

GOSANIMARI: A FAMOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN NORTH EASTERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Gosanimari is an important village in Cooch Behar District of West Bengal. It is a famous archaeological site in North Eastern India. The site contains ruins of the ancient city of Kamatapur, the capital of Kamata Kingdom. The Kamata Kingdom occupied a large area of Kamarupa and Vanga. The famous Rajpat, the remains of the Rampart and the Kamateswari Temple are the wonders to the visitors. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton had visited the Kamatapur fort in 1808 and left a vivid description about it. Madho Sarup Vats, the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India took over the responsibility of the site. There were three kings in Kamata Kingdom. They were Nildhvaja, Chakradhvaja and Nilambar. Nilambar, the last king of Khen dynasty was defeated by the force of Hossein Shah of Gouda in 1498 A.D. Later on Kamata Kingdom passed at the hands of Maharaja Biswasingha of Koch Kingdom. Gosanimari till now carrying the fame, cultural heritage and memories of the Khen kings of Kamatapur. A large number of archaeological remains have scattered in various parts of Gosanimari and its adjacent areas. Moreover the excavation in the year of 1999 had revealed some new historical evidences which help us to know about the glory and prosperity of Kamata kingdom. Further excavation in several places in Gosanimari, specially on Rajpat will enriched the history of Kamatapur fort and Kamata kingdom.

Key Words: *Archaeology, Kamata , Rajpat, Rampart , Gauda, Khen, Gosanimari etc .*

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important archaeological site of North Eastern India is Gosanimari. Gosanimari was the main centre of the older Kamata Kingdom. The King of the Khen dynasty ruled the Kamata Kingdom from the capital in Kamatapur (Gosanimari). At present Gosanimari is a village in Cooch Behar District of West Bengal. Kamata kingdom became very powerful under the reign of kings of the Khen dynasty namely Niladhvaja, Chkradhvaja

and Nilambar.¹ Nilambar, the last king of Kamata Kingdom was defeated by Alauddin Hossein Shah , Sultan of Gouda in 1498 A.D.² Now Gosanimari bears the Memories of the mighty Khen Kings of Kamata Kingdom. It contains ruins of ancient city of Kamatapur, capital of the Kamata kingdom. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton and Madho Sarup Vats visited this notable archaeological site. Now it is under the responsibility of the Archaeological Survey of India. There are various kinds of ancient remains in many places in Gosanimari. The famous Rajpat, the remains of the earthen rampart, the Kamateswari temple are the main attraction of Gosanimari. It is believed that temples and buildings are still now buried under a large grass grown mound. The mound is known as ‘Rajpat’. Some figurines, stone slabs etc. were found on Rajpat. Some of them are now preserved in the new museum. Till today some remains of the past have been discovering in Gosanimari and its adjacent places. It is sure that further excavation on the famous Rajpat will reveal some new history about the Khen Kings of the Kamata kingdom.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF GOSANIMARI:

The Kamata kingdom was one of the mighty kingdom in the political map of India. It was the western part of the older Kamarupa kingdom. In the 11-12th Century the kingdom was ruled by the Pala and the Sena dynasty respectively. Then the Kamata kingdom was under the Khen dynasty in the 14th century A.D. The Khen dynasty ruled the kingdom till 1498 A.D. There were three kings in the Khen dynasty namely Niladhvaja, Chakradhvaja and Nilambar. Nilambar, the kings of the Khen dynasty ruled the whole kingdom from the capital in Kamatapur (Gosanimari) which is now in Cooch Behar District of West Bengal. Nilambar was a mighty King who built a vast Kingdom. But he was displaced by Alauddin Hossein Shah, the Turko – Afghan ruler of Gouda in 1498 A.D. There is an infamous tale about the defeat of Nilambar. The tradition is that there was an illicit love of the youngest queen of king Nilambar and Monohar, Son of Shashipatra, the minister of the Kamata kingdom. This resulted in the killing of Monohar ordered by the king. To take revenge of his son’s death, Shashipatra went to the royal court of Alauddin Hossein Shah and informed him about the incident.³ Then Hossein Shah invaded the Kamata Kingdom. After a long siege of the Kamatapur fort and a treacherous win, Hossein Shah finally destroyed the city and annexed the region up to Hazo.

Hossein Shah could not maintained the political control of Kamata kingdom and the control went to Biswasingha, the able son and successor of Haria Mandal, a tribal leader. Biswa Singha founded the Koch dynasty in 1515 A.D.⁴ The Kamata Koch Kingdom reached its zenith under Maharaja Naranarayan. During the reign of Naranarayan, the Kamata Koch kingdom was divided into two parts demarcating the river Sankosh as border. The eastern regions of the kingdom which was known as ‘Koch Hazo’ was given to Raghudev Narayan.

Lakshmi Narayan became the king of the remaining portion which was called as Koch Behar. Koch Hazo was soon absorbed into the Ahom kingdom. The Royal Court introduced the term 'Cooch Behar' by the declaration of a circular in 1896 A.D. In 1773 Cooch Behar lost her independence and acknowledged the suzerainty of the British East India Company.⁵ The last king of Cooch Behar was Jagaddipendranarayan. Though India got her independence from the British rule in 1947, Cooch Behar remained a tributary state till 28th August, 1948. Cooch Behar merged with the Indian Union on 12th September, 1949 A.D.⁶ Thereafter it is regarded as a district of West Bengal since 1st January, 1950.⁷ Thus Gosanimari which contains the ruins of the ancient city of Kamatapur, the capital of the Kamata Kingdom became an important archaeological site in North Eastern India.

GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF GOSANIMARI:

Gosanimari which was once one the central place of the Kamata Kingdom is now a village and an important historical place of North Eastern India.

Location:

Gosanimari is situated to the north-western side of Dinhata Sub-Division of Cooch Behar District. It is about 13 kilometer from Dinhata twon. Gosnaimari is connected with Dinhata and Cooch Behar by bus-route. The Singimari river flows towards the western side of Gosanimari. The Dharla is one of the mentionable river of Gosanimari.

Physiography:

Gosanimari is a plain area, lacking of hill or high land except the remains of the Rajpat and Rampart. The village is filled with green trees and plants. There are plenty of arable land. The soil of this area is a mixture of sand and mud. Singimari, the principal river of this area which flows towards the western side of Gosanimari.

Climate:

The climate of Gosanimari is hygienic and water is fresh. The climate is neither very hot nor very cold.⁸ The plenty of rainfall in this area is due to the influence of South-Western Monsoon.

Inhabitants:

The people of different caste and creeds are found in Gosanimari. Among them the Rajbanshis are the majority in this area. Besides the Rajbanshis, the upper caste Hindus and Muslims are also live in this village. Bengali is the spoken language of the people of Gosanimari.

Agriculture:

Agriculture is the main profession of the people of Gosanimari . Some people are engaged in the government service. The main crops of this area are paddy, jute, pulses, mustard seeds and tobacco. Various kinds of vegetables and fruits are also produced in large number in this area.

CLOTHING, DWELLING AND FOOD OF THE PEOPLE OF GOSANIMARI:

The main clothing of the people of Gosanimari are dhuti, punjabi and lungi. The other clothes which used by the people are shirt, pant, coat etc. The women use sharee, blouse, orna etc. Both men and women wear warm clothes made of cotton or wool. The houses of poor people are made of wood, bamboo and tin. Few villagers have brick-built houses or houses made of tin. Rice is the staple food of the people of Gosanimari. Almost all the people like vegetable, milk, milkmaid food, meat, fish and pulses. They also drink tea and coffee. Chekka, pelka and shidol are the three popular vegetable of the people in this region.

THE MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES OF GOSANIMARI:

There are many important archaeological evidence in Gosanimari. The 'Rajpat', the Kamateswari temple, the famous 'Rampart' are the chief objects of the area. Besides these some mentionable places and noticeable articles are also became the attractive evidence of this archaeological site.

The Famous 'Rajpat':

The remains of the famous Kamatapur fort are the mentionable archacological evidences of Gosanimari not only in Cooch Behar but also in North Eastern India. The Kamatapur fort was situated at Gosanimari village in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. This fort ascribed to king Nilambar, the last king of the Khen dynasty. Nilambar, was overthrown by Hossein Shah, the Turko-Afgan ruler of Gouda in 1498 A.D.⁹ The remains of the Kamatapur fort are still visible. The 'Rajpat' ,several parts of the famous earthen rampart , the traces of the inner and outer ditches, images of different deities etc. are the important evidences of Gosanimari .

The citadel or the royal palaces of the Khen kings was situated at the middle of the fort of which some portion is now known as 'Rajpat'. The fort gave birth many legends about the kings, god and goddess. According to tradition in order to built the Kamatapur fort, king Kamateswar vowed to his tutelary deity Kamateswari. It is also said that Viswakarma, the Master of Architect of Heaven built the fort in a night directed by Devi Kamateswari. From the tradition we have known that king Kamateswar became king of Kamata Kingdom due to the favour of Gosani Devi. Radha Krishna Das Bairagi wrote the famous 'Gosanimangal' in order to preach the occipital of Gosani Devi.

Buchanan Hamitlton visited the Kamatapur fort in the year of 1808-09 A.D.¹⁰ He had collected some information on the basis of the local tradition and wrote an account on it. This valuable account has given us a vivid description about the Kamatapur fort which was existed at the time of his visit at the place .Later on in 1952 Madho Sarup Vats, Director General of Archaeology visited Gosanimari and had published a brief note about the outcome of his observation.¹¹

The remains of the citadel or royal residence which is now known as the Rajpat is still visible. Rajpat is the main attraction to the visitors from the outside places and the local inhabitants. People regard it as the memories of the Khen kings or King Kamateswar. Rajpa is of a quadrangular in shape. It was once surrounded by a ditch about 60 feet in wide from the north to the south. There were many figurings made of sandstone, stone slabs, pieces of pillars lying on the Rajpat. It is a matter of regret that many of them were displaced. In order to preserve the existing evidence a museum was established to the northern side of Rajpat. The museum is open to the general people. The most important figurines are the figure of Balakrishna, a dancing female figure, the figure of the king and his servant, the figure of king and kings attendant, the figure of king's guard etc .

Two Marvellous Wells of the Rajpat:

There are two wonderful wells at the centre of the Rajpat. These wells are different in form from other wells in Gosanimari. The brick made wells of the Rajpat are the main attraction of the site. The structure of the wells mainly the inner portion is the matter of curious to the archaeologist as well as the general people. In 1999 there was an excavation on the Rajpat under the supervision of department of Archaeology which showed the present structure of the wells which were unearthed for a long time. The wells are situated at the middle of a square shaped flat deep area made of brick. The inner portion of the wells constructed step by step and the lower portion is narrower in size than the upper one.

The Famous Earthen Rampart of Gosanimari:

The famous earthen rampart made by the Khen kings who protected the citadel or the royal residence is important archaeological evidence in Gosanimari. Towards the north, south and western side of Rajpat there was a high earthen rampart which was nearly 22 Kilometers long. But the intact long and lofty rampart is now no more. Only few parts of the rampart have been found in many places in Gosanimari and its adjacent areas. In 1999, a team of the Archaeological Survey of India had identified seven rampart in Gosanimari. To see the technical skill in making the rampart they assumed that the defence system of the Khen kings was very strong.

The existing parts of the rampart are nearly 25 feet in height and 53 feet in width. Now these are all covered with trees and plants. The Kamatapur fort had some entrances. The names of the entrances of the fort were Sildwar, Baghdwar, Sannyasidwar, Joydwar, Nimaidwar and Hokodwar. Except the Sildwar all other entrances were made of wood or iron. One gate made of brick which was supported on stone pillar on which account the Sildwar is called do. Another gate was called Baghdwar. The Baghdwar is said to have derived its name from having an image of a tiger.¹² Through the Sannyasidwar, the saints entered into the fort to meet the king. The Joydwar shows the sign of the victory of the Khen Kings. After the victory in war the king entered into the fort through the Joydwar. It is said that Sri Krishna Chaitanya (Nimai) entered into the fort through a gate which was called as Nimai gate with the mission to preach the Vaishnavism in Kamatapur. According to Buchanan Hamilton Hokodwar was built by a Khen or Koch chief named Hoko. In Gosanimangal of Radha Krishna Das Bairagi there is no reference of Nimaidwar and Hokodwar. In Gosanimangal there are reference of Dharmadwar and Akshaydwar in the place of Nimaidwar and Hokodwar. The remains of the various gates of the Kamatapur fort are now no more. We have an idea about the location of the gate on the basis of the space of the rampart.

The Traces of Ditches of Kamatapur Fort:

The Citadel (Pat) or Royal Residence of the Khen kings of Kamata Kingdom was surrounded by two ditches. The ditch was about 60 feet in width and about 1860 feet in length from the east to west and about 1880 feet from north to south. Kamatapur fort was situated on the west bank of the river Dharla which formed the defense of one side. The other sides were fortified by an earthen rampart and by double ditches. With the help of the modern technology the ditches were filled with water of river Singimari for the purpose to resist the invasion of the invaders. The traces of a ditch still have been visible in Gosanimari. In course of time the great ditches of Kamatapur fort turned into arable land.

THE REMAINS OF TAKSHAL (MINT) OF THE KHEN KINGS:

The coins of the Khen kings were made in 'Takshal' (Mint) which was situated near Rajpat (Royal residence).¹³ There were 18 rooms inside the Takshal which were built to preserve the coins. That is why the place was called Atharokotha. The coins of the Khen kings have the similarity with the coins of the Pala and Sena kings of Bengal. After the downfall of the Khen dynasty the Takshal was totally closed for ever. In course of time the brick made mint has turned into ruins. The main building is now no more but the remains of the mint are scattered in many places in this area. Few years ago during the time of excavation some big stone have been discovered which were arranged with lime and brick-dust. The stones were used as pillars of the building. If an excavation will conduct on the remains of the Takshal, we will have more information about it.

The New Museum at Rajpat:

There were many archaeological evidences on Rajpat such as figurines, relics, pillar which were made of stone, wells etc. But many of them were displaced from Rajpat. In order to preserve the remaining evidences of Kamatapur fort a museum was established. The museum is situated towards the northern side of Rajpat. It is open to the all visitors and also to the common people of this locality.

The Kajali Kurah:

The Kajali Kurah is the name of a Village in the adjacent area of Gosanimari. Bur during the period of the Khen rule there was a pond in this area which name was Kajali Kurah. In 1498 King Nilambar was defeated by the Turko-Afghan army of Hossein Shah of Gouda. It is said that king Nilambar was taken to prisoner and put into a cage to be taken to Gouda, but he escaped by the way and disappeared in the pond or he was hired by Goddess Gosani Devi. Later on during the Koch rule an image of Goddess Gosani Devi was rescued and placed in a new temple for worshipping.¹⁴

Pinjarir Jhar:

Pinjarir Jhar is one of the most important site of former Kamatapur fort. In 1498 king Nilambar was defeated by the army of Hossain Shah, the Sultan of Gouda. After the disappearance of Nilambar in Kajali Kurah, the army of Hossain Shah left the cage on the road in which he was carrying and went away. It is said that the undried pieces of Bamboos of the cage immediate became a cluster of bamboos.¹⁵ There was a small fort which was made of mud. Since then the place is known as Pinjarir Jhar .

Sitalvas:

King Kamateswar of Kamata Kingdom had a cool house which was situated towards the northern side and nearly one mile away from the rampart of the Kamatapur fort. King Kamateswar stayed there in summer and became fresh and cool. This why the place is known as Sitalvas. There was a big bath tub or tank which was known as 'Sitalkhuri'.¹⁶ Gradually the cool house or the Sitalvas became the name of a place or a village. Buchanan Hamilton in his account mentioned that he saw a rude goblet at Sitalvas. The goblet was made of grey granite and the sides were 6 inches thick at the brim; the total diameter at the brim is six and half feet and the cavity is three and half feet deep. The tank or the bath tub is now no more but the place obtained its name Sitalvas from the name of the palace.

The Famous Bholanath Pond:

The Khen kings of the Kamata Kingdom made many ponds throughout the Kamatapur fort. Among these the famous Bholanath pond is mentionable. It was situated near the Baghdwar in the Kamatapur fort. According to tradition the pond was made by Bholanath, an official of king Kamateswar. That is why the pond was called so. But another opinion is that there was a Siva temple towards the one side of the pond. For that reason the pond was called as Bholanath pond. On the other side of the temple there was a Vishnu temple. Both the temples were destroyed by the army of Hossein Shah. The remains of the temples are still found by the both side of the pond. The bank of the pond was made of lime and brick dust. The inner side of bank of the pond was made of brick. Now there is a market by the side of the Bholanath pond which is known as Haribolar Hat .

Barobangla :

The office buildings of the king Kamateswar were situated towards the south of the Sildwar of Kamatapur fort. It was near about two miles away from the Rajpat. The place was known as Barobangla. Barobangla was contained 12 big houses made of brick. The army chief or other high officials of Hossein Shah of Gouda were accommodated in the Barobangla. Buchanan Hamilton saw the remains of the office buildings of king Kamateswar. In course time the remains of the building were completely destroyed by the Singimari, one of the major river of Kamatapur. The place is still known as Barobangla.

Jalubar:

From the account of Buchanan Hamilton we have known that there two big ditches in the Kamatapur fort. The ditches were made for the purpose to protect the Royal Palace of king Kamateswar. The ditches were filled

with water of river Singimari with the help of modern technology to resist the invasion of the invaders. The special system of supplying water in to the ditches is similar with the modern sluice gate. The name of the system was Jalubar. That is why the place is still known as Jalubar.

Bhulke-Bhulki:

There are the remains of a building near the Bholanath Pond which was belonged to the Khen period. The building is known as Bhulka Bhulki. It is said that after finishing the bath the women of the royal family were take part in the game of hide and seek or bopeep.

Kumarir Kot:

Kumarir Kot or the fort of the princess of Kamata kingdom was an important part of the Kamatapur fort. The princess of the Khen royal family were called as 'Aii Kumari'.¹⁷ It is said that they had their residence in the fort. There was a rectangular shape surrounded place and a well. The remains of the brick made well and some heavy stones are still visible in this place. The place is now known as Kumarir Kot .

Royal Roads:

King Nilambar built many royal roads in his kingdom. The royal roads were connected with the capital and other parts of the kingdom. The remains of some royal roads are now visible. One road was stretched out up to the Jalpesh temple at Jalpaiguri.¹⁸ It's western part is now known as Dinhata Mekhliganj Road. The other road was stretched out up to Girimul and its southern part is known as Cooch Behar Kakina Road. A road which is in Rangpur, now in Bangladesh is still known as Nilambari Road. Another road known as Darparmalli which was stretched out from near Baghdwar upto the bank of river Ganga. Another road which also known as Darpar Malli was stretched out from Bura Bowra to the bank of the river Teesta.

Kodal Dhoa Dighi:

Kodal Dhoa Dighi is one of the notable pond made by the Khen kings of Kamata Kingdom. It is situated near the Rajpat. Another pond which was also known as Kadal Dhoa Digha is situated at Akrahat. According to tradition after completing their work of making the rampart, the labours washed their spade in the pond.¹⁹ For this reason the pond was known as Kadal Dhoa Dighi.

Mogolkata Kurah:

The Mogalkata Kurah is one of the large pond in the Kamatapur fort. It was situated about 3 miles away towards the northern side of Takshal. The remains of a bridge made of brick are still visible in the pond. Perhaps the bridge connected the ditch of the north- eastern part of the Rajpat.

The Famous Kamateswari Temple:

The temple of Kamateswari of Gosanimari is one of the notable temple not only in Cooch Behar but in North East India. It is said that Khen king Chakradhawaj was the builder of the Kamateswari temple. But on basis of various proofs many historian surmise that king Nilambar was the founder of the temple. Buchanan Hamilton during the time of his observation guessed that the temple was situated at Rajpath. It is also said that Hossain Shah, Sultan of Gouda had destroyed the temple at the time of his invasion in 1498. Later on Maharaja Biswasingha of the Koch Kingdom enshrined Ggosani Devi at Kamatapur. The existing temple was built by Kavimandala in 1665 A.D. under the order of Maharaja Prannarayan.²⁰

The temple of Kamateswari surrounded by a wall made of brick. On the four corner of the wall there are four minars. The domical shape of the minar shows the sign of Islamic architecture. The temple is 45 feet in height and 28 feet in length. According to Madho Sarup Vats there is a similarity between the Kamateswari temple and the 17th Century Mughal architecture.

A nahabatkhana stands on the main entrance of the temple. The main entrance has a large arch. The half circular dome stands on the curved cornice of the temple. Besides the garbhagriha, the temple has a sacrifice room, restroom, Dolbhita, Bhogroom etc. The artistic work of the sacrifice room shows the impact of Mughal architecture and the restroom shows the impact of British architectural style and pattern.

The existing image of Bhagavati is made of stone which stands on a throne made of wood. The image of Brahma and Sivalinga, Shalgram or Narayan Shila , Gopal made of octo-alloy etc. are in the temple. There is a small image of Surya standing which is 21 inches in height driving in a chariot by seven horses. Samga, Chhaya, Kangi and probha- the four wives of Surya stands by the two sides of him. This sculpture is typical of the Pala period. There is also a bronze image of Surya showing Arjuna driving a regular chariot. This bronze image is very much later. There is an image of Vishnu 37” high which stands on a lotus.²¹ The image is made of stone. Vishnu has four hands which holds a lotus, a Sankha, a Gada and a Chakra. The sculpture is also typical of the Pala

period. The image of Gajalaxmi is in the temple which is setting on a lotus and her right leg resting on an elephant.

There is a strange scimitar in the temple of Kamateswari which was used for the sacrifice of the buffalo. This scimitar is different in shape than other general scimitar. It is 44” in length along with the handle, the middle portion is 32” and the lower part is 4 ½” in width which is half-circular in shape. It is 8 Kilogram in weight.

Besides the daily worship, Ambubachi, Talnabami, Durgapuja, Kalipuja, Ratandi Chaturdashi, Akshay Tritiya, Dol, Basantipuja etc. are also celebrates here.

CONCLUSION:

Gosanimari is an archaeological site the where the Royal palace of the Khen kings of Kamata Kingdom was situated. It is one of the most important archaeological site in Cooch Behar District of West Bengal and North Eastern India. This archaeological site has many evidences belonged to the Kamata Kingdom. The Rajpat and the rampart are the main attraction to the visitors. The other places which have many evidences from which we know about the Khen kings of the Kamata Kingdom. But it is matter of regret that the Archaeological Survey of India do not take further step for the excavation of the site. If both the Government and the Archaeological Survey of India will take necessary step, Gosanimari will be a beautiful tourist centre in North Eastern India.

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