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Rajiv Gandhi University



MAHIS-407

History of North East India (Early times-1947) - II

MA HISTORY

2nd Semester

Rajiv Gandhi University

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HISTORY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA (EARLY TIMES-1947)-II

MA [History]

Second Semester

MAHIS – 407

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14. The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(1) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counseling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counseling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counseling Coordinators are engaged from the Departments of the University. The Counseling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counseling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABUS
History of North-East India (Early Times-1947)-II

UNIT I: DECLINE OF THE AHOM STATE AND EARLY COLONIAL INTERVENTION

- a) Moamaria Rebellion
- b) Captain Welsh's Mission
- c) Burmese Aggression

UNIT II: COLONIAL EXPANSION

- a) Annexation of Assam
- b) Annexation of Khasi Hills
- c) Annexation of Cachar
- d) Status of Tripura

UNIT III: SOCIETY AND ECONOMY IN THE HILLS

- a) Nagas
- b) Mizos
- c) Garos

UNIT IV: Freedom Movement

- a) 1857 and North East
- b) National Consciousness
- c) Peasants Uprising
- d) Non-Cooperation Quit India Movement

UNIT V: IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

- a) English Education
- b) System of Governance
- c) Land Revenue
- d) Development of Roadways, Waterways & Railways

INTRODUCTION

The North-East is the eastern-most region connected to east India via a narrow corridor squeezed between Nepal and Bangladesh. It consists of the contiguous Seven Sister states-Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura-and the Himalayan state of Sikkim. These states are grouped under the Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (MDONER) of the Government of India. Except for the Goalpara region of Assam, the rest were late entrants to political India the Brahmaputra valley of Assam became a part of British India in 1824, and the hilly regions even later. Due to cultural and historical reasons, parts of North Bengal in West Bengal (districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Koch Bihar) are often included in North-East India. Sikkim was recognized as a part of the North-Eastern states in the 1990s..

The states are officially recognized under the North Eastern Council (NEC), constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the eight states. The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) was incorporated on 9 August 1995 and the MDONER was set up in September 2001.

This book - History of North-East India (Early Times - 1947) has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the Introduction followed by the Unit Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary, Key Terms and Activity further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units:

Unit 1: Discusses the decline of the Ahom state and early colonial expansion.

Unit 2: Familiarizes you with the scenario of colonial expansion.

Unit 3: Explores society and economy in the hills.

Unit 4: Describes the freedom movement in North-East India.

Unit 5: Covers the impact of British rule in North-East India.

UNIT I DECLINE OF THE AHOM STATE AND EARLY COLONIAL INTERVENTION

Structure

- 0 Introduction
 - 1 Unit Objectives
 - 2 Moamaria Rebellion
 - 3 Captain Welsh's Mission
 - 4 Burmese Aggression
 - 5 Summary
 - 6 Key Terms
 - 7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
 - 8 Questions and Exercises
 - 9 Further Reading
-

0 INTRODUCTION

The Ahom state began to decline from the time of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795). In 1782, the Moamarias insurrection rose again with renewed vigour and increased violence. They advanced to Garhgaon and created panic among the population. The advance was halted and the rebels were treated with severity and many were executed. Such a step aggravated the situation. After a brief pause, the disturbances caused by the Moamarias swept down across the north bank. The Moamaria rebellion during the 18th century was a conflict between the Morans, adherents of the Moamara Sattra, and Ahom kings. After defeating the royalists, the Moamarias advanced towards the capital. The Morans are a tribal group of Mongol origin who live in the North East districts of Assam. It is believed they migrated from the Hukong valley of Upper Burma. Assistance was sought from Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, and Luki. Before the help arrived, the rebels occupied Rangpur; Gaurinath Singha with the members of his family sailed downstream, and reaches Nagaon, and then to Gauhati. At Rangpur, the Moamarias set up Bharath Singha as king; but the Hatisungi Morans set up Sarbananda as their king of the territory to the east of Dihing and both minted coins in their names. Krishnanarayan of Darrang had also organized a large force and occupied north Gauhati. Purnananda Buragohain shifted the centre of administration of Dichoi, later known as Jorhat, which became the new Ahom capital.

Under the circumstances, Gaurinath Singha appealed for help of men and materials to the East India Company's authorities through Raush, a salt merchant and Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar. In response to this, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General despatched Captain Thomas Welsh with sepoys who arrived at Goalpara in early November, 1792; and from there, on receiving urgent message from the king moved upstream the Brahmaputra. The meeting between the king and Capt. Welsh took place at Nagarberra on the Brahmaputra. Advancing further, Captain Welsh suppressed the rebellious elements at Gauhati and on the north bank. He also pacified Krishnanarayan, the rebellious prince at Darrang and expelled many of the Burkendazes who assisted

him. Sometime later he advanced to Jorhat, and then to Rangpur where he defeated the Moamarias, and restored the authority of Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur in 1794.

This unit will discuss the Moamaria rebellion in the 18th century, the advent of captain Welsh and the Burmese aggression in the early 19th century.

1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the phases of Moamaria rebellion from 1769 to 1806
- Interpret the reason behind Captain Welsh's mission
- Discuss the Burmese aggression

2 MOAMARIA REBELLION

The Moamaria rebellion occurred from 1769 to 1806. The conflict occurred in the 18th century between the Ahom kings and Morans who were the adherents of the Moamara Sattra. It caused general and extensive disgruntlement amongst the populace against the Ahom king and the nobles. It spanned two periods during which the Ahom kings were bereft of all control over the capital of their kingdom. When they managed to take back their capital, there was nothing but widespread slaughter of the subjects because of which huge areas were bereft of population. It had not been possible to get back his entire kingdom for the Ahom king. Bengmara which was part of the north-east region of the kingdom gained virtual independence from Ahom rule.

The rebellion had greatly weakened the kingdom of the Ahoms. It destroyed approximately half of the population and played havoc with the economy of the kingdom. Thus weakened, the Ahom kingdom became an easy target for invasion and the Burmese invasion followed. The next devastation was the colonization of the region by the British.

Crisis had been brewing in the Ahom Kingdom as the basis of the state, the Paik system was not flexible enough to change and adapt to the changes in society and economy. The leakage of manpower from the Paik system was caused in one way by the rise of the sattra. This led to tension and conflict between the Ahom kingdom and the sattras. The Moamara sattra which had Moran tribes' people as adherents followed the nonconformist Kala-samhati sect that competed against the royalist sattras belonging to other sects. As this sattra grew, the Ahom kingdom also grew more and more uncomfortable. To try to suppress them, the Ahom kingdom resorted to their repression and to insulting the sattra's followers.

As time went by, the guru of the Moamaria compromised with the Ahom rulers. Inspiration was gained by the rebels from the magico-religious cult of night worshipers, which was a mix of Tantricism and tribal fertility rites.

Sattra-Ahom conflict

In the sixteenth century, the Mahapuruxiya Dharma was established by Srimanta Sankardeva. This was a religion which was proselytizing and was one which opened itself to everyone, even the tribesmen and the Muslims. It was a religion which made available such opportunities to the common tribesmen that would help to better them economically and socially. Also, the sattras made available to them a safe escape from the mandatory labour they had to perform under the system of Paik.

The new religion propounded by Sankardeva appeared like a huge threat to the Ahom rulers. When Suklenmung was on the throne, to escape persecution Sankardeva ran off to the Koch kingdom. Pratap Singha, who was a later king, destroyed both the Kuruabahi and the Kalabari sattras setting precedent for his successors who carried on a similarly oppressive policy. This policy of oppression was changed by Jayadhwaj Singha and the rulers who succeeded him, till Sulikphaa Lora Roja made attempts to accept and live with the sattras. When Gadadhar Singha ascended the throne, he reversed the policy again. He started the persecution of the sattras. Rudra Singha, the son of Gadadhar Singha, made attempts to isolate those who were more of a threat to the Ahom kingdom, these would be the ones who were more liberal and were of the non-Brahmin sattras. He put in all effort to promote the Brahmin sattras. When the failure of his policy became evident to him, he changed course and began to provide saktism with state support. Saktism was the historical and theological *bete noire* of the Mahapuruxiya dharma. He was sure that this policy would curb the influence of the sattras. His new policy caused much greater persecutions. The one which is of greatest significance is the one that occurred in the time of Siba Singha under Bor Roja Phuleshwari Kunwonri. The conflict remained unresolved and came to the front finally in the form of the 18th century Moamoria rebellion which made the Ahom kingdom weak and hollow to such an extent that with the coming of the 19th century it collapsed.

The First Phase

Ahom officials flogged a sattra's leading disciple, Ragh Neog, on the 15th of September 1769. The reason for the flogging was that he had not made available the number of elephants that were required. Ragh Neog, Naharkhora Saikia and his two wives Radha and Rukmini led the Morans, assured the three Ahom princes (the king's (Lakshmi Singha's) brother Mohanmala, and two nephews of the king) that they would help to liberate the area lying to the north of river Burhidihing. And this they did. The Ahom capital was occupied by the rebels on 21st November, 1769. Naharkhora's Ramananda was put on the throne. Lakshmi Singha, the defeated Ahom king, was captured and imprisoned. The defeated king's high officers were executed. Three of the common Morans were made the three great Gohains. Two common Ahoms were made the Gohains at Marangi and Sadiya, a *kanri paik* was made the Borphukan and Ragh Neog became the Borbarua.

There was lack of experience amongst the rebels as far as statecraft was concerned. Due to this missing ingredient, they were unable to bring any kind of new order and in a bid to imitate them, they ended up doing just the same as their erstwhile leaders. Many daughters and wives of noblemen were seized by Ragh Neog and added to his harem. Many of the new rebel officers started imitating and behaving just like the old nobility had done and this caused dissatisfaction to the other rebels. These rebels, under the leadership of Govinda Gaoburha, moved from the capital and entered Saganmuri. This situation was seized by a few persons of the old nobility who lost no time in putting Ragh to death and took back their capital. This they achieved on 11th April, 1770 aided by Kuranganayani who was an Ahom queen from Manipur. The following purge led to the execution of, amongst others, the Moamara sattradhikar and his son Saptabhuj, Rukmini, Radha, Astabhujdev, Naharkhora and Ramananda the rebel king.

Once the Ahoms had managed to recapture their capital, the rebels under the leadership of Govinda Gaoburha in Saganmuri made an attempt to again dethrone the king. Even this attempt and movement were characteristic of a popular uprising. Weapons that the rebels mostly employed were clubs and bamboo staffs. The slogan that they

chanted was *praja-oi joroiroa, chekani-oi sopai dhora* ('Ye oppressed subjects, hold your stave close'). The uprising under Govinda Gaoburha's leadership is referred to as *chekani kubua ron* ('The war of the staves'). During the course of one such engagement, the Dhekial Phukan and the Borpatrogohain lost their lives while the Borgohain had a narrow escape. Marching on towards Rangpur, the rebels met forces at Thowra. The forces comprised fighters of the Burhagohain, the new Borpatrogohain, the Borgohain and a detachment cavalry sent by the king of Manipur. The rebels faced a defeat in this encounter. Their leader Govinda Gaoburha was taken captive and put to death.

Several rebels went off into the deep forests and from there, with leadership from men like Lephera, Parmananda and others carried on continuing guerilla warfare. At the very start under the leadership of the Deka-Phukan and the Na-Phukan a royalist force tried to further the cause but met with defeat. A while later, another force now under the leadership of the Borpatrogohain managed to get rid of Parmananda and Lephera. Then on, the Burhagohain followed a systematic obliterating village as also the leaders who remained. In a seize, starvation led to the death of many rebels along with their families. Those who survived were separated and settled at different places. Finally, Nomal, probably the last holdout, was captured and executed. With this, Moamoria rebellion's first phase came to a close.

The Second Phase

Rebels who were armed attacked Garhgaon and Rangpur in April 1783. Though the rebels were driven away, what followed was a month-and-a-half-long continuous slaughter of Morans.

An army of Dafla-Bahatias and Moamarias was raised by Harihar Tanti in the year 1786. Auniati sattra had kept a grandson of the late Moamara sattradhikar, Pitambar, in his custody. Pitambar was freed by a contingent of the rebels. In 1788, on 19 January, Rangpur was surrounded by rebels. The king Gaurinath Singha as well as the inhabitants of the capital fled. This region which was captured began to be administered locally. Brahmaputra's north bank was administered by Harihar Tanti, Majuli was under Howha and the Moran tracts from Bengmara (present-day Tinsukia) were under Sarbananda. The position of King was given to Bharat. Regular striking of coins was done in the names of Sarbananda and Bharat. The regrouping attempt made by Purnananda Burhagohain failed and he established himself in Jorhat, the vanguard of the royalist forces. Darrang is where the Ahom nobles set up camp while Nagaon was where the king stayed. The king met with dissensions due to which on 11 June, 1792 he moved to Gauhati.

About 1792, counter attacks started when an attack made by the Manipuri king was warded off by Bharat. In the same year, the East India Company sent 550 fully armed well-trained troops along with Thomas Welsh to help the Ahoms. On 24 November, 1792, facing no resistance they captured Gauhati. Next, on 18 March, 1794, they gave Rangpur to Gaurinath Singha. Thomas Welsh was awarded prize money and on 25 May, 1794 he returned to Bengal. In 1794 itself, Gaurinath Singha passed away in Jorhat. Kamaleswar Singha succeeded him. The suffering of the rebels did not abate under his rule and they suffered further reverses. The experience that they had with the troops of Thomas Welsh and their military display inspired the Ahoms to do away with the *paik*-based militia and establish for themselves a standing army comprising mostly paid Hindustani sepoys.

The fate of the rebels was not too good. In 1796, the rebel Phopai was killed, rebel king Bharat was killed in 1799 while 1800 Sadiya fell to the royalists. In spite of many attempts through 1802 and 1806, Sarbananda held out from Bengmara. Finally, the title of Barsenapati was conferred on him and he was given the territory of Matak.

So, Moamaria rebellion came to an end managing to nearly finish the Paik system as also create a near-independent Matak tract under the rule of Barsenapati.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. The _____ rebellion occurred from 1769 to 1806.
2. In the sixteenth century the _____ was established by Srimanta Sankardeva.
3. Saktism was the historical and theological *bete noire* of the Mahapuruxiya dharma. (True/False)

3 CAPTAIN WELSH'S MISSION

The decline of the Ahom kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780–95). The rebellion of the Moamarias began again in 1782, this time more violent and more vigorous. The rebels marched to Garhgaon, pushing the population into panic. The rebels' advance was arrested, with the rebels being severely put down and execution of a huge number from amongst them. This just worsened the situation and after giving it a little time, the Moamarias created disturbances across the north bank. The royalists were defeated by the Moamarias and post this victory they headed towards the capital.

The king looked towards Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, and Luki for help. Before assistance could arrive Rangpur was taken over by the rebels and Gaurinath Singha along with his entire family sailed off to Nagaon, then further to Gauhati. In Rangpur, Bharath Singha was made the king by the Moamarias. Meanwhile, Hatisungi Morans made Sarbananda the king of the region lying east of Dihing. Coins were struck in the names of both the kings. North Gauhati too had been occupied, by Krishnanarayan of Darrang who had done so with the help of a large force.

The administrative centre of Dichoi (Jorhat) was moved by Purnananda Buragohain and at a later stage it was made the new capital of the Ahoms.

This was when an appeal was made by Gaurinath Singha seeking help from the East India Company through Raush, a salt merchant and Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar for both materials and troops. The Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, responded by sending Captain Thomas Welsh with a troop of trained and armed sepoys. They reached Goalpara at the beginning of November, 1792. Here, they got the king's urgent message. On the Brahmaputra at Nagarberra, a meeting was held between Thomas Welsh and the king.

From there, Captain Welsh moved further and both at Gauhati and on the river's north bank he was able to defeat the rebels. At Darrang, Welsh even succeeded in pacifying the rebelling prince Krishnanarayan, and expelling a number of the Burkendazes who were assisting the prince. After a while, Welsh marched to Jorhat, then onwards to Rangpur where post being victorious over the Moamarias, in 1794 he reestablished Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur.

While Capt. Welsh was gaining one success after the other, the new Governor General Sir John Shore recalled him. While he had been in Assam, in 1793 itself Welsh had concluded a commercial treaty under whose terms the inter Bengal and Assam commerce was to be on a 'reciprocal basis'. In answering the queries of his government, he presented his answers in The Report of Capt. Welsh. In it he provided vital information pertaining to the Ahom's system of Government, their products, trade and commerce, to name a few. Despite the fact that many people considered Gaurinath Singha to be vindictive and cruel, Welsh says he did a lot of good too; for example, it was he who had human sacrifice abolished at Sadiya's *Kechaikhati* temple.

Let us look at the help that Welsh provided to the Ahom King from a different angle. Towards the close of the 18th century, the East India Company was presented with a lucrative opportunity when trouble started in the Ahom kingdom due to the Moamariya rebellion. It gave them a huge means of surveying and understanding the region.

When King Gaurinath Singha's call for help reached the Company, it initially dithered since it was in the middle of a war on taxation against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Finally when they managed Siege of Srirangapatnam and treaty signing in 1792, they were free to indulge in other issues.

That very year, they dispatched Bengal Army's Captain Thomas Welsh to aid Gaurinath Singha. He set out with six companies of sepoy, every company had 60 fighting men, and there were small medical corporations under Dr John Peter Wade. The entire unit had just 550.

At the close of November of 1792, this unit had its first military encounter with the local population. Northern Kamrup, inclusive of North Gauhati, had been occupied by Darrang Raja Krishnanarayan. He ignored the various requests the English had made to him to disband his barkandaz army. This led to a battle and post just two engagements, he put down arms, removed the barkandazes from his army, and accepted the Ahom king's vassalage.

Captain Welsh, at the start of 1794, had started to negotiate with upper Assam's Moamariyas. The negotiations were unsuccessful and the atmosphere for an armed encounter brewed. Again, the English gave battle and the militia again lost to the Bengal Army. Reinstating of Gaurinath Singha was accomplished and at the same time the English army was recalled to Bengal.

Why was the Bengal Army invincible?

Philosophy of war

The armies of the East India Company fought in a European style on the infantry front. The Company lacked cavalry units in the true sense for quite some time. The British Army had perfect ones. The armies in India had total reliance on cavalry, and infantry for them was of scarce importance. In this regard, the army of the Ahoms was an exception, being possibly the only one with no cavalry. Assamese were brilliant foot soldiers and expert implementers of guerrilla warfare.

The unit that came to fight the Moamariyas had better leadership and training than the Moamariyas. The weapons that they used were also better. Well drilled, the unit's troops had the doggedness that had been displayed by English armies throughout the world at different theatres of war. They were trained not to flee or break up under any circumstance. They were trained to hold their ground, even in the most adverse

situation. To quote Manimugdha Sharma, 'It was this superior will to prevail that probably made all the difference.'

Troops of the Company, in the 1970s itself had short-land pattern. The muskets were easy to load and were of high performance. An expert soldier could fire four rounds in approximately one minute.

On the other hand, when compared with the company units, both leadership and weapons of the Moamariyas were deficient. Moamariyas had no idea of the style of fighting employed by the Europeans. Moamariyas did not possess real firearms except for some obsolete matchlocks. Moamariyas would use anything as a weapon such as bamboo sticks, spears, pick-axes, pikes and swords. The Ahoms did not possess muskets.

When Captain Welsh and team were recalled by Sir John Shore in 1794, they were full of stories about Assam, which aided the Company to interfere in the future affairs of Assam.

In the Gazetteer of India, Assam, Vol 1, it is mentioned that, 'According to Captains Welsh's account, Gauhati was an expansive and populous town at that time. It was situated on both sides of the banks of the Brahmaputra and extended to the neighboring hills. Along the river bank there was a rampart on which mounted 113 guns, including 3 of European manufacture. Another fortification of the town was a large enclosure, surrounded by a brick wall. Rangpur was a largely populated town, spanning about 20 miles. The surrounding country had been very densely cultivated. The nobles held large estates of land, which were tilled by their slaves, but the products were never brought to the market. It was almost impossible to buy grain: it was easier to buy salt or opium. The price of commodities was very cheap. Buffaloes were sold for five rupees.'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Under which ruler's reign did the Ahom kingdom start declining?
5. Where was human sacrifice abolished?
6. The Assamese were poor foot soldiers and not good implementers of guerrilla warfare. (True/False)

4 BURMESE AGGRESSION

To quote from the Government of Assam website, 'The Ahoms ruled Assam uninterruptedly for six hundred years. They established a strong and stable government, gave peace and prosperity and happiness to their subjects and successfully resisted many foreign invasions. But during the closing years of the Ahom rule, on account of the incompetence and inefficiency of the monarchs and mutual rivalry among nobles, the Ahom monarchy fell into decadence. For the Burmese it was a favorable opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ahom kingdom.'

The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice. For a short period from 1821–1825, the kingdom even fell into the hands of the Burmese and was ruled by them, till the British pushed them out. The Assamese refer to this period as manor din and the Manipurians call it Chahi-Taret Khuntakpa or seven years of devastation. Whatever it may be called, this period is remembered as a time of horror. The 600-year-old Ahom kingdom was in a sorry state and was feeling the pinch of depopulation due to emigrations

and depredations. Till now, there had been reluctance on the part of the British to colonize Assam who were in direct contact with a belligerent Burmese occupying force. This led to the First Anglo-Burmese War which further caused annexation by the British of the kingdom of the Ahoms and Burma.

Background

Second half of the 18th century saw a weakening of Assam's Ahom kingdom because of the spate of Moamoria rebellions. Purnananda Burhagohain, the Prime Minister, made serious attempts to bring the region back under Ahom. He managed to put down all rebellion and reestablish royal authority. All the high posts were occupied by his relatives. This could have been done by him for either ensuring that the administration ran smoothly or just to consolidate his own power. Gauhati's governor, Badan Chandra Borphukan, felt anxiety at how Purnananda Burhagohain power was growing. He began with trying to befriend Purnananda Burhagohain. One strategy he chose was to wed Pijou Gabhoru, his daughter, to Urekhanath Dhekial Phukan the son of Purnananda. He also gave a huge dowry of utensils and gold ornaments. His strategy backfired. Purnananda Burhagohain showed displeasure and even suspicion that Badan Chandra Borphukan was making inappropriate use of his office. Badan Chandra Borphukan became angry with Purnananda Burhagohain behaviour and did not refrain from encouraging conspiracy in Jorhat, the capital, for assassinating Purnananda Burhagohain. The conspirators were caught and punished, and Badan Chandra Borphukan's link with them became known. In the meantime, Burhagohain received complaints from the populace of Western Assam, regarding the atrocities that Badan Chandra Borphukan and his two sons, Janmi and Piyoli, were committing. Ultimately, in 1815 CE, action was taken by Purnananda Burhagohain. He dispatched a deputation which had the order for Badan Chandra Borphukan's arrest and for bringing him to Jorhat so that justice could be served. Purnananda Burhagohain's daughter-in-law Pijou Gabhoru (Badan Chandra Borphukan daughter) was quick to dispatch a warning message to her father and Badan Chandra Borphukan made his escape to British-ruled Bengal. Still, in Chilmari in Bengal, he was caught by Burhagohain. Aided by the local Thanedar/Police officer, he again made good his escape and went off to Calcutta. Here he paid a visit on Lord Hastings, the Governor General seeking help for removing Purnananda Burhagohain. His plea was turned down stating that they followed a policy of noninterference in the internal matter of another kingdom. At about the same time, Burmese King Bodawpaya envoy and Badan Chandra Borphukan met in Calcutta. Having heard his story, the envoy took Badan Chandra Borphukan to Burma and got him an appointment with the king.

First Burmese invasion

Badan Chandra Borphukan met the Burmese King Bodawpaya in 1816 and asked for help in putting down Purnananda Burhagohain, his political rival. King Bodawpaya agreed to help and he dispatched with Badan Chandra Borphukan a party under the leadership of a general of Bhamo. They arrived in Assam in January 1817. On 27 March, 1817 the first battle was fought at Ghiladhari. Jama Khan, Hao Bora and Daman Gogoi led the forces of Assam. It was a week-long battle and Purnananda Burhagohain passed away because of natural causes. Chronicles suggest that as a cause of his death the Ahom nobility's ranks became divided. The Assam army was forced to surrender since it was not receiving any reinforcement. Purnananda's son Ruchinath became the Burhagohain, and told the king to leave but the king refused to do so. At this point, Ruchinath began to be suspicious of Chandrakanta Singha having an alliance with Badan Chandra Borphukan, so he headed off to Gauhati without the king when the Burmese army advanced towards

the Ahom capital at Jorhat. Chandrakanta Singha, the king, did not leave and when Badan Chandra Borphukan came he was received well by the king and made the Mantri Phukan.

All of 100,000 rupees was given to the Burmese army while appropriate presents were given to the commanders. Hemo Aideo, who was an Ahom prince's daughter, was sent off to the king of Burma with a dowry and 50 elephants. April 1817, the Burmese army went away from Assam. A short while later Badan Chandra was assassinated. Ruchinath marched against Chandrakanta Singha and Purandar Singha was made the king.

Second Burmese invasion

When the news reached Bodawpaya, he dispatched an army that had a strength of 30,000 troops commanded by Kiamingi (Alumingi Borgohain) and in the guidance of Patalang Senapati (Momai Barua). This army was met by an army led by Jaganath Dhekial Phukan on February 15, 1819 at Phulpanisiga, near Janji. The army of the Burmese lost around 300 soldiers, was defeated and retreated a bit. Rather than pursue the defeated army, the Assam army went back to Jorhat, capital of the Ahom kingdom. This caused panic and confusion. Unable to create confidence, Purandar Singha and Ruchinath Burhagohain sailed off to Gauhati, and within the next two days Jorhat was occupied by the Burmese army.

On 9th March 1819, Chandrakanta was reinstated as the king. Next came the executing of all Ahom officials suspected of providing support to Ruchinath Burhagohain. In April 1819, mid-leaving Mingimaha Tilwa in-charge, Kiamingi headed back to Burma. Patalang followed the orders of Tilwa and gave pursuit to Ruchinath; he engaged Ruchinath in battle at Nagaon and succeeded in driving him beyond Assam chokey. Patalang became the Borbarua. On 27 January, 1820 the Burmese contingent headed back home. Chandrakanta Singha displayed gratitude towards Bodawpaya by sending Upama Aideo, a princess, accompanied by attendants and officials.

Chandrakanta later showed a change in attitude towards the Burmese. Patalang, originally a Namrup native, convinced Chandrakanta to get free of the alliance with the Burmese allegiance and also got a fort made in Jaypur (Dighalighat).

Third Burmese invasion

Bagyidaw ascended the throne of Burma in 1819. He took a decision that he would annex Assam. In February 1821, he dispatched Mingimaha Tilwa to Assam. While Chandrakanta Singha made off to Gauhati, Patalang Borbarua was killed. Many Ahom officials were killed by Mingimaha. He even put Punyadhar (Jogeshwar Singha), one of Hemo Aideo brothers, on the throne.

Chandrakanta Singha's response

Gauhati became the camp of Chandrakanta Singha. Without the help of either Purandar Singha or Ruchinath he marched against the Burmese. Not able to put together an army in British territory, Purandar had one raised under Robert Bruce in Bhutan. His raised forces could not stand against Chandrakanta's forces and were dispersed in May 1821. A huge force that Tilwa had deputed in September 1821 moved against Chandrakant. Chandrakant headed back to Assam Chokey and further back to British territories. Chandrakanta managed to raise a force comprising mostly Hindustani and Sikhs soldiers, and in 1821 October he gained back Assam Chokey. In 1821, December he gained back Gauhati. On 15 March, 1822 Chandrakanta put camp near Jorhat, at Mahgarh.

When news of the situation in Assam reached Bagyidaw, he dispatched a contingent of 20,000 led by Mingi Maha Bandula. This force, in 1822 April defeated Chandrakanta's forces. Chandrakanta retreated to Gauhati, then to Assam Chokey. In June 1822, at Assam Chokey, Mingimaha Tilwa defeated him. Chandrakanta was forced to retreat to British territory. Post this victory, Mingimaha Tilwa was declared by the Burmese as Assam's Raja. This ended Assam's sovereign Ahom rule.

Burmese rule

Post their Assam Chokey victory over Chandrakanta the Burmese stood opposite the British in Brahmaputra valley. Tilwa's demand was for the British to hand over Chandrakanta, or he would enter British territory to hunt him out. He had approximately 1,000 troops at Gauhati under Bandula and 7,000 at Assam Chokey. Faced with issues of logistics, Bandula headed out of Gauhati, and Tilwa remained there with no more than a 1,000 troops. With this being the situation, the Burmese invited Chandrakanta Singha to return to the throne. Seizing the opportunity, Chandrakanta was quick to abandon his Phukans and Baruas. At Assam Chokey, he surrendered to Tilwa. On arriving at Jorhat, Chandrakanta was imprisoned.

The Anglo-Burmese war had started in 1824. It concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Under the treaty's terms, to quote from the Government of Assam website, 'the Burmese renounced their rights on Assam as well as the neighboring kingdoms of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. The Treaty of Yandaboo also marked the end of the Ahom monarchy and established the British sovereignty in Assam. With this treaty we make the transition from the Medieval to Modern Age in Assam.'

To quote the treaty as made available from:

C. U. Aitchison, ed. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads: Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*. Vol. XII. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931, 230-233.

Treaty of Yandaboo, 24 February 1826

Treaty of peace between the Honorable East India Company on the one part, and his Majesty the king of AVA on the other, settled Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, K.C.B., and K.C.T.S., Commanding the Expedition, and Senior Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; Thomas Campbell Robertson, ESQ., Civil Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; and Henry Ducie Chad, ESQ., Captain, Commanding Britannic Majesty's and the Honorable Company's Naval Force the Irrawaddy River, on the part of the Honorable Company; and by Mengyee-Maha-Men-Kyan-Ten Woongyee, Lord of Laykaing, and Mengyee-Mara-Hlah-Thuo-Hah-Thoo-Atwen-Woon, Lord of the Revenue, on the part of the King of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full powers, agreed to and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty-seven Gaudma Era, 1826.

ARTICLE 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honorable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.

ARTICLE 2

His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntia. With regard to Munnipoor it is stipulated, that should Ghumbheer Sing desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

ARTICLE 3

To prevent all future disputes respecting the boundary line between the two great Nations, the British Government will retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, including the four divisions of Arracan, Ramree, Cheduba, and Sandoway, and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Unnoupectoumien or Arakan Mountains (known in Arakan by the name of the Yeomatoung or Pokhingloun Range) will henceforth form the boundary between the two great Nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective government's for that purpose, such Commissioners from both powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

ARTICLE 4

His Majesty the King of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergui and Tenasserim, with the islands and dependencies thereunto appertaining, taking the Salween River as the line of demarcation on that frontier ; any doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of Article third.

ARTICLE 5

In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the Nations, and as part indemnification to the British Government for the expenses of the War, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of Rupees.

ARTICLE 6

No person whatever, whether native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested by either party, on account of the part which he may have taken or have been compelled to take in the present war.

ARTICLE 7

In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two governments, it is agreed that accredited ministers, retaining an escort or safeguard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase, or to build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials; and a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage, will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

ARTICLE 8

All public and private debts contracted by either government, or by the subjects of either government, with the others previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated upon the same principles of honor and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war ; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British

subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava., shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in and part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

ARTICLE 9

The King of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burmah ships or vessels in British port nor shall ships or vessels, the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon River or other Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

ARTICLE 10

The good and faithful Ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present War, will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above Treaty.

ARTICLE 11

This Treaty to be ratified by the Burmese authorities competent in the like cases, and the Ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether Europe or Native, American, and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners ; the British Commissioners on their part engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council ,and the Ratification shall be delivered to His Majesty the King of Ava in four months, or sooner if possible, and all the Burmese prisoners shall, in like manner be delivered over to their own Government as soon as they arrive from Bengal.

Archibald Campbell.

Largeen Meonja,

Woonghee.

T. C. Robertson

Civil Commissioner.

Seal of the Lotoo

Hy. D. Chads,

Captain, Royal Navy.

Shwagum Woon,

Atawoon.

Additional Article

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangements, with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article before referred to, into installments, viz., upon the payment of twenty-five lacks of Rupees, or one-fourth of the sum total (the other articles of the treaty being executed), the Army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a

similar sum at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso as above, the Army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual installments in two years, from this Twenty-fourth day of February AD 1826, through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honorable the East India Company.

Archibald Campbell.

Largeen Meonja,

Woongee.

T. C. Robertson,

Civil Commissioner.

Seal of the Lotoo

Hy. D. Chads,

Captain, Royal Navy.

Shwwagum Woon,

Atawoon

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William in Bengal, this Eleventh day of April, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six.

Amherst.

Combermere.

J. H. Harington.

W. B. Bayley.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of _____ invasion of Assam.
8. When did the Anglo-Burmese war come to an end?

ACTIVITY

Write a descriptive essay on the Anglo-Burmese war.

DID YOU KNOW

May be primitive but the technologies developed by the Ahoms in the field of metallurgy and architecture are quite notable. The Ahoms created separate clans to develop each field of technology. The Kharghorias were good gun powder makers, the Jawkhorias made nitres, and similarly there were carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, stone carvers, tailors, etc. The giant size canons were cast iron processing ores in traditional crude methods but it worked. The canons are still rust free even though they are centuries old.

5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Sukaphaa is said to have established the Ahom kingdom.
- Moamoria rebellion rebels stole away the power of the Ahoms.
- 1769 to 1806 was the period of the Moamoria rebellion. It was the conflict that occurred in the 18th century between the Ahom kings and Morans who were the adherents of the Moamara Sattrā. The rebellion destroyed approximately a half of the population and played havoc with the economy of the kingdom. Thus weakened, the Ahom kingdom became an easy target for invasion and the Burmese invasion followed.
- Crisis had been brewing in the Ahom Kingdom as the basis of the state, the Paik system was not flexible enough to change and adapt to the changes in society and economy.
- The leakage of manpower from the Paik system was caused in one way by the rise of the sattrā which came in conflict with the Ahom kingdom.
- In the sixteenth century the Mahapuruxiya Dharma was established by Srimanta Sankardeva. It made available such opportunities to the common tribesmen, which would help them to better them economically and socially. Also, the sattrās made available to them a safe escape from the mandatory labor they had to perform under the system of Paik.
- The Moamaria Rebellion occurred in two phases.
- The decline of the Ahom Kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). When he was attacked and Rangpur was taken over Gaurinath Singha along with his entire family sailed off to Nagaon, then further to Gauhati.
- Gaurinath Singha sought help from the East India Company through Raush, a salt merchant and Mr. Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar for both materials and troops. The Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, responded by sending Captain Thomas Welsh with a troop of trained and armed sepoy.
- The period from 1817 to 1826 is the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice.
- The Anglo-Burmese war had started in 1824. It concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Under the treaty's terms, to quote from the Government of Assam website, 'the Burmese renounced their rights on Assam as well as the neighboring kingdoms of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. The Treaty of Yandaboo also marked the end of the Ahom monarchy and established the British sovereignty in Assam. With this treaty we make the transition from the Medieval to Modern Age in Assam.'

6 KEY TERMS

- **Barkandazes:** Hindustani irregular infantrymen or cavalrymen, who were basically freebooters
- **Disgruntlement:** Dissatisfaction
- **Rebel:** A person who rises in armed resistance against an established government or ruler.

7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Moamoria
2. Mahapuruxiya Dharma
3. True
4. Gaurinath Singha
5. Sadiya's *Kechaikhati* temple
6. False
7. Burmese
8. The Anglo-Burmese war concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826.

8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the first Burmese aggression.
2. In short, describe the terms of the treaty signed between the British and Burmese post the ousting of the Burmese from Assam by the British.
3. Why was Captain Welsh able to gain such success in his mission in Assam?
4. What were the causes of the Moamaria Rebellion?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the Moamaria Rebellion.
2. Discuss Captain Welsh's Mission.
3. Describe the events that led to deploying Captain Welsh's Mission.
4. Discuss the events that led to the Burmese interfering for the first time in the affairs of Assam.

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UNIT II COLONIAL EXPANSION

Structure

- 0 Introduction
 - 1 Unit Objectives
 - 2 Annexation of Assam
 - 2.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar
 - 2.2 Administration of David Scott (1824-1831)
 - 2.3 Administration of T.C Robertson (1832-1834)
 - 2.4 Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)
 - 2.5 Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects
 - 3 Annexation of Khasi Hills
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 - 3.2 Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills
 - 3.3 Freedom Movement
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-

0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about colonial expansion in Assam. The reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-1818) saw the Burmese invasion on Assam. Friction between Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan and a conspiracy by Satram to overthrow the former led the latter to go to the Burmese capital Amarapura where he pleaded for assistance against the *Buragohain*. Bodoupaya, who had already had his eyes on Assam, seized the opportunity to send an army of about sixteen thousand men with Badan Chandra to Assam. The Burmese army after defeating the Assamese army at several engagements arrived at Jorhat. Chandra Kanta Singha was retained as king, and Badan Chandra assumed power as minister. The Burmese then retired to their country with large presents. But soon the assassination of Badan Chandra and installation of Purandar Singha by ousting Chandra Kanta Singha, once again brought the Burmese under the command of Ata Mingi to Assam in 1819. On their advance, Purandar and his Prime Minister Rudinath fled to Gauhati, and Chandra Kanta Singha was once again restored to the throne despite his mutilation of person caused in the meanwhile. After the departure of the Burmese, Chandra Kanta Singha sought to raise a fort at Jaipur against further Burmese invasion. However, a Burmese force sent by their Monarch with presents of ornaments and dress to Chandra Kanta Singha seeing such preparations killed Patalong under whose supervision the fort was raised. Thinking this hostile move on the part of the Burmese army, Chandra Kanta fled to Gauhati and did not come back in spite of Burmese assurance. This was in 1821. The Burmese then set up an Ahom prince, Jogeswar Singha. Chandra Kanta Singha crossed the border and entered Bengal where he tried to collect arms and men to fight the Burmese. At the battle of Mahgarh, Chandra Kanta's army was badly defeated, and he once again entered the British territory.

The period from 1821 to 1824 is called period of Burmese rule. During this period, the Burmese devastated the country and committed atrocities by plundering and killing. The Burmese also threatened the Goalpara frontier of Bengal by demanding the surrender of Assamese refugees including Chandra Kanta Singha, and their supporters who often gave trouble of them across the border. In that time, the border conflict in the East India Company's Chittagong frontier with the Burmese empire took serious turn. Anticipating a threatened invasion of Bengal, the prized possession of the Company in India, Lord Amherst, the then Governor General, decided to declare war on Myanmar (Burma). War was declared on the 5 March 1824. This was the First Anglo-Burmese War which lasted for nearly two years.

Immediately after the declaration of war, the British army entered Goalpara frontier of Assam and after defeating the small Burmese garrisons in Lower Assam, it advanced to Upper Assam. By taking advantage of a dissension among the Burmese commanders, the British occupied Rangpur in 1825 and drove the Burmese and their allies, the Singphos out of Assam. A section of the Burmese army surrendered to the British remained in Assam.

Immediately on the occupation of Assam by the British, martial law was declared; David Scott was appointed as civil officer in charge of civil matters, and Col. Richards in charge of the army, and the British started their administration.

By Article II of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was concluded between the British and the Burmese at Yandaboo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese monarch renounced all claims upon and promised to refrain from all interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies. As Assam was already occupied by the British during the Anglo-Burmese war, it was kept under British occupation and started introducing British administration.

1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the East India Company's annexation of Assam
- Describe how the British annexed the Khasi hills and consolidated power
- Explain how the kingdom of Cachar fell to the British imperialistic idea
- Interpret how the British allowed the king of Tripura to function independently despite exercising its control

2 ANNEXATION OF ASSAM

After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces: Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Kamrup, Nowgang and parts of Darrang, with Gauhati as its headquarters, constituted Lower Assam. Upper Assam comprised the other parts of Darrang, from Biswanath to the river Buridihing with its headquarters at Rangpur.

The Ahom Rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandaboo came into action. Lower Assam was brought directly under the British dominion because it bore high revenue income. Upper Assam suffered a lot under the Burmese invasion. People lost their confidence in the Government and the administration collapsed. It became essential for Upper Assam to be under the Governance of the Military. Appointed Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott and Colonel Richard was appointed as

the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam. The people of Assam were very happy with the British administration in the beginning. Common people now hoped for peace and prosperity, after suffering a lot during the Burmese invasion. Ruling classes thought that their power and privileges would be secured under the British rule. But this was not to be. The British cared for their own prosperity and their own business. People could now see that the British administration was different. Soon people were not content with the administration.

7.2.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar

The Ahom nobility were dissatisfied with the British as they understood that their rights and privileges were not secure under the administration of the British. Soon, Gomdhar Konwar, the Prince of Ahom and a scion of the royal family, organized a revolt against the British. Time turned out to be favourable, with the Khasis and Singphos also preparing a revolt against the British. Gomdhar was formally enthroned at Bassa. Revolutionary forces advanced towards Mariani, but the British won the battle, led by Lieutenant Rutherford. Gomdhar was arrested and imprisoned.

7.2.2 Administration of David Scott (1824-31)

With improvements in conditions in Upper Assam, Martial law was also lifted in 1828. Now, the entire valley of Brahmaputra came under civil administration. Civil and criminal justice were under David Scott who was appointed as Commissioner. He was the chief of police and also presided over collection of revenue. In simple words, David Scott was given all the charges of the entire valley as a Commissioner. He used all his power in revenue collection, judicial and police administration in the valley. Scott was against the implementation of new rules and tried to retain the old system as much as possible. The 'Paik' and 'Khel' systems were retained in Upper Assam. Barbarua was appointed for collecting tax. The 'Pargana' land system of land division was retained in Lower Assam. A Choudhury was made in-charge of each Pargana to collect taxes. Payments in cash were accepted. Various taxes were imposed on the people of Lower Assam, some of which are: rent tax, professional tax, and stamp duties. The British Police system was followed to maintain law and order. The police system comprised a Daroga, one Jamadar and a number of constables. The post of Barphukan was retained for judicial administration. He took up civil cases. Some Panchayat Courts were also present to solve petty civil cases. Scott had put a lot of effort towards the welfare of Assam. David Scott steered the administration of Assam through the most crucial times of its history.

David Scott did not annex Upper Assam on the basis of economic as well as social view points. He thought that it would become a liability for the British. People were devastated and lost faith in government administration after the Burmese invasion. Scott noticed the hostile mood of Ahom nobles. Gomdhar Konwar's revolt followed by Dhanjay Pealia Bargohain's conspiracy expressed anger against the British. Therefore, Scott recommended restoring monarchy in Upper Assam rather than annexing the British dominion. Accordingly, the prince of Ahom, Purandar Singha, was crowned as the Raja of Upper Assam. The British signed an agreement with the King that: (i) the Raja would pay a sum of ₹50,000 annually as tribute; (ii) the Raja would act according to the advice of the British Political Agent; and (iii) the Raja would be protected against any foreign aggression. The British very tactfully served its purpose to satisfy the nobles momentarily, and then annex Upper Assam in due time because the conditions of the agreement would be impossible to fulfil for Purandar Singha.

Purandar Singha was a young man of about 25 years of age. He readily accepted the treaty being imposed on him but was unaware of the difficulties of his new position. There were a lot of political difficulties and his administration was financially crippled from the beginning. Purandar Singha had spent his earlier days in Bengal. Though he was approved by the British, People of Assam and the nobles wanted Chandrakanta Singha as king instead. Common People were unhappy with the new rules introduced by the British government after taking the possession of Assam. Hence, Purandar Singha could not keep up the agreement with the British. Purandar Singha failed to pay the regular yearly revenue to the British starting from the year 1835 because of a rapid fall in revenue. This violation of agreement gave the British ample and legitimate reasons to support their annexation of Assam. Finally, Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India in 1838. In other words, the foundation of British rule in Assam was laid.

2.3 Administration of T.C Robertson (1832-34)

T.C Robertson was appointed as the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam after Crack Fort, in 1832. He was soon appraised as a man of tact, prudence and sound judgment of the province. With his prejudice against the 'native agency', he realized that the supervision of British officers was a must in Assam. Robertson divided Lower Assam into four districts. An officer called the Principal Assistant led each province. The Principal Assistant acted as a Judge, Magistrate and Collector and was paid a salary of one thousand rupees. He had the authority to decide original civil cases from five hundred to one thousand rupees; he could also hear appeals from Lower Courts. He had the same authority as the Magistrate of Bengal to deal with criminal cases. There were two courts in each district, the munsifs and the panchayat. Original cases from one hundred to five hundred rupees were tried in the munsif's court and appeals were heard from the panchayat court. The panchayat court tried minor cases of up to one hundred rupees. Robertson brought about radical changes in the revenue system. He abolished additional imposts in 1832. But tax on land at various rates was imposed on the peasants. Robertson also introduced measures to safeguard and protect the peasants from extortions. Patgiris, Bishayas and Choudhuries were appointed as revenue officers.

2.4 Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)

After T.C. Robertson, Captain Jenkins became the Commissioner. Upper Assam was the last dominion of the Ahom rule in Assam and was annexed to the British territory under his administration in 1838. He created the post of Deputy Commissioner, who was vested with judicial powers, besides his civil duties. He was to act as district and session judge. The Principal Assistant was given new powers to transfer cases to subordinate courts. The munsif's and the panchayat courts continued to function and decide civil cases as before. The number of Thanas was increased to maintain law and order, and protect the lives and property of people. Darogas was given the charge, who was aided by a Jamadar and a few constables. The khel system was abolished in matters of revenue. New taxes like tax on 'barimati' were introduced. Non-rupit land rates were increased. Professional tax on the various professions was the same as in Ahom rule. Meanwhile the discovery and success of tea plantation made it the most important cash crop in Assam. Tea industry was followed by coal and oil industries. Agriculture sector and local economy were no way linked with

industrialization in Assam. There was drastic improvement in communication with the other states. Medical care and health facilities were also introduced. One of the most important benefits was modern education of British Rule. A new awakening started in the Brahmaputra Valley from the end of the 19th century.

At the time of Burmese expulsion, the condition of Brahmaputra valley was most deplorable. The civil administration of Assam was entrusted to David Scott during the period of transition. He was given the title of 'Agent of the Governor General for the entire eastern frontier' from Cachar and Sylhet of the south to Sikkim in the north. He was also the Special Civil Commissioner of North-East Rongpur, i.e., Goalpara and the Garo Hills. Mr. Robinson says, 'Hitherto the affairs of the province were conducted on much the same system that prevailed before the conquest. The officer-in charge exercised general superintendence and devoted their attention to fiscal business while the criminal and civil duties were conducted by councils of the Assamese nobility under the name of Panchayat. Each division had two to three such Panchayats of the province. Appeals lay from the court of one Panchayat to the next superior court and ultimately to the court of the Commissioners.'

The executive officers in judicial cases were magistrates as well as judges trying to deal with the accused with the help of the Panchayat but referring all horrendous offences appended with their options to Mr. Scott for his ultimate judgement. The revenue administration was carried out in the same manner as it had existed during the conquest. An improved method of assessing land revenue was introduced by David Scott, but he died in August, 1831 before implementing it. Thus, the history of the state under the British rule started after appointing David Scott. On the eve of the Anglo-Burmese war, that they had no plan of annexing any portion of the Brahmaputra valley and favoured to stay only as conquerors. As a result, the first rebellion broke out. It was started by Assamese nobles against the newly established authority with demand to eliminate the new administrative system of revenue, which diminished many of them to abject poverty.

Occupation of Lower Assam by the British was not viewed as a serious concern by the Khasi Chiefs who held the low lands, generally known as nine-duars north of their hills. The ruler of Khyrem, Barmanik took the initiative in August 1828 down the plains of Dimarua, a few kilometres from Gauhati, seized collections of revenue officers and publicly demanded his independence on the duars. The second revolt broke out the Eastern Assam under the administration of the ex-nobility of Assam. The British Government somehow succeeded to put off their joint rebellion. Nearly all the territories of Brahmaputra Valley and the hilly regions of Jaintia and Cachar were annexed to the company's administration in Assam in the course of two years. Accordingly, David Scott, North-East Frontier, agent to the Governor General, spread suzerainty British over Cachar under an agreement with Raja Govinda Chandra in March, in 1834. In his agreement with Scott, Raja Ram Singha of Jaintia acknowledged the authority of the British Government. Thus, the extension of British dominion into Assam or the North- East Frontier started. People submitted to the inevitable; in actuality, they 'hailed with unbounded joy' their deliverers who rescued them from the cruelty of the Burmese and granted them the most loyal cooperation. Even an archenemy of the British, Maniram Dewan, heavily welcomed the arrival of the English. Scott's policy of satisfying the former official aristocracy proved a miserable failure. And towards the end of 1828, the Ahom, the Khasis, the Singphos as well as the Bhutias in the north were binding on the British subjects.

British administration was imperfect. People demanded a change from the repeated uprising and the administrative confusion of the period. T.C. Robertson was

the successor of Scott as the agent of the Governor in 1832. Nevertheless, in 1832, Upper Assam except for the territories of Sadiya and Mattak, was made over to the Ahom prince Purandar Singha, who was a vassal king. In October, 1838, the territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr. Jenkin, Agent of East India Company, and Assam became a 'nonregulated' province as a whole of the Indian Empire. This was done on the contrary to their earlier assurances with a purely commercial motive. Purandar Singha was humiliated unnecessarily, and it could have been done only with the tacit consent of the rival group of Purandar Singha. The British followed the same tactics in finally annexing Cachar in 1830, and they also annexed Sadiya to British India in 1842. Likewise, Jaintia, which was under the rule of a vassal king, was annexed in 1835 and Manipur was restored to its ruling dynasty. There were eighteen mountain passes along the southern frontier of Bhutan, called Bhutan duars. Highlanders of Bhutan held their sway over this border by means of these passes and established their de facto right over the whole of border territory. As a result of incessant indignities committed by the Bhutias on the British subjects, the British Government appended all the Assam duars in 1841 as the only means of security and peace in this part of the frontier. These duars were the main channels of trade between Tibet and Assam.

Hostilities with the Mishimis originated from a simple incident, when in 1854, French Missionary M. Kich crossed the Mishimi country into Tibet accompanied by his friend N. Bourri. They were murdered by the Mishimis while returning. The Mishimis were crushed in a series of attacks, and the rebels made their submission to the British in 1843. The Lushais committed their first sweep in 1849 and the punitive expedition that followed was so encouraging that they gave no further difficulty till 1858 AD. Meanwhile, T.C. Robertson had felt that mixed activities of a far flung frontier to the provinces was not justified. He realized that for good supervision, there was a necessity of European officers in Assam and on his recommendation, the supreme Government granted its approval for dividing the province into four districts: Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang and Nagaon in March, 1833; each was assigned a Principal Assistant vested with the authorities of a Collector, Judge and Magistrate. Gauhati remained the headquarters of the province for many years after British occupation of Assam. But the headquarters of the new administration shifted to Shillong after Assam emerged as a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. After the formation of separate districts, boundaries underwent changes in 1833. The Dhansiri River basically formed the boundary in the east, and the district of Sibsagar covered some areas of the existing Karbi Anglong district, North Cachar Hills and also the Naga Hills. In 1853, North Cachar was segregated from a subdivision, and in the next year the region of Tularam was added to the North Cachar subdivision. The Naga Hills and a large part of Karbi Anglong were combined into a separate district during 1867, and the subdivision of North Cachar was abolished, and a considerable area of North Cachar subdivision was assigned to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

The province of Assam was created with a view of relieving Lieutenant Governor of Bengal from a part of his huge administrative responsibility in 1874. The head of this newly created province was titled as the 'Chief Commissioner'. In 1905, Lord Curzon merged the eastern district of Bengal with Assam, but it was reversed in 1912 and Assam was refurbished to its previous territorial position. In 1921, in accordance with the prerequisites of the government of India Act, 1919, Assam was granted the status of a Governor's province.

1.2.5 Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects

The disputed succession of the British disturbed the peace and tranquility of the province. Anarchy predominated in the later Ahom period resulting in mismanagement in the state. The situation was further intensified by the successive rebellions, the population of Assam dropped down to half of its actual number. The Peasants had to give cultivation and depended mostly on wild roots and plants. They had to face a lot of stress of protracted wars and oppression. The land was stalked by famine and pestilence. Mills's report on Assam stated that it was not to set back the clock as desired by Maniram or the people of the same dreams, but to strengthen the possession of the British and to stiffen their hold over the administration. David Scott had organized the administration to his greatest capacity and introduced British system in widespread outline and spirit with adaptation for indigenous system prevailing at that time. With regard to the general administration of Assam, even justice was vested in the Commissioner of Assam whose headquarters were at Gauhati. To relieve the commissioner as Civil and Sessions, a Deputy Commissioner was posted there in 1939. A Principal Assistant was given the charge of each district. This senior (principal) assistant was assisted by a junior assistant and a sub-Assistant. A deputy Commissioner was redesignated as Judicial Commissioner in 1861; Principal Assistant as Deputy Commissioner; Junior Assistant as Assistant Commissioner and Sub-Assistant as Extra Assistant Commissioner.

There was a separate civil judicial establishment which consisted of one chief Sadar Amin, six Sadar Amins and seventeenth Munsifs. In 1872, separate establishment of Sadar Amin and Munsifs was abolished. The credits working out principals of administration in both Upper and Lower Assam go to David Scott. The British administration in Lower Assam actually began in 1824-1825. There was an increase in the revenue collections in each succeeding year and this must have humiliated the people.

New methods were introduced by the British for revenue administration. Paraganas were placed under Choudhuries in the new system. Choudhuries were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue and administration of justice in small criminal cases in their particular paraganas. The Choudhury had to pay the government revenue for six months in advance before collecting any revenue from the people and therefore, we can say that he acted as a revenue collecting contractor. Revenue was estimated as per the classification of the cultivated area. Besides revenue, the people were subjected to pay Rs.2 as a per capita poll tax. Property of the defaulting tenants was confiscated if they failed to pay. As a result, peasants at times couldn't save their hearth and home. So climbing resentment grew among the Assamese peasants who were in great need of regular rehabilitation for a considerable period of time. The introduction of a new judiciary system by the foreigners also added to the suffering of the people.

A thana (police station), thanedhar (police) or daroga were in charge of protecting lives and properties in the interiors. Thanedhar was given the authority to arrest people whom he suspected, to detain them and even to hold preparatory trial before entrusting them to sadar station. Special lease grants and simple lease grants were introduced under the Chartered Act of 1833. They were to administer revenue administration to encourage tea plantation and the British established a company named 'Assam company'. By 1858, almost the whole erstwhile Lakhimpur and Sibsagar were included with this

company for tea plantation and consequently expanded its operation to Cachar. Extension of the tea industry compelled import of labour from outside the state. According to Mill, the number of such immigrants in Assam in 1881 was 3 lakhs which reached over six lakhs by 1901.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. _____ was the headquarters of Lower Assam.
2. Choudhuries were given the responsibility of _____
3. Who annexed Bengal with Assam ?
4. _____ was appointed to collect tax.

3 ANNEXATION OF KHASI HILLS

Gaurinath Singha's commercial treaty of with Captain Welsh in 1793 opened the gates for the merchants of Bengal to enter into the province. Avenues of employment in both office and trade caused a steady inflow of the population from the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur to Assam. After it came under the administration of the British, they adopted the same policy as in the other parts of India. In order to supplement the Chartered Act of 1833, the British encouraged the establishment of English schools in Assam as they needed people with the knowledge of English to help run the administration. The people of Assam enjoyed respite after a bitter struggle with the Burmese invaders. Besides, there were very few educated people with the knowledge of English in Assam. In April 1831, the Government of Bengal made Bengali the language of court instead of Persian. The introduction from Bengal not only made the judicial and revenue departments their only preserve, but their services became equally essential to the recently started government schools for death of regional teachers specially to grant instructions in Bengali which had since then been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Eventually, Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839. An English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was appointed as Assistant Commissioner. He saw that peasantry could not be improved to a great extent without the understanding of modern scientific applications. He also believed that a better mode of living which cannot be achieved without Western education. He laid stress on the requirement of increasing the standard of education. He was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for replacing it with Assamese. However, concrete steps were taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on propaganda through Arunodoi but also established a few schools for girls. Rev. Nathan Brown started the first missionary school at Sibsagar in 1840 and followed by the schools set up by Bronson at Nagaon in 1843 and by Mrs. Barkes at Gauhati in 1850. The need for the formation of political association including organization to vent the grievances of people started gradually. The Chartered Act of 1833 was a convenient instrument of the British colonialists who now began spreading out their financial arms to serve the interest of the empire including colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the basic curses of foreign domination as other parts of India did.

3.1 Annexation of Jaintia Kingdom

The Jaintia kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills. The empire was divided into two parts, the plains and the hills. The Burmese, in 1824, force occupied

Cachar and threatened to charge the Jaintias. King Ram Singh was asked to surrender, and the British came forward to protect the king. The Burmese retreated from Jaintia frontier on the arrival of British force. A treaty between the King and the British was signed by which the Raja formally agreed to be a subordinate of the British Government. The disagreement between the Raja and the British rose in connection with the endowment of a border outpost. In 1832, a fresh conflict arose. The Raja of Gobha conquered four British nationals for sacrifice at the shrine of goddess Kali. Shortly after this incident, the British appended the Kingdom of the Jaintias in 1835.

3.2 Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills

Garos is a tract of mountain territory inhabited by the Khasis. It is situated between the state of Jaintia and the Hills on the west. There were 30 states in the Khasi hills before the advent of the British. Each state had an elected chief who had a council, without whose sanction no important business could be performed. The British first got acquainted with the Khasis in the year 1765 when the company needed the Dewani of Sylhets from the Mughals. The British became a close neighbour of the Khasis after this takeover, and they soon realized the possibilities of trading with them. Consequently, the British started business with the Khasis in an item like lime, silk, wax, iron, ivory and honey. Shortly, the British came to monopolize trade in lime stone and after the discovery of coal, they started to monopolize trade in coal too. However, this trade had to face disturbances as well. The Khasis often attacked the plains due to the ill-treatment rendered out to the Khasi traders by the traders from the plains.

David Scott was appointed as an Agent to the Governor-General in November 1823, and he was given the responsibility of developing and consolidating companies and also the administration in the North-East frontier. The view displayed by Scott marked the introduction of a new British policy referring to the North-East. At the same time, the British were following a policy of non-intervention with regard to the state of the Khasis. Scott's view was that for a robust solution to the dispute of trade, the British government had to establish a strong control over all the Khasi Chiefs. The Government of Bengal endorsed Scott's views thus heralding a change of policy. Scott realized the needs for maintaining good relations with the Khasis when the need for a postal service across from Sylhet to Gauhati was urgently felt. Scott was also interested in building roads in the region along with a Sentitorium and Cantonment. Militarily, the proposed road would reduce the length of the march from lower Assam to Sylhet. It would also enable the British to keep the Khasi Chiefs under control and fascinate trade and commerce by giving the Khasis easy access to the markets in the plains.

Scott first contracted with Duwan Singh, Syiem of Sohra. He agreed to permit the British to build a road through his territory combining Assam with Sylhet and in return he demanded to get a Zamindari near Pandua. However, Scott got permission from Raja Ram Singh to construct a road through his Hima which connected Jaintiapur with Naogaon and Raha by the Burmese. Scott had now looked for a new route; all he could think of at that time was a road from Bardwar to Sylhet.

Scott resorted to a policy of coercion and negotiation to achieve his objective. He ordered the Khasi traders to close down the markets in plains and declared that he would annex Bardwar which belong to the Syiem of Nongkhlaw, in the plains. At the same time, he also stated that a normal trade relationship would be supported, and Bardwar would continue to be a part of Hima Nongkhlaw provided the Syiem Tirot

Khasis suffered a serious setback as a result of the wave economy measures chosen by the British. The Khasis could not restore their economy even after the end of the war, due to the monopolistic grip of the British. The movement had its consequences on the social life of the people. The Khasis came into direct contact with a foreign culture for the first time and were quick to absorb it. When the Missionaries came to the hills to develop Christianity, it could easily have found a large following. Christianity produced with it Western education which quickened the pace of modernization among the Khasis.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. _____ started the first missionary school in Sibsagar.
6. The _____ kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills.
7. David Scott was appointed Agent to the Governor-General in the year _____.

4 ANNEXATION OF CACHAR

Cachar was another native kingdom which was victimized by the imperialist ideas of the British. The kingdom of Cachar was under the rule of two princes who had clearly defined areas of control. Govinda Chandra was the ruling prince in the plains. But after his assassination, the British annexed the province in the year 1832. Tularam ruled the hilly tracts. His territory was annexed after his death in 1854.

Annexation of Naga, Garo and Lushai Hills

The British initially considered leaving the Naga tribe alone. Later on, this policy was rejected, and between 1835 and 1851 about ten military campaigns were sent to the hills. Eventually, in 1866, the British took ownership of the area of Angami Nagas. The British also took possession of other Nagas gradually brought under control of the British. Another hill tribe, the Garos often produced problems in the plains. The British government tried to make the Garos a tributary at first, but the arrangement crashed. After this, in 1869, the British brought the Garos under their control. They formed a separate district. The Southern boundary of the Cachar hill tracts was named the Lushai hills, which was the home of the Kuki tribe. The British took ownership of the Lushai hills. It was placed under the Assam administration in 1898.

Annexation of Khamtis

The Khamtis were a division of the Shan tribes. They settled at Tengapani in Assam in the middle of 18th century. The British Government accepted the Khamti chief, Sadiya Khowa Gohain as the legitimate ruler of the Khamtis. After the death of Sadiya Khowa Gohain, the new Chief had some conflict with the chief of the Muttock country. The British got worried about this and selected a new Sadiya Khowa Gohain: the former was dismissed to Gauhati. The New Chief was stripped of the power of administering revenue together with judicial matters. It appeared as if the Khamtis accepted the new arrangement. But in actuality they were not happy at all. As a consequence, in 1839, led by their Chief, the Khamtis stormed the garrison at Sadiya and killed the British Agent. The British then sent punitive forces to defeat the Khamtis. Ultimately in 1842, both the Sadiya and the Muttock country conjointly came under British territory.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. The _____ were a division of the Shan tribes.
9. The kingdom of Cachar was under the rule of two princes who had clearly defined areas of control. (True/False)

5 STATUS OF TRIPURA

With the coming of the colonial era the British extended their control over Tripura but granted some independence to the Manikya kings. The royal history of Tripura ended in the year 1947 when monarchy in the state was completely terminated. Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was the last ruling Manikya king of Tripura and it was after his death that Tripura was acceded to the Union of India. In the year 1949, Tripura became a Union Territory of India and remained so until 1972 when it was made a constituent state of the Indian nation.

Tripura had a feudal antiquity since long. According to the Rajmala, tribal kings ruled Tripura about a hundred years ago for an uninterrupted period of thirteen hundred years. The princely Mathura entered a new era in 1765 after the king of Tripura tendered his alliance to the East India Company. The princely Tripura was referred to as 'Independent India' until it was merged with Union of India.

The territorial pattern of the principality of Tripura in the Hoary past was now covered with obscurity. According to the records, principality of Tripura once consisted of the vast territory stretching from Sylhet and Cachar on the north of Chittagong on the south and it merged with the hills inhabited with the tribes called Mizos in the east. The Karimgunge division was also included in the Tripura Kingdom. The 'Lushai Country' which was on the east of Tripura was also considered by the Tripura Rulers.

The province of Tippera, which remained independent for a long time, was annexed to the Mughal Empire after the Mughal invasion on Tripura. During the Mughal period, the situation in Tippera formed a legacy of British people. According to the Mughal arrangements, only the plain portions of Tippera called 'Chakla-Roshnabad' were attached to the British territory. The Company considered the hilly tracts inhabited by various tribes as some different entity.

It is said that, the Commissioner of Chittagong suggested Lord Aukland that the hilly tracts should be annexed to British territory but was not considered because of the expenses involved. Thus, the hills became 'Independent Tippera.'

The rulers of Tripura failed to protect their territory from the encroachments of the British. In 1822, during demarcation between the 'Hill Tippera' and the British District of Sylhet, Lt Fisher seized a large portion of the hill region. According to Sandy, 'It was an act of robbery committed by the company.'

The king of Tippera was deprived of yet another tract of 850 sq. towards the east after the British undertook Lushai expedition in 1871-1872. The British authority unilaterally drew Tripura's eastern boundary line with British India in 1897.

7.5.1 British Paramountly and the King of Tripura

The British imperialism advanced in India with rapid strides since the time of Lord Wellesley. The British Empire grew astoundingly under the Governance of Lord Dalhousie. According to the records, there was no Treaty signed between the state and

Government. The king of Tripura enjoyed a dual role as a subject as well as a Zamindar of the British government and the other as an independent ruler of 'Hill Tippera'. As the throne of Hill Tippera was automatically given to the zamindar of the Chakla-Roshnabad, the king was given the responsibility.

Even after the assumptions of the Indian government by crown, Indian States were recognized as independent states and were regarded as allies of British Government. A verdict of the Privy Council of Queen Victoria on March 15 1869, called the king of Tripura an Independent Ruler considering the "Hill Tippera".

The absence of a successor to the throne in Tripura gave way to the British authorities to interfere with the politics of the palace. The British took advantage of the anarchical situations and took over the throne. Finally, the Viceroy granted a Sanad to Radhakishore Manikya on June 21, 1904 'settling the questions on succession to the state and its appurtenances.'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. The plain portions of Tippera called _____ were attached to the British territory.
11. The King of Tripura enjoyed a dual power as both a zamindar and the _____.

ACTIVITY

Draw a map showing the rule of the British over various areas of Northeast India.

7.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The British divided Assam as Lower Assam and Upper Assam.
- Ahom Rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandaboo came into action.
- Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott.
- Colonel Richard was appointed as the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam.
- Martial law in Upper Assam was lifted in 1828.
- The old 'Paik' and 'Khel' systems were retained in Upper Assam.
- Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India in 1838.
- In October, 1838, territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr. Jenkin, Agent of East India Company, and Assam became a 'nonregulated' province as a whole of the Indian Empire.
- Choudhuries were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue and administration of justice in small criminal cases in their particular paraganas.
- Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839.
- Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for to replace it with Assamese.

- The Khasi war of liberty left a deep scar on Khasi society.
- The Cachar District is located in the Southernmost part of Assam is one of the oldest districts of Assam.
- Tripura had a feudal antiquity of many years.
- Principality of Tripura once consisted of the vast territory stretching from Sylhet and Cachar on the north of Chittagong on the south and it merged with the hills inhabited with the tribes called Mizos in the east.

7 KEY TERMS

- **Annexation:** To incorporate (territory) into an existing political unit such as a country, state, county, or city.
- **Nobility:** The group of people belonging to the noble class in a country, esp. those with a hereditary or honorary title.
- **Munsif courts:** Is the court of the lowest order handling matters pertaining to civil
- **Choudhuries:** Chaudhary word derived from the Sanskrit word, Chatur Dhrit, meaning 'One who holds all the four varnas (groups) of society' i.e., respected by all.
- **Treaty:** A formal agreement between two or more states in reference to peace, alliance, commerce, or other international relations.
- **Zamindars:** A landlord required to pay a land tax to the government.

8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Gauhati
2. Paraganas
3. Lord Curzon
4. Barbarua
5. Rev. Nathan Brown
6. Jaintia
7. 1823
8. Khamtis
9. True
10. Chakla Roshnabad
11. Ruler of Hill Tippera

9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces. What were they?

2. When was Ahom rule in Assam terminated?
3. Why were the Ahom nobility dissatisfied with the British?
4. Who were the Khamtis?
5. What do you understand by Bhutan duars?

Long-Answer Questions

1. How did the hostilities with Mishimis start?
2. How did the Nongkhlaw incident start?
3. When did the British consolidate Khasi Hills?
4. Write a brief note on Cachar.
5. Write a short note on the status of Tripura during British rule.

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UNIT III SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF THE HILLS

Structure

- 0 Introduction
- 1 Unit Objectives
- 2 Nagas
- 3 Mizos
- 4 Garos
- 5 Summary
- 6 Key Terms
- 7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 8 Questions and Exercises
- 9 Further Reading

0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about society and economy of hills of North-East India. Northeast India, considered as one of most culturally diverse regions of the world, is a land inhabited by more than 200 fascinating tribes, including Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Adi, Nyishi and Bhutia. It is no wonder the region has ever since captured the imaginations of anthropologists from all over the world. The tribes in these states have been a huge topic for research by scholars and research groups. They consider that the tribes have a vast culture and tradition. They have always wanted to research about their life, history, culture, tradition, language, economy, source of living and so on. The tribes that live in these regions are from the Tibeto-Burmese, Proto Austrioloids and Indo Mongloids origin. The traces of their origin are evident from their looks and the traditions they follow. These tribes show a lot of resemblance with the traditions of the neighbouring countries.

Different tribes follow different cultures, languages and traditions. They celebrate different festivals and they had tough times in the history migrating from one place to another. They are so diverse that they have different type of attires and cuisines for each tribe in this region. These people live and earn from the produce they get from the hills and forests.

Origin of the tribes

The tribes that live in these regions are from the Tibeto-Burmese, Proto Austrioloids and Indo Mongloids origin. The traces of their origin are evident from their looks and the traditions they follow. These tribes show a lot of resemblance with the traditions of the neighbouring countries.

Types of tribes in North-East India

Tribes of northeastern India constitute a large part of the tribal community of India. The tribes are scattered all over the states. Arunachal Pradesh alone consists of 25 different tribes. Nagaland consists of 16 tribes. Some of them are:

- Garo
- Khasi

- Jaintia
- Adi
- Nyishi
- Angami
- Bhutia
- Kuki
- Rengma
- Bodo
- Deori

1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the society and economy of the Nagas
- Discuss the society and economy of the Garos
- Describe the society and economy of the Mizos

2 NAGAS

Naga people are a mixture of several tribes who settled in the northeastern part of India and northwestern Burma. These tribes have same types of culture and traditions and the major population of this group are from Indian states like Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The Nagas speak different languages where each language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language group that is a group of Sino-Tibetan language family including Angami – Pochuri, Ao, Kukish, Sal, Tangkhul and Zeme. These people with different culture, traditions and languages have developed a common language Nagamese creole which is used to communicate between tribes and villages where each have different dialects of language.

Nagaland's official language is English, fluently spoken by major urban population. Nagamese is used by the villagers in different tribal districts. Meitei is the language mainly used by the Nagas of Manipur. There prevail perennial disputes and tensions between the tribal people of Nagaland and Manipur.

As on 2012, Nagaland officially recognized 17 Naga tribes; some more Naga tribes inhabit the adjacent states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India and the borders of Burma. Most prominently known Naga tribes are Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khamniungan, Konyak, Lotha, Pochury, Phom, Poumai, Rongmei, Naga, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema (Sumi), Mao (Memei, Maram Naga, Thangal Naga, Yimchunger, Zeliang, Zeme, Liangmai, Nocte, Pochuri, Tangsa, Tutsa and Wancho.

Nagas used to sever the heads of the enemies and preserved them as trophies before the 19th century.

Culture and organization

Nagas are well-organized tribes by their language and traditions. Their traditions have strong warrior qualities. Their villages are normally situated on the hilltops till the end of

19th century; they used to raid villages on the plains below very frequently. The tribes express variation in their languages and traditions to a certain extent.

Even though they express variations, they have similarities culture which distinguishes them between the adjacent people of other regions. Dress codes, eating habits traditions, and customs are almost similar among the Naga tribes. One difference was their ritual, head hunting which was once common in the tribal warriors of Nagaland and in the midst of Naga tribes in Myanmar. They took the heads of their enemies to establish their power which is not practised now. There are around two million Naga people.

The men's clothes are unique: they wear a conical red headgear decorated with wild boar canine teeth and white-black Hornbill feathers. They use spears with red-black hairs ornamental to the shaft, and the Dao with a broad blade and long handle as weapons.

Other than the cultural contacts with the adjacent Ahoms, the Nagas had no connections with the outside world till the British colonization of the region in the 19th century.

In 1828, Britain attached Assam with the Treaty of Yandabo of 1826. In 1830s, they sent forces and in 1845 the British succeeded in finishing a non-hostile deal with Naga chiefs, who first attacked the neighbouring regions of Assam. The Nagas frequently dishonored the treaty and continued their attacks in Assam.

After the 1830s, British trails to attach the region to India were resisted continually and effectively by guerrilla War from Naga tribes particularly by the Angami Naga Tribe. The British sent military forces and succeeded in constructing a military post in 1851 and create some military bases in the area. In 1878, the Angamis increased their attacks on the British camps. The British reciprocated powerfully, burning several revolutionary villages and devastating the opposition. In due course, the area came under the rule of the British.

Christian missionaries

In the 19th century, protestant Christian missionaries from Britain converted lots of people from Naga tribe which in turn diluted many tribal customs and tradition and spread of English education, this opened the gates of modernity in Naga Hills. The first missionary was said to be started by Rev. Miles Bronson in 1841 in Naga Hills. He stayed for a short period. In 1872, E.W. Clark started the first church in molungkimong (Dekha Haimong village) by working in the midst of Ao people and with the assistance from Mr. Godhula, an Assamese Christian from the 1870s.

As the Tribals adopted Christianity and they created more of 'Naga' uniqueness, a fundamental disappearance from their distinctions basing on their martial tribal villages. As on date, 95 per cent of Nagas identify themselves as Christians, more commonly as Baptist. Naga society has altered remarkably from what has been seen a century ago. Christianity and missionaries have become a powerful force for their alteration in their social and their cultural practices than the government.

The new found educational system and religion disturbed the original pattern of life; they discarded their communal patterns, cultural practices and customary political setup without searching true purposeful alternatives in the adaptation presented by the colonizers.

Resistance and struggle for identity

The region of Naga Hills had persistent confrontation as they have long been secluded from the outside world. The growth of a spirit of autonomy and sense of general identity are comparatively new concepts amidst Nagas. As of their traditions, they had independent and republic village free from all outside command.

With the availability of modern education and Christian missions, politicization of Naga traditions began. In 1918, a group of literate Nagas from Nagaland formed Naga club and wrote a letter to the Simon Commission 1929 asking that Nagas be included in the renewed system of India.

On 14th August 1947, just one day before Indian Independence, Nagas were the first traditional group from the north east to announce their province an independent state, without belonging to the new nation. Angami Zapu Phizo led the initial faction with Naga National Council (NNC). In the latter days of the British Raj, he held discussions trying to attain an autonomous Naga Nation. In June 1947, a 9 point treaty was signed which promised to bring the Naga tribes into a single political governmental unit and acknowledged the Nagas' right to self-government after ten years. Disputes rose over the explanation of the treaty, and many in the NNC objected the same.

Under Phizo, the NNC declared their independence from the British on 14th August 1947. In May 1951, the NNC claimed that 99 percent of the tribals supported a referendum to break away from India, which was instantaneously discarded by the Government of India in New Delhi. Around 1952, the NNC, collected primarily of Nagaland Nagas, led a guerrilla war movement. India reciprocated by devastating their attempts with their armed forces. Phizo escaped through East Pakistan and went to London. He continued to inspire the independence movement from London till his death in 1990.

Statehood, divisions and ceasefires

In 1960, the Naga People's Convention signed a 16 point treaty with the Indian government by which statehood was given to Nagaland in 1963.

A ceasefire was signed between the NNC and the Indian government. They had six rounds of talks without any real progress. In 1972, a murder attempt was made on the Chief Minister of Nagaland, which ended the talks about independence. In November 1975, a group of Delegates of the NNC signed the Shillong Accord, accepting unconditionally the Indian Constitution and surrender of Arms. The Accord was condemned by Nagas; it started the division among the rebels.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was formed in the 1970s by thuingaleng Muivah, Issac Swu and Khaplang, the NSCN later split into two, when Khaplang started another organization.

In the 1990s, people started killing their own brothers and sisters among the revolutionary groups. Especially in Manipur, both nagas and kukis were involved in ethnic violence. People from both the sides suffered a lot of casualties.

The NSCN (IM) was admitted to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) of the United Nations on 23rd January in 1993. This gave hope to the people that could bring the Naga cause to the eyes of international attention. The NSCN (IM) agreed to a truce with the Indian government in 1997.

The Indian government refuses to legally extend the truce to all the areas inhabited by the Nagas outside of Nagaland. The NSCN thinks that this is the biggest ordeal for

bringing in peace. However, the Indian army and the NSCN cadre continued to fight with each other.

Society

The Naga tribes have a very democratic society. The village is very intricately bonded within itself, and it consists of people together with different clans.

The Nagas actually live in villages with an average population. These villages are distinct and they have proper markings for their lands to differentiate with the neighbour villages. Each village has its own language and these villages promote a strong feeling of social unity within the village. Almost all the homes in the village grow pigs to provide meat that requires little care. The people of the village are bonded together because of social, political, economic and ritual connections. Each village has its own identity. However, it does not mean that the village is isolated because its village has its bonding with the other villages. The main bonding of the villages is being eroded because of the acceptance of modern day culture and renovating the civilization. A lot of commercial towns are developing in all the regions in the Naga Hills very quickly. These kinds of changes have brought in drastic changes in the social bonding, lifestyle, and the values of the people in the villages.

Each family in the Naga society is considered as the cell of the society. They are considered as the most basic unit of the society. This society's one of the highest virtues are being monogamous and showing loyalty to the spouse. It is considered to be incest if the marriages are held within the same clan. So getting married within the clan is not permitted. People who got married within the clan were disowned by the villages. When it comes to inheritance, the male offspring can inherit the land and cattle. The eldest son of the family inherits the largest share. This indicates that the Naga society considered itself to be democratic as a pretense to itself.

Naga women have been kept in the highest positions of the society and they have been given the leading roles in the community relationship and the basic household necessities, compared to the women in the other castes of India. The birth of boys is highly valued by the society that has high patriarchal values. Women are expected to be humble and obedient. The role of Naga women is much complex and varied than the boys. They play roles such as wife, mother, child bearer, and grow the children, provide food, and manage household matters. She assists the men with the household income by weaving and selling shawls. Women in Naga society are given a lot of freedom and are highly respected. However, they are not a part of the decision-making process of the clans of the village.

According to the Naga society, the time spent in a man's life in the youth dormitory or the morung is a very important part of education and acculturation. It is called the morung system. The morungs are constructed in front of the village entrance or in a place that is guarded. Girls and boys are sent to their respective gender dormitories at the early stages of their adolescence. The elders visit the morungs and teach them the values of Naga culture, traditions that are passed to all the future generations. These are taught to the young when they spend their time in the morung, using folk music and dance, folk tales and oral tradition, wood carving and weaving. Important announcements, such as notifications for meetings, death of a villager, warnings of expected dangers and so on were made from these morungs by beating the log

drums. Due to modernization, the use of time in morungs has been abandoned for their youths.

There used to be a very common practice of headhunting in Naga society. The Naga Hills were called the paradise of headhunters by Ursula Graham Bower. Most of the villages had a skull house. Each man from the village had to contribute to the collection. Contributing a head to the collection was a symbol of courage and valor in Naga society. The men who could not contribute were considered impotent, women, or cows. A man was highly valued by severing the head of the enemy in a battle and bringing it back to home. Headhunting is eradicated by the Naga society after the people in the villages converted to Christianity. Modernization has also contributed to the eradication of headhunting.

The continuous development and modernization of cultures has weakened the ties and the traditional relationship between the elders and the youth. There are several nuclear families detached from the villages and this kind of a trend has been widespread among the Naga people as the interaction with modernized society has increased considerably.

Naga tribes are very good in crafting. They live in houses made of wood and straw. These are decorated and arranged orderly. Each tribe in the village has a unique way of building their huts. All the tribes have the head of buffaloes in the entrance of their house.

Naga people are extremely fond of radiant and vibrant colours. It is very much evident in the clothes that they weave and the headgear for both the genders. The clothing pattern that is used by the Nagas depends upon their tribe and these clothes are woven by their women. They use varieties of embellishments on the clothes to make them attractive. They use intricate jewelry with tusk, claws, glass, shell, stone, teeth, wood, seeds, hair, fiber, metals, and horns.

It is said that these tribes made all the goods that they used on their own. This kind of tradition was there among many tribes. They make their own clothes, hats, rain coats, medicines, and vessels; they have expertise in pottery, wood carving, bead-work, jewelry-making, baskets, and metalwork.

The women in the Naga tribes focused mainly on weaving colourful woolen and cotton shawls. The Naga shawls have a very distinct feature. They are not stitched with a single cloth. They are made up of three clothes that are woven separately and are stitched together. Weaving these shawls is a time-consuming task because of its intricate weaving. It takes a few days to complete one Naga shawl. The men and women wear shawls with different designs. They do not wear the same design shawls. They also wear different designs of wrap around garments which is commonly called mekhela.

Social status of the person who wears a shawl is based on the design of the shawl in many tribes. Some of the most familiar shawls in the Naga tribes are: *Tsungkotepsu* and *Rongsu* of the Ao tribe; *Sutam*, *Ethasu*, *Longpensu* of the Lothas; *Supong* of the Sangtams, *Rongkhim* and *Tsungrem Khim* of the Yimchungers; and the Angami *Lohe*. The angami lohe shawls have very thickly embroidered animal motifs.

The Indian Chamber of Commerce has filed an application seeking registration of traditional Naga shawls made in Nagaland with the Geographical Registry of India for geographical indication.

The most essential ingredients for the traditional Naga culture are the folk songs and dances. Folk tales and songs are used as the mode to sustain the art of oral tradition. Naga folk songs are used to narrate the history of ancestors and important incidents. They are also romantic songs. Songs that describe the activities done in the form for a particular season are called seasonal songs.

The early western missionaries disagreed with the use of folk songs. They believed that they are associated with the spirit of worship, war and immorality. Slowly, the original music from the Nagas disappeared once the western hymns were translated and introduced to the people of Naga. Folk dances are a combined effort from both the men and women. They are combined and performed in a synchronized manner. These are performed based on the dances. These dances are performed basically at festivals and religious occasions. War dances are also performed in the Naga Hills. However, mostly men perform the war dances as it involves a lot of athletic and martial style. All these dances are accompanied by war songs and war cries from the dancers. The original music is from the instruments that are made of bamboo mouth organs, cup violins, bamboo flutes, trumpets, drums made of cattle skin, and log drums.

Following are the major festivals of Nagaland:

- Sekrenyi: The sekrenyi festival belongs to the Angami tribe. It takes place in Kohima in the month of February.
- Ngada: The Ngada festival is celebrated by the Rengma tribe. It is celebrated mainly in Kohima in the last week of November.
- Chiithuni: The Chiithuni festival is celebrated by Memei trib. It is majorly celebrated in Mao in December and January.
- Nga-Ngai: The Nga-Ngai festival is celebrated by the Zeliang tribe. They celebrate this festival in the last week of December. It is mainly celebrated in Kohima.
- Mimkut: The Mimkut festival is celebrated by the Kuki tribe in the third week of January. It is mainly celebrated in Kohima.
- Tsukhenyi: the Tsukhenyi festival is celebrated by the Chakhesang tribe. They celebrate this festival in the month of March and April. This is mostly celebrated in Peek.
- Nazu: The Nazu festival is celebrated by the Pochury tribe. It is celebrated in the month of July and August. It is also celebrated majorly in Phek.
- Moatsu: The Moatsu festival is celebrated by the Ao tribes. They celebrate this festival in the first week of May. This festival is celebrated majorly in mokokchung.
- Aoleang: The aoleang festival is celebrated by the konyak tribes. It is mostly celebrated in Mon in the first week of April.
- Monyu: The Monyu festival is celebrated by the Phom tribes. It is vastly celebrated in Longleng in the first week of April.
- Miu: The Miu festival is celebrated by the Khiamngan tribe. It is celebrated in the second week of May and is celebrated vastly in Tuensang.
- Naknyu Lem: The Naknyu Lem festival is celebrated vastly by the Chang tribes. They celebrate this festival in the second week of July and it is majorly celebrated in Tuensang.

- Metemneo: The Metemneo festival is celebrated mostly by the Vimchunger tribes. It is celebrated in the second week of August. It is celebrated majorly in Tuensang.
- Amongmong: The amongmong festival is celebrated by the sangtam tribes. They celebrate this festival in the first week of September. It is vastly celebrated in Tuensang.
- Tokhu Emong: The Tokhu Emong festival is celebrated by the Lotha tribes. This festival is celebrated in the first week of November. This festival is celebrated mainly in Wokha.
- Tuluni: The Tuluni festival is celebrated by the Sumi tribes in July. It is mainly celebrated in Zuriheboto.

The following are classified as the tribes of Naga Hills:

- Angami
- Ao
- Chakhesang
- Chang
- Khiamniungan or Khiamungan
- Konyak
- Lotha (Kyong)
- Mao (Memei)
- Maram Naga
- Nocte
- Phom
- Pochury
- Poumai
- Rengma
- Sangtam
- Sumi (Sema)
- Tangsa
- Thangal
- Tutsa
- Wancho
- Yimchunger
- Zeliang
- Maring

The Kukis are normally considered as the non-Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have shared good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since the 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. The rise of Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area. ◦

According to the Wycliffe website, the following tribes are considered as the tribes of the Naga Hills:

1. Pidgin
2. Angami
3. Ao
4. Chang
5. Chokri
6. Chote
7. Inpui
8. Kharam
9. Khezha
10. Khiamniungan
11. Khoibu
12. Konyak
13. Liangmei (Community of Zeliangrong)
14. Lotha
15. Makuri
16. Mao
17. Maram
18. Maring
19. Monsang
20. Moyon
21. Mzieme
22. Nocte
23. Northern Rengma
24. Phom
25. Pochuri
26. Poumei
27. Puimei
28. Purum
29. Rongmei (Community of Zeliangrong)
30. Sangtam
31. Southern Rengma
32. Sumi
33. Thangal
34. Tarao
35. Tase
36. Thangal

37. Tutsa
38. Wancho
39. Yimchungru
40. Zeme (Community of Zeliangrong)

The Naga tribes live in Nagaland, Manipur, southern Assam, northern Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh and also in Myanmar. The ethnologues website also has a list of tribes that are considered as Naga tribes. They classify the tribes based on their language that marks the languages based on codes.

Like all the other tribes in the world, the economy of the Naga tribes is also based on the forest they live in. Tribal economy can also be commonly called forest economy. The Nagas developed an economy which gives primary importance to the farming industry and the agriculture of the tribe. Along with the revenue earned from the agriculture they also combined it sustainably with the revenue earned from the extracts of forest produce.

The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fish and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, and herbs from the forest. In addition to the shifting cultivation, they also developed terraced rice paddies even before the British and the Christian missionaries in the 1830s.

The tribal economy is non-structured, simple, self-sufficient and contained. The community sustains based on the natural environment. The structure of its local economy depends on its availability of natural resources and the population pressure. It also depends upon the level of skills possessed by each individual. It is mostly a combined effort of each and every individual of the community. In addition, there is an industry in every Naga tribe that has their contribution of expertise. For example, pottery, weaving, carvings, blacksmith etc. The land in the society of the Nagas is owned by the village chief of the community or a clan. However, once the plots are given to the individuals, they own the exclusive rights over the land and can do anything they want to do with the land. They can keep the land or sell it as they wish. However, no villager has the right to sell the land to anyone outside the village. Each plot in the village must be owned by the villagers and the owners must be one among the Naga tribes.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name five tribes of the Nagas.
2. Social status of the person who wears a shawl is based on the _____ in many tribes.
3. The most essential ingredients for the traditional Naga culture are the _____.
4. The full form of UNPO is _____.

3 MIZOS

The Mizos were a collection of tribes living together in an area. The most common feature that brings them together is their tribes. The Mizo people were not a collection,

but were groups fighting among themselves and migrating from one place to another in search of a place where they can stay permanently. Warfare was the cause of the fragmentation of the tribes. In the later stages it became the cause for the conglomeration of these tribes and they all migrated in the Mizo-chin territory.

All the people did not settle in one place. People from the smaller groups did not find a permanent place. There was very less availability of land and so people started fighting over the land for its authority. All the people of Mizo had to shift to another place and search for another place once the victor occupies their place. The increase in the population of chin hills and the association with the warfare had brought in new hope among the sailo lineage of the mizos. When the people of the sailo lineage got power, they brought ways to expand the authority of the political judiciary in their area. They enlarged the claims of the local territories. This was done by expelling the cultural complexity of many people in the Lushai ethnic groups. All the people in the Mizo groups accepted the self-appointed chief for the Mizos. The person appointed as the chief carried chieftainship to the future generations. These were the systematic changes and the revolutionary developments of the period from the 18th century to British rule.

The territories took the form of petty chiefdoms. However, they could not become real chiefdoms because the chiefs were not clear about what should be done to create an administration free of confusion.

Their desire for a good administration was less than being active in having more slaves, booty, and heads. They however had to make a distinguishing factor among themselves and started involving themselves in martial endogamy and marital alliance with politics among themselves.

The main source of production for the Mizo people was the Sweden cultivation. Although the distribution of land was still there, the chiefs never worked for their people or their land.

This kind of primary and basic means of production did not help in maintaining a sustained clear visibility of chiefdom or a state. The Mizos had a lot of complexity involved in the status and role of each individual. These small fights could not bring over much change by involving the chief in righteous work that involves benefits for the people and a better administration.

The Mizos had a community that did not have slave system but had the existence of bawiship. This was marked as slavery but this is done voluntarily. They used to surrender as slaves to the chief for various reasons. Mostly, the poor section women and poor widows used this option. These people were a majority of the bawi supporting people.

The people of Mizo depended mostly on the produce that they got from their land. Generally, they lived from the produce they made from the jhum cultivation. They had a big blow when there is famine in the village. They did not have anything as a back up or a contingency plan to be supported in that period. This kind of situation prevailed even under British administration. The transformation of Mizo society had a big role for the Zawlbuk institution. This place inspired a lot of kids and they learnt a lot from the elders in Zawlbuk. The women were not treated equally and their status was very inferior compared to the men. They made their contribution to improve the economy and the living of the Mizos. Their effort for this cause was as equal as what the men contributed to bring up the economy of the Mizos.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. The most common feature that brings them together is _____.
6. The poor section of women and poor widows used the _____ of slavery.

4 GAROS

History says that Garos have been self-sufficient for everything else other than salt. Their stories have long stories of men travelling several kilometres from the hills to the markets in the plain only to buy salt. They had enough fish, shrimps and crabs in their rivers. They consumed smoked fish and also purchased dry fish from the markets. One of the crucial items of the agalmaka ceremony of the jhum cycle is the smoked fish or the dry fish. These are offered to their deity Minima Kiri rokime and are served for the feast. Minima Kiri rokime is the deity who blesses the farmers with paddy and fish. She is known for her arrival with the clouds that give rain from the sea. Saka Misi Saljong is another deity who blesses their farms. The Garos had salt springs now and then they made use of it to some extent. However, animals also used them frequently. The Garos do not have any record to the usage and extraction of black salt.

The Garos travelled from Tibet with their leaders Jappa Jalimpa and Supa Bongeppa. They travelled carrying their tools used for agriculture with yak tails and other valuables. They played musical instruments like tambourine, bells and cymbals during the travel. History says that, the Garos moved from Tibet and travelled to India due to the failure of crops in their home land. The main land that they searched for was a land that was suitable for farming and a place where they can settle down permanently. Garos are known to be migrating from places over a hundred years and they grew tiresome of the idea of shifting to another place. They wanted to shift permanently to a suitable area one and for all. On their way to India, they practised clearing forests and jungles. They also practised jhum cultivation.

They migrated and finally settled in places like Habraghat, Kamrup, Goalpara, Sibsagar districts Itripura ad East Bengal.

The plains of Habraghat belonged to the Garos till 1822. They were not in the control of the zamindars. The Rohmer lands, Piranha, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, Singimari, Karaibari, Putimari, Rohmari lands were controlled by the independent Garo sardars.

According to various authors, Garos owned the territory between the northern latitudes 250 and 260. They owned the perganahs of Habraghats, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, Karaibari, and the Goalpara district completely which is situated between the Brahmaputra and the Garos. To the south, they owned Susung, Sherpur, Durgapur, and the areas of Habraghat, Nalibhari, Shribodi, and Kulmakanda.

History proves that the Garos had started using the techniques of wet cultivation even before the arrival of the British. Some of the lands of the Garo sardars were awarded as lakraj lands in Goalpara district recognizing the settled cultivation. Many other lands in Rangpur and Mymnesingh were also settled as lakraj lands by Udhan Shuk Bahadur. These lands separate documents and maps individually. These lands

were given as a favor to the Garo people during Muslim rule in 1825. Sherpur and Parganas were also implicit in these lands.

An author had compiled and listed the Garo territories of Kamrup in the period between 1807 to 1814 as follows: the Rajahs residence at Boghpur was united in Baraduyer and the market place at Kukirya. Independent Garos bought salt from the Rajhat in Jaintya and Laur in the distrust of Srihatta. They used to bring this salt to the market place at Boghpur. The Laur road passes the territory of Koiram. Koiram is a Garo chief. This territory borders on Susangga. Ganeshwar Rajas territory is situated to the west of Koiram. Ganeshwar Raja is the nephew of the Raja of Koroyivari. The other territory Mairapur is situated between Bhokgram and Baraduyar. To the west of Gauhati is Lukiduyar, which borders on the independent Garos. Bengal is close to the Pantan and Bongram territories. To the south of Pantan is Vagaduyar. The *raja* of Bholagram belongs to the Mech community. Mech is a community which has close racial and linguistic affinity to the Garos. All the rajas of Garos paid tribute to the low lands of Assam. The chief Lukiduyar was converted by the Bhramans. Even though he belonged to the Garo family, he received and followed instructions from the Bhramans.

Most of the rajas who had a lot of relations and branched to various places in the southern side of the Brahmaputra belonged to the Garos. The Ahom kings pacified the friendship of the independent mountaineer by offering a free commercial intercourse. They were satisfied with the moderate level of tributes they made.

Hamilton, a famous author, made a study related to the territories that are denied to the Garos, and the cause of head hunting journey of the Garos for the independent mountaineers to the plains.

Very soon, the Bengalese zamindars used the terror of the British arms as their help and made brutal acquisitions on the poor Garos. The armies of the Garos possessed very imperfect kind of bows, swords and spears. The terror created by the zamindar using the name of the company as officer was sufficient to threaten the Garos. Every Garo has faced excessive exaction. Every Garo who goes to the company to exchange commodities, and the chiefs who owned lands that are easily accessible were also treated the same way. This happened in the acquisition of the large space that was acquired between the mountains on one side and the Kalamalupara and Mechpara on the other side. Either they acquired or they were rendered tributary and mere ciphers like the one in Hawaraghat. The zamindars created a lot of violence, but the Garos never went to the British against them.

Garos are known to be independent and they never approached the British people against the violent usurpations from the zamindars. Complaining to the British was the only thing they could do because, British were the sole authority to whom they could complain about their property. After some time, the behaviour of the zamindars towards the Garos needed some serious investigation and some action had to be taken. It happened that the Garos were not given justice and no inquiry took place in favour of the Garos.

With all the support of the British, Bijni zamindar made more acquisitions and encroachment. He extended his boundaries and owned Dilma, Rohamari, Konchikol, Resu by the end of the century. One of the Garos gave a great detail of the circumstances they had to face. A person with a prosperous life, with paddy lands, became deprived of his own land because of the zamindars. From 1900 to 1911, Sonaram R. Sangma led a movement for justice demanding the return of all the encroached lands and Lakraj lands to them. He fought especially for Nazaranah mahals and the Lakhraj lands. However,

the Garos did not get any justice from the British raj. The loss of these agricultural lands had a very big impact on the economy of the Garos.

Nengre Mechik, Dire Tira, and Dising Gitel were the people who took an initiative to establish market places once their economy improved. They took the initiative to establish market places in Sengkadik Wakmetom, Matia panchia at Kamrup district. They initiated a marketplace called DimrimBri Palwang A.ding in the folklore. Also, a wealthy chief Munpa Senepa also initiated a market place in Samegaru and Chekjongbra. Folklore says that a trader showed him his rangs or gongs. The rangskal-rangjogi caused dizziness and illness to munepa with his supernatural powers. The chief recovered only when a rooster was given as a sacrificial offering. After that various types of rangs were made with brass and bell metal. The Garos have a very sentimental value to their gongs. Wearing rangs is one of the means to measure the wealth of a man. It denotes the status of the person in the society of Garos. After Munepa died, he was laid in the bed of gongs. This custom is very rare now and nobody follows it anymore. Gongs were also used to be exchanged. Till the recent decades, they were used as a mode to get a loan using the gongs as a mortgage against those loans. Vows and gongs were the mode of loans and exchange during the age of the barter system. Some of the evidence for this kind of loan system is there in the Garo epic poetry Kata doka. The hero is sold as a slave and he is purchased with 12 kines and 12 gongs as per the poem. However, the Kochinasindiya and Nuniya tribes who live in the border of Assam had progressed in the society. Of those who have progressed, some of them trade with salt, slaves, silver while others are artists and they work with brass, iron, and precious metals. While some of them from the achik and abeng tribes trade with the production of their farms as consumer articles. The Garos used the Narayan rupee that was made by the Cooch Behar kings. Later in 1847 when the company also issued coins they were launched in the market, a lot of confusion and suspicion took place among the Garos and the traders.

The Garos used to bring cotton, lac, maynas, plantains, parrots, bananas, melons, chilli, maize, grains, aromatic herbs, and rubber to the market. All these things had a great demand and would go for a higher price in the markets of Bengal and Assam. They also bought falcons, elephants, agar, and *tezpatta* to the market and sold them for a great price. The Garos purchased umbrellas, pottery, bread, cloth, bulls, cocks, sugar, or capons in return.

William Carey could make out the difference between the usages of such articles that were bought from the market. Articles such as pottery, earrings and clothes were previously made by themselves among their clans.

Both the zamindars and the British were more interested in the cotton than any other item that was bought by the Garos. The relationship between the Cossyas and the Garos has always been very cordial. It was noted that people from both Cossyas and Garos visited all the fairs both on Assam side of the hills and in Sylhet. Moreover, the taxes that were levied upon them were very much considerable.

William Carey also described the type of trade that took place in Goalpara. Some of them are as follows:

- 7000 maunds of cotton with seeds which were worth 35000 rupees
- 10000 maunds of stik lac worth 35000 rupees.

The cotton that was bought by the Garos were snow white in colour and they were sold in huge jengges. They were in great demand for manufactures from textiles and quilts. Cotton that was produced and sold by the Garos were so much in demand

that millions of ryot made use of this cotton to make clothes, threads, and quilts. Bengali merchants were very much eager to buy the Garo cotton as much as the Garos wanted to sell their cotton for their needs. The Chaudhries levied duties from both the Garos and Bengalis and made as much as harvest as they could.

The speciality of the cotton cultivated in the Garo hills is has an anecdote from the folklore. It is said that Gonga made an ancient gigantic cotton tree fall on the banks of the river Ildek. It is believed that the branches of the tree fell on the A.Beng area. This is believed to be the reason why the A.Bengs produced more cotton than others in the Garo hills.

Garos continued to consume and obtain enough vegetables, grains, and fruits as long as their lands are fertile and the jhum cycle had prolonged. The Garo people developed the best variety of paddy like sarangm mima gorim.

The jhum field of Garos also saw a lot of other varieties such as millet and maize, arums, beans including soya beans, tapioca, mendu, sesame, ginger, chillies, pumpkins, brinjal, varieties of gourd, lady's finger, mejak which belongs to the mustard family, types of sorrel were cultivated In the jhum field. Other than the vegetables, Garos had a very good collection of fruits also. They had jackfruits, mangoes, tamarinds, angkil, pomela, varieties of citrus fruits such as chinara, matchi, chambil, kampil, atoll, and sokmil. Beer was also brewed from some of the grains such as rice, millet, and a few others. They used to obtain ginger, chillies, and karchi from plaintain trunks. Garos consumed a lot of animal food along with grains. They ate meat such as pork, beef, venison, fish, shrimps, crabs, chickens, tortoise. The Garos hunted deer, barking deer, wild fowl and hogs for food. The wangala festivities last a week in the Garo hills with the food they produce. They consume a lot of rice beer or chu, and they cooked meat and served it to the whole group of people gathered for the festivities. As a part of the celebration, the people of the village throw steamed rice in all the directions in Nokmas house imitating the fall of hailstones. The bulls that were kept for slaughtering were kept in the nokkra or the porch. The people of Garo slaughtered goats, pigs, or fowl in the ceremonies to heal the sick. They sacrifice bulls in the funerals to honour the dead. If a Nokma dies in the village, they used to sacrifice more than fifty bulls.

The Garos also obtained fibre from the kilkra trees which was also used to make strings and ropes. The Garo people made blankets out of the pakkram tree. They used the yarn for weaving with the use of locally produced cotton, and they dyed the woven cloth with the help of vegetable and fruit dyes. These dyes were also used to pain the articles such as wood carvings that were placed in the Nikpante, nokmas house and the memorial post of the dead. They built their houses from the building material that is obtained from the forest. They obtained the timber from the bolsal tree, boldak, bolang, chagro and they used other trees to make posts and beams.

They had bedrooms, kitchen, living room, porch, three varandahs, storeroom, and a toilet that could be used in the night only. They had sheds in their houses for pigs, cows, goats, fowls, etc. The family lived in the *jamadal* when it is the farming season. They do that to stay close to the farm. The *jamadal* is constructed in the jhum field itself. It also has a place for garbage called *kalbong*. They also had a strong watch house on top of a tree and this is also to be out of reach from the animals and birds. They attach a device called *wa.kap* in the houses constructed in the *jamadal* and the houses built on the trees. These are used to frighten the predators. They used thatching grass for the roof.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Why do the villagers use wa.kaps in the *jamadal*?
8. The Garo people made blankets out of the _____

ACTIVITY

Prepare a colourful collage portraying various tribes of Northeast India. Mention one unique feature of each of them.

DID YOU KNOW

The original garment of the Mizos is known as puan. They were used by men and women more or less in the same fashion. One has to see them to believe the intricate traditional designs woven by the Mizo women, born weavers who produce what can only be described as art on their looms. The Mizo have held on to certain patterns and mottos that have come down through the ages. These designs have become deep rooted in their tribal consciousness and have become a part of the Mizo heritage. The unique value of Mizo PUAN comes from the personal involvement of the weaver, who with great labour weaves her dreams into each work and weft until every design has a story to tell. These traditional hand woven apparels are of different shades and designs without exquisite play of colour combination and intricate weaving patterns. Some of the common clothing or puan are :

Puanchei: It is by far the most colourful costume and is used by every Mizo lady.

Kawrchei: A distinctive blouse of the ladies

Ngotekherh: This traditional puan is worn round the waist originally it was a men's puan but now it is worn by men and women alike.

Hmar am: Originally this was a small hand woven cloth of handspun cotton and indigo dye.

Cyhna Hno: It is a beautiful embroidered silk puan of the Mara's. It is used by both men and women.

5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The women in the Naga tribes focused mainly on weaving colorful woolen and cotton shawls. The Naga shawls have a very distinct feature. They are not stitched with a single cloth. They are made up of three clothes that are woven separately and they are stitched together. Weaving these shawls is a very time consuming task because of its intricate weaving. It takes a few days to complete one Naga shawl.
- The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fish and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, herbs from the forest.

- The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fishes and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, herbs from the forest. In addition to the shifting cultivation, they also developed terraced rice paddies even before the British and the Christian missionaries in the 1830s.
- Naga tribes are very good in crafting. They live in houses made of wood and straw. These are decorated and arranged orderly. Each tribe in the village has a unique way of building their huts. All the tribes have the head of buffaloes in the entrance of their house.
- The Kukis are normally considered as the non Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have had good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. Rising Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area.
- The Garos used to bring cotton, lac, maynas, plantains, parrots, bananas, melons, chillies, maize, grains, aromatic herbs, and rubber to the market. All these things had a great demand and would go for a higher price in the markets of Bengal and Assam. They also bought falcons, elephants, agar, and *tezpatta* to the market and sold them for a great price. The Garos purchased umbrellas, pottery, bread, cloth, bulls, cocks, sugar, or capons in return.
- Most of the rajas who had a lot of relations and branched to various places in the southern side of the Brahmaputra belonged to the Garos.
- The plains of Habraghat belonged to the Garos till 1822. They were not in the control of the zamindars. The Rohmari lands, Perganah, mechpara, Kalumalupara, Singimari, Karaibari, Putimari, Rohmari lands were controlled by the independent garo sardars.
- The garos travelled from Tibet with their leaders Jappa Jalimpa and Supa Bongeppa. They travelled carrying their tools used for agriculture with yak tails and other valuables. They played musical instruments like tambourine, bells and cymbals during the travel. History says that, the garos moved from Tibet and travelled to India due to the failure of crops in their home land.
- Minima Kiri rokime is the deity who blesses the farmers with paddy and fish. She is known for her arrival with the clouds that give rain from the sea. Saka Misi Saljong is another deity who blesses their farms. The Garos had salt springs now and then they made use of it to some extent.
- With all the support of the British, bijni zamindar made more acquisitions and encroachment. He extended his boundaries and owned Dilma, Rohamari, Konchikol, Resu by the end of the century.
- The Kukis are normally considered as the non Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have had good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. Rising Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area.

- The Nagas actually live in villages with an average population. These villages are distinct and they have proper markings for their lands to differentiate with the neighbor villages. Each village has its own language and these villages promote a strong feeling of social unity within the village. Almost all the homes in the village grow pigs to provide meat that requires little care. The people of the village are bonded together because of social, political, economic and ritual connections. Each village has its own identity.
- Nagas are well-organized tribes by their language and traditions. Their traditions have strong warrior qualities. Their villages are normally situated on the hilltops till the end of 19th century; they used to raid villages on the plains below very frequently. The tribes express variation in their languages and traditions to certain extent.
- The Indian government refuses to legally extend the truce to all the areas inhabited by Nagas outside of Nagaland. The NSCN thinks that this is the biggest ordeal for bringing in peace. However, the Indian army and the NSCN cadre continued to fight with each other.
- Garos are known to be independent and they never approached the British people against the violent usurpations from the zamindars. Complaining to the British was the only thing they could do because, British were the sole authority to whom they could complain about their property.

6 KEY TERMS

- **NSCN:** Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland is a nationalist extremist group that operates in North-East India
- **Mekhela:** It is a traditional assamese dress worn by women
- **Sekrenyi:** It is a festival of the Angami tribe celebrated in February
- **Morungs:** The traditional Naga bachelor's dormitories

7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Maram Naga, Nocte, Phom, Pochury, Poumai
2. Design of the shawl
3. Folk dances and Songs
4. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
5. Tribalism
6. Bawi system
7. Frighten the predators
8. Pakkram tree

8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Name the varieties of animals that were brought to the market place by the Garos.

2. Write a short note on the society of the Nagas.
3. Write a short note on the five festivals of the Nagas.
4. Write about the cotton growing of the Garos.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write about the economy of the Nagas.
2. Write about the society of the Garos.
3. What were the main features of the society and economy of the Mizos?

9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT IV FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Structure

- 0 Introduction
 - 1 Unit Objectives
 - 2 1857 Revolt and the North-East
 - 3 National Consciousness
 - 4 Peasant Uprisings
 - 5 Non-Cooperation and Quit India Movement
 - 6 Summary
 - 7 Key Terms
 - 8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
 - 9 Questions and Exercises
 - 10 Further Reading
-

9.0 INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle or the movement for independence was a movement that began even prior to 1857 and continued till India became free in 1947. The movement was mostly peaceful though both unarmed and armed struggle are recorded. The movement also involved many political and social organizations. Various political ideas played a huge role in the movement. For the role that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi performed in the movement, he is referred to as the 'Father of the Nation'.

It was on 3 June, 1947, that Lord Mountbatten, the then Viceroy announced India's partition. India was to be divided into two separate countries: Union of India and Islamic Pakistan.

Post the announcement and during the process of partition hundreds of thousands of persons lost their lives while uncountable others were separated from their loved ones and family. At midnight of 14th August 1947, India became an independent country.

Let us look at the role that North-East India had to play in the struggle for independence from the Company rule and the British Raj.

1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the uprising in the North-East during 1857
 - Discuss the emergence of national consciousness in the North East
 - Describe the peasant uprisings in the North East
 - Discuss the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Quit India Movement in the North-East
-

2 1857 REVOLT AND THE NORTH-EAST

Mostly, the origins of the uprisings of 1857 have been ascribed to the unrest that took place in Bengal's military establishment and to the outbreak in Meerut in May 1857. North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply

involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising. It was also involved with the 1857 movement. Regions of the North East, including the hill areas, were involved with other regions of India in the huge reaction that was happening against the rule of the British in India. There is abundant literature for the North East regarding the participation in events of 1857 which help us to reconstruct the role played by this region.

Benudhar Sharma was the first to research and publish the outcomes of the research regarding the involvement of people from the North East in the fight against British rule in 1857. Benudhar Sharma published his findings at the time of the centenary observance of 1857. In his book, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, H. K. Barpujari has provided a rather detailed account of events.

In 1826, the annexation of Assam took place post the ousting of the Burmese and the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on 24 March 1826. Just a few months prior to signing of the treaty, British occupation in Assam had gone up to Bishwanath in the north at which place they had even stationed an officer. Even though Assam did not rise against the British, it was annexed and post the First Anglo-Burmese War the Ahom state disappeared. The British had provided refuge to two Ahom princes. Prince Chandra Kanta got put on pension and was sent off to Kaliabor. It was supposed that Prince Purandhar Singha had a lot of wealth, so he got no pension and at a later stage the British gave back Upper Assam to him for five years (1833–1838) as part of an experiment and post this period its administration went back to the British. Of the various causes in Assam that led to the events of 1857 one was that the Ahom nobility had been deprived by the British of position, rule and privileges over Assam.

These people were used to leading a certain type of life and were with the new administration forced to make a sudden change in their habits as also participate in other vocations, specifically performing physical labour which was demanding. Neither did they have land nor any significant moveable property. All their requirements were met by the state from the service of the pykes and their dignities and comforts and taken care of by the slaves available in abundance. The effect of British occupation in the form of socioeconomic changes led to suffering and irritation across those homes that had been dependent on being served by others.

The two Ahom princes had been pushed by the British into a sorry state. In 1839, Chandra Kanta passed away and his family was left in a poor financial condition. In a marginally better state, Purandhar Singha asked for a raise in his pension which did not come in time for him to utilize (he died in October 1856). Maniram Dewan took up the case of the nobility and the princes. He had been part of the British administration in his early days and had excelled. But he had many troubles to face. He had to forego the benefits of the mauzas which Purandhar Singha has allowed him, and in his tea garden enterprise he had not got the revenue concessions which were given for the same thing to European investors. Subsequently, Maniram took on the post of Dewan with Purandhar Singha's grandson Kandarpeswar Sinha. The government was petitioned by Maniram both on behalf of disposed nobility and the prince in 1853 when Assam was paid a visit by A. J. M. Mills, Judge, Sadar Dewani Adalat. Mills was of the belief that Maniram played a huge role in instigating people to discontent and was unreliable. At the point when North India was hit by the 1857 uprising, Maniram Dewan was in Calcutta pursuing his struggle to present his and Kandarpeswar's case to the authorities.

Brahmaputra Valley sepoy unrest-related literature is mostly gleaned from archival material and it depicts Maniram Dewan's influence on the prince to uplift the revolt's standard through inciting sepoys at Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Gauhati and Jorhat. The tea

planters were scared by the spread of the uprising in Assam and they moved to Gauhati for shelter. In Guwahati, the American Baptist missionaries at Gauhati felt concerned for their safety. When the Chittagong sepoy uprising's news reached Assam, an appeal was made to the government of India by the Chairman of the Assam Company for sending a force of Europeans 'without a moment's delay'. Maniram Dewan's correspondence was intercepted in early September of 1857. Both he and the Raja were implicated in making plans to oust the British rule from the region. In Jorhat, Kandarpeswar got apprehended, in Calcutta the arrest of Maniram Dewan took place while many of his associates were apprehended in Assam. Maniram Dewan was moved to Jorhat where he was tried and sentenced to death on February 26, 1858, and on that very day he and Peali Barua, an associate, were also hanged. Being too young, Kandarpeswar did not face a trial and also because the intercepted correspondence of his Dewan showed that he was not the conspirator but was drawn into it by Maniram.

It has been brought out by Amalendu Guha that the valley's meager uprising had popular support. Assam (Tea) Company's Assamese workers struck work to show that they supported the rebels. In March 1858, it was reported by the company, 'Had an outbreak occurred, there can be no doubt that they would have sided with the rebels,'. January of 1858 saw the labour contractor Madhuras Koch being given a seven-year imprisonment sentence.

A source for the 1857 events is found in the form of a British soldier's diary. His name was George Carter and he was a sergeant in the 2nd Bengal Fusiliers in Ambala. In 1856, he got transferred to the 1st Assam Light Infantry (ALI) and arrived on February 22, 1857 in Dibrugarh. His diary has proven to be a sterling source of information regarding 1857. It was on June 3, 1857 that through the Calcutta Phoenix Extraordinary he got to know of the mutiny breaking out in upper India. The entry he made for June 7 also has the following:

The rebellion as far as I can glean from natives has been foreseen for some years by them in an indiscreet manner: there is a prophecy among them which has been talked of till they believed it would be a true one: namely that after the completion of a hundred years from the time the British took Bengal (viz. 100 years after the Battle of Plassey 23 June 1757) the British in India will expire (Coompnee Ke Raj Murjage).

It is documented by Carter that in Dibrugarh there being any disturbance in June was not a worry. By August 1857 middle, the Commanding Officer of ALI, Lt. Colonel Simon Hannay, considered the taking of 'open precautionary measures'. On August 17, Carter was told by Hannay that in Gauhati agents from northern India were present and were 'trying to arrange a rising amongst our Sepoys in connection with the Assam Raja'. His 19th August entry documents that the mutiny had entered Dibrugarh and Golaghat. Since appropriate measures had been taken, there was no untoward occurrence in Dibrugarh. The measure was augmentation of ALI's position with Gorkha troops called from Sadiya which lies further north. There is a mention in Carter's notings of the military establishments being in utter panic since the artillery there comprised Hindustanis almost exclusively. Plans were created by Colonel Hanney to defend Dibrugarh. Captain Lowther and Captain Holroyd, according to the diary entries, went to Jorhat, the place where the apprehending of Kandarpeswar Singha took place with documents that incriminated and linked him with an uprising intended in Assam. Then, within the battalion, arrests were made. Some names mentioned by Carter are: sepoy Shaikh Muhammad doctor Hadaiat Ali and jamedar Noor Mahammed.

Attack at the Barak Valley

The revolt affected the Barak valley and East Bengal as well. In November, people in Chittagong got to know about the uprising in Meerut and the 34th Native Infantry's 300 sepoy who were stationed in the port town rose up in arms. The office of the Collector was looted by them and they decamped with three elephants as well as ₹27,8267, they set the prisoners free and headed to Sylhet via Tripura. Then they went to Cachar and here they were confronted by Sylhet Light Infantry. A battle ensued at Latu in Sylhet Light Infantry's Commandant in which Major Byng lost his life. Captain Stewart, Cachar's Deputy Commissioner, ensured that he was kept updated about the movement of the group in the district and tried to ensure that they would not enter the Lushai hills. The 'mutineers,' as the British called them, were able to get the backing of quite a few princes of Manipuri some of whom since approximately the 1830s had resided in Cachar under the British authorities' watchful eyes. The princes, one being Norindrojeet Sing, had planned to make use of the mutineers for getting into Manipur to usurp the state's government. In the beginning of 1858 January itself, 110 mutineers died in the hands of the Sylhet Light Infantry. Prisoners were also taken, these being 7 children and 12 women who had accompanied the men. Down the month, the number of persons killed rose to 167. Those who were still alive were in a state of anxiousness at all times. By the start of February, if reports are to be believed, the number killed rose to 185.

Information regarding the Barak valleys and Brahmaputra disturbance was heard in the Khasi-Jaintia hills. Approximately 30 years earlier, many Khasi himas (states) had challenged the intent of the British to get a secure position in their hills. This was referred to as the Anglo-Khasi war of 1829-1833. The British did not annex the himas. The chiefs of the himas, Syiems, got forced into signing treaties with the British which put them under political control of the British. At the start of 1835, annexation of the Jaintia took place and the East India Company demanded that the tribute should revert to the status as assigned by the 1824 treaty. The government deputed the Judge of the Board of Revenue, W. J. Allen, in the year 1857, to report on the administration of the Cherra Political Agency and his observation was that 'exaggerated rumours' regarding the British power's collapse had created a certain amount of excitement among the Khasi chiefs. He made explicit mention of the intrigue hatched by Rajendra Singh, Jaintia Raja, with Cherra Syiem for getting back the possession that he had lost. The immediate reaction of the Government was to want to seize Rajendra Singh and move him to Calcutta but they stopped when they were cautioned by Allen that this would raise the importance of the entire incident as also of the Raja. The former Raja, on 15 September, had proposed that he would himself 'proceed to Hindustan with my own troops about 2500 (Cookees, Khasees and Moneepuries) to fight against the enemy of the British Government as I am bound to assist the Government agreeably to the Treaty... made on the 10th March 1824'. From them he requested for a steamer which would carry the troops and asked that the troops be provided muskets. Rajendra Singh was without an army. Years back when the annexation of his state's plains portion was done, he had given up the position of Syiem. It was suspected by the British that in the milieu of the 1857 situation he was trying to get back his claim over Jaintia. His proposal was rejected by the British Government and consequently Jaintia's former Raja was pushed to live in Sylhet with the authorities keeping an eye on him.

A key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising was the annexation by the British of Indian states before 1857. The Khasi-Jaintias and the Assamese were unhappy with their states' political control and as a result they too were part of the uprising. Like

it was all across India, in Assam too the 'disgruntled' aristocracy both fired up the sepoys to rise up and assumed a leadership role even though the uprising did not become as big in Assam as in various other parts of India. The Brahmaputra valley did not have a European regiment and not a single killing of a European officer of the local corps happened. Even then, concern was felt for the safety of the European civil and military administration during the period of the sepoy unrest. In Cachar it was not from the district that the unrest started. When the sepoys actually entered into the district, the descendents of those whose state in 1832 had been annexed did not come forward to wither support or aid the sepoys. On the contrary, the princes of Manipuri sought to gain advantage from the uprising in Cachar. It is to be noted that in the Khasi-Jaintia hills, Barak valley and Brahmaputra valley significant popular support was missing. That is why the British did not find it difficult to control the movement. This is one reason why people do not seem to have much memory of the uprising except for that which has survived in the ballads sung in Cachar. Be it as it may, it cannot be refuted that the events of 1857-58 did affect the region and clearly depicted the resentment which had spread across the region against the colonial rule of the British.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. In which year did the annexation of Assam take place?
2. Post which war did the state of Ahom disappear?
3. When did Chandra Kanta pass away?

9.3 NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising. This uprising had pushed the British Indian Government under various kinds of financial strain. They were compelled by 1858-59's deficit in budget to implement new taxes. In 1860, advised by James Wilson the government implemented income-tax and in 1860 this was also implemented in Assam province. New economic forces came into play. New social forces, expressing themselves variously played their parts in the development of conscious national forces. Post 1857, struggle against the foreign government in India continued but the form of struggle changed. The struggle had a transformed intensity which was dependent on how much the consciousness had grown from place to place. In Assam, the *Raijar mels* and *sabhas* were two institutions that were most popular when it came to solving the problem that the indigenous people were confronted with.

In Assam, the earliest popular movement is the Phulguri uprising which was planned to force the Government to take back the much disliked taxation. Despite the failure of this movement it set a precedent and just later similar movements broke out in other parts.

Hopkinson, in 1861, decided that the land tax was to be doubled and the extra revenue would go towards public utility works. His proposal was not approved by the Board of Revenue. Hopkinson made the same proposal in a modified manner in 1865. This time he said that the land revenue must be increased to bring it at par with that of other districts. He even intended that 'house-hold and garden lands' rate be raised. The Government of Bengal approved his proposal. This led to the increase in nearly all districts of 25 per cent to 50 per cent in the rates of non-*rupti* and *rupti* lands.

To quote from Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'From early 1869, *mels* were frequently held at Gobindapur, Hadira, and Bajali in Kamrup. A no tax campaign on a vigorous scale was launched by the *ryots* of Rangia and Lachima in the district of Kamrup and Patharughat in Darrang. During the month of December, 1892, people belonging to *Tahsils* of Pati Darrang, Nalbari, Barama, Bajali and also of the five mouzas of upper Borbhag and Sarukhetri in their *mels* resolved not to yield to any sort of Government pressure and excommunicate those who would pay revenue to the Government. The movement started with the looting of the Rangia *bazar*.'

McCabe was compelled by the *ryots*' strong resistance and fear of more trouble to make the security measures stronger. He had meetings of *mels* banned without taking the deputy commissioner's permission. The people were not to be deterred. More serious troubles broke out in Patharughat, and the *ryots* were chased along the Mongaldoi road by a continuously firing police, killing or wounding scores of agitators. In Rangia too firing was resorted to for dispersing a humongous and rebellious crowd gathered to show that they resented the raised revenue. The British named these popular uprisings as 'Assam riots'. These were looked upon as serious and the government's measures to suppress them were also looked upon with seriousness. The Indian Nation's editorial read, 'the burden which now press upon the land in Assam are considerably heavier than on land owned by zamindars in Bengal.' The Amrita Bazar Patrika observed in its editorial that 'in the Deccan the furry of the *ryots* was directed against money lenders, in Bengal against indigo-planters in 1860, in Pabna against Zaminders in Assam, at this movement, it is open rebellion against the Government.'

Though the form of government changed post the Queen's proclamation and direct British rule, the internal administration became worse rather than improve. The introduction of multiple taxes, such as income-tax and stamp duties, caused great concern to *ryots*, which as a result caused the 1861 Phulaguri riot in which was seen the popular discontentment of the tribal peasants towards the steady raising of taxes and the addition of forms of taxation. This movement, by 1893-94, had brought the whole of Assam's rural population in its fold.

The Rising's Impact

The effects of Assam's peasant movement were felt in the imperial legislative in which Rash Bihari Ghosh posed a question regarding the agency of special constables having propriety of realizing land revenue. The pertinent question got vague replies from the authorities. Despite the fact that the risings were not a success, various things were learnt from it. The economic struggle provided a political outlet via the emergence of national consciousness.

Towards the end of 19th century, Western education was spreading and the national patriots found a new awakening. All across the province, *Raijmels* put forward to the government the grievances of the public for consideration. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was born. Prior to the birth of the Indian National Congress, a group of enlightened persons formed the *Ryot sabha* foremost to protest against land revenue enhancement and to put forth the people's other grievances. It was in 1885 that in Assam the Indian National Congress started, yet delegates of the various *sabhas* and *Raijmels* attended its sessions no matter where they were held. The first Assamese who joined in the 1886 second Indian National Congress was Devicharan Baruah.

The British authority compared the *mels* with nihilist organization and lived in their fear. There was a rise in political consciousness and a belief in strength due to the

Raij-mels. According to Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, The '*Ryot-sabha* or *Raijmels* were active in districts like Sibsagar, Nagaon, Darrang, Kamrup and Lakhimpur. The *mels* in Assam played an important role in making the people conscious of the utter helplessness in which they lived under the alien rulers.'

With the new elite's initiative, the *Ryot Sabha* of Tezpur was set up in 1884. In the villages, its base was very wide. Peasants in hundreds paid it small subscriptions. It built the Tezpur Town Hall in 1887, a first in Assam.

In 1885, in Sibsagar the Assam *Desh Hitaishini Sabha* was formed while in 1857 in Nagaon the *Gyan Pradayini Sabha* was formed. Both had the same objective: spreading advanced knowledge among people the *sabhas* were set up under Anandaram Barua and Gunabhiram Barua's supervision.

A landmark event in Assam's political Associations' history was the formation of the *Sarbajanik Sabha* at Jorhat in 1884 by Jagannath Barua. This *sabha* wanted to gradually put an end to poppy cultivation relook at the government's educational policy. Besides stressing that people of the land be employed in large numbers, the *sabha* stressed that their emoluments and service conditions also be bettered. Each *sabha* asked that Assamese be again made the medium of instruction thus widening the scope of education and this was how Assamese literature's 'Jonaki Age' started.

The western impact introduced rationalism in the people's blind faith in age-long conventions, customs and beliefs. Yet people remained orthodox though moving away slowly. A slow change occurred in the attitudes of the sections that were orthodox and even before the new century began, high-caste Hindu students started enrolling in Calcutta's Presidency College, according to the Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'for higher courses in English education though the aim of English education was primarily for the purpose of creating a set of clerks to run Governments offices.'

In 1901, Cotton College was established in Gauhati leading to the increase of higher education. The Jorhat *Sarbajanik Sabha* showed concern about the Government's educational policy.

In Assam, from 1874 to 1905, there was no legislature and people did not get participation in any sort of legislative activity.

Assam was visited by Lord Curzon in March 1890. This gave a sterling chance to the European planting community to put forth their desire to extend their commercial and industrial undertaking in Assam. The Superintendent, Assam Frontier Tea Company Limited, Dibrugarh, J. Alstone, in his welcome address petitioned the Viceroy for improving transportation and communication as also get a survey performed in the hill tracts in the vicinity for mineral resources. He also petitioned for providing Assam a permanent seat in the India Legislative Council.

Between 1874 and 1905, Assam Valley also saw changes in demography. The epidemic that hit the Surma and Brahmaputra Valleys led to agricultural growth retardation in the province, and the fall in the indigenous population was more than neutralized by the influx of immigrants. Approximately 1/4th of Assam proper's population in 1901 comprised non-indigenous persons. This change in population composition adversely affected the economy of the peasants.

The span 1901-1918 was the phase of preparation and growth of political consciousness. In the history of Assam, we look upon 1903 as a crucial year. It was in this year that Assam Association was created by Assam's educated gentry under the leadership of Faizner Ali, Jagannath Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Manik Chandra Baruahnd

and certain others of the All-Assam Political Organization. In Dibrugarh, the inaugural session was presided over by one of the organization's chief promoter, Raja Probhat Chandra Barua of Gauripur, Assam. The session in Dibrugarh in 1917 was presided over by Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bardoloi who elaborated on the Association's requirement remarking, 'organize, knock at the door and you find the door opened.' Both the 1919 Jalianwalla Bagh massacre and the Rowlatt Acts faced popular resentment and this was expressed and stressed by the Association.

The 1918 session of the Association was held in Goalpara in December. It was presided over by T.R. Phookan, who said, 'The Government is bad and bureaucratic. It should be democratic. The English officers and English traders and also section of Indians do not advocate popular Government and Lord Sydenham and others say that Indians are not fit for self Government. But one cannot learn swimming without plunging in water. If India is not fit for self Government even after a century and half of British rule, who is responsible for this?'

To quote from Gazetteer Of India, Assam State. Vol-1, 'The members of Assam Association later distinguished themselves as leaders of the freedom struggle and introduced an element of extremism into the politics of the Association and replaced it in 1921, by the provincial Congress Organization.'

The focus of the Association in Assam was the province's issues that were of public importance. As the Assam people's mouth piece, it made known their 'needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations.' A tough agitation was put up by the association in response to the imposition by the government of a grazing-tax for the grazing of cattle in Assam's forest reserves. The government's opium policy was a thing that the Association watched closely.

In Assam, in the 19th century, development of nationalism was a process that can be referred to as a two-track process since the population was as much part of the smaller nationalism at the Linguistic regional level as of the bigger all India level nationalism. As the 19th century ended, it was imminent that there would be partition of Bengal. On 16th of October, 1905, the separate province status of Assam also ended. Eastern Bengal and Assam came up as the new composite province whose first lieutenant Governor was Fuller.

In both Surma valley and in Bengal, the anti-partition agitation at this point was going strong. In his speech in 1905 on November 1, member of the Gauhati Municipality Fuller said, 'Eastern Bengal and Assam came into being consisting of an area of 275937.5346 square kilometres and a population of 31 million souls'. Fuller provided the people of Assam the assurance that their privileges would not be affected by the change that was proposed. Both the Jorhat *Sarbajanik Sabha* and the Assam Association held meetings in protest of the undesirable tagging.

In the years that followed, meetings were organized in Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Goalpara, Gauripur and Dhubri to show resentment towards the new province's creation. The belief that the people had in both Swaraj and Swadeshi was augmented by the anti-partition movement. There was complete boycotting of British goods and in various parts of Assam shops were set up to sell *Swadeshi* merchandise.

The anti-partition movement became a popular movement finding its base in national education and *Swadeshi*. The movement was also joined by the Valleys' Muhammedan population. Despite the fact that there was a constant struggle amongst Assam and Bengal on issues of land, employment and language, they were both one when it came to the nationalistic movement for freedom from British rule.

Gobinda Lahiri Ambika and Giri Roy Choudhury in 1905 in Gauhati tried to get the local students organized in *Swadeshi* spirit. Some students were ready to take on the job at steamer *ghats* and Railway stations of labourers and whatever they would earn they would send to the common fund set up for the cause of *Swadeshi*. *Swadeshi* had taken such a hold that the use of liver pool salt and beet-sugar was stopped by the Kamakhya *Pandas*. Influenced by Khudiram and Barin Ghose, Tringuna Barua, Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury along with some others turned to a cult of terrorism, though their movement terminated with Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury getting sent in 1907 to Barpeta where he stayed till 1915.

Assam Legislative Council got set up in November 1912. Its Chairman was the Chief Commissioner. It comprised 12 members who were elected and 13 who were nominated. Some leading members were Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah, Muhammad Saadullah, Radha Binode Das, Padmanath Gohain Baruah, Manik Chandra Baruah and Kamini Kumar Chanda. This council held no control over the province's budget but its criticism by the representatives was allowed. Actually, the budget was nothing but an estimate and departing from it could be done by the government whenever it chose. The council could not take up a programme for nation-building because the financial system was extremely rigid. Radha Govinda Das (Sylhet) and Tarun Ram Phukan found that the Council was futile and tendered their resignation. Protesting against a derogatory remark that was made by the Chairman, Phani Dhar Chaliha who was a representative of the planters resigned. The government's policy for the Local Boards of providing the planters undue representation met with criticism from Padmanath Gohain Baruah who put forth the argument that the interest in the Local Boards that the planters held couldn't be as 'universal' as would be of the native population.

Due to the Morley-Minto reforms the problem of the minorities in India was opened and obviously members of those communities would petition the Council for their special requirements and needs.

The demand of Muhammad Saadullah was that Muslims be given communal representation in Local Boards. This led to a circumscribing of the responsibilities and powers of the legislators.

In 1916, the Assam Student Conference was formed and this was a landmark event. Its 1st session took place in Gauhati under the presidentship of Lakshminath Bezbaruah. This organization produced a cadre of student leaders whose role in the noncooperation and subsequent movements is of significance and importance. The following had all started as student leaders: Padmadhar Chaliha, Hem Chandra Barua, Omeo Kumar Das and Chandranath Sarma.

Assam Association had for a while been asking for making Assam a full provincial. It was thought that in 1918 constitutional reforms this would be implemented. N.C. Bordoloi led a deputation of Assam Association, which was sent to London to put forth the case of Assam to the House of Lords' Selbourne committee. This led to, based on the Government of India Act, 1919, the status of full-fledged governor's province being conferred on Assam.

Slowly, under the influence of the massacre at Jaliwanwalla Bagh, Assam's political pivots were getting pulled towards the call for unity amongst Hindus and Muslims and the call for non-cooperation being made under the Congress banner by Mahatma Gandhi. There was readiness in Assam to move forward to the common goal of freedom with all of India. The movement in Assam was an integral part of India's struggle for freedom as it became part of the new action-oriented all-India political agitation.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. What is the foremost cause for the rise of national consciousness during British India?
5. What types of taxes were introduced post 1857?
6. When was the Indian National Congress formulated?

4 PEASANT UPRISINGS

Between the years 1763–1856 in India, against the situations existing in various regions of India due to the Company rule, over 40 major rebellions took place and minor rebellions that took place can be counted by the hundreds. Nevertheless, the nature of these rebellions was not national but local, as were the effect that they had. Since the uprisings had their specific local issues and purposes they remained isolated from uprisings in different regions.

First peasant movement in Assam: Phulaguri movement

The British were out to get all the money and material that they could from their Indian colony and with this in mind in Assam they began their rule with an extremely rigorous policy of taxation. They had implemented land revenue and various other taxes that affected every aspect of a person's daily life: tax on tree cutting and cutting of grass in jungles, tax on cattle grazing. They did not overlook any article that was of regular use. Water, jungle wood, bamboo, opium, everything came under their greedy policies. The diverse and high taxations made a certain restlessness seep into the population.

The Nowgaon district residents go to know that there was to be taxation on the betel nut and this causes them tension. On the 17th of September, 1861, in the village of Phulaguri, about 1000 went to petition the District Commissioner. The District Commissioner did not hear them out; instead he had then detained them for a day and imposed a fine on them. A decision was taken by the peasants that the betel tax was not to be paid. For a more widespread mobilization of the sentiment, a Raaiz-Mel (Mass Meetings) of five days was called starting October 15th. The meeting received huge participation which troubled the administration and on the 4th day of the meeting it sent J.B. Singer who was a senior officer to keep the situation under control. J.B. Singer employed firing and *lathi* charge which aggravated the gathered and Lieutenant Singer was attacked and killed.

This was the first time that the British administration had received such a shock in Assam. It has put to death 39 peasants and a number of the leaders had been hanged. The Phulaguri movement became an inspiration for peasants to keep rising against the Administration.

Munda Rebellion (1899-1900): The Munda Rebellion is possibly the most prominent and important uprisings to have occurred post 1857. Unlike other tribes, traditionally the Mundas had specific rights that they enjoyed for being the forest's original clearers. Even before the British had arrived in India, money lenders and merchants had been infringing on their rights.

The British got with them the system of traders and contractors and this quickly put an end to the old system. Indentured labourers were required by the contractors.

The Munda Rebellion arose as a result of the oppression of the tribals by both the contractors and the British rulers. Birsa Munda was their foremost leader. He to an extent had missionary education which made him a more aware person. His fellow men were encouraged by him to carry on worshipping the sacred groves as they had always done, a great way to keep the British away from snatching the wastelands away from the tribals. This was what Birsa Munda was standing up for in the face of the British officers and the *mahajans*/moneylenders.

The missionaries, Churches and police stations fell under his attack. Misfortune befell the tribals – they were defeated and in 1900 the captured Birsa Munda passed away in prison. The sacrifice he had given bore fruit. The people got landownership rights to an extent under the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 along with banning tribal bonded labour.

Jaintia and Garo Rebellion (1860-1870s): A road was planned by the British post the 1st Anglo-Burmese War, to connect the Brahmaputra Valley with Sylhet. It was strategically required by them for their troops' movements.

The construction of the road was vehemently opposed by the Garos and the Jaintias. The Jaintias, in 1827, attempted to halt work and quickly there was spread of unrest even into the Garo hills. A number of Garo and Jaintia villages were burnt to the ground by the British who had been alarmed by the unrest. There was a rise in the hostilities post the introduction in the 1860s by the British of Income Tax and House Tax. While the British defeated Pa Togan Sangma the Garo leader, they captured and publically hung U Kiang Nongbah, the Jaintias leader.

5 NON-COOPERATION AND QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

According to Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Assam had played a significant role in the struggle for freedom though in the earlier stages, her political development was too slow due to want of intellectual contact with the rest of India as a result of backwardness in English education and lack of communication.'

When the noncooperation call was given, Guwahati's Kaliram Barman took back his nomination paper post scrutiny and resignation was tendered by Kumudram Bora, who was in the council as an elected member.

In India's political history, the year 1919 proved to be extremely eventful. In 1920, August 1, the noncooperation movement was launched by Gandhiji. This was the Khilafat movement's direct outcome. There had been a huge response to Khilafat caused by both Muslims and the Hindus. Public meetings and/or *hartals* were observed to respond to the Khilafat movement in North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar Jorhat, Goalpara and Guwahati.

Though in September 1920, Gandhi did not receive support in Calcutta from Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and others they did know where the nation was headed. Bordoloi, on his return to Guwahati, went all out to muster support for the noncooperation movement amongst the Assamese intelligentsia. During 1920 October, there were discussions on the issue of noncooperation across Assam where meetings at the district level were held by the Association: Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar and Nagaon. At the same time, N.C. Bordoloi, C.N. Sarma and Tarunram Phukan travelled through the province in a bid to mobilize public opinion. Due to the initiative of young lawyers, a decision was taken by the Gauhati Bar Association that the visit of the Viceroy would be boycotted by them.

Nearly every Association at the district level decided that it would boycott the elections of the Council and objected to accepting honorary posts, honors and titles from the British Government.

The Students' boycott agitation had the immediate effect of demanding that in the province national colleges and national schools be set up. In February 1921, actually a national school got set up at Bharalumukh, Gauhati within the residence premises of Rohinikumar Choudhury. In other areas in the province, similar schools got established.

The commercial world's equilibrium was disturbed by the First World War's outbreak. Across both valleys of North East India, all necessities and food stuff became scarce leading to economic crimes, such as burglary and theft. In his speech on March 13, 1918, Phanidhar Chaliha implored that the Government take such steps that will diffuse the situation. In 1918, March Assam Valley saw the fixing of salt's retail price through a notification, followed by equal measures in hill districts and the other valley. The entrenched economic problem had fallen upon the plains districts' population's labour section. The Chargoia exodus happened when the cause of Cachar district's tea gardens' tea labourers' brutal treatment by European planters was taken up by enraged nationalist leaders. It started with an economic struggle followed by sporadic strikes leading it to mass political action which caused labourers to collectively break out from the system of bonded labour. This happened when incipient class militancy came in contact with the primitive minds that had felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi. Darrang, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh hosted strikes. In the whole of Assam, the labourers aired their unhappiness with state's food and cloth process being high, inadequate leave facility, workload being excessive and wages being low. The officials were anxious and troubled by extended labour problems.

The pace of the Civil Disobedience movement was kept alive in Assam by Assamese Congress leaders just as it had been proposed by the All-India Congress Committee. It was urged by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) that people need to be ready to calmly face every kind of indignity and hardship and maintain towards the Swaraj cause an unflinching devotion. For Purna Swaraj, people enrolled in huge number as volunteers which added strength to the National Volunteer Corps. In 1921, November 30th, both Bordoloi and Phukan who were Assam Congress's foremost leaders got arrested. Next, arrests of a number of leaders followed. The worst hit as far as arrests and sentencing were concerned were Sylhet, Sibsagar, Guwahati, Golaghat and the sub-division of Tezpur. With the economic depression in the 30s hitting a huge area, the phased Civil Disobedience Movement flowed into being an anti-imperialist mass revolt. The emergent leftist youths breathed fire on capitalism and landlordism as also the British rule.

Land revenue payments were refused to the British agents by the peasants. Government services lost many Government and police official due to resignations. According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Saptahik Assamiya, a weekly published from Gauhati was prosecuted for defamation of British officer, for publishing a report on defilement of Sundaridiya Satra at Barpeta by Captain Calvert, in course of his repressive operation. Jails were filled with non-co-operators. The British Government exerted its full strength to repress the participants and to suppress the movement by use of arms, and finally succeeded in qualling the agitation.'

Post the 1922 Uttar Pradesh Chauri Choura riots, Gandhiji said that the movement was to be stopped. His decision was backed by the Congress Working Committee. Then

on, the Assam leaders pushed forward constructive programmes such as weaving of *khaddar*, spinning of yarns and temperance work.

The AICC meeting was attended by Omeo Kumar Das in 1922. Here, he talked of Assam's severe repression. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Assam as a two-member committee to study its political milieu. They were highly impressed by the huge progress that had happened in various parts of Assam as far as the movement was concerned. The people had sacrificed and suffered for the movement and for freedom from the British and this impressed them both. The contribution of Assam was outstanding. Assam's orthodox noncooperators were firm in their pledge to implement programmes that were constructive, due to which the formation of the Swaraja party took place in 1923 within Congress.

Due to this movement, in Assam the British government granted that it would slowly decrease the consumption of opium in Assam. For Assam, this was the greatest success. The next huge success was when the Local Self Government Act was introduced and Assam Municipal Act, 1923 was passed, providing for increased number of elected members as also elected chairman.

The congress as well as the nation was surprised when, in 1923, an election was held to the Legislative Council. For most seats, the Swarajya party put up its candidates and got support from both Khilafat organization and the local Congress. Unopposed, Tarun Ram Phukan got elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. Of Assam Council's 39 elective seats, just 13 got reelected. Since Swarajya had not attained absolute majority it needed the Independents on its side and had to negotiate with them. So as to attack the government within the council and destroy the constitution, the new council's meeting resolved to establish the Assam Nationalist Party in 1924 just the way it had been done in other parts of the nation. Success was gained with this infiltration policy and in 1924 April the Legislative Council of Assam manages a monthly salary cut for the ministers with salaries falling to ₹1500 from ₹3,500. Also, on 1925, March 3, the Opium Prohibition Act was passed.

Good times did not last long and in 1924 March the coalition developed a split. The Swarajists were aware that they would not have a majority and in 1925 even though they opposed it, both the Assam Stamp (Amendment) Bill and Assam Court Fees (Amendment) Bill went through. In the end they lost the majority and were advised in 1926 by AICC to stage walkout in all the legislative bodies.

In 1926, from December 28th the 41st session of the Congress took place in Guwahati, under S. Srinivas Iyenger's presidentship. It was attended by responsive cooperators as well as the Swarajist no changers.

Responding to the Civil Disobedience movement call given by Assam's National Congress in 1929 December, on January 26, 1930 there was spontaneous celebration of 'Independence Day'. February of the same year saw the old leaders in the Provincial Congress resigning from their offices. The situation was diffused by Bishnuram Medhi with volunteering to take on presidentship the Congress in Assam. Post Gandhi's Dandi march, in 1930 April, Civil Disobedience Movement was joined by the Assam Congress also.

The nation observed the national week of 'war against salt tax'. The law breaking movement spread through violating the Forest Laws. To quote from the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol 11, in Assam, there was boycotting of 'foreign cloths, excisable drugs and the shops selling such goods. Picketing was resorted to. Sri Bishnuram Medhi helped

by Tyagbir Hemchandra Barua, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua, Omeo Kr. Das, Sidhinath Sarma, Pitambar Goswami, Gormur Satradhikar, Lakhidhar Sharma and others conducted the movement very successfully. Srimati Chandra Prabha Saikiani and Srimati Durgaprava Barua took up picketing in front of Cotton College Guwahati. The arrest of the national leaders included a spirit of fearlessness amongst the general mass. The authority clamped section 144Cr. P.C. in Nagaon, Tezpur and Dhubri to suppress this popular consciousness. But people from different places participated in the protest demonstration. As a result, police attacked the crowd with lathis and batons in such places.'

The masses in rural regions provided spontaneous support to the movement. Satyagrhis in huge numbers were lathi charged, were variously tortured arrested jailed. In the meantime, students started their protest against the circular sent out by the government for students and guardians to provide an undertaking stay away from politics.

The Nationalists set up public high schools such as the Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.

Till May 1934, the movement continued with majority of leaders such as Nobin Chandra Bordoloi being jailed a second time.

In a bid to retard the movement, the Government implemented post arrest penal action and convicted majority Civil Disobedience movement members. Till 31st March, 1932, in Assam 885 males, 54 females were arrested while 672 males and 42 females were convicted.

From 1930 to 1938, though the leaders of Congress did have differences at times, the organization grew much stronger. According to the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol 1, as in a bid to open up fallow waste lands in Assam for cultivation, influxes of landless peasants from East Bengal were being invited to Assam by the then Assam Ministry headed by Sir Md. Saadullah, and because flow of innumerable jobseekers continued to Assam unabated, a section of Assamese nationalists got alarmed and Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury, a staunch nationalist to the core, founded 'Assam Sangrakshini Sobha' and without seceding from the Congress, began to voice through this organization, demands 'for vindication of right of the Assamese people, the children of the soil as against aggression of outsiders.'

One section of the Assam Muslims had great sympathy for those who had come to Assam from East Bengal since most of them too were Muslims. This led to a section of Assam Muslims other than the Assamese Muslims, the old East Bengal Muslims and Hindus not participating in the 1930-32 Civil Disobedience Movement. At a later stage, the Assam *Sangrakshini Sabha* became Assam *Jatiya Mahasabha*. Assam *Sangrakshini Sabha* organized *ryot sabhas* which became the strong holds of Assam at the time of movements of the later stage which the National Congress sponsored, guided by Gandhi.

In Assam's Civil Disobedience a major role was played by Rani Gaidinliu. Against the constituted authorities, she set up a revolt.

The 1933 meetings held by Ryot Association, Assam Association and Assam Provincial Ryot Sanmilan, got conducted in different parts with the agenda being matters of a non-political nature. Civil Disobedience Movement's political side got restarted post communal award declaration. The purna swaraj ideal as a priority issue was pushed aside by the issue of Harijan. Post Poona pact, Assam's Congress leaders took up the cause of removal of untouchability and Harijan upliftment.

In keeping with the decision made by Congress regarding reforms under the Government of India Act, 1936, Assam Congress took part in the election of 1937, winning 33 seats of the 108 in the House and becoming the single largest entity in the house. Since at that time the Congress policy was not to accept ministry other groups got together to form a Coalition Ministry with Chief Minister being Sir Saadullah. For the past 15 years, he had been associated with administrative machinery of the British as also the legislature, and was the perfect candidate for the Governor of Assam. To save the humiliation of a no-confidence vote, he had to resign on September 13, 1938, as the Coalition's communal policies put the ministry in an awkward position as they completely neglected to preserve the requirements of 'the children of the soil'.

Post this incident, headed by Gopinath Bordoloi the Congress Coalition Ministry got formed. In the dispute of the Assam Oil Company, it addressed the issue from the side of the labour, which turned the industrial labour pro Congress. However, September 1939 saw the outbreak of WW II, and the ministry in Assam tendered its resignation as Congress did not want to participate in the Oct.-Nov. 1939 Imperialistic War. Md. Syed Saadullah on November 17, 1939, formed yet another Coalition Ministry, causing huge problems since he supported the British. In December 1941, the students of Cotton College put up a demonstration in protest of the circular sent out by the government to have students participate in the War Fund Exhibition held at Gauhati Judge Field. The students were lathi charged. Similar lathi charge incidents also occurred in other parts of the nation.

In protest of the atrocities on the students, Rohini Choudhury tendered her resignation. She was part of Syed Saadullah's Coalition Ministry. The ministry too resigned on December 24, 1941. To stand against Congress's *Santi Sena* organization, the Village Defence party was established by the British Government. In the rural areas, the *Santi-Senas* swallowed up the Village Defence parties.

When during 1940 October, the Viceroy refused to give in to the National Government, which was a demand of the Congress, under Gandhiji's leadership there started in Assam an individual *Satyagraha* campaign. Many took part, such as Omeo Kumar Das, Bishnuram Medhi and Gopinath Bordoloi, and were even arrested. Meanwhile, British allies were heading to India. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India and made an offer of Dominion. This was refused by the Congress and instead on August 9, 1942 the Congress took the 'Quit India'. Assam joined in immediately. On 9th August, 1942 itself, arrest was made by the British of many including the following: Lila Barua, Dr. Harekrishna Das, Debeswar Sarma, Bishnuram Medhi, Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Md. Tayabullah. Both Sidhinath Sarma and Gopinath Bordoloi at that time had been in Bombay regarding the All-India Congress meeting but as soon as they returned to Assam, the British had the nabbed at Dhubri. Every organization subscribing to funds from the Congress, and even the *Ryot-sabhas*, were now said to be unlawful. Despite all this, the British were unable to curb the clipping pace of the movement.

The action taken by the government on adoption of the Quit India Movement only intensified the people's resolve and acted as a catalyst to the movement. People rose in anti-government mass protests, under local leaders.

According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, '*Santi Sena* organisations were set up throughout the State under the leadership of local Congress Socialists. Mahendra Nath Hazarika, Lakshmi Prasad Goswami, Sankar Barua built up an underground resistant movement. A *Mritya Bahini* or death squad was formed in the State under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika. The party carried out some

serious acts of sabotage throughout the State. In Darrang district, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Gohon Chandra Goswami went underground and carried out sabotage at various places by organizing *Mrityu Bahini*.'

The government turned violent to suppress the movement. On several occasions the government resorted to firing. Many died in the firing, some of whom were: Khahulis Numali Taleswari and Kanaklata, all teenage girls.

According to the judgement given for the firing at Dhekiajuli the police faced severe structures that could not be relaxed by the High Court on any ground. In Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur some of those who faced atrocities from the police were Pohor Gogoi, Bhogeswar Chetia and Madhuban Chutia. Moulana Tayebulla began the individual *Satyagraha* movement in Sibsagar. He was Asom Pradesh Congress Committee's President. The 'Quit India Movement' was responded to by the whole of Sibsagar district. Processions everywhere were *lathi* charged. A number of people were arrested and imprisoned or detained.

To quote the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Kushal Konwar, who was believed to be innocent, was however, declared to be guilty of sabotage and awarded capital punishment by the court that tried him. He was hanged in Jorhat Jail in 1943.'

For undermining the movement, the Government resorted to the levying on the people of different district in the Province what they termed collective fines.

People formed village Panchayats in Bajali in Barpeta sub-division, in Nalbari sub-division and in Kamrup district at Bahjani. Also, they drew up Panchayat administration schemes. Rawta Kachari and Madan Barman died in Bajali during police firing. This added fuel to the already flaming hatred that people had towards the repressive bureaucracy.

Food scarcity and mounting prices also added to discontent and people tried paralysing the oppressive Government. The role of most importance as far as the 'Quit India Movement' is concerned was played by the Nagaon district. Approximately 11 km to the east of Nagaon town, in the village of Barhampur, police opened fire on a massive gathering and Thagi Sut, Lakhimi Hazarika, Phuleswari Konwari and many others lost their lives.

For the period of a month, military supplies were terminated and *bazars* and *hats* were shut. Troops were positioned all over the state and even then it was not possible to stop or even lessen the sabotaging by *Santi Senas*.

Azad Hind Fauz organized by Subhas Chandra Bose tried to get India freed in 1943, with help from Japanese and Germans. They entered Assam via Burma. The British Government in India was shocked by this. The Government decided to release Gandhiji in May 1944; he was in jail, and was sick. Gandhiji, in 1945 January, in his last visit to Assam, visited Gauhati with four leaders of Assam. Here, he had mass-prayers performed.

The Quit India Movement was not enough to make the British Government move out of India. The call for a separate Muslim country gathered force due to the 'communal policy undertaken by the pro-Muslim league Saadullah ministry in Assam and the increasing number of mutually apathetic East Bengal Hindu and Muslim immigrants' entry into Assam.' There was a rise of strong communal feeling in Assam with the Muslims of Assam Muslims being in favour of India's partition.

Pandit Nehru in December 1945 went on a quick Assam tour and left behind a favourable picture of the congress in the minds of the people. In the elections, this led to the victory of Congress on 50 of the 108 seats. With two of the Independents joining them, the strength rose to 52 and on February 10, 1946, Congress Prime Ministership of Gopinath Bordoloi formed its Ministry.

According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'The Muslim League went for secret organizational activities to constitute "*Banglo-i-Islam*" comprising Bengal with its hinterland or Assam as envisaged by the Pakistan National Movement since 1940 for the Millat of Islam.'

Cabinet Mission to India arrived with the intention of ironing out the Indian Problem. In May of 1946, the grouping system was initiated by this mission that led to enblock rising of the Assam Provincial Congress against inclusion of Assam in the Grouping system which would have branded it as a majority state. The *Assam Jatiya Mahasabha* also rose up and all through Assam mass agitation was organized by it.

Assam Jatiya Mahasabha obtained from the Bengal Khidirpur Dock a secret document that revealed Maulana Bhasani group from eastern Bengal forming an underground conspiracy for invading Assam via migration of population. At this point, Gopinath Bordoloi and Syed Saadullah on part of Assam took part in the constituted Assembly making sure that the sixth schedule I was incorporated. This helped to set disintegration of population and geographical Assam afoot for future.

Finally, India was split into India and Pakistan. Pakistan gained independence at midnight of 14th August, 1947 while India chose midnight of 15th August, 1947.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. The pace of the Civil Disobedience movement was kept alive in Assam by _____ leaders.
8. Name two public high schools set up by the Nationalists.

ACTIVITY

Write a report on the current political scenario of Assam. Contrast the situation with that in 1857.

DID YOU KNOW

The migration of Bengali Muslim peasants from erstwhile East Bengal began in the 1800s after the British annexed Assam in 1826, with the *Treaty of Yandaboo* after defeating the Burmese in the First Anglo Burmese War. 'Malevolent' colonial policies of the British in Bengal, such as the *Permanent Settlement*, had already wreaked Bengal's economy and pauperized its artisans and peasantry. Severe exploitation under its *zamindari* system added to the woes of the peasantry. In the geographically contiguous province of Assam, population density was low, land was abundant and there was no *zamindari* system. It was just a matter of time before an impoverished and harassed Bengali Muslim peasantry began migrating in a trickle which became a deluge, encouraged by the British.

6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising and also the 1857 movement.
- In 1826, annexation of Assam took place post the ousting of the Burmese and the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on 24 March 1826.
- The British had provided refuge to two Ahom princes.
- Of the various causes in Assam that led to the events of 1857 one was the Ahom nobility had been deprived by the British of position, rule and privileges over Assam. All their requirements were met by the state from the service of the pykes and their dignities and comforts and taken care of by the slaves available in abundance.
- Maniram Dewan took up the case of the nobility and the Princes. Maniram took on the post of Dewan with Purandhar Singha's grandson Kandarpeswar Sinha. The government was petitioned by Maniram both on behalf of disposed nobility and the prince in 1853 when Assam was paid a visit by A. J. M. Mills, Judge, Sadar Dewani Adalat.
- Brahmaputra Valley sepoy unrest-related literature is mostly gleaned from archival material and it depicts Maniram Dewan influence on the prince to up the revolt's standard through inciting sepoys at Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Gauhati and Jorhat.
- The tea planters were scared by the spread of the uprising in Assam and they moved to Gauhati for shelter.
- When the Chittagong sepoy uprising's news reached Assam, an appeal was made to the government of India by the Chairman of the Assam Company for sending a force of Europeans 'without a moment's delay'.
- Maniram Dewan correspondence was intercepted in early September of 1857. In Jorhat, Kandarpeswar got apprehended, in Calcutta the arrest of Maniram Dewan took place while many of his associates were apprehended in Assam. Maniram Dewan was moved to Jorhat where he was tried and given the death sentence on February 26, 1858.
- Assam (Tea) Company's Assamese workers struck work to show that they supported the rebels.
- January of 1858 saw the labour contractor Madhuram Koch being given a seven-year imprisonment sentence.
- A source for the 1857 events is found in the form of a British soldier George Carter's diary.
- The revolt affected the Barak valley and East Bengal as well. In November, people in Chittagong got to know about the uprising in Meerut and the 34th Native Infantry's 300 sepoys who were stationed in the port town rose up in arms.
- Information regarding the Barak valleys and Brahmaputra disturbance was heard in the Khasi-Jaintia hills.

- A key cause that led to the feudal and sepooy uprising was the annexation by the British of Indian states before 1857.
- It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising.
- In Assam, the earliest popular movement is the Phulaguri uprising which was planned to force the government to take back the much disliked taxation. Despite the failure of this movement it set a precedent and just later similar movements broke out in other parts.
- The span 1901–1918 was the phase of preparation and growth of political consciousness. In the history of Assam, we look upon 1903 as a crucial year. It was in this year that Assam Association was created by Assam's educated gentry under the leadership of Faizner Ali, Jagannath Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Manik Chandra Baruahnd and certain others of the All-Assam Political Organization.
- As the Assam people's mouth piece, it made known their 'needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations.'
- In Assam, in the 19th century, development of nationalism was a process that can be referred to as a two track process since the population was as much part of the smaller nationalism at the Linguistic regional level as of the bigger all-India-level nationalism.
- Between the years 1763–1856 in India, against the situations existing in various regions of India due to the Company rule over 40 major rebellions took place and minor rebellions that took place can be counted by the hundreds. Nevertheless, the nature of these rebellions was not national but local, as were the effect that they had. Since the uprisings had their specific local issues and purposes they remained isolated from uprisings in different regions.
- The peasant uprisings of note in Assam are Phulaguri movement, Munda Rebellion and the Jaintia and Garo Rebellion.
- According to GAZETTEER OF INDIA ASSAM STATE. VOL-1, 'Assam had played a significant role in the struggle for freedom though in the earlier stages, her political development was too slow due to want of intellectual contact with the rest of India as a result of backwardness in English education and lack of communication.'

7 KEY TERMS

- **Annexation:** Incorporation by joining or uniting.
- **Musket:** An infantryman's light gun with a long barrel, typically smooth-bored, muzzleloading, and fired from the shoulder.
- **Uprising:** An act of resistance or rebellion; a revolt.

8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The annexation of Assam took place in 1826.
2. Ahom state disappeared post the First Indo-Burmese War.

3. Chandra Kanta passed away in the year 1839.
4. It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising.
5. The introduction of multiple taxes, such as income-tax and stamp duties happened post 1857.
6. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formulated.
7. Assamese Congress.
8. Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.

9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the names of some personalities of Assam associated with the uprising of 1857.
2. What was the role played by Maniram Dewan in the 1857 uprising?
3. In Assam, why was the development process considered as a two-track process?
4. Name the peasant uprisings that took place in Assam.
5. Mention a key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the Phulaguri movement.
2. Write a note on National Consciousness in Assam.
3. What role did Assam play in the Quit India Movement?
4. Write a short note on the peasant uprisings in Assam.
5. Discuss the scenario of Assam as it was during the year 1857.

10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT V IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

Structure

- 0 Introduction
- 1 Unit Objectives
- 2 English Education
- 3 System of Governance
- 4 Land Revenue
- 5 Development of Roadways, Waterways and Railways
- 6 Summary
- 7 Key Terms
- 8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 9 Questions and Exercises
- 10 Further Reading

0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the impact of British Rule on North-East India. The hills and plains of the region have been occupied by different streams of Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods well before the onset of colonial rule. It is important to note that in the long centuries before the advent of British rule in the region, there was a high degree of fluidity in the socio-cultural arena so that inter-mingling of various streams of people, including biological admixture, produced diverse social alignments and group identities. The boundaries of the groups were never very rigid. It is this flexibility, characteristic of a frontier tract experiencing considerable population movement from different directions, which provided scope for shifting alliance and identities. Pre-colonial social setting in the region was more fluid and flexible than in the subsequent colonial and post-colonial periods. Thus, various 'tribal' inhabitants of the hills got integrated and often absorbed into the fold of the Hindu peasantry consequent on changing their niche from the hills to the plains. In the plains as Assam, tribal groups such as the *Bodo-Kechari*, *Rebhs*, *Nech*, *Karbi* and the *Deuri-Chutiya* had thus, for centuries, provided the main source of Hindu population through a process of conversion and subsequent Sanskritization.

The 'tribe' had never been a fixed or static category in those early times and there were many instances of change from tribal to non-tribal status. Contrary to popular notion, the numerous culturally and politically discrete communities of later times lived in a situation of contact and communication with their respective neighbouring populations.

The conditions radically altered during a rather brief period (1826-1947) of British colonial rule. The annexation of Assam by the British (i.e. the East India Company) brought the people of this region into greater and deeper contact with sociopolitical currents then prevailing in the rest of the country. The channels of contact and the levels of communication were further accentuated in the early part of the 20th century. The British set in motion a series of moves in order to establish a degree of political and administrative dominance over the plains as well as the hill people. The British policies and the activities of Christian missionaries who came into the region contributed significantly in creating a freeze effect on the communities and social formations. Colonial rule and missionary activities also contributed significantly in detailing the character and

tenor of identity movements among the tribals and non-tribals in the post-Independence period.

The impact of British administration became manifest through various means and measures such as the introduction of Inner Line Regulation in 1873 and the declaration of most of the hill areas as "Excluded Areas" under the provision of Government of India Act of 1935. Most tribal communities of the hills thus remained cut off from social and political developments taking place elsewhere. Mention must also be made of impressive population movements into the region during the British period unleashed by the imperatives of colonial administration and economy. In the context of an organized colonial economy with fairly strict monitoring of exploitable resources, coupled with immigration of diverse groups in a short period of time, the earlier resilience of the regional social system was lost forever. Each community tended to become a rigid social formation and this was to the utmost advantage of the colonial rulers. The accentuation of tribal-non-tribal differences and the formation of rigid social blocks out of indigenous castes and communities as well as recent migrants were important developments in the colonial period.

1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose and impact of English education in Assam
- Discuss the British system of governance in Assam
- Analyse the purpose and impact of the British land revenue system in Assam
- Discuss the purpose of the development of roadways, waterways and railways in Assam

2 ENGLISH EDUCATION

Modern education which is currently prevalent in Assam has its roots in 1826 when there was a setting up of British rule in the territory of Assam. In Assam, for a very long time a system of education which was indigenous to Assam existed. This involved the imparting of formal education at the elementary level in institutions like satras, madrassas, tols and pathsalas which imparted education to Vaisnavites, Muslims, Brahmins and Hindus, respectively.

According to Bose: 'Aim of the English to educate the Indians was either to produce caricatures of European characters who would be willing to accept the Gospel of Christ or to get a regular supply of cheap clerks to serve them in the business organization of the government of India and subsidiary undertakings of the British Subjects.' Then again as shown by Debi 'these indigenous systems were largely replaced by modern education pattern under British company's patronage. With the expansion of British rule in India as a whole, knowledge of English became a historic necessity both for administration and increasing commercial intercourse. Before the charter act of 1833 there was no noticeable progress in the field of education in Assam, but after that both government and missionaries actively took part in educational field'.

Today in Assam, education at the school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards. Post the 20th century proposal to set up local self-government in India, in Assam there was huge a development in the field of education. The 1882 resolution was the first step which emphasized the value of local bodies for primary education's expansion. The resolution of 1882 gave the local board the power to control, manage, establish and aid primary schools. Under it, the Boards got the authority to have general supervision over the lower middle schools too and also provide grant-in-aid to them. The 1913 resolution made the educational policy lay more stress on education at the primary level. Under the Assam local self-government Act of 1915 local bodies are provided a broader base of powers for managing matters pertaining to education at both middle and primary levels. While in Assam the relevant Act got passed in 1926, it could not attain the associated main objectives. Later, there was a change in the policy followed by compulsory primary education Acts being passed across all provinces by 1930.

At this point, imperial grants were released by the government to Assam so that elementary education could be promoted. This led to approximately 6795 primary schools being set up by 1937 where 313,347 pupils gained education. The other system of education, Madrasas and Tols also provided education. In the year 1935, there existed approximately 120 madrasas and 162 tols.

The year 1947, in a bid to fix the problems with the 1926 Act, saw the passing of the Assam primary education Act under which various measures were to be employed to enforce education. Subsequent steps were the Assam Basic Education Act of 1953 and the Assam Elementary Education Act of 1962 and 1968.

In this sense, we can see that the British education system did help to establish a formal system of education. For secondary education, it was the 1882 Hunter Commission and the 1904 and 1913 resolutions that gave it a bigger forward push. In the year 1919, the Sadler Commission proposed that at this level diversified courses be introduced. This commission also was of the view that secondary education improvement is required for any improvement in university education. The repercussion of the Commission's findings and recommendations in 1935 led to setting up of 213 high schools of which 28 were government high schools and various non-aided and aided high schools were imparting education through several courses. Still, in secondary education weakest links existed as revealed by the Zakir Hussain Committee Report of 1937 and Radhakrishnan Commission Report of 1949. For overcoming these problems, multi-propose schools and post-basic education were introduced which would follow the principle of craft-based education. According to Debi, the primary 'aim of these courses is an all round development of the students both as an individual and as a useful member of the society and to provide varied types of courses for students with diversified abilities and interests'.

All across Northeast India, the highest number of institutes for higher education are in Assam. Progress of collegiate education in Assam accrued much later. The Cotton College, followed by Sylhet College, had been set up by 1901. Earl Law College was set up in 1915, Jorhat College, Brindaban College, Edmund's college and St Anthony College were opened in the territory of Assam and they all played major roles in the promotion of higher education in the period prior to 1947. The year 1900 saw the setting up in Dibrugarh of the Berry White Medical School. There was development of education, both technical and industrial, during the period prior to independence through the Tezpur-Balipara railway workshop, Dibrugarh

Railway workshop and various other institutes of training. Also, the English medium schools in the state are of supreme quality, as are the colleges for science and arts. Even higher education has expanded phenomenally following the 1913 resolution of Government of India on Indian Education. The latest achievement is the setting up of Guwahati IIT and Central Universities at Silchar and Tezpur.

As opposed to other regions in India, in Assam teacher education was late to start. In 1888–89, the Christian missionaries became the first ones to set up primary teacher training schools. Irish Christian Brothers, in the year 1936, in St Edmund's college set up few training classes for B.T. degree. At Shillong's St Edmund's college training was provided to teachers in-service at secondary level of school education. Later, this was moved to St. Mary's college. In Assam after independence, stemming from the 1954 Basic Education Act, the state set up many Basic Training Centres for the training of in-service teachers of primary schools. Both in-service and pre-service training for teachers of Middle School was introduced in the existing normal Schools. In the 1970s, this was stopped as it was creating trained teachers for whom there were no jobs.

Medium of Instruction

The 1935–1936 report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated 19th December, 1936, para.1). This was implemented across high schools except for Bengali schools. Gauhati University at the beginning of 1970, decided that starting 1972–73 it would replace English with Assamese as the medium of instruction across colleges affiliated to it. English would remain as an optional unit of instruction. Recommendations made by the Academic Council of Gauhati University in the context of medium of instruction were:

1. Assamese would be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University.
2. English shall continue as the alternative medium of instruction for need-based courses.
3. Students may write their university examinations either in Assamese or English.
4. The council withdrew the option of answering examination questions in Bengali which were earlier used for some regions.

The British system of education did lay a foundation for the present day formal education system that exists in Assam and which is one of the best across the whole of India. Yet, it cannot be said that British education did not cause any harm or was not detrimental for the people of the state.

H. Srikanth has written about the cause and effect of the British education policy in the North-East in explicit detail in 'Man and Society: A Journal of North East Studies'.

He writes, 'The [British] officers felt that as long as the hill tribes remained backward and uncivilized, it would be difficult for them to make the native tribes accept the changes brought in by colonial rule. Hence, the British officers considered it necessary to civilize and humanize the hill communities through the spread of modern education and Christianity. David Scott, the first Agent for the Governor-General of North Eastern Frontier of Bengal, experimented with his ideas in the Garo

Hills by starting a school at Singamaria in 1831 with the help Serampore Baptist Mission.' The Governor-General also wanted Christianity to spread but the East India Company Directors were not for it. 'They were afraid that the religious intervention would provoke the natives to revolt against the colonial rule.'

David Scott was succeeded by Major Jenkins who got schools opened and encouraged the spread of both education and Christianity. In 1841 and later, there was also baptizing of several Khasi-Pnars and the Welsh Mission was the first to do so. That which the colonial powers were unable to accomplish with their military prowess was achieved by the spread of Christianity and education by the Missionaries despite all the hardship and hostility that they encountered from the native tribes and the hill people. The suspicious natives even hacked some of the Missionaries to death.

H. Srikanth says, 'Apart from education, the Missionaries offered medical services to the sick, taught the tribal people the value of hard work, personal hygiene and sanitation, and trained the in skills such as agriculture, horticulture, masonry and carpentry. ...and encouraged the natives to give up their traditional ways by acquiring attitudes, values and behavior compatible with Christian and modernist values.'

H. Srikanth also says that the Missionaries opposed the colonial authorities on various issues that they disagreed with like their practising slavery in the hills. The Missionaries even, '...learnt the local language of the hill tribes, developed scripts and wrote primers and books in these languages....it should be mentioned that the on the whole the native hill communities of north-east India did not experience the extent of alienation the indigenous had experienced elsewhere following the spread of Christianity.'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. In which year did British rule begin in Assam?
2. In ancient Assam, what were the Hindu institutions of education named?
3. What are the levels of education in Assam in the current age?
4. Who were the first to set up primary teacher training schools in Assam?

3 SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

When the British occupied the region, it was a disturbed region with an existing dispute on disputed succession. It was the period of later Ahoms and was fraught with anarchy and maladministration. Rebellion after rebellion worsened the situation and the Assam province now had a low population, approximately half of the original, due to oppression and protracted wars. The peasants were driven to abandon cultivation and find food in the form of wild plants and roots. Pestilence and famine troubled Assam. As per the Government of Assam, the 'Mills's Report on Assam' stated that, it was not to set the clock back, as desired by Maniram or the people of his thinking, but to consolidate the possession of the British and to tighten their grip over the administration. David Scott organized the administration to his best capacity and introduced British system in general outline and spirit with accommodation for an indigenous system prevalent at that time. Assam's implementation of the justice mechanism as well as the overall general administration became the responsibility of the Commissioner of Assam who was headquartered in Guwahati. The commissioner was relieved of the position of

Civil and Sessions Judge in 1936 with the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner in Guwahati. Every district was put under the charge of a Principal (Senior) Assistant who had a Junior and a Sub-Assistant to help him impart his duties. The Deputy Commissioner, in the year 1861, became the Judicial Commissioner. At the same time, the Principal Assistant became the Deputy Commissioner; Junior Assistant became the Assistant Commissioner while the Sub-Assistant became the Extra Assistant Commissioner. A civil judicial establishment was separately set up comprising 17 Munsiffs, 6 Sadar Amins and a Principal Sadar Amin. In the year 1972, separate authorities of Munsiffs and Sadar Amin were abolished. In both lower and upper Assam, the main responsibility was of David Scott for formulating the principles of administration. In lower Assam, it was in 1824–25 that British administration truly started. With each passing year, the collection of revenue went up which must have pushed the people against the wall. A new form of revenue administration was implemented by the British. Under it, the paraganas were put under Choudhuries who in their parganas both collected revenue and administered justice in criminal cases of a petty nature. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government six months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection). The assessment of the revenue was done based on the cultivated area's category. Other than the revenue, people had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax. If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated and as a result often the peasants were unable to save their homes. All of this led to a rising resentment among the Assamese peasants who actually required undisturbed rehabilitation. The foreign judiciary system also added to the people's suffering. For the protection of the property and life of people inhabiting remote areas and interiors a police establishment had been set up which comprised a thana under the charge of a daroga or thanadar. Powers had been vested in him for arresting, detaining and even conducting a preliminary trial on anyone found to be suspicious, prior to having them sent to the sadar station. With Chartered Act of 1833 Special lease grants and Fee, there was the introduction of simple lease grants for revenue administration for the encouragement of tea plantation and the British set up a company named Assam Company. Between 1833-58, nearly the whole of Sibsagar and erstwhile Lakhimpur were under this company's tea plantation and then the company extended into Cachar. It became imperative to bring in labour from other states to cater to the expanding tea industry. According to Mill, in 1881 the number of such immigrants in Assam was 3 lakhs. In 1901, Assam had 6 lakhs of such migrants. The 1793 Gaurinath Singha and Captain Welsh commercial treaty provided the merchants of Bengal with access to the province's interior. Employment avenues in office and trade led to continuous population inflow to Assam from the districts of Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dacca and Sylhet. Once Assam fell under British administration, the British implemented the same policies here as they had in other regions across India. For the purpose of supplementing the Chartered Act of 1833 in Assam, the British promoted the setting up of English schools to meet their requirement of persons with knowledge of English to aid them in administration. The Assamese people had no clue of what the British were planning and there were not many people in Assam who were English educated. Bengali instead of Persian was made the court language by the Government of Bengal in April 1831 leading to influx of people from Bengal. This further led to the judicial and revenue departments becoming solely their preserve as also their becoming highly sought after as teachers of Bengali in schools with Bengali having been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Then, in 1839 both from Assam courts and from schools Assamese was abolished. An English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was made the Assistant Commissioner. He saw that Western education was essential if the living of peasantry was to be bettered.

The need to improve the education standard and not impose Bengali as the medium of instruction was impressed upon by him. He advocated that Assamese be made the medium of instruction in schools. To quote from the Government of Assam's website, 'Concrete steps were, however, taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on a propaganda through their mouth piece the Arunodoi but also set up a few schools for girls. The first missionary school was started at Sibsagar by Rev. Nathan Brown and O.T. Cutter in 1840 and this was followed by the schools set up by Bronson at Nagaon (1843) and Mrs. Barkes at Guwahati in 1850. With the spread of Western ideas the need was gradually felt for the formation of political association and organisation to ventilate the grievances of the people. The Chartered Act of 1833 was a handy instrument of the British colonialists who already began spreading out their financial tentacles to serve the interest of the empire and colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the basic evils of foreign domination as other parts of India did.'

All through the 19th Century, the relationship between the people of Assam and the Government was dominated by the issue of collection of revenue. After the 1857 uprising, in 1858 the East India Company's rule ended in India and India was passed on to the British Crown. There was an increase in the land revenue assessment. With the coming of the new government, there was also the imposing of stamp duties and income tax. Huge profits were earned by the government from the salt and opium trade which it conducted in the state. There was resentment among the people of Assam for cash payment of revenues, something they had never done. While we do find some good measures that the British Government had implemented, such as forced labour, abduction of young women and punishment by chopping off nose and ears, we clearly see that their other policies that harmed the populace overshadowed the good ones. In this light, Mills was petitioned by Moniram Dewan in 1853, saying, 'Illustrious Sir, we are just now, as it were, in the belly of a tiger'. The credit or otherwise for the association of Assam with the 1857 uprising goes to Moniram Dewan. He was disillusioned with the British and, as the Government of Assam website puts it, 'he turned a rebel in 1857 when the class interest of a section of the Indian feudal class coincided with the broad national interests against foreign rule. The sepoys of Assam like infantry battalions both at Dibrugarh and Guwahati remained absolutely passive and strictly loyal to the British.' There were stories of the defeat of the British power in various parts of Assam and India and the people of the hills were much enthused by them. While the people were not organized, they were discontented and willing fighters. To counter the existing uprising troubles, the government made security tighter and put Act XIV into force. Many persons were arrested. Many were tried, many executed and the remaining deported. They even arrested Kandarpeswar Singha who was then kept in Alipur as prisoner of state. Next, Moniram was arrested in Calcutta as also were his collaborators, some of them being Shaikh Formud, Bahadur Gaoburah, Marangikhowa Gohain, Mayaram Nazir and Dutiram Baruah. With this, the attempt to oust the British Government from Assam made by Moniram came to an end.

The 1858 proclamation of Queen Victoria got the Company rule to a close and set up a government which would be directly under the British Crown and promised that the native princes' rights would be respected. In Assam's case there was an exception and there was no undoing of the wrong of 1838. According to the Government of Assam website, 'Struggle against expatriation's and for land reforms entered the countryside. The land revenue assessment which had remained unchanged for the last twenty to thirty years was enhanced in 1894 and as such the ryots of different places viz., Rangia and Lashima in the Kamrup district and the ryots of Patharughat in the Mangaldoi

district were the first to react against the enhancement of revenue of land.' For two decades, serious movements took place and both the agrarian outbreaks during the last four decades of the 19th century and the post 1857 renaissance movement added to the growing national movement for attaining freedom from foreign rule.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. Why were the Choudhuries looked upon as contractors?
6. How much poll tax did the people need to pay?
7. What happened if a person defaulted in tax payment?
8. Who became the Assistant Commissioner of Assam in 1839?

4 LAND REVENUE

According to Ananda Saikia in *The British Land Revenue Policy in Assam in the Early Stages, and its Impact upon the Peasantry (1827-1874)*, during that time, in Assam, approximately 90 per cent of the population was of peasants and British Government relied on land revenue as one of its main sources of income in this region.

When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of Upper Assam and David Scott of Lower Assam.

David Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system. For personal service, the Pykes had to pay produce revenue in cash. In Assam, there was levied a poll tax of ₹3.00 per pyke. Hazarikas, Saikias and Borahs who were Ahom government's old pyke officers were vested with the duty to collect revenue in Lower Assam. Earlier records were used as the basis for settlements. In Central as well as Lower Assam, on every pyke there was imposed a ₹2.00 tax, known as 'gadhan' and this entitles them to obtain 3 'puras' of land which was arable. The lands, to begin with, were not transferable or hereditary.

Prior to 1835, a territory newly annexed into Assam got administered directly by the Governor General of India. In the same year, it became part of Bengal presidency and got its own Commissioner who was responsible to the Bengal Government. British occupation Hill regions got reorganized on the basis of districts. In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families. Except for specific areas like some Jaintia Hills' tracts and Garo Hills' submountain regions, there existed no land revenue and assessment was mostly not on land but on house. In Goalpara and Cachar permanent settlement was introduced by the British Government.

—The peasants were expected to pay land revenue in cash and this was something they were not used to. Also, there was not much money in circulation. The money was way scarcer than the revenue demand. The position of the exports was also not better than that of the imports. This led to many of the peasants selling their children and themselves as slaves.

During this period, the Ryotwari system of land settlement ruled the relationship between the cultivators and the government. This system had been experimented in 1792 by Captain Road in Madras and in 1864 it was properly adopted there. It was largely implemented in other states of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

The Ryotwari system makes an agreement between the government and the cultivator who thus becomes the proprietor of the land. To begin with doccenial, it was turned to a 30-year period after which there would be reassessment and re-setting of terms.

The terms on the Ryot were rigorous and the assessment was also more over-assessment than correct assessment. The government owned the land and the Ryot could, therefore, not sell it. They were occupancy tenets with only the right to occupy the land.

In various regions under the British, three types of land tenure systems were under operation:

- Mahalwari and Malguzari system
- Ryotwari system
- Zamindari system

The most preferred system was the Ryotwari system as it could provide direct gains to the government. For the Ryots it was a problem as these revisions of land revenue was done periodically. Often the assessment would be excessive, forcing the cultivators to become wage earners. Also, since the settlements were done on an individual basis, the Ryots could not come together to have their problems settled.

The British abolished slavery in Assam and availed of the services of the free slaves on their tea plantations where they became tenants. This abolition, according to Amalendu Guha, served a three-fold purpose for the British: it weakened the Ahom aristocracy, forced the freed people to seek positions in the tea plantations and turned them into share croppers or wage earners. Since there was shortage of capital, the freed persons could not get a share of the land which was available in abundance.

The land revenue policy of the British regarding religious land property was a continuation of the one followed by the Ahom Government with minimal changes.

Ananda Saikia in *The British Land Revenue Policy in Assam in the Early Stages, and its Impact upon the Peasantry (1827-1874)*, says:

under the Ahom Government considerable areas of arable land were also assigned as rent free 'Lakhiraj' in the form of 'debottar', 'Dharmottar' and 'Brahmottar' grants for the services in the temples and *Satras* and for the support of the individuals attached thereto. The British retained this system with a view to getting support from the 'Satradhikars' (religious head of the *vaishnavite* monasteries). With the object in view, the Government granted 'Lakhiraj' (rent free) land and in some cases 'Nisfkhiraj' (land assessed at half rate than the usual rate of revenue) land to the 'Satradhikaras' who could produce relevant documents of the previous government in this regard.

He goes on to say:

By acquiring rent-free land from the government, most of the *Satradhikars* who got rent free land, exploited the poor ryots by offering them land on share-cropping basis and created a *Zamindari* of their own, over their *Vaishnavite* disciple. Thus, the British land settlement system is directly responsible for creating a *Vashnavite Zamindari* class in Assam, although, all states were not included in it.

The Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838 were framed to make available wasteland at terms that were attractive for the purpose of special cultivation. Benefit of these rules was taken by the British tea companies, and in 1840 the Assam Tea Company and in 1859 the Jorhat Tea Company were set up. In 1861, the system of free simple grants

was introduced by the British Government to enable planters to obtain land on terms that were easy from the government. Anyone could pay and take the land but the ryots had not the means to improve the occupied land. Also, the European planters pushed the government to raise the land revenue so that the peasants would be forced to leave their villages in search of work and end up as wage workers on the plantations. All tea plantations took on the form of being zamindari and the workers on the plantations were nothing but serfs.

In Assam, the middlemen of the revenue system were known in the upper level as patguries, Choudhuries and Mauzadar, and at the lower level as Gaonburas, Mandal Tekalas. Over time, this class also became that of landlords. They gave their land to landless ryots and received half of the land's produce. Till date, this system remains prevalent and is another outcome of the British land revenue system.

It was the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1884 that legalized the land revenue arrangements.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, who became the commissioner of Upper Assam and Lower Assam?
10. What was the land revenue policy implemented by Davis Scott?
11. What was the tax implemented on people of the hills?
12. Who experimented with the Ryotwari system, when and where?

5 DEVELOPMENT OF ROADWAYS, WATERWAYS AND RAILWAYS

During the pre-British rule period in Assam, the situation of infrastructure, such as electricity, communication and transportation was extremely poor. The British Government in Assam had the lucrative interest of developing coal mining, petroleum and tea industry and therefore it put in tremendous effort to bring into Assam systems of transportation that were modern. Despite the fact that they were inadequate, whatever progress they managed to make pertaining to transport of various kinds, be it rail, road or river, it was by nature certainly pioneering.

Let us take a look at the various means of transport that the British Government implemented in Assam in the period prior to independence.

Waterways/River transport: In Assam there was a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company. At a later stage, the Rivers Steam Navigation company and the Indian General Navigation Company were established, both private companies, for providing commercial services of a regular nature to Assam. Sometime later, the two companies came together and the Joint Steamer Companies was created and it was this company that, all through the period that the British were in the state, provided the steamer services. With these services, it became easy for the state to export products that were bulky, such as timber, jute and tea, as also to import other consumer goods. The service came at a rather low cost.

Railways: Assam did not have a railway system during pre-British times. As the tea gardens developed and grew in Assam's interior regions, there arose the requirement to have a system of railways which was well developed so that low-cost or rather cheap transport was available for the thriving tea gardens. The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881. The very next year saw the inauguration of the first railway line which ran from steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Jaipur road. Tezpur-Balipara Railway and Jorhat provincial Railway were two other companies that were established in the year 1885. These were set up to explicitly cater to the transportation needs of the tea gardens in Tezpur.

The Assam—Bengal Railway was established in the year 1892 for providing a railway link between Assam and the other states of India. Dhubri got connected all the way with Calcutta in the year 1902 by building in an extension to the Eastern Bengal Railway line. It was during the period 1909-10 that Amingaon got connected to Calcutta via Dhubri. The Assam railway lines grew extensively and rapidly in the period 1896-1933.

Roadways: The cheapest means of transport was developed in Assam with the help of its rivers and this was one reason why in the initial stages the British rulers in Assam paid no heed to the development of roads. It was as late as 1880 that the Government's Public Works Department (P.W.D.) was established for road construction in Assam. Then in the year 1880 local boards were set up to better the roads in the state's rural areas.

It was as early as 1848 that a claim was made by the Assam Company that they had opened as well as repaired public roads which were more than 800 miles in length. The purpose of these roads was to connect the tea plantations with Calcutta for the sole purpose of commerce and trade.

Post World War I, there was realization within the government that there was urgent requirement for better and for this purpose in 1926-27 at the provincial level a Road Board was established. In the year 1927, a new fund named the Tea Rates Road Fund was created which was set up by inflicting added local rates on the tea lands for the purpose of improving the state's roads.

In addition, two funds were established in 1929-30, at the national level to develop roads across British India. These funds were the General Road Development Fund and the Special Reserve Fund. In the period within 1929-30 to 1937-38, ₹21.8 lakh worth of financial assistance from the General Fund and ₹36.9 lakh from the Reserve Fund were sanctioned.

This calculation shows that a very minimal amount of funds were put out for the construction, expansion and maintenance of roads and this led to road transport remaining rather backward in the state of Assam.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. In which year was a steamer service started by the East India Company?
14. Which company was created when Rivers Steam Navigation Company and the Indian General Navigation Company were merged?
15. In which year was the Assam Railways and Trading Company established?
16. In which year was Dhubri connected to Calcutta by railway?

ACTIVITY

Draw a comparative analysis of the impact of British Rule in Assam and Bengal.

DID YOU KNOW

In the classical period Assam was called Kamrupa and also Pragjyotisha. In medieval times the Mughals termed it as Asham, and British colonialism transformed it to Assam.

6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The modern education which is currently prevalent in Assam has its roots in 1826 when there was a setting up of British rule in the territory of Assam.
- According to Bose: 'The aim of the English to educate the Indians was either to produce caricatures of European characters who would be willing to accept the Gospel of Christ or to get a regular supply of cheap clerks to serve them in the business organization of the government of India and subsidiary undertakings of the British Subjects'.
- Today in Assam the education at school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards.
- The 1935-36 Report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated 19th December, 1936, para.1). This was implemented across high schools but for in Bengali schools.
- Gauhati University at the beginning of 1970, decided that starting 1972-73 it would replace English with Assamese as the medium of instruction across colleges affiliated to it. English would remain as an optional unit of instruction.
- Major Jenkins got schools opened and encouraged the spread of both education and Christianity.
- When the British occupied Assam, David Scott organized the administration to his best capacity and introduced British system in general outline and spirit with accommodation for an indigenous system prevalent at that time.
- Assam's implementation of the justice mechanism as well as the overall general administration became the responsibility of the Commissioner of Assam who was headquartered in Guwahati.
- In lower Assam, it was in 1824-25 that British administration truly started. With each passing year, the revenue collections went up which must have pushed the people against the wall.
- The paraganas were put under Choudhuries who in their parganas both collected revenue and administered justice in criminal cases of a petty nature. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government six months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection).

- The assessment of the revenue was done based on the cultivated area's category.
- People had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax.
- If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated and as a result often the peasants were unable to save their homes.
- All through the 19th Century, the relationship between the people of Assam and the government was dominated by the issue of collection of revenue.
- When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of Upper Assam and David Scott of Lower Assam.
- Davis Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system.
- In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families. Except for specific areas like some Jaintia Hills' tracts and Garo Hills' submountain regions, there existed no land revenue and assessment was mostly not on land but on house.
- The peasants were expected to pay land revenue in cash and this was something they were not used to. Also, there was not much money in circulation. The money was way scarcer than the revenue demand. The position of the exports was also not better than that of the imports. This led to many of the peasants selling their children and themselves as slaves.
- During this period, the Ryotwaree system of land settlement ruled the relationship between the cultivators and the government.
- The terms on the Ryot were rigorous and the assessment was also more over assessment than correct assessment. The government owned the land and the Ryot could, therefore, not sell it. They were occupancy tenets with only the right to occupy the land.
- In the various regions under the British, three types of land tenure systems were under operation:
 - o Mahalwari and Malguzari system
 - o Ryotwaree system
 - o Zamindari system
- The most preferred system was the Ryotwaree system as it could provide direct gains to the government. For the Ryots it was a problem as these revisions of land revenue was done periodically. Often the assessment would be excessive, forcing the cultivators to become wage earners. Also, since the settlements were done on an individual basis, the Ryots could not come together to have their problems settled.
- The British abolished slavery in Assam and availed of the services of the free slaves on their tea plantations where they became tenants.
- This abolition, according to Dr. Amalendu Guha, served a three-fold purpose for the British: it weakened the Ahom aristocracy, forced the freed people to seek positions in the tea plantations and turned them into share croppers or wage earners. Since there was shortage of capital, the freed persons could not get a share of the land which was available in abundance.

- The land revenue policy of the British regarding religious land property was a continuation of the one followed by the Ahom Government with minimal changes.
- The Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838 were framed to make available wasteland at terms that were attractive for the purpose of special cultivation. Benefit of these rules was taken by the British tea companies, and in 1840 and 1859 the Assam Tea Company and the Jorhat Tea Company were set up, respectively.
- The European planters pushed the government to raise the land revenue so that the peasants would be forced to leave their villages in search of work and end up as wage workers on the plantations.
- All tea plantations took on the form of being Zamindari and the workers on the plantations were nothing but serfs.
- It was the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1884 that legalized the land revenue arrangements.
- During the pre-British rule period in Assam, the situation of infrastructure, such as electricity, communication and transportation was extremely poor.
- The British government in Assam had the lucrative interest of developing coal mining, petroleum and tea industry and therefore it put in tremendous effort to bring into Assam modern systems of transportation.
- Despite the fact that they were inadequate, whatever progress they managed to make pertaining to transport of various kinds, be it rail, road or river, was certainly pioneering.
- In Assam there existed a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport to make it easy for the state to export products that were bulky, such as timber, jute and tea, as also to import other consumer goods.
- As the tea gardens developed and grew in Assam's interior regions, there arose the requirement to have a system of railways which was well developed so that there could be made available low cost or rather cheap transport for the thriving tea gardens.
- The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881. The very next year saw the inauguration of the first railway line which ran from steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Jaipur road.
- Roadways: The cheapest means of transport was developed in Assam with the help of its rivers and this was one reason why in the initial stages the British rulers in Assam paid no heed to the development of roads.
- It was as late as 1880 that the Government's Public Works Department (P.W.D.) of was established for road construction in Assam.
- Assam 1929-30 to 1937-38, ₹21.8 lakh worth of financial assistance from the General Fund and ₹36.9 lakh from the Reserve Fund were sanctioned.

7 KEY TERMS

- **Missionaries:** A person sent on a religious mission, esp. one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country.
- **Pestilence:** A fatal epidemic disease

8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. 1826
2. Pathsalas
3. Today in Assam the education at school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards.
4. In 1888–89 the Christian missionaries became the first ones to set up primary teacher training schools.
5. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government 6 months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection).
6. The people had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax.
7. If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated.
8. In 1839, an English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was made the Assistant Commissioner.
9. When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of upper Assam and David Scott of lower Assam.
10. Davis Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system.
11. In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families.
12. The Ryotwaree system was experimented in 1792 by Captain Road in Madras.
13. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company.
14. At a later stage, the Rivers Steam Navigation company and the Indian General Navigation Company were established, both private companies, for providing commercial services of a regular nature to Assam. Sometime later, the two companies came together and the Joint Steamer Companies was created.
15. The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881.
16. Dhubri got connected all the way with Calcutta in the year 1902.

9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the impact of the British making Bengali the official language in Assam.
2. Describe the role played by the missionaries in Assam in the context of education.
3. Explain the basic concept of permanent settlement.
4. Write a short note on the development of railways in Assam.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the impact of English Education in Assam.
2. Explain the impact of the British system of governance in Assam.
3. Explain the impact of the British Land Revenue system in Assam.
4. Explain the purpose of the development of roadways, waterways and railways in Assam.

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