UNIT 1: EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD IN ASSAM

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the background of the penetration of European powers in India
- learn about the gradual fall of the Ahom kingdom
- explain the Burmese invasion in Assam
- trace the policy adopted by the British to annex Assam
- discuss the Chief Commissioners Province
- highlight the Early revolts against British rule in Assam.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

One of the remarkable features of the 15th and 16th century was the attempt of the European powers to extend their control over the rest of the world. With the discovery of the sea route to India and America, the European powers engaged themselves is establishing colonial rule in various parts of the world. Thus emerged a new merchant class in search of new land for investment of capital. During this period further demands for raw materials and food were created. New markets were developed to make available the increasing demands. Of all the European powers, Britain created the leading colonial

expansion. The efforts in this direction were backed by the scientific and industrial power ever since the Industrial Revolution. Although in the nineteenth century, it built up an empire which was the largest under the crown. The form of penetration throughout the world was almost the same. The arrival of traders or missionaries heralded the beginning. In India, the English East India Company had established the trading posts in different coastal areas. The trading posts in India formed an integral part of Britain's trading empire for disposal of the manufactured goods. Trade gradually led to economic control and finally to political control. Within a short period, India was transformed into an usual colony for the British. The lucrative opportunities in India increased Britain's desire to caplure more and more territories and the country now looked towards expanding virgin lands. It was in this context that the British developed their interest in Assam.

During the initial stage of colonial penetration, the British had given importance to Assam and the Eastern Himalayas for its resources and strategic location, the region having a common frontier with Tibet, China and Burma. The British search for overseas markets had been seen in the context of economic condition of Britain in particular and Europe in general. With the attainment of the Dewani of Bengal, the East India Company had come into direct contact with the medieval kingdom of Assam. Prior to the advent of the East India Company, the territory was ruled by the Ahoms, a branch of the Shan group of the most widespread Tai population of South-East Asia, who in the early part of the 13th century, crossed the Patkai and settled in the territory around Sibsagar with Sukapha as their first king. Besides the British had been interested in commercial relations with frontier kingdoms. The Burmese activities in those areas proved unfavorable to the British commercial interest. Besides, the insecurity in the North-East Frontier threatened the security of Bengal for which the authorities at Fort William were compelled to enforce their influence in Assam. In 1824, the British Government declared war against the Burmese and in 1826, by the Treaty of Yandaboo, Assam was 'ceded' to the East India Company.

1.3 DECLINE OF AHOM RULE

In the early part of the 13th century, the Ahoms who were the members of the Shan Branch of great 'Tai' or 'Thai family' of South-East Asia under the rule of king Sukapha, had established a new kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley. According to the Ahom chronicles, Sukapha left his homeland Maulung in1215 AD and moved towards Patkai via the Hukong valley. He reached the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 and had been moving from place to place till he settled at Charaideo in 1253 which he made the capital of his newly established kingdom. This enabled the establishment of a kingdom which expanded and encompassed the Brahmaputra Valley well over a period of six hundred years. When he reached the Brahmaputra valley, Sukapha had ordered the chroniclers to maintain the records of all events. This was the beginning of historical writing in Assam, a valuable contribution to Indian historiography.

Sukapha died in 1268 and was succeeded by his son Suteupha (1268-1281), who extended the boundary of the kingdom to the river Namdang. From the reign of Subinpha (1281-1293) to that of Supimpha (1493-97) covering a long period of more than two hundred

years, no extension of territory was made by the Ahoms. The first extension of territory of the Ahom kingdom occurred during the reign of Suhungmung (1497-1539) whose period marks another new epoch in the political and cultural history of the Ahoms. The steady expansion of the Ahom power brought them into a conflict with another expanding power, the Koches, who under Biswa Singha made themselves masters of the country west of the Barnadi. Under the shrewd rule of Naranarayan and the military generalship of commander Chilarai, the Koches had made an attempt to overthrow the Ahom kingdom. The division of the Koch kingdom in 1581 A.D. into Koch Bihar, west of the Sankosh, and Koch Hajo to its east, greatly weakened the Koches. During the reign of Pratap Singha (1603 -1641), the Ahom political hegemony expanded up to the Jayantia kingdom, which lay further south of the Kachari kingdom. Political relations were established at the initiative of the Jayantia king, who had proposed the marriage of a Jayantia princess to the Ahom king Pratap Singha and thereby becoming a subordinate.

In the second decade of the seventeenth century, the Ahoms came into direct clash with the Mughals whose sway had by then extended over the entire sub-continent except for the North-East which remained outside their political control. The westward movement of the Ahoms also became more vigorous from the time of Pratap Singha (1604-1641) and this created a conflict with the Mughals. The Ahoms successfully resisted the advance of the Mughals and the Barnadi on the north bank and the Asurar Ali on the south bank of the Brahmaputra became the boundary between the two dominions. The eastward expansion of the Mughals however continued almost throughout the entire century leading to several armed engagements between the two. In 1662 - 1663, the Ahoms suffered a temporary setback in the expedition of Mir Jumla and had to come to terms at Ghiladharighat (Jan.1663 A.D.). Under the efficient leadership of Lachit Barphukan, the Ahoms deferted the Mughals in the famous battle of Saraighat in 1671.The last of the Mughals were driven out from Guwahati by Gadadhar Singha in 1682. Henceforth, the river Manas came to be the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom.

The Ahom power reached its zenith during the reign of Rudra Singha (1695-1714). Under him the Ahom nobility became better organised than before. It stood behind the king representing the cherished feudal values and desires but at the same time, came in direct conflict with the subject people, who also began to get organised under the local landlords and Vaishnavite reformers. This political crisis took the form of religious conflict during the reign of next king Shiva Singha, who was embroiled in it so much so that the military plan of his predecessor was given up for good. From then onwards the monarchy showed signs of decay.

The throne was occupied by weak and unscrupulous monarchs and every succession became a scramble for power. Taking advantage of the situation, the Moamarias, a socio-religious sect, rebelled in 1778, overpowered the royalists and dethroned the reigning monarch, Gaurinath Singha who was forced to flee to Guwahati from where he sent his appeal for help to the British. This came in the form of Captain Welsh's expedition and Gaurinath was once more enthroned in 1793. However, Welsh was soon recalled following the appointment of Sir John Shore who resorted to a policy of non-intervention. As a result,

Assam relapsed into the former state of anarchy and internal strife.

The first challenge to the Ahom monarchy came during the reign of Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780) from a group of disciples of Mayamara Satra, who had been long sheathing under the domination of the government. Starting on a religious cause, the movement soon assumed great political extent and influenced the entire Brahmaputra valley. Since the first Moamariya rebellion of 1769, the Ahom kingdom was immersed in a series of civil wars, which precipitated the inroads of the Burmese and led to the interference of the British. As a result of which the kingdom lost its independence and suffered the annexation to the British India in 1826.

Lakshmi Singha died in 1780 and was succeeded by his son Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795).He was a bitter enemy of the Moamariyas and followed a persecution policy towards them. However, the Moamariyas could not subdued even by ruthless oppression. They become more resolute in their resistance against the Ahom government. In April 1782, the insurgents entered the palace campus at Garhgaon and attempted to kill the king and burn the city but the king managed his escape to Rangpur. The Moamariyas then proceeded towards Rangpur but could not enter the city. In the sharp engagement a large number of Moamarias were killed and the rest fled in different directions. This inhuman activities further complicated the situation with conspiracy succeeding conspiracy. In January, 1788, Gaurinath Singha fled to Guwahati and assembled some men from different parts of the country and sent them to fight against the Moamariyas. The rebellion of the Moamariyas inspired the people in different parts of the country to rise up against the Ahom rule and fight for freedom and justice. As a result, the khel system had begun to rapidly break up and it turned difficult for the Ahom government to suppress the rebels. The entire administrative - military machinery and socio-economic organisation rested on the paik or khel system. This system worked well in the heydays of the Ahom rule.

Gaurinath Singha finally decided to take help from outside. He, wrote a letter to Huge Baille, the Company's Resident at Goalpara and request for military assistance. Baille managed some Barkandazes to send to Guarinath, but on their way to Guwahati, they were intercepted by Krishnanarayan, a rebel Koch prince of Darrang. The Ahom king then again wrote letter to Daniel Rush, the farmer of the salt revenue at Goalpara, who sent him 700 Barkandazes under one Chait Sing Subeder. However many Barkandezes were killed by the Moamariyas . During this time Krishnanarayan and Haradatta started a rebellion against the Ahom government. In July 1791, Krishnanarayan appealed to Henry Douglas, the Commissioner of Koch Behar for military assistance agreeing to pay the Company Government a tribute of 5001 Rajamohari rupees. With the help of the Barkandazes, Krishnanarayan and Haradatta entered Assam in December, 1791. On hearing of Krishnanarayan's advance, Gaurinath Singha offered a peace proposal, but, the former refused. Unable to drive away, the Barkandazes by his force Gaurinath Singha appealed to Mr. Lumsden, the collector of Rangpur for military help. The King failed to receive any help. Unable to control the situation with his own army, the king again wrote to Lord Cornwalis, the then Governor General for military assistance. Accordingly in September 1792, 360 Sepoys were sent under the command of Captain Welsh, with Lieutenant Mc

Greor as adjutant, Ensign Wood as Supervisor and Dr. John Peter Wade as Assistant Surgeon. The result of the expedition of Captain Welsh was that Gaurlnath was once more enthroned in 1793. However, Welsh was soon recalled following the appointment of Sir John Shore who resorted to a policy of non-intervention. As a result, Assam relapsed into the former state of anarchy and internal strife.

Gaurinath Singha died in August 1795 without leaving any male inheritor to the throne. Purnananda Burhagohain managed to reinstall Kinaram who ascended the throne and took the Hindu name Kamaleswar Singha. Since then, Purnananda become the defacto ruler of the kingdom. After the death of Kamaleswar Singha in 1811, Chandrakanta Singha became the king of the Ahom Kingdom. Purnananda Burhagohain exercised undue influence over the young king, Chandrakanta (1811-17) and virtually ruled the country in the king's name. The Barphukan, the king's viceroy in Lower Assam, strongly opposed this personal rule of the Buragohain. The enmity between the two officers went to such an extent that the Buragohain had sent a senior officer with an adequate force to arrest the Barphukan and bring him to the capital. The Barphukan had gained information regarding the plan and had fled to Calcutta to seek British help. When he failed to receive any help from the British, he went to the Burmese court at Ava for aid. Thus, the Burmese, who were ever anxious to extend their dominions west-ward, had made their appearance on the scene in 1817.

1.4 BURMESE INVASION

- **First Invasion (1817):** Due to the clash started between Purnananda Burhagohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan, Burhagohain sent a force to apprehend the Barphukan. Barphukan had managed his escape to Bengal in time. He tried to get military help from the Governor General, but failed and went to the court of Badawpaya, the Burmese King to seek his aid against Purnananda Burhagohain. Badan Chandra had an advantage in the Assamese queen of the Burmese king, Rangili Gabharu, the daughter of an Ahom noble. It was through her, Badan persuaded the king to assist him with a force. It was a god sent opportunity for the Burmese king who had been waiting for a chance to take interest in the affairs of Assam. Badawpaya sent a strong force to help Badan. The Burmese army arrived at Namrup early in 1817. On hearing the news of the advance of the Burmese troops, the premier or prime minister arranged 7 companies of sepoy to resist them. At this moment, the Burhagohain became so wild with rage that he collapsed suddenly, possibly of a heart attack. Badan Chandra entered Jorhat in March, 1817 and permitted Chandrakanta Singha to carry on his role, but himself became the defacto ruler. The Burmese army left Jorhat in April, 1817.
- **Second Invasion (1819):** After departure of the Burmese force, there began a quarrel between Badan Chandra and Barbarua Dhoni. Badan Chandra was assassinated by a mercenary soldier name Rupsingh. All these events in Assam was learnt by the Burmese court which then sent a strong contingent under the command of Alamingi to avenge the death of Badan Chandra and to restore Chandrakanta. The first

engagement took place at Phulpanichiga near Janji in February, 1819. The Burmese had entered Jorhat and eventually Chandrakanta was restored his throne. However, he was a king only in name and the real authority was exercised by the Burmese commanders. Thus, Burmese established their authority in Assam. Alamingi left Jorhat in April, 1819 and Mingimaha Tilwa was placed in charge of the affairs of the country with a force of 2000 men.

- **Third Invasion (1821):** Mingimaha Tilwa left Assam for Burma in January 1820 leaving the affairs of the country in charge of Patalang Barbaruah. However, Patalang persuaded Chandrakanta Singha against the Burmese loyalty. When Mingimaha had returned back to Assam, he suspected evil motive on the part of Patalang and had him killed. At this, Chandrakanta became anxious about his own safety and fled to Guwahati. The Burmese placed one Jageswar Sinha on the throne of Assam in 1821. Chandrakanta tried to drive away the Burmese from Assam and he had his last encounter with the Burmese at Hadira Chouki in June, 1822 where he sustained a major defeat. This marked the end of the Ahom Monarchy in Assam. The Burmese activities in Assam proved harmful to the British commercial interest. Furthermore, the insecurity in the North-East Frontier threatened the security of Bengal. Therefore, the authorities at Fort William were compelled to enforce their influence in Assam. In 1824, the British Government declared war against the Burmese and a force advancing up the Brahmaputra occupied Rangpur and forced the Burmese to retire to their own territories. Finally in 1826, by the Treaty of Yandaboo, (24th February, 1826), the King of Ava surrendered his claim over Assam.

1.4.1 British Intervention

Political instability, inefficient kings during the last phase of Ahom rule and competition among the Ahom nobles to establish their superiority and the Ahom administration itself offered a golden opportunity to the King Burma to interfere in the internal matters of the Ahom kingdom. During that time, the Burmese followed the imperialistic policy and tried to extend their boundaries by annexation of Assam, Kachar and Manipur.

When the Burmese launched an attack on kachari, the British came forward to interfere in the politics of North-East. The Burmese soldiers also attacked the Sahpuri island near Chattagam which was under the control of the British. In 5th March, 1824, the British declared war on Burma. The Anglo-Burmese war came to an end with signing up the Treaty of Yandaboo in 24th February, 1826. By the terms of the treaty of Yandaboo, the Burmese king relinquished all his claim upon Assam and its subordinate kingdom. Thus, as a victorious power, the British established their political hegemony over Assam and the entire Brahmaputra valley came under the British military occupation.

1.4.2 Treaty of Yandaboo

The Treaty of Yandabo was the peace treaty signed on 24th February, 1826 that ended the First Anglo-Burmese War. The treaty was signed by General Sir Archibald Campbell on the British side, and the Governor of Legaing Maha Min Hla Kyaw Htin from

the Burmese side. The terms of the treaty of Yandaboo were as follows:

- There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British on the one part, and the King of Ava on the other.
- The King of Burma, Ba-gyi-daw, renounced all claims' upon and promised to abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its neighboring states of Cachar, Jayantiya and Manipur. It recognised the East India Company to establish their political control over the principalities of the Ahom Kingdom of the Brahmaputra Valley.
- To prevent future disputes regarding the boundary line between the two great Nations, the British Government would retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, and the King of Ava ceded all right.
- The King of Ava ceded to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergui and Tenasserim.
- The King of Ava agreed to pay an amount of Rupees one crore to the British government as a war indemnity.

1.5 BRITISH ANNEXATION OF ASSAM

After the occupation, the British divided Assam into two provinces, Lower Assam and Upper. Lower Assam comprised of Kamrup, Nowgang and parts of Darrang with its headquarters at Guwahati. Upper Assam comprised the other parts of Darrang, from Biswanath to the river Burhidihing with its headquarters at Rangpur. The Treaty of Yandaboo marked the end of Ahom rule in Assam. Since the hope of revenue income from Lower Assam was clear, so it was brought directly under the British dominion. Under the Burmese invasion, Upper Assam had suffered a lot; the administration had broken down; the people had lost all confidence in the government. It was therefore necessary to place Upper Assam under direct military control. David Scott was appointed as the Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam and Colonel Richard was appointed as the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam. In the beginning, the people of Assam were very happy with the British administration. The common people of Assam had suffered a lot during the Burmese invasion - they now saw hope for peace and prosperity under the British. Also, the ruling classes thought that under the British rule their power and privileges would be secured. However, the reality was different and the British administration proved to be indifferent; all they cared for was their business and their own prosperity. Soon, discontent among the people started growing.

1.6 CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RULE AND TEMPORARY ADMINISTRATION

After the retreat of the Burmese from Rangpur in January, 1825, the entire Brahmaputra valley came under the military occupation of the British. The Supreme Government decided to make temporary arrangement for administration in this region. David Scott and Colonel Richards were appointed Joint Commissioner, the former to

remain in charge of Western Assam with headquarters at Guwahati and the later of Eastern Assam with headquarters at Rangpur. Eastern Assam required close military supervision because it had suffered badly from the revolting cruelties of the Burmese and the entire area was in anarchical condition. Colonel Richard had to exercise both civil and military functions in Eastern Assam. The Senior Commissioner, David Scott was to hold civil charge of Western Assam. He was also to have exclusive charge of political relations with the states and the tribes of the entire region. In other words, David Scott was placed in the overall charge of the entire valley as a Commissioner. He directed all his energy towards revenue collection; and judicial and police administration in the valley. Scott's principle was to retain the old system as far as possible and implement new rules as little as possible. In Upper Assam, the old 'Paik' and 'Khel' system was retained. The Barbarua was appointed to collect the tax. In Lower Assam, the 'Pargana' land division system was retained; each Pargana was placed under the charge of a Choudhury to collect taxes. Payments were accepted in cash. Professional tax, rent tax, stamp duties were among the various taxes imposed on the people of Lower Assam. To maintain law and order, the British Police system was followed. It consisted of one Daroga, one Jamadar and a number of constables. For Judicial administration, the post of Barphukan was retained. Civil cases were placed under him. Some Panchayat Courts were also present to solve petty civil cases. All the work done by Scott was for the welfare of Assam. It was David Scott who steered the administration of Assam through one of the most crucial period of her history. He successfully faced all difficulties to lay a foundation of the British rule in Assam. Although in some cases he failed, yet he was one of the best among all British administrators.

From the economic and social points of view, David Scott did not annex Upper Assam. He thought that it would become a liability for the British. After the Burmese invasion, the people were devastated and had lost faith in government administration. Also, he noticed that the Ahom nobles were in a hostile mood. The revolt of Gomdhar Konwar followed by a conspiracy led by Dhanjay Bargohain expressed their anger against the British. Therefore, Scott recommended the restoration of monarchy in Upper Assam rather than its annexation to the British dominion. Accordingly, the Ahom prince Purandar Singha was enthroned as the Raja of Upper Assam. The British signed an agreement with the King that: (i) the Raja would pay a sum of Rs 50,000 annually as tribute; (ii) the Raja would act according to the advice of the British Political Agent; and (iii) the Raja would be protected against any foreign aggression. The British very tactfully served its purpose, which was to satisfy the nobles momentarily, and then annex Upper Assam in due time because the conditions of the agreement would be impossible to fulfill for Purandar Singha. Purandar Singha was a young man of about 25 years. He did not realise the difficulties of his new position when he accepted the treaty imposed upon him. His administration was financially crippled from the beginning, and there was political unrest. He was approved by the British, but the Assamese people and the nobles wanted Chandrakanta Singha as king instead of him because Purandar Singha had spent his early days in Bengal. When the British took possession of Assam, they introduced new rules which made the common people very unhappy with the government. As a result, Purandar Singha could not keep up the

agreement with the British. From 1835, there was a rapid fall in revenue and Purandar Singha could not make regular payments of the yearly amount to the British. This violation of agreement gave the British ample and legitimate reasons to support their annexation of Assam. Finally, in 1838, Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India. In other words, the foundation of the British rule in Assam was laid.

1.6.1 Bengal Presidency

The Bengal Presidency was established in 1765, following the defeat of the last independent Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in June, 1757 and the Battle of Buxer in 1764. The Governor of Bengal was at the same time the Viceroy of India for many years. After the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, the East India Company took control of the region. Under British Administration, Assam became a part of the British India province called the 'Bengal Presidency'. Assam remained under the administrative jurisdiction of the huge Bengal Presidency till 1873 which consisted of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, United Provinces including Delhi, portion of Central Provinces and Chota-Nagpur. Tagging of Assam with the Bengal Presidency had created certain practical problems for the administrators, for which the administration of Assam was entrusted by a Proclamation of 6th February, 1874 to a Chief Commissioner.

1.7 CHIEF COMMISSIONER'S PROVINCE

Assam as the part of Bengal Presidency, which was already a huge one had created certain problems to the administrators. Firstly, the ethnic diversities often clashed. Secondly, the administration of the presidency increased the burden of the Lieutenant Governor. Thirdly, the European tea planters in Assam had "Unique Position" and they required special consideration. Thus, the difficulty of administering the huge Bengal Presidency was felt for quite some time and a decision had to be taken in the matter. Hence, Muir, a member of the council, favoured chief Commissionership for Assam as it would lighten the burden of the Lieutenant Governor and provide free and better prospects for the province under the direct control of India than Bengal.

With the objects of relieving the administration of Bengal and strengthening the Local administration, Lord Northbrook issued a dispatch on 23rd October to the Secretary of State for the final arrangement of Chief Commissionership in Assam. Accordingly on 6th February, 1874 the province of Assam was entrusted to a Chief Commissioner under the immediate authority and control of the Governor General in Council. Colonel R. H. Keating was appointed as the first chief Commissioner of Assam on 7th February, 1874. In September, 1874, the district of Sylhet was added to Assam.

1.8 EARLY REVOLTS AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN ASSAM

1.8.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar (1828)

From the attitude and activities, it is clear that the British East India Company was

bound to strike roots in Assam. The higher classes became dissatisfied with their policy and action. The nobles found that their privileges were being taken away from them in lieu of pensions and offices in the subordinate rank. They therefore organised themselves to restore the Ahom Monarchy and made an attempt to capture the British base at Rangpur. The first attempt was made under the leadership of Gomdhar Konwar and Dhanjay Bargohain in 1828. The Ahom nobles offered their support and considered it the most opportune hour for them to launch an attack. Gomdhar was formally enthroned by the Ahom rites at Bassa in the South-West corner of Jorhat and collected arms and men from neighboring areas. In November, 1828, Gomdhar marched towards Mariani, twelve miles from Jorhat. The rebels were intercepted by the British under Rutherford on their way to Mariani and an encounter took place between them. After a feeble resistance, Gomdhar fled to Naga Hills and a few days later he surrendered himself.

Gomdhar Konwar was tried by the bar panchayat at Jorhat, found guilty of rebellion and sentenced to death. Dhanjoy Bargohain who was sentenced capital punishment, managed to escape from the jail to the Naga Hills.

1.8.2 Second Revolt (1829)

After the failure of the revolt of Gomdhar Konwer (1828), in 1829, a second attempt to overthrow the British Government was made by another Assamese Prince, Gadadhar Singha who was the relative of the Ahom King Jogeswar Singha. In order to establish Ahom rule in Assam, he sought the help of the police camped in Sadiya. But the police, instead of help, arrested him and sent to Gauhati. Gadadhar Singha also arranged the marriage of his sister with Bagidowa, the king of Burma, to gain his support to fight against the British. But, Bagidowa did not support actively for which his uprising was also easily suppressed.

1.8.3 Third Revolt (1830)

In March 1830, another anti-British revolt came to the front to reinstall Ahom Monarchy. This revolt was led by Dhanjoy Borgohain. He was supported by his son Harnath, Harkanta and Hemnath, his son-in-law Jeuram Dihingia Baruah, Piyoli Phukan and others. The rebels decided to crown prince Rupchand as the Ahom king and to gain success against the British, they sought help from Moamoria, Khamti, Khasi, Garo and Nagas.

As per the religious belief, rebels performed a 'Deopuja' and after it they marched towards Rangpur with a troops of thirty soldiers under a 'Jamadar'. However they were defeated and sent back. The revolt was suppressed by the British in the midst of 1830 and the main leaders were arrested. Tried by the Panchayat in Jorhat, Rupchand, Haranath, Jeuram, Piyoli and Bom Singphow were accused of treason and sentenced to death. But, David Scott altered the decision of the panchayat. In August, Piyoli Borphukon and Jeuram were hanged in Jorhat. Other leaders were sent to Dhaka jail and their properties were confiscated. Thus, the revolt of 1830 came to an end.

Thus, the earlier uprisings against the British Government by the Ahom Royal family

and the nobility failed miserably in the face of the well organised and better equipped army of the British.

1.8.4 Revolt of Khasis (1829)

The most organised and determined resistance against the British came from the Khasis. Some Khasi chiefs lost their hold over the duar areas during the time of Burmese war. In 1825, David Scott made a settlement for fixed demand in cash, which was not possible to pay for them. It was Teerut Singh who led the Khasi people against the British. On April, 1828, a band of about 500 people under the leadership of Teerut Singh attacked and massacred two English officers, Lieutenant Burlton and Beddingsfield, besides sixty Indian Sepoys at Nongkhlao. However, in 1832, Teerut made his submission and the British pacified the Khasis by bringing Raja under subsidiary alliance.

1.9 CONSEQUENCES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EARLY REVOLTS AGAINST BRITISH RULE

Gomdhar Konwar made the first attempt in 1828 against the British Government. His main objective was to restore the old Ahom monarchy and expel the British. Though he failed, it greatly inspired the people to fight against alien powers. The British government imposed heavy taxes on the ordinary peasants. The colonial government remained totally indifferent to the development of Assam and on the contrary, spent days and nights for tapping new sources of revenues which finally invited resentments in the land. Exploitation of the resources, reducing the people to extreme poverty, intervention of internal affairs of the tribal areas gave birth to disdain and resentment in them against the government. The result and impact was that though the revolts failed to achieve its aims and objectives to a great extent, it inspired the people of other places to revolt against the Britishers.

5 LET US KNOW

- History writing in Assam began in Ahom period.
- Charaideo is the first capital of Ahom kingdom in Assam.
- The first phase of Moamariya rebellion began in 1769.
- The Treaty of Yandaboo was signed on 24th February, 1826 that marked the end of Ahom rule in Assam. The treaty was signed by General Sir Archibald Campbell on the British side and Governor Legaing Maha Min Hla Kyaw Htin for the Burmese.
- Gomdhar Konwar, Dhanjay Borgohain and their followers rose in revolt against the British occupation of Assam in 1828.
- R.H. Keating was the first Chief Commissioner of Assam.
- Assam region was separated from the Bengal Presidency in the year 1874.
- Sylhet district was separated from Assam and added to Pakistan in 1947.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Choose the correct answers:

(a) The first capital of Ahom Kingdom in Assam was Charaideo/ Gargaon/Sivsagar.
.....

(b) The Treaty of Yandaboo was signed between East India Company and Ahom King/ King of Burma/Kachari King.
.....

(c) The first phase of Moamoria Rebellion began in 1759/ 1779/1769.
.....

(d) The first rebellion against the British rule in Assam in 1828 was led by Piyali Baruah/ Gomdhar konwar/ Dhanjay Borgohain.
.....

Q2) Fill in the blanks:

(a) The first chief Commissioner of Assam was…….

(b) Assam region was separated from the Bengal Presidency in the year .....……...

(c) Tirut Singh was the leader of……

2 LET US SUM UP

- One of the remarkable features of the 15th and 16th century was the attempt of the European powers to extend their control over the rest of the world.
- Of all the European powers, Britain took the leading colonial expansion. Although in the nineteenth century, it built up an empire which was the largest under the crown.
- In India, the English East India Company had established the trading posts in different coastal areas. Within a short period, India was transformed into an usual colony for the British.
- In 1826, by the Treaty of Yandaboo, Assam was 'ceded' to the East India Company.
- The Ahom power reached its zenith during the reign of Rudra Singha (1695-1714). The first challenge to the Ahom monarchy came during the reign of Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780) from a group of disciples of Mayamara Satra.
- As a result of the Yandaboo Treaty, the entire Brahmaputra valley came under the British military occupation. The Treaty of Yandaboo marked the end of Ahom rule in Assam.
- On 6th February, 1874 the province of Assam was entrusted to a Chief Commissioner under the immediate authority and control of the Governor General in Council. Colonel R. H. Keating was appointed as the first Chief Commissioner of Assam on 7th February, 1874.
- In September, 1874, the district of Sylhet was added to Assam.
- The earlier uprisings against the British Government by the Ahom Royal family and the nobility failed miserably in the face of the well organised and better equipped army of the British.

1.11 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K. (1992). *The comprehensive history of Assam*. *Modern period: Yandabu to diarchy 1826-1919 A.D*. Volume four. Guwahati: Publication Board of Assam.

2) Baruah, S.L. (2007). *A comprehensive history of Assam*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

3) Gogoi, P. (1968). *The Tai and Tai Kingdom*.

4) Lahirl, R.M. (1994). *Annexation of Assam*.

1.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

(a) Charaideo
(b) King of Burma
(c) 1769
(d) Gomdhar Konwar

Ans to Q No 1:

(a) R.H Keating
(b) 1874
(c) Khasi

1.13 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Name the Ahom king who established first capital in Jorhat?

Q 2: Who was Alumingi?

Q 3: Who killed Badan Chandra Barphukon?

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

Write short notes on:

a) Treaty of Yandaboo
b) David Scott
c) Rebellion of Gomdhar Konwar

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

Q 1: Describe the decay and fall of the Ahom Kingdom in Assam.

Q 2: Discuss about the Burmese invasions in Assam.

Q 3: Describe how the British consolidated their power in Assam.

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UNIT 2: REVOLT OF 1857 AND ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Revolt of 1857 in Assam
2.4 Role of Maniram Dewan
2.5 Suppression of the Revolt by the British
2.6 Nature of the Revolt of 1857
2.7 Causes of the Failure of the Revolt
2.8 Let Us Sum Up
2.9 Further Reading
2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
2.11 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the background and nature of the revolt of 1857
- analyse the causes of the failure of the revolt
- trace the policy adopted by the British to suppress the revolt
- discuss the role of Maniram Dewan in the revolt.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The Revolt of 1857 is considered as an important event in the history of India. It began at Meerut, 58 km from Delhi on 10th of May, 1857 with the mutiny of the Company's sepoy. After the first spark at Meerut, the event spread to Delhi (May 11), Lucknow (30/31st May), Kanpur (June 4), Jhansi (June 6), Rohilkhand and Jagadishpur and Bihar (July 25). The revolt shook the very foundation of the Company Rule. Though the revolt was a mere product of the sepoy discontentment but in reality it was a product of the character and policies of colonial rule, of the accumulated grievances of the people against the Company's administration and their dislike towards the foreign regime. Perhaps, the economic exploitation of the country and the destruction of its traditional economic fabric by the British was the important cause of this widespread discontentment. The policy of conquest pursued by the British had created unrest among many Indian rulers and chiefs. British had entered into agreements with them under a system of subsidiary alliance. Sind, Punjab and Awadh were annexed by this policy. The British also followed the policy of destroying the power of the nobles and Zaminders in the territories they had annexed. Many of them were deprived of their lands. Under the new land revenue system introduced by the British, the old land owning families were displaced. Besides, the British policies and attitude had created a fear among the people that the British government was determined to destroy their religion and culture also converting them to Christianity. The sepoys had their own

grievances regarding their conditions of service, but it was the threat to their religion which actually provoked them into mutiny. At this time a new type of riffle was introduced. Its cartridges were smeared with cows and pigs fats acting as grease, and the paper covering them had to bitten off before they could be loaded into the rifle. The use of these grease cartridges offended the religions of both Hindu and Muslim soldiers and it became the immediate cause of the revolt.

2.3 REVOLT OF 1857 IN ASSAM

The Revolt of 1857 which had engulfed a large area of the Company's territory in India did not leave Assam undisturbed. In Assam, the Revolt of 1857 resulted in a wave of anti-British sentiments among the people. Initially, the Assamese people welcomed the establishment of British rule in Assam. The nobility hoped that their lost rights and privileges would be restored by British administration, the general people were glad to be get rid of the depredations of the Burmese army. The high officials in Ahom administration including the members of the nobility were paid in terms of land and servitors. It was with the help of the Paiks that the members of the nobility and gentry cultivated their lands and opened new areas for cultivation. Taking advantage by employing the free service of the Paiks, the nobles maintained their power and position. However, the hopes and aspirations of the people were not fulfilled. The policy pursued by the British had adversely affected the ruling classes and also the other classes of people.

S.L. Baruah remakes that except imposing and collecting taxes, the British government was totally indifferent in improving the economy of the miserable peasants. Benudhar Sarma also states that lands were reassessed and provisions were made for the realization of tolls from the users of the Ghats and Bazars. As a colonial power, the British were bent on fulfiling their economic interest by all means.

The old aristocracy could not cope up with the new administrative system introduced by the British. They not only lost their privileges but also lost the chances to work in the new administrative structure. The nobles became dissatisfied as they lost all their previous privileges. The common people also lost their faith in the British Government as they initially believed that the British saved them from the Burmese but in course of time realised the real motive of their so called saviours. In this situation, Maniram Dutta Barua, popularly known as Maniram Dewan, a powerful noble of the Ahom Monarchy planned to stage a revolt simultaneously with that of the Revolt of 1857.

2.4 ROLE OF MANIRAM DEWAN

Maniram Dewan was born on April 17th, 1806. His father Ramdutta was the Dulakasariya Barua under King Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1810) and Purandar Singha (1833-1838). He was an ambitious man and a great potential and ability in administrative affairs. Due to his energy, ability and intelligence, Maniram was considered a trusted person by the British. In 1828, David Scott appointed Maniram Barua as a Shirastedar of Upper Assam. At first, Maniram had no sympathy towards the anti-British movements. However,

slowly he came to learn that the British rule had come to stay and that there was no possibility of restoration of the rights and privileges of the nobility under it. Assam was partitioned into two divisions: Lower Assam and Upper Assam. David Scott was placed in charge of Lower Assam with headquarters at Guwahati. Although the Company had established its successful administration in Lower Assam, yet the condition in Upper Assam was not congenial at all. Lord William Bentick, the then Governor General (1828-1833), made an agreement with Purandar Singha by which he agreed to pay an annual tribute and obey the orders of the Political Agent as well as to administer justice based on the principles prevailing in Company territory. Another important provision of the agreement was that if the Raja departed from loyalty to the British Government, the right was reserved by the Company either to transfer the said country to another ruler or take it into its own immediate occupation. In 1838, Francis Jenkins visited Upper Assam and submitted a report to the Calcutta Government alleging that there was misgovernment in Purandar's territory and recommended its immediate resumption. Consequently Purandar was deposed and Upper Assam was permanently annexed to the territories of the East India Company. He paid visit to Robertson, the then Deputy Governor of Bengal. Robertson assured him to offer a post soon befitting his status and dignity. Later, Maniram was appointed as a Dewan or Chief Executive in the Assam Tea Company at Nazira. After working in the Company, he realized the capitalist exploitation of the British mercantile community. All his hopes came to an end when he was deprived of the benefit of getting waste-land at concessional rates like the European planters. Maniram now realized that there would be no future for him under the colonial rule.

Maniram now desired to make relation with Kandarpeswar Singha, the Charing Raja, who also, like him, had been facing utmost difficulties in maintaining the royal family. In 1853, Andrews John Moffat Mill, the Judge of the Sadar Dewani Adalat, was deputed for the enquiry of the local state of administration in Upper Assam. Kandarpeswar Singha met Mills and requested him to hold his right as a tributary under the East-India Company. He was given a patient hearing, but seeing the futility of his pretensions Mills discouraged the young prince from entertaining any hope of restoration. In this connection, two memorandums were submitted by Maniram. In one, Maniram prayed for some favour from the Government in recognition of his past services to it, and in the other, he pleaded for the restoration of the Ahom Monarchy. However, his petitions were rejected by the British Government. The petition being rejected, Maniram decided to go to Calcutta and take up the matter with the Lt. Governor of Bengal.

Maniram went to Calcutta and submitted his petition to the Governor-General on 6th May, 1857. The Governor General again refused to accept his proposal. Being thus tired of to making petitions and prayers, Maniram grew desperate and resolved to take direct action. When Maniram was at Calcutta, the sepoy mutiny broke out and the entire of northern and central India was charged with a revolutionary fervor. Being encouraged by the success of the sepoys at Meerut, Delhi etc, Maniram decided to unite the sepoys stationed in Assam and raise the banner of rebellion. He, then, began to send letters to the Charing Raja Kandarpeswar Singha and his lieutenant Mohesh Chandra Gabharu Melia

Barua alias Piyali Barua. The Chief planner of the revolt was Maniram Dewan but it was Piyali who brought the plan into action. Piyali soon gathered around him several leading persons such as, Ugrasen Marangi-khowa Gohain, Krishnadutta Khangia Barua, Lakhinath Senchowa Barua, Kamala Charingia Barua, Nilakantha Choladhra Phukan, Dutiram Barua Muhidhar Muktiar, Umakanta Sarma , Mayaram Nazir, Shaikh Bahadil popularly called Bahadur Goanburha, Formud Ali etc. Very soon the number of supporters of the revolution grew larger. Maniram Dewan, through his faithful assistant Piyali and other followers inspired the sepoys of Assam stationed at various places like, Guwahati, Sadiya, Golaghat, Jorhat, among others to get ready for the revolt. The rebels also planned that they would rise simultaneously at several headquarters, kill the Europeans, burn their houses, and then would march to Jorhat and proclaim the Charing Raja as the King of Assam.

2.5 SUPPRESSION OF THE REVOLT BY THE BRITISH

However, the British had come to know about the plan of the sepoys in Assam and became alert. It was during this time that a few of Maniram's letters to Kandarpeswar was captured by the police under Haranath Barua 'Daroga' of Sibsagar and this letter confirmed the complicity of the Charing Raja and Maniram Dewan in the plot against the British. Charles Holroyd, who was the Principal Assistant of Sibsagar immediately, took to action with the army to arrest the rebels. After possible precautions had been taken up, on 7th September, 1857, the Charing Raja was arrested by the British army from the palace at Jorhat. Maniram was also arrested in Calcutta sometime in September 1857. Act No. XIV of 1857 being imposed in Assam, Captain Holroyd was empowered to take action on the rebels. Holroyd accordingly, tried cases of all those who were accused of treason and complicity in the great rebellion. Piyali was tried on 9th February, 1858 and given death punishment. Maniram was brought to Jorhat and in the trial held on 23rd February, was given the death sentence on Friday, 26th February 1858, at about 10 A.M, two great freedom fighters of Assam- Maniram Dewan and Piyali Barua were hanged to death in Jorhat Jail. Kandarpeswar was granted a pension and kept in Guwahati under British jurisdiction. A number of sepoys were dismissed from service for their defection. Some Assamese nobles, Nilakanta Sholadhara Phukan, Mayaram Nazir, Kamala Charingia Barua ,Luki Senchoa Barua, Dutiram Barua, Sheik Bahadur Gaonbura were deported to the Andaman. Thus, the 1857 revolt in Assam came to an end.

2.6 NATURE OF THE REVOLT OF 1857

In Assam, it may be said that the revolt was monarchical as the rebels wanted to restore Monarchy in Assam. Partially the revolt was also an anti-imperialist as Maniram and his associates expressed their concern about the distress of the common people under British rule. The establishment of the British paramountcy in India was first challenged by the people of India through the revolt of 1857. Though confined to a small part of north India, the revolt of 1857 was the first uprising to overthrow the British regime. The Anglo-European historians called the revolt of 1857 as the 'Mutiny'. G. B. Malleson considers it as 'Nothing but a sepoy mutiny'. V.D. Savarkar considers the revolt as the first war of Indian

independence. In other parts of India, the revolt was mainly started by the sepoys and was followed by the civilian. But in Assam, the primary objective of revolt was to restore the Ahom Monarchy. The revolt was started by the middle class to protect their interest by restoring Kandarpeswar Singha to the throne with the support of the military and the common people who were also dissatisfied with the new system of the British government. One important aspect of the revolt in Assam was that the people who were getting benefits from the British had shown their loyalty to their masters only. Besides these privileged Assamese, there were some persons who had assisted the Government in revealing all documents against Maniram and his associates. The significance of the revolt of 1857 in Assam is that it brought the Assamese people together and make them consciousness of belonging to one nation.

5 LET US KNOW

Views of Historians on the nature of the revolt of 1857:

- **T. R. Holmes -** It was a conflict between civilization and barbarism.
- **Sir John Seely -** Wholly unpatriotic and selfish sepoy mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support.
- **Disraeli -** A national rising.
- **Dr. S. N. Sen -** What began as a fight for religion, ended as a war of independence.
- **Prof. Stanley -** It was far more than a mutiny…….yet much less than a first war of independence.
- **J. L. Nehru -** Essentially it was a feudal outburst headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the wide spread anti foreign sentiment.
- **V. D. Savarkar -** First war of Indian independence

2.7 CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF THE REVOLT

There were various causes responsible for the failure of the revolt of 1857 in Assam. These are as follows:

- The revolt could not embrace the entire territory or all the groups and classes of Assamese society. It was localized, restricted and poorly organized. Except Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Golaghat and few other places, the people did not take part in the revolt.
- A number of Assamese people gave active support to the British in suppressing the Revolt. Haranath Barua, Muhidhar Sarma Muktiar, Kinaram Pandit, Trilochan Nazir, Nirmal Hazarika, Durgeswar Burhagohain and many others who had been assisting the Government in revealing all documents against Maniram and his associates. It contributed to the failure of the Revolt of 1857 in Assam to a large extent.
- The revolt was not inspired by any positive and creative idea. Lack of programme, plan and funds helped the British to suppress the revolt.
- Negative attitude of the modern educated people. They did not support the revolt and mistakenly believed that the British rule would help them to accomplish the task of

modernization.

- Superior military strength of the British. The European soldiers were equipped with modern weapons. In terms of tactics and strategy, the British soldiers were far superior to the natives.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- The name of Maniram's father was Ramdutta.
- Mohesh Chandra Gabharu Melia Barua is the original name of Piyali Barua.
- In 1858, 26 February Maniram Dewan and Piyali Barua were hanged to death in Jorhat Jail.
- At the time of great uprising of 1857, Lord Canning was the Governor General of India.
- Nana Saheb the leader of the revolt of 1857 who sent three letters to Napoleon III of France during rebellion.
- Disraeli, a leading British Parliamentarian termed the revolt as 'National Revolt', not a military mutiny.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Choose the correct answers :

(a) Maniram Dewan was first appointed by British administration as the Sheristader / Dewan of Upper Assam.

.....

(b) Lord William Bentick / Lord Canning was the Governor General of India during the time of the revolt of 1857.

.....

(c) Charles Holryod was the Principal Assistant / Judge of Sibsagar.

.....

(d) G. B. Molleson / V.D. Savarkar called the revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian independence.

.....

Q2) Fill in the blanks :

(a) The full name of A. J. M. Mill was……

(b) Konwar Singh was the leader of revolt of 1857 who led the place ……..……..

(c) Maniram Dewan was hanged till death along with …….

2 2.8 LET US SUM UP

- The revolt of 1857 was a popular revolt broke out in northern and central India. Earlier the revolt was started by the sepoys, or the Indian soldiers of the Company's army but soon spread into wide region and involved the masses.

- A large number of peasants, artisans and solders took part in the revolt and fought heroically against the British exploitation.
- In Assam under the leadership of Maniram Dewan, Assamese people also sought to join the revolt to overthrow the British rule. The basic purpose of Maniram and his associates was to restore the Ahom Monarchy in Assam.
- Historians have different opinions regarding the nature of the revolt.
- According to some British historians like Malleson, Kaye, it is just a sepoy mutiny. However, some nationalist historians like V.D. Savarkar had described it as a planned war of national independence.
- As regards the nature of the revolt in Assam, it may be said that it was a monarchical and partially anti-imperialistic.
- The most important significance of the revolt of 1857 is that it brought the people together and created national consciousness among them.

O 2.9 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H. K. (1992). *The comprehensive history of Assam*. *Modern period: Yandaboo to diarchy 1826-1919 A. D*. Volume four. Guwahati: Publication Board of Assam.

2) Baruah, S. L. (2007). *A comprehensive history of Assam*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

3) Chandra, B. (1971). *Modern India*. New Delhi.

K 2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: (a) Shirastedar
(b) Lord Canning
(c) Principal Assistant
(d) V. D. Savarkar

Ans to Q No 2: (a) Andrews John Moffat Mill.
(b) Bihar.
(c) Piyali Barua

M 2.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Who was A. J. Moffat Mill?

Q 2: What were the views of V. D. Savarkar regarding the nature of the revolt of 1857?

Q 3: Mention one cause for the failure of the revolt of 1857.

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

Q 1: Write about the nature and significance of the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

Q 2: How did Maniram Dewan try to restore the Ahom Monarchy in Assam?

Q 3: Why did Maniram Dewan try to expel the British from Assam?

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

Q 1: Discuss the role of Maniram Dewan in the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

Q 2: Discuss various causes for the failure of the revolt of 1857 in Assam.

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UNIT 3: ROLE OF RAIJMELS; PHULAGURI DHAWA, UPRISING OF THE JAINTIAS

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objective
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Raijmel
  3.3.1 Meaning and Nature of Raijmel
  3.3.2 Aims and Objectives of the Raij Mel
  3.3.3 Role and Significance of Raij Mels
3.4 Phulaguri Dhawa, 1861
  3.4.1 Significance of Phulaguri Dhawa
3.5 Uprising of the Jaintias, 1860-1863
3.6 Let Us Sum Up
3.7 Further Reading
3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
3.9 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the meaning and role of Raijmel
- provide a brief account of the Phulaguri Dhawa
- describe the Jaintia uprising.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

During the post mutiny period, the British Government made some arbitrary and unjustified revenue assessment which led to a series of peasant uprisings in Assam and neighbouring hill areas. The peasants convened ‘raij-mel’ or ‘people's assembly’ to express their discontentment against the government at different places of Assam. A popular uprising at Phulaguri (1861) near Nagaon town marked the beginning of the peasant uprising in Assam. A valiant uprising took place in the Jaintia hills from 1860 to 1863 against the new taxation measures of the British Government that affected the economic life of the people. In this chapter, we will discuss the role of Raij-mel, Phulaguri Dhawa and uprising of the Jaintias.

3.3 RAIJ MEL

3.3.1 Meaning and Nature of Raijmel

Raij Mel is described as a people's assembly or meeting in Assam. In Assamese the word Raij means ‘people’ and Mel means ‘meeting’. The word 'Raij' is derived from Rajya, which was originally an administrative or a fiscal unit in some parts of medieval

Assam. McCabe, an English official said gaon-panchayat was organised with the objective of talking up social issues and developed gradually and later it took the name Raij-mel. He further described the Raij-mel as an embodiment of collective strength of the people. Etymologically, mel means a meeting; an assembly of people gathering to discuss certain issues and problems. In Assam, a 'mel' was a 'time honoured institution' and a 'recognized feature' of the Assamese social life, for it was the only means through which people could obtain protection from the oppression of the local functionaries.

Before the coming of the British, a strong feeling of insecurity and depression had gripped the agricultural community of Assam. After the arrival of the British the situation did not improve. The new administrative changes introduced by the British had affected the peasants to a great extent and their conditions began to deteriorate with their built-up resentment. British introduced the system of accepting money tax instead of manual labour. With it, the demand for cash had swiftly increased and the peasants were not able to bear the growing demands. This policy of exacting revenue in cash created a widespread resentment and hardship of the peasants. There was neither any change in the general crop pattern nor any extension of cultivation. The British government only raised the revenue demand from time to time. The economic discontent raised the political consciousness among the peasants and it paved the way for organising themselves to challenge the oppressive British rule in Assam. In reality, the common people spontaneously took the initiative to organise the Raij Mels (people's assemblies) for social and political purposes which had been a unique feature of the 19th century Assamese agrarian society.

- **Nature of Raij Mel**

  The Raij-mels were, by nature, anti-imperialist. The Raij-mels in the greater interest of the people raised voice against injustice and thus, indirectly reserved human rights. The Mels considered the augmentation of revenue as an ominous contemplation and a faulty step. Secularism is one of the characteristic features of the Raij-mels. The Raij-mels had played a vital role in mobilising peasants against the agrarian policy and the agrarian exploitation of the Imperialist ruler. The peasants took active part in the Raij-mels hoping that the mels would lead them towards right direction giving them respite from the exploitation and burden of revenue. Despite their failure, the Raij-mels compelled the Colonial government to concede to the partial reduction of the rates of assessment.

  One organisational feature of the Raij-mels was the ‘Dak-system’ (postal system) and the ‘Lathials’ (men with clubs). During the time of emergency, some secret decisions were taken in the Raij-mel and to dispatch such secret messages to remote villages, Dakowals were appointed. These Dakowals (Postmen) carried the messages from one village to another. There were some peasants who wanted to pay their revenue to the government and others who wanted to purchase the auctioned properties of their own men that had been attached for the failure of payment of revenue arrear. To frighten both this classes of peasants, some Lathials (men with clubs) were appointed.

  Another noticeable thing is that the Raij-mels were generally convened at Namghars

and Masjids. The melkies (leaders) probably selected Namghars and Masjid for some particular reasons. Firstly, being religious place, the suspicious eyes of the colonial spies would not fall on the mels. Secondly, it would be much easier for the melkies to unite all in such religious places and have them swear their loyalty in the name of God. The nature of the Raij-mels was like the village panchayat but its activities were not confined to the panchayat alone. Sometime, it became like a spokesman not only of the inhabitants of one village but the inhabitants of one or even more Tahsils. The Raij-mels maintained strict discipline by cursing and ostracizing people who violated the discipline of the Raij-mels.

In brief, it can be said that significant role was played by the Raij mel in mobilising and bringing out the masses into the path of socio-economic and political agitation leading to the growth of political and national consciousness in Colonial Assam. From 1861 to 1894, the main strength and guiding force of the peasants' uprisings of Assam was the Raij-mels.

3.3.2 Aims and Objectives of the Raij Mel

- The Raij Mels tried to place the socio-economic problems of the people before the government.
- The Raij Mels wanted to safeguard the mutual interest of the peasants and to protect them from different kinds of oppression.
- To show the mobility and solidarity of the peasants irrespective of the caste, creed and ethnic groups was another aim of the Raij-mels.
- The other aims of the Raij-mels were not to yield to the government demand and compel the government to reduce the rate of revenue and other taxes.
- The Raij Mels tried to restore the lost glory of the peasants at the hands of the government.

3.3.3 Role and Significance of Raij Mels

The Raij-mel played an important role in 19th century Assam. In another words, it can be said that the Raij-mel is the peasants' mobilisation campaign. In this context, M. Sharma opines that the Raij-mels were institutions where the peasants were the most important participants. In Assam, a mel was a "time honoured institution" and a "recognised feature" of Assamese social life. It was the organisation through which people could hope to get security and protection from the oppression of the local functionaries.

The Raij mel played a very crucial role in the Phulaguri uprising of 1861. A number of peoples' assembly were held around Phulaguri and most of them were actively supported by the local leaders. The peasants of Barpujia, Roha, Kampur, Chapari and Jamunamukh area assembled in the Raijmel at Phulaguri to discuss various related matters. The chief objective of this mel was to raise their voice against the pan tax and also to express their anguish towards the prohibition of the poppy cultivation. Under the leaders of their mels, a number of villages were united and had decided to protect themselves from the exploitation

of their rulers. The aggrieved ryots had taken decision to continue their struggle until their demands were fulfilled. Thus, these well organised and well-attended mels provided ample opportunities to the masses not only to discuss their problems but also to develop a spirit of independence and self-reliance.

In 1883, the Government adopted a certain policy to raise the land revenue. The ryots had again looked towards the raij mel for their protection. A large number of mels were convened in different parts of the district of Darrang and Kamrup. The ryots discussed this matter relating to their unbearable taxation and then decided to protest against the policy of the Government. Thus, the mels were to a great extent successful in uniting the ryots of all castes and communities against the Government.

In 1892, the mels played a very active role in Rangia and Lachima. The bold defiance of the peasants of Rangia and Lachima inspired their fellow brothers of different parts of North Kamrup to oppose the increase in land revenue. Soon, mels were held at Nalbari, Barama, Bajali and many other places. The peasants of the Patharughat Tahsil of Darrang district declined to pay the increased rate of revenue in accordance to the decision of the Raij-mel held in the month of January 26, 1894. The mel discussed the matter and demanded for the remission of the increased rate of land revenue to the rate of the former settlement. Decisions of the Raij-mels were circulated throughout the area. The peasants from different localities in keeping with the decisions of the earlier Raij-mels, participated in the Raij-mels of Patharughat on 28th January, 1894.

The Raij-mels had played a significant role in mobilising peasants exclusively against the agrarian policy and the agrarian exploitation conducted by the Imperialist ruler. It helped in the growth of consciousness among the masses in the 19th century. In this context S. D. Goswami opined, "The main strength and guiding force of the peasant uprisings of Assam from 1861 to 1894 was the Raij-mels which spearheaded the resistance struggle against the repressive and exploitative action of the dominant Colonial class and the power."

3.4 PHULAGURI DHAWA, 1861

The acquisition of power by the British Crown from the East India Company proved fatal to the Indian peasants. The British Government introduced new revenue policies to reduce the deficit caused by the revolt of 1857 which adversely affected the Indian peasants. As a result, the peasants rose in revolt across various regions of the country against the new revenue policies of the colonial government.

The new imposition of exorbitant taxes created turmoil amongst the peasants of Assam. In 1860, income tax was introduced in Goalpara and Kamrup districts. Taxes were levied on cutting of timber and washing of gold. The right to fish in river and beels was offered to the highest bidders. Stamp duties were also introduced at the same time. In 1861-62, excise duties were levied in Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong districts with a ban on poppy cultivation. The bari and chapori lands was assessed at a meagre rate in which poppy was cultivated.

Nowgong, which was amongst the largest opium-producing district of Assam was

adversely affected by the imposition of excise duty. Meanwhile, rumours were afloat in Nowgong district that the British Government contemplated on levying taxes on houses, homestead and betel-leaf cultivation. This led to an agitation amongst the tribesmen, particularly Lalung and Kachari of the Phulaguri area. On 17th September, 1861 around one thousand ryots gathered at the Sadar Court to protest against the ban on poppy cultivation and contemplated imposition of taxes on betel-leaf cultivation. Some of protesting farmers forcefully entered into Deputy Commissioner's office at Nowgong. The impetuous Deputy Commissioner, Herbert Scones refused to listen to their complaint patiently. Scones not only fined but also arrested the trespassers for the rest of the day. In their subsequent representation on 9th October, the ryots again were unsuccessful in receiving a satisfactory reply from Herbert Scones. This forced the people to stop cooperating with the British administration. They decided not to pay any tax to the British administration. The aggrieved ryots then decided to convene a raij-mel at Phulaguri on 15th October for five days. On that day, a crowd of over thousand ryots had assembled. Scones despatched a police force under Haladhar Barua, the then daroga of Nowgong jail to disperse the crowd. Haladhar arrived at the place of raij-mel and ordered the crowd to disperse, but the latter disobeyed him. This made him a hasty retreat from the spot. Next day, a police force was sent with the same objective which resulted in complete failure. On 17th October, about three to four thousand peasant assembled there. The police party arrived at the place of meeting and arrested the leaders. But, the raging mob forcefully freed the prisoners. Next day, Scones despatched Assistant Commissioner Lieutenant Singer with a police force to Phulaguri. When he arrived at Phulaguri, he found a gathering of over three thousand people, majority of them armed with club. In those days, Assamese people used to carry a bamboo stick with them to drive off any animal or clear unwanted objects from the road. This had enraged Singer, he ordered the mob to lay down their clubs and disperse. In a scuffle that followed, Singer was beaten on his head by Moira Singh with a club and was beaten to death. The police force accompanying Singer then fled away from the spot and Singer's body was thrown into the kolong river. A group of agitators rushed to Raha and attacked the police station there. The officer-in-charge of the Raha police station met with the same fate as that of Singer.

As the situation became tense, Scones himself arrived at the spot with an armed force of Assam Light Infantry to control the situation. Firing took place and several people lost their lives while many were injured. Law and order of the affected area came to normalcy followed by the arrest of forty-one persons who were alleged to have been implicated in the Singer's murder case. Eight or nine leaders amongst them were punished to death or deported to Andaman Island.

3.4.1 Significance of Phulaguri Dhawa

The Phulaguri uprising had played a vital role in the history of the peasant movement not only in Assam but also in India. It was the earliest popular peasant uprising in Assam against colonial exploitation. Though, the government succeeded in suppressing the uprising with an iron hand, the sacrifice of the Phulaguri peasant did not go in vain.

Eventually, the British administration was compelled to review the oppressive tax structure.

Regarding Phulaguri movement, it may be pointed out that the entire decision making in Phulaguri movement was done by the farmers themselves and the people who came out to demonstrate their protest was based on peasant affaires. It marked the beginning of peasant uprising in Assam as the aggrieved ryots fought unitedly for a common cause. The division of the people of Phulaguri not to pay taxes in 1861 may be regarded as the beginning of the Non-cooperation movement long before such a tactic was formally adopted as a part of freedom movement in 1920-21 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. At the same time, the Phulaguri episode created the wide spread spirit of freedom movement against foreign rule.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) In which year income tax was introduced in Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam?

.....

Q2) Who was Herbert Scones?

.....

.....

.....

3.5 UPRISING OF THE JAINTIAS, 1860-1863

The word "Jaintia" is derived from ‘Jaintia Devi’ or ‘Jayanteswari’ indicating an incarnation of the Hindu goddess Durga. The Jaintias were known as ‘Syntengs’ inhabitants of Jaintia hills in the north-eastern part of India. In 1835, the Jaintia hills were annexed to the British territory. The British administered the plain areas directly and the hill region indirectly by appointing fifteen dolois and four sarders. The first popular uprising in Jaintia hills against the British government started in 1860. Until then, the Jaintias were exempted from direct taxation due to the migratory habits of the hill tribes who were basically engaged in shifting cultivation. But, the situation changed drastically when a house-tax and a stamp duty was levied on them in 1860. The Jaintias were rose in open rebellion against certain administrative measures introduced by the British, which affected the religious sentiments and the economic life of the people. They attacked the police station at Jaintiapur, Mulagul and Jaflong. The commanding officer of Cherra rushed to Jowai with a group of troops. The British government easily suppressed the rebellion in its early stage as the rebels were not well organised.

The political unrest continued in the Jaintia hills. A historic uprising began there on 28th December, 1861 under the leadership of U Kiang Nongbah. He organised the Jaintias with an intention to oust the British and reinstall the former Raja to the throne. In 1861, a meeting was held at Synten near Jowai amongst the leading personalities. The Jaintia people selected U Kiang Nongbah as their supreme leader, who tried to organise a militant force and draw the support of whole community. The Dolois or the chiefs, whose powers were curtailed by the Government willingly offered their support to the movement. After

the annexation of Jaintia hills by the British, the Dolois were recognised as the chiefs and the owner of the communal lands. However, the corrupt practices of the Dolois compelled the British authorities to lower their position by appointing a Daroga at Jowai in 1850. On 28th December 1861, the Jaintias celebrated the annual dance festival (pastieh) at Jalong near Jowai using the swords and shields. But there was a ban on the uses of swords and shields by the Jaintia. A police party from Jalong had arrived there and dispersed the crowd. The provocative manners of the British officials compelled the people to rise in violent uprising when the former stopped a cremation procession at Jowai on 29th December 1861. On 17th January, 1862, about six hundred Jaintias suddenly attacked the military post at Jowai, and captured the arsenal. Besides, the rebels besieged the military post. A group of rebels blocked the road to Cherrapunji.

As soon as the news of the siege reached Cherrapunji, the Deputy Commissioner of Khasi-Jaintia hills E.W. Rowlatt, came to Jowai with a strong force and reoccupied the military post. The detachment of the 33rd Native Infantry was deployed at the stronghold of the rebels. In the meantime, the battalions of the 44th Native Infantry and the Bengal Military Police rushed to Jowai. The military operations were intensified and vigorous steps like burning of villages and destroying the food grains were taken to starve the rebels. As the casualty on the British side increased day by day, Brigadier General G. D. Showers of the Eastern command decided to negotiate with the rebels. G. D. Showers deployed Raja Rabon Singh of Khyrim and Raja Ram Singh of Cherra as mediator to resolve the uprising. The British government announced rupees one thousand on the capture of U Kiang Nongbah.

The Jaintia Uprising gradually lost its strength from the midst of 1863. The Government suppressed the rebels high-handedly by destroying their villages and punishment of the guilty and the innocent. At last, U Kiang Nongbah was captured. Nongbah was tried by a military court, and sentenced to death. He was publicly hanged at Jowai. The Jaintia rebellion came to an end in April 1863 when the rest of the leaders surrendered before the Government official.

The Jaintia rebellion that took place under the leadership of U. Kiang Nongbah was quite different from that of the Phulaguri Dhawa. It was entirely a tribal movement. The Jaintias did not revolt on agrarian issues. It occurred when certain administrative measures of the British government hurt the religious sentiments and affected the economic life of the Jaintia people.

- **Causes of the failure of the Jaintia Rebellion**

  Though the Jaintias made a valiant effort to overthrow the colonial power from their soil and reinstall the former king, the Jaintia rebellion ended in failure. The major weakness of the rebellion was the lack of proper understanding of resisting the mighty colonial power. The Jaintia people did not have a clear knowledge about the strength of the British force. The rebels fought with their traditional weapons like homemade cannons, spears, arrows and swords while the British used modern weapons. Moreover, strong diplomatic policy of the British enabled them to suppress the rebellion.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) Who was the leader of the Jaintia rebellion of 1862?

.....

Q4) Who was E. W. Rowlatt?

.....

3.6 LET US SUM UP

- Raij Mel is described as a people's assembling or meeting in Assam. In Assamese the word Raij means people and Mel means meeting or assembly.
- The word 'Raij' is derived from Rajya, which was originally an administrative or a fiscal unit in some parts of medieval Assam.
- The Raij-mels were, by nature, anti-imperialist. The Raij-mels in the greater interest of the people raised voice against injustice and thus indirectly reserved the human rights.
- Significant role was played by the Raij mel in mobilising and bringing out the masses into the path of socio-economic and political agitation leading to the growth of political and national consciousness in Colonial Assam.
- The imposition of certain new taxes by the British on the people of Assam in general and contemplated imposition of tax on betel-leaf in Nowgong in particular paved the way for a historic peasant uprising at Phulaguri in 1861.
- The Phulaguri uprising had played a vital role in the history of the peasant movement not only in Assam but also in India. It was the earliest popular peasant uprising in Assam against colonial exploitation.
- The first popular uprising in Jaintia hills against the British government started in 1860. A historic uprising began there on 28th December 1861 under the leadership of U Kiang Nongbah.
- The Jaintia rebellion was quite different from that of the Phulaguri Dhawa. It was entirely a tribal movement. It occurred when certain administrative measures of the British government hurt the religious sentiments and affected the economic life of the Jaintia people.
- U Kiang Nongbah offered a strong resistance against the British administration but, finally he was betrayed, captured and hanged publicly.

3.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H. K. (1992). *The comprehensive history of Assam*. Guwahati: Publication Board Assam.

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5) Sharma, M. (1989). *The peasant uprising and middle class hegemony- The case of Assam*. NEIHA.

K 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: In the year 1860.

Ans to Q No 2: Herbert Scone was the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong at the time of Phulaguri Uprising.

Ans to Q No 3: U Kiang Nongbah.

Ans to Q No 4: The Deputy Commissioner of Khasi-Jaintia hills.

M 3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: What is Raij-mel?

Q 2: Who was Haladhar Barua?

Q 3: When was the Jaintia rebellion started?

Q 4: What is Pastieh?

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

Q 1: Write a short note on the significance of the Raij-mel.

Q 2: Explain two main causes of the failure of the Jaintia Rebellion.

Q 3: Write a brief account of Phulaguri Dhawa.

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

Q 1: Discuss the role and significance of Raij-mel in peasant uprising during colonial Assam.

Q 2: Who were the Dolois? Mention the main functions of Dolois.

Q 3: Discuss the role of U Kiang Nongbah with special reference to the Jaintia Rebellion.

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UNIT 4: AGRARIAN REVOLTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives
4.2 Introduction
4.3 Agrarian Revolts
4.4 The Assam Riots (1893-1894)
  4.4.1 Rangia Riot (1893)
  4.4.2 Lachima Riot (1894)
  4.4.3 Patharughat Riot (1894)
  4.4.4 A New Awakening
4.5 Let Us Sum Up
4.6 Further Reading
4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
4.8 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the meaning and background of the Agrarian Revolts
- gain a better idea on Assam Riots
- describe the Rangia and the Lachima Uprisings of Kamrup
- describe the Patharughat Uprising
- explain the new awakening that is responsible for arousing nationalistic and political consciousness throughout Assam.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the long run of human history different countries of the world experienced many violent peasant movements. Early peasant movements took place as a result of stresses in the feudal and semi-feudal societies. However, in India several peasant movements arose during the colonial period. The ruin of traditional handicrafts, change of ownership of land, huge amounts of debt and impoverishment of peasantry under the colonial rule had led to the numerous peasant movements in India.

The peasant uprisings of 19th century Assam were the anti-imperialist struggle against the colonial rule. The economic policies of the colonial government had adversely affected the Indian peasants. On many occasions, the peasants rose in revolt against the arbitrary taxes imposed on them by the colonial government. In many places, the peasants of Assam organised themselves through Raij-mel and demonstrated strong protest against the Government. After thirty years of the Phulaguri incidents the peasants of Patharughat in the Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang District and the peasants of Rangia, Lachima of the then North Kamrup District organised a strong mass protest against the British Government which is widely known as Assam Riots.

4.3 AGRARIAN REVOLTS

The word 'Agrarian' means anything that is related to ‘land, its management or distribution’. Agrarian system included land-tenure system. The term revolt implies a situation in which a large group of people behave in a violent and uncontrolled way for a particular cause.

Anthony Pereira, a political scientist, has defined a peasant movement as a "Social movement made up of peasants (small landholders or farm workers on large farms), usually inspired by the goal of improving the situation of peasants in a nation or territory".

Agrarian revolts include the revolts of agrarian classes which are related to agriculture in terms of working on land and its ownership. In most of the cases, the agrarian revolts are fought on economic issues. In India, different agrarian classes have resorted to open revolt against money-lenders, zaminders and the colonial government throughout the pre-independence and post-independence periods. It is worth mentioning that the strength of participant classes and the success of the agrarian revolts have always depended on the efficiency of leadership, issues, types of mobilisation and the response of the authorities. Almost all regions of the country had experienced agrarian revolts during the pre-independence period. All exploited classes of the society viz. tenants, agricultural labourers and artisans were involved in these revolts. The most prominent among them were Kheda in Gujarat, Mopila in the Malabar Coast, Champaran in Bihar, Tebhaga in Bengal, Patharughat, Rangia and Lachima in Assam. In the Deccan region, the peasant revolt was directed against money-lenders, in Bengal against the indigo planters and zaminders, but in Assam it was against the exploitation of the Government.

4.4 THE ASSAM RIOTS (1893-1894)

In 1868-69, the British Government had increased the rates of revenue on rupit and non-rupit lands in the Assam valley districts from 25 to 50 per cent. The people of Kamrup and Darrang districts convened raij-mels against this arbitrary tax. Accordingly, the people of Lakhimpur also surrendered much of their land. The government resorted to deployment of force in every place to suppress the protest of the riots and to stop holding of raij-mels. The people then decided to gather in the ‘Namghars’ or ‘Mosques’ for the redressal of general grievances of diverse communities and not to launch a struggle. However, the situation became tense when the government increased the rates of revenue once again. Towards the end of the 19th century it forced them to rise in rebellion. In December, 1893, Sir William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam made a new assessment and increased land revenue to 70-80 per cent and in some cases even to 100 per cent. Then, the people of Rangia and Lachima in Kamrup and Patharughat in Darrang districts launched a series of protests which were widely known as "Assam Riots". In a meeting on 4th January, 1894 at Tengabari, the raij passed resolution to stop paying revenue and to take avenge whoever attempted to attach the auctioned property of their fellow villagers. These series of risings broke out against the British as well as the Marwari traders, as the people thought they were monopolising the internal trade of Assam and exploiting the people.

- **Factors Leading to the Assam Riots**

  In spite of the growing discontent of the riots, the authorities in Bengal as well as in Assam did not stop the imposition of new taxes and increased the existing rates on land revenue. In 1861, Hopkinson sought to increase the land tax on the plea of utilising the exceed revenue on works of public utility. Hopkinson's offer did not receive the sanction of the Board of Revenue, but the latter agreed to the recommendation made earlier by Mr. Jenkins for an extra fund to be created for the repair and modification of roads, bridges etc. In the next attempt, Hopkinson proposed to raise the revenue on land with a view to equalising the rates in all the districts of province. On this occasion, his proposal received the approval of the Government of Bengal. In 1868-69, the government had increased the rates of revenue on rupit and non-rupit lands in the Assam valley districts from 25 to 50 percent.

  Eventually, the discontentment of the people took violent turn against this new assessment in Kamrup and Darrang in 1983-84.

5 LET US KNOW

"D.D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma, together with Daniel Thorner, brought peasants into the study of the Indian history for the first time".

4.4.1 Rangia Riot (1893)

The Rangia Movement started with the looting of the Rangia Bazaar on the morning of 24th December, 1893. In the same evening the aggrieved riots convened a mel at Belagaon near Rangia. After attending the mel, the mob gutted down the huts of the bazaar and threatened a Marwari trader that his shop would be looted on 30th December, on the ground that 'his presence had increased the revenue burden on land'. On 30th December, about three thousand people assembled at Rangia, held demonstration throughout the night. The mob also threatened that they would destroy the thana (police station), post office and the Tehsildar's office. However, the timely arrival of a police force under Mr. Reilly, Assistant Superintendent of Police brought the situation under control.

On 6th January, 1893, R. B. McCabe, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup arrived at Rangia with a police party and arrested some persons alleged to have been involved in the incidents of 24th December, 1893. The arrests, however, did not prevent the people from further attacks. On 10th January, a crowd of about three thousand, some armed with clubs assembled at the open field near Rangia thana. The Deputy Commissioner then asked the crowd to disperse. However, they refused his order and started coming closer to Rangia Thana with cries that declared 'we won't pay revenue at enhanced rate'. In the evening, they attempted to release their comrades by forcing their way into the thana. The raging crowd had occupied a few houses near the thana, where upon the police resorted to fire. The police firing compelled the crowd to disperse from the spot. Though there were no exact records of the number of casualities in that incident, there is every possibility of heavy casualities. Realising the critical situation and the possibility of further troubles in

the adjoining areas of the districts, McCabe called for additional troops from Tezpur and Darrang frontier. The Tehsildar's cutcherry was strongly stocaded and orders were issued for the attachment of all licensed guns of Rangia, Nalbari, Barama and Bajali area. The authorities also imposed ban on holding meeting of the mels without prior information not only in Rangia but in other places like Pati-Darrang, Nalbari, Tamulpur, Hajo, Barama, Bajali and Sarukhetri mouza. The village headmen of the affected areas were appointed to act as special constables (under section 17, Act V of 1881) with the object of maintaining peace and assisting in revenue collection. With the return of normalcy in Rangia, the government succeeded in realising a sum of Rs. 60,000/ as land revenue out of a total collection of Rs. 90,000/ within a few days.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) When did the Rangia Riot begin?

.....

Q2) Who was Mr. Reilly?

.....

4.4.2 Lachima Riot (1894)

Lachima is a village under Sarukhetri mouza. The dwellers of this area were poor and they were badly affected by the frequent increase of land revenue. At Nalbari, Bajali and Barama, mels continued to be as active as before. The alien government ordered the Mouzadars and Mandals of Sarthebari to collect revenue strictly. On 21st January, 1894, the Mouzadar accompanied by a Mandal went to Kapla village to collect revenue. The peasants of the area assembled in a mel to discuss the situation. At that moment, a head constable with four policemen had gone to prevent the peasants from holding the mel. The crowd who assembled the mel became furious. The Mouzadar and the Mandal were severely assaulted and the Mandal died on 28th January, 1894. A total of seventy-five persons were arrested by the police for interrogation and investigation. On receiving the news of that incident R. B. McCabe, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup rushed to Lachima on the evening of 24th January with a party of the 13th Bengal Infantry. By the next morning, measures were taken for the arrest of ring leaders and fifty-nine persons were arrested and kept in a temporary lock-up. Then a huge crowd of about three thousand persons gathered in front of the camp. A memorandum was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner signed by 6,000 ryots, demanding the release of their comrades and revocation of the re-assessment order. However, the Deputy Commissioner insisted on the government's demand and warned the raij with dire consequences against non-payment of revenue. The crowd then became furious and rushed towards him. McCabe ordered a bayonet charge on the raij and dispersed them finally.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) Where is Lachima situated?

.....

Q4) Who was Mr. Mc Cabe?

.....

4.4.3 Patharughat Riots (1894)

After the Kamrup and Lachima Riots, the peasant uprising of Patharughat in the Mangaldoi sub-division of the Darrang districts was very important in the history of Assam. According to Amalendu Guha, it was the 'most tragic incident' in the history of peasant uprising of Assam. Riots of a serious nature broke out at Patharughat in January, 1894. The ryots through their mels not only protested against the increased rates of revenue, but also resisted those who would be paying revenue to the government. J. D. Anderson, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang received information from the intelligence on 24th January, 1894, of mels for days together at Sipajhar, Kalaigaon and Mangaldoi tehsils. Mr. Anderson then decided to take coercive action and left Tezpur for Patharughat on 26th January, accompanied by J. R. Barrington, Commandant of Frontier Police, with a party of 17 armed civil police and 12 sepoys of the Balipara guard. On the way, he found a notice on a tree inviting the ryots to attend a mel at Patharughat, 12th to 14th Magh (1301 B.S.), with a view to placing their demand before the district authorities to lower the re-assessment rates.

On the morning of 28th January, when a police party under Barrington went to attach the property of the defaulting ryots, a mob of about 200 people came forward to resist them. Barrington and his men somehow had manages to escape from any harm. The mob then advanced towards the rest-house where the Deputy Commissioner had encamped. Since the ryots came unarmed and there was no sign of violence, the Deputy Commissioner then decided to meet them in the open space in front of the rest-house. At first, he had informed the ryot regarding the orders of the Government of India and at the same time ordered them not to hold any mel and warned them of the inevitable consequences of refusal to disperse. In spite of that warning, the ryots refused to disperse unless their demands were solved. Barrington and his police party drove them to an open field in the neighbourhood with force. A huge crowd had already gathered there and they had began to throw sticks, bamboos and clods of earth on the police party, breaking their limbs and blinding them. As a result, the Police Commissioner Barrington had ordered his force to disperse the crowd by open firing. According to official records, fifteen ryots had lost their lives and thirty-six were injured. The British force began to torture the villagers and destroy their properties. The villagers were forced to pay the enhanced rates of revenue. As the peasants threw clods of earth on the British police, this incident was popularly known as 'Doli Ran' among the villagers. Popular verses, known as 'Doli Purana' composed in Purana style by the village poet, Norottam Das, were written to commemorate the incident.

The tragic incident of Patharughat was a heroic effort made by the ryots in the history of peasant uprising of Assam. *The Indian Nation* in its issue on 21st April, 1894, described the grievances of the people as 'real and not sentimental'. *The 'Amrit Bazar Patrika'* observed that in the Deccan the fury of the riots was directed against money-lenders, in Bengal

against indigo-planters (1860), in Pabna against zamainders (1872), but in Assam, this movement was a open rebellion against the increasing Government taxes.

5 LET US KNOW

Since 2000, the Indian Army has been paying homage to the martyrs of Patharughat on January, 29th every year.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5) Where is Patharughat situated?

.....

Q6) Who was J. R. Barrington?

.....

- **Causes of the Failure of the Riots of 1893-94**

The peasant uprisings of 1893-94 had failed due to some basic causes which can be categorised as mentioned below:

The traditional weapons of the peasants could not cope up with the modern weapons of the British. They used traditional weapons like spears, bows, arrows and daos against the British force. It was the main reason of the defeat of the peasants of Kamrup and Darrang.

- Underestimation of the strength and ability of the British was another cause of the defeat of the peasant.
- The local leaders were inferior to the colonial leader in terms of military skill, efficiency and decision making.
- The people of Assam at that time underwent economic hardship. And because of this reason, they could not fight a decisive battle against the authorities.

4.4.4 A New Awakening

The Riots of 1893-94 marked the beginning of a new era of socio-political awakening in Assam and paved the way for organised challenge to the colonial government. The united strength and might of the peasant created by the raij-mel had changed the socio-political scenario of Assam in the next few decades.

The spread of western education during the latter part of the nineteenth century created a class of enlightened people in Assam. Through Raij-mels they brought the public grievances to the notice of the government for consideration. The spread of western education greatly contributed to replace the age-long beliefs and customs of the land with a spirit of rationalism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the outlook of the orthodox section of the society had gradually changed. Students from high caste Hindu families were sent to the Presidency College at Calcutta to acquire higher knowledge in western education. The establishment of the Cotton College at Guwahati in 1901 contributed to the spread of higher education in Assam.

The formation of Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha at Jorhat in 1884 by Jagannath Barua is a landmark in the history of political association in Assam. The Sarbajanik Sabha kept a strong vigil on the education policy of the government. Apart from this, the Sabha demanded large employment of the natives of the land and emphasised on the improvement of their service condition and emoluments.

In Assam before the formation of Indian National Congress, The Ryot Sabha was formed by a group of enlightened people mainly to protest against the increase of land revenue and to raise other public grievances in the province. Although the Indian National Congress (INC) was not started in Assam until 1921, yet the Raij-mel or Sabha of different districts of Assam had sent delegates to attend the Congress session wherever it was held. Devicharan Barua was the first Assamese to attend the second session of Indian National Congress held at Calcutta in 1886.

The Ryot sabha or Raij-mels played a vital role in districts like Sibsagar, Nagaon, Darrang, Kamrup and Lakhimpur in making the people conscious about their worse condition in which they lived under the Colonial rule. The Tezpur Ryot Sabha was formed in and around 1884, which had become popular in the villages. In 1887, it built the Tezpur Town Hall, the first of its kind in Assam. The Assam Desh Hitaishini Sabha (1885) and Gyan Pradayini Sabha (1887) were formed under the leadership of Anandaram Barua and Gunabhiram Barua at Sibsagar and Nagaon respectively with an object of spreading knowledge amongst the Assamese people.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was the pioneer of the new awakening in Assam. He realised that the real progress of Assam could be attained only through modern education. He proposed that people should acquire the knowledge of western science, literature and philosophy. He strongly argued in favour of replacing the Bengali language with the Assamese language and thereby contributed to restoration of Assamese language in its rightful place.

Since Assam has no legislature of its own during the years 1874-1905, the people of Assam were debarred from participating in legislative activities of any kind. In March, 1900, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India paid a visit to Assam. In a welcome address J. Alstone, the Superintendent of Assam Frontier Tea Company Limited, Dibrugarh, appealed to the Viceroy to improve the lines of communication and means of transport in the province. Besides, he also pleaded for a permanent seat for Assam in Indian Legislative Council.

2 4.5 LET US SUM UP

- The peasant uprisings of the 19th century Assam were the anti-imperialist struggles against the colonial rule. The economic policies of the colonial government had adversely affected the Indian peasants.
- Agrarian revolts include the revolts of agrarian classes which were related to agriculture in terms of working on the land and its ownership. All exploited classes of the society viz. tenants, agricultural labourers and artisans were involved in these revolts.
- The Rangia movement started with the looting of the Rangia bazaar on the morning

of 24th December, 1893.

- The Riots of 1893-94 marked the beginning of a new era of socio-political awakening in Assam and paved the way for organised challenge to the colonial government.
- The spread of western education greatly contributed in replacing the age-long beliefs and customs of the land with a spirit of rationalism.
- The establishment of the Cotton College at Guwahati in 1901 contributed to the spread of higher education in Assam.

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4) Goswami, M., Pujari, S. , Dutta, U. (2012). *Asomor etihash*. Jorhat, Assam: Grantha-Sanskriti Edu Cell.

5) Sarma, D. (1957). *Patharughatar ran*. Mangaldai: Page 1-28.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: On 24th December, 1893.

Ans to Q No 2: Assistant Superintendent of Police.

Ans to Q No 3: Lachima is village under Sarukhetri mouza.

Ans to Q No 4: The Deputy Commissioner of the Kamrup District.

Ans to Q No 5: In the Mangaldoi sub-division of the Darrang District.

Ans to Q No 6: Commandant of the Frontier Police during Patharughat uprising.

4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: What does the word "Agrarian" mean?

Q 2: What is Agrarian revolt?

Q 3: Who was Sir William Ward?

Q 4: Who was J. D. Anderson?

Q 5: When was the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha formed?

Q 6: When was the Tezpur Ryot Sabha formed?

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

Q 1: Write a short note on Rangia Riot.

Q 2: Explain briefly about Lachima riots.

Q 3: Discuss briefly the causes of the failure of the Assam riots.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-350 words)

Q 1: What is Assam riots of 1893-94? Discuss the factors leading to the occurrence of Assam riots.

Q 2: Write a brief account on the Patharughat Riot.

Q 3: Discuss the birth of the new awakening that took place immediately after the Assam riots.

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UNIT 5: GROWTH OF ASSAMESE NATIONALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives
5.2 Introduction
5.3 Factors Contributing Towards the Growth of Assamese Nationalism
5.4 Partition of Bengal and its Impact on Assam
5.5 Let Us Sum Up
5.6 Further Reading
5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- learn about the growth of nationalism in India
- highlight the factors contributing towards the growth of Assamese Nationalism
- describe partition of Bengal and its impact on Assam.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

The word "Nationalism" means advocacy of political independence for a particular country. Nationalism is a political, social and economic system characterised by the promotion of the interest of a particular nation.

Traditional Indian historiography explains that Indian nationalism grew partly as a result of British imperial policies and in some extent as a reaction to it by the Indians. R. Coupland wrote "Indian nationalism was the child of the British Raj". In fact, Indian nationalism was the unwanted child of the British Raj whom it refused to feed at birth and tried to suppress it subsequently. In reality, many factors contributed towards the growth of Indian nationalism such as the result of the Indian Renaissance, the offshoot of modernisation initiated by the British in India and as a reaction to British imperial policies in India. The world-wide upsurge of the concepts of nationalism and right of self-determination initiated by the French Revolution also partly contributed towards the growth of Indian nationalism.

The political and administrative unification established under the British rule fostered the spirit of nationalism in India. Development of means of communication had unified the country from East to West and North to South and largely contributed to the growth of nationalism throughout the country. Besides, introduction of modern system of education and development of press both in English and vernacular languages had played a notable role in mobilising public opinion and promoting nationalism. Apart from the progressive characters of various socio-religious reform movements of India, the strong wave of nationalistic ideas that swept cotemporary Europe and Latin America also promoted pan-Indian feelings and spirit of nationalism.

5.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS THE GROWTH OF ASSAMESE NATIONALISM

The establishment of British rule in Assam and subsequent economic exploitation create a large scale discontentment among the masses and it ultimately led to the growth of nationalism. Besides, the spread of modern education, growth of printing press and formation of political associations had largely contributed to the rise of the feelings of nationalism in Assam. The factors that contributed to the growth of Assamese nationalism can be categorised under the following heads:

- **Role of Raijmel and Ryot Sabha:**

  Apart from the Ahom princes and nobility, the common peasants joined together through Raijmel in different places of Assam to oppose British taxation policy during the period 1860 to 1894. The Raijmel played an important role for peasants to mobilise their campaign against the Government. Mccabe, an English official described the Raijmel as an embodiment of the collective strength of the people. Most prominent amongst them were Phulaguri Raij-Mel (1861), Rangia Raij-Mel (1893), Lachima Raijmel (1894) and Patharughat Raijmel (1894). Towards the end of the 19th century, the Raijmels of Assam gradually merged with the Ryot-Sabha. The Tezpur Ryot-Sabha, Nowgong Ryot-Sabha, Vishwanath Ryot-Sabha, Saring Ryot-Sabha,Ganak Pukhuri Ryot-Sabha, Na-duar Ryot-Sabha, Jamuguri Ryot-Sabha and many others played an important role in organising the people of Assam and fight for their rights. Though these uprisings were suppressed by the superior British force, the socio-economic and political agitation led by these Raijmels and Ryot-Sabhas had contributed indirectly to the growth of political consciousness in colonial Assam.

- **Modern Education and Development of Assamese Renaissance**

  Sir Charles E. Trevelyan, T. B. Macaulay and Lord William Bentinck (The Governor General of India), took a decision in 1835 to introduce English education in India with an intention to create a class of educated Indians to run the administration efficiently. The Government of India extended grant-in-aid to Assam by a resolution passed in 1882 which brought in a considerable increase in primary and secondary education. By 1880's there were around 1760 primary schools and 98 high schools in Assam.

The American Baptist missionaries laid the foundation of Assamese literature by establishing elementary schools and preparing text books in Assamese language. Nathan Brown wrote the first grammar of Assamese language (1848) and Milles Bronson completed and published the first Assamese Lexicon (1867). They also published first ever magazine *Arunodoi* in Assam. The *Arunudoi* was an forerunner of newspapers and magazines in Assam.

Gradually, the introduction of modern system of education gave a new direction to Assamese political thinking. The scholarship holders and the wards of wealthy Assamese families who went to Calcutta for collegiate, medical and technical education, came into contact with some progressive leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and Devendra Nath Tagore. These educated Assamese

youth composed prose, poetry, short story and drama which were 'national in tone'. The poems of Ambikagiri Raychoudhury, Prasannalal Choudhury, Binanda Chanda Barua and Dimbeswar Neog were intensely patriotic. Kamalakanta Bhattacharya, through a series of his thought provoking essays urged the Assamese people to be energetic, serious and patriotic. Slow and gradual promotion of Assamese literature ultimately led to the emergence of a spirit of nationalism.

5 LET US KNOW

Hemchandra Goswami composed the first Assamese sonnet *"Priyatamar Chithi"*, (the letter from the beloved, 1889).

- **Press and Public Association**

  The introduction of the printing press in Assam was another offshoot of the British rule in India. The credit for the setting up of first printing press in Assam is attributed to the two American Baptist Missionaries, Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter, who started their operations in early 1836. Initially, they set up the press at Sadia and it was shifted to Sibsagar in 1846. Gradually the Vernacular presses such as Dharma Prakash Press, Auniati Satra and Chidananda Press, Guwahati came into existence. Though the colonial rulers imposed numerous restrictions on the press from time to time, the latter part of the 19th century witnessed an unprecedented growth of Indian-owned English and vernacular newspapers.

  The first Anglo-Assamese weekly, *'The Assam News'* published under the editorship of Hem Chandra Barua succeeded in creating public opinion on common problems of the people. The monthly *'Mau'* or *'The Bee'* highlighted the burning questions of the day. It openly criticised the existing system of nomination in the local bodies. The journal supported the ideals of the Indian Nation Congress (INC) and condemned the policies and methods adopted by the Ryot Sabhas in Assam for redressing the grievances of the people.

  The Assamese press had played a significant role in mobilising public opinion and promoting nationalism in the province. This was noticeable in *Bijuli* (1891) edited by Padmanath Gohain Barua, which acted as the connecting link between the government and the governed. Assamese weeklies like *The Assam* (1894), *The Advocate of Assam* (1904-1907) and *The Assam Bilashini* were clearly 'national in tone'. *The Advocate of Assam* stood for nationalism, Swadeshi and Swaraj. It strongly condemned the existing Land Laws of Assam as they denied tenants permanent right over the land. The Bengali weekly, *Surma* played an important role in creating public opinion in the Surma Valley. Two radical papers, *Desabandhu* and *Prajasakti* published from Sylhet during the period of partition of Bengal inspired people with the idea of nationalism.

- **Assam Association and Growth of Political Consciousness**

  The birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a landmark in the history of political association in India. Like the other provinces of India, Assam also felt the

need particularly among the Assamese intelligentsia for a broad-based political institution to represent the voice and the aspiration of the people to the government. Apart from enriching Assamese language and literature, the Asomiya Bhasa Unnati-Sadhini Sabha (1888) had succeeded in arousing a sense of unity and patriotism amongst the Assamese. In 1884, the first political association of Assam, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha was founded by Jagannath Barua. The main object of the Sabha was to express the wishes and aspiration of the people before the government and to make the people aware of the objects and policies of the government. It protested the Assam Land Revenue Regulation of 1886. The activities of the Sabha came to a halt after the death of Jagannath Barua in 1907 and subsequent division amongst its members. Since then, The Assam Association played an active role in presenting the needs and grievances of the people to the Government. After the birth of the new province Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Assam Association demanded the Lieutenant Governor its representation in the provincial legislative council. Its efforts led to the declaration of Assam as a major province equal in status with other provinces of India. The Association became defunct with the formation of the Assam Provincial Congress in 1921.

The Surma Valley Political Conference was formed in April 1906 at the initiative of some eminent leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Kamini Kumer Chanda, zaminders, merchants and mirasdars. From the outset, it was imbued with the spirit of intense nationalism. The conference extended its fullest support towards the Swadeshi movement. It also advocated the establishment of national schools, swadeshi and physical training for the youth including the techniques of lathi and sword playing. Its continuous efforts turned the entire valley into supporters of the movement for Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Who was Lord William Bentinck?

.....

Q2) Who had set up the first printing press in Assam?

.....

Q3) Who edited the newspaper *Bijuli*?

.....

5.4 PARTITION OF BENGAL AND ITS IMPACT ON ASSAM

In 1905, the then Viceroy of India Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal into two provinces i.e. Bengal proper and East Bengal and Assam. It was a masterpiece of Curzon's internal policy. At that time Bengal was the ‘nerve-centre’ of the rising Congress movement. The Government, therefore, chalked out a plan to check the growing national consciousness by having the province partitioned. It was explained from the official side that lawlessness and crime prevailed to a great extent in the eastern districts of Mymensingh and Backergange divisions and the police arrangement was unable to cope with the situation.

The Lieutenant-Governor could not properly maintain the law and order of these extensive areas. Hence, efficiency of administration demanded the re-arrangement of boundaries between Bengal and Assam. From the political point of view, the government sought to isolate the Hindu dominated Bengali middle class and to create a Muslim majority province on the border of Bengal.

5 LET US KNOW

George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Keleston, was popularly known as Lord Curzon. He was a British conservative statesman and served as the Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905.

- **Factors Leading to the Partition of Bengal**

  In 1874, Assam was separated from the Bengal administration but, it failed to bring any form of relief to the Government of Bengal. In 1893, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, William Ward, stressed the need of transfer of entire Chittagong Division prior to the transfer of South Lushai Hills to Assam. Hence, in January 1896, the Government of India sought opinions from the Government of Bengal and Assam regarding transfer of the entire Chittagong Division. C.C. Stevens, the officiating Lieutenant Governor (1897) was not in favour of the transfer. According to him, the communication between Assam and Chittagong required substantial improvement prior to the accomplishment of the transfer. Alexander Mackenzie, the next Lieutenant Governor viewed that such administrative measures would accrue no special advantage to the Chittagang Division.

  On the contrary, William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam strongly favoured the transfer. He explained that the new administrative set up would enable the government to create separate services for Assam in different branches of administration. Accordingly, the districts of Chittagong Division would also benefit from the transfer as they would receive much attention of the government in a small province like Assam than that of a large province like Bengal. However, Sir Henry Cotton, who succeeded Ward as the Chief Commissioner for a brief period, described the proposal as 'ill-advised'.

  The proposal of transfer of the Chittagong Division had come into forefront once again when Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor wrote a note to the Viceroy Lord Curzon on 28th March, 1903 to reduce the administrative burden of the Government of Bengal. J. B. Fuller, the Chief Commissioner of Assam offered his support to the proposal on the ground that territorial changes would bring administrative development to the province and help in speedy completion of Assam-Bengal Railways.

  In the year 1900 the European planters in Assam pleaded to the Viceroy Lord Curzon during his visit to Assam to improve the transport and communication system of the province and to open an outlet to the sea by including Chittagong to Assam.

  In 1904 Lord Curzon visited Eastern Bengal to give an insight into the problem of

redistribution. The Government of Bengal and Assam gave final shape to the scheme in the following months and received the approval of Lord Curzon on 26th December 1904. The proclamation on the formation of the proposed province received the assent of the Secretary of State on 29th August 1905 and the same was announced by the Government of India on 1st September 1905. By October 16, 1905, a new province 'East Bengal and Assam' including Chittagong with an area of 106,540 sq. miles and a population of 31 million was born. The headquarter of the new province was Dacca. The province was put under the charge of a separate Lieutenant Governor. Bampfylde Fuller was appointed as its first Lieutenant Governor.

Immediately after assumption of the charge, Fuller paid a visit to Assam to win over the heart of Assamese people. He assured the people of Assam that the new administrative set up will not affect their privileges like scholarships for the students and reservations in government employment in Assam Valley and that the local bodies in Assam will share representation in the Legislative Council.

- **Impact of the Partition of Bengal in Assam**

  The partition of Bengal was followed by vehement protest and demonstration throughout the country. The Bengal intelligentsia thought it was an attempt to weaken the growing solidarity of Bengali nationalism. They also considered it as a threat to the traditions, history and language of the Bengalis. The nationalists opined that the scheme was devised to divide the people on the basis of religion. Even Lord Curzon during his tour of Eastern Bengal stated that one object of the proposed partition plan of Bengal was to create a Mohammedan province where Islam could be predominant and its followers in ascendancy. On 16th October, the inauguration day of new province was observed as a day of national mourning throughtout Bengal. Meetings, demonstration and shouting of slogans had marked the beginning of anti-partition agitation and in the later stages the boycott of foreign goods and educational institution had merged into it. The use of indigenous goods and establishment of vernacular schools were also part of this anti-partition agitation. Bengal experienced an unprecedented national upheaval to which the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other communities had equally contributed. This agitation was known as 'Swadeshi' Movement and it paved the way for India's freedom struggle in later years.

  Assam, being directly involved in the partition scheme of Lord Curzon, also felt the repercussion of the 'Swadeshi Movement'. In response to the call of the Bengal leaders, Hindus and Muslims of both the valleys of Assam jointly observed the anti-partition day. At Dhubri, the members of Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs communities participated in a public sankirtan in the morning. In the evening of the same day, a large procession was organised by Hindu and Muslim residents of the town. They passed through the streets singing the national anthem and shouting slogans like ‘Bande Mataram’ and ‘Allahoo-Akbar’. In the Surma Valley, meetings were organised in protest against the partition at Sylhet, Habibganj, Maulvi Bazar, Silchar, Karimganj and Badarpur. The 'Surma Valley Association' took the initiative to propagate the ideology of Swadeshi or Swaraj amongst the masses.

This anti-partition agitation took a new turn when a number of extremist organisations and secret revolutionary societies were formed at several places of Bengal under the guidance of Surendra Nath Benerjee, Bipin Chandra Pal, A. Rasul, Ashwini Kumer Dutta and Arabinda Ghosh. Other prominent leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai championed the cause of militant nationalism (extremism) against British imperialism which received massive support all over India. Now, the demand for Swaraj or Home-Rule gained popularity within extremist group.

Some educated young men of Assam like Ambikagiri Raychoudhury, Raktim Bora, Triguna Barua and others were attracted by the extremist ideology. Ambikagiri started a voluntary association called Seva Sangha which could not gain much momentum under the strict vigilance of the police. He also wrote a patriotic drama called *Bandini Bharat*, the manuscript of which was intercepted by the police.

By a Royal Proclamation at the Delhi Durbar, on 12th December, 1911, the partition of Bengal was annulled and Assam, including Cacher, Sylhet, Goalpara and the Hills were placed under the charge of a Chief Commissioner. After the annulment of partition, Assam again became a Chief Commissioner's province with its own Legislative Assembly at Shillong, from 1st April, 1912.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4) Who was Sir Andrew Fraser?

.....

Q 5) Who was the first Lieutenant Governor of the new province East Bengal and Assam?

.....

Q 6) Who wrote *Bandini Bharat*?

.....

5.5 LET US SUM UP

- In the latter part of the 19th century, the Raijmel created socio-political unity amongst the masses and made them aware about their political rights.
- The spread of western education and establishment of printing press in Assam fostered the feelings of nationalism amongst the masses.
- The birth of Indian National Congress in 1885 gave impetus to the spirit of nationalism.
- Various Associations of Assam like the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, the Assam Association, the Surma Valley Political Conference and many others greatly contributed to the rise of political consciousness.
- The partition of Bengal was followed by large scale protests and demonstrations in both provinces of Bengal and Assam.
- The anti-partition agitation led to the boycott of foreign goods and spread of Swadeshi.
- The partition agitation greatly contributed to the massive awakening throughout the

country and created the feelings of intense nationalism.

5.6 FURTHER READING

1) Barua, S. (1985). *A comprehensive history of Assam*. New Delhi: Munshiram monoharlal.

2) Borpujari, H. K. (Ed.). (1993). *The comprehensive history of Assam*. Vol. (v), Publication Board of Assam.

3) Goswami, C. (2008). *Nationalism in Assam*. New Delhi: Mittal Publication.

4) Grover, B.L. & Grover, S. (1998). *A new outlook at modern Indian history*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd.

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The Governor General of India.

Ans to Q No 2: Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter.

Ans to Q No 3: Padmanath Gohain Barua.

Ans to Q No 4: The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

Ans to Q No 5: Bampfylde Fuller.

Ans to Q No 6: Ambikagiri Raichoudhury.

5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: What does the word 'nationalism' mean?

Q 2: Who wrote the first grammar of Assamese language?

Q 3: When was the Surma Valley Political Conference formed?

Q 4: Who was the founder of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

Q 5: Who was Sir Henry Cotton?

B) Short Questions (Answer each questions within 150 words)

Q 1: Write short note on the factors that led to the rise of nationalism in India.

Q 2: Mention the impacts of modern education on the growth of the spirit of nationalism in Assam.

Q 3: Discuss briefly about the role of Assamese press in the growth of nationalism.

C) Long Questions (Answer each questions within 300-350 words)

Q 1: Briefly discuss about the factors that contributed towards the growth of Assamese nationalism.

Q 2: Narrate the factors that led to the Partition of Bengal.

Q 3: Describe the impact of the Partition of Bengal on Assam.

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UNIT 6: THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives
6.2 Introduction
6.3 Development of the Press in Assam During the Colonial Period
6.4 Growth of Political Associations and Public Organisations During the Colonial Period
6.5 The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha
6.6 The Assam Association
6.7 The Surma Valley Political Conference
6.8 Let Us Sum Up
6.9 Further Reading
6.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
6.11 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- learn about the development of the press in Assam during the colonial period
- discuss the growth of political associations and public organisations during colonial period
- explain the role of the press and the public organisations in the colonial period.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss about the development of press in Assam during colonial period. The liberal policy of the Press Act of 1835 encouraged the development of press in India. The first newspaper written in an Indian language was published in Bengal. The press helped in mobilising and consolidating public opinion on major issues of national importance. Through the press, people raised their voice against unjust and oppressive policies of the Government.

The birth of first ever news magazine *'Arunodoi'* was a landmark in the history of the development of press in Assam. It gave birth to a number of newspapers and magazines in Assam. From the latter part of the 19th century, some progressive Assamese started publishing a good number of newspapers to highlight the matters affecting the interest of the people.

We shall also discuss about the growth of political associations and public organisations in Assam during the colonial rule. With the birth of Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885, a good number of political associations had emerged all over the country. In the 1880s, of the 19th centuary, various political associations like Upper Assam Association, Nagaon Ryot Sabha, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Assam Association and the Surma

Valley Political Conference were formed to act as the mouth-piece of Assamese people. Through these associations, the Assamese intelligentsia successfully represented the wishes and aspirations of the people before the colonial ruler on many occasions. Apart from highlighting the socio-economic, political and cultural issues of the day, these Associations stirred the feelings of nationalism among the masses.

6.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESS IN ASSAM DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The invention of printing press revolutionised the modern society and civilisation. The inventor of the printing press in Europe, Johannes Gutenberg of Germany set up his press at Mainz around 1439. It made copying much easier than before. In 1453, the Bible was printed in his press.

The Indian press by and large was the product of the Company's rule and first appeared in the form of Bengal press. Before the introduction of the printing press in Assam by the American Baptists Missionaries, some vernacular newspapers like *Samachar Darpan, Samachar Chandrika Somprakash, Sanjivani* and *Masik Patrika* had played a significant role in raising public opinion and explaining the views on Assam's socio-political and economic matters.

The development of press and its impact on modern Assamese language and literature is an interesting chapter in the history of press in Assam. The credit for setting up of the printing press in Assam can be attributed to the two American Baptists Missionaries Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter, who started their operations in early 1836. In the same year, Commissioner of Assam, Major F. Tenkins wrote to Mr. Trevellyan, a civil serviceman in Bengal, inviting the Baptists Missionaries to start a station at Sadia. A young missionary Nathan Brown accepted the offer. Another missionary and printer, Oliver Cutter accompanied him to work towards sitting up a printing press. Initially, they set up the press at Sadia and it was shifted to Sibsagar in 1846. Gradually the vernacular press such as Dharma Prakash Press, Auniati Satra and Chidananda Press of Guwahati came into existence.

The first ever news magazine of Assam, *Arunodoi* was published in January 1846 from Sibsagar and was in circulation until 1880. Its first editor was Nathan Brown. *Arunodoi* tried to draw the favour of the Government. It hardly published anything against the Government. However, papers like the *Dacca News* and *Som Prakash* continued to draw the attention of the Government to important matters of Assam. However, *Arunodoi* prepared the ground for an intellectual awakening in Assam.

Arunodoi was an forerunner of newspapers and magazines in Assam. The first known Assamese weekly newspaper was *'The Assam Mihir'*, which made its appearance in 1872. *'Dainik Batori'* was the first daily newspaper of Assam. The monthly journal *Assam Darpan* lasted for a year only. *'The Assam News'* was the first Anglo-Assamese weekly published from Guwahati under the editorship of Hem Chandra Barua. It succeeded in awakening public interest and opinions on problems of common interest.

Assam Bandhu, published from Nagaon in 1885, under the editorship of Gunaviram Barua dealt mainly with articles on arts, science and subjects of general interest. The monthly *Mou* or *The Bee* (1886-1888) edited by Haranaran Bora highlighted the major problems of that period. It urged the Assamese youth to take up industrial profession and practise arts. It openly criticised the existing system of nomination into the local bodies. The journal supported the ideals of the Indian National Congress. This monthly journal condemned the policies and methods adopted by the ryot sabha in Assam for redressal of the grievances of the people.

'The Jonaki', one of the most significant monthly, published from Calcutta under the leadership of Chandra Kumar Agarwala was non-political in character. *'Jonaki'* was the mouth piece of 'Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha' (Assamese Language Improvement Society). Edited successfully by Chandra kumar Agarwala, Hemchandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaruah, *'Jonaki'* became the forum of a group of eminent writers and created a new era in the Assamese journalism. It focused on scientific, historical, literary and various other subjects. Other three monthlies *Usha* (1907), *Banti* and *Alochani* lasted for several years. However, *Dipti* (1905), *The Eastern Herald* (1898), *The Citizen* (1902), *The Assam Chronical* (1905) and *The Assam Herald* (1912) were forced to stop their circulation within a short period for shortage of funds, printing difficulties and lack of public support.

Bijuli (1891) edited by Padmanath Gohain Barua gave importance on political and national problems of that time. Assamese weeklies like *The Assam* (1894), *The Advocate of Assam* (1904-1907) and the *Assam Bilashini* were nationalistic in character. *The Assam Bilashini* (1914) published from Dharma Prakash Press, Auniati Satra under the editorship of Krishnakanta Bhattacharya did not last long for the repressive measures of the Government. *The Advocate of Assam*, edited by Mathuramohan Barua stood for nationalism, Swadeshi and Swaraj. It strongly condemned the unjust policies of the Government.

The two weeklies, *Assam Banti* (1900) edited by P. N. Gohain Barua and *The Times of Assam* (1895) edited by Radhanath Changkakati were moderate in their tone. The Assamese papers strongly protested the employment of non-Assamese in the educational institutions of Assam and vehemently criticised the Assamese member of the Legislative Council for failure of raising their voice against the matters affecting the interest of the people.

The Assamese press also highlighted national and international issues such as the dissatisfaction caused by the Morley-Minto Reforms (1909), the hostile attitude of England towards Turkey during the time of Turko-Italian War (1911-12) and pleaded for the intervention of the Government of India to improve the condition of the Indians in British colonies specially in Canada and British Columbia.

The papers in the Surma Valley like *The Paridarsak* (1886), The Silchar (1886) and the Srihatta Mihir were moderate in tone. *The Silchar*, edited by Bidhu Bhushan Sen played a significant role in guiding public opinion and highlighting social and political issues of the time. The Bengali weekly, *The Surma* (1911), edited by Chandrodoy Vidyavinode succeeded

in strring public opinion in the Valley. *Deshabrata* and the *Praja-Sakti*, edited by Mohendra Nath De were clearly revolutionary in character.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Who was Oliver Cutter?

.....

Q2) Which was the first daily newspaper of Assam?

.....

Q3) Who was the first editor of the monthly *'The Jonaki'*?

.....

LET US KNOW

The first ever newspaper of India was *The Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser*. It was published by James Augustus Hickey in the year 1780.

6.4 GROWTH OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

From the middle of the 19th century, a wave of new awakening had swept the minds of the emerging middle class people of Assam. It was noticeable at first on 11th June, 1852. On that day, some leading personalities of Guwahati urged the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup to introduce Municipal administration under the provision of the Act of XXVI of 1850. In 1857, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Gunabhiram Barua organised the Gyan Pradayini Sabha to spread advanced knowledge amongst the Assamese people. In the year 1888, the Assamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha was formed. Although literary in character, yet it succeeded in arousing a sense of unity and patriotism amongst the people. The Tezpur Ryot Sabha was formed to provide relief to the agricultural ryots from enhancement of land revenue.

The birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marks the beginning of a new epoch in the history of political association in India. Like the other parts of the country, in Assam, the Assamese intelligentsia felt the need of broad-based political organisation to represent the wishes and aspirations of the people before the Government. Most prominent among them were: The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha (1884), the Tezpur Ryot Sabha (1884), the Nowgong Ryot Sabha, the Upper Assam Association and Assam Association. All these associations sought to draw the attention of the Government against popular discontentment of masses.

In the following section, we will discuss about the role played by the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Assam Association and the Surma Valley Political Conference on matters affecting the interest of the masses and spreading the spirit of nationalism amongst the people.

6.5 THE JORHAT SARBAJANIK SABHA

In 1884, the first political association of Assam, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha was

founded by Jagannath Barua. Its first President was Naranarayan Singha of Ahom royal family and first General Secretary was Jagannath Barua. After the death of Naranarayan Singha, Jagannath Barua was elected as President and Devicharan Barua as its General Secretary. The main objective of the Sabha was to place the wishes and aspiration of the people before the government and to make the people aware of the objects and policies of the government. It held a series of meetings in protest against the Assam Land Revenue Regulation of 1886 from October 1892 to February 1893.

The Sabha criticised government's education policy specially, reduction in the number of scholarships of Higher Education in Assam. The Sabha demanded large scale employment of the natives of the soil and emphasised on the improvement of their pay and prospects. It suggested gradual prohibition of opium sales as the ryots would have to pay heavier amount of land-revenue, if opium was immediately prohibited and also it would became fatal for the regular users.

The Sabha became defunct after the death of Jagannath Barua in April 1907 and subsequent division amongst its members.

6.6 THE ASSAM ASSOCIATION

The Assam Association was formed in 1903 by Manik Chandra Barua. The first General Secretary of the Association was Manik Chandra Barua, the first President was Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua of Gauripur and first Vice-President was Jagannath Barua. Most of its members, Manik Chandra Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Phanidhar Chaliha, Tarun Ram Phukan and Nobin Chandra Bordoloi were the legislators of the time. Therefore, they were in a position to draw the attention of the government through their speeches on the floor of the Councils, to the resolutions and demands of the Association. Its first session was held at Dibrugarh in 1905.

With the partition of Bengal, a new province namely East Bengal and Assam came into being. There was no representative of the Brahmaputra Valley in the Legislative Council of the new province and also in the Imperial Legislature. Since the non-Assamese members showed little and no interest in the affairs of the Brahmaputra Valley, the Assam Association demanded its representation in the Provincial Legislature. At last, the right of representation was granted in the Legislative Council of East Bengal and Assam and Manik Chandra Barua made his debut in the Council.

Some of the issues raised by the Association were:

- Progressive Indianisation of the Civil Service.
- Further democratisation of the Legislative Council.

After the death of Manik Chandra Barua in 1915, Rai Bahadur Ghanashyam Barua became the Secretary of the Association. In between 1915 to 1920, its sessions were held in Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Sibsagar, Goalpara, Barpeta and Jorhat. From 1916, changes in the function of Assam Association was seen, when some youth of the province like Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury and Chandranath Sarma joined in it. They were more interested in extremist activities rather than peaceful and constitutional methods.

It may be mentioned that during its existence, the Association served as the mouthpiece of the valley in placing the needs and aspirations of the people before the Government. Gradually its members were influenced by the Indian National Congress (INC). The association became defunct with the formation of the Assam Provincial Congress in 1921. However, before the formation of Assam Provincial Congress, the Assam Association was the largest political association of Assam.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4) Who was the first president of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

.....

Q5) Who was the founder of Assam Association?

.....

6.7 THE SURMA VALLEY POLITICAL CONFERENCE

The anti-partition agitation gave birth to several numbers of association in the Surma Valley. In 1906, some leading members of the Srihatta Swadesh Sevak Samity decided to organise a conference for the entire valley.

The Surma Valley Political Conference was formed in April 1906 with the initiative of some eminent leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Kamini Kumer Chanda, zaminders, merchants and mirasdars. From the outset, the policy and programme of the conference was intense nationalism. However, it did not follow the path of terrorism in any form and shape. The conference extended its full support towards the Swadeshi Movement. It also advocated the establishment of national schools, swadeshi and physical training for the youth including the techniques of lathi (club) and sword playing.

The first session of the conference was held at Sylhet on 11-12 August, 1906. It was presided over by Kamini Kumer Chanda. As per the proceedings of the committee meeting, a central committee was formed with headquarters at Sylhet with sub divisional committees in different parts of the Valley. The main functions of the committees were:

- Improvement of education, health and sanitation
- Broadening the ideal of swadeshi
- Establishment of cooperative societies and national educational institution
- Collection of funds

Its second session was held at Karimganj on 18-20 April, in 1908. It was presided over by Radha Binode Das. The conference asserted that the attainment of Swaraj was its only political goal which can be attained by means of cultivation and development of unity. Radha Binode Das asked the members of the association to visit village to village in order to spread the ideal of Swaraj, Swadeshi, boycott and thereby create much needed unity amongst the masses for the attainment of its goal.

In 1909, the third session of the Political Conference held in Habiganj. It was presided over by Sarat Chandra Chaudhury. The inspiring speeches of Sri Arobindo, Kamini Kumer Chanda, Ramani Mohan Das aroused the feelings of swadeshi, self-help and national

unity. Its continuous efforts made the entire valley the most ardent supporter of the movement for Swaraj, Swadeshi and boycott.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6) When was the Surma Valley Political Conference formed?

.....

Q7) When was the third session of the Surma Political Conference held?

.....

6.8 LET US SUM UP

- The liberal policy of the Press Act of 1835 encouraged the development of press in India. The press helped in mobilising and consolidating public opinion on major issues of national importance.
- The birth of first ever news magazine *Arunodoi* was a landmark in the history of the development of press in Assam.
- The Indian press by and large was the product of the company's rule and first appeared in the form of Bengal press.
- The credit for setting up of the printing press in Assam attributed to the two American Baptists Missionaries Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter, who started their operations in early 1836.
- The first ever news magazine of Assam, *Arunodoi* was published in January 1846 from Sibsagar and was in circulation until 1880. Its first editor was Nathan Brown.
- Assam Bandhu, published from Nagaon in 1885, under the editorship of Gunabhiram Barua dealt mainly with articles on arts, science and subjects of general interest.
- *'Jonaki'*, one of the most significant monthly, published from Calcutta under the leadership of Chandra Kumar Agarwala was non-political in character.
- In 1884, the first political association of Assam, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha was founded by Jagannath Barua. The Sabha became defunct after the death of Jagannath Barua in April, 1907 and subsequent division amongst its members.
- The Assam Association was formed in 1903 by Manik Chandra Barua. The first General Secretary of the association was Manik Chandra Barua, the first President was Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua of Gauripur.
- The Surma Valley Political Conference was formed in April 1906 in the initiative of some eminent leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Kamini Kumer Chanda, zaminders, merchants and mirasdars.
- Towards the end of the 19th century, Assamese press made an unprecedented growth despite the colonial rulers imposed numerous restrictions on the press from time to time.

The unit has also discussed the growth of political organisations in Assam such as the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Assam Association and the Surma Valley Political Conference

and many others that succeeded in reflecting the wishes and aspiration of the people before the Government and to make them aware of the objects and policies of the Government.

6.9 FURTHER READING

1) Barua, S. (1985). *A comprehensive history of Assam*. New Delhi: Munshiram monoharlal.

2) Borpuzari, H. K. (Ed.). (1993). *The comprehensive history of Assam*. Vol. (v), Publication Board of Assam.

3) Borpujari, H. K. (Ed). (1977). *Political history of Assam 1826-1919*. Dispur: Government of Assam.

4) Goswami, M. Dutta, U. & Pujari, S. (1992). *Asomor itihash*. Jorhat, Assam: Grantha-Sanskriti Edu Cell.

6.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: An American Missionary who accompanied Nathan Brown for working in printing press..

Ans to Q No 2: *Dainik Batori.*

Ans to Q No 3: Chandra Kumer Agarwal.

Ans to Q No 4: Naranarayan Singh.

Ans to Q No 5: Manik Chandra Barua.

Ans to Q No 6: In April 1906.

Ans to Q No 7: In the year 1909.

6.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Who was the first editor of *Arunodoi*?

Q 2: Which was the first Anglo-Assamese weekly in Assam?

Q 3: Who was the first president of Assam Association?

Q 4: When did Assam Association form?

Q 5: In which year the second session of the Surma Valley Political conference held?

Q 6: Who presided over the third session of the Surma Valley Political Conference?

B) Short Questions (Answer each questions within 150 words)

Q 1: Write short note on the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha.

Q 2: Briefly explain the composition and role of Assam Association in arousing public opinion.

Q 3: Write a short note on the Surma Valley Political Conference.

C) Long Questions (Answer each questions within 300-350 words)

Q 1: Narrate the development of press in Assam during colonial rule.

Q 2: Discuss the growth of political association and public organisations in Assam during colonial period.

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UNIT 7: FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND ASSAM: NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives
7.2 Introduction
7.3 Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam
7.4 Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam
7.5 Quit India Movement in Assam
7.6 Let Us Sum Up
7.7 Further Reading
7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
7.9 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the role of Assam in Non-Cooperation Movement
- explain the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam
- describe the Quit India Movement in Assam
- explain the role of Assam in freedom struggle.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

The East India Company was formed to trade with East and Southeast Asia and India. It received a Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth in the year 1600 A. D. The East India Company came relatively late to trade in India in comparison to other European countries. From the humble beginning in trade, the East India Company entangled itself into the politics of India. The third battle of the Carnatic (1758-63) established British supremacy over other European trading companies. After the Battle of Plassey (1757) and Battle of Buxer (1764) the English became the virtual masters of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The ever increasing conquest and commercial exploitation of the East India Company over the years had adversely affected all the sections of the Indian society. It resulted in a violent revolt in the year 1857 which shook the very foundation of the British Empire in India.

18th century India presented the picture of a stagnant civilisation and decadent society. However, the revolt of 1857 sowed the seeds of a new era in India. The transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown brought radical changes to the attitude of the British towards the Indians. Growth and development of western education under the colonial rule revolutionised the Indian society. The spread of western education created a section of elite people in India. This elite section insisted on eradicating social evils from the Indian society and creating socio-political consciousness amongst the people of India.

The year 1885 was an epoch making year in Indian history. During that year, the Indian National Congress (INC), an all-India political organisation was formed. Indian National Movement gained momentum under the banner of Indian National Congress and the Indian people became conscious of its political position. During the colonial period many unforgettable movements took place in India against the unfair policies of the British. Some of the great movements fought by Indians are Non-Cooperation Movements, Civil Disobedience Movements and Quit India Movement. All these movements forced the British Government to quit India and almost 200 years of British rule come to an end on 15th August, 1947. It is discussed below:

7.3 NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT AND ASSAM

The Non-Cooperation Movement was an important phase of the Indian Freedom Movement. It was a reaction to the oppressive policies of the colonial rule such as implementation of the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. After the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, Gandhiji decided to launch an anti-British non-violent non-cooperation movement in India. The Indian National Congress in its special session held at Calcutta in September, 1920 adopted a resolution of renunciation of the Government titles, the boycott of the Legislatures, Law-courts, schools and colleges, and subsequently non-payment of taxes. This movement was also aimed at attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means.

- **Assam Association and Non-Cooperation**

  Assam was not remain aloof from the mainstream of Indian politics. It took an active part in the domain of Indian National Movement. The Assam Association sent Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Chandra Nath Sarma and Faiznur Ali to attend the special session of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta. However, they could not collectively support the issue of non-cooperation as they did not receive the mandate from the Association. In its subsequent meeting, held at Gauhati on 11th October, the members of the Assam Association unanimously decided to boycott foreign goods and also the forthcoming elections to the first reformed council. The Association also decided to implement swadeshi programme. In the 17th Annual Conference of the Assam Association held at Tezpur in December, 1920, ratified the Gauhati decision on Non-Cooperation. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, with a number of delegates from Assam Association attended the 35th Session of the Indian National Congress (INC) held at Nagpur.

  In a meeting held at Jorhat on 27th October, 1920, The Assam Valley Muslim Association adopted a resolution to extend its support to the movement. The people of Surma Valley showed keen interest to the resolution on Non-Cooperation passed at the Calcutta session. The fifth Surma Valley Provincial Conference was held on 19th and 20th September, 1920. Many prominent Indian Nationalist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Sunderimohan Das and Akram Khan attended the conference. Bipin Chandra Pal appealed to the students to boycott schools and colleges to support the Non-Cooperation Movement. In this conference, a resolution was adopted to launch

a non-violent non-cooperation with the European merchants and planters.

Many prominent leaders of Assam Valley like Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Tarun Ram Phukan and Chandra Nath Sarma moved from corner to corner of the province to organised meetings to propagate the idea of non-cooperation. Meetings were also held at different places which determined to boycott the forthcoming visit of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford to Assam.

- **Role of the Students**

Students of Assam took up the non-cooperation issue seriously and played a vital role in the movement. Chandra Nath Sarma, after suspending his legal practice at Tezpur Court came to Guwahati and tried to mobilise the student community. Along with some college students he attended the All India Students' Conference held on 25th and 26th December, 1920, at Nagpur. The conference called for "the immediate and unconditional boycott of Government and Government aided colleges" to offer its support to the non-cooperation movement. The boycott call of the conference had rocked the students of Cotton College in January 1921, when they decided to go on strike for an indefinite period. A good number of students in Assam came out of colleges and schools. In response to non-cooperation movement many students in the Surma Valley gave up their studies. Meanwhile, there was a growing demand for setting up of vernacular institution for the education of the students and eventually a number of them came into existence in different parts of the province.

The non-cooperation movement created a favourable condition for the tea garden labourers to get rid of yearlong economic exploitation. Being the worst victim of racial hatred, labourers in several tea gardens of the Surma Valley went on strike for higher wages. On 2nd May, 1921, the labourers of thirteen tea gardens in the Chargola and Lonmai valley of Karimgang had also gone on strike demanding their wage hike. Shouting the slogan "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai", about 9000 labourers had assembled at Chandpur railway terminus and waited for a steamer Goalundra to leave for their native land. The planters and district authorities pressurised the labourers away from the railway platform. The police and official went into action at midnight by driving men, women and children out of the railway platform. Many of them were injured and some were drowned.

The people condemned the oppression on the labourers in the Chandrapur incident throughout Assam. The employees of the Assam-Bengal Railways and the Steamer Navigation Service went on indefinite strike to protest against this brutal assault. The pleaders of Guwahati met on 3rd June, 1921, and decided to suspend practice for three days in protest against the Chandrapur tragedy.

- **Role of the Assam Provincial Congress**

The first Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) was formed on 5th June, 1921, with Kuladhar Chaliha as the President and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi as the General Secretary. The Cachar and Sylhet districts as hitherto been, remained under the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Soon, the APCC set up District Congress

Committee in each subdivision with village committees and Mouza committees at lower level. The Congress workers put every effort to make the non-cooperation movement successful. Hartals, processions, meetings, boycott and picketing became the regular features in the urban areas.

On invitation from the Assam Provincial Congress members, Gandhiji visited Assam in August, 1921, and briefly remained in Assam for twelve days. He visited several places and delivered his speeches. The people of Assam who attended Gandhiji's meetings responded immediately to his call for boycotting all things that were foreign made. People started discarded even their personal clothing. Gandhiji's visit gave a new impetus to the Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam. A good number of lawyers, government officials, teachers, students and people from other walks of life embarked the movement with new enthusiasm and vigour. Congress volunteers appealed the local traders to boycott the garden hats and encouraged the people to wear khadi cloths. Foreign clothes and liquor were boycotted everywhere. In the Surma valley, the Khilafat movement gained more popularity than the non-cooperation movement.

The government now decided to take all possible repressive measures to suppress the movement. The government imposed restrictions on writings on Gandhism or Swaraj. *Assam Bilasini* and *Asamia* in Brahmaputra valley and *Janasakti* and *Surma*, two other papers in the Surma valley were victimised. All associations of the volunteers were declared unlawful. It also enforced the Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act, 1911 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The government then demolished the Congress offices and arrested the congress leaders. Nearly 1500 congressmen were held in the prison across various district jails of Assam.

The Non-Cooperation Movement had met with serious set-back when a clash took place at Chauri Chaura, in the Gorakhpur district in the United Province. On 5th February, 1922, a furious crowd murdered 21 policemen at the police Chowki. Gandhiji was greatly disappointed at this incident and he immediately suspended the movement. He urged upon the congressmen to stick to the principle of non-violence and to undertake the swadeshi programme more actively than earlier.

5 LET US KNOW

"Annie Besant was the first woman president of Indian National Congress and Sarojini Naidu was the first Indian woman president".

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Fill in the blanks:

A) Indian National Congress was formed in the year_____(1884/1885/1886) .

B) The fifth Surma Valley Provincial Conference was held in the year_____ (1920/1921/1922).

C) Gandhiji made his first visit to Assam in the year_____(1920/1921/1922).

7.4 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

The Civil Disobedience Movement was an important phase of Indian freedom struggle. This movement was mainly started with the ideology of disobeying laws, demands and commands of the government. One of the causes behind this movement was the formation of Simon Commission by the British Government in the year 1927 to formalise the constitution of India. The Indian National Congress (INC) and other political and social organisation of India rejected the commission as there was no Indian member in it. Another cause of the movement was the rejection of Nehru Report by the British government. In 1928, a new constitution was prepared by a committee which was headed by Motilal Nehru. The main theme of the Nehru Report was to achieve the Dominion status for India. The Government replied that the matter would be discussed on the basis of the recommendation of the Simon Commission in a Round Table Conference to be held at London. However, the Lahore session of Indian National Congress (INC) resolved to boycott the Legislature and the Round Table Conference and launch a Civil Disobedience movement as well. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi started Civil Disobedience Movement to defy salt law. Gandhiji started Dandi March on 12th March, 1930 along with 79 members of his Sabarmati Ashram to produce salt from the seawater in the coastal village of Dandi, situated in Gujarat.

The decision of the Lahore Congress had a mixed effect in Assam. Some veteran Congress leaders like Tarun Ram Phukan, Gopinath Bordoloi and Rohini Kanta Choudhury opined that Assam was not yet ready to launch civil disobedience movement. Hence, they resigned their respective post in the Provincial Congress and decided to remain aloof from the mainstream of the movement. At this critical juncture, Bishnu Ram Medhi came forward to accept the post of APCC President with the help of other leaders like Md. Tayebullah, the General Secretary, Sidhinath Sarma, Hem Chandra Barua, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury and Omeo Kumar Das. All these leaders conducted the movement with new zeal.

The people of Surma Valley promptly responded to the civil disobedience call of the National Congress. Brajendranarayan Choudhury, the president of the Congress League organised frequent meetings in Sylhet districts and encouraged the people to defy Salt law. On 6th April,1930, a group of people under Dhirendranath Das Gupta started for Noakhali to extract salt from of the saline water of the Bay of Bengal. Brajendranath Choudhury proposed non-payment of Chowkidari tax in Sunamganj and Habiganj subdivision. Some students of the Sylhet districts led by Darikanath Goswami formed a Socialist youth Conference and had actively participated in the movement. The Government was greatly alarmed by the active participation of the students in the political activities of both the valleys. It instructed the principals of M C. College and Cotton College to inform the students that their active participation in political agitation would disqualify them from finding any Government job in future. Despite this warning, the students of M. C. College observed a hartal on 15th April, as a protest against the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru and boycotted the college.

- **Cunningham Circular**

  The gradual unrest among the students regarding participation in the civil disobedience movement compelled the government to restrict them from taking any active role in politics. Mr. J. A. Cunningham, the then Director of Public Instruction of Assam, issued a circular to all academic heads of the Province. It was stated in the circular that the students as well as their parents and guardians had to give written undertaking so that the students would refrain from participating in any kind of political activities and would abide by the disciplinary rules and orders of the concerned institution and the education department. The circular provoked the sentiments of the students and Nationalists in the province. Several vernacular schools were started at Gauhati, Tezpur, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Maulavi Bazar and Habibganj solely on public charity.

  In many places of Assam, women played an important role in the demonstration activities led by the congress workers. Guneswari Devi and Mukteswari Devi of Nowgong were the first ladies in the province who faced imprisonment during India's struggle for freedom. Chandraprava Saikiani was arrested for picketing and Girija Bala Gupta was arrested for organising the womenfolk in the movement.

  Despite large scale arrests and imprisonment of the congress volunteers, the movement gained new strength day by day. Debeswar Sarma organised a demonstration at Jorhat in protest against the Assam visit of the Viceroy Lord Irwin.

  On 4th March, 1931, Gandhiji suspended civil disobedience movement after conclusion of a pact with Lord Irwin. By this pact, the government invited the congress to participate in the Round Table Conference at London and also agreed to release those prisoners of the movement who were not charged with any kind of violence. Many Nationalists leader such as Nehru and Patel were greatly shocked at Gandhiji's decision to suspend the movement.

- **Communal Award (1932)**

  On 16th August, 1932, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald declared the notorious "Communal Award". According to the Award, the right of separate electorate was given to the Muslims as well as all the minority communities in the country. The Award also declared untouchables as a minority and the principle of weightage was applied with some modification in the Muslim minority provinces.

  The Communal Award could not satisfy any Indian party. The Muslims were unhappy, as it has reduced their majority in Punjab and Bengal to a minority. On the other hand, the Hindus refused to accept the untouchables as minority.

- **Second Phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement**

  Failure of the Round Table Conference at London and declaration of the Communal Award by the British Prime Minister Sir Ramsay Macdonald, forced the Congress Working Committee to resume Civil Disobedience Movement on 1st January, 1932. After three days, the Government arrested Gandhiji and congress was declared illegal. The Government now enforced new measures of repression. In Assam, the congress

workers defied these repressive measures of the government. Many provincial leaders like N. C. Bordoloi who kept themselves aloof from the first phase of the movement, now played an active role in it. According to an official source, altogether 1,494 persons were arrested upto 31st August. Many prominent Congress workers like Chandra Prava Saikiani, Hem Chandra Barua, Purna Chandra Sarma, Gahan Chandra Goswami, Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, M.M. Choudhury, B.N. Choudhury, B.P. Chaliha, Sudhansu Banerjee, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Hemanga Biswas and Dhiren Chandra Dutta were sent to jail.

The movement had its impact in the neighbouring hills as well. The Naga Queen Gaidinliu and her followers were greatly inspired by the Civil Disobedience Movement and dreamt of freedom for the people. The Government arrested and sentenced her to transportation for life in January, 1933.

In protest against the declaration of communal award, Gandhiji undertook a fast unto death in jail. The civil disobedience movement came to an end after Gandhiji agreed to sign Poona Pact with B. R. Ambedkar on 24th September, 1932. The communal award was a blow to Gandhiji and he eventually decided to suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement.

5 LET US KNOW

"The 41st Session of the Congress was held at Pandu near Gauhati in 1926. The session was presided over by Srinivas Ayenger".

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2) Write true or false.

A) Simon Commission was formed in the year 1927 to formalise the Constitution of India.

.....

B) Mr. J. A. Cunningham was the Director of Public Instruction of Assam during Civil Disobedience Movement.

.....

C) Nehru Report was prepared by a committee which was headed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

.....

D) Gandhiji suspended Civil Disobedient Movements due to Chauri Chaura incident.

.....

7.5 QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

The historic Quit India Movement started in the year 1942. The apprehension of Japanese invasion during the Second World War and failure of the Cripps Mission compelled the All India Congress Committee to launch the Quit India Movement. On 8th

August, 1942, the All India Congress Committee passed the "Quit India" resolution in its Bombay Session demanding complete withdrawal of the British rule from India. Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan "Do or Die" to the people of India. On the very next day, the British Government arrested Mahatma Gandhi and a large number of congressmen throughout India and put them in jails. The INC was declared an illegal body. Such repressive measures of the government provoked masses all across the country. Hartals, strikes and demonstration became the order of the day. In some places reaction of the people was violent. They attacked the administrative buildings, court buildings, railway, police stations and post-offices.

The people of Assam spontaneously joined in this historic movement. Gopinath Bordoloi and Sidhinath Sarma were arrested in Dhubri, while returning from attending Bombay Session of AICC. Some other prominent congress leaders like Bishnuram Medhi, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Md. Taybulla, Omeo Kumar Das, Debeswar Sarma were arrested from different parts of Assam. Pitambar Dev Goswami, the Satradhikar of the Garmur Satra, Majuli, and his deputy, Krishna Dev Goswami were arrested for offering support and participation in the movement. The people of Assam now began rebelling and sabotaging. At Sarbhog, the agitating crowd raided the aerodrome and destroyed military dumps, MES office etc. Madan Chandra Barman and Reutaram Boro lost their lives before armed bayonets while they observed a protest day against the repressive measures of the government. At Barhampur in Nowgong district, the police opened fired on a huge gathering while people were celebrating the recapturing of the Santi-Sena camp on 18th September. As a result, Lakshmikanta Hazarika, Thagiram Sut, Boloram Sut and Bhogeswari Phukanani embraced death in the police firing. At Dhekiajuli, on 20th September, police opened fire on a procession led by Kamalakanta Das to hoist the congress flag at the police station there. In this incident, eight persons were killed on the spot, including three women. In a similar incident at Gahpur, Kanaklata Barua, a member of the Mrityu Bahini, was shot dead while leading a procession from Chaiduar to hoist the Congress flag in front of the local police station. Mukunda Kakati then took up the flag from her hand and he too was shot dead.

The congress workers involved in violent activities on the railways in many places of Assam such as, near Shahajibazar in Habibganj; near Panikhati and at Rangia in Kamrup; at Puranigudam in Nowgong; near Safrai in Sibsagar; at Kachamari and at Sarupathar in Golaghat. Kushal Konwar was sentenced to death for his alleged implication in the Sarupather train derailment case. There were considerable cases of Lathi-charge in North Lakhimpur, Dhalpur, Bihpuria, Dikhoughat, Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Bihali, Barpeta, Sibsagar, Nitaipukhuri, Teok, Dergaon, Golaghat and Nowgong town.

The people had to face assault from the military at the time of realising collective fines and in raiding villages and volunteers' camp. Nidhiram Koch, a poor peasant of Goalpara fell victim of military shooting for his failure to pay his share of the collective fine.

In the Surma Valley, people gave warm response to the Quit India Movement. A war council was formed to take widespread satyagraha in the valley. The people there targeted to blow up the bridge and cut telegraph and telephone lines to paralyse the administration

and obstruct the movement of the troops. Police station at Lala, Badarpur and Biswanath were targets of mob-attack.

The women of Assam played a dominant role in the Quit India Movement. Women took active part in processions, demonstration and picketing. Saralabala Devi and Snehalata Devi were the most active women leaders in Sylhet.

Students and younger generation of both the valleys played an important role in the movement. A good number of young men of Assam who studied in Calcutta and other provinces left their studies. Soon they joined in the movement and took up the organisational work. After the arrest of the top leaders of the province, they had been organising various protest movements such as strikes, hartals, picketing, processions and sabotage activities.

Inspired by the ideology of Jai Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali, some young revolutionaries in Assam like Shankar Chandra Barua, Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Laxmi Prasad Goswami, Bishnu Rava, Baikuntha Singh and Lakshyadhar Choudhury engaged themselves in various kinds of underground activities. Hem Chandra Barua acted as the liaison officer and guided these activities. These revolutionaries carried on vigorous no-tax campaign and encouraged the people to raise arms against the British. Bombs were manufactured in many places of Kamrup. Government guns were stolen in Nalbari, Patacharkuchi and Nowgong. In some places like Jamuguri, Sootea, Bajali and Kenduguri parallel governments were also established.

In 1943, the Azad Hind Fauz advanced to India through Burma and entered Assam. Greatly alarmed by the situation, the British government released Mahatma Gandhi from jail in May, 1944. Mahatma Gandhi visited Guwahati in January, 1945, and performed mass-prayers. However gradually the stormy days of the movement had passed over.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) Fill in the blanks:

A) The _____ Session of the INC took the Quit India Resolution in 1942.

B) _____ was shot dead along with Kanaklata Barua at Gohpur.

C) _____ was executed for his alleged implication in the Sarupathar train derailment case.

7.6 LET US SUM UP

- The Non-Cooperation Movement was an important phase of the Indian Freedom Movement. It was a reaction to the oppressive policies of the colonial rule such as implementation of the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
- This movement aimed at the attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means.
- Students of Assam took up the non-cooperation issue seriously and played a vital role in the movement.
- The Non-Cooperation Movement created a favourable condition for the tea garden labourers to get rid of their yearlong economic exploitation.

- The non-cooperation movement had met with serious set-back when a clash took place at Chauri Chaura, in the Gorakhpur district in the United Province.
- The Civil Disobedience Movement was started with the ideology of disobeying laws, orders and commands of the government. Breaching of Salt Law, boycott of foreign goods and picketing of liquor shops took place on a large scale all over India as parts of the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- The apprehension of Japanese invasion during the Second World War and failure of the Cripps Mission compelled the Indian National Congress (INC) to launch the Quit India Movement in 1942.
- Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan "Do or Die" to his countrymen in the movement.
- During the period of Quit India Movement, the congress workers in Assam undertook some sabotage activities such as, disruption of the means of communication, destruction of public property, seizure of police stations and post-offices, disconnecting telephone and telegraph wires etc.
- In this movement, Bhogeswari Phukanani, Kanaklata Barua, Mukunda Kakati, Kushal Konwar and many other sacrificed their life for the cause the country.

7.7 FURTHER READING

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3) Dutta, K. N. (1993). *Landmarks in the freedom struggle in Assam*. Guwahati: Lawyers' Book Stall.

4) Grover, B.L. & Grover, S. (1998). *A new outlook at modern Indian history*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

A) 1885.

B) 1920.

C) 1921.

Ans to Q No 2:

A) True.

B) True.

C) False.

D) True.

Ans to Q No 3:

A) Bombay.

B) Mukunda Kakati.

C) Kushal Konwar.

7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: What was the aim of the Non-Cooperation Movement?

Q 2: Who was the first President of Assam Provincial Congress?

Q 3: Name two prominent women leader of Assam who took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Q 4: When and between whom the Poona Pact was signed?

Q 5: When the Indian National Congress passed the Quit India Resolution?

Q 6: Name the Satradhikar of the Gormur Satra who was arrested for his support and participation in the Quit India Movement.

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

Q 1: Write a short note on the role of students in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Q 2: Briefly explain the Cunningham Circular.

Q 3: Write a note on Communal Award.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-350 words)

Q 1: Discuss the role of Assam in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Q 2: Discuss briefly the role played by Assam in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Q 3: Describe briefly the impact of Quit India Movement in Assam.

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UNIT 8: CABINET MISSION PLAN AND ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives
8.2 Introduction
8.3 Cabinet Mission
8.4 Plan of Cabinet Mission
8.5 Reactions of the Congress and the League
8.6 The Cabinet Mission Plan and Assam
8.7 Grouping System and Reaction in Assam
8.8 Gopinath Bardoloi and Grouping System
8.9 Attitude of M. K. Gandhi Towards Assam
8.10 Attitude of National Leaders
8.11 Independence and Partition
8.12 Let Us Sum Up
8.13 Further Reading
8.14 Answers to Check Your Progress
8.15 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the background of the Indian National Movement
- discuss about the Cabinet Mission Plan
- explain the Grouping system and Reaction in Assam
- know about the bold stand of Gopinath Bordoloi against the grouping plan
- learn about the attitude of M. K. Gandhi and other National Leaders towards Assam

8.2 INTRODUCTION

The Britishers came to India in the 17th century as traders and remained in India as colonial masters till 1947. Within 157 years of their arrival the East India Company was in a position to establish their covert rule over India. After a few years, they were able to establish direct rule over several parts of India. Their misdeeds, corrupt and highly exploited rule greatly dissatisfied the people and their regime became a target of revolt. In 1857, the first Indian revolt against the British rulers took place. The second half of the 19th century witnessed the rise of a new consciousness among the Indians. The reawakening of the Indian people strengthened the feeling of opposition against the British. Several groups in India and abroad like The Hindustan Republican Party, The Indian National Army, and the Gaddar Party had adopted military methods to bring an end to the alien rule. Due to all these effort of the Indians, the stage was set for the independence of the country which finally took place in 1947.

The Indians fully demonstrated their determination to secure freedom from the British. Throughout 1945-1946, numerous agitations, strikes, demonstrations and boycotts characterised life in India. Under such a situation of protests, hartals and revolts, the British administration and repression began to break down. Due to the two World Wars, the British military, economic and political power stood eclipsed and it became very difficult for Britain to govern the far flung colonies. In 1945, the Labour Party won victorious in the British Parliament and the political situation of Britain took a turn in favour of India's independence. The Labour Government dispatched a high level Cabinet Mission to India to resolve the issue of transfer of power to India.

8.3 CABINET MISSION

The Cabinet Mission came to India on 24th March, 1946.The Cabinet Mission, composed of three British Cabinet Ministers-Sir Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, Presidents of the Board of Trade and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty. The main objective of the mission was to set up machinery to settle the political crisis in India and drawing up a constitution for independent India and also to make necessary arrangement for an Interim Government. The most important task of the commission was to prepare the methods for the transfer of power and suggest measures for the formation of the constitution making machinery and also to set up Interim Government.

8.4 PLAN OF CABINET MISSION

The Mission spent the first three weeks in discussion with the leaders of various political parties, members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, the rulers of Princely States etc. After their discussion Cabinet Mission announced its recommendations on May 16th, 1946.

(A) Plan for Constitutional set up of India

1. The unit of India had to be retained. There should be a Union of India, taking up both British India and the States.
2. The Union should have an executive and legislature constituted from British India and State representatives.
3. All subjects other than the Union subjects and residuary powers should be vested in the province.
4. All provinces should be free to form Groups with their own executive and legislatures. The provinces were divided into three Groups.

   Group A---Madras, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Central Province.

   Group B---Punjab, North West Frontier Province and Sindh.

   Group C---Bengal and Assam.
5. The Mission recommended the summoning of a Constituent Assembly to draft the Constitution.

(B) Plan for an Interim Government

The Mission had given more importance to the setting up of an interim government. The plan was accepted by all the political parties. The plan proposed that all portfolios including that of war, would be given to Indian leaders enjoying people's confidence. It was also an attempt to reunite the views of the congress and the Muslim League. It provided for the unity of India as a federation. The congress accepted it because the plan rejected the demand for Pakistan. They hoped that a united democratic India would be built up. The Muslim League accepted it because it indirectly accepted the demand for a Muslim majority state in the form of a group. In September 1946, an interim government of India was formed by the congress with Jawaharlal Nehru heading the Council of Ministers. The Muslim League joined the cabinet but refrained from joining the constituent assembly.

8.5 REACTIONS OF THE CONGRESS AND THE LEAGUE

The Congress and the League could not come to an agreement on the fundamental issue of the unity or partition of India. Cabinet mission came to India to seek in association with the viceroy, an agreement with the Indian leaders on the principles and procedures relating to the constitutional issues. The mission rejected the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan on various grounds. The establishment of Pakistan would not solve the problem of communal minorities. Therefore, the mission suggested that there should be one central government covering at least some specified subjects. The part of the proposal concerned with province-wise grouping was interpreted differently. The Muslim League accepted the compulsory grouping of the provinces but congress thought that making of groups should be optional for the provinces. Finally, the mission decided in favour of the League's stand. With some reservations, the Cabinet Mission was accepted by Muslim League and Congress. However, after July, 1946 elections which gave the congress 209 seats in an assembly of 296, the Muslim League decided to withdraw their support to the mission, fearing that this would hide Muslim League in the assembly.

The League demanded the formation of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state out of India. It demanded the formation of Pakistan as a separate Muslim state. After a few months, the League rejected the plan. The Viceroy then reconstituted his council without any representatives from League. The League protested against the Viceroy and observed the Direct Action Day on 16th August, 1946 and it led communal riots in various parts of the country. In Calcutta, about hundreds of people were killed and enormous properties were lost. It was followed by violent communal riots in Noakhali in East Bengal, in Bihar and later in Punjab where a large number of innocent people lost their lives. Gandhi was deeply hurt during this moment when he saw complete disregard towards his principle of nonviolence. He went to East Bengal and Bihar on foot. However, the seeds of communalism sown too deeply under the patronage of the Colonial government could not be uprooted easily.

8.6 THE CABINET MISSION PLAN AND ASSAM

Separation of Assam: The Grouping plan of the Mission to 'group' Assam with Bengal created wide resentment in Assam that it was intended towards creating a predominantly Muslim zone in Eastern India. It divided the country into three Groups **A, B** & **C**. The Group **A** included Madras, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Central Province, the Hindu majority areas. Group **B** included Punjab, Sind, North West Frontier Provinces & Baluchistan, the Muslim majority areas. The Group **C** included Bengal and Assam as mentioned earlier.

8.7 GROUPING SYSTEM AND REACTION IN ASSAM

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vehemently protested against the Grouping system. It was feared that Assam would lose her identity and individuality in the new political arrangement. Hundreds of protest meetings were held in different parts of Assam. Assam Jatiya Mahasabha played an important role in protesting against the plan. The Shabha even collected some papers and secretly exposed the design of the League in Assam. The matter took a serious turn in parts of Kamrup, Nowgong and Goalpara districts in the Assam valley and also in Sylhet and Cachar districts in the Barak valley.

8.8 GOPINATH BARDOLOI AND GROUPING SYSTEM

On July 16, 1946, Gopinath Bardoloi's Ministry expressed strong disapproval of the plan and directed the ten representatives of Assam to the Constituent Assembly not to sit in section with any other Province for devising the Constitution of Assam or any group Constitution with such other province for settlement of any question relating to Assam. However, it was challenged by Moulana Basani and other leaders of Muslim League, asking that whether the House had the authority to give such directions and whether such type of resolution could be admitted in the Assembly for resolution. Saadullah supporting the Grouping System, argued that Assam would be benefitted economically, if tied with Bengal. However, Bardoloi opposed the argument of Saadullha and stated that Assam's autonomy could not be sacrificed under any circumstances. On 6th December, 1946, the British Government gave a statement that the Federal Court would take initiative to settle the case of disputed grouping. As the decision would be harmful to Assam, the APCC sent a delegation to pressurise the Congress high Command to reject the statement of 6 December. The Congress Working Committee took time to clear their stand on this issue. Bardoloi took a bold step and informed Nehru, the Congress President that Assam would stand by Gandhi's advice which held "framing our own constitution and Grouping accordingly."

8.9 ATTITUDE OF M. K. GANDHI TOWARDS ASSAM

Bardoloi met Gandhi and discussed about the causes and consequences of the Grouping Plan. Gandhi advised Bardoloi to intensify the popular struggle against the British

Cabinet Mission plan. He openly declared that if necessary, Assam should break away from the Congress and intensify the non-violent struggle against the Cabinet plan. Gandhi told Bardoloi that if Congress Working Committee would not give clear guidance, Assam should not include into the section. He further said that it would be a kind of Satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress. He assured that "Assam's refusal to go to the Section would not stand in the way but would rather lead India towards independence."

The representatives of Assam also met Nehru and Azad and discussed on this vital issue. They both tried to conciliate the delegation Assam, but on the otherhand Mahatma Gandhi assured the leaders of Assam to extend all his help. On 19th December, 1946, a meeting was held in the Jubilee garden at Guwahati with the joint auspices of the Congressmen and the students. Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati attended the meeting and published the message of Gandhi. The meeting adopted a resolution opposing the intervention of the Federal Court and urged upon the people of Assam to prepare them for a movement.

8.10 ATTITUDE OF NATIONAL LEADERS

The AICC in its plenary session held in January, 1947, reviewed the situation. Although the AICC,desired to proceed with the Constituent Assembly, yet it had to think about the Assamese non-Muslims and Sikh in Punjab. It had also to accept the British statement of 6th December only with the condition that there would be prior agreement among the parties concerned to abide by its decision. The resolution made it clear that no attempt could be made to compel a province against it wishes. The Congress Socialists and Communist extended their full support to the anti-Grouping agitation that swept the Assam valley.

The working Committee of the Assam Congress also reiterated on 17th January, 1947 that the Constitution of the provinces should be framed by its own representatives alone. Gandhi wrote to the APCC President indicating that the AICC would not act contrary to the wishes of the people of Assam. Thus, it was mainly for Assam's objection to its Grouping with Bengal that the Muslim League repudiated its earlier acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan.

In the meantime, the political situation of Britain was changed. Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister of Britain was sympathetic to the cause of Indian Independence and the new environment strengthened the case for withdrawing from India. On 20th February, 1947, Attlee announced that the British would transfer power to India by June, 1948. Mr. Attlee appointed Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India for taking the issue of transfer of power. He soon realised that partition of the country into India and Pakistan was the only alternative to solve the problem.

8.11 INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

For taking the issue of transfer of power, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee

appointed Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India on 24th March, 1947. After discussion with the Indian leaders, Mountbatten realised that partition of the country into India and Pakistan was the only way to solve the problem. After consultations with the British Government, he formulated a plan and made public on 3rd June, 1947 which came to be known as Mountbatten Plan.

Main Features of the Plan

- Partition of India was certain.
- The representatives of the Muslim majority districts and those representing the provinces in the legislative assemblies of Bengal and Punjab would meet separately and decide by a simple majority vote whether their representative province was to be divided or not.
- The legislative assembly of Sindh would decide whether to join in the Constituent Assembly of Delhi or the new constituent Assembly of those not joining Delhi.
- A referendum would be held in Sylhet to decide whether to join East Bengal or to retain in Assam.
- A referendum would be held in North West Frontier province to decide whether to join in Delhi or the new state.

The plan was accepted by both the Congress and the Muslim League. After acceptance of the Mountbatten plan, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, 1947 which brought freedom to India along with the partition of the country relating to the creation of Pakistan into two parts-West Pakistan and East Pakistan. In 1971, East Pakistan liberated itself from Pakistan and became Bangladesh.

Sylhet Referendum

According to the Mountbatten plan, a referendum was to be held in Sylhet to decide whether that district would remain as a part of Assam in India or become part of East Bengal. The date of the transfer of power was fixed on 15th August 1947. The Sylhet Hindus demanded the reunion of Sylhet with Bengal but the Sylhet Muslims opposed to the same. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Sylhet opposed to the idea of Pakistan and advised all Muslims to vote for an undivided Assam. In Assam valley, the public demanded the separation of Sylhet from Assam. Finally, referendum was held and the verdict was given in favour of separation of Sylhet which brought relief to the people of Brahmaputra valley.

Points to Remember

- The first President of Muslim League was Salimullah Khan.
- On 16th August, 1946, the Muslim League celebrated the Direct Action Day.
- Indian Muslim League was established on 3rd December, 1906.
- *'Star of India'*, News Paper was published by the Indian Muslim League.
- Choudhry Rahmat Ali composed the word Pakistan.
- Warren Hastings (1774-85) was the first Governor General of India during East India Company's Rule.

- Lord Mount Batten was the first Governor-General of free India.
- C. Rajagopalachari (1948-50) was the First and last Indian Governor General of free India.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Choose the correct answers :

(a) The Cabinet Mission came to India on 24th March, 1945/ 1946/ 1947.

.....

(b) The Cabinet Mission was headed by Sir Pethick Lawrence/ Sir Stafford Cripps/ and A.V. Alexander.

.....

(c) Noakhali was situated in Punjab/ Bihar/ East Bengal.

.....

(d) Direct Action Day was observed on 17th/16th/18th August, 1946.

.....

(e) The British Prime Minister Clement Attlee / Lord Wavell / Lord Mount Batten had taken initiative to send a Cabinet Mission to India.

.....

Q2) Give short answer.

a) Who was the Prime Minister of Assam during the time of Grouping Plan?

.....

b) Who became the Governor General of India after Lord Wavell?

.....

c) Who celebrated the Direct Action Day in protest against the Proposal of Cabinet Mission?

.....

d) Who composed the word Pakistan?

.....

8.12 LET US SUM UP

- India attained her independence through a largely peaceful national movement. It arose as a reaction against the socio economic exploitation of the British Colonial government.
- Due to all efforts of the Indians the stage was prepared for the liberation of India which was finally achieved in 1947.
- The leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League were preparing themselves for a negotiation with the Government.
- The British Prime Minister sent a Cabinet Mission to India on 24th March 1946, composed of three British Cabinet Ministers-Sir Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and A.V. Alexander.
- The most important task of the Mission was to prepare the methods for the transfer

of power and put forward measures for the structure of the Constitution making machinery and also to set up Interim Government.

- The Mission announced its recommendations on May 16th, 1946. It divided the country into three Groups A, B & C. Group C included Bengal and Assam.
- The Grouping System created deeply resentment among the people of Assam. Finally the Mission had failed.

8.13 FURTHER READING

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3) Ghai, K. K. (2003). *Indian polity (Democratic government and politics in India*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.

4) Gupta, D. C. (1970). *Indian national movement*. Delhi: Vikas Publications.

8.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

(a) 1946 (b) Sir Pethick Lawrence (c) East Bengal (d) 16th August, 1946 (e) Clement Attlee.

Ans to Q No 2:

(a) Gopinath Bardoloi.

(b) Lord Mountbatten.

(c) The Muslim League.

(d) Choudhry Rahmat Ali.

8.15 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Who was Sir Staford Cripps?

Q 2: What were the provinces of the Group B according to the Grouping Plan?

Q 3: In which year was the Muslim League formed?

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

Q 1: Write a short note on Cabinet Mission Plan.

Q 2: Explain the reaction of the Muslim League on Cabinet Mission Plan.

Q 3: Briefly explain the demands made in the Sylhet Reforendum.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-350 words)

Q 1: Why was the Cabinet Mission sent to India? What were the main features of the

scheme?

Q 2: What is Grouping Plan? Discuss the reaction in Assam against the Grouping Plan.

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UNIT 9: REORGNISATION OF ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives
9.2 Introduction
9.3 Background
9.4 Formation of Nagaland
9.5 The North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971: Provisions and Impact
9.6 Let Us Sum Up
9.7 Further Reading
9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
9.9 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the background of reorganisation of the State of Assam
- discuss the formation of Nagaland
- explain the constitutional development in the Naga Hills
- discuss the provisions and impact of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971

9.2 INTRODUCTION

The Northeast region of India is better known for its cultural and ethnic diversity and the problems engulfing the region around linguistic reformations and ethnic assertions. The region has been in the midst of a struggle for identity over language, culture, history and ethnicity. As a result, the region has been witness to a number of ethnic movements over and again to pressurize the government to form separate political entities, including separate states along linguistic lines. An initiative in this regard was taken in the form of North-Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act ,1971, which paved the way for division and fragmentation of Assam into different states.

9.3 BACKGROUND

The North-Eastern Region of India presents a unique picture of its own without any resemblance to any other part of the country, whether in part or whole in terms of its geographical contiguity with foreign countries, social and political history and diversity in population composition. It was may be one of the reasons why many parts of this region could not be brought under the direct control by East India Company. Though done in later years, Manipur and Tripura remained separate from direct British administration as they were Princely states. However, the Assamese speaking people, who comprised the major population group in the Brahmaputra valley, occupied the centre stage in the whole region. In the pre-independence period, there was a constant resistance on the part of the

Assamese speaking people against the imposition of Bengali language in Assam and sincere efforts were made to counter the Bengali influence. This was one of the factors which led to the emergence of Assamese national consciousness and the gradual rise of the theory of assimilation and the eventual formation of a greater Assam including the tribal areas. As a matter of fact, the tribal areas were actually undergoing the process of gradual assimilation with the Assamese people in the upper and central parts of Assam. But this process of assimilation was halted, especially after independence, when most of the hill tribes started asserting their separate tribal identity based on their distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions. Thus, there arose a fear among some of the hill tribes and other non-Assamese linguistic groups of possible Assamese domination in the political and cultural spheres of the tribal communities of the hill areas. Thus, the process of gradual natural assimilation was halted and there arose demands for separate statehoods on the part of the hill tribes based on their distinctive ethnic and linguistic identities. The result was reorganization of the Northeastern region many times. By 1972, the whole of the Northeastern region was divided into five states i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura and two union territories, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, these two states, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh also got full-fledged statehood.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Tripura remained separate from direct British administration, as it was a Princely state. (True/False)

.....

Q2) In which year did Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh get full-fledged statehood ?

.....

9.4 FORMATION OF NAGALAND

- **Struggle for Naga political identity**

  Federal reconstitution of India has posed the problem of language based identity. Regarding secessionist tendencies in the hills, Nagaland provided an epic example. The question of Nagaland for the Nagas became quite sensational soon after Independence in 1947. The political developments were compounded by the militancy angle in the region. Naga resistance to any political change may be traced back to the year 1928, when a small gathering of Naga leaders from the Naga Club (which was political platform of the Nagas) conveyed their separate cultural identity to the visiting members of the Simon Commission and appealed that the Nagas be left out of any political reforms being contemplated by the Simon Commission. The political consciousness among the Nagas had started forming with the formation of Lotha Tribal Council in 1923. Ao Nagas formed a similar council in 1928, and other Naga tribes also organized tribal councils by the 1940s.Towards the end of British rule in India , the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C.R.Pawsey, formed the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 with the intention of uniting the Nagas, which later transformed itself into the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946. Later it emerged as

one of the most powerful political organizations of the Nagas. It was expected to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Naga Tribes, to achieve local autonomy within the province of Assam and to train the people for self-government.

In the post independent period, it was felt that there was a need for preserving the tribal cultural identity and promote the development of the tribal areas by way of helping the tribal groups to pursue their own welfare through creation of separate states . At the same time, it was assumed that small states were able to make better progress than big states.

- **Constitutional development in the Naga Hills and formation of Nagaland**

  Prior to occupation of Assam by the British, The Ahom kings looked upon the Nagas as their subjects. The Raja of Manipur also exercised control over parts of the Naga Hills. The whole of Naga Hills became part of British India with the conquest of Assam in the early part of the 19th century. The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at Samaguting under the administration of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, which was later transferred to the Province of Assam in 1874. The District headquarters were transferred to Wokha, in the heart of the Hills, in 1876, and two years later it was shifted to Kohima, and Wokha continued to be a subdivision headquarter. In 1889, the sub-divisional headquarter was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung. Thus, the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration had two sub-divisions - Kohima(Sadar) and Mokokchung. These arrangements were inherited by the central Government at the time of India's Independence in 1947. With effect from 26th January, 1950, the Constitution of India brought about a change in the administrative set up of the Naga Hills District.

  Under the Sixth Schedule (Part A) of the Constitution, the Naga Hills District was treated as an Autonomous District and was to have an Autonomous District Council, which could not become a reality as Nagas were dissatisfied with the Sixth Schedule and they, therefore, boycotted the elections for the Council. Consequently, the administration of the district was carried on under the transitional provisions Paragraph 19 of the Schedule, by the Government of Assam.

Consequent upon the constitution of Naga Hills District in 1866, the residual hill areas of the Naga Hills which lay between the external boundary of the Naga Hills District and the international boundary between India and Burma, continued as an unadministered area till 1937 when the Government of India Act, 1935 coming into force. Under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 , these unadministered area was named as Naga Tribal Area and placed directly under the control of the Governor of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District on behalf of the Governor General of India representing the British Emperor. After Independence, the Government of India extended the necessary laws rules and orders to the Naga Tribal Area for the purposes of administration.

After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under the Sixth Schedule (Part B), and came to be administered by the Governor of Assam as Agent of the President.

The North East Frontier Areas (Administration) Regulation, 1954 created the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which also included the Naga Tribal Area, now renamed as Tuensang Frontier Division.

At the time of India's Independence in 1947, the political development in Naga Hills moved in two opposite directions. While on the one hand, there was the struggle carried out by the militant wing of the Naga National Council which at one extreme demanded full sovereignty. On the other hand , the moderate sections of the Naga National Council was looking for a viable solution by constitutional means. The nine point understanding concluded between the Naga National Council and Assam Governor Akbar Hyderi at Kohima in June 1947 came up as a conflict management mechanism. This understanding stipulated for a ten-year association of the Nagas with India, after which they would be free to decide their own fate. The agreement recognized " the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes" and tried to address questions of land, boundaries, etc.

After promulgation of the Indian Constitution in 1950, the provision of the Hyderi Understanding were inserted in the Sixth Schedule, but the Naga National Council showed its defiance and embarked upon a programme of mass agitation and open rebellion. An armed insurrection erupted in Tuensang in 1954 and soon engulfed two other districts , namely, Kohima and Mokokchung. First the police, and later on the army was deployed to put down the risings. In 1957, an agreement was reached between Naga leaders and the Union government, creating a single separate region of the Naga Hills in the form of a new administrative unit in the State of Assam , namely, the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) (comprising the erstwhile Naga Hills District and Tuensang Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency). The NHTA became a Union territory directly administered by the Central government but with a large degree of autonomy.

However, this was not acceptable to the Nagas and the conflict between the Naga rebels and the security forces continued. Subsequently, discussions were held between Prime Minister Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC) and in July 1960 a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India. As per the first point of the agreement, it was declared that "The territories that were heretofore known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act, 1957, shall form a State within the Indian Union and he hereafter known as Nagaland." Accordingly, the State of Nagaland was inaugurated by the President of India on the December 1, 1963 at a colourful ceremony in Kohima.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at which place ?

.....

Q4) After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under which Schedule?

.....

9.5 NORTHEAST AREAS REORGANISATION ACT, 1971: PROVISIONS AND IMPACT

The Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 passed on 30th December, 1971 provided for the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and to provide for the formation of the State of Meghalaya and of the Union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh by reorganisation of the existing State of Assam and for matters connected therewith.

Let us look at some of the important provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971. As per the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 :

- The two parliamentary constituencies of the existing union territory of Manipur shall be deemed to be the two parliamentary constituencies of the State of Manipur; and the two parliamentary constituencies of the existing union territory of Tripura shall be deemed to be the two parliamentary constituencies of the State of Tripura.
- There shall be two parliamentary constituencies in the State of Meghalaya to be called the Shillong parliamentary constituency and the Tura parliamentary constituency.
- The whole of the union territory of Mizoram shall form one parliamentary constituency to be called the Mizoram parliamentary constituency.
- The sitting member nominated to fill the seat allotted in the House of the People to the North- East Frontier Agency, shall now be deemed to be the have been nominated to fill the seat allotted to the Union territory of Arunachal Pradesh in the House of the People.
- The High Court of Assam and Nagaland shall cease to function and is hereby abolished.
- There shall be a common High Court for the states of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura to be called the Gauhati High Court (the High Court of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura).
- The President shall, by order, determine the grants- in- aid of the revenues of the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and the share of each such State in the Union duties of excise, estate duty and taxes on income.
- Provisions relating to certain corporations, provisions relating to All India Services and other related services, legal powers to make rules , etc. with regard to the existing and newly formed states were other provisions included in the Act.

The emergence of separate states following the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 has been able to satisfy the sentiments of numerically smaller groups and communities residing mostly in the hill areas to protect their cultural, identity, heritage and values by giving them the autonomy to develop in their own ways. Smaller states have also ensured better distribution of resources in favour of the tribal communities and has led to convenience in governance, as geographically smaller states are easier to govern at times. However, at the same time, there have been also a surge in demands for further

devolution of powers in recent times based on linguistic and ethnic lines, often resulting in violent conflicts in some states. As such, it is important to ensure that all groups and communities residing in the Northeastern states get equal opportunities for securing their own development and participate equally with the majority communities in the process of governance in order to avoid further political division of the Northeastern states and maintain peace.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5) Write any two provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

.....

.....

9.6 LET US SUM UP

- The North-Eastern Region of India presents a unique picture of its own without resemblance to any other part of the country, whether in part or whole, in terms of its geographical contiguity with foreign countries, social and political history and diversity in population composition.
- However, the Assamese speaking people, who comprised the major population group in the Brahmaputra valley, occupied the centre stage in the whole region.
- In the pre-independence period, there was a constant resistance on the part of the Assamese speaking people against the imposition of Bengali language in Assam and sincere efforts were made to counter the Bengali influence. This was one of the factors which led to the emergence of Assamese national consciousness and the gradual rise of the theory of assimilation and the eventual formation of a greater Assam including the tribal areas.
- As a matter of fact, the tribal areas were actually undergoing the process of gradual assimilation with the Assamese people in the upper and central parts of Assam.
- But this process of assimilation was halted, especially after independence, when most of the hill tribes started asserting their separate tribal identity based on their distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions.
- By 1972, the whole of the Northeastern region was divided into five states i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura and two union territories, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, these two states, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh also got full-fledged statehood.
- Regarding secessionist tendencies in the hills, Nagaland provided an epic example. The question of Nagaland for the Nagas became quite sensational soon after Independence in 1947. The political developments were compounded by the militancy angle in the region.
- Naga resistance to any political change may be traced back to the year 1928, when a small gathering of Naga leaders from the Naga Club (which was political platform of

the Nagas) conveyed their separate cultural identity to the visiting members of the Simon Commission and appealed that the Nagas be left out of any political reforms being contemplated by the Simon Commission.

- The political consciousness among the Nagas had started forming with the formation of Lotha Tribal Council in 1923. Ao Nagas formed a similar council in 1928, and other Naga tribes also organized tribal councils by the 1940s.
- Towards the end of British rule in India, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C.R.Pawsey, formed the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 with the intention of uniting the Nagas, which later transformed itself into the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946.
- Later it emerged as one of the most powerful political organizations of the Nagas. It was expected to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Naga Tribes, to achieve local autonomy within the province of Assam and to train the people for self-government.
- In the post independent period, it was felt that there was a need for preserving the tribal cultural identity and promote the development of the tribal areas by way of helping the tribal groups to pursue their own welfare through creation of separate states . At the same time, it was assumed that small states were able to make better progress than big states.
- The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at Samaguting under the administration of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, which was later transferred to the Province of Assam in 1874.
- The District headquarters were transferred to Wokha, in the heart of the Hills, in 1876, and two years later it was shifted to Kohima, and Wokha continued to be a subdivision headquarter. In 1889, the sub-divisional headquarter was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung. Thus, the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration had two sub-divisions - Kohima (Sadar) and Mokokchung.
- These arrangements were inherited by the central Government at the time of India's Independence in 1947. With effect from 26th January, 1950, the Constitution of India brought about a change in the administrative set up of the Naga Hills District.
- Consequent upon the constitution of Naga Hills District in 1866, the residual hill areas of the Naga Hills which lay between the external boundary of the Naga Hills District and the international boundary between India and Burma, continued as an unadministered area till 1937 when the Government of India Act, 1935 coming into force.
- Under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935, these unadministered area was named as Naga Tribal Area and placed directly under the control of the Governor of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District on behalf of the Governor General of India representing the British Emperor.
- After Independence, the Government of India extended the necessary laws rules and orders to the Naga Tribal Area for the purposes of administration.

- After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under the Sixth Schedule (Part B), and came to be administered by the Governor of Assam as Agent of the President.
- The North East Frontier Areas (Administration) Regulation, 1954 created the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which also included the Naga Tribal Area, now renamed as Tuensang Frontier Division.
- After promulgation of the Indian Constitution in 1950, the provision of the Hyderi Understanding were inserted in the Sixth Schedule, but the Naga National Council showed its defiance and embarked upon a programme of mass agitation and open rebellion.
- An armed insurrection erupted in Tuensang in 1954 and soon engulfed two other districts , namely, Kohima and Mokokchung.
- Subsequently, discussions were held between Prime Minister Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC) and in July 1960 a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India.
- As per the first point of the agreement, it was declared that "The territories that were heretofore known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act, 1957, shall form a State within the Indian Union and he hereafter known as Nagaland."
- Accordingly, the State of Nagaland was inaugurated by the President of India on the December 1, 1963 at a colourful ceremony in Kohima.
- The Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 passed on 30th December, 1971 provided for the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and to provide for the formation of the State of Meghalaya and of the Union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh by reorganisation of the existing State of Assam and for matters connected therewith.
- The emergence of separate states following the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 has been able to satisfy the sentiments of numerically smaller groups and communities residing mostly in the hill areas to protect their cultural, identity, heritage and values by giving them the autonomy to develop in their own ways.

9.7 FURTHER READING

1) Datta Ray, B. and Agrawal, S.P. *Reorganisation of North East India since 1947*. Concept Publishing Company, 1996.

2) Verma, Rajesh. *History of North East India*. Mittal Publications. 2103.

9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: True
Ans to Q No 2: 1987

Ans to Q No 3: Samaguting

Ans to Q No 4: Sixth

Ans to Q No 5:

(a) There shall be two parliamentary constituencies in the State of Meghalaya to be called the Shillong parliamentary constituency and the Tura parliamentary constituency.

(b) The President shall, by order, determine the grants- in- aid of the revenues of the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and the share of each such State in the Union duties of excise, estate duty and taxes on income.

9.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Mention the sub-divisions of the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration.

Q 2: The State of Nagaland was inaugurated in which year ?

Q 3: The Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) comprised of which areas?

Q 4: Mention the name of the the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills who formed the the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945.

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

Q 1: Write briefly about the constitutional development in the Naga hills and formation of Nagaland.

Q 2: Write briefly about the struggle for Naga political identity.

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

Q 1: Discuss briefly the formation of Nagaland.

Q 2: Explain any seven provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

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UNIT 10: LANGUAGE MOVEMENT AND ASSAM MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives
10.2 Introduction
10.3 Language Movement
    10.3.1 Origin and Course of the Language Movement
10.4 Assam Movement
    10.4.1 Origin and Course of the Assam Movement
10.5 Let Us Sum Up
10.6 Further Reading
10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
10.8 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the background of the language movement in Assam
- discuss the events of the language movement
- explain the background of the Assam Movement
- discuss the events of the Assam Movement
- discuss the role of organisations such as the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) in mobilising the people for a mass movement
- explain the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985

10.2 INTRODUCTION

A close look at the political landscape of Assam reveals that as a geographical entity, Assam represents a point of convergence of many groups and communities as a consequence of different waves of immigration from different regions taking place at different periods of history. During the British colonial rule, new forms of experimentations were carried out by the rulers in terms of encouraging human settlements in different parts of Assam based on economic and political calculations so much so that such political and administrative exercises even threatened to alter the demographic profile of Assam. As a matter of fact, colonial rule gave rise to new complexities in terms of cultural and linguistic expressions. Against this background, in the post-independence period, Assam witnessed intense scenes of conflict and tensions based on an assertion of the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people. Such efforts to safeguard the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people were seen in the form of the Language Movement of the 1960s and later the Assam Movement beginning in the late 1970s. In this unit, we shall discuss the Language Movement and the Assam Movement both of which are important landmarks in the political history of Assam.

10.3 LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

10.3.1 Origin and Course of the Language Movement

The genesis of the language movement in Assam could be traced back to the colonial period when the British had introduced the Bengali language in the government schools and law courts of Assam in 1837. This policy was resented by a section of informed intellectuals from Assam spearheaded by people like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan who asserted the distinctiveness of the Assamese language and pleaded with the colonial rulers to revoke the use of Bengali in schools. The American Baptist missionaries too strongly opposed the imposition of Bengali in Assam. Subsequently, in 1873 Assamese was restored as the medium of instruction in schools and as a language to be used in courts. The Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha established in 1888 in Calcutta (presently Kolkata) played a significant role in the field of development of Assamese language and literature. Starting from the second decade of the 20th century, the British colonial government began to encourage immigration of Bengali speaking Muslims from erstwhile East Bengal into the land-abundant region of Assam. Large tracts of land came to be inhabited by such settlers. At the same time, the colonial administration needed to staff its lower and middle-level bureaucratic positions with people with knowledge of English. Accordingly, the British colonial government encouraged the migration of Bengali Hindus into Assam to fill various posts in departments such as the Railways and the Postal service given the fact that Bengali Hindus were exposed to western education at an early stage of colonial rule. Soon Bengali Hindus started occupying a dominant position in government offices and in the legal, medical and teaching professions.

Against the above background, the civil society in Assam started asserting its linguistic and cultural identity more vigorously after independence coupled by the fact that higher positions of the bureaucracy came to be now filled by members of the educated Assamese middle class. Certain sections of the Assamese society advocated declaring Assamese as the state language. Two prominent linguistic and literary bodies namely, the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha expressed concern over the dominance of the Bengali language. The Assam Sahitya Sabha urged upon the government to declare the Assamese language as the state language within 1960. It observed September 9, 1959 as the state language day across Assam. However, the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (A.P.H.L.C.) and other tribal organisations expressed their apprehension regarding making Assamese the official language. The supporters of adoption of Assamese as the official language organized meetings and passed resolutions reiterating their demand. Different organisations submitted memoranda to the Chief Minister. They assured that the rights of linguistic minorities shall be respected as laid down in the Constitution and recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission. Nevertheless, minority organisations such as the Bengal Sangram Parishad insisted that Bengali be made the second official language of the state while it should be made the official language for Cachar at the district level. Significantly, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC)

passed a resolution whereby it was stated, among other things, that Assamese be declared by law as the official language of the state and be adopted for such purposes as may be decided by the government. Moreover, resolution also stated that Assamese be introduced as official language in all districts except the district of Cachar, the autonomous districts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills and North Cachar Hills in which areas it may be introduced as and when they are prepared for it. The APCC resolution evoked stiff opposition among different quarters in the Brahmaputra valley, Hill districts and Cachar. Subsequently, the atmosphere became rather tense. Provocative slogans were raised against the Assamese language and also against the APCC resolution by the non-Assamese speaking residents of Shillong. In response, counter demonstrations were staged by Assamese students in the Brahmaputra valley. Rallies were taken out in Dibrugarh and Jorhat wherein thousands of students participated demanding the immediate adoption of Assamese as the state language. Soon, the agitation spread to Sivasagar, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and several other districts. Large scale violence broke out in some parts of Assam including Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Mariani and Lumding railway stations, Silchar, Hailakandi, Guwahati and Goreswar. Incidents of violent clashes principally between sections of Assamese speaking and Bengali speaking communities as well as stoppage of trains and vandalism of railway property were reported in the riot hit areas. In July 1960 the All Assam Bengali Language Conference was held in Silchar wherein it was demanded that Assam be declared a ***bi-lingual state***. Incidents of violence took place particularly in Guwahati. In the midst of the turmoil, the police resorted to firing on July 4, 1960 killing one Assamese student named Ranjit Barpujari while injuring six others inside the hostel of Cotton College. Ranjit Barpujari was honoured as the first martyr of the Language Movement.

. Bi-lingual state : A state where two languages are used as official languages.

Subsequently, in this tense atmosphere, the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B.P.Chaliha introduced the Assam Official Language Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 came into being. The Bill provided that Assamese shall be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State of Assam provided that the English language, so long as the use thereof is permissible under Article 343 of the Constitution of India, and thereafter Hindi in place of English, shall also be used for all official purposes of the State Government. Following the passage of the Act, the Bengali speaking population particularly those from Cachar as well as communities in hill areas expressed their apprehensions. The Cachar Sangram Parishad launched a movement demanding adoption of Bengali as a separate state language resulting in violent outbursts and police firing which killed eight persons while injuring over twenty other persons. At this stage, the then Union Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri proposed a formula to bring about reconciliation among the opposing groups in the wake of the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 and Cachar Sangram Parishad movement. The Shastri formula recommended the following: the Assam Official Language Act of 1960 may be amended to do away with the provision relating to Mahkuma Parishads; communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi; at the state level, English will continue to be used along with Assamese; the linguistic minorities in the state will be accorded safeguards; all Acts, Bills, Ordinance, Regulations and Orders

will continue to be published in the Official Gazette in English even where these are published in Assamese.

The Shastri formula was accepted by the Assam Government and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 was amended in 1961 based on the recommendations of the Shastri formula. Accordingly, the Act as amended provided for safeguard for the use of language in the Autonomous Districts and also provides for safeguard for the use of Bengali in the district of Cachar. (Source: The Assam Official Language Act, 1960 http://www.neportal.org/northeastfiles/Assam/ActsOrdinances/Assam_Official_Language_Act_1968.asp).

The Assamese- Bengali rift resurfaced in the 1970s. In 1972, the Gauhati University decided to introduce the Assamese as the medium of instruction in all colleges under its jurisdiction. Initially, this decision would be applicable to the pre-University classes and gradually extended to degree classes. Exceptions were made in the case of Cachar, Manipur, Nagaland, the proposed district of Meghalaya and North East Frontier Agency or NEFA (presently Arunachal Pradesh). In all these areas, provision was made for retention of English as an alternative medium of instruction. However, the inhabitants of Cachar demanded that Bengali should also be recognised as a medium of instruction in the colleges along with Assamese. The Gauhati University authorities in an effort to pacify the agitating groups declared that English was to be retained as the medium of instruction for a period of time and students would be permitted to answer questions in their examinations in Assamese, English and Bengali. The decision of Gauhati University to allow students to write their examinations in Bengali met with strong opposition from large sections of the student community. Many students boycotted classes. Several students were arrested for breach of peace. The Assam Sahitya Sabha passed a resolution declaring that Assamese alone should be the medium of instruction in the Brahmaputra valley and English along with Assamese should be retained for a few years for answering examinations. Several incidents of violence and repression also broke out in different parts. Finally, the Gauhati University passed a resolution stating the following: Assamese shall be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University; English shall continue as an alternative medium of instruction till such time not exceeding ten years as may be considered necessary by the Academic Council. This decision of the Gauhati University created uproar in Cachar district with the matter reaching the Supreme Court which passed a restraining order on the decision of the Gauhati University. In this background, the Chief Minister of Assam held consultations with representatives from different groups such as teachers, students, members of the general public, etc. Ultimately, it was decided that separate University would be established. It would have territorial jurisdiction over the colleges in the district of Cachar. A resolution to this effect was passed in the Assam Assembly in September, 1972 thereby paving the way for establishment of a separate University for the district of Cachar. The resolution also declared that the medium of instruction at the University stage for Gauhati and Dibrugarh universities should be Assamese while English should be continued as the medium of instruction.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Mention the name of a prominent intellectual from Assam who asserted the distinctiveness of the Assamese language and pleaded with the colonial rulers to revoke the use of Bengali in schools.

……

Q2) Mention the names of two prominent linguistic and literary bodies of Assam.

……

……

Q3) Mention the name of an organization from Cachar which launched a movement demanding adoption of Bengali as a separate state language.

……

Q4) Mention any two recommendations of the Shastri formula.

……

……

10.4 ASSAM MOVEMENT

10.4.1 Origin and Course of the Assam Movement

The Assam Movement (1979-1985) could be said to be an epoch-making event in the political history of Assam. After independence, the issue of immigration from East Pakistan (Bangladesh after 1971) became a matter of serious concern of the government. In order to check the unrestrained large scale entry of foreign nationals from East Pakistan, the Parliament enacted the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950. This Act gave power to the central and the state governments to expel and drive out any person who came to the state secretly and illegally so as to safeguard the interests of the people of Assam. The Act clearly stated that large scale migration would hamper the economy of the province besides creating a serious law and order problem. However, the central and state governments did not implement the law effectively and the problem of large scale immigration from East Pakistan continued unabated. Subsequently, the situation became all too apparent during the Mongoldoi by-elections. After the death of Hiralal Patowary, the Janata Party MP, in March 1979, the Mangoldoi parliamentary seat became vacant. As a result, the process of holding a by-election to the Lok Sabha commenced. However, when the revision of electoral rolls started, numerous complaints were registered challenging the authenticity of citizenship of a large number of persons. This made the people of Assam increasingly apprehensive about the issue of foreign nationals. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in association with the press successfully mobilized public opinion among the people of Assam to achieve the objective that the by-election to the Mangoldoi constituency should be delayed till the names of all foreign nationals were removed from the electoral rolls. Soon, this issue no longer remained confined to the Mangoldoi constituency only, but spread to the whole of Assam. There were widespread protests resisting the alleged unlawful inclusion of the names of foreign nationals in the electoral

rolls in all other constituencies. In the wake of such discrepancies in the electoral rolls and reports of fresh immigration from Bangladesh into Assam, the AASU declared a twelve-hour general strike or Assam Bandh on June 8, 1979 in demand of the "detection, disenfranchisement and deportation" of foreigners. Significantly, a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to form a new coalition called the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam. In other words, organisations such as the AASU and the AGSP were successful in spearheading a mass movement marked a programme of protests and demonstrations urging the government to identify and expel illegal migrants.

In 1979, the Janata Party government in Assam collapsed leading to political instability in Assam. In November 1979, thousands of people from different parts of the state including the capital city of Guwahati courted arrest even as they launched a satyagraha or civil-disobedience to the law. President's Rule was imposed in December 1979 and it continued for one year. The AASU and AAGSP together called for the closure of all educational institutions. At the same time, they called for picketing in front of the offices of the state and central government.

In December 1979 the leaders of the movement gave a call to boycott the elections to the Lok Sabha unless the government agreed to revise the electoral rolls and names of the foreigners were removed from the electoral rolls. Prospective candidates were urged not to contest in the election until the revision of electoral rolls was effected.

On December 10, 1979 which was the last date for submitting the nomination papers for the parliamentary election, the leaders of the movement called for a state-wide bandh. The government declared a curfew at different parts of the state. In Barpeta, Khargeswar Talukdar, the general secretary of Barpeta AASU Unit, who was in his early twenties, died when the police attacked the protestors calling for boycott of the election. The supporters of the Assam Movement honoured Talukdar as its first Martyr. An economic blockade was launched. The supporters of the movement stopped the flow of crude oil and plywood from Assam to the rest of the country. On 18th January, 1980, at Duliajan, the headquarters of Oil India Limited, the district administration supported by police gave instructions for the dispersal of the picketers. When the picketers declined to leave, the police was forced to use tear gas and then fired to disperse the picketers. In this police firing, four persons were killed and many were injured. The leadership of the movement declared the deceased as martyrs of the movement. People in Assam overwhelmingly supported the oil blockade and joined in the picketing.

Following the fall of the Keshab Gogoi ministry, President's Rule was once again imposed in Assam. Protests and demonstrations continued across the state on a mass scale. Central paramilitary forces were brought in and many protesters were arrested and beaten up in different parts of the state. Subsequently negotiations resumed between the state government and the leadership of the movement in December 1982. However, the government decided to hold elections in Assam on the basis of the electoral rolls prepared in 1979.The state witnessed scenes of violence around the time of the election. A new

Congress Government headed by Hiteswar Saikia came to power after the election. Strikes and demonstrations against the government continued. Meanwhile in 1983, the Indian Parliament passed the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act or IMDT Act. This Act further made it difficult to prove that a person was an illegal immigrant in Assam as the burden of proving the citizenship or otherwise of an alleged immigrant rested on the accuser and the police and not the accused. Subsequently, in April 1984,negotiations between the Government of India and the leadership of the Movement took place. On August 15, 1985, the Assam Accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the leaders of the movement. As per the terms of the Accord, all illegal immigrants who had entered Assam after March 25th, 1971 would be detected and deported. Under the Accord, the Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people. The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing. Other concessional measures such as building a new Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and setting up of an oil refinery in Assam were also promised by the Union Government. The Union Government assured that relevant laws for prevention of encroachment of government lands and lands in tribal belts and blocks would be strictly enforced and unauthorized encroachers would be evicted.

With the signing of the Accord, a new party, namely, the Asom Gana Parishad was formed. As agreed at the time of signing of the Accord, the State government formed after the election of 1983 was dismissed and the State Assembly was dissolved. In the ensuing Assembly elections held in December 1985, the Asom Gana Parishad was voted to power and a new government was formed with Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the Chief Minister.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5) Mention the name of the Act passed by the Union Parliament in 1950 to check the unrestrained large scale entry of foreign nationals from East Pakistan?

.....

Q6) Mention the name of the organization which came into being after a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam.

.....

Q7) Which Act passed in 1983 transferred the burden of proving the citizenship or otherwise of an alleged immigrant on the accuser and the police rather than the accused?

.....

Q8) Write about some of the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985.

.....

.....

2 10.5 LET US SUM UP

- The genesis of the language movement in Assam could be traced back to the colonial period when the British had introduced the Bengali language in the government schools and law courts of Assam in 1837.
- The American Baptist missionaries too strongly opposed the imposition of Bengali in Assam. Subsequently, in 1873 Assamese was restored as the medium of instruction in schools and as a language to be used in courts.
- Large tracts of land came to be inhabited by such settlers. At the same time, the colonial administration needed to staff its lower and middle-level bureaucratic positions with people with knowledge of English.
- Two prominent linguistic and literary bodies namely, the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha expressed concern over the dominance of the Bengali language. The Assam Sahitya Sabha urged upon the government to declare the Assamese language as the state language within 1960.
- Minority organisations such as the Bengal Sangram Parishad insisted that Bengali be made the second official language of the state while it should be made the official language for Cachar at the district level.
- Significantly, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) passed a resolution whereby it was stated, among other things, that Assamese be declared by law as the official language of the state and be adopted for such purposes as may be decided by the government.
- The APCC resolution evoked stiff opposition among different quarters in the Brahmaputra valley, Hill districts and Cachar.
- Rallies were taken out in Dibrugarh and Jorhat wherein thousands of students participated demanding the immediate adoption of Assamese as the state language. Soon, the agitation spread to Sivasagar, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and several other districts.
- In the midst of the turmoil, the police resorted to firing on July 4, 1960 killing one Assamese student named Ranjit Barpujari while injuring six others inside the hostel of Cotton College. Ranjit Barpujari was honoured as the first martyr of the Language Movement.
- Subsequently, in this tense atmosphere, the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B.P. Chaliha introduced the Assam Official Language Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 came into being.
- Following the passage of the Act, the Bengali speaking population particularly those from Cachar as well as communities in hill areas expressed their apprehensions.
- At this stage, the then Union Home Minister, Lal Bahdur Shastri proposed a formula to bring about reconciliation among the opposing groups in the wake of the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 and Cachar Sangram Parishad movement. The Shastri formula recommended among other things that the Assam Official Language Act of

1960 may be amended and communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi; at the state level, English will continue to be used along with Assamese and the linguistic minorities in the state will be accorded safeguards.

- The Assamese- Bengali rift resurfaced in the 1970s. In 1972, the Gauhati University decided to introduce the Assamese as the medium of instruction in all colleges under its jurisdiction. The decision of Gauhati University to allow students to write their examinations in Bengali was met with strong opposition from large sections of the student community.
- Finally, the Gauhati University passed a resolution stating the following: Assamese shall be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University; English shall continue as an alternative medium of instruction till such time not exceeding ten years as may be considered necessary by the Academic Council. This decision of the Gauhati University created uproar in Cachar district with the matter reaching the Supreme Court which passed a restraining order on the decision of the Gauhati University.
- Ultimately, it was decided that separate University would be established. It would have territorial jurisdiction over the colleges in the district of Cachar. A resolution to this effect was passed in the Assam Assembly in September, 1972 thereby paving the way for establishment of a separate University for the district of Cachar.
- The Assam Movement (1979-1985) could be said to be an epoch-making event in the political history of Assam. When the revision of electoral rolls started in the wake of the by-election to the Mongoldoi parliamentary constituency, numerous complaints were registered challenging the authenticity of citizenship of a large number of persons.
- The AASU, in association with the press successfully mobilized public opinion among the people of Assam to achieve the objective that the by-election to the Mangoldoi constituency should be delayed till the names of all foreign nationals were removed from the electoral rolls. Soon, this issue no longer remained confined to the Mangoldoi constituency only, but spread to the whole of Assam. There were widespread protests resisting the alleged unlawful inclusion of the names of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls in all other constituencies.
- Significantly, a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to form a new coalition called the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam.
- In 1979, the Janata Party government in Assam collapsed leading to political instability in Assam. In November 1979, thousands of people from different parts of the state including the capital city of Guwahati courted arrest even as they launched a satyagraha or civil-disobedience to the law. President's Rule was imposed in December 1979 and it continued for one year.

- In December 1979 the leaders of the movement gave a call to boycott the elections to the Lok Sabha unless the government agreed to revise the electoral rolls and names of the foreigners were removed from the electoral rolls. Prospective candidates were urged not to contest in the election until the revision of electoral rolls was effected.
- In Barpeta, Khargeswar Talukdar, the general secretary of Barpeta AASU Unit, who was in his early twenties, died when the police attacked the protestors calling for boycott of the election. The supporters of the Assam Movement honoured Talukdar as its first Martyr. An economic blockade was launched. The supporters of the movement stopped the flow of crude oil and plywood from Assam to the rest of the country.
- On 18th January, 1980, at Duliajan, the headquarters of Oil India Limited, the district administration supported by police gave instructions for the dispersal of the picketers. When the picketers declined to leave, the police was forced to use tear gas and then fired to disperse the picketers. In this police firing, four persons were killed and many were injured. The leadership of the movement declared the deceased as martyrs of the movement. People in Assam overwhelmingly supported the oil blockade and joined in the picketing.
- On August 15, 1985, the Assam Accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the leaders of the movement. As per the terms of the Accord, all illegal immigrants who had entered Assam between 1966 and March 1971 would be disenfranchised for ten years and those who came after 1971 would be deported. Under the Accord, the Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people. The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing, etc.
- With the signing of the Accord, a new party, namely, the Asom Gana Parishad was formed. As agreed at the time of signing of the Accord, the State government formed after the election of 1983 was dismissed and the State Assembly was dissolved. In the ensuing Assembly elections held in December 1985, the Asom Gana Parishad was voted to power and a new government was formed with Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the Chief Minister.

10.6 FURTHER READING

1) Baruah, Sanjib. 2000. *India Against Itself*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2) Gohain, Hiren. 1984. *Assam: The Burning Question*. Gauhati: Spectrum Publications.
3) Goswami, Sandhya. 1997. *Language Politics in Assam*, Ajanta, New Delhi.
4) Hussain, Monirul. 1994. *The Assam Movement - Class, Ideology and Identity*. Delhi: Manak Publications.

K 10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Anandaram Dhekial Phukan

Ans to Q No 2: Assam Sahitya Sabha and Assam Jatiya Mahasabha

Ans to Q No 3: Cachar Sangram Parishad.

Ans to Q No 4: (i) The Assam Official Language Act of 1960 may be amended to do away with the provision relating to Mahkuma Parishads.

(ii) Communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi.

Ans to Q No 5: Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950

Ans to Q No 6: Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP)

Ans to Q No 7: Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act

Ans to Q No 8: (i) All illegal immigrants who had entered Assam between 1966 and March 1971 would be disenfranchised for ten years and those who came after 1971 would be deported.

(ii) The Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people.

(iii) The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing.

(iv) Building a new Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and setting up of an oil refinery in Assam were also promised by the Union Government.

M 10.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Name the organisation established in 1888 in Calcutta that played a significant role in the field of development of Assamese language and literature.

Q 2: When did the Assam Sahitya Sabha observe the state language day across Assam ?

Q 3: In which year did the Parliament enact the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act ?

Q 4: The issue of unabated infiltration came to light in the wake of by-election to which parliamentary constituency?

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

Q 1: Analyse the background against which the civil society in Assam started asserting its linguistic and cultural identity more vigorously after independence.

Q 2: Write briefly about the Shastri formula.

Q 3: Explain the role of the ASSU in the Assam Movement.

Q 4: Write briefly about the Assam Accord of 1985.

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

Q 1: Discuss the language movement in Assam.

Q 2: Discuss the Assam Movement.

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UNIT 11: INSURGENCY IN ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives
11.2 Introduction
11.3 Factors responsible for the Growth of Insurgency in Assam
11.4 Insurgent Outfits in Assam: ULFA and NDFB
11.5 Prospective Solutions to the problem of Insurgency
11.6 Let Us Sum Up
11.7 Further Reading
11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
11.9 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the meaning of insurgency
- explain the factors responsible for the growth of insurgency in Assam
- discuss two important insurgent outfits in Assam, namely, ULFA and NDFB
- discuss some of the prospective solutions to the problem of insurgency.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

Secession, autonomy, separate statehood, ST status are certain demands which have been raised by certain sections in Assam. Very often, the demand for separate homeland is often accompanied by violence. Certain demands such as those for secession and separate statehood are directed against the established authority of the state and thereby assume the form of insurgency. The late1970s saw the beginning of the rise of most of the now active insurgent groups like ULFA, NDFB, MULTA, KPLT, Adivasi National Liberation Army, KLNLF. Most of these groups accuse the central government of ignorance about the region and internal colonization aimed at extracting resources from the region. The insurgent scenario in the state is characterised by the existence of multiple separatist factions with demands ranging from regional autonomy to a separate state. These groups have made the region a hot bed of conflict and violence.

11.3MEANING OF INSURGENCY; FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF INSURGENCY IN ASSAM

11.3.1 Meaning of Insurgency

Insurgency, literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization. The insurgent groups feel that their land and territory is under "political and economic occupation". They, generally try to garner the support of the masses by putting forward

arguments about how the majoritarian state has deprived them and their region, economically, socially and politically and thereby try to justify their acts. They often indulge in violence and plays bargaining games with the authority. They operate within a definite territory and for a definite territory. So, they are not counted under terrorism. Their influence is limited to a certain community and space. Their interest also differs from outfits to outfit. They have varied objectives, role and activities. So, sometimes it becomes difficult to understand what their real motive is. Interestingly, inspite of having differences in aims and objectives, they have a common goal of fighting against the central government. Some of the common features that insurgent groups share are:

- A common ideology of blaming the government as wrong and illegitimate.
- To bring about a change in the politico -economic system.
- A popular support base.
- Dependent on one dominating and charismatic leadership.
- Mainly springs out of dissatisfaction over a long period of social injustice.

Insurgency is not a new phenomenon in India. The separatist tendencies have been visible in different parts of India since a very a long time. The nature of insurgency movement in India is largely sub regional and ethnic in nature. Separatism has been witnessed in different parts of India such as the Khalistan Movement in Punjab and Naxalite-Maoist insurgency covering many parts of central and eastern India. India's northeast India too has been witness to a prolonged period of insurgency related conflicts.

Assam is also one of the states that has been worst affected by guerilla warfare, bombings, military operations and unjustified torture of the militant groups on the local populace. Some of the important active outfits of Assam are:

- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
- National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)
- Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)
- Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)
- United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)

The idea of secessionism among the Assamese could be traced back to late 1930s when it was a Governor's province. There was a grave threat towards the community becoming a minority as a consequence of immigration. Centre's apathy towards the problems of Assam was further compounded by the historical perceptions of the state political leadership which had developed a deep sense of grievance against the official policies during colonial rule as these policies affected the territorial, cultural and developmental interests of the region. Policies of Partition of India and the Grouping Plan further enhanced misgivings among the Assamese people about their fate and future. It got aggravated with the problem of immigration and language, leaving Assam to burn during the 1980s leading to the Assam Movement. During this period the armed insurgent group, namely, the ULFA was also born.

Again, the Bodos of Assam felt that they were on the verge of losing their cultural

and ethnic identity due to the perceived cultural and linguistic domination of the Assamese speaking population. So, in an effort to restore the process of Bodo cultural and ethnic identity and address the related issue of land alienation, the Bodo movement was eventually started. The All Bodo Students' Union, Bodo People's Action Committee and Bodo Security Force demanded separate Bodo statehood called Bodoland. The BLT faction later reached an agreement with the Government of Assam and formed a separate political entity within Assam called BTAD. But the NDFB continued with their demand of separate statehood.

11.3.2 Factors Responsible for Growth of Insurgencies in Assam

Erstwhile Assam and today's NE has still a low connectivity with mainland India. During the 1970s and 1980s, it was almost disconnected with mainland India, given the connectivity bottlenecks in those days. It was only through the 23 kilometers long corridor which connected Assam with other parts of India. Assam is more bordered by international boundaries than national. When erstwhile Assam got divided into seven states, it evolved as the only gateway to connect India with NE. So, structurally, economically and socially this region felt alienated and remained economically backward for long years. Representation from this part was low at All India level jobs. Business was taken over by the 'outsiders' like Marwaris from Rajasthan and other parts. Low level of development also hampered in the agricultural sector. Once, self sufficient, Assam at one stage, had to rely on exported rice and wheat. industrialization too was in a bad shape. So, literally, the region was suffering and the blame was unequal distribution of policies and programmes. So, many disgruntled youths started to unite against the government and the result was formation of insurgent groups one after another. The general factors contributing towards growth of insurgencies in Assam are:

(i) Land Alienation: Land is the principal form of property of the agrarian society in Assam. For the rural society, about nine-tenth of them depend on agriculture and their mainstay of living is related to land. The problem started when immigration, both internal and external started and insecurity around land increased . It was two dimensional. First - Influx of "outsiders" created a fear psychosis among the mainstream Assamese population resulting in an agitation against illegal influx. Secondly, within Assam itself, the domination and so called "Assamese chauvinism" of the mainstream Assamese speaking population caused certain sections of tribal youths to agitate against the latter.

(ii) Rural indebtedness: Poverty, lack of paid work leading to financial distress in post independence India was a characteristic feature. Assam was also not free from it. The result was rural indebtedness. There was no credit flow from banks and no other such financial institutions was there to lend help. So, they had no other way out except borrowing and a chain system of borrowing emerged. As a result most of the time, the people lost their wealth (mortgaged land or jewelries) and they fell into a vicious cycle of poverty. So, lack of adequate financial support from the government led certain sections to agitate against the government.

(iii) Unemployment: Inability to utilize the potential of the youths in productive

activities, inadequate employment opportunities, low remuneration in private organizations and related problems, inappropriate skill development programmes are some factors which contributor to rising unemployment in the region leading a huge chunk of the youths towards insurgency.

(iv) **Non-exploitation of Resources for the benefit of the region:** Assam is a store house of natural resources. It has a huge potential to generate employment and wealth. There is an immense potential for hydropower production from Brahmaputra, tourism, etc which could be used scientifically for the benefit of the region. There are huge oil reserves with the potentiality of the state becoming an oil exporter. However, despite the region being endowed with such enormous resources, successive governments have failed to tap the potential of the region to the fullest. Instead, it was being increasingly felt that at best the centre had always been in interested in just extracting resources from the region, whether oil, coal, timber and minerals, rather than using them for the benefit of the people of the region. There was a strong feeling of anger against this "step motherly" treatment being meted out to the state. As such, many youths were driven to the path of insurgency and armed violence.

(v) **Support from foreign countries:** At different periods of time, some countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Pakistan were seen to be lending support to those insurgents. They gave shelter knowingly or unknowingly to the insurgent groups making the problem acute. Some of these countries even supply arms, provide funds as well as training ground for these groups which have kept them alive.

(vi) **Human Rights violations:** Due to continuous strife in the region there is deployment of counter insurgency agencies like the Army, BSF, ITBP, CRPF, etc. It has been seen that in counter-insurgency operations, there have been instances of gross violation of human rights and many youths have been subjected to physical violence during such operations. This has resulted in the growth of mistrust between the common people and the government. This situation has worked favourably for the insurgents who try to mobilize public opinion in their favour. Many victims who have suffered at the hands of the security forces have been seen to join the insurgent groups which strengthen the outfits' organization.

(vii) **Failure of the government:** The Central government in India has failed to address the problems of this region over and again. Most of the bipartite or tripartite talks with the insurgent outfits did not yield any result. The government actually failed to understand the sentiments of the people at large. The continuous failure of the government in finding lasting solutions to the conflict situation of the region has only resulted in the further surge of insurgent groups.

(viii) **Mutual understanding between vested interests and insurgents:** It is also alleged at times, that certain vested interest groups also play a role in the survival of insurgent outfits. They provide fund, as well as shelter and even

involve and uses them for political gains.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) What do you understand by Insurgency?

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Q2) Write the names of four insurgent groups active in Assam?

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11.4 INSURGENT OUTFITS IN ASSAM: ULFA AND NDFB

11.4.1 United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)

The ULFA was formed in April 1979 in Sivasagar in Assam by some youths which included Paresh Baruah, Arabinda Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia, Pradip Gogoi, Bhadreshwar Gohain and Budheswar Gogoi. Its main aim is secession from India by way of engaging in an armed struggle to form a sovereign socialist Assam. During the 1990s, the ULFA, in its early years, was successful in mobilizing large sections of the people of Assam on the issue of perceived "colonial" mode of exploitation of the resources of the region by the centre.

- **Main demands:**
  - (i) Rights of the people of Assam to exercise control over their own land and resources.
  - (ii) Protection and conservation of the ethnic people and their rights (constitutional and political rights) as well their culture and tradition.
  - (iii) Rights over economic resources including oil and to stop further exploitation
  - (iv) Provide social security through upgradation in education, health and other necessary sectors.
  - (v) Structural development through building of bridges, proper connectivity, upgraded transport and communication as well as facilitation of capital for industrialization.
  - (vi) Improved relation with neighbouring countries.

ULFA finished its first recruitment by 1984 and it started training and arm procurement process from groups like Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and NSCN. They learned the

rudiment of insurgent tactics from KIA. They used the Indo-Burma forest as their training base camps. It was also found that they had good relations with the Royal Bhutan Army for steady support of rations and logistics. They were seen to be involved in money laundering and kidnapping as their sources of income. In a very short period of time, they grew as one of the most powerful insurgent groups in South Asia with strong mass support. Probably, it was the only insurgent group to have such an immense popularity. It was because they had a very clear ideology in the first instance and many people of the region looked upon them as "saviors".

By 1990s, it started indulging in various violent activities and the Government of India classified it as a terrorist organization and banned it under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 1990. There were a number of military operations carried out by the Government of India like Operation Bajrang in 1990, Operation Rhino in 1991, Operation All Clear in 2003 and Operation Rhino 2 by the Indian Army. By 2011, ULFA leaders led by ULFA 'vice chairman' Pradip Gogoi, along with 'foreign secretary" Sashadhar Choudhury and "central publicity secretary", Mithinga Daimary announced that the outfit's central executive council would sit for talks with the Central Government without precondition. Interestingly, this was not supported by ULFA's "commander-in-chief" Paresh Baruah who declared the general council itself as unconstitutional. Hence, a formal spilt in ULFA occurred and it split into ULFA- Anti Talks Faction (ULFA-ATF) led by Paresh Baruah and ULFA Pro-Talks Faction (ULFA-PTF) led by Arabinda Rajkhowa.

In recent times, the outfit has been weakened considerably. Many recruiters have surrendered and returned along with their leaders, powerful members like Anup Chetia have been arrested and the flow of youth to the organization has also decreased. The popular mass support that the organization used to enjoy earlier has declined as people got fed up with the violent path that the outfit adopted. In the contemporary period, the trend is more towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on evolving political solution rather than a military one.

11.4.2 National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)

In 1986, October 3, Ranjan Daimary formed an armed outfit called Bodo Security Force (BdSF) in Odla Kashibari Village near Udalguri, to preserve the identity and security of the Bodo people living in Assam and demanded formation of a separate state of Bodoland within India. This organization was rechristened as NDFB on November 25, 1994 following the rejection of the Bodo Accord signed between the Government of India and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU)-Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC). With the rechristening of BdSF as NDFB, the organization started Guerrilla Warfare. The motive of NDFB is establishment of sovereign Bodoland. The ideology of the group is ethnic nationalism, Marxism, Socialism and Democracy. It shows its allegiance to UNLFW- a conglomeration of several separatist outfits from the North East region. The NDFB has two groups namely National Council (political wing) and Bodoland Army (armed wing). After the Operation All Clear launched by the Indian Army in 2003, the NDFB decided to go for ceasefire and agreed to sit for talks with the government in 2004. The NDFB subsequently split into two

factions namely, NDFB - Progressive and the faction led by Ranjan Daimary alias D R Nabla. It had its headquarters in Myanmar and it is currently operating in the areas in the north and north west of Brahmaputra(Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Darrang, Barpeta, Dhubri, Nalbari and Sonitpur districts) in Assam and in the Garo Hills in Meghalaya. The Myanmar Army, of late, has launched offensive operations against the Indian insurgent groups operating out of Myanmar, including ULFA and NDFB.

The original motive of NDFB has been diluted over time and it has coordinated efforts with the ULFA. Sometime in 1999, the ULFA and NDFB formed a coordination committee for launching a united struggle. NDFB also works with NSCN (IM). Somewhere down the line, the ideology followed by NDFB started to mismatch with that of its counterpart , Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and civil society organizations including All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and Bodo Sahitya Sabha. The violence they have indulged themselves in is not supported by the majority of the Bodo population as well as the civil society organizations. They are seen to have indulged themselves in violence from time to time. Mention may be made of 1998 santhal killings in Gossaigaon, landmine attack on Security Forces Personnel in Kamrup, bombing of a passenger train near Tezpur, serial blasts in Guwahati city, etc. In 2012, NDFB of Nabla faction split further, leading to the formation of another new faction, which was led by a non-Bodo I K Songbijit.

- **Main Demands:**
  - (i) Securing a sovereign Bodoland.
  - (ii) To liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.
  - (iii) To uphold integrity of Bodoland through establishment of a democratic socialist society and to promote liberty, equality and fraternity.
  - (iv) To liberate the Bodo community from exploitation of other communities in Assam and uphold their ethnic identity and cultural traditions.
  - (v) Introduction of the Roman script for Bodo Language.
  - (vi) Preservation of Tribal Belts and Blocks for security against illegal immigrants.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) The ULFA was formed in April 1979. (True/False)

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Q4) Mention any two demands of the NDFB ?

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11.5 PROSPECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF INSURGENCY

Assam, a serene land of peace has been living in a fear psychosis for a number of decades. It has been reeling under insecurity and violence. Bandhs and strikes have become a way of life. In April, 2000, the then Union Minister for Home Affairs, L.K.Advani expressed

the government's readiness to enter into a dialogue process with the NDFB and ULFA , if they were interested to give up violence and agreed to negotiations within the framework of Indian Constitution. It ended before starting and the issue remained as it was. Regarding ULFA as stated earlier peace talks bifurcated the organization. Same has happened with NDFB. So, plausible solution is not possible unless the organizations compromised with their motive and ideology. Yet, some of the prospective solutions may work out to a large extent.

- Rapid economic development should be brought as soon as possible by mobilising the resources available.
- Governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should reach the needy instead of the elite.
- Counter-insurgency programmes and use of force should be avoided and should be taken only as a last resort.
- The armed groups must demand reasonable demands as seeking sovereignty is unreasonable.
- For proper political settlement of the problems the government should be transparent and avoid creation of tensions.
- The state police and central forces should equally cooperate with one another in matters of intelligence sharing, investigation and operations against militants so that the information received is credible and fool proof so that it does not create confusion among the population and the insurgent groups.
- Moreover, the operating Autonomous Councils should be empowered.
- Work permit to the immigrant workers can be given.
- Emphasizing the importance of the role of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and North Eastern Council (NEC) as agencies for effective implementation of development policies.
- Most importantly, the centre must remain mindful of the cultural psyche of the people of the region and try to fulfil their socio-cultural aspirations.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5) Mention any two solutions to the problem of insurgency in Assam?

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

- Insurgency, literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization.

- Insurgency is not a new phenomenon in India. The separatist tendencies have been visible in different parts of India since a very a long time. Separatism has been witnessed in different parts of India such as the Khalistan Movement in Punjab and Naxalite-Maoist insurgency covering many parts of central and eastern India. India's northeast India too has been witness to a prolonged period of insurgency related conflicts.
- Assam is also one of the states that has been worst affected by guerilla warfare, bombings, military operations and unjustified torture of the militant groups on the local populace.
- The idea of secessionism among the Assamese could be traced back to late 1930s when it was a Governor's province. There was a grave threat towards the community becoming a minority as a consequence of immigration. Centre's apathy towards the problems of Assam was further compounded by the historical perceptions of the state political leadership which had developed a deep sense of grievance against the official policies during colonial rule as these policies affected the territorial, cultural and developmental interests of the region.
- Policies of Partition of India and the Grouping Plan further enhanced misgivings among the Assamese people about their fate and future. It got aggravated with the problem of immigration and language, leaving Assam to burn during the 1980s leading to the Assam Movement. During this period the armed insurgent group, namely, the ULFA was also born.
- Again, the Bodos of Assam felt that they were on the verge of losing their cultural and ethnic identity due to the perceived cultural and linguistic domination of the Assamese speaking population. So, in an effort to restore the process of Bodo cultural and ethnic identity and address the related issue of land alienation, the Bodo movement was eventually started.
- The All Bodo Students' Union, Bodo People's Action Committee and Bodo Security Force (which later split into BLT and NDFB) demanded separate Bodo statehood called Bodoland. The BLT faction later reached an agreement with the Government of Assam and formed a separate political entity within Assam called BTAD. But the NDFB continued with their demand of separate statehood.
- Some of the general factors contributing towards growth of insurgencies in Assam are Land Alienation, Rural indebtedness, Unemployment, Non-exploitation of Resources for the benefit of the region, etc.
- The ULFA was formed in April 1979 in Sivasagar in Assam by some youths. Some of the main demands of the ULFA include rights of the people of Assam to exercise control over their own land and resources, protection and conservation of the ethnic people and their rights (constitutional and political rights) as well their culture and tradition, etc.
- A formal spilt in ULFA occurred and it split into ULFA- Anti Talks Faction (ULFA-ATF) led by Paresh Baruah and ULFA Pro-Talks Faction (ULFA-PTF) led by Arabinda

Rajkhowa.

- In 1986, October 3, an armed outfit called Bodo Security Force (BdSF) was formed in Odla Kashibari Village near Udalguri. This organization was rechristened as NDFB on November 25, 1994. Some of the demands of the NDFB include securing a sovereign Bodoland, to liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.
- The NDFB subsequently split into two factions namely, NDFB - Progressive and the faction led by Ranjan Daimary alias D R Nabla. In 2012, NDFB of Nabla faction split further, leading to the formation of another new faction, which was led by a non-Bodo I K Songbijit.
- Some of the prospective solutions to insurgency may be- rapid economic development of the region by mobilising the resources available; governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should be made to reach the needy instead of the elite; counter-insurgency programmes and use of force should be avoided and should be taken only as a last resort; The armed groups must demand reasonable demands as seeking sovereignty is unreasonable; etc.

11.7 FURTHER READING

1) Baruah, Sanjib. (2001). *India Against Itself*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2) Bhattacharjee. J.B. (2007). *Roots of Insurgency in Northeast India*. New Delhi : Akansha Pulishing House.

11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Insurgency, literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization. The insurgent groups feel that their land and territory is under "political and economic occupation". They, generally try to garner the support of the masses by putting forward arguments about how the majoritarian state has deprived them and their region, economically, socially and politically and thereby try to justify their acts. They often indulge in violence and plays bargaining games with the authority. They operate within a definite territory and for a definite territory.

Ans to Q No 2: (i) Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)

(ii) United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)

Ans to Q No 3: True

Ans to Q No 4: (i) Securing a sovereign Bodoland.

(ii) To liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.

Ans to Q No 5: (i) Rapid economic development should be brought as soon as possible by mobilising the resources available.

(ii) Governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should reach the needy instead of the elite.

11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Mention any two factors responsible for the growth of insurgencies in Assam.

Q 2: Operation All Clear was launched by the Indian Army in which year?

Q 3: In which year was the ULFA was formed ?

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

Q 1: Explain the meaning of insurgency.

Q 2: Explain any four common features that insurgent groups share.

Q 3: Write a short note on ULFA or NDFB

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

Q 1: Explain any five factors responsible for growth of insurgencies in Assam.

Q 2: Explain the prospective solutions to the problem of insurgency.

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UNIT 12: SIXTH SCHEDULE AND MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY IN THE HILLS

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Constitutional Provisions under the Sixth Schedule
12.4 Movement for Autonomy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills
12.5 Let Us Sum Up
12.6 Further Reading
12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.8 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the historical background of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution
- explain the features of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- discuss the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam
- discuss the movement for autonomy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills

12.2 INTRODUCTION

India attained independence in 1947 and before India attained independence the British Government had identified the tribal areas and gave assurances for their protection and also development. However, they took no effective measures to provide political autonomy to the tribes. There emerged various demands for autonomy and better status from the tribes of the hill areas of Assam within the framework of the Constitution of India after independence. Then the Constitution of India made special provisions through the Sixth Schedule for local self-government in the hill areas inhabited by tribal people in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

The origin of the Sixth Schedule goes back to the very constitution of Assam as a separate province of British India in 1874. Some parts of the province described as 'backward tracts' were to be administered under the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. The need for a separate system of local administration was felt as the people of those areas have a distinct culture which they wanted to maintain and keep intact. The people of these areas wanted to maintain their authority over their land, forests, streams and rivers and safeguard their customs and traditions, dress, food habits and also preserve their tribal social norms and their own system of social justice.

However, because of various historical reasons, the people of these areas remained backward both economically and educationally. They have a rich heritage which needed to be protected from being overrun by people from the plains. It was felt that the system of local administration prescribed for the other areas of the country would not be suitable for

the hill areas of the North East and hence a simpler form of administrative arrangement has been provided through the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which provides special constitutional safeguards to the hill areas of the north east.

12.3 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS UNDER THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

In order to ensure the participation of the people of the 'backward tracts' and to safeguard tribal interests, the interim Government of India appointed a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi. This Committee was known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee. The Bordoloi Committee made an intensive study of the various demands and aspirations of the hill tribes and recommended the introduction of a simple and inexpensive administrative set-up for administration of tribal areas to be called District Councils. The recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee were incorporated into Article 244(2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. This scheme sought to build up autonomous administration (District Councils and Regional Councils) in the hill areas of Assam which included at that time the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District, Garo Hills District, Lushai Hills District, Naga Hills District, North Cachar Hills District and Mikir Hills District.

- **Features of the Sixth Schedule**

1. The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.
2. The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture. Though the tribal people are very keen about the preservation of their own culture, tradition and social system and institutions and are very conscious of their authority over their land, forest, streams and rivers yet they did not have enough means to preserve their own identity. The rich heritage of the indigeneous people needs to be protected and developed. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule is to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administrative set up of their own which would safeguard their customs, tradition social norms and way of life.
3. At present, there are nine autonomous hill tribal districts in these four states of the north east. They are the North Cachar Hills District (Assam), the Karbi Anglong District (Assam), the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (Assam), the Khasi Hills District (Meghalaya), the Garo Hills District (Meghalaya), the Jaintia Hills District (Meghalaya), Tripura Tribal Areas District (Tripura), the Chakma District (Mizoram), the Mara District (Mizoram) and the Lai District (Mizoram).
4. The Sixth Schedule along with the Fifth Schedule applicable to the Scheduled

areas and the Scheduled Tribes outside the northeastern region were described by the former Chief Justice of India, late Mohammed Hidayatullah as 'miniature constitutions for certain scheduled areas of India' which implies that the Sixth Schedule is a little Constitution within the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule provides every detail about the rules for establishment, determination of the autonomous districts and autonomous regions, composition powers and functions of the District Council or Regional Councils. The Autonomous District Council is a body which is created by the Parliament. The Autonomous District Council may act independently of the State Legislature.

5. The Sixth Schedule provides for constitutional bodies for administration of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Megahalya , Tripura and Mozoram. It provides that certain designated tribal areas of these states will constitute autonomous districts and autonomous regions. Again, if there are different Scheduled Tribes in an autonomous district, the Governor may, by public notification, divide the area or areas inhabited by them into autonomous regions. The areas of the autonomous districts are determined by the State Governor. The Sixth Schedule empowers the Governor of a State to create a new autonomous district, increase or diminish the area of any existing District Council, unite two or more autonomous districts or parts thereof so as to form one autonomous district, define the boundaries of any district and alter the name of any autonomous district. The administrative areas of the District Councils however, may differ from place to place. For instance, the District Councils in Assam and Meghalaya have been constituted at the district level whereas in Mizoram, the District Councils have been created at both the district and sub-divisional levels.

6. According to the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, the District Councils shall consist of thirty members, 26 are elected from the single member constituencies on the basis of adult franchise and not more than four persons are nominated by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Executive Member of the Council for a term of five years. There will be a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman in each District Council who are elected by the elected members of the District Councils. Functionally, the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman act like the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of a legislature. The District Councils are empowered to make laws for allotment, occupation, use of land; management of unreserved forests, use of water courses and canals for agriculture purpose, regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment of village councils and town committees, administration of village policy, public health and sanitation, appointment and succession of chiefs. Laws made by the District Council are published in the official gazette of the concerned state.

   Paragraph 4 of the Sixth Schedule entitles the District Council to constitute Village and District Council Courts in the autonomous areas to adjudicate or try cases of customary laws in which both the parties are tribals. No other court except the High Court and the Supreme Court of India have jurisdiction over suits and cases

decided by the Council Courts. District council has the powers to collect land revenues and levy and collect various taxes. In addition to these sources of revenue, grants-in-aid, loans and advances etc. from the state government constitute other sources of income of the Councils. Like the local self government institutions of the non-tribal areas (panchayats), the district councils also constitute a part of the third stratum of Indian administration.

7. The Sixth Schedule provides for an Executive Committee (EC) of the District Council to carry on its executive functions. The EC consists of the Chief Executive Member, and other Executive Members. It is just on the lines of a cabinet system in parliamentary democracy. The District Council is like a miniature government at the district level. It is clear from the provisions of the Sixth Schedule that the civil administration of the autonomous districts is carried on by two authorities viz. Deputy Commissioner representing the state Government and the Executive Committee of the District Councils. The Sixth Schedule has thus created two sets of authorities.
8. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule can be amended only by the Parliament like any other part of the constitution. But it must mentioned here that the amendments of some parts of the Sixth Schedule are not regarded as amendments to the Constitution under Article 368.

➢ **Establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam**

Under the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Government of Assam framed the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952 for the autonomous region in the Lushai Hills District. Accordingly, the District Councils and the Regional Councils were constituted in 1952 and 1953 respectively. The two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar were granted autonomy as far back as in 1952 under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution to bring economic, educational and linguistic aspirations, preservation of land rights, ethnic identity of the respective tribes and also for speeding up infrastructure development in the districts.

The plain tribes of Assam in the last few decades have also become organized and have demanded constitutional safeguard and also special administrative arrangement for their respective community in the pattern of hill administration in Assam.

In 2003 the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) comprising four plains districts were also granted autonomy under the Sixth Schedule. Thus, the Sixth Schedule gradually extended to the plain tribal areas of Assam.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Mention any two features of the Sixth Schedule.

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Q2) The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. (True/False).

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12.4 MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY IN KARBI ANGLONG AND NORTH CACHAR HILLS

Since independence, Assam which is a land of diverse ethnic communities, has witnessed a number of identity movements , both peaceful and violent which are centred around political demands for statehood. Assam has experienced reorganizations several times leading to the drastic reduction in size of the state. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India provides for the formation of Autonomous Councils in the hill areas of Assam. But two hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills since the 1960s have been citing the inadequacies of the Autonomous Councils under the Sixth Schedule. In fact, in recent times, Karbi-Dimasa Autonomy movement has undergone a major change with the movement giving rise to demand for exclusive autonomous homeland on ethnic lines.

The demand of the hill people of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hill districts for an autonomous state in Assam is rooted in the long history of similar movements in the north-east which have led first to the separate state of Nagaland, then Mizoram and later Meghalaya. In the recent past, Assam has witnessed a series of ethnic flare ups with a number of ethnic groups like the Rabhas, the Tiwas, the Misings, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Koch Rajbonghsis, the Boro, the Dimasas and the Karbis intensifying their demands for either greater autonomy or separate statehood based on their ethnic identities. Tracing the genesis of the district of Karbi Anglong, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District came into being in November, 1951. The new district was formally created with some parts of the districts of Sivasagar (now Golaghat), Nagaon, Cachar and United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of the present State of Meghalaya. Subsequently, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was bifurcated into two separate districts, namely, the Mikir Hills district and North Cachar Hills district in the year 1970. The Mikir Hills district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District" with effect from October 14, 1976. Thus, Karbi Anglong came into being as a full-fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its head quarters at Diphu. Likewise, North Cachar hills also emerged as a full-fledged district with its headquarters in Halflong. Presently, the North Cachar Hills district has been renamed as Dima Hasao district.

Both districts enjoy autonomy as per the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Karbis and the Dimasas occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam.

In the mid 1950s, demands were made for the creation of a separate hill state in the form of the Hill State Movement. Karbi Anglong did not participate actively in the Hill State Movement being led by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

In 1970 when Meghalaya was formed, the two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar were given the option to join the new autonomous state, but however on the

contrary, they decided to remain in Assam. However, the two hill districts all along desired greater devolution of powers.

The question of ethnic identity assertion of the Karbis again found prominence in the politics of the district in the mid-1980s. Some of the ultra nationalist policies followed by the Asssam government were also responsible for creating doubts among the tribal population in different parts of Assam including Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (presently Dima Hasao). There are mainly two factors are: i) Introduction of Assamese as a compulsory 'Third Language' under the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) as per a circular issued in 1986. ii) Introduction of new Language Policy making mandatory the knowledge of Assamese for all recruitment to government services. The two Hill Districts considered these moves of the then government as the violation of Bimala Prasad Chaliha's commitment of not making the knowledge of Assamese compulsory for recruitment to government services. Against this background, an umbrella organization called-Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was constituted to safeguard the language, culture and tradition of the hill people of both North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong. The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills under Article 244-A of the Indian Constitution. The Article 244-A deals with the formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both.

Accordingly, the struggle for an autonomous State within the State of Assam was launched in pursuance of Art.244-A of the Indian Constitution as a means of securing administrative and political autonomy to the fullest extent possible. A series of bandhs were organized by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee over a period of time. It observed a Karbi Anglong State demand day on 17 June, 1986. The ASDC claimed to have observed a parallel Independence Day Programme on 15 August, 1986 to fulfil the demand for the creation of an autonomous state. Protest marches, prayer meetings, etc., were organized in different parts of the district even as demands were raised for constituting an Autonomous State within Assam under Article 244-A of the Constitution comprising the two hill districts.

In an effort to prevent further reorganization and division of the State of Assam while at the same finding a solution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995, in the presence of the Union Home Minister. This led to the enhancement of the powers and functions of the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong in terms of as many as thirty subjects/departments. Henceforth, the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong was renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

Accordingly, under the Memorandum of Understanding, 1995, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council was entrusted functions in relation to thirty subjects/departments to which the executive powers of the State of Assam extended. However, even in the aftermath of the MoU of 1995, the demand for an autonomous or separate state for the Karbis has

not come to a logical end as the political struggle for fulfilment of the ethnic aspirations of the Karbis is still alive. It may be mentioned here that a new district, namely, the West Karbi Anglong district was created out of the existing Karbi Anglong district of Assam in 2015 with headquarters in Hamren. The district comes under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and is administered according to the provisions of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3) The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills under which Article of the Indian Constitution?

.....

Q4) A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995. (True/False)

.....

12.5 LET US SUM UP

- In order to ensure the participation of the people of the 'backward tracts' and to safeguard tribal interests, the interim Government of India appointed a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi. This Committee was known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee.
- The Bordoloi Committee made an intensive study of the various demands and aspirations of the hill tribes and recommended the introduction of a simple and inexpensive administrative set-up for administration of tribal areas to be called District Councils.
- The recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee were incorporated into Article 244 (2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. This scheme sought to build up autonomous administration (District Councils and Regional Councils) in the hill areas of Assam.
- The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.
- The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture.
- At present, there are nine autonomous hill tribal districts in these four states of the north east. They are the North Cachar Hills District (Assam), the Karbi Anglong District (Assam), the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (Assam), the Khasi Hills District

(Meghalaya), the Garo Hills District (Meghalaya), the Jaintia Hills District (Meghalaya), Tripura Tribal Areas District (Tripura), the Chakma District (Mizoram), the Mara District (Mizoram) and the Lai District (Mizoram).

- The Sixth Schedule provides for constitutional bodies for administration of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Megahalya, Tripura and Mozoram. It provides that certain designated tribal areas of these states will constitute autonomous districts and autonomous regions.
- The Sixth Schedule provides for an Executive Committee (EC) of the District Council to carry on its executive functions. The EC consists of the Chief Executive Member, and other Executive Members. It is just on the lines of a cabinet system in parliamentary democracy.
- Under the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Government of Assam framed the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952 for the autonomous region in the Lushai Hills District. Accordingly, the District Councils and the Regional Councils were constituted in 1952 and 1953 respectively.
- Since independence, Assam which is a land of diverse ethnic communities, has witnessed a number of identity movements, both peaceful and violent which are centred around political demands for statehood. Assam has experienced reorganizations several times leading to the drastic reduction in size of the state.
- The demand of the hill people of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hill districts for an autonomous state in Assam is rooted in the long history of similar movements in the north-east which have led first to the separate state of Nagaland, then Mizoram and later Meghalaya.
- Tracing the genesis of the district of Karbi Anglong, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District came into being in November, 1951. The new district was formally created with some parts of the districts of Sivasagar (now Golaghat), Nagaon, Cachar and United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of the present State of Meghalaya. Subsequently, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was bifurcated into two separate districts, namely, the Mikir Hills district and North Cachar Hills district in the year 1970.
- The Mikir Hills district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District" with effect from October 14, 1976. Thus, Karbi Anglong came into being as a full-fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its head quarters at Diphu. Likewise, North Cachar hills also emerged as a full-fledged district with its headquarters in Halflong. Presently, the North Cachar Hills district has been renamed as Dima Hasao district.
- Both districts enjoys autonomy as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Karbis and the Dimasas occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam.
- In the mid 1950s, demands were made for the creation of a separate hill state in the form of the Hill State Movement. Karbi Anglong did not participate actively in the Hill State Movement being led by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

- The question of ethnic identity assertion of the Karbis again found prominence in the politics of the district in the mid-1980s. Some of the ultra nationalist policies followed by the Asssam government were also responsible for creating doubts among the tribal population in different parts of Assam including Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (presently Dima Hasao).
- Against this background, an umbrella organization called-Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was constituted to safeguard the language, culture and tradition of the hill people of both North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong.
- The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills under Article 244-A of the Indian Constitution. The Article 244-A deals with the formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both.
- Accordingly, the struggle for an autonomous State within the State of Assam was launched in pursuance of Art.244-A of the Indian Constitution as a means of securing administrative and political autonomy to the fullest extent possible. A series of bandhs were organized by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee over a period of time. It observed a Karbi Anglong State demand day on 17 June, 1986.
- The ASDC claimed to have observed a parallel Independence Day Programme on 15 August, 1986 to fulfil the demand for the creation of an autonomous state. Protest marches, prayer meetings, etc., were organized in different parts of the district even as demands were raised for constituting an Autonomous State within Assam under Article 244-A of the Constitution comprising the two hill districts.
- In an effort to prevent further reorganization and division of the State of Assam while at the same finding a solution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995, in the presence of the Union Home Minister.
- This led to the enhancement of the powers and functions of the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong in terms of as many as thirty subjects/departments. Henceforth, the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong was renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.
- Accordingly, under the Memorandum of Understanding, 1995, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council was entrusted functions in relation to thirty subjects/departments to which the executive powers of the State of Assam extended.

12.6 FURTHER READING

1) Konwar, Narayan. *Society and Politics In Assam*. Guwahati : Book Land.

2) Sengupta, Sarthar(ed.). *Tribal Studies in North East India*. New Delhi : Mittal Publications.

3) Kumar. B.B.(ed.). *Problems of Ethnicity in North East India*. New Delhi. Concept Publishing Company

K 12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: (a) The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.

(b) The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture. Though the tribal people are very keen about the preservation of their own culture, tradition and social system and institutions and are very conscious of their authority over their land, forest, streams and rivers yet they did not have enough means to preserve their own identity. The rich heritage of the indigeneous people needs to be protected and developed. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule is to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administrative set up of their own which would safeguard their customs, tradition social norms and way of life.

Ans to Q No 2: True

Ans to Q No 3: Article 244-A

Ans to Q No 4: True

M 12.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Name the states covered under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Q 2: The recommendations of the ……Committee were incorporated into the Article 244 (2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. (Fill in the Blank)

Q 3: Name the Hill Tribes under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in Assam.

Q 4: In which year BTAD was granted autonomy?

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

Q 1: Write briefly about the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee.

Q 2: Write briefly about the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam.

C. Long Questions: (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss any six features of the Sixth Schedule.

Q 2: Discuss the autonomy movement in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Districts.

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UNIT 13: MOVEMENT FOR BODOLAND

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Movement for Bodoland
  13.3.1 Background of the Movement for Bodoland
  13.3.2 The Demand for Bodoland
  13.3.3 Bodo Accord and the establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council
13.4 Let Us Sum Up
13.5 Further Reading
13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.7 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the issue of assertion of the Bodo ethnic identity
- discuss the background of the movement for Bodoland with reference to the Roman Script movement and the demand for Udayachal
- describe the demand for Bodoland and the events surrounding the movement for Bodoland
- discuss the Memorandum of Settlement and establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

The issue of ethnic self-consciousness manifested in terms of assertion based on one's tribe, community and language often with the demand for political autonomy has been an important feature of politics of the North-Eastern region in the contemporary period. Such sentiments are often expressed in terms of organised movements. In this unit we shall attempt to learn about the ethnic identity based movement of the Bodo people which has been an important factor in the political history of Assam.

13.3 MOVEMENT FOR BODOLAND

13.3.1 Background of the Movement for Bodoland

The collective mobilisation of the Bodo community for securing political autonomy and the demand for a separate state of Bodoland within the Indian union has been a major factor in the post-independent political history of Assam. Infact, the socio-political movement for Bodoland marks a new chapter in the history of social movements in the country. Let us now examine the background of the movement for Bodoland.

➢ Roman Script Movement

In the initial period, assertion of the Bodo identity was associated with the language issue. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed at Basugoan, near Kokrajhar in 1952. Immediately after its inaugural meeting, the BSS presented a memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Bishnu Ram Medhi, seeking Bodo as the medium of instruction in Bodo areas. Subsequently, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) organized a massive demonstration in Kokrajhar making the same demand. In 1963, the Assam Government introduced the Bodo language in the Bodo Kachari belts up to class III. In 1966, although the Assam Government recognized the Bodo language up to the secondary stage of education in Assam, it did not take appropriate steps to implement this scheme. This led to wide-spread dissatisfaction and the BSS took to agitation once again. It was sorted out later when the State Government and the BSS signed an accord providing for a time-bound programme for introduction of the Bodo medium. The enactment of the Assam Official Languages Act (1960), making Assamese the sole official language of the State and the demand for making Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the state's universities further agitated the Bodo leaders who opposed this move. A Satyagraha campaign was launched. Many Bodo leaders were arrested under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). The movement for Bodo autonomy took a new turn by 1974 when the Udayachal demand was pushed into the background and the Bodos wanted the introduction of Roman script for their language (Roman had been used for the Bodo as far back as in 1886). Finally, at the request of the Union government, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha agreed to accept the Devanagri script in April 1975. Subsequently, the Assam Government granted the Bodo language the status of an associate official language in the Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division.

➢ Demand for Udayachal

An important development in the political history of Assam was the demand for Udayachal. The younger generation of tribal activists formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) at Kokrajhar on February 27, 1967, under the presidentship of Modoram Brahma. It demanded a political unit in the entire northern tract of Assam for the plains tribal population of Assam, in response to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's proposal of January 13, 1967 to reorganize Assam on a federal basis. Influenced by the formation of the All Parties Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) by the leaders of the hill tribes demanding separation from Assam, the leaders of the plains tribes in Assam demanded an autonomous region within Assam, with safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, to be known as Udayachal, so that the tribal people could protect their land adequately and conserve their traditional culture. This stage of the movement was marked by non-violent agitation for full autonomy. The supporters of the movement boycotted the bye-election to the Lok Sabha seat from the Kokrajhar constituency during July 1967 and May 1968 .The movement for Udayachal stirred the political orientation of the younger generation of the Bodo population and made them more conscious of their ethnic identity.

13.3.2 The Demand for Bodoland

In the late nineteen seventies, the PTCA leaders downgraded their earlier demand for a Union Territory to that for an Autonomous Region, leading to a split in the party, with the PTCA (Progressive) headed by Binoy Khungur Basumatary reviving the demand for separation from Assam. Meanwhile, since 1979, the Bodos had become actively involved in the Assam Movement. Under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma, the Bodos actively participated in the Assam Movement. However, when the AGP government came to power in the State after the agitation, the Bodo leaders including Upendranath Brahma were denied berths in the cabinet. This did not go down well with the Bodo community. At the same time, the success of the leaders of the Assam Movement in mobilising the people of the state caught the attention of the Bodos, particularly the youth. The accession of Upendranath Brahma to the presidentship of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) marked the beginning of a new era in the political history of the Bodos. By early 1987, the ABSU completed its preparations for launching of a mass movement demanding a separate state for the Bodos to be known as the Bodoland. On March 2, 1987, the ABSU, under the presidentship of Upendranath Brahma formally declared the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland outside Assam on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. The ABSU created a political organization, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), to spearhead the movement. The ABSU/ BPAC movement began with the slogan "Divide Assam 50-50". The focus on ethnic identity was sharper this time than in the previous Udayachal movement of the seventies, which had demanded a homeland for all the plains tribes in Assam. The Bodoland movement attempted to forge a "larger Bodo nationality" covering all the plains tribes of Assam including those of non-Bodo origin.

The ABSU demanded the creation of a separate state in the north bank of the Brahmaputra for the plains tribals of Assam. It also demanded creation of regional Councils for non-Karbi tribes in Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council. Two powerful student bodies, the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) and the All Cachar Karimganj Students Association extended their moral support to the ABSU movement. Several organizations such as the Assam Tea Tribes Students Association and the Rabha Students' Association condemned the police torture on Bodo people. Demonstrations, protests, strikes, road blockades etc., were staged by ABSU and other organisations. The ABSU organised mass hunger strikes in front of district and sub-divisional offices including those of the DCs, SDOs and SDCs. Subsequently, the ABSU held discussions with the Assam Government. After discussions with the Chief Minister of Assam, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the ABSU agreed to tone down its demands and decided to concentrate, on three demands. Among the three demands, the main demand was creation of a separate state, namely, Bodoland for the plains tribal communities on the north bank of the Brahmaputra with the river serving as the natural boundary.

The call for a separate state of Bodoland found favour with many sections of the Bodo community in the Bodo dominated areas of Assam. Meanwhile, after the initial phase,

the Bodo Movement came to be marked by sporadic incidents of violence. At the same time, the formation of the Bodo Security Force (BdSF) which is now known as the National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFB) marked a new chapter in the movement as it launched a militant movement running parallel to political efforts that had already begun to take root.

After several years of violent agitations, the Government of India and the Government of Assam negotiated an accord with some major Bodo groups. The bipartite Bodo Accord of February 20, 1993 provided for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the state of Assam with the council enjoying maximum autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. It was proposed that the BAC would comprise the contiguous geographical areas between Sankosh and Mazbat/Pasnoi river. The accord could not work because some of its essential provisions were not implemented and severe infighting among the Bodo factions and their leaderships made it impossible to achieve stability within the BAC. During the five years since the accord was signed, no elections were held for the Bodoland Autonomous Council (the initial operation period of the council ran out long ago). No proper boundary was drawn, marking the autonomous tribal region (comprising the contiguous geographical areas between the rivers Sankosh and Mazbat). As a result, the territorial jurisdiction of the BAC remained uncertain. By 1996, Bodo leaders almost abandoned the idea of BAC and instead reverted to the idea of a separate Bodoland.

Meanwhile, subsequent to the Accord, a section of the Bodo youths declined to lay down arms as they disapproved of the scheme laid down by the Accord with the result that they formed the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force or BLTF under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma to continue to fight for greater political autonomy. The militant outfits, namely, the BdSF and the BLTF differed in terms of the grievances and demands of the Bodo community and the course of action to be adopted to achieve the objective of a homeland for the Bodo community. While the BLTF demanded a separate state of Bodoland to be carved out of the state of Assam, the BdSF demanded sovereignty by way of secession from India. Subsequently, the struggle was beginning to turn aggressively exclusivist in nature. The Bodoland Accord soon collapsed and violence erupted in Bodo areas. The scale of violence escalated as the movement progressed. Attacks on school buildings, markets, public buildings and bridges paralysed normal life in the affected area. Bodo armed militants began a campaign of terror in the proposed Bodoland area through targeted violence, extortions, kidnappings, etc. They attacked school buildings, bazaars, public buildings, railway stations, roads, bridges etc., to pressurise the central as well as state governments. Many innocent lives were lost in bomb attacks on buses, markets and public places. Large-scale attacks were carried out against the Adivasi community in May 1996, displacing over one lakh people in the Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts. It may be noted here that the Adivasis had been cohabiting with the Bodos for centuries together since the time they were brought by the British from parts of central and eastern India to work in the tea plantations of Assam. A second wave of attacks in May 1998 resulted in further displacement of people. The spate of violence led to the displacement of thousands of people. Besides, there were also instances of fratricidal clashes between the Bodo militant groups themselves. As a result many Bodo people also lost their lives and were

displaced in the cycle of violence and counter-violence. In fact, certain sections of the Adivasi and other non-Bodo communities also began to arm themselves in order to fight back. This resulted in significant displacement of the Bodo population from areas where they were in a minority. In the process, the whole atmosphere deteriorated with regard to inter-personal and inter-community relationships. Against this background, the non-Bodo communities started perceiving the ABSU led movement as turning one sided and exclusivist in nature which led to a decline of support on the part of non-Bodo organisations for the Bodoland movement. The large-scale violence took a heavy toll not only in terms of killings, massacres, destruction of public and private property and ***internal displacement*** but also on other aspects of public life. The Union Government decided to hold discussions with militant outfits (BLTF and NDFB). Both the militant outfits were involved in the dialogue process. The centre first entered into a dialogue with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force which was waging an armed struggle demanding a separate state of Bodoland. The discussion started in the year 2000 and till November 2001 several rounds of tripartite talks were held among the Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo Liberation Tigers Force. The BLTF demanded that the Bodos be granted Sixth Schedule Status. It proposed the creation of an administrative structure under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which would replace the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

. Internal displacement : A situation where people are forced to leave their place of residence and take shelter in other places within the territory of the country.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) In which year was the Bodo Sahitya Sabha formed ?

.....

Q2) Which script did the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha finally agree to accept in April 1975 ?

.....

.....

Q3) What was the name of the autonomous region demanded by the leaders of the plains tribes in Assam in the 1960s ?

.....

Q4) What is the full form of MISA ?

.....

Q5) Under whose presidentship did the ABSU formally declare the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland?

.....

.....

Q6) When was the bipartite Bodo Accord providing for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) signed?

.....

13.3.3 Bodo Accord and the Establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council

The movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body. It may be noted here that the tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizorm are specified in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The tribal areas of Assam included the North Cachar Hills District and the Karbi Anglong District. Accordingly, the Sixth Schedule was applicable only to the hill areas of Assam. As such, the Sixth Schedule was amended in the Bodo case as the community in question was basically a tribal group inhabiting the plains of the State. The area under the BTC jurisdiction is called the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The Council enjoys autonomy and control over departments specified in the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), 2003, but it does not control the district administration. The Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) was disbanded as an armed outfit in the year 2003. As per the Accord, an interim BTC was formed which came to be headed by former BLT Chairman Hargrama Mohilary.

Different non-Bodo organisations opposed the formation of the BTC and 18 non-Bodo organisations together formed the Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS) to oppose the proposed Accord. They launched a series of agitations and have been organising strong programmes of agitation with the support of non-Bodos within the BTC area even after the Accord was signed. The non-Bodo organisations pointed out that non-Bodos constitute the majority of the total population in proposed BTC area. The non-Bodo organisations demanded that proper safeguards should be ensured to protect the rights and interests of the non-Bodo community.

The first election to the BTC took place on 13th May, 2005. A political party namely, the Bodo People's Progressive Forum (BPPF) was formed one month ahead of the election. It comprised of former members of the dissolved BLT and the ABSU. Rabiram Narzary became the first President of the BPPF. However, fissures soon appeared in the BPPF which came to be split between two factions- one faction led by former members of the ABSU and the other by former members of the BLT. This faction of the BPPF was headed by Hargrama Mahilary, the ex-BLT chief and Chief Executive Member of the interim BTC. In the ensuing elections, Hargrama Mahilary was elected as the leader of the newly elected BTC.

5 LET US KNOW

As per the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), there shall be an Executive Council comprising of not more than 12 Executive Members, one of whom shall be the Chief and another one the Deputy Chief of the said Executive

Council. There shall be adequate representation for the non-tribal members in the Executive Council. The Chief and the Deputy Chief of the Council shall have the status equivalent to the Cabinet Minister and the other Executive Members equivalent to the Minister of the State of Assam for protocol purposes in BTC area. Some of the subjects to be entrusted to BTC by Assam Government are as follows: Small, Cottage and Rural Industry, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary, Forest, Agriculture, PWD, etc. The State Government would provide an amount, to be decided every year on population ratio basis, as grants-in-aid in two equal instalments to the BTC for executing development works.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7) Who were the signatories of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord 2003 ?

.....

Q8) The area under the BTC jurisdiction is known as what?

.....

13.4 LET US SUM UP

- In Assam, the issue of identity politics centering on the issue of ethnicity is of a complex nature.
- Along with the political struggle, armed struggles have also been a distinguishing feature of ethnic identity based politics in the State.
- The collective mobilisation of the Bodo community for securing political autonomy and the consequent demand for a separate state of Bodoland within the Indian union has been a major factor in the post-independent political history of Assam.
- In the initial period, assertion of the Bodo identity was associated with the language issue. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed at Basugoan, near Kokrajhar in 1952.
- The enactment of the Assam Official Languages Act (1960), making Assamese the sole official language of the State and the demand for making Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the state's universities further agitated the Bodo leaders who opposed this move.
- Finally, at the request of the Union government, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha agreed to accept the Devanagri script in April 1975.
- Subsequently, the Assam Government granted the Bodo language the status of an associate official language in the Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division.
- The younger generation of tribal activists formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) at Kokrajhar on February 27, 1967, under the presidentship of Modoram Brahma.
- The leaders of the plains tribes in Assam demanded an autonomous region within

Assam, with safe guards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, to be known as Udayachal.

- By early 1987, the ABSU completed its preparations for launching of a mass movement demanding a separate state for the Bodos to be known as the Bodoland.
- On March 2, 1987, the ABSU, under the presidentship of Upendranath Brahma formally declared the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland outside Assam on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra.
- The ABSU created a political organization, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), to spearhead the movement. The ABSU/BPAC movement began with the slogan "Divide Assam 50-50".
- The ABSU demanded the creation of a separate state in the north bank of the Brahmaputra for the plains tribals of Assam. It also demanded creation of regional Councils for non-Karbi tribes in Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council.
- The Bodo Security Force (BdSF) which is now known as the National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFB) launched a militant movement running parallel to political efforts had already begun to take root.
- After several years of violent agitations, the Government of India and the Government of Assam negotiated an accord with some major Bodo groups. The bipartite Bodo Accord of February 20, 1993 provided for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the state of Assam with the council enjoying maximum autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution.
- The accord could not work because some of its essential provisions were not implemented and severe infighting among the Bodo factions and their leaderships made it impossible to achieve stability within the BAC.
- Meanwhile, subsequent to the Accord, the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force or BLTF was formed under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma to continue to fight for greater political autonomy.
- While the BLTF demanded a separate state of Bodoland to be carved out of the state of Assam, the BdSF demanded sovereignty by way of secession from India. The scale of violence escalated as the movement progressed.
- The Union Government decided to hold discussions with militant outfits. Both the militant outfits were involved in the dialogue process. The centre first entered into a dialogue with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force which was waging an armed struggle demanding a separate state of Bodoland.
- The movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of

the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body.

- The Sixth Schedule was amended in the Bodo case as the community in question was basically a tribal group inhabiting the plains of the State. The area under the BTC jurisdiction is called the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The Council enjoys autonomy and control over departments specified in the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), 2003, but it does not control the district administration.
- The Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) was disbanded as an armed outfit in the year 2003. As per the Accord, an interim BTC was formed. It was headed by former BLT Chairman Hargrama Mohilary.
- Different non-Bodo organisations opposed the formation of the BTC and 18 non-Bodo organisations together formed the Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS) to oppose the proposed Accord.
- The first election to the BTC took place on 13th May, 2005. Hargrama Mahilary was elected as the leader of the newly elected BTC.

13.5 FURTHER READING

1) Kundu, Dilip Kumar, Triparthy, Ajay & Agarwal, Bhavna. (2010). *The State and the Bodo Movement in Assam*. APH Publishing Corporation.

2) Sonowal, Khema. 2012. *Why Bodo Movement?* Guwahati: Eastern Book House.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: 1952

Ans to Q No 2: Devanagri script

Ans to Q No 3: Udayachal

Ans to Q No 4: Maintenance of Internal Security Act

Ans to Q No 5: Upendranath Brahma

Ans to Q No 6: on February 20, 1993

Ans to Q No 7: Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF), Union Government and and Assam State Government

Ans to Q No 8: Bodoland Territorial Area Districts

13.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Where was the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed in 1952?

Q 2: The demand for the autonomous region of Udayachal was demanded under which Schedule of the Indian Constitution ?

Q 3: Name the political organization created by the ABSU to spearhead the movement for Bodoland.

Q 4: When was the Memorandum of Settlement for the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was signed?

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

Q 1: Discuss the Roman Script Movement.

Q 2: Discuss the demand for Udayachal.

Q 3: Explain the three demands that the ABSU agreed to concentrate on after holding discussions with the Chief Minister of Assam?

Q 4: Write briefly about the Memorandum of Settlement and establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

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

Q 1: Explain the historical background of the Movement for the Bodoland.

Q 2: Describe the events surrounding the demand for Bodoland up to the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in 2003.

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UNIT 14: GROWTH OF REGIONALISM IN ASSAM: EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES - AGP AND BPPF

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives
14.2 Introduction
14.3 Regionalism : A Brief Overview
  14.3.1 Growth of Regionalism in India
  14.3.2 Regionalism in Assam
14.4 Emergence of Regional Political Parties in Assam
  14.4.1 Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)
  14.4.2 Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPF)
14.5 Let Us Sum Up
14.6 Further Reading
14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
14.8 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the nature and growth of regionalism in Assam
- discuss the emergence of regional political parties in Assam
- describe the formation, growth and the role of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in the politics of Assam
- discuss the formation, growth and the role of Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) in the politics of Bodoland and Assam.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In a large country like India, regionalism is as natural as the diversity of the nation itself. India is home to diverse ethnic cultures, caste groups, languages and religions. In the post independent period, different groups have asserted themselves to protect their ethnic and linguistic identities as well as to secure political and economic interests and attain adequate cultural safeguards for the development of their respective region and its people.

As a matter of fact, regional politics in India is not a new phenomenon. Since the process of unification of the nation during and after independence, regional politics have taken a centre-stage. For example, Assam fought against the grouping system of the Cabinet Mission Plan and the people of the region stood united against such partisan politics of the mission. In this unit, attempts have been made to acquaint you with the growth of regionalism in a federal polity like India with special reference to the growth of regionalism in Assam, emergence of regional political parties in Assam and the formation

and growth of Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF).

14.3 REGIONALISM - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Let us now discuss the issue of regionalism in greater detail.

14.3.1 Growth of Regionalism in India

Regionalism has continued as the most potent force in Indian politics ever since the country has attained independence in 1947. It has remained as the main foundation for many regional political parties which have been assuming the seat of power in many states since 1960s. The best manifestation the emerging role of regional political parties can be attributed to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which ruled at the national level from 1999 to 2004. The NDA was but a coalition of various region-based political parties.

Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and is often fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. The British colonial division of the Indian territory broadly divided the country into two parts– the directly-ruled provinces, and some 560 (indirectly-ruled) autocratic princely kingdoms of many sizes, religions, tribes, and languages added complexity to regionalism in India. In India, regionalism, or the acute sense of loyalty to a particular region has manifested itself in various ways and forms. The issue of deprivation is often associated with the growth of regionalism. Regionalism has often expressed itself in antagonistic terms because of the deprivation felt due to long-term neglect in the field of development and resource distribution.

14.3.2 Regionalism in Assam

There is no denying the fact that there was ample space for regionalism in Assam to grow. But it grew primarily because of the fact that (during and after the British rule), Assam remained a peripheral hinterland (a place situated far away from the centre) throughout history and the national government always seemed to govern from a distance in both the pre-independence period and post-independence period. After independence, Assam's region specific grievances remained grossly unaddressed and as a result popular movements began to surface. Widespread disparity between the state and national levels in various areas of economic development made the Assamese people disappointed. The illegal foreign national issue on the other hand provided a popular and emotive dimension. The resultant 'Assam Movement'- a movement to deport illegal foreign nationals from Assam, lasted for six long years (1979-1985). The formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) after the movement, and its coming to power in 1985 and many other such events exhibit the existence of regionalism in Assam.

Regionalism during the Assam Movement took varied shape and became closely linked with the idea of 'ethnicity'. Ethnicity is an important ingredient of regionalism. Ethnicity implies belonging to a race or community sharing a common cultural tradition. The groups

that democratically fought to protect and preserve the broad Assamese national identity and culture believed in the capability of the Indian federal structure to accommodate their aspirations within the constitutional framework of the country. They demanded more autonomy for the state. On the other end of the political spectrum, there emerged extremist groups who wanted a separate nation for the people. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) demanded complete secession from India and went underground. As such, the socio-political environment of Assam remained disturbed for quite some time until the 'Assam Accord' was signed in 1985. The years from 1979 to 1985 witnessed political instability in the state, imposition of President's Rule, sustained, often violent, agitation, frequent general strikes, civil disobedience campaigns which paralyzed all normal life for prolonged periods, and unprecedented ethnic violence.

Finally, the Rajiv Gandhi government was able to sign an accord (Assam Accord) with the leaders of the movement on 15th August 1985. It was agreed that all those foreigners who had entered Assam after March 25, 1971 were to be detected and deported; A parallel package for the economic development of Assam, including a second oil refinery, a paper mill and an institute of technology, was also worked out. The central government also promised to provide 'legislative and administrative safeguards to protect the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage' of the Assamese people. The existing assembly was dissolved and fresh elections held in December 1985. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), formed by the leaders of the anti-foreigners movement, was elected to power.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1) Mention an example of a government at the central level which was basically a coalition of region-based political parties.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q2) The Assam Movement was started in the year ..... (Fill up the Blank)

Q3) When was the Assam Accord signed?

.....

Q4) It was agreed that all those foreigners who had entered Assam after March 25, 1971 were to be deported. (True/False)

.....

14.4 EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM

During last two decades, the rise of regional parties has influenced not only state politics but also the national parties and national politics. With sizeable electoral support, the regional parties have not only managed to win elections and form state governments, their influence is visible in the sphere of national politics too.

In Assam too, a good number of regional political parties have emerged after the Assam Movement. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), are some notable regional political parties of Assam.

14.4.1 Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was the product of the six-year-long Assam Movement, which was spearheaded by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The Assamese people were raising demands for steps against the foreign infiltrators who had entered the state through porous border, mostly from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) and occupied vast areas of the state thus threatening the economic, political, social and cultural existence of the indigenous people of the state. When the revision of electoral rolls of Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency was undertaken following the death of sitting MP, Hiralal Patwari, in 1978, the names of several lakhs of illegal immigrants were detected in the electoral rolls. Immediately, the AASU under the leadership of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta (President) and late Bhrigu Kumar Phukan (General Secretary) demanded action against the infiltrators. AASU received the support of the people of Assam in demanding the postponement of the bye-election to Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency and a thorough revision of all the electoral rolls of the state in order to detect (foreign infiltrators), delete (from voter's lists) and deport all the illegal infiltrators. Soon a mass movement was launched throughout the state and thus, the Assam Movement was started in 1979. Many organizations like the Asom Sahitya Sabha, two regional political parties- Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP), the Asom Jattiyabadi Dal (AJD) the Sadau Asom Karmachari Parishad, Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad, Asom Yuvak Samaj, All Assam Central and semi-Central Employee's Association etc., joined hands with AASU and launched a common platform in the form of the the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) to guide the Movement. The Movement continued for six long years and during these years and hundreds of party workers sacrificed their lives. The central government had to come to the negotiation table with the AASU and AAGSP. Several rounds of discussions with successive governments in New Delhi culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985 between AASU, the AAGSP and the Central Government in presence of the then Prime Minister late Rajiv Gandhi. Following the Assam Accord, the State Assembly was dissolved, paving the way for fresh elections.

The AASU called for a National Convention of the people of Assam at Golaghat on Ocober 13-14, 1985. In this convention, it was decided that a regional political party under the name and style of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) would be constituted. Accordingly, the Asom Gana Parishad party was formally launched at Golaghat on October 14, 1985. Incidentally, the then Central Executive Committee of the All Assam Students' Union with Sri Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the President and Bhrigu Kumar Phukan as the General Secretary handed over charge to a new batch of leaders at a convention held in Lakhimpur in September, 1985.

When the AGP was formed, the first presidium was headed by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta who became the President and Late Bhrigu Kumar Phukan who became one of the General Secretaries of the newly formed party. The six-year long movement against the foreign infiltrators in Assam thus paved the way for the formation of a regional political organization in the form of the AGP with the former leadership of the AASU as the key functionaries. The AGP contested the elections to the State Assembly held in December 1985. It won a landslide victory by winning 67 out of the 126 seats apart from capturing seven of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. The AGP thus formed the government in Assam. This was a historic moment for Assam because AGP was the first regional party to form government in the State. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, became at the age of thirty-three, the youngest Chief Minister of independent India. There were several factors which helped the party to form government, merely after two months of its formation.

- The political campaign of the party was based on a national issue i.e. expulsion of illegal immigrants from Assam. This serious issue helped the party immensely in winning mass support.
- The party was mainly formed by the leaders of the Assam movement who enjoyed an overwhelming support from the public.
- The support of the student community was another reason behind the success of AGP.
- Though there were other regional political parties in Assam at that time like Plains Tribal Council of Assam and United Minorities Front, the support base of these parties remained limited while the AGP could garner support from all sections of the societies.

The AGP was unable to successfully implement the Assam Accord's core provisions for disenfranchising and expelling illegal aliens, in part because Parliament passed a legislation making it more difficult to prove illegal alien status in the form of the IMDT Act. Meanwhile, the law and order situation in the state deteriorated gravely. As a result, in November 1990, the AGP government was dismissed and President's Rule declared. However, the party failed to retain power in the next assembly elections. In March 1991, differences among the party leaders led to its split. This resulted in the formation of the Natun Asom Gana Parishad by leaders like Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Dinesh Goswami, Pulakesh Barua and few others who parted from the party. However, the Natun Asom Gana Parishad soon merged with the parent party, that is, the AGP, in 1992. Yet again in 2000, the AGP had to face another split. This split was led by Atul Borah, who went on to form the Trinamool Gana Parishad. AGP faced another setback in 2005 when Prafulla Mahanta was expelled from the party. Mahanta then formed his own party and named it as Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive). On 14 October, 2008 Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive) merged with the mother party, with an aim to boost the ailing party and became a single unified party once again. The headquarters of the party are situated at Ambari in Guwahati. In the last Assembly Elections held in 2016, AGP won 14 seats.

14.4.2 Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF)

Before discussing the Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) it would highly be purposeful to discuss the context in which the party emerged. As discussed in the previous unit, the movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body.

The Bodo Accord of 2003 also required the leaders of the movement to ensure the surrender of all arms, explosives, and ammunition by their followers, and bring those who had gone underground back into the national mainstream. The successful completion of formalities witnessed the biggest ever surrender ceremony in the country as a total of over two thousand Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) militants along with varieties of sophisticated weapons bade farewell to arms on December 6, 2003. The leaders of the BLT along with the leaders of All Bodo Students' Union launched a political party called Bodo People's Progressive Front (BPPF). However, in the run-up to the elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council, there occurred a split in the Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF). As a result, there emerged two factions of the BPPF, namely, BPPF (Hagrama) and BPPF (Rabiram). BPPF (Hagrama) was led by Hagrama Mahilary the erstwhile BLT chief and chief executive member of the ad hoc BTC while BPPF (Rabiram) was led by Rabiram Narzary, former ABSU president. Subsequently, in the elections to the BTC, BPPF (Hagrama) won. The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as Bodoland People's Front (BPF). However, BPPF (Rabiram) could not win any seat in the elections.

In the Assam Assembly elections of April 2006, BPPF (Hagrama) teamed up with the Indian National Congress and won 11 seats and thus became an ally of the Indian National Congress led ruling coalition in Assam. In the General Elections of 2009, its candidate, Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary was elected to the 15th Lok Sabha from Kokrajhar constituency. Biswajit Daimary of the BPF got elected to the Rajya Sabha in May, 2008. In the 2011 Assam Assembly election, BPF won 12 seats. The BPF however ended its 13 year-old alliance with the Congress party when it came out of the state government in June 2014 over issues relating to the all-round development of the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. The BPF incidentally had one Cabinet Minister in the state cabinet holding the portfolios of Transport, Tourism and Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes in BTAD until the party broke its alliance with the state government. In the last Assembly Elections held in 2016, BPF won 12 seats and become a partner of the Coalition Government in Assam.

5 LET US KNOW

The political landscape of the BTR has been characterized by a shifting rivalry between the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), led by Hagrama Mohilary, and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), led by Pramod Boro. In the 2021 Assam Assembly Elections, these two parties competed against each other. The BPF, having severed its long-standing alliance with the BJP, joined the Congress-led "Mahajot" (Grand Alliance). In contrast, the UPPL allied with the BJP-led "Mitrajot" (NDA). The outcome of these state elections saw a notable decline for the BPF, which secured only 4 seats, while the UPPL won 6 seats. This solidified the UPPL's position as a key partner in the state government and established its dominance in the region for the early part of the decade.

The BTC council elections held in September 2025 marked a dramatic shift in the regional power structure. Despite the UPPL's incumbency, the BPF staged a major political resurgence, emerging as the single largest party by winning 28 of the 40 elected seats. The UPPL saw its representation reduced to 7 seats, while the BJP, contesting independently or in limited arrangements, secured 5 seats. This victory allowed Hagrama Mohilary to return as the Chief Executive Member. Following the election, the political alignment further evolved as the BPF officially rejoined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). By early 2026, the BJP confirmed a renewed partnership with the BPF for the state assembly elections, designating the BPF as the senior regional partner in the BTR.

In the ultimate analysis, in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation like India, regionalism can be a very powerful force when it comes to meeting the goals of national development by way of seeking removal of economic imbalances across various regions and securing the due share of every region in the allocation and distribution of resources. As a matter of fact, regional political parties can help raise and address region specific local issues and help the Union government to formulate national panning in a way that helps the equitable development of all regions of the country and safeguard the ethnic and cultural identities of different communities. In this sense, regional development becomes the path to national development, thereby achieving the welfare of the entire nation at large.

w CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5) When the AGP was formed, who became its first president?

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.....

.....

Q6) In which year was the Natun Asom Gana Parishad formed?

.....

Q7) Which faction of the BPPF won the first election to the BTC?

.....

.....

Q8) How many members did the BPF win in the 2011 Assam Assembly election?

.....

14.5 LET US SUM UP

- Regionalism has continued as the most potent force in Indian politics ever since she attained independence in 1947. It has remained as the main foundation for many regional political parties which have been assuming the seat of power in many states since 1960s.
- Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and often fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation.
- The illegal foreign national issue on the other hand provided a popular and emotive dimension. The resultant 'Assam Movement'- a movement to deport illegal foreign nationals from Assam, lasted for six long years (1979-1985). The formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) after the movement, and its coming to power in 1985 and many other such events exhibit the existence of regionalism in Assam.
- Regionalism during the Assam movement took varied shape and became closely linked with the idea of 'ethnicity'. Ethnicity is an important ingredient of regionalism. Later, these ethnic assertions took the shape of identity politics. The groups that democratically fought to protect and preserve Assamese identity and culture believed in the capability of Indian federal structure to accommodate its aspirations within the constitutional framework of the country.
- The AGP contested the elections to the state assembly held in December 1985 and swept the polls by winning 67 out of the 126 seats apart from capturing seven of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies, and formed the Government in Assam. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta became the youngest Chief Minister of independent India at the age of thirty two.
- In March 1991, differences among the party leaders led to its split. This resulted in the formation of the Natun Asom Gana Parishad by leaders like Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Dinesh Goswami, Pulakesh Barua and few others who parted from the party. However, the Natun Asom Gana Parishad soon merged with the parent party, that is, the AGP, in 1992.
- Yet again in 2000, the AGP had to face another split. This split was led by Atul Borah, who went on to form the Trinamool Gana Parishad. AGP faced another setback in 2005 when Prafulla Mahanta was expelled from the party. Mahanta then formed his own party and named it as Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive).
- On 14 October, 2008 Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive) merged with the parent party, with an aim to boost the ailing party and became a single unified party once again.
- The Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) Accord was signed in 1993. The leaders of the BLT along with the leaders of All Bodo Students' Union launched a political party called Bodo People's Progressive Front (BPPF). However, in the run-up to the elections

to the Bodoland Territorial Council, there occurred a split in the Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF). As a result, there emerged two factions of the BPPF, namely, BPPF (Hagrama) and BPPF (Rabiram).

- The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as Bodoland People's Front (BPF). However, BPPF (Rabiram) could not win any seat in the elections.
- The political landscape of the BTR has been characterized by a shifting rivalry between the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), led by Hagrama Mohilary, and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), led by Pramod Boro.

14.6 FURTHER READING

1) Das, Samir Kumar. (1997). *Regionalism in Power- The Case of Asom Gana Parishad*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
2) Kalita, Haren Chandra. (2011). *Regional Politics- The Role of Asom Gana Parishad*. Guwahati: E.B.H.Publishers.
3) Baruah, Sanjib. (2001). *India Against Itself*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
4) Kundu, Dilip Kumar, Triparthy, Ajay & Agarwal, Bhavna. (2010). *The State and the Bodo Movement in Assam*. APH Publishing Corporation.

14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government

Ans to Q No 2: 1979

Ans to Q No 3: August 1985

Ans to Q No 4: True

Ans to Q No 5: Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

Ans to Q No 6: 1991

Ans to Q No 7: BPPF (Hagrama)

Ans to Q No 8: 12

14.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Where was Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) launched?

Q 2: In the State Assembly elections held in the month of December in 1985, the AGP won how many seats?

Q 3: Name the two factions of the BPPF.

Q 4: The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as what?

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

Q 1: Mention any four factors which helped the AGP to form government for the first time.

Q 2: Write about the background leading to the formation of the BPPF.

Q 3: Write briefly about the growth of regionalism in India.

Q 4: Write briefly about regionalism in Assam.

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

Q 1: Write a note on the AGP.

Q 2: Write a note on the BPPF.

*** ***** ***



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1) Barpujari, H.K. (1993). *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol V. Publication Board, Assam.
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8) Dutta, K.N. (1998). *Landmarks of the freedom Struggle in Assam*. Guwahati: Lawyers Book Stall.
9) Gohain, Hiren. (1984). *Assam: The Burning Question*. Gauhati: Spectrum publications.
10) Goswami.C. (2008). *Nationalism in Assam*. New Delhi: Mittal publication.
11) Goswami, Sandhya. 1997. *Language Politics in Assam*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
12) Hussain, Monirul. 1994. *The Assam Movement - Class, Ideology and Identity*. Delhi: Manak Publications.

Websites:

1) http://www.agp.org
2) www.satp.org

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Name of the Paper: .....
Course Code: .....

Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)
Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University
City Office: Resham Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022

Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KK Handiqui State Open University, Resham Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022
(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1) Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? ☐☐☐

2) Please give your opinions (by ✓ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I)	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II)	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III)	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV)	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V)	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI)	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII)	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII)	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX)	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1) Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

.....

.....

2) What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

.....

.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.