UNIT 6 : COLONIAL FORWARD POLICY

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will able to-

- you will understand the colonial forward policy
- describe the forward policy toward Garo, Lushai and Naga hills
- discuss the relation with trans inner liner tribes.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

The political settlement in Assam started by the British through the Treaty of Yandaboo. In 1828 British occupied lower Assam to subdue the intire Brahmaputra valley in the end of the nineteenth century. In this unit we shell discuss the British policies towards hilly regions.

6.3 COLONIAL FORWARD POLICY

The annexation of Assam brought the British into contact with different tribes inhabited in North-East India. Anglo-tribal relations in the 19th century came through several phases. Initially the British are reluctant to come to

close to the tribes Inhabiting in the North-East frontier of India and preferred to exercise as much control as less necessary to maintain peace and soverinity on the border. The tribal people being always independent their age old customs and traditions determined their racial, political and economic lives and they were averse to any interference. The British policy therefore they encourage trade with them so long as they remain peaceful. The gradual extension of British frontier invariably led to close of the tribes and for various reasons it became essential to reverse their earlier policy and followed one of the active intervention. Over a period of time non-intervention gradually gave away for indirect control and eventually to direct control by the end of the century.

An important factor in the change of attitude had learn the extension of tea plantations in the hill area. Initially the govt. realized the problem of campaigning the hills. The tribal people moreover known to be fierce warrior moreover the government felt that the hill areas had little economic prospect and that it would be mansaeen invest in the region anyway. Hence British policy up to 6th decade of the 19th century was guided by these considerate this is evident in the context of the general expansionist policy followed by the viceroy like housie.

The extension of British frontier resulted in frequent plundering raids on the tea garden by the tribesman. By the 1860s and 1870s plantation lokley in Assam had became friendly strong. It is the due to their pressure to a large extent the govt. decided to adopt a forward policy towards the hill tribes of North-East frontier of India.

6.4 FORWARD POLICY TOWARDS GARO HILLS

Garos lived in the interior of the hills. The various class of the garo tribes inhabited between the plains of east Bengal and Khasi hills. In this region there were estates of Kariabari, Kalumalupuna, Habraghat, Mechpara, slerpur- sasung and Bijni. Choudhury and Raja, the zamindars of the estates were responsible for the collection of revenue form the garos and maintenance of law and order in this area. But this zamindars did not give much importance on the garos and they made regular incursions into

the plains. Meanwhile cotton became an important item of trade in the hills that compelled the zamindars to impose their jurisdiction in the region. Subsequent attempts were made in the respect and the hills also continued in retaliation or raids in the plains. This led to turmoil in the frontier areas. Company realized to impose their direct control on the garo hills.

In 1816, the East India company, as a part of the district of Rangpur, assuming administrative responsibility over the Garos, divided the garos into three categories as zamindari garos (who lived within the estates of former zaminders), the tributary garos(who acknowledged the authority of the government by paying an annual tribute) and the independent garos.

Bengal Regulations were made operative in this area, but David Scott realized that it is unsuitable for this area. Scott recommended for the creation of civil commissioner in the tract comprising Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari. The idea was to bring all the Garos under the direct control of the British without Zamindars as intermediaries. Along with Scott proposals the Bengal regulations were replaced by Regulations of 1822. But with the appointment as the agent to the governor general, north-eastern frontier, Burmese invasion began and the Garo problems were stopped down.

After the British occupation in Assam, repeated raids and plunders continued. Although British took coercive measures, but in general the policy was conciliatory. But repeated rapids and murders continued in the Garo hills. Due to this Lord Dalhousie, Governor general realized for a strong step in the Garo hills and recommended for immediate despatch of an expedition to quell the tribes. Accordingly an expedition was sent, but it was not successful. Due to this, the relations between the Garos and the English shifted from lead to worse. Overthrow the earlier policy, Delhousic decided to set up an economic blockade. To confine the garo in the hills, markets were closed. But the measures also became ineffective. Jenkins and Moffatt hills recommended for the military occupation of the Garo hills.

In 1861 Henry Hopkinson become an agent to the Governor and commissioner of Assam after Jenkins. He advocated a radical proposal for the hill tribes. He reiterated the earlier suggestion for the appointment of a

special officer and also stressed the necessity of constructing roads. But secretary of state for India recommended for the increase of commerce and advice that the Garos be encourage to grow more cotton by extending all possible aid for its cultivation. Hopkinson tried applied this new policy.

In 1865, B. W. D Morton, Deputy commissioner of Goalpara, proposed for a policy organization in the Garo hills, by which the laskars would be responsible for the collection of taxes and the maintenance of law and order in this area. Government accepted the proposal and directed Morton to arm them with civil and military power, necessary for maintaining law and order. Accordingly W. J. Williamson. Assistant commissoner of Goalpara appointed thirty four chiefs and Zimmadars on a fixed salary.

This arrangement worked in the north parts of the garos hills, but at the same time problems in the southern parts continue to solve this problems, in July 1866 Garo hill were made a separate administrative unit in 1869, it became an full fledged district with Williamson as its Deputy Commissioner. But there were several hostilities going on and so 1874 Garo hills was subject gated and it way bought under Commissioner of Assam in 1874.

6.5 FORWARD POLICY TOWARDS LUSHAI HILLS

The Lushai inhabited the hill tracts adjoining cachar. The economic resources of the hill tracts inhabited by the Lushais were very limited and disputes over control of resources often led to interclan feuds. The Lushai also raided neighbouring British territory in the plains often for their sustenance. Until the early years of the 1870s these depredation were sporadic. The Government of Bengal decided to send a punitive expedition into Lushai territory. In January 1850 captain Hister was despatch with a force of the sylhet light Infantry.

In December 1850 the deputies of several Lushai chiefs came to Silchar with an offer of tribute in return for British aid against their enemies. British accept the hand of friendship but refuse to get involved in inter tribal feuds. In 1862 groups of Lushai swooped into kachai villages plundered them, killed several inhabitants and took many more as captives.

The British decide to induce Sukpilal, one of the main Lushai chiefs to maintain peace in return for an annual payment. In 1865 captain Steward signs an agreement with Sukpila.

The situation became so alarming that the government was compelled to sanction another expedition into the Lushai Hills in 1869. Though initially successful, the British forces withdraw due to bad weather; Government appoints a special officer to deal with the situation He concludes treaties with several chiefs in the hills including Sukpilal. In 1881 Sukpilal death and renewal of Inter-clan tribes feuds.

The operations against the Lushai ended by 1890 with the surrender of the main chiefs of north Lushai hills brought under a British political officer. In 1891 south Lushai hills and the Chittagong hill tracts formed into a separate district. The district has its new headquarters with Lungleh under C.S. Murray as superintendent. In 1898 the Chin Lushai hills, which administered partly by Assam and partly by Bangal was incorporated with the above territory.

6.6 FORWARD POLICY TOWARDS NAGA HILLS

The extension of the frontier in upper Assam brought the British into direct contact with the Nagas who dwelt in the hills adjacent to Sibsagar district, the Nagas were decided into a number of clans such as Angami. Sema and Lolha each under a chief. The Nagas also made plundering raids into the villages in the plains. The frontier thus remained in a constant state of up heave.

The British policy towards the Nagas was initially one of non-intervention. The British decided that the best way to deal with them was to establish personal contact with them chiefs and bind the Nagas under them through conciliatory gestunes to stop then from thacking neighbouring British territory. In 1851 the Government laid down the following policy that was to the be followed with regard to the Nagas.

To confine ourselves to the frontier, to protect it as it could and ought to be protected, to encourage trade with them so long as they are peaceful towards us and rigidly to exclude all communications on their

becoming troublesome or troubleburnt. The government was forced to abandon its policy of non-intervention. Explaining the position, Henry Hopkinson, who had succeeded Jenkins in 1861.

Hopkinson further pointed out that the government had no alternative except to occupied the territory or leave them alone altogether. Take these into consideration be believed that until the government laid down a clear-cut policy, it would be impossible to propose measures for the secured of the border. The inner line regulation enactor in 1873 beyond which tribes were left to manage their own affairs. Demarcated the boundary between British administered areas and those under the tribes. British protection extended to those Naga villages who paid a house tax. By 1878,17 Naga villages had come under British protection. A few powerful villages refused to succumb to the pressure and maintain their independence.

C.H. Damant took over as political officer of Naga hills in 1878. He shifted his headquarters from sermaguting to Kohima to be in their midst. He demands revenue from all villages including the independence ones. His demand causes widespread discontent. in October 1879 Damant along with his escorts was murdered at khonong when he head gone to enquire into a dispute. The death of the political officer emboldened the Nagas to group together and around 6,00 of them laid siege on kohima.

It became imperative for the authorities to reassert their position. The government sent Brigadier general Nation own expedition to caw the Nagas into submission. In March 1880 after several Lostib villages leave leveled to the ground, most of them were compelled to surrender. The British restored their influence in the neigbourhood of Kohima, Wokha, Khonoma and Golaghat. But the outlying villages remained beyond control and outrages continued in these areas. In 1881 the designation of Deputy commissioner the requirements of the tea industry and competition among the Europeans for the competition of coal and other resources in the Naga hills gradually led to the extension of the administrative boundary of the district. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the major portion of the Naga hills came under British administrative control.

The British did not introduce any significant changes in the administration of the Nagas. They considered it politically and economically expedient not to interfere directly in the administration of this stage.

6.7 RELATION WITH TRANS INNER LINES TRIBES

The initial interest of the British relation with the trans inner frontier tribes has been motivated by the strategic location of the area. These hills attracted the attention of the British as pathways to greater commercial significance such as China and as perceived buffers to illegal incursion and imparial expansion from Burma.

Surveys, exploration and map-making was made by the various British officials like captain Bedford, Witcox, Neufville, G, T, Bayfield, S. F. Hamay and Licutemant Busbton. These reports established the fact that there were some frontier trilbes, who played a buffer role between Assam and with that of China and Burma.

When the Industry, minearls and timbers grown tremendously, British took necessary steps to protect plain from the predatory raids. The government began to set up check posts along the routes of tribal movement to check inroad of the tribes. In 1873 also British passed the inner line regulation, through which it restricted the entry of the plains people into the tribal hills and thus minimised the contact between the hills and the plains.

British made trade relations with the trans frontiea tribes. Various commodities were brought by the tribes on the plain markets like vdalguri, Khagrapana and Daimara and carried lots of articles from the plains. The import items from plains were mainlt cotton piece goods (Europeas) cotton. buttle leares, iron, mineral oils etc. The export items from the hills wear horpes, ponies, nules, cattle, sheep and goats, lac, spices etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In which area Garos lived.

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Q 2: Write the name of one estates that …..… responsible for the

collection of revenue from the Garos.

Q 3: In which year Garo hills was made 4 full- fledged district.

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Q 4: In which years were brought under the chief commissioner of Assam.

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Q 5: In which year south Lushai hills ……the Chittagong hill tracts was made as a separate district.

Q 6: In which century Naga hills was made under British administrative control ?

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6.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt,

- In the nineteenth century British changed the earlier policy of non-intervention and followed the policy of intervention.
- In case of Garos hills, British periodically entered and subdued them. They brought under chief commissioner of Assam in 1874.
- Due to the frequent raids by the Lushais, British sent expeditions into the Lushai hills and the operation completed in 1890.
- In the Naga hills, British appointed several officers and sent expeditions control the Nagas. In the beginning of the twentieth century major portion of Naga hills came under the British control.



6.9 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K: *Assam in the Days of Company*

2) Barpujari, H.K (edited): *Political History of Assam, Volume-I*

3) Barpujari, H.K (edited): *A Comprehensive History of Assam Volume-II & IV*

4) Baruah, S.L: *A Comprehensive History of Assam*

5) Dutt, K.N: *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam*