UG HT S2-01
(DSC/DSE)

FOUR YEAR BACHELOR'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER-II

INTRODUCTION TO ASSAM HISTORY

HISTORY

Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Subject Expert

1. Professor Paromita Das, Gauhati University
2. Prof. Rajib Handique, Gauhati University
3. Dr. Bornali Sarma, Cotton University

Course Co-ordinator

Dr. Priti Salila Rajkhowa, KKHSOU

SLM Preparation Team

UNITS	CONTRIBUTORS
1, 2, 6	Mukutar Rahman Saikia, St John College, Dimpaur
	Dr. Gargee Sharmah, Pragjyotish College
3, 7	Dr. Mridutpal Goswami, Dudhnoi College
	Dr. Sukmaya Lama, KKHSOU
4, 5,10	Dr. Mamoni Sarma, LCB College, Dr. Sukmaya Lama, KKHSOU
8, 9	Dr. Mridutpal Goswami, Dudhnoi College
11	Dr. Arindam Talukdar, Bhattadeva University, Bajali
	Dr. Priti Salila Rajkhowa, KKHSOU
12	Dr. Malabika Das, Handique Girl's College
13	Dr. Binod Sarmah, Furkating College, Dr. Sukmaya Lama, KKHSOU
14	Dr. Binod Sarmah, Furkating College, Dr. Priti Salila Rajkhowa, KKHSOU

Editorial Team

Content (English Version)	:	Paromita Das, Gauhati University & Barnali Chaudhari, IDOL
Language (English Version)	:	Professor. Robin Goswami, Cotton College
(Assamese Version)	:	Dr. Neeva Rani Phukan, Assistant Professor (Assamese) KKHSOU, Dr. Priti Salila Rajkhowa, KKHSOU
Structure, Format & Graphics	:	Dr. Priti Salila Rajkhowa, KKHSOU

January, 2024

Copyright © Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

This Self Learning Material (SLM) nof the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike4.0 License (international): http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Printed and published by Registrar on behalf of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

The University acknowledges with thanks the financial support provided by the Distance Education Bureau, UGC for the preparation of this study material.

Headquarter : Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781 017
City Campus : Resham Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781 022; Web: www.kkhsou.in

CONTENTS

		Page
UNIT 1 :	**Sources of Ancient Assam** Literary Sources, Archaeological Sources, Foreign Sources	7-15
UNIT 2 :	**Legendary Period** Naraka and his successors, Different stories of Naraka	16-23
UNIT 3 :	**Ruling Dynasties of Early Assam** Varmanas, Salastambhas, Palas	24-31
UNIT 4 :	**Administration of Early Assam** Administrative System of Early Assam- Central, Local; Judicial, Military	32-36
UNIT 5 :	**Society, Economy and Religion of Early Assam** Social Condition, Economic Condition, Religious Condition	37-46
UNIT 6 :	**Sources of History of Medieval Assam** Literary Sources, Archaeological Sources, Foreign Sources	47-54
UNIT 7 :	**Political Conditions in the Post Pala Period** Kamatapur, The Baro Bhuyans, The Chutias, The Kacharis	55-63
UNIT 8 :	**The Ahoms** Origin of the Ahoms, Advent of the Ahoms, Events from 1228 CE to 1826 CE	64-76
UNIT 9 :	**The Koches** Origin of the Koches, Visva Simha, Naranarayan, Partition of the Koch Kingdom	77-83

UNIT 10 : Society, Economy, Religion and Administration of Medieval Assam under the Ahoms 84-100

Social condition, Economic condition, Religious beliefs, Neo-Vaishnavite Movement, the Ahom system of Administration-the Paik system

UNIT 11 : Establishment of the British rule and Anti-British Movements 101-115

Anglo-Burmese Wars, Treaty of Yandaboo and British Conquest of Assam, British Administrative Set Up, Revolt of 1857

UNIT 12 : Socio-Economic Transformation of Assam during Colonial period 116-124

Changes in the Economic Structure, Agrarian Revolts, Social transformation of Assam towards modern age

UNIT 13 : Emergence of Political Consciousness 125-132

Rise of Assamese Nationalism, Establishment of different organisations

UNIT 14 : Participation of Assam in the National Movement 133-148

Partition of Bengal and its Impact,The Non Co-operation Movement in Assam, Civil Disobedience Movement and Assam, Quit India Movement in Assam, Grouping Controversy and Independence

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the Second Course of B. A. in History entitled *Introduction To Assam History* under NEP 2020 of Krishna kanta Handiqui State Open University. The course aims to enlighten the learners with the history of Assam. The course consists of fourteen units.

The first unit *Sources of Early Assam* introduces you to the various materials and sources available for study of the history of Ancient Assam and its relevance.

The second unit *Legendary Period* discusses the period when Naraka and his successors ruled ancient Assam, before the coming of the Ahoms.

The third unit *Ruling Dynasties of Early Assam* gives you the details of the political history of Ancient Assam. After going through this unit, you will be able to describe the early ruling dynasties and the glorious achievement of the kings.

The fourth unit *Administration of Early Assam* discusses the state affairs and developments in ancient Assam. This unit explains the social setup, the economic structure, the religious system and the administrative machinery that was followed.

The fifth unit *Society, Economy, Religion of Early Assam throws* light on the social conditions, economy and religion in Early Assam.

The sixth unit *Sources of History of Medieval Assam* will help you in identifying various sources for the study of the history of Medieval Assam.

The seventh unit *Political Conditions in the Post Pala period* will discuss the Kamatapur, Baro Bhuyans, the Chutiyas and the Kacharis.

The eighth unit *The Ahoms* introduces you to the establishment of the Ahom rule in Assam. This unit will give you a brief overview of the political history of Assam under the rule of the Ahom kings beginning from Sukapha till the signing of the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826.

The ninth unit *The Koches* discusses the origin and the rise of the Koches. This unit will explain the significance of the Koch history as contemporaries of the Ahoms.

The tenth unit *Society, Economy, Religion and Administration of Medieval Assam under the Ahoms* will explain the status of the society and its people along with the religious system during the Ahom period. It will also describe the administrative system and economic affairs of the state.

The eleventh unit *Establishment of the British Rule and Anti-British Movement* gives you the detail of the downfall of the Ahoms and the arrival of the Britishers, to Assam. This unit also explains the Anglo-Burmese wars in details and the early anti-British movements.

The twelfth unit *Socio-economic Transformation of Assam during Colonial Period* will explain the colonial policies and the subsequent changes brought in the society as well as the economic sphere.

The thirteenth unit *Emergence of Political Consciousness* will make you familiar with the rise of the feeling of nationalism among the Assamese people and the growth of various orgnanisations to meet

their collective interests.

The fourteenth unit *Participation of Assam in the National Movement* will discuss the growing political awareness of the common people and their active participation in the freedom struggle movement.

While going through this paper, you will notice that some boxes are put in the left hand or right hand side of the text. These boxes are meant to serve the purpose of in-text glossary for you. Again, you may find some boxes marked with: “LET US KNOW”. These boxes will provide you with some additional interesting and relevant information. The boxes marked with “ACTIVITY” will help you in making your learning more active and efficient. And, at the end of each section, you will get “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. It will be better if you solve the problems put in these boxes immediately after you go through the sections of the units and then match your answers with “ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” given at the end of each unit.

UNIT 1: SOURCES OF ANCIENT ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Literary Sources

1.3.1 Indigenous Literary Sources

1.3.2 Foreign Literary Sources

1.4 Archaeological Sources

1.5 Let us Sum up

1.6 Further Reading

1.7 Answers to check your progress

1.8 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the various source materials for the study of Ancient Assam
- discuss the literary sources and archaeological sources of Ancient Assam
- describe the foreign sources for the study of Ancient Assam

1.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to discuss the sources of ancient Assam in brief. The history of ancient Assam roughly covers the period from the days of the Epics to the early part of the 13th century A.D.

For an in-depth study of the history of the ancient period of Assam, we have to depend upon different types of sources. The various sources that help in the reconstruction of the historical past of Ancient Assam can be mainly divided into two types- Literary and Archaeological.

1.3 LITERARY SOURCES

Literary sources are a very important source of information for the reconstruction of the past. These sources can be further sub-divided into Indigenous and Foreign literature. We are now going to discuss both the Indigenous and Foreign Literary sources.

1.3.1 INDIGENOUS LITERARY SOURCES

The Brahmanical works of the early and later Vedic period are important for the study of cultural relations between the Aryans and the Non-Aryans of India with eastern India. The *Satapatha Brahmana* records the progress of the Aryan culture up to the river Sadanira while the *Aiteraya Brahmana* records the progress of that culture in Kamarupa. The *Gopatha Brahmana* narrates a tradition regarding the origin of the name Kamarupa indicating an early contact of the Aryan and Non-Aryan elements.

The Puranas are invaluable for reconstructing the history of ancient Assam. Most of them like the *Garuda, Markandeya, Naradiya, Brahmana, Skanda, Agni* and *Vishnu* contain references to ancient Assam and her rulers. The *Garuda Purana* mentions Kamarupa and Kamakhya as great centres of pilgrimage. The *Markandeya Purana* mentions Pragjyotisha along with Udayachala, Lauhitya and Kamarupa as countries in the east. The *Kalika Purana* depicts a clear picture about the traditional boundaries of Pragjyotisha- Kamarupa as well as the importance of Goddess Kamakhya in the religious life of the people of Assam.

Besides the Puranas, the Tantrik-Buddhist literature of Eastern India, Tibet and Nepal also contain materials relating to the religious and political history of ancient Assam. Some of the works are- the *Hevajra Tantra* of the 8th Century A.D., *Kamarupa- Yatra*, a Sanskrit work, *Tikkha-Kalpa, Kamakhya Tantra* and *Yogini Tantra.* All of them mention about Kamarupa-Kamakhya and other *pithas* of Assam.

Epics, like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata prove to be an invaluable source as they make references to Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa. Similarly, the Sanskrit literature provides rich information about the

geographical boundaries, political and the socio-cultural history of Ancient Assam. Noteworthy of these texts are- *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa, *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta, Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacharita*, Kalhana's *Rajtarangini, Kathasaritsagara* by Somadeva, *Brihatsamhita* by Varahmihir and Sandhyakaranandi's *Ramacharita*.

The Buddhist or Jain literature too throws light on the history of Ancient Assam but it has yet to be corroborated by other evidences. The *Nikayas* mentions *Lohicca* which is identified as Lauhitya in connection with two Brahmanas who came to the greater kingdom of Magadha. The Buddhist literature associates ancient Assam with the *Mahaparinirvana* of the Buddha, which is said to have taken place at modern Hajo.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Which Purana mentions Kamarupa as a pilgrimage centre?

.....

Q2: Mention the names of some of the Tantrik - Buddhist literature?

.....

Q3: Name the author of *Brihatsamhita*?

.....

1.3.2 FOREIGN LITERARY SOURCES:

The works of foreign literature refer to the land and its people of Kamarupa. But it is difficult to identify the places and peoples mentioned in them. Herodotus mentions the Kalatiai along with Gangaridae and Prasioi of Assam. Megasthenes and Strabo refer to the Derdai of the east, who were noted for their working in gold. It is probable that the reference is to some hill people of this region. Pliny in his *Natural History* refers to a number of people of the frontier and trans-Himalayan regions, who can be identified with some Tibeto-Burman tribes of Assam. In the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography* we find references to people and places which may possibly be identified as being located in ancient Assam.

The Chinese works were another important source. I-Tsing in his account refers to King Devavarma of Eastern India who held sway over the Nalanda region. This Devavarma has been identified with King Avantivarman. The most important Chinese source was *Si-Yu-Ki* written by Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang, who visited India during the period 629-45 A.D. It gives us an account of Hiuen-Tsang's visit to Kamarupa and stay at the court of king Bhaskaravarman providing information of the political, social and religious life of the people of Assam.

The Arabic and Persian works of the Muslim scholars shed good light on the ancient history of Assam. Alberuni's Arabic work entitled *Tarikhul-Hind* written about 1030 A.D. mentions that Kamrupa lies to the east of Kannauj. The Persian work *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhajuddin Siraj gives information about Muhammad-i- Bakhtiyar's expedition against Tibet through Kamarupa and the destruction of the major part of his army in Assam near Guwahati.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4: Match the following:

(a) Pliny ..... (i) Tarikhul-Hind

(b) Alberuni ..... (ii) Tabaqat-i-Nasiri

(c) Minhajuddin Siraj ..... (iii) Natural History

(d) Hiuen Tsang ..... (iv) Si-Yu-Ki

Q5: Fill in the blanks–

(i) Megasthenes and ..... refer to the Derdai of the east, who were noted for their working in gold.

(ii) ..... informs about Muhammad-i- Bakhtiyar's expedition

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Apart from the literary sources, archaeological sources play an important role in the reconstruction of the historical past of Assam. The archaeological sources can be studied well under three different categories- Inscriptions or Epigraphy, coins or Numismatics sources and material remains.

● INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions are writings engraved on copper plates and rocks and impressed on clay seals. No genuine history of ancient Assam can be written without the epigraphic evidences which are reliable to a great extent. Hence, as historical sources inscriptions have great significance. The local epigraphs or inscriptions of Assam are found in many numbers. They are engraved on copper plates, stone tablets, rocks, pillars, outer parts of caves, temples and other buildings.

More than fifty inscriptions belonging to the early period have so far been discovered. The *Tezpur Rock Inscription* of king Harjaravarman is the earliest known dated inscription of ancient Assam. It is dated 510 of the Gupta era corresponding to 829 A.D. Most of these inscriptions are copper plate grants. Among this are the *Umachal Rock Inscription*, *Barganga Rock Inscription* and *Doobi Copper Plates*, which provide information about the Varman dynasty. For the history of the Salastambhas, we have the *Tezpur Rock Inscription*, *Hayungthal Copper Plate*, *Tezpur Copper Plate* and *Parbatiya Copper Plates*. The history of the Pala dynasty can be known from the *Caratbari Copper Plates*, *Bargaon Copper Plates*, *Soalkuchi Copper Plates* and *Guwahati Copper Plates*.

There are some other local inscriptions providing information about ancient Assam. The prominent ones are – the Kamauli grant, the Assam Plates and the Kanai Barasi Bowa Rock Inscriptions. The *Kamauli grant* of Vaidyadeva (c.1126-1140A.D.) found at Varanasi records the victory of Mayana, the general of the Gauda ruler Ramapala, over the king of Kamarupa and Vaidyadeva's conquest of the western part of the kingdom of Kamarupa. The *Assam Plates* of Vallabhadeva (c.1180-1200 A.D.) give the names of three kings who were probably the successors of Vaidyadeva. The *Kanai Barasi Bowa Rock Inscription* dated 1205 A.D. records the destruction of the Turkish army while invading Kamarupa.

Some contemporary inscriptions from other parts of India too contain information on the history of early Assam. In the *Allahabad Prasasti* of Samudragupta the name of Kamarupa occurs as a frontier kingdom, whose king owed allegiance to king Samudragupta of his own accord. The

Mandasore Inscription of Yasodharman mentions Yasodharman's invasion upto the neighbourhood of the Lauhitya. The *Aphsad Inscription* of Adityasena refers to the conflict between Mahasenagupta and Susthitavarman (c.585-593 A.D.), the king of Kamarupa.

The *Pasupati Temple Inscription* at Kathmandu gives information about Nepal king Jayadeva Parachakrakama, who married Rajyamati, the daughter of king Harshadeva of Bhagadatta's family. The *Bhagalpur grant* of Narayanapala of Gauda refers to diplomatic relations between Pragjyotisha, Gauda and Orissa during the reign of Devapala. The *Belava grant* of Bhojavarman records a conflict between Jatavarman of Bengal and a ruler of Kamarupa. The *Silimpur Stone Inscription* of a Brahmana named Prahasa records that the Kamarupa king Jayapala offered 900 gold coins equal to his own body weight to the Brahmana along with other gifts.

- **COINS OR NUMISMATIC SOURCES**

Numismatic evidence is one of the most reliable sources for the study of the early history of any land, especially when the coins help us in determining the chronology of a dynasty. But unfortunately very few coins of the early period have so far been discovered.

Among coins of pre-Ahom times found in Assam so far, there are certain gold issues of the type called *Imitation Gupta*, found in a hoard discovered at Paglatek, in the south bank of Brahmaputra. The same types of coins are also found in Bangladesh and Tripura which gives information of Assam-Bengal trade relationship. Some Copper coins discovered in Dhulapadung Tea Estate near Tezpur are roughly round in shape and of varying weight. These coins have a blank reverse and a single letter 'Va', 'Ha' and 'Ba' on the obverse. It is probable that 'Va' indicates the name of Vanamalavarman and 'Ba' (Ba) lavarman and 'Ha' indicates Harjaravarman. The *Silimpur Stone Inscription* of Prahasa records a *tulapurush* gift along with 900 gold coins of Jayapala, who is generally identified with the last member of the Pala line of kings of ancient Assam. However, the Ambari stone Inscription found at Guwahati issued at a later date records the name of Samudrapala.

- **MATERIAL REMAINS**

The remains of the undated history of ancient Assam consist of neoliths,

megaliths and pottery which help us in studying the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan elements in Assam. Old monuments in between the period 5th to the 12th Century A.D. are found scattered throughout the land. These consist of remains of architecture and fortifications, sculptured designs and icons of various deities. As a subject of historical study, they are useful not only for their artistic value but also for the light they throw on the religious conditions of the people. The temples and images of the various deities of different faiths supply us with information about the state of social and religious life of the people.

Some of the prominent monuments are the door frames found at Dah-Parvatia, remains of a gigantic Sun temple at Tezpur, Buddhist, Saivate, Shakti and Vaisnavite shrines lying scattered throughout the state. Only few places have been satisfactorily excavated. At Dah Parvatiya near Tezpur some early sculptures and statues were discovered of which some belong to the Gupta age. A few years back, a good number of remains were unearthed at Narakasurgaon. Then at Ambari in the city of Guwahati, beautiful architectural remains of the ancient period came to light along with an abundance of icons of Mahisamardini Durga, Surya and Indra.

Thus, the ancient architecture and monuments help us a lot of to understand the evolution of the artistic and cultural development of our ancestors. These also inform us about different schools of art, its development and the amount of foreign influence upon it.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Which is the earliest known dated inscription of ancient Assam?

.....

Q7: Name the Rock Inscription that records the destruction of the Turkish army while invading Kamarupa?

.....

Q8: The Silimpur Stone inscription belongs to whom?

.....

Q9: The Bhagalpur Grant belongs to which ruler?

.....



1.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about—

- the different literary sources for the study of ancient Assam
- the scholarly works of the indigenous and the foreign writers in highlighting our historical pasts
- the archeological remains and its importance in understanding the history of ancient Assam
- the significance of the study of sources, in reconstructing the history of ancient Assam



1.6 FURTHER READING

1) Baruah, S.L., (1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

2) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

3) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: Garuda

Ans to Q. No. 2: *Hevajra Tantra, Tikkha-Kalpa and Kamakhya Tantra* are some of the Tantrik Buddhist works

Ans to Q. No. 3: Varahamihir

Ans to Q. No. 4:

(i) Pliny	————————	(c) Natural History
(ii) Alberuni	————————	(a)Tarikhul-Hind
(iii) Minhajuddin Siraj	————————	(b) Tabaqat-i-Nasiri
(iv) Hiuen Tsang	————————	(d) Si-Yu-Ki

Ans to Q. No. 5:

i. Strabo

ii. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri

Ans to Q. No. 6: The *Tezpur Rock Inscription*

Ans to Q. No. 7: The *Kanai Barasi Bowa Rock Inscription*

Ans to Q. No. 8: Prahasa

Ans to Q. No. 9: Narayanapala of Gauda

1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions:

Q1. Who was Prahasa?

Q2. Name a few Sanskrit literary texts which throw light on the ancient history of Assam?



Q3. The *Kanai Barasi Bowa Rock Inscription* dates back to which period or time?

Q4. Where is the Pasupati Temple Inscription situated?

B) Short Questions:

Q1. What is recorded in the Allahabad Prasasti?

Q2. Why is Si-Yu-Ki an important literary source?

C) Long Questions:

Q1. Explain the importance of the numismatic sources in reconstructing the history of Ancient Assam?

Q2. Explain the political history of Ancient Assam through the Rock Inscriptions left behind?

Q3. Describe the works of the foreign travelers in understanding the history of Ancient Assam?

Q4. Discuss the significance of the indigenous texts in writing the history of Ancient Assam?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 2 : LEGENDARY PERIOD

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1. Learning Objectives

2.2. Introduction

2.3. King Naraka and his successors

2.4. Legends of King Naraka

2.5. Let us sum up

2.6 Further Reading

2.7 Check your progress

2.8 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss about Naraka and his successors
- describe the different stories revolving around Naraka
- understand the legendary period associated with the rule of Naraka and his successors.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The history of ancient Assam revolves around many legends and one such legend is about the king Naraka, who is very often referred to in the historical texts that form a huge bulk of literary sources. The rule of Naraka is often associated with the advent of Aryanism in Assam. The study of the early history of Kamarupa would be partial without any reference to it.

2.3 KING NARAKA AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Pragjyotisha and Pragjyotishpur are mentioned for the first time in the epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana, in relation to the legendary king Naraka and his successors Bhagadatta and Vajradatta. The Mahabharata allows an insight into the earlier myths of Naraka and his successors. He is

recognized as being one of the ancient kings of Assam with the name Bhauma (son of the Earth or Bhumi) and *Asura*. He is referred to have stolen Aditi's ear-rings and was slained by Krishna Vasudeva (a form of Lord Vishnu) who recovers the ear rings. In a later stanza, it is narrated that Lord Vishnu killed Naraka at the insistence of Indra, whose status was threatened by Naraka. Likewise, it is also narrated that the Earth, mother of Naraka, secured the *Brahmastra* (a powerful weapon) for her son from Lord Vishnu. It was later passed on to his son, Bhagadatta.



LET US KNOW

What is Myth? How is it different from Legend?

We often use the term inter-changeably, but it has different connotations. While myths are about stories of Gods and Divine beings. They are sacred narratives. Legends on the other hand deals with real heroes, imagined as super-humans. Myths have a spiritual base while legends have some historical base.

The Mahabharata contains numerous references to Naraka's son, Bhagadatta. Bhagadatta was the ruler of Pragjyotisha and a friend of Indra, king of gods as well as of Pandu, the *Kuru* prince. He is said to have presented an iron vessel and swords with ivory hilts to Yuddhisthira on the grand occasion of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. He also provided soldiers to the Kuru king Duryodhana which included the Chinas and the Kiratas. He fought for Duryodhana in the war of Kurukshetra. He is said to have been killed by Arjuna and so was his son, Vajradatta while guarding the horse of Yuddhisthira for the *Ashwamedha* sacrifice (horse sacrifice).

It is stated in the Digvijaya section of the *Sabha Parvana* of the *Mahabharata* that Bhagadatta was known as dwelling in the eastern sea with his followers and people who lived along the sea coast. It is said that Arjuna during his march to the north, came across the Pragjyotisha king, whom he defeated. Similarly, Bhima is mentioned as having defeated the *Mlechchha* king and his people of the sea coast, while he was on his expedition to the east. He is said to have reached Lauhitya (Brahmaputra).

The Puranas give a different version of the story revolving round Naraka. According to the *avatara* (incarnation) theory, the Hindu god Vishnu descends to earth in ten different forms or incarnations to save mankind. Rama and Krishna are the two most famous incarnations of Vishnu. The avatara theory traces the legend of Naraka to the theory of his being born of the *Varaha* (boar) form of Vishnu and *Bhumidevi* or Earth. The *Satapath Brahmana* describes the rescuing of the Earth from the ocean by Prajapati in the form of a boar. The *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, of a later date, mentions the boar to be of a black colour and having a hundred arms. In the later mythology, the god Vishnu is regarded as Prajapati. The *Harivamsa* gives a hint of the birth of Naraka as a result of the union of Earth and her saviour, Vishnu.

According to the *Kalika Purana*, the result of the union of the boar (*Varaha* incarnation of Vishnu) and Bhudevi, was a powerful son whose birth was delayed for the good of the world. Vishnu advised the earth to carry the son in her womb until the end of *satya yuga*. Meanwhile Janaka, the ruler of Videha, was issueless and had started a sacrifice for the purpose of having a child. The result was the birth of two sons and a girl. The girl (Sita) had to be dug out as the child lay inside the earth. Under the advice of Narada, Janaka dug the earth and the earth handed over the child to Janaka and requested him that he should bring up her son, who was to be born from the very ground where Sita was born. As said, so it happened, and after the destruction of Ravana by Rama (the avatara or incarnation of Lord Vishnu), the earth went to the very sacrificial ground where Sita was born and gave birth to Naraka. Vishnu blessed the child and said that he would be a ruler of a concealed kingdom and as long as he would possess human nature he would prosper, but once he was devoid of their nature he would bring about his own ruin. The Earth informed Janaka, who adopted the child and Gautama named him as Naraka as the child was found in a skull. For sixteen years, Naraka grew up under the protection of Janaka and nursed by earth (under the name of Katyayani). Shortly after the completion of his sixteenth year, Vishnu took him to Pragjyotisha city. It was situated in the middle of Kamarupa inhabited by the Kiratas who worshipped Kamakhya as the principal deity and also Shiva. Following the advice of Vishnu, Naraka

killed the Kirata king Ghataka and drove the Kiratas to the east beyond the Dakkeravasnini (Dikhou river).

The coronation of Naraka was performed by Vishnu. The kingdom of Naraka extended from the Karatoya to the eastern territory bounded by the shrine of goddess Dikkeravasini Naraka's kingdom was the place of residence of Mahamaya Yogini (Kamakhya) besides Lauhitya *'son of Brahma'* or Brahmaputra and other principal gods and goddesses. The land came to be known as Kamarupa wherein were settled Brahmins who had an expertise in the Vedas, the members of the four varnas and others by Vishnu. Meanwhile, Naraka married the princess of Vidarbha, Maya and soon he was presented with a lance (sakti) and was advised by Vishnu that the weapon was not to be used against men, unless for self defence, that he should worship only goddess Kamakhya and never bring harm upon the Brahmanas, gods and sages lest he should invite his death.

For many years, Naraka ruled wisely and there was prosperity in his kingdom. But soon he came under the influence of the Asura (demon) king Bana of Sonitpur (identified as Tezpur in the district of Sonitpur). Bana was a worshipper of Shiva and soon Naraka started showing disrespect and dishonour towards Vishnu, Kamakhya and the Brahmanas. It is said that once sage Vasishtha came to worship Kamakhya but was not permitted to do so by Naraka. The angry sage cursed Naraka that he would be killed by Vishnu in the human form and that as long as Naraka was alive, Kamakhya would disappear from the earth. Naraka now kept closer terms with Bana and tried to please Brahma by standing for one hundred human years on the bank of Lauhitya. Brahman was pleased and granted him boons but with a caution that he was not to molest Tilottama and other heavenly damsels, born on earth before the coming of Naraka to his capital. Acting on the advice of Bana, Naraka soon attacked the gods, sages and others. He was assisted in his activities by his four sons: Bhagadatta, Mahsirsha, Madavat and Sumalin and also by Hayagriva, Maru and other demons. Naraka stole Aditi's earrings and perpetrated much havoc on earth and in heaven. At this, Vishnu took the avatar of Krishna and went to Pragjyotisha where he killed Naraka. Naraka's son Bhagadatta was made the king and

also received his father's lance. Krishna returned to Dvaraka with the earrings, the Maniparvata and Varuna's umbrella.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Fill in the blanks:

(i) It is stated in the ..... section of the *Sabha Parvana* of the *Mahabharata* that Bhagadatta was known as dwelling in the eastern sea with his followers

(ii) The ..... describes the rescuing of the Earth from the ocean by Prajapati in the form of a boar.

(iii) The *Harivamsa* gives a hint of the birth of Naraka as a result of the union of ..... and her saviour, Vishnu.

(iv) Naraka is recognized as being one of the ancient kings of Assam with the name ..... and .....

2.4 DIFFERENT STORIES OF NARAKA

In the late medieval period, the Naraka legend is further embellished by additions and alterations. Based on Kasiram Das's Bengali *Mahabharata*, which was composed about the beginning of the seventeenth century, Bhagadatta is regarded in Assam and Bengal as the father of the wife of Duryodhana (Bhanumati). Some other traditions place Bhagadatta as having married the sister of Duryodhana. Even though such relationship between Bhagadatta and Duryodhana is unknown in the Puranas, yet the people believe that a tank in Guwahati was excavated on the solemn occasion of the marriage between Duryodhana and Bhanumati.

Kalhana's *Rajtarangini* mentions a similar tale where it mentions that king Meghavahana of Kashmir attended the Svayamvara of Amritaprabha, daughter of the king of Pragjyotisha. He then weds her and receives the umbrella of Varuna. When Meghavahana returns the parasol to Varuna, he is told that the umbrella was carried away by the father of his father-in-law. This seems to point that Naraka's grand daughter was Amritaprabha.

Harshacharita mentions the name of Pushpadatta among the lists of the ancestors of Bhaskaravarman and placed him after Bhagadatta and Vajradatta. This is not corroborated however by any other source. Some writers refer to Puspadatta as the son of Bhagadatta, who was killed by Nakula in the Kurukshetra war. As against the early literary and epigraphic traditions, the medieaval inscriptions of Assam tend to elaborate the myths of Vajradatta. It is said that when Bhagadatta took over as the lord of Pragjyotisha, his younger brother, Vajradatta went to the forest and started penance to his Isvara (Siva). He was successful and he was blessed by his god to be the lord of Uparipattana and also the future lord of Pragjyotisha. Verse 5 of the Doobi copper plate refers to many horse sacrifices being performed by Vajradatta. The myths of Naraka and his successor are also highlighted in the works like *Yogini Tantra, Haragaurisamvada, Ain-i-Akbari (*completed *in 1595 A.D.)* and *Mandala Panji.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2: When was Kasiram Das's Bengali *Mahabharata* composed?

Q3: Who was Amritprabha?

Q4: Name the Buddhist Tantrik literature which mentions the myth of Naraka and his successors?

Q5: Which Inscription mentions the horse sacrifices performed by Vajradatta?



2.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learn about–

- the King Naraka as mentioned in the literary texts.
- the successors of Naraka
- the legendary period as highlighted through the Puranas and other texts.



2.6 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



2.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1:

(i) Digvijaya

(ii) Harivamsa

(iii) Earth

(iv) Bhauma and Asura

Ans to Q. No. 2. Beginning of the 17th century

Ans to Q. No. 3. Daughter of the King of Pragjyotisha

Ans to Q. No. 4. Yogini-Tantra

Ans to Q. No. 5. Doobi Copper Plate Inscription



2.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. Who was King Bana?

Q2. Give the territorial limit of Naraka's kingdom?

Q3. After killing Naraka, Krishna returned to Dvarka with some items? Name them.

(B) Short Questions

A. Write a short note on:

a) Bhagadatta

b) Janaka

c) Varaha

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Describe the importance of the Puranas in revealing the legend of Naraka and his successors?

Q2. What does Mahabharata tells us about Naraka?

Q3. Illustrate the picture of Pragjyotisha during Narka and his successors' time through literary sources.

Q4. What light do the texts throw on the religion during the legendary period of Naraka?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 3 : RULING DYNASTIES OF EARLY ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 The Varmanas

3.4 The Salastambhas

3.5 The Palas

3.6 Lets us Sum up

3.7 Further Reading

3.8 Check your progress

3.9 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the ruling dynasties in Ancient Assam
- explain in details of the Varmana, the Salastambha and the Pala rulers
- discuss about the political situation during the rule of earlier dynasties in Ancient Assam

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to study about the political history of Ancient Assam through a brief study of the ruling dynasties that ruled over the kingdom known as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa. The Varmans (c.350-650 A.D.), Salastambhas (c.655-900 A.D.) and the Palas (c.900-1100 A.D.) were the earliest known ruling dynasties of ancient Assam.

Let us begin with the Varmana dynasty.

3.3. THE VARMANAS

In the middle or later half of the 4th century A.D, the Varmans were

able to carve out a kingdom in the Kamarupa region of ancient Assam. The Pushyavarman was the first known historical ruler of the Varman dynasty that ruled for about three centuries.

He was a later contemporary of the Gupta Emperor, Samudragupta (c.335-376 A.D.) of Magadha. He claimed decent from Naraka. Pushyavarman was an adventurous chief who took advantage of the then prevailing political instability in Kamarupa and made himself the ruler of the land. As such, the dynasty of Pushyavarman is called the *Naraka- Bhauma dynasty*. Besides, the dynasty is also known as the *Varman dynasty* as the kings of the dynasty had all their principal names ending in the word Varman.

Pushyavarman was regarded as a subordinate ally of the Gupta ruler. In the *Allahabad Pillar Inscription* of Samudragupta the king of Kamarupa is mentioned as *Pratyanta Nripati*. Again in the seal of Bhaskaravarman attached to the *Doobi Plates*, Pushyavarman is called *Maharajadhiraja* and the *Lord of Pragjyotisha.* The assumption of the title of *Maharajadhiraja* indicates the independent status of Pushyavarman. It appears that Pushyavarman was initially a vassal ruler under the Guptas. But later he became an independent ruler and raised Kamarupa to an important position.

He was succeeded by Samudravarman who proved to be a man of remarkable abilities.The later successors of Pushyavarman and Samudravarman were able to bring great glory and laurels to their kingdom. However, the most noteworthy ruler of the Varman dynasty was Bhaskaravarman, who was the younger brother of Suprathistitavarman. After the death of his brother Bhaskaravarman ascended the throne of Kamarupa in c 600 A.D and ruled till c 650 A.D. for a period of fifty years. He was the most illustrious one of all the Varman rulers. His activities were not confined to the bounds of his kingdom.

At the time of his accession, the glory of the kingdom of Kamarupa was greatly undermined with the defeat of Pundravardhana at the hands of Mahasenagupta and Sasanka Bhaskaravarman could not tolerate the rise of Sasanka of Gauda who soon made himself the master of Magadha and Kanauj. Under such a situation, Bhaskaravarman sought the friendship of king Harshavardhana of Thaneswar.

Unable to face the combined attack, Sasanka fled away to Orissa where he continued to rule till 619-620 A.D. By this victory Gauda with its capital city of Karnasuvarna came to the possession of Bhaskaravarman. To commemorate the occasion, he issued from his victorious camp at Karnasuvarna the famous Nidhanpur grants reconfirming the land grants made by Bhutivarman in Pundravardhana.

Later Bhaskaravarman too participated in the religious assembly at Kanauj and religious convocation at Prayaga arranged by Harshavardhana. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang visited the kingdom of Kamarupa and stayed at the court of king Bhaskaravarman. The Chinese pilgrim was very much pleased with the hospitality of Bhaskaravarman and with the peace and prosperity prevailing in the kingdom of Kamarupa. Bhaskaravarman was a celibate and died leaving no successor to the throne and thereby marked the end of the rule of the Varmans.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Name the first ruler of the Varman dynasty?

Q2: Pushyavarman was succeeded by which ruler?

Q3: Bhaskaravarman made an alliance with which ruler and against whom?

Q4: The Prayaga religious convocation was arranged by whom?

Q5: Name the Chinese pilgrim that visited the kingdom of Kamrup during the time of Bhaskaravarman?

3.3 THE SALASTAMBHAS

With the death of Bhaskaravarman, the kingdom of Kamarupa passed under the rule of the Mlechchhas. As indicated in the *Bargaon Copper Plate* of Ratnapala (a king of the Pala dynasty which succeeded the Salastambhas), the chief of the Mlechchhas, Salastambha (c. 655-670 A.D) laid the foundation of the rule of a new dynasty called the Salastambhas after his name.

The *Bargaon Copper Plates* of Ratnapala states that the dynasty of Salastambha had 21 kings, the last one being Tyagasimha. But we know only about 15 rulers of the Salastambha dynasty. Salastambha is assumed to be an aboriginal chief. However, very soon the kings of the Mlechchha dynasty claimed their descent from Naraka. He was a very powerful king. It is also stated there that Salastambha was followed by Vijaya, Palaka, Kumara and Vajradeva whose rule was not of any consequence.

Actually very little is known about Salastambha and his successors till the time of Harjaravarman (c.815-837 A.D.). Among the pre-Harjara kings of the Salastambha dynasty, other than Salastambha it was Harshavarman (c.725-745 A.D) whose reign formed another glorious chapter in the history of the kingdom of Kamarupa. It was under him that Kamrupa rose to power for a brief period. However, the most important ruler after Harshavarman was Harjaravarman (c.815-837 A.D). He was the first of the Kamarupa kings to assume high sounding title *Maharaja-dhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka.* Harjaravarman built a lofty temple for *Hetuka Sulin* and rows of buildings in his capital city at Haruppeswara identified with modern Tezpur.

Harjaravarman was succeeded by his son Vanamalavarman (c.837-855 A.D.). Vanamalavarman too like his father tried to spread Aryan culture towards the east and made land grants to the Brahmans in *Uttarakula*. Vanamalavarman abdicated the throne in favour of his son Jayamala, and fasted unto death.

Balavarman II (c.860-890 A.D.) was the last powerful ruler of the Salastambha dynasty. He left three records of his reign namely, the *Howraghat Copper Plates, Nagaon Copper Plates and Ulubari Copper Plates.* Tyagasimha (c.890-900 A.D.) was the last ruler of the Salastambha dynasty. He was the 21st member of the Salastambha line. After him the dynasty became extinct, due to the absence of an heir.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The ..... of Ratnapala states that the dynasty of Salastambha had 21 kings.

(ii) ..... built a lofty temple for *Hetuka Sulin.*

(iii) ..... was the last ruler of the Salastambha dynasty.

(iv) ..... was the first Kamarupa king to assume high sounding title *Maharaja-dhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka.*

3.5 THE PALAS

After the death of Tyagasimha it was decided that someone from the race of Naraka should be appointed as the ruler of Kamarupa. Under such a situation Brahmapala (c.900-920 A.D) was elected as the king due to his proclaimed kinship with the Bhauma-Naraka clan. The Pala rulers to show their relations with the earlier Bhauma-Naraka kings added the word 'Varman' after Pala in their names.

Brahmapala was possibly a governor in the western part of the kingdom. In the inscriptions of his son Ratnapala, Brahmapala is described as a great warrior and is styled as Maharajadhiraja. The *Bargaon Copper Plate* of Ratnapala records that Brahmapala abdicated in favour of his son, Ratnapala. Ratnapala (c.920-960 A.D) was a powerful ruler of the Pala dynasty.

In his three grants namely, *Caratbari Copper Plate*, *Bargaon Copper Plates* and *Soalkuchi Copper Plates* Ratnapala is described as *Paramesvara-Paramabhattaraka-Maharajadhiraja* Ratnapalavarmandeva indicating his imperial status. It is known from the *Gachtal Copper Plates* of his great grandson Gopala that Ratnapala defeated king Rajyapala of Gauda. He was succeeded by his grandson Indrapala.

In the *Gachtal Copper Plates* of Gopala it is stated that Indrapala defeated king Kalyanachandra, son of Sri Chandra of Vanga (Bengal) of the

Chandras, who was the vanquisher of a king of Gauda. He also strengthened his position by entering into a matrimonial alliance with the Rashtrakutas. His Guakuchi grant testifies to his control over the North Bengal. From the Gauhati grant it can be inferred that his reign was one of peace and plenty.

The next Pala ruler was Gopala (c.990-1015 A.D.), son of Indrapala born of the Rashtrakuta princess Rajyadevi. The king had personal charm, merit and intelligence, munificence as well as success in the war as stated in the *Khonamukh Copper Plates* and *Subhankarapataka* grant of Dharmapala.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7: Match the following:

(i) Bargaon Copper Plate ———— (i) Gopala

(ii) Gachtal Copper Plates —— (ii) Dharmapala

(iii) Khonamukh Copper Plates ———— (iii) Ratnapala

Q8: Fill in the blanks:

(i) .....was the last important ruler of the Pala dynasty.

(ii) The ..... stated that Indrapala defeated king Kalyanachandra of Vanga (Bengal).

(iii) The ..... records that Brahmapala abdicated in favour of his son, Ratnapala.

Harshapala's son Dharmapala (c.1035-1060 A.D.) was the last important ruler of the Pala dynasty. We have three inscriptions of his time namely, *Khonamukh Copper Plates Subhankarapataka* grant and *Pushpabhadra Copper Plates.* He was very powerful monarch and restored the lost glory of the kingdom of Kamarupa by making conquests in North Bengal and probably towards the sea in the south- west of the kingdom. The thirteenth century Ambari stone slab inscription found in Guwahati records the name of Samudrapala, indicating that Pala rule continued till that period.



3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learned about,

- the ruling dynasties of ancient Assam which included the Varmanas, Salastambhas and the Palas.
- the political developments in Kamarupa between the fourth and the twelfth century A.D. have been discussed in detail so that a comprehensive account is obtained regarding the state of affairs during this period.
- the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa was ruled by the Varman, the Salastambha and the Pala dynasties, besides other minor kings.



3.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K. (2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: Pushyavarman

Ans to Q No. 2: Samudravarman

Ans to Q No. 3: Harshavardhana of Thaneswar against Sasanka

Ans to Q No. 4: Harshvardhana

Ans to Q No. 5: Hiuen Tsang

Answer to Q No. 6:

i. The *Bargaon Copper Plates*
ii. Harjaravarman
iii. Tyagasimha
iv. Harjaravarman

Answer to Q No. 7:

i. Bargaon Copper Plate ——————————(i) Ratnapala
ii. Gachtal Copper Plates ——————————— (ii) Gopala
iii. Khonamukh Copper Plates——————— (iii) Dharmapala

Answer to Q No. 8:

I. Dharmapala
II. The Gachtal Copper Plate
III. The Bargaon Copper Plate

3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. The Varmana dynasty is also known popularly by which name?
Q2. Gauda came under the possession of Bhaskaravarman by the defeat of which king?
Q3. Mention some Inscriptions of Dharmapala?

(B) Short Questions

Write short notes on:

a) Naraka Bhauma clan
b) Harjaravarman
c) Harshavardhana of Thaneswar
d) Indrapala

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Describe the rise of Kamarupa as a kingdom under the rule of Bhaskaravarman?
Q2. Explain to what extent were the Palas' able to restore the lost glory of Kamarupa?
Q3. Elaborate on the socio-cultural development during the time of Salastambhas.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 4: ADMINISTRATION OF EARLY ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1. Learning Objectives

4.2. Introduction

4.3. Administration during Early Assam

4.4. Let us Sum up

4.5 Further Reading

4.6 Check your Progress

4.7 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the administrative system of EarlyAssam,
- describe the judicial system prevalent in Early Assam,
- discuss the military administration of Early Assam.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, you learnt about political dynasties and the kings ruling over the land, popularly known as Kamarupa. In this unit we will learn about the administration that existed in ancient Assam.

The polity and administration of a state are inter-related. Polity is in fact the guideline depending upon which the type of administrative machinery of a state is determined in order to preserve the integrity of the state and to look after the welfare of the subjects. The nature or form of the government whether absolutely monarchical or limitedly monarchical varied and depended upon the will of the people which was considered as supreme.

4.3 ADMINISTRATION IN ANCIENT ASSAM

Ancient Assam followed the general pattern of administration that existed in contemporary India. Monarchy was the general form of government in ancient Assam. The king being the head of the administration occupied

the commanding position in the State. The chief title of the king was *Maharajadhiraja*. The rulers of ancient Assam associated themselves with the concept of divinity. They were sometimes identified or compared with Gods.

The king as the head of the state looked after the smooth functioning of the administrative machinery ensuring prompt action and maintaining the rule of law. They bestowed lands to the Brahmanas, patronized the learned and promoted different arts and crafts.

In the affairs of administration, the king used to be assisted by a Council of Ministers. The *Kalika Purana* states that a king should appoint learned and wise Brahmanas as ministers and the *Kamauli* grant shows that these posts were generally held by the Brahmanas and were often hereditary. The ministers are referred to in the inscriptions as *Mantrins*, *Amatyas* and *Sachivas*. A set of officials used to help the king in discharging the duties which included the *Rajaguru* (royal priest), *Bhisaja* (physician), *Mahadvaradhipati* (chief warden of the passes), *Mahapratihara* (head chamberlain), etc. There were various classes of messengers called *Dutaka* who performed the duties of couriers and served as peace time messengers and escorts. The *Lekhaka* were the scribes who recorded administrative matters and functions as clerks.

The kingdom was divided into several administrative units namely, the *Bhukti, Mandala, Vishaya, Pura* and *Agrahara*. The local units did not enjoy much autonomy. The *Bhukti* was the biggest administrative division. Corresponding to a modern district, there were many *Vishayas*. Below it was the *Pura* which was the city. *Agrahara* was a unit made up of many villages or *gramas*.

The inscriptions of ancient Assam indicate that justice was administered according to Hindu law books. There were probably courts of justice at the capital and local administrative units. Some officers namely, *Nyayakaranika, Vyavaharika*, *Kayastha, Dandika, Dandapasika,* etc used to perform the judicial functions. In the epigraphs we also found the name of two types of police officers namely, *Chauroddharanika* and *Chata-bhata*. Nothing could be said about the nature of punishment given to the criminals,

except that fines were imposed.

■ Revenue Administration

The rulers of ancient Assam had an effective revenue administration. The principal source of revenue was however the land revenue, known as *Kara* and *Upakara* or *Upaskara* levied on the cultivators which could be paid in cash or in kind. Taxes were also levied from the cultivators on special occasions in the form of *Uparikara* and *Utkhetana.* Besides, there was *Chata-bhata-pravesan* collected at the time of the arrival of regular and irregular military and police forces. The commercial taxes included the custom duties and tolls or *Sulka*. For the assessment of land revenue, the villages were grouped in units of twelve or less than twelve.

Officers associated with revenue administration included *Dattakarapurna* (tax collector), *Uparika* (officer in charge of recovery of the *Uparikara* tax), *Utkhetika* (officer in charge of collecting *Utkhetana tax*), etc. Land revenues were also collected through the heads of the local administrative units. There were also clerks, accountants and scribes attached to the revenue department. Lands granted to the Brahmanas were called *Brahmadaya* land-grants which were revenue free and immune from all harassments. Land endowments were also made to temples and other religious institutions known as *Dharmottara* and *Devottara* land grants. All the documents of the land grants were kept in the custody of the *Karanika* (registrar of documents) in the record office called *Adhikarana*.

■ Military Administration

In organising the army, the king was probably assisted by the war minister. Under him there was a *Mahasainapati* (commander-in-chief) followed by other officers *Senadhyaksha*, *Baladhyaksha*, etc. In times of war, the king was also assisted by the tributary chiefs, who commanded their own detachments. The division of the army was traditionally a fourfold one consisting of namely, infantry, cavalry, elephants and ships mainly for carrying troops across the rivers. The soldiers were recruited from all classes of people including the Brahmanas. The architectural remains and literary references indicate the existence of numerous forts in different parts of ancient Assam. Actual remains of forts and embankments of the ancient

period are found at places like Guwahati, Dimapur, Biswanath, Numaligarh, Tezpur and Sadiya.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Match the following:

(i) Dattakarapurna ——- (a) city

(ii) Chata-bhata ——-— (b) commander-in-chief

(iii) Pura ———-——— (c) tax collector

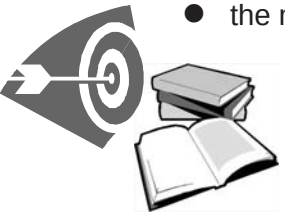
(iv) Mahasainapati -——— (d) police officers



4.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about

- the general administration existing in Early Assam.
- the revenue administration in Early Assam.
- the military admiinistration in Early Assam.



4.5 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K. (2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L., (1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*

4.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1:

(i) Dattakarapurna ————- (c) tax collector

(ii) Chata-bhata ———— (d) police officers

(iii) Pura ———— (a) city

(iv) Mahasainapati ————- (b) commander-in-chief



4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q1. What does the *Kamauli* grant say about the administration?

Q2. Define *Brahmadaya* lands?

Q3. What was the chief title of the king?

(B) Short Questions:

Q1. What was *Agrahara* composed of?

Q2. Certain kinds of land were exempted from revenue or taxes. Name them.

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Discuss the administration system in early Assam with a special emphasis on the revenue administration.

Q2. Describe the position of the king in the administration of Early Assam.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 5: SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND RELIGION OF EARLY ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1. Learning Objectives

5.2. Introduction

5.3. Society in Early Assam

5.4. Economy in EarlyAssam

5.5. Religion in Early Assam

5.6. Let us Sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Check your Progress

5.9 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the social conditions of ancient Assam,
- describe the economic system that prevailed in ancient Assam,
- discuss the religious life of the people of early Assam.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, you learnt about administrative system prevalent in early Assam. In this unit we will learn about the social conditions, the economic system, religious affairs and administration that existed in ancient Assam. It focuses on the non-political aspects of the day to day life of the people.

5.3 SOCIETY IN EARLY ASSAM

The mixed migration of the Aryans and the Brahmanas that began in the later part of the fifth century A.D. influenced the culture of Ancient Assam. The caste system in ancient Assam was not strictly adhered to. The society rested largely but loosely on the *Varnasramadharma*. Epigraphic records

of the 6th century referred to classes like *Kayasthas, Karanas, Lekhakas, Vaidyas, Kumbhakaras, Kaivartas* and *Tantravayas*. Gradually the distinction among the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were disappearing and the fourfold caste system, were gradually shrinking to a threefold system. Later on the society became broadly divided into two: the Brahmanas and Sudras, the latter embracing all non-Brahmanas. *Yogini Tantra* though not a contemporary text also provides information about the social conditions of Assam. The Brahmanas occupied a position of higher prestige in the society.

Family was the smallest unit of the society. Joint family was the general practice. The institution of marriage was considered sacred. The most practiced form of marriage was *Brahma, Prajapatya, Daiva, Arsha* and *Asura*.

Women in upper class were provided education and were expected to be socially accomplished. Sculptures of the ancient period reveal the figures of women playing musical instruments and dancing which informs us that the womenfolk did engage themselves in such creative activities. The *Purdah* system was not prevalent and so was *Sati* except once when a concubine of Bhaskaravarman committed Sati. Child marriage was prevalent among the Brahmanas and the Kayasthas. Widow re-marriage and inter-caste marriage was prevalent among the lower classes. Polygamy was almost a universal practice. The epigraphs also depict the life of the city damsel's, courtesans and *devadasis* or temple girls. The *Tezpur grant* mentioned about the *vesyas* (prostitutes). The *Bargaon grant* of Ratnapala records that they occupied the best place in his capital city Durjjaya.

Rice was the staple food of the people of Assam. Drinking wine was common amongst the people of the upper class, while the common people drank *Lao pani* or rice beer. Chewing of raw areca nut with betel leaf and lime was very much popular among the people.

Epigraphs, literature and sculpture provide us information on the types of dress and ornaments used by the people of ancient Assam. The male dress consisted of dhoti and an upper garment called *uttariya*, especially used by the higher classes. Men of distinction also wore a head-dress. Women used to wear two garments in the upper and lower part of the body.

The women used the ornaments like *kasturi, kinkini*, necklace of beads, etc. They used *kundalas* and *nupuras*.

The people of ancient Assam knew about the art of dyeing both yarn and cloth. The *Kalika Purana* mentions the use of garments of blue and red for religious purpose. The dyeing of cloth was very much common even among the hill tribes of Assam. Dice was a popular indoor game among the people. Hunting and fishing were very much popular. Dancing and music were popular amusement.

There were two types of inheritance system: the *mitakshara* and the *dayabhaga* which varied according the tribe. According to the *mitakshara* system, a child inherited the ancestral property at the time of its birth, while in the *dayabhaga* system the son could claim the property after the death of his father. As for the burial practices, the dead body was buried but after the influence of Vedic Hinduism, cremation of the body was practiced. This ritual differed among the different tribes of the region.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: The society of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa was based on which system?

.....

Q2: Mention the popular form of marriages prevalent in ancient Assam?

.....

Q3: The *vesyas* are mentioned in which inscription?

.....

Q4: What was the name of the upper garment worn by men of upper class in ancient Assam?

.....

Q5: What led to the change in the burial practice that was followed in ancient Assam?

.....

5.4 ECONOMY OF EARLY ASSAM

Land was the backbone of economic life of Assam. Land was divided into *janapada* (country side), *pura* or *nagara* (city, town) and *vana* (forest land). Janapada was again divided into gramas or villages, which were again subdivided into *kshetra* (arable land), *khila* (waste land), *go-pra-carabhumi* (land for cattle grazing) and *vastubhumi* (building sites). As all the lands were granted by the King, the owner of the soil was the king himself. The forest, mines etc belongs the state. The *Tezpur* and *Bargaon grants* mention the individual donors receiving land with houses, paddy fields, pasture ground etc. from the state.

Cultivation was carried on by the jhuming method since very early period. The process of replacing this method by ploughing was very slow. Most of the tribes of the hill areas still follow the jhuming method. Along with paddy of different varieties, people also cultivated other crops like pulses, mustard, sugarcane, and various kinds of fruits and vegetables.

The *Kalika Purana* mentioned about a large number of precious trees including Pine, Sal, Sandalwood, Agaru, etc. According to *Mahabharata* during the time of *R*ajasuya ceremony of Yuddhisthira the King of Pragjyotisha sent presents which included precious jewels, skin, gold, sandal and aloe wood and heaps of aromatics. Besides, there was fish. A class of people called *Kaivartas* was engaged with the fishing profession.

The cities were the centres of the foreign trade. The cities made contributions in the economic field by acting as centres of inter-state and international trade. In ancient Assam the important cities, like Haruppeswara, Durjaya, Kamrupanagara and Pragjyotishpura were decorated with wide roads, through which kings, as well as feudatories used to come on the back of elephants. The *Tezpur grant* mentioned the existence of broad highways through which articles of trade were often brought into the big cities.

The rivers were also used for transportation and commercial purposes. The trade with neighbouring states was mainly carried on by the river transport through the Brahmaputra and the Ganga. Mainly the trade relation

of ancient Assam was with the neighbouring states and foreign countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), China and Tibet. The chief articles of trade were silk cloth, lac, aloe wood, musk, gold, ivory, etc. All the business transaction was carried on by barter. The *Tezpur Rock Inscription* of Harjaravarman indicates that cowrie shells were used for payment of fines and other petty transactions.

Gold washing and jewellery making seems to be important occupations of the period, Gold was found in abundance in many rivers of Assam. The *Tezpur grant* mentioned that Lauhitya-Sindhu carried gold dust from the huge golden blocks of Kailasa Mountains.

The *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri* mentioned about numerous images of gold and silver and of a huge image of beaten gold. The *Bargaon Rock Inscription* of Ratnapala mentioned about existence of copper mine within his kingdom which yielded him considerable income. The abundance of sculptural and architectural remains indicates the presence of stone masons and stone carvers. Thus a large number of people lived on metal working in ivory engraving and stone carving.

Various minor craft such as the brick making, carpentry, working in ivory, bell metal, and cane were the other occupations of the people. The carpenters of ancient Assam were skilful workers. The ivory and bell metal products of Assam had a great demand both inside and outside the kingdom of Kamarupa. Another important product was bamboo. The epigraphs mentioned about the bamboo forests as marking the boundary line of denoted lands. Epigraphs mentioned that pottery was an important craft in the villages. The *Harshacharita* refers to leather workers and distillers of wine. The forests of Assam supplied resins, aromatic woods etc to the rest of India and abroad. Pragjyotisha also produced Red Sandal. Agaru was found abundantly in Assam. Musk was produced in Assam.

The people of ancient Assam also knew about the art of dyeing which was made of lac, indigo and other products. The lac culture was a specialty of ancient Assamese people. The epigraphs also mentioned clans of professional weavers called *Tantavayas* who were expert in weaving. The art of rearing cocoons for manufacture of various silk cloths was also known

to the people of Assam. The *Harshacharita* refers to three different types of silken cloth.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

i. ..... was engaged with the fishing profession.

ii. The ..... indicates that cowrie shells were used for payment.

iii. The ..... refers to three different types of silken cloth.

iv. The ..... of Ratnapala mentioned about existence of copper mine.

v. ..... was the backbone of the economic life of ancient Assam.

5.5. RELIGION IN EARLY ASSAM

Prior to the Aryanisation of Pragjyotisha and the religious influence of the Brahmanical cult and Vedic rituals and culture, the ancient people followed the cult of ancestor worship, fertility cult, etc. The Vedic culture in ancient Assam flourished with the addition of new deities to its pantheon together with the assimilation of religious myths and cults of the non Aryans.

The religion propagated by the Brahmanas was called the Brahmanical religion. The kings of Assam used to issue Copper plates for granting revenue free lands to Brahmanas thus attracting the Brahmanas to come and settle in Assam. These Brahmanas belonged to different *gotras*. The Brahmanas studied various Vedas, performed rituals and worshipped diverse Pauranic deities. Brahmanical Hinduism found a fertile ground in ancient Assam as early as the beginning of the fifth century A.D. due to royal patronage. The *vrata* (fasting), *danas* (donation) were the important aspect of the Brahmanical religion. Due to the impact of the non-Aryan culture, some important developments took place in Brahmanical religion. The worship of innumerable gods and goddesses came to occupy important position in

the religious system, giving rise to special cults and sectarian rites and beliefs.

The earliest Hindu religion that prevailed in ancient Kamarupa was Saivism. It was the dominant religion of the ruling dynasties. The *Kalika Purana* mentioned sects of Saivas in Assam, viz, the Kalikas and Pasupatas. The *Yogini-Tantra* of 16th century tells about the other two sub sects of Saivism namely, the Kaulas and Avadhutas dual worship of Siva and Shakti. Siva was a very popular deity amongst both the aborigines and Aryanised people. King Vanamalavarman repaired the lofty temple of Hetuka Sulin (Saiva). In the *Gachtal* inscription, king Indrapala is mentioned as constructing a series of white washed temples dedicated to Shiva. The tradition of Devadasis was one of the special features of Saiva cult that prevailed in ancient Assam.

Saktism is the cult of worshipping female goddess as the supreme deity in her various forms as Devi Durga, Kali, Kalika, Kamakhya, Tara etc. The *Kalika Purana* refers to many other seats of Devi worship and among them the most important was the temple of Tamreswari at Sadiya, where the goddess in her Kesaikhaiti (eater of raw flesh) form was propitiated with human and animal sacrifice. This goddess is known as Dikkarvasini in the Tantras and Puranas.

The worship of Surya or the Sun God was also prevalent in ancient Assam as referred in the *Markandeya Purana* where the king Rajyavardhana offered prayers to the sun god to restore his youth. Among the other Brahmanical deities worship of Surya occupied a very prominent position. The *Kalika Purana* gives evidences of the worship of the Sun God as it refers to the Raviksetra on the Tattva hill which is now identified as Sri Surya Pahar. Pragjyotisha was the centre of sun worship as is mentioned in the Griha Sutras. According to Taranath, before the introduction of Buddhism, the people of Kamarupa were sun worshippers.

Vaishnavism existed in Assam from very early times. Pragjyotisha had long been associated with Vishnu worship. Naraka is said to have traced his descent from the Boar incarnation of Vishnu. The Barganga epigraphs mentioned king Bhutivarman as Parama-Daivata-Paramabhagavata.

Buddhism was prevalent in ancient Assam before the visit of Hiuen Tsang to the land. According to Taranath it was Dhitika who propagated Buddhism in Kamrupa. In the *Rajtarangini,* Kalhana mentioned that the Kamarupa queen of Meghavahana of Kashmir brought with her a Tibetan Buddhist monk residing in her father's court, which proved the prevalence of the faith about this time.

Besides these major cults, there were other minor religions such as the worship of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Indra, Agni, Kubera and Manasa. We have no definite knowledge of these cults. The rulers patronised the Vedic religion and culture. There was no possibility on internecine strife between these sects.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7: Which text mentions the Kaulas and Avadhutas sects of Saivism?

.....

Q8: The temple of Tamreswari at Sadiya is referred in which texts?

.....

Q9: According to whom were the people of Kamarupa sun worshippers, before the introduction of Buddhism?

.....

Q10: Pragjyotisha as the centre of sun worship as is mentioned in which texts?

.....



5.6. LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about

- the social life of the people in Ancient Assam
- the economy in Ancient Assam
- the religion system followed in Ancient Assam



5.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K. (2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



5.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: *Varnasramadharma*

Ans to Q No. 2: *Brahma, Prajapatya, Daiva, Arsha* and *Asura*

Ans to Q No. 3: The *Tezpur grant*

Ans to Q No. 4: *Uttariya*

Ans to Q No. 5: The influence of Vedic Hinduism

Answer to Q No. 6:

(i) Kaivartas

(ii) The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjaravarman

(iii) The Harshacharita

(iv) The Bargaon Rock Inscription of Ratnapala

(v) Land

Ans to Q No.7: Yoni Tantra

Ans to Q No.8: The Kalika Purana

Ans to Q No.9: Taranath

Ans to Q No.10: The Kalika Purana

5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q1. What is *Kara*?

Q2. Define *Sulka*?

(B) Short Questions:

Q1. What was the inheritance system that prevailed in ancient Assam?

Q2. What do you mean by *Varnasramadharma?*

Q3. Who were the Tantavayas?

Q4. Name few cities of ancient Assam?

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Illustrate the status of women in the society of ancient Assam.

Q2. Describe the condition of trade and commerce in ancient Assam?

Q3. Explain the rise of Sakti worship in ancient Assam. Elaborate the administrative system in ancient Assam.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 6: SOURCES OF HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL ASSSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1. Learning Objectives

6.2. Introduction

6.3. Literary Sources

6.4. Archaeological Sources

6.5. Let us Sum up

6.6 Further Reading

6.7 Check your Progress

6.8 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the different sources for the study of Ancient Assam
- explain in details the literary sources
- describe the archaeological sources

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Unlike the sources for the study of Ancient Assam, the sources for the study of the history of medieval Assam are abundant. We have a number of *Buranjis* on the history of the Ahoms, and also on their contemporary rulers.

Besides these historical chronicles, there are a number of *Charita Puthis* or biographies of saints, Persian accounts as well as inscriptions, coins and an abundance of temples and other structures that provides an invaluable insight into the history of Medieval Assam. In this unit, we will be discussing the sources in details.

6.3 LITERARY SOURCES

Among the indigenous literature of the medieval period, the *Buranjis*

were the foremost one. The Ahoms started a procedure of keeping records of all events of the time in a set of documents called Buranjis. Basically, it is a chronicle dealing with the political events of the period. The earlier Buranjis were written in the Tai-Ahom language. However, from the time of Suhungmung (1497-1539), the Buranjis were also written in the Assamese language.

The Ahom Buranji from Khunlung and Khunlai covers the period from the reign of the Ahom rulers from Khunlung and Khunlai to Rudra Singha. Then there is an almost complete and comprehensive *Ahom Buranji from the earliest time down to the reign of Purandar Singha* (1832-1838) in Tai-Ahom language. The *Purani Asam Buranji* covers the period from Sukapha to Gadadhar Singha. It provides us a full record of the Muhammadan wars in Assamese. The *Satsari Asam Buranji* is a collection of seven old Assamese Buranjis. The *Deodhai Asam Buranji* includes the relations of the Ahom with the neighboring tribes namely, the Koches, Jayantias, Kacharis, Mikirs, Chutias, Naras and Mantaras, the Ahom-Mughal relation, social customs, administration of the Ahoms, etc. *Assam Buranji Puthi* is a history of the Ahom rulers from the earliest times to the British occupation of Assam. *Asamar Padya Buranji* has two metrical chronicles, *Kalibharat Buranji* and *Belimar Buranji*, covering the period from 1679 to 1858. It provides the history of internal dissensions and foreign invasions at the close of the Ahom rule along with the early days of the East India Company's rule in Assam. The *Tungkhungia Buranji* deals with the rule of the Tungkhungia clan of the Ahom kings from Gadadhar Singha to Kamaleswar Singha (1681-1810 A.D.).

There are some Buranjis on the tribes of Assam. There is the *Chutia Buranji* which describes the history of the Chutiyas from 1189 to the dismemberment of their kingdom in the 16th century. The names of the kings are chronologically arranged and the dates are mentioned in the *Saka* Era. The *Kachari Buranji* deals with Ahom-Kachari relations from the end of the 14th century to the beginning of the 18th century. It provides glimpses of the earliest settlements of the Kacharis. The *Jayantia Buranji* and the *Tripura Buranji* deal with the diplomatic relations of the Ahom with the

kingdom of Jayantia and Tripura respectively.

The *Padshah Buranji* dealt with the Badshahs of Delhi, from the establishment of Muslim supremacy in India, upto the second half of the 17th century. The Muhammedan wars during the reign of the Ahom kings Pratap Singha, Jayadhvaj Singha, Chakradhvaj Singha and Gadadhar Singha are narrated in detail in the *Kamarupar Buranji***.** The *Asam Buranji* deals with the history of Assam from the commencement of Ahom rule till the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681 A.D.

Vamsavali, was the genealogical account maintained by the Assamese noble families and the royal families of the various kingdoms. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* was the most comprehensive one providing an account of the Koch kings from their rise to power till the death of Parikshit. The *Bhuyans* had their genealogy and history maintained in a class of Vamsavali called *Bhuyar Puthi*. There are also *Satriya Vamsavalis* providing information on the history of the foundation of *Satras*, life and career of their religious head and their relation with the ruling power. Most important of them are *Mayamara Satrar Vamsavali* and the *Dihing Satrar Vamsavali*.

Besides the Buranjis, there are vast Vaishnava literatures providing information on the socio-economic history of medieval Assam. The central theme of the Vaishnava literature centred round religion and dealt mainly with the lives and works of the Vaishnava religious heads. These works are known as *Charit Puthis* or hagiographies (biographies of saints) like the *Kathagurucharita*.

The indigenous sources on medieval Assam are occasionally supplemented by accounts of contemporary foreign travellers and adventurers. The *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri* written by Minhaj-ul-Siraj gives a detailed account of the first three Muslim invasions of Assam. *Tarikh-i-Firoz-Shahi* by Ziau-din-Barani contains rare materials regarding the history of Kamatapur. The *Akbarnamah* and *Ain-i-Akbari* by Shaikh Abul Fazl throws light on the beginning of the aggressive Mughal North-East frontier policy and the subsequent Koch-Mughal relation. *Muntakhab- ut- Tawarikh* of Abdul Qadir or Badauni throws light on a descriptive manner upon the contact between Assam and the Mughals. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the autobiography of

Emperor Jahangir refers to the Ahom-Mughal conflict during the last quarter of 16th century and the conquest of Koch Hajo by the Mughals. *Padshahnamah* by Abdul Hamid Lahori throws light on the domestic conflict between Lakshmi Narayan of Koch Bihar and Parikshit Narayan of Koch Hajo.

Alamgirnamah by Mirza Muhammad Kazim gives information on the Mir Jumla's aggressive imperialism in Koch Bihar and Assam. *Fathiyyah-i-Ibriyyah* written by Shihabuddin Talish is the history of Mir Jumla's conquest of Koch Bihar and of Assam till his death in March, 1663 and the return of the victorious army. Besides, the *Farmans* of Emperor Aurangzeb to Raja Ram Singh form another important source for the Assam-Mughal conflict of 1667-1671.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: In which language was the earliest *Buranji* written?

.....

Q2: What do you mean by *Vamsavali*?

.....

Q3: Mention the author of *Padshahnamah.*

.....

Q4: Which work highlights the conquest of Mir Jumla?

.....

Q5: What do you mean by Charit-puthis?

.....

6.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Among the archaeological sources, inscriptions are valuable, contemporary and authentic source materials. From dynastic point of view, the inscriptions may be classified as Koch, Ahom, the Bengal Sultanate and the Mughals. The scripts used in the first two classes of inscription were mostly Sanskrit and Assamese, while Persian was used in the inscriptions of the last two categories.

There were only two Koch inscriptions during the second half of the

16th century. The first one is on the Kamakhya temple issued by Sukhladhvaj. The second refers to the rebuilding of the Hayagriva Madhava temple on Mani hillock at Hajo by Raghu Deb, king of Koch-Hajo. The Darrang *Rajavamsavalis* refers to a *Copper Plate Sasana* issued by Naranarayan dedicating the services different categories of *Paiks* (servitors) for the service of the Kamakhya temple which he rebuilt.

The earliest inscription of the Ahom period is the *Gachtal Rock Inscription* issued in the year 1362 A.D. Engraved in Sanskrit, it records Sultan Sikandar Shah's invasion of Assam in 1284 Saka i.e., 1362 A.D. The *Samdhara Rampart Rock Inscription* of 1616 refers to the victory of the Ahom king, Pratap Singha. Two *Kanai Barasi Rock Inscriptions*, refers to the construction of an Ahom fort there in the month of December after the defeat and death of Sayyid Sana and Sayyid Firuz by Lachit and records the names of different Ahom officials. The *Phatasil Rock Inscription* of 1667 in Sanskrit briefly records the defeat of the Mughals by Lachit Barphukan.

Inscriptions on religious buildings also provide genuine information on the medieaval history of Assam. For eg., the *Munger Shah Nafah Inscription* in Persian on the Eastern wall of the *dargah* of Shah Nafah refers to the Assam campaign of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1498). The Persian inscriptions on the Hajo mosque built by Mir Lutfulla Shirazi, Mughal Faujdar of Guwahati shows that it was built to propagate Islam in Kamrup.

Coins as historical sources throw immense light on the economic and social conditions of its time. A standard Ahom coin called *Takka*, weighted a *tola* or 176 gram. The earliest known Ahom coins belong to Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.). Three scripts, Ahom, Devanagari and Assamese were used in the Ahom coins. The Koch king Naranarayan used to issue coins on a regular basis. These coins were cast in various metals like gold, silver, copper and brass. Again, these had legends and epithets on the obverse and the name of the king and dates in the *Saka* Era on the reverse in Sanskrit and Bengali script. The Koch ruler lost the right of minting full *tankas* after the acceptance of the Mughal alliance. The Koch coins were known as *Narayani*, from the ending of the names of the rulers.

The historical value of the numerous public works of the Koch and the Ahoms helps us in corroborating the existing literary and numismatic

sources and write an authentic history. The most important of the Koch monuments are in the form of temples. Visvasimha is said to have revived the worship of Kamakhya and his sons rebuilt the temple on Nilachal hill in Guwahati. Raghudeb had the Vishnu (or Hayagriva Madhava) temple on Mani Hillock (Manikut) at Hajo, built by the skilled and efficient artisan Sridhar in 1583 A.D.

Ahom rulers distinguished themselves by constructing numerous public works. Rudra Singha built a brick city at Rangpur, while Pramatta Singha built new buildings and masonry gateways at Garhgaon and an amphitheatre (Rang-ghar) at Rangpur. He also built the Rudresvar and Sukresvar temples of Guwahati. Numerous temples were built in the days of later Ahom rulers testifying to their patronage of Hinduism. Pratap Singha is credited with the construction of the Siva temples of Dergaon and Biswanath, Gadadhar Singha built the temple of Umananda.

A few archaeological remains in the form of religious buildings have been left behind by the Muslim Sultans as well as others. Most reputed of these was the Poa Mecca near Hajo built to perpetuate the memory of a Muslim divine, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Aulia. The Gurudvara at Damdoma was constructed after the visit of the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The earliest known Ahom coins belong to _____.

(ii) The Koch coins were known as _____.

(iii) _____ was built in the memory of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Aulia.

(iv) _____ is credited to have built Rang-ghar at Rangpur.

(v) Umananda temple was built by _____.

Q7: Which inscription records the defeat of the Mughals by Lachit Barphukan?

.....

Q8: Mention the scripts were used in Ahom coins?

.....



6.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through this Unit, you have learnt about:

- the rich literary sources written by indigenous and foreign scholars on the history of medieval Assam
- the archaeological remains of the ruling dynasties that ruled Assam in medieval times
- the importance of the sources, in writing an authentic history



6.6 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.II, Vol.III, & 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. II, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



6.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to the Q No. 1: Tai-Ahom language

Ans to the Q No. 2: They are genealogical accounts maintained by the Assamese noble families and the royal families of the various kingdoms.

Ans to the Q No. 3: Abdul Hamid Lahori

Ans to the Q No. 4: *Fathiyyah-i-Ibriyyah*

Ans to the Q No. 5: Biographies of saints

Ans to the Q No. 6:

(i) Jayadhvaj Singha

(ii) *Narayani*,

(iii) Poa Mecca

(iv) Pramatta Singha

(v) Gadadhar Singha

Ans to the Q No.7: The *Phatasil Rock Inscription*

Ans to the Q No. 8: Ahom, Devanagari and Assamese scripts

6.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. What does the Bhuyan Vamsavali deal with?

Q2. Why did the Koch rulers lose the right of minting full *tankas*?

Q3. *Asamar Padya Buranji* has two metrical chronicles. Name them?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write short notes on:

a) Buranjis b) Koch monuments c) Vaishnava Literature

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Discuss in detail the importance of numismatic sources in reconstructing the history of Medieval Assam.

Q2. Explain in details the foreign literary sources for the study of Medieval Assam.

Q3. What light do the inscriptions throw on the religious condition of medieval Assam?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 7: POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN THE POST PALA PERIOD

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Kamatapur

7.4 The Bara Bhuyans

7.5 The Chutiyas

7.6 The Kacharis

7.7 Let Us Sum Up

7.8 Further Reading

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.10 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- know the political condition in the Post Pala period,
- discuss about the state of Kamatapur,
- discuss about the emergence of the Chutiyas,
- discuss about the Bara Bhuyans and the Kacharis.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

The Pala dynasty ruled in Assam for nearly two hundred years. Following the end of Pala rule the political condition of Assam became unstable. Taking advantage of the situation the Pala rulers of Gauda (modern Bengal) invaded Assam and succeeded in establishing their jurisdiction in the western part of the state for a brief period. Meanwhile the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan at the hands of Muhammad Ghori in 1192 led to the commencement of the rule of the Delhi Sultanate. By the beginning of the thirteenth century a large part of north India came under their sway. After the conquest of Bengal, the sultans of Bengal sought to conquer Assam. Thus this period also witnessed the first Muhammad invasions of Assam. Invasions

from the west were thus the chief feature of the post–Pala period.Simultaneously some small chieftains began to establish their authority over some regions. In this chapter we will discuss about the Chutiyas, Bara Bhuyans and Kacharis .

7.3 KAMATAPUR

With the fall of the palas in the early part of the 12thcentury, the powerful kingdom of Kamarupa disintegrated marked by political transitions and creation of new geo-political spaces. The power centre shifts from Kamrupanagara to Kamatapur during this period and gives an interesting turn to the history of Assam. We do not possess much information about the successors of the Palas. We find the name of a king called Sri Vallabhadeva who does not call himself the ruler of Kamarupa, however the names of the village boundaries where the lands were granted by him have names ending in “koñci” which is peculiar to the Kamrup district of Assam.

Meanwhile parts of western Assam were ruled by feudatory chiefs who owed allegiance to the Pals of Gauda or Bengal. The *Ramacharita* of Sandhyakaranandin states that Mayana a general of Ramapala (c.1072-1126 A.D.) conquered Kamarupa. Ramapala appointed Tinghyadeva as a feudatory chief. This is corroborated by the Kamauli copperplates of Vaidyadeva (c.1126-1140 A.D.) The Pala dynasty in Assam came to an end and Kamarupa became a *mandala* in the Pragjyotish *Bhukti* of Gauda. The Kamauli grant further tells us that Tingyadeva rebelled after Ramapala’s death and Vaidyadeva, the minister and general of Ramapala’s son and successor Kumarapala defeated Tingyadeva. Initially he ruled as a feudatory of Bengal, but asserted his independence, following the death of Kumarapala. He assumed full imperial titles like *“Maharajadhiraha Parameswara Paramavaisnava, Parambhattaraka”* and issued the land-grant from his head-quarter at Hamsakonchi in Kamrup District. But in the region of Guwahati, remnants of Pala rule continued till atleast 1232 A.D. when a king called Samudrapala was ruling. The Ambari Stone Inscription which is dated Saka 1158 (1232 AD) mentions Samudrapala as ruling over the Guwahati region. Meanwhile Assam had to face the Turko-Afghan

invasions. Sandhya was the last Pala ruler, who is mentioned by Ramcharan Thakur's *Guru Charitra*. Referring to this work, K.L. Baruah establishes his point that it was Sandhya who shifted his capital from Kamarupanagara to Kamatapur due to the growing trouble from the Bhuyans and the Kacharis.

7.4 THE BARA BHUYANS

Numerous accounts exists that speak of the origin of the Bara Bhuyans but it runs contrary to each other. Sankaradeva, in his Bhagavatapurana, mentions his father as Kusumavara (chief Bhaumika). The title suggests that his family belonged to the Bara Bhuyan family. The tradition of Bara Bhuyans prevailed in Bengal too, which finds mention in *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbar-namah*.

The Bhuyans were a class of new rulers who emerged after the dis integration of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa in 12th century. Earlier they exercised their power in the region between the Dikrai and the Barnadi on the north bank and in the Kapili valley. They did not introduce a monarchical type of government. The word 'bhuyan' means a landlord equal with the Persian term zaminder. The term Bhuyan came from Sanscrit word 'bhumi' meaning land. The Bhuyans are also found in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa etc. The Bhuyans in Assam maintained a confederacy. The most of the Assamese Bhuyans were Kayasthas. We found the institution of Bhuyans in Bengal too.

There are two opinions regarding the origin and state formation of the Bhuyans of Assam. According to one theory the Bhuyans came from Gauda. As a result of a peace agreement between the Gauda king Dharmanarayan and the Kamata king Durlabh Narayan in 14th century the Bhuyans entered into Assam. The Kamata king established them at Lengamaguri situated to the east of Hajo. However the Bhuyans could not stay long at Lengamaguri due to the inroads of the Bhutiyas .According to another theory the Bhuyans were the indigenous inhabitants of Assam. They were the descendants of Samudra, a minisrer of the king Arimatta.

The officials of the Bhuyans received land-grants in lieu of cash salaries. The land-grant system was not hereditary. But in actual practice

the land-grants were possessed by the son of the deceased officer. Thus the state formation of the Bhuyans was formed in the method of feudalism. Their main source of income was the revenue paid by the cultivators. The feudatories grouped the villages together in some units. The purpose of these was to get well assessment of their income from a particular area. The units comprised of villages were known as Chakla. The Chakla was administered by an officer known as Bhuyan. If the unit comprised of twelve villages, the officer -in-charge was called a baro-bhuyan. If the number of the villages were less than twelve then the officer -in -charge was termed as Chota-Bhuyan or Saru-Bhuyan or Bhuyan .Sometimes the Bhuyans took title like raja, Chota-Raj, Gomathaetc.

Each Bhuyan was independent within his respective region. He could maintain his own army. The Bhuyans ruled like independent chiefs. Inthe early part of 16th century they were subdued by the Ahoms. The Bhuyans also had judicial power overtheir respective areas. They established their own courts known as karkhanas.

The Bhuyans in the Kamata kingdom was very powerful. Niladhvaj, the ruler of Kamata kingdom became the sovereign lord of the whole kingdom. The Bhuyans took the leadership and overthrow the government of Hussain shah.

The power of the Kamata Bhuyans began to weaken with the rise of the Koches. Biswa Singha, who founded the Koch kingdom, subdued most of the Bhuyans.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Write True/False:

(a) Morans and Barahis were subdued by Sukapha by a policy of blood and iron.

(b) The post of Barphukan was created by Pratap Singha.

(c) The Ministers were known as 'Dangnariayas'.

7.5 THE CHUTIYAS

The Chutiayas were one of the kingdoms in the upper Brahmaputra

valley which emerged in the political scene after the downfall of the Palas. Chutiyas were indigenous people of Assam. They were Mongoloid origin and their language had a similarity with the Bodo language.

The Chutiya kingdom was established by Birpal in 1187 CE. He was a Chutiya chieftain. The Chutiya kingdom was the largest kingdom in Assam after the fall of the Palas and before the rise of the Ahoms. The kingdom continued almost 400years in eastern Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The exact location of the Chutiya capital cannot be ascertained. However it is generally held that the Chutia capital was situated on the bank of the river Kundil. Therefore it was known as Kundil Nagar or Bhismak Nagar .It is assumed that the capital of Chutiya kingdom was Sadia and Ratnapur. The Chutiyas are now found in the districts of Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Sibssagar, Darrang and Duar areas.

The Chutiyas ruled over a territory bounded on the west by the river Sisi, a tributary of Subansiri, on the east by the Brahmakunda. In the northern side it was surrounded by hills and on the south by the river Burhidihing. The Chutiyas established a monarchical type of government. King was considered the supreme head of the monarchy. However he was assisted by his officials. Most of their kings name ended with the suffix 'Narayan'. Birpal, the originator of the Chutiya kingdom, claimed his descent from a legendary king named Bhismak. He also took the title Gayapal after subjugating the nearby petty chiefs.

Birpal's son and successor Gaurinarayan or Ratnadhvajpal was one of the most powerful Chutia king. He defeated Bhadrasen with alarge army and made his son as a tributary ruler. After that Birpal took the title Ratnadhajapal. He also planned to subdue Nyayapala, the neighboring king. Nyayapala offered his daughter in marriage to the Chutiaking. Thus we found that the Chutiyas established their state formation on a monarchical structure. They had a strong military department. With the help of this army they subdued the nearby chiefs. Ratnadhvajpala built several forts along the foot hills to check the further aggression of the neighboring hill tribes. Ratnadhvajpal sent his army to Kamateswara .Ultimately the Kamata king Sandhya, gave his daughter in marriage to Vijaydhvajpal, the son of

Ratnadhvajpal.

The Chutiya kings were diplomatic in foreign relations. Gatnadhvajpal maintained friendly relation with the ruler of Gauda. The political relations of the Chutiyas with the Ahoms started from the middle of the 14th century CE. Suhungmung or the Dihingia Raja, a powerful Ahom king finally conquered the Chutiya kingdom. The kingdom was annexed with the Ahom kingdom in 1523 CE.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.2: Who had established the Chutiya Kingdom?

.....

Q.3: Which term was used to denote the units of villages in the administrative system of the Bhuyans?

.....

Q.4: In which place the Bhuyans first settled down?

.....

7.6 THE KACHARIS

The Kacharis was a branch of the indo-mogoloid group of people. After the fall of the palas, the Kacharis rose into prominence. In the 13th century, at the time of the coming of the Ahoms the Kacharis were the most organized tribe with their kingdom. Their kingdom was extended from the river Dikhou in the eastern side to the Kapili River in the west. The present district of north Cachar was also under their jurisdiction.

The Kachari king contemporary to Sukapha was possibly Bicharpatipha. From the Buranjis we got the information that Sukapha fought with a large number of Kacharis at the foothills of Naga Hills. Suhungmung dihingia raja defeated the Kacharis in a battle in 1526 and made them Ahom feudatory. From that time the Kachari kings came to known as thapitasanchita (established and preserved) of the Ahoms. But later on the Kacharis revolted against the Ahoms and recovered their capital Dimapur. The Kacharis were again subdued by the Koches in 1562 and became

subordinate to the Koches. The Ahom king Rudra Singha finally defeated the kacharis.

They introduced a developed administrative system. They introduced a monarchical type of administration. King was the supreme authority. We do not found any reference of assemblies. The king was assisted by some ministers. The kingship was hereditary.

The royal authority had an efficient military administration. The army was consisted of infantry,artillery elephantdetachment etc. The king was also the head of the judiciary and militia. He was the commander in chief in the battles.

Ministers held the second position in the administrative unit. Ministers were generally appointed from the nobility. They advised the ruler duringemergency. There were administrative divisions in the Kachari administration. The provinces were under the governors

The Kachari kings also issued silver and gold coins. They maintained trade relation with the neighboring tribes and the Ahoms. Textile, timber and salt were the chief source of state revenue. The finance department looks after the trade and commerce. Moreover the state also levied house tax, market tax and land revenue. Textile, salt and timber were the chief source of revenue from exports. About imports item we found reference of minerals.

The Kacharis had numerous towns like Kasomari, Sonapur, Banpur, Maibong, Khaspuretc. The growth of urban centers indicate development of municipal administration. The administration of the towns were under the direct supervision of the ruler. The kachari villages were governed by the village headman.



LET US KNOW

The Morans and the Barahis- After the decline of the Pala rule, states of the Morans and the Barahis emerged. A member of the Bodo-Kachari race, there are very feww accounts that give out details about them. At best, it can be said that they were a small community and came under Ahom control.



ACTIVITY 7.1

Write a short note on the Ahom-Kachari relation.

.....

.....



7.7 LET US SUM UP

- Following the end of Pala rule the political condition of Assam became unstable.
- The Ahoms entered in the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 CE and gradually started their state formation. However there are some differences with the state formation of early period.
- The Chutiya established their kingdom in 1187 CE by Birpal. They established a monarchical type of state formation.
- The term 'bhuyan'means 'landlord'. They did not introduce a monarchical type of government.
- The Kacharis came into prominence in 13th century CE. They also introduced a monarchical type of state formation.



7.8 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(ed) *Comprehensive History of Assam* (Vol II), Assam Publication Board, Guwahati , 2004(1990).

2) Baruah, S.L, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers. Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2002.

3) Boruah, Nirode. *Kamrup to Kamata: The Political Transtitions and the Neo Geo-Political Trends and Spaces in* Proceedings of the Indian History Congress. 2011, Vol. 72 (Part 1) pp. 78-86

7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: (a) False (b) True (c) True

Ans to Q No 2: Birpal

Ans to Q No 3: Chakla

Ans to Q No 4: Lengamaguri.



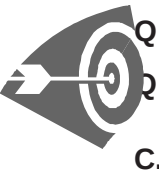
7.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Type questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q 1: Who was Sukapha ?

Q 2: Who shifted his capital from Kamarupanagara to Kamatapur?

B. Short Type Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)



Q 1: Who founded the Chutiya kingdom?

Q 2: Who were the Morans and the Barahis?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question within 500 words)

Q 1: Who were the Bhuyans? What was their system of State Formation? Discuss.

Q 2: Who were the Kacharis? Discuss briefly their system of State Formation.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 8: THE AHOMS

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1. Objectives

8.2. Introduction

8.3. Origin of the Ahoms

8.4. Advent of the Ahoms

8.5. Events from 1228 A.D. to 1826 A.D.

8.6. Let us Sum up

8.7 Further Reading

8.8 Check your Progress

8.9 Model Questions

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- discuss the origins of the Ahom rulers
- explain the coming of the Ahoms to Assam
- describe the events in brief from 1268 A.D. to 1826 A.D.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we discussed at length about the sources for the study of Medieval Assam. In this unit we are going to discuss about the rise of the Ahom power in Assam. You will learn about the struggles of the Ahoms with the indigenous tribes as well as the Turko-Afghan invaders for their establishment in the Brahmaputra Valley.

The dynasty that was established by Sukapha survived for almost six hundred years and became the most dominant power. In this unit, we will describe the rise of the Ahom power and the gradual decline due to the external threats posed by the arrival of the Burmese and the British and also the weakness of the later Ahom rulers.

8.3 ORIGIN OF THE AHOMS

The Ahoms were the members of the Tai race that are quite widespread in South-East Asia. They were the original inhabitants of the state of Mong Mao or Mong Mao-Lung situated in the South-Western Yunnan. As stated in the *Buranjis* (Ahom chronicles) it was from Mong Mao's capital Kieng Sen Mao-Lung that the Ahoms came to Assam.

Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam left Kieng Sen Mao-Lung in 1215 A.D. Probably Sukapha, who was a royal prince of the state of Mong Mao, had a dispute with one of his brothers due to which he left his ancestral kingdom to seek his fortune elsewhere. He did not come alone and was accompanied by 5 chiefs of *Mong* (state or dependencies) along with their contingents, three queens, two sons and one daughter. He also brought with him 300 horses fitted with saddles and bridles and 2 elephants which helped him in carrying the heavy weapons.

The Ahom legends and the Brahmanical Accounts attribute their origin to the divine ancestry and were described as the descendants of God Indra or *Lengdon* as the *Deodhais* mention him.



LET US KNOW

- *Deodhais*– The Ahom tribal priest were known as the *Deodhais*

8.4 ADVENT OF THE AHOMS

The Ahoms reached the fertile plains of Brahmaputra through the Patkai pass, which was an old route from the South western Yunnan. It took Sukapha and his followers 13 years to reach Patkai pass. From Mong Mao after passing through different Mongs, they camped at Khamjang on the bank of the Nong Yang Lake. During their stay there, Sukapha reduced the Khamjang Nagas to submission. With necessary arrangement made in Khamjang, Sukapha with his followers marched forward and reached Patkai or Doi-Kao-Rang. Sukapha moved further down the hills and crossing

the Nam Nang-Pu reached the river Naruk. They moved further downstream and reached the meeting point of Namruk and Burhi-Dihing. From there they moved upstream and reached Mong La-Khen Ten-Sa (Lakhen Telsa). Turning back, Sukapha with his followers followed the course of the river Burhi-Dihing and entered the Brahmaputra Valley near Tipam where he had his first headquarters.

For three years Sukapha stayed in Tipam and from there moved down the river staying for a few years at Abhoipur and Habung finally reaching the mouth of the river Dikhow. He stayed in Song-Tak for two years. Again, he turned back and stayed at Simaluguri from where he went to Demow, settling there for six years. But again inundation compelled him to move to Lang-Te-Pha where he built a town. Again, because of flood, Sukapha had to move to the adjacent hill where he built another town Charaideo (Che Tam-Doi) and passed away there in 1268 A.D. During his journey he met many hostile tribes, whom he subdued and brought under control.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The Ahoms were the members of the _____ race.

(ii) The Ahoms reached the fertile plains of Brahmaputra through the _____ pass.

(iii) Sukapha with his followers followed the course of the river _____ and entered the Brahmaputra Valley

(iv) Sukapha passed away in _____.

(v) *Lengdon* is reffered to God _____ by the *Deodhais*.

8.5 EVENTS FROM 1268 A.D. – 1826 A.D.

- **Foundation of the Ahom Rule**

Before his death, Sukapha laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley on a firm basis. He fought against the local chieftains and brought them under his control but he followed a generous policy towards them and treated them as equals. Sukapha maintained connection with his

ancestral kingdom of Mong Mao and sent tributes to its ruler. This tradition was continued by his successors until the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332 A. D.).

During the reign of Sukhangpha in the early 14th century there was a decline in the power of the kingdom of Mong Mao as he refused to pay tributes. His reign also marked the beginning of the first war against the powerful kingdom of Kamata. The other remarkable Ahom ruler was Sudangpha who was also known as Bamuni Raja. It implies the first stage of the growth of the influence of Brahmans among the Ahoms.

From the end of the reign of Sudangpha in 1407 till the accession of Suhungmung in 1497 A.D. there was not much extension of the Ahom kingdom as they avoided conflict and rather made peaceful advancement in the Brahmaputra Valley with a conciliatory and friendly attitude towards them.

- **Expansion of the Ahom Kingdom**

It was after 1497 A.D. that the Ahoms began an expansionist policy in the Brahmaputra valley. Suhungmung's reign witnessed the revolt of the Chutiyas, Kacharis and the Muslim invasion. The Chutiyas repeatedly attacked the Ahom kingdom only to be defeated time and again. Upon the annexation of the whole Chutiya kingdom a new officer was appointed for its administration by the designation of Sadiya Khowa Gohain. In 1526, the Ahoms marched against the Kacharis who were defeated after a tough battle. In the year 1531, the Kacharis gave the Ahoms a tough time. The Kachari king Khunkhara tried to drive away the Ahoms from Marangi. Eventually, the Kacharis were defeated and a prince named Detsung was installed as their ruler.

Suhungmung's reign is also known for the first Muhammedan invasion in Ahom history. The Muslim commander was known by the name of Wazir. The Ahoms drove away the Muhammedans as far as the river Burai. In 1532, the Muhammedans under Turbak defeated the Ahoms but in the next year, the Ahoms achieved a naval victory near Duimunisila. The last battle took place at Bharali. Turbak was killed and the Muslim army was totally routed. Suhungmung was, however, assassinated in 1539 by a Kachari servant Ratiman.

Suhungmung (Dihingiya Raja) was eventful from all fronts. The Nagas, Chutias and Kacharis who had revolted were defeated. The Muhammedan invasions had been driven back. The Saka era was adopted from his time. It must also be mentioned here that collection of census data took place from this time. The use of firearms also began from Suhungmung's reign. He extended the Ahom territory on all sides through his prowess.

Suklenmung succeeded Suhungmung as the next Ahom ruler. His reign witnessed hostile relations with the Koch ruler Nara Narayana. The Koch army under Chilarai (brother of Nara Narayana) fought at the banks of the river Dikrai and was able to defeat their rival. Another battle was fought at Kaliabor, but the Ahoms were again routed with a heavy loss. Soon Suklenmung attacked and encamped at the bank of river Pichala. This resulted in a disaster as the supplies of the Koch army were cut off and many of them died. In a second engagement at the same place, Chilarai, the Koch commander inflicted another crushing defeat on the Ahoms.

In July 1563, the Koch commander, Tipu led an invasion up to the Brahmaputra. But the Ahoms defeated him. In 1570 again, Tipu and Bhitarual raised an army against the Ahoms but the Ahom army was successful in crushing their efforts. After the death of Nara Narayan the Ahom-Koch relations entered a new phase. The division of the Koch kingdom into two between the successors of Nara Narayana led to a war which was complicated with the entry of the Muhammedans and the Ahoms. Dharma Narayana allied with the Ahoms while Lakhsmi Narayana joined the Muslim forces. In the end, the Koch kingdom ceased to exist as an independent kingdom and the Koch Raja of Darrang became a tributary of the Ahoms. In most of the confrontations, the Ahoms were successful against the Muslims.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2: What is the significance of the rule of Sudangpha?

.....

Q3. What was the role of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain?

.....

Q4. Who was the Muslim commander who first led the Muhammadan invasion in the Ahom history?

.....

Q5. Who was Chilarai and during whose reign did he attack the Ahom territory?

.....

- **The Ahom-Mughal Conflict**

The next important ruler was Susengpha or Pratap Singha. During his reign there was another Mughal invasion. The Nawab of Bengal, Sheikh Qasim sent an expedition against the Ahoms and in the ensuing battle the Mughal forces were defeated. Soon the Ahom commanders were defeated for not paying heed to the orders of the king. Fresh hostilities began in September 1612 and in the battle that ensued, the Mughals were severely routed. In the famous battle of Bharalimukh, the Muslims were slained in large numbers. After some years, problem erupted due to the matter of Harikesh who had sought protection under the Ahoms.

The Mughals tried to seize Harikesh to which the Ahoms replied by force and in the battle the Mughals were defeated. Pratap Singha sought the friendship of local chiefs and by sending more forces to the battle front; the Ahoms could push back the Mughals to Sualkuchi. In 1638, the Mughals came up to the river Bharali. Hostilities soon began in which the invaders had to retire back to Guwahati after undergoing a defeat. Peace was made between both the camps and a boundary was fixed between them.

Jayadhvaj Singha succeeded Pratap Singh and his reign is marked for the invasion of Mir Jumla. The Mughals under Mir Jumla who was the governor of Bengal marched against the Ahoms in 1662. He was accompanied by Rashid khan. The Ahom garrison at Jogighopa could not give resistance to the Mughal force and hence they retreated to Srighat and later to Samdhara.

Meanwhile Mir Jumla marched towards Garhgaon the Ahoms offered a feeble resistance and thus, the fort of Simlagarh fell to the Mughals very easily. At this news the Ahom garrison at the fort of Samdhara lost heart

and fled. The Ahoms next attacked the Mughal fleet and the Ahom forces under the Bar Gohain gained some success but they kept on retreating. On 17 March, 1662 Mir Jumla entered the Ahom capital, Garhgaon and occupied it. But slowly the rainy season set in. Taking advantage of it, the Ahom army launched some surprise attacks on the invaders. Most of the country had been re -occupied by the Ahoms and Jayadhwaj Singha returned to take charge. The Ahoms attacked the Mughal army day in and day out. When the floods receded, the Mughals again prepared for a fresh attack. But due to the famine in Bengal, supplies were not reaching the Mughal forces. Mir Jumla also fell ill and his soldiers were not at all ready to risk another rainy season. Thus the Nawab was compelled to negotiate for peace with the Ahom king. The famous Treaty of Ghiladhari Ghat was concluded on January 9th 1663.

The next Muslim invasion took place during the time of Chakradhvaj Singha or Supungmung. Raja Ram Singh along with Rashid Khan was sent by Aurangzeb in 1668. The Ahoms were initially successful but were soon routed.

Fresh problem started during the time of Udayaditya Singha or Sunyatpha, when Raja Ram Singh demanded for the restoration of old boundaries. Two battles were fought on land and water. The bravery of Lachit Barphukan led to the victory of the Ahoms against the Mughal army in 1671 A.D. which is famous as the battle of Saraighat. The defeat of the Mughals sealed their fate. Hadira became the new Ahom-Mughal boundary.

During the time of Gadadhar Singha, the battle of Itakhuli was fought against the Muhammadans in 1681 A.D. As a result Guwahati was re-occupied by the Ahoms and Manas was declared as a boundary between the Ahoms and the Mughals. This was the last Muhammadan war. The rule of Gadadhar Singh is marked by the restoration of the prestige of the Ahoms.

He was succeeded by his son Sukhrungpha or better known as Rudra Singh. He led a major campaign against the Kacharis who had asserted their independence under their ruler Tamradhvaj. Rudra Singha dispatched the Ahom army under the Bar Barua and the Pani Phukan to subdue them. The Kachari capital, Maibong was occupied and a huge booty taken. While the Pani Phukan proceeded to Raha, he occupied Demera without any

resistance from the Kacharis because they were afraid of the Ahom army. But very soon, Rudra Singh was compelled to call back the forces due to the rainy season.

Tamradhvaj who had fled for his life now turned to Ram Singh, the Jayantia ruler, for help. Ram Singh held the Kachari king and his family captive, which forced the latter to seek the help of Rudra Singh. The Barbarua and the Barphukan led the Ahom forces. On reaching Mulagul, the Barbarua sent a message to Ram Singh for the immediate surrender of Tamradhvaj and his family, to which Ram Singh replied in the positive but on condition that both the Ahom forces of the Barbarua and Barphukan should stay their advance. Ram Singh gave up the captives but the Ahom forces continued with their march to Jayantia. Ram Singh prepared for a tough battle but he had to surrender to the Barbarua and was taken captive. But very soon, the Jayantia army gave a tough fight to the Ahom forces. And even though reinforcements were sent the Jayantia army could not be subdued and the Ahom forces were forced to retreat. Tamradhvaj died due to dysentery and his son was released by Rudra Singh. The Ahom ruler now turned his attention to the Muhammadan army. He organised a big army for the attack but he was struck by an illness which resulted in his death in 1714. Unlike his predecessors, he did not prefer a policy of isolation. He was one of the greatest rulers among the Ahoms.

Sib Singh succeeded Rudra Singh and his rule was marked by the expedition against the Daflas who were subdued and it was witnessed the gradual increase of Sakta Hindu cult. During the time of Pramata Singh (1751-1769), expeditions were sent against the Daflas who had raided Ghiladhari. The Mikirs and the Jayantias were also brought under submission. The Kachari king was also forced to submit to the Ahom king. However, an expedition against the Burmese from Manipur to reinstate the Manipuri ruler, ended in a disaster as the Ahom forces faced great hardship and retreated later.

The reign of Lakhsmi Singh (1769-1780) was marked by the rebellion of the Moamaria Gosains. The arrogance of the Bar Barua gave the Moamarias the pretext to wage a war against the Ahoms. The Moamarias

were supported by the Morans and the Kacharis. In the first fight that took place on the banks of the river Dibru, the Moamarias made little progress. Soon after Lakhsmi Singh was made captive by the Moamarias and his officials were put to death. However, his captivity did not last long and was installed as the king. The Moamaria Gosains were tortured and killed in large numbers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The battle of Bharalimukh was fought during the time of.....

(ii) ..... led the Ahom army during the battle fo Saraighat.

(iii) The Moamaria rebellion began during the reign of .....

Q7: When was the last Muhammadan war fought?

.....

Q8: Who was Mir Jumla?

.....

- **Downfall of the Ahoms**

The early signs of the downfall of the Ahom dynasty began to appear from the time of Gaurinath Singh who ascended the throne in 1780. His reign witnessed the second Moamaria rebellion. The atrocities committed on the Moamarias and their families sparked new conspiracies and plots against the Ahom monarch. The initial attempts of the Moamarias ended in failures. But soon the royalist forces found it hard to resist the armed advances of the rebels and soon the Burha Gohain retreated to Rangpur. Garhgaon was soon occupied by the rebels. The tough struggle raged for a long time and the people gradually started losing heart and would have submitted to the rebels but for the untiring effort of the Burha Gohain. It was the Raja of Manipur who offered assistance to Gaurinath Singh. In a serious turn of events, the Ahom king appealed for British help which led to the arrival of Captain Welsh. With his arrival, Captain Welsh was able to curb the powers of the rebels.

Chandrakant Singh, brother of the late king was eventful for it marks the rule of weak kings and the handling of the state affairs by the powerful officials. The Burhain Gohain had been handling the state affairs for a long time and it was the activities of Badan Chandra, the Bar Phukan that led the Burha Gohain to announce his arrest. Badan Chandra fled and sought help from the Burmese government agent based at Calcutta. The Burmese promised help and sent a troop of 16000 to Namrup. There was a short battle at Ghiladhari in which the Ahoms were defeated. The Ahoms had to face another loss in the death of their leader, the Burha Gohain. His son who succeeded him as the Burha Gohain did not match his father's stature and hence, the Ahoms failed to resist the Burmese army. The Burmese occupied Jorhat and reinstated the Bar Phukan. There was political instability in the kingdom, after the departure of the Burmese, due to ongoing conspiracies of the court officials. Chandrakant Singh fled for his life, in the wake of the chaotic situation, and he was succeeded by Purandar Singh.

But Purandar Singh was a king only in name as the direct reigns was held by the Burmese. He ruled but for a short duration. The Burmese soon replaced Chandrakant as the ruler. The tyranny of Burmese rule forced Chandrakant Singh and Purandar Singh to oust the Burmese. They repeatedly attacked the Burmese from the British territory but in 1823, Chandrakant Singh was imprisoned by the Burmese.

The Burmese rule in Assam is marked as the dark days due to the immense torture and atrocities committed on the common poor people. But the Burmese were not destined to rule for a long time. They soon came into a head clash with the British due to their incessant attacks on the frontier villages of the British territory. Thus began the Anglo-Burmese war in Assam. The first operation took place in Cachar which the British claimed as their protected state and in several engagements that were fought the Burmese had to submit. Next, the Burmese were forced to retreat from Gauhati which soon came under the British control. The Burmese created havoc in Upper Assam, and also occupied Raha, Nowgong and Kaliabar. The arrival of British force however led to the withdrawal of the Burmese forces. After the successful British operations against the Singphos and in Burma, the war was brought to an end. The King of Ava (Burma) signed the Treaty of

Yandaboo in 1826, thus laying the foundation of British rule and the end of Burmese rule in Assam



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q9: Match the following:

(i) Captain Welsh arrived in Assam during the time of .....

(ii) The battle of Ghiladhari was fought during the rule of .....

(iii) The Treaty of Yandaboo was signed in .....

(iv) The Raja of ..... offered help to Gaurinath Singh during the Moamaria rebellion.

(v) The first Anglo-Burmese war operation took place in .....



8.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt:

- the origin of the Ahoms and their early settlement in Assam
- the rise of the glory of the Ahom ruler from 1228 A.D. till 1780
- the downfall of the mighty Ahoms and the subsequent Anglo-Burmese wars.



8.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*

8.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q No. 1:

(i) Tai

(ii) Patkai

(iii) Burhi-Dihing

(iv) 1268

(v) Indra

Ans to Q No. 2: His rule marked the beginning of the growth of Brahmanical influence.

Ans to Q No. 3: The Sadiya Khowa Gohain was appointed to look into the administration of the newly occupied Chutia kingdom.

Ans to Q No. 4: Wazir

Ans to Q No. 5: Chilarai or Sukhladhvaj was the brother of the Koch king Naranarayan and he attacked the Ahom kingdom during the time of Suklenmung.

Ans to Q No. 6:

(i) Pratap Singh

(ii) Lachit Bar Phukan

(iii) Lakshmi Singh

Ans to Q No. 7:

(i) 1681 A.D.

(ii) Mir Jumla was the Governor of Bengal who invaded Assam during the rule of Pratap Singh

Ans to Q No. 8:

(i) Gaurinath Singh

(ii) Chandrakant Singh

(iii) 1826

(iv) Manipur

(v) Cachar



8.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Question

Q1. After reaching the Brahmaputra valley, where did Sukapha set up his first headquarter?

Q2. When did Sukapha leave Kieng Sen Mao-Lung?

Q3. The title “Bamuni Raja” is ascribed to which Ahom king?

Q4. Raja Ram Singh was a contemporary of which Ahom ruler?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write a short note on–

(a) Rudra Singh

(b) Sukapha

(c) Ahom-Kachari struggle

(d) Captain Welsh’s mission

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Explain in brief Mir Jumla’s invasion of Assam.

Q2. Describe the rise of Ahom power in Assam during the 17th century.

Q3. In your opinion what led to the downfall of the Ahom dynasty?

Q4. Describe in brief the Moamaria uprising in Assam.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 9: THE KOCHES

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Objectives

9.2. Introduction

9.3. Origin of the Koches

9.4. Visva Simha

9.5. Nara Narayana

9.6. Partition of the Koch Kingdom

9.7. Let us Sum up

9.8 Further Reading

9.9 Check your progress

9.10 Model Questions

9.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- trace the origin of the Koches
- discuss about the achievements of Viswa Simha, Nara Narayana and other
- describe the rise and fall of the Koch Kingdom

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we discussed about the coming of the Ahoms and their political achievements. In this unit we will trace the history of the Koches who were a great power that emerged in the Western part of Assam in the 16th century. Probably the Koches had a Mongoloid origin. They were also known as Mech in the Assam history. This unit will explain about the rise of Koch power under different Koch kings and the dynastic conflict that led to its partition in 1581 A.D.

The Koch history consists of its long drawn battles with the Ahoms and the Muslim invaders.

9.3 ORIGIN OF THE KOCHES

According to the *Puranas* and *Tantras*, the Koches were of mix blood of Mongoloid, closely allied to the Meches, the Tharus, the Garos and the Dravidians. Adopting Hinduism, they sought skilfully to reinforce their claim to a higher social status by the legend.

The earliest known ancestor of the Koch royal family was Hariya Mandal, a chief or head of the 12 Koch or Mech families of the pargana. He had two sons namely Visu, and Sisu. It was Bisu more popularly known as Viswa Simha, with the assistance of his brother Sisu or Hinduised name Siva Simha, laid the foundation of the Koch political power, according to the chronicle *Darrang Raj Vamsawali*.

9.4 VISWA SIMHA

Viswa Simha was a courageous man whose rise to power can be placed in about 1515 A.D. He defeated all the Bara Bhuyans (powerful class of local landlords) and set up a strong and independent kingdom with his headquarters at Chikangram. Later on, he shifted his capital to Koch Bihar. He first came into conflict with the Ahoms in about 1523-33 A.D. Visva Simha refrained from any armed confrontation with the Ahoms. Visva Simha agreed to pay the annual tribute of horses to the Ahom king and became a vassal king under the protection of the Ahoms. Thus, he would be secure from any Muslim invasion and at the same time, extend his dominion gradually. A peaceful relation was established.

With Ahom protection being secured, Viswa Simha gradually expanded his dominion. He initially regularly paid tribute to the Ahoms. But with his growth in power, he defaulted in payment of tributes and invaded the Ahom kingdom to remove the disgrace of being a tributary. He died in 1540 A.D. and left behind an efficient administration for his successor. Under his administration, he had 12 ministers who were also known as Qazis like Thakurias, Saikias, Hazaris, Umras and Nawabs. These ministers belonged to the chief Mech or Koch families. He had also appointed officials like Wazir, Lashkars, Bhuyans, Baruas, etc., as wardens of the frontiers. He collected

revenue from the peasants in kind. Having accepted the Hindu religion, he restored the worship of Kamakhya. He also became tolerant of all other religions.

9.5 NARA NARAYANA

Nara Narayana also known as Malla Deva, the eldest son of Viswa Simha succeeded his father to the Koch throne. His beloved brother Sukladhwaj was appointed as the Dewan, combing the post of Prime minister and Commander-in-chief. Sukladhwaj was also known as “Chilarai” as he used to fight like a kite in the battle field.

The reign of Nara Narayan is important, it was during his time that the Ahoms and the Koches came into conflict. It all began when a conspiracy against Nara Narayan by a petty chief who fled to Suklenmung, the Ahom king was detected. Suklenmung gave refuge to the chief that led to a battle between Nara Narayan and the Ahom king. The Koch army under Chilarai fought at the banks of the river Dikrai and was able to defeat their rival. Another battle at Kaliabor, the Ahoms were defeated again with a heavy loss.

Suklenmung attacked soon and encamped at the bank of river Pichala which ended in a disaster as the supplies of the Koch army were cut off. The Koch army suffered a huge loss of man after this battle. Nara Narayan retaliated by burning down some villages within the Ahom boundary. The Ahoms confronted the Koch army in response and in an engagement at the mouth of the river Dikhou, the Ahoms were defeated. Again in a second engagement at the same place, Chilarai, the Koch commander inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ahoms. The Ahom king and his nobles fled and soon Garhgaon, their capital city, was captured. The Ahoms had to sue for peace. The Ahom king had to surrender many of their nobles and sons of their chiefs to the Koches as hostages besides paying a war indemnity of sixty elephants, sixty pieces of cloths and a large amount of gold and silver as per the conditions set while making peace with the Koch king.

However, even though Nara Narayan was successful everywhere, yet the Koches had to face much trouble in their dealings with Padshah of

Gaur. The Koch chronicle informs of the defeat of the Koch forces under Chilarai who was taken captive Nara Narayan was very desperate to make a good relation with the Ahoms for the release of his brother. But this he did under the pretext of the game of dice where he deliberately lost the game and thus released the prisoners and made friendship with the Ahoms.

However, friendly relationship with the Padshah of Gauda was not established by the Koch king. Rather, a few years later Nara Narayan along with Munim Khan, who was sent by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605 A.D.), decided to attack Gauda. The Koch army under Sukladhwaj or Chilarai attacked from the East, while the Mughal army under Munim Khan advanced towards Gauda from the West. The Padshah of Gauda was easily defeated and his kingdom was equally divided between the Koch king Nara Narayan and the Mughal Emperor Akbar. But in the course of this expedition, Sukladhwaj contacted small pox and died on the bank of the river Ganga.

In July 1563, the Koch commander, Tipu led an invasion up to the Brahmaputra. But the Ahoms defeated him. In 1570 again, Tipu and Bhitarual raised an army against the Ahoms but the Ahom army was successful in crushing their efforts. In 1577 three men revolted against Nara Narayan, but having failed they sought the shelter of the Ahom king. The Ahom king, Sukhampha allowed them to settle at Gajala. In 1585, the Koch King of Koch-Hajo, Raghudeb gave his daughter Sankala in marriage to Sukhampha with a handsome dowry. Sukhampha in his turn gifted the Koch King generously.

The court of Nara Narayan was adorned with scholars of different branches of learning. Besides Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, they were Purushottam Vidyabagish, Ram Saraswati, Ananta Kandali, Sridhar and Bakul Kayastha. As such Nara Narayan was called the Vikramaditya of Assam. Gohain Kamal, another brother of the Koch king, is credited with the construction of Gohain Kamal Ali, a road from the Koch capital to Narayanpur (North Lakhimpur sub division). The Koches are also said to have built a fort at Narayanpur.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Name the ancestor to whom the Koch dynasty is traced back to?

.....

Q2: Give the name of the Ahom king who was a contemporary of Nara Narayan.

.....

Q3: Under whose supervision was the Gohain Kamal Ali road constructed?

.....

Q4: To which religion did Viswa Simha adhere to?

.....

9.6 PARTITION OF THE KOCH KINGDOM

After the death of Nara Narayan the Ahom-Koch relations entered a whole new phase. The Koch territory was divided into two parts with the river Sankosh as the dividing line. Being childless, Nara Narayana nominated his nephew Raghu Deva (son of Sukladhwaj) as his successor. But in his advanced age he was blessed with a son named Lakshmi Narayan. This created apprehension in the mind of Raghu Deva, who at the instigation of some officials, declared himself the king at Barnagar. Instead of fighting against Raghu Deva, Nara Narayana, in 1581 A.D. partitioned the Koch kingdom.

The territories east of the river Sankosh known as Koch Hajo were handed over to Raghu Deva and Western part was retained by Nara Narayana for himself and his descendents. Raghu Deva ruled over Koch Hajo, but paid tribute to his uncle Nara Narayana, acknowledging his overlordship. But after the death of Nara Narayana in 1587, Raghu Deva stopped paying tribute and assumed independence by issuing coinage in his name.

The death of Nara Narayana marked the end of the glorious days of the kingdom of Koch Behar. Lakshmi Narayana (1587-1627 A.D.) became

the new ruler of Koch Behar. The assumption of independence status by Raghu Deva was disliked by Lakshmi Narayana as it ended the authority of Koch Behar over Koch Hajo. As a result, there started a conflict between the two Koch kingdoms which finally led to the Ahom - Mughal conflict.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5: Fill in the blanks:

(i) Naranarayana died in the year _____.

(ii) The Koch kingdom was partitioned in _____.

(iii) After partition Lakhsmi Narayana began ruling in _____.

(iv) Raghu Deva was the son of _____.



9.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt:

- The origin of the Koches and their lineage
- The political history of the Koches under the rule of Viswa Simha
- The exploits of Chilarai and Naranarayan
- The downfall of the Koches with the partition of the Koch kingdom



9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L., (1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II, III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D*

9.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: Hariya Mandal

Ans to Q No. 2: Suklenmung

Ans to Q No. 3: Gohain Kamal

Ans to Q No. 4: Hinduism

Ans to Q No. 5: (i) 1587

(ii) 1581

(iii) Koch Behar

(iv) Sukhladhwaj

9.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. Who were the Bara Bhuyans?

Q2. How do you define a tributary ruler?

Q3. Why did Viswa SImha refrain from any armed confrontation with the Ahoms?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write a short note on:

a) Visva Simha

b) Chilarai

c) Raghu Deva

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Discuss in length the Ahom-Koch struggle during the time of Naranarayana.

Q2. Explain the role of Viswa Simha in laying the foundation of the Koch dynasty.

Q3. Describe in details the causes behind the downfall of the Koches.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 10: SOCIETY, ECONOMY, RELIGION AND ADMINISTRATION OF MEDIEVAL ASSAM UNDER THE AHOMS

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Social Condition

10.4 Economic Condition

10.5 Religious Beliefs (Neo-Vaishnavite Movement)

10.6 Administrative System (Paik System)

10.7 Let us Sum up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Check your Progress

10.10 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the social conditions during the Ahom Empire,
- explain the economy of the Ahom period,
- describe the religious traditions during the Ahom rule,
- illustrate the cult of Bhakti and Neo-Vaishnavism in Assam and its influence on the culture of Assam,
- discuss the Paik system, a unique feature of the Ahom administration.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will study the socio-religious and the economic conditions that existed during the rule of the Ahoms. In this unit we will also be able to understand the unique method started by the Ahoms in the matter of administration.

10.3 SOCIETY

The huge literary sources of the period throw much light on the society and customs prevalent among the people.

We find references to Brahmanas who started settling down in Assam. The kings of Assam brought learned Brahmanas and patronized them for the purpose of strengthening the Brahmanical tradition. The *Daivajanas* or the *Ganakas* who were astrologers by profession enjoyed the patronage of the Ahom rulers and an honoured position in the society. The next were the *Kayasthas*, whose work was to maintain the accounts and serve as the record keepers or the scribes. They were called *Sat Karmi* since they performed the six sacraments. In number, the *Kalitas* surpassed the Brahmanas or the *Daivajanas*. In Assam the *Kalitas* were divided into two categories: *Bar Kalitas* and *Saru Kalitas*. The next position in the social hierarchy was occupied by the *Keots*. The earliest reference to the *Keots* is to be found in the *Katha Gurucharita*. The two classes of *Keots* were *Haluwa Keots* who were treated as upper caste Hindus and *Jaluwa Keots* who were treated as belonging to the lower depressed class of fisherman community. The *Kaivartas* followed the Vaishnavite religion.

The Koches or *Rajavamsis* were another high caste in the social ladder. The *Chutiyas* were another tribal group, of which a part of the community merged with the Ahoms, another with the *Mishing*, while a third section became a part of the *Barahis* of Eastern Assam and therefore came to be known as *Barahi Chutiya*. The priestly class of the *Chutiyas* or the *Deoris* remains true to their faith. The *Chutias* who accepted Hinduism maintained a separate identity.

Assamese society was also constituted of many other castes, sub-castes and professional classes. Madhava Kandali, the great poet refers to the *Nathayogis* and *Haris* in a derogatory manner indicating their low social status. Barring a few caste based professions, most of the professions could be pursued by all members of the different castes and creeds.

Assam was inhabited by a large number of tribes, who lived according to their own community rules and laws. The *Lalungs* or *Tiwas* and *Dimasas*

were Bodo-Kachari tribes. Among the Buddhist communities that migrated from the early part of the 18th century, the *Khamtis,* the *Doanahs*, the *Tai Phakes*, the *Turungs*, the *Aitonias* and the *Naras* formed small groups. The Muslim invasion of Bakhtiyar Khilji also led to the settlement of the Muslims in the region.

The society of medieval Assam gave much space for the growth of art and architecture. The Ahom and Koch rulers rebuilt many of the old temples, built new ones and introduced new styles in the shape of an octagonal sanctum and beehive dome. They also initiated the widespread use of brick instead of stone blocks. The Neo-Vaishnava movement resulted in the development of the art of illustrated manuscripts patronised by the Ahom rulers and the Koch king. The *Hastirvidyarnama* is the most unique example of a painted manuscript among the secular branch of manuscript paintings.

Prior to the emergence of the Neo-Vaishnava movement Sanskrit was the main language but gradually Assamese took over and along with Sanskrit, Assamese language began to be used in land grants. Vernacular literature flourished under personalities like Madhava Kandali, Sankaradeva, Ananta Kandali, etc due to the patronage received from the Ahom kings . Sankaradeva's *Kirtana Ghosa*, *Rukmini Haran*, *Bhakti Ratnakara* are some classic works in the vernacular language. Assamese language and literature grew to a new height with works like *Satriya Vamsavalis* (chronicles of the Satras) and the *Charita Puthis* (Literature concerned with the lives of saints). Many secular writings also enriched the Assamese literature like Bakul Kayasthas' *Kitabat Manjuri*, Sridhar's *Sandhyakanda.* The *Buranjis* remain the greatest contribution of the Ahom rulers towards the literature of Assam.

Games and sports, dance and music were patronised by the Ahoms. Animal fights were the common pastimes. The appointment of *Senchowa Barua* (person in charge of training falcons), *Kukurachowa* Barua (trainer of cocks for cock fights) indicate the popularity of the above sports. Dance and music during agricultural festival like Bihu were celebrated, religious festivals like Durga worship due to the influence of Saktism were also

celebrated with equal pomp and glory. The *Devadasi* form of dance, performed by *Natis* also prevailed in the temples. Institutions like the *Satras* also encouraged the various forms of dance, mainly *Oja-Pali*, *Sutradhari*, *Dasavatar,* and *Krishna-Nritya*.

Joint family system was prevalent. Women folks of Assam lived under patriarchal dominance, but did not suffer from social evils like *sati* which was rampant in the rest of the country, with few exceptions as mentioned in the *Haridevacharita*. The widows among the Brahmanas and the *Kayasthas* had to live an austere life. Formal education was not encouraged. They were considered educated if they could read the *Ratnawali*, *Kirtana* and the *Namaghosa*. However, the women folk equally participated in agricultural activities like planting, sowing crops, etc. The women of each and every household were an expert weaver.

The marriage customs in the society were not uniform. The Ahoms followed the *Chaklang* system of marriage. However, Vedic rites were followed if an Ahom king married a non-Ahom girl. The tribal groups of the region followed their own tribal customs.

Regarding the food habits, rice, milk, fish and pulses were the staple diet of the people, rich or poor. Chewing of areca nuts with betel leaves was a common practice.

During the initial phase of the Ahom rule, the society was marked by harmonious relation between different sections and classes. After the Ahom rule was firmly established we find a hierarchical society. The aristocracy consisted of the king, his circle of ministers (*Patra Mantri*), and the priestly class. Next was the *Chamua* class who mostly occupied the office of the *Barua*, *Hazarika*, *Saikia*, etc. The people at the lowest order were the Paiks and the slaves who constituted the country's military as well as the labour force. The social distinction among the classes was in the matters of dress, food habits, possession of Paiks, etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The _____ who were astrologers by profession.

(ii) The earliest reference to the *Keots* is to be found in _____.

(iii) The *Nathayogis* and *Haris* are mentioned by _____.

(iv) The Ahoms followed the _____ system of marriage.

(v) The people at the lowest order were the _____.

(vi) The office of the *Barua*, *Hazarika*, *Saikia*, etc. was occupied by the _____ class.

10.4 ECONOMY

Agriculture remained the backbone of the economy during the Ahom period. The agricultural economy was a self sufficient one and the people never faced insecurity regarding food, except during trying times of war and natural calamities.

Village settlements were organized in such a manner that the families belonging to a particular profession and ethnic origin were settled together which is revealed by the names of the villages like *Tantikuchi*, *Kamarkuchi,* etc. The village life seemed very hard as the common man had to reel under the pressure both of paying taxes to the king in the form of manual labour as well as fighting during wars and at the same time they were required to pay their respect to the religious head of the *Satras* in the form of taxes.

There were urban centres at Rangpur, Garhgaon, Guwahati, Hajo, etc. which grew up as administrative, trading or religious centres.

Assam was rich in agricultural products as mentioned in the writings of the foreign travelers. Rice was cultivated on a large scale along with other agro based products like pulses, oil seeds, spices, mustard, poppy (as an intoxicant), bamboo, etc. Fruits like *thekera*, *owtenga, amara*, orange, lemon, etc. were very common. Shihabuddin Talish, mentions an alkali called *Khar* used by the local people as a substitute for salt. Names of places like *Banhbari*, *Jalukbari*, *Adabari*, *Betkuchi*, etc indicate areas of cultivation of a particular crop. Bay leaves (*tejpat*) were cultivated in the hilly areas.

Sugarcane of three varieties was cultivated as Shihabuddin Talish (a Muslim chronicler accompanying Mir Jumla) mentions it. Tobacco formed an important cash crop of Assam. Areca nuts and betel leaves were widely found and their use was very common.

The tools used were mostly agro-based like bamboo-harrow, plough spade, clod breaker, rakes, axes, sickle, etc. Oxen, buffaloes and a few horses were used for cultivation purposes. The tribal population in the hills followed the *jhum system* (shifting system) of cultivation. Small industries grew up centering on textiles, metal casting, timber woods, etc. Ivory industry, gold washing, iron smelting, salt manufacturing, copper and bell metal industry flourished side by side. Wood craft attained some excellence though it was not of a high order. Pottery making was another industry which was carried out by the *Kumar* and the *Hira* communities. Brick making industry grew up under strict state supervision.

During the early period of the Ahom rule, external trade was minimized. It was during the time of Rudra Singha that external trade was encouraged. However, the *Charita Puthis* give evidence of some people who made their living through trade. The *Buranjis* however give in detail the encouragement of the Ahom rulers in the sphere of internal trade. For the purpose of internal trade the Ahoms established different marts or *haats*, Sadiya being the central market for the entire hill tribes. The different hill tribes brought their products like millets and rock salt and exchanged their goods with each other and the plains people in lieu of goods itself as the circulation of money was limited.

In order to facilitate trading activities, *Choukis* or outposts were erected under officers called *Duaria Baruah* or *Chakial Baruah* to collect taxes and control illicit transport of goods. The Ahom king Gaurinath Singha agreed to expand trade with the East India Company. Apart from the trade with Bengal and the Mughals, trade relations between Bhutan and Tibet had always existed. According to Talish, *Cowries*, rupees and gold coins were used in the Ahom kingdom. Similarly the Koch coins, the *Narayani* rupee was also accepted as a currency in Assam.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2: Write True/False:

(i) Shihabuddin Talish was a Muslim chronicler who accompanied Mir Jumla. (True/False)

(ii) Salt manufacturing was carried out by the people of *Kumar* and the *Hira* communities. (True/False)

(iii) *Tantikuchi*, *Kamarkuchi* are the name of urban centres during the period of Ahom rule. (True/False)

(iv) Sadiya being the central market for the entire hill tribes. (True/False)

(v) *Duaria Baruah* was appointed to collect taxes and control illicit transport of goods. (True/False)

10.5 RELIGION

Brahmanical religion maintained its supremacy in the Assamese society during the medieval period. However, the religion became more complex with elaborate rituals and ceremonies thus losing the favour of the common people. Esoteric forms of worship and *Vamacara* rituals, magic and incantation was practiced. These practices continued long after the expansion of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement.

Tantricism was another form of cult worship that involved sacrifices, both animal and human. It is said that human beings were sacrificed at the altar of Kamakhya, Kesaikhaiti and Jayanteshwari. These sacrifices continued until it was banned by Gaurinath Singha. The ruling families as well as the tribal communities worshipped Siva and Sakti in their various forms which is seen through the various temples and shrines built for Siva and Shakti. Sakti worship was also very much prevalent among the local people.

The literary sources refer that during the time of Sankaradeva, Buddhism was prevalent but it was loosely associated with a degenerated form of Tantricism of the *Vajrayana* faith. Sikh religion is also said to have

emerged with the visit of Guru Nanak Dev to Kamrupa, which led to many people taking up the Sikh faith. Christianity too started penetrating in Assam after the coming of the East India Company.

Islam was spread through the Muslims who settled in Assam due to the invasions of the foreign powers. The *Dargah* of the five *Pirs* (Sufi saints), namely, Shah Akhar, Shah Bagmar, Shah Saran, Shah Sufi and Shah Kamal in Dhubri stands as an edifice of the growth of Islam in Assam. Shah Milan was also a *Pir*, commonly known as Azan Pir, who composed many devotional hymns like *Zikirs* and *Jaris* in Assamese. The Ahom monarchs gave due patronage to the Muslim saints and their holy places. Land grants were also made in favour of the Muslim saints.

- **NEO-VAISHNAVISM**

It was the launching of the Bhakti movement that brought the tumultuous phase in religious sphere to a halt. The Bhakti movement started by Sankardeva was termed as *Mahapurushiya* dharma as the reformer himself was known as a *Mahapurush* or Great Man. Officially it assumed the name of *Ek-Sarana-Dharma*. As most of its teachings were based on the *Bhagavata Purana*, it was also known as *Bhagavata Dharma*. The Neo-Vaishnava religion was based on four principles namely, *Guru*, *Deva*, *Bhakta* and *Nama*. According to Sankaradeva, all the four elements are inter-linked. A devotee should keep close association with the other devotees and with his *guru.* He never gave importance to image worship. Rather, he made the new disciples of the faith to prostrate before the *Bhagavata* placed on the altar. He accepted disciples from all walks of life and gave them equal space, thus giving a boost to social cohesion and harmonious living in the society of Assam. His idea of community feeling was spread through his speeches and through prayers (*Kirtana - Nama*) in prayer halls (*Namghar*).

Satra, the highest seat of learning, is the most important organ of the Vaishnava organization. The first *Satra* was established in Bardowa in 1494 by Sankardeva. The ecclesiastical ranks of a *Satra* consisted of *Satradhikar* (Abbot), *Bhakats* and *Sisyas*. The *Satradhikar* was sometimes a celibate and known as *Gossain* or *Mahanta*. He initiated the disciple to the new faith and conducted religious functions. The *Bhakats* were the devotees who

held clerical jobs. Celibate devotees were known as *Kewaliya Bhakats*. The laity or the laymen were called *Sisyas*.

Vaishnavism or the worship of Vishnu was prevalent in the ancient period of Assam. The Pala ruler, Dharmapala became a Vaishnavite as mentioned in the *Pushpabhadra grant*. The Vaishnava cult which existed prior to the coming of Sankaradeva was associated with *Pancharatra* cult. This form of *Pancharatra* Vaishnavism was allied with Tantric rituals.

The Vaishnava cult of Sankardeva is immersed in the teachings of *Gita* and *Bhagavata Purana*, and they served as the source of guidance to its followers. The Neo- Vaishnavism cult encouraged its followers to surrender themselves into the absolute power of the sole Lord Krishna or Vishnu. Sankaradeva had announced that a true Vishnu devotee should visit no other temple but that which was dedicated to Vishnu. They should also not accept any offerings given in temples dedicated to other Gods or deities other than Vishnu. Sankaradeva did not believe in renunciating life or being a celibate for spiritual attainment. He also did not hesitate to initiate women into the faith.

The popularity of the new faith led to a creative upsurge of literary works. Both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, his disciple and successor were accomplished poets. Sankaradeva along with his cousin Ramaraya established prayer halls known as *Namghars* for religious discussion, mass prayer, occasional performances of dance and drama, etc. The movement suffered a jolt after the death of Sankardeva and also due to the secessionist group led by Damodardeva and Harideva. Vaishnavism had to face many challenges also due to the Growing royal patronage to Sakti cult.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3: Fill in the blanks:

(i) Human sacrifices continued until it was banned by the Ahom king _____.

(ii) *Mahapurushiya* dharma was started by_____.

(iii) The Vaishnava cult which existed prior to the coming of Sankaradeva was associated with _____ cult.

Q4: Answer the following questions:

a) Who were the *Bhakats*?

b) What purpose did the *Namghars* serve for the common people?

c) Name the head of the "*Satra*"?

10.6 ADMINISTRATION OF THE AHOMS

The Ahom was largely based on customs and conventions. The administrative system of the Ahom was highly efficient and provided the needed stability to the expanding Ahom kingdom thereby allowing them to establish their hegemony over the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam.



LET US KNOW

The *Patramantri* was the Council of Five who assisted the king. It consisted of the Burhagohain, the Bargohain, the Barpatragohain, the Barbarua and the Barphukan.

The Ahom administrative system was different as there was no clear division like the central, provincial and local administration. In the Ahom administrative system, the king or Swargadeo was the supreme head of the state having supreme authority over all his subjects. Next to the king was an aristocratic body of ministers known as *Patramantri* who used to assist or advise the king in administrative matters. Among them, the three great Gohains were the permanent and hereditary ministers of the state. All three of them were of equal rank. The king had to act according to the advice of the Gohains. He could not rule like an absolute monarch. For discussion of important matters there was also the *Barchora* (Council-chamber).

For looking after the civil administration there were about 12 Phukans and 20 Baruas selected from the hereditary nobility who were responsible to the king. The Barbarua in his administration was assisted by an advisory council collectively called *Chorar Phukans* or *Choruwa Phukans*. To assist the Barphukan, there were officials like *Dihingia Phukan, Chetiya Phukan,*

Pani Phukan, Deka Phukan, Rajkhowas and *Panidihingias*. There were also the Barua, Hazarika, Saikia and Bora. Besides, there were several other miscellaneous officials like *Katakis* (royal messengers), Kakatis (clerks), *Dolois* (astrologers), *Neog* (both military and civil), etc.

For smooth local administration different categories of governors were appointed by the Ahom Government. Among the governors, the *Sadiya Khowa Gohain*, *Marangi Khowa Gohain* and *Salal Gohain* occupied a distinctive position in the Ahom administration. The governors along with the prime responsibility of looking after the administration of the area under their charge had to look after the defence of the nearby frontiers. In general, the governors enforced law and order, collected revenue and administered justice in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The princes and the close relatives of the ruling monarch were appointed as *Meldagia* or *Melkhowa Rajas* to look after the local administration.

In the matters of administration of justice the king's court was the supreme and the highest court of appeal. In the absence of the king, it was the *Nyaya Sodha Phukan* who exercised jurisdiction. Appeals could be made to the king's court from the Barbarua's and Phukan's court. Next in authority to the king's court was the court of the Barbarua. This court was so powerful that even the three Dangarias were not exempted from its jurisdiction. The minor disputes at the village level were settled locally in the village Namghars, open place or in the house of an influential person in the assembly of villagers. This was known as the *Meldowan*. The decision of such Mel was taken unanimously. If unanimity could not be reached, the decision of the majority prevailed.

We shall now discuss the Paik System.

- **Paik System**

The Paik system was also known as the *Khel System*. Under this system every adult male population of the kingdom between the age group of 16 to 50 was registered as a Paik for rendering service to the state. Besides rendering military service to the state, the Paik also had to provide some service to their masters.

The Paiks were broadly divided into two classes - *Kanri* and *Chamua*.

The regular peasants who were bound to give service to the state as a soldier in times of war and as a labourer in times of peace were called *Kanri Paiks*. Peasants of good birth or relative affluence were called *Chamua Paiks*. They could enjoy exemption from personal state service by paying a commutation fee of Rs.3 per head per annum as *Ga-dhan*. There were also other Paiks like *Bilatiyas*, who worked as tenants in the private landed estates of the nobles; *Dewaliyas*, who were allotted to the temples and Satras; and *Bahatiyas*, who were to render service to their respective hill masters. The Bilatiyas and Dewaliyas were exempted from paying a number of taxes and rendering military service unless the situation so demanded.

In return for their services to the state, each Paik was allotted free of charge, 2 *puras* of best arable land called *Ga-mati*. The Paiks under the professional Khels were regarded as peasants. When they did engage in other crafts, they were taxed at the fixed rate relating to the nature of the craft. The royal authority kept a strict supervision on the professional Paiks so that trade relations could not develop among them.

The Paiks were rigidly supervised to bring about efficiency in the Paik or Khel system. Over every 20 Paiks there was an officer called *Bora*, over him was a *Saikia* commanding 100 Paiks, followed by a Hazarika who commanded over 1000 Paiks, over him a Barua commanding 2000 Paiks, next a Rajkhowa commanding 3000 Paiks and then a Phukan commanding 6000 Paiks.

As stated above, the Paik System prevailed in Upper Assam from Kaliabar to Sadiya. In Kamrup, the *Pargana* System which had been introduced by the Mughals was retained. The Ahoms after occupying Kamrup continued with the Pargana System, mixing it with the Paik System to suit their administrative requirements. Under this system, Kamrup was divided into 26 Parganas. Every Pargana was placed under the charge of a Choudhury, who received remuneration in the form of a certain portion of land under his management. A Pargana was further divided into *Taluks* consisting of 4 or 5 villages. A *Taluk* was placed under the charge of a *Talukdar*, who was granted land as salary. The Talukdars were assisted by junior officials like *Thakurias* and *Patgiris*, who were also allowed to hold land as remuneration.

● MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

The Ahoms had an efficient military organization. A unique feature of the Ahom army was that it was drawn from all sections of the people. Under the Paik System, all able bodied men of the Ahom kingdom were bound to render compulsory military service. There were also contingents supplied by the Bhuyans and the other vassal chieftains.

The Barbarua was the Commander-in-chief of Upper Assam and the Barphukan that of Lower Assam. During an emergency, the Gohains, the royal princes and even the king himself led the men in battle. There was a regular system of gradation of officers in the Ahom army.

The full contingent of the Ahom army consisted of infantry, navy, artillery, elephant, cavalry and spies. Technical skill and general excellence of the Assamese infantry was very sound which is even referred to in the Persian chronicles. The strength of infantry was very high. The navy was an important wing of the Ahom army. The naval department was under the supervision of the *Naosaliya Phukan*. The war boats called *Bacharis* were very strong and durable. These were furnished with big guns and cannons with the capacity of carrying 70 to 80 men. For manufacturing the large boats there was a central workshop called *Barnaosal* located initially at Garhgaon and later at Rangpur. Besides, smaller workshops called *Naosals* were there at Garhgaon, Jaipur, Majuli and Dergaon.

Artillery was an important part of Ahom warfare. The Ahom soldiers were experts in making various kinds of guns, match locks, artillery and big cannons. An officer called *Khargharia Phukan* looked after the manufacture of fire arms and gun powder. Elephantry was placed under the charge of *Hati Barua*. Elephants were used to break through forts and palisades as well as in clearing thick jungles so that the infantry could pass through. The cavalry too was placed under the charge of a Barua called *Ghora Barua*. He was required to maintain a registrar of the horses. He classified them according to their breed, age, colour and size.

The Ahoms had a highly developed espionage system. Prior to an expedition spies were sent to the enemy camp to gather information about the strength and war strategy of the rivals. Forts were constructed by the

Ahoms at strategic locations. Subsequently, Guwahati and Jagighopa were also fortified. The main weapons of war were swords, spears, axes, maces, bows, arrows, etc. The soldiers were expert in guerrilla warfare.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5: Write True or False:

(i) The *Neogs* were the official clerks. (True/False)

(ii) *Khargharia Phukan* looked after the manufacture of fire arms and gun powder. (True/False)

(iii) The naval department was under the supervision of the *Naosaliya Phukan*. (True/False)

(iv) A *Taluk* was placed under the charge of a *Choudhury*. (True/False)

Q6: Answer the Questions given below:

(a) What do you understand by the term "Ga-mati"?

(b) Who were the *Kanri* Paiks?

(c) What is "Meldowan"?

(d) Name two fortified towns during the time of the Ahoms. What kind of weapons was used by the soldiers during the Ahom period?



10.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, we have learnt-

- the society and the lifestyle of the people during the time of the Ahoms
- the economic aspects, like trade and commerce, of the Ahom period
- the religious traditions followed during the times of the Ahoms
- the neo-Vaishnavite movement and its impact on the Assamese society
- the administrative system of the Ahoms and specially the Paik system



10.8 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*



10.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: (i) *Daivajanas*

(ii) *Katha Gurucharita*.

(iii) Madhava Kandali

(iv) Chaklang

(v) Paiks

(vi) Chamua

Ans to Q No. 2: (i) True

(ii) False

(iii) False

(iv) True

(v) True

Ans to Q No. 3: (i) Gaurinath Singha

(ii) Sankardev

(iii) *Pancharatra*

Ans to Q No. 4: (i) The *Bhakats* were the devotees who held clerical jobs. Celibate devotees were known as *Kewaliya Bhakats*.

(ii) The prayer halls known as *Namghars* were meant for religious discussion, mass prayer, occasional performances of dance and drama, etc.

(iii) Satradhikar

Ans to Q No. 5: (i) False

(ii) True

(iii) True

(iv) False

Ans to Q No. 6: (a) In return for their services to the state, each Paik was allotted free of charge, 2 *puras* of best arable land. This land was called *Ga-mati*.

(b) The Paiks who offered service to the state in times of peace as a labourers were called the *Kanri Paiks*.

(c) The minor disputes at the village level were settled locally in the village Namghars, open place or in the house of an influential person in the assembly of villagers. This was known as the *Meldowan*.

(d) Guwahati and Jagigopha

(e) The weapons used during times of war were swords, spears, axes, maces, bows, arrows, etc.



10.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions:

Q1. Name the various forms of dances as encouraged by the Satras?

Q2. What was the function of the Satradhikar?

Q3. What is “Bacharis”?

Q4. Who were the “Bilatiya” Paiks?

(B) Short Questions:

Q1. What challenges did the Neo-Vaishnavite movement face after the death of its founder?

Q2. Why was the Bhakti movement in Assam termed as “Mahapurushiya Dharma”?

Q3. Write a short note on:

(a) Trade during the Ahoms

(b) Tantric cult

(c) Judicial administration of the Ahoms

(d) Paik system

(C) Long Questions:

Q1. Describe the administrative system of the Ahoms.

Q2. Explain the Neo-Vaisnavite movement and its impact on the society.

Q3. Throw some light on the social organization that existed in the Ahom period?

Q4. Discuss the economic condition of Assam during the time of the Ahoms as mentioned in the accounts of Shihabuddin Talish.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 11: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRITISH RULE AND ANTI-BRITISH MOVEMENTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Anglo-Burmese Wars

11.4 Treaty of Yandaboo and British Conquest of Assam

11.5 British Administrative Set Up

11.6 Revolt of 1857

11.7 Let Us Sum Up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.10 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the Burmese invasion of Assam,
- describe the circumstances leading to British intervention in Assam and the Anglo-Burmese wars,
- explain the terms of the Treaty of Yandaboo and the significance of this historic treaty in the history of Assam,
- describe the British administrative system in Assam,
- discuss the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

After a detailed study of the socio-economic condition and the polity of Assam during the Ahom rule, we will now discuss the Burmese invasion of Assam. We are going to discuss the factors that led to foreign intervention in Assam. A brief account of the course of the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824) has also been discussed as well as the terms of the Treaty of

Yandaboo that brought about an end to the war. In addition to all these political developments, we are also going to discuss the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

11.3 ANGLO-BURMESE WARS

Prior to the intervention of the British East India Company, Assam was ruled by the Ahom dynasty. However, from the middle of the 18th century the Ahom monarchy began to decline due to incompetence and inefficiency of the of the Ahom monarchs and the mutual rivalry among the nobles. The situation became worse after the death of Kamaleswar Singha in 1811. After his death, Purnananda Buragohain and other nobles decided to place Chandrakanta Singha, the brother of the deceased king on the throne. As the new king Chandrakanta Singha was a minor at that time, Purnananda Buragohain took full advantage of the situation and became the defacto ruler of the Ahom kingdom. Chandrakanta was reduced to the position of a puppet ruler.

However, young king Chandrakanta Singha did not want to remain a puppet king forever. He was a pleasure loving ruler, but was also hungry for power. The king developed a close friendship with a youth of his own age named Satram, the son of the officer incharge of the training of cocks and their association brought about far reaching changes in the political situation of that time. The king appointed Satram as the *Charingiya Phukan*. In the words of Dr S.L Baruah, 'Satram gradually became the friend, philosopher and guide of the king'. The rapid rise of Satram and his close proximity to the king created resentment among the Ahom nobility. The Prime Minister Purnananda Buragohain raised objections in this regard but king Chandrakanta did not pay any heed. Encouraged by the king`s patronage, Satram gradually became so powerful that he started dreaming of becoming the king. With this aim in view, Satram, with the secret approval of Chandrakanta hatched a conspiracy to murder Purnananda Buragohain.But the plot was discovered. All the conspirators except Satram were executed and Satram was banished to Namrup where he was later killed by some Nagas.

Meanwhile, the political situation of Assam took a new turn with the appointment of Badan Chandra as the *Barphukan* (Viceroy in charge of Lower Assam) at Guwahati after the death of Kaliabhomora Barphukan. Badan Chandra was unscrupulous, arrogant and very oppressive. Moreover, he was a strong enemy of Purnananda Buragohain. It was, therefore, a blunder on the part of Purnananda to appoint Badan Chandra as Barphukan. Dr S.L. Baruah has rightly observed, "By this act of his the premier was not only digging his own grave, but was also brining the 'Great Deluge'-the Burmese invasion to Assam".

Initially for a short period of time Badan Chandra loyally discharged his duty as the Barphukan. But this did not last long; soon he revived his lust for power and wealth and grew arrogant. He let loose a reign of terror and atrocities on the people of Kamrup.To put an end to Badanchandra's oppressive rule, Purnananda Buragohain sent a force to apprehend the Barphukan. But Badan Chandra got the scent of this in advance and managed to escape to Rangpur in Bengal.

At Rangpur he tried to persuade the Governor General of the English East India Company to send an army for aid of the Ahom king and lodged a complaint against the misrule of Prime Minister Purnananda Buragohain. He sought British intervention and military help to curb the power of Purnananda and to restore the authority of the king. But the supreme government at Calcutta refused to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ahom kingdom. Badan Chandra then opened negotiation with the Calcutta agent of the Burmese government and with his help reached Burma to persuade the Burmese to intervene in the affairs of the Ahom kingdom.

Unlike the British, Badan Chandra got a favourable response from the Burmese authorities. The Burmese decided to take advantage of the prevailing political chaos in Assam in order to fulfill their own imperialistic designs. It was, therefore, a golden opportunity for the Burmese when Badan Chandra appealed in the court of king Badawpaya seeking his aid against Purnananda Burhagohain and the Burmese king immediately agreed to help Badan Chandra Barphukan.

In March 1817, an army of 8000 soldiers was dispatched to invade

Assam under Badan Chandra Barphukan. This was the *first Burmese invasion* of Assam. On its way to Assam through the Patkai-Nongyang route, the strength of the army increased to about 16,000 after being joined by some local chief's enroute. The Burmese defeated the Ahom soldiers in several battles, suppressed all opposition and installed Chandrakanta Singha to his position and returned to their own country with huge war booty.

- **Second Burmese Invasion (1819)**

After the departure of the Burmese the internal quarrel of the Ahom monarchy reached its climax. During this anarchical situation, Purnananda Buragohain died or as some say, committed suicide. Badan Chandra Barphukan was also assassinated by a mercenary soldier named Rup Singh and Chandrakanta was deposed. Purandar Singha, a member of the Ahom royal family was now placed on the Ahom throne. When the Burmese king came to know about these developments, he became furious and immediately sent a strong army under the command of Alamingi to avenge the death of Badan Chandra and reinstate Chandrakanta Singha. This led to the *second Burmese invasion* in 1819. Consequently, the Ahom king Purandar Singha fled to Guwahati. The Burmese advanced to Jorhat and released Chandrakanta Singha and placed him on the throne. Having thus established their authority in Assam, Ala Mingi left Assam in April 1819 and Mingimaha Tilwa was given the charge of affairs with a force 2000 men.

- **Third Burmese Invasion (1821)**

However, Chandrakanta Singha soon began to feel suspicious of the true intentions of the Burmese. He became anxious about his own safety and fled to Calcutta. The Burmese then placed Jogeswar Singha (1821-1824) on the throne of Assam. Meanwhile, Chandrakanta Singha made a brave attempt to drive away the Burmese from Assam but he suffered a major defeat in the battle of Hadira *Chowk*i (check post) in June, 1822. Assam, thus, went under direct Burmese rule and came to be considered a province of the Burmese Empire.

Although it appears that the Burmese attacked Assam taking advantage of the anarchical condition and military weakness of Ahom monarchy at the instance of Badan Chandra Barphukan, yet the real intention of the Burmese

invasions of Assam lay deeper, as they were guided by their imperialist policy of expansion towards the East after their Westward expansion.

- **British Intervention and the First Anglo-Burmese War**

Towards the close of the 18th century, Burma under rule of Al-ang Paya (1733-60) emerged as a strong kingdom. During the reign of his son Badawpaya (1772-92), Burma began to follow an imperialistic policy. Its imperialistic design began to materialize in full scale when Burma occupied Upper and Lower Burma, conquered Arakan and occupied Manipur. In order to lay their hands to the rich province of Bengal, the Burmese began to make frequent inroads into the territory of Bengal. The British Government initially only observed the situation and took no action against the Burmese. They were in favour of mutual settlement through negotiations. But the Burmese were not in favour of such negotiations. In November 1823, a serious situation developed when Burma occupied the island of Shahpuri on the Chittagong frontier.

In the North-East frontier, the Burmese occupied Manipur in 1819 after ousting its Rajah Gambhir Singh. There were danger signals on the Sylhet frontier. Manipur was already in the hands of the Burmese and the Burmese now threatened to attack Cachar and came very close to the frontier of the British India province of Bengal.

Meanwhile, David Scott had been appointed as the agent to the Governor General on the North-East frontier in addition to his post of Civil Commissioner of Rangpur. Early in February, 1824 he informed the supreme government in detail about the Burmese threat to Bengal. According to him the Burmese army might use any one of the three possible routes to invade Bengal. The routes, according to Scott, were from Manipur through Tipperah and Cachar; from Assam by Cachar and Jaintia; from Assam through the Brahmaputra. He wrote that it would be most difficult for the British to prevent the Burmese war boats if they chose the third route. He, thus, strongly favoured British intervention in Assam in order to drive out the Burmese.

At the recommendation of David Scott, the Governor General Lord Amherst (1823-28) declared war against king of Ava (Amarapura) on March 5, 1824. Thus began the *First Anglo-Burmese War*. The expulsion of the

Burmese from Assam was regarded as one of the main objectives of the war.

Let us now briefly discuss the course of the first Anglo-Burmese War. The war was fought in three sectors- Assam, Arakan and Rangoon. The British force in Assam was placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Mac Moraine. He died of cholera in May 1824 and was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Richards. David Scot maintained a close relation with the commander and provided all necessary help from outside. In the Brahmaputra Valley, the war began early in March 1824.The British force left Goalpara on 13th March and arrived in Guwahati on 28th March. The British under Captain Sneyd captured Guwahati quite easily without bloodshed as the Burmese had already evacuated it. Thus, in less than a month Guwahati, Raha and Nowgong fell into the hands of the British. Due to the onset of monsoon the hostilities were suspended but operations were renewed in November again. The Burmese now made a hasty retreat to Upper Assam and fell back upon the fort of Rangpur. The Burmese could not face the British due to lack of reinforcement, internal dissensions and due to lack of food supply. Thus, they were compelled to leave Rangpur in March 1825 and the Brahmaputra Valley was freed from Burmese occupation. According to A.C.Banerjee, the occupation of Rangpur practically completed the British conquest of Assam.

The war in Arakan and Rangoon continued for several months. By January, 1826 the expulsion of the Burmese from Manipur was complete. The campaign in Arakan ended in April 1825. According to A.C. Banerjee, the campaign of Burma proper, which started auspiciously for the British with the occupation of Rangoon in May 1824 and the death of Mingimaha Bandula in April, 1825, came to a close in February 1826 when the main British army under General Sir Archibald Campbell reached Yandaboo, a village, within four days march from Ava. The Burmese were no longer in a position to offer any resistance and sued for peace. Thus, on 24 February, 1826, the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed between the Burmese Government at Ava and the British East India Company, terminating the first Anglo-Burmese War.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Answer the following questions:

a) In how many sectors the first Anglo-Burmese war was fought?

.....

b) Where did Chandrakanta Singha face a defeat from the Burmese?

.....

Q2: Name the Ahom kings installed by the Burmese.

.....

Q3: Who was the Governor General of India at the time of first Anglo–Burmese War?

.....

Q4: When did Mingimaha Bandula die?

.....

Q5: When was the Treaty of Yandaboo signed?

.....

11.4 THE TREATY OF YANDABOO AND BRITISH CONQUEST OF ASSAM

We have discussed so far the background of the Burmese invasion of Assam and the circumstances that led to British intervention. However, the real motive of this Anglo-Burmese rivalry and the British intervention of Assam were the imperialistic and colonial aspirations of both the parties. Hence, after the Burmese invasion of Assam, the British began their campaign against the Burmese (The First Burmese War, 1824-26). First, Lower Assam was freed, and then the British defeated the Burmese in Upper Assam leading to the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo.

The Treaty of Yandaboo was signed between the Burmese and the British on February 24, 1826. This treaty constituted an important landmark in the history of Assam. The treaty brought an end to the 600 years of Ahom rule in Assam and it marked the beginning of the rule of the British East

India Company in Assam. By Article 2 of the Treaty of Yandaboo, the king of Burma renounced all claims upon, and agreed to abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jayantia. With regard to Manipur it was stipulated that should Gambhir Singh desire to return to that country, he should be recognized by the king of Ava as the Rajah there of.

The result of the first Anglo-Burmese War proved to be a turning point in the history of Assam. According to K.N. Dutta, in the ordinary course Assam should have at once been restored to her rightful rulers whom the Burmese had dispossessed, but *nemesis* had come upon the internal quarrels that sapped the vitality of the Assamese people and their rulers even before the Burmese came and exposed their land to the *cupidity* of rival conquerors. The British, who had occupied the land during the course of the war, took advantage of the same dissensions amongst the princes and the nobles of Assam and the general distraction of the people and kept it under their own occupation by right of conquest from the Burmese (and not from Assamese), contrary to the earlier promise they made at the beginning of the war that they would restore the old native government in it after the war was over.



Nemesis **:** Punishment or defeat that is deserved and cannot be avoided.
Cupidity **:** Strong desire for more wealth, possession and power.

It may be mentioned here that at the time of the beginning of the war, the British had announced that they were not led to this country by the thirst of conquest and promised that they would re-establish a government adapted to the Assamese needs and calculated to promote the happiness of all classes in Assam. However, the British could not control their imperialistic attitude with regard to Assam and took all measures to occupy Assam permanently. Thus, after the Treaty of Yandaboo, Assam went under the British rule within a short period of time.

11.5 BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE SET UP

We have seen how the British occupied Assam after the Treaty of Yandaboo. Now the supreme government found it necessary to make arrangement for the administration of this region. Even before the Treaty of Yandaboo, the British adopted two different general principles in regard to

the administration of the two territorial units, namely, Lower and Upper Assam. After the treaty Assam was divided into two divisions: Western or Lower Assam and Eastern or Upper Assam with Biswanath as the boundary on the North bank.

Lower Assam comprised Kamrup, Nagaon and parts of Darrang with headquarters at Guwahati. Upper Assam comprised the remaining parts of Darrang, extending from Biswanath to the river Buridihing, excluding the Matak country, with its headquarters at Rangpur. Each division was placed under the control of a commissioner. David Scott was placed in charge of Lower Assam and was declared the Senior Commissioner. Colonel Richards was appointed in charge of Upper Assam with headquarters at Rangpur and was declared the Junior Commissioner. He was to exercise civil functions in Eastern Assam in addition to his military duties.

Inspite of having two Commissioners, David Scott was made in charge of overall administration in order to maintain uniformity in the administrative set up. Scott was to hold exclusive charge of political relation with the states and tribes of the entire region. Thus, it is clearly seen that David Scott was the most powerful official of that time. Although each Commissioner was to perform his civil duties independently, they were expected to be in constant touch with each other even in respect of the matters connected with their respective units. They were empowered to decide civil disputes, to administer criminal justice, to organize police system and to set up jails. In December, Lieutenant Colonel Richards resigned from his post and he was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Cooper**.** At the same time Adam White was appointed as Scott‘s assistant in Guwahati and Captain Davidson was appointed as an assistant in Goalpara.

It may be mentioned here that even during the initial period of military occupation, the British felt it necessary to adopt two different general principles in regard to the administration of the two above mentioned territorial units.i.e, Lower Assam and Upper Assam. There was a possibility of retaining Lower Assam under direct British rule and the British permanently annexed Lower Assam to the British territory in 1828. However that was not the case with Upper Assam. The future of Upper Assam still remained unsettled.

During the Burmese rule, Upper Assam had suffered much from the cruelties of the Burmese and a sort of anarchical condition was prevailing there. The Ahom nobility was still strong in Upper Assam. Therefore, David Scott was in favour of continuing the old system of administration in the area. They were also actively considering the restoration of Ahom monarchy in Upper Assam.

11.6 REVOLT OF 1857

From 1757 onwards, the expansionist policies of the British East India Company created resentment among the Indian people. The policy of conquest, economic exploitation and administrative changes had adversely affected all sections of people. All these policies of the British compelled the Indians to rise in revolt against the British in many parts of India. Finally, the popular discontent against the British rule found expression in the Revolt of 1857. As in other parts of India, the people of Assam also joined the revolt. Unfortunately, the revolt failed to achieve its aim, but it sowed the seeds of the freedom struggle, for which it is often termed as the First War of Indian Independence.

In was neither a sudden event nor was it confined to some particular areas. It was started by the sepoys of a British regiment, but all sections of people including the peasants, labourers, artisans, tribals, aristocrats and soldiers participated in this movement. Many Indian states also played a significant role in it. As in other parts of India, the people of Assam also had grievances against the British. The people of Assam had initially looked upon the Britishers as saviours but later on their attitude was changed towards them leading to the outbreak of rebellion in this region. The effects of the British rule in Assam are discussed below

After the Treaty of Yandaboo (24 February, 1826), the nobility of Assam who had lost their former power were greatly dissatisfied with foreign rule. They started their rebellion under the leadership of Dhananjoy Peoli Phukan and Gomdhar Konwar, etc. It was a symbol of aspirations of the Assamese for independence.

The then British Commissioner David Scott was in favour of the

restoration of the Ahom monarchy in Upper Assam because the revenues collected from Upper Assam would not be enough for the maintenance of British administration. Secondly, the restoration would satisfy the Ahoms, particularly the Ahom nobility.

The Central Government was not convinced by the arguments of Scott and so the question of the final settlement regarding Upper Assam was deferred. Lord William Bentinck who succeeded Lord Amherst as the Governor-General in 1828 took a realistic view of the whole situation. The administrative confusion and the hostile attitude of the Ahom nobility prompted Bentinck to take a definite decision on the question of Upper Assam without any further delay. On April 24, 1833 Purandar Singha was formally installed as a ruler of Upper Assam. But on the pretext of misgovernance, Upper Assam was brought under the direct control of the Company in 1838. Since then the people of Upper Assam had been dissatisfied with the rule of Company. By the treaty of 1826, the British had appointed Bar Senapati, the Chief of the Morans of Matak to provide a contingent of three hundred *paiks* in lieu of tribute. A new treaty was imposed on his successor Maju Gohain on the condition of paying an annual tribute of 10,000 rupees. This treaty was not liked by the Moran tribe on religious grounds. The British Government annexed the state of Matak in November, 1839. The British followed an expansionist policy and annexed the different states of the North-Eastern region one after another without any regard for the feelings of the people of Assam. This greatly increased the resentment of the people of Assam against the British rule.



***Paiks* :** Male servants for rendering services.

The new government was solely concerned with the collection of taxes but did not pay heed to the miserable economic condition of the ryots. Their condition deteriorated as the extortion of the government went on increasing. The British had failed to fulfill the promises they made to the people of Assam before the first Anglo-Burmese war. It was the aristocracy, which first reacted to this new situation with their abortive attempt. Each new administrative measure introduced by the British was a serious blow to the old aristocracy. The abolition of slavery in 1843 by the British Government created resentment as it eroded the power and privileges of the old

aristocracy in Assam. Protests against the government decision were made by the members of the ruling class everywhere. Captain Neufville's policy of employing men from Bengal in place of the local aristocracy further aggravated the situation.

Moreover, the British economic policies greatly irritated the people of Assam. The British started tea plantations in Assam. The British imposed the policy of "waste land regulation" a tactic of depriving the local people of the benefits of setting up Tea plantations. The British Government also managed to complete the formation of the imperialist capital by transferring the whole Tea industry to the British Tea planters through its clever regulations. They imported cheap labour force from Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Telengana. These imported cheap labourers were known as Coolie. They were viewed with suspicion by the local people of Assam. More than that, the elite section of the Assamese society was greatly dissatisfied with the British policy of opium cultivation. They pleaded with the government for the stoppage of the supply of opium to the people and for the eradication of the habit.

The British social and religious reforms created suspicion among the orthodox people of Assam. The activities of the government officials and Christian missionaries created fear among the Hindus and Muslims that their religion was in danger. British attitude of racial discrimination was also resented by the Assamese people.

Therefore, the old aristocracy and gentry could hardly reconcile themselves to the new British rule. Some of them became desperate and felt that their salvation lay only in the restoration of the old regime. Chandrakanta, the ex-Raja, after making several attempts to regain his possessions, died with a heavy heart in early 1838 at an early age of 43. Purandar, who was also removed from his position, made several representations urging upon his restoration till he breathed his last in October 1846. His only son and successor Kameswar also died a few years later, when his son Kandarpeswar was a mere boy of eleven. It was at this stage that Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Baruah, popularly known as Maniram Dewan, hitherto one of the most loyal and trusted officers of the Company, assumed a new role as the leader of the war of liberation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Who was placed in charge of Lower Assam in the British introduced administration?

.....

Q7: Who succeeded Lord Amherst as the Governor-General?

.....

Q8: Who was popularly known as Maniram Dewan?

.....



11.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit we have learnt,

- the circumstances leading to the Burmese invasion of Assam and the consequent intervention of the British in Assam.
- the first Anglo-Burmese war and its results.
- the administrative set up introduced by the British with reference to the administrative reforms of David Scott and Robertson.
- the revolt of 1857 in Assam.



11.8 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*

5) Dutt, K.N. (1993): *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Lawyers' Book Stall.

6) Gait, E., (2004): *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Revised,

Guwahati.

7) Saikia, Rajen, (2000): *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No.1: a) Three sectors, b) Hadira Chowki

Ans to Q No.2: Chandrakanta Singha and Jogeswar Singha.

Ans to Q No.3: Lord Amherst.

Ans to Q No.4: April, 1825.

Ans to Q No.5: 1826

Ans to Q No.6: David Scott

Ans to Q No.7: Lord Bentinct

Ans to Q No.8: Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Baruah



11.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1. Which treaty concluded the Anglo-Burmese War?

Q.2. Who was Gomadhar Konwar?

Q.3. Name the headquarters of Lower Assam under the British administrative set up?

Q.4. Who was Chandrakanta Singha?

(B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1. Who was Dhananjoy Peoli Phukan?

Q.2. Briefly discuss the administrative set up of Lower Assam introduced by the British?

Q.3. What do you know about Paik System?

Q.4. Who were Coolies?

Q.5. Write short notes on the following:

a) Purnananda Burhagohain

b) Badan Chandra Barphukan

(C) Long Question (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1. Discuss the Anglo-Burmese wars.

Q.2. Discuss the British administrative set up in Assam under David Scott and T. C. Robertson.

Q.3. Discuss the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 12: SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF ASSAM DURING COLONIAL PERIOD

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1. Learning Objectives

12.2. Introduction

12.3. Changes in the Economic Structure

12.4. Agrarian Revolts

12.5. Social Transformation of Assam towards modern Age

12.6. Let us Sum Up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Check your Progress

12.9 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to–

- explain the changes brought within the sphere of economy during the colonial rule
- describe the social changes in Assam during the British rule
- discuss the various types of agrarian revolts and the causes behind the frustration of the peasants

12.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previos unit, we have discussed about the establishment of British rule in Assam and the response of the natives towards them. In this Unit, we will be discussing the changes brought in by the colonial policies in matters of the society and economy. The British introduced many agrarian policies that had a deep impact on the native peasants. It ultimately led to the rise of the local farmers against the British.

This Unit will give us an overview of the response of the local people to the changes they encountered. Let us now look into the economic changes

brought during the colonial rule.

12.3 CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The economy of Assam during the British period was pathetic due to the exploitative nature of revenue system that was introduced and vigorously pursued.

The abolition of khel system resulted in the increase of revenue in Assam due to the pressure of land. Revenues went higher when land tax was introduced in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur Districts. In lieu of tax on land there were other taxes like the plough tax, the hoe tax etc. The capitation tax and taxes on one's caste and calling continued till 1837-38. The rate of assessment was also enhanced from time to time causing deeper frustration among the people. The abkari opium was introduced in 1851-52. In the year 1859, there was an attempt at raising the rate of assessment of all the districts on an equal level with the district of Kamrup.

However, the financial strain caused by the uprising of 1857 led to further introduction of new form of taxes. It was in 1860 that income tax was introduced. Initially, the amount was minimal but it increased with its gradual extension to the other districts. The British encouraged the ryots to cultivate cash crops and also contemplated to put tax on bari lands in order to earn higher revenues. In matters of the hill tribes, house tax was imposed and many of the tribes willingly paid as it offered them protection from external threats. The revenue policy of the British was detrimental to the interest of the farmers of ryots. They lost ownership over their land and property.

The Land Settlement regulation Act of 1886, led to different types of land relationship. Accordingly there were three different classes- zamindar, intermediaries and the peasant class. The peasants were faced by acute poverty, as they started losing more lands. The 1886 regulation also brought tenancy system. The increased land rent compelled them to seek help from the money lenders. Thus colonial rule only helped in feudal exploitation. The pressure on land further increased with the immigration policy, which allowed foreigners to settle as cultivators.

With a subsistence economy, the Assamese people were moderately affluent. However, there were cases of indebtedness in both the Brahmaputra as well as the Surma valley. With the introduction of the Railways and related economic development, the self sufficient nature of the village was long gone. Traditional industries were on the decline and land holding was becoming smaller. Exploitation of the *mahajans* increased adding to the plight of the farmers.

Popular discontent increased with every new assessment of the land revenue at enhanced rates or with the imposition of new taxes. Maniram Dewan protested against the opium trade of the East India Company in Assam. But his protest was unheeded and opium and salt continued to yield large revenue for the government. R*aij Mels* were held in different parts of the state under the leadership of local leaders like *Gossains, Dolois* or influential land-owners to ventilate their popular grievances. Ryots both Hindus and Muslims became united under the *Gossains, Dolois*, or *Gaonburhas* of their respective areas to lodge their protests against the arbitrary and unjustified revenue assessment of the British Raj.

The continuous increase of revenue and taxes was not justified as the British had hardly taken any measures in the development of agriculture.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Answer the following as True or False:

(i) It was in 1866 that income tax was introduced. (True/False)

(ii) Land tax was introduced in Sibsagar. (True/False)

(iii) The traditional cottage industries were on the decline. (True/False)

(iv) Colonial rule ushered a period of prosperity for the peasants. (True/False)

(v) Maniram Dewan protested against the opium trade. (True/False)

12.4 AGRARIAN REVOLTS

Thus, discontent against the alien rule, which in earlier period was

generally confined to the members of royalty and aristocracy, now touched every member of the society and popular movements became a usual feature of this period.This led to a series of agrarian revolts in parts of Assam. A few of such revolts are mentioned below.

- **The Phulaguri Uprising, 1861**

In 1861 the peasants of Phulaguri area in the Nagaon district, who were mostly tribal (Tiwa and Kachari) people vehemently protested through their Raij Mels against the prohibition of Poppy cultivation. In that year rumours of imposition of taxes on incomes and on areca nuts and betel leaves made them angry. But the British authorities did not pay any attention to their sentiments and adopted strong measures to suppress the demonstrations of resentments made by the peasants in 1861. Several persons lost their lives while many were injured when the crowd was fired upon. Forty one persons were arrested on charge of their alleged implication in the murder case and eight or nine leaders, mostly tribal, were punished with death or deportation. This incident is still remembered by the people of Assam as the *Phulagurir Dhawa* or the Battle of Phulaguri. It was the earliest spontaneous popular movement in Assam against the policy of colonial exploitation.

- **The Jayantia Rebellion, 1860-63**

The people of the Jayantia hills were greatly dissatisfied with the imposition of new kind of taxes like house tax, stamp duty, etc by the British Government. They rose in open rebellion. The British suppressed them with a strong hand, but the trouble did not stop there. The Khasi people were roused to action when a License Tax (tax for keeping guns) which interfered in their tribal customs was introduced shortly afterwards. The British finally suppressed them in 1863 after a long and hard campaign.

- **The Assam Riots, 1894**

Among the agrarian outbreaks in Assam, the most important rebellion was the Assam Riots of 1893-94. It marked the anger of the peasants against the enhancement of land revenue. The new assessment increased the rates by 70 to 80 percent and this greatly annoyed the farmers. A series of Raij-Mels were held to voice popular resentment. They demanded the

withdrawal of the unjust orders which affected their economic stability that was solely based upon land and agriculture. The people of Rangia and Lachima in Kamrup, and Patharughat in Darrang launched a "no tax campaign" declaring excommunication to be the penalty for anyone who disobeyed the *Raij* (people).

- **Rangia**

The movement at Rangia started with the looting of the Rangia bazar. The Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup McCabe arrived on the spot and arrested many leaders. On 10th January, several thousand people assembled in the field close to the Rangia police station demanding the release their arrested leaders. When McCabe ordered them to disperse they shouted "We won't pay the increased revenue." Finding the situation critical McCabe called for additional reinforcements. Many of them lost their lives and many were arrested. This uprising was suppressed with a strong hand.

- **Lachima**

It began with the assault of a mauzadar and a mandal on January 1894, near Lachima who had gone there for collection of revenue. Seventy five persons were arrested in this connection. The threatening attitude of the ryots compelled McCabe to arrive at Lachima and he adopted very strong measures to suppress the uprising.

- **Patharughat**

A similar uprising took place at Patharughat in Darrang District in January, 1894. Not only did the ryots refuse to pay the increased amount of revenue but they also stopped those who sought to pay revenues to the government. To deal with the situation, J.D. Anderson, the D.C. of Darrang, arrived at Patharughat with a band of military police under Lt. Berrington. Next morning a huge crowd assembled in a paddy field in front of the rest house where Anderson was staying. Anderson asked them to disperse but the people would not listen and began to throw sticks and clods of earth at Anderson. There was an open firing, which resulted in the death of fifteen people and injury to many ryots. The Patharughat incident is still remembered as the *Doli Ran* as the people attacked the British with clods of earth.

There were similar uprisings in many other parts of Assam. The government adopted many strong measures to suppress them. The Raij Mels in Assam played an important role in making the people conscious of the utter helplessness in which they lived under the British Raj. From these uprisings, the British realised that unless the Raij Mels were crushed, the maintenance of British sovereign power in Assam would be next to impossible.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2: Match the following:

(i) Doli Ran ——————————— (a) 1861

(ii) Phulaguri Dhawa ———————— (b) 1894

(iii) License Tax ——————————— (c) Assam riots

(iv) No Tax Campaign ———————— (d) DC of Darrang

(v) J.D. Anderson ——————————— (e) The Jayantia Revolt

12.5 SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF ASSAM TOWARDS MODERN AGE

Being a homogenous society there was no class segregation in the Assamese society. But with the colonial rule, new class distinction emerged due to the strident measures taken by the Government.

The introduction of modern education and also due to the contacts with Bengal, the society of Assam witnessed a massive change. The earlier rigidity with caste suddenly started to decline. The society also began to shun the age old prejudicial thoughts and beliefs. The Muslims who had been suffering from various social disabilities were now in a better position. Growth of urbanization and the need for services, led to the disappearance of the so-called untouchability. There was an increase in the mobility of the common people to different places in search of knowledge and trade.

The trend for upward mobility in terms of class, led to positional changes. The people often changed their names and entering into a class while others changes their tribal title.

The Neo-Vaishnavite culture and preachings of Sri Sankardeva also had a huge influence in the liberal attitude followed in the caste system.

With the coming of Census operations, the backward classes began to move upwards in the social hierarchy. However, practices like endogamy, exogamy and hypergamy did exist.

The introduction of press also brought many social changes. The Assamese youths who were education on western lines suddenly started following the culture of the west. The rigid customs followed by the Brahmans were now becoming relaxed. There was a crying demand for the eradication of social evils and also reforms like the advocacy for widow re-marriage. Female education received widespread attention and a strong public opinion in favour of it was raised.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The Vaishnavite movement is related to the teachings of _____.

(ii) The practice of _____ was encouraged in the Assamese society during colonial rule.

(iii) The _____ who had been suffering from various social disabilities were now in a better position.



12.6 LET US SUM UP

After going thorugh this Unit, you have learnt:

- the economic transformation of the society during the colonial rule
- the impact of the colonial policies on the peasants and their immediate response
- the various peasant revolts that erupted in different place in Assam
- the changes within the society brought because of the British rule



12.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*

5) Dutt, K.N. (1993): *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Lawyers' Book Stall.

6) Gait, E.,(2004): *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Revised, Guwahati.

7) Saikia, Rajen, (2000): *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.



12.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No.1: (i) False (ii) True (iii) True (iv) False (v) True

Ans to Q No.2:

(i)	Doli Ran	————	(b) 1894
(ii)	Phulaguri Dhawa	————	(a) 1861
(iii)	License Tax	————	(e) The Jayantia Revolt
(iv)	No Tax Campaign	————	(c) Assam riots
(v)	J.D. Anderson	————	(d) DC of Darrang

Ans to Q No.3:

I. Sri Sankardeva

II. Widow Re-marriage

III. Muslims



12.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. Mention few taxes that were imposed on the peasants.

Q2. Who took the lead in organizing the peasant protest movement?

Q3. Who was the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup during the Rangia Revolt?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write a short note of:

(a) Phulaguri Dhawa

(b) Raij Mels

(c) Doli Ran

(d) Land Settlement Act

(e) De-industrialization in Assam

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Describe the social change in Assam during the British period.

Q2. Explain what led to the Agrarian Revolts in Assam and what were it consequences.

Q3. Discuss the Land Revenue Policy of the British.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 13: EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1. Learning Objectives

13.2. Introduction

13.3. Rise of Assamese Nationalism

13.4. Causes for the rise of Assamese Nationalism

13.5. Establishment of different organisations

13.6. Let us Sum Up

13.7 Further Reading

13.8 Check your Progress

13.9 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the rise of nationalism in Assam
- explain the causes behind the rise of nationalism in Assam
- describe in details about the establishment of different organisations

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, we had discussed the structural changes brought in the social and economic sphere of Assam by the British. The changes had far reaching impact on the people as it developed anti-colonial feelings.

In this Unit, we will discuss the factors that led to the rise of nationalism in Assam. With the rise of Assamese nationalism, many political organizations grew up and it was through the activities of these organizations that the people of Assam were inspired to participate in the fight for freedom.

The next Unit will be an attempt to look into the various liberation movements and the level of popular participation in Assam.

13.3 RISE OF ASSAMESE NATIONALISM

The establishment of British rule brought about far reaching political, economic and social changes in Assam. The East India Company's rule came to an end in 1858. After the end of the Company's rule, Queen Victoria of England by a proclamation on November 1, 1858 directly assumed the responsibility of the Indian administration. The British Government introduced changes in every sphere of administration. In course of time it resulted in an increasing feeling of being exploited by the colonial government.

Though the British initially appeared as the saviour of the Assamese people, yet their imperialistic intentions soon became apparent. Therefore, discontent with the British rule soon began to rear its head. The people of Assam were resentful of the British from the very beginning. The introduction of British rule actually broke the basic structure of the old regime. This loss of powers and privileges that they had always enjoyed as members of the ruling classes led them to rethink about the intentions of the British. They could now foresee a very bleak future for themselves under the British.

13.4 CAUSES FOR THE RISE OF ASSAMESE NATIONALISM

This anti-colonial feeling combined with various other social forces resulted in the rise of political awareness or consciousness in the region which in turn led to the rise of Assamese nationalism. We are now going to discuss some of the key factors for the rise of Assamese nationalism.

- **Dissatisfaction of the Nobility**

The members of nobility were highly dissatisfied under the British rule. They were deprived of the benefits and were subjected to taxation which reduced their status to that of a commoner. Imposition of a foreign language in the form of Bengali sidelined the Dangarias (officials at the Ahom court) in the new administrative set up. The influx of *Amolahs* (officials) from Bengal further infuriated them and created a sense of common purpose amongst the Assamese nobility.

- **Money Economy and Revenue Maximisation**

The introduction of money economy adversely affected the Assamese cultivators. They had to sell a major part of their produce simply to meet their land revenue demands which constantly kept on increasing. With every assessment, the condition of the cultivators deteriorated. Additional taxes like the grazing tax (levied as cattle fee), taxes on river ghats, taxes on markets, taxes on fisheries, etc caused tremendous discontentment among the people and united them against their common enemy, the British.

- **Opium Policy**

In 1860 the government banned the cultivation of opium. But the volume of trade in opium increased, with the government acquiring monopoly over it. By levying an excise duty the government realised a large amount of money from opium in Assam which was a heavy burden on the people. The government did not restrict the sale of opium and large scale consumption continued.

- **Decline of Local Industries**

The British rule set in motion a process of de-industrialisation with the entry of British manufactured goods in the markets of Assam and the ultimate ruin of the traditional industries. The people lost their subsidiary sources of income.

The tea, coal, oil industries failed to absorb the displaced local population as they provided no source of employment. Managed and owned by Europeans and worked with immigrant labour force, industrialisation in Assam was confined to certain sectors only.

- **Immigration**

There was the large scale immigration of tea garden labourers, and workers in the coal and oil sector. The immigration of people increased the population of Assam with no corresponding increase in the production of the cultivators in Assam. Under pressure the subsistence economy steadily eroded resulting in growing dependence on imported food grains.

- **Introduction of Western Education**

The introduction of Western education and the infiltration of new liberal ideas and knowledge through it instilled a spirit of rational enquiry. This led

to a growing demand for economic and social reforms. The students from Assam often had to go to Bengal for higher education which was the epicenter of rising Indian nationalism. It was here that they imbibed the idea of nationalism and on their return spread new ideas among the people of Assam.

- **Growth and Development of Press**

The growth and development of Press in Assam led to the general awakening among the people. In Assam, the birth of journalism may be traced to the publication of *Arunodoi* by the American Baptist Missionaries in their press established at Sibsagar in 1844. Within a short period of time many vernacular newspapers and periodicals were published in Assam, such as, Assam Bilashini, Asam Mihir, Assam Darpan, The Assam News, etc. These newspapers raised awareness and created public opinion on current issues like opium consumption, pitiable working condition of the tea garden labourers, etc. Bengali language was replaced by Assamese in 1872 which provided the people of Assam with the much needed moral boost.

- **Emergence of Assamese Intelligentsia**

The introduction of Western education and the development of the Press along with the economic grievances of the people led to the rise of Assamese intelligentsia. This group of Assamese people was equipped with knowledge on modern ideas and western values. They had a dramatically different outlook and they sowed the first seeds of *Renaissance* (new age) in Assam. Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan was the harbinger of this new age and his work was carried forward by Hem Chandra Barua, Gunabhiram Barua, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Padmanath Gohain Barua and others. Their writings infused Assamese literature and the minds of the Assamese people with both the liberalism of the West and the glorious tradition of Assam's past.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Who were the *"Amolah"*?

.....

.....

Q2: Define the new "Intelligentsia class" that emerged in Assam.

.....

.....

Q3: Mention the impact of de-industrialisation on the common people of Assam.

.....

.....

13.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS

With the growing resentment among the common people towards the British colonizers, there emerged many organizations. *Raijmels* played a crucial role in providing a platform for the people to put forward their grievances. Before the birth of the Indian national Congress, organizations like the Ryot Sabha formed by a group of enlightened people to protest against the increase in land revenue played a major role. In Assam, traditionally, the *Raij-Mels* were there as an assembly of village people for discussing the socio-political issues.

The Congress was not functional in Assam (1885), and hence the delegates from different *Raijmels* or sabhas of the province were sent to attend the congress sessions. The *Raij-mels* were active in Sibsagar, Nagaon, Darrang, Kamrup and Lakhimpur and were instrumental in increasing popular participation. The *Tezpur Ryot Sabha* established in and around 1884 had a wide base in the villages. The Ryot Sabhas was basically formed at ventilating the grievance of the peasants against the hike in revenues.

The *Assam Desh Hitaishini Sabha* in 1885, at Sibsagar and *Gyan Pradayini Sabha* in 1857 at Nagaon were formed under the capable leadership of Anandaram Barua and Gunabhiram Barua. The *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* founded in 1884 by Jagannath Barua marks a milestone in the history of political association in Assam. The *Sarbajanik Sabha* demanded the abolition of the cultivation of the poppy and also a large employment of the natives of the soil. In 1903 the educated intelligentsia

class led by Manik Chandra Baruah, Ghanashyam Barua, and others founded the Assam Association. The agenda of the *Assam Association* and the *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* were mostly to organise protest meeting against undesirable tagging and formation of new states. *The Assam Chatra Sanmilan* in 1915 was one organisations which initially pressed for regional demands but gradually merged into mainstream politics. They immensely contributed to the rise of Assamese nationalism and to the national movement for freedom from British rule. In 903, the *Assam Association* was formed under the leadership of Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua as the President. The Association worked as one broad based political organization due to the incessant effort of the members.

There were socio-cultural organizations like the *Assam Sahitya Sabha* formed in 1872 at Calcutta, the *Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha*, which originated in Calcutta for the promotion of Assamese language and literature. The *Seng Khasi* was started to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Khasis. Noteworthy to mention here is the fact that, the leaders of most of these associations were the new emerging intellectual class who were educated on western lines and who were in contact with Bengal, the heart of Indian Nationalism.

The emergence of these organizations only conformed the widespread political awakening of the people. However, most of these organisations did not choose to confront the Government directly on any matter rather they took to constitutional methods for the deliberation of their problem.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4: Match the following:

(i) *The Assam Desh Hitaishini Sabha* — i. 1884

(ii) *The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* founded — ii. 1885

(iii) *The Assam Chatra Sanmilan* — iii. 1857

(iv) *The Gyan Pradayini Sabha* — iv. 1915

(v) *The Assam Sahitya Sabha* — *v. 1872*



13.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about:

- the rise of Assamese nationalism and the causes behind it
- the emergence of different cultural and political organisations in Assam
- the role played by these associations in creating awareness among the common people.
- the role of eminent luminaries of Assam in the functioning of these associations



13.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Dutt, K.N. (1993): *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Lawyers' Book Stall.

5) Gait, E.,(2004): *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Revised, Guwahati.

6) Saikia, Rajen, (2000): *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

13.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No. 1: The officials who came from Bengal and worked for the British in Assam were termed as *Amolahs* by the Native people.

Ans to Q No. 2: The new Intelligentsia class of Assamese society comprised of those who were educated on western lines and equipped with

knowledge on modern ideas and western values.

Ans to Q No. 3: The impact of de-industrialisation were:

- The local artisan faced a loss of income
- The traditional industries were ruined
- There was increasing unemployment among the local youths

Ans to Q No. 4:

(i) *The Assam Desh Hitaishini Sabha* ———— i. 1885
(ii) *The Sarbajanik Sabha* founded ———— ii. 1884
(iii) *The Assam Chatra Sanmilan* ———— iii. 1915
(iv) *The Gyan Pradayini Sabha* ———— iv. 1857
(v) *The Assam Sahitya Sabha* ———— v. 1872



13.8. MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions

Q1. Who founded *The Sarbajanik Sabha*?

Q2. When and where Arunodoi was first published?

Q3. In which year was Bengali replaced by Assamese as the official language?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Define “Raijmels” or “The Ryot Sabhas”.

Q2. Mention the names of few personalities who were the harbingers of a new age in the history of Assam.

Q3. How did modern education enable the growth of popular participation against the British?

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Trace the development of the press in Assam.

Q2. Discuss the causes behind the rise of Assamese nationalism.

Q3. Explain the role of *Raijmels* in raising popular consciousness against the colonial rule.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 14: PARTICIPATION OF ASSAM IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Partition of Bengal and its Impact upon Assam

14.4 The Non Co-operation Movement in Assam

14.5 Assam and the Civil Disobedience Movement

14.6 The Quit India Movement in Assam

14.7 Grouping Controversy and Independence

14.8 Let Us Sum Up

14.9 Further Reading

14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.11 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the partition of Bengal and its impact on Assam,
- discuss the role of Assam in the Non-Co-operation Movement,
- describe the role of Assam in the Civil Disobedience Movement,
- discuss the Quit India Movement and its impact on Assam.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, you have learnt about the emergence of nationalism in Assam and the development of political consciousness among the people of Assam. The protest movement of 1857 against the foreign rule made the people of Assam politically conscious and subsequently helped in the rise of Assamese nationalism.

In this unit we will discuss the participation of Assam in every phases of national movement, namely, the Non-Co-operation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

14.3 PARTITION OF BENGAL AND ITS IMPACT UPON ASSAM

Bengal was the centre of rising Indian nationalism in the late 19th century. Being a large province, the British Government was unable to rule Bengal. There was immense pressure on the Calcutta Secretariat and the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was unable to give his personal attention to such a big province. The British Government in the pretext of administrative inconvenience decided to partition the province of Bengal into two parts, a) East Bengal and Assam and West Bengal. Like the all India picture Assam was also to be effected by this partition proposal.

In fact, it is necessary to mention here that the process of readjustment of territories had begun since the sixties of the 19th century. In 1896, it was William Ward, Chief Commissioner of Assam, who had suggested the transfer of Chittagong division and the two districts of Dacca and Mymensing to Assam. But the proposal was not pursued by the new Chief Commissioner, Henry Cotton because he felt that such a change would bring forth a lot of protests. The transfer issue was thereafter postponed for the time being.

But again early in 1903, Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal renewed the earlier proposal of the transfer of the Chittagong division, together with the districts of Dacca and Mymensing and secured the approval of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. Lord Curzon had another motive in his mind behind the partition of Bengal for administrative efficiency. But the real motive behind this partition was to divide the people of Bengal on the lines of religion and to check the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal from where it had spread to other parts of the country. He observed that the people and the administration in the Chittagong division or in Dacca and Mymensing did not differ from those in the districts of Sylhet and Cachar in Assam. The Viceroy therefore strongly recommended the creation of a new province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam' by adding the districts of Dacca and Mymensing as well as the Chittagong division to Assam. The entire Country opposed this decision of the British government.

During that period, nationalism in Assam was at its infant stage. In comparison to the Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley was more conscious about the partition plan as they had close touch with Bengal. Initially, the reaction of the people of Assam to the Partition of Bengal was muted. They were more concerned with regional issues than mainstream politics. Hence, they failed to realise the implications of the act of partition. At the individual level, the Assamese intelligentsia tried to point out elaborately the issues at stake. They made it clear that if Assam was tagged on with the more advanced districts of Bengal, the Assamese people would have to face unequal competition from the Bengalese of East Bengal in every walk of life. If the seat of administration was shifted to Dhaka, then Assam proper would not receive the same attention as it did. But the protest of the intelligentsia was limited to the writing of letters and articles in the Press.



LET US KNOW

The European planters welcomed the partition scheme as the name of Assam was retained in the nomenclature of the newly created province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam'. Their only fear was that in case the name Assam was removed from the nomenclature of the new province, the sale of their tea marketed as 'Assam Tea' might be affected.

In Bengal, the partition was opposed by the people on many accounts, the most important one being the communal aspect involved in the partition plan. But the people of Assam gradually got alarmed at the partition because of the possibility of domination by the non-Assamese elements. The people of Assam feared that in the proposed province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam', the Assamese would lose their separate identity and the people would be deprived of their legitimate share in the government. The Partition of Bengal made the people of Assam convinced about the destructive motives of British rule. In the Surma Valley, public resentment was more strongly expressed.

The Swadeshi Movement that had begun in the wake of the anti-partition agitation raised the national movement to new heights. The *Surma Valley Association* organized Swadeshi and boycott meetings at several places. A *Swadeshi Mission* was also started at Silchar to spread the message of Swadeshi amongst the rural masses. But more than Swadeshi, it was the idea of boycott that attracted the people of Assam more, because it promised hope for the regeneration of local industries. This was however confined to urban centres. At Dhubri, Goalpara, Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and other towns, bonfires were made of foreign goods and enthusiasm was shown in buying Swadeshi goods. One of the most important aspects of the movement in these places was the perfect understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims.

The student community of Assam played a very important role in popularising the Swadeshi Movement. In Barpeta, Tezpur and other places the students, besides organizing protest meeting, also dissuaded people from purchasing foreign cloth. Spinning and weaving were common in every household in Assam and as such the use of Swadeshi was in vogue among the people since long time past. So far as the boycott of foreign goods was concerned many people refused to purchase foreign products.



Swadeshi: A political movement in British India that encouraged domestic production and boycott of foreign goods as a step towards home rule.

Swaraj: Swaraj generally mea -ns self-governance or home rule.

Revolutionary ideas and secret societies gradually found their way into Assam. The *Arunachal Ashram* near Silchar played a significant role in infusing the revolutionary ideas. Through its mouth piece, *Praja-Shakti* radical ideas and the idea of *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* were spread among the youth. In the Brahmaputra Valley, inflammatory literature was found in some hostels of the Cotton College. The voluntary organisation of the *Seva-Sangha* under leadership of Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury developed during this period, on the lines of the *Anushilan Samiti* of Bengal. But the idea of revolutionary nationalism, Swadeshi and Swaraj failed to receive widespread support in Assam due to lack of political consciousness at the grass root level.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Mention the new provinces to be created by the partition of Bengal.

.....

Q2: When did Bengal partition?

.....

Q3: Who was the leader of the voluntary organisation of the *Seva-Sangha*?

.....

14.4 THE NON CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

The Swadeshi movement which mainly arose out of the anti-partition agitation had quickened the sense of national oneness and solidarity of India. The idea was slowly gaining ground even in the Congress. In 1906, Dadabhai Naoroji had declared Swaraj to be the objective of the Congress. But it was only when Mahatma Gandhi activity entered the arena of Indian politics to fight for India's independence with new methods and techniques that the Indian National Congress opened a new page in the history of India's struggle for freedom. The Punjab atrocities and the Khilafat agitation were the most important events which evoked a great discontent all over India. In 1919, the infamous Rowlatt Acts were passed by the British Government arming it with extraordinary repressive powers.

Mahatma Gandhi organized a passive resistance movement against such repressive measures. Hartals and mass demonstrations were organized in many parts of India. The government repressed the movement with a heavy hand. The worst feature of the repression was the terrible massacre by General Dyer of the unarmed people that assembled at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar. It is known as the Massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh (1919). Martial law was proclaimed in Punjab. This Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy and Gandhiji's emergence as the undisputed leader not only helped in the growth of an all India political awareness among all sections of the



Non Co-operation: It is a non-violent civil disobedience against a government or an occupying power.

people but also paved the way for the historic *Non Co-operation* Movement of 1921. Among these happenings of national resentment, a new issue disturbed the emotions of Indian Muslims. It was concerned with Khilafat, the highest office in the Islamic world. After the World War I, the Allies decided to disband the Office of the Khalif. The Muslim Community felt it an insult to their religion.

In Assam also people came forward in support of the Non Co-operation Movement. The Assam Provincial Congress was formed at the height of the Non Co-operation Movement with the setting up of Congress Committees at the district level so that the programmes of the movement could be implemented successfully. One remarkable feature of the Non Co-operation Movement was its intense mass appeal. People of all classes, students, labourers, peasants, both men and women felt the urge for Swaraj and responded in a greater or lesser degree to the call for Non Co-operation. The involvement of different classes of people of Assam in the movement was a unique feature. An important aspect of the Non Co-operation movement in Assam was the involvement of the tea garden labourers in it. The Non Co-operation Movement offered them the opportunity for the first time to raise their voice of protest against the British exploitation. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Assam in 1921, gave a fillip to the movement and the problems of tea garden workers attracted his attention. He advised the tea planters to popularise Swadeshi among the workers. A notable feature of the Non Co-operation Movement in Assam had been the propaganda against the consumption of opium. The Congress Volunteers in different districts made a door-to-door campaign about the evil effects of the consumption of opium.

In January, 1921, the students of Assam, following the decision of the All India Students Conference held at Nagpur in December, 1920, to participate in the Non Co-operation Movement, launched a strong agitation for boycott of schools and colleges. The contribution of students to the success of the Non Co operation Movement was remarkable. As a matter of fact, it was the students who began the movement in Assam. Boycott of foreign goods and especially of foreign clothes, propagation of Khadi,

picketing before the liquor and opium shops were the chief items in the programme for the achievement of Swaraj. Preparations for a no-tax and no-revenue campaign were also made at selected places.

Women also equally participated with men in the Non Co-operation Movement in Assam. Women held meetings in various places to keep up the tempo of the movement. Women were usually not arrested during the Non Co-operation Movement in Assam but there is no doubt that a new awakening came amongst them.

The Non Co-operation Movement failed to achieve its immediate goal of establishing Swaraj in India. The British Government tried hard to suppress the movement and the jails were filled with political prisoners. But its apparent failure must not blind us to the fact that the movement had a tremendous impact on the people. It marked the beginning of Assam's active participation in all India politics. Assam joined the main stream of nationalist upsurge. The repressive measures of the British Government against the Non Co-operators instead of demoralising the people made them determined soldiers of the freedom movement. Gandhiji suspended the Non Co-operation movement in 1922 because of a violent incident that took place at Chauri Chaura in Bihar where 22 policemen were killed.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4: Name the British officer associated with the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy.

.....

Q5: When was the infamous Rowlatt Act passed?

.....

Q6: When did Mahatma Gandhi visit Assam?

.....

14.5 ASSAM AND THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

The spirit of the Indian National movement became slow after the suspension of the Non Co-operation Movement and was revived only with

the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Various developments in the meantime, however, served as the background for the upsurge of the Civil Disobedience Movement. First, the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 offered an opportunity to unite the different groups and parties in the country against the British. Second, the freedom movement reached new heights centering upon the opposition to the Simon Commission. Protest demonstrations, *hartals* (strike), etc, were held all over the country when the members of the Commission landed in Bombay. Third, the Congress rejected the proposal of a Round Table Conference in London for the solution of the constitutional problem as suggested by the Simon Commission except on promise of full Dominion Status, and declared in the Lahore Session in December, 1929 that Complete Independence or *Purna Swaraj* would be the goal of the Congress's fight for freedom. Thus, the Congress was preparing itself for a new phase of the movement. Congress members were directed to resign their seats in the Legislatures and preparations were made for launching a Civil Disobedience Movement including non-payment of taxes whenever possible. It was in view of these developments that Gandhiji was preparing himself and the people of the country for the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930).

In Assam, there was bickering among the Congress leaders over the Civil Disobedience movement. As the difference of opinion could not be resolved, a section of them resigned their posts. Veteran leaders like Tarun Ram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, etc. came out of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. Leadership was now held by the younger leaders such as Bishnuram Medhi, Gopinath Bardoloi, Siddhinath Sarma, Tayebulla and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury. In the Civil Disobedience Movement, the student community played a very important role. Liladhar Barua was one such leader who, by encouraging the students, gave a new dimension to the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam.

Mahatma Gandhi began his Salt Satyagraha in April, 1930, after the historic boycott of the British goods. Violation of Salt Regulations by making Salt in the indigenous way and the violation of Forest laws at certain places in Assam were recorded to. Bishnuram Medhi conducted the movement

with firmness and he was assisted by Hem Chandra Barua and other leaders like Omeo Kumar Das, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua, Siddhinath Sarma, Debeswar Sarma, Lakshmidhar Sarma, Satradhikar Goswami of Garmur and many others.

Women also participated in the movement. Chandraprava Saikiani and Durgaprova Bora came forward to resort to picketing before the Cotton College at Guwahati. Arrest and imprisonment, beating and lathi-charge on men and women, and attachment and confiscation of property of the villagers for failure to pay the land revenue by the government became the order of the day. The participation of students greatly hampered the British exploitative policy and the British Government, therefore, had to take immediate steps to prevent students from joining the political movement. J. Cunningham issued a circular (26 April, 1930) to all the Headmasters of government and non-government schools. The circular, known as the **Cunningham Circular**, forbade students to associate themselves with any political movement. It was clearly stated in the Circular that the parents or guardians would have to give an undertaking in writing that their son or ward would refrain from political activities. The undertaking was to be signed before the students were readmitted to the schools. But the circular failed to prevent the students from participating in politics. Rather, it provoked a sharp reaction throughout the country. Students all over Assam protested against the Circular in the form of boycott of educational institutions, picketing in front of school and college gates and *bringing out processions* shouting anti-circular slogans, etc. The governmental repression on the students encouraged the establishment of new schools. The Kamrup Academy of Guwahati, Sibsagar Vidyapeeth, Public High School of Dibrugarh and other schools were established at that time. These were all private schools, and had no connection with the government.

The impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement was also felt among the hill tribes of Assam. Gandhiji's call for Civil Disobedience inspired the Nagas to shake off British rule. The Kubai Nagas were the first to raise the banner of rebellion against the British in the wake of the Civil Disobedience Movement.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7: In which year the Cunningham Circular was issued?

.....

Q8: When did the Simon Commission appoint?

.....

Q9: Name two leaders of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam.

.....

But, unfortunately, the British Government was also able to suppress the Civil Disobedience Movement. Finally, the Civil Disobedience Movement was formally withdrawn in 1934. The very next year the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, 1935.

14.6 THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

By the end of the year 1941, realizing their gradual decline in the World War II, the British Government earnestly wanted co-operation of Indians in their war efforts. In order to solve the Indian problem, the British Government sent to India a mission under Sir Stafford Cripps in March 1942. But the Cripps Mission failed to fulfill the needs of the Indians. The failure of Cripps Mission led to wide spread disappointment and anger in the country. The year 1942 was a momentous year for the people of Assam as it was for other parts of the country. After the resignation of the Gopinath Bordoloi ministry, a new ministry headed by Mohammed Saadulla was formed in Assam. Meanwhile the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945) had its impact on the freedom movement of the country. Saadulla had been allowed to form the ministry in Assam on his tacit assurance that he would support Britain's war-efforts in all possible manners. However, the Congress in Assam started a vigorous campaign against the war efforts. In Assam at that time Satyagraha Committees were formed to propagate anti-war message as per direction of Gandhiji and the Congress. This anti-war propaganda in Assam gained much popularity. Again, at this critical time,

the newly installed Saadulla ministry was beset with a number of problems. Most important was the immigration of people from the Eastern part of Bengal. The Assamese viewed this to be a threat to their culture and identity. Another was the contribution of money by the Saadulla Government to the war-fund. Money was deducted from the salary of the government officials, organizing competitions, shows, etc. The Student community of Assam offered protest against the efforts of the government to raise money for the war-fund. Unable to face such protest and denunciation from people all over Assam, Saadulla tendered his resignation as the Chief Minister in 1941.

The failure of the Cripps Mission had closed the door for all future negotiations, For Gandhiji, the only possible solution now appeared to be for the British to quit India. The idea was gradually formulated into the Quit India Movement. The Congress Working Committee that met at Wardha on 14 July 1942 discussed Gandhiji's idea of launching a mass movement in the country demanding the immediate withdrawal of the British power from Indian soil. It adopted a resolution to this effect, which was notified in the All India Congress Committee's session held at Bombay on 7-8 August, 1942. Thus, the Quit India Movement was started in India with the slogan of ***Do or Die***. But before the Congress could start the movement, the government was quick to arrest almost all leaders of Congress by the next day. The sudden arrest of the leaders by the British Government produced instant reaction among the people of Assam as well. There was a mass upsurge in Assam. Most of the prominent Congress leaders of Assam were arrested following the adoption of the Quit-India resolution. Md. Tayebulla, Gopinath Bardoloi and Siddhinath Sarma were arrested at Dhubri. Some other leaders such as Pitambar Deb Goswami and Krishna Deb Goswami were also put behind bars. In the different districts of Assam like Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang, Sibsagar and other places, mob violence took place. People in these places attacked government properties and damaged railway and telegraph lines.

An exemplary act of bravery was shown by Kanaklata Baruah, a young girl of eighteen years from Gahpur. She led a huge crowd with a national tricolour flag in her hand to hoist it at the Gohpur police station, the British



Sedition: Actions or speeches which encourage rebellion against the authority of a state or ruler.

police fired upon her leading to her death. Mukunda Kakati who also met with the same fate. There are also other instances of police atrocities. Kushal Konwar was hanged to death in the Jorhat jail on an alleged charge of *sedition*. Kushal Konwar along with five others were accused of causing derailment of a train. People of the Surma Valley also played a key role in the Quit India Movement. People there formed committees through which Satyagraha was conducted. Women of Sylhet also took an active part in the movement. Saralabala and Snehalata were two important leaders who led the women of Sylhet in the movement.

Participation from various sections of people from all over the province the August Revolution made it a mass movement. The women of Assam also played a memorable role in the Quit India Movement. Many of them were enrolled as members of the Shanti Sena. Amalprova Das, Puspalata Das, Chandraprava Saikiani and many other women took up organizational works among the people. Another important aspect of the movement was the underground activities which provided leadership to the activists. Of the underground organizations which were locally active in Assam, mention may be made of *Ahimsa Biplavi Sangha* of Barpeta, *Mrityu Bahini* of Nagaon, *Shanti Bahini* of Darrang, etc. In Darrang district, the efficient volunteer organizations like *Shanti Bahini* and *Mrityu Bahini* under the guidance of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala played an important role in mobilizing the people against the British Raj. The pattern of activity of the underground movement was to organize no-tax campaigns, armed rebellion against the British, etc.

Constant Police atrocities and government repression ultimately succeeded in suppressing the movement. Yet the Quit India Movement marked an important phase in the freedom struggle of India in terms of popular participation and sacrifice of the people for the national cause. The importance of the movement lies in its popular character. It may be pointed out that the mass upsurge of the movement convinced the British rulers that their hold was sure to collapse in India, sooner or later. The movement marked the last phase of the freedom struggle in India. The British, after 1942 did not risk any confrontation with the people of India.

14.7 GROUPING CONTROVERSY AND INDEPENDENCE

At this juncture, the British Labour Government sent a cabinet mission under Sir Patric Lawrence to negotiate with Indian leaders the terms for the transfer of Power to Indians. The Cabinet Mission proposed the establishment of a Constituent Assembly to frame the future Constitution of India. Accordingly elections were held in India in 1946 to form the Constituent Assembly. The plan of the Mission to 'group' Assam with Bengal for creating a predominantly Muslim Zone in Eastern India was strongly opposed by the people of Assam. According to this plan the Assam representatives to the Constituent Assembly would have to sit in a Section with the Bengal representatives. The leader of Assam Congress, Gopinath Bordoloi stressed on provincial autonomy, he pleaded the separation of Sylhet district from Assam and Jinnah's claim to include Assam in Pakistan as a Muslim dominated Province, he hold the mission that it was absolutely impossible. On the other hand, Saddulah, leader of the Muslim League in Assam, tried to impress upon the delegation that it was the Muslims who actually constituted the majority of the population in the province. He opposed the idea of transferring only Sylhet to Pakistan instead he suggested that whole province might be attached to Bengal. There was a storm protest against the decision of Cabinet Mission Plan from every corner of Assam. With the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi who supported strongly Assam's stand and ability of Gopinath Bordoloi to convince the other Indian leaders about the justness of Assam's case. This led to the ultimate failure of the Grouping Plan of Cabinet Mission. Meanwhile, Lord Mountbatten was appointed as the last Viceroy of India. He immediately began to work on a scheme for the partition of India. When power was ultimately transferred by the British government to the people of India on 15th August, 1947, Assam emerged from her subjugation to foreign dominion for twelve decades as a free unit of the Dominion of India which was formally transformed into the Republic of Indian Union.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q10: In which year was the Quit India Resolution adopted?

.....

Q11: In which year did Stafford Cripps visit India?

.....

Q12: Mention two underground organizations of Quit India Movement?

.....



14.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learned,

- the Partition of Bengal and its impact upon Assam.
- the impact of the freedom movement in Assam and the participation of Assam in the Non Co-operation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement.
- and Assam's contribution to the freedom movement in India has been assessed.



14.9 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.

2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.

4) Dutt, K.N. (1993): *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Lawyers' Book Stall.

5) Gait, E.,(2004): *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Revised, Guwahati.

6) Saikia, Rajen, (2000): *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to the Q No.1: West Bengal , East Bengal and Assam.

Ans to the Q No. 2: 1905

Ans to the Q No. 3: Ambikagiri Roy Chaudhary

Ans to the Q No. 4: General Dyer

Ans to the Q No. 5: 1919

Ans to the Q No. 6: 1921

Ans to the Q No. 7: 1930

Ans to the Q No. 8: 1927

Ans to the Q No. 9: Omeo Kumar Das and Siddhinath Sarma

Ans to the Q No. 10: 1942

Ans to the Q No. 11: March, 1942

Ans to the Q No. 12: Shanti Bahini, Mrityu Bahini



14.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very short questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)

Q1. Why was Bengal partitioned?

Q2. When did Gandhi visit Assam?

Q3. In which year the resolution of *Purna Swaraj* was passed?

Q4. Name two martyrs of Quit India Movement of Assam?

Q5. Who was leader of the Muslim League in Assam?

Q6. Who headed Cabinet Mission?

(B) Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1. What is Cunninghum Circular?

Q2. What role did Assam play in the Quit India Movement?

Q3. Write short notes on:

a) Chauri Chaura incident

b) Cunningham Circular

(C) Long questions (**Answer each question in about 300-500 words)**

Q1. Discuss the effects of the Partition of Bengal in Assam.

Q2. Explain the impact of Non Co-operation Movement in Assam.

Q3. Describe the impact of Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam.

Q4. Discuss the role of students of Assam in the Freedom Struggle.

*** ***** ***



REFERENCES

Books:

English

1) Barpujari, H.K.(2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. I, Vol.II, Vol.III, & Vol. IV, 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.
2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.
3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. I, II,III, 2nd edn, Guwahati.
4) Choudhury, P.C., (1959):*The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the 12th century A.D.*
5) Dutt, K.N. (1993): *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Lawyers' Book Stall.
6) Gait, E.,(2004): *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Revised, Guwahati.
7) Saikia, Rajen, (2000): *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

Assamese

1) Barbarua, H., (1981): *Ahomar Din*, Guwahati.
2) Bora, D.,(1983): *Moamariya Gana Abbhyuthan*, Vol. I & II Banlata.
3) Kalita, R.C. (2006): *Asamar Kalanukramik Itihash*, Publication Board Assam.

Website and Electronic Resources:

1) Google Images.