

CHAPTER – THREE

AGRARIAN POLICY OF THE BRITISH: IMPACT ON THE PEASANTS OF ASSAM

The dictionary meaning of 'agrarian' is anything related to land, its management or distribution. Agrarian system also included land-tenure system. According to Andre Battelle, agrarian system does not mean only peasantry.¹ Assam, a land of the mother of rivers, is predominantly an agricultural state and agrarian issues, therefore, form the base of the economic problems in the region. The agrarian nature of the economy of the region is different obviously from the proportion of rural population to the total population, the use-pattern and occupational structure. Topographical and ecological consideration as well as the nature of the social structure have promoted and emboldened of the character of the economy of the region since past. "Assam has had a complex agrarian history. The evolution of its land system during different periods of historical development has taken a circuitous path"². A systematic and authentic picture of the historical development of the territory can be obtained just after the coming of the Ahoms. Prior to that, it is teemed with murky and cobwebs of uncertainty.

Su-ka-pha founded the Ahom rule in 1228 A.D. and his successors dominated the Brahmaputra valley for almost six centuries prior to the inclusion of Assam by the English East India Company in 1826. Instead of organizing the land system on the basis of areas of land, it was organized on the basis of the people engaged in it. Wet-grounds and swamps were brought into the state of cultivation by the Ahoms through collective efforts and made them fit for the cultivation of rice. It is agriculture that besieges a dominant place in the economy of the State of Assam.....Assam is a Peasants' land Par excellence; not only her economy but also her social and cultural patterns are determined by this avocation.³ Agricultural lands during the Ahom regime was community lands and they were distributed amongst various families. This type of community-pattern land-ownership became the foundation and support of the entire Ahom State.

During the early part of the Ahom occupation of the valley, almost major part of the region except some selected areas was under shifting cultivation pursued by the tribes, mostly of Bodo Kachari origin. In spite of the best efforts of the Ahom rulers, agricultural extension was sometimes handicapped in the valley by natural as well as human factors. But the Ahom rulers fully utilized the existing manpower and every possible advanced technology to overcome them and thus brought considerable amount of land under cultivation even at the initial stage of their rule. New lands were either made revenue free or were given to the peasants for a lump sum of its produce as revenue. This policy encouraged the peasants to open new lands time and again.⁴ As a result, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total land area in Upper Assam came under cultivation prior to the Moamariya rebellion.⁵

In north-eastern region and as such in Assam, methods of cultivation mainly depended on ethnic heritage and geographical situation of the lands. As a matter of fact, agriculture system as a whole was largely marked by tribal ways of farming. In subsequent period, the Ahoms had developed agricultural tradition. Anyway, the period therefore witnessed both tribal and non-tribal methods of cultivation.

All the tribes were adapted to shifting rice cultivation. Crops were produced with less utilization of labour and use of very ordinary tools. The native set fire in the jungle to clear the land of cultivation..... The jungle is burnt down and for three successive years two crops are annually realized from it.....After the land has been thus impoverished, it is allowed to remain fallow for three years and fresh jungle land is prepared in the same primitive way and with most simple implements of husbandry.⁶

According to John M'cosh "The grain is first sown on a piece of well-mannered garden land and when about a foot high is transplanted in masses into large khates previously ploughed and in a state of inundation."⁷

Early records show that the Ahom kings built large number of embankments, spurs-cum-roads with Paik labourers to prevent flood and protect the agricultural field from the raids of the Brahmaputra and her tributaries. The Bhuyans of Assam built embankments on the river Tembuwani and Magurijan for protection of crops and houses.⁸

Assam where rainfall is copious throughout the year, provides a fertile soil for cultivation and rice is raised extensively throughout the state.⁹

The system of irrigation essential for wet rice culture was in some form prevalent since early times among some people of Assam which is evidenced by some contemporary foreign accounts. For example, Yuan Chwang, the Chinese traveler who visited Kamrup in the middle of the 7th century, noted in his account that water led from the rivers or from banked-up lakes flowed round the towns. During the Ahom regime, irrigation and flood control work were undertaken as a state policy so that the flat level lands opened up for rice cultivation could contain only that amount of water which was actually needed for good cultivation.¹⁰

Fertilizer in the modern sense of the term was only a recent development in Assam. Gunabhiram Barua in the last part of the 19th century remarks that the people of Assam did neither use fertilizer nor artificially irrigate their fields for the improvement of the fertility of the soil.¹¹ Chemical fertilizer was hardly in use in Assam even as late as the 20th century. Natural vegetation and soil fertility made the use of manure in Assam a matter of secondary importance.

Implements of cultivation in Assam during ancient and medieval period were simple. The inhabitants of the lower Brahmaputra valley had possibly knowledge of the use of plough drawn by a pair of bullocks much earlier to those of the upper valley. The implements included a wooden plough (*Nangal*) with an iron-tipped share (*Phal*), wooden rakes (*Jabaka*) and mallets (*Dalimari*), a rough bamboo harrow (*Mai*), yoke (*Juwali*), sickles (*Kachi*), bill hooks (*Da*), knives and different types of bamboo baskets like *Dulie*, *Mer*, *Kharahi*, *Pachi* etc. to keep the products.¹² The Ahoms inherited the use of domestic buffalo in ploughing from their earlier abode in South-East Asia.

The *Yogini Tantra*, an early 16th century Sanskrit work of Assam, speaks of as many as twenty varieties of rice. The *Kotha Guru Charita* contains numerous references to rice cultivation and mentions its varieties. The *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* and the *Alamgirnama* both speak of extensive rice cultivation in Assam.

The statistical account of Assam by Hunter mentions as many as eighty-seven (87) varieties of rice.¹³ Of these the most peculiar three varieties were *Chakua*, *Bara* and *Jaha*. Husked rice from *Chakua* and *Bara* were so soft that people in Assam used to take

them un-boiled just soaking them in water which was then called Komal Chaul or Bokachaul. It should be mentioned that the Paik militia while in the battle field, mostly depended on *Komal Chaul* with ripe banana.¹⁴

Land revenue formed the basis of the state's existence in the medieval period. In a society of self-sufficient economy, where money hardly played any serious role in state maintenance, land, labour and the produce of the soil formed the major sources of meeting the state expenditure. Rulers of medieval Assam, therefore, took every care to register quality lands and the Peasantry who worked on it. The Ahoms rulers had a peculiar system of collection of revenue. Here not only the soil, but also its people were considered as property of the state.¹⁵

During the initial stage of the Ahom period, revenue was in form of manual labour, but later on, as a result of the extension of the state machinery and growth of different profession, non-manual working groups also became necessary.¹⁶

There was the system of paying revenue in kind and cash also. A Paik Peasant, on rare occasions, could avail the option to pay revenue in cash at the rate of Rs.2 or 3 per head instead of giving his personal service.

Revenue system of Lower Assam was somewhat different from that of Upper Assam. This was due to the fact that there was already a well-established system of administration in Mughal pattern which was almost impossible to be replaced by a new one entirely. When the Ahom rulers occupied Kamrup, they did not abolish the former structure of land revenue. Instead, keeping the old system almost intact, it was provisioned that land and properties of the revenue officers in Kamrup were to be increased proportionately to the amount of revenue they could actually deposit to the state treasury. As a result, when in Upper Assam every peasant possessed a piece of land and had collection of paddy to meet the needs of his family for the whole year, in the Lower Assam Peasants had accepted bondage as a way of living.¹⁷

The peasants got incentive from the state to clear new lands for cultivation of some seasonal crops like mustard, pulses, sugarcane, gourds etc, while no revenue or little revenue entitled them at least temporarily to possess certain amount of additional fertile lands.

According to Goswami, no land revenue was imposed during the Ahom rule excepting the cleared jungles.¹⁸ If anyone cleared jungles for cultivation, he was allowed to hold that land on payment of one or two rupees per annum per *pura*. But he could enjoy it so long it was not required for settlement to other Paiks. Moreover, sometime some settlers were permitted to cultivate inundated lands on payment of a nominal plough tax to the state. Artisans and others had to pay a higher poll tax as they did not cultivate land. Thus even though the Ahom revenue and civil administration possessed many characters of a feudal society, it had some safety valves in the form of liberty and possession so that the peasants were not like the serfs in a typical feudal social system.

Regarding revenue free grants of lands it can be said that such grants were given to the nobles, officials and the priests. This system was developed and maintained all through the entire period of Ahom rule until the 19th century.¹⁹ Land donation practice for charitable and religious purposes was prevalent in Ahom period and it became popular after the Ahoms embraced Hinduism. The Lakhiraj estates which were granted for religious and other related purposes were of three classes, viz. (i) Debottara lands appropriated and dedicated to temples and idols (ii) Dharmottara lands dedicated to religious purposes and (iii) Brahmottara lands granted to priests and learned people. It remains expressed that the Lakhiraj estates were revenue free estates.

The families of Parbatia Goswamis had 41,000 acres of land which partially or wholly revenue free (Nisfkhiraj and Lakhiraj) spread over 31 Mauzas. It was estimated in 1883 that Parbatia Goswami and Madhav Devalay, accounted for no less than 1,000 tenants ryots. Such tenants did not enjoy occupancy rights anywhere in the Brahmaputra Valley.²⁰

The process of systematic and regular land survey and measurement under the Ahoms started since the inception of the 17th century. One chronicle states that king Pratap Singha introduced the system of measuring lands by using a bamboo pole which was 7 ½ cubits and 4-fingers long, a system which was used in measurement of land in Mughal Bengal. Different units of land measurement denoting different measures of lands were in use in medieval Assam.²¹

Except the nobles, priests and persons of high caste, the male population between the age group of 15 and 50 was required to render services to the state. The Ahom rulers

of medieval period organized the peasantry in such a way that the state could obtain the maximum use of its labour force through the Paiks. Such persons known as Paiks were personally allotted to the high officials, priests and elites in lieu of allowances and regular salary. Two *puras* (about 3 acres) of good quality land free of charge was given to each Paik in return for his services. A Paik could also pay Rs.2 per annum instead of rendering personal services. Paiks were also granted land for homestead called *bari* for which they were to pay a poll or hearth or house tax of about one rupee per annum. The Bhaktas (disciples) loyal to neo-Vaishnavite Satras were exempted from rendering physical services in royal house and even their name had been excluded from the Paik-list.²² This was an example of social injustice that existed in the society.

The Paiks paid throughout the country a poll tax variously named such as in Kamrup as house tax, in Nowgong, Lakhimpur proper and Sibsagar as body or Poll tax both at one rupee for each Paik of full age. In Darrang, a hearth tax upon every party looking separately high or low, of one rupee was imposed.

The Paik system had assumed a complete and elaborate structure. Four Paiks were grouped under a *got* (unit) but the number was finally reduced to three in Upper Assam. One member of each *got* was forced to be present in rotation for work as might be required of him and during his absence from home, the other members were expected to cultivate his land and keep him supplied with food. In times of war, two members of a *got* or three, if situation demanded, might be called on to attend the war field and it was the tradition, in times of peace, to employ the Paiks on Public and Philanthropic works. Like a bondsman, a Paik had to render his compulsory manual service and other kinds of duties to the state. But in regard to possession of certain political rights, he was sometime treated as free citizen. This was a most valuable privilege whereby the Paiks were saved from much of the oppression of.....²³

The Paiks were further grouped under the Khels which ultimately developed into a full-winged part of the state-instruments. There was regular gradation of officers. A *Bora* commanded twenty Paiks, a *Saika* hundred, *Hazarika*, *Rajkhowa* and *Phukan* likewise commanded one, three and six thousand Paiks. The system maintained a rigid discipline like a regular army.

Many elements of tribal economy crept into the Ahom land system which could be stated as feudal in character. In the words of Guha, 'These were indeed feudal estates in a largely semi-tribal, semi-feudal society.'²⁴ Three categories of people could be ascertained in such land system, viz. (i) the aristocracy – the feudal lords who had revenue-free lands and servile dependents to cultivate and work. (ii) The servile-population - the slaves, serfs and tenants who were absolutely parasite on these landlords and cultivated their lands and finally (iii) a large number of peasantry holding land directly from the state and paying a rent to it. Of the three categories, majority of the population belonged to the third category but that they did not form the sole groups. Though there were differences among slaves, serfs and tenants, these differences became hazy and obscure except in the case of domestic slaves. They were all dependent and parasite peasants working under homogenous umbrellas.

Economy of Assam during the Ahom regime was backward. Use of money was limited and trade among the peasants was largely absent. Everything was produced at home. Kaushal is right when he opines that before the advent of the British, Indian economy was in a state of equilibrium, though at a low level. Agriculture, then as now, was a gamble in monsoon.²⁵

The villages, in short, are a network in Assam; these villages are mostly self-sufficient in their economy, and simplicity in the social system and patterns of life is their keynote. The peasant ploughs the land and produces his own food; he builds his house with thatches and bamboos collected from the jungles.²⁶

Due to the fertility of the soil and copious rainfall, state could extract surplus and these surplus agricultural commodities were exported from Assam to Bengal, Bhutan, Tibet and Burma. Thus, the Ahoms kept their trade relations with their neighbouring states. Pemberton in his reports gives a vivid description on the export and import goods from and to Assam. Assam exported cotton, black and long pepper, mustard seeds, fruits like *thaikol* to Bengal in 1809 in Ahom regime.²⁷ This proves that from a long period Assam was rich in her agri-products and by exercising her trade relations with neighbouring states, she enriched her economy.

Like the men, the women of Assam have a distinct place in the economy of the family; they take an active part, mostly in eastern Assam (Upper Assam), in the rearing

of crops. They transplant the paddy seedlings and reap the harvest when ripe. It is a pretty sight to see an Assamese girl, lost in the deep canvas of the golden corn, reaping against the background, perhaps of a blue mountain under whiffs of vagrant clouds.²⁸

However, people were satisfied with the policy of the state during the Ahom period but that does not mean that they had no grievances at all. Despite that, they were more or less content and happy under the state. The Government was more or less concerned for their countrymen and formulated policy for their interest. There were no difference between rulers and the ruled. All were from the same land and same people which gave birth to tolerance and philanthropic attitude among themselves in spite of having discrimination and exploitation. But the same people became discontent and ventilated their grievances against the policy of the government in later period as a result of which several peasant uprisings took place in Assam in 19th century. This time, there was difference between the rulers and the ruled. Rulers were outsiders and the ruled were from the land. Outsiders formulated policy for their own interest what the native did not like and opposed it tooth and nail. Ultimately this gave birth to ignition and confrontation.

The Peasant is always in close contact with his land. It is the land which saves him. Historically, for Indian peasant, land is his hope and glory. From time immemorial, land continues to be the mainstay of the people and it constitutes not only the structural feature of the Indian countryside but changes in land relations act as the prime mover of social, economic and political transformation as well.

It is the land which constitutes the major source of livelihood for the village people. According to one estimate, nearly 3/5 of world population derives their livelihood from agriculture. Most of the peasants do not have own land and they purchase rights of cultivation and occupancy from others. Land involves an interaction between the land owner and the actual cultivator. But unfortunately, the dominant castes that have control over major portions of land suppress and exploit the sub-ordinated classes. Oliver Mendel Sohu and Marika Vicziany, who have discussed the rural land reform with reference to untouchables, argue that the sub-ordinated people have gained nothing out of land reforms.

Due to the decline of indigenous industries, pressure on land augmented resulting in land fragmentation. Differences in the size of land have created diverse agricultural classes in rural society – viz. big, small, marginal and landless labourers.²⁹

The English East India Company came to India in an era which is remarkable in world history for colonial and commercial maneuvers. The British colonization of North-East India is a fascinating episode who first appeared as traders and then gradually took over the reigns of administrations and converted it into a colony of Britain. The colonization of North-East India in the 19th century was directly influenced by the policy of promotion of the British Commerce. The first blood was drawn by annexing Assam or the Ahom state which was the largest and the richest in the region.

The British Policy towards the trade and markets in North-East India and the way they used these markets for economic penetration and colonization, was in no way different from how they colonized the whole of India or established colonies elsewhere in Asia or Africa. They appeared first as traders, then penetrated deep into the mainstay of life and finally conquered the region in several installments over a period of about hundred years.³⁰

The people hoped that with the advent of the British troubles would end and under a restored native government as promised, peace and prosperity would return. But their hopes were belied and thus the first flush of enthusiasm was logically followed by growing discontent of the people.³¹

The people at large in the initial stages welcomed the advent of the British because the latter had expelled the Burmese who had been responsible for reducing Assam to dire straits. Assam had been depopulated to a great extent and under the stress of protracted wars and oppression; the peasants had to give up cultivation, living mainly on wild roots and plants. Famine and pestilence stalked the land.

The enigma of economic backwardness and underdevelopment, issues of rural unrest and violence and of social institutions and values are all involved in the basic nature of the agrarian question.³²

Daniel Thorner writing on Indian land reform problems in 'The Agrarian Prospect in India' states that 'the agrarian structure is, after all, not an external framework within which various classes function, but rather it is the sum total of ways in which each group

operates in relation to other groups. Notwithstanding this comprehensive definition, he is concerned with only a part of the totality of relations he speaks of, namely those related to the politics of contemporary land reform.³³

The land reform system under which the cultivator works is of key importance in determining the pace and character of agricultural development. The agrarian structure in the country despite recent reforms continues to affect adversely the status of the farmer, as also his capacity to make investments. Further, in an overwhelming number of cases, the size of the unit of cultivation is too far below the minimum required for progressive agriculture.³⁴

Baden Powell has contended that the ryotari village was the original type in India. The ryotwari was first made by Captain Read and Thomas Munro in the districts of Bara Mahal in 1792. Gradually, it was extended to other parts of the province where permanent settlement of the land revenue had not been made or where the permanently settled estates were sold up for inability to pay the fixed revenue. In course of time, it spread to Bombay, Assam and Berar also. Under the Ryotary Settlement, every registered holder of land was recognized as its proprietor. He paid revenue directly to the Government. He was at liberty to sublet his property or to transfer it by gift, sale or mortgage. He could not be ejected from his land till he paid the revenue. In the long run, the Ryotary Settlement created a group of peasants who were sub-ordinate to the proprietor of the land.³⁵ In Ryotary Settlement, each cultivator could hold land as a separate estate under the Government and it seemed to have had given impetus to the peasantry. The Ryotary Settlement included the peasant proprietors who were themselves owners of the land. Desai has made three divisions of the class of peasant proprietors namely upper, lower and middle-class landowners. With the passage of time, the number of lower classes peasantry increased. A large number of them were reduced to the status of agricultural labourers and paupers.³⁶

In spite of having its merits, the system resulted in many evils, since the Company entered into agreement with each ryot; the traditional sense of unity that existed among the members of the village community disappeared. Quite sometime, the assessment was thought excessive and this resulted in substantial land going out of cultivation, many ryots abandoning cultivation and fleeing into neighbouring area. Moreover, if a ryot felt

that assessment in his case was excessive he had to deal individually with the state and not through the village community. This naturally reduced his bargaining power and thus, chances of getting his grievance redress were abated.³⁷ Thomas Munroe said, "It is the system which has always prevailed in the past". But the primary consideration to devise a settlement directly with the cultivator was the motive of financial gain to the company. It resulted in the Ryotary Settlement. The primary aims of the Ryotary Settlement were the regular collection of revenue and amelioration of the condition of the ryots. The first was realized but the second remained unfulfilled.

A majority of peasants in agricultural India are tenant peasants. Tenants constitute a heterogeneous group; interestingly enough, some of them are also land owners. Actually, there are variations among them.³⁸

Ryots of Goalpara have been exploited and squeezed by the Zamindars and their sub-ordinates. In general sense, they governed over the ryots. On the other hand, there was co-existence of the British imperialism with that of the Zamindari economic relation as a result of which few Zamindars also suffered lot along with the ryots.³⁹

British adopted various policies and introduced many reforms. Outer motive of all these were well and good but their inner motives were appropriation and exploitation. The most important evil resulting from their rule was the drain of wealth which impoverished the country. Probably between Plassey and Waterloo (1757-1815) a sum of 1000 million pounds sterling was transferred from India to English banks.⁴⁰

Land is the gift of God; it is a part of nature. Nobody can distribute water, neither can anybody distribute air. Vinoba Bhave argued that land belongs to God and therefore, it has to be distributed equally. Nehru always pronounced, "When India will get freedom, land would be justifiably distributed."⁴¹

British distorted the dreams of the Indians by imposing revenue on land. Sub-ordinate class got nothing out of the land reforms introduced by the British. Most of their reforms and policies were just an eye-wash.

The British imperial rulers of India unleashed far-reaching changes in Indian agrarian structure. New land-tenures, new land ownership concepts, tenancy changes and heavier state demand for land revenue triggered off far-reaching alteration in rural economy and social relationship. So far land revenue and land tenancy are concerned, it

can be said that despite their discrepancies, by surveying land and settling the revenue the British slowly and gradually laid the foundation of a modern state in the 19th century.⁴²

The land revenue was mainly a heritage from the indigenous rule but the administration of land revenue was a natural growth of the substitution of monetary payment in the place of manual labour. Starting with a fairly detailed knowledge of the practice during the Ahom rule, the Anglo-Indian administrators built the present complex of the land revenue administration in Assam.⁴³

The British regime introduced a new revenue system by superseding the traditional right of the village community over the village land.....for the first time, land ceased to be owned by the community, it became a part of private property. There emerged an intermediary between the tenants and the government. This was a watershed in the history of agrarian system. The government apparatus by initiating an endless process of raising revenue demand created tremors and turbulence in the hearts of the peasants what they could hardly forget.

Humanitarianism underlay many of the reforms introduced by the British in the first half of the 19th century. Practically, it proved futile and meaningless if we go through their policy. The method of collection of land revenue by the officials was rigid and strict. The rates of land revenue during the early British period were much higher than during the pre-British period. In the words of Kaushal, in order to realize the revenues, inhumane methods were used both on the Zamindars and the peasants. The Zamindars who failed to meet the Company's demands were expropriated while the peasants were left little else than their families and bodies – the tyranny of Hastings extinguished every sentiment of father, son, brother and husband. Everything visible and edible was seized and sold. Nothing but the bodies remained.⁴⁴

Concerning the revenue administration in the Brahmaputra Valley, Gait says – 'it was thought inadvisable to make any radical change until the ultimate destiny of the country had been settled.'⁴⁵

II

Agrarian policy of Assam during colonial period:

Soon after the British rule was extended to Assam in 1826, some alterations were made in the land system with a view to suiting the requirements of the colonial rule.

Actually land settlement started in Lower Assam in 1824-25 prior to the British besiege of Assam in 1826. The Government did not change the Mughal Land settlement system prevailing in Kamrup and settled all matters relating to revenue with the Choudhuries. The Choudhuries could enjoy their privileges so long the authority was pleased over them. These officials gained privileges, viz. revenue-free lands, paiks from the government. In realization of revenues, Choudhuries were assisted by the Patwaries and the Thakurias. The British entrusted the onus of realizing revenues of Raha and Nowgong with Lata Pani Phukan and Aradhan Roy respectively.

Therefore, the government showed some flexibility and allowed the old system to continue which meant the rule of the Zamindars in Goalpara and those of the Choudhuries in Kamrup. In Upper Assam, the Government introduced the Ryotary settlement almost in a parallel situation with the Choudhuries.⁴⁶

But the first condition of the province was rather disappointing when the British took control of it. One of the major concerns of Scott, therefore, was to improve it by tapping certain new sources of revenue.⁴⁷ After fetching the administration specially the Lower Assam under their control, the prevailing practice of personal service was replaced by the imposition of Poll tax but later on even this tax was also deleted and regular land revenue was introduced on the basis of the nature and types of the land. The British replaced the native system and introduced a new system based on direct money taxation. Revenue affairs had, under the first 7 years of their rule, rather retrograded than improved. In 1832, it was determined to hold the country and arrangements were then made for introducing a taxation of the lands in substitution of the poll tax and Captain Mathie, Rutherford and Bogle were appointed as collectors of Darrang, Nowgong and Kamrup to carry them out.⁴⁸

Land-holdings were divided into four categories: *basti* (homestead), *bao-tali* (low-lying land), *farangati* (high land growing inferior crops) and *rupit* (Paddy land); separate rents were fixed for them and they were gradually revised from time to time. The amount in *basti*-land varies in Kamrup from Rs.3 to Re.1-8-0 according to the circumstances of the occupants. The *rupit* lands in the same district were originally assessed at one rupee per *pura*, the *bao-tali* at twelve annas and the *farangati* at four

annas. These rates were gradually raised and in 1848 they had reached Re. 1-4-0 per *Pura* for rupit and one rupee for all other kinds of land including *basti*.⁴⁹

The land grants made to temples, priests and other charitable purposes during the Ahom regime were made sure either as revenue-free (Lakhiraj) or half revenue free (nisfkhiraj). While *debottara*-land grants were made sure as revenue free, *brahmottara* and *dharmottara* lands grants were required to pay half of the revenue rate prevalent at that time. In this manner, the colonial government recognized the Lakhiraj and nisfkhiraj estates and continued as major classes of estates. Thus, the rent-free grants were brought under assessment by Scott.⁵⁰

In Assam, there was no dearth of arable land and because of this, the peasants preferred annual leases and were unwilling to tie to a particular plot of land for a fixed period of time. The government declared in 1870 that the right of the periodic leaseholders would be transferable and heritable. Such declaration was made to encourage periodic lease. The annual settlement system was slowly transmuted into decennial leases by the enforcement of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation in 1886. The rights of tenants under these regulations were fixed for definite period. The decennial lease holders and those paying revenue directly to the government for the previous ten years were ultimately endorsed as ryots enjoying heritable permanent and transferable rights of occupancy and use of their lands. However, the existing practice was allowed to continue in the case of annual settlements so that ryots remain satisfied. Thus, the ryotwari system of land revenue administration received a tremendous and colossal boost under the Regulations of 1886. Actually, the peasants considered long-term system tedious and opted for annual lease. The settlement policy of the government to cut down the annual lease facilities drastically was looked upon by J.N. Barua as 'deprivation of their rights'. Nor did he agree with the repeated assertion of the government about the happiness and improved condition of the peasantry of Assam. Then came his rebellious assertion – 'I say the ryots are in no way better off'. In a single sentence, he brought into focus the plight of the ryots.⁵¹

In spite of its goodness, sometime the annual system also proved defective. Yet, the government effected such settlements. Every year, peasants saw the new masters. The latter exploited them as much as possible during their one year term, as they were

uncertain about next term. The condition of the peasantry became worse every time a new settlement was made.⁵²

Although the government tried to attract the cultivators towards decennial leases, the system started becoming popular only during the closing part of the 19th century. The main issue involved in such an agrarian situation was the lack of security for cultivators. In the words of Sharma, even at the beginning of the 20th century, although decennial leases were becoming more popular, the majority of leases were still annual. This unpopularity of decennial leases shows how insecure the Assamese ryots felt under the new British revenue system. There was genuine fear of the system, which made them opt for lease and gave them no security of tenure. It also perhaps points to the fact that there were such land holders in Assam who felt economically secure enough to opt for a ten years' lease and feel able to pay the government revenue demand on time for the lease years. So, on the one hand, the government wanted to encourage decennial leases so that it could be sure of the annual revenue to be collected and on the other hand, the Assamese ryots were not economically strong enough to opt for long term leases.⁵³

The Assamese Peasants were alien to the transfer and inheritance and because of this; the people were hardly enchanted when the government granted such rights with the long term leases. During the Ahom regime, such rights were not available to the ryots and that's why the question of transfer and inheritance of land was not present in the economy of Assam.

Alterations in the revenue regulations also fetched a series of changes in the administration of revenue. Alterations began by the Rules of 1870 were ultimately made sure by the Regulations of 1886. The land was first divided into smaller units called mauzas and native officials known as Choudhury, Patgiri, Mauzadar or Bishaya realised revenues from land holding ryots. The government appointed them on impermanent basis and local village accountants called Thakuria, Patwari and Kakati assisted them. Albeit called by various appellations – like Choudhury, Patgiri and Mauzadar initially, these officers were ultimately designated as Mauzadars. Only a wealthy and influential person of the concerned mouza was employed as Mauzadar and he was given the onus of realizing and depositing the land revenue demanded from his Mauza by a contracted and

stipulated time. The Mauzadar, under these circumstances, became powerful in the rural hierarchy.⁵⁴

The Mauzadars were appointed from among the rich and respectable families of every district. Though they had their own tale of woes, they were men of consequence in the society. As commission agents, they had a fair income to lead a comfortable life.⁵⁵

The Mouzadary system was much popular and well-understood by the people. Although it was rough and ready, it was cheap and not oppressive. The Commissioner of Assam Valley Division Maxwell wrote in the Administrative Report for the year 1896-97: one native gentleman whose ideas are much in advance of his countrymen was of the opinion that the Mauzadary system was better suited to the people, the Mauzadar was an inhabitant of the area He was respected by the ryots and assisted them in times of distress and generally speaking was their adviser in family disputes.⁵⁶

It is not a general and acceptable view. It is partially true and one-sided view. Revenue bureaucracy was an essential organ of the colonial government and unfortunately the peasants were utterly at the clemency of them. Mauzadars and Choudhuries were the revenue contractors of the government and extorted more revenue from the ryots and kept substantial portion with them. They were financially powerful and commanded considerable influence in the society. No other indigenous Assamese groups could challenge their position.

Their exactions sometime even crossed the limit which resulted in their angry expression through other channels. In early 1855, some discontented ryots of Mangaldoi sub-division sent a petition to the Lt. Governor of Bengal complaining against their maujadars. Next year, some Kachari ryots of Kalaigaon and Mangaldoi brought complaint against their Maujadars.⁵⁷

The Choudhury system proved itself as a ban to Assamese Peasants. When the peasant failed to pay taxes as demanded by Choudhury, he was chastised by Choudhury. As a result, sometimes the remnant of the property of the defaulter tenants was confiscated and at times they had to save their skin by leaving the hearth and home. Such was the plight of the Assamese peasants as a result of the British-imposed Choudhury system.⁵⁸

The Choudhuries foreseeing the possibility of not being re-elected launched exactions on all sides sometime five or six times the real amounts of rent collected. These exactions attracted the attention of Robertson and he soon realized that existing disorders in revenue affairs were due to the paucity of European officers, ignorance of the employees on the resources of the country, condition of the people, demands founded on no certain data, irregular and undefined, additional assessments, corrupt practices and intrigues of the *amlah*, embezzlement by all parties and so on. However, he tried to bring transparency in the administration and with this aim in view, settlements were made directly with the ryots and title deeds or pattas were issued to them specifying there in the amount of revenue to be paid under signature and seal of the collector.⁵⁹

The Mandal stood at the lowest rank of the revenue administration and yet he was the pivot of the entire system. His responsibilities were too heavy and yet he was the lowest paid officer. Land assessment and proposals for settlement were made by the Mandal who in those days, were appointed by the Mauzadars. The monthly salary of a Mandal in 1880-81 was Rs.6. Little wonder that he supplemented it by illegal exaction from the tenants. Over the Mandals, there were Kanungoo, Mauzadar and Tehsildar.⁶⁰ Gaonbura (village headman) was a respectable man in the village. The government invested him formally as a government officer and remunerated him by a remission of land revenue.⁶¹

The new British government was eager to appoint Haliram and Jagnaram in administrative services. Haliram was given the charge of land settlement in the districts of Nowgong and Darrang. So efficiently he managed the whole thing that he was given again the charge of settlement in Kamrup.

It remains expressed that the British employed local people in realization of revenue having adequate knowledge on the fields. The British employed those people in their administration who had knowledge on the economic condition of Assam. For instance, they employed Maniram as Sarestadar and Tehsildar due to his vast knowledge on the economic condition of Assam. He reorganized the land settlement in Upper Assam and tripled the revenue income from that area. He even prepared a report on the washing of gold in the rivers of Assam.⁶²

Naturally, the general character of the land settlement in the plains of Assam was ryotwari except the areas under the permanent settlement. There were no middle men and government dealt directly with the actual ryots and occupants. But despite that, there was some problem on the question of direct contact with the actual tiller as subletting was very common and widespread in lakhiraj, nisfkhiraj and in Khiraj estates when the holdings were very large.

Under the circumstances, tenants formed a major class surviving on land. In fact, tenancy as a form of labour was widespread during the Ahom rule. Many slaves were gradually transformed into serfs and in the long run, into tenants-at-will. After the expiry of the Ahom rule, therefore, large bodies of tenants were found, mostly in compact blocks, in the surviving landed estates, paying their rent in one form or other to their landlords.

The *adhi* system was the most widespread and popular form of share-cropping practice. Though variations in the operations of the system were seen from district to district but the essential characteristics remained intact. The Assam District Gazetteers mention five different forms of crop sharing widespread during the closing part of the 19th century in the plains of Assam, viz.: *Gachch-adhi*- Equal division on the standing crop of the fields, each party reaping and transporting its own share; *Dal-adhi*- Equal division of the harvested bundles, each party threshing and transporting its own share; *Boka-adhi* – Division of the field in equal parts, after the tenants had cultivated the land up to the stage of puddling, each party taking charge of its parts thereafter; *Chukti-adhi* or *Thika adhi* – the handing over to the landlord of a fixed quantity of grain; *Quti-adhi* – Equal division of the threshed grain, each party taking thereafter its own share.

The condition of the tenants during the period was regulated not only by the rent burden under distinct form of *adhi* but also through various religious and customary bonds attached to the system. However, to secure fair rent, freedom from arbitrary ejection and fixity of tenure, several legislations were passed during the first half of the 20th century. The Assam Tenancy Act of 1935 was the significant one among them which recognized three classes of tenants, viz. privileged, occupancy and non-occupancy ryots.

Over and above Ryotary Settlement, some parts of Assam were under the permanent settlement which was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 in Bengal.

Before the inclusion of Assam in 1826, the two districts Sylhet and Southern portion of Goalpara were parts of the Bengal presidency. These two districts came under the permanent settlement when it was introduced in Bengal presidency. The settlement known as the Zamindari system continued in these areas when they were brought under the administration of Assam in 1874.⁶³

In matters of land settlement and revenue collection, Jenkins adopted reactionary role and slowly and gradually he augmented the revenue. Excluding Goalpara, the incidence of land-revenue from 1832-33 to 1852-53 in the district of the Brahmaputra valley are shown in the following table.

Name of the District	Year & Revenue 1832-33	Year & Revenue 1842-43	Year & Revenue 1852-53
Kamrup	1,10,181	2,52,991	2,82,304
Darrang	41,506	1,35,453	1,57,795
Nowgong	31,509	1,10,314	1,29,873
Sibsagar		80,843	1,14,463
Lakhimpur		34,729	46,553
Total	1,83,196	6,14,330	7,30,988

Thus, a decade after 1832-33 the land revenue in Assam proper amounted to Rs.6,14,330 in 1842-43 and still a decade after in 1852-53 it amounted to Rs.7,30,988.⁶⁴ The percentage of increased rates were 17,16.49, 16.82, 41.58 and 33.85 in Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsaagar and Lakhimpur from 1842-43 to 1853.

Moreover, the increase in assessment on rupit and non-rupit land⁶⁵ also invited wide spread reaction.

Districts	Years, nature of land and assessment Rupit Land (Per purah)		Years, nature of land and assessment Non-Rupit Land (Per purah)	
	1842-43	1852-53	1842-43	1852-53
Kamrup	1-4	1-8	1-0	1-0
Nowgaon	1-4	1-6	0-4	1-0

Darrang	1-8	1-6	0-12	1-0
Sibsagar	1-4	1-4	0-12	0-14
Lakhimpur	1-0	1-0	0-12	0-12

Despite the steady rise in revenue, attempts had been made by the district officers to enhance the rate of assessment. This was considered inexpedient by the Board of Revenue in a newly conquered province. So wishes of the Board of Revenue were respected. In 1852, on the modification of the *tarh* (the standard measure from 11 ½ to 12 ½ in length) there occurred a rise in rates in all categories of land.⁶⁶

The burden of revenue became so high that even the members of the royal family was also affected by this. The family of the Darrang Raja failed to pay the revenue even at half rates as fixed earlier and sought permission from the government to resign part of their estates. They tried to impress upon the Government what may be termed as their burden of bigness. Hundred of bighas of cultivable lands were lying useless and they found it difficult to pay revenue for land not really covered by cultivation. Moreover, agricultural produce in their area, they said, did hardly bring them any cash. Bolindra Narayan Konwar was in arrear of revenue for the year 1853-54 and 1854-55 to the extent of Rs.2, 451 and declaring himself unable to pay the dues he offered to transfer to the government more than 5,392 *pooras* of land in liquidation of the revenue amount. 5,392 *pooras* of land were lying in 27 Mauzas of which only 624 *pooras* were under cultivation. Similarly, Suryya Narayan Konwar had 434 *pooras* of land, out of which he resigned 411 and retained only 23 *pooras* paying a *sudder jummah* of Rs.10-1-9. Amrit Narayan Bahadoor, Rajooram Konwar and Rajnarayan Konwar were also in arrear. They too offered to surrender some portions of their cultivable land. Shortage of labour and low money income from land were the major causes of such a situation.⁶⁷

Government heard the agony of the royal families and accepted their complaint. Even the direct descendants of the Ahom kings were also exempted from land revenue and money pension. But such type of agonies and distress suffered by the ryots were not heard by the government which finally gave birth to resentments among themselves against this discriminatory policy in the colonial period. The rise and growth of the Vaishnava Satra was one of the important and significance chapters in relation to the

control and ownership of land in colonial Assam. Sri Sankardeva's Vaishnava reform movement besieged an important place in Brahmaputra Valley by the end of the sixteenth century.

The Vaishnavites received substantial grants of land and money for the setting up of *Satras* under the patronage of the Ahom kings. These land grants, with the Paiks, were rent free and it made the Gossains and the Adhikars substantial land owners and facilitated the *Satras*' growth of power and influence. Thus, the *Satras* almost became the personal assets of the Gossains and the Adhikars and the pattern which started during the Ahom regime continued even during the colonial period. According to one account, there were 288 *Satras* at the turn of the present century spread over the entire Brahmaputra Valley.

Like the Ahoms, the colonial government also granted *Lakhiraj* (rent free) and in some cases *Nisfkhiraj* (land assessed at half) land to the *Satras*. *Auniati Satra* and *Dakshinpat Satra* were granted 2200 and 1200 acres of land respectively by the then British government. By acquiring rent free land, most of the *Satradhikars* exploited the poor ryots by offering them land on share-cropping basis and thus created a *Zamindari* of their own. Thus, the British Land Settlement System is directly responsible for creating Vaishnavite *Zamindari* class in Assam. All *Satras*, of course, were not included in it.⁶⁸

A large number of people were attached to *Satras* lands and they paid regular rent to the *Satras*. So as to manage the *Satra* lands, therefore, an elaborate structure of revenue administration was utter necessary. It was finally evolved by employing several officers and agents in each *Satra* to realize rent and thus managed the business. The land structure within the *Satra* had developed a clear feudal inclination and this inclination was far stronger than in the Ahom monarchical system.⁶⁹

The relationship between a ryot and the *Satra-Adhikar* was that of a tenant-landlord despite the fact that the latter hardly acted as an exploitative *Zamindar* due to the absence of forced and coercive power. The ryots had to pay the high revenue rates during the colonial time. In spite of that, if he defaulted in the payment of rent, he had to forego his rights over his land. But such type system was not there in the *satra*-system. But it lacks adequate empirical data. Logically, the landlord-tenant relationship is invariably based on dominant sub-ordinate relationship and some elements of economic exploitation

and social oppression are inherent in it. The levels and magnitude of physical coercion and illegal exactions may vary from one system to the other but to deny and ignore their existence altogether is not easy to comprehend. The *satra* land system was not favourable to the poor tenants but it was favourable to the Gossains and because of this they led a comfortable and affluent life in the society.⁷⁰

The colonial government had faced severe financial crisis after the revolt of 1857. The government had to spend Rs.64 crores (40 million pound sterling) in curbing the revolt of 1857 and now contemplating how to mitigate the crisis by discovering new sources of income and they finally discovered it. According to Pemberton, 'looking to the extra-ordinary fertility of the soil, the noble river which flows through the valley from one extremity to the other, its former affluence, abundant population, and varied products, there can be no doubt that in the course of a very few years, under a more settled government this province will prove a highly valuable acquisition to the British government; its revenue already shows progressive improvement and as our communications are renewed with the numerous tribes surrounding it, new channels of commerce will be obtained, that cannot fail to enrich the country and give stimulus to its own agriculture and manufacturing industry'.⁷¹

There was acute shortage of labour in Assam to run the plantation industries as almost all were engaged in cultivation. Therefore, to solve the problem of labour, revenue hike on agricultural land was utmost necessary to flush them out of cultivation. According to Guha, planters urged the government to enhance the land revenue rate so that the poor peasants could be flushed out of their village to work for wages on the plantation.⁷²

The government sought to wipe out the indigenous and traditional agriculture economy and sought, therefore, establishment in that place of their own economy. They thought that their motive would not fulfill until and unless revenue was hiked.

According to the government the rate of revenue in Assam was ridiculously low, and therefore, hike would not create pressure on the people. Jenkins would not mind even the displacement of local ryots from their lands through the operation of a discriminatory land revenue policy in favour of the white colonists. For such a policy, according to him, would promote the long-run interest of the ryots themselves. He was afraid that if the

government assessment upon the natives was generalized and not heavy, they would not be available as tenants cultivators under European superintendence and therefore, the introduction of commercial agriculture would be inhibited. On the other hand, if the assessment on cultivation was heavy, the ryots would have no alternative other than work for the European capitalist farmers.⁷³

In spite of having enormous fertility of the soil, the peasants of Assam did one crop in a year and spent the entire months without agricultural work. The government thought that the peasants would not spend their time idle if revenue was maximized. To the government this step would break the lethargy of the peasants and make them busy in cultivating the commercial crops.

The resources of the province and the fertility of agricultural land also suited to the Company's policy of revenue maximization. The British interest in India before and after colonization was primarily commercial. They reached India and its prosperous regions for trade; trade led to conquest and empire. Even after conquest, the trade and profit continued to be the key motive of the Raj. The actual conqueror was an enterprising commercial organization the English East India Company. The transfer of authority to the British Crown (1858), 100 years later, did not change the mercantile character of the Raj. It aimed at revenue maximization and increasing the wealth of Britain at the cost of India.⁷⁴

Compared to many other provinces of India, scope of taxation was certainly limited in Assam. Some of the important sources of state revenue were not existent here. For example, the revenue derived from salt supplied to Assam for consumption was not credited to Assam. Custom duties abolished in 1835 had not been revived in the 19th century. In the absence of these two, the government had to depend to a great extent on the land revenue, the rate of which was revised a number of times during the 19th century.⁷⁵

Moreover very lately the capitation and the house taxes were abolished throughout Assam and to meet the deficiency of revenue, the taxes on Rupit, Bari, Baotali and Farangati lands were increased.

The assessment of revenue in Ryotwari settlement was fixed in the beginning but the situation was not in tune with this pattern. A steady and rapid increase of revenue was

inevitable and order of the day due to the more or less agricultural growth. The principle of periodical settlement left adequate scope for adjusting and maximizing revenues especially with the changing demand of the British government

To increase the paying capacity of the ryots, Scott and Jenkins both encouraged the ryots to grow marketable crops. Jenkins stood opposed to any enhancement in the rate of rupit or arable land as that would scare the ryots away from the cultivation of rice crop, the staple food; and in fact many had already diverted to the production of crops like mustard, the profitability of which had in the meantime gone up several times. In lieu of enhancement of rate in rupit land, Jenkins raised the rate of non-rupit land in all the districts except Kamrup. In Nowgong and Darrang, it rose to rupee one and annas two from annas fourteen and in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur to a rupee from annas twelve and fourteen respectively.⁷⁶

Statement showing proposed increase (Per Purah) in 1865

District	Rates in force		Proposed rate		
	Rupit	Non-Rupit	Basti	Rupit	Non-Rupit
Kamrup	1-8	1-0	3-0	1-14	1-8
Darrang	1-6	1-2	3-0	1-14	1-8
Nowgong	1-6	1-2	3-0	1-14	1-8
Sibsagar	1-4	1-0	3-0	1-14	1-4
Lakhimpur	1-4	1-0	3-0	1-14	1-8

Source: Appendix A, Statement – II, Comprehensive History of Assam, HK Barpujari (ed.), Guwahati, 2004 P.20

Different plan and technique were made to increase and impose new taxes by different way. Jenkins planned to increase the rate on *bari* land and tried to convert the waste and jungle land into fruitful fields of different vegetables like sugarcane, mustard, mulberry and tobacco. According to him, people would not hesitate to pay the revenue if such plans are adopted.

In 1859, attempts were made to raise the assessments on the plea of equalizing the rate of all the districts with that of Kamrup which was then the highest. They were also

motivated by their desire of compelling the ryots by the increased demand to work under the tea-planters who were then facing acute scarcity of labour in their operation. Increased taxation invariably led to agricultural stagnation. Despite this, in 1861, the government acting on the recommendation of Colonel Hopkinson arbitrarily doubled the rates of land revenue in view of the general progress and prosperity of the province which, it was argued, indicated the increased paying capacity of the ryots. The administration seems to have conveniently overlooked the fact that the wealth generated in the province had little link with the local economy. In the circumstances, the enhanced land revenue was transformed into a virtual rack-rent that impoverished them.⁷⁷

In 1865, Hopkinson renewed proposal into a different form proposing to raise the revenue on land with the object of equalizing the rates in all the districts. The difference in rates, he argued, had encouraged migratory habits of the ryots by driving them away from the areas of heavier taxation to those where assessment was light. He also wanted to raise the rates of household and garden lands since the produce of these lands, viz. betel nut commanded a ready sale on the spot at a higher profit. His proposal received the approval of the government of Bengal and consequently rates of rupit and non-rupit lands increased from 25 to 50 percent in almost all the districts.⁷⁸

Statement showing assessment

District	Rates per Bigha in 1864-65		1868-69		
	Rupit	Other Land	Basti, homestead or garden land	Rupit or low paddy land	Faringati or dry weather crop lands
	As p	As p	Re		
Kamrup	6 - 0	4 - 0	1	10	8
Darrang	5 - 6	4 - 6	1	10	8
Nowgong	5 - 6	4 - 6	1	10	8
Sibsagar	5 - 0	4 - 0	1	10	8
Lakhimpur	5 - 0	4 - 0	1	10	8

The question of raising the assessment of land and also giving the cultivators a permanent, heritable and transferable right in their land was discussed during the period between 1861 and 1867. It was under the settlement Rules of 1870 that the government, for the first time, categorically and unequivocally recognized the permanent, transferable and heritable right in rupit and *bari* land in private occupation.⁷⁹

The settlement Rules of 1870 were the first Public declaration of the rights in land possessed by the cultivators of the soil. These remained in force till 1887 when land and Revenue Regulation superceded them. The Land and Revenue Regulation of 1886 did not change the principles of the settlement rules of 1870. Rather, it plugged the loopholes and elaborated the existing rules to meet changing requirements. Subsequently in 1883 after Cadastral Survey (field to field), decennial settlement rules were passed. Under these rules, settlements were to be made only of lands which were to be held permanently.⁸⁰

The land revenue rates on both dry and wet crops were uniformly and arbitrarily doubled in 1868 throughout Assam proper. As a result of these enhanced rates which were implemented during 1860-71, the total land revenue demand jumped up from Rs. 1,001,773 in 1864-65 to Rs. 2,165,157 in 1872-73. In some parts of Assam, people reacted to the new assessment by organizing Rajmels. Peasant of Nowgong took the path of revolt in 1868-69. In Lakhimpur district, the people protested in a novel way. They surrendered so much of their land to the government that the revised rates, though about double the previous rates in force, yielded an enhancement of only about 26% in the total revenue collection. This was at a time when the acre under food grains was failing to increase sufficiently to meet the rising local demand for food. Food prices were higher in Assam than in any part of neighbouring Bengal.

In 1870, the assessment was raised to a uniform rate of one rupee per bigha (1/3 acre) for basti, ten annas for rupit and eight annas for farangatei. Between the years 1883 and 1893, a cadastral (field to field) survey on a scale of 16 inches to the mile was made of the whole area, except tracts where cultivation was sparse, which were afterwards surveyed by non-professional agency. The assessment was then revised; each class of land was divided into three sub-classes and new rates were imposed, ranging from Re. 1-6-0 to Re. 1-2-0 per bigha for basti, from one rupee to twelve annas for rupit and from twelve annas to nine annas for farangati.⁸¹

Settlement showing assessment and re-assessment

Sl. No.	Class of land	Rates per bigha in 1868-69	Rates laid down in Resettlement Rules	Rates Proposed	Rates in 1893-94				
I.	Homestead or Garden Land	Re. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. P.				
	First Class					2- 0- 0	1-6-0	1-6-0	
	Second Class					1 -0 -0	1-8-0	1-4-0	1-4-0
	Third						1-4-0	1-2-0	1-2-0
II.	Rupit	0-10-0							
	First					1-4-0	1-0-0	1-0-0	
	Second					1- 0 -0	0-14-0	0-14-0	
	Third					0-12-0	0-12-0	0-12-0	
III.	Faringati	0-8-0							
	First					1-0-0	0-14-0	0-12-0	
	Second					0-12-0	0-12-0	0-10-0	
	Third					0-10-0	0-10-0	0-9-0	

Source: Appendix – B Statement-II, Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol-V: HK Barpujari (ed.) p.36

During the period between 1866 and 1889, the land revenue had more than quadrupled but land under ordinary cultivation had increased by only 7%. The increased land revenue demand had been justified on grounds that there had been a substantial increase in the price of staples and a considerable increase in the wages of labour.

There were epidemic diseases like cholera, small pox and fever in Goalpara, Nowgong, Darrang and Kamrup in 1879-80. In spite of that, there was neither a fall in land revenue nor contraction of agriculture except Kamrup district. Extension of

cultivation and assessment of leasehold grants on the expiry of their revenue free tenure led to the increase of Inland Revenue in Nowgong, Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. The term of 20 years of revenue free settlement of land with the former Rajas of Darrang originated in 1859-60 having expired, the entire land was brought under resettlement. The resettlement records revealed that the ex-Rajas of Darrang had already resigned 2,512 acres of wasteland to the government and alienated 3,115 acres of cultivated as well as waste lands to others who, again on their part, surrendered 345 acres of waste land to the government⁸²

Resettlement of Assam proper was again made for ten years in 1893 and the settlement of 1893-94 raised the assessed revenue from 70 to 80 percent and some cases in 100 percent. It was done on the basis of the classification of land and became applicable in the all districts of the Brahmaputra Valley except Goalpara district.

District	1891-92	1892-93	1893-94
Kamrup	9,61,842	9,79,347	13,33,314
Darrang	4,92,709	4,96,682	6,48,820
Nowgong	5,27,736	5,41,144	6,90,980
Sibsagar	8,57,323	8,72,484	12,01,689
Lakhimpur	2,67,127	2,75,853	3,70,124
Total	31,06,737	31,65,510	42,44,927

The revenue system of the hilly areas of the 19th century Assam was essentially different from the plains. The hilly people were accustomed to shifting cultivation. They seldom cultivated the same land for a period of years and in most cases moved around the hills in search of new lands. So, collection of land revenue under such circumstances was a difficult proposition and hence house remained throughout the 19th century the principal source of taxation of the hill tribes. The Mikirs of the Nowgong district were the first to be assessed but the change proved unproductive. People in order to avoid taxation, were in the habit of living together under the same roof.

Other heterogeneous taxes: With the consolidation of their authority, the British discovered that land revenue alone was not enough for the growing requirements of the

state and the necessity of exploiting the natural resources for the advantage of the ruler had become imperative. Of the various and miscellaneous revenues the house tax and the pass taxes were the relics of the Ahom system of taxation. The British did not abolish them altogether, rather retained them in certain places in a modified form. Fisheries and the salt wells yielded considerable revenue for the Ahoms. Under the British rule, the former was steadily developed and the latter became an item of secondary importance as a result of the increasing supply of the Bengal salt.⁸³

The poll tax introduced by the Burmese was revived and extended to Darrang and Nowgong with the object of equalizing the burden on all classes. In Darrang, it was calculated on the number of mess pots or *charoos* in each house hold from 8 *annas* to Re. 1; in Nowgong it became a capitation tax at Re.1 per head and in Kamrup Kharikatana (a house tax) was levied on plough at the rate of Re.1 per plough. Professional tax on artisans continued to be levied as under the former government. Popular discontent increased not only for enhancement of revenue at every resettlement but for imposition of new taxes such as stamp-duty and license fee for collecting forest products.

The prospect of obtaining additional allocations becoming extremely bleak, the local authorities in Assam directed their attention to tapping new sources of revenue to meet their increasing expenditure. Despite prohibitory orders of the court, on the plea of discouraging litigations, stamp-duties were introduced in 1858. Excise duties were levied at the Sadar stations in Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong but the same were not extended to tribal areas. Already washing of gold was farmed out and the *jalkar* or right to fish in the rivers and the *beels* was offered to the highest bidder. Taxes for cutting timber (Gorkhati), reeds (Bunker) and grazing tax (Khusary) became common.⁸⁴

In land abundant Assam, peasants had enjoyed from time immemorial, the traditional right to graze their cattle freely on the village commons and neighbouring forests. Under the British regime, this right was gradually encroached upon to bring forth additional revenue to the exchequer. A grazing fee per head of horned animals was introduced. In 1888, this fee was 8 *annas* per annum per head of buffaloes and 4 *annas* per head of cows. So, people reacted sharply against this.⁸⁵

Betel leaf cultivation and tax: People of Assam were accustomed to chewing areca-nut and betel vine. The Ahom rulers stressed on maintaining a systematically planned areca-nut and betel-vine gardens in front of every house. The Jayantia and Kamrupar Buranji mention both ripe and raw nuts chewn with two different varieties of vines. It is believed that the term 'Guwahati' has been derived from areca-nut and betel vine gardens abundance here in ancient times onwards.⁸⁶

Anyway, the multiplication of taxes became a matter of concern to the agricultural ryots. In the district of Nowgong, rumours were afloat that the government was contemplating imposition of taxes on their houses, gardens and betel leaf cultivations. Although the official sources dismissed these, the people learnt about the correspondence that was going on between the Sadar Board and the district officials on the Subject. About this time the introduction of the License tax confirmed the belief of the villagers, particularly of the tribals of Phulguri that before long their *pan* and betel nut would be subjected to taxation. Discriminatory colonial trade policy also ignited the Indian traders.

Company's servants carried on free trade all over their territory but the Indian traders, on the other hand, had to pay heavy duties. Finally, the Colonial Government with a view to introduce free and fair trade abolished obnoxious inland and custom duties, but income tax, stamp and ferry funds were levied to meet the increasing demands of the state. On the advice of James Wilson, in 1860, Income tax was introduced and this was extended in the following year (1861 onward) to the province of Assam.

Professional tax on braziers, gold-washers, silk-weavers, fishermen and the like continued to be levied as under the Ahom government. The rates varied from Khel to Khel; a gold-washer, for example, paid rupees five, a brass worker the same amount, the makers of oil and the fishermen paid rupees three and the weavers of silk paid rupees two each.⁸⁷

Opium and Revenue: Opium is an important article and is grown to a very considerable extent. Opium was an important commercial crop in the 19th century India but the condition of Assam province, according to Mills, was not favourable for production of opium on a large scale due to difficulty of procuring labour. Bengal was the only source. The use of opium in Assam was not a thing of the distant past and according

to the view of the Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Committee (1925) it started from the end of the 17th century when Assam came in contact with the Mughals. But it can't be accepted as it was known even during the days of Sankardeva (1449-1568) and Ahom king Lakshmi Singha in the 18th century and poppy grown in Beltola near Guwahati, was a quality product and the royal house had the supply of its quota from there. Gradually, the drugs became so popular that opium-eater was not an exception but one who did not eat in was an exception which converted the Assamese into an effeminate, weak, indolent and degraded people.

The colonial government of Assam gave more attention on opium as it was the most important source of the revenue, next only to land. It was a gold mine for the government not to be lightly surrendered. According to D. Scott, in Cachar the Raja was not allowed to cultivate opium and the privilege of supplying opium sufficiently for the consumption of the people of Cachar was enjoyed by the British merchants.

Like Cachar, the government wanted to bring this lucrative and coveted business under their control in Assam also. But they approached steadily and gradually with a view to evading reaction of the local people. It was believed that if the cultivation of opium, the most important cash crop grown locality, was suppressed, the problem of shortage of money would become even more acute. Many cultivators would lose the only source of cash income, while others who were already addicted to opium, would require additional money to buy abkari opium.

The sale of opium in Kamrup district for the last three years is given below.

Years	Maunds	Seers	Price
1850-51	45	18	18,180
1851-52	57	17	22,970
1852-53	36	16	14,560

Source: Mills A.J.M., *Report on the Province of Assam*, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, Second Edition, 1984, p.326

The steady increase in the sale of abkari opium and rise of production of local opium clearly indicates that the number of consumers was increasing irrespective of the age and sex. Jenkins was in favour of increasing assessment which would effect prohibition of cultivation in near future and finally on his recommendation, government prohibited poppy cultivation in April 1860 throughout the province.

The growing monetization of the economy had induced farmers to grow more poppy for cash, sometimes even at the cost of other crops. However, the government for the fear of losing out a valuable source of revenue put ban on poppy in April 1860. With the imposition of ban, the government introduced the system of issuing opium from the government treasury at a high price.⁸⁸ In spite of putting ban on local opium and introduction of abkari opium, it cannot be said that there was fall of local opium. It continued but not as in previous manner.

Motives behind the ban: The demand of opium was increasing and encouraging in China and it was met only through the importation of opium from India. Between the cost of production and the price, the government enjoyed a big margin as revenue. Britain was the centre of anti-opium agitation at the international level.⁸⁹ The British put ban on the opium of Assam province in 1860. Their intention was not for the welfare of the local people but to prohibit local poppy and introduce foreign poppy and thus bring this coveted and lucrative business at their hands. Actually, their anti-opium agitation revealed their double standard. British motives behind the ban were to deter local opium cultivation and import abkari opium from Bengal and North India. The planter community recommended to the government to put a ban on the cultivation and sale of opium, as its consumption made the local people apathetic towards work. Actually, they sought energetic and active labourers for their plantation industries and suppression would induce the opium eaters to work as labourers in their tea gardens.

The British opium policy in Assam, like their land revenue policy and assessment and its periodic enhancement, was dictated, more or less, by the overall interests of the tea plantation industry under the British finance capital.⁹⁰

Some of the elite and middle class remained silent while tax was imposed on the opium due to their self interests in tea plantations. The leaders of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha also did not demand the stop of the opium business fearing loss of revenue and

imposition of tax on them to meet the loss. In addition to that, most of the people did not like opium ban. To them, it cures dysentery and malaria, alleviates pain and gives longevity and livelihood. Dhekial Phukan suggested to the government to discontinue the sale of government opium forthwith and impose heavy tax on the local poppy cultivation. Harbilas Agarwala (1842-1916), an Assamese planter, ran a lucrative opium shop and recommended to the government for the gradual eradication of the evil.⁹¹

Raw gold of Assam: Tea is the only industry that occupies a considerable portion of the economy of the state. The articles, more precious than silver and gold, grow wild upon its mountains and the local hill tribes used to call it, "Phinak" and drink its beverage. Tea shrubs of Assam were planted on an experimental basis in the Botanical garden of Calcutta but this venture had to be abandoned.

The discovery of tea in 1823 and also coal and petroleum in 1825 in the Brahmaputra valley during the operations against the Burmese inspired the British decision to colonise Assam at the earliest.⁹² Also the strained relation between the British and the Chinese encouraged the farmer to look for tea plantation in India.⁹³ But if we believe Trevelyan, there is no denying the fact that Indian tea was within the reach of the mass population of England even in the mid 18th century and the port of London received these ships.⁹⁴

The area of waste lands in the Assam province is so large that it is no necessary to check the freedom of the ryots to transfer his land. Moreover, Assam abounds in many parts with valuable timber, not of the ornament but the useful order, chiefly adapted for building or for canoes. The main characteristics of the topography of Assam during the British regime was the existence of large tracts of waste land and it propelled the rise and growth of the tea industry in Assam.⁹⁵

The first experimental plantation was made by the Company in 1835 in Lakhimpur. The year from 1835 till 1852 was the period of experiment in the tea-sector. The growth of tea plantation was largely flourished mainly in 5 districts of the Brahmaputra valley and in the districts of Sylhet and Cachar of the Surma valley. The period from 1852 till 1892 has, therefore, rightly been called as the period of foundation of tea plantation.

The discovery of tea and its profitability and potentiality had awakened growing interest of the British capitalists in the cultivation of this plant in the valley from the fifties of the 19th century and plantation became much more profitable in Indian and international markets. The economy of Upper Assam changed with the plantations from the middle of the 19th century but Lower Assam retained its traditional character.⁹⁶

Wasteland – its utilization: The economic resources of the Ahom state, particularly tea, coal and oil guided the British Policy. The foothills along the valley of Brahmaputra were found to be rich in timber, rubber, ivory and other raw materials which could be supplied from Assam. The agricultural land in the valley was highly fertile and it was capable of generating surplus and yielding handsome revenue. These facts impressed the British authority about the commercial prospects in Assam. Therefore, the immediate task of the British authority was to reclaim the land in the plains for the settlement of the cultivators and for the tea plantation.⁹⁷ With a view to make their commercial plan viz. tea plantation successful, they contemplated to utilize the vast tracts of waste lands of Assam in practice and this finally gave birth to the waste land rules. Actually, these rules were tools of grabbing the waste lands. Indeed, colonial government in the name of Waste Land rules engulfed those lands which were full of forest and natural resources. The planters even usurped the grazing fields and encroached upon the jhum rights of the tribal shifting cultivators.

The government brought vast tracts of waste lands under tillage and tried to improve the resource and economy of the people. But they were allergic to the allotment of these lands to the local people and favoured foreign enterprise, skill and capital to serve their motto. The waste land settlement policy tempted planter to grab more land than they required or could manage.⁹⁸

To give waste lands to Europeans and deprive the local people of the same, the government, however, framed certain favourable rules of land grants entitled 'Wasteland Grant Rules'. According to Guha, a set of rules were framed - 'Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838' to make these lands available for special cultivation.⁹⁹

As early as September, 1827, David Scott proposed a plan of granting wasteland on the conditions and his successor Robertson also planned the same. But in 1836, Captain Jenkins suggested to the government of Bengal the introduction of the Gorakhpur

rates with some modification for similar grants in Assam. Finally, after several process and surveys, the government of Bengal approved it in August 1836.

The terms of the waste land grants were so favourable to the Europeans that a scramble for land took place among the planters. Their intention was not always to plant the whole area with tea; intention was acquiring those wastelands which contained valuable materials like timber.¹⁰⁰

Referring to K.M. Lokesh' thesis (unpublished) R. Saikia says – "Land grants were made at the most liberal rates in Coorg for coffee plantation. British speculators flocked in even from Ceylon and Burma; close at their heels came forward the 'Kodavas (British called it Coorgs) and all of them took to coffee plantation and their hard work and patience answered their expectation well."

So, this reveals that liberal land grants system of the British was confined not only to one specified regions, rather it scattered various parts of the globe. But noticeable exception is that in Coorg, coffee plantation was done jointly both by the Kodavas and the British but this venture was not seen in colonial Assam. The terms of liberal land grants were extremely liberal but its precedent was set by the King Purandar in 1836.

On mere request, the Raja granted to the Assam Tea company an extensive area near Gabharu hills for cultivation of tea in anticipating that in near future his subjects would be able to reap the benefit of this new enterprise.¹⁰¹ But his expectation proved futile.

Mills during his visit to Assam in 1853 said: In a country like Assam, where there is a super-abundance of land and a deficiency of labour, I strongly deprecate the granting of wasteland to natives of the province. Actually, Mills wanted utilization of these lands and supported grants to the outsiders.

Although no distinction was made between the European and the indigenous, the government of Bengal on the recommendation of the Board of Revenue laid down that no grant should be made of less than 500 acres in extent and unless the grantee satisfied the collector that he possessed the required capital and implements for its utilization. The local entrepreneurs were debarred from applying for these grants as very few had fulfilled the necessary wealth qualification.¹⁰² In 1856, on the recommendation of the

commissioner of Assam (Jenkins) the government of Bengal reduced the limit to 200 acres and in special cases even to 100.

Rules introduced by Lord Cornwallis were too liberal and was objected to by the Secretary of the State. Under his direction, the Board of Revenue had to revise some of the provisions which received the approval of the government of Bengal on 30th August 1862. Accordingly, grants were to be limited to an area of 3000 acres. The revised rule enabled the speculators to purchase waste lands at a very low rate. Not only the rules were too liberal but also there was much laxity in their application.¹⁰³

Due to their financial capabilities, the British planters could avail the facilities of the government in opening tea gardens what the local planters could not dream of such venture and those who could do that did that after retirement with their savings.

Thus, with a view to attracting and also to encouraging investors to take up land for cultivation of tea and coffee, waste land grant rules were passed from time to time since 1838. Under these, some land of a lease was held revenue free while others yielded revenue gradually after certain period. Rules were revised in 1854, 1861, 1874 and 1876. Thus with the help of these tools, viz. the Regulation of Wasteland Rules of 1838, the Old Assam Rules of 1854, the Fee Simple Rules of 1861-62 and the Assam Land and Revenue Regulations Act of 1886 – the Colonial Government wanted to grab the vast tract of waste lands more than one half of the extent of the province covering with deep forests, long grasses and bushes.

The Waste and Settlement Rule created another revenue free estate like the Lakhiraj estates. But such type revenue free rule was not framed for the rice cultivation. This type of discriminating rule was incentive to tea plantation and discouragement to cultivation which invited ignition and irritation among the local people.¹⁰⁴

Introduced in 1839, tea was firmly established as the most important cash crop by the seventies. The total acreage under tea increased from 2,311 acres in 1841 to around 8000 acres in 1859 and almost 31,350 acres in 1871. In 1872, the total area taken up by the tea planters in the Brahmaputra valley was officially reported to be 3, 64,990 acres of which only 27,000 acres were under tea. Up to 1870-71, the British tea planters got settlement of 7 lakh acres of land. But only 56,000 acres of land were under tea cultivation; that is 1/8th of total settled land. In 1881 and 1891, the area under tea

cultivation was 710 and 1310 acres and lands settled with the immigrants were 1400 and 522 acres. According to Atkinson, plantations covered only 1.01 percent of the cultivated area of British India in 1895.¹⁰⁵

Tea lands vs. crop-lands: The Colonial government passed several agrarian legislations, viz. Wastelands Settlement Rules – 1854, Fee Simple Rules – 1862 and the Thirty Years Lease Rules – 1876 to favour the planters. Consequently, by 1896-97, a total of 182366 acres of waste lands on fee simple terms were leased out to the planters at a very low cost of littler over rupees 5 per acre. According to the 1881 census, the number of plantation households, mostly European individuals and company shareholders, were 35,181.

The percentage of increase of land under tea was exceptionally high. The period between 1875-1914 shows an increase by 158.44 percent. In contrast to it, the land utilization under traditional crops was considerably lower which resulted in multifold reaction.¹⁰⁶

Paiks and Khels: Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which some individuals are literally owned by others as their property. There are different variants of slavery. Bonded labour is one such form of slavery in India. It may be mentioned that Momai Tamuli Barua became bondsman for Rs.4 prior to his recruitment to the royal service.

Slavery as a recognized institution might have existed in the kingdom of Pragjyotishpur and Kamrup since ancient times. Slavery still continues to a very considerable extent in Assam and these poor creatures are bought and sold everyday for a mere trifle they are valued in the market according to caste; high caste adults sell for about twenty Rupees, boys fifteen and girls from eight to twelve No slaves are allowed to be exported from Assam. But Pemberton mentions in his report of the exports of slaves from Assam in 1809. According to him hundreds slaves were exported from Assam to Bengal in 1809 at the Rs. 2000.¹⁰⁷

Like a bondsman, a Paik had to render his compulsory manual service and other kinds of duties to the state. But in regard to possession of certain political rights, he was sometime treated as a free citizen. Gait states that this was a most valuable privilege whereby the Paiks were saved from much of the oppressions. The Ahom rulers of

medieval period organized the peasantry in such a way that the state could obtain the maximum use of its labour force. This systematic organization was known as the Paik system.

The state during the Ahom regime depended for its growth and existence on the peasants, artisans and workers including slaves and servants who formed the body of the labour force. The aristocracy and the nobility for their maintenance and the peasantry for their own living had to depend on the working classes. Indeed, the peasantry supplied all that was required for the growth and development of the state.

It was one of the laws of the Ahom government that the land and the subjects were equally the property of the state and accordingly not only the houses and the lands, but the cultivators were also assessed.¹⁰⁸

Pratap Singha engaged Momai Tamuli to arrange and organize the peasantry called Paiks in certain order. This arrangement of Paiks into an institutional form came to be known as the Paik system. Prior to this, one man from every family served the state, although some families had 4-6 working men, whereas possibly there were some which had only one. To do away with this disproportionate demand, Momai Tamuli resettled the old village by breaking big families and established new ones and arranged the Paiks into Khels making it compulsory that one member of every *Got* of four Paik was to render service to the state.

The Bhaktas who were loyal to neo-Vaishnavite *satras* exempted from rendering physical labour in the royal house and they have even been excluded from the Paik list.

Though slave trade was illegal, it was immensely profitable and even Marwaris also found indulged in this trade. Hundred slaves were exported from Assam to Bengal in 1809 at the Rs.2000.00¹⁰⁹

Some fellows during the Ahom period borrowed money from the rich peasants and became their slaves or *bandhas* or bondsmen and remained as such until they could repay the debt. One Baloram Atai of Tapa, a village in Kamrup, had mortgaged himself for rupees five and became slave.

At the close of the Ahom period, an estimated 9% of the total populations were slaves and bondsmen. According to the Statistical Report of 1835, the total population of Kamrup district were 1, 93,331. Rutherford stated that out of the estimated population,

28,602 were slaves, 24,740 were bondsmen, 70,286 were females and 25,206 were slave girls.

As per the advice of David Scott, a census was made of the slaves in Kamrup and of the estimated population of 2, 71,944 in Kamrup district, about six percent were slaves and about three percent were bonded men.

In Assam, there was another kind of labourer known as Morakiya who ploughed owner's land. He was neither a bonded labour nor a freeman. John Butler said, 'he was not an equal of his employer, neither was a servant, nor a slave but partaking of all.' According to Gunabhiram, 'he was essentially a free labour'.

Slavery system was prevalent in Goalpara also. Referring to the Zamindari system of Goalpara, Guha has also mentioned the existing slave system in the district. During the time of Buchanan, there were slaves among the appointed agricultural workers. These slaves (Ahom) in addition to their entrusted duties in the houses and cultivation fields of the Zamindars helped them against the ryots. Zamindars employed them in violence and subversive activities. Slave-families were given land for cultivation.¹¹⁰

Slavery was an endeavour of solving the problem of labour through exportation and importation at an accelerated rate which was uncivilized and barbaric in the name of civilization.

Lord Cornwallis attacked slavery in 1789 in a proclamation. Bengal government prevented slave importation by Regulation-X in 1811. Regulation – III of 1832 laid down that all slaves, British or Foreigners, should be considered free. Act V of 1843 provided that the civil courts should not take cognizance of claims to slaves, a measure which abolished the right of slavery and ultimately paved the way for the total eradication of this social evil and it was finally prohibited by the penal code of 1860. In the first half of the 19th century, the British often with the support of enlightened Indian opinion abolished such institutions as suttee (1829), female infanticide, human sacrifice and slavery (1833). Though slavery system was abolished formally in 1843, yet it continued as before. Even after getting legal redemption, most of the slaves and their children continued to work for their masters as before.

To abolish the system, had there been no British in Assam, even then the system itself would have been wiped out gradually and slowly as most of them had died already

and some deserted the land due to the Burmese invasion of Assam. Even at that time too, they became a misnomer.¹¹¹

The nobility lost its old privileges based on wealth and service of the Paiks due to its abolition. Protests against the government's decision of abolition of Paiks and Khel system were made by the members of the Ahom ruling class everywhere. They were joined by the Brahmins and Mahantas of Kamrup as they were also affected by this. Maniram protested against the oppressive British rule, not on behalf of the mass people but on behalf of the upper classes that were hard hit by the abolition of certain feudal privileges such as slavery, forced labour, etc. He became rebel when his interest received withstands at the British hands.

The abolition of Paik (1843) almost crippled the old Ahom aristocracy. Brahmin and Mahanta land owners who had for long depended on slaves and bondsmen for cultivation of their *devottara*, *brahmottara* and *dharmottara* lands were also severely affected. Brahmin slave-holders of Kamrup even held a protest demonstration and submitted to the authorities a bunch of 1000 petitions seeking permission to retain their slaves and bondsmen.

Due to this abolition 'most of the estates of pre-colonial aristocracy became unproductive and most of them were not even in a position to pay the land revenue in the form of money under the colonial system.'¹¹² Like the land owners of Assam, the land owners of Sripuram were also Brahmins and were ritually prohibited to use the plough, cultivation has to be done by the tenants and agricultural labourers.

Normally, the educated members of the Brahmin families when got settled in cities for taking up professional jobs such as lawyers, doctors, they then leased out the land to lower castes. Thus prevailed professional inequality in the society of Assam. But abolition of Paiks by the Act-V of 1843 by Captain Brodie, the newly appointed Principal Assistant of Sibsagar irritated the so-called higher castes and the men of rank found it beneath their dignity to work hard in hand with those who had been till recently their subordinates. The revenue free Khats brought under assessment and they were pushed down to the level of ordinary ryots. Those whose ancestors never lived by digging, ploughing or carrying loads are now reduced to such degrading employments.¹¹³

It is true that behind the abolition of Paiks was the creation and attraction of labourers towards the plantation sector. The Political Agent of Upper Assam urged (1st June, 1836) the necessity of emancipating the unfortunate Assamese and resettling them in the tea districts which would, he hoped, solve to a great extent the problem of procuring labour from outside.

Tea plantation started in 1840 and labour importation began thirteen years later. Abolition of slavery greatly facilitated the movement of labour. On the south, plantation labourers mostly came from the Harijan castes whereas in Assam, they came from 'clean' castes, Harijans and tribes such as Mundas and Santhals.

The greater the quantity of land, the greater the labour required. But in land – abundant Assam, the requirement of labour was far from satisfactory. None was interested to work under the tea-gardens due to their limited wants.

Moreover, many people were engaged in the houses of the nobilities and the royal families. So, there was shortage of labour. It was further aggravated by some rumours: 'those who go to Assam meet death'. Henceforth, abolition of Paik was necessary for removing the shortage.

Though the British talked of the equality by abolishing the Paik system, their inner motive was altogether different. Employment of the labourers as slaves in the gardens was not new for the British. The writings of Dr. Johnson and Horace Walpole prove it. They wrote, 'It has appeared to us that six and forty thousand of African Negroes are sold every year to our plantation alone! It chills one's blood.'¹¹⁴

Abolition of the Paik system was just an eye-wash and double standard step which manifests the hippocratic characters of the white colonists. They often talked of equality, raised voice against apartheid but these were just on their lips.

The exploitation of the tea labourers of Jorhat, Tezpur and Darrang by the planters, had been, till then, kept as a well-guarded secret. The tea labourers were kept in sanctuary-type enclosures. In no case, were they allowed to mix with the local people of the neighbouring villages. The word strike was anathema to the planters.

According to Barpujari, 'the British followed a levelling policy, abolished discriminatory path and slave system narrowed down the gap between high and low castes. But this cannot be accepted wholly or fully. The miserable condition of the coolies

of the tea gardens of Assam was the worst form of serfdom than slavery. The coolies, however, were essentially neither slaves nor serfs; they constituted the newly emerged working class of Assam, bound together by a common interest against capital in its colonial form.

Though there were slaves in Assam during the Ahom period, they were not the worst form and this might be because of flexibility in casteism and racialism in Assamese society in comparison to the other states of India.

British judicial system established the principle of equality and their executives broke the system by inflicting indescribable exactions on the coolies and working classes of Assam. What they did in India, just opposite they did outside of it. They abolished slave system in Assam on one hand and used to kidnap the poor and innocent Chinese labourers on the other, in order to sell them as slaves in Cuba, Peru, Chile and the western coast of the United States. The fate of these Chinese was as tragic as the plight of the ensnared Africans.

Finally, we can say that though slavery was abolished in 1843, a new form of slavery emerged in tea estates where tea-labourers were treated like slaves by their planter masters.¹¹⁵

Migration into the Brahmaputra Valley: According to R. Mehrotra, migration is a necessary element of normal population adjustment and equilibrium within a nation or any sub national spatial unit. The immigration into the Brahmaputra Valley is classified into five categories of persons. (i) Labourers to work in the tea gardens of the valley coming from Bihar, Orissa, Chota Nagpur, North-West Provinces, Central Provinces, United Provinces and Madras; (ii) Farmers settling in the agricultural lands of the valley coming largely from East Bengal; (iii) Immigrants from Nepal engaged in livestock etc.; (iv) Traders and Artisans and (v) Other immigrants such as salary earners, planters, miners, administrators, labourers etc coming from various parts of India.

According to Burton Stein, floods, droughts epidemics, excessive tributes demand stimulated migration. According to Gunabhiram Barua, cheap and fertile land, attractive earnings and easy matrimony caused migration in Assam.¹¹⁶ There was scarcity of labour in Assam as local people were loath to work hard due to their limited wants. The planters complained to Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, regarding the labour scarcity –

'the indigenous population had been wholly insufficient to develop the province'. So it was found necessary to seek for tea garden coolies elsewhere who involved legislation from 1863 to 1901. Moreover, the local people were also not interested to work in the tea gardens. According to Mills, the want of labour in prolific Assam deters speculators from embarking their capital in developing resources.¹¹⁷

The large tract of unoccupied areas under deep forests and sparsely populated lands were the main source of attraction for migration into Assam. Srinavasa says that the greater the quantity of land owned by a family, the greater the input of labour required. So, it is quite natural, if we accept Srinivasa's view and apply it in broader sense in the case of Assam, for depending on the labour forces from other sources to work in the vast lands. The growing economy demanded an increasing labour supply. The cash crop production needed an immense amount of manpower supply which was lacking in Assam.¹¹⁸

It was the British who linked the Indian economy with the world economy by introducing the steam powered ships and the building of the Suez Canal (1869). They produced indigo, jute, cotton, tobacco, tea and coffee for consumption abroad but to produce these goods, they had to rely mainly on the labourers. Srinivasa is right when he says, 'the advent of the plantation marked the beginning of migration of labourers to the two plantation areas: mountainous regions of Assam and Western Ghats. Missionaries were also not lagging behind in this field as some of them were found encouraging people to migrate to Assam and settle in the government waste land. The completion of the Assam Bengal Railway improved communication network and facilitated immigration.

By the end of the 19th century A.D. most of the tribals in Bihar had been evicted from their lands and had to leave for the Assam and the Doors tea gardens and the coat fields of Manbhum. The pangs of emigration were portrayed in their literature:

'All partings are painful;
I will leave you, my friend.
I shall not be happy,
When you go to Assam, brother!

.....

If you are alive, send letters.

If you are dead, come in the dreams.¹¹⁹

Sometime, despite having facilities, the labourers were still then not interested to come. In Assam, tea plantations were established in malarious, lightly populated areas where labourers declined to come. The rumours that those who had gone to Assam none had returned and all had died again aggravated the labour crisis in Assam. In addition to that, the unfavourable climate, Kala-zar, lack of medical treatment, insufficient food and many other factors helped in increasing the labour crisis as many immigrant labour deserted due to the fear-psychosis of mortality.¹²⁰

H.L. Johnson, Commissioner of Assam, adopted some measures in 1885 (May) to encourage immigration. The fares of trains and ships were decreased and even revenue free land was given. He said, "I have now authority under rule 35, section-2 of the Settlement Rules, to allow a revenue free term of three years to encourage immigration".¹²¹

Heavy burden of revenue and taxes and thick population density compelled peasants to migrate from one district. Kachari people from Kamrup and Mangaldoi subdivision migrated to the tea districts due to revenue hike and epidemic havoc. With a view to discouraging this habits, Hopkinson proposed the rates of revenue equal in all the districts and even got the approval of the Government of Bengal.¹²²

Immigration was mainly due to the growth of tea plantation and the available cultivable land. Thus, so far the growth of population of the Brahmaputra Valley as a whole during 1881 to 1931 is concerned, it was environmental and medical factors combined with economic forces that generated declining movement in death rates and increasing movement in immigration rather than the biological factors which are generally responsible for the rapid growth of population.

The number of deaths and desertions during the period of civil wars and invasions of Assam by the Burmese was enormous, as is evident from the fact that in 1826, the population stood at 8,30,000 souls. The administrative confusion, oppression and extortion in the early days of the company's rule reduced the number, according to Pemberton, to less than seven districts. The population of Assam proper including Goalpara exceeded twelve lakhs and this rose to about 15 lakhs in 1872. This increase

was due to the influx of outsiders, imported labourers particularly to meet the growing demands. Of eighteen lakhs in 1881 nearly three lakhs were immigrants and their number reached over six lakhs in 1901.

1826 – 8.3 lakhs

1853 – 12 Lakhs

1872- 15 Lakhs

1881 - 18 Lakhs

Due to the rapid growth of population in Assam, density of population also began to augment spontaneously.

Density of Population Per Sq. mile (in the Brahmaputra Valley)

District	1872	1881	1891
Kamrup	146	167	164
Darrang	69	80	90
Nowgong	68	82	90
Sibsagar	64	79	96
Lakhimpur	27	40	56
Goalpara	98	113	115

Source: Appendix 3, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, A. Guha, p.279

According to census of Assam, 1931, Nowgong was the district where there was the greatest concentration of immigrants from East Bengal. These immigrants occupied large areas of unsettled waste land.¹²³ The area under cultivation, the nature of the crops grown and the extent of the livestock may be accepted as the best standards of agricultural prosperity. But these elements were found absent in colonial agricultural sector of Assam. Despite that, agricultural prosperity flourished in Assam due to the availability and fertility of the soil.

The Ahoms constructed more roads, embankments, canals, and bridges in and around their capital. About 90% of the roads in old Sibsagar district were built by the

Ahoms. This proves that they did more for the cultivation and welfare of the peasants. But the British only got them repaired and that too restricted in limited numbers.

For the improvement of agriculture, even Muhammad Bin Tughluq in medieval period (14th century) opened an agricultural department in India.¹²⁴ But the so-called modern people with modern outlook hardly did such steps even outside of Assam. The British neither set up Agriculture Technology Development Centre nor Agriculture Information Centre to bring revolutionary change in agricultural sector. The colonial government sucked the blood of peasants and squeezed them like lemons through the maximization of land revenue and others like that.

Measures for agricultural development (?): Jenkins realized that development of a province by and large depended on the improvement of communication and wanted to set apart a certain percentage of revenue for repair and construction of roads. For the protection of cultivation, he emphasized the need for gradual restoration of the old causeways which were essential as embankments. But it is doubtful how sincerely he spent the revenue for the protection and development of cultivation.

In spite of the systematic revenue maximization, the government did nothing to improve the condition of the agriculture. Unfortunately in Assam, industrial growth and development had no links with the agricultural sector. Foreign government cared more for revenue than for the material improvement of the people. They were interested in both a highly bureaucratic unaccountable administration and in the exploitation of the vast natural resources of the conquered province.¹²⁵

Anandaram, the harbinger of modern age suggested to Mills in 1853 for the all round development of agriculture. To improve the peasantry, he stressed the need of production of varied and marketable crops by improved methods of cultivation. He wanted the government to take the lead in bringing agricultural experts from abroad to teach the people regarding the means connected with agriculture. He also wanted the government to furnish modern technology to the cultivators and advocated the importation of foreign technical knowhow and pleaded for the setting up of a number of technical schools to teach the students to construct implements of agriculture and other works of utility. But all became the cry in the wilderness as the authority showed little interest on it. Among other things, he also pointed out that the implements of agriculture

were the rudest and the animals used in the plough were the 'feeblest' and manuring of fields were 'ill-understood' and asked the authority to introduce new modern technology by replacing these drawbacks. However, he expressed sorrow due to the authorities' deaf ear to these.

Some of the elites of Assam province tried their best to bring agricultural change through their writings and thereby tried to increase the income of the peasants. The book 'Krishi Darpan' published and written by Kefayat Ullah, Sadar Munsiff of Guwahati in 1853, was mainly written for the cultivators of Assam. The book gave instructions on tilling lands, selection of seeds, and discussed the utility of crops. The Monthly Journal 'Orunodoi' in 1854 appealed to the people of Assam to make use of the book.¹²⁶ But the efforts ended in smoke.

It would be biased and partial if we do not mention the name of Dr. Voelcker. Like some native, some foreigners also made recommendation for the improvement of agriculture. Dr. Voelcker, Consulting Chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society, exchanged views with the delegates and experts in two conferences held at Simla in 1890 and 1893. The report which he finally submitted extended to all matters affecting agricultural improvement.

The character of the soil and the manners suited to them, the diseases of cattle and plants, their causes, the means by which they may be prevented, minimized the improvement of fuel and fodder supplies, the reclamation of the wasteland economic products, improvement of old and introduction of new staples and agricultural implements, possible reform in the methods and practices of cultivation.

For the bad agricultural and economic condition of the peasants, they themselves were also responsible. They did not take little interest in raising non-food crops in an organized way and showed indifference in sericulture and horticulture. Active interest and participation and land used for different kinds of farming could have developed their economy. According to Bhalla, the use of land for orchards, dairy, goats, poultry, fishery and bee-keeping was not extensive and small even today.¹²⁷

But according to Barpujari, lack of strong embankments and device for the protection of land from the frequent ravages of floods, primitive mode of agriculture and feeblest animals prevented the ryots from raising more than one crop throughout the year.

Seed is a critical and basic input for attaining sustained growth in agricultural production. So the use of high-yielding varieties and their timely and regular replacement are important for maintaining yield levels of crops. But the peasants of Assam were neither acquainted with this nor did the government take effective measures for this. To avail the services namely credit, marketing services, services relating to seeds, fertilizer, agricultural implements, there was lack of co-operative office. Even the white colonists also remained silent to it. According to Bhalla, this service is not very encouraging even today.¹²⁸ There was not much change in the set of agricultural implements when the British occupied this land in the early part of the 19th century.

Continuity in Agri-mode: The mode of cultivation continued to be primitive and the implements, he used, were of the archaic type. According to Barpujari, the apparatus and process of agriculture throughout the region, both hills and plains, remain till date almost the same except that chemical fertilizers and power tillers have come to be used in a very limited way in some rice-fields.¹²⁹

Green revolution coupled with the introduction of new technology changed the mode of production in agriculture resulting in the emergency of capitalism in agriculture. But in Assam, such change was hardly seen due to the primitive mode of agricultural tools. As already mentioned, Anandaram gave a clear picture regarding the mode of agriculture implements in this way – the implements of agriculture were the rudest, the animals used in the plough were the feeblest and the conditioning and manuring of fields for better harvest were ill-understood.¹³⁰

Bullock was used for ploughing in Assam and other states of India during the colonial period. But unfortunately, while the peasants used diesel and electricity power for ploughing in the west, the same was not applied in the field of cultivation of Assam and other Indian states. Even today, while agriculturally advanced states use more of diesel or electricity for most operations, the poorer states are still relying on bullock power. Like ploughing, animal power was used in Assam in harvesting and threshing also. People were unaware of the use of power and government steps were also not satisfactory in this field.

Except to some extent in plantation, the application of modern technology in cultivation sector was far from satisfactory which had vast prospect of fetching

revolutionary change. Ignorance and indifference of the people were also equally responsible for that. Despite repeated request, the authority showed little interest in this field. Even today, according to Situation Assessment Survey undertaken in 2003, nearly 60% farmers do not have access to any information on modern technology from any source. According to Situation Assessment Survey, undertaken in 2003, the percentage of farmer households accessing information through radio was 28.9, extension worker 5.9, TV 9.3, Newspaper 10.2, input dealer 8, other progressive farmers 15.9 and any source 46.1.¹³¹ To improve the quality of agriculture, there was lack of information centre in Assam. If such centres were there in Assam at that time, then peasants could have accessed some suggestions and recommendation and developed their economy. As said earlier, like today, there was no Agriculture Technology Development and Information Centre in colonial Assam. As a result, prospect of high yielding became hazy but despite that, peasants got no respite from revenue burden which gave birth to disdain in the minds of the peasants.

Water is to land what food is to human body. The part played by irrigation in Indian agriculture is all the greater due to the uncertainty, unequal distribution, as well as the insufficient rainfall. In large parts of the country, rainfall is the only source of water supply and its failure causes almost famine condition.¹³²

The actual success of agriculture in India largely depends on nature. Cultivation depends on climate and if there are irregularities in the climatic rhythm, the programme of cultivation is upset. The greatest single climatic factor which dominates Indian agriculture is the monsoon. It rains sometimes when he needs sunshine whereas it shines sometimes when he needs rain. Due to the uncertainty of monsoon, the peasant must expect upon occasion to see much of his year's work wiped out by a cloudburst, hailstrom or a plague of grass-hoppers.¹³³

Positive and encouraging results from the improved west Jamuna canal (1820) and opening of eastern Jamuna could not have remained unknown to Anandaram. The Grand Upper Anicut (1844) under the Cauvery Delta Scheme, the Dowlesh Waran and the Madduru Anicuts (1848) under the Godavari Delta scheme were already completed by that time and the construction of the Ganga canal and the Krishna Delta irrigation project works was then in progress.

Large scale irrigation and water supply could have changed the pattern of agriculture and brought green revolution in the agriculture sector. But the government did nothing to provide irrigation facilities to the peasants as scarcity of water was an impediment of agriculture in the state.

Canal-irrigated lands gave much higher yields than unirrigated lands. The yields of irrigated and unirrigated land in the Punjab (1896-97) bear the testimony to it.¹³⁴

Crops	Irrigated (Kg per hectare)	Non-irrigated (Kg per hectare)
Rice	1,308	298
Wheat	1,028	645
Barley	667	630
Jawar	661	419
Bajra	661	409
Maize	1,359	749
Gram	846	585
Sugarcane	1,851	1,078
Cotton	112	64

Source: *A People's History of India - Indian economy- 1858-1914*, Irfan Habib, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007.

By initiating such canal-irrigation system, the colonial government could have increased the incidence of crops in Assam also. But they cared for revenue maximization not for the agricultural improvement of the state which invited disdain against the alien government

Today, farmers irrigate their lands from various sources viz. tubewells, wells, canals, river spring during Khariff and Rabi season. But unfortunately, the peasants of Assam during that time depended on rain and river for irrigation. Even today, it remains unchanged to some extent.

Forests are a handmaid to agriculture and it has immense influence on climate, rainfall, water supply, flood control, soil erosion, fertility of the soil and direction of winds.¹³⁵ The colonial government hardly planted and extended the areas of forest lands. They rather reserved and engulfed forests lands in the name of waste lands and destroyed and exported them to their native land. Large-scale destruction of forest lands invited

deforestation and deforestation invited some evils, viz. bad drought, floods, soil erosion etc. resulting in bad effects on agriculture.

In fertile and land-abundant Assam, peasants were least interested towards fertilizer and manure. But that does not mean that they did not know it. Use of manure was known to the cultivators but they made limited use of it. Generally, sugarcane was manured. In Nowgong, the growers used to manure tobacco. With no scarcity of cultivable land, the peasants did nothing to increase the productivity of the land. Though area under cultivation was going in all the districts of the valley, the average productivity stagnated. As a result, there could have been no improvement of the peasants' lot. They were used to produce the same crop from the same land annually and were not accustomed to rotation of crops. Measures and other improvements of the soil such as chemical fertilizers, modern implements, seeds, etc. were not used. The cultivators had no special efforts except in the protection of the crops from wild animals and other.¹³⁶

To get rid of the exactions of the insects, the farmers of south-west Kamrup of that period probably used medicinal plants viz- Jarmoni (a wild plant) and the skin of fruits viz-sumathira (a kind of fruit) in their crop-fields. Moreover, leeches of several varieties abound in all parts of Assam. All certain season, particularly during the rains, every bush and blade of grass is frequented by them.

Peasants at that time had to bear the bit of leeches especially at the time of ploughing, harvesting and threshing which was a natural and horrible picturesque of that time. People, probably to get rid of them, applied salt or cucumber or its leaves which was considered as anti-leeches. To kill the insects, viz. caterpillars, larva, grasshopper, locusts, crickets etc. the peasants usually and naturally planted some green medicinal plants (Jarmoni) in the crop-fields and sometime even dead-frogs. Fire was caught at night to attract and kill the insects. Even today, some peasants catch fire on the tyres at night to kill the insects.

Despite that, the matter of regret and concern is that when Europe was flooded with the emergence of Green Revolution in agriculture with the application of modern technology, the same people showed their little interest in their colonial lands. Being basically traders, their main intention was to take not give return for that.

But today, Situation Assessment Survey of the Farmers (SASF-2003) brings out the fact that the proportion of farmers using pesticides during rabi season was the highest in West Bengal (65%) followed by Punjab, Assam and Haryana.

The use of chemical pesticides and other agro-chemicals are getting reduced being banned globally because of their toxic effects on human beings and his live-stock, residual toxicity, environmental problems, pest out-breaks and drastic effects on beneficial insects.

Today the scientist are trying to develop a holistic system of tackling pests to make it more eco-friendly, economically viable and socially acceptable for the farmers.

Use of bio-control agents and bio-pesticides are increasingly gaining acceptance with farmers and, therefore, Integrated Management Practices (IMP) have been adopted since 1985 to tackle the pests and diseases of major crops.¹³⁷ When IMP have been adopted today to tackle the pests and diseases of crops, our ancestors not using chemical fertilizers and pesticides emancipated the natural environment from being profanated and jeopardised. Indeed, they were the harbinger and sentinel of nature in true sense of the term.

Land Reforms (?): The land reforms measures made the government supper power in agricultural relations and they payed little attention to landlords, jagirdars, zamindars and peasants. The government gave no opportunity to landlords and others to take any measures to provide technology and improved agricultural input to farming. Foreign government of India did not implement radical land reform as it was not possible due to some political reasons.

It is said that humanitarianism underlaid many of the reforms introduced by the British in the first half of the 19th century.¹³⁸ It can be accepted to some extent. They brought revolutionary change in Indian society by eliminating some social injustice and evils.

On the contrary, their land reforms measures did little benefit to the Indian peasants. They sucked and squeezed the bloods of the Indian peasants through their land reform measures and finally constructed graveyard for them. Indeed, land reforms and revenue administration enriched and empowered colonists and impoverished and pauperized the indigenious.

The Ahoms encouraged peasants for cultivation and, therefore, new lands were given to them either revenue free or for a lump sum of produce as revenue. But such venture was found to be rarely taken by the British.

The land reforms and revenue administration of the British was not encouraging for the Indians. Their land reforms made them superpower in agricultural sector. They gave no scope to land owners and peasants to develop agricultural technology through which they could have developed their fortune.¹³⁹ Actually, the government did not want drastic change in agriculture. Development of agriculture in Assam would develop the economy of the local people – what they did not like. They wanted local people to become economically dependent and parasite on them.

Gandhiji very rightly observed that if villages live, who can perish India and if villages perish, who can save India.¹⁴⁰ Indian villagers are mostly cultivators and their mainstay is agriculture. The British were well-known to the fact that to cripple the Indian economy, attack on agriculture would be the proper. With this aim and motive in view, they most probably sought to destroy the traditional agriculture of Assam. The revolt of Phulaguri, Patharughat and Rangia were the best examples of this. They never wanted to see a rich and prosperous colony. That's why they did not introduce any modern method of technology in Assam what was available in technologically rich England.

Even some of the Commissioners of Assam also did not encourage the cultivators to cultivate traditional crops. Jenkins encouraged the cultivators to cultivate such crops which were easily marketable. Motive behind this encouragement was to increase the paying capacity of the ryots.¹⁴¹ Probably, they sought to increase the paying capacity of the ryots not because of improving the economy of the local cultivators but because of the collection of more revenue from them. They liked to squeeze and suck the local through revenue and tax augmentation. They never sought material improvement of the local people.

The lease of Mouzadar is of short duration and his office is insecure.¹⁴² Probably, they did not introduce long lease duration and secured office for the mouzadar thinking it would strengthen his position in the locality and bring rejuvenation in agriculture. But it is also true that some of the mouzdars inflicted indescribable exactions on the peasants of Assam.

It was a matter of great concern for the peasants of Assam that they did not get any return from their government Revenue collected from the peasants were not spent for their development and it became transparent in 1888-89 when a local board grant was needed for the renovation of the Janji bund to protect thousands of acres of paddy land from inundation.

In addition to that, the local taxes collected from the rice cultivators were spent in building the roads and bridges mainly convenient for tea gardens.

Both public and private funds were spent for the tea cultivation in Assam by the colonial bureaucrats. They gave every encouragement to the colonial planters and even granted leases on very favourable terms for the cultivation of new staples. They prepared waste land rule for their people's interest. Funds were rarely spent for the cultivation of rice, mustard oil, etc. So, local crops interests were totally neglected by them. Owing to this type of parochial nature, local cultivators did not like the colonial bureaucrats and held them responsible for their wretched condition. Behind the hike of revenue and tax, they suspected the hands of the bureaucrats and, therefore, expressed their anguish in the revolt of 1861 and 1893-94.

The British developed the communication network for profitable exploitation of the region. The tea producing districts had a better communication system than the non-tea producing districts of colonial Assam.¹⁴³ This is an example of deprivation. But there are many examples of such deprivation.

Sir Henry Cotton (the Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1896-1902) encouraged the planters to take up lands for ordinary cultivation.¹⁴⁴ It proves that the government in addition to plantation, encouraged their men in cultivation also. But, local people were neither encouraged in plantation nor in cultivation. Their parochial and discriminatory policy ignited the minds of the common people.

Throughout the 19th century, the government had been primarily guided by financial consideration; priority was always on quicker and larger collection of revenue rather than on increased production and efficient distribution. Complete protection of the peasants from the oppression had been a mere dream in Assam under the British.

Instead of giving protection, the government even incited the planters against the cultivators. Planters' disdain and anguish towards the local cultivators began to argument

in such manner that they even disrupted inter-village communications by fencing in portions of existing public roads and denying the right of way to villagers.¹⁴⁵

Greater concentration on plantation ultimately brought anathema in agriculture resulting in shortage of food. At the time of shortage of food, the entire population of tea gardens was fed on imported rice.¹⁴⁶

Colonial government and natural calamities: Early records show that the Ahom rulers in order to extend cultivation built embankments with Paik labourers to prevent frequent flood from the Brahmaputra and its innumerable tributaries. Some natural and human factors also sometime handicapped the agricultural extension of the Ahom rulers. But the Ahom rulers overcame these problems by fully utilizing the existing manpower and advanced technology.¹⁴⁷

Like the Ahom period, the natural calamities like flood, fire, earthquake, drought and cattle disease aggravated the situation of Assam in colonial period also. Locusts and white ants did not lag behind in their destructive operations. The Government's measures to tackle these were not satisfactory. The government instead of adopting some relief measure to protect the victims, they were found busy in collection and maximization of revenue.

Flood of varying intensity was almost an annual occurrence in Assam. Due to the flood, there was fall of harvest. No attempt was made to raise embankments or devise means for the protection of the land from ravages of the floods. There was growing demand for such protective measures.¹⁴⁸

Like flood havoc, there was locust havoc in Assam during the first half and even the second half of the 19th century. There was large scale destruction of harvests of locusts in the district of Nowgong in 1822 resulting in scarcity of food. The ravage was not confined to the crops alone. The locusts ate up the leaves of all fruits and other trees. A second blight was noticed in 1840. The third occurred in 1858 and this time, the ravage of locusts was aggravated by the appearance of other insects.¹⁴⁹ Though the officials of the government took note of the damage of crops caused by locusts, but the steps taken by them was doubtful and not satisfactory.

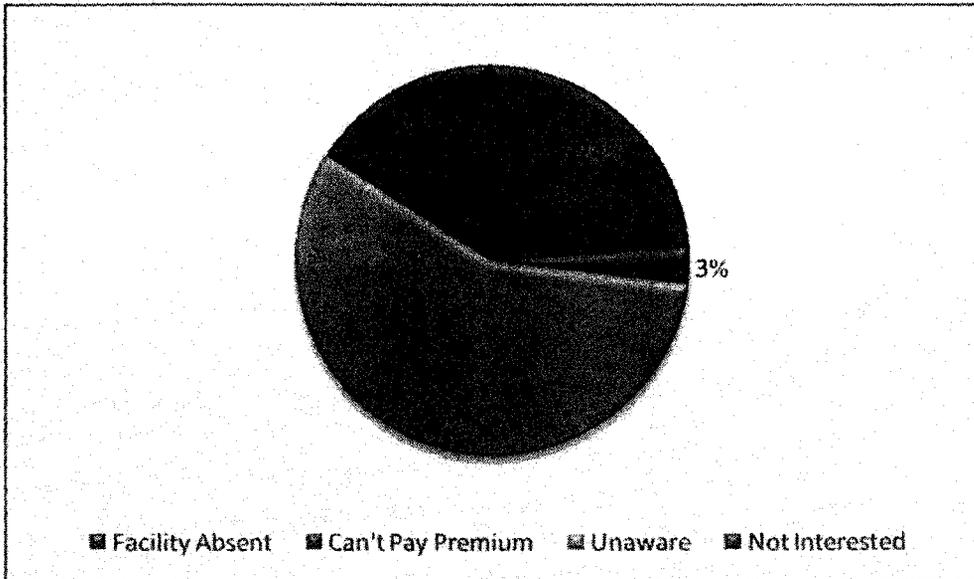
Assam was not the only state squeezed by the British during the time of famine and natural calamities. In the year 1770, there was a great famine in Burdwan (Bengal).

The revenue statistics for Burdwan shows that this rich district was so optimally squeezed till the time of famine that there was no scope for revenue maximization. In the year of famine, revenue raised from Burdwan was Rs. 40, 57,432.¹⁵⁰ The habit of collection of tax and revenue was in their bloods and veins and it continued upto their death. Question of humanity was secondary; revenue was their primary and principal motive.

According to Srinivasa, humanitarianism underlaid many of the reforms introduced by the British in the first half of the 19th century. Humanitarianism resulted in many administrative measures to fight famine, control epidemics etc.¹⁵¹ The British government brought some radical change in our society by eliminating social evils from the society through reforms. But in such measures, they were helped by Rajaram Mohan Ray, Vidyasagar, Ranade, etc. But what policy they did adopt towards agriculture that hardly benefited the Indians. Their role in fighting natural calamities like famine, drought, flood etc. revealed their double standard and hippocratic nature. They constituted sometime some committees, sometime conducted some investigations. But they were all eye-wash. These humanitarian people's eyes were on the wealth and the revenue, not on the famine, drought and on the floods.

The people of Assam produced crops only for their annual need. Henceforth, there was scarcely surplus for sale or for bad days like drought, flood etc.¹⁵² So, their condition became deplorable when crops damaged due to floods or drought. Moreover, to compensate their loss, there was no crop insurance system. The colonial government was also not interested for giving compensation for the damage caused by natural calamities.

For their miserable and deplorable condition, they themselves were also responsible. Even today, the extent of crop insurance is very limited. According to the 'Situation Assessment Survey of the Farmers' undertaken at the all India level by the National Sample Survey organization of the Ministry of Statistics and Plan Implementation, Government of India' during 2003, only 4% of farmer households reported ever having insured their crops. Among those who had never insured their crops were found to be unaware of the practice of crops insurance.¹⁵³



Source: G.S. Bhalla, *Condition of Indian Peasantry*, pp. 6, 7.

Due to the drought and floods, many crops-fields damaged and it gave birth to scarcity of foods. Due to the fall of harvest, the prices of food grains rose. Sometime, food grains were not found even at high cost. A.D. Phukan described the year 1851 in this manner— 'People in some parts of Darrang and Kamrup were actually obliged to dispose of their children and to part with their valuable ornaments and utensils for a few seers of rice due to famine.'¹⁵⁴

The prices of food-grains were rising and many starvation deaths were reported from Nowgong in the bad season of 1896. On October 16 of that year, troops had to be called out there to suppress a riotous outburst against the Banias who had cornered the grain market. Conditions were further worsened by the great earthquake of 1897 that caused many deaths and havoc over many hundreds of acres of farm land.¹⁵⁵

III

Trade & Commerce in Pre- & Colonial Assam:

During the Ahom Period, Assam had good trade and commercial relation with her neighbouring states, viz. Tibet, Bhutan, Burma, Bengal, etc. Treaty with the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha was of reciprocal and liberal commerce facilitating free intercourse between the subjects in Bengal and Assam, permitting the merchants to proceed

anywhere in Assam in boats loaded with merchandise and removing all earlier restrictions. Actually, this treaty opened the gate of trade.

In Ahom period, Assam had trade relations with Bengal. There was export and import between these two states. Assam exported to Bengal stick lac, Muga Silk, Muga cloth, Munjeet (Indian madder), black pepper, cotton, ivory, bell-metal vessels, mustard seed, iron hoes, slaves, thaikol fruits etc. In 1808 and 1809 when the country was still suffering from the effect of long internal dissension and its inhabitants were living in a most unsettled and precarious state of society, the exports and imports to and from Bengal amounted to Rs. 3,59,200.

(Exports from Bengal Rs. 2, 28,300

Export from Assam Rs. 1, 30,900

Rs. 359,200 ¹⁵⁶

Though Assam had trade relations with her neighbours, the economy of Assam during the Ahom regime was backward and use of money was limited and trade among the peasantry was largely absent; everything was produced at home. Monetization came very late in Assam economy. Money, therefore, became hardly collected at the hands of the peasants. Cultivation and production of money in Assam was very limited till the second half of the 18th century. ¹⁵⁷

In 1809, trade between Bhootan and Assam was said to amount to two lakhs of rupees per annum, even when the latter country was in a most unsettled state; the exports from Assam were lac, madder, silk, erendi silk and dried fish. The Bhootias imported woolen cloths, gold dust, salt, musk, horses, the celebrated Tibet chowries and Chinese Silk. As the state of affairs in Assam became more distracted, this trade necessarily declined, but under all these disadvantages, the Khumpa Bhootias or Lassa merchants, just prior to the Burmese invasion, brought down gold, which alone amounted to upwards of 70,000 rupees. But so severely has the trade suffered from the occupation of the country by the Burmese that in 1833 two Bhootia merchants only came down from the hills, when Lieut. Rutherford had the charge of the purgunnah of Darrang. ¹⁵⁸

The British were attracted to the north-east not only by the possibility of extracting the raw materials and marketing the English goods in the region but also by the prospects of trade with China, Burma and Tibbet. ¹⁵⁹ Basically being business-minded, the

British understood that the future economy of a country depended on road and communication. That's why they laid more importance on it so as to boost their trade and economy. Of course, it brought reward for them. Jenkins and Fisher discovered the route and it opened the lines of communication facilitating the merchants to enter with varied goods. Raw materials and forest resources sounded the economy which helped them in establishing a sound and stable government in Assam.¹⁶⁰

When the British came to Assam, the availability of cash was limited in day-to-day transactions and it was difficult for the peasants to go to the market to seek relief. Assamese Peasants very lately came into contact with the trade economy. Of course, Assamese peasants were not the only peasants that came lately with it. The entire Indian picture was more or less the same. The Patidar of Gujarat are a peasant caste who took to trade and commerce only during the closing decades of the 19th century.¹⁶¹

In course of time, the resources, manufactures and the trade in North-East India passed into the complete control of the British Raj. The trade was ultimately used as an instrument of colonial control and governance. It was so vital to the life and existence of the people in the region that the government could always dictate its own terms and suppress the anti-British plots and revolts.

So long there was native government in Assam, withy and prosperity went hand to hand. But arrival of the British, sheltered is to the ground. Hill-plains cordial relation during the time of the Ahoms was disturbed by the British. Though the colonial government at the initial stage of their rule tried to maintain unity between the hills and the plains, later they changed their policy due to longer political considerations of trade and defence.¹⁶²

The people of Assam were unaware of the term 'market economy.' British arrival let them know of it. They asked people to grow crops for commercial purpose which would give money to them and sound economy.

David Scott created taste among the Assamese for commodities not locally available and gradually *hats* and markets were established in and around the Sadar station where traders from Dacca and Calcutta arrived there with loads of foreign goods. They collected local produce in exchange of foreign goods. The growth of tea, coal and oil industries had stimulated the interest in cash crops. This together with the introduction of

abkari opium and the liberal issue of licenses for liquor shops led to an increasing demand of money in the new economy. The money economy gradually out-weighed the barter system. However, the limited flow of currency was a serious check on the Capital formation.¹⁶³

The introduction of money as the medium of exchange without a substantial increase in the existing currency inevitably fell crushingly on the ryots for whom there was no alternative but to leave their hearths and home to find shelter even in the adjoining hills. People not only in the hilly regions but in the plain also felt it difficult to pay tax and revenue in cash. Moreover, there were no markets in close proximity to sell their produced goods and therefore, the common people were harassed and became fed up with the tax and revenue collection policy of the British. Actually, the British introduced monetary economy just to meet their revenue demand. But people were dissatisfied as they were not acquainted with this new system.

The rural peasants of north Kamrup and Mangaldoi faced problem in adjusting with the new market economy. They got less opportunity to sell their produce in cash whenever necessary and because of this problem they could not pay their revenue to the Mouzadars timely. Same problem developed in payment of revenue by the Mouzadars to the government.¹⁶⁴

Commercialization of Agriculture: According to Irfan Habib, the term 'commercialization of Agriculture' is used to describe the extension of trade and money relations in India's countryside. The commercialization of agriculture refers to the process of production of crops for market to be sold for cash rather than for family use or subsistence which dominated Indian agriculture from times immemorial until the arrival of the British in India. The process commenced sometime in the beginning of the 19th century and gained momentum after the middle of the same.

The commercialization of agriculture had progressed mostly in those tracts where the crops were largely grown for export. It brought transformation in agriculture and thus agriculture became capitalistic. Need for cash, activities of the new class of commercial middlemen, village market linked with world market, agricultural policy of the government, development of roads and railways, impact of the American civil war, opening of the Suez Canal (1869) – all these led to the emergence of commercialization

of agriculture in India.¹⁶⁵ Due to the commercialization of Indian agriculture, the income of the agriculturists increased, self-sufficiency of village disappeared, new crops took the place of traditional crops and the market of Indian agricultural crops widened. Anyway, commercialization of agriculture affected the balance of the village economy.

For the vast majority of poorer peasants, commercialization was often a forced process, as money was needed to meet the growing demand of revenue and rent in cash. Coimbatore peasants once told a British collector that they were growing cotton simply because they could not take it; the grain they might have cultivated would have been consumed by them, whereas now they went half-fed but at least had the money with which to meet revenue demands.¹⁶⁶

Rural indebtedness is an evil which has accumulated over very many years in the past and passed from generation to generation. Sir M. L. Darling once said that it has long been recognized that indebtedness is no new thing in India. What really new was the significance it acquired after the establishment of British rule? Darling was of the view that extravagance and improvidence of the agriculturist was responsible for his debt. The views of the Deccan Riots Commission (1875) that 'undue importance has been given to the expenditure on marriage and other festivals but it rarely appears as the nucleus of his indebtedness. Nor would it be true to say that the moneylender and the method of his business were to mainly blame for the indebtedness and poverty of the agriculturist. Indebtedness has not been so much the result of poverty but a cause of poverty. Poverty was more the cause than the effect of indebtedness.

A Society steeped in debt is necessarily a social volcano. Discontent between classes is bound to arise and smouldering discontent is always dangerous. The exploitation of the peasantry at the hands of the moneylender shattered the traditional peace and harmony of village life and created in its place tension, anger and a smouldering feeling of revenge.¹⁶⁷

An important consequence of the growing demand of money in the new economy was the growing indebtedness of the peasants which drew swarms of moneylenders and middlemen into Assam province. The Keya and the Mahajan assumed a prominent place in the economy of the region.

Without adequate monetization of the economy, the British demand to pay revenue in cash caused problem for the Assamese peasants. The Marwari Shopkeepers found this situation ripe for lending money and thus multiplied the earning rate. They came forward to advance loans to the peasants to enable them to pay the revenue. This loan was advanced at an interest rate of one anna per month per rupee, in other words 75%.

The market of the peasant economy had been completely in the grip of the Marwaris since the advent of the British. Peasants used to receive cash advances from the Marwari traders as against pledged crops and mortgage.¹⁶⁸ Out of 9,801 professional moneylenders in Assam as per the 1891 Census Report, only 1793 were in the Brahmaputra Valley (1,211 were in Kamrup alone); of the rest, were in the Surma Valley.¹⁶⁹ Loanees had to mortgage movable and immovable property such as land, land documents, ornaments, utensils etc. Cases were not rare when peasant loanees failed to redeem the mortgage and lost their mortgaged property forever.

As the Peasants could not pay so much of taxes, their arrears went on ever increasing and thereby paved the way for rapid growth of indebtedness and pauperization. It is obvious that non-realization of taxes forced the ryots to sell his or her lands at a very cheap rate. Even household utensils were not spared for. Marriage, purchase of cattle and rituals also forced the ryots to run to take loan from Mahajans and others.

Massive fiscal pressure due to the maximization of land revenue led to increasing indebtedness in the villages caused peasants' flight. Peasants' flight due to revenue hike and indebtedness is not new. So to get ride of the exactions of the Bhog-Patis (Tax collectors) many peasants abandoned their villages which became desolate as described by Varahmihir in the 6th Century. As oppression of the Jagirdars for the collection of revenue on the peasants increased, the number of absconding peasants grew resulting in decline of agriculture.¹⁷⁰

Regarding the incidence of indebtedness in different states of India, Situation Assessment Survey undertook a survey in 2003. According to G.S. Bhalla, the established number of indebted farmer households is 4536 and percentage of indebted farmer households is 18.10 in Assam. But regarding the incidence of indebtedness in

colonial Assam, G.S. Bhalla is silent. The Situation Assessment Survey data on indebtedness brings out that at all India level, 60.4% of rural households were farmer households and 48.6 of these were in debt. But states with very low incidence of indebtedness were the hill states of Meghalaya, Arunachal and Uttarankhand.¹⁷¹

Decline of the nobility was followed by the decline of the old crafts. The decline of the crafts was neither sudden nor totally unexpected. The commercial treaty of 1793 between the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha and the English East India Company inflicted the first blow on the traditional crafts of Assam.¹⁷² The ideological make-up of the British government led them to believe, notwithstanding the fact that India was now to serve the ends of the industrial revolution, that the new India could be created as a mirror image of England.¹⁷³

The British government resorted to the policy of Laissez-faire in order to flood the Indian markets with machine-made goods of England. In pursuance of this policy, the government imposed nominal import industries on British goods and boosted the export of raw materials to England. Thus, their discriminatory commercial and industrial policy helped them.

Like the Indian handicrafts, Chinese handicrafts also met decline at the hands of the colonial government. For example, the new tariff system encouraged the foreigners to import foreign goods to China without any restrictions. It caused a serious damage to the nascent industries of China.¹⁷⁴

The indigenous industries of Assam were neglected to make way for new enterprises which were European in capital and management. Consequently, a situation developed in which the traditional economy of Assam was totally disrupted. European goods were popularized in Assam and the introduction of the finished goods reduced the demand of the local products. The imported salt, for example, resulted in the depreciation of the Tibetan Salt. The Tibetan pony also lost its demand in Assam since the roads and other means of transport emerged in the scene. The mill-made cloths and woolens pushed the indigenous handloom products out of market. The introduction of synthetic rubber displaced the Indian-rubber while the indiscriminate trapping of the rubber forest caused the natural end of the rubber trade. Similarly, the Wildlife Protection Policy reduced the

prospect of elephant trade. In the changed situation, the demand for the local products declined drastically and this reduced their purchasing power.

The businessmen from outside the region not only imported goods for marketing locally but they even specialized in manufacturing the items of local market. Some local people were employed by the outsiders to manufacture local implements and emphasis was given on such implements which had liking in the locality. A number of indigenous industries particularly spinning and weaving of cotton and silk continued to exist and met domestic requirements, but their qualities being comparatively poor, they could hardly compete with cheaper and better varieties imported from abroad. Likewise increasing import of brass-copper iron wares hit the local artisans hard while the gold washers took to agriculture when they found their time-honoured pursuits less economic.¹⁷⁵

Export of raw materials from India, investment of British capital in industries in India, mercantilism and restrictions on import from India changed the nature of demand from new educated classes. Import of factory-goods from England, free trade policy and other policies of government, organizational weakness of the Indian handicrafts – all these led to the decline of cottage industries of Assam. The decline started by the beginning of the 19th century and got accelerated after 1850.

Throughout British rule, India was mercilessly impoverished. Her famous manufactures were ruined and poor artisans and craftsmen driven to make out a living from primitive agriculture.¹⁷⁶ The cottage industry in India had, in the past, acted as a safety valve for those who depended on agriculture because it gave a second source of income to the farmer. Its decline deprived the farmer of his subsidiary occupation, thereby considerably reducing his income and compelling him to take recourse to borrowing.

British did nothing to absorb the people who were driven out from their old crafts and these displaced people created pressure on the agricultural land. The pressure of population on agriculture led to the inevitable sub-division and fragmentation of the peasants' holdings. The growth of population hastened this process. The fragmentation of lands resulted in the limitless growth of uneconomic holdings leading to the birth of poverty. The decline of village industries not only threw vast numbers of men from agriculture but also created large numbers of landless rural labourer.¹⁷⁷

The surplus revenue was spent for buying goods for export to England. This marked the beginning of the drain of wealth. Dadabhai Naoroji was of the opinion that large sums of money were privately sent by the opulent servants of the British East India Company. These remittances amounted to 2 million pounds a year. The drain was a one-way traffic. India got nothing in return for the drain of her wealth. With the passage of time, the process of drain assumed large proportions. R. C. Dutta has estimated that the annual drain which was 3½ million pounds in 1857, rose to 17 million pounds by 1901-02.¹⁷⁸

Initially, in the wake of turmoil and disturbances, the long and continued wars, repeated acts of oppression, famine and pestilence, the transition to British rule in Assam was received with much enthusiasm, hopes and assurances. But these hopes and assurances were, however, belied as soon as the colonial rulers introduced substantial changes in agrarian class relations. The introduction of new agrarian system did not generate any structural development, rather expedited the process of pauperization and rapid stagnation. The horrible result of such policies appeared within two or three decades since its inception. Krishna Sharma strongly criticized the agrarian policy of the colonial government by depicting the deplorable condition of the farmers.¹⁷⁹

The conduct of the Cadastral Survey was so erroneous that these were always confronted with numerous objections. The measurements of the fields of each mauza were not carefully and systematically tested as Mills reported in 1853. Objections of the peasants were hardly discussed and less examined; moreover, surveys were not free from errors.¹⁸⁰

The Ahom period was the halcyon days for the peasants of Assam as they had to pay less revenue during this time than the colonial Period. The rent realization mode was modified from personal to territorial basis. Historically, for India's peasant, land is the hope and glory of the rural people. By augmenting the incidence of revenue, the alien government wounded the feelings of the peasants. Naturally enough, the colonial government cared more for revenue than for the material improvement of the masses which ultimately found manifestation in criminal offences.

Revenue Policy of the government dissatisfied the people of Assam. In addition to the arbitrary and unjust settlement, classification of land was neither scientific nor based

on actual productivity of the soil. Formerly, the ryots were the owners of the land. Now, they could be ejected from their land on the breach of any of the conditions of lease. Formerly they could transfer their land, now requiring permission. Former single *patta* had been multiplied during the British regime for which the farmers had to bear extra Stamp duty.¹⁸¹

The government classified and increased the rate of revenue on land at a time when productivity of the land was considerably declining. Even the rate of revenue was not reduced at the time of fall of prices of paddy. With every assessment and survey, the alien rulers used to augment the rate of revenue without caring for low productivity and yielding. The government demand went on accumulating huge arrears; vast areas of land were thrown out of cultivation and ryots were exposed to the rapacity of the revenue officers whose extortion had then become proverbial.

The nature of British exactions was manifested in the growing pauperization of India. Consequently, tenants suffered lot under the exactions of landlords, mouzadars and Choudhuries who were fully guarded by the machinery of the State. Moreover, the arbitrary confiscation of huge produce of the peasants was the root of all major social conflicts involving the peasants.¹⁸² Prohibitory order of Poppy cultivation in 1860-61 shattered the domestic economy of the tribal people of Nowgong. Opium policy, ever increasing land revenue and the tea plantation industry were the three major sources of colonial exploitation in Assam during the British regime. Imposition of new taxes like stump duty, license fee for collecting forest products, grazing fee for grazing cattle invited widespread discontent against the alien government¹⁸³

Colonial government in the name of wasteland rules engulfed those lands which were full of forest. They exported valuable woods to England and thus continued their holocaust of forest destruction inviting catastrophe to agriculture, viz. droughts, soil-erosion, floods, etc. The local people did not get benefits from the waste land rules. These rules were made to boost plantation sector in Assam. Local cultivators got nothing from this rules. Rather their lands were sold as wasteland to tea companies.¹⁸⁴

The government encouraged migration to remove the shortage of labour in their plantation industries. These migratory people first came in small numbers but later on in

large proportion including their children and families which found manifestation in the growing population pressure on the land.

By abolishing the Paik-system in Assam, the British did a yeoman's service to the people of Assam. But they did it only because of their own interest. High classes like aristocrats, nobilities and member of the royal families did not like its abolition as its abolition degraded their so-called social status hitherto enjoyed in the society.

The British sucked and squeezed the blood of the masses by the systematic maximization of revenue. It was like one way traffic. Nothing was done in return to ameliorate the condition of agriculture. The government did not provide the people with better facility and improved means of cultivating their lands. Even their measures to prevent natural calamities like drought, floods etc. were not satisfactory. Nero was fiddling when Rome was burning. The British were busy in revenue collection and revenue maximization when people were hammered by frequent floods and droughts.

The British introduced money economy not for the welfare of the people but just to meet their revenue demand. The peasantry traditionally unaccustomed to any kind of money taxation and now constantly in dread of the enhancement of land revenue and imposition of new taxes kept up the smouldering fire of protest and hatred against the Raj.¹⁸⁵

For most of the peasants, commercialization of agriculture and development of money economy was just like an anathema. They did not like this system and rather sought to go back to their former system, viz. barter system, and self-sufficient village economy. Lack of adequate currency and payment of revenue in cash created another problem for them. Money-lenders finally came to their rescue and thus they fell in the grip and cobwebs of the money-lenders. They had to lose their agricultural lands, households prosperities and even ornaments and utensils at the hands of the moneylenders especially at the hands of the Marwari (Keyas) money-lenders. Thus, the incidence of rural- indebtedness continued to mount and ultimately it engulfed the entire regions. There was no hope of respite from this.

Exploitation and extirpation continued unabated. The local people had to sell their raw materials to the agents of the government at a very cheap rate which had been exported to England and imported again to Assam as finished goods. These finished

goods manufactured in England flooded the markets of Assam and due to the better quality and cheap price, the British products sounded the death-bell of the local products resulting in the decline of the indigenous industries of Assam. Decline of indigenous industries put additional pressure on agricultural lands. Due to the policy of the British, some became labourers and some become slaves in the land.

Anyway, the economic condition of almost all sections of the peasantry under such conditions started deteriorating deeply during the second half of the 19th century. Ultimately such agrarian conditions led to widespread discontent and irritation among the people which was finally manifested in the outbreaks of uprising that Assam witnessed during the period.¹⁸⁶

Notes & References

1. Doshi, S.L. & Jain, P.C. - *Rural Sociology*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, Reprinted, 2006, pp. 115-116.
2. Karna, M.N. - *Agrarian Structure and Land Reforms in Assam*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p. 18.
3. Barua, Hem - *The Red River and the Blue Hill*, Lawyers Book Stall, Gauhati, Assam, Revised, 1962, p. 78.
4. Nath, J. G. - *Agrarian Structure of Medieval Assam*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2002, p. 60.
5. Hamilton, F.B. - *An Account of Assam*, Bhuyan S.K. (ed), Guwahati, 1963, p. 26.
6. Nath - *Op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
7. M'cosh, John - *Topography of Assam*, Logos Press, New Delhi, Second Reprint, 2000, p. 29.
8. Lekharu, U.C. - *Katha Guru Charit*, Nalbari, 1987, pp. 11f, 38.
9. Barua - *op. cit.*, p. 86.
10. Gait, S.E. - *A History of Assam*, LBS Publications, Guwahati, Assam, 1984, p. 267.
11. Barua, Gunabhiram - *Assam Buranji*, Guwahati, Reprint, 1972, p.187.
12. Allen B.C., Gait E.A., Allen C.G.H. & Howard H.F. - *Gazetteer of Bengal and NEI*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p. 63.
13. Nath - *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.
14. Bhuyan, S.K. - *Studies in the History of Assam*, Guwahati, 1965, p.147.

15. Mills, A.J.M. - *Report on the Province of Assam*, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, Second Edition, 1984, p. 2.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 92.
16. Barua, Gunabhiram - *Assam Bandhu* (Periodicals), N. Saikia (Compiled & Edited), Guwahati, 1984, p.74.
17. Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) - *Deodhai Asam Buranji*, Guwahati, Reprint, 1962, p. 84.
- Barbarua, Srinath Duara - *Tungkhungia Buranji*, Bhuyan S.K. (ed), Guwahati, Second Edition, 1964, p-iii.
- Barua, Raisahib G.C. (Trans & Edited), - *Ahom Buranji*, Guwahati, Reprint, 1985, p. 126.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p.167.
18. Goswami, P.C. - *The Economic Development of Assam*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, Appendix-II, pp. 280-281.
19. Karna - *op. cit.*, pp.19-20.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p. iii.
20. Guha, A. - *Planter Raj to Swaraj* (1826-1947), Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006, p. 40.
21. Nath - *op. cit.*, p.102.
22. Roychoudhury, Anil - 'Socio-Economic Aspect of Neo-Vaishnavite Satras: A Survey' in S. Barman's (et al) *Oitihya aru Itihas*, Journal Emporium, Nalbari, Assam, 2005, p. 35.
23. Mills - *op. cit.*, p. 2.
- Gait - *op. cit.*, p. 239.
24. Guha, A. - *Assamese Peasant Society in the late 19th century: Structure and Trend*, Calcutta, Aug. 1979, p. 2.

25. Kaushal, G. - *Economic History of India (1757-1966)*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, Reprint, 1991, p. 1.
26. Barua, Hem - *op. cit.*, p. 87.
27. Pemberton, Capt. R.B. - *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam (DHASA), Gauhati, 1966, pp. 82-83.
28. Barua, Hem - *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.
29. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, pp.105, 117-118, 127, 173, 175.
30. Bhattacharjee, J.B. - *Trade and Colony- The British Colonization of North East India*, NEIHA, Shillong, 2000, Prologue, pp. 1, 47, 82.
31. Barooah, D.P. - *Aspects of the History of Assam*, Darbari Prakashan, Kolkata, 2002, pp. 28-29.
32. Karna - *op. cit.*, p. 1.
33. Stein, Burton - *Peasant-State and Society in Medieval South-India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 14.
34. Agarwal, A.N. - *Indian Agriculture*, Vani Educational Books, New Delhi, 1980, p. 370.
35. Kaushal - *op. cit.*, p. 103.
- Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 140.
36. Saikia, R. - *Social and Economic History of Assam (1853-1921)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2001, p. 93.
- Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 131.
37. Desai S.S.M. - *Economic History of India*, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, July, 1990, p. 45.

38. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 133.
39. Barman, Santo - 'Socio-Economic Condition of Goalpara district during Zamindari regime- An Appraisal' in S.Barman's (et al) *op. cit.*, p. 270.
40. Digby, William - *Prosperous British India*, Sagar Publication, New Delhi, 1969, p. 33.
41. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.
42. Srinivasa, M.N. - *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman Ltd., Delhi, 1995, p. 49.
43. Bose, M.L. - *Development of Administration in Assam*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1985, p. 71.
44. Kaushal - *op. cit.*, p. 97.
45. Gait - *op. cit.*, p. 293.
46. Mills - *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 19.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 161.
47. Goswami, S.D. - 'Revenue Reorganization of Assam under David Scott', *NEIHA-I*, 1980, p. 153.
48. Mills - *op. cit.*, p. 4.
49. Gait - *op. cit.*, p. 295.
- Karna - *op. cit.*, p. 21.
50. Barpujari H.K. (eds), - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I (1826-1919), Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, Second edn., 1999, pp. 8-12.
51. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 116.
52. Chopra, P.N., - *A Social, Cultural and Economic History of India*, Vol.-III, Macmillan India Ltd., Madras, 1990, p. 176.
- Puri B.N. & Das M.N.
53. Sharma, Manorama - *Social and Economic Change in Assam:*

- Middle Class Hegemony*, Ajanta Publication, New Delhi, 1990, p. 59.
54. Karna - *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 28.
55. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 93.
56. - *Report on the Administration of Revenue in Assam 1880-81, Part-II, Para-2 (1874-1905, 1912-22)*
- Bose - *op. cit.*, p. 68.
57. Sarma Manorama - *op. cit.*, p. 63.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.
58. Barooah, D.P. - *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.
59. Barpujari (eds), - *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 30- 31.
60. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 93.
- Hunter, W.W. - *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.-IV & VI, Calcutta, 1879, p. 50.*
- Bose - *op. cit.*, p. 69.
61. - *Report on the Administration of Revenue in Assam, 1880-81, Para-25, (1874-1905, 1912-22)*
- Bose - *op. cit.*, p. 70.
62. Guha, A. - 'A Peep through 19th Century Assam-Maniram Dewan' in S. Barman's (et. al) *op. cit.*, pp. 349, 354.
63. Karna - *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25.
64. Mills - *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.
65. Barpujari, H.K.(ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam (1826-1919) Vol.-V, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2004, Appendix-A, Statement-1, p. 19.*
66. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam, Vol-I, p. 51.*
67. Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34, 37.

68. Saikia, Anand - 'The British Land Revenue Policy in Assam: Its impact upon Peasantry' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *Studies in the Economic History of NE India*, NEHU Publications, Shillong, 1986, p. 103.
69. Sharma Manorama - *op. cit.*, p. 126.
70. Karna - *op. cit.*, p. 30.
71. Pemberton - *op. cit.*, p. 76.
72. Hussain, M. - *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity*, Manak publication in association with Haranand Publications, New Delhi, First edition, 1993, p. 42.
73. Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration and the emergence of Nationalism in Assam' in A. Bhuyan's (ed) *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*, Government of Assam, Dispur, Guwahati, 2000, p. 17.
74. Bhattacharjee, J.B. - *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 54.
75. Goswami, S.D. - 'The British Taxation Policy in Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 91.
76. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol-I, p. 51.
Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol-V, Appendix-A, Statement-II, p. 20.
Assam Secretariat Revenue Proceedings- A, Sept-1890, Nos-9-14, Hopkinson, 14 June, 1865.
77. Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration
- Barpujari (eds) - (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 17.
Guha, A. - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I, p. 51.
- *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 7.
78. Barpujari (Eds) - *Political History of Assam* Vol-I, pp. 94-95.

- Barpurjari (Ed)
- *The Comprehensive* Vol.V, Appendix-B, Statement-I, p. 35.
 - *Assam Secretariat Revenue proceedings-A*, Sept-1890, Nos-9-14, - *Revenue and Agricultural Department proceedings*, March-1893, No. 3.
- 79.
- *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Vol.-I, Calcutta, 1896, Reprinted, 1965, Shillong, P-iv.
- Guha
- *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- 80.
- *Assam Valley Re-assessment Report*, 1892-93.
- Bose
- *op. cit.*, p. 59.
81. Guha
- *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- Gait
- *op. cit.*, p. 343
- Barpurjari (ed)
- *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.V, Appendix-B, Statement-II, p. 36. - *Assam Secretariat Revenue Proceedings - A*, Sept.-1890, Nos. 9-14; *Revenue and Agriculture Department Proceedings*, March-1893, No. 30.
82. Goswami, P.
- 'Opening up of Nambor forest for settlement- a missed opportunity', *NEIHA-XXIII*, 2002, p.119.
 - *Report on the Administration of Land Revenue -1879-80*, Shillong, 1881.
- Saikia
- *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.
83. Barpurjari (eds)
- *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I, pp. 96-97.
- Bose
- *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- Goswami, S.D.
- 'Revenue Settlement in the Hill districts of

- Assam: A studies of the House tax' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed), *op. cit.*, pp.106-107.
- Goswami, S.D. - 'The British taxation policy in Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 94.
84. Barpujari (ed), - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. V, p. 7.
- M'cosh - *op. cit.*, pp.122-123.
- Dutta, K.N. - *Landmarks of the Freedom Movement in Assam*, Gauhati, 1958, p. 25.
- Mills - *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 24, 323.
- Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I, p. 88.
85. Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, pp. 74-75.
86. Nath - *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.
- Bhuyan S.K. (ed) - *Jayantia Buranji*, Gauhati, Second Edition, 1964, pp. 98f.
- Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) - *Kamrupar Buranji*, Gauhati, Second Edition, 1958, p. 86.
- Sharma, S.N. - *A Socio Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 AD)*, Gauhati, 1989, p. 75.
87. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol-I, pp. 89-90.
- Chopra, Puri & Das - *op. cit.*, p.166.
- Goswami S.D. - 'British taxation
- Goswami. S.D. - 'Revenue Reorganization of Assam under David Scott', *NEIHA-I*, 1980, pp.150-151.
88. M'Cosh - *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 213-215.
- Mills - *op. cit.*, pp.110, 326.

- Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 45.
- Bhattacharjee, J.B. - *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration
- Kalita, R.C. - 'British exploitation in Assam: The opium policy and revenue (1850-1894)', *NEIHA-XII*, 1991, p. 344.
89. Singh, A.K. - *History of Far East in modern times*, Surjeet Publications, New Delhi, p. 9.
- Chopra, Puri & Das - *op. cit.*, p. 188.
- Saikia, R. - *op. cit.*, p. 217.
90. Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration
- Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 8.
- Kalita, R.C. - 'Opium prohibition and Rai Bahadur J.N. Barua', *NEIHA-XVI*, 1995, p.186.
- Kalita, R.C. - 'British exploitation in Assam', *NEIHA-XII*, 1991, p. 343.
- Chopra, Puri & Das - *op. cit.*, p. 183.
91. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 218.
- Guha - *op. cit.*, pp.18, 46, 71.
- Chaudhury, Prasenjit - 'Hero-worshipping and intellectual disease; Assam in the 19th century and an aspect on the study of leftist history' in S. Barman's (et al), *op. cit.*, p. 68.
92. Barua, Hem - *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 82.
- Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, p. 49.
93. Barpujari, H.K. - *Assam in the days of the Company*, NEHU Publications, Shillong, 1996, p. 241.
94. Trevelyan, G.M. - *English Social History*, Orient Longman

- Ltd., Mumbai, Indian Reprint, 2001, p. 388.
95. Allen, Gait, Allen & Howard
M'cosh
Hilaly Sarah
96. Saha, Subhash

Goswami, H.

Bhattacharjee, J.B.

Dasgupta, Keya
97. Bhattacharjee
98. Barpujari (eds)
Guha
99. *Ibid.*
100. Barpujari (ed)

Goswami P.
- *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- *op. cit.*, p. 36.
- 'Railways in Assam and Immigration of Peasants in the Colonial Period', *NEIHA-XXII*, 2001, p. 225.
- 'Capital Labour relations: A Study of Tea Plantation in Assam (1835-1926)' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 331.
- *Population trends in the Brahmaputra Valley*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1985, p. 90.
- 'The Eastern Himalayan trade of Assam in the Colonial period' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 202.
- (1) 'Industrialization in the Brahmaputra valley (1881-1921)' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 292.
- (2) 'Coming of tea in the Brahmaputra Valley: Changes in Pattern of trade' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 264.
- *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- *Political History of Assam*, Vol. I, p. 52.
- *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, pp. 11-12.
- p. 10.
- *The Comprehensive Vol. V*, pp. 37-39.
- 'Colonial Penetration
- Bhuyan's (ed) *op. cit.*, p.15.

101. Saikia R. - *op. cit.*, pp. 181,184.
102. Mills - *op. cit.*, p. 16.
Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol-I, pp. 52-53.
103. Barpujari (ed), - *The Comprehensive* Vol.V, pp. 42-43.
104. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 228.
Bose - *op. cit.*, pp.60-61.
Saha Subhash - *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, Vol-I,
(Unpublished Ph.D thesis), - *Grass root Nationalism – a study of mass resistance in the districts of Darrang and Nowgong of Assam (1937-1947)*, NEHU, Shillong, 1989.
- Karna - *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.
105. Goswami P. - 'Colonial Penetration
- Saikia, Anand - 'The British land revenue policy in Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.
- Goswami H. - *op. cit.*, p. 112.
- Habib Irfan - *A People's History of India Indian economy (1858-1914)*, Tulika books, New Delhi, 2007.
106. Saha - *op. cit.*
107. Doshi & - *op. cit.*, p. 152.
Jain - *Lachit Borpuhukan and his times*, Guwahati, 1947, p.17.
Bhuyan S.K. - *Journal of Historical Research*, Dibrugarh University.

- M'cosh - *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.
- Pemberton - *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.
108. Gait - *op. cit.*, p. 239.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- M'Cossh - *op. cit.*, pp.119-120.
109. Lekharu, U.C. (ed) - *Katha Guru Charit*, Nalbari, 15th edition, 1987, pp.101, 469-470.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.
- Sharma, N. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis), - *The Rise and Growth of the Peasant Movement in Kamrup district, the period between 1826-1900*, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 2003, pp. 48-49.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 93.
- Roy Choudhury - *op. cit.*, in S. Barman's (et al) *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, p. 87.
- Nag, Sajal - 'Economic roots of the regional Capitalist class – a study of the primitive accumulation of the Marwari Community in Colonial Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 352.
110. Nath - *op. cit.*, pp.128-129.
- Sharma, N. - *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.
- Guha A. - 'Land rights and Social classes in medieval Assam', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (IESHR), Sept. 1966, p. 56.
- Guha, A. - *Jamidar Kalin Goalpara Jilar Artha-Samajik Awastha: Ek Oitihasic Dristipat*, Natun Sahitya Parishad, Guwahati, 2000, p. 47.
111. Hussain, Haidar (Chief Editor) - 'Daas-Prathar Nirlajja Parisangkha' in *Sambhar*, March-22, 2000, Guwahati, p. 16.

- Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- Sarma N. - *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I, p. 16.
112. Barooah, D. P. - *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- Saikia, R. - *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- Guha, A. - 'A Peep through 19th Century Assam-Maniram Dewan' in S. Barman's (et al), *op. cit.*, p. 354.
- Barooah D.P. - 'The rebellion of 1857 and its impact on Assam' in A. Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 9.
- Hussain - *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.
113. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 152.
- Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.I, pp. 63-64.
114. Sarkar Sumit - *Modern India (1885-1947)*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 30-31.
- Barpurjari (ed), - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.V, p.216.
- Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41, 63.
- Trevelyan - *op. cit.*, p. 389.
115. Bhuyan, A. - 'The Non-Co-Operation Stir in Assam' in A. Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.
- Dutta, Ajit Kr. - 'The Background of National Awakening in Upper Assam' in A. Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 70.
- Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 37.
- Bora, Dhruvajyoti - 'Caste-system in History: Role of Caste in Assam' in S. Barman's (et al) *op. cit.*, p.104.
- Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- Singh, A.K. - *op. cit.*, p. 15.

- Hussain - *op. cit.*, p. 44.
116. Goswami, H. - *op. cit.*, pp. 88-90.
- Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.
- Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 55.
117. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, Vol.-I, p.56.
- Goswami, H. - *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.
- Gait - *op. cit.*, pp. 360-361.
- Mahanta, Arpana - 'Planter Raj to Swaraj – an observation' in S. Barman's (et al) *op. cit.*, p. 263.
- Mills - *op. cit.*, p. 30.
118. Saha - *op. cit.*
- Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.
- Nag, Sajal - 'Religion and Ethnicity in Class Formation: Aspect of Peasants Class Composition in Colonial Assam in the Context of Communalism', *NEIHA-V*, 1984, p. 160.
119. Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, p. 63.
- Saha - 'Capital Labour relations: a study of Tea plantation in Assam (1835-1926)' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 331.
- Barman, S. - 'Christian missionaries and the 19th century Santhals migration to Assam', *NEIHA-XXVIII*, 2007, p. 353.
- Hilaly, S. - 'Railways in Assam and Immigration of Peasants in the Colonial period', *NEIHA-XXII* 2001, p. 227.
- Das, Pramodanand - 'Tribal Peasantry in Bihar: A Structural Analysis' in V.K. Thakur and A. Aounshuman's (eds), *Peasants in Indian History-I*, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, Delhi,

- 1996, pp. 502-503.
120. Habib
Goswami H.
121. Gohain, H. (Eds)
122. Saikia, R.
Guha
Borpujari (eds)
123. Goswami H.
Barpujari (eds),
Sharma Manorama
Guha
124. Saikia
Gadgil, D.R.
Dutta, Ajit Kr.
Srivastava, A.L.
Barpujari (ed)
- *A People's History of India*
 - *Indian economy (1858-1914)*, Tulika books, New Delhi, 2007.
 - *op. cit.*, p. 94.
 - *Pratishruti aru Phalashruti*, Banalata, 2007, p.18.
 - *op. cit.*, p.109.
 - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, pp. 31-32.
 - *Political History of Assam*, Vol-I, pp. 94-95.
 - *op. cit.*, p. 176.
 - *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.
 - 'Class-formation in Assam: The Agrarian sector (1911-1947)', *NEIHA-XII*, 1991, p. 379.
 - *op. cit.*, Appendix -3, p. 279.
 - *op. cit.*, p. 94.
 - *The Industrial Evolution of India*, Delhi, 1982, p. 66.
 - *Gazetteer of India, Assam State, Sibsagar district*, Government of Assam, p. 227.
 - 'The Background of National
 - A. Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 70.
 - *The Sultanate of Delhi (1206-1526)*, Agarwala & Company, Agra, 1971, pp. 189-190.
 - *The Comprehensive History of Assam (1826-1919 A.D.)*, Vol-IV, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2004, pp. 292-293.

- Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 18.
125. Dutta, Anuradha - 'Aspects of Growth and Development of Nationalism in Assam in the 19th century' in A. Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 60.
- Barooah, D.P. - 'The Rebellion of 1857.....' in A. Bhuyan's (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 41.
126. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam, Vol-I*, pp. 121-122.
- Mills - *op. cit.*, Appendix (J) P. XXXIX.
- Saikia, R. - *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82, 113.
127. Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol-V*, p. 65.
- Bhalla, G.S. - *Condition of Indian Peasantry*, National Book Trust India, New Delhi, 2006, p. 17.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 82, 104.
128. Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol-V*, pp. 7, 19, 63.
129. Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam, Vol-I*, p. 58.
- Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 69.
130. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 81.
131. Bhalla - *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 32-33.
132. Ram, N. (Editor in Chief) - *The Hindu Survey of Indian Agriculture*, M/S Kasturi & Sons Ltd., Chennai, 2008.
- Kaushal - *op. cit.*, p. 168.
133. Chopra, Puri & Das - *op. cit.*, p. 149.

- Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 105.
134. Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 83, 104.
Habib - *op. cit.*
135. Desai - *op. cit.*, p. 70.
136. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 96.
Sarma N. - *op. cit.*, p. 150.
137. M'cosh - *op. cit.*, p. 51.
Bhalla - *op. cit.*, p. 13.
David, B. Vasantharaj - 'Integrated Management of Pests and Diseases' in *the Hindu Survey of Indian Agriculture*, 2008, p. 118.
138. Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.
Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, p. 51.
139. Nath - *op. cit.*, p. 61.
Doshi & Jain - *op. cit.*, p. 121.
140. Ibid. - p. 114.
141. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, pp. 51-52.
142. Mills - *op. cit.*, p. 8.
143. Guha - *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, p. 27.
Mahanta, Arpana - *op. cit.* in S. Barman's (et al), *op. cit.*, p. 262.
Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 230.
Hussain - *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
144. Guha - *Planter.....*, p. 34.
145. Goswami, S.D. - 'The British Taxation Policy in Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 95.
Guha - *Planter.....*, p. 12.

146. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 228.
147. Nath - *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.
- Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) - *Satsari Asam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1964, p. 76.
- Saikia - *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 226.
148. *Ibid.* - p. 101.
- Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol.-
V, p. 63.
149. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 103.
150. Sen, Ranjit - 'General pattern of revenue maximization
in Bengal (including Lower Assam) in the
18th Century' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op.*
cit., pp. 116-117.
151. Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.
152. Barpujari (eds) - *Political History of Assam*, pp. 58-59.
153. Bhalla - *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.
154. Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol-
V, p. 63.
155. Guha - *Planter.....*, p. 30.
156. Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.
- Pemberton - *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.
157. Barpujari (ed) - *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol-
II, (13th century to the treaty of Yandabo-
1826), Publication Board of Assam,
Gauhati, 1992, p. 19.
158. Pemberton - *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
159. Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, p. 83.
160. Pemberton - *op. cit.*, p. 76.
161. Srinivasa - *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.
162. Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, p. 89.
- Kalita, B.C. - 'Administrative Units of NEI: A
Geographical Note' in the *North Eastern*

- Geographer*, Vol-XII, Nos-1 & 2, 1980, p. 53.
163. Barpujari (eds)
Goswami, P.
Bhattacharjee
164. Barpujari (eds),
Guha
Mahanta, Arpana
Goswami, P.
Saikia
165. Habib
Desai
166. Desai
Sarkar
167. Agarwal
Kaushal
168. Ghosh, Lipi
Goswami, P.
Nag Sajal
Guha
169. *Ibid.*
170. Saikia
Saha
- *Political History of Assam*, pp. 56-57.
- 'Colonial Penetration.....' in A. Bhuyan's (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- *Political History of Assam*, Vol-I, p. 15.
- *Planter.....*, p. 7.
- *op. cit.* in S. Barmani's (et al)- *op. cit.*, p. 263.
- 'Colonial Penetration.....' in A. Bhuyan's (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- *op. cit.*, p. 106.
- *op. cit.*
- *op. cit.*, pp. 62-64.
- *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.
- ; *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- *op. cit.*, 209.
- op. cit.*, pp. 177, 179, 180, 183.
- 'Indebtedness in Peasants Sector: A Study of Assam proper in late 19th Century' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.* p. 339.
- 'Colonial Penetration
- Bhuyan's (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 'Economic roots of the regional Capitalist Class in Colonial Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 353.
- *Planter.....*, p. 40.
- p. 39.
- *op. cit.*, p.117.
- *op. cit.*

- Sharma, R.S. - *Indian Feudalism* (c.AD-300-1200), Macmillan India Ltd., Madras, Reprinted, 1996, p. 267.
- Rana, R.P. - 'Was there Agrarian Crisis in Mughal North India?' in *Social Scientist*, Vol. XXXIV, Prabhat Patnaik (ed), Tulika, New Delhi, Nov-Dec-2006, p. 23.
171. Bhalla - *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.
172. Saikia - *op. cit.*, p. 226.
173. Josh Bhagwan & Joshi Shashi - *Struggle for Hegemony in India* – (1920-47), Sage Publications, New Delhi, p. 28.
174. Singh - *op. cit.*, p. 19.
175. Goswami, P. - 'Colonial Penetration
- Bhattacharjee - *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- Barpurjari (eds) - *op. cit.*, pp. 87-89.
176. Desai - *Political History of Assam* p. 59.
- Kaushal - *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.
177. *Ibid.* - *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- Goswami, P. - p. 180.
- Chopra, Puri & Das - 'Colonial Penetration
178. Keswani, K.B. - *op. cit.*, p. 16.
179. - *op. cit.*, p. 183.
180. Gait - *Modern India (1819-1964)*, Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi, First Edition, 1990, pp. 245-246.
181. Barooah D.P. - *Krishna Sharmar Diary*, Assam Publication Board, Guwahati, 1972, p. 249.
- Barpurjari (eds) - *op. cit.*, p. 343.
- *op. cit.*, in A. Bhuyan's (ed) *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- *Political History of Assam*, Vol.I, pp. 99-

- 100.
182. Goswami, S.D.
- Bhattacharjee
- Habib
183. Kalita, R.C.
- Dutta, K.N.
184. Guha
185. *Ibid.*
186. Karna
- 'British Taxation Policy in Assam' in J. B. Bhattacharya (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 95.
 - *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
 - *Essays in Indian History - towards a Marxist Perception*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 154-155.
 - 'British Exploitation in Assam: the Opium Policy and revenue (1850-1894)', NEIHA-XII. 1991, p. 343.
 - *Landmarks of the Freedom Movement in Assam*, Guwahati, 1958, p. 25.
 - *Planter*....., p. 12.
 - p. 21.
 - *op. cit.*, p. 31.