UNIT 3: MOAMARIYA REBELLION

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- discuss the causes of the Moamariya rebellion,
- discuss the nature of the Moamariya rebellion,
- analyse the significances of the Moamariya rebellion.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

The first peasant revolt that occurred in medieval Assam was the Moamariya revolt which went on to take the form of a popular mass insurrection against the established social authority. Dear learners, now in this unit we shall discuss about this peasant rebellion in detail.

3.3 CAUSES OF THE MOAMARIYA REBELLION

The Moamoria rebellion (1769–1805) was the 18th century conflict in Assam between the Moamorias, who were mainly from Moran and Motok community and disciples of the Moamara Sattra, and the Ahom kings. This led to widespread popular discontent against the Ahom king and the nobles and in which the Ahom king lost control of the capital. There are various causes of the rebellion. These are discussed below in detail.

- The economic base was the determining factor of the rebellion. The repressive paik and khel system (we have already discussed in our earlier units), lack of socio-economic choice and freedom, stagnation and crisis in the backward feudalism prepared the ground of the revolt. Under the paik and khel system, a paik was offered a very small portion of land to cultivate, the production of which could not fulfil the minimum demands of the peasants.
- The Morans had led an isolated life due to their geographical disadvantageous location. Their relation to the Ahom state was limited to being a tribute-paying community. Mayamora Satra, with most of the disciples from the *Moran* tribe strongly denounced the vedic rites and ritual superiority of the Brahmins. The Mayamora Satras belonging to the *Kala Sanghati* was radical to the original teachings of the neo-vaishnavite movement. But Ahom religious policy anchored on an alliance between the monarch, the *Shakti* worshippers and the brahmonical section of the neo-*vaishnavites.* It shows that there was a direct contradiction between Ahom state religious policy and the basic principle on which the Mayamora Satra was based on. The Ahom state gradually developed a suppressing attitude towards Mayamora Satra and its disciples. Even several of its leaders were executed on royal orders. However, the growing royal suppression only bolstered the resilience of the followers of the *MayamoraSatra,* and they turned their activities somewhat underground and esoteric and took the form of a civil rebellion.
- In the political sphere, the Ahom monarchy was facing labour scarcity, which was the base of the kingdom. The kingdom was failed to solve the age old problems of the paik and khel system. Instead of trying to reform the repressive systems they tried to keep the paik and khel system going through terror and coercion.
- The immediate cause of the rebellion, however, belonged to superstructure. It was religious persecution of the Moamoriya Vaishnava Gurus and disciples which fuelled the fires of revolt.

Thus the ground of the rebellion was deep rooted and only a spark was needed to break out the rebellion.

3.4 NATURE OF THE MOAMARIYA REBELLION

The long peasant revolt from 1769 to 1805 had three distinct phases.In each phase the nature of the rebellion was different from the other.

In the first phase the nature of the rebellion was of peasant rebellion. Widespread dissatisfaction of the peasantry in the existing system resulted the rebellion. Hundreds of paiks started escaping from the 'khel' and sought refuge in the Vaishnava *satras* and monasteries- which also saw a mushrooming growth during this period. The tenancy system that operated in the lands controlled by the *satras* was an added inducement for such escapees.

The tremendous royal repression failed to extinguish the spark of peasant revolt. Within ten years the peasants, mainly the Moamoria disciples, started regrouping. By 1780 large number of apparently unlinked underground rebel groups started appearing all over upper Assam. In view of the royal repression these underground organizations used tomeet at night under pretext of some religious function. Soon the rebellion took the form of a civil war.

The Moamariya rebellion was neither an ethnic nor a caste based rebellion, nor was it against any particular castes or ethnic groups such as Brahmins or Ahoms. Though the rebellion was started by the Morans it was from the very start carried forward by people of all castes and creeds including Ahom, Chutiyas, Kachari, Kaivartas and all other depressed classes. They were all disciples of the Moamariya Guru. Participation of people of all castes and walks of life in the rebellion gave it to the character of a real mass rebellion.

3.5 SIGNIFICANCES OF THE REBELLION

- The Moamoria peasant revolt broke the backward feudal state of medieval Assam. Through the rebellion did not actually result in the

common ruin of the contending classes, there was general weakening all around.

- In the post-uprising state that was restored with the help of British arms there were lots of changes. It became weaker, it could no longer rely on the levy of peasant militia like before. It had to create a salaried standing army. The principal offices of the states could also no longer be confined to the Ahom aristocracy but had to be opened to others.
- The rebellion shakes the very foundation of the state monarchy. The weak state could no longer resist the repeated Burmese invasions that occurred within a few years and after that English East India Company occupied the state, ultimately lost its freedom.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q.1: Moamariya rebellion was a peasant/military rebellion. (Choose the correct answer)

……

Q. 2: From which community the disciples of Mayamara *satra* belonged to?

……

Q.3: Mayamara *satra* belonged to the ……..…..*samhati* of neo-vaishnavism.(fill in the blank)



3.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt-

- the background of the Moamariya rebellion.
- The nature of the Moamariya rebellion,
- Significances of the Moamariya rebellion in the history of Assam.