CHAPTER - V

CHAPAR ESTATE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ZAMINDAR FAMILY
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Origin and Extent of the Estate:

According to tradition the Pargana Chapar was in the olden time within the Bijni Raj, and in the time of Bijni Raja Mukunda Narayan, the Pargana was taken away by one Jay Narayan Sarmah, who obtained a grant of the estate from the Moghuls. Although most of the valuable documents in respect of Chapar zamindary had been destroyed by fire, while the family residence was at Chapar, authentic history of the estate can be traced back as far as 1130 B.S. (1623 A.D.). In 1130 B.S. we find that said Jay Narayan Sarmah was in possession of five "Chowdhuries". Thus, Jay Narayan Sarmah secured the rank of the zamindar called Choudhury. He used to pay nominal tribute to the Moghul Faujdar at Rangamati.

After the acquisition of Diwani of Bengal by the British East India Company, Chapar was considered to be one of the old zamindaries, and the tribute paid by it to the Moghul Government was accepted as land revenue. Though no settlement in detail was ever made with the zamindar of Chapar at the Decennial Settlement, the Permanent Settlement fixed

2. Revenue A, December, 1931, No.303-310, Assam Secretariat Record Room, Dispur.
the old assessment as *jama* of the estate. The *jama* was Rs. 5660.4.

**Pargana** Chapar was practically a compact unit, extending from the mouth of the Manas to Pabonari jan, and from Pir Bagmara Darga at the foot of Rangamati Hills to Sootakhawa Mukh. There were two *chitz* (separate blocks) mahals appertaining to *touzi* No. 5, viz., *dighi* Barundanga with 6 mouzas and mouza Paikendra, with an area of about 200 square miles of 390,000 bighas more or less. *Touzi* No. 17 or Chote Kazipara an eschewed *lakhiraj* grant belonging to one Baloram Bhattacharyya, was settled in perpetuity with the then *zamindar* of Chapar estate in 1258 B.S. It contained only 101 bighas and 5 cottas of land with the fixed revenue of Rs. 22-5-6 pies only. *Chitz* mahal Paikendra was situated practically in the heart of Khuntaghat *pargana* of *Bijini* Raj, and the boundary of this mouza with *Bijini* Raj estate had been permanently demarcated, after the award of the late arbitrator Rai Chandra Kanta Sen Bahadur. In most cases boundary disputes between the estates in Goalpara were settled by arbitrator. It had altogether 1,977 bighas.

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16 cottas, and 7 dhurs of land. Dihi Barundanga or Kashbagilla was bounded on the north by Parbotjoar estate, east by Taria, west by Gauripur and Government Khas mahal Latka mouza, and on the south by Gauripur. It had six mouzas with 4,196 bighas, 9 cottas of land. It is found in the old records that whatever chars were formed within the boundaries from Par Bagnara to the foot of Lengtiar Pahar (north bank) and from Sootakhawa Chowkie to Pabmari jan (south bank), belonged to the estate and this estate possessed and claimed possession of all char lands within the above limit. Four hundred and four bighas, three cottas and fifteen dhurs of land had been given away as lakhiraj (invalid) or Brahottar or Debottar by the zamindars of this estate from time to time, and the estate had purchased from time to time 3,417 bighas, 9 cottas, 11 dhurs of lakhiraj makrari maurasi and Brahottar land 5.

Financial Resources:

Though the estate incurred debts in the thirties of the current century, the general resources of the estate were, in reality, not unsatisfactory. Apart from the collection of rent, settlement, petition, and mutation fees, and

bank department investments, a fair sum came annually from the Sairat, which consisted of market tolls, cattle-market, Bhasan Mahal, Khutagari, stocking rent, fishery, dalali, jute mahal and forests. The total assets of the estate amounted to about Rs.260,000/- and the total debts with accumulated interest to Rs.345,000/-. But the recoverable debts due to the estate amounted to Rs. 205135/- and recoverable arrear rents to Rs. 166323/- forming a total of Rs.371456/-. The following statement of annual receipt and expenditure shows that, after making all charges, the normal surplus which was available for the liquidation of the debt came to the tune of Rs.80278/81 deducting general and audit Rates.

Regular estimated annual receipts and expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receipt</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Disbursement</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rent</td>
<td>112209/8/9</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Local rates</td>
<td>7146/14/4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interest-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) on Govt. securities</td>
<td>50/0/0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Receipt other</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>than those shown above</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) divided on stock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Government Revenue</td>
<td>523/3/0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rent to Superior landlords</td>
<td>349/12/8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Local rates</td>
<td>8211/0/0</td>
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<td>4. Management of property</td>
<td>1800/0/0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Salary of Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

contd/---
4. b) Interest on debt due to the estate 15343/7/8

4. b) Establishment, Travelling allowance and commission

c) contingencies 12048/0/0

5. Misc.

a) Sairat income 18503/11/0

b) Mutatation fees 1378/4/6

c) Settlement Nazar 12834/12/0

d) petition Nazar 1136/10/0

e) Amalnamas 84/6/0

5. Law Expenses

a) Salary Law Clerks 25/- already shown under 4(a), there being no retained pleader

b) Other expenses 1000/0/0

6. Maintenance of the Proprietor

a) allowance @ 3000/- p.m. 36000/-0/0

b) allowance to mother, grand mother and other relatives 4920/0/0

c) Social ceremonies 180/0/0

d) Religious ceremonies 4000/0/0

e) Doctor's fees and medicines 300/0/0

f) Other fees 200/0/0

7. Education

8. Misc.

a) Embankment cess 198/14/0

b) Municipal taxes 1629/5/0

c) Income tax 9000/0/0

d) School 384/0/0

e) Charities and donations

Contd/---
8. Misc.

- g) Chowkidari tax 200/0/0
- h) Annual repairs of existing building & attached quarter 37/0/0
- i) Household establishment 1500/0/0
- j) Life Insurance 480/0/0
- k) Pensions 3429/0/0
- l) Petty expenses 492/0/0

9. Audit Rate,
    General Rate 250/0/0

Total - Rs.173990/5/4

Genealogy of the zamindar family:

The Chapar family had descended from the founder of the estate, Jay Narayan Sarmah who obtained a Badshahi grant in 1130 B.S. Jay Narayan having no male issue bequeathed his property to his daughter's son Rati Kanta in about 1725 A.D. Rati Kanta had two sons, namely, Umakanta and Kamala Kanta and a daughter named Sitadebi. In succession Rati Kanta was followed by his son Umakanta who died leaving no heir to succeed him. He was, thus, succeeded by his brother Kamala Kanta about 1162 B.S. Unfortunately he was also childless. So his sister's son Chandra Narayan became the sole heir to his maternal uncle's property in 1173 B.S.

It was during his life-time that the British acquired the Diwani, and the British accepted the tribute being paid by the estate to the Moghul Government as land revenue. Subsequently, the Decennial Settlement came into operation, and the jama, fixed by the Decennial Settlement, was made permanent as per Bengal Regulation I of 1793, Be that as it may, it is said that Chandra Narayan faced difficulties

7. Ibid.
8. Hazarika, B.B., Director of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati, A Glimpse into the History of Chapar Zamindary (Estate), a paper read in the seminar, organised by the institute he served, in 1986.
in the management of the estate, and he had to grant lakhiraj to a number of persons to secure their support.

On Chandra Narayan's death, his wife Rohini Debi adopted Kirtinarayan in 1847 A.D. The family residence was then at Chapar, but due to constant litigations with the tenants which had started during the life-time of her late husband she thought it prudent to remove it elsewhere. Accordingly, a site near Bilashipara, which was then a jungle land, was selected for the family residence. But before the new constructions at Bilashipara were completed, she died in 1851 A.D.

First administration of the Court of Wards:

At the death of Rohini Debi, her adopted son was a minor. Thus, during the minority of Kirtinarayan, the estate was placed under the management of the Court of Wards from 1851 to 1859, and Babu Dharani Fanta Bagchi, who played an important role in the history of the Chapar family, became the surbarahikar or the Chief Officer.

It is said that soon after the death of Rohini Debi Chapar

9. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
estate was engrossed in deep crisis. The adoption of Kirtinarayan was challenged by a group of people headed by one Rabi Ram. There was also an attempt made by the then Deputy Commissioner to confiscate the property. However Col. Jenkins in his judgement of 23rd May, 1852, upheld the cause of Kirtinarayan.¹²

Kirtinarayan removed the residence from Chapar to Bilashipara in 1858 A.D., and Bilashipara had been the headquarters of the estate since then. Kirtinarayan attained majority in 1859 and took charge of the management of the estate from the Court of Wards. During the Bhutan war referred to earlier Kirtinarayan rendered valuable assistance to the Government in the shape of supply of ration, fodder, and coolies. His services were appreciated by the Government.¹³

Kirtinarayan had four wives, i.e., first Dayamayee Debi, second Mantagini Debi, third Suryyamani, fourth Raimani alias Sarada-prasanna Debi. Dayamayee Debi and Suryyamani Debi having pre-deceased him neither of the

two surviving wives bore any issue. Kirtinarayan died in 1882 A.D. In pursuance of the directives of a Deed of Adoption executed by Kirtinarayan in May, 1876, the eldest of his surviving wives Mantagnini Debi, adopted Indra Narayan in 1888. He attained majority in 1902 and was married to two wives, Jogamaya Debi and Susamakamini Debi. He had two sons, being born by his second wife Susamakamini Debi. The first child having died in 1905, his second issue Nripendra Narayan was surviving. Indra Narayan died in 1906, and before his death he made a will, wherein he devised that on his death the estate would be managed by executors, and that his stepmother Saradaprasanna Debi would receive a monthly allowance of Rs.100/- and his adoptive mother Mantagnini Debi, his two wives, viz., Jogamaya Debi and Susamakamini Debi (mother of Nripendra Narayan), Prasanna Kumar Goswami (father of his first wife) would receive a monthly allowance of Rs.50/- p.m. each. Thus, the estate was managed by the executor till 1923. Nripendra Narayan was born on the 6th of Bhadra in 1312 B.S. (22nd August, 1905). He got his rudimentary education at home, formal education in Dhubri High School, St. Edmand's College, Shillong, and St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. His mother died in 1324 B.S. He attained majority in 1923, and took the charge of the
estate from the executors, who administered the estate during his minority. In 1328 B.S., he married Bedabala Devi, the eldest daughter of the Second Maharaja Rajkumar Mahima Niranjan Chakravarty of Hetampur Rajbari of the District Birbhum. Nripendra Narayan gave a power of adoption to his wife on first Ashar, 1329 B.S., by virtue of which he authorised his wife to adopt up to nine sons, should she would give birth to no male issue or should no male issue would survive him.\(^{14}\)

**Second administration of the Court of Wards**:

Nripendra Narayan Choudhury made up his mind to devote a few years of his life at Benaras with his wife in the study of the ancient religious lore of our land, and, as such, it was not possible for him to look after the interest of his estate. He submitted an application dated the 24th of March, 1931, to Hon'ble A.J. Laine, Member of Executive Council in charge of the Revenue Department, Shillong, praying that he might be declared a disqualified proprietor under the existing law for the purpose of managing his estate and that his estate might

\(^{14}\) Revenue A, December, 1931, Cp cit.
be brought under the management of the Court of Wards. Accordingly, under an order dated the 18th June, 1931, from the Revenue Department, the Court of Wards decided to take up the charge of the estate under Sections 7 and 35 of the Act IX of 1879. On the afternoon of the 2nd July, 1931, the Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara acting on behalf of the Court of Wards, Assam, formally assumed charge of the properties of Nripendra Narayan Choudhury, who was declared a disqualified proprietor under clause (e) of Section 6 of the Court of Wards' Act IX of 1879) as amended.

The number of properties was 18 only when the estate came under the Court of Wards. During the Court's management the number of properties was raised to 21. The excess of three was due to acquisition of a plot of land with houses therein within the Municipal area of Dhubri town consequent to a compromise of a mortgage suit with one Babu Annada Prasanta Gupta and Sarajubala Gupta containing sites for three blocks already rented out. During the period of Court's management of the estate, Khan Bahadur Tajammal Ali was in-charge of the District

15. Ibid.

of Goalpara from 2 July, 1931 to 13th November, 1931, November, 18th and 14th April, 1932 to 2nd Jan., 1933, and Mr. S.P. Desai, ICS, from the 14th November, 1931 to 13th April, 1932, and 3rd Jan., 1933 to 25th March, 1933. Babu Himangshu Mohan Raye was the Manager during the entire period of the Court's management.  

**Resumption of administration by the zamindar:**

On the application of Nripendra Narayan Choudhury as per demi official No. 76 W. dated the 11th December, 1933 orders were issued by the Court of Wards for release of his estate in their letter No. 69/W/R-661 of 2nd March, 1934. Accordingly, on the 24th day of April, 1934, corresponding to 7th Baisak, 1341 B.S., the estate was released, and the zamindar Nripendra Narayan Choudhury resumed the charge of administration of the estate.  

Nripendra Narayan Choudhury endeavoured to do something good for the public and the tenants. A sum of Rs. 10,000/- was granted from the estate for the establishment of High School for the girls at Dhubri. A High School

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18. Ibid.
was established at Bilasipara after the name of his father Indra Narayan, and the school was maintained at the expense of the estate. Contribution of a sum of Rs. 500/- was made by him to relieve the distress of the people of Assam during the flood of 1930\(^\text{19}\). He was the last zamindar of the Chapar estate, during whose tenure the estate was acquired by the Government of Assam in 1957\(^\text{20}\).

Genealogical Table of Chapar zamindar family

Jay Narayan Sarma Choudhury (1130 B.S.)

Ratikanta Kamala Kanta (died childless)

Umakanta Sitadebi Kamala Kanta (died childless)

Chandra Narayan (died childless)

wife Rohini Debi

Adopted son Kirti Narayan, four wives—

Dayamayee Debi, Mantagni Debi, Suryamani, Raimani

Adopted son Indra Narayan (died in 1906)

two wives, Jogamaya and Susumakamini

First son (died in 1905) Second son Nripendra

Narayan Choudhury (born in 1312 B.S.)

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Forecast Report, Re-settlement of erstwhile permanently Settled areas of Goalpara district, Dhubri, 14-10-77.