

CHAPTER - IX

SURVEY AND SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWN OF COOCH BEHAR : V.

1. FIRST SETTLEMENT OF THE TOWN OF COOCH BEHAR :

The First regular settlement of the town of Cooch Behar was made in the year 1873-74. Prior to this there was no regular settlement. Shopkeepers had generally to pay revenue, but as a rule all the amlas, pleaders, and most of the other residents never paid anything. The revenue paid by the shopkeepers, was not fixed according to area or any recognised scale of rates, the amount being arbitrarily fixed from time to time. The right to collect revenue from the portion called Hat Bhawaniganj, comprising the principal streets of the town as well as the market place in which daily markets called Bazar, and bi-weekly markets called Hats, were held, was leased out to the highest bidder at auction. The lessee had the right of collecting market or Bazar dues from the Vendors who frequented the market place, as well as ground rent from the occupiers of the shops and houses included in his mehal. Only those who sold their wares in the market place paid the market dues¹. The rent payable by the Mahajans, shop keepers and others, which were very low, had not been altered since the time of Maharaja Shibendra Narayan (1839-47). The Ijaradar could not enhance rents, but he exacted for his own profit one month's extra rent called Ijaradaree. The large shop keepers and the Mahajans were, besides, too powerful to be dealt with by any private individual². The State Revenue, therefore, suffered and nothing like the amount to which the State was entitled to realised the total revenue of the town for the year 1967-68 was only Rs. 4,500/-. This unsatisfactory state of affairs attracted the notice of Mr. T. Smith, the then Deputy Commissioner, in 1968, when the ijaradaree system was abolished and the town was taken under khas management³, a committee was also appointed to fix

the boundaries of the town and the rates of rent. Several large holes in the town had in the meantime been filled up and the process of raising the several blocks so as to make them suitable for building purposes was in progress. It was at first proposed to divide the sites into suitable plots properly measured and to lease them out to the highest bidders at public auction for 10 years. But it was feared that a 10 years' lease would not be a sufficient inducement to any one to build a good house⁴.

A survey of the town of Cooch Behar was made by then Deputy Commissioner at the end of 1868, but for some reason or other ; it was not followed by a regular settlement. The first revenue survey was made in the year 1869-70, but nothing in the way of settlement. A fresh survey was made by Mr. Renuy, Deputy Collector, in the year 1872-73. The settlement Officer Mr. Beckett draw up a table of rates, which were not wholly acceptable to the Dewan, who submitted them to the Commissioner with proposals of his own for raising some rates and lowering others. Col. Haughton then passed orders to the effect that the lands in the town should be assessed at the same rate as those in the country and that the inhabitants of the town should be taxed for a variety of Municipal purposes by a Town Committee. This involved a distinct principle of taxation from that which had been adopted in making the first regular settlement of the rest of the State. Writing to Colonel Hangton's successor on the 4th April, 1873, for a reconsideration of the orders. Mr. Smith made the following remarks :-

" No detailed instructions accompanied this order, probably because colonel Hangton being on the eve of his departure had no leisure for maturing the scheme or for considering the difficulties and disadvantages which it entails and which probably might have induced him to reconsider his orders.

The First question that arises is on what principle are the taxes to be assessed. The Dewan has proposed to act up to the spirit of Act. III of 1864 B.C. and follow the principle of valuing houses and lands and taxing them at a fixed rate not exceeding $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent of their annual value. Such a percentage would never produce an amount equal to what the Raja is entitled to obtain and moreover as rents have not been adjusted according to an adequate scale we have no means of ascertaining the annual value of the houses and lands. I believe that the inhabitants prefer to pay adequate rents, the justice of which is obvious to everyone instead of taxes, the very name of which is everywhere unpopular. I have no doubt also that in the course of a few years, the majority of the inhabitants would have to pay both taxes and high rents ; for the fortunate persons who get lease of lands in the heart of the town at agricultural rates, would sublet and sell their holdings and high rents would be obtained though not by the Rajah.

For these and other reasons the Settlement Officer Mr. Beckett agrees with me in thinking that the interests of the Rajah would be served best by postponing for the present the scheme of Municipal taxation and by making settlement of the town rates, either the rates proposed by Mr. Beckett or those subsequently proposed by the Dewan. I would mention that I laid this question before the late officiating Commissioner at Jalpaiguri and he signified his willingness to accede to my proposal. The only difficulty which stood in the way of an immediate decision was the difference of opinion between the Settlement Officer and the Dewan as regards the proposed rates of rent. This difference can be adjusted easily if you are pleased to concede the principle of a settlement of the town at town-rates".

It was however on the basis of the survey made by Mr. R. H. Renny, Extra Assistant Commissioner, in the year 1872-73, that the first Settlement

of the town was concluded by Mr. W. O. A. Beckett for three years with effect from the beginning of 1873-74⁵.

2. RATES OF RENT AND PERIOD OF SETTLEMENT

This was a tentative measure adopted with the object of seeing how the rules introduced in the course of the Settlement affected the residents. The rates were fixed after a good deal of discussion, especially, as there was nothing in the way of past experience to serve as guide in the matter⁶. The town was, besides, in a state of transition. The rates were slightly modified at the next settlement which was made in from 1876-77 for a period of 8 years which expired in 1883-84, under orders contained in the proclamation issued at the Durbar held on the occasion of the installation of His Highness the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur in 1883, the term of the settlement of all lands other than Patit or fallow lands in the State, was extended for 5 years⁷. The Patit charcha or re-assessment of lands which had been classified as Patit or uncultivated fallow at the first settlement, having been taken up at this time, a fresh survey of the town was made along with these operations in the year 1884-85, and a fresh settlement concluded for 3 years from 1886-87 to 1888-89. The period of this settlement was made short, because the Rakamcharcha settlement (re-assessment of lands under a fresh classification) of the Pargana of Cooch Behar was to commence in 1890-91. So far, however, as the town was concerned, the term of the settlement made in 1886-87 was extended for a further period of 10 years which expired in 1900, and no fresh survey was made⁸. In view of the extension of the Railway to the town and from there to the foot of the Bhutan hills in the Alipurduar and of the consequent development of the Commercial resources of the town which was expected from the same, it was not considered expedient, to revise the rates at the time. A fresh survey was however, made in the year 1906-07 and a

resettlement concluded for 13 years with effect from 1907-08 so as to terminate with the period of the resettlement of the Cooch Behar Pargana.

The Cooch Behar town property was divided into 9 blocks as shown below :-

Block No. 1	-	Comprising	495 plots.
Block No. 2	-	Comprising	1240 plots.
Block No. 3	-	Comprising	761 plots.
Block No. 4	-	Comprising	201 plots.
Block No. 5	-	Comprising	426 plots.
Block No. 6	-	Comprising	506 plots.
Block No. 7	-	Comprising	635 plots.
Block No. 8	-	Comprising	570 plots.
Block No. 9	-	Comprising	58 plots.

The area under the survey and settlement of the Town Cooch Behar at both the first and the second settlement was the whole of the taluk of Cooch Behar as defined in the Revenue Survey papers⁹.

Mr. W.O. A. Becket at first proposed the following rates for the town :-

Rs. 50 per bigha for shop in the reserved portion and for houses of prostitutes.

Rs. 12 will be the minimum for any shop in the reserved portion and for a prostitutes house.

Rs. 16 per bigha for homesteads in reserved portion.

Rs. 32 per bigha for shops in other parts.

Rs. 5 will be the minimum for any shop in other parts.

Rs. 12 per bigha for homesteads in other parts¹⁰.

The Dewan's opinion about the rates to be introduced in the town.

The Dewan wrote as follows on the rates proposed by Mr. Beckett :

" It was probably never the wishes of the authorities to increase existing rates in the new settlement ; the rates lately sanctioned for the greater portion of the Raj are not higher than those at which settlements used before to be concluded by the Malcutchery. Under these circumstances it is not advisable to assess very heavily lands held by Grihastos or permanent residents of the town and by others from whom the Raja never collected any rent. They should be made to pay rent like others ryots, but the rates should not be so high as Rs. 12 and Rs. 16 per bigha. The rates for homesteads in the whole town should in the humble opinion of the Dewan be uniform and it should not exceed Rs. 5 a Bigha ; paddy fields adjoining a house should, moreover, be assessed at the usual rate of 8 annas. With respect to shops it will be necessary to have two rates, one for the reserved portion and the other for the other parts of the town. At present many shop keepers pay rent at the rate of 8 annas to one rupee a cubit of frontage of these shops at these rates the rent of a bigha varies from Rs.100 to Rs. 200 and some times more. Some shop keepers however, pay rents at lower rates. Considering these circumstanes the rates proposed for shops in the reserved portion is rather low ; it may be 70 rupees, (the minimum) being Rs. 12 as proposed "¹¹.

Dewan further observed "It will be rather hard if the rates for shops in the reserved portion be applied to all houses of prostitutes ; many will find it difficult to pay rent at the rate of Rs. 50 a bigha, most of these were removed a short time ago from the best part of the town to a place which was low, the circumstances too is to be allowed some weight Rs. 15 per bigha

(with Rs. 5 as the minimum) is considered to be a sufficiently high rate for them.

In connection with this subject it is to be remembered that all the residents of the town have to pay chowkidari taxes, the rate of which is gradually being increased."

In May, 1873, Mr. C.T. Metcalfe, Commissioner, Cooch Behar, sanctioned the following rates for the town of Cooch Behar :-

Boundaries of plot No. 1 - the rate was fixed 12 annas a cubit and Rs. 25 per bigha for the rest area.

Boundaries of plot No. 2 - Frontages on all four sides at the rate of 12 annas a cubit and Rs. 25 a Bigha for the remaining area.

Boundaries of plot No. 3 - the whole area at the rate of Rs. 25 per bigha.

Boundaries of plot No. 4 - West frontage at the rate of 12 annas a cubit and the remainder at the rate of Rs. 25 per bigha.

Boundaries of plot No. 5 - the rates on the South Frontage to be 12 annas a cubit and Rs. 25 a bigha for back holdings. The remainder of the plot to be at the rate of Rs. 8 a bigha.

Boundaries of plot No. 6 - the rate on the south frontage to be 12 annas a cubit and Rs. 25 per bigha for back holdings. The rest area to be at the rate of Rs. 8 a bigha¹².

The rate in the rest of the town to be Rs.8 per bigha.

Several petitions were filed by the residents of the town complaining of the proposed rates, and the matter was fully discussed at a meeting presided over by the Commissioner and attended by all the responsible officers of the State. It was argued that the proposed rates were excessive with regard to the condition and income of the State officers, Lawyers and other residents of the town, not being shop-keepers. It was finally agreed that the rate for shops should be retained at the prevailing rate of 12 annas per running cubit of frontage area and that the rates for house-lands, other than shops and frontage rates, should be at the uniform rate of Rs. 8 per bigha. The settlement was to be made as far as possible with those persons who might be in defacto possession of the land as lessees for a term of years or in cases where the lessees desires to erect pacca or permanent buildings. In cases where persons claimed a superior right and had hitherto paid rents to the state the settlement might be made with them as Jotedars. In cases where no rents had hitherto been paid by persons claiming to be jotedars, the recognition of this tenure would be dependent on the consideration of the circumstances of the case and on the payment of a premium or salamee at the rate of Rs. 10 a bigha. Persons who were willing to be a lessees for a term of few years might obtain such leases at the current rates for periods of 3, 7 and 21 years liable to revision on each revision of resettlements. This was the origin of the two classes of holdings viz. Jotes and occupancy holdings in the town of Cooch Behar. The rule continued upto 1905 and some occupancy holdings were converted into jotes at the Settlement held in the year 1905, on receipt of a nuzzar of Rs. 10 a bigha.

As it was stated earlier that the rate for shops was 12 annas per cubic, and for all other lands Rs. 8 per bigha. In the rest of Cooch Behar

town Taluk the rates prevailing at that time in different taluks of the State were adopted, as detailed below :-

<u>Table : IX-1</u>	Rs. As. P.	
For Homestead or Garden lands	2-8-0	per bigha.
For Bamboo land	1-2-0	
For cultivated land	0-8-0	
For fallow or jumble land	0-1-0	

These arrangements, however, did not meet with the approval of Mr. W. T. Herschel, Commissioner, who on the 9th September, 1874 recorded the following note on the subject :-

" I have had some complaints before me about this and have noticed some unsatisfactory results of the arrangement".

" The boundary in the first place appears drawn in too close to the Rajbari placing it at the very edge of the town, whereas there is a considerable gathering of houses to the North of it now excluded. The fact that land is Petbhata should not affect the case. Petbhata may fall into the town and yet be exempt as petbhata for life and liable after that to the fair rent due to its position. The petbhata therefore, next to the Rajbari, should be included. Conservancy and other laws will then apply equally to the inhabitants of it ; otherwise, we may have the foulest sports under the nose of the Palace. I think the boundaries might well extend further north. There are several houses that way which seem quite as properly liable to town rules as other parts far off from the Rajbari.

Again, I am not sure that the boundaries in some parts have not been a little widely drawn specially down to the south west corner. I have

only casually inspected that part but it seemed very little like town, the proximity of the new cutcheries may make a difference. Then the rates appear to me to require revision. The rates that are fair in the Centre cannot be fair at the skirts. I observed many empty spots in the reserved portion which seem to show that at present at least a lighter rate would be advisable even there. In the outskirts may be seen new huts sprung up on low marshy ground rather than on good ground in the interior. It is no object to crowd the town, but we are very long way from doing that as yet. We are spending enormous sums on filling up holes in the town and making good ground and it is intolerable to see the town growing up outside itself all the time.

The present rates from all I can see were not assessed with sufficient discrimination.

I request the Deputy Commissioner will call together a Committee consisting of himself, Mr. Beckett, the Dewan and any other he may think fit to add and revise the boundaries and rates with reference to the remarks and report result for the issue of orders in regard to the next settlement which will take effect after the end of 1882".

3. MEASURES ADOPTED FOR REVISION OF RATES OF RENT.

A Committee consisting of the members named above accordingly sat on the 11th August, 1875 with the result that the town was extended on the North and the south-west by the addition of two blocks. The rate for shops remained the same as before the old rate of 8 per bigha for house lands was maintained in fact in the block bounded on the North by Shibendra Narayan Road, on the east by the Smith Road, on the south by Sunity Road and on the West by Keshab Road. In the rest of the town proper, including the portions

newly added, the rate was reduced to Rs. 6 per bigha. In all other parts of the town taluk the rates were as follows :-

<u>Table: IX-2</u>	Rs. As. P.
For house land	3-0-0 per bigha
For bamboo	1-2-0 per bigha
For cultivated or fallow lands	0-8-0 per bigha
For fallow land in some places situated quite close to the river.	0-1-0 per bigha.

These rates were a little higher than those which prevailed in the different taluks of the State and which had been adopted in the previous settlement. But, on the other hand, in certain parts included within the boundaries of the town proper the low rates fixed for lands situated outside were adopted in consideration of the fact that they were inhabited by poor people with the commencement of the construction of the new palace, a scheme was adopted for the improvement of the surrounding lands. The palace compound was accordingly extended on the North and lands had also to be taken up in other directions for a variety of purposes. In order to provide suitable house sites for people, who had to be removed and who had hitherto enjoyed the advantages of the town, it became necessary to extend the limits of the town proper¹³.

The portion of the Cooch Behar town taluk lying outside of the area were also surveyed. Some new area viz. Kharimala Khagrabari was now included for the first time in the town of Cooch Behar. No alteration was made in the rates for shops and the area assessed at the rate of Rs. 8 per bigha also remained the same as before. The remaining portion of the town proper was assessed at Rs. 6 per bigha and the outgoing portions of the town taluk at the ordinary rates mentioned above.

With a view to provide acomodation for the people whose houses had to be removed on account of the extention of Narendra Narayan Park in 1896-97, the town proper was further extended on the east by the addition of the area of the Cooch Behar town Taluk. The new area was assessed at the rate of Rs. 6 per bigha¹⁴.

This tract together with the remaining portion of the Cooch Behar town taluk had been included within the limits of the town Municipality in 1892.

In proposing a new settlement of the town to take effect from the commencement of 1905-1906, Rai Calica Doss Dutt, Dewan of the State in his letter No. 1623 dated the 4th September, 1905 to His Highness the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur in Council, summed up the existing circumstances and remarked as follows :-

The different rates prevailing in the town at that time were as follows :-

Block 1 - The rate was Rs. 8 per bigha.

Block 2 - Rs. 6 per bigha.

In this block there are also some lands which the following rates prevail :-

<u>Table : IX-3</u>	Rs. As. P.
For homestead	3-0-0
For Bamboo	1-2-0
For cultivated land	0-8-0
For certain patches of land situated on the bank of the Torsa	0-1-0

(These are mostly agricultural)

Block 3 - The remaining portion of the town Rs. 3 per bigha.

There are some cultivated and Patit lands in this block which are settled at the rate of 8 annas and 2 annas a bigha respectively. Some lands have also been lately settled at Rs. 6 per bigha. For lands occupied by shops outside the old market place a frontage rate of 12 annas a cubit or Rs. 240 a bigha and for shops situated on the two sides of the old market place Rs.1-4 a cubit¹⁵.

It is interesting to note that irrespective of shop sites the highest rate was Rs. 8 and that the rates for agricultural lands were lower than those fixed on the occasion of the re-settlement of the State in the interior.

In his letter the then Dewan explained why it was not advisable to revise the rates of 1896. The Railway was extended to the town in 1898 and from there to the foot of the Bhutan Hills in two years. It was at one time thought that when the Torsa, the Dharla and the Teesta were bridged, European firms, as in Haldibari would be established here at Cooch Behar. But no such firms had been opened ; only M/s. Ralli Brothers took lease of a plot of land near the Railway Station but they also had not yet opened business there. Thus the anticipations as regards the development of the trade of the town owing to the opening of the Railway have not been realised. The Dewan thought that in consideration of the extensive improvements effected at a considerable expenditure in the different parts of the town, the revision of rates should no longer be deferred. The revision of rates have also become necessary owing to the fact that though a large number of roads have been opened within the last few years the drainage channels cannot be improved or other useful works undertaken for want of funds. The Dewan proposed the following rates :-

(1) A uniform rate of Rs. 8 for the portion of the town situated to the north.

(2) A uniform rate of Rs. 6 for the portion situated to the south.

(3) The remaining portion of the town, the rate be fixed according to the rules adopted on the occasion of the resettlement of the State. This area, though included in the town Taluk is an agricultural tract and will not bear a high rate¹⁶.

The above proposals of the Dewan have been sanctioned by His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in Council on the 19th September, 1905.

The total area surveyed, including the town and its suburbs, was 10.17 square miles. The area of the town including Nilkuthi and the Railway Station Compound was 4878 bighas 5 cottas and 4 dhurs or 2.5 square miles. All measurements were made with Gunter's Chain and the area calculated were then reduced to standard bighas, cottahs and churs.

All previous settlements, however, the measurement itself was made in standard Bighas, cattas and dhur. At the Revenue Survey of 1869-70, the area of Cooch Behar town, Taluk was found to be 1309.86 acres, which is equivalent to 3962 bighas 6 cattas. The total area of Cooch Behar town shown in the first settlement was 3965 Bighas and 19 dhurs which was less than that shown in the settlement of 1876-77 by 12 bighas 5 cottas and 18 dhurs. Of those two settlements the town proper the merely a part of the Cooch Behar town Taluk, which only was therefore surveyed in its entirety. It was noticed that at the survey of 1884-85 a portion of Taluk - Khar mala Khagrabari, west of the Gordon Road, was added to the town taluk and the area

calculated was 4167 bighas 8 cottas and 5 dhurs. A good deal of change had taken place since that time and before the town was measured for the new settlement in 1905-06. The main course of the river Torsa began to flow past the town in 1890 and large tracts of land on the south and south-west of the town taluk were washed away. This accounts for the difference of 55 bighas and 13 dhurs between the results of the last two measurement. It has also to be borne in mind that the results of two surveys even of the same area can never be exactly the same, especially, when the area under operation is large. The percentage of difference allowed by the Board of Revenue is 10.

The unassessed area during the settlement of 1905-06 measuring 2,568 bighas 5 cottas and 14 dhurs, was distributed as follows:-

Table : IX-4

B.K.D.

1.	Lands which gradually come under settlement.	264-14-12
2.	Land which is required for Public purposes and which cannot, therefore be settled.	2077-17-6
	a] The palace and its compounds Road, <u>jhils</u> etc.	352-14-3
	b] The Narendra Narayan Park	51-14-17
	c] Public Buildings and their compounds	469-14-05
	d] Tanks, <u>Jhils</u> etc.	210-0-1
	e] Roads & drains	469-6-17
	f] Lands otherwise required for public purposes	259-12-11
	Total -	<u>2077-17-6</u>
3.	Rent free lands :-	433-7-16
	a] <u>Debuttar</u>	146-4-15
	b] <u>Brahmattar</u>	48-4-0
	c] <u>Lakheraj</u>	19-2-11
	d] <u>Petbhata</u>	219-16-10
	Total :	<u>433-7-6</u>
4.	<u>Jaigir</u> or service land	35-15-18
5.	<u>Mokarari</u> land or land permanently settled	<u>21-4-14</u>
	Total :	<u>2,568-5-14</u>

In recommending a revision of the settlement of the town of Cooch Behar, the Dewan remarked as follows :-

" Towards the close of 1883, Your Highness in Council constituted a Town Committee and placed Rs. 9,000 out of the collections of the town at the disposal of that body for Municipal purposes. The total land Revenue collections of the town amounted at this time to a little over Rs.9,500 with the completion of the new Palace its compound was extended to the north upto Puranabas, where Maharani Kameswari Dangar Aye Devati, the Rajmata Deo Aye Devati and other ladies of Palace used to live. We had also to take up lands in other directions for different purposes. With this object of making suitable house sites available for people who had to be moved and who had hitherto enjoyed the advantages of the town it became necessary to extend its limits to the boundary of the town taluk on the north and the south and to the Gordon Road with its extension to the Bangchatra Road on the east and also to assess them at town rates. The total land revenue collections inclusive of the tolls realised in the two daily markets now amounting to nearly Rs.17,000/- which under the subsequent orders of Your Highness is entirely made over to the town Committee'.

The increase in revenue is estimated about Rs. 3,000, which is more than 25 percent on the collection of land revenue irrespective of tolls. If it be your Highness' pleasure that the increase also should be paid to them they should arrange to pay the cost of re-settlement. If necessary the State may grant a loan and the town Committee may repay it in 3 or 4 years with the increase which is expected"¹⁷

It should be mentioned here that the present limits of the town Municipality are not conterminous with those of the Cooch Behar town, taluk, as shown in the Revenue Survey map, for which revenue collections are made

by the Bhowaniganj Tehsil Cutchery. The portion of the taluk which lies south of the Hazrapara Road and is bounded on the east by the Bangvhatra Road and on the West by the Tract leading from the site before occupied by the house of Dina Nath Chakraborty of Patakura to the Torsa lies outside the limits of the Municipality. This tract contains agricultural lands and is inhabited by Agriculturists, who enjoy very few of the advantages of the town, the latrine tax and the chaukanidari tax at high rates were not thought fit to be imposed upon them. Although the Town Committee could strictly speaking have no claim to the revenue derived from this tract, His Highness liberally gave it along with the other collections made by the Bhowaniganj Tehsil Cutchery to the Municipality. The amount of this Revenue was not much, at the close of last year it amounted to Rs. 447.

With the revision of the rates and applications of the six rupees rate to the lands lying immediately to the south of the present southern units of the Municipality, it will be time to extend the Municipal limits atleast to the tract of which the rate is now proposed to be raised to Rs. 6.

The whole of the increase obtained by the resettlement of 1905-06 of the town was ordered by His Highness to be given to the Town Committee for the maintenance and development of the town of Cooch Behar¹⁸.

SUMMARY

The first measurement of the town of which have any authentic record, was the one held in 1868. This measurement was followed by the survey of 1869-70 held under the supervision of Mr. H. J. O. Donel, Deputy Superintendent of Revenue Surveys, Govt. of India, a loan of whose services was obtained for the purpose by Colonel J. C. Hanghton, the first

Commissioner of Cooch Behar during the minority of the then Maharaja Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur. At this survey the town was formed into a distinct taluk, called the Cooch Behar town Taluk. The area at this time was 2 square miles.

The above two surveys had no reference to the settlement of rents, the operations connected with which were for the first time undertaken in 1872-73 and completed in the following year i.e. 1873-74. The term of Settlement was purposely fixed for a short period of 3 years as the residents besides shopkeepers and women of ill-fame, were before exempted from the payment of rents and the authorities wanted to see how the new rules withdrawing the exemption affected them.

The next Settlement was the one of 1876-77 concluded for a period of eight years to end in 1883-84 with that of the General Settlement of the State. Beyond an extension of the limits of the town and a slight modification in the rates no changes in the rules were introduced at this settlement. His Highness Maharaja Sir Nripendra Narayan assumed the charge of the State in November, 1883 and as it was then thought inexpedient to undertake a new settlement, the period of the General Settlement of the State was extended for 5 years, at the expiration of which a fresh settlement was concluded in the town for a period of ten years which expired in 1899-1900. As it was in contemplation at this time to connect the capital of the State with the Railway system of British India, and as it was expected that the railway would develop the commercial resources of the town, no revision of rates was made this settlement. The Railway was opened upto the Torsa ghat opposite the town in 1894. The line was diverted, an iron bridge was constructed over the river and the railway was extended to the town in 1898 and from there to the foot of the Bhutan Hills in two years. At one time some European

merchants showed considerable eagerness to have lands near the Cooch Behar Station for the establishment of jute firms. It was also thought lands would be wanted by other traders. Some lands were accordingly reserved but excepting M/s. Ralli Brothers and a few petty shopkeepers none came forward even though the apprehend difficulties in regard to transhipments were to a great extent removed by the bridging of the Dharla below Mogulhat and of the Teesta below Kawneah.

At the time of the Revenue survey held by Mr. O' Donel in 1869 the area of the town was about two square miles. It had considerably increased since then. With the increase in area the land revenue collections, inclusive of the collections made at the two daily hats in the town also increased from Rs.9500 in 1883, the year His Highness assumed the charge of the State to Rs. 17000 in 1905 and though the entire amount was under an order of His Highness in council, paid to the Municipal Board of the town, called the Cooch Behar town Committee, that body could not undertake several useful works, the principal of which was a scheme for the drainage of the town which had been affected by the opening of a large number of roads. For all these, funds were wanted and a revision of a rates was considered necessary. The revision was also necessary in view of the vast improvements effected in the town. The Dewan's views in this connection with this matter as contained in his letter No. 1623 dated the 4th September, 1905, is very interesting to note.

A meeting of the council held on the 19th September, 1905. His Highness the Maharaja Bhup Bahadur was pleased to sanction the proposals of the Dewan, as also the estimated cost of Rs. 8000 which was subsequently raised to Rs. 10000/-. It was decided that the cost was to be paid by the

Town Committee, to whom the increase of Rs. 3000 then expected to be obtained by the resettlement was to be paid. The settlement operations were commenced in November, 1905, and completed in February, 1908. It appears that the total increase actually obtained over the old Jama of Rs.10,729-8-6 is Rs.6,283-10-9 or nearly 59 percent. It has been distributed over 5 years from 1908, from when the new settlement has come into force. The total of assessed area dealt with in 1458 Bighas 8 kathas 16 dhurs of which 3 bighas 3 kathas 13 dhurs lying by the sides of the market place, have been assessed at Rs. 1-4 per cubit, 1106 Bighas 12 kathas 13 dhurs at Rs. 8, 227 bighas 5 kattas at Rs. 6 and 98 bighas 19 kathas 10 dhurs at the General resettlement rates. The unassessed area measured 2568 Bighas to be occupied by the palace and other public buildings, roads, tanks, jhils etc.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] Pramanath Nath Chatterjee, - The Resettlement of the town of Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar, 1913, p. 52.
- [2] The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1882-83, Cooch Behar, 1883, p. 8.
- [3] P. N. Chatterjee, - Op.cit., p. 53.
- [4] P. N. Chatterjee, Op.cit., p. 52.
- [5] Harendra Narayan Choudhuri, The Cooch Behar State and its land revenue settlements, Cooch Behar, 1903, p. 508.
- [6] P. N. Chatterjee, Op.cit., p. 54.
- [7] Proclamation issued on the 9th November, 1883.
Extract from the proclamation issued by His Highness the Maharaja Bhup Bahadur : "The existing land Revenue settlement is hereby

extended for 5 years from 1291 B.S. with the exception that all patit lands brought under cultivation since the last settlement will be assessed as full rates".

- [8] Letter of G.J.B.T.Dalton, Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar No. 1560 dated Cooch Behar, the 20th January,1883, to the Commissioner of Rajshya and Cooch Behar Division.
- [9] P. N. Chatterjee, Op.cit.,p. 56.
- [10] W.O.A. Beckett's letter No. 398 dated the 30th May,1872.
- [11] Quoted from the Book of P. N. Chatterjee, Op.cit., p. 60.
- [12] P.N. Chatterjee, Op.cit., p. 62.
- [13]] Ibid, p. 65.
- [14] The Annual Administration Report of the Cooch Behar State for the year 1896-97,Cooch Behar 1897, pp. 5,6.
- [15] A.A.R., 1905-06, p. 8.
- [16] Dewan's letter No. 1623, dated 4th September, 1905 to His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.
- [17] A.A.R. 1905-06, p. 10.
- [18] P. Chatterjee, Op.cit., p.91.