**Debhata – a lost municipality in Bangladesh!**

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It is very interesting to be researched in-depth by the Urban Planners and other relevant professionals- why an urban settlement i.e., a municipality named Debhata located in the extreme western part of Sathkira district has been abolished. The stunning *Ichamati* River is flowing gently on the western part of Debhata.

Debhata municipality was established in 1867. The municipal area was extended to an area of 3.3 square miles. The population of this town was about 5570 in 1921. At that time there were about 965 tax payers representing 17.6 per cent of the population living in the municipality. The main municipal services were street light (oil lamp placed with caste iron poles), provisions of roads, water supply through digging ponds, etc. The principal source of receipt of the municipality was being tax assessed at the rate of one per cent of the annual income of the tax-payers (K.G.M. Latiful Bari, editor, Bangladesh District Gazetteers – Khulna, Bangladesh Government Press, Dhaka, 1978).

The municipality was administered by a board of consisting 12 members who were nominated by the then Government.

Debhata Municipality was abolished in 1955 since there was no justification of existence of such a municipality having no activities. A Union Board was formed in its place which was later on replaced by a Union Council in accordance with the provision of the Basic Democracy Order of 1959.

A reconnaissance visit was made there by the writer of this note during the first week of August 2015. The original one-storied thick walled building of the municipality still exists. The relics of the Hindu *zemindars* (landlords) residences surrounded by thick wall and decorative gates, ponds with *ghat*s (slope of steps leading down to the water level of the pond) and roads are witnessing the past glory of the town. These ponds were the sources of water for the residents for different purposes. A grind-iron pattern of roads are still visible in the area.

Possibly, Debhata Municipality was created by the patronage of the then *zemindars* whom had close linkages with Calcutta and the British Government. It is known that there were about *7 zemindars* living at that time at Debhata Municipality.

The main identifiable reason for abolishment of Debhata Municipality is that after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 the Hindu *zemindars* had left for India leaving their landed properties and residences and as such their patronages were missing. Further, the importance of Debhata which had linkages with Calcutta was reduced significantly. Gradually, the population of the municipal area had gone down. From then onwards, the municipal activities of Debhata were getting closed day by day.



