

## **Garhgaon: Third Capital City of Ahom Kingdom**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The third capital city of Ahom kingdom Garhgaon founded the 15th Ahom king Suklenmung. More than 250 years this city was the capital of Ahom kingdom. After its foundation in the year 1540 A.D. Through the patronisation of Ahom kings from Suklenmung to Rajeshwar Singha, different types of constructions were developed in this area. The place of Garhgaon had a glorious history, which history is always remaining as a golden chapter in the history of Assam.*

**Keywords:** *Ahoms, Capital city, Garhgaon, Kingdom.*

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### **Aim and objectives of the paper:**

- To focus the glorious history and historical importance of Garhgaon city as the third capital of Ahom kingdom.
- Architectural interests of Ahom kings as well as their political supremacy also will be mentioned.
- To highlight the various constructions in the Garhgaon capital city.
- Thick and faultless security systems of Ahom kingdoms will be discussed.

**Methodology of the paper:** Method of the writing of this paper is descriptive. Data has been collected from the different secondary sources like books, research papers, research thesis, newspapers, souvenirs etc.

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

The history of Assam within 1228 to 1826 is known as the Medieval Assam History. When Sukafa entered to the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 and established the Ahom kingdom, a new era was started in the history of Assam. The Ahoms were only rulers of Assam and entire north-east India, who were ruled for a long period. The kingdom of Ahoms was existing more than six hundred years. Within these years Ahoms kings mainly took five places as their capital cities. Those places were Charaideo, Sarguwa, Garhgaon, Rangpur and Jorhat. Among others, the position of Garhgaon was third. More than 250 years or almost 3 centuries this place was existing as a capital city of Ahom kingdom. The importance and popularity of the Garhgaon capital city is still beyond the imagination. Still there are some important legends among the people of Assam about Garhgaon; which legendary lines are always telling us about the glorious past of the Garhgaon city. The location of the current Garhgaon city is 13 k.m. far from the sivasagar town of Assam towards east.

### **II. DISCUSSION:**

The Assamese word Garhgaon means city of fort. 'Garh' means fort and 'Gaon' means Village. So, the meaning of Garhgaon is a village made by fort. To know about the actual history of Garhgaon we should back to 480 years ago. The Ahom king Suklenmung (1539-1552) first made this capital city by building a line of forts around this place to rule. Therefore in the history of Assam this king also known as Garhgaya raja or king of Garhgaon.

The place of Garhgaon has its own history. Before the selection this place as capital city of Ahom kingdom by king Suklenmung, this place was known as Hemenabari. Because in that place there was a garden, owner of that garden was a man named Hemen. After a short period of his death Suklenmung captured this area and started to build his capital. After selection, construction and decoration, the picture of that place had totally changed. According to a popular oral tradition we have known that Suklenmung's queen Chao-Chin prepared a map to build this capital city, she made that map by adopting a sample of the palace of Shyan dynasty's kings of contemporary China. According to this map, the city of Garhgaon was built by constructing some multistage forts. The first fort was built by earth around the city, it was almost from 15 to 16 feet height. Outside of this fort around the city a long ditch was dug. Above the fort, which was made by earth planted a line of Kotoha Bah (a species of spiny bamboo) densely that enemy's will never enter the capital city. This type of protection by planting bamboo was called as Bahgarh, or the fort made by bamboo. Inside of the those forts there was also another fort, which fort surrounding the royal palace of king. It was built by bricks. Again during the time of Ahom king Pratap Singha due the weakness of old forts a new bamboo fort was reconstructed around

the capital city. During his reign additionally four chief gates were newly constructed to enter the capital city by the supervision of Momai Tamuli Barbarua. These chief gates were Rajgarh chief door, Serekapar chief door, Nangalamara chief door and Bogidol chief door. Thus this new born capital city Garghgaon's boundaries were enriched in Rajgarh in east, Bhangarh in west, again Bahgarh and Pathaligarh in west; and Dikhou river in south.

Since Suklenmung to till the time of Ahom king Pramatta Singha maximum houses were constructed in the city of Garhgaon. Within this period along with King's palace, houses of the royal families some other important houses were also built like Holong ghor, Pat Ghor, Singori Ghor, Borsosa Ghor, Kuji Ghor, Pali Ghor, Gola Ghor, Top Ghor, Khar Ghor etc. Among those constructions only a Ghor or house is still alive. This house is Gola Ghor or a house for a storming arms, ammunition and explosives. On the other hand, among those houses the Holong Ghor was most illustrious, it was used as the residence of king. The house made by wood and bamboo and it was two storeys. King's residential place about this Holong Ghor prominent Writer Shihabuddin Talish had mentioned in his account. Talish came to Ahom kingdom with Mirjumla during the time of Mughal's expedition against Ahoms. Noteworthy that, for the first time Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's military general Mirjumla captured Garhgaon capital city due to the lack of efficient king of Ahom kingdom in 1662. Writer Shihabuddin Talish was with Mirjumla, who wrote the book *Fatiha-i-ibriya*. Talish closely studied the Garhgaon city. Specially, through his account on Assam it is known that by the Holong Ghor or residential place of Ahom King was greatly impressed him. About this house Talish said that length of the house was almost 120 hands and 30 hands wide. It was standing on 66 wooden posts. Talish also praised about the extraordinary wood and bamboo works of the people of Garhgaon capital city. Besides, along with those houses two new houses were built during the time of Ahom king Rudra Singha, those were Gobinda Dol and Puja Ghor (Prayer House) were specially constructed by using the bricks.

The Kareng Ghor was the last connection and important construction to the capital city of Garhgaon. The bright history of Garhgaon is still shining through this historical house. It was constructed during the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha (1851-1769) in 1752 by bricks. More than 12,000 workers completed the construction of this ultra modern house within a year. At the very beginning it had seven storeys, two storeys were underground and another five storeys were upper ground. From those underground there was a path on the bank of the Dikhou river. Through this path during the time of perilous time king escaped from the capital city. Therefore, this path was known as secret path of Ahom kingdom. Later along with those underground storeys of Kareng Ghor that secret path was closed by different natural calamities. Besides, during the time of British East India company's rule in Assam an another storey of Kareng Ghor had also closed by the company rules. Now only four storeys are visible of this house. These four storeys are square size. In every storey there is a floor, the upper floors are gradually smaller than lower floors. In the left side of every storey there are steep steps to go upper storey. This house is an illustrious example of the assimilation of Tai Ahom and Islamic architecture of medieval India.

### III. CONCLUSION:

Ahom kings and their soldiers were famous for their bravery, diplomatic and military powers. Despite this, due to the internal turmoil and lack of efficient rulers of kingdom Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's military general Mirjumla could capture the Garhgaon capital city of Ahom kingdom, but after a very short period Ahom king along with his soldiers recaptured the capital. Ahoms were also famous and expert on art and architecture as well as their bravery. Which truth we have seen from their innumerable gorgeous secular and religious constructions are still lying in different places of the state. Although in the subsequent period due to the transfer of the capital city from Garhgaon to Rangpur, decline of Ahom kingdom and growth of British rule in Assam the importance and popularity of Garhgaon city gradually reduced, still with its half alive historical forts and houses like Kareng Ghor, Kharghar etc., the city of Garhgaon is existing as a chief historical place of Sivasagar district of Assam.

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