

HISTORY OF TRIPURA AND ASSAM

**BA [History]
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Paper IV**

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Reviewer

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INTRODUCTION

Tripura, lying in North-east, is the third smallest state of India. The history of pre-Manikya Tripura is still shrouded in information gap. How the Tripuri tribesmen migrated into the present territorial location known as Tripura and how the monarchy under the Manikyas evolved still remain an enigma as far as authentic material for constructing a worthwhile history is concerned. The Kings of Tripura adopted the ‘*manikya*’ title and shifted their capital to Udaipur (formerly Rangamati) on the banks of the River Gomti in South Tripura in the 14th century. This was their most glorious period and their power and fame was even acknowledged by the Mughals, who were their contemporaries in North India. During the British rule, it was a princely state and was merged with the Indian union on 15 October, 1949. The last ruler of the princely state of Tripura was Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur who reigned from 1947 to 1949.

Assam is a state in north-eastern India. Located south of the eastern Himalayas, Assam comprises the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak Valley along with the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts with an area of 30,285 sq mi (78,440 km²). Assam, along with Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Meghalaya, is one of the Seven Sister States. Assam shares an international border with Bhutan and Bangladesh; and its culture, people and climate are similar to those of Southeast Asia – comprising the elements in India’s Look East policy.

This book *History of Tripura and Assam* traces the history of the states of Assam and Tripurs from their origin till the integration into the Indian union. The book throws light on the politico-socioeconomic condition and the various reforms introduced by the different rulers during their reign. The book also deals with the life of the various ethnic tribes of the states and their role in the various affairs of the states. An account of the different resistance movements that had taken place in Tripura and Assam over the years has been described. A detailed account on the socio-economic aspects of the people of Tripura and Assam has also been given in this book.

This book, *History of Tripura and Assam*, has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with **Introduction** to the topic followed by **Unit Objectives**. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with ‘**Check Your Progress**’ questions to test the reader’s understanding of the topic. A list of **Questions** and **Exercises** is also provided at the end of each unit that includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The **Summary** and **Key Terms** section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

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UNIT 1 TRIPURA - I

Structure

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The British relation with Tripura is the most important aspect of the modern history period of the state. The colonizers reduced the independent kings of Tripura to a subservient one. However, the kings at times protested against this interference of the British in their internal affairs, they reluctantly followed the instructions and policies of them as their existence depended on them. Interestingly, the various administrative changes and reforms brought by the British, modernized the bureaucracy and the judicial system.

The transition from interfering with the revenue extraction from a part of the state to exercising a prominent role in their internal affairs of the state, as a whole, has been given in detail in the unit. The first two parts of the unit deals with the nature of the relationship between the British and the rulers and the administrative changes brought in the state. In the third part of the unit, three tribal movements i.e., Tipra movement of 1850, Jamatia movement of 1863 and the Reang movement of 1942-43 have been discussed.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the social, political and economic conditions of Tripura before ascension of Birchandra Manikya

- Understand the British relation with Chakla Roshanabad and hill Tripura
- Explain the importance of resistance movements in the 19th century
- Describe the impact of Revolt of 1857 in Tripura

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1.2 PRINCELY TRIPURA: SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION BEFORE ASCENSION OF BIRCHANDRA MANIKYA

The early history of Tripura is shrouded in myths and legends. According to the legends, the state of Tripura was founded by Druhyu, a son of emperor Yayati, who belonged to the Lunar dynasty. His capital was at Pratisthanpur. He is stated to be the first historical and by far the most important ruler of the dynasty. One of his descendants, Daitya, is said to have come to 'Kirata Desha' and established his kingdom in 'Tribeg', which is now in the present Nowgong district of Assam. Tripura, the son and heir of Daitya, was succeeded by his son Trilochan. He married the daughter of the neighbouring Raja of Hirimba (Cachar). Trilochan's eldest son inherited his kingdom.

It is difficult to find any recorded source which provides information on the origin of 'Tripura'. According to Captain Lewin, 'The origin of the name Tipperah is doubtful.' For this reason, it has been stated that in the ancient period, prior to the establishment of the Muslim rule in Bengal, Tripura was politically not considered a state. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, who had reached Kamrup in AD 642-643, noted the names of almost all the contemporary kingdoms situated in north-east India, but had not mentioned the name of Tripura. It can be inferred that had there been such a powerful kingdom under the name of Tripura, it would not have missed the notice of a keen observer like Hiuen Tsang.

The Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas perhaps do not mention the name of *Tripuradesa*. The mythical demon *Tripurashura* should not be confused with *Tripuradesa*. It should be noted that Tripur and Tripura do not mean the same kingdom. If you go through the *Brahmandapuram*, in its forty-ninth chapter, a geographical account of ancient Bharat is given, you may find that Tripura was mentioned as 'Traipur' and it was situated near the Vindhya in central India, but people consider it as Tripura.

The archaeological evidences found in the region prove that a large portion of this region, particularly south-western part of the present state of Tripura, was politically attached to the kingdoms of eastern Bengal known as Samatata, Vanga and Harikela. The Tippera copper plate grant of Samanta Lokanatha brings into light a list of feudatory chiefs who ruled east Bengal in the middle of the 7th century. This also points to the fact that the state of Tripura did not exist in the ancient period.

All the above historical facts prove that of the state of Tripura did not have any separate entity in the ancient period. Most of the western and southern parts of Tripura was attached to eastern Bengal under various dynasties and had no separate political status. Rajmala, a chronicle of the royal family of Tripura narrates that the

ancestors of this family shifted their capital from Nowgong district to the district of Cachar on the bank of river Barak. Afterwards, they proceeded south-west and settled in Dharma Nagar and established their capital on the bank of Juri river. It was from Dharmanagar that they came to the centre of the present state of Tripura. According to Shri Kailas Chandra Singh, 'In Tripura, *Tui* means water and by adding *Pra* which means near, the word *Tuipra* was formed. It is from 'Tuipra' the people were referred as 'Tipra' and the land came to be known as Tripura'.

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Pre-colonial Manikya Period

The actual process of state formation in Tripura began during the reign of the Manikya rulers, which is also known as the medieval period or the pre-colonial period in the history of Tripura. The Tripuri rajas are said to have assumed the title of 'Manikya' from the time of Ratna Pha, who, according to Professor Kalikaranjan Qanungo, was a contemporary of sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban. Ratna Phawas defeated by Sultan Mughisuddin Tughril in about AD 1950 Upon his submission, he was honoured with the title of 'Manikya' by the Muslim ruler.

According to Amalendu Guha (author of *The Ahom Political System- An Enquiry into the State Formation Process in Medieval Assam*), 'Statehood emerged only when a community was either capable of producing surplus sufficient for the maintenance of a non- producing public authority, or systematically appropriating tribute, the requisite surplus, from the subject or both. Smaller the surplus, less elaborate was its public authority structure. In North-east India, tribal state formation, early or medieval was possible by generation of the requisite surplus from either their own or other people's wet rice cultivation.'

The process of state formation started in the early 15th century, when Tripura chief, Chhengthung Pha, later named as Maha Manikya, succeeded in subjugating other tribes namely the Jamatias, Kukis, Reang and others. *Rangamati* (the present Udaipur in South Tripura) was annexed by Jujhar Pha, the seventy fourthraja of Tripura. Rangamati was made the capital of the kingdom from raja Lika onwards. Later, the name was changed to Udaipur by Udai Manikya, a king of the Manikya dynasty.

The followings factors initiated the process of state formation in Tripura:

- **Early contact with the Bengalis:** The Tripuris' early contact with the Bengalis proved to be one of the main factors for the state formation process in Tripura. It is believed that trade and commerce facilitated the contact between the Tripuris and the Bengalis. The king of Gour conferred the title of 'Manikya' on Ratna Pha and thereon, the successive kings of Tripura have been using it as a suffix to their names.
- **State formation under the leadership of Fa:** The Rajmala gives an account that the forefathers of the kings of Manikya dynasty established their kingdom in different places before the formation of the state of Tripura. However, whether the account of Rajmala is authentic or not needs verification. It is believed that the hill tribes of Tripura under the leadership of 'Fa' entered Tripura and initiated the process of state formation.

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- **Unity among the tribes:** The tribes were a united and well organised group. Various tribal groups were given important social position, for instance, the Jamatias were recruited in the army, the Halams enjoyed important social position.
- **Communication between the Tripuri tribes and the people of the plains:** The communication between the Tripuri tribes and the people residing in the plains, proved to be a determining factor in the state formation. This tribal group was more acquainted with the people of the plains as compared to other tribes. Because of this close association, the tribes benefitted from the political and socio-economic organization of the people of the plains.
- **Role of economy:** The economy played a very pivotal role in the state formation process. The Tripuri tribe along with other tribes of the state were engaged in Jhoom cultivation, which proved to be a milestone in improving their economic condition. Economic advancement among the tribal communities, in general, and among the Tripuri, in particular, can be attributed to the extension of cultivation through settled agriculture and organised village communities for generating surplus needed for the state. As a matter of fact, the Tripuris excelled in the Jhoom cultivation. They produced surplus products like paddy and jute. In addition to these agricultural products, they also obtained large quantity of forest products. They engaged in trade and commercial activities with the people of the plains. They earned substantial amount of profit by selling the surplus products, which contributed significantly in the state formation process. Tavernier, a foreign traveller, who had come to Bengal during the reign of Mughal emperor Shahjahan, had mentioned in his travelogue about two Tripuri merchants and about a Tripura king who had a silk industry.
- **Importance of individual ownership on land:** Some economists had given importance to individual ownership of land in the state formation process. The kings of Tripura acknowledged the ownership of land by the people residing in the plains. It is believed that Ratna Manikya invited many Bengalis to settle in Tripura and even allowed them the right to own property. Among the new settlers, many were related to Baro Bhuyias – the twelve zamindars of Bengal. The people of the plains practised plough cultivation which increased the production from land. This also increased the revenue of the king. The king used to collect forest materials as tax from the hill people. All these contributed to the organization of an efficient system of administration and the army, which was essential for the state formation process in Tripura.
- **Brahminical influences and the role of Hindu religion:** Temples bearing architectural designs from neighbouring states, immigration of peasant communities to the territory played a vital role in making the Hindu religion influence the indigenous inhabitants. The Brahminical influence was also facilitated by land grants to the Brahmins, which led to the extension of cultivation and the establishment of rural settlements in

territory of the aboriginals. The imposition of a feudal superstructure on a tribal society can be attributed to the breakdown of the tribal social structure and its fragmentation into a distinct social strata. At the top was the elite, belonging to the royal lineage, occupying the seat of power. They were sanskritized to a great extent, married other Kshtriya royal families, build temples around their territorial jurisdiction. They also validated their sanskritized religious supremacy by taking part in national pilgrimages and organizing regional fairs and festivals. Later, these festivals and fairs were secularized and universalized and attained the status of 'national festival of Tripura', which promoted the feeling of sub-nationalism.

- **Assistance of powerful neighbouring states in providing security:** It was essential for a newly formed state to have the assistance of the powerful neighbouring states in matters related to security. From the very beginning, the kings of Tripura accepted the suzerainty of the powerful sultans of Bengal and provided them with elephants. In lieu of this, they were recognised as a tributary state and received assistance from the sultans. The Rajmalatells us that Ratna Pha occupied the throne of Tripura with the help of Sultan of Gaur.
- **Muslim administration and military system:** The kings of Tripura followed the administrative system of the Muslim dynasty and the military set up of the kingdom of Gaur. The process of state formation began in the early 15th century. Owing to a series of invasions and chaos within the kingdom, it was essential that the military structure of the state be re-organised and an efficient system be set up. This contributed significantly to the development of the state.

Surajit Sinha remarks, 'Although, the concentration and expansion of political power of the heads of kingdoms and states in the tribal regions critically depended on the power of the king to extract surplus and exploit the technological productive power of the subjects, it is also observed that the head of the polities were expected to partially re-distribute the wealth through the organization of feasts and sacred festivals, buildings of temples, construction of tanks.' Records have shown that the king of Tripura used to organize a grand feast for the tribal subjects on the day of Dashami of the Durga puja, known as 'Hasam Bhojam'. The kings of Tripura constructed many tanks (dighi) all over the state and erected lot of temples. The royal family was involved in the celebration of the Kharchi Puja and Ker Puja.

Besides Rajmala, there are other sources which provide information on the process of state formation in Tripura. The illustrated book *Ain-i-Akbari*, written by Abul Fazl mention the reign of Vijay Manikya I (AD1532- 1563), 'Adjoining Bhati is an extensive tract of territory inhabited by the Tipperah tribes. The name of the ruler is Vijay Manik. Whoever obtains the chieftainship bears the title Manik after his name and the nobles that of Narayan. He has a force of two hundred thousand footmen and a thousand elephants. Horses are scarce.' Stewart, a European historian, has written in his book *The History of Bengal*, 'The province of Tippera, which from time immemorial had been an independent kingdom, was annexed to the Mughal empire.' This did not mean that the state lost its independent status. It was only the portion to

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the west and south of the district of British Tippera that was converted into the zamindari of Roshanabad. This fact becomes clear in Irfan Habib's book *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, in which he mentions Tripura as Tipara. According to a famous book *Bharistan – i- Ghayabi*, 'The king of Tripura resisted the Mughals with an army of one thousand cavalry, sixty thousand infantry and two hundred elephants.'

The Ancient Period

There is a paucity of sources regarding the administration of Tripura prior to the reign of Ratna Manikya. The Rajmala also does not throw any light on it. The history of administrative control of the Tripura government can be found in the early chronicles and are based mainly on myths and legends. In ancient period, there was no powerful monarchy, who effectively controlled the entire tract.

In ancient period, a large part of this region was under the control of various dynasties such as Vanga and Samatata. These dynasties, in all probability, had no effective control over the entire region. The hilly region, inhabited by several tribes, settled themselves under their respective chiefs. Each tribe had its own social and administrative set up. The chief of the Tripuri tribe, whose title was 'Pha', was able to exercise his influence over the chiefs of other tribes. The 'Pha' ruled over his people with the help of tribal administrative organization. Chantai or priest worked as a minister and gave advice to the chief in various internal and external affairs. The other tribal officials were Ghalim, Cabra, Baruah. There was no land revenue system. The tribes had to give some forest products and tributes, had to perform civil and military duties, if required to their nominal head, the chief of the Tripura tribe.

Administrative system of the Tripuris

The Tripuris are the largest ruling tribe in Tripura. When the chiefs of this tribe extended their areas to the plain land and its adjoining districts, they were influenced by the Hindu society and culture of the neighbouring states. Each of the Tippera village was self-governed. While, the men in the village could participate in the affairs of the council, the women did not participate in the activities of the government. The designation of the chief varied from village to village. He was, either called a 'Chaudhuri' or 'Sardar'. The following chart shows the designation and duties of the village panchayat of a Tripuri village:

Table 1.1 Designation and Duties of Village Panchayat of a Tripuri Village

Sl. No.	Designation	Duties
1.	Chaudhuri/ Sardar	Chief of the village, head of the administration, distributes Jhoom fields, supervises ceremonies, settles disputes and collects taxes
2.	Karbari	Secretary to the chief, assists the chief in all matters, supervises the work of the village administration
3.	Ojhai/Akcai	Priest of the village, supervises all religious ceremonies and marriages, treats diseases
4.	Bhandari	Storekeeper, looks after store in ceremonies, marriages and religious occasions
5.	Khandal	Peon and sepoy, informs the villagers about any meeting

The rulers of Tripura gave up their original title of 'Pha' and took the title of 'Manikya'. According to Rajmala, king Dangar Pha divided his kingdom into seventeen divisions and placed them under his sons. These places were as follows:

- Kachrang
- Acharang
- Rajnagar
- Agartala
- Dharmanagar
- Tarak
- Bishalgarh
- Khutumura
- Lakbari
- Madhugram
- Thannangchi
- Bank of river Mohuri
- Lawganga
- Barak
- Telarang
- Dhoopathar
- Manipur

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Administrative system of the Reangs

As stated earlier, the Reangs are the second largest tribe after the Tripuris and presumably ruled over parts of the state. Their administrative set up was a three-tier system at the village, clan and tribe level. The chief of the village was known as a *Chaudhuri*.

Table 1.2 The Village Council of the Reangs

Sl.No	Designation	Duties
1.	Chaudhuri/ Kami Fang	Village headman
2.	Kher Pang	Manager, storekeeper
3.	Akcai	Priest
4.	Khandal	Peon and bodyguard
5.	Daoa	Messenger

- **The zonal council of the Reangs:** The village council is followed by the zonal council. There were three zonal councils. Three chiefs were selected from three zones. The chief of a zone would be addressed as *Huklai*

Chaudhuri. Hazra and *Dehazra* would assist him. For the smooth functioning of the administration of the Reang community, the *Huklai Chaudhuri* acted as a link between the central and village administration.

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- **The state level council of the Reangs:** There were twenty-seven administrative heads for the fourteen *dafas* and they had nineteen different designations. The heads together formed the central administrative machinery of the Reangs. While *Roy* was king for the whole tribe, *Kachkau* acted as a minister to him. The following table describes the apex body of the Reangs:

Table 1.3 Apex Body of the Reangs

Sl.No.	Designation	Duties
1.	Roy or Kami Kachkao	Chief or Raja
2.	Chapia Khan	Prime Minister
3.	Chapia	Minister
4.	Hukulai Chaudhuri	Zonal chief
5.	Chheng Krak	Chief of the army
6.	Akcai	Priest
7.	Vaidya	Physian
8.	Yak Sunga	Swordsman
9.	Bhandari	Treasurer/ Store keeper
10.	Khang Kalem	Tax collector
11.	Dalai/Dar Kalai/Dharia	Assistant priest
12.	Hazra	Assistant zonal chief
13.	De Hazra	Junior Assistant zonal chief
14.	Daoa	Messenger
15.	Duguria	Band party master

All the tribal village councils in Tripura have certain similarities amongst them. Their main source of information is traditions and beliefs. There is no reliable source available at our disposal which gives us information about their genesis. Each tribe had an electorate system of self- governing institutions. However, it is a matter of great concern that at present, only the remnants of such institutions are found in the village councils.

Pre-colonial or Medieval Period

Originally, the rulers of Tripura had not assumed the title of 'Manikya' and were known by the title of 'Pha'. It is said that the Tripura rajas are said to have assumed the title of Manikya from the reign of Ratna Manikya. Henceforth, the traditional title of 'Pha' or 'Fa' was not used in future.

It was Ratna Manikya, who brought three Bengalis named Bara Khandab Ghosh, Pandit Raj and Joynarayan Sen from Lakshanabati to govern his nascent administration. He created the post of 'Seristas' and introduced both Bengali and Persian as the official languages. The administrative system had three distinct features of Hindu, Muslim and tribal. The Rajmala mentions, 'distant or newly conquered provinces were ruled by Laskars. Nasul and Chhambalnagar (Kailashahar) were administered by such rulers. Laskars were held in great esteem and wielded overall authority over their regions.'

The State structure of the Manikya period were organized in the following manner:

Kingship and form of the government

The rulers of Tripura who took the title 'Manikya', were assisted by a group of nobles known as *Narayans* who were related to the king through blood and possessed an army. Their post was hereditary. The king had the full autonomous power over the administration of the state. As head of the state, the king of the Manikya dynasties paid due attention to the maintenance of law and order. The early Manikya rulers supported the Brahmins in the form of endowing them with land grants and money. Some of the rulers were patrons of art and literature. During the reign of Dharma Manikya I and Dhanya Manikya. The literary activities of the state of Tripura had reached its climax. Music was also popularised by the kings of this dynasty. It was probably Ratna Manikya who introduced administrative reforms based on the Muslim system of administration. It is generally believed that he created four official posts at the centre in accordance to the Muslim administrative system. These posts were as follows:

- **Suba:** He was the main officer who acted as commander-in-chief of the army. Owing to his position as head of the army, his influence was extensive. Generally, the office of the suba was confined to the members of the royal family and the relatives of the kings. For instance, Daitya Narayana, father-in-law of Vijay Manikya I, Rajadhara Narayana, the second son of Amar Manikya, Govinda Deva, the eldest son of Kalyana Manikya, held the position of Suba. But, there were exceptions to this rule. Ray Kachag, who held the post of suba, was not related to the royal family.
- **Uzir or minister:** The Uzir or Minister had one of the important posts in the central administration of the kingdom. He was incharge of the revenue department. Before the reign of Krishna Manikya, the Bengalis were appointed as uzir. But, Krishna Manikya had appointed his own relative Jaydeva as his uzir. It is believed that Vijay Manikya introduced the post of uzir to curtail the power of the generals. It is said that the members belonging to the family of

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the well-known Khandava Ghosh held this prestigious post for a long period of time.

- **Nazir:** The Nazir had a significant role to play in the administration of the Manikya period. The job of the Nazir was to manage the police department. Thus, he was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the country. The relatives of the kings used to hold the office of Nazir.
- **Diwan:** The Diwan was incharge of the finance department. He looked after the accounts. This post was hereditary in nature. Previously, the Bengalis were appointed as diwan. Krishna Manikya appointed two diwans, one Bengali diwan to look after his zamindari in the plains and the other who was a relative of the king to look after affairs in the hills. As the administrative system became more complex the number of officials were increased. During the reign of Ratna Manikya II, several referances of officials like Uzir, Nazir, Nemujir, Karkoon, Kotowal, Muchib, and Diwan can be found.. The tribble organization and customs were not neglected completely. The administration of Tripura in the medieval period was an admixture of tribal, Hindu and Muslim system of administration.
- **Yubraj:** As a successor to the king, *Yubraj* or crown-prince was next to the king in power and stature. He was in-charge of the revenue, soldiers and elephants. He had to take the lead in the field when occasion demanded. The issue of succession worried the king and to avoid any crisis, the post of ‘Yubraj’ was created by the king. The idea behind the creation for the post was to ensure the succession of the prince during the reign of the king himself.
- **Barthkur:** Barthakur was next to Yubaraj in power and position. He had to collect elephants from the forest. This post was created by Ramdev Manikya (AD1673-1682) In order of succession, Barthakur was third in line. In case of any accident, or death of the Yubraj, the Barthakur was expected to take charge of the administration.
- **Thakur:** The other members of the royal family of Tripura were known as *Thakur*. It was Kalyan Manikya (AD1624-1660), who conferred the title of ‘Thakur’ on those princes who could not become kings. The number of Thakurs were enormous and they held powerful posts in the administration. Their position was similar to that of nobles or urban class of aristocrats.

The King and his family lived in the capital. The capital and its adjoining villages were under the direct control of the king. The plains of Tripura and adjoining areas around the capital were divided in several *parganas*. Each pargana was ruled by an officer known as *chowdhury*. Peripheral regions and newly conquered provinces were ruled by *laskar*, who exercised overall authority over their respective regions. We also find a reference to *thana* which was used as a military base in a newly conquered land. The in charge of a thana was known as the *thanadar*. However, the tribal chiefs, retained their hold over their respective tribes and ruled according to their own system.

Justice

There were no codified law. Justice was dispensed according to a primitive system of equity and good conscience. There was no regular judicial procedure. The rulers were the judges. There was no permanent jail. The prisoners under trial were kept in a camp. The punishment for crimes was severe and criminals were beheaded publicly.

Sources of Income

The revenue from the plains, tribute from the tribal chiefs which mainly came in the form of elephants and forest products were the main sources of income of the king. There was the currency system. The people, who were under the direct control of the King, had to pay taxes. There was no system of land revenue in the hills. As the plough cultivation was not in practice in the hills, the king had to levy a house tax on each family. Tavernier, in his account had mentioned that the king of Tripura had a gold mine and silk factory. Revenue of some paraganas were allotted for the expenses of the queens and members of the royal family.

The Army

In the medieval period the rulers of Tripura were often in confrontation with the sultans of Bengal. As such they maintained a large army. Abul Fazl in his book had mentioned that Vijay Manikya possessed two hundred thousand footmen and a thousand elephants. The Rajmala states, 'Vijay Manikya recruited ten thousand Afghan horse soldiers in his army and possessed five thousand speed boats.' Amar Manikya maintained Portuguese artillery as well. The generals of the army were selected from the rank of Narayans, who were related to the king by blood and belonged to the Tripuri tribe. The Commander-in-Chief of the army was known as suba, took the title of 'Daitya Narayan' Nazir, had to maintain law and order in the country. He also had to participate in wars, if the need arises. The royal army consisted of the traditional four limbs (*chaturanga*) viz. infantry, cavalry, navy and elephants.

The army was equipped with various weapons. The chief weapon used during this period was *Khadga* (sword), bow and arrow were also in use. Pointed and poisoned bamboo poles, poisoned arrow and many other indigenous weapons were used in the warfare. It is also stated that the Tripura troops used cannons.

Michip

The actual meaning of the word 'Michip' is coordinator, interpreter and linkman. The practise of selecting people among the *Thakurs* to serve as co-ordinators between the king and the tribal communities is an old one. It was the duty of the Michip to look after the welfare of the tribe who were under his leadership, to provide food and lodging to them when their leaders used to visit the capital. He also listened to their grievances and brought them to the royal court to be addressed by the king.

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Hasham Bhojan

The practise of organising an annual royal feast at the capital was known as *Hasham Bhojan* or *Asha Bhojan*. All the tribal chiefs and headmen were invited and entertained, once a year, at the time of Durga Puja in the month of october. It was a grand occasion and dialogues were exchanged between the king and his subjects.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who founded the state of Tripura?
2. Mention the largest ruling tribe in the state of Tripura.

1.3 BRITISH RELATION WITH CHAKLA ROSHANABAD AND HILL TRIPURA

From the end of the Mughal period till India's independence, the kings of Tripura performed a dual role in the two diverse geographical terrain of the state. In the hills, he enjoyed the status of the king and in the fertile plains (acquired from the *Nawab* of Bengal) his designation was that of a *Zamindar*. This fertile tract of land was known as *Chaklaroshnabad*. According to W.W. Hunter, Chaklaroshnabad was, 'by far, the most valuable portion of the Raja's possession and yielded larger revenue than the whole of his kingdom of Tipperah'.

It was in 1761, when the British colonial rulers, for the first time, came in contact with Tripura, following military help provided to the *Nawab* of Bengal Mir Qasim, in his expedition against Krishna Manikya. Although, initially the colonial rulers were asked only for military help, later on, they gained authority in the plain land. The British colonialists noticed that the territory was divided into two parts: the hills and plains. What surprised them was the fact that while in the hills, the ruler was independent; but in the plains (*Chaklaroshnabad*), he was a *Zamindar* under the *Nawab* of Bengal. The British came to dominate the affairs of Tripura by gaining control over *Chaklaroshnabad*. The British conquered Chaklaroshnabad in AD 1761 and the revenue collected from this huge fertile land was fixed at rupees one lakh and one *sicca* for the first year. However, no revenue was collected from the hills. It is important to explain in detail the history of *Chaklaroshnabad* to understand British relation with Tripura.

Chaklaroshnabad is a huge fertile land comprising the territories of Noakhali, Tipperah, Sreehatta/Sylhet and Brahmanbaria. Once it was part of the kingdom of Tripura, but after the conquest of Mir Habib it became the *zamindari* of the Tripura ruler. After independence, it became a part of East Pakistan, (present Bangladesh) a great loss for Tripura, in particular, and India, in general. It was a permanently settled estate spread over an area of 570 sq miles. The estate was originally a part of the state of Tippera, which came into possession of the Mohammadans in 1733. The Mohammadans collected revenue from the plains and not from the hills. The

East India Company followed their example. The revenue assessed as per the Permanent Settlement in 1793 was *Sicca* ₹ 1, 39, 676. At the request of the raja, the estate was brought under survey in 1892-99. Excluding the portion in Sylhet, which was not surveyed, the area measured was 558 sq miles of which 401 were cultivated, 39 cultivable waste, and the rest was made up of uncultivable land and water bodies; 517 sq. miles was rent payable, and out of this area 252 sq. miles was under direct control of the *ryots*, 208 sq miles by tenure-holders with variable rents, and the balance by tenure-holders at fixed rents. The population of the estate in 1891 was 467,000 or 837 persons per sq. mile. The settlement increased the rental of the estate from 5.84 lakhs to 6.76 lakhs or by 16 per cent.

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The internal quarrels among the royal family members were a common phenomenon. During the reign of Dharma Manikya, Jagat Ram (the great grandson of Maharaja Chhatra Manikya) invaded Tripura with help of Mir Habib (the Dewan of Neoabat of Dhaka) and Aka Saddak (*zamindar* of Baldakhal), sought the permission of Shuja-Ud-Din Khan, the then Nawab of Bengal. In the ensuing war which took place at Comilla, Dharma Manikya was defeated and took shelter in his kingdom in the hills. Though Dharma Manikya lost the *zamindari* of *Chaklaroshnabad*, his kingdom in the hills remained intact. Mir Habib declared Jagat Thakur as the raja of Tripura and conferred the title of Raja Jagat Manikya. However, he had control over only the plain land for which he had to give the Nawab of Bengal an annual revenue of rupees 92, 993. Shuja-Ud-Din named the plain land of Tripura as 'Chaklarosnabad' and converted it into a *zamindari* land of the Maharaja of Tripura in lieu of an annual revenue. J.G. Cunning said, 'The tract corresponds to the present estate of *Roshnabad*, the Mughals, left the hilly portion alone.' The word '*Chakla*' means circle and '*Roshnabad*' means land of light. However, Jagat Manikya could not hold on to kingdom in the plain for a long time.

Dharma Manikya went to Murshidabad to meet the Nawab of Bengal. The nawab decided to award the *zamindari* of *Chaklaroshnabad* to Dharma Manikya instead of Jagat Manikya. Thus, *Chaklaroshnabad* which was once a part of the administrative system of Tripura, became a separate *zamindari* of the Maharaja for which he had to pay an annual revenue to the *nawab* of Bengal. Then onwards, the kings of Tripura had two status—in the hills, he was an independent king, while in *Chaklaroshnabad*, he was a *zamindar* under the *nawab* of Bengal.

Dhara Manikya was succeeded by his brother, who adopted the title of Mukunda Manikya. After Mukunda Manikya, the rulers of Tripura were weak. Taking advantage of such a situation, Shamsar Gazi attacked and captured the entire region. In return, he paid a hefty sum of revenue to the *nawab* of Bengal. But Mir Qasim removed Shamsar Gazi from the throne of Tripura on charges of anarchy, captured and killed him. He put Krishna Manikya on the throne. Soon, a dispute broke out between the two over the amount of revenue to be collected from *Chaklaroshnabad*. During this period, the British colonisers established their administrative set up at Chittagong on 8 November 1760, headed by Mr Verelest. The *nawab* requested British Governor to provide military aid in the expedition against Krishna Manikya. Accordingly, Mr Verelest sent military aid under the command of Lt Mathews. Interestingly, Krishna Manikya, instead of surrendering

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to the *nawab* of Bengal, surrendered to the British. E.F. Sandys remarked, ‘he (Krishna Manikya) had escaped from the cruel claws of the Mughal tiger only to fall into the rapacious jaws of the English lion.’ A treaty was signed between the two according to which the king agreed to give an annual revenue of Chaklaroshnabad to the British, which earlier he used to pay the *nawab*. In return, the British Government agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of his kingdom, especially in the hills.

The colonial rulers agreed not to interfere in the administration of the internal affairs in the hilly areas, not out of generosity, but because they found the hilly region to be unprofitable for it was a barren land, inhabited by primitive tribes. ‘Indeed the hills were left undisturbed not because the company sought to “conciliate the Rajah” or show generosity to a foe in their power,’ as indicated by Halliday, but because these were not profitable. Then, the Company was, to some extent, apprehensive of the tribes inhabiting the hills, of whom nothing was known. Therefore, in the settlement with the Raja no reference was made to the hills. Hence, the hills came to be known as ‘Independent Tripura’. A British revenue collector, Marriot, was sent to enquire into the resources of the country. He found the hilly part of the land was covered with jungles and inhabited by people who knows nothing and used to remain unclothed. A. Mackenzie explained the revenue collector’s observation of the plains of Tripura in the following words, ‘The paying part of Tipperah, lay on the plains and appeared in the Mohammedan revenue roll as *pergunnah Roshnabad*. For these, of course a settlement was made. We found it a *zamindari* and as such we treated it.’ In case of the hills, the revenue collector’s observation was, ‘But of the barren hills. . . . we took no cognizance. Covered with jungles and inhabited by tribes, of whom nothing was known, save that they were uncouth in speech and not particular as clothing The Rajah claimed to exercise authority over them, but did not. . . seemed, derive much profit from them. Thus, till 1860s the British Government did not interfere in the affairs of the Maharaja’s administration in the hills.’

Though Tripura was completely at the mercy of the British Government, it must be said that at least upto early 1860s, the British Government gave it due recognition as an independent state. Even, as late as 1861, the Rajas of Tripura received assurance from the colonial Government about their policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the state. The British Government was yet to formulate a definite policy towards it because of its insignificance as a state.

Though the British Government followed the policy of neutrality and non-intervention in the administrative affairs of the hills for over a century, a change, slowly, became noticeable in their policy during the late sixties of the 19th century. The Lt Governor of Bengal suggested that the Government of India use the word ‘Hill Tipperah’ instead of ‘Independent Tipperah’, as the territory, though not subject to the jurisdiction of the courts, was not politically independent. This suggestion was approved in the Resolution of the Government of India Number 237, dated 26 September 1866. The traditional independence of Tripura was scrapped off overnight. Moreover, during the same period the *Nazrana* Resolutions of 30 March 1870, Government of India was published, which stressed on the point that as ‘Hill Tipperah’ was not an independent territory, the rulers of Tripura, would henceforth, be subject

to Nazrana rules. According to this rule, if the ruler had a successor, the *nazar* or tribute to be paid to the government at the time of succession, which would be half of the annual revenue of the state, in all other cases, the '*nazar*' would be one year's revenue.

During the second half of 1870, the Government decided to appoint an agent in Tripura due to the fact that the Raja was in the habit of sending expeditions against the Kookies, who retaliated by conducting raids. The British felt that it was absolutely essential to prohibit the Raja from conducting raids against the tribes without their permission. According to A. Mackenzie, junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 'The object of the appointment of the agent should be clearly explained to the Raja. He should be told that while it is not the intention of the Government to interfere in the management of his hill possession, the present anomalous state of things under which a British subject exercises absolute authority in a tract of country surrounded by British territory can no longer be permitted.'

The British interference in Tripura started through their political agents who used to dominate the Maharaja in various ways. For instance, in 1889, (August) under instructions from Lt Governor of Bengal, the officiating political agent R. T. Greer, visited Tripura with advice for Birchandra Manikya, for reform measures on certain issues. It was decided that in consultation with the political agent, the Maharaja should appoint a minister and a manager for five years with full administrative powers of the state and over the maharaja's *zamindaris* as well. During this tenure of five years, the minister and the manager would supply information about the state as well as Maharaja's zamindari to the political agent. Their dismissal should be done only after consultation with the political agent.

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya was dissatisfied with this kind of British intervention in his administrative affairs. He, in a letter to the Lt Governor of Bengal in 1889, (September 27) expressed his opinion that the proposal of Mr Greer will result sooner or later result in total loss of his independence. He, however, agreed to sign the memorandum, fearing that a refusal might displease the Lt Governor of Bengal which might be construed with disloyalty towards the British Government. In spite of his displeasure, the Maharaja was forced to appoint an assistant political agent, Umakanta Das, as minister of the state in 1890. After two and a half years, when the Maharaja wanted the resignation of the agent and issued a dismissal order, the minister continued administering the state, claiming that the Maharaja could not do so without permission of the Bengal Government. The Maharaja, ultimately, had to withdraw his dismissal order. At the Comilla Durbar held in 1892, the maharaja met the Lt Governor, who agreed to withdraw Umakanta Das. In return, the Maharaja was asked to submit an annual administrative report to the Government. The Maharaja also had to pay a visit to the commissioner of Chittagong at Comilla, whenever he was asked to supply all the necessary information. The Comilla Durbar was shrewdly organized to wiring concessions and to bring the state to a position, hardly tenable with the concept of independent status. In the Arms Act, the maharaja had used the word '*Swadhin* Tripura' (Independent Tripura). The Magistrate and ex-officio political agent, T. Emerson wrote to the minister of state, reminding him that the use of the word '*Swadhin*' (independent) to describe the state, appears to be contrary

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to the orders of the Bengal Government. Through various instances, the maharaja was reminded, time and again that he had no status of an independent ruler.

Besides losing independence, the state, mysteriously lost almost half of its territory which even shocked the British. Till the second half of 1857, the total area of the state was 7,632 sq miles and its eastern boundary was identical to the western limits of Burmah (Major Rennel's map of Bengal, 1781, corroborated this, as did Thornton's Gazetteer of 1857). However, during the Lushai expedition of 1871-72, the eastern boundary was pushed to the Longai river on the west and a notification was issued to that effect on 13 June, 1874, which resulted in loss of territories, bringing down its area to half.

Lushai was not been wrested from the rulers of Tripura by rightful conquest. It was gradually absorbed within British India. It appears from records of the then political agents and the commissioners of Chittagong that the Longai boundary was merely a provisional 'Inner Line of Defense'. But the tract was not restored to the state on the ground that the Lushai troubles were not over. The situation persisted till 1900 when the Government of India issued a notification, without knowledge of the Tripura Durbar, confirming Langai river as the western boundary of the Lushai hill district.

It is interesting as to why the British Government which was unwilling to annex any portion of the hilly Tipperah in the initial stage became very active in acquiring that area in the later stage. As per John Edgar's notes, (who undertook a tour among Lushais in 1871) the British Government, coming under pressure from the tea planters and missionaries, annexed a large tract of territory to the state. While the tea planters were strongly against the transfer of the territory, the missionaries objected to the transfer of the territory on the ground that they would not be allowed a free hand in the territory directly under the rule of the king.

In spite of their subordinate position, the rulers of Tripura maintained their loyalty towards imperial power because their very existence depended upon it. The rulers, in turn, received certain concessions such as the thirteen gun salutes, the title of hereditary Maharaja or the *Sanad* of hereditary succession. But, whenever the imperialist interest were affected, there was no compromise on their part. The case of the Lushai expedition clearly demonstrates this fact. The Tripura Durbar repeatedly objected to this boundary in 1890, 1891, 1897, 1905, 1913 and 1919. There were several other protests and representations between 1891 and 1897.

The kings were dissatisfied with British Government owing to the difference between what was declared as policies and what was practiced in reality. For instance, in 1870, Birchandra Manikya was asked to use the title 'raja' instead of Maharaja on the ground that the proper title of the hill Tipperah chief is 'Raja' and not 'Maharaja' and that by that title of the chief of hill Tipperah is to be addressed in future in official correspondence. Birchandra Manikya, ultimately, received the higher title of Maharaja by proving his absolute loyalty to the British Government by contributing generously to the celebration held at Comilla on the occasion of the assumption of the title of 'Empress of India' by Queen Victoria.

Such displays of loyalty to the British Government should not be constructed as reconciliation to the British rule. It was but a plot adopted by the princes of India

to preserve tenets of their tradition against a much superior force. But in their minds they had grievances against this dominating attitude of the imperialistic Government.

1.3.1 Appointment of Political Agent

The British occupied the plains of Tripura and Raja Krishna Manikya had surrendered to them. The intention of Governor Vansittart was to reduce the Raja to his due state of obedience to the Government of Islamabad and to gain some advantages from the expedition of the Nawab of Bengal. The Raja of Tripura became a zamindar in the plains and a British resident was appointed in his court to look after the affairs of the zamindari. After the death of Krishna Manikya in 1861, the region was converted into a *khas* land of the company. It was returned to his successor, Rajdhar Manikya, after ten years in 1792, under the permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis.

The administration in the plains began to modernize under the supervision of the East India Company. Mr Leeke was appointed Resident in the court of Krishna Manikya to look after the affairs of Chaklaroshnabad. During his tenure, the judicial system of the plains was separated from that of the hills. The king would appoint judges for the territories in the hills, where he was the supreme chief. However, the court of Roshnabad was composed of the British Resident and the king himself or his representative, the *Dewan* of Roshnabad. This is evident from the copies of some judgments delivered at that time under joint seal and signature.

In 1792, when Roshnabad was given to Maharaja Rajdhar Manikya under permanent settlement, the post of the Resident was abolished, the territory was turned into the district of 'Roshnabad Tripura' and a British collector was appointed in the court of the Maharaja

A political agent was appointed again in 1871 on the suggestion of the Bengal Government to assist the Raja, mainly to advise him in his treatment of the kookies. The appointment was abolished in 1878. The maintenance of Government's political relation with the state was entrusted on the Magistrate of Tipperah. An officer of the designation of a Deputy Magistrate was also stationed at Agartala. These officers brought some reforms in the administrative system of Tripura, such as the establishment of higher courts on the British model, codification of laws, looking into the interests of the common people, showing respect to the princes for rule of law and cessation of succession feuds.

Birchandra Manikya is regarded as the architect of modern Tripura. During the initial stage of his reign, the appointment of untrained and treacherous *Thakurs* in responsible posts (in 1872) resulted in disorder and financial difficulties.

In 1871, a political agent was appointed to reside in Agartala, with the special objective of protecting the British interests in the frontier which suffered from the raids carried out by the Lushaisinto, the British territory. Mr A.W.B. Power was the first political agent of Tripura. It was explained to the king that this appointment did not denote a policy that would in any way prejudice his interests or interfere in the exercise of his authority within his state.

It was during Birchandra's reign, when for the first time the British had the opportunity to intervene into the internal affairs of Tripura. Previously, during Krishna

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Manikya's reign, though Mr Ralph Leeke was appointed as the Resident of Tripura, his sole function was to look into the affairs of the *zamindari* of *Roshnabad*. At first, Maharaja Birchandra objected to the appointment of a political agent in his independent state. However, the agents were a strong force in the state. They would oblige the Raja directly in times of emergencies. At the same time, they could compel him to act according to the will of the Government of India by sending adverse reports against his administration. An important instance by their direct advice is the reform brought within the judiciary by the Maharaja with the advice of the Political agent Mr A.B. Power in 1872.

Birchandra appointed Comilla's Sub Registrar Nilmani Das to the post of Dewan of Tripura State in 1873 acting on the advice of British officer W.F. Campbell (Dewan of Roshnabad). Nilmani was an experienced administrator. He introduced a number of administrative procedures, such as the establishment of excise department, stamp duty and rules for the registration of documents. He also created the sub-division of Udaipur which fostered the development of the southern portion of hill Tipperah. Shri Uday Chandra Sen was placed in charge of the sub-division, Sonamura was made the headquarter of the sub-division as Udaipur would become inaccessible and unhealthy during the rainy season. Later, another sub-division was created at Belonia. In 1895-96, towards the end of Birchandra's reign, Dharmaagar division and Khowai sub-division were created. Maharaja Birchandra, for better administration of the northern portion of the state, had created Kailasahar division. Durga Prasad Gupta was appointed as the Superintendent of the Kailasahar division with similar powers as those of the Deputy Commissioners of the British Indian territory. The Sadar Magistrate was also appointed. Previously, such regional administrative system in the pattern of District administration was not introduced within the territory of hill Tipperah. The introduction of this pattern and creation of new departments increased the number of posts in the administration and trained officials were appointed to those posts. Thus, a bureaucratic administrative system was created, for the first time by Birchandra, acting on the advice of the British officers. Maharaja Birchandra established *Khas Appeal Adalat* (Royal Court of Appeal) in 1872, on the advice of the political agent, for producing final judgement on the civil and criminal cases. The court was constituted of two judges, Raja Mukundaram Roy, a descendant of Chhatra Manikya, and Braja Mohan Thakur. It was modeled, to some extent, on the lines of the Privy Council in England. The judgements were issued bearing the signature of the Maharaja on the recommendations made by the judges of the Khas Appeal Adalat. Since ancient time there was a *Pahari Adalat*, (Hill Court of Appeal) dealt with appeals which came from the self-administrative councils of the tribes. The self-administrative units varied from tribe to tribe.

The Pahari Adalat was abolished for bringing about unification within the judicial system. The judges of the civil and criminal courts, who had to deal with the cases of the hill court, were advised to keep an eye on the rules prescribed for the cases of the hill tribes. The *Seristadar* of the hill court had some administrative functions which he performed under the supervision of the hill court.

The abolition of *Pahari Adalat* was a step towards modernization. First, it was the beginning of the process of unifying the judiciary. Second, it separated the executive from the judiciary shaking off the traditional tribal system. Steps were taken for codification of laws. The *Dewan* of Chaklaroshnabad, Munshi Ishan Chandra, compiled the civil and criminal laws of Tripura. Before that there were no written laws. The Maharajas framed rules for different purposes from time to time. The compilation of the civil and criminal laws by Shri Gupta may be regarded as the first written code. Towards the end of his reign, the Maharaja also formed a Legislative Council (*Byabasthapak Sabha*), an organization created for the first time in the state.

Often pressures from political agents compelled the Maharaja to change officers in the administration, to introduce reforms of varying degrees in the administration and to follow economic measures in tune with the expenditure of the state. However, the political agents did not exercise complete mastery over the Maharaja as has been remarked by Colonel Mahim Chandra *Thakur*. The Lieutenant Governors and the Governor General were sympathetic and in their behavior towards the Maharaja. Contributions of the ministers appointed from among the experienced officers of the British administration was an important factor in changing and remodeling the administrative set up towards modernization. Among these officers, Mr W.F. Campbell, Munshi Ishan Chandra Gupta, Babo Nilmoni Das, Sub-Registrar of Comilla Sri Dinanath Sen, Assistant Inspector of schools, Dacca Division, Ray Umakantha Das Bahadoor, Assistant political agent, Babo Mohini Mohan Bardhan, were appointed who contributed to the systematic functioning of the administration. They framed rules, codified laws, introduced procedural reforms, reorganized revenue system, divided the central administration into regional divisions and laid the foundation of a bureaucratic order. Thus, an attempt was made to decentralize the authority of a traditional patriarch which may be regarded as an important feature of modernization.

The appointment of a political agent at Agartala was finally abolished in 1878. The magistrate and collector of Tripura became the ex-officio political agent with an Indian officer as an assistant political agent at Agartala. In 1890, it was decided that in consultation with the ex-officio political agent, the king would select and appoint a minister in charge of administration. Accordingly, Rai Umakanta Das Bahadur was appointed as the minister. This agreement continued until 1892. The king was asked to submit an annual report on it and he, himself or the *Yubaraj* and *Barathakur*, should attend the occasion of the visit of the Commissioner, every year at Comilla. The appointment of assistant political agent at Agartala was abolished in the same year.

Steps were also taken to abolish certain social evils. The most important social reforms undertaken by Birchandra Manikya were the abolition of Slavery and Sati system. The system of slavery was a common practise in Tripura from a very early period. The rulers of Tripura brought slaves from the adjoining states. Most of eunuchs of the palace were selected from among the slaves. In India, slavery was abolished by Act V of 1843. The British Government requested the Government of Tripura to abolish this system. Bir Chandra Manikya obliged and abolished this system in AD1877. Regarding the abolition of slavery in Tripura,

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Mr Bolton, the officiating political agent of Tripura reported, 'with regard to the subject of domestic slavery, I am glad to report that since the close of the year the Maharaja has issued a proclamation forbidding the sale, purchase, receiving in pledge, or forcible detention as a slave, of any human being, under penalties to be awarded by the criminal courts but authorizing the making of contracts of service for a period not exceeding three years. The proclamation, I think, deals effectively with the custom of domestic slavery. The persons who are actually slaves have the option of leaving or staying with their masters, and future dealings in slaves are stopped, while the power to make contracts of service is some compensation to the class which has hitherto been accustomed to rely on the labour of slaves and also an advantage to any person who may be willing to promise their service for the sake of an immediate gain. The Maharaja's action in this matter is deserving of praise.'

Though Sati was legally forbidden in British India, however, the practice still continued in hilly Tipperah till the end of the nineteenth century. A glimpse into the Rajmala, three decades back, show that 'Sati' was prevalent among the royals during the first half of sixteenth century. The *Rajmala* mentions that after the death of Maharaja Dhanya Manikya, his wife kamala Devi committed 'Sati'. Reference to 'Sati' among the royal family of Tripura is also available in Tripura *Desher katha Likha* or *Tripura Burunji* written by Ratna Kandali Sharma and Arjundas Boiragi during first half of eighteenth century.

It is well known that in a tribal society, women enjoy considerably high status and freedom. Widow remarriage is allowed in this society. The practice of '*pardah*' is not prevalent. In shifting cultivation, (popularly known as *jhum* cultivation) women equally participated along with male members. Certain customs like *Kai-jag-nani* and *Hik-nana-ni* bears proof of the fact that in marriages, the opinion of a tribal woman is important. A question now arises as to how practice of sati entered into the tribal society? The tribals of Tripura basically belong to the Mongoloid race and the practice of Sati was not present in their social system. Scholars think that it was adopted by them from the Hindus when they came in contact with the Bengali Hindus, mostly from east Pakistan or present Bangladesh. Dr Deepak Kumar Chaudhury, a regional historian, described this practice of sati among tribal people, as an interesting aspect of the social history of the Indian tribes, which belies the general notion that Sati i.e., the burning of widows with their deceased husbands, was only confined to the caste Hindus. It has been observed that some of the hill tribes of Tripura, particularly the Jamatia tribe, regularly practiced Sati, although widow remarriage was common among them and widows were never socially ostracized in their communities. This peculiar behaviour pattern of the tribes of Tripura – practice of widow remarriage on the one hand and burning of widows on the other, is difficult to explain.

In 1871, the British Government appointed Umakanta Das as political agent of Tripura in order to stop the practice. Umakanta Das, during his visit to Tripura collected relevant facts about the prevalence of Sati custom while travelling to Sonamura area of the state. He wrote a letter to the officer in charge of the Maharaja , Babu Ganga Charan Bhattacharya, on 11 June, 1888, 'During my recent visit to Sonamura sub-division in Marc, I learnt of three cases of the kind having occurred

among the Jamatias in the course of last two or three years. These cases are noted in the margin. If any more have taken place within the last four and five years anywhere in the state this office may be supplied with a list of them.’

The Maharaja had informed the British Government that practice of Sati was abolished in the state. Umakanta Das, a letter to Ganga Charan, mentioned, ‘the order of prohibition is perhaps either very old and has now well been forgotten, or is not sufficiently strict, otherwise, so many cases as three occurring in succession to one another, could hardly have passed unnoticed. I, therefore, beg to suggest that a fresh proclamation strictly prohibiting the practice and making it a punishable offence be issued and widely circulated.’ The letter disclosed the following cases of sati:

- Widow of Charan Senapati of Brahma Cherra.
- Widow of Ganga Mohan Senapati named Beni Lakshmi of Failong Cherra.
- Widow of Milaram Burma of Hantarai Choudhury para, in Tuiruppa Cherra.

On 26 August 1888, a letter was sent to Umakanta Das from the royal court stating that sati was an age old religious custom of Tripura. It was not practiced by forceful implementation. The widows, willingly, burnt themselves with their dead husbands. Therefore, it is not necessary to stop the practice by using force. But the British Government was not satisfied with the justification of the royal court. The commissioner of Chittagong D.R. Lyall, who was looking after the political agency of Tripura, didn’t agree with the logic of the Maharaja and warned through Umakanta Das that if the Maharaja didn’t take steps to stop the practice then it would prove costly to him. Mr Lyall, in a letter, dated 2 October 1888, wrote, ‘The reply is excessively unsatisfactory and not what I should have expected from a ruler usually so enlightened as the Maharaja. Nor can I admit that the facts are correctly stated. The custom of *satee* is certainly not indigenous and is, to the best of my belief, practiced by none of the hill tribes except as an innovation. It is only the Hinduised portion of the hill men who practice the custom and they are not a class likely to become disaffected nor would the disaffection be of the faintest consequences. The practice has clearly declined because it was believed to be forbidden – the Koilashar case which took place in February last proves this – and if it is now publicly admitted by the Maharaja that it is not forbidden, the custom will very soon revive as it is quite clear that what is not forbidden is allowed, or in other words, tacitly concerned. I, too cannot, strongly impress on the Maharaja the fact that his present action amounts to be a direct encouragement of an act which has for nearly 60 years been declared illegal in India and which the whole civilized world unites in holding to be absolutely barbarous. I should be very unwilling to lay this question at length before the Government and trust that the Maharaja will take such action as will not necessitate my pushing the matter further.’

Maharaja Birchandra Manikya was bound to stop the practice of sati by enacting the law in 1888, coming under pressure from British government.. It is surprising that Birchandra Manikya who was regarded as the architect of modern Tripura was forced by British Government to stop the practice of Sati in Tripura. It is quite possible that social opposition was the main reason behind his inactiveness. He declared the practice illegal and punishable by an Act in 1888.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. What is *Chaklarosnabad*?
4. Who is regarded as the architect of modern Tripura?

1.4 RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Among the nineteen various tribes, the Tripuris numerically constitute the largest tribe of Tripura. According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji, 'The Tripuris belong to Bodo group of Indo-Mongoloid people. The Bodos, spread over the whole of Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as east Bengal forming a solid block in Northeastern India. The Bodos were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in eastern India and they form the main basis of the present day population of these tracts.' The Tripuris are divided into two groups, namely, Puran Tripuri and Deshi Tripuri. The Puran Tripuris claimed to be the original inhabitants of the state and traced their descent from Kshatriya warriors. The Puran Tripuris, which include Deb Barmans, are numerically more predominant than other tribes. The Deshi Tripuris are said to have originated as a result of an admixture between the Bengalis and the Tripuris. The Tripuris have their own dialects. This is known as kok borok. This dialect is a part of Bodo group of Assamese-Burmese branch of Tibeto-Burman family of languages. It is the mother tongue of the majority of tribes. It had no written script. In 2001 census, 5, 43,843 persons were recorded as Tripuris as compared to 2,50,382 in the 1971 census. The Tripuris are subdivided into different groups according to their vocation. The twelve had as or huddas, as these groups are called, are not clans as commonly presumed. They are as follows: Bachhal, Siuk, Koatia, Daityasing, Hujurua, Silatia, Apiya, Chhatra tuiya, Deorai or Galim, Subenarayan, Senaand Julai.

After the death of Krishna Kishore Manikya, Ishan Chandra Manikya became the ruler of Tripura. His coronation to the royal throne took place on 1st February, 1850. His brother Upendra Chandra became Yubaraj and Brojendra Chandra, the eldest son of Ishan Chandra Manikya was nominated as Barathakur. After taking charge of the kingdom, Ishan Chandra found that the zamindari of Chaklaroshnabad had sunk into debt amounting to eleven lakhs. To solve the financial problem, Ishan Chandra Manikya appointed Balaram Hazari as his *dewan*. He gave him the responsibility to free Chaklaroshnabad from indebtedness. Balaram's appointment as a *dewan* was disliked by many members of the royal family. He was, however, patronized by the *Yuvaraj* or heir-apparent Upendra Chandra. Upendra Chandra was an extravagant prince and Balaram Hazari had to fulfill his financial demands. Balaram and his brother Sridam began to collect money from the subjects in a cruel manner in order to free Chaklaroshnabad from the huge debt and also to provide money to Upendra Chandra. Due to this, the tribal people under their two leaders Kirti and Parikshit, revolted against the king. This revolt, known as 'Tipra Revolt',

took place in 1850. The revolt was supported by few members of the royal household for they were against the appointment of Balaram as the *Dewan* of royal administration.

In the middle of the night, the two leaders attacked the house of Balaram with help of Tipra and the Kuki tribes. Though Balaram managed to escape, Sreedam was killed by Kirti. There volt was ultimately suppressed by the king with the help of his army. Many of the rebels were imprisoned and Kirti was killed due to the conspiracy of Upendra Chandra.

After the suppression of the revolt, Balaram Hazari conspired with Upendra Chandra against the king and tried to place Upendra Chandra on the throne. But the king came to know the plan. He dismissed Balaram from the post of Dewan and deported him from the kingdom along with other conspirators. Now Braja Mohan Thakur became the Dewan of the state and took charges of administration of the royal affairs.

Jamatia movement

The Jamatias are said to be the successors of a class which constituted the major strength of the royal army. In fact, the term Jamatia has originated from the term 'jamayet' which means gathering or mobilization. They are regarded as a fighting class and were probably an admixture of the original inhabitants of the territory. The Jamatias language is similar to that of Tripuris. So, they speak kokborok which is the language of Tibeto-Burman and are of Mongoloid origin. As per 2001 census, their population strength in Tripura was 74,949. They are treated as the fourth largest tribal group of Tripura. These tribals proved to be the loyalists to the throne during the princely rule. They were accorded special status and were exempted from the payment of some taxes including gharchukti i.e., family tax. As such, they came to enjoy a commanding position among the tribes of Tripura. They were also granted large fertile valley tracts for settlement in the Udaipur region.. They live largely in Udaipur and Amarapur sub-divisions of south Tripura district and Khowai of West Tripura district. Few of them are found in the Sadar sub-division of West Tripura district. Jamatias are Hindus and practice Shakti cult and vaishnavism. 'Hoda Akra' is their supreme traditional social institution, which has the power to look after, preserve and promote their social taboos, customs and religion. All sorts of social and criminal disputes in between the community members are also sorted by the Hoda.

After the death of Ishan Chandra, his brother Birchandra, became the ruler of Tripura in 1862. The most important event during the early years of his reign was the revolt of the Jamatias under their leader Parikshit. An appraisal of the political situation of Tripura during the initial period of Birchandra Manikya's rule is essential to understand the reason behind the Jamatia Revolt.

Though Birchandra Manikya became king in 1862, however, his succession to the throne was subsequently challenged by his half-brothers Nilkrishna and Kala Thakur. They brought a suit in the court against Birchandra Manikya. Nilkrishna and his party claimed that Bir Chandra was never appointed Yubaraj or heir apparent

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to the throne by his brother Ishan Chandra Manikya. In the midst of this quarrel, the king arrested and deposed Guru Bipin Bihari Goswami from power, who previously exercised full control over the political affairs of Tripura and possessed a strong, dominating personality. The result was that the Thakurs became all powerful and the king was fully dependent on them. The Magistrate of Tripura district remarked, 'It appears from enquiries which I have hold that since the removal of the Guru from power, no method or arrangement of any kind exists in the administration at Agartala and that the Raja, leaving all matters in the hands of a number of irresponsible and rapacious dependants, exercises no supervision whatever in his own affairs.'

As long as the dispute over the succession to the throne remained unsettled, the people were afraid that they would be called upon to pay revenue twice. Moreover, there were two or more claimants to the throne and they would have the sympathy of their friends and dependents. It was for this reason many of subjects refused to pay rents. The royal conspirators started exploiting and torturing the subjects. It was during this period that the Jamatia revolt took place.

Jamatias formed the bulk of the population of the royal army. They were, in fact, a strong group of Tipras who, since ancient period used to live together in a group and were serving the Maharaja's army. The king sent army to collect rents from the Jamatias by force. The Jamatias were looking for an opportunity to revolt. In the conflict that took place, two Jamatias were killed and their heads were cut off and brought to the king at Agartala.

The Jamatias revolted in 1863. They stopped paying taxes and attacked the Udaipur palace. Birchandra Manikya who was then at Udaipur left for Agartala and sent army to Udaipur to suppress the revolt. But the royal army failed to suppress the revolt or arrest Parikshit. The Maharaja, then took the help of Darlong Kukis to suppress the revolt. Around 200 Jamatias were killed in the revolt. Parikshit was arrested. The Kukis, as a mark of victory, brought the heads of 200 Jamatias hanging from their swords, to Agartala. To terrorize people they hung the heads in trees.

Later, the king came to know that the Jamatia revolt was not against him, but against the corrupted leaders and employees of the royal administration. Birchandra Manikya freed Parikshit and other prisoners of revolt after converting them to Vaishnava religion.

Bir Chandra Manikya informed the British authority that the disturbance in the hills have been created by his brothers, Neelkishen and Kala Thakur. But, the then district magistrate of Tripura was of the opinion that it originated between his own tax-collectors and ryots. In his words, 'I am convinced that neither Neelkishen nor Kala Thakur have had any hand in this rising. The Rajah's conduct in sending out a number of armed ruffians to collect rent and afterwards cutting off and hanging up the heads of the murdered men, instead of holding a strict dispassionate enquiry into the merits of the affray, were quite sufficient to account for the disturbances in the first instance, and without any assistance on the part of his brothers, however hostile their feeling might be.' In his opinion, the matter should be brought to the notice of the Government in order that efficient measures be taken to prevent such occurrences in the future. The king informed the British Government that he had already taken steps to carry out the wishes of the Government in this matter. The

Government of Tripura had entered into amicable arrangement with Jamatias and he had adopted means, by the establishment of police stations and courts for the trial of all disputes, to render his subjects secure and contented.

1.4.1 Kuki Rebellion (1860-1861)

There are nineteen tribal communities in Tripura. These tribal communities are Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Noatia, Mog, Kuki, Munda, Garoo, Lushai, Orang, Santal, Uchai, Khasia, Bhil, Lepcha, Bhutia and Chaimal. The people of Tripura, from the beginning, have been trying to appeal to the rulers of Tripura to fulfil their socio-political demands and have been fighting for their rights but various oppressive heads of the State did not acknowledge their hopes and requirements. This gave rise to disappointment among the people of the various tribes on many occasions and lead to many upheavals, revolutions and attacks by the population of these tribes throughout the history of Tripura. People were forced to raise their voice against the ruler during that time in order to get their demands to be fulfilled. Tripura's history has numerous mentions of these revolts and the tribal leaders who played prominent role in helping people achieve their demands. These revolts were mostly focused on areas which were under monarch's rule and away from the influence of the British. The regions where most unrest occurred were of Sylhet, Chattagram and Comilla, they are a part of Bangladesh presently, Cachar and Karimganj which now constitute as a part of Assam and Chakla Roshanabad. Many tribes have revolted against the rulers of Tripura, for instance, Kuki attack of 1860, Jamatia uprising which took place in 1863. The history has witnessed various movements as well, for example, Swadeshi Movement in 1905, Reang Revolt in 1942-43, Jana Siksha Movement in 1945 and Lushai Reform Movement in 1946-47.

Background of Kuki Rebellion 1860-62

Many historic writers, while writing the history of Tripura have claimed that the Kukis were, by temperament, of an exploiting nature who believed in looting people for personal gain. As commented by Nalini Ranjan Roychoudhury that, 'It may be incorrect to view the raids of 1860-61 merely as one of the many tribal uprisings.' The population of Tripura often experienced the raids by this tribe. They can be dated back to 1836 and continued till very late. The Kukis organised many raids throughout the period of monarchy in Tripura. Maharaja Krishna Kishor Manikya, had not provided any effective measures for the tribe during his reign as they had never officially put forward their demands or grievances. Even though they were not directly under his control yet the King wanted to secure the hilly parts of Tripura. In 1836, he appointed Ramkanoo Thakur who was related to him as an independent chief in order to look into the affairs of the region and check the activities of four such groups which consisted of Mogs, Chakmas, Kukis and the Tipperahsin. In July 1836, Ramkanoo Thakur undertook a massive attack in the region of Tipperah, there was loss of life and property which had forced the Raja to remove Thakur from his post. The Kukis committed a massive incursion in April 1844 at Kochabari and Pratapgarh under the leadership of Lalchokla. Krishna Manikya's was not able to capture and punish the kuki leader Laichokla. He was finally arrested in December 1844. The Kukis were known for undertaking such attacks and raids and the rulers

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were not able to do much as they did not fall under their jurisdiction. They would often come from the hilly parts and raid the villages situated in the plains and kill numerous people. In 1849, a similar attack was conducted in the regions of Chittagong and Cachar.

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The Rebellion of 1860

Tripura, in 1860s, witnessed a sequence of incursions. In January, hundreds of Kukis were mobilised in Chittagong to undertake an attack on villages near the river Fenny and continued their attack to the villages and killed many people. In this attack, many Britishers were killed as well. The police and troops were unable to control them as they returned to the hills and the forest area. During these attacks, the leader of the Kukis was Rutton Poea. The weak administration of ruling King Isanchandra Manikya and his minister Guru Bipin Bihari failed to check the attacks from affecting parts of Chakla Roshanabad. An aid of thirteen thousand seven hundred was collected by the British authorities and the king in order to help the affected villagers. The British authorities were gearing up in order to stop and control the offending tribe. In January 1861, a large armed troop of soldiers was sent under the leadership of Captain Rabon to control the Kukis. During this time the Reangs joined the Kukis to attack Udaipur which caused harm to life and property on a large scale. The villages of Chakma community suffered heavy losses. The incapable administration of Ishanchandra Manikya was once again blamed for this attack. On 22 January 1862, another atrocious mass destruction was conducted in Northern Tripura and Sylhet under the leadership of Ratan Poea this mass destruction is referred as Adampur massacre. The king was unable to prevent this attack.

The Kukis continued to disrupt the life of people of Tripura. The situation began to improve only with the change of administration. The new ruler Birchandra Manikya tried to appease the Kuki leaders and the British authorities by providing them with gifts which were often termed as 'vat'. The king felt that this was the only way to appease the Kukis. Though they continued to cause trouble as the raids undertaken by them were not based on any dissatisfaction of their demands not being met as they never made any demands. Kuki attacks were conducted in order to revolt against the repressive archaic rule of the monarch of Tripura. However, the incursions conducted by them were not based on demands and thus their attacks were not considered as a movement. They were just considered as rebellious actions against the incapable rulers of the time.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What do you understand by jamatias?
6. Mention the nineteen tribal communities of Tripura.

1.5 REVOLT OF 1857 AND TRIPURA

During the first half of the nineteenth century, monarchy began to favour the British Empire. The rulers had assisted the British in 1824 during their campaign against Burma. The British were very concerned with the frequent revolts by the tribal population and wanted to take measures to prevent them as they realised that the monarch was incapable of doing the same. The king became anxious to please the British hence he made attempts to improve the revenue collection in his state. For this purpose, he appointed Balaram Hazari as the Dewan who was to look after the revenue collection and with him he appointed Bipin Bihari Goswami, to take care of the state affairs. The Dewan was very strict and harsh in his actions while collecting the revenue. He began to extract undue taxes from the people and this made people rebel against the oppressive collector which resulted in a revolt in 1857. The state affairs were also in a mess as Dewan had got full support of Goswami in allowing him to collect undue taxes from people of Reang, who had already faced two consecutive droughts in their region. The revolt was supported by the other tribal people and made the Kukis also revolt in 1860. However, the revolts by the tribes were suppressed and Balaram Hazari was removed from his duties. The revolt by the tribes coincided with the uprising of the 1857 which had begun to mobilise the anti-British sentiments in the north.

The mutiny of 1857 had stunned the British Indian Empire and had begun to show impact on Cachar under the leadership of Narendrajit Singh, a Manipuri prince who was son of Maharaja Chourjit Singh. During the revolt, the prince was able to provide strong leadership to the mutineers. Narendrajit Singh had not forgotten the unfair deeds of the East India Company during the reign of his father. The prince was harbouring anti-British sentiments and felt that participating in the mutiny of 1857 will help him to take revenge from the British, thus he joined the war of independence. The soldiers of the 34th Native Infantry in Chittagong fought the Battle at Latoo on 8 December 1857. The soldiers killed Major Byng who was fighting for the British. The prince joined the mutineers on 20 December 1857 when they reached Cachar. The British Government was given full support by king Ishanchandra who prohibited the soldiers from entering his territory. The infantry and the prince were proving to be dangerous for the British; Robert Stewart employed preventative forces at Cachar when his deputy Lt. Ross informed him that the mutineers were split into groups and were trying to gain access into Cachar and Badarpur. The British toughened their measures in Panchgram.

The Revolt of 1857 was an integral mutiny of the 34th Native Infantry Chittagong under the leadership of Narendrajit Singh as they were all fighting against the British rule. In the psyche of these revolutionary soldiers there was no disparity in the name of caste, creed or religion. They were bound together by a feeling of true nationalism and intense anti-colonial sentiments. In January 1858 fought in Cachar and lost the battle, the prince was able was arrested by the Manipur Army. Thus his revolt in Cachar was considered the eastern arm of the Revolt of 1857.

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Role of Narendrajit Singh in the Revolt of 1857

During 1850s, Narendrajit Singh who had managed to escape after the Cachar attack reorganised a battle force with anti-British population of Cachar and jail authorities to help the arrested prince to be rescued. The six princes managed to escape in January 1858 though they were unable to join the war of Binnakandy (Cachar). Urgent hunt was ordered by the Superintendent but the efforts were futile. The jail staff was held responsible for this mishap. A reward of rupees hundred was declared by the Superintendent. In spite of the reward, no one in the region gave any information about the six Manipuri princes or Narendrajit Singh. This made the Superintendent realise the support which was there among the people and decided to employ harsher measures to control the mutineers. These instances give a clear indication that in Cachar the uprising had clearly turned into a revolt with the presence of Narendrajit Singh who had full support of the people of the region. Later on, Narendrajit Singh was arrested by the Manipur Army but Chandrakirti Singh wanted him to be released as he knew that the prince was not participating in the revolt in order to get access to the throne. The prince had fought a war for the independence of Cachar from the British rule. People of Cachar gave full support to the uprising by the prince and his army and turned it into a revolt of such an immense scale. The revolt under Narendrajit Singh led to awakening the people towards a common aim of overthrowing the British and attaining the freedom of North Eastern India from their oppressive rule. The revolt helped in spreading the feeling of Nationalism in the region of Cachar. It was an independent principality till 1820s and was not fully aware of the binding status of a state. R. Stewart, has been quoted from one of his letters about his views on the strength of the mutineers, 'When the mutineers of the 34th National Infantry entered Cachar and their strength and intentions were unknown, the agitation amongst the Munnipoorie population was extreme, and the station was threatened each day with attack.'

When the prince joined Chittagong Mutineers he was already preparing to revolt against the British in order to free Cachar. The British became well aware of this fact and after the revolt they formulated the policy of further actions in the region keeping in mind the prince and his party of mutineers. It was clearly mentioned in a report after the revolt:

'It cannot be wise policy to permit those ambitious princes to keep the large and increasing Maneepoore population of Cachar in a state of political agitation and anxiety, which is very injurious to the prosperity and good Government of the province and which sooner or later will lead to very evil consequences.' Consequently, fourteen Manipuri princes of Cachar were shifted to Nuddea in West Bengal.

Therefore, the purpose of the Revolt of 1857 in Cachar under the leadership of Narendrajit Singh was mostly for the re-establishment of this province to its previous glory and rightful rulers. The prince consciously joined the sepoy mutiny of Chittagong and turned its focus towards Cachar. He convinced the mutineers that there was no point in directly fighting against the Manipur King as he was a strong supporter of British rule. He mobilised them and made Cachar the epicentre of the revolt of 1857. The prince was fighting a war against the British and had no aspirations

to the throne of Manipur. The revolt in the region caused a lot of stress for the British as they were already tackling the anti-British sentiments which had become widespread all over the country due to the uprising in Meerut and other parts of North India.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. What was the purpose of the Revolt of 1857 in Cachar?
8. Who was Narendrajit Singh?

1.6 SUMMARY

- The early history of Tripura is shrouded in myths and legends. According to the legends, the state of Tripura was founded by Druhyu, a son of emperor Yayati, who belonged to the lunar dynasty. His capital was at Pratisthanpur.
- It is difficult to find any recorded source which provides information on the origin of 'Tripura'. According to captain Lewin, 'the origin of the name Tipperah is doubtful.'
- The archaeological evidences found in the region prove that a large portion of this region, particularly south-western part of the present state of Tripura, was politically attached to the kingdoms of eastern Bengal known as Samatata, Vanga and Harikela.
- The actual process of state formation in Tripura began during the reign of the Manikya rulers, which is also known as the medieval period or the pre-colonial period in the history of Tripura.
- There is a paucity of sources regarding the administration of Tripura prior to the reign of Ratna Manikya. The history of administrative control of the Tripura government can be found in the early chronicles and are based mainly on myths and legends. In ancient period, there was no powerful monarchy, who effectively controlled the entire tract.
- The Tripuris are the largest ruling tribe in Tripura. When the chiefs of this tribe extended their areas to the plain land and its adjoining districts, they were influenced by the Hindu society and culture of the neighbouring states.
- Originally, the rulers of Tripura had not assumed the title of 'Manikya' and were known by the title of 'pha'. It is said that the Tripura rajas are said to have assumed the title of Manikya from the reign of Ratna Manikya.
- From the end of the Mughal period till India's independence, the kings of Tripura performed a dual role in the two diverse geographical terrain of the state. In the hills, he enjoyed the status of the king and in the fertile plains (acquired from the *nawab* of Bengal) his designation was that of a zamindar.

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- It was in 1761, when the British colonial rulers, for the first time, came in contact with Tripura, following military help provided to the *nawab* of Bengal Mir Qasim, in his expedition against Krishna Manikya.
- Though the British government followed the policy of neutrality and non-intervention in the administrative affairs of the hills for over a century, a change, slowly, became noticeable in their policy during the late sixties of the 19th century.
- Among the nineteen various tribes, the Tripuris numerically constitute the largest tribe of Tripura. According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji, 'the Tripuris belong to Bodo group of Indo-mongoloid people.
- The Bodos, spread over the whole of Brahmaputra valley and north Bengal as well as east Bengal forming a solid block in north-eastern India. Bodos were the most important Indo-mongoloid people in eastern India and they form the main basis of the present day population of these tracts.'
- There are nineteen tribal communities in tripura. these tribal communities are Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Noatia, Mog, Kuki, Munda, Garoo, Lushai, Orang, Santal, Uchai, Khasia, Bhil, Lepcha, Bhutia and Chaimal.
- Many historic writers, while writing the history of Tripura have claimed that the Kukis were, by temperament, of an exploiting nature who believed in looting people for personal gain.
- Tripura, in 1860s, witnessed a sequence of incursions. In January, hundreds of Kukis were mobilised in Chittagong to undertake an attack on villages near the river fenny and continued their attack to the villages and killed many people.
- During the first half of the nineteenth century, monarchy began to favour the British Empire. The rulers had assisted the British in 1824 during their campaign against Burma.
- The purpose of the revolt of 1857 in Cachar under the leadership of Narendrajit Singh was mostly for the re-establishment of this province to its previous glory and rightful rulers.

1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Sub nationalism:** Sub-nationalism has been defined as the policy of asserting the interest of one's own state/region/province, as separate from the interest of the nation and the common interest of all other states/regions/provinces.
- **Chronicle:** A chronicle is a historical account of facts and events ranged in chronological order, as in a time line.
- **Rebellion:** Rebellion, also called uprising, or insurrection is a refusal of obedience or order. It refers to the open resistance against the orders of an established authority.

- **Tribes:** A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society.

1.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. According to the legends, the state of Tripura was founded by Druhyu, a son of emperor Yayati, who belonged to the Lunar dynasty.
2. Tripuris are the largest ruling tribe in the state of Tripura.
3. *Chaklarosnabad* is a huge fertile land comprising the territories of Noakhali, Tipperah, Sreehatta/Sylhet and Brahmanbaria.
4. Birchandra Manikya is regarded as the architect of modern Tripura.
5. The Jamatias are said to be the successors of a class which constituted the major strength of the royal army.
6. The nineteen tribal communities of Tripura are Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Chakma, Halam, Noatia, Mog, Kuki, Munda, Garoo, Lushai, Orang, Santal, Uchai, Khasia, Bhil, Lepcha, Bhutia and Chaimal.
7. Therefore, the purpose of the Revolt of 1857 in Cachar under the leadership of Narendrajit Singh was mostly for the re-establishment of this province to its previous glory and rightful rulers.
8. Narendrajit Singh was a Manipuri prince who was son of Maharaja Chourjit Singh.

1.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the factors that initiated the process of state formation in Tripura?
2. Write a short note on the administrative system of the Tripuris.
3. What were the reforms introduced by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya, to fulfil the demands of the people of Tripura?
4. What is Kuki Rebellion?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What were the changes witnessed in Tripura in ancient and pre-colonial period?
2. Discuss the impact of British relation in Tripura with Chakla Roshanabad.
3. Analyse the importance of Jamatia movement in Tripura.
4. Write a detailed note on the revolt of 1857 in Tripura.

1.10 FURTHER READING

NOTES

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UNIT 2 TRIPURA - II

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Era of Modernisation and Reformative Measures: Birchandra Manikya to Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya
- 2.3 Socio-Political Movements in Tripura: Reang Uprising
 - 2.3.1 Janashiksha Movement
- 2.4 Rabindranath Tagore and Tripura
- 2.5 Contribution of Princely Court towards Development of Bengali Language and Literature
- 2.6 World War I and II and Tripura
- 2.7 Integration of Tripura to the Indian Union
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Key Terms
- 2.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.11 Questions and Exercises
- 2.12 Further Reading

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Tripura is located in the south-west extreme corner of the North-Eastern region of India. It is bounded by Bangladesh in the north, west, south and south-east. In the east, it shares common boundary with Assam and Mizoram. Prior to 15th century, the history of this state is shrouded in myths and legends. There is a paucity of sources prior to the reign of Ratna Manikya. It was during the reign of the Manikya rulers that the administrative system of the kingdom became well organized. The system of administration was influenced by the neighbouring Muslim kingdom of Bengal.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the era of modernisation and reformative measures in Tripura
- Interpret the rise of various socio-political movements in Tripura
- Explain the relation between Rabindranath Tagore and Tripura
- Describe the contribution of princely court towards development of Bengali literature
- Analyse the integration of Tripura to the Indian union

2.2 ERA OF MODERNISATION AND REFORMATIVE MEASURES: BIRCHANDRA MANIKYA TO BIR BIKRAM KISHORE MANIKYA

The state of Tripura was ruled by the rulers of Manikya dynasty since the medieval period. The first Manikya King, according to sources, was Ratan Manikya. He ascended the throne in A.D. 1279. Before that, the state was mostly following a feudalistic style of governance. The Royal family lived a comfortable life but the rest of the population of Tripura, which was predominantly tribal, lived in the interior parts of the hilly state. The tribes were very backward in their living pattern. Their livelihood was dependent on agriculture of oilseeds, paddy and potatoes. They followed primitive techniques of agriculture which led to poor yield of the crops. The administration was only interested in collection of revenue. The population of the state was very dissatisfied with the oppressive conduct of the authorities. The state has witnessed tremendous unrest due to the feudal pattern of governance. The situation began to change considerably with the rule of Birchandra Manikya in 1862.

The period from 1862 to 1947 is known as the period of modernization in the history of Tripura. The state was in deep financial crisis during the period of Ishan Chandra and the rulers prior to him. There were many tribal movements and revolts in the state in order to fight the feudal system of governance.

Birchandra Manikya 1862-1897

Birchandra Manikya was the brother of Ishan Chandra. After his death, he took over the state of Tripura, in 1862. Birchandra is often called the architect of modern Tripura as he introduced many reforms which were influenced by the efficient western style in the state.

- He reformed the judicial system of the state by systemizing the civil and criminal law.
- The system of registration and exercise stamps was introduced by him.
- He was instrumental in abolishing the slavery and practice of 'Sati' from the state.
- He was able to tackle the unrest of the Jamatias in 1863 as he realised that the revolt was not against the King but the oppressive officials who were exploiting the population of Tripura for their own vested interests.
- During his period, the art and literature was given impetus as the King himself was a musician and a poet. He knew many languages. The court of King was an assortment of numerous poets and singers. The title of 'Tanraj' was allotted to famous singer Jadu Bhatta by Birchandra.
- The discovery of great scholar and poet Rabindra Nath was made during his period.

The era of Birchandra led to many reforms in the state. The King has been rightly named as ‘Vikramaditya’ of modern Tripura.

Radha Kishore Manikya 1897-1909

The reforms which were initiated during the era of Birchandra were carried forward by his son Radha Kishore. He was a progressive ruler like his father who wanted to modernise Tripura.

- The King reformed the system of education by introducing many modern trends.
- The King was very influenced by the European methodology and tried to bring changes based on their way of working. The period witnessed many reforms in the health department and police department. The agricultural policies of the state were also reformed as most of Tripura’s economy sustained on its cotton and tea production.
- The King did away with the oppressive control of Dewans who were extracting unfair land revenue. In order to get more revenue from land, many new land reforms were implemented.
- Radha Kishore was known to be a benign ruler. He always encouraged the welfare of his subjects. The Victoria Memorial hospital in Agartala was built by him. The restoration work of the palace was undertaken by resources which were the funds of the taxpayers. The King declared the restored palace as common property of people of the state as well as the royal family. He was a great patron of literature and learning. He profusely assisted Rabindra Nath in establishing the Santiniketan Vidyalaya. The King gave regular aid to Vishwa Bharati and the Bengal Technical Institute which was located in Calcutta.
- The King wanted the population of Tripura to be educated. For this, he established a free college in Agartala. However, the college had to be discontinued due to the pressure from the British Government.
- The period witnessed a lot of cultural growth regarding which the first literary conference was held in Agartala. The King invited Rabindra Nath Tagore to be a part of this conference. In order to promote literature, he gave liberal grants to J.C Bose and Hemchandra Banerjee.
- The King was a true Vaishnava and encouraged his subjects to follow Vaishnavism.

Birendra Kishore Manikya 1909-1923 AD

Birendra Kishore took over the throne of Tripura in November 1909; the prince was twenty-six years old. At such a young age he was able to bring about many reforms in Tripura. He continued with the modern policies initiated by his father. Many administrative and welfare reforms were started during his period.

- Birendra Kishore wanted to promote education in the state as he felt that all changes will benefit the people only if they were educated. He segregated

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the state into ten administrative divisions and started the civil servant examination in order to select the suitable candidates who will be capable of taking up the administrative duties of the state. In 1909, the King appointed officials at the post of chief secretary, police superintendent and deputy superintendent of police was done to promote the smooth functioning of the government.

- In order to reduce crime in the state, in 1911, the new Arms Act and the Penal Code Amendment Act were implemented.
- Birendra Kishore wanted the state of Tripura to flourish. For this, he wanted to explore the natural resources of the state to the fullest. During his period, the tea industry was given immense impetus. In order to educate people well about the farming techniques, a school of agriculture was established in the state.
- In 1916, the Burma Oil Company was allotted a formal licence by the King to explore the oil, natural gas and mineral reserves of the state. The silk- weaving unit was established by him in Agartala.
- Like his ancestors, the King was a talented composer and a skilful artist. The King took many steps to promote art and literature in Tripura. He set up the Ujjayanta Drama Company which encouraged young artist to exhibit their talent in the field of drama.
- The Lakshmi Narayan Temple which is known as ‘Durga Bari’ was constructed during his period. The current residence of the Governor of Tripura, Pushbanta Palace was built during his time.
- In 1913, when Rabindra Nath received the Nobel Prize for his contribution in the field of literature, King Birendra Kishore planned an impressive function in his honour in Agartala. Besides donating a substantial amount to aid the running of Shanti Niketan, the King helped in establishing a hospital for the residents of Shanti niketan.

The period of Birendra Kishore is considered as one of the most modern phases in the history of Tripura. The king not only carried forward the reforms initiated by his predecessors but also encouraged many reforms which helped the economy of Tripura. The period of modernization started in 1862 during the reign of Birchandra. The period before that witnessed weak rulers who were not able to implement any land reforms which lead to poor generation of revenue. The rulers were pro-British and in order to appease them, they forced the people to pay unfair taxes. This led to revolts by the tribal population. When Birender Kishore died in 1923, the reigns could not be taken over by his son, Bir Bikram as he was still a minor. Hence the council of ministers took over the administration of the state of Tripura. However, in 1927, Bir Bikram took the throne and he began to rule the state with the same spirit as his father. The new king was keen to promote all round development of Tripura and to achieve this goal he further introduced agricultural reforms. He banned the Jhum cultivation in the state. The king wanted to promote education in urban as well as rural parts of Tripura and enhance the system of communication. He initiated the rural educational system under the scheme of

Vidyapattam Plan. Bir Bikram wanted to check the conversion of people to Christianity, hence he began to promote Buddhism in Tripura and constructed a Buddhist temple in 1946. The King died in 1947 and after that the state of Tripura was put under the control of Indian Union in 1949.

Radha Kishore Manikya, the son of Bir Chandra Manikyam was also a great reformer. His administration was marked by his attempt for consolidation of the reforms of his father. He carried out the following reforms:

- He contributed to the administrative reforms by the formation of an executive council consisting of six members on a sound basis with rules of procedure and powers delegated from the Maharaja. He formed an *Amatya Sabha* consisting of five members including the *Yubaraj*.
- He separated the police and revenue departments and placed his two sons at the head of these two departments. By separating the two departments, he relieved the revenue officers from police duties and placed the police department under the charge of an officer trained in the western military training.
- He introduced judicial reforms by reorganizing *Khas Appeal Adalat* with greater number of judges, by creating the post of the *Munsiff* - magistrate and the collector of revenue, by appointing an Honorary Magistrate, by establishing a long hierarchy of courts to feed the *Mufussil* areas and abolishing some like the courts of sub-judge, session courts and Appeal courts to relieve the people from the hazards of too many appeals for a final decision in a single case.
- He reorganized the Secretariat. The *Khas-Serista* was separated from the Private Secretary's office. Rules were framed for the department of royal household to prevent corruption.
- He introduced a modern system of education, State Civil Service, reformed health, and agriculture and police department on the lines of European model. It was during his reign that the land revenue was increased.

However, the institutions established by him were not at all democratic, the channel of communication between the people and the ruler was like the medieval times.

Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya reconstituted the *Amatya Sabha* created by his father. He wanted to rule only with this body of advisors instead of a ministry. The numbers of members was raised from five to eight and the Maharaja was the president of this body. But he had to rule with the ministers for a few years.

In 1916, he constituted a state council consisting of large number of officials and two *zamindars*. The council had to perform all the three functions – executive, legislative and judicial. After two years, the Maharaja formed an Executive Council out of the members of the state council. It was composed of seven official members who constituted the Durbar to run the day to day administration. He also created selection committees out of the state council for different purpose. The creation of the post of Chief Secretary was another addition to his reforms of the executive.

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The greatest contribution of the Maharaja was the reconstruction of the state civil service in a systematic and modernized form. During his reign, in 1910, revival of the post of Assistant political agent was approved. But on the suggestion of the king, a resident political agent at Agartala was appointed instead.

In 1922, Tripura state was had direct political relation with the Government of India. At the same time the post of residential political agent was abolished and the collector of Tripura was again appointed as the ex-officio political agent.

By a *sanad* of 1 January, 1919, the title of 'Maharaja' was conferred on the ruler of Tripura as a hereditary distinction. In the same year, the title of Manikya was recognized by the Government as hereditary, and its use with the suffix 'Bahadur' was permitted.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya, the son of Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya, ascended the throne in AD1923. He was a minor at that time. So, the administration of the state was entrusted to a council of administrators. His investiture ceremony took place in the year AD1927. He was an enlightened and benevolent rule.

To fulfill the demands of people of Tripura, the Maharaja, by a proclamation in AD 1939, introduced the following reforms:

- The establishment of a *Rajya Sabha* or Privy Council to assist the Maharaja as an advisory body in both executive and judicial matters.
- Improvement in the organization and personnel of the Khas Adalat or high court which already existed as the highest independent judicial Tribunal of the state.
- Appointed a *Mantri Parishad* or council of minister with wide administrative powers comprising a chief minister and other ministers not exceeding four in number; each in charge of a separate portfolio.
- Established a Legislative Assembly (*Vyavasthapak Sava*) possessing adequate legislative powers, as well as recommendatory powers with regard to the budget.
- Established village unions or *mandalis* for the agricultural population as basic territorial units with administrative powers over local affairs including collection of certain taxes, and judicial powers for trial of petty cases both civil and criminal.
- Introduced a system of Financial Administration and Audit under a qualified finance minister and the complete separation of the state budget from the budget of the ruler. He also approved the draft of the constitution of Tripura in 1941 and issued order for its immediate implementation. But no action was taken in this regard due to World War II.

A council of regency was appointed on 8 August 1947, after the death of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, headed by Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi, to rule Tripura on behalf of her minor son, Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya. Other members of the council were Maharajakumar Brajendra Kishore Deb Barman, Major B.B. Deb Barman and Mr S.V. Mukherjee holding the posts of vice president, chief minister as well as the *Dewan* respectively. Later, the council of regency was

dissolved on the advice of the India Government and Maharani Kanchanprava Devi became the sole regent on 12 January 1948. Chief Minister S.V.K Mukherjee resigned and a new chief minister was appointed. The chief minister would be designated as the *Dewan*, who with the assistance of one advisor and two or three secretaries will run the administration. On 13 August 1947, the Maharani signed the Instrument of Accession. Tripura, was thus, integrated into the union on 15 October, 1949. A chief commissioner took over from the regent maharani. In 1950, Tripura was given the status of a part 'C' state. On 14 April 1953, a three member council of advisors was appointed to aid and advise the Chief Commissioner.

The council of regency, formed during the minority of Kirit Bikram, had greater independent powers. It was developed in a way that constitutionally it was less dependent on the Government of India. During the rule of the council of regency, the regent Maharani was the legal head of the state.

The regent Maharani during this period appointed three non-official Ministers to the Official Ministry. The appointment was made without the consultation of the Government of India. The appointment might be regarded as a step towards democratization. The unusual circumstances did not allow her to achieve success in introducing a modified constitution. This step was the last attempt of the rulers towards modernization of the administration. Had she been successful in introducing the constitution, Tripura could have earned full democratic rights long before 1972. The process of selection of the non-official ministers appointed by the regent Maharani may not be called a popular one. In this respect, she was far advanced than her husband who could not envisage such a process in his constitution of 1941. The measures of repression were introduced in many cases under legal orders by the Maharani, for instance, the emergency order declaring military administration in Khowai. It showed her respect for law, which was lacking in her husband when he sent military troops for suppressing the Reang revolt. The administrative processes became more methodical during her rule.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the period of modernization in the history of Tripura?
2. Mention any two reforms introduced by Ramkishore Manikya.

2.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN TRIPURA: REANG UPRISING

Reangs are the second largest tribal community of Tripura. They are recognized as one of the seventy five primitive tribes in India. Numerically, as per 2001 census, their numerical strength was 1, 65,103. Reangs belong to Indo-Mongoloid racial stock. Their language have affinity to the Austro-Asiatic group under Tibeto-Burman family. Reangs are said to have come first from Shan state of upper Burma (present Myanmar) Four chiefs with their followers migrated to Tripura and Chittagong hill tracts many generations ago. Similarly, another group entered Tripura via Assam

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and Mizoram during the 18th century. They are scattered throughout the subdivisions of Kailasahar, Amarpur, Belonia, Khowai, kamalpur, Udaipur, Dharmanagar and Sadar. There are two major groups among the Reangs: Meska or Mechka and marchhai or Malchui. These two groups are further divided into 14 sub-groups. The Reangs had their own internal system of government based on a well-defined hierarchy. The head of the community enjoyed the title of *rai* and *kachak* acted as the minister to him.. Originally, they were employed as palanquin bearers. But due to their loyalty they won a place in the royal force. As a result of their contact with the royal army, their cultural life underwent a change.. Unlike the Jamatias, they were made to pay gharchukti i.e., the family tax. Ultimately, the Reangs revolted against the autocratic regime, the last revolt being in 1942 when they succeeded in overthrowing the immediate representative of the ruler i.e., rai. Since then the Reang village councils continued to be active as well as de facto ruling bodies. Reangs are still a nomadic tribe and a large number among them maintain their livelihood by practicing jhum cultivation and other food gathering activities like collection of jungle fruits, leaf, plants, fishing in stagnant water in hill slopes, hunting of wild animals and birds]

Reang unrest (1942-43) took place under the leadership of Ratanmani Reang, during the reign of Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya This was partly a socio-religious movement and partly an anti-feudal movement, a protest against the existing feudal pattern of society which was oppressive in nature.

Reang society was dominated by a group of village headmen collectively known as *choudhuries*. The head of these *choudhuries* was called *rai*. All social, political, and economic decisions of the village were decided by them. They had great influence in the village matters. Even the rulers of Tripura used to enhance and support the powers and positions of the *choudhuries* in all village matters. It was through the help received from the *choudhuries* that the Maharajas used to collect tax from the ordinary people in return of which they were exempted from paying tax.

Taking advantage of their powers and positions, the *choudhuries* made various exactions from the common people and engaged themselves in selfish interests and began to oppress the people. There was unequal system of taxation in the village which was noticeable in the minimum tax paid by the Tripuris and maximum taxes paid by the Reangs and the Noatias. The Reangs were highly dissatisfied with this unequal system of taxation of the Maharaja.

Umakanta Das in a statement in 1903 said, 'The Reangs were already over-taxed. They not only had to pay the highest house tax but also bamboo and cane taxes in addition. They protested against these inequalities but without any effect.' As there was a complaint against the Reangs that they did not prepare the *Takani* (i.e., the statement of their agricultural produce) to their respective *Tahasil Kachari* and exported cotton, mustard seed, sesame illegally to their neighbouring British India without paying any export duty to the Government of Tripura. On the basis of this, the Maharaja imposed a higher rate of *Gharchukti Kar* (tax amounting ₹ 91 per family) on them in Amarpur division.

The common people of the Reang society, being oppressed by *choudhuries*, approached Ratanmani, who originally belonged to the Chittagong hill and later on settled in Tripura in 1937 at Amarpur. He established his Ashram at Amarpur and had many disciples. He used to teach the Ramayana and Mahabharata to the oppressed people from the Reang community. Thus, a socio-religious reform movement gained momentum among the Reangs and the Noatias due to his influence. In course of time, a quarrel broke out between the *choudhuries* and the disciples of Ratanmani on the issue of share of money from *Tirthamukh Mela* (fair). From a long time, most of the Hindu tribal people used to gather at Tirthamukh mela held on the last day of the month of *pouse* of Bengali calendar each year, where they used to throw the bones of the dead relatives in the river Gomati. It was during this time, some Brahmins of Comilla and Sonamura used to visit this place and chant *mantras* for the welfare of the deceased. They earned a lot of money from this ceremony. The disciples of Ratanmani in collaboration with their Reang *choudhuries* disallowed the Brahmins to conduct their practice, for they wanted the disciples to perform this ceremony. The profit earned thereby was divided equally between the Reang *choudhuries* and the disciples of Ratanmani.

The Maharaja arrested Ratanmani and captivated him at Agartala. However, Ratanmani managed to escape. As a result, his popularity among his disciples increased. His followers increased in number when supporters of ex-rai of Reangs named Debi Singh became his followers. Khagendra Reang, a *choudhuri* of Bagafa, wanted to be the rai or chief of the entire Reang community in Tripura. There was a custom among the Reangs that one could not be a *Rai* during the lifetime of another Rai. The king dismissed the existing rai named Debi Singh Reang of Amarpur and appointed Khagendra Choudhuri as rai of the Reang community. Khagendra Choudhuri and his supporters began to harass the supporters of Debi Singh Reang. The supporters of Debi Singh Reang complained against Khagendra choudhuri and his supporters to the king without any effect. They submitted a petition to Reang Bunga, the Sailo chief of the Jampui hills, to settle the matter. Reang Bunga forwarded their petition to the king for taking necessary action. These dissatisfied the Reangs who became the followers of Ratanmani.

The number of Ratanmani's disciples increased more due to his social work before the outbreak of Second World War. The prices of essential commodities increased. The Government used to purchase paddy and the condition of people was miserable. Famine broke out in Amarpur, Udaipur, Belonia and Subroom. At this critical juncture when some selfish *choudhuris* wanted to make profit out of this situation, the disciples of Ratanmani established some *DharmaGola* (for the distribution of food) in their own villages.

When the Second World War started, the king of Tripura ordered the *choudhuries* to collect soldiers from the Reang youths. But the Maharaja received information that it could not be done due to protest of the disciples of Ratanmani. The king further gained information that at several places like Belonia, Amarpur and Udaipur, the Reangs were gathering in large numbers and were preparing to revolt against the king. There were reports of looting of the houses of *choudhuries*. Ultimately, the Maharaja sent armies against the rebels. The disciples of Ratanmani

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couldn't stand in front of the organized royal force. Their villages were burnt down and many of them (20, 425 in number as per estimates of Reang leaders and 3,000 including women and children as per Government report) were brought to Agartala. They were forcefully converted to Vaishnavism from *Saivism*. However, most of them were released on the ground that they were all famine stricken people who had revolted against the oppression of the *choudhuries* of their villages and not against the king.

Ratanmani fled to Chittagong with some of his followers. However, they were arrested by the British police and put into Rangamati jail. The chief minister of Tripura requested the political agent of Bengal on 29 November, 1943 to issue extradition warrant for the arrest and execution of the accused persons. Ratanmani was handed over to the Central Jail authority. He was brought to the Maharaja's palace where he was killed. His body was brought back to the Central and it was declared that he had died of cholera. Some of his followers were tried by a special court under a special judge and convicted in July, 1944. A criminal case was carried out against a few young Reangs of southern part of Maharani of Udaipur Division at Agartala. There were charges of robbery and rioting against them. But the case was withdrawn by the Government in the early stage.

2.3.1 Janashiksha Movement

The period of 1931 witnessed political unrest. The Reang community began to revolt against King Bir Bikram. There were numerous factors for the community to revolt against the ruler. The people of the community were over taxed for worshipping and following the rituals of their religion. They were penalised if they practiced polygamy. The officials of the king forced the people to work as bonded labour. There was strict action taken against people who maintained association with reformist Ratanmani. The people were very dissatisfied by the inefficiency of the ruler as he had taken no action to punish the real troublemakers, Debi Singh Roy and Khagendra Chowdhury. In order to amalgamate the egalitarian forces of the national struggle for independence and to provide backing to the backward tribal communities of Tripura in 1945, the Janashiksha movement was started. The purpose was to address the various social, political and economic conditions of the people belonging to tribal community.

The Janashiksha movement was aimed at providing adequate education to the youth of the community and at the same time to spread awareness among the members of the community. The movement was also established for the abolition of poverty among the tribal people.

Structure of the Movement

The movement was formulated by the involvement of eleven educated youth of Tripura. The movement was a part of Tripura Janashiksha Samiti guided by Dasarath Deb, Biren Datta, Nilmani Debbarma, Aghore Debbarma, Sudhanwa Debbarma. The movement is considered to be a very significant landmark in the history of Tripura. The aim was to impart education to every segment of the society and not

keep it limited to the upper class and the urban areas. The King Bir Bikram in response to the Janashiksha Samiti established Tripur Sangha led by Ramkumar Debbarma and Lalit Kumar Debbarma. The council established by him soon ceased to function with his untimely death. However, the King took numerous steps to undermine the functions of the Janashakti Samiti as he was keen to promote his council so that he could get popularity among the people of Tripura. In spite of all the opposition by the King the members of the 'Jana Shiksha Parishad' accomplished to obtain the King's approval to establish four hundred and eighty eight primary schools all over the state of Tripura. The Parishad was helped by a former education minister, Major D. A. W. Brown. The council established during the rule of Bir Bikram adopted the status of a political party in 1948 and renamed itself as 'Tripura Rajya Mukti Parishad'. The party managed to involve a few members of Jana Siksha Samiti which was established in 1945. The Communist party, under the leadership of Kanchan Prabha Debi, lost all its power as it was banned by the government of Tripura. The Jana Shakti Samiti no longer existed and the members soon joined the new party which was established after the ban of the Communist party. Tribal leaders became the member of the new party which came to be known as 'Gana Mukti Parishad'.

Nevertheless, 'Jana Shiksha Samiti' was successful in increasing the awareness among the tribal population of Tripura. The movement was instrumental in motivating people to bring a change in their style of living and it gave tremendous momentum towards the process of development of the state. The movement paved way for the people to realise the importance of education and how it is essential for them to be educated. The movement can take credit for moving Tripura towards the path of development.

The history of Tripura has witnessed the episodes of exploitation faced by its population. The people reacted to these exploitations in form of rebel against the ruler. The movements and revolts which took place were not able to secure many gains for the people but they managed to successfully spread awareness among the people about the ills of oppression and turned their focus towards developing their state. The movements were able to unite the people to fight against domination and ill-treatment by the ruler of Tripura. The leaders of the movement became famous in the history of Tripura. Out of all the movements the 'Jana Shiksha Movement' is considered to be the most successful as it managed to liberate the people of various tribes by spreading awareness regarding the importance of education and literacy.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. Which is the second largest community in Tripura?
4. Who were *choudharies* in Reang society?
5. When was Janashiksha movement launched?

2.4 RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND TRIPURA

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The state of Tripura was very culturally developed. The period from 1862 to 1947 witnessed great development in the field of art and literature. The rulers during this period not only promoted the development in the field but they themselves were also talented artists, musicians and composers. The rulers of this period were very creative and their artistic work has been mentioned in detail in the history of Tripura. The history not only mentions the inclination of the ruler towards the art and literature but mentions the close relation, the four rulers shared with the renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore. The poet had very close relations with the royal state of Tripura and its four consecutive rulers. The development in the field of art and literature was at its epoch during this period but the patronage towards developing Bengali language and heritage was undertaken by all the ruling Manikya monarchs starting from the first ruler of this dynasty, King Ratna Manikya in 1464. In 1830, King Krishna Kishore Manikya had urged Prince Dwaraka Nath Tagore for help during a political crisis in his state. Prince Dwarka Nath was Rabindranath's grandfather who had timely provided assistance to the king to end the crisis. King Bir Chandra Manikya had written to Rabindranath Tagore and renewed the friendly ties between them. Rabindranath had mentioned his affectionate relations with the rulers in his famous novel *Rajarshi* and plays *Visarjan* and *Mukut*. This reference was made before the two had actually met.

In 1881, the queen Bhanumati Debi died and King was in deep sorrow because of her death. During this phase, he read Rabindranath's renowned love-poem *Bhagna Hriday*. The poem was able to provide lot of solace to the grieving King and he sent his secretary Radha Raman Ghosh to Rabindranath's residence in Jorasanko which was close to Calcutta to applaud the poet for his great work. The king was very saddened to see that the poet's work was not much recognized by the modern Bengali literary experts. The King personally took the initiative to publish the work of the poet and was willing to set up a printing press in order to publish his work. The King and the poet began an association which soon changed into deep friendship. Rabindranath visited the King at his Calcutta residence on many occasions. The king surprised the scholars of literary world when he honoured the young poet to be one of the best poets of that time. In 1882, Rabindranath was only twenty one years old and had only one book to his credit. The poet was given such a prestigious title by the ruling king. The poet was very overwhelmed by the faith and the affections displayed by the king and he was envied by many to be given such an honour at the age of twenty one. The mature King just by reading the poem written by the poet realised the worth of his work and developed genuine affection for the poet. The two became close friends inspite of the fact that the king was almost double the age of the poet. The king himself was very intellectual and had composed many poems and songs. Their passion towards literature made the age difference between them non-existent. Rabindranath has made a reference of these instances in his autobiography *Jiban Smriti* and felt fortunate to be associated with King Bir Chandra.

The relationship between Rabindranath and Bir Chandra laid the foundation of a lasting friendship between them. The poet maintained relations with the next

four generations of the royal family. He was associated with them for more than sixty years. The poet was associated with them till the day he died. He played the role of a mentor and a friend for the rulers of Tripura.

Rabindra Nath's association with Tripura's royal family continued even after the death of King Bir Chandra Manikya in 1896. The relations were continued on the same level by Bir Chandra's son and successor King Radha Kishore Manikya retained the closeness with the poet as his father. In fact the ties became even stronger and Rabindranath came for his first visit to Tripura in 1900. The King with the help of Rabindranath managed to enhance the literary work in Tripura. In the twelve years of Radha Kishore's reign the poet came to Tripura on five occasions. Radha Kishore wanted Tagore's aid in making him understand the technicalities of handling state matters. The king took advice from the poet on varied issues for instance, while appointing ministers, matters concerning drafting the budget for the state or regarding aspects about deciding the code of conduct of the ministers. Tagore was able to advise the King on state matters which needed reforms. The king initiated many reforms in the day to day functioning of the administration and in the field of education on the advice given to him by Tagore.

This relationship helped in improving Tripura's ties with greater Bengal. The benign Maharaja made many donations in order to aid various cultural and literary projects taken up in Bengal. On Tagore's request the king aided a research which was being pursued by Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose in England as he needed urgent funds to carry on with his research. The king made a generous donation towards Bose's research work which he felt would benefit the country. The king made several contributions towards the work and institutions run by the poet. He paid an annual grant to Viswa Bharati. This grant continued to be sanctioned to the organisation till the period of Bir Bikram Kishore.

The ties between Tagore and the next ruler continued in a steady manner. Birendra Kishore was a very talented personality and inherited the artistic wisdom from his ancestors. Besides being a composer and musician he was a talented painter. Many of his oil paintings were honoured by renowned painters. The ruler continued to provide financial aid towards the Viswa Bharati. The relation between the King and Tagore benefitted Tripura socially as well as culturally. In 1939 King Bir Bikram Kishore made a visit to Santiniketan. The King appointed Rajkumar Buddhimanta Singh, a Manipuri dance teacher to teach dance at Shantiniketan. Buddhimanta was an expert who introduced many new dance forms and improved the existing styles. The guru had a large fan following as a result many other experts began to show inclination to be a part of Shantiniketan. The experts helped in developing Rabindra Nritya to great heights. They were able to add many graceful moves to the style of dancing.

Following in the footsteps of his ancestors, Tripura's last ruler, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore carried forward the relation built by his ancestors with Tagore. He continued the tradition of supporting Shantiniketan. The cultural development benefitted Tripura as well. The development of art and literature in the state was at its paramount. Bir Bikram had deep regard for Rabindranath Tagore. The king had the opportunity to bestow Tagore with the honourable title of "Bharat Bhaskar". The honour was

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bestowed on Tagore just three months prior to his death. The king had celebrated the 80th birth anniversary of the poet with a grand ceremony at the royal palace Durbar. He had sent an envoy to invite and help the ailing poet to make the journey to Tripura. The celebration was meant to be a tribute to the ailing poet. The invite deeply touched Tagore and expressed his feeling, 'Such a free and disinterested bond of friendship between an immature poet whose fame was yet uncertain and one enjoying royal distinction is unprecedented in the history of any literature. The distinction that this royal family has conferred on me today illumines the final horizons of my life'.

In 1926, Tagore made his last visit to Tripura and he not only felt honoured to be invited by the king but also wanted to acknowledge the affection and respect displayed towards him by the Kishore Sahitya Samaj of Agartala. He felt that the organization had taken all his advice in a very positive way and helped immensely towards the cultural development of the state. Finally in the speech in order to show his gratitude towards the rulers of Tripura who had shown great amount of love and affection to him and supported his endeavours in such a wholehearted manner, he said, '...it has been my privilege to receive honour even from the hand of kings in the West. But the tribute I received from a prince of my own country is to me, personally speaking, of much greater value. That is why my relationship with the State of Tripura is not just that of a guest for a day. This relationship is wedded to the memories of the father and the grandfather of the present king'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. Mention any one love-poem written by Rabindranath Tagore.
7. What was the title endowed by Bir Bikram to Rabindranath Tagore?

2.5 CONTRIBUTION OF PRINCELY COURT TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF BENGALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language is an important symbol of group consciousness and solidarity. In a pluralistic society such as ours, what is remarkable is not just the numbers and variety of dialects, but that each one of them reflects a distinctively definable community having distinctive traits, traditions, attitudes, beliefs, customs and habits. Sometimes a combination of the dialects spoken in a homogeneous territory having some common characteristic traits develops into a language. A language in conjunction with culture, religion and history is an important component of nationality formation. Its functional and symbolic value has far reaching significance in the transitional continuum from continuity to ethnicity and from ethnicity to formalized nationality.

Empirical study on the basis of historical evidences show that no aboriginal tribal communities of Tripura had their own written script, all being in a form of colloquial expression. So, the rulers of Tripura had to look for a written language for

the sake of administrative works. It is stated that Bengali, the flourishing language of the neighbouring plain was adopted as the state language of Tripura.

Bengali always found a place of honour in the royal court of Tripura. Till the integration of Tripura with the Independent India, Bengali had functioned as the official language of Tripura. It is understood that the kings of Tripura had adopted Bengali as the language of the royal family, by which a new culture among the tribal people could be witnessed. Later on, the tribal people of Tripura started to speak in Bengali instead of their mother tongue kok-borok. They seemed to be engaged in other Bengali cultural pursuits like literature, dance, music, rites and rituals, etc.

Altogether there are 19 tribes in Tripura speaking different languages, but the majority of them speak Kok-Borok language. Generally, the tribes of Tripura can be divided into two major groups:

- Aboriginal Tribes, in which Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Lusai, Uchai, Chaimal, Halam, Kukis, Garos, Mog and Chakma come under this category and
- Immigrant Tribes, in which tribes named as Bhil, Munda, Orang, Santhal, Lepcha, Khasia and Bhutia fall under this category, who came and settled in this state for economic reasons.

But linguistically, the tribes of Tripura can be divided into three groups:

- Bodo groups
- Kuki-Chin groups
- Arakan groups

Kok-Borok Language and Literature

Out of the total tribal population of Tripura, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal communities occupy the majority. Out of nineteen tribal communities, eight communities viz. Tripuri, Reang, Noatia, Jamatia, Rupini, Kolo, Uchai and Murasing speak in Kok-Borok. According to the census of 1991, tribal population in the State stood 8, 53,345 out of 27, 57,205 being the total population of the State. Out of the total tribal population, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal population comprising the above mentioned eight communities is presumed to be about seven lakhs.

Other minor tribal communities of the State have also used the Kok-Borok language as a medium of communication. In the recent past, the Halam communities call the Kok-Borok 'RajaniKok' (Language of the Kings). This Kok-Borok is the sister language of the Boro, Garo, Koch, etc. of the North-East descending from the Tibetto-Burmese language family.

At present, Kok-Borok language has been recognized as a language of literature. Therefore, it deserves a language of lively amplitude and distinctive originality. The linguists are of the view that if the modern method of the Linguistics is followed, then the development of this language is certain.

The first Kok-Borok magazine was published in the mid-fifties. From the seventies, there is a continuity of development process and activities in creating Kok-Borok literature. Though, there is still dispute in matter of Kok-Borok script

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and spelling method, the number of publication of Kok-Borok books on poems, short stories, novel, drama and books of translation are gradually increasing and has taken an important position.

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The State Government of Tripura has recognised Kok-Borok as one of the official languages of the state in AD 1979. The important Government notifications, publicity booklets, etc. are being published in the Kok-Borok language along with Bengali. The Kok-Borok language was introduced as a medium of instruction for the Kok-Borok speaking students at the primary level about twenty years back and it has now been extended up to degree level classes.

Development of Kok-Borok language and Literature

- It is stated that Radhamohan Thakur has written the grammar book of Kok-Borok called 'Kok-Borokma' which was published in 1900.
- TraipurKothamala, the Kok-Borok-Bengali-English translation book has also been written by Radhamohan Thakur and was published in 1906.
- 'KOK-BOKMA', the Kok-Borok grammar book was written in 1897 jointly by two authors named Daulot Ahmed and Md. Omar.
- The first Kok-Borok Magazine "Kwtal Kothoma" was first edited and published in 1954 by Sudhanwa Deb Barma, who was one of the founders of the Tripura Janasiksha Samiti, and a social worker and a political personality of the State.
- Sudhir Krishna Deb Barma had written two Kok-Borok books named 'Koktang' and 'Surungma Yakhili' which were published in 1954 and 1962 respectively.
- Kok-Borok Dictionary named as 'Kokrobam' was written by Ajit Bandhu Deb Barma, and was published by the Education Directorate in 1967.
- The Kok-Borok text Book for children 'Cherai Surungma (Bagsa)' was published by the Education Directorate in 1958, which was written by Mahendra Deb Barma.
- A number of Kok-Borok and Bengali Magazines were patronizing the thoughts and aspirations of the tribal people. Some of those were —
 1. Koktun, edited by Ajoy Deb Barma and Surjya Reang,
 2. ChiniKok, edited by Ajoy Deb Barma & subsequently by Nirmal Deb Barma
 3. Tripura Kogtun, a Kok-Borok mouthpiece of the Information Cultural affairs and Tourism Department of the Government of Tripura, edited by Shyamlal Deb Barma
 4. Yapri, edited by Narendra Deb Barma of Kok-Borok and tribal culture, One — "Tripura kok-Borok Unnayan Parisad" was established under the Chairmanship of Bir Chandra Deb Barma in 1967.
- Tripura Kok-Borok Sahitya Sabha was founded by Sailendralal Tripura, which organized regular discussion on the Kok-Borok development and tribal culture through annual conferences and seminars.

Education and Literature

We all know that education plays a significant role in human life. Without education, a person is considered uncivilized and uncultured.

According to A. W.B. Power, the first political agent of Tripura, ‘The people were virtually without any education. While the hill people were totally illiterate, the people of the plains were marginally better. There were only two schools in the Raja’s territory, one at Agartala known as ‘Anglo-Vernacular School, or the Maharaja’s School and the other at Kailasahar, which was opened only in 1872.’

- As the matter of fact, it was the able reign of Birchandra Manikya that for the first time elementary education was started for both boys and girls in AD 1872 and written laws were also introduced and the domestic slavery was prohibited in AD 1878.
- Under the patronage of Bir Chandra Manikya ‘Rajaratnakaram’, a well-known historical work was published. During this time, Dinesh Chandra Sen wrote ‘Vanga Bhasa O Sahitya’, the history of Bengali literature.
- Gifted with a fine literary taste, Radhakishore Manikya followed the old tradition of patronizing learning. The original Rajmala was re-edited during his reign and we are told that Pandit Chandroday Vidyabinode was entrusted with this task. It is also known that the Rajmala was completed in four volumes in AD 1902. Only a few copies were printed and these were exclusively meant for the members of the royal family. These were kept in the library of the royal palace.
- The ‘Silalipisamgraha’ (collection of stone inscriptions), an unfailing source of historical studies, was a notable work of Chandroday Vidyabinode who got liberal patronage by the king. Vidyabinode also re-edited and published the ‘Brihannaradiya-Purana’ in AD 1907.
- The Tripura State Gazette, an official newspaper, was first published during his enlightened rule.
- A great educationist, Radhakishore Manikya spent a large amount of money for the diffusion of education. Apart from a new high school, a number of Girl’s Schools and primary schools were established in different parts of his kingdom, including the Tulsibati Girl’s School at Agartala named after his consort. A free boarding for the Thakur boys and the Kumaras (princes) of the Royal House were established in AD 1900.
- The foundation stone of the present M.B.B. College, Agartala was laid by Maharaja Bir Bikramkishore Manikya on 7 May, 1937 and it proved to be a milestone in the field of higher education in Tripura.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. How many tribes are there in Tripura?
9. How are tribes in Tripura divided linguistically?

2.6 WORLD WAR I AND II AND TRIPURA

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In backward parts of North East India, many individuals were incorporated into the Indian Labour Corps as paid labour. These men were sent to France in order to fight the war for the British in 1917-18. The region of North East had fallen under the control of British only by the early 1900s. Most of the Eastern parts of India were very backward and mainly constituted of tribal people who had no exposure to basic standard of living. They had no contact with the world beyond the hills and the forests. The War was a sanctified opening that helped them to get an opportunity to widen their prospects and benefit their communities. The War proved to be the channel that accelerated their shift towards civilization and helped in educating people and spread Christianity to this part of the country. On the whole, there was an increase in political awareness among the people of the tribes as they got exposed to modern ways of life.

Need for Man-power

In 1915, the British War Cabinet became conscious that more man-power will be required to fight the war. The trained soldiers were required to fight the war and were not available to perform any other task. The British not only needed skilled army man but they needed labourers in order to construct roads, built railway tracks, manage ammunition, unload supplies from the ships, cut forests, build shelter and even men were required to bury the dead soldiers. There was acute shortage of labour in the west, hence men had to be supplied from the population of the colonies. These people had to be individuals who could manage hard labour and survive in tough conditions. The population of tribals fitted the requirements of British.

In January 1917, a request was made to the Viceroy in order to supply men from India for the Western Front in France. Most of Indians in the north were already incorporated as army soldiers, hence the only option left was to supply men from the eastern states such as Assam, Bengal, Orissa and the North Western Frontier Province as they were not a part of the British army. The request was forwarded and it was agreed that eight to ten thousand competent healthy men will be employed to be sent to France. The demands were sent to the tribal chiefs to gather the number of people required to be sent.

Indian Labour Corps

The Labour Corps was an organization set up by British in order to provide necessary support to the army for instance, catering, laundry, shifting provisions and equipment, digging graves, docking ships and other maintenance jobs were done by the corps.

Lushai Labour Corps

The Lushai Labour Corps consisted of men from Lushai tribe which is mostly from the present day Mizoram and Aizwal. The men from this corps arrived at Marseilles in June 1917 and they were allotted the most laborious task such as fortifications, charcoal making etc. The corps was under the charge of Lt. Col. Mayfair. Rev. D.

E. Jones. The men were made to serve in the war zone for a year. In June 1918 when the corps returned to their homeland more than 100 men had lost their lives. A war memorial was built in the name of men who died during the war in the centre of the Aizawl city. On 7 December which is observed as Armed Forces Flag Day, these men are remembered. During their visit to the west they learnt the game of football and since then the game is played in Mizoram and a variety of spinach which the men got from France is still grown there and known as 'feren'.

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Khasi Labour Corps

The Khasi Labour Corps was in the beginning known as the 26th Khasi Labour Corps. The Corps was commanded by two European officers Herbert Cunningham Clougston and F B Wilkins. The men were sent under their command to France. They were accompanied by David Stephen Davies, a Presbyterian missionary and Rev. Shai Rabooh, a Khasi preacher as well. More than 67 khasi lost their life during the war. In 1924 a memorial was built in Shillong and the memorial has an inscription engraved on it which reads as *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. It means that it is sweet and right to die for your country.

Garo Labour Corps

In April 1917, the Deputy Commissioner placed a requirement of 1000 men to the Labour Corps; these men belonged to Garo Hills. The men were made to camp at Tura where the conditions were very bad and many of them lost their lives as they suffered from various diseases. In August when the men moved to France only half of them were fit to travel. Some of them became unwell while travelling the long distance. The men had to face many hardships while they were in France. In July 1918 they returned to Tura and by now only 120 men were left of the 1000 which had initially been recruited. The day they returned to Tura is since then remembered as Garo Labour Corps Day in remembrance.

Naga Labour Corps

The 21 Naga Corps consisted of Nagas, Semas, Lothas, Regmas, Aos, Changs and few more Trans-frontier tribes. The maximum strength was of the Nagas as at the time of recruitment they were 2000 men. The men of this Corps were transported to France in two groups. One group consisted of 688 men who left in June 1917 and the other had 992 men and this group left in July 1917. They were under the command of The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. H. C. Barnes. He was assisted by many clerks and interpreters. The men of the Naga Labour Corps after reaching were assigned work in Mametz, Le Transloy, Haute Avesnes, Contalmaison and Guillemont. They were made to undertake rescue work, repair roads etc. Some of the men from this Corps were utilised to control the Kuki revolt of 1918. The men who managed to survive the war and return to their homeland organised a political organisation called the Naga Club. They established themselves in Kohima and Mokokchung in 1918. In 1928 the association requested the Simon Commission to grant them the right to choose their own faith when the British left India.

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Manipur Labour Corps

In early 1917 the Manipur Labour Corps was formed when the King of Manipur Chura Chand Singh and the Political Agent Lt. Col. H.W.G. Cole were asked to provide manpower. On this request they sent message to chiefs of all hill tribes to gather men for recruitment to the Labour Corps. The villagers revolted from travelling to an unknown land but they were not given the choice to refuse and the 22nd Manipur Labour Corps was formed and later divided into four companies. The recruitment of these men was done from the tribes of Meiteis, Tangkhuls, Koms, Kukis. Angom Porom Singh was made the in-charge of the Meiteis company; R. S. Ruichumhoa led the Tangkhuls company; Teba Kurong headed the Kom company and the Kukis were led by Thomsong Ngulhoa.

In 1917 Raja of Manipur Sri Churachand Singh made arrangements for State Military Police to support the British in the War. A company of 315 men took training along with the 3/39th Garhwals in Lansdowne and were sent to France to fight the war. The King made cash donations to aid the British in the war. The funds were used to procure motorable ambulances and an aircraft.

In September 1917, when demand was made to recruit more men for the Corps a large scale revolt was initiated by the Kukis against the King and the British authorities. This uprising is known as the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919 or Zou-Gal. This rebellion is remembered in the history of North East as the strongest and the greatest tribal revolt against the British.

Role of the Ruler of Tripura in the World War

In 1917, King Birendrakishore Manikya decided to make a fixed annual contribution of ₹ 15,000 in order to help the British and he made a lump sum contribution of ₹ one lakh as war fund. The Royal palace donated 800 shirts for the 11 Rajputs serving in France. Provision was made to transport 23,000 bamboos when request was made by the Munitions Board. In order to get people join the army the king offered to give a donation of ₹ 25 and along with that a gift of two acres of land to all those who were willing to join the army. In spite of the benefits, only seventeen men were recruited. Some died while undertaking the long and tough journey to France. The rulers sacrificed lives of so many men only because they wanted to appease the British. The same man power should have been used to fight the British who were draining the country socially, politically and most of all economically.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. What was the purpose of Labor Corps organization?
11. What was constituted in 21 Naga Corps?

2.7 INTEGRATION OF TRIPURA TO THE INDIAN UNION

Tripura was one of the princely states under British India. After the death of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya on 17 May 1947, his minor son Kirit Bikram became the Maharaja of Tripura. A council of Regency was formed under the presidentship of Maharani Kanchanprabha Devi (widow of Bir Bikram Manikya) to run the administration of the state. Other members of the council were Maharaj kumar Brajendra Kishore Deb Barman, Major B.B. Deb Barman and Mr S.V. Mukherjee holding the posts of vice president, a general member and chief minister as well as *Dewan* respectively. Three non-official ministers were selected who were to be associated with the chief minister and his official colleagues. They were Captain Maharaj Kumar Durjoy Kishore Dev Varman Bahadur, Kumar Nandalal Dev Varman Bahadur, and Moulvi Tamizuddin Ahmed Chowdhury Khan.

In spite of promises for a better constitutional reforms and almost equal position given to the non-official ministers, the council under regency of the Maharani could not satisfy her people, who were demanding a fully responsible government. Shri Pattavi Sitaramaya, Vice-President, All India States' People's Conference also wrote to Shri S.V. Mukherjee to establish a responsible government in Tripura as quickly as possible.

Within few months of Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya's death, a conspiracy was plotted for annexing Tripura with Pakistan. It is believed that the plan of annexation was known to the Bengal Boundary Commission. The conspiracy was plotted specially after Chittagong hill tract, Chaklaroshnabad, Sylhet district had gone to Pakistan leaving Tripura isolated and cut off from the mainland. Moreover, success in forcible occupation of a portion of Kashmir and abetment from a corner of the state authority encouraged the pro-Pakistani group to conspire and hatch a plot for annexing Tripura to Pakistan.

In Tripura, the *Anjuman Islamia* with Abdul Barik Khan, alias Gadu Mia, and Sirajul Islam, alias Pyera Mia, respectively hatched the conspiracy. Besides, reports from East Pakistan began to come in that *Ansar Bahini* was getting ready to attack Tripura. In view of considerable reduction in the palace guards, the threat was one to be reckoned with. Also, there was no force of the India Government present in the state at that time.

Although a socio-religious organization, *Anjumam Islamia* had a strong political inclination towards the Muslim League. Maharaj Kumar Durjay Kishore Debbarma, step brother of Maharaja Bir Bikram, was a close friend of Gadu Mia and had a business partnership with him. Subsequently, he became an interim Minister of the state. Gadu Mia and other pro-Pakistani elements were believed to have allured Durjay Kishore that if Tripura state could be included in Pakistan, the latter would be made the Maharaja of Tripura. Another top executive authority of the State who was believed to have indulged in the conspiracy was Satya Vrata Mukherjee the Chief Minister of the state and a member of the Council of Regency, appointed by the British Government. When the decision of the Maharaja regarding his joining the

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Indian Dominion was made public, *Anjuman Islamia* reacted sharply. It raised the question as whether the Maharaja alone could decide of joining the Indian Dominion. Durjay Kishore also gave a tacit support to him. Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya dies a sudden death. It was at that time that Durjay Kishore formed an organization, Bir Bikram Tripura Sangha. Though its objectives were related to social reform and service, it nursed an anti-Bengalee feeling at heart. The *Sangha* had its militant wing styled in local dialect as '*Seng-Krak*' (at that time translated as beheading at one blow). It was *Seng-Krak* through which the cult first appeared in Tripura. It was the symbol of that cult which always tried to encourage violent clashes between the tribals and the Bengalis in Tripura. The *Seng-Krak* began to incite the tribal people through the propaganda that the Bengali refugees had grabbed Tripura State. The Muslims and the Tribals in Tripura had no means to survive other than supporting the move for merger of Tripura with Pakistan.

Big rallies of the Muslim National Guards or *Ansar Bahini* began to take place at various places in East Pakistan bordering Tripura. A big Muslim rally was also organized at the very heart of Agartala. The prevailing situation was very alarming for the Indian Government. According to the intelligence Bureau of India, 'This information is confirmed by an independent source which says that the Muslim League National Guards in East Bengal are carrying on open propaganda that Tripura State belongs to Eastern Pakistan and that preparations are being made to invade Tripura. Several pamphlets inciting Muslims to conquer Tripura and annex it to East Bengal are in circulation in East Pakistan.'

In such a scenario, the *Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal* launched a strong resistance movement against the conspiracy. The central Committee of the Communist Party of India called upon the people of Tripura to resist the conspiracy with all efforts and to retain the state. The Tripura State Congress also started hectic campaigning. The *Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal* formed in 1946 by the ex-members of the *Tripura Rajya Janamangal Samity*, the leaders of Tripura *Janasiksha Samity* and the students and workers of the cultural fronts of the communists, started movements on two fronts. On the one hand, the *Praja Mandal* offered a strong resistance against the pro-Pakistani conspirators, and on the other hand, it opposed the anti-Bengalee propaganda of the *Seng-Krak*. A big contingent of volunteers of the *Praja Mandal*, mostly the tribals marched on the roads of Agartala town on 12 July 1947, raising slogans which were expressive of determination of resisting the conspiracy for annexing Tripura state to Pakistan. On the same day, a big public meeting was held at Umakanta Academy ground. It was addressed by *Yubaraj* Remendra Kishore Deb Burman (Nani Karta) and others. The speakers demanded immediate removal of S. V. Mukherjee and pledges to thwart, at any cost, the conspiracy for annexing Tripura to Pakistan. The Regent Maharani and her son was then staying at Shillong for security reasons. She was made aware of the latest situation prevailing in Tripura. The Regent Maharani immediately reported the matter to Sardar Patel, the then Home Minister of India.

A detailed report on the situation of Tripura was communicated to the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Umeshlal Singha, Secretary, Tripura State Congress Committee rushed to S.M. Ghosh, President of the Bengal Provincial

Congress Committee, for advice. S.M. Ghosh sent Umeshlal Singha and two other Congress workers of Tripura to Vallabhbhai Patel on 29 October 1947 where in a letter he explained the situation of Tripura. In the reply to the letter of S.M. Ghosh, Sardar Patel assured him that all possible action would be taken.

Sardar Patel informed Nehru of the steps being taken on the subject. He informed that a programme of improvement of communications had already been decided and steps had been taken to ensure that Tripura had independent communications of posts and telegraphs and wireless with the Central authorities. Moreover, he wrote that Assam Government was asked to post a force of the Assam Rifles in the State and that Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari would be appointed an Agent of the Central Government to deal with Tripura State. Being distressed to hear that tactics similar to those employed in the case of Kashmir were being resorted to by Pakistan for creating troubles in Tripura State, K.C. Neogy, Central Minister for Refugee and Rehabilitation, who was earlier associated with Tripura State as Legal and Constitutional Adviser, wrote on November, 6, 1947 a letter to Sardar Patel. In his letter he suggested to send 'a responsible military officer to Agartala, the Capital of the State, to make enquiries on the spot as regards necessary precautionary measures.' Similarly Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee, Central Minister for Industry and Supply, also wrote to Sardar Patel on 7 November, 1947 requesting him to take prompt action in the Tripura affairs. He wrote: 'Mr. Guha, who is one of the Ministers in Tripura, has addressed a letter to Mr. (V.P.) Menon explaining the whole position. The matter perhaps will be placed before you as soon as Mr Menon has considered this letter. The Muslim League is helping in the formation of a committee of action which will take steps on Kashmir lines to compel the State to join Pakistan. Fortunately, the majority of the people in Tripura are Hindus. If we can help the state on the lines indicated by Mr Guha in his letter to Mr Menon, we may be able to mobilize Hindu opinion within the state to resist aggression. I have no doubt the matter will receive your due attention, and in consultation with the Defense Ministry direct immediate action to be taken'. In his reply, Sardar Patel assured both K.C. Neogy and Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee that some actions had already been taken and that communications had been put on a proper basis independent of Pakistan. Moreover, the Eastern Command was put on alert for military assistance in case of need.

As a result of the resistance movement and some actions being taken by the Government of India, the *Anjuman Islamia* and other pro-Pakistani elements sensing danger, ultimately retreated. Thus, a chapter of conspiracy for annexing Tripura to Pakistan came to an end.

From the official correspondence between Sardar Patel and Nehru mentioned earlier in this discussion it is clear that the government of India responded immediately by sending men and material to put end to the inimical external inroads and influences. Now the council of Regency was dissolved according to the advice of the India Government and Maharani Kanchanprava Devi became sole Regent on 12th January, 1948. The Government of India decided to remove S.V. Mukherjee from his office and accordingly he was asked to resign. His resignation was accepted on 27 November 1947. Durjay Kishore Deb Burman was also asked to resign and his resignation was

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accepted on 17 January 1948. Moreover, he was asked to stay outside Tripura for certain period of time.

To streamline the administration of Tripura, the Government of India abolished the office of the Chief Minister of Tripura. In its place, the office of the *Dewan* was introduced and A.B. Chatterjee was appointed as the *Dewan* of Tripura. He joined in his office on 20 December 1947. After him assuming office, the Council of Regency was dissolved on January 12, 1948. Maharani Kanchan Prava Devi was allowed to continue to remain as the sole Regent of Kirit Bikram Kishore Deb Burman.

In spite of Maharani's professed sincerity and respect for the opinion of her people, her excuse for the dissolution of the ministry seems to be a lame one. It is perfectly clear from the circumstances that she was guided by the Government of India in all her actions at the time. Otherwise, with her sincere adherence to the Constitution of her late husband, she could have appointed a fresh council of ministers with the recommendations of the new chief minister. The dissolution of the Ministry and conferring of powers to the single hand of the *Dewan* was, after all a retrograde step in the process of democratization of the administration, followed so far in the attempt of modernization of the government by the rulers of the State.

During her regency, the Maharani made a proclamation on November 11, 1947, reiterating the decision of the Late Maharaja by saying that Tripura State had joined the Indian Union before 15 August, 1947. 'The accession of this State to the Indian Union was decided by the Late Ruler after due consideration and full consultation with all sections of the people'. She further assured that appropriate steps would be taken and all attacks would be resisted firmly for self defense and existence.

The Tripura merger agreement was signed on 9th September, 1949 in New Delhi. Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi as Regent and on behalf of her minor son, signed the agreement. By this agreement the Maharaja of Tripura ceded to the Dominion Government 'full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to Government of the state and agreed to transfer the administration of the state to the Dominion Government on the fifteenth day of October, 1949.

The agreement also provided that the Maharaja 'shall be entitled to all personal rights, privileges, immunities and dignities enjoyed by him as the ruler of Tripura, whether within or without the state, immediately before the 15 August 1947. No mention was made in the merger agreement about the *zamindari* of *Chaklaroshnabad* which was therefore included into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The silence of Maharani K.P. Devi to get the *zamindari* of Chaklaroshnabad, included in her merger agreement casts a doubt on her political wisdom. Had the *zamindari* been included in the state of Tripura the refugee problem would not have been so acute and injurious to the already existing people of this country.

Thus, Tripura became one of the 657 princely states of India when Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi signed the Instrument of Accession on 13 August, 1947 on behalf of her minor son Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya. Princely Tripura was integrated with the union on 15 October, 1949 and a Chief Commissioner took over from the Regent Maharani and in 1950 Tripura was given the status of a part C state.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

12. When was the Tripura merger agreement signed?
13. When was Tripura integrated with the Indian union?

NOTES**2.8 SUMMARY**

- The state of Tripura was ruled by the rulers of Manikya dynasty since the medieval period. The first Manikya king, according to sources, was Ratan Manikya. He ascended the throne in A.D. 1279. Before that, the state was mostly following a feudalistic style of governance.
- The period from 1862 to 1947 is known as the period of modernization in the history of Tripura.
- Birchandra Manikya was the brother of Ishan Chandra. After his death, he took over the state of Tripura, in 1862. Birchandra is often called the architect of modern Tripura as he introduced many reforms which were influenced by the efficient western style in the state.
- Reangs are the second largest tribal community of Tripura. They are recognized as one of the seventy five primitive tribes in India.
- The period of 1931 witnessed political unrest. The Reang community began to revolt against King Bir Bikram.
- The Janashiksha movement was aimed at providing adequate education to the youth of the community and at the same time to spread awareness among the members of the community. The movement was also established for the abolition of poverty among the tribal people.
- The state of Tripura was very culturally developed. The period from 1862 to 1947 witnessed great development in the field of art and literature. The rulers during this period not only promoted the development in the field but they themselves were also talented artists, musicians and composers.
- In 1881, the Queen Bhanumati Debi died and king was in deep sorrow because of her death. During this phase, he read Rabindranath's renowned love-poem *Bhagna Hriday*.
- In 1926, Tagore made his last visit to Tripura and he not only felt honoured to be invited by the king but also wanted to acknowledge the affection and respect displayed towards him by the Kishore Sahitya Samaj of Agartala.
- Language is an important symbol of group consciousness and solidarity. In a pluralistic society such as ours, what is remarkable is not just the numbers and variety of dialects, but that each one of them reflects a distinctively definable community having distinctive traits, traditions, attitudes, beliefs, customs and habits.

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- Out of the total tribal population of Tripura, the Kok-Borok speaking tribal communities occupy the majority. Out of nineteen tribal communities, eight communities viz. Tripuri, Reang, Noatia, Jamatia, Rupini, Koloï, Uchai and Murasing speak in Kok-Borok.
- In backward parts of north east India, many individuals were incorporated into the Indian labour corps as paid labour. These men were sent to France in order to fight the war for the British in 1917-18.
- Tripura was one of the princely states under British India. After the death of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya on 17 May 1947, his minor son Kirit Bikram became the maharaja of Tripura.
- The Tripura merger agreement was signed on 9 September 1949 in New Delhi. Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi as regent and on behalf of her minor son, signed the agreement.

2.9 KEY TERMS

- **Saivism:** Shaivism, also known as Shivaism and Saivam, is one of the major branches of Sanathan dharma, revering Shiva as the Supreme Being.
- **Dialect:** A dialect is a variation of a standard language spoken by a group of people. Sometimes people who live in the same place share a dialect. Sometimes people who are similar in some other way, such as social class, share a dialect.
- **Kok-Borok:** Kok-Borok is the native language of the borok people of the Indian state of Tripura and neighbouring areas of Bangladesh. Kok-Borok is closely related to languages of Bodo Dimasa Kacharies of Assam.
- **Dewan:** The originally Persian title of Dewan has, at various points in Islamic history, designated a powerful government official, minister or ruler.

2.10 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The period from 1862 to 1947 is known as the period of modernization in the history of Tripura.
2. Two reforms introduced by Ram Kishore Manikya were that he introduced European methodology in the ways of working and established Victoria Memorial hospital in Agartala.
3. The second largest tribal community of Tripura is Reangs.
4. Reang society was dominated by a group of village headmen who were collectively known as *choudharies*.
5. The Janashiksha movement was launched in 1945.
6. *Bhagna Hriday* is a love-poem written by Rabindranath Tagore.
7. The title endowed by Bir Bikram to Rabindranath Tagore was Bharat Bhaskar.

8. There are nineteen tribes in Tripura.
9. Linguistically, the tribes of Tripura are divided into three groups i.e., Bodo groups, Kuki-Chin groups and Arakan groups.
10. The Labour Corps was an organization set up by British in order to provide necessary support to the army for instance, catering, laundry, shifting provisions and equipment, digging graves, docking ships and other maintenance jobs were done by the corps.
11. The 21 Naga Corps consisted of Nagas, Semas, Lothas, Regmas, Aos, Changs and few more Trans-frontier tribes.
12. The Tripura merger agreement was signed on 9 September, 1949.
13. Tripura was integrated with Indian union on 15 October, 1949.

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2.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the Janashiksha movement.
2. Trace the development of Kok-Borok language and literature in Tripura.
3. What was the impact of Rabindranath Tagore's works on the princely courts of Tripura?
4. Discuss the various labour corps formed in North-East India during World War I.

Long –Answer Questions

1. What were the major factors responsible for the rise of socio-political movements in Tripura?
2. Discuss the history of merger of Tripura with the Indian union.
3. What was the contribution of the princely court towards the development of Bengali language and literature?
4. What was the impact of World War I and II on Tripura? Discuss in detail.

2.12 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 ASSAM - I

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Causes of Decline of the Ahom Kingdom
 - 3.2.1 Decline of the Ahom Kingdom and its Different Phases
- 3.3 First Anglo-Burmese War: Background and Impact
 - 3.3.1 Treaty of Yandaboo: Provisions and Significance
- 3.4 David Scott and His Reforms
 - 3.4.1 Occupation of Upper and Lower Assam
 - 3.4.2 Annexation of Cachar Plains and other Kingdoms
- 3.5 Economic Changes Under British Rule
 - 3.5.1 Coal and Petroleum Mining
 - 3.5.2 Railways
 - 3.5.3 Tea Plantations
- 3.6 Summary
- 3.7 Key Terms
- 3.8 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 3.9 Questions and Exercises
- 3.10 Further Reading

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

The reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-1818) saw the Burmese invasion on Assam. Friction between Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan and a conspiracy by Satram to overthrow the former led the latter to go to the Burmese capital Amarapura where he pleaded for assistance against the *Buragohain*. Bodoupaya, who had already had his eyes on Assam, seized the opportunity to send an army of about sixteen thousand men with Badan Chandra to Assam. The Burmese army after defeating the Assamese army at several engagements arrived at Jorhat. Chandra Kanta Singha was retained as king, and Badan Chandra assumed power as minister. The Burmese then retired to their country with large presents. But soon the assassination of Badan Chandra and installation of Purandar Singha by ousting Chandra Kanta Singha, once again brought the Burmese under the command of Ata Mingi to Assam in 1819. On their advance, Purandar and his Prime Minister Rudinath fled to Gauhati, and Chandra Kanta Singha was once again restored to the throne despite his mutilation of person caused in the meanwhile. After the departure of the Burmese, Chandra Kanta Singha sought to raise a fort at Jaipur against further Burmese invasion.

Immediately on the occupation of Assam by the British, martial law was declared; David Scott was appointed as civil officer in charge of civil matters, and Col. Richards in charge of the army, and the British started their administration. In this unit, the rise and fall of the Ahom Kingdom and the background of the first Anglo-Burmese war has been discussed in detail. The annexation of Cachar plains along with the economic changes under British rule have also been discussed here.

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3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe how the British annexed the Khasi hills and consolidated power
- Analyse the rise and fall of the Ahom kingdom
- Explain how the kingdom of Cachar fell to the British imperialistic idea
- Describe the provisions and significance of the Treaty of Yandaboo
- Analyse the process of the occupation of the upper and lower Assam

3.2 CAUSES OF DECLINE OF THE AHOM KINGDOM

The Ahom Kingdom is also known as the Kingdom of Assam. It spanned a long 600 years of the history of Assam—from 1228 to 1826. It was situated in the Brahmaputra valley. It was a sovereign state that successfully warded off even Mughal attempts to expansion. Sukaphaa is credited with having established the Ahom kingdom. He was a Tai prince from Mong Mao. It started with being a Mong in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river with its base lying in wet rice cultivation. In the sixteenth century, there was sudden expansion of the kingdom under Suhungmung. At this point its character changed and it turned multi-ethnic. This created a huge effect on both the social and the political life of the people in the Brahmaputra valley. During the phase of the Moamoria rebellion, the Ahom kingdom got weak and as a result it was plagued by Burmese invasions. In the First Anglo-Burmese War, the Burmese were defeated and had to enter into a treaty with the British. The treaty was known as the Treaty of Yandabo, 1826. Under the terms of the treaty, the East India Company got control of the Ahom Kingdom.

The Early Ahom State

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century A.D., Ahoms were busy mainly in consolidating their newly acquired territory and also protecting it from neighbouring powers. However, the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332), the fourth Ahom king, saw the first war with the ruler of Kamata kingdom. The reason for the war is not given in the Ahom chronicals, or buranji. It was brought to a close when the Kamata ruler sued for peace by offering a princess, whose name was Rajani. This event indicates the growing strength of the Ahom power. Tao-Kham-thi (1380-89), the seventh king led a successful expedition against the Sutiya king for murdering his brother Sutupha (1369-76) at a regatta. The reign of Sudanghpha (1398-1407), better known as 'Bamuni Konwar' for his birth in the house of a Brahmin at Habung, is important in several respects. It was for the first time that Brahmanical influence had its entry into the Ahom royal palace, the capital was transferred to Charagua near the bank of river Dihing. On the report of some nobles who were dissatisfied with Sudanghpha for his subordination to Hindu influence, the Tai rulers of Mong Kwang (Mogaung) sent an expedition to annex the Ahom kingdom. In the battle fought at Kuliarbari, the invaders were forced to retreat and came to terms in a treaty concluded on the

shore of the Nongjang lake in AD 1401. By this treaty the Patkai was fixed as the boundary between Assam, and Mong Sudangpha suppressed a revolt of the Tipamiyas, and he also asserted his sovereignty over the three eastern dependencies, viz., Tipam, Aiton and Khamjang. The reigns of four successive kings: Sujangpha (1407-22), Suphokpha (1439-88), and Supempha (1493-97), covering a period of ninety years were comparatively peaceful, barring a brief war with the Dimasa Kacharis in AD 1490. The bordering Nagas, who made some raids were kept in check.

Expansion of the Ahom kingdom

The real expansion of the Ahom kingdom began with Suhummong (1497-1539), better known as Dihingiya Raja, as he belonged to the Dihingiya phoid (clan) of the royal family. By this time the Brahmanical influence grew considerably in the Ahom court so much so that the king is said to have received the Hindu title Swarganarayan, an equivalent of in chao-pha Tai. He transferred his capital to Dihing. A census of population was done during his reign. After a series of armed conflict caused by boundary dispute, the Sutiya king was defeated and killed and his kingdom centering Sadiya was annexed to the Ahom dominion as a province over which a governor, titled Sadiya Khowa Gohain, was placed. He also defeated the Kacharis of the Doyang-Dhansiri Valley and brought their territory under the Ahoms as a province called Marangi and placed a provincial governor titled Marangi Khowa Gohain. This was in 1526. The Kachari royal family moved to Maibong leaving Dimapur. After sometime, on an appeal, the Kachari king at Maibong was given recognition as Thapita-sanchita (established and preserved) by Suhummong. The same king also brought the Bhuyans on the north bank under Ahom control. It was during the reign of Suhummong that the first major invasion of Assam by the Pathan rulers of Bengal occurred. After an initial expedition by Bir Malik and Bar Ujir, the two Bengal generals, Turbuk was commissioned by the Sultan of Bengal. In a major encounter, the Ahom side lost several of their generals and many soldiers. However, in a renewed naval war after sometime, the Ahom side gained superiority leading to the defect and the death of Turbak. A large number of arms, cannons, horses and soldiers were captured by the Ahoms. The defeated army was pushed through Kamrup and Kamata where the people cooperated with the victors.

The ruler of Kamata, Durlabhendra, accepted Ahom protection by offering his daughter. The Ahom army marched westward as far as the Karatoya, the eastern frontier of Bengal, and built a small brick temple on its bank. Thus by 1534, the Ahom army liberated Kamrup and the Kamata king. Suhummong established relation with Manipur and Orissa; and Viswa Singha, the rising Koch chief visited his court and acknowledged his allegiance. By his great zeal and enterprise, Suhummong extended the Ahom dominion from the eastern confine of Sadiya to the Karatoya and successfully failed the invasions of Assam by the Muslim rulers of Bengal. Due to the expansion of the Ahom dominion during his reign, non-Ahom population in the Ahom kingdom greatly increased. The reign of Suklenmong (1539-52) and Sukhampha (1553-1603) were mainly important for Koch expeditions to the Ahom kingdom. The first was conducted by Viswa Singha which, however, did not

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materialize. The second major invasion was led by king Naranarayan, with his younger brother Suklathwaj, popularly known as Chilarai, occupied the Ahom capital Garhgaon. However, the Koch army soon returned after a peace treaty. This was the last Koch invasion of the Ahom kingdom.

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The period of Ahom-Mughal conflict

The history of the Ahoms during the seventeenth century was mainly the history of the Ahom-Mughal conflict which arose of the imperial ambition of the Mughal emperors to extend their dominions to east beyond Bengal and if possible to seek routes to China and Tibet; at the same time to collect certain articles such as gold dusts, long pepper, elephant teeth, musk, and lack obtained in Assam which were valued greatly by the royalty and nobility in the Mughal courts. The absorption of the Koch kingdom into the Mughal dominions made the Ahom kingdom coterminous. The long reign of Susengpha (1603-41), better known as Pratap Singha, was important in the history of Assam in several respects. The Mughal claim on the Koch territory to the east of Barnadi and the trading adventures of certain Mughal merchants caused conflict and tension along the border leading to the first serious battle with the Mughal army and navy at Bharali near Tezpur in which the enemy side was completely routed. This was in AD 1616. A vivid description of the plight of the Mughal soldiers is given in the *Baharistan-i-Ghayli* by Mirza Nathan, a Mughal general. About 1700 men of the enemy side were killed, double this number were wounded and 9000 men were taken as prisoners. This was followed by a series of campaigns against the Mughals. In 1618, there was another serious battle at Hajo in which the Ahoms lost nearly 4000 boats, and an equal number of men were killed. The war, however, did not stop, but continued with occasional outburst, and the pendulum of victory moved from one side to another in Kamrup. Ultimately, peace was restored by a treaty concluded by Momai Tamuli Barbarua and Allah Yar Khan in 1639 where by the Barnadi on the North and the Asurar Ali on the south were fixed as the boundary between the Ahom and Mughal territories. It did not, however, last for a very long time.

During the early years of Pratap Singha's reign, the Kachari king, who was always considered thapita-sanchita status by the Ahom kings, was bold enough to show his defiance by declining to comply a request for passage of a Jaintia princess through his country. An Ahom army led by Sunder Gohain was badly defeated and the general himself was killed by the Kacharis led by Prince Bhimbal in 1606 AD. Soon, however, relation with the Kachari king was restored. Pratap Singha also cultivated good relations with the Jaintia king. Pratap Singha introduced certain reforms in the administration and reorganized the paik. Two very important posts that of the Barbarua and the Barphukan were created; the former was placed as the head of the secretariat and judiciary immediately under the king; the later was placed in charge of lower Assam west of Kaliabor and also head of diplomatic relations with the west. Several other new posts of lesser important were also created. A census of population was undertaken, and the paik system was extended to newly acquired territories. All free adult population were registered as paik for state services. A squad for four paiks constituted the lowest unit called got and twenty such units were commanded by a Bora, one hundred by a Saikia and one thousand by a

Hazarika. Departments were usually headed by Phukan, Baruah, Rajkhowa according to their importance. Among other notable works of Pratap Singha included construction of several important roads, bridges, excavation of tanks and ramparts. He also built several towns. The king was liberal and catholic in his religious policy. The short reigns of his two immediate successors Surampha (1641-44) and Suchingpha (1644-48) were not of much importance.

The reign of Sutamla, better known by his Sanskrit title Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63) was marked by a major invasion of Assam by the Mughal army headed by Mir Jumla, the newly appointed Nawab of Bengal. It was apparently a retaliatory action taken against the occupation of Sarkar Kamrup by the Ahom army by taking advantage of the confusion that ensued following the disposal of Shah Jahan by his son's. The large army of infantry and cavalry supported by a strong navy mostly manned by Europeans chiefly the Portuguese and the Dutch proceeded towards the capital of Assam by overrunning the defenses put up at Hatichala-Baritala, Pancharatan-Jogighopa and Pandu-Saraighat. After the occupation of the fort at Samdhara following a stiff battle and a keenly contested naval victory near Kaliabor on the Brahmaputra, the Mughal army advanced towards the Ahom capital, Garhgaon, Jayadhwaj Singha with his family and close associates evacuated the capital and retreated to Namrup hills close to the Patkai. The Mughal army occupied Garhgaon, and established outposts at several places in Upper Assam; Mir Jumla himself made his headquarters at Mathurapur. However, when the rainy season started, these outposts had been cut off by flood and became isolated while the Mughal navy with big war boat which remained at Lukhnow could not help them. The Ahom army then started to harass by adopting guerilla method of warfare. Due to disruption of communication, the Mughal army was placed under great hardship; the physical as well as moral condition began to deteriorate. The health of Mir Jumla became worse as he had been suffering from consumption. Under the circumstances, a peace proposal initialed by the Ahom side was ultimately agreed upon.

The treaty of Ghiladharighat at Tipam on the Buri Dihing was drawn up on Jan.9, 1663 by which Jayadhwaj became a tributary of the Mughal Emperor. He agreed to pay a huge war indemnity, the cessation of all territory west of the Bharali on the north bank on the state of 'Dimarua', Beltola west of the Kallong on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Jaydhwaj Singha's daughter accompanied by the daughter of Tipam Raja was sent to Delhi and the sons of the ministers were sent as hostage with the Mughal till full payment was made. Mir Jumla and his army left Assam. Soon after his return to Bakotha, as Garhgaon, as Garhgaon was despoiled by the Mughals, Jayadhwaj Singha passed away in 1663. He was the first Ahom king to embrace Hinduism by receiving initiation from a Vashnava priest. He made large revenue free land grants with paiks to several Hindu satras (monasteries). One of the notable achievements of Jayadhwaj Singha's reign was the planned settlement of villages in certain tracts of the country. However, Mir Jumla's invasion caused devastation of the economic and social condition of the kingdom. Mir Jumla was accompanied by a news reporter (waqia navis) named Mirza Mahammad Wali, Poetically known as Shihabuddin Talish, who left a very valuable account of Assam, its climate, population, manners and customs, products, and of its capital Garhgaon.

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A few excerpts may be of interest. 'Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax to the Rajah of Assam, yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands.' 'From Lakhaugarh to Garhgaon, also, there are roads, houses and farms in the same style and a lofty and wide embanked road has been constructed up to Garhgaon for traffic.' The people of the country are free from certain fatal and loathsome diseases such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, cutaneous eruptions, goitre and hydrocele, which prevail in Bengal.' 'It is not the custom here to take any land tax from the cultivators; but in every house one man out of the three has to render service to the Raja.' 'In all the past ages no (foreign) king could lay the hand of conquest on the skirt of this country, and no foreigner could treat it with the foot of invasion.' 'And all the people of his country, not placing their necks in the yoke of any faith, eat whatever they get from the hand of any man, regardless of his caste and undertake any kind of labour.' 'Their language differs entirely from that of all the people of Eastern India.' 'They cast excellent matchlocks and bachadar artillery, and show a great skill in this craft. They make first rate gunpowder..' 'The common people bury their dead with some of the property of the deceased, placing the head towards the east and the feet towards the west.' Talish also left a vivid and valuable description of Garhgaon, and the royal palace. Chakradhwaj Singha (1663-70) himself to be a person of indomitable courage and firm determination who refused to put on the gown (siropa) sent by the Mughal court to him as a tributary king.' Death is preferable to a state of subordination to Bangal' he uttered. Preparations for war were soon complete, and Kamrup was again recovered by a strong Ahom navy, and infantry under the Command of Lachit Barphukan in 1667. The Mughal occupational army was badly mauled. Following this several fortifications had been raised on both banks surrounding Gauhati to protect it against any further attack. Having received the news of Mughal reverse, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb dispatched a Rajput general Raja Ram Singh, son of Raja Jay Singh of Amber with a large force with order to chastise the 'wicked tribe' (the Ahoms). Ram Singh advanced towards Gauhati by occupying several posts which the Ahoms evacuated for strategic reasons to concentrate at Gauhati. Ram Singh made his camp at Hajo.

The Ahom army under Lachit Barphukan and other generals including Atan Buragohain foiled every attempt of Ram Singh to occupy Gauhati by war and diplomacy and the war dragged on for several years with loss on both sides. In the meantime, Udayaditya ascended the throne in 1669. The Battle of Saraighat fought in 1671 was the last determined attempt of Ram Singh which met ignominious defeat at the hands of the Ahom. The defeated army was pushed back beyond the Manaha river. It may be mentioned that in the war against the Mughals, many of the neighbouring hill people sent their contingents and successfully fought against the invaders. From the death of Ramdhwaj Singha, the successor of Udayaditya Singha, in 1675 to the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681, there ensued a period of weak and unstable government during which several weak and young kings were placed on the Ahom throne the quickly removed by ministers and high officials for their own selfish gains than for the welfare of the kingdom. By taking advantage of the situation, Laluk Barphukan, the Viceroy of Lower Assam at Gauhati treacherously handed Gauhati over to the Mughals.

The first major achievement of Gadadhar Singha (1681-96), who was installed king at Kaliabor by the nobles and officers, was the expulsion of the Mughals from Gauhati and Kamrup by defeating them at the Battle of Itakhuli. They were pursued down to the Manaha, which henceforth became the Ahom-Mughal boundary till 1826. The king then suppressed all conspiracies to weaken the power of the Monarch, and reduced the tribes who created troubles in the border. He also controlled the growing power of the Hindu religious heads, but he was no bigot in his religious policy. Possessing a towering personality, Gadadhar Singha restored the authority of the king, and brought peace and order to the country. Rudra Singh's reign (1696-1714) marks new turning point in the history of Assam. Inherited from his father a strong monarchy and a peaceful kingdom, Rudra Singha now found time and resources to build a new capital at Rangpur near the present town of Sibsagar on the Dikhow by importing artisans and masons, and know-how from Bengal. When the Rajas of Cachar, who was treated by the Ahoms as thapita-sanchita, and Jaintia showed signs of insubordination, they were captured and brought before Rudra Singha and were compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Ahoms. The king had planned to invade Bengal with the support of the rulers and chiefs of the neighbouring states like Tripura, Koch Bihar, Burdwan and Nadia. When all preparations were complete and the vast army assembled at Gauhati for the march, Rudra Singha suddenly fell ill and passed away in that city. The king is known for his liberal policy; he allowed to grow trade with Bengal, and also imported several cultural items like dress, festival, songs, etc., from that country. This resulted in a slow cultural synthesis.

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Later Ahom kings

The first half of the eighteenth century was peaceful and the reigns of two kings Siva Singha (1714-44) and Pramatta Singha (1744-51), saw the unprecedented growth of Hindu religious proclivities, and the building of Hindu temples. A great number of endowments of land and man were made for sustaining these. Siva Singha's queen Phuleswari, who acquired great influence over him, even dared to insult Vaishnava mahantas by forcing them to bow down to the Goddess Durga. From this time onwards, the Ahom kings became more attached to Sakta faith which introduced a new element in the social and political life. The traditional Ahom religious institutions fell into negligence, and the Ahoms who remained stuck to their own religion and customs, became a degraded class. At the same time, cultural penetration from Berigal continued unabated. The reign of Rajeswar Singha (1751-69), a younger brother of Siva Singha saw the rise of Kirti Chandra Barbarua to power and status. One of the important events of his reign was the dispatch of the Ahom army against the Burmese in Manipur whose legal ruler Jai Singh (known as Bhagya Chandra in Manipur) was driven away by them and who came to Assam through Kachari country. Jai Singh strengthened his relation with Rajeswar Singha by giving his daughter Kuranganayani in marriage to the latter. This followed the policy of his predecessors by making endowment of land and men to religious persons and institutions.

Lakshmi Singha's reign (1769-1780) was disrupted by the revolt of the Moamarias, the followers of the Mayamara Mahanta of orthodox Vaishnava persuasion. Several causes are attributed to the revolt of which one is the physical

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punishment meted by Kirti Chandra Barbarua to Nahar, the chief of the Morans who came to make annual offer of elephant which was found lean and haggard. Nahar was mortified at this and was looking for support to take revenge on the Barbarua. Already Phuleswari's action had inflamed the situation. The climax was reached when the Moamaria Gossain was abused by the Barbarua for being indifferent to him. The Morans were then ready to fight. They were joined by three exiled Ahom princes. The rebels advanced towards the capital Rangpur and after defeating the royal troops at several engagements they arrived at Rangpur. The king who attempted to flee was pursued and captured, and was put in confinement at the temple of Jaysagar. Ramakanta was declared king and Nahar became the Barbarua. The Morans preserved the entire structure of the Ahom govt. However, after a few months, the Moran rule was overthrown and the insurgents were punished. King Lakshmi Singha was released from captivity and was restored. Like his predecessors, the king made a number of grants of rent free land with men, and built several temples.

3.2.1 Decline of the Ahom Kingdom and its Different Phases

The Kingdom began to decline from the time of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). In 1782, the Moamarias insurrection rose again with renewed vigour and increased violence. They advanced to Garhgaon and created panic among the population. The advance was halted and the rebels were treated with severity and many were executed. Such a step aggravated the situation. After a brief pause, the disturbances caused by the Moamarias swept down across the north bank. After defeating the royalists, the Moamarias advanced towards the capital. Assistance was sought from Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, Luki. Before the help arrived, the rebels occupied Rangpur; Gaurinath Singha with the members of his family sailed downstream, and reaches Nagaon and then to Gauhati. At Rangpur, the Moamarias set up Bharath Singha as king; but the Hatisungi Morans set up Sarbananda as their king of the territory to the east of Dihing and both minted coins in their names. Krishnanarayan of Darrang had also organized a large force and occupied North Gauhati. Purnananda Buragohain shifted the centre of administration of Dichoi, later known as Jorhat, which became the new Ahom capital. Under the circumstances, Gaurinath Singha appealed for help of men and materials to the East India company's authorities through Raush, a salt merchant and Mr. Douglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar. In response to this, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General dispatched Captain Thomas Welsh with sepoys who arrived at Goalpara in early November, 1792; and from there, on receiving urgent message from the king moved upstream the Brahmaputra. The meeting between the king and Capt. Welsh took place at Nagarberra on the Brahmaputra. Advancing further, Captain Welsh suppressed the rebellious elements at Gauhati and on the north bank. He also pacified Krishnanarayan, the rebellious prince at Darrang and expelled many of the Burkendazes who assisted him. Sometime later he advanced to Jorhat and then to Rangpur where he defeated the Moamarias, and restored the authority of Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur in 1794.

In the midst of this success, Capt. Welsh was recalled by Sir John Shore, the new Governor General and he left Assam. During his stay in the kingdom, he concluded a commercial treaty in 1793 by which commerce between Assam and Bengal was sought to be put on 'reciprocal basis'. The Report of Capt. Welsh which he submitted to his government in response to certain queries gives certain important information in regard to the system of Ahom govt., trade and commerce, products, etc. Although Gaurinath Singha is depicted by some as cruel and vindictive, he had certain pieces of good work like the abolition of human sacrifice at the Kechaikhathi temple at Sadiya. Kamaleswar Singha's reign (1795-1810) witnessed localized revolts at several places in Kamrup which was successfully suppressed, at Sadiya by the Khamtis, Pani Noras, Miris and others, fresh Moamaria insurrection in league with the Daflas. In spite of these, he connected the new capital Jorhat by constructing several new roads like the Na-ali, the Rajabaha Ali, the Mohabandha Ali, the Kamarbandha Ali, etc. and also built a copper-house at Kamakhya. The reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-18) saw the Burmese invasion. Friction between Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan and a conspiracy by Satram to overthrow the former led the latter to go to the Burmese capital Amarapura where he pleaded for assistance against the Buragohain. Bodoupaya, who had already had his eyes on Assam, seized the opportunity to send an army of about sixteen thousand men with Badan Chandra to Assam. The Burmese army after defeating the Assamese army at several engagements arrived at Jorhat. Chandra Kanta Singha was retained as king, and Badan Chandra assumed power as minister. The Burmese then retired to their country with large presents. But soon the assassination of Badan Chandra and installation of Purandar Singha by ousting Chandra Kanta Singha, once again brought the Burmese under the command of Ata Mingi to Assam in 1819. On their advance, Purandar and his prime minister Rudinath fled to Gauhati, and Chandra Kanta Singha was once again restored to the throne despite his mutilation of person caused in the meanwhile. After the departure of the Burmese, Chandra Kanta Singha sought to raise a fort at Jaipur against further Burmese invasion. However, a Burmese force sent by their Monarch with presents of ornaments and dress to Chandra Kanta Singha seeing such preparations killed Patalong under whose supervision the fort was raised. Thinking this hostile move on the part of the Burmese army, Chandra Kanta fled to Gauhati and did not come back in spite of Burmese assurance. This was in 1821. The Burmese then set up an Ahom prince, Jogeswar Singha. Chandra Kanta Singha crossed the border and entered Bengal where he tried to collect arms and men to fight the Burmese. At the battle of Mahgarh, Chandra Kanta's army was badly defeated, and he once again entered the British territory.

The period from 1821 to 1824 is called period of Burmese rule. During this period, the Burmese devastated the country and committed atrocities by plunder and killing. The Burmese also threatened the Goalpara frontier of Bengal by demanding the surrender of Assamese refugees including Chandra Kanta Singha, and their supporters who often gave trouble of them across the border. In that time, the border conflict in the East India Company's Chittagong frontier with the Burmese empire took serious turn. Anticipating a threatened invasion of Bengal, the prized

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possession of the Company in India, Lord Amherst, the Governor General decided to declare war on Myanmar (Burma). War was declared on the 5th of March 1824. This is the First Anglo Burmese War which lasted for nearly two years. Immediately after the declaration of war, the British army entered Goalpara frontier of Assam and after defeating the small Burmese garrisons in Lower Assam, it advanced to Upper Assam. By taking advantage of a dissension among the Burmese commanders, the British occupied Rangpur in 1825 and drove the Burmese and their allies, the Singphos out of Assam. A section of the Burmese army surrendered to the British remained in Assam. Immediately on the occupation of Assam by the British, martial law was declared; David Scott was appointed as civil officer in charge of civil matters, and Col. Richards in charge of the army and the British started their administration. By Article II of the Treaty of peace and friendship which was concluded between the British and the Burmese at Yandabo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese monarch renounced all claims upon and promised to refrain from all interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies. As Assam was already occupied by the British during the Anglo-Burmese war, it was kept under British occupation and started introducing British administration.

Ahom Administration

The system of government was partly monarchical and partly aristocratic. The king or Swarga Maharaja as he was called, was the supreme head of the state. All honours, titles, offices, decisions and war-measures emanated from him, but he had to act according to the advice of the five hereditary councilors of state, the Buragohain, the Bargohain, the Barpatra-gohain, the Barbaruah and the Barphukan. The state of Jaintia, Cachar, Khrim and Manipur were in friendly alliance with the Ahom government. The province of Darrang enjoyed complete autonomy in its internal administration, as well as the other vassal states. There were six establishments of princes introduced by Suhummong Dihingia Raja at Charing, Tipam, Tungkhung, Dihing, Samaguri and Namrup. Each of these princes had their own estates and dependents. All of them were entitled Raja and belonged to the royal family which started with Sukapha, the first Ahom king. Subsequently, the title of Charing Raja was reserved for the heir apparent while the title of Tipam Raja and Namrupia Raja were meant for other nearest blood relations of the reigning monarch. Ambition for the throne nurtured by some of these families without any political and military training became the cause of the downfall of Ahom rule in Assam. The Patramantries occupied important position in the political administration and enjoyed enormous powers. The Barphukan governed as viceroy or deputy to the king, in the tract between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang in Nagaon, but after extension of the Ahom kingdom in the westward direction he was put in charge of the country from Kaliabor to Goalpara with his headquarters at Gauhati. He had conducted diplomatic relations with Bengal, Bhutan and chieftains of Assam frontiers. Other local governors such as Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Marangi Khowa Gohain, the Solal Gohain and the Kajali Mukhia Gohain, etc., were appointed for the administration of the outlying areas of the country. Besides, there were other positions recruited from respectable Ahom families for high posts. Among them, the highest rank was of the

Phukan, next in rank were the Baruas. There were twelve Rajkhowas, a number of Khatakis and Dolois. Adult population of Assam was divided into Khels, Khels into Paiks and areas were constituted into Chamuas for revenue administration. It was not the usual practice in Assam to pay the revenue in cash. It was paid through services or paiks etc.

The currency of Assam consisted of gold and silver coins. The liberal and practical outlook shaped the religious of the Ahom monarchs. The image of 'Chom-Cheng' which Sukapha had brought with his from his ancestral home was the tutelary deity of the Ahom rulers till the end of their rule. The general success of the Ahoms in their dealings with the hill tribes was admitted by the Mughal chronicler Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mir-Jumla's expedition in 1662-63 AD. He wrote- 'Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax to the Rajah of Assam yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands.' Regarding the military system of the Ahoms, Ram Singh, the Mughal general had to admit that every Assamese soldier was an expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and cannons and that he did not such specimen of versatility in any other part of India. This proves that the organization of army under the Ahom rulers was efficient and effective. Law and justice was in action during the Ahom reign. The criminal law was characterized by sternness and comparative harshness. The penalty for rebellion was various forms of capital punishment.

In 1228, the kingdom of Ahom got established with the coming of Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, the first Ahom king, from Mong Mao (now part Peoples Republic of China). He traversed the Patkai mountain range and reached the valley of the Brahmaputra. It appears that Sukaphaa faced no challenge from or had not required to battle with an existing kingdom. He brought under his occupation, the area on the river's south bank, east had the Patkai Mountains, south, the Dikhau River and north, the Burhi Dihing River. Local groups like those of the Marans and Barahi were befriended by him. He set up his capital in Charaideo and set up offices of the Dangaria—Borgohain and Burhagohain. Both the offices got their separate regions of control in 1280s and what check and balance each of the three would have on the others was also clearly laid down. Wet rice cultivation technology was introduced to the people of this region by the Ahoms. Persons ready to fit in with the Ahom polity and life style were welcomed into the fold and this process is referred to as Ahomization. Due to Ahomization, to take an example, the Barahi people became totally subsumed while groups such as Maran and Nagas became Ahoms this significantly raised the number of Ahom. Right up to the 16th century, the Ahomization process remained highly significant as in this period led by Suhungmung the Ahom the kingdom was hugely expanding in territory, taking in regions at the cost of the Kachari and the Sutiya kingdoms.

With the rapid expansion adding large territories to the kingdom, the pace at which Ahomization was occurring was not good enough and in their own kingdom, the Ahoms became a minority. This caused the kingdom's character to change. It turned inclusive and multi-ethnic. The influences of the Hindus which had first been felt at the close of the 14th century under Bamuni Konwar, now took on a significant

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form. The Assamese language entered the Ahom court and was used alongside the Tai language for a while during the 17th century. Then the Tai language was replaced by Assamese. With the state expanding rapidly, the Borpatrogohain which was a new high office was installed. It was at par with the two high offices installed previously. The two previous offices did have objection to the new one. Marangikowa Gohain and Sadiakhowa Gohain were 2 special offices, set up for overseeing those territories which had been taken from the Kachari and Sutiya kingdoms, respectively. Paik system was employed to organize the kingdom's subjects which formed the militia.

Bengal's Afghan and Turkic rulers attacked the Ahom kingdom but with no success. There was also an occasion when under Ton-Kham Borgohain the invaders were pursued by the Ahoms and they went as far as the Karatoya river, and post this the Ahoms looked upon themselves as being the rightful heir of the erstwhile Kamarupa Kingdom.

The features that are seen in the mature Ahom kingdom were adopted during the period of Pratap Singha. Let us look at some of the changes. There was the reorganizing of the Paik system under the *khel* system which was more professional, and it replaced the *phoid* system which was kinship based. Both Borphukan and Borbarua got set up as also some more small offices. Then on, no other restructuring of a major kind of the state structure took place.

The 17th century saw repeated attacks from the Mughals on the Ahom kingdom. Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, was even occupied by Mughals in 1662, under the leadership of Mir Jumla but were not able to hold on to it. When the Battle of Saraighat, came to a close the Ahoms had come out victorious from the invasion of the Mughals as also managed to further the kingdom's boundary in the west right up to river Manas. Post a short period that was fraught with confusion, the kingdom got itself the last set of kings, the Tungkhungia kings, established by Gadadhar Singha.

Paik system was the basis of the Ahom kingdom. It is a type of corvee labor not Asiatic or feudal. In upper Assam, Ahoms started wet rice cultivation this region had low population density and was mostly marshy. The superior rice cultivation technology and land reclamation by employing irrigation systems, embankments and dykes, the very initial state structure was established by the Ahoms. In the sixteenth century, Suklenmung introduced the first coins. The personal service system that was rampant under the Paik system kept continuing. It was in the 17th century that expansion of the Ahom kingdom led to the inclusion of the erstwhile Mughal and Koch areas, and with this contact the Ahoms were influenced by their revenue systems and accordingly adapted.

The King (Swargadeo)

The kingdom of Ahom was under the rule of a king who was known as *Swargadeo* (*Chao-Pha* in Ahom language). The king had to be from the line of Sukaphaa, the first Ahom king. Generally, succession was based on primogeniture, though on occasion it was possible for the great Gohains (*Dangaria*) to elect another descendant of Sukaphaa from a different line or even enthroned or depose one.

Dangaria

For support in administration, Sukaphaa had two great Gohains: Borgohain and Burhagohain. They both had independent territories in the period of the 1280s, and were made veritable sovereigns in these territories called *bilat* or *rajya*. Borgohain's territory lay to the west up to the Burai River while that of Burhagohain lay between Sadiya and Gerelua River on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River. Both had complete command over the *paiks* that they controlled. Generally, people from specific families were put on these two administrative positions. The Princes considered to be eligible for becoming Swargadeo would not be in the running for either of these positions and it was also true vice versa. Suhungmung, in the 16th century, had another Gohain created and named Borpatrogohain. The territory of the Borpatrogohain lay in the middle of the other two other two Gohains.

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Royal officers

During his reign, Pratap Singha introduced two offices to be under the king directly. These offices were Borphukan and Borbarua. Borbarua was both the judicial and military head and was in command of the territory lying to the east of Kaliabor which was not commandeered by the *Dangaria*. Unlike the Dangariyas, the Borbarua was allowed to utilize for personal use only that section of the paiks which was under his command while the remaining were at the service of the state of Ahom. The civil and military command over the territory to the west of Kaliabor lay with the Borphukan who also held the position of viceroy of *Swargadeo* in the west.

Patra mantris

The council of ministers or *patra mantris* comprised five positions. Since Supimphaa's time (1492–1497), one *patra mantri* was made the prime minister or *Rajmantri* and was given additional powers as well as 1000 additional paiks of the Jakaichuk village were placed at his service.

Other officials

Judicial and well as military responsibilities rested with both the Borphukan and Borbarua, and both got help from two separate councils (*sora*) of *Phukans*. While Gauhati was the seat of the Borphukan's *sora*, the capital was where the Borbarua's *sora* sat. *Baruas* was the name given to superintending officers. The highest amongst the officers was of the Phukans. All together, 6 Phukans, each holding a specific responsibility, comprised the council of the Borbarua. The Neog Phukan, Deka Phukan, Dihingia Phukan, Na Phukan, Bhitaraual Phukan and the Naubaicha Phukan who was allotted 1000 and took care of the royal boats, all together comprised the council of Phukan. Similarly, even for the Borphukan there existed a council of six subordinate Phukans whom he was obligated to consult regarding every important issue. In this council were two Sutiya Phukans, Nek Phukan, the Dihingia Phukan, Deka Phukan commandeering 4000 *paiks* and Pani Phukan commandeering 6000 *paiks*.

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There were twenty or so Baruas. Some of these were:

- Sonadar Barua: chief jeweler and mint master
- Khanikar Barua: chief artificer
- Hati Barua: in charge of elephants
- Ghora Barua: in charge of horses
- Duliya Barua: royal palanquins' in charge
- Chaudang Barua: executions' superintendent
- Bhandari Barua: treasurer
- Bez Barua: Royal family physician

Some other officers were 12 Rajkhowas, various Katakis, Kakatis and Dolais. A Rajkhowa were a territory's governors as well as commanded 3000 *paiks*. A Rajkhowa was a public works supervisor as also an arbitrator for local disputes. A Kataki was an envoy dealing with hill tribes and foreign nations. Kakatis wrote documents that were official while the Dolais were expounders of astrology who also ascertained the most auspicious time and date for important tasks.

Governors

Those of the royal families held rule over certain territories and were addressed as *Raja*.

- *Charing Raja*, *Swargadeo*'s heir apparent, administered the tracts around Joypur on the right bank of river Burhidihing.
- *Tipam Raja* is the second in line.
- *Namrup Raja* is the third in line

Royal families' members who had lower positions got regions known as *mels*, and were addressed as *melkhowa raja* or *meldangia*. Princes who were even lower were *Meldangia gohains* and these numbered 2: *Sarumelia gohain* and *Majumelia gohain*.

Individual *mels* were provided to the royal ladies. There were 12 such allotments by the time of Rajeshwar Singha. Of the highest importance was the one provided to the chief queen and was known as the *Raidangia mel*.

The forward territories were administered and ruled by forward governors who also were military commanders. Such offices were given to members of families which had the eligibility for being the three great Gohains.

- *Jagiyal Gohain* served under Borbarua, administered Jagi at Nagoan and maintained relations with seven tribal chiefs, called *Sat Raja*.
- *Kajalimukhiya Gohain* served under the Borphukan, administered Kajalimukh and maintained relations with Jaintia and Dimarua.
- *Marangi khowa Gohain* administered the regions that were contiguous to the Naga groups west of the Dhansiri river.

- *Sadiya Khowa Gohain* based in Sadiya, administered the regions that were acquired after the conquest of the Sutiya kingdom in 1523.
- *Solal Gohain* administered a great part of Nagaon and a portion of Chariduar after the headquarters of the Borphukan was transferred to Gauhati.

Rajkhowas were lesser governors. Some Rajkhowas were:

- Abhaypur
- Bacha
- Darrang
- Solaguri

Vassals or dependent kings were addressed as *Raja*. Each of these Rajas gave an annual tribute with the exception of the Raja of Rani. It was required of these Rajas to provide paiks and resources as and when required, for example at war time.

- Barduar
- Beltola ruled the tracts southwest of Gauhati, and were the descendants of Gaj Narayan, a grandson of Chilarai of the Koch dynasty
- Darrang Raja ruled over later-day Darrang district, and were the descendants of Sundar Narayan, a great-grandson of Chilarai of the Koch dynasty
- Dimarua
- Luki
- Rani
- Tapakuchi

Paik officials

The Ahom kingdom had huge dependence on the Paik system which was just a corvee labor form. All common subjects fell in the category of *paik*. A group of 4 *paiks* was referred to as a *got*. All through the year from every got one paika was in the king's direct service while the remaining three paikas would take care of his fields besides their own. This Paik system was under the administration of Paik officials.

- Bora had 20 *paiks* under his charge
- Saikia had 100 *paiks* under his charge
- Hazarika had 1000 *paiks* under his charge

Land survey

While hiding in Kamrup prior to his ascent to the throne, Gadadhar Singha made himself fully acquainted with the Mughal's system of land measurement. Immediately on the ending of the war with the Mughals, Gadadhar passed orders to have a system on the same lines introduced all across the kingdom. They had surveyors brought in from Bengal and Koch Behar for implementation of the system. The first implementation happened in Sibsagar from where it was moved quickly on. Despite

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all the speedy work, the survey got completed only post the death of Gadadhar. The survey of Nowgaon was conducted next and the following settlement was done under the personal supervision of Rudra Singha.

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It is said that the method of survey included:

measuring the four sides of each field with a *nal*, or bamboo pole of 12 feet (3.7 m) length and calculating the area, the unit was the 'lucha' or 144 square feet (13.4 m²) and 14,400 sq ft (1,340 m²) is one 'bigha'. Four 'bighas' makes one 'pura'.

Even today in Assam, a similar system of land measurement is followed.

Satgharia Ahom Aristocracy

The third Ahom king was Subinphaa (1281–1293). He is responsible for the clear defining of the *Satgharia Ahom* aristocracy or the Ahom of the seven houses. These are the families or *Gohains* of the *Chaophaa*, *Burhagohain* and *Borgohain*. He also had specified the four priestly lineages—*Deodhai*, *Mohan*, *Bailung* and *Chiring* (the *Gogois*). There existed marital relationships of an exogamous form in these lines. In the later period, there was an increase in the number of lineages probably because of incorporation of other lineages or because of division of the existing ones. While the king had to be from the first family the *Borgohain* and *Burhagohain* came from the third and second families. *Borphukans*, most came from the *Sutiya* ethnic group and the *Borbaruas* belonged to the *Khamti Chiring Kachari* and *Moran* groups. At a future date, to the *Bailung* group were also added the *Mising*, *Naga* and *Nara* (*Mogaung*) oracles. The composition of the extended nobility was the non taxpaying spiritual class and landed aristocracy.

The gentry freed from the *khels* was known as *apaikan chamua* and it paid tax in the form of money. The *paikan chamua* comprised literati, artisans, and other skilled persons who performed non-manual work and paid their taxes in the form of their service. Manual labour was performed by the *kanri paik*. At the lowest rung stood *bandi-beti*, *licchous* and other serfs and bondsmen. Some amount of inter class movement was allowed. This is evident from the fact that from the rung of bondsman *Momai Tamuli Borbarua* climbed up the ranks and under *Pratap Singha* he was made the first *Borbarua*.

Moamaria Rebellion

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

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

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

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

Sattras–Ahom conflict

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

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

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The First Phase

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

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

Once the Ahoms had managed to recapture their capital, the rebels under the leadership of Govinda Gaoburha in Sagunmuri made an attempt to again dethrone the king. Even this attempt and movement were characteristic of a popular uprising. Weapons that the rebels mostly employed were clubs and bamboo staffs. The slogan that they chanted was *praja-oi joroiroa, chekani-oi sopai dhora* ('Ye oppressed subjects, hold your stave close'). The uprising under Govinda Gaoburha's leadership is referred to as *chekani kubua ron* ('The war of the staves'). During the course of one such engagement, the Dhekial Phukan and the Borpatrogohain lost their lives while the Borgohain had a narrow escape. Marching on towards Rangpur, the rebels met forces at Thowra. The forces comprised fighters of the Burhagohain, the new Borpatrogohain, the Borgohain and a detachment cavalry sent by the king of Manipur. The rebels faced a defeat in this encounter. Their leader Govinda Gaoburha was taken captive and put to death.

Several rebels went off into the deep forests and from there, with leadership from men like Lephera, Parmananda and others carried on continuing guerilla warfare. At the very start under the leadership of the Deka-Phukan and the Na-Phukan a royalist force tried to further the cause but met with defeat. A while later, another force now under the leadership of the Borpatrogohain managed to get rid of

Parmananda and Lephera. Then on, the Burhagohain followed a systematic obliterating village as also the leaders who remained. In a seize, starvation led to the death of many rebels along with their families. Those who survived were separated and settled at different places. Finally, Nomal, probably the last holdout, was captured and executed. With this, Moamoria rebellion's first phase came to a close.

The Second Phase

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

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

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

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

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

Captain Welsh's Mission

The decline of the Ahom kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780–95). The rebellion of the Moamarias began again in 1782, this time more violent and

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more vigorous. The rebels marched to Garhgaon, pushing the population into panic. The rebels' advance was arrested, with the rebels being severely put down and execution of a huge number from amongst them. This just worsened the situation and after giving it a little time, the Moamarias created disturbances across the north bank. The royalists were defeated by the Moamarias and post this victory they headed towards the capital.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philosophy of War

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

The unit that came to fight the Moamariyas had better leadership and training than the Moamariyas. The weapons that they used were also better. Well drilled, the unit's troops had the doggedness that had been displayed by English armies throughout the world at different theatres of war. They were trained not to flee or break up under any circumstance. They were trained to hold their ground, even in the most adverse situation. To quote Manimugdha Sharma, 'It was this superior will to prevail that probably made all the difference.'

Troops of the Company, in the 1770s itself had short-land pattern. The muskets were easy to load and were of high performance. An expert soldier could fire four rounds in approximately one minute.

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

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. State the first major achievement of Gadadhar Singla.
2. When was the Kingdom of Ahom established?
3. During the reign of which ruler did the Ahom kingdom saw its decline?

3.3 FIRST ANGLO-BURMESE WAR: BACKGROUND AND IMPACT

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

The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice. For a short period from 1821–1825, the kingdom even fell into the hands of the Burmese and was ruled by them, till the British pushed them out. The Assamese refer to this period as manor din and the Manipurians call it Chahi-Taret Khuntakpa or seven years of devastation. Whatever it may be called, this period is remembered as a time of horror. The 600-year-old Ahom kingdom was in a sorry state and was feeling the pinch of depopulation due to emigrations and depredations. Till now, there had been reluctance on the part of the British to colonize Assam who were in direct contact with a belligerent Burmese occupying force. This led to the First Anglo-Burmese War which further caused annexation by the British of the kingdom of the Ahoms and Burma.

Background

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

First Burmese invasion

Badan Chandra Borphukan met the Burmese King Bodawpaya in 1816 and asked for help in putting down Purnananda Burhagohain, his political rival. King Bodawpaya agreed to help and he dispatched with Badan Chandra Borphukan a party under the leadership of a general of Bhamo. They arrived in Assam in January 1817. On 27 March, 1817 the first battle was fought at Ghiladhari. Jama Khan, Hao Bora and Daman Gogoi led the forces of Assam. It was a week-long battle and Purnananda Burhagohain passed away because of natural causes. Chronicles suggest that as a cause of his death the Ahom nobility's ranks became divided. The Assam army was forced to surrender since it was not receiving any reinforcement. Purnananda's son Ruchinath became the Burhagohain, and told the king to leave but the king refused to do so. At this point, Ruchinath began to be suspicious of Chandrakanta Singha

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having an alliance with Badan Chandra Borphukan, so he headed off to Gauhati without the king when the Burmese army advanced towards the Ahom capital at Jorhat. Chandrakanta Singha, the king, did not leave and when Badan Chandra Borphukan came he was received well by the king and made the Mantri Phukan.

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

Second Burmese invasion

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

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

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

Third Burmese invasion

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

Chandrakanta Singha's response

Gauhati became the camp of Chandrakanta Singha. Without the help of either Purandar Singha or Ruchinath he marched against the Burmese. Not able to put together an army in British territory, Purandar had one raised under Robert Bruce in

Bhutan. His raised forces could not stand against Chandrakanta's forces and were dispersed in May 1821. A huge force that Tilwa had deputed in September 1821 moved against Chandrakant. Chandrakant headed back to Assam Chokey and further back to British territories. Chandrakanta managed to raise a force comprising mostly Hindustani and Sikhs soldiers, and in 1821 October he gained back Assam Chokey. In 1821, December he gained back Gauhati. On 15 March, 1822 Chandrakanta put camp near Jorhat, at Mahgarh.

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

Burmese rule

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

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

To quote the treaty as made available from:

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

3.3.1 Treaty of Yandaboo: Provisions and Significance

Treaty of peace between the Honorable East India Company on the one part, and his Majesty the king of AVA on the other, settled Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, K.C.B., and K.C.T.S., Commanding the Expedition, and Senior Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; Thomas Campbell Robertson, ESQ., Civil Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; and Henry Ducie Chad, ESQ., Captain, Commanding Britannic Majesty's and the Honorable Company's Naval Force the Irrawaddy River, on the part of the Honorable Company; and by Mengyee-Maha-

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Men-Kyan-Ten Woongyee, Lord of Laykaing, and Mengyee-Mara-Hlah-Thuo-Hah-Thoo-Atwen-Woon, Lord of the Revenue, on the part of the King of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full powers, agreed to and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty-seven Gaudma Era, 1826.

Article 1

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

Article 2

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

Article 3

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

Article 4

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

Article 5

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

Article 6

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

Article 7

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

Article 8

All public and private debts contracted by either government, or by the subjects of either government, with the others previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated upon the same principles of honor and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava., shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in and part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

Article 9

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

Article 10

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

Article 11

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

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NOTES**Additional Article**

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangements, with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article before referred to, into installments, *viz.*, upon the payment of twenty-five lacks of Rupees, or one-fourth of the sum total (the other articles of the treaty being executed), the Army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a similar sum at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso as above, the Army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual installments in two years, from this Twenty-fourth day of February AD 1826, through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honorable the East India Company.

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. In which year did Bagyidaw ascend the throne of Burma?
5. What was the duration of the Anglo-Burmese war?

3.4 DAVID SCOTT AND HIS REFORMS

Let us study the occupation of upper and lower Assam.

3.4.1 Occupation of Upper and Lower Assam

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

The Ahom Rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandaboo came into action. Lower Assam was brought directly under the British dominion because it bore high revenue income. Upper Assam suffered a lot under the Burmese invasion. People lost their confidence in the Government and the administration collapsed. It became essential for Upper Assam to be under the Governance of the Military. Appointed Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott and Colonel Richard was appointed as the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam. The people of Assam were very happy with the British administration in the beginning. Common people now hoped for peace and prosperity, after suffering a lot during the Burmese invasion. Ruling classes thought that their power and privileges would be secured

under the British rule. But this was not to be. The British cared for their own prosperity and their own business. People could now see that the British administration was different. Soon people were not content with the administration.

Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar

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

Administration of David Scott (1824-31)

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

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

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

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

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

Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)

After T.C. Robertson, Captain Jenkins became the Commissioner. Upper Assam was the last dominion of the Ahom rule in Assam and was annexed to the British territory under his administration in 1838. He created the post of Deputy Commissioner, who was vested with judicial powers, besides his civil duties. He was to act as district and session judge. The Principal Assistant was given new powers to transfer cases to subordinate courts. The munsif's and the panchayat courts continued to function and decide civil cases as before. The number of Thanas was increased to maintain law and order, and protect the lives and property of people. Darogas was given the charge, who was aided by a Jamadar and a few constables. The khel system was abolished in matters of revenue. New taxes like tax on 'barimati' were introduced. Non-rupit land rates were increased. Professional tax on the various professions was the same as in Ahom rule. Meanwhile the discovery and success of

tea plantation made it the most important cash crop in Assam. Tea industry was followed by coal and oil industries. Agriculture sector and local economy were no way linked with industrialization in Assam. There was drastic improvement in communication with the other states. Medical care and health facilities were also introduced. One of the most important benefits was modern education of British Rule. A new awakening started in the Brahmaputra Valley from the end of the 19th century.

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

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

Occupation of Lower Assam by the British was not viewed as a serious concern by the Khasi Chiefs who held the low hands, generally known as nine-duars north of their hills. The ruler of Khyrem, Barmanik took the initiative in August 1828 down the plains of Dimarua, a few kilometres from Gauhati, seized collections of revenue officers and publicly demanded his independence on the duars. The second revolt broke out the Eastern Assam under the administration of the nobility of Assam. The British Government somehow succeeded to put off their joint rebellion. Nearly all the territories of Brahmaputra Valley and the hilly regions of Jaintia and Cachar were annexed to the company’s administration in Assam in the course of two years. Accordingly, David Scott, North-East Frontier, agent to the Governor General, spread suzerainty British over Cachar under an agreement with Raja Govinda Chandra in March, in 1834. In his agreement with Scott, Raja Ram

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Singha of Jaintia acknowledged the authority of the British Government. Thus, the extension of British dominion into Assam or the North- East Frontier started. People submitted to the inevitable; in actuality, they 'hailed with unbounded joy' their deliverers who rescued them from the cruelty of the Burmese and granted them the most loyal cooperation. Even an archenemy of the British, Maniram Dewan, heavily welcomed the arrival of the English. Scott's policy of satisfying the former official aristocracy proved a miserable failure. And towards the end of 1828, the Ahom, the Khasis, the Singphos as well as the Bhutias in the north were binding on the British subjects.

British administration was imperfect. People demanded a change from the repeated uprising and the administrative confusion of the period. T.C. Robertson was the successor of Scott as the agent of the Governor in 1832. Nevertheless, in 1832, Upper Assam except for the territories of Sadiya and Mattak, was made over to the Ahom prince Purandar Singha, who was a vassal king. In October, 1838, the territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr. Jenkin, Agent of East India Company, and Assam became a 'nonregulated' province as a whole of the Indian Empire. This was done on the contrary to their earlier assurances with a purely commercial motive. Purandar Singha was humiliated unnecessarily, and it could have been done only with the tacit consent of the rival group of Purandar Singha. The British followed the same tactics in finally annexing Cachar in 1830, and they also annexed Sadiya to British India in 1842. Likewise, Jaintia, which was under the rule of a vassal king, was annexed in 1835 and Manipur was restored to its ruling dynasty. There were eighteen mountain passes along the southern frontier of Bhutan, called Bhutan duars. Highlanders of Bhutan held their sway over this border by means of these passes and established their de facto right over the whole of border territory. As a result of incessant indignities committed by the Bhutias on the British subjects, the British Government appended all the Assam duars in 1841 as the only means of security and peace in this part of the frontier. These duars were the main channels of trade between Tibet and Assam.

Hostilities with the Mishimis originated from a simple incident, when in 1854, French Missionary M. Kich crossed the Mishimi country into Tibet accompanied by his friend N. Bourri. They were murdered by the Mishimis while returning. The Mishimis were crushed in a series of attacks, and the rebels made their submission to the British in 1843. The Lushais committed their first sweep in 1849 and the punitive expedition that followed was so encouraging that they gave no further difficulty till 1858 AD. Meanwhile, T.C. Robertson had felt that mixed activities of a far flung frontier to the provinces was not justified. He realized that for good supervision, there was a necessity of European officers in Assam and on his recommendation, the supreme Government granted its approval for dividing the province into four districts: Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang and Nagaon in March, 1833; each was assigned a Principal Assistant vested with the authorities of a Collector, Judge and Magistrate. Gauhati remained the headquarters of the province for many years after British occupation of Assam. But the headquarters of the new administration shifted to Shillong after Assam emerged as a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. After the formation of separate districts, boundaries underwent

changes in 1833. The Dhansiri River basically formed the boundary in the east, and the district of Sibsagar covered some areas of the existing Karbi Anglong district, North Cachar Hills and also the Naga Hills. In 1853, North Cachar was segregated from a subdivision, and in the next year the region of Tularam was added to the North Cachar subdivision. The Naga Hills and a large part of Karbi Anglong were combined into a separate district during 1867, and the subdivision of North Cachar was abolished, and a considerable area of North Cachar subdivision was assigned to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

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

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

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

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

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

A thana (police station), thanedhar (police) or daroga were in charge of protecting lives and properties in the interiors. Thanedhar was given the authority to arrest people whom he suspected, to detain them and even to hold preparatory trial before entrusting them to sadar station. Special lease grants and simple lease grants were introduced under the Chartered Act of 1833. They were to administer revenue administration to encourage tea plantation and the British established a company named 'Assam company'. By 1858, almost the whole erstwhile Lakhimpur and Sibsagar were included with this company for tea plantation and consequently expanded its operation to Cachar. Extension of the tea industry compelled import of labour from outside the state. According to Mill, the number of such immigrants in Assam in 1881 was 3 lakhs which reached over six lakhs by 1901.

3.4.2 Annexation of Cachar Plains and other Kingdoms

Gaurinath Singha's commercial treaty of with Captain Welsh in 1793 opened the gates for the merchants of Bengal to enter into the province. Avenues of employment in both office and trade caused a steady inflow of the population from the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur to Assam. After it came under the administration of the British, they adopted the same policy as in the other parts of India. In order to supplement the Chartered Act of 1833, the British encouraged the establishment of English schools in Assam as they needed people with the knowledge of English to help run the administration. The people of Assam enjoyed respite after a bitter struggle with the Burmese invaders. Besides, there were very few educated people with the knowledge of English in Assam. In April 1831, the Government of Bengal made Bengali the language of court instead of Persian. The introduction from Bengal not only made the judicial and revenue departments their only preserve, but their services became equally essential to the recently started government schools for death of regional teachers specially to grant instructions in Bengali which had since then been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Eventually, Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839. An English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was appointed as Assistant Commissioner. He saw that peasantry could not be improved to a great extent without the understanding of modern scientific applications. He also believed that a better mode

of living which cannot be achieved without Western education. He laid stress on the requirement of increasing the standard of education. He was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for replacing it with Assamese. However, concrete steps were taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on propaganda through Arunodoi but also established a few schools for girls. Rev. Nathan Brown started the first missionary school at Sibsagar in 1840 and followed by the schools set up by Bronson at Nagaon in 1843 and by Mrs. Barkes at Gauhati in 1850. The need for the formation of political association including organization to vent the grievances of people started gradually. The Chartered Act of 1833 was a convenient instrument of the British colonialists who now began spreading out their financial arms to serve the interest of the empire including colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the basic curses of foreign domination as other parts of India did.

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Annexation of Jaintia Kingdom

The Jaintia kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills. The empire was divided into two parts, the plains and the hills. The Burmese, in 1824, force occupied Cachar and threatened to charge the Jaintias. King Ram Singh was asked to surrender, and the British came forward to protect the king. The Burmese retreated from Jaintia frontier on the arrival of British force. A treaty between the King and the British was signed by which the Raja formally agreed to be a subordinate of the British Government. The disagreement between the Raja and the British rose in connection with the endowment of a border outpost. In 1832, a fresh conflict arose. The Raja of Gobha conquered four British nationals for sacrifice at the shrine of goddess Kali. Shortly after this incident, the British appended the Kingdom of the Jaintias in 1835.

Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills

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

David Scott was appointed as an Agent to the Governor-General in November 1823, and he was given the responsibility of developing and consolidating companies and also the administration in the North-East frontier. The view displayed by Scott marked the introduction of a new British policy referring to the North-East. At the

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same time, the British were following a policy of non-intervention with regard to the state of the Khasis. Scott's view was that for a robust solution to the dispute of trade, the British government had to establish a strong control over all the Khasi Chiefs. The Government of Bengal endorsed Scott's views thus heralding a change of policy. Scott realized the needs for maintaining good relations with the Khasis when the need for a postal service across from Sylhet to Gauhati was urgently felt. Scott was also interested in building roads in the region along with a Sentitorium and Cantonment. Militarily, the proposed road would reduce the length of the march from lower Assam to Sylhet. It would also enable the British to keep the Khasi Chiefs under control and fascinate trade and commerce by giving the Khasis easy access to the markets in the plains.

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

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

Further, Scott asked Tirot Singh to get the approval of all the Khasi chiefs to give the company the authority of passage as the road would additionally affect areas beyond the jurisdiction of Nongkhlaw syiem. Consequently, Tirot Singh conveyed an assemblage at Nongkhlaw and all the Khasi's Syiem's were asked to attend the meeting. Scott and his men arrived at Nongkhlaw on 3rd November 1826, Scott was highly pleased by the method of Khasi sitting-at-council by the strict consideration of rules that controlled and governed such sessions. Tirot Singh explained the objective of the meet and requested the different declaimers to express their viewpoints on the proposition of the British government. The debate lasted for two days and ended in favour of the proposition. The decision of the assembly was represented in a treaty which was resolved with the British government. Subsequently, as per this treaty the Khasi's accepted to aid the British government in the development of the road, provide men and materials and donate lands for constructing residential quarters. British protection followed as cordially.

The Dimarua which is a few miles from Gauhati was upheld by Khyrim as an appendix from the Ahoms, but a subordinate chief held the actual management responsibilities. He held his appointment from outstanding tribute to Khyrim. David Scott took over Dimarua after the retreat of Burmese and forbade the Syiem of Khyrim from consolidating tribute for the chief. These aroused Syiem Bormanick and developed down to Dimarua to capture the revenue collected by the officer of

the East India Company in 1828. He also elected a Basan in that area and vowed to return again the following year to receive the tribute. Scott decided to take action against Khyrim, and he called upon the Jaintia Raja, and other Khasi's Syiems to aid the British against Khyrim. These led to tension among the Khasi Syiems as they realized the imperialist design of the British.

Scott did not keep his promise of reviving Bardwar to Tirot Singh. Tirot Singh was also displeased with the denial of the company to provide him military support against the Syiem of Rani, Balran Singh, against whom Tirot Singh together with Bormanick, Syiem of Khyrim had made a collective stand. He told the Company's Revenue Superintendent at Bardwar, 'Mr. Scott made friends with me stating your enemy is the Companies enemy and that he would relinquish the revenue of Bardwar in both money and in paiks. He has not done it and wished to give troops to my enemy.' Tirot Singh was now conscious of the danger of the agreement he made with the company for the road construction. Knowing that it would appear upward if he suddenly stopped the construction, he waited for a better opportunity to oppose it without actually breaking the treaty.

Again there was high domination of the military at Nongkhlaw; there they harassed the poor inhabitants and other misdeeds finally led to mistrust and hostility in the hearts of the Khasis. Most of the people were unaware of the road construction, and a few Headmen complained to Tirot Singh that their opinion was overlooked in these important matters. They also understood that the British dominion was trying to take a grip over the hills and a rumour bobbed that the British imposed taxes on the Khasis. All these aspects together brought about a general discontentment and a menace and made the dispute between the Khasis and the British determined. Early in 1829, Tirot Singh made plans to expel foreigners from the country. He did not consider himself bounded by the treaty any longer and pitched his lot with Bormanick and other chiefs against the British. A conference of Khasis Syiems was held at Nongkhlaw, and a decision to drive away the British was taken. The plan was general massacre of all immigrants at Nongkhlaw and the abolition of the companies post. The plan was put into action the following day, the Company was attacked at Nongkhlaw and Burlton Burlton, and Lt. Bedingfield of the Bengal Artillery along with many of the Company's men were killed. However, Scott who was in Nongkhlaw at the time of conference managed to escape to Sohra and then to Cherra. From Cherra, Scott messaged the authorities at Sylhet and Gauhati and Captain Lister set out for the hills at once.

Freedom Movement

The Nongkhlaw incident started off as a widespread movement all over the Khasi hills to set it free from foreign power. Initially, the movement brought unity among the Khasi Syiems in a move to dislodge the British from the land, all disagreements being set aside in the face of an outside threat. Scott underestimated the strength of the Khasis to get united against the company by depriving them of the right to use the Duars in economic transactions. He ignored the growing hostility exhibited by the people against the road construction and the presence of the British in the hills. His refusal to recognize Syiem Bormanick's claim to the Dirmarua and the duty of

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taxes on him when he sent his men to receive the revenues further antagonized the Khasis. Slowly, other Syiems started realizing the true nature of the company and comprehending the danger to the liberation of their Kingdom, they gave their full backing to Tirot Singh. Chiefs among them were the Syiems of Jirang, Myriaw, Rambrai, Mawsynram, Bhowal, Nongpoh, Maharam, Mawieng and other petty units. Messengers were sent to Jaintia hills, Bhutan, the Ahom king Chandrakanta and to the Singphos to solicit their help to oust the British. The Khasi states which remained neutral were Cherrapunjee, Langrin, Nongspung, Khyriem and Nongstoin. Except for Duwan Singh of Cherra, the neutral state remained mute spectators to the conflicts. The military regiments of the company were composed of Sikhs, Manipur, Gorkhas and the Assam corps. From time to time, military contingents were dispatched from Sylhet and Goalpara district.

Impact of the Movement

Khasi society was left with a deep scar after the Khasi war of liberty. The whole political scenario of the Khasis changed after the movement. The unity that emerged among the Khasis was temporary; it could not withstand the political tactics applied by the British in their thirst for territorial as well as economic expansion. One Khasi Syiem after the other was won over by the British and compelled to sign a treaty of loyalty with the company acknowledging their subservience. That was the reason why statesmen of the status of Tirot Singh were put down by the alien force. The movement produced combatants of the caliber of Warmaniae, Lorshon Jarain, Monbhut, Mukin of Mawsmi, Jidor Singh who brought out the greatest in Khasi patriotism but none of them could withstand the swords of the enemy.

Erosion of power of the Syiems is another important outcome of the war. Through the treaties of loyalty signed by them with the British authorities, most of them surrendered their political power to the government and enslaved themselves to its supremacy. In the year 1859, the government promulgated Sunnader as a license at the inauguration of the Syiem. Through its provisions, the government could obtain land for military and civil purposes and could transfer free land as well as waste land into government land. The final power of the Sunnader was that he had the authority to remove any Syiem from the office if he was unable to satisfy the authorities. The power of the Syiems was further reduced after independence. He was now dependent on an elected body for the District Council. The movement also touched the economy of the land. The economy of the Khasis suffered a serious setback as a result of the wave economy measures chosen by the British. The Khasis could not restore their economy even after the end of the war, due to the monopolistic grip of the British. The movement had its consequences on the social life of the people. The Khasis came into direct contact with a foreign culture for the first time and were quick to absorb it. When the Missionaries came to the hills to develop Christianity, it could easily have found a large following. Christianity produced with it Western education which quickened the pace of modernization among the Khasis.

Annexation of Cachar

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

Annexation of Naga, Garo and Lushai Hills

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

Annexation of Khamtis

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

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. Why was the Ahom nobility dissatisfied with the British?
7. Where was the Jaintia kingdom located?
8. Who was the ruling prince of the Kingdom of Cachar?

3.5 ECONOMIC CHANGES UNDER BRITISH RULE

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The following were the economic changes under the British in Assam:

3.5.1 Coal and Petroleum Mining

The discovery of petroleum in British North East India (NE) began with the onset of amateur geological exploration of the region since the 1820s. Like tea plantations, exploration of petroleum also attracted international capital. Since the last quarter of the 19th century, with the arrival of global technology, the region's petroleum fields became part of a larger global petroleum economy, and, gradually, commercial exploration of petroleum became a reality. It was a time when geologists had not yet succeeded in shaping an understanding of the science of oil and its commercial possibilities.

Over the next century, the Assam oilfields played a key role in the British imperial economy. After decolonisation, these oilfields not only turned out to be the subject of intense competition in the regional economy, but also became centrally identified with questions of community rights. Immediately after independence, the Indian state encountered political opposition to its stake on oil from Assam. This happened at a time when the share of natural resources between the province and centre was still not well-defined. Such opposition continued until a later period, when an economic blockade, with the aim of restricting oil flows outwards from Assam, was successfully imposed as part of the assertion of regional politics. This also became a counter in the political negotiations between the Indian state and its federal province.

3.5.2 Railways

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

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

Waterways/River transport: In Assam there was a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company. At a later stage, the Rivers Steam Navigation company and the Indian General Navigation Company were established, both private companies, for providing commercial services of a regular nature to Assam. Sometime later, the two companies came together and

the Joint Steamer Companies was created and it was this company that, all through the period that the British were in the state, provided the steamer services. With these services, it became easy for the state to export products that were bulky, such as timber, jute and tea, as also to import other consumer goods. The service came at a rather low cost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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NOTES**3.5.3 Tea Plantations**

With Chartered Act of 1833 Special lease grants and Fee, there was the introduction of simple lease grants for revenue administration for the encouragement of tea plantation and the British set up a company named Assam Company. Between 1833-58, nearly the whole of Sibsagar and erstwhile Lakhimpur were under this company's tea plantation and then the company extended into Cachar. It became imperative to bring in labour from other states to cater to the expanding tea industry. According to Mill, in 1881 the number of such immigrants in Assam was 3 lakhs. In 1901, Assam had 6 lakhs of such migrants.

The Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838 were framed to make available wasteland at terms that were attractive for the purpose of special cultivation. Benefit of these rules was taken by the British tea companies, and in 1840 the Assam Tea Company and in 1859 the Jorhat Tea Company were set up. In 1861, the system of free simple grants was introduced by the British Government to enable planters to obtain land on terms that were easy from the government. Anyone could pay and take the land but the ryots had not the means to improve the occupied land. Also, the European planters pushed the government to raise the land revenue so that the peasants would be forced to leave their villages in search of work and end up as wage workers on the plantations. All tea plantations took on the form of being zamindari and the workers on the plantations were nothing but serfs.

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. When was Assam-Bengal Railway established?
10. What were the middlemen of the revenue system known in Assam?

3.6 SUMMARY

- The Ahom Kingdom is also known as the Kingdom of Assam. It spanned a long 600 years of the history of Assam—from 1228 to 1826. It was situated in the Brahmaputra valley.
- From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century A.D., Ahoms were busy mainly in consolidating their newly acquired territory and also protecting it from neighbouring powers. However, the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332), the fourth Ahom king, saw the first war with the ruler of Kamata kingdom.

- The real expansion of the Ahom kingdom began with Suhummong (1497-1539), better known as Dihingiya Raja, as he belong to the Dihingiya phoid (clan) of the royal family.
- The ruler of Kamata, Durlabhendra, accepted Ahom protection by offering his daughter. The Ahom army marched westward as far as the Karatoya, the eastern frontier of Bengal, and built a small brick temple on its bank.
- The reign of Sutamla, better known by his Sanskrit title Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63) was marked by a major invasion of Assam by the Mughal army headed by Mir Jumla, the newly appointed Nawab of Bengal.
- During the early years of Pratap Singha's reign, the Kachari king, who was always considered thapita-sanchita status by the Ahom kings, was bold enough to show his defiance by declining to comply a request for passage of a Jaintia princess through his country.
- The Ahom army under Lachit Barphukan and other generals including Atan Buragohain foiled every attempt of Ram Singh to occupy Gauhati by war and diplomacy and the war dragged on for several years with loss on both sides. In the meantime, Udayaditya ascended the throne in 1669.
- The first half of the eighteenth century was peaceful and the reigns of two kings Siva Singha (1714-44) and Pramatta Singha (1744-51), saw the unprecedented growth of Hindu religious proclivities, and the building of Hindu temples.
- The system of government was partly monarchical and partly aristocratic. The king or Swarga Maharaja as he was called, was the supreme head of the state.
- In 1228, the kingdom of Ahom got established with the coming of Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, the first Ahom king, from Mong Mao (now part Peoples Republic of China).
- Bengal's Afghan and Turkic rulers attacked the Ahom kingdom but with no success. There was also an occasion when under Ton-Kham Borgohain the invaders were pursued by the Ahoms and they went as far as the Karatoya river, and post this the Ahoms looked upon themselves as being the rightful heir of the erstwhile Kamarupa Kingdom.
- The third Ahom king was Subinphaa (1281–1293). He is responsible for the clear defining of the *Satgharia Ahom* aristocracy or the Ahom of the seven houses.
- The Moamoria rebellion occurred from 1769 to 1806. The conflict occurred in the 18th century between the Ahom kings and Morans who were the adherents of the Moamara Sattrā. It caused general and extensive disgruntlement amongst the populace against the Ahom king and the nobles.
- The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice. For a short period from 1821–1825, the kingdom even fell into the hands of the Burmese and was ruled by them, till the British pushed them out.

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- After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces: Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Kamrup, Nowgang and parts of Darrang, with Gauhati as its headquarters, constituted Lower Assam. Upper Assam comprised the other parts of Darrang, from Biswanath to the river Buridihing with its headquarters at Rangpur.
- T.C. Robertson was appointed as the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam after Crack Fort, in 1832. He was soon appraised as a man of tact, prudence and sound judgment of the province.
- Hostilities with the Mishimis originated from a simple incident, when in 1854, French Missionary M. Kich crossed the Mishimi country into Tibet accompanied by his friend N. Bourri. They were murdered by the Mishimis while returning.
- Gaurinath Singha's commercial treaty of with Captain Welsh in 1793 opened the gates for the merchants of Bengal to enter into the province. Avenues of employment in both office and trade caused a steady inflow of the population from the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur to Assam.
- The Burmese, in 1824, force occupied Cachar and threatened to charge the Jaintias. King Ram Singh was asked to surrender, and the British came forward to protect the king. The Burmese retreated from Jaintia frontier on the arrival of British force.
- Khasi society was left with a deep scar after the Khasi war of liberty. The whole political scenario of the Khasis changed after the movement. The unity that emerged among the Khasis was temporary; it could not withstand the political tactics applied by the British in their thirst for territorial as well as economic expansion.
- In Assam there was a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company.
- The cheapest means of transport was developed in Assam with the help of its rivers and this was one reason why in the initial stages the British rulers in Assam paid no heed to the development of roads. It was as late as 1880 that the Government's Public Works Department (P.W.D.) was established for road construction in Assam.
- With Chartered Act of 1833 Special lease grants and Fee, there was the introduction of simple lease grants for revenue administration for the encouragement of tea plantation and the British set up a company named Assam Company.

3.7 KEY TERMS

- **Moamoria rebellion:** It refers to the eighteenth century conflict between the Morans, adherents of the Moamara Sattrā, and the Ahom kings.

- **Borgohain:** The second of the two original counsellors in the Ahom kingdom.
- **Barkandazes:** These are Hindustani irregular infantrymen or cavalrymen, who were basically freebooters.
- **Choudhuries:** Chaudhary word derived from the Sanskrit word, Chatur Dhrit, meaning 'One who holds all the four varnas (groups) of society' i.e., respected by all.

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3.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The first major achievement of Gadadhar Singha (1681-96), who was installed king at Kaliabor by the nobles and officers, was the expulsion of the Mughals from Gauhati and Kamrup by defeating them at the Battle of Itakhuli.
2. In 1228, the kingdom of Ahom got established with the coming of Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, the first Ahom king, from Mong Mao (now part Peoples Republic of China).
3. The decline of the Ahom kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). The rebellion of the Moamarias began again in 1782, this time more violent and more vigorous.
4. Bagyidaw ascended the throne of Burma in 1819. He took a decision that he would annex Assam.
5. The Anglo-Burmese war had started in 1824. It concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826.
6. The Ahom nobility were dissatisfied with the British as they understood that their rights and privileges were not secure under the administration of the British.
7. The Jaintia kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills. The empire was divided into two parts, the plains and the hills.
8. The kingdom of Cachar was under the rule of two princes who had clearly defined areas of control. Govinda Chandra was the ruling prince in the plains. But after his assassination, the British annexed the province in the year 1832. Tularam ruled the hilly tracts. His territory was annexed after his death in 1854.
9. The Assam-Bengal Railway was established in the year 1892 for providing a railway link between Assam and the other states of India.
10. In Assam, the middlemen of the revenue system were known in the upper level as patguries, Choudhuries and Mauzadar, and at the lower level as Gaonburas, Mandal Tekalas.

3.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the later Ahom kings.
2. What was the Satgharia Ahom aristocracy?
3. Write a short note on Captain Welsh's Mission.
4. State in brief the impact of the freedom movement in Assam.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the reasons for the decline of the Ahom kingdom. Also discuss the loopholes in the Ahom administration.
2. Discuss the different phases of the Sattra-Ahom conflict.
3. Describe the background and impact of the first Burmese invasion.
4. Discuss the rise and fall of the Cachar plains and other kingdoms.

3.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 ASSAM - II

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Spread of Western Education
 - 4.2.1 Cultural Awakening in Assam: Press, Literature and Organisations
- 4.3 Revolt of 1857 and Assam
- 4.4 Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements in Assam
 - 4.4.1 Cabinet Mission and Independence
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Terms
- 4.7 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 4.8 Questions and Exercises
- 4.9 Further Reading

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4.0 INTRODUCTION

The British rule has influenced the culture in India in a big way due to the several years of colonization. India, a country of a very diverse population has amongst its folds different cultures, but with the advent of the British, there was a huge movement of whitewashing and superimposition of the English culture on the indigenous population. This was carried forward with the help of missionaries initially but then the strict resolutions by the British government in India took control affecting the cultures directly. But where there is imposition, there is some amount of resistance, and so was the case with Assam. The state participated in the independence movement in a significant manner. In this unit, you will learn about the spread of Western education and the cultural awakening in Assam along with the participation of Assam in the Revolt of 1857, the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Quit India movement and the Cabinet Mission finally leading to the independence.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the spread of Western education and cultural awakening in Assam
- Describe the Revolt of 1857 and Assam
- Explain the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement in Assam
- Interpret the Cabinet mission and Independence movement

4.2 SPREAD OF WESTERN EDUCATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

All across Northeast India, the highest number of institutes for higher education are in Assam. Progress of collegiate education in Assam accrued much later. The Cotton College, followed by Sylhet College, had been set up by 1901. Earl Law College was set up in 1915, Jorhat College, Brindaban College, Edmund's college and St Anthony College were opened in the territory of Assam and they all played major roles in the promotion of higher education in the period prior to 1947. The year 1900 saw the setting up in Dibrugarh of the Berry White Medical School. There was development of education, both technical and industrial, during the period prior to independence through the Tezpur-Balipara railway workshop, Dibrugarh Railway workshop and various other institutes of training. Also, the English medium schools in the state are of supreme quality, as are the colleges for science and arts. Even higher education has expanded phenomenally following the 1913 resolution of Government of India on Indian Education. The latest achievement is the setting up of Guwahati IIT and Central Universities at Silchar and Tezpur.

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

Medium of Instruction

The 1935–1936 report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated

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

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

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

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

He writes, ‘The [British] officers felt that as long as the hill tribes remained backward and uncivilized, it would be difficult for them to make the native tribes accept the changes brought in by colonial rule. Hence, the British officers considered it necessary to civilize and humanize the hill communities through the spread of modern education and Christianity. David Scott, the first Agent for the Governor-General of North Eastern Frontier of Bengal, experimented with his ideas in the Garo Hills by starting a school at Singamaria in 1831 with the help Serampore Baptist Mission.’ The Governor-General also wanted Christianity to spread but the East India Company Directors were not for it. ‘They were afraid that the religious intervention would provoke the natives to revolt against the colonial rule.’

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

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

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

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4.2.1 Cultural Awakening in Assam: Press, Literature and Organisations

The British Colonial rule showed its effects in three main areas: the economic, the governance and the impact of the missionary activities. The activities by these missionaries have been the cause of bringing about social changes in the state of Assam. The British helped Assam’s expansion in the field of education, trade and commerce. They converted conventional economy to market economy and the missionaries helped to bring about many positive changes in Assam. The state was able to develop a feeling of nationalism, though it was focused on a sense of belongingness only for Assam and was not so much based on patriotism.

Role of British in Assam’s Resurgence Movement

The native structure of education existed in Assam when the British rule had been established. The British began to make changes in the Ahom administration and soon realised that for change to be effective they will have to change the system of education as well. The Ahom monarchs had built Tols, Satras and Pathsalas but the education imparted in them was primarily spiritual and ethical in character. Soon it was realised that the people were not able to handle the British administrative work as they lacked English education. The only immediate solution for this problem was that the British appointed refugees who they had transported from East Bengal. This was not taken well by the upper class people as they were not able to take part in the administrative work. This problem was very well handled by David Scott who proposed to establish an English school at Guwahati though this did not materialize as Scott died in 1831. Major Jenkins made a detailed report on Assam province and had suggested that education should be a state accountability. The report requested the government to establish schools to impart English education. The Guwahati High School was established in 1835. By 1840, 340 students had taken admission in the school and soon the school had branches in other parts of Guwahati. By this time, Bengali language was made the official language in courts and as medium of instruction in schools. This was done to overcome the problem of illiteracy in villages. The people in the villages also began to show the inclination to be educated, around twenty-one schools were set up in rural areas by 1838. The government was keen to educate the youth in urban areas as they had to get them to do clerical jobs, it was through the activities of the Missionaries that the education was initiated in rural areas. The missionaries made sure that awareness was spreading in all rural areas. In 1857, the ‘Wood’s Despatch’ theory was implemented under which education was for the masses and not just a particular section. Though high school education was still not stressed and the students had to travel to Calcutta to join colleges. In

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1864, Mr. Murray, the Inspector of School began to stress on college education in Assam. Gowahatty Zilla School (Guwahati High School) was raised to Collegiate School level in 1866 and was associated with Calcutta University. The college functioned up till 1877 and then due to poor performance it was shut down. Between 1880-1900, many commissions were formulated to file petitions for establishing college education. After many years of struggle, Manik Chandra Barua and Jagannath Barua were able to get the government to establish Cotton College in Guwahati in 1901. The Missionaries had suggested that Assamese should be made the medium of instruction. They felt that education will spread to every section of the society only if it was imparted in a language which was easily understood. The Missionaries began to promote primary and girl child education.

The printing press in Assam was established by the efforts of the Missionaries. In 1846, American Baptist Missionaries which was run by Nathan Brown published the first Assamese newspaper, the paper was circulated under the name of *Orunodia* which means dawn of light. The paper was in circulation till 1880 and proved to be instrumental in uniting the people of Assam. The *Orunodai* provided the forum to spread important messages like the need for higher education or the establishment of native language or the issue of education for women and other social issues. It became a medium for mass education as the missionaries and the modern educated population of Assam could make people aware about the Indian culture and how developing it was important. The *Orunodai* led to printing of several more newspapers and magazines. In 1871, *Assam Bilashini* was started and it remained in circulation till 1883, in 1885 The *Assam Sandhu*, a paper which consisted information on literature, history, current affairs, was started. The paper was able to spread awareness about the importance of democracy, unity and the paper acted as a check on the government departments as well. The *Assam News* in 1880-81 played an essential role in building the public opinion of the people of Assam. The weekly began to improve the existing standards of journalism. The publishing of a monthly Journal *Jonaki* with the involvement of leading Assamese scholars in the field of literature such as Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Hemchandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaroa. It played an essential role in developing the Assamese language and literature. It awakened the readers and helped in generating national consciousness. The monthly journal *Bijuli* started in 1890 focused on printing many articles about political issues in the state and helped in developing political views of the people.

The newspapers and journals began to channelize the views of the people in a systematic manner and helped in promoting cultural nationalism. The people of Assam began to express their issues and thoughts in a very refined manner.

Assamese Literature developed as the papers contained many articles about the ancient traditions of the society. People began to read folktales and historical stories because of the newspapers. The meaningless agitations came to a stop as people began to use the newspaper to put their point across. The newspapers managed to create the anti-British feelings all across the state. Rural people organised many mass organisations which were called Rajmels in order to gather the masses to fight for their rights. These organisations came into being as per the nature of the

demand which had to be put forward. Puna Sarwajanik Sabha and Indian Association were organizations who tried to get more Assamese Indians to be appointed for the governmental jobs in the British administration. The Bombay Workers Association was instrumental in getting the worker population to revolt against the British. There was a visible shift in the leaders, the power was moving out of the hands of the traditional leaders and going in the control of the middle class. The 1893-94 uprising of the peasants had this feature. The revolt against the British began to be fought by the educated population of Assam. The peasantry and the middle class of Assam joined hands. The Tezpur Ryot Sabha formed in 1884 comprised of people like Lambodar Barha, Babu Lakshmi Kanta Barkakati and Manikanta Barha who were a part of the Assamese educated middle class. The sabha was formulated to protest the policies of land revenue by the British. The sabha's aim was to fight for the rights of the peasants. In 1903, the sabha merged with the Upper Assam Association. Besides this, during this period a few other organisations like Shillong Association, Nowgong Ryot Sabha, the Sylhet Association etc. came into existence. The Ryot Sabha was like the Rajmels and these organisations were led by the middle class population mostly. All these associations were local in nature and helped to get the people to become politically aware and fought for the rights of the peasants. There was a rapid growth in the society about the repressive nature of British rule. The awareness got a further impetus with the origin of organisations like the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha (JSS). The student population also began to become aware about their rights and formed the Assamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha (ABUS). The Sabha was important in developing the Assamese traditional folk music and dramas. The sabha also revived many religious songs. The sabha had branches in many parts of Eastern India. These organisations not only spread awareness about the local cause but at the same time helped to revive the cultural heritage of Assam. In all this the British did play an indirect role.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Which resolution was the first step which emphasized the value of local bodies for primary education's expansion?
2. Mention the publisher and the name of the first ever Assamese journal.
3. Name some of the members of the Tezpur Ryot Sabha.

4.3 REVOLT OF 1857 AND ASSAM

Mostly, the origins of the uprisings of 1857 have been ascribed to the unrest that took place in Bengal's military establishment and to the outbreak in Meerut in May 1857. North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising. It was also involved with the 1857 movement. Regions of the North East, including the hill areas, were involved with other regions of India in the huge reaction that was

happening against the rule of the British in India. There is abundant literature for the North East regarding the participation in events of 1857 which help us to reconstruct the role played by this region.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is documented by Carter that in Dibrugarh there being any disturbance in June was not a worry. By August 1857 middle, the Commanding Officer of ALI, Lt. Colonel Simon Hannay, considered the taking of 'open precautionary measures'. On August 17, Carter was told by Hannay that in Gauhati agents from northern India were present and were 'trying to arrange a rising amongst our Sepoys in connection with the Assam Raja'. His 19th August entry documents that the mutiny had entered Dibrugarh and Golaghat. Since appropriate measures had been taken, there was no untoward occurrence in Dibrugarh. The measure was augmentation of ALI's position with Gorkha troops called from Sadiya which lies further north.

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There is a mention in Carter's notings of the military establishments being in utter panic since the artillery there comprised Hindustanis almost exclusively. Plans were created by Colonel Hanney to defend Dibrugarh. Captain Lowther and Captain Holroyd, according to the diary entries, went to Jorhat, the place where the apprehending of Kandarpeswar Singha took place with documents that incriminated and linked him with an uprising intended in Assam. Then, within the battalion, arrests were made. Some names mentioned by Carter are: sepoy Shaikh Muhammad doctor Hadaiat Ali and jamedar Noor Mahammed.

Attack at the Barak Valley

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

Information regarding the Barak valleys and Brahmaputra disturbance was heard in the Khasi-Jaintia hills. Approximately 30 years earlier, many Khasi himas (states) had challenged the intent of the British to get a secure position in their hills. This was referred to as the Anglo-Khasi war of 1829-1833. The British did not annex the himas. The chiefs of the himas, Syiems, got forced into signing treaties with the British which put them under political control of the British. At the start of 1835, annexation of the Jaintia took place and the East India Company demanded that the tribute should revert to the status as assigned by the 1824 treaty. The government deputed the Judge of the Board of Revenue, W. J. Allen, in the year 1857, to report on the administration of the Cherra Political Agency and his observation was that 'exaggerated rumours' regarding the British power's collapse had created a certain amount of excitement among the Khasi chiefs. He made explicit mention of the intrigue hatched by Rajendra Singh, Jaintia Raja, with Cherra Syiem for getting back the possession that he had lost. The immediate reaction of the Government was to want to seize Rajendra Singh and move him to Calcutta but they stopped when they were cautioned by Allen that this would raise the importance of the entire incident as also of the Raja. The former Raja, on 15 September, had proposed that

he would himself ‘proceed to Hindustan with my own troops about 2500 (Cookees, Khasees and Moneepuries) to fight against the enemy of the British Government as I am bound to assist the Government agreeably to the Treaty... made on the 10th March 1824’. From then he requested for a steamer which would carry the troops and asked that the troops be provided muskets. Rajendra Singh was without an army. Years back when the annexation of his state’s plains portion was done, he had given up the position of Syiem. It was suspected by the British that in the milieu of the 1857 situation he was trying to get back his claim over Jaintia. His proposal was rejected by the British Government and consequently Jaintia’s former Raja was pushed to live in Sylhet with the authorities keeping an eye on him.

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

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. Name the treaty with which the annexation of Assam took place in 1826.
5. When did the Anglo-Khasi war take place?

4.4 NON-COOPERATION, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND QUIT INDIA MOVEMENTS IN ASSAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Post the 1922 Uttar Pradesh Chauri Choura riots, Gandhiji said that the movement was to be stopped. His decision was backed by the Congress Working Committee. Then on, the Assam leaders pushed forward constructive programmes such as weaving of *khaddar*, spinning of yarns and temperance work.

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

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

The Congress as well as the nation was surprised when, in 1923, an election was held to the Legislative Council. For most seats, the Swarajya party put up its candidates and got support from both Khilafat organization and the local Congress.

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

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

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

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

The nation observed the national week of 'war against salt tax'. The law breaking movement spread through violating the Forest Laws. To quote from the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol 1, in Assam, there was boycotting of 'foreign cloths, excisable drugs and the shops selling such goods. Picketing was resorted to. Sri Bishnuram Medhi helped by Tyagbir Hemchandra Barua, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua, Omeo Kr. Das, Sidhinath Sarma, Pitambar Goswami, Gormur Satradhikar, Lakhidhar Sharma and others conducted the movement very successfully. Srimati Chandra Prabha Saikiani and Srimati Durgaprava Barua took up picketing in front of Cotton College Guwahati. The arrest of the national leaders included a spirit of fearlessness amongst the general mass. The authority clamped section 144Cr. P.C. in Nagaon, Tezpur and Dhubri to suppress this popular consciousness. But people from different places participated in the protest demonstration. As a result, police attacked the crowd with lathis and batons in such places.'

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

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

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

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

From 1930 to 1938, though the leaders of Congress did have differences at times, the organization grew much stronger. According to the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol1, as in a bid to open up fallow waste lands in Assam for cultivation, influxes of landless peasants from East Bengal were being invited to Assam by the then Assam Ministry headed by Sir Md. Saadullah, and because flow of innumerable jobseekers continued to Assam unabated, a section of Assamese nationalists got alarmed and Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury, a staunch nationalist to the core, founded 'Assam Sangrakshini Sobha' and without seceding from the Congress, began to voice through this organization, demands 'for vindication of right of the Assamese people, the children of the soil as against aggression of outsiders.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, '*Santi Sena* organisations were set up throughout the State under the leadership of local Congress Socialists. Mahendra Nath Hazarika, Lakshmi Prasad Goswami, Sankar Barua built up an underground resistant movement. A *Mritya Bahini* or death squad was formed in the State under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika. The party carried out some serious acts of sabotage throughout the State. In Darrang district, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Gohon Chandra Goswami went underground and carried out sabotage at various places by organizing *Mrityu Bahini*.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4.1 Cabinet Mission and Independence

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

Pandit Nehru in December 1945 went on a quick Assam tour and left behind a favourable picture of the congress in the minds of the people. In the elections, this

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led to the victory of Congress on 50 of the 108 seats. With two of the Independents joining them, the strength rose to 52 and on February 10, 1946, Congress Prime Ministership of Gopinath Bordoloi formed its Ministry.

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

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

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. Name the prominent leaders who travelled through the Assam province to mobilize public opinion for the Non-Cooperation movement.
7. Under whose leadership was a mritya bahini formed in the state of Assam?
8. Which political group went for secret organizational activities to constitute 'banglo-i-islam'?

4.5 SUMMARY

- Modern education which is currently prevalent in Assam has its roots in 1826 when there was a setting up of British rule in the territory of Assam. In Assam, for a very long time a system of education which was indigenous to Assam existed. This involved the imparting of formal education at the elementary level in institutions like satras, madrassas, tols and pathsalas which imparted education to Vaisnavites, Muslims, Brahmins and Hindus, respectively.
- Today in Assam, education at the school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards.
- Post the 20th century proposal to set up local self-government in India, in Assam there was huge a development in the field of education.

- For secondary education, it was the 1882 Hunter Commission and the 1904 and 1913 resolutions that gave it a bigger forward push. In the year 1919, the Sadler Commission proposed that at this level diversified courses be introduced.
- All across Northeast India, the highest number of institutes for higher education are in Assam. Progress of collegiate education in Assam accrued much later. The Cotton College, followed by Sylhet College, had been set up by 1901.
- As opposed to other regions in India, in Assam teacher education was late to start. In 1888–89, the Christian missionaries became the first ones to set up primary teacher training schools.
- The 1935–1936 report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated 19th December, 1936, para.1). This was implemented across high schools except for Bengali schools.
- The British helped Assam's expansion in the field of education, trade and commerce. They converted conventional economy to market economy and the missionaries helped to bring about many positive changes in Assam.
- The British began to make changes in the Ahom administration and soon realised that for change to be effective they will have to change the system of education as well. The Ahom monarchs had built Tols, Satras and Pathsalas but the education imparted in them was primarily spiritual and ethical in character. Soon it was realised that the people were not able to handle the British administrative work as they lacked English education. The only immediate solution for this problem was that the British appointed refugees who they had transported from East Bengal.
- In 1857, the 'Wood's Despatch' theory was implemented under which education was for the masses and not just a particular section. Though high school education was still not stressed and the students had to travel to Calcutta to join colleges. In 1864, Mr. Murray, the Inspector of School began to stress on college education in Assam. Gowahatty Zilla School (Guwahati High School) was raised to Collegiate School level in 1866 and was associated with Calcutta University.
- After many years of struggle, Manik Chandra Barua and Jagannath Barua were able to get the government to establish Cotton College in Guwahati in 1901. The Missionaries had suggested that Assamese should be made the medium of instruction.
- The printing press in Assam was established by the efforts of the Missionaries. In 1846, American Baptist Missionaries which was run by Nathan Brown published the first Assamese newspaper, the paper was circulated under the name of *Orunodia* which means dawn of light.
- In 1871, *Assam Bilashini* was started and it remained in circulation till 1883, in 1885 *The Assam Sandhu*, a paper which consisted information on literature, history, current affairs, was started.

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- The *Assam News* in 1880-81 played an essential role in building the public opinion of the people of Assam. The weekly began to improve the existing standards of journalism.
- The publishing of a monthly Journal *Jonaki* with the involvement of leading Assamese scholars in the field of literature such as Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Hemchandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaroa.
- The newspapers managed to create the anti-British feelings all across the state. Rural people organised many mass organisations which were called Raijmels in order to gather the masses to fight for their rights. These organisations came into being as per the nature of the demand which had to be put forward. Puna Sarwajanik Sabha and Indian Association were organizations who tried to get more Assamese Indians to be appointed for the governmental jobs in the British administration.
- The Tezpur Ryot Sabha formed in 1884 comprised of people like Lambodar Barha, Babu Lakshmi Kanta Barkakati and Manikanta Barha who were a part of the Assamese educated middle class.
- The local associations helped to get the people to become politically aware and fought for the rights of the peasants. There was a rapid growth in the society about the repressive nature of British rule. The awareness got a further impetus with the origin of organisations like the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha (JSS). The student population also began to become aware about their rights and formed the Assamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha (ABUS).
- Mostly, the origins of the uprisings of 1857 have been ascribed to the unrest that took place in Bengal's military establishment and to the outbreak in Meerut in May 1857. North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising. It was also involved with the 1857 movement.
- In 1826, the annexation of Assam took place post the ousting of the Burmese and the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on 24 March 1826. Just a few months prior to signing of the treaty, British occupation in Assam had gone up to Bishwanath in the north at which place they had even stationed an officer.
- The effect of British occupation in the form of socioeconomic changes led to suffering and irritation across those homes that had been dependent on being served by others. The two Ahom princes had been pushed by the British into a sorry state.
- A key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising was the annexation by the British of Indian states before 1857. The Khasi-Jaintias and the Assamese were unhappy with their states' political control and as a result they too were part of the uprising.
- It is to be noted that in the Khasi-Jaintia hills, Barak valley and Brahmaputra valley significant popular support was missing. That is why the British did not find it difficult to control the movement.

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- In India's political history, the year 1919 proved to be extremely eventful. In 1920, August 1, the noncooperation movement was launched by Gandhiji. This was the Khilafat movement's direct outcome. There had been a huge response to Khilafat caused by both Muslims and the Hindus. Public meetings and/or hartals were observed to respond to the Khilafat movement in North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar Jorhat, Goalpara and Guwahati.
- During 1920 October, there were discussions of the issue of noncooperation across Assam where meetings at the district level were held by the Association: Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar and Nagaon. At the same time, N.C. Bordoloi, C.N. Sarma and Tarunram Phukan travelled through the province in a bid to mobilize public opinion.
- Nearly every Association at the district level decided that it would boycott the elections of the Council and objected to accepting honorary posts, honors and titles from the British Government.
- The Quit India Movement was not enough to make the British Government move out of India. The call for a separate Muslim country gathered force due to the 'communal policy undertaken by the pro-Muslim league Saadullah ministry in Assam and the increasing number of mutually apathetic East Bengal Hindu and Muslim immigrants' entry into Assam.' There was a rise of strong communal feeling in Assam with the Muslims of Assam Muslims being in favour of India's partition.
- Cabinet Mission to India arrived with the intention of ironing out the Indian Problem. In May of 1946, the grouping system was initiated by this mission that led to enblock rising of the Assam Provincial Congress against inclusion of Assam in the Grouping system which would have branded it as a majority state. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha also rose up and all through Assam mass agitation was organized by it.
- Assam Jatiya Mahasabha obtained from the Bengal Khidirpur Dock a secret document that revealed Maulana Bhasani group from eastern Bengal forming an underground conspiracy for invading Assam via migration of population. At this point, Gopinath Bordoloi and Syed Saadullah on part of Assam took part in the constituted Assembly making sure that the sixth schedule I was incorporated. This helped to set disintegration of population and geographical Assam afoot for future.

4.6 KEY TERMS

- **Missionary:** It refers to a person sent on a religious mission, especially one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country.
- **Annexation:** It refers to the incorporation by joining or uniting of one territory into another.
- **Muazas:** It is word used to denote a locality in a district or a within a large Assamese city.

- **Ryot:** It refers to an Indian farmer or tenant in the ryotwari system of revenue collection from agricultural land.

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4.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The resolution of 1882 was the first step which emphasized the value of local bodies for primary education's expansion.
2. Nathan Brown was the publisher of the first ever Assamese journal *Orunodai*.
3. The Tezpur Ryot Sabha formed in 1884 comprised of people like Lambodar Barha, Babu Lakshmi Kanta Barkakati and Manikanta Barha who were a part of the Assamese educated middle class.
4. The treaty of Yandaboo is the treaty with which the annexation of Assam took place in 1826.
5. The Anglo-Khasi war took place from 1829 to 1833.
6. N.C. Bordoloi, C.N. Sharma and Tarunram Phukan were the leaders who travelled through the Assam province to mobilize public opinion for the non-cooperation movement.
7. In Assam, a mritya bahini was formed under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika.
8. The Muslim League went for secret organizational activities to constitute 'Banglo-i-Islam comprising Bengal with its hinterland.

4.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the important resolutions which brought about the development of primary and elementary education in Assam.
2. What were the observations of H. Srikanth on the cause and effect of British education policy in the North-East?
3. Write a short note on Maniram Dewan.
4. Give a brief overview of the political agitation groups in pre-independent Assam.
5. 'The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha set the disintegration of population and geographical Assam afoot for future.' Explain the statement.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on the spread of Western education in Assam.
2. Explain the cultural awakening in Assam related to the press, literature and organisations.
3. Discuss the Revolt of 1857 and the participation of Assam.

4. How did the Civil Disobedience movement spread in the state of Assam?
5. Describe Assam's involvement in the Quit India movement.

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4.9 FURTHER READING

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