Ancient Assam, known as Pragjyotisa or Kamarupa, occupied an area larger than that of the present state of Assam. It extended to the river Karatoya in the west encompassing in it some parts of the modern Indian state of West and Bangla Desh. According to E. A. Gait, the kingdom of ancient Kamarupa comprised roughly the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, modern Rangpur (Bangladesh) and Coochbehar in west Bengal (India).1

The Yoginītantra divides Kamarupa into four parts or pithas, viz., Kamapītha, Ratnapītha, Svānapītha and Saumarapītha. The boundaries of the four pithas are given as follows: Kamapītha from Karatoya river to the Saṅkosh river; Ratnapītha from the Saṅkosh to the Rupahī river; Svānapītha from the Rūpahi to the Bharalī river; and Saumarapītha from the Bharalī to the Dikraṅg river. The Ratnapītha division of old Kamarūpa included the Goalpara region. The erstwhile Goalpara district

has undergone several changes in respect of its jurisdiction since it first came under the British rule. The permanently settled portion was originally a part of the district of Raṅgpur (now in modern Bangla- desh.) From 1765 to 1822 A.D., the old thānas of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari formed a part of the Rangpur district, which was known as Raṅgamaṭi district. Practically, the whole area covered by the old undivided Goalpara district spreading on both sides of the Brahmaputra came to be known as Raṅgamaṭi. This name of the region continued till in the early days of the British occupation. Martin in his Map of Rongopoorn (Rangpur) included almost the whole of the erstwhile Goalpara district. The erstwhile Goalpara district was the western most district of Assam comprising both the banks of the river Brahmaputra. The District was bounded on the north by the mountainous country of Bhutan, on the east by the undivided Kamrup district, on the South by the Garo hill district of Meghalaya and on the West by the districts of Cooch-behar and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and Rangpur in Bangla- desh. It consists of three sub divisions, namely Dhubri, Goalpara and Kokrajhar (created in 1957).

2. District Census Hand Book, Goalpara, 1961
Dhubri, the western district of Assam, is covering a geographical area of 2,838 sq. k.m. The district is bounded by the Kokrajhar district of Bodoland in the North, Meghalaya and Bangladesh in the South, Bongaigaon and Goalpara districts in the east and west Bengal and Bangladesh in the west. It is situated between latitudes 25° - 28° and 26° - 22' north and longitudes 89° - 42' and 90° - 12' east and 30 meters above the sea level.

The climate of the district is very damp and humid because of heavy rain and high temperature. The topography of the district is generally plain, covered with patches of small hillock like Tokrābāndhā, Chāṇdārdiṅgā, Chakrāśilā, Sonāmukhī, Bakuāmārī, Dudhnāth, and others which are situated in the North-eastern side of Meghalaya and others hills in the west of the district. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows through the heart of Dhubri district. Among other rivers, the Gadadhar, the Gangadhar, the Tipkai, the Gaurang, the Zinziram, the Raidak etc. are noteworthy. According to the census report of 2001, "the total population of Dhubri district is 16,37,344 of whom 8,41,044 male (51.37%) and 7,96,300 Female (48.63%). Among them 87.84% resides in rural areas and only 12.16% people resides in urban areas. Density of population is 584 per
Sq. Km., and the rate of literacy of the district is 48.2%." The district consists of three sub-divisions: (i) Dhubri, (ii) Bilasipara, (iii) South Salmara (Mankachar Sub-division). Demographical pattern of the people of Dhubri district are as follows: (as per 2001 census report).

Hindu - 4,05,065, Muslim - 12,16,455, Sikh - 159;
Christian - 12,477, Buddhist - 292, Jaina - 2,119;
Others - 171, Religion not stated - 606.

The demographic pattern of the locality, it is observed since long back the history of this region is quite interesting for its fascinating story of continuous process of assimilation of different races and cultures, which have substantial potentiality for the growth of a new culture of this region, particularly in respect of language, art and religion.

Known as the western gateway of Assam, it once formed the integral part of the ancient kingdom of Prāgyotisā which was subsequently came to be known as the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. It is believed that the Pāla ruler, Dharmapāla shifted his capital from Prāgyotispura to this region, which later on formed a part of the Kamtā kingdom from c 1305 A.D. to c 1498 A.D. Again, the region was under the Pathan rule from c

£1408 A.D. to c 1505 A.D., and then it went under the Koch king of Coochbehār till 1581 A.D. During the time of Raghudev Nārāyaṇa, the capital of Koch Hājo kingdom was established at Lālkurā (near Rūpsi), north of Gauripur opposite Sahebganj in Dhubri district. But in course of time, the capital of Koch Hājo was also known as Ghilā Vijaypur or city of the ghilā plant (*Mimosa Scanders*). Vijaypur, the capital of Koch Hajo is also mentioned in the *Yoginītantra* in 15-16th cent. It was established by Raghūdeva Nārāyaṇa on the bank of the river Gadadhar which was occupied by the Mughals in 1613 A.D. The Mughals had their administrative headquarters here and their capital Ghilā Hāney or Zāhāngirābad in Dhubri district. According to Bāhāristan-I-Ghāybī, written by Alauddin Isfania in the name of Mirzanathan who himself participated as one of the generals in the war launched by the Mughal army against Koch Hājo kingdom. The medieval chronicle Bāhāristan-I-Ghāyebī written in Persian during the reign of Jahangir in the first two decades of 17th century A.D, gives us detailed information about the war between the eastern Koch king Parikshīt Nārāyan (Grandson of Chilarai) and Mughal army at Dhubri. “The chronicle has been preserved in the museum at Paris, and the noted historian

Late Jadunath Sarkar enlightened us about the existence of this book, in the year 1920-1921. Dhubri’s history of medieval period is mainly based on this book. According to this chronicle, the Dhubri fort was the most prominent and strongest fort of Kamrup during the Koch period. In c 1613 A.D. the Mughals approached Dhubri with the intention to capture and occupy the Dhubri fort. But after reaching Dhubri, the Mughal army saw the tall, erect fort standing amidst dense forest which is almost impenetrable. In addition to this, due to the Koch royal elephants, stationed outside the fort on the bank of the river passing by, it was not possible to reach the cannon ball inside the fort. Again, it should be mentioned that the construction of *Sabat* and *Khakriz* tactics for the first time introduced in Assam by the Mughals in their endeavour to occupy the Koch fort of Dhubri.

After continuous attempt of three months, the Dhubri fort could be captured after a bloody war with several thousands death on both sides. The battle of Dhubri was the greatest and most fierceful ever fought on the soil of Kamrup (Assam) by the local Koch and tribal army against the Mughals. For the first

7. *ibid*, p 223
time, the local army fought against the enemy both in water, land and on the ground with horses, elephants and fire arms. Mirza Nathan, while narrating the events of the war noted: “If He (Parikshit) had been bold enough on that night he might set the world in a conflagration.” On the other hand, in the Preface to the Baharistan-I-Ghaybi Dr. S. K. Bhuyan said: “Mirzanathan occupies a position in the Assamese history next in importance only to Nowab Mirjumla” Significantly, it may be mentioned that huge number of stone pieces are lying scattered on the bank of the Brahmaputra river which are noticed invariably during the winter season when the water level recedes. These stone pieces are generally rectangular in shape with curving resembling iron pegs. It seems that these are nothing but the reminiscent of construction of Dhubri fort. The result of Dhubri war, can be narrated as follows:

As a result of the Dhubri war, a section of the people, who were followers of Islam, started to settle in the land and became a part and parcel of the Assamese society. On the other hand, this was the beginning of an era marking the flow of outsiders into Assam in search of land and other avocation. The most important effect of this war was that

8. *ibid*, Preface
the Mughals began to rule through Zemindars, Choudhuries, Kanoongos and others as their representatives by introducing a new system of land tenure. Right from 1613 A.D. many feudatory chieftains and Zemindars had cropped up in Bijni, Sidli, Chirang, Ripu, Guma, Gauripur, Karaibari, etc. in the eastern wing of erstwhile kingdom of Parishkit (grand-son of Chilarai). They were virtually accepted as the protectorate of the Mughal ruler, Consequently, during the stay of Ramsingha at Rangamati, necessary steps were taken to consolidate the new administrative invocation which were operative from the territories of Coochbehar to Mughal Kamrup. Again, according to Sikh Chronicles, it is learnt that Rājā Rāmsing, the noted Rajput general of Aurangazeb, led the expedition against the Ahom king Chakradhaj Singa in 1667 A.D. Five renowned Pīrs (mendicant), namely Shah Akbar, Shah Bagmur, Shah Kamal and Shah Švarān accompanied him to over come the Assamese black art magic. Because, in the earlier period, there was a general belief among the outsiders that “Assam was a land of black art, and magic and sorcery.” Among the five Pīrs, three of them took their last breath on the soil of Goalpara district.

9.  Sing, T., Guru Teg Bahadur: Prophet and Martyr, p 244-45
The famous Pañch Pīr Dargāh was established in memory of them, which is unique in the matter of religious tolerance and social harmony in the locality. (Details will be discussed in the concerned Chapter). During the Assam invasion, when Raja Ramsing and Teg Bahadur (9th Sikh Guru) reached Dhubri, they heard about the glorious visit of Guru Nanaka at Dhubri and instructed all the soldiers to bring five shieldfuls of earth to raise a mound in memory of the founder of the Sikh religion. As a result of it, under the guidance of Teg Bahadur, a pavilion on the top of the mound adjacent to the river Brahmaputra was erected and gradually it became a Gurudwara of the Sikh community (Details will be discussed in the concerned Chapter).

The Dhubri district is famous for a number of historical sites and monuments, religious establishments and heritage buildings namely Netāi Dhubunī ghāt, Āi Sākhātī thān, Pañch-Pīr Dargāh, Mahāmāyā temple, Mosque of Hussain Shah, Sikh Gurudwāra, Neo-Vaisnavite Satra of Chhatrasāl, Royal palaces of the local Zeminders etc. Dhubri, the district town itself, is named after, the legendary Netāi Dhubunī who was connected with the episode of Beulā and Lakhindar as narrated in the Padmāpurāṇa and the Manasā-maṅgala-kāvyā.
Simultaneously, the Dhubri district also witnessed the glorious visit of many of the great historical personalities like Guru Nanaka, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, Guru Teg Bāhādur, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Acarya Vinobha Bhāve, Acharya Jagadish Ch. Bose, Gopinath Bordoloi and many others. A number of famous sites are also associated with some of them. The present Panbari area of Dhubri district was known as Rangamati which was once a trade centre of western Assam.* It was also the capital of Gauripur Rāj during the time of Zeminder Bulchand Barua, the forefather of Rājā Prabhat Ch. Barua of Gauripur Rāj.

Again, according to Kharga-Narayan Vaṁśavālī, during the time of the asura ruler Sambarāsura, Rangamati was the capital of the erstwhile Kāmarūpa kingdom (Greater).¹⁰

On the other hand, Rāngāmātī is famous for the mosque established by Nawab Hussain Shah of Gaur after the annexation of Cooch Behar. (Details will be discussed in concerned Chapter).

This region had lost much of its importance in the post-Mughal period and gradually it moved far away from the lime light. Montgomery Martin has written in the History of Eastern India in 1883 A.D. that “the situation of Dhubri, where the

¹⁰ Khan Choudhury, A. A., Kochbehārer Itihāsa (Beng), p 243
office of police has been established is very fine, being a rocky point at the Junction of the Godadhor with the Brohmoputro. By the rock it is secured from the encroachment of the rivers, while it is just high enough to be exempt from inundation. It is said to have been chosen by a certain Mano Singho, the officer who first managed the country for the Moguls, as his place of residence, and then was probably a considerable place; built it has now sunk into insignificance, and has no appearance of a town; but it is covered with gardens and has one shop, where rice and other articles of absolute necessity are sold. Kapasgola and Alumgunj, which may be considered as the same place, occupy the southern extremity of where Ranggamati was situated, and may be still considered as the chief place of the division. They contain the house of the chief Zemindar and one of the petty land holder who depends on him and perhaps in all 250 houses. Of these by far the best are occupied by the slaves of the chief land holders. The whole area scattered over some little hills, and in the intermediate vallies, and there is little appearance of town. It has no trade, and only two shops”

But gradually Dhubri became a centre for trade and commerce. Records indicate that the steamer services started

between Dhubri and Dibrugarh was introduced in the year 1883 A.D.

Christianity also prevailed in this region as soon as the Goalpara (undivided) district was formed. Prior to Yandaboo treaty the merchants of the East India Company started to build up churches at different places of the district. At present there are three churches in Dhubri district (Details will be discussed in concerned Chapter), one in Dhubri town and the other two at Devitola, a tribal populated area adjacent to Panbari in Dhubri district.

During the British period in 1869 A.D. the District headquarter of Goalpara was shifted from Goalpara town to Dhubri. Thus Dhubri regained its lost glory again as District Headquarter during the British regime. But later on in 1983, three districts viz., Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Goalpara were formed out of the erstwhile Goalpara district. Then in 1989, another independent district, Bongaigaon, was curved out of the then Kokrajhar District. The eastern zone of the erstwhile Goalpara region includes present Goalpara district, but the western zone covered Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts. The middle portion roughly comprised Bongaigaon district which incorporates the cultural elements from both sides.