

ASSAMESE BUSINESSMEN

FROM MANIRAM DEWAN TO ROBIN DUTTA

**A
STUDY**

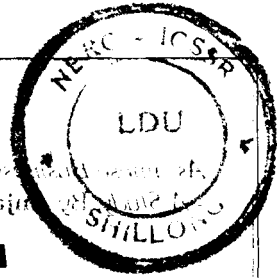
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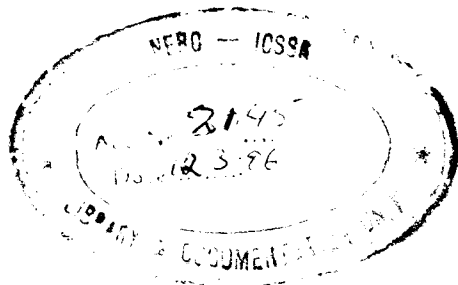
Assamese Businessmen : From Maniram Dewan to Robin Dutta
- A Study. By **Anjan Kumar Baruah.**

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Business¹ has a distinct impact on the people of a particular area as well as a country. Business contributes not only to the economical, but also to the political, social and cultural development of a nation or a community. All prosperous nations like Japan, USA, Germany, South Korea, UK, France and so on have a very firm footing in trade, commerce and industries. The activities of these developed nations reveal that for economic development of a nation in general or of community in particular, availability of an indigenous entrepreneurial class is the most essential factor.

In India, communities like the Parsees, Gujaratis, Marwaris, Sindhis and some others are economically pretty advanced. It has been observed that the major occupation of these communities is none other than business. In contrast, the bulk of business of Assam is controlled not by the indigenous people but by people from outside the state; particularly Marwaris and other trading classes from Northern India. Qualities like business expertise, willingness to take risk, endurance, intercommunity rapport etc can be attributed to these communities for being successful business communities in India. These qualities are very much lacking in the Assamese people and due to these lackings, we are yet to have a successful Assamese business community as such. Another reason which contributes to the non-development of a successful Assamese business community is the priority and emphasis given by the Assamese people to small agricultural farming and jobs over business as an occupation.

That without a successful business community of their own, development of Assam and attitudes of Assamese people is a far cry, were rightly observed by A.H. Danforth, a Christian missionary a long time ago. In 1853, in his report forwarded to A.J. Moffatt Millis, Danforth stated, "Assam, though a rich and beautiful valley, is greatly in want of population, and its resources lie underdeveloped. The Ryots are satisfied to cultivate merely enough for their own use, and what little trade there is, is carried on almost entirely by the Bengallees and Kayahs. The want of an enterprising and

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impulsive spirit is everywhere seen, and until this monotony is broken up by drawing the attention of the natives to the advantages of commerce, and the blessing which honest industry is certain to secure, little can be hoped from the Province."²

Similar views were expressed by the contemporary intelligentsia class of Assam too. They were very much concerned about the monopoly of outsiders in the business sphere of Assam and about the flow of capital to outside of the state. Writers like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan tried to encourage the people to take up business as their livelihood, so as to stop the monopoly of outsiders and flowing out of capital. These people felt, prosperity of Assam and of its people can only be hoped through the development of an indigenous business class. But unfortunately their repeated appeals hardly succeeded in making any impact on the natives.

Now, of course, shortage of easily cultivable land, growing unemployment problem and exposure to the modern trends, have however slightly changed the scenario. Due to these factors more and more Assamese people are gradually coming out to take up business particularly trading, as their occupation. This is an encouraging sign. But apart from a very few most of the Assamese business people are being pushed back by tough competition by outside established businessmen, inexperience and by some negative attitudes on their part. Continuation of this situation is bound to create social tension which would bring many social problems. According to Myron Wiener, the fact that such a large part of India's trading, banking and industrial classes are aliens in the area in which they work is no doubt a significant element in the widespread antibusiness, socialistic attitude of so many Indians.³

In the following sections of this book an attempt is being made to discuss the business environment in Assam in the light of business environment in India. Through this book readers are expected to have an idea of the conditions in which Assamese businessmen have to carry out their activities. I would consider my attempt to be fruitful, if it could contribute a little to the growth of a successful Assamese business community, and to the growth of a prosperous Assam, in the coming century.

Evolution of Business: The Indian Scene

Since the arrival of the first European trading companies in India in the sixteenth century, they established factories at many places. These were, of course, not producing establishments but trading settlements— agencies for buying and selling goods on a commission basis. In its initial stages the British-owned East India Company paid more attention to the export of manufactured products to Europe which included textiles, spices and perfume.

In the subsequent period, the East India Company defeated its prime foreign competitors, the Dutch, the French and the Portuguese, and by 1757 became a major commercial and political force of India. Gradually, they captured Bengal and defeated Tipu Sultan, a major political opponent of Southern India. They rapidly consolidated a major portion of India by defeating the Maratha Maharajas of Indore and Gwalior and the Peshwa leader of the Maratha confederacy. The princes of Rajasthan and Central India had also fallen as easy preys to the the East India Company and all of them signed subsidiary alliances with the Company one after the other. By 1838 the easternmost part of the country was annexed from the Ahom Kings. The only king who was able to keep his flag of independence flying was Ranjit Singh of Punjab. But his kingdom too was annexed in 1849.

Between the consolidation of British power in the later half of the eighteenth century and the revolt of 1857, the British rapidly extended their commercial network all over the country. In its incipient days the commercial activities of East India Company, was more concentrated on finding goods to be sent from England to sell in exchange for cloth and other commercial commodities then in demand.

But, by the end of the eighteenth century British demand for cloth had declined. Instead, a triangular trade had developed in which Indian opium went to China, in exchange of which Chinese tea had to be sent to England, while from England, various manufactured goods were coming to India for their opium to China. In addition to this, other Indian items were successfully exported in the early years of the nineteenth century. These included, at first indigo and grain, and later cotton⁴ and tea.

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But the Industrial Revolution soon reversed this trend. The British Parliament passed a protection legislation putting a ban on import of manufactured goods from India. Further, the export of raw materials from India was encouraged to sustain productive capacities in England. R.C. Majumdar and others, therefore have pointed out, "India was gradually transferred into a plantation for the production of raw materials and a dumping ground for the cheap manufactured products from the west."⁵

In 1833 the East India Company's monopoly in trade was abolished by the British Government, and private investors and corporate bodies came rushing to India. The dominant position of the East India Company was undermined by numerous British-owned agencies and managing houses.⁶

After the transfer of political power from the East India Company to the British Government indigenous industries had almost disappeared from the scene; several British private entrepreneurs with their experience in home country came forward to set up large scale industries in India. Moreover by 1860 the Limited Liability Company's Act was introduced in India which gave a tremendous impetus to business in India; Under this Act these companies could raise huge capital for business purposes in India.

Thus the decade 1850-60 was the period which witnessed the establishment of the first cotton mill, the first jute mill and the first coal mine in India. It was in this period that the first railway line was also laid. By the last quarter of the 19th century considerable number of cotton mills were set up in the country. Production of coal per annum also increased and the railways had expanded their activities⁷ to other parts of the country from a humble beginning with the Bombay- Thane link of 1853.

Some Indians— many of whom belonged to the traditional commercial communities, had also set up industries before the 19th century. But their number was not large. Before entering into industrial enterprises most of the commercial communities of India were engaged as shop keepers, money lenders and brokers to European firms operating in the country. Later, their accumulated savings and experience were used to float industrial enterprises in India.

By the turn of the century Indians began to increase their role in setting up industries. It was only during and after the World War

I, encouraged by a lack of competitive imported goods from abroad and by government assistance, that Indian industrialisation got some impetus. The number of Indian-owned industries increased gradually after this period.

Many factors were responsible for the evolution of modern business in India during the British period. In a nutshell, they are—the need for outlets of investment of British capital, the favoured treatment extended by British rulers to British enterprise, the growth of population, improvement of transport system and the World War I. The Swadeshi movement in the early years of the 20th century, the opportunities thrown up by the World War I and the growth of a patriotic sense and adventurous spirit among the richer people of India, together with the increasing political consciousness of the people, ultimately led to the development of certain big indigenous industries.⁸

Industrialisation in the British period in India was concentrated around the ports of Calcutta as well as Bombay, and the inland centres of Ahmedabad and Kanpur. Besides, commercial exploitation of Indian agriculture through the export of India's grains, indigo and cotton, was in full swing. Indian industrialisation involved the further domestic processing of items which were already being exported, such as jute, cotton or tea, or the domestic manufacture of goods which were formerly imported, such as steel and chemical dyes. From its origins in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indian industrialisation had to remain content with an indifference, if not the open discouragement, of the country's political authorities. Only after World War I did the government give a mild protection and some encouragement to selected forms of industrial enterprise, especially the paper, sugar and cement. After independence however, a general protectionist system: was introduced.⁹

Industrial development, in the British period was, however, very limited, confined to the growth of only a few large scale sectors. Foreign capital together with foreign managing agencies dominated industries, private finance as well as foreign trade. Daniel Thorner, therefore, aptly summarised the trends: "After 1850 the great British concern played a predominant, almost quasi-monopolistic role in the economic life of India. Indians desiring to enter fields in which British managing agencies already operated found it advisable to place themselves under the protection of one or

another of these houses. Throughout the nineteenth century, the would be India captains of industry received little, if any, of the Government help for infant industries which were so common in Europe and the United States. The first tariffs of even a moderately protective nature did not come into operation until the 1920's and upto 1944 the great British shipping lines were able to operate freely in the Indian coastwise trade. The birth of modern industry in India has, therefore, been a prolonged and painful process."¹⁰

The policy of the British Government towards business was one of laissez faire. In other words, business organisations could carry on their operations unflattered by restrictions. But since independence the Government of India adopted a different economic policy. The economic policy is highlighted by the adoption of a 'socialistic' pattern of society.¹¹

The Laissez Faire economic policy which reigned supreme for a long time could not deliver the goods to the nation. It could not maintain equitable distribution of wealth. It rather encouraged concentration of wealth and means of production in the hands of a few. Its glaring defects shocked the public faith in its working. This situation demanded government intervention for social control of business.

India's commitment to the socialistic pattern of society¹² encouraged the Government to adopt a series of five-year plans for rapid economic development. In this set-up, mixed economy or regulated economy based on the co-operation of the public and private sectors became a necessity. The aim of the Government was that public sector and private sector will progress side by side for the economic advancement of the country. The industrial policy of the Government enumerated the industrial fields where state interference and control were to be introduced. So these features of the present-day regulated or controlled economy provided the background for organisation of business in our country.

To avoid exploitation of the consumers and the labourers, to remove concentration of the nation's wealth and means of production in the hands of a few and to ensure equitable distribution of wealth, equal opportunities to all for gainful employment irrespective of caste, creed and religion; the social control over business has been imposed which denotes regulation and canalisation of

business activities for common good.

Keeping the above objectives in view, the government of India passed a number of legislations and adopted various policies from time to time to regulate trade, commerce and industry. The rules and regulations like the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, etc. were passed, and various industrial, licencing, commercial, fiscal and other policies were announced. Moreover, the Government adopted measures like nationalization of banks, insurance companies, coal mines and so on, to give its socialistic pattern of society a realistic meaning.

But how much has it been able to achieve its objective is difficult to assess. N.C. Roychowdhury noted that mixed economy has not been able to prove its worth to meet the expectation of the people. Though there has been a radical change in the structure of economy with a spectacular growth in some sectors, this growth as a whole has been very slow. The rate of growth of real national income per head in India is only about 1.5 percent per year. Justice and equality of opportunity have not been ensured to all the people despite the adoption of various Acts of Parliament. There is still the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. Many public sector undertakings are running at a heavy losses. In spite of increase in production in many spheres, the measures have proved inadequate to secure its equitable distribution at a fair price. The general people are deprived of many of the basic necessities of life. Black-marketing, hoarding, adulteration etc, are raising their ugly heads every now and then. The people are again, hard hit due to continuous increase in prices of essential commodities of food, shelter and clothings. The success of mixed economy in these circumstances, can thus be said to be only partial.¹³

Moreover, from the days of evolution of modern economic sector, only a few communities have been able to take hold in trade and industries. Yojana, an economic journal of the Government of India, pointed out: "Owing to its historical backwardness and socio-economic reasons, development of industrial entrepreneurship in India has been very restricted both in its extent and

quality. It is largely confined to a few regions and communities only."¹⁴

Timberg too has noted, "A rapid survey of Indian industrialisation indicates that India's industrial entrepreneurs came largely from a small number of trading communities....we see that the bulk of large scale Indian entrepreneurs today belong to the Marwari or Gujarati community."¹⁵

Despite all these problems, one can say that the Indian business have been able to flourish considerably. Its volume of business has increased day by day. The Indian industrial sector has been able to move from the traditional to more advanced and sophisticated fields like areoplane, shipbulding, chemicals, fertilizers and other sophisticated engineering products. More recently it has entered high-teach industrial fields like making more advanced computer.

In recent years, the business environment of the world has changed rapidly. Hence, keeping in view the impact of change in the global business economy and deterioration of export, which makes the balance of payment position of India critical, the Government of India has taken a more liberal policy for trade, commerce and industry. Foreign investors as well as collaborators are invited to participate in the economic sector of India. Many more Government sectors are opened for private investment. Although there are mixed reactions to this Government policy, it is yet too premature to assess the result of this policy now. Only time will speak of the outcome of this policy.

Evolution of Business: The Assam Scene

In 1826, under a treaty in Yandaboo (now in Myanmar), the Burmese renounced all its claims upon the territory of Assam. At first, the British did not annex all the territories of the province. Purandar Singha was nominated as a protected prince in charge of Upper Assam. Other areas had already been left under other local chiefs. But these arrangements did not last long. In 1838, Purandar Singha's territory was annexed by the British on the pretext of mismanagement. By 1842 the whole of the Valley of Brahmaputra was under the control of the East India Company.

When Assam first came under British rule the whole state wore a deserted look. There was acute shortage of people in the province

which was caused by the Burmese atrocities and by pestilence. Widespread consumption of opium by the Assamese people continued to be a menace to the society as before.

The Assamese was not at all enterprising. He lived on a hand to mouth basis. Ordinarily there was not more than what was his immediate need and rarely was there a surplus for sale or for a rainy day. "What the people consider themselves as comfort is only a condition free from want, with sufficient opium and pan tamul (betel-leaf and betel nut)".¹⁶ The Political History of Assam has noted that the people were loath to work hard,— "mainly because they had limited wants; they were satisfied 'with the humblest of food; plainest of clothes, and smallest of habitation, The requirements of their daily life were produced by their own toil; they 'cultivate rice, pulses, fruits (and) vegetables to supply their tables; mustard to light their house (and) silk (or) cotton to provide their garments.'" ¹⁷ In case he failed to produce anything generally he borrowed from his neighbours.

Money economy was not well developed in Assam before the arrival of the British. Both internal and external trade in that period were confined mostly to the barter system. The volume of internal trade was very little and was carried out through door to door barter of commodities like cloths, cotton and muga yarn, rice, pulses, turmeric, mustard oil, tobacco and opium. In case of external trade also, the Assamese traders bartered agricultural and animal produce in exchange of salt with the neighbouring Bengali traders. In the absence of a mercantile community the ordinary farmer, unless otherwise forced, scarcely resorted to the markets for disposal of his surplus produce. As a result, the Assamese had to pay the maximum of prices and received in return the barest of the minimum.¹⁸

The trade with Bengal was mainly water-borne and was subjected to custom duties at a point on the river Brahmaputra known as Kandahar or Hadira Chokey— opposite to Goalpara. Besides Hadira, transit duties were also levied at several other places. The duty levied at Hadira by the Government on certain commodities was so arbitrarily fixed that it discouraged merchants to have commercial transaction with Assam. The British Government in 1835 abolished Hadira and other chokeys on the Assam border and this left all the trade to and from Bengal perfectly free.¹⁹

The abolition of the customs chokeys and the growing security of life and property gave a fillip to the trade with Bengal. Soon, traders from Dacca and Calcutta started coming to Assam with loads of foreign textiles, food stuff and luxury items. Through hawkers they collected articles of local produce in exchange of foreign salt, opium, broad cloth and iron wares. Woolen goods, sugar, coconut oil and fine rice soon found their ways into the local market.²⁰

Lac, oil seeds, pulses, jute, wax, rhinoceros' horn, cotton and silk— both raw and manufactured, formed the most important commodities of export. Of course, the increased import of foreign textile and consequent decline of the cotton industry in Bengal affected the cotton trade in Assam. Of the imports, apart from salt, foreign cloth, food stuff and commodities used by men of average means were on the increase.²¹

Since the days of David Scott, the first Chief Commissioner of British Assam, attempts had been made to create a taste among the Assamese for commodities not locally available and gradually 'hats' and markets were springing up in and around the district head quarters.²² Realising the evils of purely agricultural, economy, Jenkins, another British officer, also tried to give the Assamese a commercial and industrial bias firstly by encouraging increased cultivation of crops as would be easily marketable and secondly by creating a class of speculators to exploit the natural resources of the province. On the basis of his recommendations the British Government accorded its approval to grant wastelands on favourable terms to the Assamese, Bengalis and Europeans. But the dearth of capital made it difficult for the local entrepreneurs to take advantage of the laudable scheme. Money was so scarce that even at the hour of worst peril, one could not procure a petty amount of loan. "If he wished to borrow rupees ten from a Kaya (Marwari merchant), he should have to deposit as security jewels worth rupees twenty and then he is obliged to pay an interest at the rate of Rs. 5 per month."²³

In spite of the efforts made by the local authorities, the material progress of the province continued to be awfully slow till the early sixties. Dhekial Phukan lamented that the British Government had failed "to improve in any material degree the condition of prosperity of the country or even to repair the loss, it had lately sustained

from domestic wars and foreign invasions. " Despite liberal terms that were offered, vast tracts continued to be wastes throughout the province. The hopes nurtured by Jenkins that the upper classes who had hitherto depended upon government service for their livelihood, would take the lead in agriculture and industrial undertakings doomed to bitter disappointment.²⁴

The agricultural ryots were also not much enterprising. They were satisfied with the produce of their arable land. Their mode of cultivation continued to be primitive and the implements used by them were very crude. They produced as much as they needed and therefore scarcely there was a surplus for sale or for a rainy day. So in the case of a failure of crops on account of draught or flood, famine occurred. Indigenous industries like spinning and weaving of cotton and silk continued to exist and met domestic demands, but their qualities were comparatively poor. These products, could hardly compete with cheaper and better varieties of imported products from outside. Moreover, increasing import of brass-copper-iron wares hit the local artisans hard. Some traditional castes, for example, the gold washers Sonowals) abandoned their time-honoured occupation and took to agriculture because they found that their old occupations were less economical. In case of trade, the whole traffic was carried on by the outsiders, particularly by the keyas or Marwari merchants. According to a contemporary writer, "The Assamese see a set of strangers in land getting rich before their own eyes, none ever follows their example and they appear to have no inclination to enter into competition with these foreigners."²⁵

The early period of British rule (1825-70) in Assam was a period of administrative and economic consolidation. Assam possessed four great assets—land, river, forest and minerals, which were most lucrative to the imperial ruler. In 1833, the East India Company's monopoly in trade was abolished and private investors and corporate bodies of investors represented by the managing agency houses came rushing to Assam. As Amalendu Guha pointed out: "With the ascendancy of industrial capital over mercantile interests in Great Britain by 1833, the British policy in Assam received clear direction towards colonisation."²⁶

In 1834, the Governor General set up a committee to explore the possibility of tea growing in India. It was found that the tea

plant was indigenous to Assam. The discovery of tea plant in Assam enabled the Company in India to develop a trade on which China had a monopoly and as such it was declared by the Tea Committee— "to be by far the most important and valuable that has ever been made on matters connected with the agricultural or commercial resources of this empire."²⁷

But, the non-existence of a labour class and lack of technology hindered their entry into the industry. Of course, soon the British overcame this problem by importing both. The Assam Railway and Trading Company's (ART) history records that the acute shortage of labour, caused by the Burmese atrocities and by pestilence had been remedied by immigration of workers from other parts of India and the introduction of health services to combat diseases. Various skills had also been imported— tea-making from China and others from Britain. "These, then, were the main ingredients in the development of Assam in the beginning in the nineteenth century, the catalyst or flux being the readiness of British investors to risk capital abroad and of British administrators and technicians to endure exile."²⁸ This eventually led to the development of the great tea industry of Assam.

Since the formation of the first tea company, the Assam Company in 1839, tea plantation expanded considerably and became the biggest industry of India. But in carrying out their operations the planters continued to face difficulties particularly of labour both skilled and unskilled. The initial attempt to import Chinese tea-makers had to be abandoned, because, "Apart from being costly the Chinese at times proved themselves 'untractable and worthless.' The unfriendly relations that then existed with the Government of China ultimately forced the planters to resort to local artisans, and fortunately for them the latter proved before long as efficient as the Chinese."²⁹

On the other hand, in 1858-59 about 8,000 acres of land in Assam was under tea cultivation. By 1871 more than 3 lakh acres of waste land had been settled with planters in Assam proper³⁰ alone. Tea, introduced in 1839, was firmly established as a new crop before the seventies.³¹

The people of Assam were, however, reluctant to work as day-labour and under no circumstances at the cost of their own cultivation. Despite competitive rates that were offered from time

to time, it was difficult to have adequate hands at seasons where these were greatly needed.³² As Weiner commented— “In the nineteenth century, Assamese peasants, almost all land-owning cultivators, had no desire to give up self-employment for low-paying proletarian jobs in the tea plantations. They, therefore, left this expanding labour market to migrant workers from tribal Bihar.”³³

At the same time, British Government progressively and systematically enhanced the burden of land revenue on ordinary farmers in order to encourage their transfer from subsistence farming to plantation jobs.³⁴ But, despite these measures adopted by the imperial ruler the local ryots did not turn up in large numbers to work as plantation workers. And there would be no solution to the problem. The situation ultimately led to the import of plantation workers from other parts of India.

Despite a speculative crisis in 1866-67, the subsequent tempo of growth in tea industry continued to be unhindered. Fascination for owning a tea garden was so strong among the people that many described it as tea fever. “The speculators and the ambitious people started suffering from tea fever and the fever is still on today, for the last 166 years.”³⁵

The emergence of tea as a major industry has changed the economy of Assam. This economic change and subsequent ever-increasing inflow of immigrants into Assam produced consequences of far reaching importance in the political, economic and cultural life of the Assamese. As the Assamese were also not interested in trade and commerce, Bengali and Marwari traders came in to reap the opportunities. In a memorandum in November 1874, R.H. Keating, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, emphasising the importance of industrial and mercantile communities pointed out that the Assamese with their subsistence economy were not interested in large trade and industry.³⁶ Therefore, to facilitate commercial transactions with Bengal, merchants of Marwar were allowed to set up golas or depots at several locations in western Assam. In the early days of the Company “these enterprising men are stationed in all principal parts of Assam, and their petty agents stroll around the frontiers, where there is a chance for making a rupee.” The very fact that a handful of foreigners penetrated and carried on their transactions into the interior of

the country without any let or hindrance clearly shows that their relations with the local people were quite friendly although they remained socially aloof.³⁷

But the situation was not so bad in the Surma Valley, where the presence of Marwari traders were negligible and in the Khasi Hills, the business was completely in the hands of local Khasi traders. Observing this, Amalendu Guha said— "what Assamese completely lacked, however, was an aptitude for commerce. Unlike the neighbouring Khasi people, the Assamese were observed to have been very indifferent to trading occupations."³⁸

In the initial stage, some Assamese planters tried to set up a few tea gardens, but except a few, most of them failed to survive due to many reasons. This will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. But "outside this sector" said Guha, "almost the entire internal trade, the procurement of such export goods as rubber, cotton, long pepper, silk etc. and the distribution of various manufactured consumer goods was in the hands of the Marwari community, right from the beginning of the British rule. The only exception to this was the trade in oil seeds, still in the hands of indigenous farmers,— traders of eastern Kamrup. They were traditionally associated therewith from the mediæval times, but were destined to lose their ground to Marwari traders in near future."³⁹

The British ruler, as well as the capitalist class had their major interest in tea. Therefore, a set of wasteland settlement rules were accordingly formulated— and then repeatedly revised— to facilitate British capital export to North-East India. As a result of this the total area under tea cultivation increased tremendously within a very short span of time. The total area of wastelands settled with planters in Assam proper increased from slightly more than 3 lakh acres in 1871 to 6.4 lakh acres by 1901.

Besides tea, British capital entered into coal, petroleum, timber, railway etc. and upto 1901, at least 14 saw mills were set up to produce tea shooks for packing tea. Extraction of coal from the Makum Coalfields in 1881, opening of the Dibru-Sadiya Railways in 1882, drilling of mineral oil during 1886-88 near Margherita and erection of an experimental refinery in 1893 at Digboi boosted the economy of Assam.

There was a big revolution in the transport sector upto the sixties; there were practically no roads and only elephants and country

boats helped the people in moving from one place to another. The condition was worse in the interior Assam. As the ART Company History records— a journey from Dibrugarh to Margherita by Dehing river— “Goods traffic from Dibrugarh, only sixty miles away, might take as long as forty days by country boats.”⁴⁰ Upto 1890, the journey from Calcutta to Dibrugarh took atleast a fortnight.

In 1848, the East India Company provided steamers to ply between Calcutta and Gauhati and in 1860 the Indian General Steamer Navigation Company agreed to provide two vessels to sail at six weeks intervals between Calcutta and the Assam Valley. From these modest beginnings grew the various steamer services of later years including fast mail boats running to a regular time table.⁴¹

The first rail route from Calcutta towards Assam was the single line to Poradaha in 1862, the extension to Goalundo being completed in 1864. In 1879 the nearest approach to Assam by rail from Calcutta was by the Eastern Bengal Railway to Kaunia on the Teesta River or to Goalundo. The journey on to Dibrugarh from either of these two places took approximately a fortnight. By 1885, the only railways in the Assam Valley was the Dibru-Sadiya Railway constructed by the Assam Railways and Trading Company (ART) and the Jorhat Provincial Railways (JPR), a narrow gauge railway line. Both of these were in Upper Assam, connecting the distant tea gardens with the Brahmaputra. The river services were at this time the only means of communication with the outside world.⁴²

Work on the Assam Bengal Railways began in 1891-92. In 1897 the Gauhati-Jamunamukh section was opened for traffic. The hill-section from Lumding to Badarpur was also completed; it took eleven years to build and in 1904 through communication by rail was established between Chittagong and Dibrugarh.

In 1865 steps had been taken to construct a road through the whole length of the valley, along the south bank of the river from Saikhowaghat to a point opposite Dhubri. A second main road runs along the north bank—, but roads in Assam, except in the hills, were mostly unmatelled.⁴³ The most significant thing was that the wheel cart was introduced in this period in Assam and its number increased from a bare 3, 990 in 1890-91 to 10,529 by 1898 and 19,799 by 1910. But the use of the wheel cart

was limited only to plantations and the towns.⁴⁴

Thousands of crores of rupees was invested by the British ruler and capitalist class in the development processes generated by the tea industry and other economic activities. This encouraged further immigration of population from other provinces of the country. But still tea was the main factor for this immigration. Hence, as Guha noted— "Until the beginning of a still bigger population movement from East Bengal to Assam in this century, tea remained the biggest factor responsible for immigration. Large scale labour recruitment from outside had started from the early sixties."⁴⁵ In 1872 imported labour on tea gardens alone was estimated at 40,000 and the total number of immigrants rose to about 80,000, in a population of only 18.96 lakh.⁴⁶ But still migration of Muslim population from eastern Bengal had not started.

The number of immigrants increased from less than one lakh in 1872 to anything between 5 and 6 lakh in 1901. But on the other hand, the indigenous Assamese population decreased in the next 30 years.⁴⁷

The economy of Assam, after 1850 and before 1901 developed certain significant characteristics. Guha has noted that the rise of population due to influx created economic imbalances in the province. There was a continued imbalance between the sudden spurt of modern business sector as well as infrastructural development and traditional agricultural sector. The number of population is much more than the increase in gross acreage under ordinary crops. Though increase in demand for rice, bamboo etc. could increase the farmers' cash income, the indigenous people could not take the advantage due to labour shortage. On the other hand, the gap between the gross earnings of the economy and the locally disbursed income increasingly widened. Moreover, the surplus generated by foreign capital and savings from high salaries and substantial part of the wages was remitted from the province. Even, the part of the profit which is kept for self-financing was used mostly on imported capital goods and services. The increased demand for trading clerical, skilled and even unskilled services encouraged further migration of suitable personnel from other provinces viz. Marwari traders and the Bengali professionals. Various goods required by these migrant people like wheat flour, edible oil, ghee, refined sugar, shoes and piece goods etc. could not be readily

produced locally because of the limited domestic market which made their production economically unviable. Moreover, the British companies had no intention to produce their required goods locally. They had a deliberate policy to import their requirements from outside. In short, we can say that the gross export earning of the economy was far in excess of the import bill. This was so because the process involved a unilateral transfer over and above due payments for invisible imports— of the surplus realised by migrated enterprise.⁴⁸

Although export, imports and the trade gap— all went on increasing, but the share of tea in the total export earnings remained steady, around 70 percent, till 1901. Import items consisted mainly of various wage goods such as mill-made cloth, salt, food-grains, sugar and tobacco. Moreover, import of machineries and other inventories were also on the increasing rate.⁴⁹

Thus, during the period 1871-1901, the economy of Assam had developed all the characteristics of a dual economy, with a cleavage between the traditional subsistence sector and a capital-intensive, highly monetized modern sector.⁵⁰

On the other hand, in the peasant- economy sector, the conditions of the peasant hardly improved. Their main cash crop— mustard seeds production— decreased heavily after the 1897 earthquake. Of course, increased cash sale of rice to tea gardens somewhat compensated the peasants. But the diffused increments in their cash incomes, cut to size by increased land revenue demand, could hardly encourage capital formation on the farmers.⁵¹

The development process generated in the late 19th century continued till the first half of the next century. Tea plantation expanded considerably. Further improvement in the communication system was noticed. "In 1890" recorded the ART History, "the journey from Calcutta to Dibrugarh took at least a fortnight: in 1904 it took over three days: in 1940 only thirty hours by rail." During the 1930s several hundred miles of road were metalled with loose shingle, an improvement which encouraged the extension of all-the-year- round passenger bus services throughout the valley, a vast difference from 1850 when even carts and carriages were almost unknown. During the second World War, new roads were constructed and existing roads

widened and improved. Moreover, air fields were constructed during this period which facilitated accomplishment of journey within a very short period.⁵²

Two important commercial towns of present day Assam—Guwahati and Tinsukia were developed during this period.

Improvement in economic conditions as well as development of infra-structure brought a qualitative change in the economy of Assam. The most important change was that land-hungry East-Bengali peasants moved to Assam to colonise the riverine wastelands. Nextly, the capital already accumulated in the pocket of trading classes, more particularly in the hands of the Marwari trading community, through usury and trades, now used more productively and speedily turned over due to increased commodity circulation. Before this period their capital was used in collecting forest products as well as meagre farm surplus for market against the supply of imported manufactures. The Marwaris also opened shops in the vicinity of the tea gardens and used their capital as short-term finance to garden managers against hundis in Calcutta. Moreover, when jute became one of their trading crops they started financing East Bengali Muslim jute growers. They also started mills for their processing. Therefore, improved communications as well as the emergence of jute as a productive channel of rural finance were the two significant factors which, within years, uplifted their agrarian economy through expanded commerce.⁵³

Till 1900, immigration of Muslim peasants from adjoining East Bengal to Assam was an insignificant factor. But a change came with the turn of the century. Large numbers of East Bengali immigrants, most of them Muslims, moved to the wastelands of the Brahmaputra valley. They moved in such large numbers that S.Mullan, the Chief Census Officer of Assam in 1931 compared it "to the mass movement of a large body of ants."

With the increase in population due to influx of people, particularly the Bengali Muslims, there was a change in the crop pattern too. Jute became an important product of Assam proper. Share of rice also increased. Immigrant jute growers now started playing an increasingly important role in jute and paddy cultivation. Cotton and black-pepper gradually disappeared. Indigenous fibres like rhea and mesta became insignificant against the emergence of jute, particularly from 1901-11 onwards. Potato, introduced

during 1825-40, rapidly gained its place as the most important vegetable on the farms. Traditional cash crops such as sugarcane and mustard were on the decline. Sugarcane cultivation continued to decline but improved by 1951. In certain districts, of course, sugarcane production increased due to the arrival of Nepali immigrants. But the indigenous Assamese peasant, on the other hand, gradually started abandoning its cultivation in the Brahmaputra valley. The Nepali immigrants adopted jhumming on high jungle land and produced it at a lower cost. The share of mustard in gross cropped area also steadily declined until 1951. Sericulture and lac-culture production, of course, staggered on. Between 1920-21 to 1957-58 jute production increased rapidly but oil seed production during this period decreased at an equally rapid pace.⁵⁴

But the most irritating thing was that Assamese peasants could not take the advantage of the situational change in the agricultural sector. The tea garden labourer, who was always a good customer, was ready to pay high prices, a large portion of the amount the labourer received as wages went into the hands of the peasant who supplied his requirements; paddy, mustard, pulses, poultry, vegetables, eri-muga, threads, thatching grass, bamboos etc. But the lion's share went into the hands of the Beparis and Marwari traders. The Assamese peasants utterly failed to take advantage like their immigrant counterparts of the abundance of cultivable lands, improvement of communication and excellent markets at nearby tea gardens for sale of their agricultural products.⁵⁵

Efforts to set up some agro-based and forest-based industries were made in this period. In the late 19th and the early 20th century some bullock-drawn ghanis were set up for producing mustard oil. But till then no modern pressing method was developed. Later, a number of modern mustard oil mills were started in Kamrup, Lakhimpur and Nagaon, mostly with Marwari capital. Only one of these was an Assamese concern. Besides, some tea gardens also started small oil mills in their own gardens for producing oil cakes to be used as manures in their plantation. They used oil cakes as manure in their gardens and sold oil as a bye-product. This continued until better manures were available.⁵⁶

In case of sugarcane crushing also the Assamese used the old wooden crude mill while the Nepali immigrant cane grower used

the iron sugar mill. Even as late as 1921, bulk of the sugar cane mills of the province of Assam were "of the most primitive kind." Of course, rapidly these mills disappeared. Some attempts had also been made in the first decade of this century to introduce the steam crushing mill. An Assamese gentleman tried to set up a sugar mill with a small centrifugal apparatus in 1905. Similar plants were set up by a Marwari firm at Dibrugarh. Even earlier in the forties, an European had started a sugar mill in Guwahati. But these early ventures were all short lived and as late as 1956, there were only a few power-operated sugar cane crushers in Assam proper as compared to such crushers run by bullock power.⁵⁷

Machine-milling of rice started early this century and to this day is dominated by Marwari capital. But, despite the rapid increase in the number of rice mills in the province, upto 1960, more than half of the output of husked rice was dhenki-processed.⁵⁸

In case of the processing of jute also, the Marwari capital dominated the scene ever since its emergence as an export commodity in the province. They set up godowns and jute baling presses near river ports as well as in small towns in the jute growing areas and employed wage labourers to bale raw jute.⁵⁹

In 1917, India's first plywood mill, which was essentially a tea-chest plywood mill, was established in the Surma Valley. Immediately, in 1918 another plywood unit was set-up at the eastern part of the Brahmaputra Valley and in between 1922 and 1924, there were at least four tea-chest plywood mills in Assam. Some of these mills later closed down because of severe competition from imported tea-chests. In 1924 the first commercial plywood mill was set up by ART Company at Margherita. This was the first commercial plywood mill in India. Since its inception the plywood industry developed fast with the timber resources of the province and is even now one of the major industries of the state. From the beginning the industry is being dominated by the outsiders— first by British capital and later by Marwari capital. Only less than five percent of the units, those too very small in size, are in the hands of the indigenous people.⁶⁰

Like the 19th century, the entire economy of the state was in the hands of the outsiders in the beginning of the 20th century too. On the other hand, while there was a burst of inventive genius

and application of new inventions of some 600 to 700 tea plantations, the surrounding agrarian economy was undergoing only slow changes. Besides, other sectors of economy was completely dominated by the outsiders.⁶¹ The 1921 Census Report, therefore mentioned—

“While considerable profits have been made in the tea and other industries, it does not appear that the indigenous population has shared much in these.....The rice mills and oil mills of Dibrugarh are owned by Marwaris. A good many of the professional positions are held by Bengalis; wholesale and important retail trade is in the hands of men of Rajputana and of Eastern Bengal; the smaller shops in villages are mostly kept by up-country men.”⁶²

In 1947, India attained independence from the British and Assam became one of the states of the Indian Union. Since then the Government of India has adopted many steps and policies to make India an economically modern country; many states and communities took the advantage of these and became industrially developed.

But the position of Assam remained the same and its colonial pattern hardly recorded any significant change. Even the Asam Sahitya Sabha, a cultural, social and literary organisation, which is regarded as the mouthpiece of Assamese people, resented—

“Over the years, since Independence, Assam has been treated as nothing better than a colony within the republic for exploitation by the rest of the country and by foreigners. The state has been fragmented beyond recognition in pursuance of the divide and rule policy inherited from the British.....Every year we get Rs 22 crores as royalty for Rs 840 crores worth of oil....The tea industry, here, which produces 270 million kgs of tea worth over Rs 400 crores every year, is controlled from Calcutta and London.”⁶³

After Independence some Indian speculators purchased tea estates in Assam at high prices. Many of them obtained control of the tea estates through stock purchases of the majority of the shares. Some of these speculators were interested in earning maximum profits in the shortest period without caring for the

scientific side of tea plantations. "No Indian entrepreneurs"— said P.C. Goswami, "came forward to start any industry, except to take advantage of transfer of small individually- owned tea estates at the time of departure of the British owners to UK."⁶⁴

But till 1954-55 nearly half of the total capital invested in the Indian tea industry was invested in Assam alone and out of the amount invested in Assam nearly 76 percent was sterling capital, about 13 percent non-Indian rupee capital and only 11 percent Indian rupee capital.⁶⁵

The European control of Indian tea industry, especially in Assam, continued till the 1960s. The non-Indian estates were well-organised and were managed by only five or six large and highly resourceful agency houses of Calcutta.⁶⁶

The continued dominance of foreign capital in the tea industry of India led to the demand for nationalisation of this industry by the Socialists. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, the eminent Socialist leader, suggested after Independence to prime minister Nehru that the Government of India should purchase all the British tea companies of India with the sterling then deposited in England.⁶⁷

Strong demands for nationalisation of this industry continued till the late 70s. Even some people suggested for nationalising it without compensation. "So, analysing all the descriptions", said Ajit Kumar Sarma, "that the British capital has taken away a net profit of 2000 crores of rupees." Hence, the writer claimed that these tea companies should be nationalised without delay and there was no question of giving any compensation to them because foreign capital invested by these companies in the tea gardens of Assam had already taken away more than 200 times worth of money.⁶⁸

Besides tea, outsiders continued to monopolise all other trades and industries. The problem of immigrants continued unabated. In addition to Bengali Hindu refugees and Muslim settlers from East Pakistan, immigrants from other Indian states continued to settle in Assam. " For large number of people in North-Eastern India, especially in Bengal and Bihar, Assam was a land of opportunity where one could find a job, start a business, cultivate land and do better than at home."⁶⁹

Therefore, Weiner noted that Assam had been the fastest gro-

wing area in the sub-continent for the past seventy years. Its population had grown more than four fold: from 3.3 million in 1901 to nearly 15 million in 1971, as compared with an increase of 130 percent for India as a whole. Approximately 11.4 percent of the state's population came from outside the state, but in both the 1920s and the 1930s the migrant population exceeded 20 per cent.⁷⁰

The migrant communities dominated all fields of the state. These migrant communities included: tribal labourers from the Chota-Nagpur region of Bihar and Orissa engaged mainly in tea gardens; Bengali Muslims, mainly from East Bengal who settled on land along the Brahmaputra Valley and to a lesser extent, in the Surma Valley; Bengali Hindus, originating in East Bengal who settled in Cachar district and throughout the towns of the Brahmaputra Valley, where they held middle class jobs; Marwaris, an entrepreneurial community from Rajasthan, engaged in trade, commerce and money-lending and more recently, in a few industries and many tea plantations purchased from the British; a scattering of other migrant communities, such as Nepalis, who have settled in the low-lying hills around the Brahmaputra Valley, tending cattle; Bihari males, who work as seasonal migrants in construction projects and in the towns; and a small but economically significant number of Punjabis working in the transport industry, and more recently in their own business.⁷¹

Foreign domination of the state economy soon started posing problems to the local people. Assessing the plight of the local people Weiner said that as more and more educated Assamese youths sought urban employment, they increasingly felt blocked by 'foreign' domination of the commercial and industrial sectors. He also assessed that—

—in absolute numbers migrants are a majority or near majority in manufacturing, construction, trade and commerce and transport and communications;

—Assamese are less likely to take positions as non-agricultural workers than are migrants;

—a very substantial portion of employers in centrally controlled services— rail roads, post and telegraph and various centrally controlled departments— are non-Assamese, while employees in

the state government are more likely 'local' though one should include in the 'local' category all those born in Assam, including a majority of the Bengali Hindus.⁷²

In many cases, even very small businesses were not owned by the local people. As Guha pointed out that while bullock carts became common in most of the rural areas, "but a discouraging fact is that the indigenous people have not taken to this industry. The making of wooden wheels with iron rims for bullock and buffalo carts have remained, since their advent in Assam, a monopoly of a section of migrant blacksmiths from Bihar."⁷³

Roma Dutta, in his small book also noted that due to unwillingness of Assamese people to participate even in small businesses, majority of the state's businesses were captured by the outsiders and they had siphoned off a large amount of money from the state.⁷⁴

Shekhar Gupta too has noted that most of the people in the North-East still buy Lipton, Brooke Bond or Tata tea, produced in the state but packed and taxed in Calcutta, besides, they pay the marketing firm's profit, transport overheads. The same is true of paper.⁷⁵ He also noted that the tea industry is predominantly in the hands of British firms or the Marwaris who, from brokers, became the most successful planters in no time. The plywood industry is another story. It is all controlled by the Marwaris; in fact much of it by the Birlas who do make something like 500-600 percent profit and given the absurd forest policy, give very little back to the state. The growth of the paper industry has been tardy and most of the bamboo is taken out as raw material to be processed in mills outside the state. Even the bulk of the oil for which the royalty is meagre, is taken out to Barauni, in neighbouring North Bihar.⁷⁶

Hence, considerable part of the export earnings of tea, coal, petroleum and forest products leaked out and still leaks out of the local income-flow, without an equivalent return in the form of visible and invisible imports and services useful to the local society as such.⁷⁷

The continued dominance of outsiders worried the local people so much so that in the mid sixties many Assamese adopted a negative attitude towards industrialisation of the State. They belie-

ved that industrialisation of Assam would not help the indigenous Assamese people but would help the non-Assamese to exploit the state. Therefore, they reacted adversely towards industrialisation of Assam.⁷⁸

Many Assamese people also advocated for public sector industries. They believed that if industries were set up in the public sector, then there would be less exploitation, as well as the local would get employment there. "This so-called 'foreign' domination", said Weiner "has led many Assamese to press for an expansion of the public as opposed to the private sector. The state government of Assam continues to welcome private investment, but much of the efforts of the state leadership has been directed towards pressing the central government to expand public sector investment in the state, especially in petroleum and various raw-material-oriented industries, such as paper pulp and cement. It has also sought public sector investment for the creation of fertilizer factories, the exploitation of natural gas, and the expansion of transport facilities." This state socialism, implying the expansion of public sector investment, is supported by all Assamese political parties and by virtually all Assamese social groups, including, even the small Assamese business community."⁷⁹

Increasing domination of outsiders and influence of socialistic ideology even motivated the Government to nationalise wholesale trade of some essential commodities. In 1972, June, the Government of Assam nationalised wholesale trade of wheat and finally from November, 1973 the Government took over the wholesale trading of paddy and rice. "It is not that this system has cleared food trading from the grip of 660 private capitalists, with this a strong post of socialisim has been established"— said Hiteswar Saikia, the then minister of state for home, health, education etc. Even the then Chief Minister, Sarat Chandra Sinha, said— "till today a few businessmen who were the fuedelist's representatives are doing this business monopolistically and their mentality to earn profit gave a bitter experience of price rise, artificial scarcity and adulteration."⁸⁰

Besides, the Government also took various measures to help local entrepreneurs by setting up industrial estates, offering subsidies and other assistance. Moreover, steps had been taken to train local entrepreneurs under entrepreneurial development progra-

mmes. Many educated youths had taken the opportunities. But barring a few of them the majority failed in their ventures and their units either became sick or passed on to the hands of outsiders.

In the 1980s during the Assam agitation, the movement leaders launched a new phase of economic revolution amongst the Assamese people, which was called 'self reliance' or "swabalambita." Under this phase of agitation, the leaders asked the Assamese people to undertake business activities to make the community self-reliant. No doubt this move had been able to create good response amongst the native Assamese and the number of Assamese businessmen increased considerably, but after the agitation was over many of them left the business. We shall discuss this in the subsequent chapter.

The condition of the Assamese have not changed much till today. Trade, commerce and industries are still dominated by the outsiders. Moreover, the industrial sector is still dominated by traditional industries like tea, plywood and saw mills. Assam still continues to be the topmost producer of tea, plywood etc in India. Out of 4,20,000 hectares of land used to cultivate tea production in India, Assam alone accounts for 2,32,650 hectares and from 1960 to 1990 tea cultivated areas increased by 43 per cent.⁸¹ More than 50 per cent plywood is produced by the state till today using its forest resources. But the progressive development impulses felt in manufacturing and other industrial sectors elsewhere in India has not been felt in Assam.

Moreover, the number of sick units are increasing year by year and it has aggravated the problem further. In a recent survey, it has been revealed that there were 11,448 sick industries in 1990 which was almost half in 1985 (5683 in 1985).⁸²

The situation has not improved despite the presence of some big industrial houses and outside business class. In spite of monopoly in trade, commerce and industry by outsiders, investment in new avenues of business have been rare. Investment by outsiders is still confined to the traditional economic sector. This leaves the sophisticated manufacturing sector highly neglected. The plight of the region is clearly depicted by Shekhar Gupta. He described— "Neglect of the region by the country's large industrial groups, is next. Barring tea, the Birla interest in plywood and the Wimco match factory at Dhubri in the Goalpara district,

there is no outside industrial interest in Assam. The BRPL will soon produce 30,000 metric tonnes of polyester staple fibre, which is more than what the whole country has today. Yet it has been impossible to invite private sector capital to utilise even a part of this in spite of the offer of generous incentives."⁸³

In the agricultural sector, there is still a considerable deficit in food supply. Assam still depends on other states for its essential commodities. Due to import of rice, pulses, oil, fish and other items there is a regular flight of money amounting to Rs 700 crores per annum from Assam to other states. If the state continuously depends on others at this rate, about 3000 crores of rupees would go out by 2000 AD.⁸⁴

"Assam is still an 'income remitting' state"— said Amalendu Guha, "and immediate impact of the development process has not 'therefore' been that of benefiting local inhabitants— particularly the indigenous elements." He also said— "Even if things are not seen from a parochial point of view, and the whole of Indian economy is viewed as a single integrated unit, the problem does not vanish. It remains there as the problem of a depressed pocket or segment of society which, therefore, has failed to receive the benefits of any periodic spurt of heavy investment expenditures whatsoever."⁸⁵

Shekhar Gupta on the other hand felt that "No one makes any noise about this exploitation which begins at grass roots level which affects the common man the most, and which can only be fought locally. The most glaring example is that of broomstick grass. The bulk of the country's production comes from Assam foot hills and Meghalaya, but there is no local enterprise to process it. All it needs is a few thousand labourers who will cut the grass and bundle it into small stacks to make brooms. But every other day, in the course of the travel, I came across contractors from Bombay, Rajasthan and even Amritsar who come here, buy the grass in bulk and at throwaway prices from gullible villagers and take it out of the region. It may seem insignificant but the magnitude of business runs to about Rs 15 crores annually. All that the region gets is Rs 17 lakhs! This on a commodity which can be produced without an infrastructure, with miniscule investment and with the gain of livelihood for a large number of people in the poorest of the sub-montane areas."⁸⁶

Notes and References

1. We are not concerned much with the etymological meaning of business which means the state of being busy. This meaning is too broad to serve any purpose. On the other hand, in common parlance and even in many text books, business is identified with the exchange of goods and services. The scope of business in recent times has become somewhat wide. It includes industry, trade and also those services as banking, insurance and transportation etc. Therefore to quote F.C. Hooper, it means, "the whole complex field of commerce and industry, the basic industries, processing and manufacturing industries and the network of ancilliary services, distribution, banking, insurance, transport and so on, which serve and interpenetrate the world of business as a whole.

Therefore, business can be divided into three broad categories— (a) Industry, which creates goods or services; (b) trade, which is concerned with the exchange of these goods and services; and (c) commerce which helps the functioning of industry and trade."

(Business Organisation and Management— N.C. Roychoudhury; Modern Book Agency (P) Ltd, Calcutta, 1989; p. 1 and Business Organisation and Management- M. Banerjee, Kalyani Publishers, N. Delhi, 1984 p.25)

We often use the term businessman and entrepreneur interchangeably. For entrepreneurs, we are not using the classical theorists, term like Schumpeter and other suggested for. We are using the loose term of entrepreneurs, which includes traders, small merchants and money lenders as well as small and large industrial investors.

2. Sons of the Soil—Myron Weiner; Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988. p.46

3. *ibid*, and Assam— A Valley Divided, Shekhar Gupta; Vikas Publishing House (P) Ltd, N. Delhi, 1984,
4. The Marwaris: From traders to industrialists; Thomas A. Timberg; Vikash Publishing House (P) Ltd, Delhi, 1978 p.4 1-60
5. Business Orgn. and Management- M. Banerjee *op.cit.* p.8
6. The Marwaris; Timberg *op.cit.* p.43
7. Banerjee *op.cit.* p.8
8. *ibid*
9. The Marwaris, Timberg *op.cit.* p.3
10. Socio-Economic Trends in India- Durga Prasad Bhattacharya; Trends of Socio-Economic Changes in India- 1871- 1961, Indian Institute of Advance Studies, Shimla 1969, p. 25
11. Prime Minister Late Jawaharlal Nehru, crystallized the idea of such a society to one in which "the means of production should be socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole." The Planning Commission interprets the socialist pattern of society as one in which 'basic criterion for determining the lines of advance must not be private profit but social gain and that the pattern of development and the structure of socio-economic relations should be so planned that they result not only in appreciable increases in total income and employment but also in greater equality in incomes and wealth"
(Modern Business- S.S. Chatterjee, The World Press (P) Ltd, 1969, p.581)
12. In order to remove regional imbalances created by post industrial growth, the Government has adopted a policy under the five year plans, to encourage the establishment of industries in those areas which are industrially backward. Certain districts have been classified as industrially backward and very liberal concessions

are provided for the setting up of industries there. But in many cases industrial units in the public sector have been set up in certain regions more under political pressure than on consideration of recognised locational factors.

13. Roychoudhury, op.cit, p.89
14. Yojana; 1 October, 1979, p.4-6
15. Timberg, op.cit p.3,9
16. The Comprehensive History of Assamese vol V. H.K. Barpujari, Publication Board Assam, 1993, p.140.
17. Political History of Assam. Vol 1, 1926- 19 19 Ed. H.K. Barpujari 1977, Government of Assam p. 56
18. The Comprehensive History of Assam- Barpujari op.cit, p.112
19. Political History of Assam. op.cit. p.56-7
20. ibid.
21. ibid.
22. ibid.
23. The Comprehensive History of Assam, vol IV op.cit. p.366
24. Political History of Assam, op.cit p.58
25. ibid, p.59
26. Socio-Economic Changes in Agrarian Assam, Amalendu Guha; Trends of Socio-Economic Change in India, op.cit p.570
27. Anglo-Assamese Relations: 1771- 1826, S.K. Bhuyan; Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati, p.578, Second Ed, 1974
28. The Assam Railway and Trading Company Limited Centenary Volume 1881- 1981 (ART) P.5
29. Pol. History of Assam, op.cit p.55
30. Assam proper means the old Brahmaputra Valley district of Kamrup, Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and British Administration Reports mentioned these areas frequently as Assam proper.
31. Socio-Econ. Changes in Agrarian Assam- Guha.

- Trends in... op.cit p.570
32. Pol.Hist. op.cit. p.56
 33. Sons of the Soil; Weiner, op.cit p.47
 34. Socio-Econ.....Assam: Guhati Trends in.... op.cit p.570
 35. Assam and its Tea- P.K.Bhuyan , Centenary Souvenir; Assam Branch Indian Tea Association, 1889- 1989., Guwahati, Assam p.25-31
 36. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Barpujari, vol IV op.cit p.306
 37. Pol. History op.cit p.62
 38. Socio Econ.— Guha p.572
 39. ibid p.572
 40. ART. op.cit p. 17
 41. ibid
 42. ibid
 43. ibid
 44. Socio Econ; Guha op.cit p. 595
 45. ibid 577,78
 46. ibid
 47. ibid
 48. ibid p. 579-80
 49. ibid
 50. ibid
 51. ibid
 52. ART. p. 6
 53. Socio Econ....Guha, p. 579-589
 54. ibid
 55. The Comprehensive Hist. of Assam; vol V, Barpujari, op.cit p. 140
 56. Socio Econ.....Guha, op.cit.
 57. ibid
 58. ibid
 59. ibid
 - 60.
 61. Guha
 62. Assam Census Report, 1921 p.14 Quoted by Guha, op.cit. p. 598
 63. Eclipse in the East, Assam Sahitya Sabha,

- Quoted by S. Gupta in Assam: A Valley Divided. Vikash Publishing House (P) Ltd, p. 63 (1984)
64. The Economic Development of Assam; P.C. Goswami, Kalyani Publishers New Delhi, p. 166
 65. Ref. Report of the Plantation Inquiry Commission (1956) pp 449-51 Quoted by P.C. Goswami p.166
 66. P.C. Goswami p. 163-4
 67. Asomar Chah Udyog: Mat Amat, Ajit Kumar Sarma; Published by the writer himself, 1975, p. 165-194
 68. *ibid*, p. 189
 69. Sons of the Soil, Weiner, *op.cit* p. 104
 70. *ibid* p. 79
 71. *ibid* p. 86
 72. *ibid* p. 128
 73. SocioEcon.....Guha *op.cit* p. 595
 74. Alibator Son Botale Kone: Roma Dutta, Published Abhijit, Devajit and Miss Karabi Dutta, 1st Ed. 1979.
 75. Assam: A Valley Divided, S, Gupta *op.cit* p. 72
 76. *ibid* p. 64
 77. Socio Econ....Guha. *op.cit* p. 598
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 79. Sons of the Soil, *op.cit*. p. 129
 80. Saptahik Nilachal, special issue, 26 Jan, 1974 p. 8
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 83. Assam: A Valley Divided, *op.cit* p. 72
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