Chapter II

(a) The Barak Valley, its geography and History.

The Barak valley as its name indicates is the plain valley situated at the extreme southern part of the state of Assam, formed basing the river Barak and surrounded by hills in its every direction except the west. The river Barak originates in the hills of Angami Naga in the state of Manipur in its lofty range which forms the northern boundary of Manipur. From there it flows westerly and southerly course to Tipaimukh, when it turns sharply to the north and for a considerable distance forms the boundary line between Cachar and Manipur. After its junction with the Jiri it turns again to the west and flows a tortuous course across the centre of the district of Cachar till it reaches at Haritikar where it divides into two branches and the southern branch which is known as Kushiyara enters in Bangladesh in order to meet the bay of Bengal. The northern branch which is called the Surma, continues to form the boundary of the Barak valley with Bangladesh up to Jalalpur. This plain valley got its name after the river ‘Barak’ and the term ‘Barak valley’ is of very recent origin. Barak valley is the post partitioned undivided Cachar district in Assam.

The Barak valley comprises the three administrative districts of Assam of its plain area viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi in the extreme south and came into existence as a direct


2. Chatterjee, Dr. Suhas —A Socio-economoc History of South Assam,Jaipur-2000, page-1
result of partition of India in the year 1947 A.D. after getting independence. Out of the three
districts Cachar and Hailakandi were original parts of the greater Cachar district, but the
Karimganj district was separated from the Sylhet district at the time of India getting
independence and annexed with the greater Cachar district as a sub-division. The Barak valley is
geographically surrounded by the state of Mizoram and Tripura in the south, the district of North
Cachar hills in the north, the state of Manipur and the Angami Naga hills in the east and the
plains of Bangladesh in the west.

The valley is blessed by the river Barak and its two branches – the Surma and the
Kushiyara and their many tributaries. Geographically it is situated in between 90.15° and 93.15°
east longitude and 24.8° and 25.8° latitude which form 8.82% of the total land of the state of
Assam. This valley consists of all total 6,922 square kilometers with hilly and plain cultivable
land having total populations as per 2001 census report more than thirty lakhs.3

This plot of land renewed its identification in different times while running through its
history. Before India got independence it was 'the Surma valley' and in the post independent
time it has got its new identity as Cachar district and it remained so for the period from 1947 to
1983 A.D. This independent Cachar district consisted in its early stage all total four Sub-
divisions

3. Das, Dr. Ramakanta. - Barak Upatyakar Stan-nam, Calcutta, 2009 page-1
—Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi and North Cachar hills sub-division. The North cachar sub-division was separated from Cachar in the year 1953 A.D. and the Karimganj Sub-division was declared as a district in the year 1983 and the status of Hailakandi sub-division was raised to a district in the year 1989 A.D. Now the district of Cachar got its new identity as the Barak Valley since that time.

The present Barak valley in the pre-independent age was known as the Surma valley. In fact, it was a part of the Surma valley in which the districts of Sylhet and Cachar were included and was never a part of Assam in history. Although Sylhet may at times have formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa, it never during the historical period included in Assam, as the term was understood prior to 1814. But when the chief commissioner of Assam was created in that year as narrated in Chapter XVII, Sylhet was incorporated in the new province. It was geographically, historically and ethnically an extension of Gangetic Bengal. The British for the sake of their smooth administration, collection of more taxes and tea plantation as per their formulated Scheduled District Act XIV declared Assam as a separate state in the year 1874 A.D. This new state was formed with the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and some other hilly tracks where the Sylhet and the Cachar districts were annexed which were earlier with larger Bengal province. But considering their distinct geographical, cultural and linguistic identity and a total diversity in respect of this geographical, cultural and linguistic field


5. Bhattacharjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan,- Cachar under British rule in North-east India, page-2
from that of the Brahmaputra valley, they created a separate administrative unit in the name of ‘Surma Valley Division’ after the name of the important river ‘the Surma’. This region was running through history in the name of the Surma valley from 1874 till India acquired independence and partitioned in the year 1947 A.D. and now the Surma valley has also been partitioned and a part henceforth received its new name ‘the Barak valley’. The present Barak valley is the eastern part of the Surma Valley consisting of the total of Cachar district and Karimganj, a sub-division of Sylhet district.

This region was under the administration of a chief commissioner since 1894 to 1905 A.D. In the year 1905, partition of Bengal took place, but due to heavy and wide agitation from the people and massive pressure, the policy of Bengal division was withdrawn and Bengal was reunited in the year 1912. This time also ‘Surma Valley Division’ was again annexed with the state of Assam which got the status of a full statehood under a governor rule.6

The picturesque valley of the Barak is a natural continuation of the vast Bengal plains and was included in the various kingdoms that had emerged during the pre-historic and early historic period like Gauda, Vanga and others.7

Though the Karimganj district is now annexed with the Barak Valley, but its history is more similar with that of the district of Sylhet, but the history of Cachar is to some extent separate than that of Karimganj. In a word, now the Barak valley is said to be the extreme

7. Bhattacharjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan, - Cachar under British rule in North-east India. page 4.
extended area of the Gangetic valley for its geographical and cultural similarity and the Brahmo-Aryan culture is found here from very ancient time. It is the extreme eastern region of the Aryan culture and civilization and the Aryan culture ceased here and could not proceed more towards the east as if the hills in the east of the Barak Valley stopped it from further. It is, therefore, could be termed as ‘Kachch’ means border. Hence ‘Cachar’ may be the corrupt form of the word ‘kachch’. On the other hand, the word ‘kachhar’ in the local dialect of Sylhet which is also spoken in the Barak valley, means ‘a stretch of land on the foot of mountain’ or ‘tract of a land between a river and hill’ while Kacchari means the dweller of such tract. The Bengalis of Cachar are called Kacchari by the Bengalis of the neighbouring districts as their counterpart in Sylhet are called Sylhetis.

In the preface of the book ‘Cacharer Itibritta’ of Mr. Upendra Chandra Guha while editing it Dr. Amalendu Bhattacharya and Dr. Sanjib Deblaskar remarked, ‘it is our imagination that the word Kachar and Cachar have got their derivation from complete separate origin and source. Though there is affinity in the pronunciation of the two, but there is no similarity in their meaning. However, since time immemorial the plains of the Barak valley happened to be the inhabitable place of some civilized people. Since the mythological age until the early period of history, there was no place here in the Barak Valley in the name of Cachar or Hirimba.

8. Bhattcharjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan, Cachar under British rule in N E India, Delhi. Page 3 & 4
In fact, it is the name of a region not very old, probably of three or four hundred years old. Its boundaries, though not always the same are determined since a short period. The plains area of Cachar was earlier under the control of the Tripura dynasty and its hilly north Cachar area was under the control of the Kamrup dynasty and in later age under the Kachari dynasty. The Cachar of pre-independent India was formed by taking two segments from the two dynasties. Geographically the north Cachar hills belongs to the hilly range of the state of Assam and the plains area of Silchar and Hailakandi sub-division belongs to the Surma Valley. The conditions of the Barak valley in its early period are not known to us.10

In ancient time Cachar valley, Sylhet and Chittagong were colonized by Aryans and the area was known as 'Prantiya Desha'. Therefore, different Hindu scripture have mentioned the name of Cachar or Hirimba. During seventh to the tenth centuries, this region might have been included in the Harikela kingdom which comprised Sylhet and the adjacent territories.11

According to the Kamakyatantra as stated by Upendra Chandra Guaha, Cachar was under the rule of Kamrupa dynasty and was dominated by tribal peoples. The ancient pilgrim places found in the Barak valley like Siddheswar Kapilashram and the temples in the Bhuban Hills, indicate that Hinduism was first religion that entered in the Barak Valley.


(b) *Tripura Dynasty in the Barak Valley,*

The present plains of Cachar, the district of Sylhet and the Chittagong division was in ancient time under the bordering Tripura dynasty. This region was called 'eastern land' and 'Kirat' dynasty. The Tripura dynasty was very old as it was mentioned in the Copper plate of Samudragupta and other old sources. The Trippera tribe, a section of Bodos, how and from where came and settled in this region is not known. However, there is a controversy over the fact that a section of Trippera tribal people crossing from the North Cachar hills through the plains of Cachar settled in present Tripura. In the thirteen century, they established a dynasty in the Barak valley and were ruling here. The capital of the Trippera dynasty was said to have been situated on the bank of the river 'Rukmini' in the area called 'Bam' in a place now known as Rajghat in the Islampur Mauza under Sonai police station. The name of the capital was Kalangsha, the ancient name of Rajghat. There are still some traces existing in this area like old roads, tanks and their stairs made of bricks and bricks-built plinths. Subsequently, the capital had been shifted in different places like Joypur, Manikbhandar and at last Agartala. Shifting of capital by the kings of the Tripura dynasty from one place to another might be due to successive attack from tribal people like Kukis and Lushais or unhygienic natural situation. However, the date, time and cause of shifting capital from Cachar and last resettlement in Agartala is not known which might have been not earlier to 7th century A.D.

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12. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra, Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala 2006 page 12
The tribe of Tripura and the tribe of Kacharis are said to have belonged to the same origin for because of similarity in their physical structure, face appearance, behavior and food habit and even there is a close affinity in their language. The present slight different that found may be due to their long separation in dwelling places.

Though the Tripura dynasty left the Barak valley, but their people remained still now in different part of the southern side of the valley. They are found in some part of the Cachar district, and in southern parts of Hailakandi and Kaimganj districts. The villages of the Trippra tribes are Called ‘Trippra Punji’. These ‘Trippra Punjis’ are still found in Haticberra tea estate under Barkhola police station and in Baladhan tea estate and ‘Trippra Punjis’ are there in the southern part of Hailakandi and Kaimganj districts. A big pond having stairs made out of bricks called ‘Shakwala Dighi’ in the village ‘Joykrishna pur’ in the district of Hailakandi still speaks that the southern part of the district of Hailakandi was once well inhabited by the Trippra tribal peoples. The bricks found there engraved with ‘The king Harishchandra’ and the year of its digging 1409 Shakabda. 13

There were, of course, some non tribal people in the plains of the Barak Valley living belonging to Barui and Patni community. They were not in large numbers and were living in plain pockets. The rest major part of the valley was covered by dense forest especially after disappear of the Tripura dynasty from here. In the later age, people from the adjacent lands like Sylhet and others came and settled here. In course of time some local principalities grew up here where some independent rulers ruled in various areas like Madan Raja and Pora Raja and others.

13. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra, Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala 2006 page-18
(c) The Koch dynasty in the Barak Valley,

The Koch dynasty was established by Bhim Singh in present Koch Bihar including the western part of the state of Assam. In the year 1534 A.D. when Naranarayan ascended the throne of the Koch dynasty, he appointed his younger brother Veer Chilaray as chief army commander. Chilaray was a very efficient commander and by virtue of his strength and ability, he could conquer the Ahom kingdom, the Jayantia kingdom, and the Cachari or Dimacha kingdom and at last he entered the Barak Valley and fought battles with the kings of the Tripura dynasty and defeated them.

The plains of Cachar was under the control of the Tripura dynasty till the middle of the sixteenth century and they lost their control over this plains of Cachar after their fight and defeat in the hands of the Koch commander Chilaray forever who established the Koch rule in Barak Valley. But the victorious Koch commander Chilaray left Barak valley soon on the call of his brother Naranarayan. He left some of his man and soldiers in Bhrahmapur later on known as Khaspur, the place where he established his capital. After some years Naranarayan sent his another brother Gosai Kamal or Kamal Naranarayan as a ruler to the Barak Valley and Gosai Kamal was the first formal ruler of the Koch dynasty who ruled in Barak valley as a viceroy of Naranarayan. The Koch dynasty was also called Dhiyan dynasty. The Koch dynasty continued to rule for a long period in the Barak valley. After the collapse of the Koch supremacy in North East India, the governor of Brahmapur, later on, Khaspur was deprived of his diplomatic function. As a result, the Koch territory in Cachar emerged as pretty kingdom and came to an end after two rulers only after Gosai Kamal and the third ruler was an oppressive monarch.
Ultimately, the nobles in the kingdom under conspiracy assassinated him. Udita, the general was proclaimed as Raja by the people and his successors ruled in Barak Valley for seven generations. The last ruler was Bhim Singh. The king Bhim Singh had no son and he had only a daughter Kanchani who was very handsome. Bhim Singh invited Lakshmichandra, who belonged to the ruling Dimacha family of North Cachar, the prince of the Cachari dynasty of Maibong. Prince Lakshmichandra son of the Cachari king of Maibong Raja Kirtichandra accepted the invitation and came to Khaspur. He became very attractive to the beauties of princess Kanchani and married her. Lakshmichandra was appointed by Bhim Singh as governor of a division of his kingdom. The area which was given to him to rule for the first time is known as Lakshmipur now.¹⁴

After the death of Bhim Singh, Lakshmichandra became the Raja of the Barak valley and in course of time the plains of Cachar merged with the Dimacha kingdom of Maibong.

¹⁴ Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra, -Cacharer Itibrittta, Agartala- 2006 page-55
(d) The Cachari or Hirimba Dynasty in the Barak Valley,

The Cachari dynasty or the Hirimba dynasty was established in the Barak valley after disappear of the Koch rule in the last part of the sixteenth century A.D.

The Cachari dynasty was first established in the Brahmaputra valley in upper Assam and their capital was in Sadiya. In course of time they ruled Kamrup and at last they established an independent state at Dimapur where they ruled for four hundred years. The Cachari rule in Dimapur ended in the year 1536 A.D. in the hands of the Ahom kings and 'probably about this time that the Kachari king decided to abandon Dimapur and moved his capital southwest to Maibong on the Mahur river in the hope that the Ahom would be unable to follow him through the jungle-covered hills to his new abode' 15 The present ruins seen in Dimapur still indicate the existence of their kingdom. The kingdom afterwards displaced from Dimapur and resettled at Maibong in the North Cachar Hills in middle of the sixteenth century A.D., because this place was comparatively safer from the attack of the Ahom kings. The Ahom soldiers dismantled the Maibong forte and the surrounding walls of the capital in the year 1701 A.D. So it was abandoned and the Dimacha kings fled southwards to Khaspur, but after a short period it was rebuilt again in the year 1745 A.D. Still many traces of ruined buildings are seen in this area which speaks the existence of their capital there.

As stated above, Khaspur was the capital of the Koch dynasty in the Barak Valley. The last Koch king Bhim Singh had no son and only a daughter Kanchani who was married to Prince Lakshmichandra of Dimacha kingdom of Maibong. In the connection of this marriage, the

Daimacha kingdom at Maibong and the Koch or Dhiyan kingdom of Khaspur became united after the death of King Bhim Singh and the Dimacha capital was shifted from Maibong to Khaspur. As a result, the Dimacha kingdom was established in the Barak Valley. At that time the present district of Hailakandi was annexed with the Dimacha kingdom.

Raja Lakshmichandra was the first Dimacha ruler in the Barak valley who ascended the throne in the year 1745 A.D. and retained Khaspur as his capital. The ancestor of Raja Lakshmichandra, the Dimacha king Raja Harish Chandra who was ruling in Maibong, also shifted from North Cachar hills to Khaspur with some of his men and soldiers after a short time. In Maibong, he appointed a Barbhanderi and a commander to rule there as his agent. Harish Chandra entrusted the whole of his kingdom including the North Cachar Hills and the plains of Cachar in the hands of Raja Lakshmichandra and he himself became totally engaged in religious activities.16

The capital Khaspur was known originally as Brahmapur which became Kochpur in later age and at last as Khaspur. It seems that the name of capital was derived from Persian. The Persian word ‘Khas’ means special has been taken here to make the capital as special one.

During the reign of Raja Lakshmichandra in Barak Valley there in Khaspur developed royal accomplishments like ponds, temples and royal palaces which still are seen in this place in ruined position.

After some years Raja Lakshmichandra was died a premature death and the throne became empty. The subjects of the kingdom requested Raja Harishchandra time and again to accept the throne, but he did not agree. He, on the other hand, made his child Krishnachandra

to the throne keeping him in his lap. Raja Krishnachandra ascended the throne of Cachar in the
year 1780 A.D. It was stated above that Raja Krishnachandra was made ascended in the throne
in his early age. The Kachari kings were not at first followers of Hindu religion, it was Raja
Krishnachandra who celebrated a formal conversion to Hinduism in the year 1790 A.D. ‘He and
his brother Gobind Chandra were placed inside the body of a large copper cow, and thence
produced by the Brahmins who declared them to be Hindu and Kshattriyas and to be the
descendants of a union between Bhima, the hero of the Mahabharata and a Raskhashi whom he
espoused in the Nambar forest. The people followed the example of their princes and nearby all
Kacharis in the district now declare themselves as Hindus.’

Raja Krishnachandra was a pious Hindu king and was very well versed in Sanskrit
language and his proficiency in Sanskrit can be well appreciated in his famous Sanskrit work
‘Rashilamrita’ and ‘Basant Bihar’. Once Raja Krishnachandra was bound to retreat in the hills
of North Cachar leaving his capital, kingdom and people for appearance of a Muslim Pir known
as ‘Pir Ferutoopi’ in Cachar who captured the kingdom for a short while and created many
troubles. This happened in the year 1799 A.D. and many of the subjects became frightened and
retreated with the king. It was happened for the second time after some years later that a
Muslim Pir called ‘Ali Pir’ appeared with some of his followers from the Bhuban hills and
chanting the word ‘Ali’ ‘Ali’ disappeared through Hailakandi towards Tripura. This made a
chaos like situation in Cachar which made the Raja in troubles but became quite later on.

18. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra, Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala 2006 page 76.
'The troubles were not far to come from Manipur. Krishnachandra had himself to be entangled in the web of intrigue that had encircled the throne of Manipur, with results that were fatal for his own principality'. In 1798, Jai Singh abdicated in favour of his son, Rabindrachandra who was murdered by his brother Madhuchandra, after a brief reign of three years. But the usurper in his turn had been expelled from his throne by his brother Chourjit. Madhuchandra appealed to Raja Krishnachandra for help which was extended. But his efforts to recover his throne with aid from Cachar ended in discomfiture and death. However, another competitor for the crown of Manipur shortly appeared in person of Marjit Singh who turned his steps to the Raja of Cachar, but was refused any assistance. Failing to secure aid from Raja Krishnachandra, Marjit left Cachar in anger and with the help of Burmese court made himself the master of Manipur. The two brothers Chourjit and Gambhir Singh with their followers took refuge in Cachar.

'In the midst of these troubles Krishnachandra passed away in the year 1813 A.D. and was succeeded by his brother Govindrachandra. Evidently, the new Raja began his career in the face of hosts of problems both internal and external. He was on the other hand very unpopular amongst the subjects. By marrying Indraprava, the widow of his deceased brother he incurred the displeasure of the nobles of his country. He promulgated a series of laws for the civil and criminal administration of his country which painted him as the most reactionary ruler.'


20. Bhattecharjee Dr. Jayanta Bhushan, The Cachar under British rule in North-east India. P-25
The people felt insecure under his rule and the Raja was deprived of proper cooperation from indispensible quarters'. Taking advantage of this anomalous situation, Kahi Das, the revenue collector in North Cachar along with some other officials revolted against the Raja. But the rebel collector was arrested and hanged under the orders of the Raja. However, Tularam, son of Kahi Das and the commander of a wing of their soldiers also revolted and continued to disturb Raja Govindachadra through frequent raids and plunders.

The fugitive Manipuri brothers were also not unharmed to the Raja. They expected, to persuade him to help them in recovering the throne of Manipur. But, in view of the chaotic situation of his own principality Govindachandra could hardly be of any use to Chourjit against his rival seated on the throne of Manipur with the help of the Burmese support. Chourjit became enraged and went in league with Tularam to harm the Hiramba kingdom. But Gambhir Singh stayed in Cachar and was appointed as the commander of the Cachar army.

More serious threat was, however, waiting for Govindachandra. In December 1817 A.D. Marjit Singh attacked Cachar with the help from the Burmese king. Govindachandra appealed to the British government, but no help was accorded. Consequently, the invaders had spectacular success in a short time and they rapidly advanced as far as the British frontier of Badarpur where they could not dare to proceed further. Govindachandra and Gambhir Singh by the time retired to a defensive position on the bank of the river Barak and then made a determined attack to expel the invaders from Cachar. Their endeavour were crowned with success and Marjit and his men were gallantly driven out and the country was liberated.
But no sooner had the invaders retired, a fresh spell of disorder broke out in Cachar. Chourjit persuaded Gambhir Singh to part with Govinchandra, and the two joining hands with Tularam resumed atrocities in the Raja's territory. The Raja requested the Governor General of India to help, but no help was granted. As a result, the rebels were encouraged in their plunderous activities and by a night attack, in June 1818 A.D. compelled the Raja to escape to Sylhet. The Manipuri brothers took possession of Cachar plains, while Tularam became the master of the North Cachar hills. In the meantime, the Burmese overran Assam and Manipur. Marjit being driven out of Manipur came to Cachar and he was warmly received by Chourjit and Gambhir Singh. They parcelled out Cachar amongst themselves and thus the Manipuri princes began to reign three different parts of Cachar plains as independent of one another.

"Meanwhile, the presence of Govindachandra in Sylhet, developments in Cachar and the establishment of the Burmese rule in Manipur could not but made the British authorities concerned about the defense of their eastern frontier".  

On the other hand, the poor Raja exiled in Sylhet was very anxious to return to his kingdom and repeatedly appealed in vain to the British authority for his re-instatement. Situation in Cachar took a new turn because of lawlessness and misrule of the Manipuri fugitives. The Manipuri brothers, who acted in union at the beginning, now fell out with each other. In the contest that followed Chourjit escaped to Sylhet while Marjit and Gambhir Singh divided the

21. Bhattacharjee Dr. Jayanta Bhushan,-Cachar under British rule in N.E. India, Delhi-page-21
plains of Cachar between themselves. Marjit Singh occupied Hailakandi and Gambhir Singh possessed himself the rest of south Cachar.  

Geographically Cachar occupied a commanding position and the British Government was determined from the very beginning not to allow the Burmese to use Cachar as the base of their future offensives. Naturally, the gradual advancement of the Burmese from Nowgong was a clear threat of invading the British territory. Finally, the Calcutta council decided that Govindachandra should be reinstated on his ancestral throne and the Manipuri brothers would be provided with pension chargeable from the revenue of Cachar provided that they would agree to reside within the British territory, while Tularam was assured of a place in the general arrangement that would subsequently follow.  

Meanwhile it was reported by the British Administration in Sylhet that the Burmese force under Tularam and Sunudram had actually passed into Cachar from Assam and had captured one forte in Halflong. Lord Amherst, governor general of India, took serious notice of the questions of extending British protection to Cachar. He discovered several inducements for the British Government to establish its direct authority or at least a preponderant influence in Cachar. He also favoured the restoration of Govindachandra as the Raja of Cachar under the protection of the East India Company’s government as an alternative to direct British rule.

23. Ibid. Page-31
24 Ibid.
In the year 1824 A.D., Newton, the British commander, marched against the Burmese force which had stocked itself at Bikrampur and easily put them to fight. The Burmese escaped into hills and subsequently affected a junction with the Manipur forces. The most remarkable battle was fought between the two forces at Bikrampur on the bank of the river Surma which considerably cracked down the morale of the invaders.

The Burmese suffered heavy losses in this encounter and ultimately fell back to Manipur. Cachar was thus liberated from the Burmese occupation force. The success of British troops cleared the ground for political settlement of the country. Lord Amherst was sanguine enough to establish British preponderant influence on the state. The Governor General was instructed to settle the terms of future relation with the Raja who was to reinstate in his paternal throne. True to the instruction from Calcutta, a treaty was concluded on 6th March 1824 A.D. at Badarpur between David scot and Govindachandra under which the Raja for himself and his successors acknowledged allegiance to the East India Company and placed his country under company's protection. In this accord more interest of the company and less interest of the Raja were agreed to be restored. Rather the independence of the country was sacrificed in consideration of British protection. The sovereign kingdom of Heramba was reduced to the status of a vassal state.

On his occasion to the throne for the second time, Govindachandra discovered himself in sea of problems internal as well as external. Despite the treaty of Badarpur, the Government of Fort William doubted the capacity of Raja to pay tribute and to maintain authority over his subjects. Therefore, the commissioner of Sylhet was instructed to keep a keen watch on the
conduct of the Raja. The economic conditions of the country were very poor and the Raja was not in a position to pay full tribute in time. In 1827 A.D. Govindachandra applied to the British Government for exemption of tributes for two preceding years which was granted. The Government of India called upon the commissioner of Sylhet to ascertain from the Raja if he was willing to hand over the kingdom to the British authority as he was advanced in age and bodily infirm and had no natural heir to succeed.  

As the Raja was encircled by his enemies both internal and external, so he was in fear of discontinuation his kingdom within his clans. Therefore, he desired to adopt a child from amongst the royal families of Cachar for continuation of the line of succession in the throne. The commissioner of Sylhet was deeply impressed by the difficulties faced by the unfortunate Raja, he rightly realized that the succession question might lead a civil war in Cachar, so he held an interview with the Raja and with due permission from the higher authority allowed the Raja to adopt a child.

But this act was first drawing to a close and the Raja Govindachandar fell a victim in the consequence was assassinated. Gambhir Singh feared that the proposal of adopting a child would foil his long cherished ambition over Cachar. So he planed of his murder which was executed under a deliberate plan and occurred in the night of 24th April 1830 A.D., when a band of Manipuris in league with the Manipuri members of Raja’s body guards entered the Haritikar palace, hacked the Raja into pieces and set fire to the capital complex. This incident created a

terror situation in Cachar and put to an end to the Heramba dynasty in Cachar.\textsuperscript{26}

As a result, the country was placed under Lieutenant Fisher, who was on survey duties in Sylhet with power of a magistrate and a collector. Afterwards in 1832 A.D. the British government in a proclamation on the 14\textsuperscript{th} August, annexed the plains of Cachar in to the British dominion and henceforth it has been running as district.

The Cachari or Heramba kingdom was annexed with the British India as distinct district of Bengal province in the year 1832 and it was so till the year 1874 A.D. In this year the British government for the sake of good administration, proper revenue collection and tea plantation, tagged this valley with the newly formed state of Assam in spite of repeated objections and agitations by the inhabitants of this region. When Bengal got partitioned in the year 1905 A.D there was again many agitations in this valley for its reunion with Bengal, but in vain and this valley again formed a part of the province of the state of Assam till India attained its independence in the year 1947 A.D. After independence Barak Valley came in to existence and constituted with three district Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi.

\textsuperscript{26} Bhattachjarjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan –Cachar under British rule in North –East India

Delhi, 1977, page-46
(b) The History of the Muslims settlement in the Barak Valley;

The Barak valley as stated above consists of three administrative districts of the state of Assam of its extreme southern part viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts and it contains around thirty lakh people of different faith and religion as per the census report of 2001. People from different ethnic group with major religions are living together in this valley. It has been declared as 'Anthropological Garden' by many scholars in their writing because of diversity in the origin of the people of this valley like the mainstream of Indian demographical structure like Aryans, Dravidians, Austric and Mongolo-Chinese. Almost majority of the populations of this valley are immigrants from other neighbouring lands except a few who are indigenous people by birth. The flow of immigrating people into this valley started since the time immemorial and is still going on.

The population in the Barak Valley was never brought under any census before the time when it was declared as a district of Bengal province and then of Assam after annexing it to their dominion by the British government in the year 1832 A.D. The first census was done in the year 1834 A.D. As per report of the British administrator, J.G.Burns the population in the plains of Cachar was estimated as fifty thousand only, the majority of which were


which were Bengalis including Hindus and Muslims. Apart from Bengalis there were Manipuris both Hindus and Muslims and tribal people including Nagas, Dimasas and Kukies and others. 29

The British administration made a census of the people of plains of Cachar in the year 1855 and the total population was found 85,522 out of which 60,281 were Bengalis both Hindus and Muslims, 10723 were Manipuris 276 were Assamese 62 were Europeans, 6320 were Kukis 5645 were Nagas and 2215 were Dimasas. A remarkable change in the population demography of Barak Valley took place in the year 1855 when a large number of Hindi speaking people from different places of India were imported as tea garden labours in the valley and gave their settlement in different tea gardens. 30

There seem little doubts that prior to the British occupation of the country, the population were extremely sparse. Reference has been made to Premberton estimate of 50,000 souls as the population of the plains. In 1855 a rough census was taken which gave a total of 85,000 inhabitants. This estimate was apparently too low and ten years later Mr. Edger calculated that including the coolies who had been imported in considerable numbers since that date, the total population was about 152,000 souls. The first regular census was taken in the year 1872 A.D. and the abstract below shows the population returned at that and at each


30. Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Census</th>
<th>Total populations</th>
<th>P.C. of increase.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>630,302</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>713,566</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>751,560</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>803,694</td>
<td>6.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>895,140</td>
<td>11.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,115,865</td>
<td>24.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,378,476</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,713,314</td>
<td>24.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2,491,496</td>
<td>45.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,995,769</td>
<td>19.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

successive census and the percentage of increase in each decade'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percentage of variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>205,027</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>295,738</td>
<td>43.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>367,542</td>
<td>25.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>414,781</td>
<td>12.3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the year 1901 A.D. up to the present day, the population census in the Barak Valley, as a part of the state of Assam being done regularly after every ten years of interval except in the year 1981. The population of the year 1901 as shown above was based in the census only done for the districts of Cachar and Hailakandi where Karimganj was not included because the present district of Karimganj was not a part of the plains of the Barak valley at that time. It was included in the Barak Valley in the year of partition in 1947 A.D.

The following table shows the total population along with their percentage of increase in every census from the year 1901 up to the year 2001 in the Barak Valley including the district of Karimganj, as per census reports.


32. Ibid.
This table only exhibits the total population in the Barak valley where Muslims population of this valley are included and no separate figure of Muslims are mentioned in this table and they are mentioned in the group of Bengali speaking community.

The Muslim inhabitants in the Barak Valley belong to mainly three language communities living in this valley. The majority part of the Muslims community of this valley belongs to the Bengali speaking community while there are other two small groups of Muslims belonging to Manipuri and Hindi or Urdu speaking communities. Besides these three language groups—there are hardly any Muslim found living in the Barak Valley belonging to other communities like Dimasa, Naga, Kukis or others.

The table below shows the numbers of Muslim population living in the Barak valley as shown in the different census undertaken by the Govt. of India in the previous four decades since 1961 after India acquired independence and formation of the Barak valley as a part of the state of Assam.

This table shows the total numbers of Muslim population in the Barak valley and their percentage in different decades. Mention may made here that prior to 1961 census no separate census of Muslim population was done and hence no accurate figure of Muslim population of the valley was found anywhere separately and because they were included in the language community group where Hindus and Muslims were counted in the Bengali speaking language group of the valley.
From the above table, the facts become evident that Muslims form a remarkable part in the population demography of the Barak valley. Now the question arises that how such numbers of Muslims came here and it happened so in a land which is situated in the far eastern area of the Indian sub-continent in the midst of hills and forest.

Muslims settlement in the Barak valley may be the result of:

(1) Mass immigration from the adjacent land like Sylhet, Tripura etc. as other community such as Bengali Hindu community. Immigration generally happens among people to seek the scope of getting better economic advantage and better standard of living. It may also happen due to political unrest, social disorder and so on in the parent country.

(2) Conversion of low caste Hindus to Islam for presence of many Muslim saints in this valley. In a nutshell, existence of Muslims in the Barak valley is the direct result of the Islamic

wave that blew in the Sylhet district of Bengal province for the presence of the great Sufi saint Hazrat Shah Jalal Muzarrad-e-Emani (R). Hazrat Shah Jalal arrived here in Sylhet in the last part of the fourteenth century A.D. So from that time onwards large scale conversion to Islam took place among the Hindu community in this region and its wave even fell on the land of the Barak Valley since that time. Since when the light of civilization has fallen on the plains of the Barak valley, migration of people towards this land started and they grew now thirty lakhs in number.

According to Baharistan-e-Ghaibi, Shaikh Kamal was sent to conquer the territory of the Raja of Kachar in the year 1612 A.D. during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Shaikh Kamal first came to Sylhet with Islam Khan, the Subedar of Bengal. The Raja of Kachar learning of this move sent his regiments to oppose the imperialists. This army of the Kacharis having left behind them the fort and the hill of Asurabatgar (Asurainagar) advanced forward and raised another fort. The imperial army reached that fort and began to fight. After a long fight throughout a month, the imperial army defeated the enemy and occupied this forte. Then battles were fought at the hills and the forte of Asurainagar. Islam Khan was behind there to send reinforcement one after another till the conquest was achieved. The forte of Asurainagar fell in the hands of imperialists. Shaikh Kamal sent an envoy to the Raja and made peace with him. The matter was approved by Islam Khan, the subedar.

Then a peremptory imperial order was issued to entrust the charge of that expedition to

Mubariz Khan and to recall Shaikh Kamal and his own officials. Islam Khan being helpless recalled Shaikh Kamal and his officers.

Mubariz Khan with his imperial officers again led an expedition against the Raja of Kachar and put him to great straits. He stormed and occupied the forte at Asurainagar and established a ‘Thana’ there at Bundashil near Badarpur. He wanted to advance further when the Raja of Cachar sent his envoys and submitted with great humility.36

The river Surma had since became the boundary line between the Heramba kingdom and Bengal and a Mughal thanader was posted there at Badarpur. This may be the first Muslim contact with Barak valley on political ground and hence migration of Muslims to the Barak valley might have started from that time. But the number of Muslims in this area was very negligible because prior to arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal, the presence of Muslims in this region was very poor.

Though the author of Baharistan-e- Ghaibi did not mention the name of the king of Cachar and no record mentioned it anywhere. But he might be the King Satrudaman of Koch dynasty because he was contemporary to the Ahom, king Pratap Singh who reigned Assam during the rule Emperor Jahangir.

Muslims started their settlement in the Barak valley mainly after 14th century with large scale immigration from Sylhet and its adjacent area as Islam entered in Sylhet in the last part of

the fourteenth century A.D. The present Sylhet was at that time divided into many small principalities like Gaur, Lur, Taraf, Jayantia and Eta and were running independent under many sovereign rulers. Among them the king of Gaur, called Gaur Govinda was very courageous and powerful.

Islam got it's widely acceptance among the inhabitants of Sylhet following a large scale conversion of Hindus to it after arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal in Sylhet in the last part of the 14th century. The story as narrated by many historians and writers in their works available in various records regarding the root cause of Hazrat Shah Jalal arrival in Sylhet in the year 1384 A.D. which runs as follows.

'There was hardly a Muslim living in Sylhet before arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal in this region as Shri Achyut Charan Choudhury writes in his famous works 'Shiihatter Itibritta' published in the year 1910 A.D., though a few Muslims were living with fear in their mind in the country under a Hindu King concealing their identity. Among them one Burhanuddin was living in the Tultikar area with other members of his family.

Once Burhanuddin sacrificed a cow on the occasion of the birth of his son and unfortunately a kite took up a piece of flesh and dropped it in the palace of the king Gaur Govinda. The king became furious on this matter and learning the fact chopped off one hand of Burhanuddin and killed his little son. Burhanuddin being totally helpless went to Delhi to the king of his own religion in order to take revenge on Govinda. There in Delhi, the king Alauddin Firoz Shah was ruling to whom Burhanuddin reported the matter and prayed for retaliation.
The Emperor Alauddin sent his own nephew Sultan Sikander Ghazi to conquer Sylhet and give justice to Burhanuddin.  

Hazrat Shah Jalal ‘Mujarrad-e- Emani’ was in Delhi at that time. He came to India to comply with the command of his guide and own maternal uncle Shaikh Ahmad Kabir. He was in search of the land for his last destination the soil of which would be in similarity in colour, smell and taste with that of the handful of dust given to him by his guide.

It is said that when Shah Jalal attained the quality of a saint as guided by his master, he was told to come to India for preaching of Islam. When he set out for India he was given a handful of dust by his guide and maternal uncle Shaikh Ahmed Kabir and was told to search such land the soil of which would be in similar with that of the dust in colour, smell and taste and to decide to make this land as his destination to settle there for preaching of Islam.

After reaching at Delhi, Shah Jalal was in search of the land as mentioned above when he met Burhanuddin who narrated his plight to Shah Jalal. Shah Jalal promised Burhanuddin to go to sylhet in order to help him. Soon he started for Sylhet.

Shah Jalal met Sikander Ghazi who was on way to Sylhet and became a member of his expedition. He started with a few members with him towards Sylhet, but as he was proceeding towards Sylhet, the numbers of followers were becoming more and at last they reached to a total 360 numbers- all were true devotee to Islam and all of them served him as his true followers and disciples.

Shah Jalal was on way to Sylhet as a part of expedition in the 1384 A.D. and the ruler of Sylhet Gaur Govinda was being informed of his arrival. As they were approaching Sylhet, Raja Gaur Govinda was taking every measure for their resistance. He ordered all boats to be locked and there was nothing for them by which they could cross the river to enter Sylhet.

Shah Jalal crossed the river Brahmaputra and the river Surma on a Musalla or prayer mat and proceeded to reduce Gaur Govinda by methods which no ordinary man could be expected to resist. The Hindu Raja had built himself a magical seven-storied tower to which he retreated on the approach of the invaders. Shah Jalal each day offered up a solemn prayer—chanting of Azan at the conclusion of which one stories of the tower collapsed. Gaur Govinda induced this mysterious destruction of his fortress for four days and then surrendered. Thus Sylhet was conquered by Muslims in a bloodless expedition. The King Gaur Govinda managed to escape from Sylhet secretly leaving everything in their place.

Sylhet appeared to be conquered by a small band of Mohammedan in the reign of Bengal king Shamsuddin in the year 1384 A.D. The supernatural power of the last Hindu king Gaur Govinda proved ineffectual against still more extra-ordinary powers of the Fakir Shah Jalal who was the real leader of the invaders.38

After getting Sylhet conquered and entering in to it Shah Jalal ordered to examine its soil, and to compare it with that of the handful of dust given to him. After proper examination there found the similarity in its colour, smell and taste. So, Shah Jalal decided to settle permanently

there forever with all of his followers. He entrusted the kingdom in the hand of Sikandar Ghazi and devoted himself in prayers and piousness. He then sent his followers to every direction for preaching of Islam among the peoples. He sent them to the different places of that region including the whole areas of Sylhet and Tripura, Mymensingh and Rongpur.39

Shah Jalal himself once came to the Barak valley in Badarpur for a temporary period. But he sent his followers Shah Ziauddin and Adam Khaki to Badarpur on the mission of preaching Islam where their tombs still exist. One of his followers, Mir Arifin came to the Hailakandi district in Panchgram area and remained here for a certain period.

A strong Islamic wave has blown over Sylhet and its adjacent area for arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal in Sylhet and for his sincere mission of preaching Islam here. A large scale conversion took place among the Hindu community and especially the low caste Hindus were highly attracted towards Shah Jalal for his supernatural power and equal social status of man in Islam. The Barak valley was more or less influenced by this wave. The present Karimganj district of the Barak valley and the bordering area of the rest part of the Barak valley were being planted by Muslim settlement from this time.

The fact as narrated by many historians and writers that Muslims were rare inhabitants of Sylhet before arrival of Hazrat Shah Jalal here, is beyond reasons to be believed. The root cause of Shah Jalal’s arrival at Sylhet is the story as in vogue that Burhanuddin sacrificed 'a cow' on

the occasion of the birth of his son. There was other animal like goat etc which he could sacrifice. But he sacrificed a cow on the ground of necessity of the time. A cow cannot be consumed by a person or a family of a person. It needs a Mahalla or a group of peoples to consume it. So, a cow might have been sacrificed considering the numbers of it eaters. Therefore, sacrificing a cow indicates that there was a Muslim Mahalla in the Tultikar area where Burhanuddin was living.

There was another fact running as found in the writings of Achyut Charan Choudhury that in the Pir Mahalla area there was a mosque erected before Shah Jalal’s arrival in Sylhet called ‘Adina Masjid’ for which construction materials were arranged by the king Gaur Govinda. Adina in Persian means ‘Friday’. Hence ‘Adina Masjid’ indicates the mosque where Friday prayer was done regularly. The concept of erecting Adina Masjid could not be considered unless there was a Muslim Mahalla who would gather in the day of Friday for performing ‘Friday prayer’. So Muslims were there in sufficient numbers in Sylhet before arrival of Hazrat Shah jalal specially in Tultikar and Pir Mahalla area.

From fifteen century onwards up to the establishment of Hiramba kingdom in Barak valley, no trace of large scale Muslims settlement is found anywhere except that some Muslims were living in the bordering area of the Barak Valley. In fact, during the Trippera and the Koch rule in the plains of Cachar, only tribal peoples were the main inhabitants of this region and this land was dominated by tribal people. ‘Attempts were made to attract more settlers from neighboring Bengal in the fertile but thinly populated valley of the Barak.'
As a matter of fact, the Bengalee population in Cachar had begun to increase since the Koch rule in the valley.  

It is said that some Muslims soldiers have come in the Barak Valley with the troops of Veer Chilaray during his expedition in Cachar and they were left here when he returned back. When the Kachari or Heramba dynasty established in the plains of Cachar and Khaspur became the capital of the kingdom, the flow of non tribal people towards Cachar started coming for their settlement in the valley.

As regards the Bengali settlement in the Barak Valley, the British officer’s reports reproduced here from the statistical accounts of Cachar by Sir W.W.Hunter as follows

‘The following paragraphs are mainly condensed from the Annual Report on the Revenue Administration of Cachar for 1871-72’ The first settlement of Hindus in the district is placed about 200 years ago, in the reign of Raja Suradarpa Chandra. The tradition runs that in his reign as Assamese Hindu Bikram Rai was sent from capital of Dimapur into that part of Cachar now known as Bikrampur to encourage the settlement of Bengali immigrants from the west. Among the others founders of colonies in the name are mentioned of Asu Thakur from Pratapgarh in Sylhet and the ancestor of the family now represented by Gulal Khan Choudhury from Trippera. By the time that Kartik Chandar came to the throne the number of colonies was very considerable’.  

40. Bhattacharjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan- Cachar under British rule in N.E. India, Delhi-1977 page-1  
The Bikrampur pargana was the first pargana which was established here in the Bark Valley by an Assamese Hindu immigrant, Bikram Rai coming from Dimapur. But Bengali people established their settlement in this region through Asu Thakur and the ancestor of Gulal Khan Choudhury from Sylhet and its adjacent area. The name of the ancestor of Gulala Khan Choudhury is not known. That means that the ancestor of Gulal Khan Choudhury was the first immigrant to settle down in the valley. So this can be guessed that Bengali speaking Muslims from Sylhet and its adjacent area came here to settle before the Heramba kings occupied Cachar and establish their dynasty.

Sir W.W. Hunter wrote in his work 'Statistical Accounts of Cachar' as;

'From their arrival at Khaspur, the distinct history of Cachar commences. Numerous colonies of Bengalis who came up the Bark Valley from Sylhet had, meanwhile, planted their first settlement on the northern side of the river shortly after passing the Sylhet frontier. It is supposed that Musalman Bengalis also migrated in to Cachar about the same time. At first, the new comers seem to have simply cleared land as stray settlers paying rent to the Cachar Raja. By degree as they became stronger, they obtained from the princes a sort of constitution which protected them from interference on the part of Cachari tax gatherers and court officials'.

'The great bulks of Mohammedan have moved into the district from Sylhet and almost all of them are the members of the Sunni sect of Muslman. It is said that the ordinary villagers fairly well acquainted with the principles of his faith and that it has not been infected with Hindu

42. Allen B. C.- The Gazateer of Cachar, Shillong 1905 page-27
superstitions to any marked degree. There is no mosque of any special sanctity and prayers are
usually done in a thatched hat. The number of people converted to the creed of Islam on religion
grounds is small, but men or women who have become entangled in an intrigue with a
Musalman, sometime change their faith on that accounts.43

The colonies predominating by Hindus and Muslims were established in the plains of
Barak Valley before ascending of the throne of Cachar by Raja Lakshmi Chandra in the year
1745 A.D. The Muslims community generally migrated from Sylhet and its adjacent area and
settled here. Though some Muslim colonies were established here earlier, but their numbers were
not so large before the time of Raja Lakshmi Chandra. During the reign of Raja Lakshmi
Chandra, the numbers of Muslims in the Barak valley grew tremendously. Still they had to face
lots to acquire a royal order from Maibong. After transfer of capital from Maibong to Khaspur, a
large number of Hindus and Muslims came here to settle because of easy approach to the capital.
At that time renowned villages of the Barak valley like Bernga, Dudhpatil, Banskandi and
Udharbond were established.44

In the year 1799 A.D. during the reign of Raja Krishnachandra, a Mughal adventurer
named Aga Mohammed Reza, commonly known as ‘Pir Ferutoopi’ entered Cachar from Sylhet
and for a time succeeded in making himself the master of the country. Raja Krishnachandra
failed in his attempt to resist the intruder and retreated and took refuge in the hills.


44. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra- Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala-2006 page 65.
Getting success at the initial, Aga declared himself that he was the twelfth Imam destined to liberate India from the yoke of the British merchants. He could easily win over a large section of the local Muslims and many crossed over the British frontier from Sylhet, Comilla and Mymansingh to join the Imam. Meanwhile, Krishnachandra sent an appeal to the authorities at Fort William for help. In response, the British Government sent some sepoys. Aga Mohammed was captured in the year 1801 A.D. and remanded to Calcutta'.

Aga Mohammed could establish his rule for a short period in this valley which survived only for one and half or two years. But this short period left an influence in this valley for increasing of Muslim population either by immigration or by conversion.

Again after some days a Muslim Pir called ‘Ali Pir’ appeared from the Bhuban hills and gathered some Muslim inhabitants of the valley around him. He was always chanting the word ‘Ali’ ‘Ali’ along with his followers. This made the people frightened and they took refuge to Sylhet and to the hills in fear of the Pir. The Pir took his way towards Tripura through Hailakandi after which peace regained in the valley. Being influenced from this Pir some people embraced his religion and became Muslim which caused an increase in the numbers of Muslim population in the valley.

Throughout the whole of nineteenth century, the plantation of Muslim colonies was being settled in the whole of the valley either by immigration from its neighbouring lands or by conversion. As a result, the Muslim populated villages like Kanakpur, Ambikapur, Dudpatil,

45. Bhattcharjee, Dr. Jayanta Bhushan.- Cachar under British rule in N.E. India, Delhi-1977 page-22.

Rongpur, Sonapur, Jhanjarbali, Majhirgram, Satkarakandi, Govindapur, Algapur, Sonaimukh Bhagpur, Sonabarighat and Ganirgram etc were established in the plains of Cachar district and the villages like Bhatirkupa, Nitainagar, Rangauti, Mohammedpur, Jalalpur, Sheralipur, Niamatpur, Mohanpur etc were established in the plains of Hailakandi district and the influence of Muslims in the society was increasing. As the Karimganj district of Assam, erstwhile Karimganj sub-division of Sylhet was mainly peopled by the Bengalee Hindu and Muslim communities and the picture remains almost the same at present also.

Once one Gulu Mia, a Muslim leader gained his influence in the society and in the royal court and exercised his power and influences specially during the reign of Manipuri Raja Gambhir Singh.

Gambhir Singh entitled him as ‘Nawab’ and provided him some power to settle disputes among peoples and to gather taxes. His grandfather ‘Jumai Khan’ came here from Sylhet in the days of Raja Lakshmi Chandra and established the village Berenga. He invited many Muslims from Sylhet to settle here. He was very expert in wood and timber business specially in sweet-scented ‘Agar’ tree business. Gulu exercised his power as a viceroy of the Raja in different areas of the kingdom. But he was not liked by the Cachari kings and in a small matter he was imprisoned by Raja Govindachandra and was murdered in the jail. This is one of the causes for which the Manipuri Raja Gambhir Singh under a conspiracy with some influential Muslims and others killed the Raja Govindachandra.

Shri Upendra Chandra Guha in his famous work ‘Cacharer Itibritta’ mentioned a deed of endowment made by Raja Krishnachandra to some Muslim inhabitants of the district of
Hailakandi during his rule. This deed of endowment was accomplished in the year 1791 A.D. for an area of land in the northern part of the district. This deed served as permit to them to make settlement of peoples in this area and an order to allow them to make this land cultivable after removing bush and jungle from it.

The deed of endowment was done and executed in the names of Thubai Mia, Nunu Mia, Khalil Mahmud Laskar, Nek Mohammed, Jaffer Khan Barbhuiya, Juma Mia, Riakat Khan, Mathai Mia Barbhuiya, Amir Bhuiya, Md. Balai Barbhuiya, Majai Barbhuiya, Didar Mahmood Mazarbhuuiya, Benu and Mangal Mazarbhuuiya.47

This deed clearly indicates that during eighteenth century Muslims were encouraged to settle in the present district of Hailakandi and remote area of the district like the eastern part of Algapur was inhabited by Muslims and still this area of land is mainly populated by Muslims.

Muslims in the Barak valley are found in many cases tagging some titles at the end of their names which they claim as the identity of their clan or family. These titles as in use, are Choudhury, Mazumder, Laskar, Barlaskar, Bhuiya, Mazarbhuuiya, Barbhuiya, Tafader and Talukder and so on. These titles are of Bengali origin as said by many scholars in their writings,48 because these words are in vogue in Bengal. But with deep look, it seems that most of these words as prevailing as titles of people, have been derived from Persian origin. Many of these words have directly been derived from Persian like 'Laskar' means soldier, Mazumder,

47. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra - Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala 2006 page 124.

Talukder and Tafader- words having the Persian suffix ‘dar’ at the end of words ‘Mazmu’ (means total), ‘Tufa’ (means present), and ‘Taluk’ (means belonging, possession etc). These titles are also found in other part of Bengal and Assam.

In early part of nineteenth century A.D, Raja Krishnachandra was returning from pilgrimage through Sylhet when he noticed that some people were having their names with these titles like Choudhury, Mazumder etc. At that time the royal treasury of Cachar was wanting of money due to overburden debt. The Raja wanted to provide suitable titles to his well to do subjects alike of Hindus and Muslims in exchange of certain amount of money in order to fill up the empty royal treasury. After his arrival in his kingdom, he started providing ‘tittles’ to peoples in exchange of money. But the process he could not complete until the year 1813 when he died a sudden death. 49

Raja Govindachandra ascended the throne and started proving the titles to people in the year 1817 A.D. His subjects irrespective of Hindus and Muslims purchased these titles as per their price, -

Choudhury for Rs. 100/-,

Mazumder for Rs. 75/-,

‘Barbhuiya’ Rs. 50/-

‘Laskar for Rs. 25/-

49. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra – Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala-2006 Page- 79
and Bhuiya for Rs. 15/-
and received a 'farman' containing the titles.\(^{50}\)

The system of conferring titles to people was in vogue in the early days of company rule in the Barak valley, but the rates by which it was sold earlier to people were not the same. This time these titles were sold by the rates as follows :-

- 'Choudhury' fetched Rs. 100/-
- 'Mazumdar' Rs. 75/-
- 'Laskar' Rs. 60/-
- 'Mazarbhuiya Rs. 45/-
- 'Choto Bhuiya Rs. 40/-

These titles became hereditary and transferable to the descendents.\(^{51}\)

Shri Upendra Guha inserted a list of some influential Muslim citizens of the Barak Valley in his famous work 'Cacharer Itibritta' who were alive during the reign of Govindachandra in Cachar and Hailakandi districts in the last part of the nineteenth century. The list included only those who had some social dignity in the society and honored by peoples. The names of such Muslim personality with their residential village are furnished below;

\[^{50}\] Guha Shri Upendra Chandra, - Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala 2006 page 88.

\[^{51}\] Bhattacharyee Dr. Jayanta Bhushan,-Cachar under British rule in N.E. India-page 76.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Muslim citizens</th>
<th>Name of their residential villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Roju Mia</td>
<td>Kanak pur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Sangai Mia</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Dewan Mia</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Ledu Mia</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Thubai Mia</td>
<td>Ambikapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Junai Mia</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Naki Mia</td>
<td>Dudhpatil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Gulam Hussain</td>
<td>Rongpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Dula Mia</td>
<td>Sonapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Arif Mahmood</td>
<td>Janjharbali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Sondai Mia</td>
<td>Majhirgram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Suna Mia</td>
<td>Satkarakandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Tenai Mia</td>
<td>Govindapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Golai Mia</td>
<td>do</td>
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<tr>
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So, it is obvious that the history of Muslims settlement in the Barak valley started since fourteenth century A.D. and it continued till India got independence in the year 1947 A.D. with a result of its partition. Like Hindu Bengali people they migrated here mainly from Sylhet and other parts of Bengal like Tripura, Comilla, Mymansingh and Dacca.

In the present Barak valley, there are many tea gardens where Hindi speaking tea garden laborers are residing of whom a small percent of Muslims are there. These tea garden workers were imported from different places of India to the Barak valley by the British Government in order to produce tea plantation in the Barak valley during their rule. Tea plantations in the Barak valley basically started from the year 1855 and from this year these tea labourers were made settled. So, the Muslim tea garden labourers started their settlement in the Barak Valley since that time. Now many of them came out of the tea gardens works and living

52. Guha, Shri Upendra Chandra, -Cacharer Itibritta, Agartala, 2006- page 119.
independently that are entitled as ex-tea-garden laborers and are being assimilated with the local peoples. Hence this is the cause for which the Hindi speaking Muslims are available in the Barak valley.

During the Burmese war in Manipur and after when Manipur was occupied by Burmese people, there developed unrest in Manipur among people. As a result, a large scale migration of Manipuris took place during that time to the Barak Valley from Manipur. A large numbers of peoples from Manipur took shelter in the Barak valley under the Cachari kingdom which was safe and secure. They were given settlement in the area. This migration of Manipuri nations to the Barak valley continued during the rule of Manipuri kings here for getting advantage in governmental agency. Among these immigrants a section of Manipuri Muslims were there to come here and settled down in different parts of the Cachar district especially in the eastern part of the district. They speak the Manipuri language and they are Muslims by religion but they are Manipuris by language and culture. They are living now in certain pocket areas of the Cachar district and no Manipuri Muslim nationals are found either in the district of Karimganj or in the district of Hailakndi.