

Chapter IV

Koch Coinage: From Anglo-Koch Treaty to Merger (1773-1949)

The year 1773 was marked by the Anglo-Koch treaty in the history of the Koch kingdom and this treaty had profound influence over the following course of events in the Koch kingdom. By this treaty the kingdom became a subsidiary state and the administrative power to a great extent fall into the hand of the authorities of the English East India Company. This treaty had profound impact over the Kingdoms age long currency system also. Though the treaty had not banned the free minting of Narayani currency but from the later developments after the treaty we can understand that the British authorities was in no mood of its free circulation and different times they imposed certain restriction over the minting of Narayani coins. Though the Koch rulers took some initiatives but their efforts were not enough to revive the glory of the Narayani currency and due to the pressure of the imperial powers the currency lost its hold from the markets of the state and finally the circulation stopped officially form 1866. But before analyzing the declining process of the Narayani currency we will first look at the successive rulers who issued coins after 1773. The coins issued after this date was mainly ceremonial coins and issued only in the time of accession in limited numbers. This coronation issues started from the time of Dhairyendra Narayan and came down to the state's last ruler Jagaddipendra Narayan.

Harendra Narayan (1783-1839):

After the death of Dhairyendra Narayan his young son Harendra Narayan a baby scarcely four years old was placed in the throne. Coins were struck ceremonially at his installation and in large

numbers during the early years of the reign so they are relatively common.¹ Apart from the normal half rupee sized coin he also issued a full sized piece.² (Plate No. IX). In the reign of Harendra Narayan the British authority took some steps to close permanently the minting of the Narayani currency but Harendra Narayan took some firm steps in view of restoring the pride and economic value of the currency. For his repeated intervention the British authority was not successful in curbing the minting of the currency. In his coins the term *Sri Srimat Harendra Narayanasya Sake* is engraved but the most important factor is that a single dot and a small crescent is also associated in the obverse side of his coins. Some numismatist say these two symbols are mint marks but these signs might have some special implications because they have distinctive significance in terms of its historicity. Besides the coins of Harendra Narayan some scholars claim that in the time of minority of the king, Khagendra Narayan issued coins. But the coins issued by Khagendra Narayan are yet to be discovered. Harendra Narayan's coins are now preserved in British Museum and Fitzwilliam museum.

Sivendra Narayan (1839-1847):

After the death of Harendra Narayan his son Sivendra Narayan ascended the royal throne in 1839. Sivendra Narayan had availed of this privilege and struck both gold and silver coins.³ (Plate No. IX). He tried to regain the economic solidarity of the Koch Kingdom, and took some drastic steps in order to do this. He tried to issue Narayani coins in view of smooth transaction in his kingdom. But the British resident commissioner did not allow him to mint Narayani coins except coronation issues. Moreover during his time Company official took necessary measures in regard to the permanent closure of the Narayani currency. In letter No. 2969 dated the 27th December 1845 Government ordered the Agent to close the mint in Cooch Behar. The term *Sri Sri Sivendra Narayan Bhup* was engraved in its obverse side. The word '*Bhup*' signifies, a person holding a large portion of land and which ultimately carries the notion that the issuer of the coin is a King. In the

reverse side as usual the term *Sri Sri Siva Charana Kamala Madhu Karasya* was engraved. Though his silver coins can be noticed in few coin cabinets, but the gold coins are now-a-days extremely rare. A few of his gold coins are now preserved in the Modan Mohan Temple, Cooch Behar. Besides this Silver half rupee coins are preserved at British Museum and Fitzwillam Museum.

Narendra Narayan (1847-63):

Narendra Narayan ascended the royal throne in 1847 at the age of six years in Banaras. Narendra Narayan was at Banaras when Sivendra Narayan died. ⁴ As Sivendra Narayan had no legal heir so he took Narendra Narayan as his adopted son. ⁵ The state was governed by Rajmata Kamteswari Devi and Brindeswari Devi till Narendra Narayan became an adult. ⁶ In 1860 Narendra Narayan took the charge of the state. During his reign he took some major steps to increase the material prosperity of his peasants and also introduced some reforms into the administration. In terms of reviving the position of Narayani currency he did not achieve any success. Only in his accession one thousand one silver and one hundred one gold coins were issued. (Plate No. IX). The terms *Sri Sri Narendra Naryan Bhup* and *Sri Sri Siva Charana Kamala Madhu Karasya* were engraved on obverse and reverse sides of this coins respectively.

Nripendra Narayan (1863-1911):

Narendra Narayan was succeeded on the throne by his son Nripendra Narayan who was nearing the completion of his first year of age. ⁷ During the premature stage of Nripendra Narayan, the charge of administration was vested to the Government with full authority and in 1865 they ordered that the use of Narayani coins should cease in the state of Cooch Behar. At that time the Colonel Haughton, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar submitted a proposal to the Government proposing the manufacture of Narayani coins with the king's portrait on one side and the portrait of the Queen of England on the other. The Government however disagreed with the Commissioner and declared the

British Indian currency as legal tender in Cooch Behar in 1865 and abolished the Narayani coins from 1st January 1866. As Nripendra Narayan was a firm believer of British model of administration so after gaining majority he did not take any step to re-issue the Narayani Currency and supported the British authority to introduce their imperial currency in his state. (Plate No. X). However the term *Sri Sri Nripendra Naryana* was engraved in the obverse side of his coin. A point to be noted here the term *Bhup* was omitted from the name. It has special significance too. As Nripendra Narayan was educated in England and he was keen to introduce the British model of administration in the Koch kingdom so perhaps he consciously omitted the term *Bhup* which literally means, a person holding a large portion of land and indicates a kind of feudalistic tendency. This is a major direction of the change of the nature of Koch state which can be supplemented by Nara Narayan's coin. Beside this the epithet *Sri Sri Sivacharana Kamala Madhukarasyas* can be found in a square box and garlanded with arabesques around. His coins are now kept at British Museum.

Raj Rajendra Narayan (1911-13):

By the demise of Nripendra Narayan the throne of Cooch Behar was dissolved upon his eldest son Raj Rajendra Narayan.⁸ The government of India recognized him as solely and rightfully entitled to the throne.⁹ His reign was very short lived and no major numismatic achievement was gained except the customary issues minted in the time of his accession. (Plate No. X). In his coin once again the term *Bhup* was incorporated with the name of the king. Besides this the Coat of Arms of the Koch state was also incorporated in the reverse side of the coins for first time. The royal symbol of the Koch kingdom was engraved in the center of the coin. This coat of arms had special significance because it was used as the royal emblem of the state. This emblem was used in the governmental documents of the kingdom. On the upper portion of the symbol a picture of monkey sitting on a globe and having crown on its head and a club in either hand is engraved. Under the flag, the picture of two corn-stalk

of paddy can be seen. Under this royal symbol a Sanskrit word, “*Yato-dharma Stato Jayah*” is engraved. The picture of a lion and an elephant is engraved on the left and right sides of the flag respectively. Below this monkey picture a flag is engraved and on this flag there are two swords can be seen in cross section, these two swords might be the reflection of the military capacity of the kingdom. A scale of balance is hanged on the top of these two swords which may be the reflection of equality and justice. On the two sides of the flag, the pictures of two animals appear. This symbol was engraved in the coins of Raj Rajendra Narayan, Jitendra Narayan and Jagaddipendra Narayan. Raj Rajendra Narayan’s coins are now preserved at British Museum.

Jitendra Narayan (1913-22):

After the death of Raj Rajendra Narayan his brother ascended the throne ¹⁰ whom the government recognized by a proclamation on 16th September 1913. ¹¹ On the occasion of the accession to the throne 100 gold and 1001 silver coins were struck in the name of the new king. ¹² (Plate No. X). The name of the king and the royal insignia of the Koch state are engraved in obverse and reverse side respectively.

Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-49):

Jagaddipendra Narayan the eldest son and heir of late Jitendra Narayan succeeded to the throne of Cooch Behar and the succession was duly recognized by the Government of India. ¹³ The coronation ceremony of Jagaddipendra Narayan was performed on the 10th March 1923 when a *Darbar* was held for the occasion. The new king took the seat on the throne and *nazars* were prepared to him by all concerned. ¹⁴ On the occasion of the accession to the royal chair 100 gold and 1001 silver coins were struck in the name of the new king. (Plate No. X). In these coins the name of the

king and the royal insignia of the Koch state are engraved in obverse and reverse side respectively. After the reign of Jagaddipendra Narayan the state of Cooch Behar merged with Union of India and the currency tradition of the state comes to an end and the currency of the Government of India was declared as the legal unit of value throughout the state.

So from Harendra Narayan coming down to the last ruler Jagaddipendra Narayan no such major change in the numismatic history of the Koch state occurred. It was due to the loss of political grip over the internal administration by the the Koch rulers and due to the feudatory nature of the Koch kingdom during this time. From 1773 to 1947 the Koch rulers were in the throne but all the administrative power was vested in the hands of the British administrators who never intended the free minting of the Narayani currency. The British treatment was shocking in regard to the de-monetization of Koch currency. They took one after another step in the direction of de-monetization of the currency. This de-monetization not only dislocated Cooch Behar State's political interest but, its commercial implication was much more severe, as the currency had a greater economic impact over north eastern part of India. With the withdrawal of the currency a monetary crisis started due to the non-availability of either *Narayani* currency. The impact was rigorously faced by the indigenous people of Cooch Behar who were accustomed with the use of *Narayani* currency in their transaction activity. In the following we will focus on the gradual penetration of the Britishers in the Koch economy and its disastrous consequences towards the abolition of Narayani currency. But before going directly to the de-monetization process of the Narayani currency we have to understand shortly the backdrop of such intention from the part of the British rulers. So first we will analyze the British motive behind the monetary unification of India and then we will go into the details of the process of the decline of the Narayani currency.

British Policy toward a Uniform Currency in India:

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were crucial periods in the history of South Asia. It was during this period that the European countries having created a series of stable nation states,

evolved the technology and institutions of an industrial society and began the process of colonial domination in Asia and rest of the world. For a long time before the rise of the British as a political power, the Europeans were carrying on their trade and commerce with India. During the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, European trade was quite normal in character and did not dislocate India's economic laws. It was after the battle of Plessey in 1757 and the conquest of Bengal that commercial relations became subservient to the political power of the English East India Company with disastrous consequences for India.¹⁵ The transaction of trade proceeded in an unprecedented manner when the norms of economic relations vanished and a politically oriented economic situation developed. In this new situation the advantage was always on the side of the ruler at the cost of the ruled.

Before the advent of the Britishers in India there was no uniform currency system in India.¹⁶ There were numerous parallel economies existed side by side with the central authority. Though the central administrative authority had their own coins but due to the lack of authority in the far flung parts of the country the currency of the center had very limited importance and circulation. Instead of the central currency the regional powers maintained their own currency for their own economy. There are two major factors behind this. First, the volume of the central currency was limited due to the metallic scarcity, so that it was not possible for the central authority to allot sufficient amount of currency for the regional economy. Secondly, in that time coins were treated as the symbol of sovereignty. So every regional power used to maintain their own currency rather than to follow any uniform currency. Both the central and regional power had a kind of negotiation in regard to the currency and there was no competition to each other.

This tradition continued in the successive centuries and there was no uniform measure of value in the early phase of British domination in India.¹⁷ Silver seemed to had been the unusual standard over the greater part of the country with gold coins in concurrent circulation at rates varying from time to time according to the price of gold bullion. Whatever the currency whether of gold or

silver, the coins differed widely in denomination, weight and fineness even with in the same region. In 1799 the company first considered the introduction of a uniform currency for territories under its control. At that time major currencies in circulation included the Bengal silver rupee, the Arcot silver rupee and the Madras gold pagoda. Apart from these, many states issued their own currencies and local transactions took place in copper coins or cowries, both accepted as the medium of exchange for a long time. The company's intention was to replace Bengal *Sicca* rupee instead of all others. However since the gold silver price ratio varied between Madras and Bengal so the plan did not seem feasible in 1799 and multiple currencies continued including several that the Company itself coined.

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Although the Directors of the East India Company had given their approval for the introduction of a uniform currency in India in 1806, the era of such currency began only in 1835 when, in terms of Act XVII of that year, the silver rupee of 180 grains, was declared the sole legal tender throughout British India, this was in fact the coin that had been in circulation in parts of the country such as Madras and Bombay.¹⁹ The mints were opened to the public for free coinage of the metal thus, India was put on a monometallic silver standard. It should be mentioned that although the Directors of the East India Company favored a silver standard they were by no means opposed to the circulation of gold coins. The Act of 1835 permitted the minting of gold coins (i) of the same weight and fineness as the silver rupee, that is, 180 grains and this was to be the gold *mohur* equivalent in value to Rs. 15, and (ii) of five, ten and thirty rupee pieces. It was declared that gold coins would not be legal tender but, the public Treasuries in terms of a notification issued in 1841 were to accept the coins on the basis of Rs. 15 for one gold *mohur*, in payment of taxes and other public dues. Besides the silver and gold coins, currency notes were also in circulation, these being issued mainly by the Presidency Banks of Bengal from 1809 and those of Bombay and Madras from 1840 and 1843, respectively. These notes were not however legal tender and their circulation was practically confined to the Presidency towns.²⁰

To bring about uniform monetary system the East India Company enacted the currency Act of 1835 according to which the silver rupee was declared as the standard coin in the country. ²¹ This ushered in the era of silver mono-metallism in India. Under the silver standard (a) there was free and unrestricted mining of silver rupee (b) the weight of the silver rupee was 180 grains and its fineness was 11/12 and (c) the silver was unlimited legal tender. From 1873 onwards the silver standard fall into difficulties. Due to the discovery of new silver mines, the production of silver increased and the gold price of silver began to fall. As a result of this, exchange value of silver rupee fell and Indian foreign trade received a setback. Thus the government on the recommendations of the Herschel Committee abandoned the silver standard in 1893. ²²

From 1893 to 1898 was a period of transition which preceded the adoption of gold exchange standard in the country. In 1898 the British government appointed the Fowler Committee to draw up a suitable gold standard for India. The Fowler Committee recommended the traditional gold standard with a few modifications. The government under the Currency Act of 1899 introduced gold exchange standard in India. The Chamberlin Committee of 1913 approved the working and suitability of gold exchange standard in India. But in 1916 due to storage of silver, the price of it started rising and the people started melting silver rupee and selling it as silver. This made almost impossible for the government to purchase silver a higher rate and supplying silver rupee at a lower rate. In August 1917 the silver rupee was ceased to be standard coin and the gold exchange standard was abandoned. ²³

The period between 1917 and 1920 was marked by unstable exchange rates. During this period the government tried to restore gold exchange standard by allowing the exchange rate to vary with the price of silver. In 1920 by the recommendations of the Babington-Smith committee exchange was fixed as 1 rupee = 2s. This was a very high rate and the attempt to maintain it cost the Indian exchequer Rs. 40 corers. After 1920 the government gave up all attempts to maintain a particular exchange rate. The policy which was known as the policy of Masterly Inactivity continued till 1927. In 1925 the government appointed Hilton Young Commission to investigate into the monetary system

in the country. The commission made far reaching recommendations for remodeling and renovating the Indian monetary system. Under the currency Act of 1927 a mixture of gold bullion and sterling exchange standard was adopted. According to this system the rupee was linked to gold but its value was fixed at 8.47 grains of fine gold. Rupee and notes were made convertible into gold or into sterling at the option of the government for making foreign payments. This hybrid system continued up to September 1931.²⁴

Coming to the Bengal province the standard of money was silver. Gold was occasionally coined, but the *mohurs* were rarely in use. The unit of the Bengal currency was the *rupee*. Copper coins were also in use. But while in other parts of India copper coins circulated extensively, in Bengal the use of them was much limited. Not many copper coins were struck in Bengal mints during the later part of the Muhammedan rule. Besides this smaller transactions were generally carried on through the medium of the cowries which was the currency of the mass of the people.²⁵

But these complex currency systems created very big trouble for the British authority. This confused condition of the currency involving many losses and much inconveniences in trade led the East India Company to its intention to establish one uniform system of currency throughout the whole of its possession in India. With the establishment of the Company rule the import of bullion stopped. To meet the scarcity of silver, gold coin was introduced in 1766 and 1769 but gold failed to take the place of silver. Bengal *shrofs* and consumers had a strong preference for silver. Thus gold price fell with the rise of silver prices. It made the currency market more confusing. Warren Hastings suspended gold coinage in 1777 but introduced it again in 1780 to meet fall in gold prices. Lord Cornwallis stopped gold coinage in 1788 but reintroduced in 1792 to meet the scarcity of silver and its impact on the currency market.²⁶

The company kingdom in Bengal grew into an all-India empire in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1833 the nomenclature of British Bengal became British India and Bengal became one of the provinces of British India; Calcutta was being the imperial capital. Keeping the

imperial consolidation in view, the Cornwallisian currency system was brought to an end in 1835 when the silver rupee of 180gm with the nomenclature 'Rupee' was declared the sole legal tender throughout British India.²⁷ The Act of 1835 declared that no gold was thereafter to be a legal tender of payment anywhere in India, but at the same time it authorized the minting of a gold piece, known as the *mohur* to be identical weight and fineness with the silver rupee, and designated to circulate at its metal value.

As the primary goal of the monetary policy in colonial India was to stabilize the exchange rate, so mere introduction of a standardize currency in company's domain was not enough to meet the British need. For this it was extremely important for the colonial masters to stop the circulation of the regional currencies. At the second half of the 18th century Indian subcontinent was bifurcated into numerous political identities and most of the major powers had their own currency system.²⁸ So these regional currencies were the major obstacle for the Britishers to introduce their own currency. Because the rate of exchange was not same and varies from region to region, so company merchant had to face great loss. So they tried to stop the circulation of the regional currency forcibly. As we know that the way of warfare and treaty system the English East India Company conquered the whole of India, so when they conquered a place, they forcibly introduced their own currency and withdraw the regional currency. But where the forceful accusation was not possible they conclude treaties and in the clause of the treaty it was categorically stated that the province should not mint any currency. Instead of that, British Imperial currency would be the medium of exchange. By this way the British administrators made the monetary unification of colonial India.

British Intervention in Cooch Behar Affairs:

Now we will discuss about how the Koch kingdom came into contact with the British and which resulted the loss of political sovereignty and which subsequently paved the way of the demonetization of its age long currency called '*Narayani Mudra*'. Before going into the details of the

storyline of British policy towards the de-monetization of *Narayani* currency it is important to analyze the roots of British contact with Koch kingdom. It will help us to understand the complexities of British intention towards the currency.

East India Company's intervention in the affairs of Cooch Behar (erstwhile Koch kingdom) presents an interesting narrative. British expansion in North East Bengal was not so rapid as in other parts of the country.²⁹ East India Company's contact with the Cooch Behar in 1772 was the stepping stone of the British in the northern frontiers of Bengal. In the year 1772, Khagendra Narayan, the Nazir Deo³⁰ of Cooch Behar applied to the East India Company for help against Bhutan, who had commenced hostilities and carried away the king and the Dewan Deo³¹ of Cooch Behar as prisoners. This help was readily given by the Company. Before going into details it would be better to take into account under what circumstances Cooch Behar a State hitherto independent of foreign control, voluntary invited British protection and what was the motive and interest on the part of the East India Company to intervene in the affairs of such a small state.

The background of these developments date back to the year 1765. The year is momentous in the history of British expansionism in India and is equally significant in the history of Cooch Behar State. The *Grant of Diwani* to the East India Company on 12th August, 1765 offered fresh advantage and legal status to the Company to consolidate its position in Bengal.³² Cooch Behar State during the second half of the 18th century was suffering from chaos and dissension of the ruling authorities which encouraged Bhutan to middle in Cooch Behar affaires and make her own position secure in the state. Taking the advantage of this situation the Bhutanese attacked the Cooch Behar State and carried away the king and *Dewan* of Cooch Behar as prisoners. This incident paved the way of direct intervention of the Company into the Cooch Behar affaires. When Bhutanese captured the entire Cooch Behar State there was no chance to save the state. At this stage, *Nazir* Khagendra Narayan in consultation with other dignitaries of the state approached the East India Company for the help to drive out the Bhutanese forces. In the opinion of Jayanath Munshi, it was promised to the company on

behalf of the minor king of Cooch Behar that a sum of rupees one lakh would be paid to it if it could succeed in freeing the state from Bhutanese control. But the offer was not acceptable to the Company which wanted a sum of the annual revenue of the state as price for its help in expelling the Bhutanese and protecting the state in future. However a treaty was signed with the East India Company in 1773.³³ The Nazir Deo concluded the treaty on behalf of the infant king Dhairyendra Narayan and the company force facilitated quick dispatches to Cooch Behar. Bhutanese were defeated by the Company's force and Dhairyendra Narayan the abduct king of Cooch Behar was ultimately released in 1774. By the treaty of 1773, Cooch Behar came out as is a tributary state.³⁴

British policy towards the de-monetization of Narayani currency:

The intervention of the British in the Cooch Behar affair was not only important in political perspective but also it opened the flood gate by which the British rulers started to interfere in almost every matter of the state. Though the Anglo-Koch treaty was successful in saving Cooch Behar from the clutches of Bhutan but elimination of the Bhutan's hold upon Cooch Behar did not result in peace and tranquility in the state. Old feuds and old jealousies between the branches of the ruling house that lay dormant for few years again came upon the surface. The result was that from 1774 to 1789 the state was convulsed with internal disorder and confusion which had a great effect upon the people of Cooch Behar in the future. Again the history of Cooch Behar from 1789 onwards may be called the period of Commissioner's rule in Cooch Behar. During the period the administration of Cooch Behar passed into the hands of the British commissioner appointed by the Governor General. In this time a series of letters were exchanged with the Governor General, the secretary and the sub secretary to Government and the Commissioners from time to time. The Commissioners informed the Government of their day to day decisions with regard to the numerous issues and problems of the state. These letters are the main source of information to reconstruct the history of this period and

now by analyzing this letters and other sources of information available, we will look into the matter that how the Narayani Currency of Cooch Behar came to an end.³⁵

The Anglo-Koch treaty of 1773 came as a catastrophe in the internal affair of Cooch Behar. The treaty can be identified with the act of *Dewani* of 1765 where the company had power without responsibility and the king had responsibility without authority. The Company authorities tried to poke their nose almost every matter of the Cooch Behar state affairs. Company's intention was very clear in this regard. They wanted to seize the political power of the state anyhow. To do so the age long indigenous currency came to them as an instrument of legitimization of their newly gained power. A point to be noted here that in Koch kingdom coins were minted in the time of accession of a new king to legitimize his sovereign stature. So the Company authority tried to fan the sentiment of the common people by introducing the imperial coins to get the support of the general masses. But the major aim behind the intention of introducing an imperial currency was economic. As the East India Company wanted to introduce an imperial currency in India, so the existence of Koch currency was treated as a barrier to do so in this part of India, because from very early times the Koch currency had a greater acceptability towards the general people of this region and it was extensively used in day to day trade and transactions. Apart from this as the Cooch Behar State situated in the Trans Himalayan trade route so the existence of any local currency might hamper the Company's trading interest.³⁶ So the Company authority took a series of attempts to stop the circulation of this age long native currency.

It has been already stated how the English east India Company had taken the chance to interfere in the Cooch Behar affairs. The Cooch Behar authority and East India Company concluded a treaty on 1773. Though the Company had not banned the Narayani currency completely but imposed some restrictions on the mint and fixed the number of coins which can be minted in the royal mint. Under the treaty of 1773 the state of Cooch Behar was minting 40 to 50 thousand Narayani silver coins at a place called Takagach, where the royal mint was located.³⁷ In the account given in 1788 by

Kashinath Bhandar Thakur to the resident Commissioner Mercer and Chauvet, it has been stated that the same number of coins were not struck each year. It was depended on the rate of exchange to Arcot rupees by which Narayani Coins were made in those days due to the non-importation of silver for coining money. As the Cooch Behar state had been minting the Narayani currency successively since from the mid of sixteenth century so the restriction of minting a certain number of coins was strictly opposed by the ruler Dhairyendra Narayan. When the terms of the treaty were settled, the king proposed that the right to strike his own coins should remain unhindered. But the Company's view was expressed in a letter dated the 5th January 1773 to the Circuit Committee of Rangpur-

“If the raja of Cose Behar can be prevailed upon voluntarily and cheerfully to relinquish the privilege of coining we would be glad to have it effected, but if he yields to it with reluctance, with we imagine will be the case, we would no wish to instant on it” ³⁸

In the clause of the treaty it has been categorically stated that the king of Cooch Behar have to pay 50,000 rupees as war cost and also to surrender half of the total revenue forever. ³⁹ But in 1774 the Governor General and the Revenue Council promulgated orders prohibiting acceptance of new Narayani coins minted after the treaty. ⁴⁰ Old Narayani coins were not so open to objection as the new. Coins of Rup Narayan, Upendra Narayan and Devendra Narayan were considered as old issues. Even local Zemindars objected to accept the new Narayani coins. As Narayani coins were current in Bhutan, Devaraja protested against the Government order and the Revenue Council agreed to deliver from the Rangpur treasury a good quality of Narayani coins necessary to the Bhutanese traders. Most probably it was due to the debasement of the quality of new Narayani coins minted after 1773 that both the English and Bhutanese authority objected to receive new coins. It can be easily presumed that the Anglo-Bhutanese war heavily affected the Koch economy and the silver supply for coining money might have been hampered and for that Koch king Dhairyendra Narayan compelled to reduce the quality of the new Narayani coins. This debasement of coins can be proved by analyzing

Dhairyendra Narayan's coins. By analyzing the metallic purity of his coins it has been proved that Dhairyendra Narayan's coins was substandard in comparison to the old Narayani coins issued by the early kings.⁴¹

During the second reign of Dhairyendra Narayan (1775-83) the Company fixed the maximum number of coins to be struck annually at 12,000 but the Cooch Behar officers paid little attention to the limit.⁴² At Rangpur, the administrative headquarter of Company, three kinds of coins like Sikka, Narayani and Franch Arcot were current and the public suffered much inconvenience due to varied value of these three types of coins. The authorities of the Company were therefore increasingly opposed to the Narayani coins. They initiated a definite policy of checking the circulation of Narayani currency. In 1777 Mr. Purling the Collector of Rungpur, reported to the Board that the Company would be free of burden from discount if the Cooch Behar mints were closed and the Narayani coins were gradually withdrawn.⁴³ Though the Company authority not took the proposal wholeheartedly but started its gradual de-monetization by denying the remittance of Narayani currency to Murshidabad in 1779. Besides this in 1780 the Company ordered to curtail the production of Narayani coins and ordered that the production of the coin be limited to 1000 per month.⁴⁴ In practice, although the authority of Cooch Behar did not recognize this order.

In 1788, two commissioners Mercer and Chauvet,⁴⁵ were sent to investigate the situation in Cooch Behar after several complaints of mal-administration had apparently been received. Their report makes an interesting reading. The report says....

“from the information of Kisnnund Bhaundar Thakoor who has the management of the Behar mint it appears that the only specie coined in it is half Narayani Rupees of which there were coined last year about twenty eight or thirty thousand; the quantity however depends upon the exchange on the French Aecot Rupees from which the Narainnies are generally in the Arcot Rupees, the intrinsic value of the silver in the Narainny Rupees can very little exceed one half of the weight.

*The coin however passes current throughout Behar and the neighboring countries of Assam, Bootan, Currybari”.*⁴⁶

As a result of this report it was decided that the mint should temporarily be closed down and from then on in spite of many representations from the king it was only rarely responded. It was certainly closed from 1789, until about 1795, was in operational in 1799, but was closed down again in 1800 on the recommendation of the resident apparently as a temporary measure.

After the treaty, though the authorities of the Company admitted the right to the king to strike coins in clear terms, they expressed their desire that it should be shortened.⁴⁷ When the Company managed the affairs of the state during the infancy of Hrendra Narayan, they almost stopped the minting of Narayani coins. After receiving powers of administration Harendra Narayan wanted to affirm his right of minting. A resolution of Government dated the 26th August 1802 admitted the right, but in their reply dated the 13th November 1805 to a letter from the king, it was stated...

*“As serious inconvenience would be experienced from that measure in the British Territories, my public duty will not permit me to concede that point to your wishes. On this subject, I request you to consider my determination to be final and I accordingly, expect that you will not have recourse to that measure”.*⁴⁸

In 1821 the king again raised the question. At that time the attitude of the Government became more un-favorable, and expressed in their reply to the commissioner dated the 22nd October in that year.

*“His lordship in Council is of opinion that, to allow this coinage to be renewed, after it has been for 21 years prohibited, will be opening the door to abuses not easily controlled, besides being on other accounts objectionable. Since therefore the Raja cannot claim it as a matter of right and is not entitled by his late conduct to any favour or indulgence”.*⁴⁹

On the 3rd February 1828 the Government was again addressed in the matter but they were not disposed to modify this determination.⁵⁰ Moreover they urged the ruler to stop the use of Narayani coins and Government also issued order not to take tribute from Cooch Behar authorities on Narayani currency.⁵¹ But keeping in mind the inconvenience faced due to this order, Colonel Jenkins the Agent of the North East frontier Province in his letter No. 476 dated the 16th November 1837, requested to Accountant General to reconsider that order.

*“I though it proper to recommend to Government that their order, prohibiting the payment of his (Raja’s) tribute in Narayani rupees should be suspended for the present or during the life-time of the present Raja. His life is not likely to be long protracted, and on the succession of a new Rajah (we) would be able without difficulty to arrange for the complete suppression of this currency.”*⁵²

Although the number of Narayani coins were struck after 1788 and must have been very limited in quantity they continued to be the most popular currency in the area well into the nineteenth century. On several occasions the British tried to replace them with British Indian rupees, but they always met strenuous opposition. For example in 1796 they suggested the introduction of Sicca rupees, in Cooch Behar to the exclusion of the Narayani currency. But the people of Cooch Behar were accustomed with the use of Narayani currency in day to day commerce so the plan had to be abandoned. In 1834 the government wanted to introduce the Farukkabad coins in Cooch Behar. Harendra Narayan objected to this and an appeal was made not to introduce the Farukkabad rupees. The government however insisted upon carrying out the scheme and in 1835 threatened to make Farukkabad and Company’s rupees as legal tender in Cooch Behar. But due to the vigorous opposition of king and his strong dislike for the measure, the government did not force the issue during the lifetime of Harendra Narayan. Although a kind of uncertainty was in the Cooch Behar state regarding legal tender of the state and this can substantiated by a statement of Capt. Jenkins. In 1849,

Capt. Jenkins said that “the people of Koch Behar still suffer much inconvenience from the prohibition to coin Narrainnee rupees, and the non-currency of the Government coin”.⁵³

After the death of Harendra Narayan, Sivendra Narayan ascended the throne and he was reluctant about the administration of the state and used to spend his times in religious activities. In the time of his accession one thousand one silver coins and a few gold coins were minted to facilitate the coronation ceremony.⁵⁴ Like the previous ruler the new king was not interested in the state apparatus so the question currency got limited attention to him. This non-involvement from the part of the ruler gave the Company officials to take necessary measures regarding the permanent closure of the Narayani currency. In letter No. 2969 dated the 27th December 1845 Government ordered the Agent to close the mint in Cooch Behar.⁵⁵ After Sivendra Narayan, Narendra Narayan became the ruler of the state and like his father he did not took any major step to retain the glory of the Narayani currency. After the premature death of the king his infant son Nripendra Narayan was placed on the throne. During the minority of Nripendra Narayan, the charge of administration was vested in Government with full authority and in 1865 they ordered that the use of Narayani coins should cease in the state of Cooch Behar.⁵⁶ At that time the Colonel Haughton, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar submitted a proposal to the Government proposing the manufacture of Narayani coins with the king’s portrait on one side and the portrait of the Queen of England on the other. The Government however disagreed with the Commissioner and declared the British Indian currency as legal tender in Cooch Behar in 1865 and abolished the Narayani coins from 1st January 1866.⁵⁷ The Narayani rupees were gradually recalled and received at the Cooch Behar Treasury at the rate of 100 full coins for 68 Government rupees. Although the government keeping in mind the public sentiment of following the immemorial custom of the royal family of issuing coins in the name of the new ruler on each accession authorized the striking of one thousand silver coins and some gold coins.

Demonetization of Narayani currency in adjacent territories:

Narayani currency not only the media of transaction in the Koch territories. It had its profound impact in the trade and transaction in the other parts of North East India especially in Assam. Though the medieval kingdoms of North East India issued coins but due to the fineness and good quality Narayani currency was in circulation in the markets of the North East India until the last decades of nineteenth century. So when British authority intended to circulate their own imperial currency in this region then Narayani currency came to them as a barrier to do so as the people of this region were accustomed with the use of currency in day to day transaction. So the British authority eagerly felt the necessity to demonetize the Narayani currency from the market places of North East India. So they took one after another step to de-monetize the currency. Side by side with the consolidation of the British rule in North East India, the British authority had attempted to introduce a uniform currency system here. Before the introduction of imperial currency various types of coins were in circulation in North East India.⁵⁸ The coins of the Ahom, Koch, Tripura states was in vogue. Side by side of these the coins of other states like Sica⁵⁹ and Arcot⁶⁰ was also in the markets of the North East. All these coins had different weight standard and for this the British as well as to the long-distance traders was in great difficulty.

To reconstruct the history of the de-monetization process of the Narayani currency we have to depend entirely on the governmental source of that period because without those no such official record is available to us for that period. These governmental records include the letters exchanged between F. Jenkins, Agent and Commissioner of the North East frontier, on behalf of the East India Company, Accountant General and Mint Master stationed at fort William, Calcutta. Beside some stray references can be availed from the records of Political, Finance Department and Board of Revenue of the Company.⁶¹ All these source to some extent recorded the course of events towards the demonetization of the Narayani currency in North East India.

The first boost toward de-monetization came from His lordship in Council of British India, who in his opinion that the new Farukkabad rupees should be introduced in place of the regional currencies in North East India. On 28th November, 1783 this message was communicated to C. Morely, Accountant General, by N.H. McNaughton, Secretary to the Government, Council Chamber.

⁶² Taking measure of the communicated message the Accountant General ordered the Revenue Accounts Officer to enquire about the matter by measuring the intrinsic value of the *Rajah Mohree* and Narayani half rupees. It was also ordered to calculate how many Narayani rupees could be received for 100 new Farukkabad rupees. The Revenue Accounts Office, on 30th December, 1883 ⁶³ conveyed the matter to R. Saunders, the Mint Master of Fort William. But he opined that the Narayani coins instead of issuing from should be brought down to the Presidency Mint for re-coinage into the legal currencies under Section 14 Regulation 35 of 1793 @ 37% discount.

After receiving the order on 12th March 1834, the mint master of Fort William communicated to the Accountant of the Revenue Department that 100 Narayani coins were equal to 69 Farukkabad rupees. ⁶⁴ The mint master then conveyed his message to the Secretary to the Government in the Political Department by Morely. The Secretary opined that...

‘the Public Officers receiving these coins be restricted from re-issuing them for any purpose, and be directed to retain them in their treasuries till a favorable opportunity offer to remit the accumulated amount to three Presidency Mint under the escort of troops at seasons when the latter are relieved by other troops’.

He further opined that the public officers should be given twelve months time to exchange the local coins to new Farukkabad rupees. Though the re-coinage of Narayani coins were restricted but another coins prevailing in North East India i.e. Sicca rupees were given permission to recoinage. Probably as the Sicca rupees were not local coins so it was given permission but as Narayani coins were the local coins so considering the sentiment of the local inhabitants, the British authority took some cautions in regard to its recoinage. The secretary to the government in the political department

Mr. Morely opined that until the Farukkabad rupees were adequately supplied, the Sicca coins might be allowed to be re-issued in public payments. Lastly Morely told the Accountant General to grant five lacks of Farukkabad rupees for the effective maintenance of the company proceedings in Assam, viz. one lakh to the Political Treasury in upper Assam and the remaining two lakhs each to the Revenue Treasuries in central and lower Assam. ⁶⁵

On 10th April, 1834 ⁶⁶ the East India Company's authorities had conveyed their message to introduce the Farukkabad rupees ⁶⁷ in Assam. But the the area of circulation of the new coins were not defined in the order so, Capt. F. Jenkins had written a letter to the Company, whether or not the above instructions were applicable to the North Eastern part of Rangpur. He wanted to take the Rangpur district under the perview of the Company's order because to him Goalpara was one of a principal trading center of Assam and the Narayani currency constituted the currency of the neighbouring Cooch Behar. The tribute of Cooch Behar was also paid in that currency. Jenkins thereafter led to apprehend that unless Farukkabad rupees were made the currency of Gawalpara, the measure intended by the Government would be rendered inadequate and unproductive. He also wrote to C.V. Trevelyan, Deputy Secretary to Government in the Political Department, Fort William as follows....

“3rd. The total abolition of the Narainee can never be accomplished until an arrangement is made with the Cooch Behar Rajah to pay his tribute in Sonur or Sicca Rupees for it is in vain to expect that these rupees will became extinct from merely prohibiting the Rajah from having a mint, as private mints, both in his and our country, will always keep up a supply as long as the Narainee rupees are receivable in our Treasuries and the coinage a source of great profit.”

“4th. The Raja of Cooch Behar might object that the Narainee rupees Being the coin of his country, he was unable to make the payments in Sonats or Sicca

and I am not aware how difficulty is to be got over than by allowing the Rajah to coin rupees. In weight and assay entirely similar to the F. rupees.”

“The privilege of coining has been long sought for the Cooch Behar Rajah and I think he would gladly indemnify the Government for the loss of seigneurage that would be occasioned by allowing to coin to the extent of or two lacks per annum”.⁶⁸

On 27th May, 1834,⁶⁹ Jenkins further informed that *“the Narainee Rupees were the coin of the countries of Cooch Behar, Bijnee, Kamroop and Durrang (in Assam) under the different members of the Narrain race of princes”*. He also opined that according to the assessment of his assistant Capt. Davidson, ten lakh of Narayani Rupees existed along the Gowalpara frontier and the total withdrawal of the current would be very difficult. Further he commented that there were private mints and any crisis of Narayani currency would provoke the private mints to issue more coins. Regarding private mint he opined *“in the Bootan Doars and the demand created by any forced measure of the nature alluded to would have a tendency to prolong their existence”*.⁷⁰

Jenkins had suggested several steps in the direction of the withdrawal of the Narayani coins. According to him there should be a fixed date upto that the circulation of the Narayani currency may be permitted but after that it should be ceased to be a legal tender. Jenkins suggested the people to give their Narayani coins to the company treasury and take their value in Sonat.⁷¹ Jenkins had his opinion that the company should arrange an agreement with the King of Cooch Behar to surrender all Narayani coins of their treasury. Besides this Jenkins felt the necessity to provide a good amount of half and quarter rupees of Company to the local treasuries for the effective maintenance of the day to day dealings. To tackle the adverse situation after the withdrawal of the Narayani coins a suggestion was forwarded by Capt. Bogle to Jenkins. Jenkins forwarded this suggestion to the political department.⁷² In this letter Jenkins wished that the Narayani coins should be taken at his treasury at a 25 per cent discount instead of 32 as directed in the Accountant General. Bogley also proposed to

collect rent in Sonat rupees instead of Narayani coins and it might increase the government revenue to a great extent. Regarding the effect of the proposal on the peasants Jenkins opined...

“I hope that considering the improving condition of the Province and the great oppression that the Ryots now suffer in consequence of the advantage taken of them by the Shroffs and Chowdries that when the change of the currency has been once effected the additional burden will be left”.

Again, keeping in mind the depreciated market value of Sicca Rupees, Jenkins stated that if the Government did not sanction to receive the Narayani rupees at a premium value the Company would not be rid of the Narayani coinage for years to come. Jenkins strongly recommended for an additional supply of five lakhs in rupees and also opined that Company should constantly supply the half and quarter rupees to habituate local people to use the new coins, otherwise a vast majority of Narayani coinage would be in the hands of the people. It appeared to Jenkins as to give justice to the people, the Company should encourage the people to submit their currency and take new coins in lieu of that. But by a letter on 10th July, 1834 the Company authority expressed the opinion that it is impossible to permit one year time to implant the new currency. With the rejection of his proposal Jenkins again wrote ⁷³ to the Political Department and expressed his fear that the abolition of the Narayani currency might provoke the local people against the Company authority. Jenkins also felt that from the moment Narayani Rupees would no longer be received at the Government Treasuries, the holders of such coins would suffer severely. His letter also highlighted other aspects such as land measurement, assessment and settlements in the province which are quite interesting from various angles. Jenkins said in the following words...

“3rd. With reference to your 4th paragraph, I beg to observe that all contracts between the Government and the people had ceased the whole of the settlements in the Province being annual and the year up. Whether the new Rupees had been introduced or not, there would have been a general rise in the rate of land

assessment consequent to the very improved state of matters in the Province and by taking the Narainee rupees at 25 percent discount we should have greatly facilitated the keeping of accounts and encouraged the bringing in of that coinage to the treasuries, and should not have materially raised that rates upon the Ryots beyond what had previously been contemplated. The gain to the Government would have been great in the 2nd and succeeding years, and having displaced the Narrainee Rupees, I imagine the people would not have suffered from the alteration of the assessment from Narrainee to Farukkabad Rupees.

4th The assessment that the Ryots will have to pay under new settlements will in fact be only in a slight degree greater than what they hitherto paid to their Chowdries, or subordinate officers of collection, but by increased means of European surveillance by the total abolition of all irregular cesses and the effect of an exact measurement of the lands, we have now have the power of preventing any concealments, of giving to each Ryot in the country a written statement of what he has to pay, and of knowing that the Chowdry has not exceeded the demands of Government. I speak now of the districts of Kamroop in which the measurement of the lands has been completed, throughout these the settlements will be concluded for 5 years. But in the Districts of central Assam where the lands are not yet measured, the settlement must still be annual”.

On a letter dated 30.08.1834 Jenkins had requested the Political Department to order the Superintendent of the Government Lithographic Press to strike off 4 or 6 thousand impressions of the Tables of Exchanges for the use of the ‘Chowdries’ and ‘Patgris’. This table contains the rate of exchange of conversion of Sicca rupees into Farukkabad and of new Farukkabad rupees into Narayani rupees and vice versa. Jenkins opined that as the people are in general very ignorant of arithmetic, true exchange should be extensively known to all. ⁷⁴ The said tables of exchanges were sent by the

Political Department to the Accountant General for ensuring the correctness of the calculations and eventually sending 7000 lithographed copies for use.⁷⁵

The matter of rate of exchange and other allied factors continued to be dominated and it led the Accountant General to write to the Political Department in length regarding the matter on 23rd October 1834.⁷⁶ In his letter, the Accountant General had advised that after the expiry of twelve months from the receipt of the New Farukkabad rupees in Assam, the receipt of Sicca rupees be prohibited both in payment of revenue and in exchange for the Farukkabad rupees, except at the rate 95/11 to the 100 Farukkabad, to prevent the importation of Siccas from the neighboring districts and the continued tender of that rupee. He wrote, the rules that obtain in the western provinces in respect to the relative value of Sicca and New Farukkabad rupees might be applied to the treasury receipts and issues of the province of Assam and north east parts of Rungpore generally, the receipts in payments of revenue in the local coin would continue to be governed by the following rates i.e. 100 Rajah Mohree Rs. = 100 New Farukkabad rupees; 100 Narainee Rs. = 69 New Farukkabad rupees, until it might be expedient to prohibit their tender. In addition to this it was asked that henceforth all bills must be drawn out in Farukkabad rupees. The complicacy in introduction of the new Farukkabad rupees vis-a-vis local coins have been highlighted in paragraph 12 of the above letter which reads as follows:

“The rates at which the local coins are now receivable, appear to be the best suited to the object in view, without subjecting Government to a great loss ; to authorize their receipt at rates above their intrinsic value, would unquestionably hold out an additional inducement to tender the local coins in payment of Revenue in preference to the New Farukkabad rupee, but it would at the same time be depreciating our own currency, and it might have the effect of creating an unfavorable impression as to the intrinsic value of our own coins. It would assuredly stimulate the activity of the local mints and prolong their existence. The

parties who are interested in maintaining the native mints, have probably propagated unfavorable reports in respect to the British currency ; but when the natives find that we make no demure to receiving back our own coin, the reaction in favour of the latter will, I apprehend, lead to the extinction of the native mints and if the cooperation of the Raja of Cooch Behar, in the manner suggested by Capt. Jenkins, can be secured, it is very desirable, and will no doubt have great influence with the native community and I strongly commend that, His Highness's aid be requested, until we have displaced a considerable portion of the local coins, when it will perhaps be proper to recognize the New Farukhabad rupee as the only legal tender in Assam and the North East Parts of Rungpore."

But the plan to introduce the company currency was not taken wholeheartedly by the native rulers and they expressed their concerns about that to the authority. They forwarded few letter to the Company authority stationed at Rangpur and the grave reaction of the native ruler in the proposed withdrawal of local coins can clearly be noticed from a translated extract.⁷⁷ The letter was from the Royal Court of Cooch Behar. The transliterated copy reads as under...

"...you to reflect on the injury such a change will bring on me. Former Commissioners have frequently written to me to pay my revenue in the Current Sicca rupees proposing to deduct some 36,000 some hundreds of rupees as the difference in the coin, but I have never consented to the proposal solely with a view to preserve the currency of my coin and in this have met with the support of the Court. Should the Narrainee Rupee be entirely done away with my Ryots and Merchants also must be injured if not totally ruined, as a very considerable trade is carried on between us and the Bhotes with whom none but the Narrainee rupees will pass and should this lead to a stoppage of our trade with them it will be very difficult for me to pay my revenue at all. The delay in writing must be given entirely to the difficulty of giving a suitable

answer to your proposal, and perceiving that none but yourself can assist me in this dilemma I have laid upon to you my condition. I acknowledge myself entirely subject to the Company who can never be benefited by insisting on a change so materially injurious. I must therefore beg you to stop the proposed measure yourself or to write to the Court in such terms that it may not take place. (True translations, signed by, F. Jenkins, A.G.G.)

In reply to the above stated Accountant General's letter the the Political Department replied on 30th October 1834⁷⁸ and it was stated there that the Honorable Vice President in Council agreed in with the different measures suggested by the Accountant General and authorized him to carry them into effect, in communication with Capt. Jenkins. But by 1838 there was a certain change in the scenario. In a letter dated 10th September, 1838, the Agent to the Governor General in Assam had recommended to the Accountant General to discontinue the receipt of Narayani and Rajah Mohree coins from 1st January, 1839 at the treasuries of Kamroop, Durrung and Nowgaon on the ground that coins of those states were in very limited circulation in those districts. However the Accountant General did not feel disposed to concur with the Agent's views because according to him, if the circulation of Rajah Mohree and Narainee rupees were so limited, *"they would soon cease to be tendered at all and no order to prohibit their receipt would be necessary"*.⁷⁹

The problem regarding the rate of exchange remained confusing and from the proceedings of the Honorable Governor of Bengal in the Finance Department dated the 7th August, 1839, it appeared that enquiries were again made (vide Letter No. 74 of the 17th January 1839) to the accountant General about the rates and rules under which native coins were credited when received at a Government Treasury in Assam. In response, the Accountant General had furnished all the information and recommended that the *"Rajah Mohuree and Narainee coinage, whether fractional or otherwise, should henceforth be received as bullion, subject to a duty of 2 percent for re-coinage"*

On 23rd September 1839 Captain Jenkins had sent a letter to the Suder Board of Revenue, Fort William⁸⁰ about the process of ceasing to accept Narayani or Rajah Mohree rupees at the treasuries in Assam. In his letter he expressed his deep concern about the problems after the withdrawal of the local currency. In his opinion, the quantity of Narayani rupees in circulation in Assam was very limited and mostly coined in the Bootan. Jenkins further stated that there would not be any difficulty to the peoples for the payment of their revenue from the large quantity of money available in Assam. In fact, expecting the concurrence of the Accountant General, he had directed in advance the collector to proclaim that Rajah Mohree would not be received after 1st January, 1840.⁸¹ According to him, however, the receipt of Narayani rupees at Goalpara must be continued until arrangements were made with the Rajah of Cooch Behar to pay his tribute in Company rupees. He felt that it was describable that Narayani rupee should continue to be received to exhaust the great quantity of that coinage which still existed in North East Rungpore and Cooch Behar. Jenkins also felt there was no necessity to accept Arcot rupees by the collectors as allowed and that it should be prohibited “as adding to the complication of accounts – very limited amounts appear to be now in circulation”.

Jenkins’s opinion on the question of ceasing to receive and issue of local coins in upper Assam and also in lower Assam had received support from Sudder Board of Revenue as could be seen in the letter dated 9th October 1839,⁸² addressed to F.I. Haliday, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department. Jenkins had requested to place the same to the Honorable Dy. Governor of Bengal. It appeared that on 22nd October 1839, the Honorable Dy. Governor of Bengal ordered that prior to prepare any orders for the discontinuance of the receipt of Narayani rupees at the treasuries in Assam, there was a need for further opinion from Capt. Vetch and Ensign Bradie on the subject.⁸³ While the related subject had not thrown any light about the proposed restrictions, it appears from the Resolution of the Processings of the Honorable President in Council of India, in Council in the Finance Department dated 7th November 1845 that the Company’s rupee had already attained complete currency throughout the provinces of Assam. It was revealed from a return received from

the Accountant General that, out of a sum of 841/2 lacks of rupees upward into the Revenue Treasuries of Assam, including the receipt from Cooch Behar within the last five years less than 1000 rupees in value consisted of Narayani rupees notwithstanding that it was optional with the public to pay in these rupees in liquidation of Government demands at the prescribed discount of 32 percent, which was believed by the Company “*to be as nearly as possible the actual difference of their intrinsic value as compared with the Company’s Rupees*”. It was also resolved that the suggestion of the Agent to the Governor General to the effect that the Government might be disposed to allow to the Rajah of Cooch Behar to have Narayani Rupee struck at the Calcutta Mint, provided they were made with the same intrinsic value as the Company’s Rupee, would not be attended to “*Nor can any further coinage whatsoever of Narainee rupees be permitted*”. Above all in the above resolution President in Council observed that the policy of the Government in India was....

*“to introduce one single uniform currency throughout the whole of the British possessions in India and that the object of this policy was not alone as supposed by the Agent to the Governor General in the North East frontier to ensure a known intrinsic value to the coinage of India, but to exhibit passably to the common understanding of all its subjects the fact of the supremacy of British power by impressing on the whole of the silver coinage legally issued in the British India dominions the effigy of the reigning sovereign of Great Britain”.*⁸⁴

Thus from the above study we can come to this conclusion that the British construction of administration in the Koch kingdom had multifaceted dimension. In one hand it welcomed new western ideas in the spheres of the government, on the other paved the way for the disappearance of so many efficient mechanisms of the ruled. British imperial mind did not recognize any obligation which came under their way of profit making. Though the introduction of a uniform currency in India had some positive aspects, but it did not mean that India’s age long currency system was the only obstacle for doing so. In India or more largely speaking in many societies of the world coins were

treated as the embodiment of political and cultural illustrations. But the colonial rulers did not pay any attention to this aspect of currency. They were in hurry to eliminate the local currency of India anyway to secure maximum interest.

In the case of Cooch Behar State, the British treatment was shocking. When the state was suffering from aggression, the British authority took the advantage of the situation and gradually snatched all powers from the hands of the native rules. As Cooch Bbehar's geo-political situation was crucial so they eagerly interested to implant the imperial currency here to secure maximum profit. They took one several steps to de-monetize the currency. Thought the native rulers especially Harendra Narayan took some steps to revive the glory of the Narayani currency but his intention was not fulfilled due to the British economic interest. Not only by Harendra Narayan, but some English governmental authorities showed considerate attitude also. Among them Captain Jenkins was in favor for the free circulation of the currency. We have analyzed earlier how by repeated exchange of letters with his higher authorities he tried to convince them that the withdrawal may hamper the politico-economic setting of the Cooch Behar State seriously. But all his efforts were in vain and he was asked to remove the age long currency at any coast.

This de-monetization not only dislocated Cooch Behar State's political interest but its commercial implication was much more severe, as the currency had a greater economic impact over the north eastern part of India particularly in Assam. With the withdrawal of the currency a monetary crisis started due to the non-availability of either *Narayani* or newly introduced imperial currency. The inter-state and intra-state trading activity of Cooch Behar also got heavy set back. But most importantly, the impact was rigorously faced by the indigenous people of Cooch Behar who were accustomed with the use of *Narayani* currency in their commercial activity. Not only that the de-monetization had its religious implications also as the *Narayani* currency was devoted to some Hindu Gods and Goddesses worshiped in the region, so the people of Cooch Behar denied to accept the Company currency or any other currency due to their cultural affiliation with the *Narayani* currency.

But finally they were forced to submit their economic as well as religious interest, so finally we can say that although the British intention of having a uniform currency in India was a need of time but it was not necessary to construct the pillars of the uniform currency on the ruins of India's age long indigenous currencies.

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45. Their report was published in the *Cooch Behar Select Records*, Cooch Behar press, 1869.
46. Nicholas Rhodes and S.K. Bose, *op.cit.*, Appendix I.
47. *Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. I*, p. 133.
48. *ibid.*, p.161.
49. *Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. II*, p. 41.
50. *ibid.*, p. 52.
51. *ibid.*, p. 73.
52. *ibid.*, p. 75.
53. "Extracts from a Report on Koch Behar" by Major Francis Jenkins, Apr. 1849, in *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*. Calcutta, 1851.
54. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar and Debajit Dutta, 'A Rare Gold Coin of Koch Kingdom', *JNSI, Vol. LXXIII*, 2011, pp. 68-70, Varanasi.
55. *Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. II, op.cit.*, p. 123.
56. Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.296.
57. H.N.Chaudhuri, *op.cit.*, p 421.
58. Haliram Dhekial Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, (Bengali), Calcutta, 1829, Guwahati, 1962, p. 77-79.

59. D. Chakravarty, *Nineteenth & Twentieth Century Coins of India*, Calcutta, 1979, p.3. Sometime around 1790 the East India Company endeavored to put an end to the discrepancies in weight and purity in coinage as per British standard, by establishing a standard currency.....to supersede the various local issues in British dominated India. These coins were known as *San Sicca*.
60. F. Pridmore, *The coins of the British Commonwealth of Nations*, Part 4 , India, 1975, pp. 8, 27 and 225. After the death of Emperor Aurangzib, the Nawabs of Arcot had struck coins of the Empire at Arcot. Though the rupee coins struck by the Nawabs were inferior to Bengal Sicca. Arcot coins could achieve popularity among the merchants of Bengal, resulting in a large circulation of such coins in that province and neighboring areas. Subsequently French and British too were striking Arcot coins in their Mints.
61. The present day's Goalpara district (undivided) was known as North East Rungpore. By 1836 the district assumed the present name. H. K.Barpujari, (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. IV*, Guwahati, 1992, p. 53-54.
62. *Assam State Archives Records, Bengal Government Papers*, File No. 399 of 1839. Sl.No. 1-3, No. 688 (Letter dated 28.11.1833- enclosure).
63. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 30.12.1833.
64. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 17.03.1834.
65. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 29.03.1834.
66. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 10.04.1834.
67. Farukkabad or Lucknow rupees of 45 San Sicca were first minted by the East India Company at Farukkabad. By Regulation XLV of 1803, the erection of a mint at Farukkabad was ordered by the Company in 1817. The right of minting Farukkabad Rupee was extended to the Mints at Calcutta and Varanasi vide Regulation XXXVI of 1817 – Pridmore F., *op. cit.*, p. 222 and K.K. Maheshwari and B.Rath, (ed.), 'The Acquisition of Indian Mints by the East India Company', *Numismatic Panorama*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 340.

68. *Assam State Archives, Vol. No. 1, 1834-35, Letter dt. 19th May, 1834.*
69. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 27.05.1834.
70. *ibid.*
71. During the Mughal Period a rupee coin was known as ‘Sicca Rupee’. While the value of such coin, prior to the rule of Emperor Farrukh Siyar, remained same during the life time of Emperor who had struck it, after the accession of the new Emperor, the coin of the previous ruler lost its ‘Sicca’ rating and became rupee of decreased value (i.e. subject to ‘batta’ in the market) and not acceptable in the Royal Treasury. By the middle of 18th Century battas were charged on the 2nd and 3rd year’s of ‘Sicca’ at 3% and aggregate 5% respectively. When the 3rd year’s a *batta* was added, the coin became known as Sonaut or Sonat rupee. The East India Company, by its Regulation of 6th August, 1771, attempted to establish a standard rupee by declaring that from 11 Sun Sicca coin onwards value of Sicca coin shall not fall year wise, but continue to be on the same footing as Siccas of the present and subsequent years, Pridmore, *op.cit.*, p. 190-192.
72. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 27.06.1834.
73. *ibid.*, Enclosure dt. 06.08.1834.
74. *Assam State Archives, No. 33. Extract from the Proceedings of the Hon’ ble the Vice President in Council in the Political Department, under date 13th September, 1834.*
75. *ibid.*
76. *Assam State Archives 1839 Bengal Government Papers, File No. 399 of 1839, Sl. No. 1-3, Enclosure- ‘Extract of a letter from the Accountant General to the Day Secretary to Government in the Political Deptt.’, Dated the 23rd October, 1834.*
77. *Assam State Archives, Vol. No. 1, 1834-35, p. 319.*
78. *ibid.*, 1839 Bengal Government Papers, *op.cit.*, Enclosure dt.30.10.1834 – Extract from the letter from the Dy: Secretary to the Government.

79. *ibid.*, Accountant General's Letter d received the nod and the Political Department has received the
nod and the Political Department has dt. 22th July, 1839.
80. *ibid.*, No. 104. Letter, dt. 23.9. 1839.
81. *ibid.*, Extract from a Letter dated 23rd October, 1834.
82. *ibid.*, No. 512, Letter dated 9.10.1839.
83. *ibid.*, Government of Bengal Letter 22nd Oct. 1839.
84. *Assam State Archives*, Proceeding of the Hon'ble president in Council of India, in Council in
Finance Department, 7.11.1845, No. 2116 of 1845 and No. 2869 of 1845.