History and Historians of Undivided Goalpara District from 1826 to 1947: A Study

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Abstract

The activities of men of the past are recorded in the history of their own. These activities also guide to shape the future. Therefore, it is necessary to know our past so that we can think for a better future. Local history is a part of national history because it has a tremendous importance to fill up the existing gaps of regional history. The history of Assam does not portray much information about undivided Goalpara District except some socio-cultural sides. As pointed out from time to time the people of Goalpara attempted to record the information in a historical manner. But as none of them was professional historian and was not acquainted with the art of writing history, no true and proper history of the district has come out. The proposed study will show how people from different parts of the district developed the idea to record the events based on some local information or through personal experience and their contributions may serve as source materials to reconstruct a comprehensive history of undivided Goalpara District.

Introduction

History records the activities of men of the past. These activities also guide to shape the future. Therefore, it is necessary to know our past so that we can think for a better future. Local history is a part of national history because it has a tremendous importance to fill up the existing gaps of regional history. The history of Assam does not portray much information about undivided Goalpara District except some socio-cultural sides. However, this study will reveal that undivided Goalpara District had played an important role on education, economy, religion and freedom movement.

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**Aims and objectives**

1) To focus the historical background and importance of undivided Goalpara District.
2) To describe the cultural heritage of undivided Goalpara District.
3) To contribute source materials for local and regional history.
4) To list out those personalities and to record their writings and to see whether a comprehensive history of undivided Goalpara Districts can be written.

**Methodology**

It is a historical research. Field study method is used. Primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was collected from field study such as discussions and personal interview. Secondary data was collected from books and local history. After the collection of data they were analysed.

**Analysis and History**

With a vast treasure of natural beauty undivided Goalpara District was situated on the westernmost point of the Brahmaputra valley. The river Brahmaputra runs nearly through the centre of the undivided Goalpara district. According to Jogini Tantra, “During Ancient times, there were four divisions of Kamrupa such as Kampith, Ratnapith, Swarnapith and Soumarpith. Among the four piths, the Ratnapith (Sankosh to Rupahi River) was called undivided Goalpara district which covered Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Dhubri and present Goalpara”. The district covered an area of about 10306 square kilometers and was bounded by West Bengal and Bangladesh on the west Barpeta and Kamrupa district to the east, the Himalayas to the north and Meghalaya to the south. It was located between latitude 25.28 degree and 26.44 degree north and longitude 89.42.

The history of undivided Goalpara District is very old but the origin of the name, Goalpara is not very old. The name of Goalpara was not mentioned in any geographical or historical itihasa prior to 1822 except in Mirza Nathan’s “Bahrainan-i-Ghaybi”. Before 1822 this place was known as “Rangamati Zila” Of course, it was a subject of debate about the source and support to the origin of the place.

The political history of undivided Goalpara district is also very old and colourful. Before British occupation, this place was under the occupation of various races such as Ahoms, Koches and Mughals. During the Koch period, Ratnapith was famous because Maharaja Naranarayana and General Chilarai glorified this place too. This place remained in hands of the Ahoms for three years but since the year the Mughal General Mirjumla invaded
Assam and occupied Ahom capital, Goalpara continued to remain under Mughal rule till 1765. The remarkable chapter during Mughal rule was the creation of Zamindary system in undivided Goalpara. Then with the rest of Bengal it passed into the possession of East India Company. Undivided Goalpara was not a separate district till 1822. It was just a part of Rangpur Zila. At that time, this place was called Rangamati Zila and Mr. David Scot was the Governor.

During the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826 undivided Goalpara was joined with Assam. In 1867 when Assam was transformed into North-East Frontier Province, Goalpara district was separated from Assam and came under commissioner of Kochbehar. Once again in 1874 for judicial purpose, Goalpara was joined with Assam and made a new province called ‘Assam Pradesh’. From that time undivided Goalpara district till today become a part and parcel of Assam. Goalpara was constituted in 1878 as a municipality. In 1879 the head quarter shifted from Goalpara to Dhubri. In the Indian Freedom Movement, the people of Goalpara took an active role and contributed a lot towards attainment of independence. During the Civil Disobedience Movement started in 1930 and in the Quit India Movement started in 1941, there were as many as (50+72 respectively) persons convicted for participating in the movement against the British rule. Thus undivided Goalpara district played a significant role to make the history of Assam as well as of India.

Historically, Goalpara is famous in cultural varieties, archeological ruins and remains, monuments and buildings, temples and mosques, satras and darghas, shrines, flora and fauna, natural beauty and scenery. Goalpara is a place of archeological remains where cultural heritage is found in different hilly areas. Some locations have been pasted here with historical importance and future prospective for tourists which are Dadan, Dekdhowa Pahar, Mahadeva Pahar, Makir Hill, Matia, Nandeshwar Hill, Pagalatek Hill, Tukreswari Hill. At Dhubri we have Panbari Mosque, Panchpeer Dargah, Gurudwara, etc.

On the basis of religious view, a unique feature of the Goalpara Zone is that it was a meeting place of three religions, viz. Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism which are exemplified at Suryapahar which is uncommon in early Assam. Moreover, the existence of three religious streams at Suryapahar has given a unique character to the art and architecture of the zone.

The zone was also commercially famous. During the British period, this place was called European city for trade and commerce. Trade and commerce carried at mainly through the river Brahmaputra. Several trade centres have been found at Sri-Surya, Hadirachowki, Rajasimla, Damra, Belguri, Fatamati, Fulbari, Jira and Nibaree, etc.

Undivided Goalpara is rich for persons with personalities. Koch King Naranarayana and his General Chilarai, Parsuram Rabha who fought against the British, Prasanna Kumar Ghosh who was a member of “Assam Association”, Director and Producer of Indian Film Industry, Pramatesh Baruah, Pratima Pandey Baruah the empress of Goalpara folk song, elephant hunter Parvati Baruah, Ronaram the son of Shivaram belonging to the Mechpara
Zamindar fought against the British during 1730-90 A.D. Anjali and Baneful contributed a lot to the literature of Assam. Nagendra Narayan Choudhury presided over the Assam Sahitya Sabha in 1937 Sibsagar conference. Khagendra Narayan Choudhury, Jatindra Narayan Nath, Bhola Nath Choudhury were the presidents of the reception committee of the Sabha chronologically. Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani led the Peasants’ Movement against the British and the Zamindars. Fragmented information about the contributions of such personalities is going to disappear as people are not interested to know the past, rather striving for a better future. Our attempt will be to record such historical information, which may be helpful to compile a chronological history of Goalpara and also to search out the source materials for further study and research.

Historians

With the passage of times, several writers attempted to write a large number of books and articles in this zone. Many scholars have made board studies on the history of undivided Goalpara District as a whole.

1) Dr. Santo Barman was one of the pioneers, whose Goalparar Jana Itihasa is an important work on Zamindari system. Here the author by his adequate field work draws a clear picture of the Zamindaries of Goalpara and Assam.

2) Dr. Jagannath Patgiri’s “Abibhakta Goalpara Zilar Satra aru Math-Mandirar Itivritta” deals with several historical Satras and Temples of undivided Goalpara district which generally gives us knowledge about the religious belief and condition.

3) Ambika Charan Choudhury’s “Ratnapithat Abbhumuki”, “Glory the name of Goalpara”, “Koch Rajbangshi Janagosthir Itihasar aru Sanskriti”, “Sangram Singha Chilarai” and “Kamatapurat Mahapurusha Shankardeva” are the most valuable works of Assam history. In these books the author gives us information about the historical identity of Ratnapith, brief history of Koch, holy places and contributions of Shankardeva, etc.

4) Dr. Amalendu Guha’s “Zamindar Kalin Goalpara Zilar Artha Samajik Awastha” gives us valuable information about the role of Zamindar in land-revenue system and socio-economic condition of people during Zamindary period.

5) Shyama Charan Nath’s “Swadhinata Andolanat Rod Kasoli” deals with the Freedom Movement of India and participation of Goalpara Zila which is also important book on this zone.

6) Kumudeshwar Barthakur’s “Prasanna Kumar Ghosh B.L.” is related to life and contribution of Prasanna Kumar Ghosh who was a member of Assam Association.

7) Sailen Das’s “Gallitipock” is a brief history of Goalpara. Here the author mentions about the origin of the name of the place and its glorified historical religious holi places.
8) Siva Nanda Sarma’s “Goalpara Zilar Itihasa” is another important local history of this zone. Here the writer mentions about the important historical period such as Ahom, Mughal, British and the period after Independence.

9) Tarini Prasad Sen’s “Bijni Raj Bangsha” is another important and valuable local history on this zone, who was an official of Bijni Raja. In this book the author highlighted chronologically about the Bijni Raja’s reign.

10) Amanatullah Khan Choudhury’s “Koch Beharer Itihasa” is another most important local history about the reign of Koch Raja-Bangshi Raja’s from early period to later period. So it is an important document for the readers and scholars.


Conclusion

From the above discussion we find that every village of the district is connected with its history which is either oral or written. It is observed that from the early day people of Goalpara formed a habit of recording the local event of their locality and the neighbouring areas. In a true sense these may not be called as history, as history needs to fulfil certain criteria. But surely this was an attempt to focus the information of the past to future generation. It may be said that these attempts might be served as source material to write a comprehensive history of the region which may fill up the gaps in the history of Assam as well as in the Indian history.
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