

CHAPTER – IV

Public Works and Social Welfare activities of the Zamindars of Gauripur and their family members

The British colonial power never realized the need to work for the socio-cultural development of the Indian people. Rather, the British neglected Indian in every aspect. Whatever they did in India was, indeed, backed by the interest of their imperial and the colonial design. Nevertheless, some of the Zamindars, as an important social force, had contributed a lot to the social and cultural changes unleashed in the 19th & 20th century. Even under the Mughals they had initiated many benevolent works for public interest, as expected by the Mughal Emperor for which they enjoyed rent free lands. Some of them, with a view to perpetuate their own or their kin's name founded educational institutions, Sadabrata, etc, some others for the hope of the blessing of Gods and Goddesses devoted themselves to religious works, like foundation of temples, arrangement of pujas, donation of land and money to such temples etc. Some of them, under pressure of the subjects and necessity of time, involved in public works, like, excavation of tanks, construction of roads and embankment, opening of dispensary etc. A few zamindars were, seemed, who initiated such benevolent works for the zeal of public services. The Permanent settlement of 1793 promoted the zamindars of Bengal as the owner of land that they held; so long they paid the stipulated revenue to the British Indian Government. Since then the zamindars of Bengal not only began to lead a life of grandeur and luxury, as they considered themselves as the local king and the master of their ryots, some of them felt the need to spent a part of their income for the development of subjects and the society. Although to meet their huge financial requirements for

maintenance such status and court ceremony, besides payment of their dues to the state, they some time resorted to oppressive and coercive measures in collection of revenue, but at the same time, some of them played a vital role in the socio-cultural development of their estates. They constructed roads, tanks for water, donated land for temples, founded schools, colleges, charitable hospitals and satras. They also patronized music, drama, art, handicraft and other cultural activities.

The zamindars of Western Assam were not only the followers of the zamindars of Bengal in the matter of zamindari administration and luxurious style of living but also of benevolent works of public importance as well. Though, they were fond of luxurious style of living for which they, some time, resorted to oppressive measures to exact more and more revenue, it can not be denied that the Zamindars of Western Assam did not contribute to the socio-cultural development of the region. Rather, some of the zamindars of this region were patron of learning, music, drama, literature, art handicrafts, besides, construction of roads, tanks, temples, and foundation of charitable hospitals. It is to be mentioned here that during the last part of 19th century and the early 20th century a wave of public welfare activities spread throughout the nation because of National Awakening and Freedom Movement, initiated by the native, rulers, landlords and even the British government of India.

An attempt has made, in this Chapter, to focus on the contributions of Gauripur Raj family to the socio-cultural development of Assam in general and Goalpara district in particular.

4.1. Brief history of Gauripur Raj Estate

Gauripur Raj Estate originated from the large Nankar lands received from the Mughal Emperor Jahangir by one Kabindra Patra, who

was appointed to the post of Qanungo of the Thana Rangamati. As stated earlier, after annexation of Koch Hajo kingdom of Parikshit Narayan, the Mughal Emperor Jahangir appointed its official for the revenue administration of the occupied land. Qanungos and Koraries were employed for the purpose in Thana of Rangamati; the administrative headquarter of the occupied territory. Qanungo, thus employed was invested special powers in the matter of civil, criminal and revenue affairs of the occupied territory. Kabindra Patra was granted huge Nankarland, in lieu of his service as Qanungo. The post of Kanongo held by Kabindra Patra became hereditary which continued for a period more than three centuries. After him his son Kabisekhar became Qanungo of Rangamati who received Sanad in 1622 and 1635 and was granted Nankarland of 9020 bighas and also permitted to hold the Nankar, granted to his father amounting 4200 bighas.

This big endowment of hundred bighas of land enjoyed by Kabisekhar by virtue of his office of Qanungo, eventually, raised his position to a leading zamindar of the region. Since the post of the Qanungo continuously held by the descendants of Kabindra Patra, every succeeding generation added still more quantity of Nankar lands to the existing quantity. Thus, there was an enormous accumulation of property in land to the credit of the Qanungo of Rangamati.¹

Thus, the Qanungos of Rangamati became zamindar of Rangamati in the course of time. Qanungo, being the sources of extensive power in regard of land settlement and revenue administration, exercised power to add further properties and facilities for their family members. The zamindari, thus founded by Kabisekhar, further expanded by his successors and one of his descendants, Bulchandra Barua, acquired five Parganas of Ghurla, Aurangabad, Mukrampur, Jamira and Gola

Alomganj. In due course of time, the zamindar of Rangamati added more Parganas by means of their power and capacity. The Zamindar of Rangamati was known as Barua and the latter descendants of Kabisekhar assumed the title "Raja". Since the capital was shifted from Rangamati to Gauripur in 1860, the estate came to be known as Gauripur Raj Estate.

Gauripur Raj Estate lay between 25° 58' and 26 19 North and 89⁵⁰' and 90⁰⁶' East in the western portion of Goalpara district (undivided), consisting of seven entire parganas, viz. Gurla, Jamira, Makrampur, Gola Alomganj, Naobad Futura, Kalumalupara and Aurangabad, with the part of Taria and certain Lakheraj grants, i.e. Srijangram and Adardiya in Khuntaghat pargana under Bijni Estate. The total area of Estate was 355 square miles.² In 1789 the Estate was placed under Decennial settlement of the East India Company which was declared perpetuated in 1793. Initially, the zamindar of Rangamati paid revenue to the British in the form of 21 elephants as it had been so to the Mughal. But the revenue in kind was commuted to cash in 1774 at C. Rs. 3,101 which was subsequently raised to Rs, 4221.

4.2. Genealogy of the Raj Family

According to the local sources, one Narahari Rai is said to be the ancestor of Gauripur Raj Family. He was a resident of Bethera in Tirhut Mozaffarpur who had been a minister of the court of Mithila. Eventually, he left his village and joined at service of Koch during the rule of Viswa Singha in early 16th century. He assumed the title Barua instead of Rai for which his descendants known as Barua. Maharaj Nara Narayan appointed his grand son, Kabindra patra as the Chief Minister of Koch Bihar kingdom. Earlier, Viswa Singha put Kabindra Patra in charge of guidance of Naraa Narayan and Chilarai while they were at Kashi for study. As a Minister, Kabindra Patra accompanied Chilarai in his campaign against

the kings of the North Eastern region. Unfortunately, Laksmi Narayan, son and successor of Nara Narayan, dismissed him from office. However, Kabindra Patra was sheltered and appointed as Chief Minister of Eastern Koch Kingdom by Raghu Narayan. As already mentioned, Raghu Narayan's son Parikshit Narayan, captured by the Mughal, who was sent to the Mughal Darbar at Delhi. It is said Kabindra Patra accompanied Parikshit Narayan when he was sent to Delhi, but Parikshit as his agent left him at Delhi while he returned home. So, after death of Parikshit Narayan and annexation of Koch Hajo kingdom, Kabindra Patra was appointed as Kanongo of Rangamati province of Mughal Empire and sent to Rangamati with Ibrahim Korari. Ibrahim Korari with a view to introduce Mughal revenue system in this occupied territory divided it into four Sarkars, viz, Kamrup, Dhekiri, Dhakhinkul and Bangalbhun and 12 Parganas. Rangamati made the Headquarter of Qanungo. Thus, Kabindra Patra established his influence overall territory of Koch Hajo from Rangamati to Guwahati. He received large amount of Nankar lands from the Mughal Emperor for his service as Qanungo, which considered as the foundation of the Gauripur Estate.

His son Kabisekhar succeeded to the post of Qanungo after him, who received two Sanads, issued by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1622 and 1635. He was granted 9020 bighas of Nankar land. His son Kabiratna succeeded Kabisekhar, a Sanad is found issued in 1654 by the Mughal Emperor confirming him Qanungoship. His performance as Qanungo was praiseworthy, in recognition of which Sanads were issued to him by Emperor Shahjahan and Aurengzeb. But he was replaced from his post for the charge of his association with Pran Narayan, the rebel Koch King of Koch Bihar against the Mughals. In his place Jainand was appointed Qanungo, the son of his uncle, Kabiballabh. However, Devraj,

son of deposed Kabiratna secured the favour of the Mughal Emperor, who restored him to the post of Qanungo by issuing Sanad in 1665 A.D.³ He was succeeded by Debraj after him Gokul Chandra became Qanungo and he was succeeded by his nephew, Debiprasad, the son of his elder brother Devraj. During the tenure of office of Debiprasad the power and prestige of his family had raised to a great extent. He was addressed to several Sanads by Emperor Aurangzeb, which bore the testimony of his power and status. He was empowered to collect *Nankar and Dastur* of the Pargana Baharband, Duki and Bari. Gauriprasad was childless, so, he was succeeded by Surya Chandra, the eldest son of Gokul Chandra. Trilok Chandra, son of his brother Gopal Chandra, succeeded Surya Chandra. But Trilok Chandra failed to pay the *Peskosh* to the Mughal for which he was removed from the post of Kanungo and Bal Chandra was appointed in his place in 1732, who issued a *muchalka* to the effect that he would perform all the duties of the Kanungo.⁴ After Bal Chandra, Bul Chandra Barua succeeded to the Gaddi of Kanungoship and the time of accession was 1778 as mentioned by B.C.Allen.⁵ But there is authentic document found in Gauripur Rajbari that Bull Chandra Barua exercised his power as Kanungo in 1766 in convincing the Mughal authority to dispossess Ranaram Choudhury, zamindar of Mechpara pargana and Umanath, the zamindar of Kalumalupara and appoint his cousin Duga Prasad as zamindars of those estates.⁶ Be that as it may, he held the post of Qanungo of Rangamati not late of 1766 and was, no doubt, a powerful zamindar of this region. He was succeeded by his brother Bira Chandra during whose rule East India Company brought Rangamati Raj Estate under Decennia Settlement, and ultimately converted it to the Permanent Settlement like zamindari of Bengal. During his tenure of office, Bijni Raja Balit Narayan was subjected of maltreatment at the hand of the

British official and it was Bira Chandra Barua who initiated a compromise between the belligerents. As a mark of gratitude, Bijni Raja granted certain rent free lakhraj to Bira Chandra Barua in Bijni Estate.⁷ On the death of Bira Chandra Barua, his wife Joy Durga Baruanee, adopted Dhir Chandra Barua, son of Gunananda, the 7th succession of Kabiballabh, brother of Kabisekhar.⁸ Dhir Chandra Barua purchased the pargana of Kalumalupara, Nabad Faturi and Taria.⁹ He was allowed to use Silver Stick with his equipage as a mark of his rank and family.¹⁰ He was succeeded by his son Pratap Chandra Barua who shifted the Headquarter of zamindary from Rangamati to Gauripur in 1860 (according to some others the date of shifting of capital was in 1856). Pratap Chandra died in 1880 leaving no child, for which his wife Rani Bhabani Priya adopted a son, named Prabhat Chandra Barua, and she ran the administration in the name of her minor adopted son, until 1896. Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua assumed the responsibility of the estate in 1896, which was the last zamindar of Gauripur Raj Estate. He died in 1940 and the Estate was placed under Trustee, according to his Will that executed before his death. Prabhat Chandra Barua had two wives, Sarajabala and Saralabala. He had five children from the line of Rani Sarajabala, namely: Pramathesh Barua, the great artist of Indian film world, Prakritesh Chandra Barua, the greatest elephant hunter, Raj Kumari Niharbala, Raj Kumari Nilima Sundari and Raj Kumar Pranabesh Chandra Barua. From the line of younger Rani, he had three sons, viz, Amal Chandra Barua, Ajoy Chandra Barua and Ajit Chandra Barua. Greatest singer of Goalpariya folk song, Pratima Pandey Barua was the daughter of Raj Kumar Pratikesh Chandra Barua (Lalji).¹¹ Raj Kumar Prakritesh Chandra Barua was the Executive of the Trust property of the Gauripur Raj Estate, during his tenure zamindary system was abolished by the Government in 1956.

From Kabindrapatra, the founder of Gauripur zamindary to Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, the last zamindar of this dynasty had administered the Estate for about four hundred years. During this long period of zamindary rule, though the feudal lords ran after the royal glamour and luxurious style of living but some of them and their family members did magnificent works for the welfare of their subjects and made splendid contributions to the development of the society and culture of this region.

4.3. Public Works of Gauripur Raj Family

The Baruas of Rangamati, popularly known as the zamindars of Gauripur, although, were craving of acquisition of land, even by any means, which lived a life of luxury and the pomp and grandeur, in the midst, some of them and members of their family paid their attention to benevolent works of public interest.¹²

Dhirchandra Barua is said to have founded a Sadabrata, a shelter house for his subjects at Rangamati. His wife Tarini Priya, who was a pious lady, established a Sanskrit Chatuspathy in Rangamati in 1834 to encourage Sanskrit education among her prajas. After Dhir Chandra Barua, his son Pratap Chandra Barua, who is said to be courageous zamindar, endeavoured some valuable services for the welfare of his subjects. According to local sources, he founded first Minor school (lower primary) at Gauripur. It was the first English school established in this area but exact date of the foundation of the school is obscure, because the school was later on promoted to High School in 1899 by his son Prabhat Chandra Barua and named it as "Pratap Chandra Institution". It is presumed that the school founded by Pratap Chandra Barua was, perhaps, in between the year 1860-1867 because in 1867 a School was established in Goalpara by Prithiram Choudhury and Pratap Chandra who claimed to

be the greatest zamindar of the this region could not be behind in establishing school in this region. Apart from this, Raibahadur Pratap Chandra Barua established a charitable Hospital at Gauripur to provide medical treatment to his subjects. His son Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua also founded such Hospital at Agomani to give free medical services to his tenants. Both these Hospitals brought tremendous change to the health care of the poor and distressed people under Gauripur Estate. The Salaries of the doctors and other staff were borne by the Royal treasury of Gauripur.^{12a} Prabhat Chandra Barua opened an emergency branch in Dhubri Hospital and donated land to Dhubri T.B. Hospital.¹³

To look after the public works, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua created "Public Works Department" and various schemes of developmental works carried out by this Department. The Department was staffed with an Engineer, an Overseer, Tindel Assistants, Peons, Mistry and coolies. The Department prepared plan and estimate of the infrastructural development within the jurisdiction of Gauripur Raj Estate. Construction of Roads, erection of deep well and tanks, temples, school buildings, Raj Hawli etc. are some of the benevolent works those were endeavoured by the zamindars of Gauripur Raj Estate. According to the personal Diary of Prakritesh Chandra Barua, alias Lalji, son of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, Sri Dharendra Chandra Barua was last engineer under Garipur zamindary rule.^{13a} Some of the public works executed under Gauripur Raj Estate as below:

(a) Construction of Road and Embankment: It is due to paucity of evidences nothing can be said firmly of the roads constructed by the zamindars of Gauripur Raj Estate. Before foundation of Gauripur zamindary, as mentioned earlier, that the territory of undivided Goalpara district had been within the jurisdiction of Koch kingdom and the road

communications had been made under Koch rule as per their military and commercial requirement. Under zamindari rule, according to some sources, some roads and embankment constructed for the public utility. Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra Barua shifted his capital from Rangamati to a new place called Gauripur. Because of this change, with a view to setting up direct communication between capital and kutcharis for revenue collection, a new line of communication established between Gauripur and the Kutcheries under Gauripur Estate. The road between Gauripur and the Dihi kutcheries, like, Rangamati, Srijangaon, Binnachara, Pratap Ganj, Simlabari, Agomani, Dimakuri, Patamari, etc presumed to have been made under Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra Barua. Singimari, Salmara, Fakirganj were communicated by boat across the Brahmaputra river. For this some specific ferry, ghates were set up under Gauripur zamindars. The zamindars had several small and big boats for maintaining communication with the kutcheries lying in the south bank of Brahmaputra. Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra Barua had rendered valuable service to the British during Anglo- Bhutan war. He repaired the Road leading to Bhutan and helped the British forces by supplying food staff to the armies and the animals for which he was felicitated and conferred with the title of "Rai Bahadur" by Governor General.¹⁴

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was a benevolent zamindar who devoted himself more on the public welfare works. He is said to be the architect of modern Gauripur town. However, Gauripur was the creation of Pratap Chandra Barua but the modern infrastructure and beautification were the creation of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua. He developed it as a model town in Western Assam, in the model of Koch Bihar palace. The present structure of Raj Hawli, Hawakhana, Shismahal, Tajmahal and Attarokotta were built by Prabhat Chandra Barua which are, indeed,

beautiful specimen of high architectural development of feudal age. The Roads, gardens and tanks were erected with a view to add its beauty and easy communication. It is said that he built Rajhawli and Hawakhana of Matiabag with Chinese engineer and architect.¹⁵

Beside, he constructed an embankment on the bank of Lawkhowa River, stretching from Gauripur to Rupsi, to protect Gauripur from its flood. He is also said to have constructed road from Gauripur to Dhepdhepi and Gauripur to Kalahat. According to local sources, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua constructed the Road from Gauripur to Rupsi jointly with the zamindar of Rupsi. He also erected tanks and deep wells for drinking water. The remains of such tanks are still visible in Dhubri town, Gauripur town and adjacent places of Gauripur. The famous Mahamaya tank of Gauripur, and Jhapsebari tanks are some of the example of his public works.¹⁶

According to the statement of some senior citizens of Gauripur, like, Haji Deraj Uddin, aged 92 years old, Gias Uddin Pradhani, aged above 90, Nani Dihadar, above 90 years old, and some others, zamindars of Gauripur Raj Estate had the tradition of exemption of revenue to the tenants in the event of damage of crops due to natural calamities. They even extended aid to the prajas from Royal exchequer whenever emergency occurred. It was in 1897 due to severe earthquake, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua extended help to some of the victims. They built school buildings, Satras, temples, and Sadabrata for the sake of public benevolence.¹⁷

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua founded a public Library at Dhubri, which was named as Cotton Public Library, after the name of H.I.S. Cotton, then Chief Commissioner of Assam. He was a patron of education and learning and devoted himself for the spread of educations

among his subjects. He established many schools of all categories, such as lower primary, middle and high schools. He not only promoted Gauripur Minor School, founded by his father to High school, but established numerous L.P. and M.E. school in different parts of his Estate. He also introduced scholarship system to poor and meritorious students. Detailed discussion of which is made under heading "contribution of Gauripur Raj Family to Education & learning". Rani Bhabani Priya, mother of Prabhat Chandra Barua was a kindhearted lady who ruled the zamindari during the minority of Raja Pabhat Chandra Barua, did a lot of public welfare activities. According to some senior citizen of the locality, that she exempted revenues, on many occasions, to the distressed tenants and in case of damage of crops due to natural calamities. Among her public works it is worth mentioning that she opened a Satra at BeNaraas "Ganga Mahal", and fed twenty-five Brahmans daily, the cost involved was borne out of the exchequer of the Estate.¹⁸

(b) Foundation of township in Dhubri: The foundation of Dhubri Township as the Headquarter of Goalpara district by Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra Barua was a very significant work. It was in 1879 he donated the territory of present Dhubri town under Ghurla pargana to the British Government for shifting of Headquarter of Goalpara district from Goalpara town. He even allotted land for the residences of each zamindar of Goalpara for their convenience of official business with the District Collector. He extended all round help to the Government in founding a High School in Dhubri in that year. The High School came to be known as Dhubri Government Boys High School. As a result, Dhubri emerged as an important town of Western Assam and gradually flourished to be the centre of commerce, learning and the culture of this region. In the following years, shipping port, railways station was founded and road

communications were developed. The foundation of Match factory in Dhubri, infact, developed it one of the important towns in Assam.

4.4. Contribution to literature

Not only a host of outstanding administrators and Qanungoes were born in Barua dynasty of Gauripur but numbers of celebrated learned and literary persons were also produced in Gauripur Raj Family as well. Kabindra Patra, the founder of Gauripur zamindary was not only a great statesman and warrior but also a great scholar who is said to have translated Mahabharata in indigenous language. His elder son Raghunath was called Kabisekhar for his wisdom and highly scholarship. Among the three sons of Kabisekhar, the eldest son Srinath was bestowed with the title "Kabiratna" for his literally works. Some outstanding personalities of the descendents of Kabiratna, whose contribution towards literature, music, art, drama, cinema and expansion of education will be remembered through out the ages.

To quote Santo Barman in this regard, "Of the zamindars of Gauripur Rajfamily, Raja Kabi Sekhar, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua and his son, Pramothesh Barua were the patrons of Arts and literature. Kabi Sekhar is said to have been the translator of the Mahabharata. A manuscript, considered by some scholars to be old copy of his translation of the Mahabharata, preserved in the library of late Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua Bahadur. Of course, there is controversy about the authenticity of his works. The transcript was edited and published by Gaurinath Shastri as Kabindra *be-rachita Astadas Parva* of Mahabharata. It is worthy of mentioning here that N.N. Basu, who laboured to prepare the genealogy of the family at the initiative of the zamindar, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua Bahadur, did not mention Kabindra Patra to be the author of the Said work. Thus, it seems to be matter of conjecture".¹⁹

Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra Barua is said to be the patron of the publication of Yugbisists Ramayana.²⁰ Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua bore the full responsibility to publish "Social History of Kamrup" in three volumes, written by N.N.Basu. As a mark of gratitude, Basu dedicated all the volumes of the book to Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua. Though the said book was influenced by the Kayastha sentiment, it greatly helps in the study of the contemporary social condition of Western Assam as well as the history of Gauripur Rajfamily. Besides, Basu has given a genealogy of Gauripur Rajfamily in this book.

Another important work in the field of literature was done by Rajabahadur was the publication of "Kayastha Samajer Etibrita". Under patronage of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, "Kayastha Samajar Etibrita" was reconstructed and published by H. N. Dutta Barua, a book that deals with the history of Kayastha of Assam. Dutta Barua published the book with the financial assistance extended by Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua. A printing press was set up in Nalbari funded by Raja where twenty people worked and earned their livelihood. Thus, in other words Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua helped in employment of few people.²¹

Prabhat Chandra Barua patronised the publication of two Weekly, the "Advocate of Assam", edited by Mathuranath Barua in Guwahati, and the "Pranthabashi" edited by Gaurinath Shastri.²² Prabhat Chandra Barua inspired Amrit Bhusan Adhikary for interpretation and explanation of *Sonam Ghosa* and all expenditure of its publication were borne by him. He extended financial assistance to Ramanath Bidyalankar, the well-known Sanskrit Pandit of Assam for the publication of Sanskrit grammar which he wrote. With a view to spread Sanskrit education among the Kayastha, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua arranged to provide them with all

round assistance including free food and lodging. He was patron of Assam State Museum and Kamrupa Anusandan Samiti too.²³

Not only Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua but also most of the zamindars of Western Assam were more inclined to Bengali language and culture than to Assamese because of their close association with the zamindars of Bengal. Most of them established matrimonial relation with the zamindar families of Bengal, used to reside in Calcutta, and adapted with the Bengali culture and society. Pro Bengali attitude of Prabhat Chandra Barua was attributed with the honour, by electing him president of the All India Bengali Sahitya Parisad conference held at Dhubri in 1929.

Besides, He was a reputed scholar, music lover, political leader, patron of learning and was a great hunter. He was a famous tabalist (expert in Tabla). He patronized historical research, journalism and animal study and some of his descendants excelled to the field of arts and culture of Assam.²⁴

4.5. Development of Music and Culture

Gauripur is said to have been centre of Music Drama and culture of Western Assam. The ruling dynasty of Gauripur Estate has made splendid contributions to the development of Music, Drama, fine Arts and indigenous culture of this region. To the development of Music, Drama, Art and indigenous Culture, the contributions of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, his sons, daughters and grand daughters are worthy of high appreciation. Raja Prabhat Chandra himself was the patron of Music, Drama, Fine Arts, Sports and indigenous Culture of Western Assam. His son Pramathesh Baruah is said to be the pioneer of Hindi cinema, and Prakritesh Barua was a great hunter, his daughter Neharbala Baruah and

Nilima Baruah, were two stars of the cultural world of Assam. Niharbala was a great artist and social worker who contributed remarkably to the growth and expansion of Deshi songs and Dances and Nilima Sundari Barua is called Loka Silpi who made huge contribution to the development of indigenous handicrafts. His grand daughter Pratima Pandey Baruah, who is better known as Hastir Kainya, has made huge contribution to the cultural development of Assam, especially in the growth and development of Goalpariya Folk Songs. Another grand daughter, Parvati Barua was famous in elephant catching and domesticating them. She was the first lady elephant hunter in Asia.

(I) Contribution of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua himself possessed multifarious qualities. He was a patron of learning, promoter of music, drama, arts, sports and local culture and contributed a lot to the growth of Goalpariya *Loka Geet*. As mentioned already, he himself was a reputed tabalist and wrote a book on *tabla* called "Tarangani". He loved music from his core of heart for which he often arranged "Musical Night" in his Raj Hawli, Attarokotta where reputed singers from different parts of India were invited. The artists and ustads attended his musical programmes from Kashi, Kanpur and Delhi. He himself took part in such programme with tabala. Artists like Suresh Chandra Barua, Lalit Mahan Ganguli and others were his associates. He was patron of *Deshi songs* and encouraged the local *geedals*, i.e. singers of Loka Geet, to work for its development.²⁵

Under his patronage, the Deshi loka geet was popularized. Geedal Karitulla and Bayan Sk. were felicitated by the Raja and all assistances were extended to them in their efforts to develop Deshi culture. He even granted a plot of land to *geedal Karitulla* for his shelter. His incentive and encouragement boosted his grand daughter, Pratima Pandey Barua who

subsequently became a legend of Goalparia Loka Sangeet. During religious festivals, Raja Bahadur arranged some entertaining programmes for public recreation. Jatra parties imported from Bengal and staged their plays. Local artists also provided opportunities to display their talents for public recreation.²⁶

Prabhat Chandra had deep interest in drama and he provided his son Promathesh Chandra Barua with favourable environment to become pioneer of the Indian cinema. He never forbade his son, Pramathesh Barua from participation in cinema, which was not booked as a good job in the contemporary period rather he encouraged his son to work in the film in such a period of time when the involvement in the cinema was considered as an anti social act. Besides, he encouraged the dramatists and artists of jatrparties and extended all possible help to them. Promathesh Barua started a drama "Fulshor" at Gauripur and his father Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was the music director of the play. He encouraged and assisted **Brother Union** Dramatic Club by providing them with a permanent Stage and a drama hall. He even donated dresses and musical instruments to this club.²⁷

(II) Contribution of Pramathesh Barua

Pramathesh Chandra Barua, a legend of Indian Film who is said to be the pioneer of Indian cinema, was, indeed, a zamindar of famous Gauripur Raj Estate. He was the eldest son of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, the famous zamindar of Gauripur Raj Estate in Western Assam. Pramathesh Barua was a man with multifarious human qualities. He was as famous as a singer, producer, director, actor, photographer and writer. He was born in 1903 in the Barua family of Gauripur, a highly cultured family of this region. From his childhood, Pramathesh Barua involved in drawing, singing, Photographing, hunting and especially attracted to

drama and theatre. He was deeply interested in music, drama and sports from his childhood. As a hunter, he killed 11 tigers in his career and numerous ferocious animals. He was also a good tennis player and artist of Piano. Initially his father entrusted him with the responsibility of zamindari of the Estate but he felt it a burden, as he preferred to enjoy a free life. His artistic mind always swung in the world of drama, film and music.²⁸

Pramathesh Barua was elected twice as representative to Assam Legislative Council and offered ministry and the chair of the president of the Swaraj Party. But he didn't accept these offers because of his attraction to cultural world. He was also a member of Senate of Calcutta University. But nothing could attract him more than the film world. Indeed, Pramathesh Barua was a born artist who very cheerfully renounced the Royal comfort, luxury and pride for the sake of art and culture, especially for the attraction of the film world. His zeal to cultural world made him an outstanding personality and became a legendary artist of Indian cultural world.²⁹

Pramathesh Barua started his film career as the director under British Dominion Film Company. To acquire knowledge in film, he went to Paris to study film technology and worked there as Assistant cinematographer. When he returned home, he brought with him some important instruments of the film from Paris. He founded his own Unit of Film production known as Barua Film Unit and began production of film with his own direction and production. Under his own company he produced film like "Apparadhi", and "Ekada". Nevertheless, his Film Unit did not last long and he joined to the New Theatre Limited. Here a series of heart touching film, produced under his direction, like, Ruplekha, Devdas, and Grihadah. Film Devdas was his famous creation,

which made him superstar of Hindi cinema. He played the tragic role of Devdas and this film not only became popular but shook the whole film industry. Pramathesh Barua as an Actor and Director reached to the zenith in the film world and he popularly came to be known as Devdas Barua.³⁰

Pramathesh Chandra Barua was a first Assamese who occupied so high position in Hindi Cinema. None can deny the valuable contribution of Pramathesh Barua to the evolution of Indian cinema. He entered into film world in such a time when the then conservative society considered the participation to cinema as an act of jeopardizing self-dignity and ethical foundation. Being a member of a Royal family, with many opportunities of living a comfortable life, even with an opportunity of becoming a minister of Assam, Pramathesh Barua opted for cultural life and devoted himself in the development of the cinematography. He was a born artist and worked whole life for the interest of the development of music, drama and cinema. His dedication and love to the film made him one of the famous film artists of the contemporary time. His role as Actor left deep impression in the mind of the audience, especially his role in the film of "Devdas", "Shapmukti", "Mayer Pran" that can never be forgotten. Pramathesh Barua was such an artist who by application of high artistic skill brought a tremendous success to the film, Jugantar.³¹ Devdas was the greatest creation of Pramathesh Baruah and he himself became tangible in Devdas. Infact, Devdas opened a new chapter in the history of cinema. Appreciating Pramathesh Baruah for his lively acting in Devdas, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, the writer of Devdas, showered praise on him saying that Pamathesh injected life into his lifeless puppet.³² Famous Director Retwik Ghatak commented on the performance

of Pramathesh Chandra Barua as an artist that Pramathesh Baruah was the greatest Director of all times. None can be compared with him.³³

Pramatesh Baruah is remembered for his creative role in cinematography. He was the pioneer of Indian Cinema. He had conception and experience of various technical and human aspects of Cinematography. He was a Dramatist, Writer, Editor, Recorder, Photographer, Director and Producer all in one. His remarkable contribution to the film world was that he introduced modern systems in Indian Cinema and brought a revolutionary change to it for which he is often called the Pioneer of Indian Cinema. He first introduced artificial light in shooting of cinema. Before that all the shooting were done in natural light. Secondly, he was inventor of the flash back system in cinema. Thirdly, he introduced outdoor shooting in film. In “Mukti” he first applied outdoor shooting and most of the shooting were made in Gauripur Palace and its surrounding areas. Kabiguru Rabindranath Thakur named the film as Mukti.³⁴

Concerning film making, Pramatesh Barua observed strict discipline and did everything systematically. He emphasized more on songs in film for which he is said to be the pioneer of the new trend of film where song played important ingredient of the film. The Rabindra Sangeet, “Diner seshe ghumer deshe...”, became immortal in “Mukti”. Singer like Sayygal, Pankaj Mullick, Kanonn Devi, and Rabin Majumdar achieved their reputation as singer through the film of Pramathesh Barua.³⁵

It is to be mentioned here that the people of Assam have some grievances that being an Assamese by birth and sprit, Pramathesh Barua has not made a single film in Assamese as he did in Hindi, Bengali and

other languages. However, he started making film in Assamese but before its completion, he died in 1951 at the young age of 48 years.

Pramarthesh Chandra Barua is not only the pride of Assam but also his creativeness, sacrifice, love, affection and devotion to the Indian film conquered the heart of the film lovers of the nation and of the abroad. Balraj Sahani, the famous artist of Hindi Cinema, in his inaugural speech of the “Gana Natya Sanga Sanmilan” in Guwahati in 1955, he proudly announced, “I am feeling proud being here in Assam, the birth place of the great artist, Pramathesh Chandra Barua”. This was no doubt, a splendid recognition of the greatness of Pramathesh Barua and the people of Assam. He is remembered for his own style in Hindi cinema that is called Barua style. He was such an Actor and Director who never accepted artificial, untenable and unhealthy story. His film was always based on reality. He was unique and really a legend of Indian Cinema.¹⁸

(III) Contribution of Princess Niharbala

Among the princesses of Gauripur Raj family Nihar Bala Baruah possessed various qualities and she contributed a lot to the cultural development of western Assam. She was the eldest daughter of Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah and Rani Sarajbala Devi. In her early life, she was more interested in hunting and killed six tigers. Niharbala used to go for hunting along with his father in dense forest and stayed in hunting camp. It is to be mentioned that learning of gun operation for the children of Gauripur Raj family was more preferable to education. Almost all the children of Gauripur Raj family, irrespective sex, were acquainted with hunting and operation of gun, riding horse and elephant. Although Niharbala was not exception but she was familiar for her cultural activities and she, indeed, made huge contribution to the growth of Deshi songs and culture in this region.

Niharbala had deep interest in the prevailing cultural heritage of the backward and poor villagers of Gauripur Estate and its surrounding region. She had been impressed with the existing music, songs, customs, and nuptial traditions of the poor and backward people of this region. In her early life she was attracted to Deshi songs and dances. She, being impressed with the traditional Deshi songs and dances of maidservants of Rajbari began to practicing them in Andarmahal. She learned folk songs and folk dances from the maid servants of Rajbari which was considered as the songs of the “*Chota Loka*”, i.e lower class people. Other members of the family did not accept her involvement in Deshi songs and dances. Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua himself was worried of the involvement of his daughter, Niharbala in Deshi songs and dances. Strong protest was raised by Madhurilata Barua, wife of Pramothesh Barua, the sister in-law of Niharbala, who did not hesitate to remark that Deshi songs were for the down trodden people, “*Chota Loka*” not for the decent society.

To restrain Niharbala from the involvement in Deshi songs and her close association with lower class people, Niharbala was married to Mukunda Narayan Barua of Agomani in 1917 at the age of 12 years. Of course, the conservative society did not permit the involvement of the girls in music and dances and dancing girls were hardly married.¹⁹ But Niharbala was a born artist who never dishearten but her zeal towards the local culture inspired her to step forward to know the traditional culture of the illiterate people of the region. After her marriage the attitude of her father, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was changed, who, latter on inspired her to study the Deshi culture. To gather extensive knowledge she used to visit the remote villages in disguise and some times under veil to escape from the sight of the conservative society. She met the different classes of people and studied their traditions and culture.

Her simplicity and kindness impressed the poor illiterate women of the backward villages, with whom she spent most of the times and had food together. She collected songs of the boatman, Kaibartas, Mahut, Maisal, wedding songs and dances of Hindus, Muslims and tribal people. Not only that she sincerely learned them and started rehearsal at Royal Palace. She learned female songs from Sarat Sundari and Chitramala, Collected Muslim marriage songs from Amena and dances from maidservants of Rajbari. She along with her young sisters, maidservants and her niece Pratima alias Busu, used to practice in the "Andarmahal". Raja Bahadur appointed *Geedal* Karitulla and Bayan Sk. as the tutors of Deshi songs for her daughter. Her curiosity in Deshi songs and culture made her a prominent Researcher of local culture and a famous artist. She organized a Cultural group under her command and held musical programme of Deshi songs and dances in different occasions. Niharbala encouraged Pratima Barua to sing *Deshi songs* i.e Goalpariya songs, because of her melodious sweet voice. Her encouragement, in reality, stood as a booster to Pratima Barua Pandey who achieved a high position in the cultural world of Assam. She staged several programmes of Goalpariya loka geet in different parts of the Nation. No doubt, Niharbala played a vital role in the accession of Pratima Barua Pandey to the position for which she is called the Empress of Goalpariya Loka Sangeet. She introduced Pratima Barua Pandey for the first time in a musical function held at Calcutta in 1956, where she presented Deshi songs before a huge audiences winning over tremendous support and encouragement of the audience. This was the beginning of the journey of Pratima as a singer of Deshi songs, later known as Goalpariya Loka Geet.²⁰

A sudden change came in the course of the life of Niharbala with the immatured death of her mother that threw her towards sea of

mourning and went to Calcutta where she educated few years and got opportunities to meet some fascinated personalities of Calcutta. She came in close contact with the great litterateur of Calcutta, Sukumar Sen and under his influence she started publishing in "Desh Patrika" a series of songs such as *Namlukatir geet*, *Hudum Deopuja*, wedding songs, Goalpariya folk songs, tale of *Hastirkanya*. *Mahuter gan*. *Madan Kamarer geet*, *Dinmoni Chaudhuranir geeti*, etc., under the banner of the, "Pranti Bashir Jhuli." Besides, she also regularly published her Pranti Bashir Jhuli, in the papers like "Pashim Bangar Prasai" and "Viswabharati" from 1931-1934.²¹

She came in close contact with some high profiled personalities like Hemango Viswas, Khalid Choudhury of Bengal and their inspiration led her to publish these *Deshi songs*, i.e Goalpariya songs and thus tried to spread Goalpariya songs in the national arena. Her mission achieved the success in putting Goalpariya folk songs to the position not below the other folk songs of the nation. It is to be mentioned that the Goalpariya or Deshi culture was the culture of the illiterate mass people of this region. The high gentry regarded *Deshi Geet* and Culture as the songs and culture of "Chota loka", i.e., lower class of people. It is the credit of Pratima Barua Pandey and her ante Niharbala Barua, whose untiring efforts enriched the Goalariya Sangeet and Deshi culture to such an extent that it is recognized as the Sangeet and Culture of not only the villagers but also the culture of the decent society of Assam as well as of the nation. Not only that, Goalpariya culture was acknowledged as one of the rich cultures of the nation. Pratima Pandey Barua was awarded the prestigious award, "Padma Sri" by His Excellency, the president of India for her valuable contribution to Goalpariya folk culture.²² With a view to develop local culture and tradition she founded "Folk Music and Folklore

Research Institution” and visited many European countries where she held numerous musical functions on Goalpariya folk songs successfully.²³

The important contribution towards the cultural arena of Assam made by Niharbala was that she placed the Goalpariya songs or Deshi songs, hitherto identified as the songs of “*Chota Loka*” or lower class of people, to the rank of other folk songs of the nation. She, with a view to popularize Deshi songs and dances arranged musical programmes in various places in India and even in abroad.

In addition to this, Niharbala is said to be the forerunner of the higher education for the female students. She was, infact, the architect of the introduction of co-education in Pratap Chandra Institution. She advocated in strong voice for the female education and due to her efforts in 1941 girls students enrolled in P.C Institution. This was the beginning of the higher education for the girls in this conservative society.

She is credited for her zeal for founding a museum in Gauripur. She collected different eggs, feathers of the birds, colourful stones and tribal dresses and ornaments along with her sister Nilima Barua and preserved in the Royal palace.

(IV) Contribution of Pratima Barua Pandey

Pratima Barua Pandey is the legend of Goalpariya folk songs and she is better known as the Empress of Goalpariya loka geet. She is remembered for her contribution to the development of Goalpariya loka geet and Goalpayia culture, which had been known hitherto as *Deshi songs* and *Deshi Culture*. It is due to her devotion, efforts and hard labour that Goalparia culture has occupied a high position in the national and international arena. It is to be mentioned that Goalpariya folk songs so far known as Deshi songs had been considered as the songs of the lower

class people, i.e. the songs of the “*Chota loka*” and was considered unfit for the decent society. The work started by her ante, Niharbala in popularizing Goalpariya Folk culture was accomplished by Pratima. It was her credit that she has familiarised the people of India with Goalpariya songs and Goalpariya culture and secured a high position for it in the national forum.

She was daughter of Prakritesh Barua, the last zamindar of Gauripur Raj Estate, and grand daughter of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua. She is popularly called the Empress of Goalpariya folk songs, the Hastir kanya and Architect of Goalpariya culture. She was born in a family, which was culturally rich and brought up in an environment where music was the indispensable part of life. Pratima Barua Pandey was born artist who for the sake of Goalpariya loka Geet renounced the comfort and luxury of the Royal family. He dedicated her life for the development and the expansion of Goalpariya Sangeet and culture. It is due to her dedication and hard labour Goalpariya loka Geet has been placed in the national and international forum from a position of nonentity. Pratima Barua started her career as the singer of Rabindra Sangeet. Later on she inclined towards Deshi Sangeet or Goalparia Sangeet. Her father, Prakritesh Barua (Lalji) made a huge contribution to her outstanding career as an artist of Goalparia folk songs. He collected Deshi songs from different places and placed before her for practice.²⁴

She was called the Hastir Kanya, because her songs of Goalpariya folklore are related mostly with *Hasti*, *Mahut*, *Fandi* and the emotion of the family of the Mahut. Her famous songs “Hastir Kanya Hstir Kanya Bamuner a Narai” impressed her followers to such an extent that she was identified as Hastir Kanya. Pratima in her young age accompanied her father in elephant hunting and spent several days with the hunting group

in the camp. She watched with full attention the training of the wild elephants by the *fandi* after its capturing. The songs used at the time of training of the wild elephants impressed her and she learned them sincerely. This was the beginning of her career as the singer of Goalpariya songs. Pratima learned the songs of Mahut, “Hastir Kanya Hastir Kanya Bamaner a Narai” from the *fandi* who usually sang songs at the time of imparting training to the hunted elephants for domestication. Further Pratima learnt the songs “*Bhalkariya Bajan re Dotara Kamala Sundari Nase*” from the maidservants, who sings the same at the time of their dance in festivals at Rajbari and learnt from them the songs of *Maisal, Naiya, Sota Elis* and others.²⁵ She got a composite platform of Sangeet at her Rajbari where often songs and dances were performed. As mentioned earlier, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua held “*Jalsa of music*” in Attarokotta palace, and Pratima happened to enjoy such Jalsa. Besides, Pratima very curiously heard the songs of their maidservants in Rajbari during festivals and Puja. She along with her ante Niharbala and Nilima sundari participated in such programme. Niharbala was highly influenced with the Deshi songs and dances, and she organized a team at Royal palace comprising her younger sister Nilima Sundary, niece Busi and some other girls including their maidservants. For her sweet melodious voice Pratima was entrusted with the job of singing for the dancing programme. Thus Pratima was acquainted with the singing of Goalpariya folk songs in Rajbari.

Indeed, Rajbari was her place of rehearsal of music. She was not the writer of Goalpariya songs but she collected these songs from different sources and practises at Rajbari. She began to sing Deshi geet on stage first in Calcutta and since then her journey was non-stopping and she dedicated her whole life in the service of Goalpariya Sangeet and its

development. She possesses a high quality of sweet tune that the listener never forgets. Her songs are related with the illiterate mass people of the backward villages of Goalpariya society, the love, affection and the tragedy of the *Mahut, the Maisal, tha Naiya*, the frustration in love, comedy and tragedy; besides, some ethical and religious songs were the objects of her immortal songs of Goalpariya loka Sangeet.

She sang in the film with Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, the legendary musician and singer of Assam who offered a chance to Pratima to sing in his film "Era batar Sur" an Assamese film. In 1959, she sang for another film "Mahut Bandu Re." Both these films virtually won the heart of the audiences. She also sang "Palasar Rang", Bagular Banga Darshan", Hastir Kanya, Gajamukta, etc. She released some popular audio and video cassette of Goalpariya loka geet like Mahut Bandu re, Hastir Kanya.²⁶

Pratima was a popular radio artist. It is her credit, that the Goalpariya folk song, which once had been neglected, now has spread over to every nook and corner through radio. In 1962 in Guwahati Radio Station broadcasted "Hastir Kanya". Since then she regularly sang Goalparia Loka Geet in All India Radio. Durdarsan also telecast her musical programmes. In 1975 Calcutta Durdarsan telecasted her Loka sangeet and in 1987 Guwahati Duradarshan for the first time started telecasting her Goalpariya Loka geet.²⁷ The popularity of Goalpariya loka geet has tremendously been increased which can be persisted looking to the growing demands for Goalpariya Sangeet to All India Radio, Durdarsan, audio and video cassette.

Her efforts made Goalpariya songs one of the popular Loka geet in Assam. In every musical functions, now, Goalpariya Lokageet is common song for entertainment. Pratima Pandey Barua was awarded many

honours and awards for her outstanding contribution to the cultural world of Assam. In 1989 she received Sangeet Natak Academy award and in 1991 she was conferred with the “Padma Sree” award by the President of India for her contribution to the cultural development of the nation. In 2000, North Bengal University awarded D.Lit Degree to her. Besides, she has been felicitated by numerous organization and institutions like Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam Natya Samity and Ranindra Bharati University. She was recipient of Abbas Uddin Memorial award, Assam Silpi Divas Award, Joymati Award, Bisnurabha Award, and Assam Natya Samity Awards.

The legendary singer, the proud of Assam left for heavenly world on 27 December 2002. The All Assam students Union, as a tribute, made hers statue and places in various places of Assam.

Her great achievement is that she made Goalpariya language, culture to be one of the rich languages and cultures of the nation in general, and Assam in particular. Since the time of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, Goalpariya (Deshi) Language had been treated as the Royal Language instead of Bengali. Pratima Barua always speaks Deshi language and her Deshi Songs led the people to belief that Deshi Language or Goalpariya is a language of descent society too.

4.6. Contributions to Religious field

Most of the members of Barua dynasty of Gauripur were conservative in their outlook and pious who were believer of Shakti cult. Kabi Shekhar is said to have founded Mahamaya Mandir in Rajbari and since then Mahamaya became Kuldevi of the Rajfamily. He founded the Bigrah of Mahamaya Devi as the Royal Deity of Rangamati. He founded Mahamaya Mandir in Rangamati since then Mahamaya was being offered

puja regularly. His successors also acknowledged Mahamaya as their *Kul Devi* and continued offering puja with traditional method.

Though the Zamindars of Gauripur were Shakta believer, they did not hesitated to assist the other cult of their Estate. Bulchandra Barua is said to have extended help in foundation of Ramrod Kati Satra of vaisnavism, in Satrasal, the place where Bhubenswari the niece of great Sankardeva was married to Chilarai, the brother of Maharaj Nara Narayan of Koch Bihar. He granted 1300 bigas of land for the maintenance of Ramrod Satra.²⁸

Rani Bhabani priya, wife of Raibahadur Pratap Chandra Barua established a Satra at Benaras Gangamahal. Twenty five Brahmins were fed there daily and the cost involved was borne out of the exchequer of the estate.³⁰

Gauripur Zamindars were very liberal in religious matters. They built temples, Satra, and made land grant to maintain such religious institutions. It is said that Raibahadur Pratap Chandra shifted his capital from Rangamati to present Gauripur along with their Royal Deity. Kuldevi Mahamaya is known as Gauri too and the name Gauripur has been derived from Devi Gauri. Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, built the present structure of Mahamaya Mandir at Gauripur.³¹

According to the information furnished by Diary of Prakritesh Barua, that Gauripur Zamindar maintained a department called "*Devarsana*" to look after the religious activities. Following *Mandirs* (temples) Thans and Satras were with in the jurisdiction of Gauripur Raj estate, of which some of them were, ran by the Royal family out of the Royal exchequer. During zamindary rule priests were appointed by the zamindars and the salary of these priests was paid from the Royal

treasury. Some of the temples, thans and satras were granted plot of land for maintenance.

1. Kuldevi – Sri Sri Mahamaya – Rajbari

Chief Priest-1

Priest-1

Mahari-1

Deori-5

Pankaj lochan Ohakraborty was Chief Priest during headship of Prakritesh Barua.

2. Sri Sri- Kunju Behari and Madan Mahan Mandir, Raj bari Gauripur

Priest-1

Mahari-1

Deori-2

Watchman, Maliand

Bhaimali-7

3. Sri Sri Ganesh Akhra-

Payari-1

Mahari-1

Deori-1

Darwan-1

Mali-1

Jharudar-1

4. Rangamati Satra (BaNaraas)

Pujari-1

Deori-1

5. Alokjhari-Mahamaya Padasila

Land donated-1500 bighas

Pujari-1

Deori-5

6. Paglarthan-

Deori-1.

7. Dihi srijan gram-Ramchandra Than
Deori-2
8. Dihi Patamari-
Gopinath Bigra
Pujari-1
Deori-1
9. Symji Bigra-South Salmara-
Pujari-2
Deori-1
10. Sri Sri Kamakhya Than, Suckchar
Deori-1
Pujari-1
11. Bouch Kata waqt Property, south salmara. ³²

The Golden image of Mahamaya was stolen; later on a bronze image was made and installed in the Mandir. Apart from, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua built Madan Mahan Mandir in Rajbari. An image made of chandan wood of God Krishna and placed in the Mandir. Besides, the Radha Symsundar Mandir and Naraasingha Mandir were established in Gauripur during zamindary rule. Charak Puja is a traditional festival being observed in Gauripur under Royal patronage. Thousand of people gathered irrespective creed and castes to enjoy it. The religious traditions of Gauripur under Royal patronage have been developed to a general festival of the locality and after termination of zamindary system; the tradition is being still followed by the people along with the descendants of zamindars.

4.7. Contribution to the expansion of Education and learning

Zamindars of Gauripur have played a very important role in the expansion of education and learning in this part of Assam. The zamindars

of Gauripur are said to be the pioneer of the modern education system in this region. As has already been mentioned, the Permanent Settlement promoted the zamindars of Bengal as to the owner of the land. As a result of which some of them initiated the social welfare activities for the benefit of their subjects. They not only constructed roads, bridges, water tanks, founded charitable hospitals and temples, but also took interest for the expansion of education and learning among their subjects. They founded Schools, Colleges, Tols, Chatuspathy, Madrassa, Muktabs, Cultural Associations, Libraries, Publications, Dramatic Club, other Associations and local Festivals. They also extended help in establishment of such institution by the people of their estates..³³ It is to be mentioned here that the second half of the Nineteenth Century witnesses the introduction of western education in India, especially after the Wood Dispatch in 1854, which was considered as the Magnacarta in the history of the education of India. The landed gentry of Gauripur, who were the follower of the zamindars of Bengal, were not behind in pursuing the public welfare activities and they founded many schools, sanskrit tols and other educational institutions and extended help to the poor and the meritorious students.

(I) Introductions of Sanskrit education

According to Kayastha Samajar Ethibrita of H.N. Dutta Barua, the first educational institution founded by the zamindar family of Gauripur Raj Estate was the Sanskrit Chatuspatty opened by Tarinipriya Baruanee, wife of Dhir Chandra Barua, zamindar of Gauripur (Rangamati). Tarinipriya was a pious woman who with a view to encourage Sanskrit learning opened this tol in 1834.³⁴ However; Controversy prevails as to the fonder of the Chatuspathy. Some of the sources have claimed that Raibahadur Pratap Chandra Barua founded "Tarinipriya" Chatuspathy in

1834. But the date of accession of Pratap Chandra Barua to the Gaddi, as mentioned in "Gauripur Raj Bangsa" was 1868. It was not acceptable because, majority of scholars have opined that Pratap Chandra Barua shifted his residence from Rangamati to Gauripur in 1856. On the other hand, Nagendra Narayan Basu mentions in his Social History of Kamrupa, Volume II, that Raibahadur Pratap Chandra shifted his capital from Rangamati to Gauripur in 1850. Subscribing the view of N.N.Basu, we can assume that the date of accession to the Gaddi by Rai Bahadur was before 1850 but not before 1834 as he was minor at that time and the estate administration was ran by his mother Tarinipriya on behalf of his minor son. Taking this view into account the Chatuspathy can be said to have been opened by his mother Tarinipriya. Pratap Chandra might have renamed it as "Tarinipriya" in memory of his mother.

Whoever may be the founder, infact, the Chatuspathy played a very important role in expansion of Sanskrit education, not only in Assam but in North Bengal too. Most of the textbooks, prescribed for Sanskrit education in Assam and Bengal were published by this Chatuspathy.³⁵ Students from different part of Assam and Bengal came to this institution for Sanskrit learning. Rai Bahadur Pratap Chandra provided free food and lodging to the learners. Reputed Sanskrit pandit of the day, like Yaggyapathi Upadhaya, Jagannath Naya Panchanan, Radha Kanta Tarkalankar, Baikuntta Nath Bidyanidhi, Gopal Dev Bidya Bagis, Mahapadhaya Adaynath Nayabhusan, Ramanath Bidyalankar, Presidential awardee lakshmi pathi Tarkasashtri and some other renowned pandit served in this Chatuspathy as the teacher. Ramanath Bidyalankar wrote Sanskrit grammar.³⁶ Some of the students of this Chatuspati acquired high status and prominency in the society for their wisdom and personality.

Gauripur was considered as the centre of the Sanskrit learning of this region and it was accurately said as the Nalanda of Assam for its contribution to the development of Sanskrit learning in Assam and Bengal.

(II) English Education

The British Government established the first High School at Dhubri in 1879 and the School came to be known as Dhubri Government Boys High School. Raibahadur Pratap Chandra Barua extended valuable help to the British in establishment of this institution. It was one of the oldest High Schools in this region, which played vital role in expansion of higher education in this region. Pratap Chandra Barua is credited for opening English education in Gauripur. He established the first Middle English which was the beginning of English education in this region. It was probably, in the sixtieth of Nineteenth Century he founded the minor school in Gauripur after shifting capital from Rangamati to Gauripur. All the expenditure of this school was borne by the Royal treasury. Till then students were imparted only Sanskrit education which were confined with in the bracket of religion. He also established some lower primary schools in Gauripur. To the expansion of modern education in western Assam, Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua, the adopted son of Raibahadur Pratap Chandra Baruah, made remarkable contribution. During his tenure of office, numerous schools of different level were founded to expand education among his subject. He himself was a literary person and had great zeal of public welfare activities.

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua promoted the Middle English school founded by his father Pratap Chandra Barua to a High English school in 1899 and named it as Pratap Chandra Institution, in memory of his father. His motive was to see his Prajas to be educated. He provided free

education to the students with hostel facilities for the students of distant places. He founded hostels both for Hindus and Muslims students. Students from different places of Assam and Bengal, such as from Tufanganj of Cooch Behar district, Bhurangamari, sonahat, Nageswari, Kurigram of present Bangladesh and students from different places of Assam came to study in this high school being attracted with the facilities provided by the zamindar of Gauripur.³⁷

For the interest of better education, Raja Bahadur took special attention in appointment of teachers. This high school played very important role in expansion of English education among the people of Western Assam and in North Bengal. Pratap Chandra Institution produced a host of imminent scholars of which some earned National and International reputation. Scholar like Dr. Amiya Chakrabaty who was a Professor of Oxford University was student of this institution. Many high profiled personalities and eminent professionals, political leaders, Doctors, Engineers, Professors, High Ranking Administrators like-Deputy Commissioner and other administrative officers were product of this institution.

In his Report of 1905, B.C.Allen.D.C of Goalpara, mentions that there are four high schools in the district which are situated at Dhubri, Goalpara, Abhayapuri and Gauripur, The first is a government school but more than half of the total expenditure is met from the fees collected. The second, receives a grant in aid and the other two schools are respectively maintained by the Rani of Bijni and Raja of Gauripur.³⁸

A Survey has conducted on the production of Pratap Chandra Institution (P.C.Inst.) on the occasions of its centenary celebrations by Dr. K N Choudhury and prepared a list of the leading alumni of this premier institution of Western Assam. He writes, "This celebrated institution in

the second millennium can surely boast of her children who have become luminaries in various fields of Culture and civilization. This very centurion foster mother has fostered through the decades of her existence a good number of reputed educationists , artists, litterateurs Philosophers, Sportsmen, Civil servants and others who have left their contributions in several fields of human culture”³⁹

Some of the eminent persons, who were Alumni of this institution and enlisted by the School authority, the worth mentioning are like Pramathesh Chandra Baruah better known, Devdas Barua, son of Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah, was student of PC Institution up to the eight standards, who later on passed his matriculation from Hare school, Calcutta who is said to be pioneer of Hindi Cinema. Ambikagiri Roy choudhury, popularly known as” Assam kesari” an eminent poet and littérateur of Assam, was also a student of this institution. The famous propagator of Assamese Vaishnavism from the line of Sankardev and Madhabdev, Krishnakanta Brahmachari was student of this institution.

Dr. Amiya Kumar, a world-renowned poet and prolific writer in Bengali, English, French and German who served as teacher in many universities of the world was also its student. The New York Times, published a statement in 1970 on Dr Chakrabarty, “The pride of India”, and calling him as “ambassador of the universal human spirit, poet and peacemaker, friend and intimate of such twentieth century giants as Gandhi, Schweitzer, Nehru and Einstein.”⁴⁰ The political leader of Assam like Anirudha Singha Choudhury, Azad Ali, Jainal Abedin, the ministers and MLAs of Assam, were students of this Institution. Some prominent scientist like Sibendra Narayan Barua, researcher of Mathematic, Dr P Dasgupta, the world famous medical scientist, who lived in London and made significant contributions to the field of medical profession and

research, Dr. Dipak Chakraborty, who held a very high position as teacher and research scientist in the Indian institute of technology, Bombay, were product of this institution.

Celebrated personalities, like Srinath Chakraborty, Director of Public Instruction, Haredranath Deka, who was Deputy Commissioner, Prof. Kalyan Datta Chaudhary, who was Professor in G.U; and technologist of Institutional repute, lived in USA. Moulavi Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner and many eminent IAS officers like Harendra Deka, S.Sarkar, late Agher Bhattacharjee, Kartikesh Bhattacharjee, Lt Jamal uddin Ahmed were the students of this School. Besides, having produced many doctors, Engineers, lawyers, eminent teachers, industrialist, etc.⁴¹

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua also founded many Primary and Middle English school in his estate. He was patron of three Middle English school established in Suckchar, Patamari and Satrasal.⁴²

With a view to spread education, Raja Prabhat Chandra and his descendants endeavoured in founding number of educational institutions within the jurisdiction of their estate. In addition to P.C.Institution of Gauripur and Middle English Schools, he also founded Town J.B School, Gauripur Sankar Hindi L.P School, Bisnupriya Sanskrit Tol, and Girls L.P School etc. Gauripur Girl's school was subsequently promoted to Girls M.E School. It is to be mentioned that Rani Sarojabala started a Girl's school in Rajbari with a view to spread education among the girls in such a time when women were confined with in four walls. Her efforts convinced the Raja to establish a girl's school in Gauripur. Apart from, Madhurilata Baruanee, wife of Pramathesh Chandra Barua, founded a Music School in Gauripur. Besides, under patronage of Gauripur Raj Family Dihidarpara M.V. School, Dhaju Patsala, B.C Memorial school of

Dhubri, Government Boys High School of Dhubri, Chapgar L.P School, 19 no. Silghagri L.P Schools were founded.⁴³

Prabhat Chandra Barua encouraged the foundation of schools by the local people in their own places. He was the patron of South Salmara high school founded in 1934; and he donated land and building materials of the high school. As a result, South Salmara High school came to be known as Rani-Bhabani Priya High school to memorize Rani Bhabani Priya, the mother of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua.

He also patronized the establishment of Madinatul High Madrassa in Gauripur and M.E.School in Mota khawa.

Fund allocation for Public works: Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua sanctioned every year ten percent of his total revenue for public works and the amount spent for different heads of public works as below.

- (1) Education - 52%
- (2) Public health – 16%
- (3) Sadabrata -18%
- (4) Donation – 12%
- (5) Drinking water- 2%⁴⁴

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was a farsighted personality, who adopted some policies for the spread of education among his subjects. He organised a fund called “Siksha Samiti” with a view to extend financial help to the poor and meritorious students for higher education. A General Body of the Siksha Samiti was formed in 1911 with the members of 100 representatives from different places of his estate, and Raja himself presided over the meeting of the Siksha Samiti. An executive body was constituted to run the fund properly.

He collected contribution from his rich tenants and jotedars. To raise the fund, he imposed two Anna on per rupee of the revenue as the

siksha donation.⁴⁵ Scholarships were given to students of different categories who were poor and meritorious. The scholarships were given to the following categories of students.

- (1) Post matric students reading Arts, Science, Medical and engineering were given Rs.30/= P.M, who were studying in India.
- (2) Poor and meritorious students were supplied books and examination fees.
- (3) Scholarships were given to students' studying in Entrance school at the rate Rs.9/-P.M, till to pass Matric examination.
- (4) Students must be bonafide residential tenants of Gauripur Raj Estate.
- (5) Students reading in foreign country were granted scholarship up to Rs.300/- P.M, till the completion of their studies and also provided conveyance allowance to them. With the financial assistance received from Siksha Samiti many students became doctors, engineers and some students went foreign countries for higher and technical education. This scholarship was awarded till the completion of education such as B.A., B.SC, M.A, B.L, MBBS, and B.E etc.

As per the rule of the Siksha Samiti, intending candidates are required to submit applications to the Samiti within seven days of the announcement of result and the Executive Committee shall decide the applications for scholarship. With the financial assistance of the Siksha Samiti many students built their fortune acquiring knowledge from various prominent institution of different faculties within the nation and abroad. Among the beneficiaries worthy of mentions are Manabinda Chakraborty, Srinath Chakrabaty, Kamakha Prasad Roy, and many

others. Lakheswar Barthakur went to Japan for studying in Agriculture who, later on founded a Sugar Mill in Tinsukia.⁴⁶

Dr. Kamakhya Prasad Roy, who did his MBBS in 1924 with the financial help from Siksha Samiti, mentioned that he received Rs.15 P.M from Siksha Samiti and Rs.10 from the Raja. He also told that he was provided books and instruments for medical science worth of Rs.450. For the spread of higher education, Prabhat Chandra Barua provided lodging, in their Gauripur House in Balyganj at Calcutta, to the students studying in the Colleges at Calcutta.

He founded a library in Rajhawli with large collection of precious books. He also donated land and books for foundation of cotton library in Dhubri. He was patron of Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, a prominent institution of research and investigation of local history of Assam.

After abolition of zamindari system in Assam, the representatives of the Royal House of Gauripur did not hesitate to liberally donate for the sake of the expansion of education in this region. The best example of which was the foundation of Pramathesh Barua College, in Gauripur in 1963, in memory of great artist Pramathesh Chandra Barua. Kumar Lalji alias Prakritesh Chandra Barua donated 6 bighas of land to the College, Madhurilata Baruanee, wife of Pramathesh Chandra Barua donated building materials with cash of Rs, 16000.

(III) Construction of school buildings and hostel

Rajabahadur built school buildings for Sanskrit Tol, P.C Institution High School, and Balika Bidyalay. He also constructed a hostel for Sanskrit Tol and two hostels one for Muslim students and another for Hindu students of Pratap Chandra Institution (high school). The Present building of P.C Institution was constructed in 1913 with allotting land of

24.1/2 bighas. He spent Rs.1440 for Sanskrit Tol and Rs.500 for P.C. institution yearly.⁴⁷

(IV) Introduction of female education:-

Rani Sarojabala, the wife of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua was the architect of the female education in Gauripur. She first felt the need of the spread of education among the female. With a view to educate the female, Rani Sarojabala opened a private school in Raj Hawli. Female students were brought from the remote villages by the bullock carts under veil, because the conservative society did not allow the female out of the housing campus. She made all arrangement of the lodging of such female students in the Rajbari. This was the beginning of the female education in Gauripur. Under pressure of Rani Sarojabala, Raja prabhat Chandra founded a female primary school in Gauripur, which was later, come to be known as 1475 No. Gauripur Girls School. subsequently, has promoted to Midde English School for the girls students.

In regard to spread of female education, Raj Kumari Niharbala Barua did a lot who first raised the demand of the higher education for the girls students. It was due to her mother Sarojabala, girl's education was on the rolled in Gauripur but not beyond upper primary level. Niharbala felt the need of the higher education for the girls and advocated that they should be given opportunities to High school level educations. Considering no feasibility in the perspective of the contemporary estate economy because of the ongoing Second World War, Niharbala, instead of founding female High School, advocated for co-education in P.C Institution. She even took initiative in this regard and proposed the guardians of eligible female students. With this view she met the guardians and held meeting after meeting to convince both the guardians and the school committee. Her efforts, ultimately, resulted in the

introduction of the co- education in Pratap Chandra Barua Institution. In 1944 some girls student got admitted in P.C institution in class VII and in 1946 first girl passed matriculation examination, was Pushpa Sarkar.⁴⁸

4.8. Development of Arts and handicrafts

Gauripur has a long history of indigenous arts and handicrafts ranging from a remote past. Its Rajfamily has made a remarkable contribution to the development of such arts and handicrafts of this region, especially to the *sola evayfs*, terrocota, pottery, weaving and products of bamboo, cane, wood, metal etc. Gauripur was famous for its sola arts which were resemble with the sola arts of North Bengal and Bangladesh. With sola, the artists created various articles of children's Toys and Sacred celebration. They produced different kinds of dolls, icons of Gods and Goddesses and articles required for offering puja to Deities. The artist draws beautifully the images of the legendary heroes and heroines, such as Behula Lakhindar, icon of Kartic, Manasa, Saraswati, and Lakshmi with the sola. They also create different fruits, birds, animals, and decorating articles with this kind of materials. These arts have been spreaded through out nation due to the devotion of the artists under Royal patronage of Gauripur Rajfamily. Sudhir Malakar, a famous artist of this kind of art held exhibition in Madras, Tribundram, Delhi, and even in foreign countries like Japan, Switzarland and earned wide recognition.⁴⁹

Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua encouraged this kind of arts by allotting suitable land to the artists for its manufacturing. Initially, *Sola silpa* started with, basically, on religious motivation and the artists had produced articles for sacred purposes. But this was promoted to secular and commercial enterprise with the efforts of some of the members of the Royal family of Gauripur, especially by Niharbala and Nilima Sundari. In

the field of Arts and handicraft Raj kumari Nilima Barua has made a tremendous contribution. She was the daughter of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua and sister of Niharbala Barua. From her child hood she was very much interested in local Arts, like terracotta pottery, sola silpa and the product of bamboos, cane, wood and metal.

For the interest of the qualitative products with export quality of local handicrafts, Nilima Barua made wide arrangement for training of the local artists by the expert artist, invited from outside. She encouraged the local artists for quality production of their arts to attract the attention of the customers in wide range. She even invited the unemployed persons to engage in this job to extend its domain and create employment for the people. It was for her, the indigenous handicrafts, especially terracotta, pottery, sola silpa and product of bamboo rapidly grown and extended in commercial point of view.

With a view to develop the indigenous handicrafts to a commercial enterprise through popularizing its products and create wide market, Nilima Sundari, even, visited Calcutta, Delhi, Mumbai, London and Paris and held exhibition of the products of Goalpariya handicrafts. These products immensely impressed the local viewers and large numbers of them were sold⁵⁰

She collected various handicrafts products of the local artists. She, along with her sister Nihabala Barua, also collected different natural articles, like clourful stones, eggs, feathers, snails etc. and preserved them in the palace. Later on a Museum was set up for the preservation of her collections in Rajbari. "It was due to her relentless efforts and patience, the indigenous Art and culture of Goalpara flourished and popularized throughout the nations"⁵¹ Nilima Barua intended to develop the indigenous arts and handicrafts to the commercial enterprise with distinct

objective to make the artists of this region economically solvent. She came across with some reputed artists of National and International level and learned wide knowledge about various arts and technicality of the improvement of their qualitative products of the different handicrafts and fine arts. She studied in Chitrakala in Viswabharati from Nandalal Basu.⁵²

Nilima Barua was called "Loka Silpi" for her dedication to the development of the indigenous handicrafts. Being the representative of the Royal house of Gauripur, she lived a simple life and assimilated with the down trodden people of Assam. She was felicitated and honoured by the government and private institutions for her contribution to the growth and development of the local arts and culture. As recognition of her superb creativity and artistic skill, she was appointed by Assam Government as the Technical Adviser of the Department of Handicraft and Cottage Industry in 1954-55. In 1958 she was appointed as the Assistant Director to All India Handicraft Board (Designing Department). In the same year she was employed as the In charge of Regional Designing Centre of Bombay. From 1950 to 1960 she served as the member of the Fine Arts Academy of India. She also worked as the member of the All India Handicrafts Council for the period from 1960-1965.⁵³

It was Nilima Barua for whose service; Gauripur became the centre of Handicrafts, Arts and Culture of Assam. Her efforts to develop indigenous handicrafts resulted in the foundation of All India Handicrafts Council in Gauripur for the development of the handicrafts of this region. This Council has been converted to the "Marketing and Extension Service Centre under Ministry of Textile and Weaving of the Government of India. Through this centre a direct communication has been set up between the Government and the artists, which stands to be a booster to

the development of the indigenous handicrafts of this region. The handicraft products of this part of country have been exhibited and marketed in the National and International markets.

Nilima Barua died in 4th Sept, 1997, but she is remembered for her contribution to the development of local handicrafts and the culture of this region. The collections of Nilima Barua have been preserved in District Museum in Dhubri and Nilima Barua Kala Sanskrity of Gauripur. The Nilima Barua Kala Sanskrity has been founded in 1997 in memory of Loka Silpi Nilima Barua, which was inaugurated by Prafulla Kr. Mahanta, then chief Minister of Assam.⁵⁴

4.9. Hastibisharat Prakritesh Barua and his contribution:

Prakritesh Barua, the last zamindar of Gauripur Raj Estate (executor of Trustee) was the son of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua and was the younger brother of Promathesh Barua, the legendary artist of Hindi Cinema. Prakritesh Barua is better known as Lalji for his red complexion and fairness. Lalji was a great hunter, an elephant expert, naturalist and environmental conserver. His love for wild animal and nature makes him a unique personality in the history of the nation. Almost of the whole life, Lalji spent his time in hunting, catching elephant, domesticating them and providing training to the wild elephants. Being the prince and the zamindar of Gauripur Estate, Lalji passed his time in hunting in the dense forest. Hunting was the important feature of the Royal blood of Gauripur Rajfamily. All the members of this family irrespective of sex, learned the art of hunting, but Lalji's engagement in hunting went such an extent that it became his hobby and profession. Ignoring princely life and Royal glamour he spent his time in dense jungle nearly of the whole part of his life. Prakriteh Barua was a born hunter who caught more than 1000

elephants, killed 111 leopards and 65 tigers.⁵¹ He even killed 27 insane elephants.⁵⁵

Prakritesh Barua though belonged to Rajfamily but led a life of ordinary people and ordinary *fandi* (elephant catcher). His dress was very simple and he usually wore a half pant and Nepali cap. Simplicity was the basic feature of his life. From the age of 7 years, Lalji acquainted with elephant ridding and taming (*kunte*) elephant with utmost skill. Gradually, he was deeply attracted with the elephant hunting and next sixty years of his life devoted in it as his hobby cum profession. After catching elephant, he domesticated it and provided full training before its sale. His long time involvement in elephant hunting enriched him with full of experiences about elephants and its behaviour of different stages. He was not only expert hunter and trainer of elephant but also acquired vast experiences of herbal treatment of the different diseases of elephants.⁵⁶

From 1937 to 1981 Prakritesh Chandra Barua caught 1005 elephants from Assam, Meghalaya and North Bengal forest. Hunting is said to be the symbol of the Royal glamour of Gauripur Rajfamily. About the learning of the children of Royal family of Gauripur Lalji told in his biography, “ we have to learn many things, first to ride on horse, then on elephant, then to drive boat, and lastly to learn to lead man and estate”.⁵⁷ Lalji had deep love for animals, though he was a professional hunter. He strictly followed some principles in hunting such as he never killed any mother animal grazing with baby, the pregnant animal and animal in close season. He never left an animal with injury lest it would be more ferocious. Lalji was the advocate of the environmental preservation. About the man and elephant clash, he has opined that due to expansion of human habitation and deforestation the herd of elephants moves to human

zone for search for food. For his love of animal and vast knowledge of elephant and its behaviour in different stages, his experiences of the herbal treatment of the diseases of different kinds of the elephants, Prakritesh Barua occupied a high position in the international forum. To appreciate Lalji, the famous elephant expert, Mr.P.D. Stracey wrote in his book, "Elephant Gold", "The case of owner rider is rare, most of the owners being staid or middle aged individuals. Nevertheless, there are one or two notable exceptions. One of them, most surprisingly, was the son of a Raja; Lalji as we called him because of his fair complexion, look to *mela shikar* (collective hunting of elephant) with his *fandis*. He was a born elephant man, with deep love for the animal and a most human approach to business of elephant catching. He could always be relied upon to observe the rules scrupulously and had great control over his men with whom he lived in the jungle."⁵⁸

Lalji's love for elephant went to such a magnitude that he offered puja to the Goddess Mahamaya for recovery of his beloved elephant, Pratapsing from illness. He even offered puja to Devi Mahamaya with the blood from his chest as the gratitude to the Devi for her kindness in recovering of "Pratapsing" from disease. After immatured, death of "Pratapsing" Lalji went to Gaya for offering "Pinda" of Pratapsing along with the "Pinda" of his father. He engraved Pratapsing in the lawn of Matiabag palace so that he could see it easily. Later he named the veterNaray hospital of Gauripur as the Pratapsing veterNaray hospital in the memory of his elephant. It is a unique event that for the first time that an institution is named after the name of an animal.⁵⁹

Prakritesh Barua was not only a famous hunter and naturalist but at the same time was a patron of music, sports and social worker. He has made tremendous contribution to the development of Goalpariya loka

sangit and Goalpariya culture. He was the last zamindar of Barua dynasty and the glorious history of twelve hundred years of the dynasty came to an end during his headship of Barua family, because of the acquisition of zamindari system by the government in 1956. In his early life Prakritesh Barua was qualified for King's scout badge and represented Assam in the Indian contingent participating in 7th world Jamboree in Holland in 1937. He ran the zamindari of Gauripur from 1941 to the last day of the zamindari rule when government acquired zamindari system in 1956. He represented to Assam Legislative Assembly and the Assam Olympic Association. He was Executive member of Assam Olympic Association.⁶⁰

Lalji has made huge contribution to the development of Goalpariya Folk culture and encouraged his daughter Pratima Barua to sing deshi songs to make it popular. It was Prakritesh Barua who extended support to his daughter, Pratima, who was opposed by some of the members of Barua family including wife of Pramathesh Chandra Barua for her involvement in Goalpariya sangeet, a culture of the lower class of people. Involvement of women in music and dance was considered as against the tradition of the contemporary conservative society. Even, remarks were made that Pratima's involvement in singing and dancing would create hurdle of her marriage. Pratikesh Barua was not retreated because of such remarks; rather he encouraged her daughter to work for the development of Deshi songs.⁶¹ Lalji collected Deshi songs from different places and asked his daughter Pratima to tune these. Pratima herself admitted that her father made her singer and her mother made her a good woman. In building of an outstanding career of Pratima Barua, as a star artist of Goalpariya Folk songs, Pratikesh Barua has made a remarkable contribution to it.

Prakritesh Barua was, no doubt, an internationally reputed hunter, naturalist, environment conserver for which he occupies a high status in the history of hunting. His daughter, Parvati Barua was said to be his real successor as a hunter. His elder daughter Pratima Barua was a famous singer of Goapariya Folk songs. Parvati Barua earned reputation as the first woman hunter of Asia. Empressed with the hunting and catching elephant, Parvati Barua involved in hunting and catching elephant in her childhood with her father. Gradually, she adhered with this business in such a way that later on she became a famous elephant hunter. She was expert in herbal medicine for the animal. She like her father caught many elephant and domesticated them. Her reputation in elephant catching and domesticating was widely recognized. She was invited to International Elephant workshop in Jaldapara Wild life Sanctuary in 1982, "A week with Elephant". She extended help to the Forest Department of Bengal, Bihar and Chattisgarh in controlling wild elephant atrocities. The International community acknowledged her talent and excellence. National Discovery has made a documentary on the life and career of Parboti Barua, "Queen of Elephant."⁶²

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