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Editor

Mr. Tarun Gogoi

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
H.C.D.G.COLLEGE, NITAIPUKHURI  
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## *Editor's Note*

The attitude of the people towards 'History' is changing slowly in the present day world. History cannot be considered today as 'a pile of dead leaves or a collection of dusty arte-facts but as a pool, sometimes benign, often sulfurous, that lies under the present, silently shaping our institutions, our ways of thought, our likes and dislikes.' People are now able to realize the power of history. They can understand it well that history is not a dead subject. Karl Marx has made an important remark : 'Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted by the past.' We generally read history to understand ourselves better; but more importantly we should use to read it to understand the others too. At present history has gradually lost its popularity as a universal history. People are today much interested on local history only. History thus becomes ethnic in character. Everybody loves the history of their own community. The cultural and language differences among the different communities gives birth to a new line of ethno-history but all these are not encouraging for the geographical integrity of the country. It has widened the difference among the communities because they begin to think that their culture, language and customs are different to that of the other community so they are no way linked with anyone. Therefore, these communities have raised their demand that their culture, custom and language are not safe under the rule of others and in order to preserve and protect their own culture and customs they should get separate home space. The search for one's own root by a community has, no doubt, enriched the field of history and helped to discover many unfolded truth of ancient past but it has divided the

people on the basis of community. Every community now raises a demand for an imagined home space on the basis of its local history. In this way the concept of total history of the entire nation or country has lost its relevance day by day because a tendency has already grown up among the people that they like to read history of their own community only and do not like to read others' history. Such attitude has increased the mistrust and misunderstanding among various communities that ultimately leads to the communal or ethnic conflict in nook and corner of the world. Our North-east region has already turned into a hot spot of such ethnic conflicts. Thus, history may also bring division among the people because the truth of past events is sometimes very harsh to a particular nation or a society. So, in the process of writing history of own community one must be very careful so that it would not hurt the emotions of other communities. It is our sincere effort by this journal to bring out the facts and truth of some such virgin areas which have enough scope for research with a scientific approach within the historical framework

I take the privilege to offer my heartiest thanks to Dr. S.K.Borgohain, principal of this college for his encouragement for publishing this issue of journal. I extend my sincere regards and gratitude to the members of the Editorial Board, particularly to Mr. S.R.Sarmah, and Gitali Saikia but for whose valuable suggestions and advice it would not be possible for us to bring out this volume. I am also highly grateful to those who have enriched this issue by their valuable articles. Finally, I am thankful to the owner and workers of the Print World Offset Printers and all the members of my entire college family. We will consider it highly rewarding if the aim with which this Journal has been brought out is fulfilled at least a little in the field of historical research.

*Tarun Gogoi*  
*Editor*

*Research Journal of Itihas Adhyayan Chakra*

## **Nineteenth Century British Imperialism in the Naga Hills: A study in historical Perspective**

**Mr. Siddhartha Pait**

**Introduction:** The Naga relationship with the plain dwellers underwent transformation after middle of the nineteenth century, when the British appeared on the scene with intensive colonial motives. The British carried out their so-called *frontier policy* into the Naga Hills with the intension of 'civilizing' and 'pacifying' the turbulent tribes. It was the knowledge of anthropology and sociology that enabled the British to go deeper into the origin of the Nagas and understand their natural characteristics. It contributed to their advantage in realizing the drive for imperialism. Civilizational expansionism inspired the British to venture into the hills. They had superior resource base and logistics which made their progress into the frontiers fast and sturdy. It is obvious that the Ahoms deliberately avoided any expansionist policy into the Naga Hills. A friendly relationship between the Ahom subjects and the Naga tribes took place in the *duars*(passes) of the Patkai foothills. Economic reasons and bouts of xenophobe resulted in frequent clashes between the Ahoms and the Nagas, but they were mostly localized in nature. In spite of having sufficient resources and might, the Ahoms did not speculate expansionist policy in the Naga Hills. Nor did they take any measures to bring changes in the conservative society of the Nagas. The policy was to subjugate and conciliate. When upper

Assam was restored to the Ahom king Purandar Singha, he asserted successfully his right to share the salt springs with the Nagas who paid tributes to the Ahoms. They also shared *bheels*(wetlands) and *khats*(estates) which comprised the basic source of sustenance. After the British interference strategy in the Naga Hills changed spreading the policy of imperialism in the garb of 'civilizing' intentions. <sup>1</sup>

**Early British interventions:** Relationship between the Nagas and the plain dwellers had gone for a change after the coming of the British. Similarly, the British-Naga relationship is largely the account of the British and the Naga dwellers of south and south western part of the Patkai valley and Burreil ranges. During the British period the Nagas continuously raided the plains of Assam, for the purpose of head-hunting and pillaging British subjects in the plains. The British came into contact with the Nagas with a series of explorations for finding out a regular communication route between Manipur and Assam through the hills. In 1832, Captain Jenkins and Pemberton headed a party of 700 Manipuri soldiers and labours from the Manipur valley via Samaguting and the Dhansiri to Jamuna. They were resisted by the Angami and the Katcha Nagas.<sup>2</sup> In order to protect the British territory, the British had to take up few armed expeditions into the Naga territory. At first the whole of Naga territory area was constituted into a sub-division under Nowgong district with Asaloo as sub-divisional headquarters. British officers were established permanently in the Angami country which had stopped their annual raids upon the British territory. Tours of Lieutenant Gregory and his successor Captain Butler not only pacified the tribes but also convinced them of the peaceful attitude of the British. In 1841, Lieutenant Bigge befriended the leading tribes of the northern slopes of the hills around Dimapur. He also

opened salt depots at Dimapur and fixed Dhansiri as the boundary between the Nagas and the British. Mr. Grange, Sub Assistant at Nowgong, proposed roads to Manipur across the Hills. He once subdued the unruly Angamis of Mozemah and Konemajh and entered into written understanding with them.<sup>3</sup> When British rule was further extended into the Naga territory it became necessary to carve out a Naga district separately from the plains of Assam. The relation between the Ahoms and the Nagas was maintained through confederations periodically held in the Ahom capital. It was established mainly on trade purpose by the Nagas with the Ahoms and in return the former restrained from committing outrages in the plains. To check territorial encroachment from both the side permanent embankments known as *Naga bund*(embankments) were raised on the ground between the Naga Hills and the plains of the Ahom kingdom. The British too recognised the embankments as boundary between Assam and the Naga territory. The history of British-Naga relationship is mostly confined to the Nagas of south and south western Nagas of southern Brahmaputra valley and Burreil(Barail) range. The British had to take over the Naga territory after they failed to appease the Nagas completely by following the policy of non-interference.<sup>4</sup>

In 1835, British controlled areas of the North Cachar Hills which constantly suffered from Naga intrusions and raids. The British government conceived that the duty of controlling the hostile Nagas devolved jointly upon Tularam and the Manipuri states, as the two powers held jurisdiction on at least some portions of the Naga Hills. It was therefore proposed that a line of posts to protect his subjects should be established by Tularam and Manipur at Semkhor and along the Naga frontier.<sup>5</sup> The British Naga relations from 1832 to 1850

prominently featured in some 'military promenades' of the British in the Naga Hills. Internecine feuds among the Nagas often resulted in armed conflicts which paved the way for British intervention. Early British contact with the Nagas came when Captain Brodie, the Principal Assistant to the Governor General of India was deputed to restore peace in the Hills. He dealt with the villages contiguous to the plains in the southern slopes of the eastern hills dwelt in by the Boree Nagas of Changoi and Jangroong. British relationships with the Borees, according to Captain Brodie, was more direct and intimate. But perpetual quarrels took place between different villages and clans among the Nagas which showed dangerous tendencies to spread down the plains, particularly in the revenue paying villages. Captain Brodie also gives evidence of head hunting in the villages and large buildings or *morungs*, in one of them accounting to 130 trophies. So he suggested that the British government should enter into a formal agreement with the tribes and exact a small annual tribute as token of submission, so they can have control over the tribes. The communities dwelling in the west of the Hills were more disorganised. Though they maintained the principle of democracy, the authority over the villages could not be maintained in right order resulting in frequent clashes.<sup>6</sup> In 1849 the Namsang Nagas committed extortion in the plains killing few British subjects. It was at this point of time Captain Brodie appeared in to control the affairs in the Hills. In 1851 Banfera Nagas committed murder in the Dhodar Ali in Sibsagar district. Lotha Nagas inflicted atrocities in Barpathar killing several persons. In 1853-54 an outbreak of armed conflicts between Namsang and the Borduar Nagas greatly disturbed the border inhabitants of the plains.<sup>7</sup> Besides those recorded incidences many other incidents of atrocities took place in the plains where the tribes held responsible. The Nagas of Mezoma and

Khonoma also reported to have smuggled guns and muskets from neighbouring Manipur to defend against clan rivalry. Soon after these developments the government policy towards the tribes had to be changed. Non- interference became the rule and British officers were not encouraged to visit the hills or resume contact with the tribes as the matter of security. In 1861 the *duars*(pass) were closed to Naga traders which caused distress among the Boree Nagas of Tablung, Jaktung, Khamsang and Namsang. They raised barricades in large numbers to resist local wars that frequently erupted following land disputes. British officers Lieutenant Vincent and Lieutenant Campbell raided few villages in Mezoma and seized guns and ammunitions. From 1851 to 1865 the British followed a policy of non-intervention towards the Naga tribe which was abandoned after 1866. British officers Lieutenant Vincent and Lieutenant Campbell raided few villages in Mezoma and seized guns and ammunitions. (Mackenzie, p. 96-97)The British also compelled the Nagas of Jotsoma and Chidima to pay tributes to the British. The armed intervention of the British in the Naga Hills commenced to ward off armed conflicts. For the convenience of administration and maintenance of peace in the hills the Naga Hills District was formed in 1866. The Naga Hills district boundary was notified in 1867 and Lieutenant Gregory established the headquarters of the Naga Hills district at Samaguting(Chumukedin), dominated by the Zemi Nagas. The former Sub-division headquarters of North Cachar hills at Asaloo was abolished. The eastern boundary was the Doyang or Rengma river and Northern boundary touched the confluence of Doyang and Dhansiri. Parts of south Cachar hills, the East Khasi hills, Jayantiya hills, Nowgong and northern banks of Dhansiri river inhabited by Angami Nagas formed the Naga Hills district. But it was too far for effective administration and supervision from

Samaguting over the newly created Sub-division of North Cachar Hills. The entire area covered by the Sub-division was transferred from Nowgong district and placed under newly formed Cachar district. The North Cachar Hills district was inhabited by the Zemi Naga and the Cacharis. The first district of Naga Hills consisted of those areas only which were adjacent to the plains where a certain amount of loose administration was exercised by the British. But there was still a wide tract of un-administered Naga territory extended from Kapili on the west to Buri Dihing on the East.

It was in 1866 that Cecil Beadon strongly advocated and inaugurated the 'forward policy' in the Naga Hills. Initially the forward policy was not the result of a conscious policy adopted by the British government neither it was the policy to extend the British suzerainty over the hills. It was adopted as a means to control the turmoil often reported in the hills bordering the plains of Assam. In the 1860s the situation was such that huge areas of revenue land in the plains were parceled out among the neighbouring hill tribes by the plain dwellers, either to prevent raids from the tribes or due to availability of extensive land for cultivation compared to low labour supply. The British to check the rapid loss of land to the hill tribes adopted the policy to carry out slow penetration into the hills. Gradually it opened the floodgates of western imperialism in the hills of Assam. In the Naga Hills the policy attained significance after the establishment of British headquarters at Samaguting, west of present day Kohima. The Nagas were reported to be friendly and anxious to become British protectorate.<sup>8</sup> Armed forces were stationed at the headquarters to prevent inter-tribe feud amongst the Nagas which was rampant. Roads were constructed and linked for extension of trade.

***Influence of tea cultivation and other economic necessities:*** With the extension of tea cultivation the relations between the planters and the Nagas deteriorated which demanded few innovative political arrangements in the frontiers. In the borders of the southern part of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar (Sivasagar) districts the revenue jurisdiction extended from Jaipur to Gabharuparbat and from there, the *Naga bund* coinciding with the inner line in subsequent years, runs up to a point on the Doyang. It is identical with the historic Dhodar *Ali* and Ladoigarh *Path*. Many tea growers occupied lands south of the British revenue areas even at the expense of paying revenue to the Naga chieftains. The relations between the British planters and the Nagas in the east deteriorated and friction arose frequently regarding 'boundaries, rent and tribute'. The character of the planters in the Naga foothills became more bold and assertive over legal rights. They acted at their discretion which endangered the security of the frontier tribes which led to violent upsurge from the Nagas. The then Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, A.E. Campbell, felt the necessity of a settled boundary with the Nagas in order to take a conciliatory policy towards them. William Grey, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, recommended extension of Act 33 to the frontier hills of Assam including areas held by the Europeans. Since the planters and the tribes in the frontiers were intermixed it was necessary to bring those areas under the control of law and tribunals. It was some sort of a measure to check the European settlers from coming into conflict with the frontier tribes. The British policy makers considered it essential to define some line within which the jurisdiction of the Act can be imposed.<sup>9</sup> The hill tribe problems forced them to create a barrier between the hill and the plains which would reduce contact and conflicts. This was done 1873 Regulation called 'Regulation for Peace and Good Governance' of certain districts on



the eastern frontiers. This official demarcation between the hills and the plains was commonly called 'Inner Line Regulation' suggested by Arthur Hobhouse. The inner line did not define any territorial jurisdiction of the British territory. Rather it referred to the extent of an area within which the administrative guidelines, land revenue regulations and judicial laws of the British government was followed. It turned out to be effective in the initial years of its implementation since no Naga raid was reported down the inner line till 1888.<sup>10</sup> But the line system ran into trouble in that year with the Nagas when the chief of the Borduaria Nagas raided a village on the Dilli river near Joypur, in the southeastern part of upper Assam and took away a British subject. The Nagas later killed the subject whereupon the Deputy Commissioner of Dibrugarh (headquarters Lakhimpur district) stopped paying *posa* (a kind of tribute) to the Nagas. With the expansion of economic activities in the borders, the British and the plain dwellers came into contact with the hill tribes which sometimes resulted in clashes. The British government followed the policy of non-interference with the Nagas that minimized the chances of involvement in the Naga affairs. Sometimes the tribes descended to steal scrap iron from mine or railway workshops, for making spears and other domestic implements.<sup>11</sup> Later on the opening and expansion of coal mines and development of plantation industries benefitted the Naga tribes. The extension of the tea gardens in upper Assam continued along the frontiers and employment of the hill people by the planters also gave rise to petty quarrels, though the disputes were resolved successfully by the local officers. The extension of tea gardens in upper Assam was another unique phenomenon of the British rule. The tea planters of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar took up lands south of the revenue line, some paying revenue to the government and others to the Naga chiefs.

Police assistance was sought by the planters in every little difficulty that faced and the government intervened on what course it should adopt.<sup>12</sup> Such practices became more prominent after the position of North-East India looked eminently bright in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century with a share of 26% profit in the tea sector. The hill slopes and *duars* proved more profitable for tea cultivation with 47% of the profit share.<sup>13</sup> British economic strategy in the Naga hill was well founded which amply supported their imperial interest. Mr. Philips, Superintendent of Assam Company supported hill connection of railway lines in the Golaghat tract. Mr. Molesworth, Consulting Engineer, Government of India observed:

*There are rich tracts of land suitable for tea along the line of railway...especially the Dimapur valley and such a line would undoubtedly revolutionise upper Assam...*<sup>14</sup>

The British nourished the ambition of opening tea gardens under government initiatives along the foot of the Naga Hills. It rapidly expanded in the southern part of upper Brahmaputra valley which led to the encroachment of areas which the Nagas claimed to be under their dominion. About forty-one tea gardens were carved out along the hills of Assam and Nagaland boundary since the beginning of tea cultivation in Assam by the British.

**Government Orders on Boundaries of The Naga Hills:** On May 22, 1875 the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, Major W.S. Clarke submitted final proposal to include three tea gardens in the south-eastern part of Assam-Tauchak, Hukanjuri and Namsang within the inner line restrictions, which were held by M/s Minto and Company on

a lease from the Namsangiya Naga chief. These were intended to be brought within the jurisdiction of the British territory and then leased on agreement by the government to M/s Minto and Co. It caused deviation in the natural boundary in the confluence of Buri Dihing and Makumpur which ran southward of the hills.<sup>15</sup> Many of the Naga tribes came down to the plains during winter season and served in the industries and earned wages. Many got employed in the reserved forest and jungle clearings when tea cultivations were taken up in the border areas of the Naga foothills. These activities kept the Nagas quiet for sometimes with effective implementation of the inner line system<sup>16</sup>. The boundaries of the district of the Naga Hills were fixed by the British for the first time in 1867, soon after the commencement of the 'forward policy'. The eastern boundary was the Doyang or Rengma rivers. The northern boundary was from the confluence of the Doyang and Dhansiri rivers along the Dhansiri for a distance of 6 miles up-to the source of Numbor *nullah*. Then along the northern course to a point on the Koliari river which runs for a distance of 28 miles. In the southern boundary a line along the Burrail range from the sources of Rengmai and Doyang to the small western feeder at the source of Dhansiri. Western Boundary was a line from the crest of Burrail range down the Dhansiri river for a distance of 26 miles across the hills to a point in Gungah(Ganga) ghat on the Kopilee(Kapili) river.<sup>17</sup>

The treaties with Burma and Manipur recognized the Patkai and Burrail hills running in continuous line from the sources of the Dihing in the extreme east of Assam to those of the Dhansiri in North Cachar, the boundary between those countries and British India. There existed no intermediate independent territory and while the tribes who inhabited in the southern slopes of those ranges are subject to Burma

and Manipur. Those who inhabited in the northern slopes of the hills were subjects of the British government. The tribes in the northern slopes including the Angami Nagas were independent only in the sense that British government had refrained from practical subjection over them. They were left entirely to themselves, except on occasional intervals, but never enjoyed or acquired political and territorial independence. In 1867, the Bengal administration directed the British frontier officials to assert authority over the Angami Nagas to the left of the river Dhansiri and bring them under a system of administration. But it was cautioned that the assertion of power and influence over the tribes should suit to the circumstances and gradually reclaim them.<sup>18</sup> The British government instructed the frontier officers not to burn, destroy and slay the turbulent tribes but assure safe access in and out of a position to their officers, so that personal negotiations can be worked out with the Angami chiefs. The frontier officers and commandants were to conciliate the tribes and demand persistently to surrender the offenders. They were further instructed to create a friendly atmosphere as the basis of future intercourse with the British. Thus the British policy of force and conciliation with the Nagas continued in the Hills.

**Naga Hills district and boundary demarcations:** The Naga Hills district was created through a notification on 15 November 1866. The boundaries included the portion between Jamuna and Langting rivers, hill ranges inhabited by Rengma Nagas, dense forests between Dhansiri and Doyang(Numbor North), Nambor South, Rengma and Diphu reserved forests. The notification of 1866 was however a vague one. The British themselves were not clear with the demarcations and therefore it was modified later. From 1866 to 1898 the Naga Hills

district kept expanding and it reached its zenith in 1898 which made the immediate demarcation of boundaries a problematic one. In 1875 some areas of North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon were included in the Naga Hills. By 1898 Mukakchang was included, but when originally the Naga Hills district was created, Kohima did not form a part of the Naga Hills. The Naga Hills district initially had very few Nagas habitants outnumbered by Karbis, Dimasas, a few Rengma Nagas inhabiting in huge tracts of forest land.<sup>19</sup>The forest area within the jurisdiction of erstwhile Sibsagar district and Karbi Anglong-North Cachar Hills claimed by the Nagas, were inhabited by various clans of the Nagas. The British declared some of these areas as 'reserved forest' and added to their territory. These included two reserved forest areas of Cachar district, upper and lower Numbor, Doigrung reserved forest, Mikir Hills, Rengma, Disoi and Doyang. They also incorporated certain forest areas like Doldoli, Dhansiri, Lengti, Lumding, Geleki, Kakodunga etc. into their dominion and later on declared 'reserved forest'.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1875, Chief Commissioner Colonel Keating re-opened the question of advocating the policy of gradual and systematic prosecution of the survey of the Hills. It was not for mere purpose of exploration like previously it used to be, but as a continuation of the British political occupation of the Hills. In July 1875, the capital of the Naga Hills was shifted to Wokha from Samaguting, which is more nearer to the Naga communities like Lothas and Hathigoriyas and the core areas of the tribe. In June 1877, Government of India addressed Secretary of State on the subject of policy to be followed in the Naga Hills. It was admitted that no attempt had been made actually in the hills to maintain order and civilise the tribes by the government. The

local officers acted as arbiters in inter-tribal feuds with power to enforce orders. The British Governor General-in-Council was of the opinion that British government should acquire effective control and influence over a large section of the hills. It was therefore proposed to move the headquarters to some locality in the interior hills to strengthen the administration for active management of both the eastern and western tribes of Naga Hills (Mackenzie, p. 130) At that point of time the headquarters were located in a place called Samaguting (Chumukidima), near Dimapur. In 1878, the expansion of the Naga Hills district took place towards the east and Kohima became the headquarters of the district. It was extremely difficult to control the plain areas and the dense forests in the plains from Kohima. In between 1898 and 1903, the non-Naga areas were removed from the Naga Hills district and re-transferred to Sibsagar district that included the area between Dhansiri and Doyang rivers. Most of the areas in Diphu and Bokajan sub-divisions of present day Karbi Anglong were included in Sibsagar district. British interest in the Naga Hills once again came to the forefront after chief commissionership was created in Assam.<sup>21</sup> So these areas were retransferred to their original districts and present day Karbi Anglong did not exist as a district at that point of time as it was either a part of Nagaon or Sibsagar district.

**Conclusion:** In the 1830s and 1840s expectations of fresh war with Burma prevented the British from deputing fresh expeditions into the Naga Hills. The Court of Directors condemned the policy of carrying armed expeditions into the Naga territories and the hills of Manipur. The purpose of conquest and subsequent management, as in case of a war breaking out with Burma, might create an awkward situation for the British. After 1838 the policy of reviving relationships with the

Naga tribes locally through some deputed British officers, expert in dealing with tribal affairs, was adopted. Local levy had been raised at Cachar for limited application of force as per demand of the situations. Since the 1860s rapid expansion of tea cultivation increased British correspondence with the Nagas, both in the eastern and western part of the Naga hill territories. Expansion and continuation of British rule in the Naga domains depended on various local factors including raids into the plains, inter-tribe feuds which escalated into grievant law and order problems and the more lucrative tea industry in the later period. The government tried to take effective measures to expand dominion in the troubled Hills in the nineteenth century. With the effective implementation of British forward policy more areas were subjugated and it became unmanageable in the subsequent years.

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# Dowry: An Emerging Social Problem in Assam

Jayanta Kr. Saloi

## Introduction:

Assam is a state of North-east India with cultural diversities and distinctions. Here in Assam, till twelve or fifteen years ago the people of Assam did not see any dowry death or hear of any dowry related problem of humiliation and harassment of women. Sociologists say: still most of the Assamese are proud that the dowry system is not prevalent in their society, culture or "value system". According to this section one salient feature in the Assamese society was the absence of the dowry system (Sahidullah. 4) Actually the concept of 'dowry' which is commonly prevalent in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and some other places of India was not in practice in Assamese society. But recently lots of dowry related incidents have brought about in Assam. In last eight years some dowry deaths also have taken place. These events make everybody think seriously about a growing problem in Assamese society. The social thinkers, parents and conscious people express their indignation and worry about these inhuman incidents. Before going to discuss in detail, let us simply explain the meaning of 'dowry'. In Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of English, dowry is defined as the money and goods which, in some cultures, her family gives to the man that she marries. On the other hand, in those societies where 'dowry' system is prevalent the family of the bridegroom demands an

amount of money or valuable goods to marry the girl. Grolier Encyclopedia of knowledge says that a substantial dowry enhanced her attractiveness as a spouse, strengthened interfamily ties, and served as a financial base for the newlywed (222).

In Assamese society dowry demand is not a custom in most of the families till today. The status of women is high in Assam in comparison to some other states of India. Assamese society (except those who came from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and other places) did not have dowry as a part of marriage (Sahidullah 4). So, the aim of this paper is to investigate the causes behind this growing problem and the intensity of it as well as to find out some solutions for prevention of dowry related problems.

## Review of Literature:

A few studies have been done on marriage system and dowry problem in Assam. Ram Ahuja in his *Social Problems in India*, published by Rawat Publications, 2009, discusses various social problems including dowry in India as a whole. His *Indian Social System*, published by Rawat Publication, 2007, is another work about social relation and system. Raisahab Golap Barua in *Ahom Buranji* elaborately discusses the marriage system of medieval Assam. H. K. Borpujari's *The Comprehensive History of Assam* is a landmark of history of Assam, where he discusses the prevalent marriage system of ancient and medieval Assamese society. Lakshmi Nath Bejbarua, in his autobiography, *Mor Jivan Soworan*, published by Banalata, Dibrugarh, 1998, comments on the dowry free Assamese society. Leela Gogoi and Hariprasanna Neog in *Axomor Sanskriti*, ed., 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, published by Banalata Dibrugarh, 2006, discusses various aspects of Assamese culture including marriage in detail. S.

N. Sarma in A Socio- Economic and Cultural History of Mediaeval Assam, 1200-1800, published by Bina Library, 1989 gives a detail analysis of marriage system prevalent in Assam. Sarbananda Rajkumar's *Itihase Garaka Sasata Basar*, published by Banalata, Dibrugarh, 2000 makes an elaborate discussion on marriage system of Assamese society in Ahom reign. Fatima Tohsin Sahidullah in the editorial page of The Assam Tribune Online writes a thought provoking article on dowry as an emerging social problem of Assam. Gitali Saikia, Asstt. Professor, HCDG College of Sivasagar, Assam wrote an article on dowry death after the murder of one Gitika Das of Guwahati by her in-laws for dowry, "*Gitika Dasor Haitya Aru Narir Ashray*", in 16 May, 2002, in *The Dainik Janambhumi*. National Commission for Women, New Delhi has made a survey on dowry in Assam and published it as Violence against Women in North East India, where data about dowry related incidents are given. S. P. Das, (Written by Fighting Legal Terror, March 1, 2011. 498 amisuse.wordpress.com) also focuses on this emerging problem and the writer tries to arouse consciousness among all to prevent this menace.

#### Methodology:

Both primary and secondary data are gathered to prepare the research paper. A random sample survey has been done in Kamrup, Goalpara and Sivasagar districts of Assam. Questionnaire has been prepared to collect data from 150 people. Data have been collected from newspapers also. The collected information and data have been analyzed and interpreted with the help of secondary sources. Secondary data comprise books, journals and articles available in websites.

The paper is descriptive and analytical.

**Findings:** The following are the findings of the study.

#### Concept of Dowry in Assamese Society:

The concept of dowry in Assamese society is quite different. In Assamese culture there is a custom of giving a few essential things to the bride not for the bridegroom as gifts in a ceremonious way. This is called '*usarga*', a willful and hearty offering of things in a ceremonious way citing '*mantras*' (Barua.120). The word '*joutuk*' is also used instead of '*usarga*', but it does not mean to give money or goods to the man whom the girl marries. In Assamese society '*usarga*' or '*joutuk*' has no negative connotation till a decade ago. The concept of 'dowry' or '*dohej*' meant by the Rajasthani or Bangali or other Indians has a negative connotation. Fear and hatred is associated with it. Cultural historian S. N. sarma, in **A Socio- economic and Cultural History of Mediaeval Assam** speaks boldly: It may be mentioned that dowry system as prevalent in other parts of India where bridegroom party demands a stipulated sum of money, ornaments and other valuables before the marriage, failing which the negotiation breaks, never existed in Assam and even now Assam is free from this evil"(222). The custom of receiving bride-price in cash or kind is prevalent in almost all tribes in Assam. (Borpujari 185). In Assamese culture the bridegrooms have to give valuable ornaments and costly dresses of '*pat*' and '*muga*' silk for the bride as '*joroon*'. The ceremony of giving '*joroon*' is observed generally the day before the marriage. The parents of the bride give some essential things like everyday wears, utensils, bed, mat, pitcher to bring water, baskets, even some ordinary things like a broom so that the girl will not face any difficulty in her new home. This was a part of Assamese culture which did not harm or humiliate anybody. Anudradha Sarma Pujari in the editorial of *Satsari* (March, 2013) says,

"There was a time Assamese people gave *sarai, panbata, saria* ( a pot) of copper, *banbati, saria* made of brush even the poor person gave the essential things with his married daughter... required clothes were knitted and woven at home. These were not dowry but the mutual cultural gifts between two families." (If any family cannot provide for these things the bridegroom party did not ask them. In earlier times parents arranged marriage for their sons and daughters. The girl was totally ignorant about the bridegroom's family. She had to marry an unknown person. Therefore, till she could adjust with the new family, her essential things were given to the bride. In Assam history the royal families established and developed friendship through marriage. Whenever, a king or a prince wished to marry a girl from a royal family he used to send messages through match-maker with some valuable gifts. If the king agreed he married her daughter to that king with elephants, horses, men; sometimes a portion of his kingdom also are willingly offered as the token of friendship. If a king was defeated he wanted to make a treaty by giving his daughter to him or by marrying the victor's daughter to his family. This strategy of give and take strengthened the tie of friendship. A few did this to exert their power over less powerful kings. In 1533, Ahom King Konsheng Borpatra Gohain made friendship with Gaura king and Gaura king married a princess to him. In 1524 Nora Raja (Kachari Raja) fought with Ahom King. Nora Raja was defeated. So, he made a treaty with Ahom king and married one daughter to tie the knot of friendship (Rajkumar. 87-88). It is written in history that marriage between two countries or kingdoms established peace and friendship and strengthened the power of both the relatives. Each family who was tied by marriage helped other at the time of adversity.

In Assam, 90 per cent people live in villages. It was basically an agrarian society. People used to celebrate a lot of festivals and functions together amidst love and joy. They were very co-operative and helpful to each other. Marriage was a community festival here. Everybody helped the family who was going to arrange marriage. No dowry demand was there. Parents were very happy at the occasion of their son's or daughter's marriage. Eminent writers Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua and Dr. Nirmal Prova Bordoloi commented on Assamese marriage that it was a village festival arranged by everybody in the village. Dr. Bordoloi describes in detail how marriage plays an important role in bringing solidarity to the society and comments that the ceremony is always very lively in Assamese society. She again says that no dowry was demanded. The things required for the marriage were given by the villagers to the family of the bride and the bridegroom. Moreover, religion and moral teaching played an important role in the society. People were happy with whatever they had; they had minimum want. People were mostly busy in spiritual thinking rather than material prosperity. Nobody heard about dowry demand at that time. In his autobiography *Mor Jivan Soworan* ( Memory of My Life) the famous Assamese writer who married a daughter of famous *Tagorebari*, West Bengal, Pragma Sundari, daughter of Debendra Nath Tagore's daughter, Pragma Sundari, wrote, "before our marriage an employee of Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore came to me and asked what condition I had before them for marrying their daughter. That means what amount I want from him as dowry. I know that in Bengal the bridegroom wants money and valuables for marrying the girl. Some Bengalis also criticized it, but practically they continue this shameful custom. I said to him that in Assamese society there is no dowry system. So, I cannot take anything from her family as dowry. The

Assamese hates the custom from the core of the heart" (Bejbarua 13-14).

In fact, the whole rituals related to Assamese marriage were based on love and respect to the family of the bride. Dr. Nirmal Prova Bordoloi, an eminent scholar of folk culture says that the groom gives a dress (*Sadar Mekhela* made of 'pat' silk) to the mother of the bride as the token of honour. The family of the groom again gives a *xarai* full of betel nut to the bride's family requesting them to bring the bride to them to perform the rituals of marriage.

#### **Dowry Demand has recently emerged:**

But for eight or ten years we have heard of some dowry demand and murder of brides for not giving satisfactory dowry to the bridegroom's family. Social scientists say that in the post-independence era, the evil of dowry system has stealthily been invading the Assamese society with the result that some dowry death cases have been reported (Sahidullah.4). Since 2001, dowry deaths have "sky-rocketed" in Assam.

While in 2001, 1307 dowry related cases were registered here, the figure went up to 3063 in 2007. Statistics lay down by Information and Public Relations Minister Rockibul Husain in Assam Assembly as asked by one opposition MLA, Aloka Desai Sarma of Asom Gana Parishod, said in July 15, 2008, that the number of dowry related incidents has increased in recent years.

To understand the present dowry problem of Assam a survey has been done in five districts of Assam—Kamrup, Goalpara, Dhubri, Golaghat and Sivasagar. The survey is based on random sampling. Twenty five married women of 25-35 age group, 25 educated unmarried girls, 25 gaurdians, 25 married women of 60-70 age group and 25

boys of 26-35 age group are interviewed. 70 per cent young women say that they were not demanded anything at the time of marriage by their in-laws. Nobody commented badly on whatever things they were given at the time of marriage in her new home. 30 per cent married young women told that they enjoyed the status of a girl in their in-law's house. 40 percent married women revealed that whatever they brought with them they keep with themselves as their husbands are living in a separate town for job. Nobody demanded those things. 20 per cent tell that their parents are wealthy and they willingly gave some valuable things and ornaments to them at the time of marriage. But these were not demanded as dowry. 90 per cent old ladies told that they were not given any valuable goods while they married. In fact, today's concept of present dowry system was unknown to them. They have told the term '*usarga*' and the little things given to them were called '*usaragia*' (taken as *usarga*). One old lady showed a pitcher brought with her as '*usaragia*'. They said: "We do not want to use the term dowry for the things given by our parents. The things were not demanded by our bridegrooms. If the things were not given no body would scold us. These are nothing costly at all. But for us these are valuable." 3 % young married women revealed that they were asked by their fiancée to give 'standard' gifts to his relatives so that he will not be ashamed of her gifts. Ten guardians of young boys told that they requested their daughter-in-law's parents not to give anything with her at the time of their sons' marriage. We are able and after all, she is our daughter, not daughter-in-law. Eight mothers told that sometimes they have to help her married daughter with money, but that is not a demand. My daughter and son-in-law return it later while they can. This is a kind of mutual co-operation. In the study 10 married women who eloped against their parents' consent revealed



that though they could not bring anything from their homes they were loved and cared by everybody in their husbands' house. They have not faced any problem. 40% unmarried educated young girls told that they talk with their fiancée to marry without dowry. Their parents have already spent a lot for providing higher education. In fact, they will be able to attain a job. Whatever they will want they will buy themselves. 80 % young boys say they do not want anything from their brides. According to them it is after all their duty and responsibility to take care of their family. Ten percent boys have said they refused such offers of parents who were ready to give land and other property with their daughters. They again said if they have married them they will make themselves mean before the eyes of others.

In Goalpara and Dhubri districts the survey reveals an opposite picture. Fifteen respondents reveal that in these areas dowry demand is prevalent. They have to give Rs. 65,000 to 1.5 lakhs to the bridegroom.

The All India Democratic Women Association (AIDWA) also made a survey in Kamrup, Barpeta, Dibrugarh, Dhubri and Sonitpur Districts of Assam in 2003. According to the results, 20.9 % of the respondents believed that dowry, as a system, was common among Assamese people. However Seventy nine unmarried young girls felt that they could be married without dowry. The survey also revealed that 20.8 % of the girls expect gifts from their parents at the time of marriage. AIDWA study reveals another fact that 19.83 % of the cases of the parents have to take loan and bear intense pressure at the time of marriage. Goalpara, Dhubri and Cachar are the border areas of Bangladesh and West Bengal. These areas are largely inhabited by Bangali and Muslims immigrants from Bangladesh. In Guwahati, Sivasagar, Tinsukia as well as some other places lots of immigrants

from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are living. Of late, their custom of dowry has exerted influence on the Assamese culture and society also. Dowry has been a major concern amongst the predominantly Bengali majority areas in Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Goalpara, Dhubri etc. (22).

Some young married women are tortured physically and mentally. Some have to return to their parents' home breaking the sacred tie. The number of dowry related cases including dowry deaths registered has alarmingly gone up from 1307 in 2001 to 3063 in 2007.<sup>11</sup> It shows that dowry related registered cases have increased nearly three in Assam between 2001 and 2007. Official sources informed that as many as 20,134 cases of crime against women were registered in Assam between 2005 and 2008. In 2006-07 dowry death were 84, in 2005-06 it were 88, and in 2007-08 it rose to 119.

Recent studies show that demanding dowry and dowry related problems are newly emerged problem in Assam. These dowry demand and humiliation of brides are, no doubt, the result of the contact with dowry prevalent societies. Besides it, some other reasons are also responsible for the increasing rate of dowry cases. These are:

- i) **Urbanization:** Urbanization is the movement of population from rural to urban areas and the resulting increasing proportion of a population that resides in urban rather than rural places. Actually, urbanization is not simply a movement from villages to cities it involves change of life style, earning source of livelihood from agriculture to business, trade, service and profession; it also involves change in the migrants' attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior pattern (Ahuja 284). That means urbanization brings change not only to habitation, but also change the mindset and behavior of a group who have left

their original home. They not only bring with them a hope of better life but also left sometimes their old values, ways, traditions, and customs. So, while the agrarian people shifts to towns or cities they have lost their elemental simplicity also. They are more easily influenced by evilness.

- ii) **Growing Materialism:** With urbanization the growing materialism also plays an important role to change the mind set of people. The peace loving co-operative society begins to be selfish and self-centered. Earlier they were indifferent to material prosperity. But now they are money -minded.
- iii) Illiteracy and lack of self-respect is also another reason.
- iv) Some of these crimes are psychogenic. In narrower terms, however, the term, 'psychogenic' is referred to 'mental disorder' or 'emotional disturbances'. The psychogenic theories trace crime in some defect in the personality of the offender or 'in the inside of the person' (Ahuja 284). Those that burns a human being is by nature very cruel and inhuman.
- v) There is always a hidden jealousy between mother-in laws, sister-in law for the daughter-in law. So, some women mentally torture the bride in the name of dowry. These women always bear an antagonistic attitude towards the bride. Moreover, the patriarchal society treats a woman as an object. This society through the process of socialization humiliates and harasses women and demanding dowry is just a weapon.
- vi) Modern men, though they are educated have a craving for easy money. They have lost love, kindness as well as forgot the auspiciousness of the sacred bond which is called marriage.

### Recent Incidents:

21 or 22 year old Meenakshi Bhuyan, who was married to one Priyam-Bhuyan in Nagaon, Assam was mercilessly assaulted by her husband on August 26, 2010 and was shifted to Gauhati Medical College Hospital. But she died there. Another incident has taken place in Nazira, Sivasagar District on 16 Feb, 2011. Another has been murdered in Sivasagar District in March, 2011. In most cases it is seen that the victim as well as the members of her parents' house, neighbours, the women associations are silent till something extreme will happen. They become active only after the death of the victim. Parents think in general that if they protest the conjugal life of their daughter will be spoiled. In most of these cases, the victim and her father's family try to bear all the tortures and humiliation for the sake of a 'happy' life. If she is going to file a case the husband and in-laws will not accept her again. So, fear always forbids them to take timely step to get rid of the torture. Sometimes, the victim has lost equilibrium of mind and commits suicide. According to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) average one Indian woman commits suicide every four hours for the torture done for dowry by her husband and in-laws.

Another case of dowry death happened in 5 May, 2002 in Guwahati, Assam. The victim, Gitika Das's parents and brother told that they knew that the nature of their son-in law was not good at all and they knew it at the time of their marriage. He demanded dowry at the time of marriage. Though knew all about him they married their daughter/ sister to him. But they could not think that he would become so inhuman (Saikia 4)

**Preventive Measures:**

1. Literacy rate in Assam is 64.28 per cent as against 65.38 per cent for India. Women literacy rate is 56.03 per cent whereas male literacy rate is 71.93. The school dropout both boys and girls are high. The government and NGOs should try to provide education to all. Only education can create awareness among people. Moreover, true education can change the mind set of people by shaping and moulding their mind. From school level the need for a happy and peaceful environment should be taught to the children.
2. Dowry prohibition Act was taken in 1961. But law cannot reduce the dowry related incidents. So, all should try to arouse consciousness so that this evil practice can be prevented now.
3. Providing economic security is a must. Education is very essential for women to provide economic security. Economic independence creates confidence and courage to face the challenges of life. It will naturally help them to acquire "freedom from fear".
4. The government and other agencies should create more and more job opportunities for women.
5. Government and NGOs should establish some shelter houses for the deserted women because in some cases the parents and brothers may not give her shelter. Such houses are also be useful for the financially sound women who do not wish to live alone.
6. Media should not ignore this emerging menace in Assamese society. It is only print media and the vision media that can arouse consciousness and protest against this evil. S.P. Das, "The actual news of our country is not in the middle pages of a

newspaper and not the headlines. However, these pages are often rightly neglected or buried under the sensational of the political warfare, economic crisis or sports gallantries that prevails the headlines. And one of such truthful news that most of us seems to be ignoring is Dowry in Assam. The Staff Reporter of The Assam Tribune (26th October 2010) wrote, Sensitive dowry prohibition officers must be appointed by the government and all related laws effectively implemented to counter increasing dowry deaths in Assam. There must be adequate resources in support services and budgetary allocations to assist victims and their families to fight cases of this nature.

**Conclusion:** From the study it is clear that the problem of dowry begins to be deeply rooted in Assamese society. We have immense responsibility to control and prevent the disease right now. One S. P. Das says that the Assamese anyway are known to be smart followers of "more wrong than right things". We should support the senior police official who said that the police, once the crime is committed, remains confined to arresting the culprits but if we really need to check the trend, the awareness level will have to be improved. The mind-set of the patriarchal society must be changed. Women are not commodities. Everybody should be taught in schools and colleges to behave women as a human being. They should be taught to love women, scare them and give a status to them. The societal responsibility is at present an urgent need. It is, indeed, the male folk who can take initiative for a happy and violence free home, a sweet home.

**Note:**

- Sadar Mekhela:** a kind of dress consists of two pieces worn by Assamese women.
- Xarai :** A decorated costly pot made of brass used to welcome guests or new comers putting betel nut and very small amount of money, i.e. Rs. 1.50 Only.
- Joroon :** A part of marriage, the function of offering ornaments, dresses, cosmetics etc for the bride by the bridegroom. The ceremony of *joroon* is generally held the previous day of marriage.
- Pat silk:** a kind of silk cloth made of the thread of white silk worm.
- Muga :** a kind of cloth made of the fibre of *muga* silk worm.

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## Discovering the Lost Indian: A Post-Colonial Reading of D.H Lawrence

Lengdon Chetia

Simonetta de Filippis in her introduction to the volume "D.H Lawrence and Literary Genres" wondered whether Lawrence – a white European man belonging to the traditional literary canon can be read in new ways and whether his work is still important to contemporary thought and culture. Now D.H Lawrence was no conventional artist. He was a rebellious and a profoundly polemical writer whose views were radical and far ahead of his times. He constantly challenged conventional thought and norms of society which accorded him hostile reception and controversy throughout his career. Though primarily known as a novelist and a short story writer Lawrence was also a poet, a travel writer, a literary critic and a painter. He was a naturalist not only in his reaction to industrialism, or in his profuse use of nature images which abounds in his novels and poems, but because he was much more sensitive to the feel of nature and vitally alive to its changing aspects. He was filled with horror at the growing materialism and selfishness of his age and believed that the disengagement of one's intellect from one's emotions has led to the impoverishment of the quality of human life. Though he may seem to attach certain sanctity to the sexual demands of a person, what he in fact tries to preach is a proper synthesis of the flesh and the spirit, the impulse and the reason. Tremendously prolific, his work was often uneven in quality, and he

was a continual source of controversy, often involved in widely-publicized censorship cases, most famously for his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). His collections of poetry include *Look! We Have Come Through* (1917), a collection of poems about his wife; *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923); and *Pansies* (1929), which was banned on publication in England. Lawrence occupied no central position in the literary tradition of his age, but his influence was the profoundest. He was too original a writer to found a school but his influence can be seen on many later writers and poets. He was an uncompromising critic of stereotypes of thought and feeling and outmoded and restrictive social and political forms. He was much ahead of his times. According to Mark Kinkead-Weekes he anticipates anti-colonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'O by three decades and more. He had a very positive attitude to different cultures which he encountered in the course of his travels to different countries. He experienced close contact and confrontation with alien cultures which were different from his own particularly in his travels in America, Italy, Ceylon, Australia and New Mexico. These experiences not only enriched his works and gave birth to works like 'Aaron Rod', 'The Plumed Serpent', 'The Kangaroo' and 'The Woman Who Rode Away', but also stands testimony to his attitude of racial tolerance and respect of the 'otherness' of other cultures. For instance in 'Indians and an Englishman' (September 1922) written just after his arrival at Taos, he gives a vivid account of his impressions:

"As for me, standing outside, beyond the open entrance, I was no enemy of theirs; far from it. The voice out of the far-off time was not for my ears. Its language was unknown to me. And I did not wish to know...I stand on the far edge of their firelight, and am neither denied nor accepted. My way is my own, old red father; I can't cluster at the

drum anymore.”

In another short prose writing, 'Taos' (September 1922) Lawrence writes of a group of white people going to the Pueblo Village

...to help erect the great stripped maypole...Of course one of the white boys took the bossing of the show. But the Indians were none too ready to obey, and their own fat dark-faced boss gave counter-orders. It was the old, amusing contradiction between the white and the dark races. As for me, I just gave a hand steadying the pole as it went up, outsider at both ends of the game.

In another essay "America listen to your own" (September 1920) written in Italy, he urges upon the Americans not to feel a sense of cultural inferiority but to renounce their cultural enslavement to a decaying Europe, to depart from "old European morality and ethic...old range of emotions and sensibilities" and to 'take up life where the Red Indian, the Aztec, the Maya let it fall.' In other words to steer clear of outmoded and restrictive social and political forms.

Lawrence's art thus reveals a profound and searching criticism of the political, religious and social structures which have shaped our materialistic and technological age. Many of his works particularly the writings of the American period (1922-25) like his novel 'The Plumed Serpent' or the short stories like 'The Woman Who Rode Away' and 'The Princess', deals with the confrontation between different cultures and different races thus anticipating the current debate on a redefinition of the traditional euro-centric point of view in today's world of plurality and hybridity. There are moments in Lawrence's works in which he adopts a non-Eurocentric perspective calling into question established certainties of the western world. For instance in the poem "Elephant" written in 1922 on a visit to Ceylon which was then a colony of the

British empire, Lawrence sympathetically writes about the prince who is reduced to "the butt of everybody" and unable to perform his princely duties. The poem describes a major Buddhist festival called Peralhera at Kandy, the old capital of the former kingdom. Overwhelmed by the alien sights and sound, Lawrence later wrote to a friend:

"It was wonderful, gorgeous and barbaric with all the elephants and flames and devil dancers in the night...The Prince of Wales seemed sad and forlorn. He seemed to be almost the butt of everybody, white and blacks alike. They all secretly hate him for being a prince, and make a Princely butt of him – and he knows it. My sympathy was with him." (The Letters, 219)

In the poem the Prince, far from being the symbol of Imperial power and royalty is just "a tired remnant of royalty" who lacks both dignity and confidence and is watching the Ceylon crowds nervously:

Elephants after elephants curl their trunks, vast shadows,  
and some cry out  
As they approach and salaam, under the dripping ûre of  
the torches,  
That pale fragment of a Prince up there, whose motto is  
\_Ich dien\_  
Pale, dispirited Prince, with his chin on his hands, his  
nerves tired out,  
Watching and hardly seeing the trunk-curl approach and  
clumsy, knee-lifting salaam  
Of the hugest, oldest of beasts in the night and the ûre  
ûare below.  
He is royalty, pale and dejected fragment up aloft  
And down below huge homage of shadowy beasts; bare-  
foot and trunk-lipped in the night...

Lawrence's ironic use of the phrase "Ich dien" which in German means "I serve" operates at two levels. At one level the phrase "Ich dien" reminds us of the long victorious history of England because it is derived from the battle of Crecy against France in the fourteenth century when after the fall of the King of Bohemia, Edward the Black Prince adopted the motto together with three Ostrich feathers on his helmet. It symbolizes that victory and constitutes the Coat of Arms of the Prince of Wales. However on another level it reveals a rather disturbing fact that the Prince has come there not to be served but to serve- to act as medium that 'serves' to tie the Empire fast to Britain:

And all there was to bow to, a weary, diffident boy whose  
Motto is \_Ich dien.

I serve! I serve\_! In all the weary iron of his mien – 'Tis I  
Who serve\_!

Drudge to the public.

Lawrence here seems to be aware of an acute sense of 'mimicry'. He takes note of the "gleaming dark laugh", "jeering devil" and "the faintest twist of mockery in every face". The mode of asserting authority over the colonized gave rise to mimicry. Bhabha's term 'mimicry' means that the colonizer in his/her relationship with the colonized is always vulnerable to the irreverence and mockery beneath the servility of the colonized. 'Mimicry' can be taken as a way of eluding control. It gives rise to postcolonial analysis by subverting the colonial master's authority and hegemony. According to Leela Gandhi "mimicry is also the sly weapon of anti-colonial civility, an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience."

Howard J Booth in his essay entitled "Lawrence in Doubt: A Theory of the Other and Its Collapse" writes how "Lawrence took on,

stretched and probed many of the possibilities of thought available around colonialism." According to Booth, Lawrence expresses in "Elephant" his view that "the British Empire is weakening as its Masculinity declines." This poem also expresses Lawrence's ambivalent attitude towards the Orient. Lawrence, a white European man could not help seeing the East as exotic 'Other'. Before leaving Europe he thought the racial others would help renew the decayed and exhausted West, but now after his unsettling experience in Ceylon he fears that the culture of the East actually poses a serious threat to the West.

However Mark Kinkead- Weekes in his essay "Decolonising Imagination: Lawrence in the 1920s" finds that Lawrence was able to overcome his antipathy towards other races and cultures with the help of his imagination. He was able to decolonize his vision and "unscale one's eyes from the prejudices of the time." In his novel "Women in Love" he makes Birkin insist that West African carving is not barbaric but the product of another kind of civilization. And in his wartime essay on Fenimore Cooper's 'Leatherstocking' novels he praises the deep relationship imagined there between the red Indians and the white Americans and also sees through it a possible resurrection of the white man. However Lawrence's first encounter with dark people was far from satisfactory. He was repelled by their 'swarming' crowds, 'soft', 'boneless' bodies and 'black bottomless hopeless eyes'. And this physical aversion we find in his essay "Studies in Classic American Literature" where he writes about the South Sea islanders as being ages behind the white man in 'the struggle of the soul into fulness':

There is his woman... I like her, she is nice. But I would never want to touch her. I could not go back on myself so far. Back to their

uncreate condition. She has soft warm flesh, like warm mud. Nearer the reptile, the Saurian age. Noli me tangere.

In 'Indians and Englishman' he espouses similar views and admits that there can be no going back of the kind that he had called for. However according to Weekes, as soon as Lawrence encounters beautiful sights and sounds of nature his sensuous imagination comes alive and he begins to respond positively giving us the very shimmer of life, not the rigid, firm outline, the husk, but the 'living plasm' which is the real thing. The 'tepees, and smoke, and silhouettes of tethered horses and blanketed figures' moving against the glowing camp-fires, the pulses of the drum beats, the thud of the dancer's feet, the 'song-shout' produced 'from the depths of the stomach' evokes in him a response which shakes him up and also bring in its wake 'an acute sadness, and a nostalgia, unbearably yearning for something', for a tribal past – a product of his passionate belief in primitive and elemental impulses and a fierce reaction against the materialistic tendencies of the age. Thus with the help of his imagination Lawrence could overcome the antipathy towards other cultures and races. He could even sympathize with the Ceylonese or the Indians who appeared to be mocking and jeering at him. He writes what ordeal it must have been "to sing and tread the slow dance between those solid walls of silent, impassive white faces". But however much these sights and sounds may move him Lawrence is acutely conscious that there can be no going back and there is an unbridgeable gap that separates him from them: "My way is my own, old red father; I can't cluster at the drum anymore."

Lawrence yearned for a renewed mode of being in which man was an organic unity, with his intellect and ego in harmony with his desires and feelings, and the individual in harmony with his community

and the natural world. He believed that those people would be declared victorious in the human conflict who would seize and identify themselves "with the master of human destiny", that is "the dark mysterious god". It would be possible to sense this dark mysterious God only through 'blood consciousness' and not through intellect. Lawrence believed that the tragedy of the western world was because of the rising intellectualization of human beings. Reason is becoming more and more important with impulse being pushed to the background, which has in turn destroyed man's spontaneous, instinctive response to life. In his essay "Indians and Entertainment" written at Kiowa ranch in 1924 Lawrence deliberates upon Indian dance and how it is different from European forms. In European dance forms the dancers and the dance is distinct to some extent, but in Indian dance 'the individual is lost in the tribe, which merges into the natural world; and there is no God separate from that world...the drum is a heartbeat of communal blood, in which body and spirit reach out-no distinction there, either – to unite man, god and nature." Lawrence now places 'Indian' and 'European' as irreconcilable modes of consciousness and finds that Colonization is psychologically damaging to whites and Indian alike. In his short story "The Woman Who Rode Away" Lawrence critiques the white woman's false sense of racial superiority and consciousness which is gradually stripped until she can almost share in the world view of the Indians. In 'St. Mawr' Lawrence shows us the danger latent in the colonizer's attempt to dominate the aboriginal nature of the native. Thus Lawrence in his writings shows how the colonizer's identity is constructed in relation to the colonized. In a novel like 'Quetzalcoatl' he anticipates many of the ways in which the later African writers would seek imaginatively to undermine colonialism and set native consciousness free from feelings of



inferiority and liberate a new sense of dignity and identity. Like Homi Bhabha he shows us how colonial authority is rendered 'hybrid' and 'ambivalent' in the postcolonial era, thus opening up spaces for the colonized to subvert the master-discourse.

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## Indo-Nepal Co-operation from Ancient to the Early Medieval Period.

Chiranjib Dahal

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct the history of the Indo-Nepal relations from the ancient to the early medieval period. The main aim of the researcher is to find out the socio-cultural and economic co-operation between India and Nepal of that period. The study on Indo-Nepal relations of this period has not received much attention from the scholars. So this is a humble effort by this investigator. In regards to methodology secondary data and information have been used extensively in this study. However, proper attention has been paid to justify these data and information in a critical way. The people-to-people relationship between the two countries goes back to the time immemorial. India and Nepal are perhaps the only two countries in the world which are closely interlinked historically, culturally, socially, politically and economically imbibing the finest and the best from the rich traditions of each other. Relations between India and Nepal have been close since ancient times stemming from geographical location and common ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities that overlap the two countries despite some difficulties stemming from problems inherent in big power-small power relations.

The Nepalese society is basically a branch of the Indo-Ganga culture. For religious, social and cultural inspiration it has always looked

to the south. Nepalese history can be understood only in the Indian context. When the princes of Northern India fought among themselves, they did not consider Nepal a foreign territory. Most of the rulers of the region belonged to India and traced their origin to Indian aristocracy. Nature and destiny have put India and Nepal close to each other. In geographical terms, Nepal is a north-west extension of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. The two countries share common environment and landscape. Nepal, situated on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, separates Tibetan region of China from the Indian sub-continent. It shares its border with India on three sides. The two countries share common socio-cultural setup although they have identical structure, way of life, cultural patterns, religion, scriptures and festivals. These factors have indeed interlinked the societies so intimately that it gives the impression of two nations but one society. It has made people-to-people relations possible and has also added an informal dimension to their mutual relations. Nevertheless, it is because of deep-rooted socio-cultural, historic-political and geographical closeness between the two countries that several areas of co-operation and sources of conflict between the two countries have continued to exist.

Historian R.C. Majumdar is of the opinion that Nepal is the only kingdom of ancient India that has maintained its independence without interruption up to the present time. The early history of the country is purely traditional. It is said to have been ruled at first by a dynasty of cowherds (gopals) consisting of eight kings. They were overthrown by a dynasty of Ahirs or Abhiras, who, played an important part in the history of western India in the early centuries of the Christian era. During the reign of the third king of this dynasty Nepal was conquered by the Kiratas. The Kirata is a well-known tribal name in ancient India. It is referred to in the Vedic, Epic and subsequent

literature. Twenty-nine Kirata kings ruled in Nepal when the country was conquered by a Kshatriya prince from India named Nimisha. The dynasty of Nimisha consisted of five kings, the last of whom was overthrown by the Licchavis<sup>1</sup>. The Licchavi dynasty was considered to be one of the greatest royal dynasties of ancient India. They came to Nepal in 635 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

Nepal's recorded history began with the "Kirat's" who arrived at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. It was recorded in one of the Nepali tradition that one kirati king participated in the battle of Kurukhetra in favour of pandavas.<sup>3</sup> During this period, Buddha was born in Lumbini garden situated in the western Terai region of Nepal. The birth of Lord Buddha gradually flourished Buddhism. The Nandas, Mauryas and the Sungas were the contemporary dynasties of the Kiratas in India. By 200 AD Buddhism has wiped out and was replaced by Hinduism brought by the Licchavis, who invaded from the Northern India and overthrew the last kirat king. By 879A.D. the Licchavi era had petered out and was succeeded by the Thakuri dynasty. The authentic history of Nepal begins with the conquest of the Licchavis. They were contemporary of Lord Buddha. About twenty-eight kings of this dynasty ruled for four or five hundred years, and their names are preserved in the genealogical and epigraphic records.<sup>4</sup> Several centuries later the Thakuri King, Arideva founded the Malla dynasty, giving birth to another renaissance of Nepali culture. Despite natural disaster and clash between the independent city states of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, the Malla dynasty flourished, reaching its zenith in the 15<sup>th</sup> century under Yaksha Malla.

Nepal has been a largely independent country throughout its existence. Though her independence became restricted from time to time, she never completely succumbed to the control of any outside

power. In her long and at times chequered career as an independent nation she has thrown out invaders from the south and the north and successfully defended her national freedom and existence. Despite her small size and insufficient resources she made them realize through her valour in the battlefield the futility of attempts to subjugate her. Some Indian and European historians are tempted to conclude on the basis of an inscription that Nepal was under the suzerainty of Samudragupta<sup>5</sup>. But according to R.C.Majumdar, "the nature and duration of Gupta suzerainty in Nepal cannot be exactly determined." The claim of some historians that Harsha who ruled over India in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD rapidly went ahead with their territorial expansion in India, Nepal's importance as a shelter-ground increased. Large number of high-caste Hindus-the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas-took refuge in Nepal. With their dynamism and superior culture they soon established their dominion over the backward and innocent hill people. The Rajput princes setup a number of little states and fought among themselves for supremacy.<sup>6</sup> Nepal never came under the Muslim rulers of India, including the great Mughals. The only Muslim ruler ever to reach Kathmandu was Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah of Bengal who raided Kathmandu in 1347, not to extend his domains but to plunder.<sup>7</sup>

Nepal, however, could not altogether escape Muslim invasion about the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. But it was merely a temporary raid and left no permanent impact on that country. Buddhist monks, fled from Nalanda and other monasteries when they were destroyed by the Muslim invaders, took shelter in Nepal carrying with them sacred texts which they held dearer than life. Thousands of Rajputs too found protection in Nepal after the capture of Chhittor by Alauddin Khilji. In a sense, therefore, Nepal gives us a more complete picture of pre-Muslim India than is obtainable anywhere else. She was regarded as

a safe place for religious meditation or political ambitions of Indian kings. Naturally, the history of Nepal had been a part of the history of the Hindu race. The valley was colonized by the Hindus, both consciously and by natural process of expansion.<sup>8</sup>

The monarchs of Nepal had always been true devotees of "Pashupati" and "Vishnu" and worshippers of "Shakti" and admirers of Lord Buddha. So there budded a sense of religious co-ordination and deep harmony."Gurkhali," the official language of Nepal is, like several Indian languages, a descendent of Sanskrit. Even the other dialects and languages spoken and understood in Nepal bear close resemblance to Indian dialects. Hindi is universally understood in Nepal and Gurkhali is written in "Deonagri" script. In view of the common dietary habits, social customs and way of life, the Nepalese in India and the Indians in Nepal do not feel themselves alienated. The Vedas and Upanishads owe a great deal to the sages who mediated on the banks of the holy rivers flowing from the Himalayas. Still today, the rivers Bagmati, Kosi and Gandaki which nurtured the civilization of both seem to echo the voices of "Vyasa" and "Vishwamitra". The idols of "Saligram" are found in Gandaki and it would not be strange to call Nepal as "Deobhumi"- a land of Gods.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Shrinarayan Chaturvedi, a well known thinker and journalist rightly remarked that India being our mother, no doubt, the sacred land of Nepal is our maternal aunt. Nepal has figured in Indian mythology from times immemorial. There are multifarious allusions as to the origin of her name. Presumably, Nepal was a land of sacred meditation and peace. Hindu mythology mentions a number of its personages and events linked with Nepal." Shiva" and "Parvati" are as much of Nepal as of India. Pashupatinath of Nepal and Kedarnath, Amarnath and Kashivishwanath<sup>10</sup> of India attract pilgrims from both the countries

for spiritual solace. Lord Buddha born in Lumbini of Nepal attained his self-enlightenment at Gaya in India. According to some historians of Nepal, sages like VedaVyasa, Markendeya, Narada, Sandilya, Balmiki, Gargi, Vishwamitra etc. had their caves in the Himalayan region of Nepal.<sup>11</sup>

It is to be observed that besides common ancient mythology, the oldest historical connection of Nepal with North Indian Plains is associated with the Great Mauryan, Ashoka. His daughter is said to have married a Nepalese Noble named Deopal<sup>12</sup>. However, the first important ruling dynasty in Nepal was that of the Licchavis who originally belonged to India and were of rulers of a small kingdom in North Bihar. Licchavis of "Vaishali," or at least a section of them, took refuge in Nepal valley to retain their freedom against the aggression of Magadha<sup>13</sup>. Nepal valley was not then isolated, as now, from the rest of India and formed virtually her integral part in respect of administration, literature and religion. Both experienced the same waves of culture and Nepal served as a link in transmitting the socio-cultural heritage of India to Tibet and Central Asia.

After the fall of the Licchavis, several powerful kings of Indian origin ruled the Nepal valley. During the Gupta period, due to the matrimonial alliance with Licchavis the cultural exchanges between the two countries were considerably developed. "Vikram Samvat" and "Shaivism" started by Guptas are still in vogue in Nepal. The Mallas too are mentioned as another powerful republican clan ruling in north Bihar and Eastern UP. They are known to have settled down in the Nepal valley during 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD. The eastern part of India was in most intimate contact with Nepal<sup>14</sup>.

Asoka gave marriage his daughter Charumati to a Ksatriya king of Nepal Devapala<sup>15</sup>. A Licchhavi Princess was married to

Chandragupta I at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. Sivadeva, son of Licchavi king Narendradeva married a Maukhari Princess, a granddaughter of Adityasena, the emperor of Magadha, While his son Jayadeva married the daughter of Harsha, the Lord of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kosala and other places. We thus find that the kings of Nepal had matrimonial relations with all the neighbouring chiefs<sup>16</sup>. According to the famous historian K.L. Baruah, Rajyamati, the daughter of the famous king Sri Harsh of Kamrupa was married to Jayadeva II, a king of Nepal. Similarly the Nepalese princess Ratnakumari was married to Biswa Singha, the founder of the Konich dynasty<sup>17</sup>.

Geography and economy have close relationship with history and political movements. It would be in the fitness of things to have a cursory survey of political changes in Nepal and their impact on Indo-Nepalese economic relations. It would be very interesting to give brief account of ancient and medieval efforts to develop Indo-Nepalese trade. In the absence of any authentic political and economic account of these periods, one has to rely mostly on a feeble and insufficient data of various travelers, missions and local legends, Nepalese relations with the northern countries were compulsorily closed on account of geographical barriers. But India had commercial relations with Persia, china and Tibet through its overland crossing Nepal Himalayas. Kathmandu Valley being the main route to Tibet had been the most important centre of trade. Kautilya in his Arthasatra mentioned that some cloths of Nepal had great demand in Magadha during that time. The Chinese literary texts allude to trade activity between India and China as far back as Seventh century BC. It is presumed that this trade was conducted through Nepal. Though the Rigvedic period was very not important from the commercial point of view, Nepal, being a part of this vast land of "Jambu Dwipa," shared gladly the material

prosperity. Dr. D. R. Regmi makes a mention of the "Niwar" and "Kirat" as original communities of Nepal valley which carried extensive trade with India. Practically, all the ruling dynasties of Nepal –the Mauryas, the Licchavis, the Thakuris and the Mallas developed close commercial contacts with their native territories of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal. Nepal used to export to India mostly metal goods such as utensils, bells, statues and wooden goods and some costly commodities of a luxurious nature<sup>19</sup>.

The golden age of the Guptas (beginning in 320AD) was responsible for the increase in commercial activity in northern India and Nepal. Samudragupta used to get homage from Nepalese rulers and trade with Nepal during those days was brisk. Kautilya, the great Indian Economist, makes a mention of a woolen product of Nepal called 'Bhingisi' or 'Apsarka'. This was an eight-piece dark colored rainproof shawl which had found its way to the Indian rulers at Pataliputra. The famous Chinese traveler Huen Tsang, who visited Nepal in between 647-57 A.D., recorded that Nepal's chief products of trade were limited to farm produce and she used to export copper, yak tail, etc. to India and her artisans were gifted with skills. Ansuvarman, a contemporary Nepalese Thakur ruler of this period (595-640 A.D.) developed the commerce of his country to a great extent. During his days Nepal enjoyed the monopoly in the Tibetan markets and the entrepot trade between Tibet and India. He maintained close relations with Harsha in India and the art, craft and culture were also at a developed stage<sup>20</sup>.

History and Geography have close relationship with each other. Geography played an important role to determine the relationship between two neighboring countries. The influence of geography over the history of a country can easily be understood through the Indo-

Nepal relationship. The relationship between India and Nepal can be traced back to the Pre-historic period, which is evidenced by the stone tools available in both the sides. Gradually the Stone Age passed towards the metallic phase and Nepal and India witnessed almost same type of development in regards to society and religion. Less attention has been paid for the study of the relationship between India and Nepal with reference to ancient history and culture. In the true sense the early history of Nepal can be traced back only to the beginning of the Christian era. The Buddhist and other early works throw some light on the early history of Nepal prior to this period.

Asoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya visited Nepal while travelling holy places associated with Buddha, which is evidenced in different Vamsavlese in Nepal. The edicts of Asoka are available in Nepal, which proved that he visited Niglihawa and Lumbini. The vamsavalese also mentioned that Asoka visited Kathmandu valley and built many stupas at Patan. Moreover he gave marriage his daughter Charumati to a Ksatriya king of Nepal Devapala. Asoka visited Kathmandu or not, it is a matter of controversy. But it is clear that many Buddhist came to Nepal as pilgrimage. It is mentioned in one of the sources that during the lifetime of Gautam Buddha many of his followers came to Nepal for preaching his principles. The vamsavalis supported that many pilgrims from India visited Nepal which were associated with Buddha as holy places. These developments belonged to the before Christian era<sup>21</sup>.

In the beginning of the Christian era Northern India was gradually ruled by the Sungas, Kushanas, Guptas etc. There was close relationship between Nepal and India at that period. During this period the Lichhavis of Vaisali entered into Nepal. The politics and culture of the Lichhavis was much similar to those contemporary

Guptas. There were also similarities between the two countries in regard to language, script, art and architecture and politics and in the administrative policies as well as social customs and traditions. The Licchavis in Nepal had matrimonial alliances with the Guptas and Maukharis of northern India. The Licchavis of Nepal were influenced by the system of administration which was followed by the Guptas in India, where the central administration had special significance. The Mahayanism faced a setback during this period and it was replaced by Hinduism and its Philosophy in large scale. Around 8<sup>th</sup> century AD Swami Sankaracharya visited Nepal with his followers for checking the growth of Buddhism and through Nepal marched towards Tibet. This view was also supported by some of the Nepalese traditions and popular beliefs of Nepal<sup>22</sup>.

The Gupta and Post-Gupta period witnessed the growth and development of various educational institutions in India. Among these the Nalanda and Vikramsila were such institutions in which many students from Nepal had their education. Since time immemorial, Nepal was the main link between India, China and Tibet, which contributed for the triangular network of relationship. Nepal was the centre of this triangular network. The invasion of the Turks created a setback to these educational institutions. The Muslim invasions in northern India affected the Palas and Senas also. As a result many scholars and artists entered into Nepal in search of secure place. Before the supremacy of the Muslims, in the eleventh century one of the famous scholars of Vikramsila, Atish, Dipankar visited Nepal. Dipankar gave lessons about the Mahayanism to the people there. Subsequently he went to Western Tibet and settled there through Palpa of western Nepal. Taranath mentioned about the travel of Atish and his preaching of the mahayanism and his contribution. Other scholars who came to

Nepal were Santarakshit, Padmasamvav, Bajrapani and Gyankar Pandit of Kashmir. They were well-known for building the cultural relationship between the two countries during the Pre-medieval period<sup>23</sup>. This migration from India to Nepal for protecting their religion and culture due to invasion of foreigners influenced a lot in the Nepali culture, specially language, literature and art. Maithili along with the Sanskrit and other language became popular in Nepal. The Nepalese artists imitated some aspects of Palas, Sen or contemporary India in their art, which helped for rapid growth of Tantricism in the beliefs of Nepal.<sup>24</sup>

Nepal and India may be among few such countries in the world, which are so intimately linked to each other and have to live together whether one likes it or not. Nepal, one of India's closest neighbors, linked up with her by cultural and commercial ties from time immemorial, has not yet received that amount of attention from Indian scholars as she could reasonably have claimed. This appears to be due, partly at least, to the peculiar process of political isolation through which she had been passing since the later Hindu period. Despite her intimate political contact with Indian Empires in the days of India's glory, she gradually passed out of Indian history during the ancient and early medieval periods. The chief factor that conduced to this seclusion was the peculiar geography of Nepal<sup>25</sup>.

Lying along five hundred miles of India's open border and well within its strategic frontier, Nepal has emerged as a state of considerable importance in recent years. Geography has played an important role in evolving and shaping the life of the peoples of the Himalayan region. While there are wide differences between the peoples living in one part and another, there are also certain problems common to the entire region, and these have given rise to certain

similar attitudes. The geographical situation of Nepal has certain peculiarities. Its inhospitable climate and its unproductive hills have rendered it a difficult place. The great Emperor of India either did not bother to bring Nepal into their empires or considered it but a far-flung outpost<sup>26</sup>. Nepal is a neighbor, whose history; economy, river systems and traditional memories are inter-woven since centuries with those of India. The snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas have been quenching the thirst of the Nepalese and the Indian rivers, most of which after flowing through the rocky gorges of Nepal have poured themselves into the holy Ganges. Our assumptions, values of life, our feelings, fortunes and aspirations have been attuned by the same culture. . The Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata occupy the same spiritual place in both the countries. People from both the sides visited the same pilgrimages and holy sites. Indian Pilgrims visited places like Pashupati, Guheswari, Gorakhnath, Monokamana, Swargadwari in Nepal while the Nepalese travelled places like Varanasi, Bodhgaya, Prayag, Haridwar, Vaishnodevi, Mathura, Kamakhya, Tirupati, Dwarka and Parashuramkund in India.<sup>27</sup> According to Lopita Nath, the early pandas in the temple of Kamakhya were Nepali-priests said to have been established there by king Narakasura for daily prayers, they called themselves "Lal Mohari Puzaris"<sup>28</sup>

Thus the above mentioned paper has tried to highlight the Indo-Nepal relations from the ancient to early medieval period. It is found that India and Nepal shared the cosmological worldviews including gods, goddesses and rituals. Sanskrit as a classical language commands the same place in both the countries. There are other reasons that have bounded the two countries together-the birth of Sita in Janakpur in Nepal and subsequent marriage to Ram-Lord

Buddha was born at Lumbini in Nepal and later attained enlightenment at Bodhgaya in India. King Asoka's daughter Charumati was married to the Ksatriya prince Devapal. The Asokan pillar at Lumbini also stands testimony to this historic relation. Nepal is caught between two Asian giants –India and China and therefore has a strategic importance. Though, the country is very weak economically, but it is rich in scenic splendor and cultural treasures. India and Nepal have since times immemorial have been closely connected with each other geographically, historically, politically, culturally and commercially and Nepal served as the link area in transmitting the religious-cultural heritage of India to Tibet and Central Asia. Many ruling dynasties of Nepal had actually emigrated from India to find secluded peace and meditation and also channels for trade and commerce. The Himalayas have nourished their bonds of religion with all fraternity and deep sympathy for each other. Besides numerous similarities regarding culture, caste and customs, many mythological and legendary events of India are associated with Nepal and both shared each other's weal and woe. Due to her seclusion from the rest of the world for long, many valuable ancient homelands of sages and ascetics, this priceless treasure and trust, therefore, has to be preserved, protected and enriched with care to inspire the citizens of both the countries for times to come. It is a humble effort to find out early relations of India with Nepal. There is also a need for more systematic and substantive research in this direction.

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## Demographic Changes: It's Impact in the Growth of Regionalism in Assam

Shirumoni Baruah

Immigration of population from one place to another is a natural phenomenon which has been taking place due to various reasons in different parts of the world. Assam has been the meeting ground of diverse ethnic groups and cultural streams since time immemorial. Throughout history people of different stocks have been migrating into this land and merged into a common harmonious whole in a process of assimilation.<sup>1</sup> But it is worth mentioning that the outsiders come during the Ahom's rule were completely merged with the Assamese nationality. But the demographic changes in Assam gradually created so much concern that it led to the Assam agitation from 1979 to 1985. After it a new regional political party came into existence namely the 'Asom Gana Pardishad' (AGP).

With the coming of the British into Assam, the demographic scenario had assumed a new turn. The colonial power had opened the door to the immigrants from other parts of India such as East Bengal, Orissa, Andhra-Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc. to fulfill their colonial motives. They imported a large number of workers to work in the tea-plantation, transport, road construction, oil field and coal mines. It was also notable that the self sufficient Assamese people never wanted to work as wage labourers.<sup>2</sup> The first settlers came as agricultural labourers. Vast tract of uncultivable fertile land and jungles



attracted many peasants particularly from the district of Mymensingh (Bangladesh).

In 1905 Lord Curzon's plan of partition of Bengal inaugurated a new era of unabated influx of population specially the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal. The Assamese nationalists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also favored the entry of the immigrants into the state like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah etc. They argued that no less than a million of people used easily be settled on wasteland of Assam.<sup>3</sup> Some Assamese Mahajan's provided a substantial part of the necessary finance to enable the immigrant peasants to bring the virgin land under the plough.<sup>4</sup>

The excessive pressure of population on land and the oppression by the Zamindars in Mymensingh district of Bengal led the land hungry people to come to Assam. Ryotwari settlement attracted the farmers. At first the peasants settled in the char areas but gradually grabbed the grazing field and forest. The census report of 1931 showed that large number of outsiders was Muslims.<sup>5</sup> President Rajendra Prasad in this regard argued that it would create communal hatred in future and in order to maintain the balance between the Hindus and Muslims inspired the Birhari Hindus to settle here.<sup>6</sup>

In 1937 under the leadership of Md Saadullah, the United Muslim Party formed the Government in Assam. The immigration policy of Md. Saadullah government was characterized as the policy of invitation to landless peasant from Bengal. The twin policy of Muslim League Ministry 'Land Development' and 'Colonization Scheme' inspired a large number of Muslim immigrants into Assam. According to the former scheme, a ban was imposed on settlement of immigrants in waste lands who had entered Assam after 1<sup>st</sup> January 1938. Wastelands were divided into blocks for indigenous Assamese and

tribal people, scheduled caste and immigrants after reserving 30% of the wasteland for existing population. Thought its main purpose was to protect the interest of both indigenous and immigrants but in practice the immigrants entered the interior areas with the support of Saadullah Ministry. Under the colonization Scheme the Government of Assam assumed itself the responsibility to settle the immigrants in a planned way in selected places. Since March 1942 an area of 75 thousands bighas were settled with immigrants.<sup>7</sup> The government introduced the 'Grow more food campaign' during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. It had extended the cultivation in Assam from 52.8 lakhs of areas to 57 lakhs during the year 1943. Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India said that his 'Grow More Food' turned into grow more muslims.<sup>8</sup> The gradual increase of density of population in Assam valley was the outcome of the large scale influx of immigrants to the district of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur of Assam.

Gopinath Bordoloi the 1<sup>st</sup> Chief Minister of Assam took steps against the immigrants and decided to evict the illegal migrants from the professional grazing reserves. But the eviction policy was strongly protested by the Muslim League and they organized meetings and hartals. Md. Ali Jinnah the leader of the Muslim League on his arrival in Guwahati on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1946 remarked that if the government would not immediately revised its policy and abandon this persecution a situation will be created which will not be conducive to the well being of the people of Assam.

The stream of immigration continued even after the partition of the country. The partition brought an endless misery to the Hindus of Pakistan. Bordoloi allowed to settle 2.35 lakh Hindu refugees in Assam.<sup>9</sup> On May 7, 1949 Bordoloi had written a letter to the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru. But he was only asked to adopt

liberal attitude and give them better facilities. In 1950 foreigners (expulsion from Assam) Act was passed empowering the Central Government to detect and deport foreigners. Though Bordoloi tried whole-heartedly to save Assam from the grip of immigration but a section of the Congress Party treated the minority as their vote banks. So they refused to take action which would affect the interest of the minorities. The Sino-Indian border war of 1962 also led to the influx of Muslim refugees into Assam. In the wake of the Bangladesh War of 1971, several lakhs refugees entered into the North eastern states and large number of them stayed here even before the war had ended. All these led to the abnormal growth of the state's population. In 1911 the census commissioner for the first time pointed out the danger of immigration and described it as a peaceful invasion of Assam by the advancing hoards of Mymensingh army.

#### GROWTH RATE OF POPULATION IN INDIA AND ASSAM

Decade	Percentage of population growth in India	Percentage of population growth in Assam
1901-11	5.7%	16.8%
1911-21	0.3%	20.2%
1921-31	11.0%	20.1%
1931-41	14.2%	20.5%
1941-51	13.3%	20.1%
1951-61	21.6%	35.0%
1961-71	24.6%	34.7%
1971-81	24.75%	36.30%

Source: Census Report of India, 1991

The natives who failed to compete with the new immigrants began to worry about domination by the latter in all spheres. Their sense of insecurity and feeling of alienation made them conscious of

their own identity.

In Assam the Bengali Hindus came as job seeker and the Muslims as a land grabber. The Bengalis were well settled community in Assam. They had their own schools, colleges, institutions, papers press, priests, localities and settlements. The Assamese Hindu who was the dominant group felt that the influx of foreigners had threatened the demographic balance of the state. The living standards of the non-Assamese were higher than the Assamese middle class. The latter felt unsecured and alienated. As the immigrant community constituted one of the important vote-banks, so they determined the trend of the politics of the state. Congress government of India had opened the land resources and employment opportunities in Assam by abolishing the domicile system implemented during the British rule. On the other hand, the apathy of the central government towards this alarming situation helped in the growth of regionalism among the educated youths of Assam.

It is observed that towards the end of the seventies for the issue of influx becomes a major concern. At that time, the minority politics became more active in the electoral politics and their demands increased, Miron Weiner book, 'Sons of the Soil' also contributed in the growth of consciousness among the Assamese elite towards this problem. In this book the danger from the influx from other places to Assam was discussed in detail at various forums. The death of M.P. Hiralal Patwari of the Mongoldoi Constituency led to by bye-election. During the updating of the voters list a number of persons of questionable identity were detected and it led to widespread reaction. The remarks of S.L. Sakhdhar of chief Election Commissioner at a meeting at Ottacamundo among the electoral officers in 1978, drew a dangerous picture of immigrations.<sup>12</sup>

The All Assam Student's Union (AASU) took up the issue of expulsion of foreign nationals in 1971. Prior to the Assam agitation the AASU had launched movements on the issue of economic backwardness and language. They were greatly influenced by the idea of regionalism. The Assam agitation was spearheaded by the AASU and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The three main demands of movement were detecting the foreigners, deleting their names from the voters list and deporting them. The basic aim was the preservation of identity. The movement also got support from the other organizations such as All Assam College Teachers Association (AACTA) etc.

The other north-eastern states had also given their support to the movement. The movement had paralyzed the administration of the state. The leaders of the movement gave a call of 12 hours Assam bandh and this was the active phase of the protest actions and mass mobilization. The leaders successfully placed the problems before the whole nation through their argument in the memorandums and other writings. The Assam movement was mostly financed by the Marwaris, because they became very popular with the Assamese. The agitationist demands that the year 1951 should be the cut-off year as the foreign nationalist issue originated with the partition of the country.<sup>13</sup> But it was difficult for the central government to accept the AASU's rigid demand of the AASU. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPM called the movement as secessionist. Publicity campaigning team also were sent to various states of India such as Chennai, Punjab, Pune, Hyderabad etc in order to analyse the aim and to remove the false allegations against it. They brought the folder of 8 pages namely 'Save Assam Today to save India Tomorrow : An appeal from the people of the state'<sup>14</sup> Rajiv Gandhi who became the

Prime Minister of India in 1984 gave a new turn to the Assam movement. After a gap of six years on 14-15 August 1985 "Assam Accord" was signed between the government of India and leaders of the agitation. It determined the year 1971, 25 March as the cut-off date for the detection of foreigners.

During the six years agitation 3,500 peoples died according to the government report and according to the non-government report, the number was 5000. 606 persons were declared as martyrs. 7000 people were injured for life according to the non government report.<sup>15</sup>

During the period of the Assam movement the leaders felt the need to have a regional political party that would stress upon all-round development of the state. After a series of dialogue among the leaders of the Purbanchaliya Loka Parishad (PLP) and Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal (AJD) at last on 14 October, 1985 at the Golaghat convention a new regional political party came into existence, namely the 'Asom Gana Parishad' (AGP).<sup>16</sup>

To conclude, the demographic changes in Assam had taken place mainly due to colonial policy of the British government and encouragement given by the Saadullah Ministry. The indigenous people were also blamed for their laziness and poor work culture. They were satisfied with whatever they had and were never interested in hard labour. This encouraged the hard working immigrants from East Bengal to this fertile land and sustains them. The policy of the central government of turning a blind eye to the serious issue of immigration was also responsible for the demographic changes and growth of regionalism in the minds of the Assamese people.

The Assam movement and the rise of the AGP to power was the outcome of the grievance of the Assamese people but it is being noted that till date the problem of influx of foreigners has not been

solved. This is mainly due to seeking votes and power with the help of foreigners.

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## Sankardeva Sangha Movement: Its Relations and Attitude towards the Marginalized Communities

Tarun Gogoi

**1.0:** The formation of Sankar Sangha (at present known as Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha) in 1933 at Palasani in the present Nagaon district as a socio-religious organization was immense importance for the social history of twentieth century Assam. It is at present one of the biggest socio-religious organizations of North-eastern India, was born for a catholic interpretation of Sankardeva's teachings in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. The main object of the Sangha as described by Haladhar Bhuyan was publicizing of a monotheistic religion (*Ek Saran Hari Nam Dharma*), the abandonment of ritual impurity, the abolition of untouchability, the creation of equal rights for men of all castes and cementing of good will between the peoples of the hills and the plains.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of Sankar Sangha were completely against the extravagant rituals in the name of religion and followed simple path of *nama kirtana* as approved by the guru Sankardeva. Most of the forefront founder leaders of Sankar Sangha had the bitter experience of strong caste-discrimination at the hands of the upper caste people in their earlier life. As for instance, Haladhar Bhuyan<sup>2</sup> and Vaishnava Pandit Sonaram Chutiya<sup>3</sup> are the two big personalities, who were insulted for their lower caste birth in two different occasions. With the spread of modern education under the British colonial rule

many non-brahmin youth had also got the opportunity to receive higher education. Thus, an educated non-Brahmin class was emerged who were more rational in the socio-religious issues and they began to protest openly against the casteism, untouchability and authoritarian attitude of the brahmanical caste in religious matters in the society. This reform movement had wanted to challenge the existing caste distinction and proclaimed that they were in no way inferior to Brahmins. In that context the freedom movement had also played tremendous impact on the structure of society. Most of the leaders of this reform sect were actively participated in the freedom struggle and thus came into contact with Gandhiji's Harijan movement, which inspired them to reform the religion as a means of reforming society.<sup>4</sup> Thus, prevailing situation demanded for a socio-religious movement to protest the upper caste hegemony in the society and to reassess the actual teachings and ideologies of Sankardeva in the light of modern outlook. This have facilitated in the growth of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha both as a movement and organization which had responded actively to the social changes of the time and tried to set up such a society where caste will never be a barrier to mix up one member with the other in the society. But in course of time, Sankar Sangha itself also came under the purview of suspicion for maintaining caste discrimination among its members in a few cases for which it has to face severe criticism too. So, in this paper a very critical approach have to be taken to investigate the attitudes of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha towards the people of marginalized communities in the later decades of twentieth century and how far it could be able to set up a scientific socialism in the society on the basis of Sankardeva's ideology. Moreover, special focus will be given on the issue of Ilaram Das, who was by caste Kaivatras, was once a big personality of Sankardeva

Sangha left out from it and set up a new organization and named it as Ek Sarania Bhagawati Samaj. His departure from Sankardeva Sangha has given enough scope to some people to raise questions on Sankardeva Sangha's goal to form an ideal democratic casteless society.

**2.0:** The main objective of this paper is to investigate the circumstances for the birth of Sankardeva Sangha movement and its relations and attitudes towards the lower caste people in the society. Besides it, whether this movement could be able to break away the existing caste based barrier in the socio-religious system in the twentieth century society and could it actually go above casteism among its members while performing different activities in the society is also another objective of this paper.

**3.0:** The source materials which will be available in the form of letters, articles and literature are used as per current historical methodologies. Field work on the Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, oral testimonials and own observations will be used as empirical data. Thus, attempt will be made to make the paper rational as far as possible on the basis of both literary sources and empirical observations heralded a positive change for the society in Assam.

**4.1:** The advent of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha has, no doubt, heralded a positive change for the society in Assam. This reform sect was able to make the social life of Assam free from the yoke of brahmanical influence in religious matters and provided equal status to every individual. It is important to be noted that like the traditional Indian society Assamese society was not divided into four varnas.

The Assamese society was broadly divided into only two *varnas*; one was the Brahmans and the rest of all others including the ruling families were the Sudras or lower castes. It is also to be noted here that the *varna* or caste system was maintained strongly in Assam only after the importation of the smarta priests from Bengal at the request of the Ahom kings in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> However, literary sources show that the contemporary Assamese society of Sankardeva was also divided on the basis of caste, where the Brahmans had always got privilege in the society. All the social rules and regulations were formulated by them only. So, they prepared some such societal norms which were benefited for them but contrary to the interest of the lower castes people. The common people were entirely kept away from the *dharma sastras*. This had opened the way to the priestly class to exploit the illiterate common people in the name of religion. However, the whole situation was changed in the wake of modern education and the rise of Assamese middle class in the early decades of twentieth century. Many newly educated lower caste youth came forward to challenge the existing social discrimination based on caste and all of them assembled in the banner of Sankar Sangha. Thus, Sankardeva Sangha movement was started in Assam and from the very beginning this movement had got support from the lower caste communities like- the Ahom, Chutiya, Kachari, Koch, Kaivatras and Tea tribe etc. and also from the educated younger generation. Another notable thing is that the Sangha has been very much organized since its birth and its members are very active in propagating its ideology among the people. They have propagated Sankardeva's teachings among the tea-garden people and tribal peoples and even able to convert a few Muslims into it.<sup>6</sup> Sonaram Chutiya, Ex- Padadhikar of the Sankardeva Sangha observed that: 'The climate of opinion today, the policy of

present government, and the fundamental rights of the constitution, all tend to a casteless and classless society. But our custom was from before. Accidentally they match.'<sup>7</sup> Sangha says that it has always tried to set up a modern egalitarian democratic society and there is no division within Sangha, all castes are eating and worshipping together in the *Namghar* (name house). But despite such claims, Sangha has most often been criticized outside its realm that it is not free from casteism because their attitude towards the lower caste people is not encouraging. So, here I will try to observe very minutely those complain that have been raised against the Sankardeva Sangha since 1970s.

4.2: The constitution of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha has clearly mentioned that it has completely against the untouchability and caste distinction in the society. Rather their constitution put utmost importance on the unity among the different castes and tribes to build a solid casteless society in order to spiritual and social development for all.<sup>8</sup> It is also seen that in all their published journals, souvenirs and news papers they always make their vows to build a casteless and classless society. If we examine the addresses of the Padadhikar's delivered in the annual conferences of Sankardeva Sangha, it is seen that all the Padadhikars have protested strongly in their speeches against untouchability and caste distinction and mentions their vows for the establishment of an egalitarian democratic society. However, the speech of Tirthanath Goswami from the Padadhikar chair is very diplomatic regarding inter mixing with the low-caste people though he had full faith on Sankardeva Sangha and believed that it could be able to remove untouchability from the society.<sup>9</sup> After all, Sankardeva sangha as an organization is not against any castes and creeds but a few members are not above it. Here one thing must be mentioned that the

constitution of Sangha is very rigid and no member is permitted to participate in any religious functions observed by other than the Sangha devotees. Even rearing of pig, duck and chicken is also prohibited for its members. Due to this reason the greater part of tribal people dislike this sect.

**4.3:** Sankardeva Sangha since its birth has been saying against brahmanical rituals because it involves the worship of lots of deities other than Vishnu. Sangha says that they are not anti Brahmins, they are only anti priest. But the anti Brahmanism attitude has been noticed at all levels of the organization.<sup>10</sup> However, it has never passed any comment so far against the lower castes which may offend them. Sangha has vehemently opposed the difference in dates and rites of performing *sradha* (funeral ceremony) between the sudras (lower castes) and the Brahmins (upper castes). Sangha demanded for uniformity of rites as sanctioned by the *Bhagawata sastra* (script) for performing the *sradha* and they logically proved their stand by mentioning different *slokas* from the different religious scripts. They declared that there should not be maintained any distinction in the mahapurushiya religion in the name of castes and creeds. They began to perform the *sradha* function through the *Nam Kirtana* on eleventh day against the existing thirtieth day fixed for the sudras by the Brahmins. Therefore, there is a reasonable ground to believe that the Sankardeva Sangha movement was a *jihad* against the social inequality and economic exploitation.

**4.4:** Sankardeva Sangha had got support from a few Satradhikars in its initial stage. They claimed that they had got the support of five of six satras with Kayastha Gosains.<sup>11</sup> A few of them have already

adorned the chair of Padadhikar also. It is important to be noted that the main base of Sankardeva Sangha is among lower castes i.e. Ahom, Chutiya, Kachari, Koch, and Kaivatrass etc. but most of its Padadhikars belong to people of non-Brahmin upper caste Hindus, though their member is very marginal in Sankardeva Sangha.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand only a few persons from the lower caste communities have adorned the Padadhikar chair till now. Among them are Sashi Chandra Barbarua and Birinchi Kummur Baruwati from the Ahom Community, Laksheswar Saikia and Haladhar Bhuyan from the Koch-Rajbonshi community and Sonaram Chutiya and Mukheswar Saikia from the Chutiya community. This has left sufficient scope to doubt that Sangha is gradually gone to the grip of the non-brahmin upper caste dominance. There is another allegation against Sangha that they did not give a chance to Ilaram Das to hold the chair of Padadhikar despite he possessed of all qualities. However, Sangha has denied these allegations but expresses its grief that it is not only Ilaram Das but many other eligible persons like- Ramakanta Muktiar, Rameswar Barua, Madhav Ch. Bhagawati, Baliram Das, Nabin Ch. Bhuyan, Bhabaprasad Chaliha, Purnananda Saikia are also not given chance to hold the post of Padadhikar.<sup>13</sup> Of course, Sangha has elected their Padadhikars through a democratic process of secret ballot from a list of three members' panel nominated by the central executive committee.

**4.5:** Moreover, Sangha has faced several set backs from its birth. Many active members in course of time have left Sangha because of their ideological difference with it. *Viyakaran Tirtha* Bhuban ch. Bhuyan, Ilaram das, Sanatram Bora and Gulok Kakoti etc. were some important personalities who discarded Sangha for this reason. It is worth mentioned that they were not ousted from the Sangha; they left

it at their own will. Particularly the departure of Ilaram Das from the Sangha created a very embarrassing situation for Sankardeva Sangha. Because it developed such a conception within (slightly among the schedule caste followers) and outside the Sangha that he was ousted from the Sangha due to his lower caste origin who was also a big claimant for the post of Padadhikar. D. Sarma, in his book *Asomiya Jati Gathan Prokriya Aru Jatiya Ganagosthigata Anusthansamuh* expresses his doubt of connecting the issue with casteism.<sup>14</sup> But according to the sources of Sankardeva Sangha the reason behind the boycott of Das from Sangha was related to *dhula mala* and *pal nam*. He was given the responsibility of *Saranacharyee* (one who confers initiation to the new members) by the Central Committee (*Mul*) of Sankardeva Sangha but he did not follow the *sarana vidhi* (rules of initiation) approved by the constitution of Sankardeva Sangha. In *sarana* and *bhajana* function he offered the *dhula* (smear on the forehead) *mala* to the devotees which were completely against the constitution of Sangha. Moreover, he also performed *pal nam*, but Sangha did not approve it. This was the basic difference between Sangha on the one hand and Ilaram Das on the other and both were not in a compromising mood to settle the matter. Ultimately he was boycotted from Sangha with some of his supporters in 1971. It is important to mention that he was then Upa-Padadhikar (vice -president) of Sankardeva Sangha for consecutive two terms. So, in no way his departure from the Sangha was related to the caste. If caste would be the factor he could not hold any position in central executive committee since 1958 and never gave him important portfolio like, *Saranacharya* and *Upa-Padadhikar*. On the other hand, Baliram Das, another notable personality from the same caste, who later on held the post of chief secretary of Sankardeva Sangha, did not leave it during that time. If Ilaram Das issue was related

to casteism, Baliram Das would also have left Sankardeva Sangha in support of him. Moreover, from my personal interview with some people living in that area I came to know that his departure from the sangha is no way linked with caste question; that was mainly connected with ritualistic matter i.e. *dhula mala* or *saran* and *bhajan*, maintaining long hair and *pal nam*.

I have met one person Bokul Das of Raha of Nagaon district now residing at Namrup, who said that before coming to Namrup he took *saran* at Ek saran Bhagawati Samaj under Ilaram Das, but at Namrup he did not find any one of his sect to be associated in performing customary rites. Once, when he went to Raha, told his problem to his initiator and also informed him about the existence of Sankardeva Sangha there. Ilaram Das at once advised him to accept the membership of Sangha by saying that Sankardeva Sangha is a very good organization.

The leaders of the Sangha still respect him much. Bokul Das admits that Sonaram Chutia once called Ilaram Das a *Mohan Bhakat* (great devotee) in front of him. It has also extended its gratitude by commemorating him in different occasions for his contributions to the growth of Sangha.<sup>15</sup> So, the allegation of casteism raised against Sankardeva Sangha on the issue of Ilaram Das is not based on true facts. Sangha is not against any individual or any caste or community; it is against those who perform anti-*sastric* rituals. According to them, they speak only those things which are available in the religious scripts; beyond that they do not speak anything.

4.6: At the time of formation of Sankardeva Sangha in 1930, Assam was under the grip of colonial rule. People were by and large participating in the freedom struggle. Sankar Sangha attained popularity



among the people of all castes and creeds because here they received equal treatment within its members. Everybody can get chance to enter in the executive body of Sankardeva Sangha and there is no system of caste preference in its election. It is seen that many tribal and other marginalized communities' people have adorned important posts in the Sangha. Some of them are offered the respectable charge of *saranacharya*, others are appointed for publicity of Sangha, i.e. Banshiram Boro, Sonaram Bhagawati, Bokul Das, Dr. Puniram Pator, Ghana Kanta Pao, Gunindra Kuli, Paliram Pegu, Ramakanta Taid, Premeswar Laskar, Priyanath Rai, Jogesh Loying and Jagat Bonia etc. Many Assamese tea tribe people have also already converted to the sangha fold and they are offered important portfolios at all levels in the organization. In this respect, the name of Prem Guwala, president of Titibor district Sankardeva Sangha, Bipul Naidu (he is now outside the Sangha) and Pradip Kurmi, Publicity secretary Sankardeva Sangha are worth mentioned. Equality, fraternity are observed by all the members of Sangha because there is no barrier to dine with a member whatever caste he belongs to and everybody can sit in the *nam prasanga* and can distribute *Prasad* etc. irrespective of castes and creeds, but he or she must be a *sarana* holder. After all, everybody can get equal opportunity in obtaining particular responsibility in Sankardeva Sangha; however, persons who possess better knowledge of *sastras* generally get preference.

#### 5.0: Conclusion:

This reform movement initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha has ushered in an era of socio-cultural renaissance in Assam and it develops a new genre of philosophy in the society. It is true that today Sangha is playing a leading role in the formation of Assamese nation

and it has definitely succeeded to a large extent in its mission. The increasing number of gathering in the annual conferences of Sankardeva Sangha is the finest example to believe this fact.<sup>16</sup> Most important aspect of this reform sect is that it is not based on a particular caste or particular community and all the members have the equal rights to bear the responsibility of the organization whenever required. 'Sankardeva wrote,' observed a Vice-President of the Sangha from the Untouchable fisherman caste, 'that he who believes in more than one god is an Untouchable. That was the opinion of Shankardeva. That was an opinion of Lord Krishna.' Members of the Sangha eat with untouchables who have joined the Sangha but they refuse to eat with Brahmans observing brahmanical rituals.<sup>17</sup> They reject the concept of caste and believe in 'one' and the 'same' among their devotees by sharing a common ideology. So, this is the reasonable ground to believe that Sankardeva Sangha keeps very good relations with all the marginalized castes and creeds treat all its devotees equally. However, Sangha is criticized for its uncompromising rigidity in associating and inter dining with other sects. They do not eat or associate with other people outside their faith. This has not only created some problems but sometimes arises conflicting situation within the family members. This helps to generate a new social division in the villages of Assam. Hence, if Sankardeva Sangha really wants to set up a greater Assamese society by uniting all the castes and creeds living within the states following the ideology of Sankardeva's scientific socialism and humanism, they have to be flexible enough in their ritualistic sphere. There is an opportunity for Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha to adapt to the demand of the situation by adopting an inclusive policy and avoiding all types of exclusive principles for the greater interest of the Assamese nation.

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## Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Satra- its Emergence as a Branch of the Mayamara Satra

Rajib Lochan Dutta

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Bhakti Movement which enlightened the socio-religious life of the common people from the darkness and superstitions prevalent in Medieval Indian society was started in Assam by the great Neo-Vaishnavite saint Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568 A.D). The Bhakti cult espoused a virulent rejection of brahmanical orthodoxy and suggested that salvation was a personal matter, which didnot require the intervention of priests and clerics and could be attained by pure devotion to God.<sup>1</sup> As such by nature the Bhakti Movement was a Protestant Movement against the existing brahmanical ritualism and caste rigidity. Sankardeva's Vaishnava movement aimed at teaching the common people simple ways of living, equality of all men in the field of religion, practicing non-violence and doing away with the belief in sacrifice of birds and animals which was largely prevalent in the society at that time in the name of religion.<sup>2</sup> In his endeavour to reform the society, he translated the Bhagavat Gita to vernacular language and made the common people know about their religion. The Bhakti Movement in Assam was not a replica or a copy of what was there in other parts of India at that point of time. The most significant and distinguishing independent character of this movement in Assam was the Satra system.<sup>3</sup> It can be considered a legacy of the Bhakti

movement in Assam. Sankardeva's efforts to bring about equality among the people of the Assamese society brought the Brahmana and Chandala into the same religious footing. But after the death of Srimanta Sankardeva, the order established by him broke down into four samhatis- Brahma Samhati, Puru Samhati, Kala Samhati and Nikka Samhati owing to difference of opinion and ideologies among the prominent leaders of the order. The original ideological stand of Sankardeva's Bhakti Movement gave way to the emergence of brahmanical elements within it. Among the four Samhatis, the Kala Samhati was the only branch within the order that tried to retain the saint's stand of embracing the downtrodden and eradicating caste prejudices.<sup>4</sup> The founder of the Kala Samhati was Gopaldeva. He asked his disciple Aniruddhadeva, a nephew of Sankardeva, to spread the faith of the Great Saint in Upper Assam and establish an egalitarian society by incorporating the backward and downtrodden tribes residing there. Following the order of his Guru, Gopaldeva, Aniruddhadeva set up towards Upper Assam and established the Mayamara satra at Bishnubalikunchi, near Narayanpur region of present Lakhimpur District. In course of time, owing to various reasons the Mayamara Satra had to be shifted from one place to another by his successors and several branches of the Mayamara Satra emerged. The Mayamara Tipuk Satra is one such branch of the Mayamara Satra. Further division within this Tipuk Satra led to the establishment of the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The objective of this paper is to highlight the emergence of the Mayamara Tipuk Satra as a branch Satra of the Mayamara Satra. Moreover, further division within the Tipuk Satra, leading to the

emergence of the Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra is also dealt with.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

This paper is mainly based on conventional and analytical methodology. Field study has been mainly adhered to, in order to prepare this paper. Moreover Primary and Secondary sources had also been used.

#### **LOCATION:**

The Tipuk Satra was originally established at the bank of the Tipuk river.<sup>5</sup> Gradually several branches emerged within the Tipuk Satra and presently there are about fifteen branches of the Satra which are scattered around various locations in the present Tinsukia district of Assam. The main focus of this paper, which is the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra, a branch of the Tipuk Satra, is located at the Kardaiguri area, near Rupai region of Tinsukia District. It is at a distance of nearly 35kms from Tinsukia town.

#### **COMPOSITION OF THE SATRA:**

The Mayamara Tipuk Satra is mainly comprised of disciples belonging to the Moran tribe. Before accepting the Mayamara Vaishnavite faith, they were adherents of the Sakti cult and worshipped Goddess Kesai Khati of Sadiya.<sup>6</sup> They believed in sacrifices which is a very familiar custom related with the Sakti worship. It is known from the Vamsavali of the Tipuk Satra and the oral history of its disciples that the Morans were incorporated into the Vaishnavite order by the ninth Satradhikar of the Mayamara Satra, Shri Shri Astabhujadeva (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). It was he who established the Mayamara Tipuk Satra for the Moran

disciples and placed Kasinaliya alias Krishnabhujā as its first Satradhikar. The Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra being a branch of the Mayamara Tipuk Satra is also composed of mainly Moran disciples.

### ORIGIN OF THE TIPIK SATRA:

Several legends are associated with the origin of the Mayamara Tipuk Satra. Shri Dimbeswar Saikia, who is an old disciple of the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra, described one such legend. According to it when the Mayamara Satra was at Khutiaputa, near Baligaon mouza, at a distance of about 12 kms north-west of present Jorhat town, the ninth Mayamara Satradhikar Asthabhujadeva was the religious head of the Mayamara Satra. Since the members of the Kala Samhati laid emphasis on Gurubada or the supreme position of the Guru, he was helped in his household activities by a number of disciples both male and female. As such a girl of the Moran Community was engaged to help Shri Shri Asthabhujadeva. However in due course of time she became the mother of a male child by Shri Shri Asthabhujadeva. The boy came to be known as Kasinaliya due to his thin structure. Asthabhujadeva bought Kasinaliya to Khutiaputa Satra, gave him education under his guidance and finally established him as the Satradhikar of the Tipuk Satra. It is also known from Chidananda Goswami's "Shri Shri Aniruddhadevar Charit aaru Mayamara Satrar Gossainsakalar Vamsavali" that a Moran boy nick-named Kasinaliya, was bought up at Mayamara Khutiaputa Satra, under the ninth Mayamara Satradhikar Asthabhujadeva. He was given education under the supervision of the Guru and in due course of time, became one of the favourite disciples of Asthabhujadeva who regarded Kasinaliya as his son. Kasinaliya grew up to be a perfect human-being and a devoted

disciple. Astabhujadeva, in order to give his son Kasinaliya recognition and establishment, established a Satra near the bank of the Tipuk Satra and made him its first Satradhikar with the name of Krishnabhujā. Along with this factor two other factors also played a role in the establishment of the Tipuk Satra. It is mentioned in the Charit Puthis that due to the hardships faced by the Moran disciples in paying homage to Astabhujadeva, while the Mayamara Satra was at Khutiaputa, that Astabhujadeva established the Tipuk Satra for their convenience. Moreover, it is mentioned in the vamsavali of the Tipuk Satra that the concern of Astabhujadeva for maintaining his lineage also acted as a factor behind the establishment of the Satra.<sup>7</sup> This historic event of establishment of the Tipuk Satra is mentioned in Shri Shri Aniruddhadevar Charit aaru Mayamara Satrar Gossainsakalar Vamsavali as follows:

তোমাসাৰ ভক্তি দেখি তুষ্ট ভৈলো অতি।

শুনা কঁহো যেন মোৰ মনৰ যুগুতি।।

এই যে কাঁ চিনলীয়া গুণে শ্ৰেষ্ঠ হয়।

আহাঙ্কে চাউল কথা দিবা সমস্তয়।। ৬৪৫

এন্তে তিনিজন জীৱ কৰিবাক পাৰ।

আছয় শক্তি জানা কহিলোহো সাৰ।।

এই বুলি তাসম্বাক কৰিলা বিদায়।

সএ হন্তে গৈয়া তেবে আপোনাৰ ঠাই।। ৬৪৭

কতো কাল অন্তে পাছে মহন্ত পাতিলা।

সেহি দিন হন্তে কৃষ্ণভুজ নাম লৈলা।।

আন চাৰি জনে গা হুয়া পাতিলন্ত।

এহি হেতু চাৰি সাধুপদ লভিলন্ত।। ৬৪৭

টিপুক নদিৰ তীৰে সত্ৰক পাতিলা।

সেহি হন্তে মৰাণ টিপুক সত্ৰ ভৈলা।<sup>৪</sup>

**SATRA ACTIVITIES FROM 1757A.D TO 1931A.D.:**

Kasinaliya alias Krishnabhujā assumed position as the first Satradhikar of the Tipuk Satra in 1757A.D. The Mayamara rebellion, which was the first popular uprising against the Ahom Monarchy and which changed the political scenario of Assam, took place during the time of Krishnabhujā. After the rebellion, owing to some difference of opinion between Krishnabhujā and the Matak king, the former had to flee from the Satra and since then no whereabouts are found about him. Krishnabhujā was succeeded by his son Komal alias Shri Shri Navabhujā as Satradhikar. He died in 1877A.D. He was followed successively by Shri Shri Sankarbhuja(1877-1897A.D.) and Shri Shri Agnibhuja(1897-1900A.D.). The process of division of the Tipuk Satra into several branch Satras started right after the death of Shri Shri Agnibhuja in 1900A.D. at the occasion of his death ceremony. According to the tradition of the Tipuk Satra, the new Satradhikar is nominated in the morning. However at that junction of time the eighth son of Sankarbhuja, Navinchandra assumed the name of Shri Shri Bhaktabhujā and became the Satradhikar of Tipuk Satra during midnight before the people could nominate the new Satradhikar the following morning. On the other hand, majority of the disciples of the Tipuk Satra had elected Malichandra, the brother of the deceased Satradhikar Shri Shri Agnibhuja as the Satradhikar. As such, at the end of the death ceremony, Malichandra assumed the name of Shri Shri Abjabhuja and became the fifth Satradhikar of Tipuk Satra. Emergence of two Satradhikars at the same time created clashes of opinion among their supporters and finally a committee for deciding the case was formed. The decision of the committee came in favour of Shri Bhaktabhujā but realising his mistake he asked forgiveness to his uncle Shri Abjabhuja and requested him to hold the position of the

Satradhikar of the Tipuk Satra and continue spreading the Mayamara Vaisnavite faith among the people. Shri Bhaktabhujā himself left the Tipuk Satra and established the Mayamara Melani Hatigarh Satra near Kakapathar region of Tinsukia in 1905A.D. and also established the Mayamara Dirak Satra at the bank of the Dirak River in present Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh in 1907A.D. The Mayamara Satras, presently in the Kakapathar region of Tinsukia District, are branches of the Mayamara Melani Hatigarh Satra established by Shri Shri Bhaktabhujā. On the other hand Shri Shri Abjabhuja, who lost his cause in the decision of the committee regarding who shall be the Satradhikar, also left the Tipuk Satra in disgrace. Shri Abjabhuja established the Daimukhiya Satra on the bank of the Dibru River. After his death in 1916A.D. his elder son Shri Shri Chandrabhuja became the Satradhikar. He shifted the Satra from Daimukhiya to Simaluguri and established a Satra there in 1925A.D. with the name of Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra and started preaching the Mayamara Vaishnavite faith. The Satras presently found near Kardaiguri and Makum region of Tinsukia district are branches of this Satra. He was succeeded by his brother Shri Shri Surjyabhujā at 1931 A.D. As such it can be assumed that Shri Shri Bhaktabhujā initiated the division of the Mayamara Tipuk Satra by his selfish desire to usurp the position of the Satradhikar of the Tipuk Satra.<sup>9</sup>

The main branch Satras of the Tipuk Satra and the founder of the Satras with the date of establishment:

BRANCH SATRA	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	NAME OF THE FOUNDER	NO. OF DISCIPLES	LOCATION OF THE SATRA
Mayamara Melani Hatigarh	1905A.D	Shri Bhaktabhujia	4300(approx.)	Hatigarh village, Kakapathar, Tinsukia. Assam
Mayamara Dirak Satra	1907A.D.	Shri Bhaktabhujia	10200(approx.)	Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh.
Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra	1925A.D.	Shri Chandrabhujia	6200(approx.)	Kardaiguri, Simaluguri village, Tinsukia, Assam.
Mayamara Kapahtali Satra	1948A.D.	Shri Ramanandamurti	5400(approx.)	Kapahtali village, Dirak chariali, Tinsukia, Assam.
Mayamara Tipuk Aamguri Satra	1956A.D	Shri Chaitanyamurti	1150(approx)	Lajum Village, Kakapathar, Tinsukia, Assam.

The table has been prepared mainly through survey method during field study.

### Present condition of the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra:

It is known from Lesor Moran, an old disciple of the Satra, that the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra has nearly 6200

disciples scattered all over Assam. Most of them belong to the Moran Community. The satradhikar is called "Jiyodhan" by the disciples. The present Satradhikar of this Satra is Shri Shri Anantabhujia. As the followers of the Kala Samhati and Mayamara Satra maintain a family life, the Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra, being such a Satra, its disciples and followers maintain a family life. Shri Agreswar Moran, a respected old disciple of the Satra mentions that elderly women disciples of the Satra enjoy a respectable position in the Satra. The wife of the Satradhikar, conceived as a living goddess, was to pour few drops of mustard oil on the cooked-curries.<sup>10</sup> However, girls are not allowed to enter the prayer-hall of the Satra. The Satra complex is comprised of the residence of the Satradhikar, two prayer-halls, one for the Satradhikar and other for the disciples and many other buildings related with religious and social activities. The main occasions of importance in the Satra are the birth and death anniversaries of the past Satradhikars. However, during the Assamese 'Ahar' month no anniversaries of the Satradhikars are organised. The disciples of the Satra maintain their livelihood by planting tea since the land is suitable for tea-cultivation. However, it is known from the disciples of the Satra that there is rapid soil-erosion near the Satra area which is posing a great threat towards the existence of the Satra and its disciples.

**CONCLUSION:** The Shri Shri Mayamara Tipuk Simaluguri Brajpur Satra is one of the most prominent Mayamara Satras presently found in Tinsukia District. It emerged as a branch Satra of the Tipuk Satra but presently it can be regarded as a representative of the original Tipuk Satra in Assam. Majority of the disciples belonging to the Moran Community maintain the affairs of the Satra with the consent of the

Satradhikar. However the Satra area is presently facing a serious problem in the form of soil erosion. Though the Satra is regularly receiving government aids for its maintenance, the solution for the problem of soil-erosion has to be immediately sorted out with the help of the government in order to save the Satra from extinction.

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## **Divided Present of Unified History, Economic Backwardness and Sustainability of Tourism Industry in Assam**

Ronjit Khanikar

### **Introduction:**

The history of human civilization is the history of travelling which is literally coined as 'tourism' in its systematic nature. It is undoubtedly true that the purpose and extent of travelling have been changed from food gathering stage of prehistoric age to innumerable socioeconomic objectives now-a-days. But unchanged is that economic dimension has been remaining at the centre of tourism. Hence it is 'today termed as one of the world's fastest growing and oldest industries' (Bhatia, A.K). There are cherished instances of countries like Honkong, Singapore, USA etc. where tourism has been playing the role of a significant accelerator in the process of economic growth. For example Singapore earned \$17.8 billion from the tourism industry out of total world tourism revenue \$1030 billion in the year 2011. Assam, the most resourceful and naturally advantaged states of North Eastern Region (NER) of India also has paramount potentiality in this context. But its growth and contribution to state's GDP have not been increasing at a time when competition is growing among the countries to reap the benefits from this sector. This can be called as a tragedy of the development process of the state. This paper is an attempt to illuminate

this decelerating sector and correlating to the problems of economic backwardness with its divided present of a unified history. The methodology of this paper is descriptive and all data are used from secondary sources.

**Background:**

The Assam state has been the most important potential development hub of the NER. There was a time when it was a land of no comparison, but at present it is a destiny of secessionism and ever widening inequality. It covers about 2.4% of the total geographical area of the country and takes care of 3, 11, 69,272 population (2011 census). The glory of 'Bar Axom' during the golden rule of Ahom dynasty for its self sufficiency was lost with the decay of this kingdom and exploitation of British after Yandabo Treaty in 1826. Unfortunately the state has not been able to break down the vicious circle of poverty despite decades of independent five year planning from 1950 and onwards. For instance the per capita income of Assam was higher than the national average at the time of independence. But as per the recent report published by the government of India the per capita income of Assam is only Rs 33,633 which is not only less than the national average of above 60,000 but its position is fourth from the lowest. Reasonably it is a situation of poverty amidst of plenty in the state. The development of tourism in the state may play a determinant role in this case. But the tourism sector of Assam got a setback in the aftermath of 'Assam Movement' in 1979. The strong emergence of separatist movement resulting in frequent and long lasting socio-political unrest thereafter has been affecting negatively the tourism sector also alongwith the other sectors of the state economy. 'In 1979, for instance, the state was visited by 2,320 foreign tourists accounting

for 0.3% of total foreign tourists who came to visit India.... But the emergence of insurgency and political uprising among different tribal groups for their ethnic identity from the later part of 1980s, which still continues in some form, put another blow to the industry. As a result the volume of foreign tourist inflow declined to as low as only 479 in '1995.' (Bhattacharya, P.). This is a clear indicator of negative impact of growing unrest in Assam on the tourism sector and that the people of Assam have forgotten their glorious history of assimilation and resulting powerful unity amidst of diversity. So it is the need of the hour that we should rejuvenate our historical importance which will not only provide us the valuable solutions for most of our problems but initiate the golden path of tourism sector in the state.

**Analysis:**

**A.1 Assam as a tourism Hotspot**

The modern concept of mass tourism based on which tourism industry has been developing is relatively of recent origin. It had a humble beginning in the early forties of the eighteenth century. "It was in 1841 that Thomas Cook a very intelligent and active member of the Temperance Society of England organized a trip by a train for 570 members of this society to a distance of 33 kms.... In 1845 he set up an excursion agency with a five percent commission on the sale of tickets from Railway Company" (Bhattacharya, P.). Likewise, it was only in 1916 when British declared Kaziranga a game reserve and later on wildlife sanctuary in 1956, Assam was projected as an attractive destination of tourists. The vast possibility of tourism sector development in Assam can be sketched as Fig-1



Fig: 1-Tourism Diversity in Assam

Historical Adventure	Ecotourism	Religious	Cultural	Tea
(e.g.Sivasagar)	(Kaziranga)	(Kamakhya)	(Majuli)	(Tea Gardens)
( Brahmaputra)				

As represented by the flow chart Assam carries the flourishing potential in several types of tourism along with upcoming branches like rural and sustainable tourism. But for several socio-economic and infrastructural bottlenecks development not as anticipated which should be a matter of serious concern.

A.2 Nexus among divided present, economic backwardness and sustainability of tourism industry in Assam

Tourism is a lucrative economic opportunity for the host country or the state. W. Cristaller rightly remarked that "tourism is a branch of economy which avoids central place and the agglomeration of the economy". It has an inherent tendency to improve the conditions of otherwise backward peripheral areas (Bhattacharya, P). Economic development of area and development of the tourism sector both are correlated and mutually self reinforcing. That means advancement in any of the sectors empowers the process of acceleration of the counterpart. But the economic development of Assam is not satisfactory till now to fulfill wants of its people and demand of various sectors which again has been influencing negatively the tourism sector.

Existence of peaceful environment in the country is of utmost importance for the boost of this sector. Because "the purchase and 'consumption' of any tourism market basket of goods and services results in a mental 'product'-tourism experience, memories and the like..... The only part which is durable or residual in this tourism

shopping experience are the memories.....It is the quality of memories which keeps a destination tourismagnatic one"(Jafari,J). This reflects peace economics of tourism products because although modern mass tourism is guided by several individual as well as social objectives, the central motive is recreational and acquiring aesthetic pleasure. No doubt the value judgment "atithi deva bhava" has been an integral part of Assamese social life which translates into guests is the gods. But after the most influencing Assam Agitation the conducive peaceful socio-economic environment has not been maintained in Assam. Although Assam established the state Department of Tourism in 1958 and declared tourism as an industry in 1992 to attract private investment sector to this sector, anticipated result has not been experienced yet. Because investment in this sector is very sensitive to the prevailing condition of the economy and definitely private investors are not generally attracted to invest in such volatile situation of the state for the fear of loss making. The organization of All Assam Students Union and hundreds of alike organization thereafter alongwith the formation United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and other terrorists organization represent the destruction of precious Assamese unity and mutual understanding among several tribal groups in the post Assam movement period. It can be called as repetition of history before Ahom kingdom because the fragmented parts of Assam were united by Sukapha and other kings through the process of assimilation and soft domination. Unfortunately, ULFA has been demanding sovereign status, Bodo, Koch-Rajbanshies, Karbi etc, are demanding separate state which will lead to complete devastation of Assam, if materialized. The central problem of the demands is economic backwardness and exclusion from the mainstream development process. The government of India

introduced the panchayatiraj system and Karbi, Missing, Deori, Rabha etc. tribes have been provided Autonomous Council to ensure their development of their own people. But these have not been found sufficient and hence both violent and non-violent protests have been going on in the state at an increasing rate. All these are transforming Assam into an instable state and unsecured tourist destination. Let us take a simple example-there were 23 Assam Bandh, 28 District Bandh, 65 road blockade and 30 rail line blockade called by the so-called democratic organizations of Assam in the first eight months of the year 2012 even Bandha was declared as illegal in the state (Niamia Barta, 31st August, 2012). Forget about the terrorist organizations, the democratic organizations have also been using Bandhs as their pocket money violating the very democratic right of the Assamese people. Such an unstable condition is enough for motivating the foreign tourists for not visiting Assam. P. Bhattacharya revealed in his research that the incident of motivation by his/her friends and relatives is very low in case of tourists visited Assam. So we need to eliminate this dissatisfaction of foreign tourists by upgrading the socio-economic environment.

The 'Bar Axom' was strategically a well protected land during the Ahom rule. The monarchy's territorial limits extended from the Patkai Hills in the east to the Manas river in the west covering both North and South Bank of mighty Brahmaputra. But border security of Assam has not been prime importance for which illegal immigration from former East Pakistan or now Bangladesh has become a serious threat to Assamese society in the post independent period. Mr M.C Mullan, a British ICS officer and Census Commissioner of Assam, 1931 referring to the large scale immigration of the Mymensinghiyas warned that "where there is a wasteland, thither flock the

Mymensinghiyas.....It is sad but by thirty years, Sivasagar district will be the only part of Assam in which Assamese will find himself at home." (Baruah, R.K). That was very pragmatic explanation of the current problem of infiltration of Assam. Importantly one of the fertile sources of sustainable economic development of rural areas of Assam is the common property resources such as bills, chars and their proper utilization. But these are not used very properly except few districts like Marigaon, Nagaon etc. These resources by nature are subjected to the problem of prisoners' dilemma and tragedy of commons. So they require specific preservation measures to ensure efficient utilization as well as sustainability. But at present most of the common property resources are illegally encroached for industrial and habitat purposes, char areas, as we all know, are the playfield of illegal immigrants and other anti-social activities. But if these are properly used then it will faster the growth of rural areas in one hand and expand the scope of Rural Tourism in the state on the other. Unfortunately both central and state governments are not taking any scientific measures in both the dimensions. The international and interstate boundaries have not been well managed during the period since independence which was explicit in Indo-China war in 1962 and now is reflected through illegal immigration as well as frequent border conflicts with neighbouring Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh. Likewise we don't have proper common property resources management policy yet to utilize them. These have been deteriorating the law and order situation in the state for which demand for Assam's tourism is not increasing steadily.

The natural beauty and ecological diversity of Assam have been a major concern of foreign tourists' attraction for the state. Hence it carries the flourishing possibility of ecotourism and wildlife tourism.

Pabitara in the border of Kamrup and Morigaon districts, Manash in the Northern part of Barpeta district, Orang in the west of Tezpur, Kaziranga, Panidehing, Dibru-Saikhuwa etc. are the homeland of rare species of biodiversity including one horned rhino in Kaziranga national park. But illegal encroachment and increasing animal poaching are the major threat to these ecotourism hotspots for which the attraction of tourists to these places may greatly reduce in near future if not checked. Let us take a very familiar example here about poaching of rare one horned rhino-the pride of Assam. According to official statistics more than 160 rhino have been killed during 2001-2013 in the Kaziranga national park. This is an unfortunate situation in a state like Assam where environmentalism of the poor people has been remaining a glorified part of our history. The developed countries of the world had started about biodiversity conservation internationally after Stockholm conference of 1972 on human environment based on the issue of endangered and extinct species. But we the people of India in general or Assam in particular have working seriously for thousands years in several ways when other parts of the world was not even started thinking about this dimension. We have the tradition of worshipping animals with god- owl with Lakshmi, lion with Durga, and several others. The religious leader of neo-vaisnavite movement in Assam Srimanta Sankardeva replicated it very beautifully as "kukura srigala gardabharau attamaram jania sabaku karia pranam". Such kind of culture is only based of the clear understanding of the interrelationship between human and other biological species of the nature. Again we have started the process of observation and conservation of birds during the Sukhapha rule of 1200 A.D. He had established a particular social group called 'sensuwa' (Eagle observer) and they were using a particular book 'Bird watching Field Book' or 'Sensuwa Puthi'. In July

edition of Arunudoy in 1858 there was an extensive article on vultures (Dutta,S). The present status of increasing animal poaching and hunting in Assam is completely against of our culture and history. Due to extensive deforestation and expansion of economic activities the habitat of animal are reducing day-by-day. This has been leading to frequent man-wildlife conflict in the state. Here poor people can't be accused, which is generally done in the Environmental researches, rather the rich people are responsible for it. Because poor people gather only their basic necessities of life from the environment and hence if they degrade environment in these process it is an inevitable result. So if poor people are provided adequate alternatives of living wherever necessary and the developmental activities are controlled then threats to biodiversity in Assam will be greatly reduced. This will help in maintaining Assam as an ecotourism hotspot in the future.

Conclusion:

In this way the decline of honor to our value added history, economic backwardness amidst of plenty, strong separatist environment have been limiting the growth prospect of tourism industry in Assam. The present socio-economic history of Assam can be viewed as repetition of history of pre-Sukhapha state in a new nature which is not conducive for overall sustainability of the state in general and sustainability of tourism industry in particular. To protect us from such a devastation, we need to defeat the now prevailing conflicting situation rejuvenating our socio-economic condition through understanding our unified history. History always reveals the triumph of unity over unwarranted secessionist uprisings through ages. The real process of safeguarding the tourism sector and its acceleration will also help in uplifting socio-economic disorder in Assam. The conscious participation of people, organizations and government will

be the pivotal determinant towards this end.

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