachar was restored to its legitimate ruler Govinda Chandra under the terms of the treaty of Badarpur except North Cachar Hills.\textsuperscript{61}

Thus, Govinda Chandra regained his territory, but his capital was shifted from Khaspur to Haritikar.\textsuperscript{62} However, even after regaining his territory he was not a happy man, because to be a British protectorate he was constrained to surrender his country. In fact, after the Treaty of Badarpur, he became the titular king only, because for all practical purposes the administration of Cachar went into the hands of the East India Company. The treaty practically empowered the East India Company to bring any part of the territory of the Raja under the possession of the Company if he failed to pay the annual tribute to the Company regularly.\textsuperscript{63} All these developments
point to the well-planned design of the British to grab Cachar in its fold. As a matter of fact, the treaty of Badarpur was the starting point of the British design for annexation of Cachar.64

By the time Govinda Chandra was restored to the throne of Cachar, he was much advanced in age and was without any issue.65 After the onslaught over Cachar by the Burmese and the Manipuris and the revolt of Tularam Senapati, the economic condition of Cachar was almost shattered so much so that the Company authorities had a great deal of doubt about the capability of the Raja to pay his promised annual tribute on time because the revenue collection of Cachar also showed a steep decline.66 However, notwithstanding such poor economic condition, the Commissioner of Sylhet gave a report that agriculture was making rapid progress and that the Raja would find no problem in paying the tribute. But due to the deep economic crisis the inevitable happened. Govinda Chandra failed to pay the tribute, and it fell into arrears.67 He had, thus, no other alternative but to appeal for remission of tribute for two years 1825-26 A.D. and 1826-27 A.D.68 Govinda Chandra’s appeal was granted69 on certain conditions, the most vital condition being that he was required to construct
a road across his territory which would be helpful to maintain communication between Sylhet and Manipur. In order to fulfil the above condition Govinda Chandra introduced various economic measures for the improvement of financial position of the state. But all his attempts proved futile. He was unsuccessful in increasing the quantum of revenue to meet the commitment. This pitiable situation of the Raja proved a boon to the Company authorities in Calcutta. They demanded a categorical assurance from the Raja as to whether he was willing to cede Cachar to the East India Company as he was issueless, advanced in age and physically infirm.

It is, thus, evident that because of financial bankruptcy Raja Govinda Chandra became incapable of administering Cachar. Apart from financial crisis, Govinda Chandra had also to face various other difficulties both from internal and external fronts. For example, Tularam rose in revolt once again in the north, the Kukis started raiding Cachar, and the like. But the most dangerous of all these was the policy of ‘slow and steady’ penetration into the king’s ancestral possessions by the Manipuri Prince Gambhir Singha. Tularam raised the question of legitimacy of Govinda Chandra’s restoration to the throne and was
determined to seize his territory with the backing of the tribal group.\textsuperscript{74}

This new development once again compelled Govinda Chandra to seek help from the Company authorities. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Company authorities instructed David Scott to settle the dispute immediately. Accordingly, a compromise was evolved between the \textit{Raja} and Tularam on July 28, 1829 A.D. by which Govinda Chandra recognised Tularam as his Senapati and formally made him in-charge of the hills.\textsuperscript{75} Tularam also accepted the overlordship of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra.\textsuperscript{76} But the problem was not over. The threats from the side of the Kukis remained and the disturbances perpetrated by Gambhir Singha still continued.\textsuperscript{77}

Such threats from all fronts made Govinda Chandra restless. He failed to make any breakthrough towards solving these problems. The chaotic condition of his State was largely responsible for the poor functioning of his administration. The Company officials in Sylhet and Calcutta were seized with the problem of development of Cachar. Investigation reveals that David Scott had warned Gambhir Singha not to create any more disturbances in
Yet the evil designs of Gambhir Singha did not stop. On the other hand, as the Raja had no issue, the matter pertaining to his successor made him mentally very disturbed. On the top of it, he was in constant fear of being assassinated by his enemies.

But nobody had any idea that the inevitable was going to happen so fast and that the Raja would become the victim of the assailants. The plan of his assassination was made deliberately and was implemented on the night of April 24, 1830 A.D. A group of Manipuris, in connivance with the Manipuri bodyguards of Raja Govinda Chandra, attacked him in the Haritikar palace. After assassinating him, they burnt down the entire capital complex. The Company Government made an enquiry into the murder and it was suspected that the plan of murder was made by Gambhir Singha, and it was implemented also under his instructions. From the enquiries made by the Company authorities it was also revealed that in the early part of 1830 A.D. Govinda Chandra had planned to adopt a child which made Manipuri prince Gambhir Singha feel uncomfortable as the proposed adoption would negate his cherished ambition over Cachar. The enquiry further revealed that Gambhir Singha entered into an alliance with
Vidyananda Sen (Company’s *vakeel* at Cachar Darbar), Ram Govinda (*Mukhtar*, under Vidyananda Sen), Gour Shyam (Confidential agent of Gambhir Singha) and Balaram Singha (Manipuri *Havildar* in Cachar army), and all of them collectively made the plan of murder and implemented it. On the basis of this enquiry report of the Company authorities, Vidyananda, Ram Govinda and Balaram were sent to Thomas Fisher, the officiating Magistrate of Cachar, for trial. In the trial, all of them were found guilty and sentenced to death. However, according to J. B. Bhattacharjee, “Government of India, however, commuted the sentence to imprisonment and transportation for life. Accordingly, the convicts were transported to Tenasserin to undergo the term of imprisonment. Strangely enough, although it was clear that Gambhir Singha was the real villain and the prime perpetrator of the crime, nothing was done against him. There was direct evidence against Gourshyam but he was not required to be examined as it would have been tantamount to the public accusation of his own master Gambhir Singha.” The latest political development of Cachar was a handle for the Company authorities to place Cachar on June 30, 1830 A.D. under the
After the assassination of Raja Govinda Chandra, the controversy regarding the succession to the throne came to the fore. Many claimants were found to claim their rights to the throne. Those claimants were Queen Induprabha, Tularam Senapati, Forty Semphongs, Gambhir Singha and others. Tularam claimed the throne as a descendant of the ruling dynasty. But his claim was rejected by the Company authorities as they found no blood connection of Tularam with the royal family of Cachar. The Forty Semphongs claimed that they should be allowed to elect a king from their own rank, but “it was found out that the assent of this body was sought only in exceptional cases when a masterful prince seized the throne by upsetting the usual order of succession.” So, their claim was also rejected by the East India Company. Three sons were born to Raja Krishna Chandra Narayana, namely Govindaram, Durgacharan and Krishnacharan. But their claims were also rejected as their mother was not the chief queen. David Scott was in favour of Induprabha’s accession to the throne. But the objection came both from the Kachari and the Bengalee subjects of Cachar on distinct
grounds. The Kacharis raised their objection because according to the Kachari customs and traditions, no female person can ascend the throne. On the other hand, the Bengalees opposed Induprabha’s accession to the throne on the ground that Govinda Chandra married Induprabha, the widow of his elder brother; and such marriage was against the Hindu customs and traditions. According to Barpujari, although David Scott was in favour of confirming the Ranee in her possession of Cachar, Mr. Cracroft, the officiating agent agreed with Fisher in opposing the proposal as such an arrangement would prolong the misrule in Cachar. The claim of Gambhir Singha was also turned down as his role behind the murder of Raja Govinda Chandra was known to the Company authorities.

Under these circumstances only one option remained, and that was the annexation of Cachar by the East India Company. So, by a declaration on August 14, 1832 A.D. plains of South Cachar were annexed to the British dominion. Provision of pension was made for the widow of the Raja. Tularam was confirmed in the possession of the North Cachar Hills.

Thus, with the death of Raja Govinda Chandra, the colourful days of independent Cachar under
Dimasa rule came to an end, and the administration of Cachar was directly taken up by the East India Company.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM:

The last Dimasa-Kachari king of Cachar, Raja Govinda Chandra, followed almost the same administrative system that was initiated by his predecessors. Under the Herombo administrative system, the king was the Supreme authority of the State and claimed divine origin and was destined to rule over the subjects as the representative of the God.\(^\text{96}\) The Raja’s primary duty was to protect the subjects from internal and external dangers.\(^\text{97}\) But unfortunately Govinda Chandra failed to fulfil his administrative duties. Generally, king was the owner of the land within his territory and he was considered as the fountain head of justice.\(^\text{98}\) Such legacy of the Kachari kingdom continued during the reign of Govinda Chandra.

But the most unique feature of the Dimasa administrative system was that their law of succession to the throne was not hereditary. The king was usually elected from among the princes of the royal family.\(^\text{99}\) It was the
group of Forty Semphongs, who performed the duty of selecting the king and the ministers. The decision of the Forty Semphongs were found to influence the royal life in Cachar. For example, when Govinda Chandra after ascending the throne, married Induprabha, the widow of Krishna Chandra, naturally, the Forty Semphongs declared the marriage as illegal and they disapproved of it. Ultimately, it resulted in far-reaching consequences. As already been pointed out the tenure of Govinda Chandra was marked by a number of internal and external troubles. In some cases internal difficulties were much more serious than the external ones. When Tularam Senapati revolted against the Raja and claimed the throne, his cause was supported by the Forty Semphongs. It was the ample proof of their utter dissatisfaction over the method of administration of Raja Govinda Chandra.

According to U. C. Guha, after assuming power as a king, Raja Govinda Chandra divided his territory into the following 7 parts:

1. Bikrampur,
2. Garerbhitar,
3. Dudhpasil,
4. Joipur,
5. Kalain,
6. Sonai, and
7. Hailakandi.

A separate *ujir* (minister) was appointed for each of the above parts for administrative convenience.\(^\text{104}\)

Minor criminal offences were tried by the *Raj Mukhtars* (advocates, appointed by the king) themselves. Social crimes used to be disposed of by the *Deshamukhyas* on the advice of the *Dharmadhyakshas* (Chief judicial Officer). Serious crimes were disposed of by the king himself after taking due cognisance of the advice of his *Patras* (juris).\(^\text{105}\)

Like other Dimasa rulers, *Raja* Govinda Chandra too used to rule the country (Cachar) with the help of a Darbar. It was divided into two parts, viz, *Mel* and *Ul*. *Mel* was composed of Forty *Semphongs* and *Ul* was composed of *Mukhtars* or heads of the *khel*. *Mel* used to deal with the matters concerning royal family, whereas *Ul* was generally responsible for mitigating the problems concerning non-Kachari affairs.\(^\text{106}\) In the event of any serious matter that required immediate attention, meetings were convened in the royal Court. Atleast one
representative from each pargana was duty bound to remain present in such a meeting. The representative of a pargana was appointed at the beginning of each year. They were required to stay in the capital for one year. Such system of staying in the capital was termed as Ule thaka or Ul kata. The matters raised in such a meeting were discussed by the representatives, but ultimately a decision was taken as per the advice of the king.107

The Chief Officers who helped the king in various royal affairs were Barbhandari (Chief in legal matters), Patras (ministers), Senapati (Commander-in-Chief), Raj Pandit (Royal Priest), etc.108 Scrutiny of records connected with the assassination of Govinda Chandra reveals that in addition to the above mentioned royal officers, there were also other important officials in the royal Court, such as confidential agents or spies, Havildar, Vakil, etc.109

A unique feature of the Dimasa administrative system was the khel. Khel was a system of land settlement under the Dimasas.110 Regarding the features of khel system we can learn from U. C. Guha that a group of persons in a body used to get the settlement of their land granted by the king and each such settlement was
termed as *raj*. Each such *raj* was again divided into *khels*. The owners of each *khel* were responsible for paying land revenue to the king. The representatives of each *khel* of a particular *raj* were responsible for paying land revenue not only for his own *khel* but also of other *khels* of the same *raj*. Each *khel* had one elected representative known as *Khel Mukhtar*. In the plains of Cachar, apart from *khel Mukhtar*, there was another type of representatives for administrative works, known as *Deshamukhyas*, who were assigned the duties of settling disputes and advising in the matters of various religious rites.

During the rule of the Dimasa kings over the plains of Cachar, *Patras* (ministers) constituted a Court of Justice. At the time of early Kachari rulers there were 54 *Patras*. This number was reduced to 18 during the time of *Raja* Krishna Chandra. But it came down to only 4 under the rule of *Raja*Govinda Chandra. The judicial officers of different ranks engaged in the royal Court were known as *Barbhandari, Barmazumdar, Mazumdar, Raj Pandit* etc.

*Raja* Govinda Chandra introduced the Hindu Civil Code in Cachar on the basis of Hindu *Shastra*. In case of the Muslim subjects, the *Raja* used to consult a recognised interpreter of the *Quranic* laws and
disposed of the cases accordingly.\textsuperscript{118} Investigation reveals that \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra gave equal importance to both civil and criminal cases.\textsuperscript{119} In the years 1816 A.D. and 1817 A.D. he enacted \textit{Rinadanbidhi} and \textit{Dandabidhi} respectively in Cachar.\textsuperscript{120} The \textit{Raja} himself used to try all cases. The person or the group found guilty was punished either by imposing a fine or by ordering a term of imprisonment.\textsuperscript{121} The point that deserves special mention here is that during the period of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra, criminal laws were made very strict by making provisions for stringent punishment in appropriate cases.\textsuperscript{122} Such stringent legal measures initiated by the king were probably necessary for containing the upward trend in the number of crimes following the internal and external troubles.\textsuperscript{123}

During the reign of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra, the army was found to be too weak to meet any eventualities.\textsuperscript{124} The situation worsened with the exit of Tularam from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the army.\textsuperscript{125} The efficiency of the army was found to decline further with the recruitment of the untrained persons in the army. In fact, the army became so weak that it even failed to suppress the incursion of a small group of Kookis.\textsuperscript{126}
To sum up, the study in this chapter reveals that during the reign of Govinda Chandra, Cachar became the hotbed of political rivalries eventually resulting in the assassination of Raja Govinda Chandra, fall of the kingdom and annexation of the same by the British.

Notes & References:

2. Ibid
7. According to N. G. Rhodes and S. K. Bose, Kaso Dau or Kohi Dan; According to Raja Govinda Chandra, Khasa Dao; According to Janmejoy Barman, Kaso Dao alias Kashi Chandra; According to J. B. Bhattacharjee, Kahi Das; According to N. K. Barman & S. K. Barpujari, Kohi Dhan or Kashi Das; According to A.J.M. Mills, Kohee Dan.


13. Appendix Nos. 3 & 4.


15. Ibid, p-26


17. Attack of Manipur by the Burmese forced Joy Singha, the Raja of Manipur, to take refuge in Cachar. After the death of Joy Singha, Cachar became the arena of a fratricidal war among his sons in their scramble for succession. Madhuchandra, who ascended the throne of Manipur after Joy Singha, was driven out by his brothers Marjit and Chourajit. Madhuchandra then took shelter in Cachar under Raja Krishna Chandra and sought the latter’s help to regain his throne. Krishna Chandra sent an army under Tularam and reinstated him to the throne. Out of gratitude, Madhuchandra gave his daughter Induprabha in marriage to Krishna Chandra.  

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21. Text of the original letter is shown in the appendix no.5
23. Till 1858, Indian territory was under the control of the British East India Company. Queen Victoria of England by a proclamation announced on 1 November, 1858 directly assumed the responsibility of the Indian administration in her own hands.
27. Ibid, p-27.
36. Ibid, p-29.
40. Ibid, p-29.
46. Ibid, p-102.
52. Ibid, p-70.
56. Ibid., p-37.
58. A copy of the treaty has been reproduced in the appendix no.6
64. Ibid., pp-38-39.
66. Ibid., p-71.
67. Ibid., pp-71-72.
68. Ibid., p-72.
73. Ibid., p-73.
74. Ibid., p-73.
78. Ibid., p-75.
79. Ibid., p-75.
84. Ibid, p-53.
85. Ibid., pp-53-54.
88. Ibid., p-76.
93. Ibid., p-76.
98. Ibid., p-44.
100. The group of Forty *Semphongs* comprised the Council of the representatives of the forty (40) Dimasa Clans.
105. Ibid., p-107.


113. Ibid., p-v.
115. Ibid, p-86.
118. Ibid., p-88.
122. Ibid, pp-83-84.
125. Ibid, p-90.