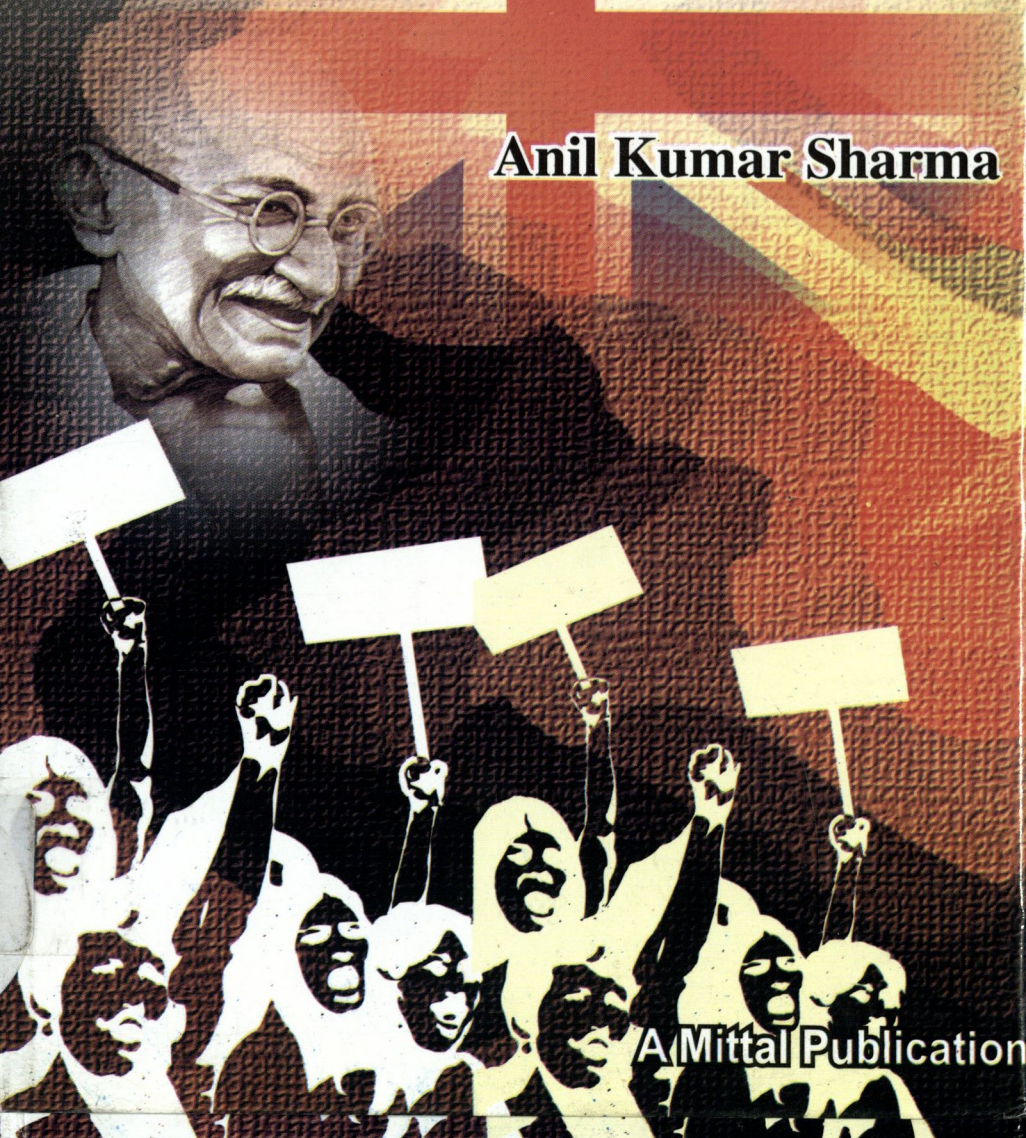


# Quit India Movement in Assam

Anil Kumar Sharma



A Mittal Publication

*Quit India Movement in Assam* is the outcome of my research work done on the part played by the people of Assam to overthrow the shackles of bondage from the British Raj and to establish her own rule with the rest of India. It is found that since the days of the Treaty of Yandaboo and more particularly since 1857 the banner of revolt against the British Raj was raised by Maniram Dewan and his associates. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Assam on the eve of Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921 roused the Assamese masses from their slumber as elsewhere. Assam soon found herself in the forefront of the struggle and the same patriotic trend continued till the attainment of Independence. The book tries to throw light on the successive movements more particularly the 1942 movement and the heroic role of the people of this easternmost province. An attempt has been made to bring to the limelight the role of Gopinath Bordoloi in saving Assam from the clutches of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The euphoria of attainment of Independence is also reflected in the book.

Rs. 595



**ANIL KUMAR SHARMA**, son of late Trilochan Sharma and Srimoti Soroj Bala Devi, was born at Dadhara, Dergaon under Golaghat district of Assam. After completion of his schooling at Dergaon he took his graduation with Honours in History from Cotton College, Guwahati and post-graduation in History from Gauhati University. Initially serving as teacher in Dergaon Higher Secondary School and Naharkatiya College for a short period, he permanently joined DKD College, Dergaon, a premier institution of higher education in Upper Assam, in 1972. He obtained his Ph. D. degree for his thesis on freedom movement from Dibrugarh University. He has taught and contributed various research papers some of which were published in the journal of Historical Research, Department of History, Dibrugarh University and Proceedings of North East India History Association. As a socio-cultural activist, he attended the Delhi session of international Conference of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society being held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in 1980. Dr. Sharma is the life member of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the greatest literary organization of Assam and the North-East India History Association (NEIHA). Some of his recent contributions were found place in the Assamese Encyclopedia on History published by the Asom Sahitya Sabha. A major contribution of Dr. Sharma is that he has brought to the limelight the contributions made by the prominent personalities and freedom fighters of the Dergaon area in a series of articles published in the *Rajjor Darpan*. A writer of Assam Higher Secondary Education Council textbook in History, some of his university prescribed text books are on the road to publication. Dr. Sharma is presently the Head of the Department of History, DKD College, Dergaon, Assam. His forthcoming book is in Assamese : 'Swadhinota Sangramot Golaghat'.

ISBN 81-8324-242-1

QUIT INDIA  
MOVEMENT  
IN  
ASSAM

ANIL KUMAR SHARMA



**MITTAL PUBLICATIONS**

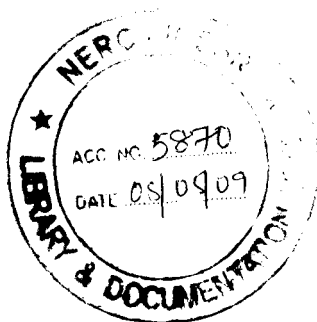
NEW DELHI (INDIA)

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and the publisher.

05.162  
11A

**First Edition 2007**  
© Anil Kumar Sharma  
All rights reserved

ISBN 81-8324-242-1



005870

Published and printed by Krishan Mittal for Mittal Publications,  
4594/9, Daryaganj, New Delhi - 110002, India.  
**Phone:** 23250398, 25351493 **Telefax:** 91-11-25351521  
**e-mail :** mittalp@ndf.vsnl.net.in  
**Website :** www.mittalbooks.com

# CONTENTS

---

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xvii
1. Introduction	1
2. The Second World War and Emergence of a Mass Movement	39
3. Quit India Movement and Mass Resistances in Golaghat District	65
4. Quit India Movement and Underground Activities in Golaghat District	87
5. Quit India and Student and Woman Movements in Golaghat District	111
6. Aftermath	139
7. Conclusion	171
<i>Appendices</i>	181
<i>Bibliography</i>	211
<i>Index</i>	221
<i>Illustrations</i>	227

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

---

### PART ONE

#### GOLAGHAT DISTRICT : A PROFILE

The present district of Golaghat was formerly a sub-division of the erstwhile district of Sibsagar (now Sivasagar) in Assam. It was constituted into a district on 23 October 1987. It comprises the area earlier included in the Golaghat sub-division. The boundary of the district of Golaghat is extended upto the river Kakodonga or Dilsiri in the east and the Brahmaputra in the north. The districts of Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur are situated on its north whereas the district of Jorhat is on its east. Its plains are extended upto the Naga Hills in the south. The Mikir Hills (Karbi Anglong district) and the Nagaon district connect its western boundary.<sup>1</sup>

#### Origin of the Name of Golaghat

The origin of the name 'Golaghat' is shrouded in hearsay. The river Dhansiri, the largest river of the district, originated from the Laishiang peak of the Naga hills; it flows through the district to its confluence in the Brahmaputra at Dhansirimukh, opposite the western end of Majuli. In the past, due to lack of proper road communication system this river remained as the only means of transporting goods to the district. Apart from the essential commodities, arms and ammunitions were carried by big boats through this river route to Golaghat and these items were stored in a godown at Nagabali, on the bank of the river Dhansiri. These arms and ammunitions were generally used in fighting against the Nagas and perhaps that was the reason why this particular place was known as Nagabali. The Assamese word '*gola*' means arms and ammunitions. On the other hand a market place or a shopping centre is also called '*gola*', whereas the word '*ghat*' stands

for river port in Assamese. As the river port (*ghat*) of the Dhansiri accommodated these *golas*, the place came to be known as Golaghat.<sup>2</sup>

The British Government in 1839 created two new sub-divisions in Upper Assam viz., Golaghat and Jaypur for administrative purposes. But in 1846 the two districts of Upper Assam were reorganised by putting Jaypur under Lakhimpur district. As a result only two sub-divisions, Sibsagar and Golaghat, remained within the Sibsagar district. The Jorhat sub-division was reorganised much later, on 18 December, 1869 and subsequently in 1913 Jorhat became the headquarter of Sibsagar district. Since then the river Kakodonga or Dilsiri became the eastern boundary of Golaghat.<sup>3</sup>

The Golaghat sub-division occupied the largest territorial areas of the erstwhile Sibsagar district. Until a few decades ago Wokha and Merapani areas of the present day Nagaland and a substantial portion of the Karbi Anglong district including a portion of the Nagaon district were within the sub-division of Golaghat. Dimapur, an important historical place of yesteryears and a premier commercial centre of Nagaland today was also included in the Golaghat sub-division at that time.<sup>4</sup> In 1951 the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District was formed. Over and above other areas it included the Mikir hills excluding areas totaling 167.63 square miles of Sibsagar district. Not only that, some portions of Barpathar, Sarupathar and Marangi *mauzas* of Golaghat circle and Duarbagori of Bokakhat circle, amounting to a total of 179.72 square miles were also transferred to the newly formed district.<sup>5</sup>

### **Administrative Sub-Divisions**

The former district of Sibsagar was divided into three sub-divisions, Golaghat, Jorhat and Sibsagar occupying respectively the western, central and eastern parts of the district. In area Golaghat was the largest with 1,363 square miles. But so far as the population was concerned the reverse was the story, 3,33,553 souls as against 12,12,224 souls in the entire district.<sup>6</sup> Out of the ten Deputy Collectors' circles in the entire district only three viz., Golaghat, Dergaon and Bokakhat circles were situated in the Golaghat sub-division. With 799.95 square miles Golaghat circle was the largest among them and with only 150.10 square miles Dergaon is the smallest.<sup>7</sup> The total number of *thanas* within the Sibsagar district was eleven out of which Golaghat sub-division had three viz., Golaghat, Dergaon and Bokakhat. In jurisdiction Golaghat *thana* was the largest of all.<sup>8</sup>

There were sixty-five *mauzas* in all in the Sibsagar district of which twenty were in Golaghat sub-division. A list containing the names of these twenty *mauzas* and the population therein (1951) is given below.<sup>9</sup>

<i>Mauzas</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Mauzas</i>	<i>Population</i>
Kaziranga	15,495	Marangi	31,005
Bokakhat	25,029	Dhekial	15,198
Ahotguri	16,003	Moukhowa	8,896
Missamara	20,090	Dakhinhengera	15,441
Rangamati	18,417	Kacharihath	7,480
Dergaon	21,549	Athgaon	8,662
Gurjogania	9,622	Ghiladhari	21,967
Kakodonga	7,199	Doyang Barpathar	23,353
Mahura	12,571	Barpathar	2,865
Khumtai	22,392	Sarupathar	23,340

At present the total number of *thanas* in the Golaghat district is 17 out of which 8 are police stations and 9 are police outposts. The police stations are Golaghat, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Sarupathar, Kamargaon, Merapani, Ghiladhari, Barpathar and the outposts are Kohora, Numaligarh, Khumtai, Kamarbandha, Somonigaon, Dhekial, Furkating, Naojan and Uriamghat.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Dhansiri : Lifeline of the People**

The river Dhansiri, the lifeline of the people of the district, rises in the south-west corner of the Naga hills, below the Laishiang peak. It is the largest river in the district of Golaghat after the Brahmaputra. The total length of the river from its source to its confluence in the Brahmaputra at Dhansirimukh is 220 miles. The river flows in a north-western direction for about 47 miles upto Dimapur near about which place it enters the Golaghat district. From Dimapur to Golaghat it traverses a northernly course but thereafter takes an abrupt turn and flows in a westernly course upto the confluence. The main tributaries of the river on the right bank are the Doyang, the Diphu, the Bhogdoi or Gelabil and on the left bank, the Nambar, the Daigrung and the Kaliani. Besides these tributaries there are also many sub-tributaries among which the Kakodonga, the Rengma and the Bhagti are most important.<sup>11</sup>

### **Population**

In 1951 the district of Sibsagar had a total population of 12,12,224 of

which 6,47,932 were males and 5,64,292 were females. The density of population as per figures submitted by the Survey General of India was 351 persons per square mile, an increase of exactly 50 over the 1931-41 decade. The most thickly populated parts of the district were in the centres towards the south viz. the *thanas* of Jorhat with a density of 650, Amguri 518, Nazira 504, Sibsagar 444, Teok 432, Dergaon 489 and other *thanas* with relatively high density, whereas the areas of lowest density were Bokakhat 161, Majuli 170 and Golaghat 245. The 1941 figures tell a similar tale. Majuli and Bokakhat occupying 17.55 per cent of the area of the district were then in the low density group of 100-150, Golaghat police station spreading itself over 25.46 per cent of the total area was within the low density group of 150-200 while Jorhat police station remained within the group of 450-600. Another interesting feature revealed by the comparison of the figures for the two censuses is that, while 60 per cent of the population continued to remain within the middle density group of 200-450, the area shows a tremendous increase from 48 per cent in 1941 to 64.66 per cent in 1951.<sup>12</sup>

Till recently the total number of population in Golaghat district is 8,28,096. In the municipal and town areas the number of population is as follows.<sup>13</sup>

Golaghat town	28,848
Dergaon town	12,994
Bokakhat town	6,996
Sarupathar town	9,687
Barpathar town	7,270

The revenue circle-wise population of the district is as follows.<sup>14</sup>

1. Golaghat Revenue Circle	2,29,873
2. Dergaon Revenue Circle	1,18,167
3. Khumtai Revenue Circle	91,272
4. Sarupathar Revenue Circle	97,025
5. Bokakhat Revenue Circle	1,19,771
6. Doyang Forest Area	80,649
7. Naojan Forest Area	91,339

The people of Golaghat district are mainly of three religions — Hindu, Muslim and Christian in order of importance. Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs are also there, but they form only a very small minority. The figure of more than 91 per cent Hindus will clearly bring out the fact of the overwhelming Hindu preponderance in the district.<sup>15</sup>

Broadly speaking the population of Golaghat can be divided into four categories, viz., (a) Indigenous, (b) Plains Tribal, (c) Tea and ex-tea garden labourers and (d) others.

1. The indigenous population comprises the Brahmins, Kalitas, Kayasthas, Baniyas, Barias, Ahoms, Chutias, Daivajinas, Koches, Keats, Kaibartas, Kumars, Katonis, Muslims, Nats, Suts, Swarnakars etc.
2. The plains tribal population consists of the Deoris, Kacharis, Miris (now Mishings), Nagas, Shyams, Sonowals etc.
3. The tea-garden and ex-tea garden population comprises the Bhumis, Garhs, Kurmis, Lahars, Mundas, Oriyas, Robidasas, Santals, Telengas etc.
4. The other people comprise the Bengalis, Marwaris, Nepalis, Punjabis, Sikhs etc.

All the communities are spread over the entire district. But generally the Deoris, the Miris and the Kaibartas live on river sides while the Muslims prefer road sides.<sup>16</sup> According to 1991 census, out of the total population of 8,28,096 only 48,838 persons live in the towns and the remaining 7,79,258 live in the rural areas.<sup>17</sup>

### **Physical Features and Climate**

The district of Golaghat, situated almost in the middle of the province of Assam, is surrounded by the beautiful hills of Karbi Anglong in the west and Naga hills in the south. The mighty Brahmaputra is flowing from the east to the west demarcating its northern boundary. The district is undulating with small hills, hillocks and river basins. It is within the temperate region and having a suitable climatic condition with monsoon-type climate prevailing throughout the year.<sup>18</sup>

### **Major Towns**

The Golaghat district has only five recognised towns at present viz. the headquarters town of Golaghat, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Sarupathar and Barpathar.<sup>19</sup> But with the industrialization of the Numaligarh area, particularly after the establishment of the Numaligarh Oil Refinery as per provision of the Assam Accord<sup>20</sup> a small industrial township is fast growing here. So also the places like Merapani on the border with Nagaland and Badulipar by the side of the National Highway No. 37 are rapidly urbanized with the development of trade and commerce. It would be proper to mention here that the only major industry (other than the refinery) of the district is the tea industry; and there are more than a hundred tea gardens within the territorial

limits of the district. One fifth of the total population of the district live in these tea gardens earning their livelihood there.<sup>21</sup>

### **Cultural and Educational Situation**

Golaghat is culturally rich and advanced since very old days. The district has a 'long tradition of Vaishnava culture since the days of the Kachari and the Ahom rulers. The Ahom kings Pratap Singha (1603-41) and Rajeswar Singha (1751-69) built the edifice of Saiva culture by establishing Siva temples in the region. There were *devadasis* in the Siva temple of Dergaon for which the area became advanced in the field of songs and dances. Perhaps the *Dergayan Nachani* Phulmoti could earn (he royal fame of *Borraj*a during Siva Singha's (1714-1744) reign only because of her proficiency in dancing. The modern cultural waves in various art forms have also touched Golaghat suitably. The establishment of Amateur Theatre Hall in 1895, the first of its kind in Golaghat, brought about a new awakening in the cultural field. The *Ekota Natya Mandir*, the *Dharma Natya Mandir* (presently *Bapuji Mandir*) and the Dergaon Town Club established at Dergaon during the thirties and forties of the last century promoted dramatic skill of the people. The *Ajanta Kala Mandal*, the *Golaghat Sangeet Vidyalyaya* and the *Rupbon Kolakshetra* pioneered the cause of classical and instrumental music in the district.<sup>22</sup>

Though Golaghat was lagging behind in the field of education, yet a good beginning was made towards the later part of the nineteenth century. It was Govinda Chandra Bezbarua, the elder brother of *Sahityarathi* Lakshminath Bezbarua, who established the first M.E. School at Negeriting in 1884. This was followed by the establishment of another M.E. School at Dergaon in 1885 and a High School at Golaghat in 1886 by him. Bezbarua was also responsible for the establishment of two other high schools at Sibsagar and Jorhat in 1889 and 1893 respectively.<sup>23</sup>

The educational scenario of Golaghat district in 1940 was as under:

1. Lower Primary School for boys 145 and for girls 12	= Total	157
2. M.V. School for boys 5 and for girls 1	= Total	6
3. M. E. School for boys 4 and for girls 1	= Total	5
4. High School for boys 2 and for girls 1	= Total	3

(Government Bezbarua High School, Golaghat and Dergaon High School are for boys and Golaghat Mission High School for girls)

- |   |         |   |
|---|---------|---|
| 5. Madrassa (Government aided)  | = Total | 2 |
| 6. Sanskrit Tol (One was Local Board aided and the other was private) | = Total | 2 |

Thus, before independence there was no collegiate institution in Golaghat and as such the economically well-to-do families used to send their wards for higher education to Calcutta, Guwahati and Jorhat. It was in 1949 a new era of collegiate education began and the first college of the district 'The Golaghat College' was established. Later the college came to be known as the Devraj Roy College. At present the district is having more than twelve full-fledged colleges established in different parts of the district. Apart from these, the only police training college of Assam is located at Dergaon. Moreover, a Homeopathic school at Chinatoly and a Junior Technical School at Pulibor are there.<sup>24</sup>

### Flora and Fauna

Nature has gifted a lot of flora and fauna to the district of Golaghat. The district is endowed with the world famous National Park, the Kaziranga National Park and the forest reserves of Nambar, Dayang and Kokodonga are situated in the district. Various precious woods and medicinal plants are found in abundance in these forests. Apart from being a source of revenue to the Government, these forests are the homes of innumerable species of wild animals. Kaziranga is world famous for the one-horned rhino which attracts tourists and animal-lovers not only from different places of the country but also from abroad. Elephant, tiger, bear, buffalo, various species of deer and bird are found in these forests.<sup>25</sup>

### Places of Tourist Attraction

The district of Golaghat has a number of places of tourist attraction. Mention has already been made of Kaziranga, the abode of the one-horned rhino. The relics of the Kachari kingdom are found near Dimapur whereas ruins of an ancient palace are seen at Deo Parbat and a mighty rampart built during the Ahom period is still found at Numaligarh by the side of the National Highway No. 37. The hot spring at the Nambar forest reserve and the Fatasil water falls attract thousands of tourists every year to these places. Moreover, the Negheriting Siva temple at Dergaon, situated on the top of a hillock, the Baba *than* (monastery) at Numaligarh, the *Kaka than* near

Kaziranga, the *Burhi Gosani than* at Dergaon and the *Athkhelia Namghar* (prayer hall) are some of the other institutions of historical and cultural importance.<sup>26</sup>

### **Communication Network: Dhansiri—the Lifeline**

The communication network of the district of Golaghat is not upto the mark. Since time immemorial the river Dhansiri, the lifeline of the people, has been used as the major river-route of the district connecting Golaghat town, the district headquarter with the rest of the world. The *Dhodar Ali* (road) constructed by the Ahom king Gadadhar Singha (1684-96) with the help of the so-called *dhods* (the lazy men), has been serving as a major land-route of the district. The National Highway No. 37 which is passing through the district from Bagori to Kakodonga connecting the Jorhat district and the National Highway No. 39, originating from Numaligarh to the Nambar river bordering Karbi Anglong, are the two major highways of the district. However, the district headquarter town of Golaghat is not touched by either of these highways and perhaps that was the reason why the development of this town is at a snail's pace. The railway network of the district is the one which was started by the British government. Furkating, situated at a distance of six kilometers from Golaghat town, is the nearest junction. Though Golaghat district is lacking an airport yet the neighbouring Rawriah (Jorhat) airport serves the needs of the district to some extent.

### **Administrative Set Up**

The district of Golaghat, since it was raised to the status of a district in 1987, has been under the direct administration of a Deputy Commissioner with headquarters at Golaghat town. Seven Assistant Deputy Commissioners and a host of other officials assist him in his duties. Moreover, the Sub-Divisional Officers of the three sub-divisions, *viz.* Golaghat, Bokakhat and Dhansiri and the Circle Officers in five circles *viz.* Golaghat, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Khumtai and Sarupathar are there to help the district administration in carrying out the day-to day administration of the district.<sup>27</sup>

## **PART TWO POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

With the Revolt of 1857 Assam entered into a new chapter of her history. The Hindustani sepoy of the 1st Assam Light Infantry stationed at Dibrugarh and 2nd Assam Light Infantry stationed at Gauhati (Now Guwahati) as well as the members of the old aristocracy became restive towards the close of July, 1857.<sup>28</sup> Maniram

Dewan, a former revenue *sheristadar* and an adviser of King Purandar Singha (1832-38), ex-Raja of Upper Assam, had already submitted a petition to A.J. Maffat Mills, Judge of the *Sadar Dewani Adalat* on deputation to Assam in 1853, highlighting the evils of the East India Company's rule in Assam.<sup>29</sup> Kandarpeswar Singha, grandson of Purandar Singha and son of Kameswar Singha, too, had been making repeated representations to the Calcutta authorities demanding restoration of a part of his forefather's kingdom or a higher pension to live in dignity.<sup>30</sup> All these attempts, however, proved futile.

Maniram's disenchantment with the local authorities in Assam being thus complete, he was compelled to have a last ditch in Calcutta where he arrived in April, 1856 to represent the case of Kandarpeswar before the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir John Campbell.<sup>31</sup> In Calcutta Maniram came into contact with some notable personalities and merchants of Bengal and attended several meetings of the British Indian Association and thus received an intellectual backing before plunging into a new course of action.<sup>32</sup> On 6 May, 1857 only five days before the outbreak of the Mutiny at Meerut, Maniram submitted to the Governor General in Council a memorial on behalf of Kandarpeswar Singha.<sup>33</sup> The proclamation of Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of Hindustan following the arrival of the sepoys at Delhi from Meerut stirred Maniram with a new urge of patriotism. He decided to start an armed insurrection with the goal of overthrowing the British Raj and restoring the old native rule with Kandarpeswar Singha as the Raja of Assam. He got in touch with his friends in Assam through messengers in the guise of *fakirs* called *bhats*. Letters addressed to the Charing Raja (crown prince) were delivered to Peali Barua, who acted as the former's chief adviser in the absence of Maniram. In this mission, Maniram was helped by leaders like Urbidhar Barua, Mayaram Barbora, Chitrasen Barbora, Kamala Charingia Barua, Mahidhar Sarma Muktear, Luki Senchowa Barua, Ugrasen Marangikhowa Gohain, Deoram Dihingia Barua, Dutiram Barua, Bahadur Gaonburha, Sheikh Formud Ali and Madhuram Koch.<sup>34</sup>

As the news of the happenings in northern India reached the sepoys of Assam, they began to believe that the English would soon quit Bengal and Assam. The military headquarters at Dibrugarh had its camp at Nogora, Jamuguri and Barpathar in Golaghat district. Nirmal Hazari and Peali Barua carrying confidential messages from the Charing Raja arrived at Nogora. The Raja promised to pay double the salary to the sepoys and give native officers pay like *Jongji Paltan* (a platoon of Europeans), if all the sepoys joined him and get him the

country. Sheikh Bhikun, the Subedar of the detachment, readily agreed to join the rebels. Peali, having been successful in his maiden attempt, sent secret messages to other detachment camps.<sup>35</sup> Secret consultations were held at Raja's parlour and schemes were laid out and agents sent to muster support from influential persons. Moreover, arms and ammunitions were collected; persons of disbanded Assam militia were called to be enrolled as soldiers; foodstuffs were collected and stored at suitable places. Contacts were established with Subedar Noor Muhammad and Sheikh Bhikun and a few others at Dibrugarh and Golaghat. Money and *ghee* were distributed for offering *puja* at the Dergaon temple and other holy places for securing divine grace.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, only a spark was needed to set the fire ablaze. That moment came on 29 August, 1857 at 9 P.M. at Nogora when a secret meeting was held at Sheikh Bhikun's quarter. The witness of this meeting was Dr. Keramat Ali, a local doctor. According to his description Subedar Bhikun, along with his co-rebels, was sitting on a *murha*. Others sat on the ground. Participants like Bhola Pandey and Sheosahay Singh addressed the gathering with their stirring speeches and appealed to the co-sepoys to do everything possible to liberate the motherland from bondage. They even threatened to kill those who did not cooperate with them. When all swore to cooperate, they planned to march to Jorhat to install Kandarpeswar Singha on the throne. From Jorhat the rebels would move to Sibsagar and after setting fire at the Deputy Commissioner Charles Holroyd's bungalow and killing all the British officers, they would move towards Dibrugarh to kill the British officials there. Thus, with such elaborate plans and programmes in the military detachment at Nogora of Golaghat, the first open and formal proclamation of the Revolt of 1857 in Assam was made.<sup>37</sup> As bad luck would have it the plot was detected before it could mature. A few of Maniram's letters written to his friends in Assam were intercepted by Captain Holroyd through the instrumentality of Haranath Parbatia Barua, the unpopular *Daroga* of Sibsagar *thana*. The ring leaders of the revolt were arrested. In Calcutta Maniram was arrested and sent to Alipur jail for a few weeks and then brought to Assam for trial. Sheikh Bhikun along with his supporters were arrested and sent to Dibrugarh for court martial. Maniram and Peali Barua were found guilty of treason and were publicly hanged on February 26, 1858.<sup>38</sup> No doubt Maniram failed in his mission but his patriotism and his martyrdom became a source of inspiration to the future generation of the Assamese.

## Growth of Assamese Renaissance

Assam produced only a small number of English educated youths till the middle of the nineteenth century. Due to the lack of higher educational institutions in Assam the upper middle class families sent their sons and relatives to Calcutta, some on government scholarships. The handful of educated Assamese youths faced no problem of unemployment. Even persons lacking sufficient formal education, could look forward to clerical and labour supervising jobs in tea gardens, the steamer companies, the railways etc. Some were also employed as *Mauzadars* and *Mandals*.<sup>39</sup>

In the growth of political awakening and national consciousness these educated people played an active role. Many of them became anglicised, adopted not only western ideas and thoughts but also western dresses customs and manners. Even Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-59) and Lakshminath Bezbarua (1869-1938), two doyens of nineteenth century Assam, who were born in Brahmin families, wore European dresses<sup>40</sup> Dhekial Phukan, a brilliant product of this age, was inspired by the Bengal renaissance and believed that it was only through the British rule that the country would be able to prosper.<sup>41</sup> He appealed to the government to protect the interest of the indigenous people and wanted the people to be self-reliant and to be entirely relieved of the necessity of relying on foreign goods. He also advocated the establishment of technical schools.<sup>42</sup> On July 4, 1857 he submitted a memorandum to the Bengal government demanding reintroduction of Assamese in offices and educational institutions of Assam.<sup>43</sup> Even the Baptist missionaries raised their voices of protest against the continuation of Bengali in offices and schools of Assam.<sup>44</sup> Anandaram Barua (1850-89), a versatile Sanskrit scholar and Assam's first civilian, and Gunabhiram Barua (1837-94), a prominent literature and social reformer, also urged the Government for reintroduction of Assamese in the province. Thus due to the continuous efforts of the Baptist missionaries and the Assamese intelligentsia that Assamese was finally recognised as the language of the court and schools of Assam in 1873.<sup>45</sup>

The spread of English education brought the Assamese elite into close contact with the liberalism and materialism of the western world. The English educated youths of Assam began to play a new role in the intellectual field. Prominent among them were Anandaram Barua, Bolinarayan Bora (1852-1927), an England educated engineer, Zalnur Ali (1848-1931) and Sibram Bora (1847-1907), both members of the Indian Medical Service. It is worth mentioning that Manik Chandra Barua (1851-1915), a pioneer timber and tea merchant,

was instrumental in the establishment of the first college in Assam, the Cotton College at Guwahati in 1901<sup>46</sup> and later the Berry White Medical School at Dibrugarh in 1912 and the Earl Law College at Guwahati in the same year.<sup>47</sup>

About this time a small band of Assamese businessmen started their business career. Apart from Manik Chandra Barua, his close relative Bhola Nath Barua (1853-1923) rose to be a millionaire timber merchant of Orissa with his head office in Calcutta.<sup>48</sup> Dinanath Bezbarua (1813-95) and Haribilas Agarwalla (1842-1916), son of a Marwari trader, established their own tea-gardens. Even Anandaram Barua contemplated to open a tea-garden after his retirement from service as an I.C.S. officer. Radhanath Changkakoti (1853-1926) and Hem Chandra Barua (1835-96) invested a part of their income in establishing printing presses and publishing newspapers.<sup>49</sup> Changkakoti spent a considerable amount of money for his printing press at Dibrugarh where from the *Times of Assam* was published.<sup>50</sup> These members of the new intelligentsia were initially as much drawn towards western ideas, as they were interested in business.

### **Early Political Associations**

Needless to say that many of the Assamese enlightened businessmen were also closely associated with the literary and political activities of the time besides being connected with the rural peasant community at large. Consequently, with support of the nascent Assamese middle class, many of the new born socio-political organizations of the province virtually became broad-based platforms of the ryots.<sup>51</sup> The first one was the *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* founded at Jorhat in 1884 at the initiative of Jagannath Barooah (1851-1907). The *Sabha* protested against the excessive enhancement of land revenue during the 1892-93 period. It also demanded the employment of "the natives of the soil" in various governmental posts.<sup>52</sup> With the same end in view the *Tezpur Ryot Sabha*, the *Shillong Association*, the *Nagaon Ryot Sabha* and the *Upper Assam Association* came into being.<sup>53</sup>

### **Growth and Development of Press**

The growth and development of press or journalism in Assam was the outcome of the introduction of printing press in the province in the 40's of the nineteenth century. The press played a vital role in the growth of political consciousness among the people. The *Arunodai* was the first Assamese monthly published from the American Baptist Mission Press of Sibsagar in 1846.<sup>54</sup> During the second half of the

19th century a lot of newspapers and periodicals appeared in the province. These included the *Assam Bilasini* (1871), the *Assam Mihir* (1872), the *Assam Darpan* (1874), the *Goalpara Hitasadhini* (1876), the *Chandroday* (1876), the *Assam Dipika* (1876), the *Assam News* (1882), the *Assam Bandhu* (1885) and the *Times of Assam* (1885) etc.<sup>55</sup> In addition to these, the *Advocate of Assam* (1904-07), edited by Mathuramohan Barua and the *Asomiya* (1918-47), a weekly, edited by Maheswar Baruah, were instrumental in arousing political consciousness of the people during the struggle for freedom.<sup>56</sup> The *Assam News* published from Guwahati under the able editorship of Hem Chandra Barua circulated useful knowledge and information with the object of moulding public opinion.<sup>57</sup> The *Mau* (1886), a monthly literary journal edited by Harinarayan Bora, held progressive views on the burning topics of the day and criticised the existing system of nomination in the Local Boards.<sup>58</sup> The *Assam Bandhu* (1885) edited by Gunabhiram Baruah and the *Jonaki* (1889) edited by Chandra Kumar Agarwalla contributed immensely towards arousing the political consciousness of the people. Padmanath Gohain Barua (1871-1946), the editor of the *Bijuli* (1891), stressed upon the role of newspapers in moulding public opinion in a series of "political articles" in his paper.<sup>59</sup> While the *Asom* (1894) was truly 'national in tone', the *Advocate of Assam* stood for nationalism, *swadeshi* and *swaraj*. The *Assam Bilasini* (1914), edited by Krishna Kanta Bhattacharyya was a truly nationalist paper.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, a few Calcutta based Bengali papers voiced the necessity of development of Assam. The *Somprakash* was the most important of all.<sup>61</sup> From the Surma Valley the *Paridarshak* (1886), the *Srihatta Mihir* (1889) and the *Silchar* (1886) circulated local news and cuttings from Calcutta papers.<sup>62</sup>

### **Emergence of Literary Associations**

The growing spirit of national consciousness found its expression in the contemporary literary associations and in the newspapers and periodicals of the time. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Gunabhiram Barua were instrumental in organising the *Gyan Pradayini Sabha* (1857) at Nagaon with the object of spreading advanced knowledge amongst the people.<sup>53</sup> Ganga Govinda Phukan was associated with the *Asamiya Sahitya Sabha* in Calcutta (1872) and the *Upper Assam Association* at Sibsagar (1880). On behalf of the *Sabha*, Jagannath Barooah and Manik Chandra Barua, then college students in Calcutta, submitted a memorial to Lord Northbrook urging him to improve the communication system of Assam with Bengal.<sup>64</sup> In 1885

the *Assam Desh Hitaisini Sabha* was formed at Sibsagar. The *Sabha* issued a circular urging the people to represent their grievances to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.<sup>65</sup> The Assamese students then studying in Calcutta took the lead in establishing a literary society called the *Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhmi Sabha* in 1888. Prominent among those who were associated with this *Sabha* were Lakshminath Bezbarua, Chandra Kumar Agarwalla, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Laksheswar Sarma, Hem Chandra Goswami and Kamala Kanta Bhattacharyya. The *Sabha* set up its branches in different parts of Assam, including Kohima (now in Nagaland) and tried its best to bring an all-round development of the Assamese language.<sup>66</sup> It also took up the publication of a monthly journal called *Jonaki*, the first issue of which was released in February, 1889 from Calcutta. The *Jonaki* brought in a new era in Assamese literature.<sup>67</sup> Along with the literary associations some useful social organisations like the *Kanee Nibarani Sabha* (1890) with the aim of eradication of the opium habit and the *Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti* (1912) with the object of highlighting the glorious past of the province were established.<sup>68</sup>

### **The *Raj Mels* : Their Historic Role**

The Revolt of 1857 left behind a severe financial strain on the British Indian Government. To tide over the difficulties the Government decided to levy a number of new taxes.<sup>69</sup> In 1858 stamp duties and in 1861 the income tax regulations were extended to Assam. Already excise duties were levied at the *Sadar* stations of Kamrup, Darrang and Nagaon.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, washing of gold was farmed out and the *jalkar* or the right to fish in the rivers and *beets* (swamps or lakes) was offered to the highest bidder. Taxes for cutting timber (*gorkhati*), reeds (*bunker*) and grazing tax (*khusary*) became common.<sup>71</sup> The multiplication of taxes was a matter of great concern to the ryots. Rumours were also afloat that the Government was thinking of imposing taxes on their houses, *baries* (gardens) and *pan* (betel-leaf) cultivation.<sup>72</sup> The introduction of license tax confirmed the belief of the villagers, particularly of the tribals of Phulaguri in Nagaon district that before long their *pan* and betel-nut trees would be brought under assessment.<sup>73</sup> In spite of the growing discontent the authorities paid no heed to the difficulties of the ryots. Under the circumstances the peasants took recourse to the *raj mels* (village assemblies) to ventilate their grievances. These *mels* provided ample opportunities to the masses not only to discuss their problems and means of redress but also to develop a spirit of independence and self-reliance.<sup>74</sup> At

their early stages, these institutions were the platforms for the spread of political consciousness and development of nationalism.<sup>75</sup> The *raij mels* were regularly held at several places where the people discussed various matters concerning them. But strangely, the authorities, in most cases, treated these *mels* as “unlawful assemblies”. They failed to understand the naked truth that these institutions were ‘time honoured institutions’ and ‘a recognised feature of Assamese social life.’ This was revealed from a letter written by Henry Hopkinson to the Bengal Government on 8th November, 1861.<sup>76</sup>

As time passed by, these institutions began to play a vital role in ushering in a new era of peasant awakening. The popular *raij mels* gradually transformed themselves into more representative and broad based organizations, the *ryot-sabhas* with active support of the Assamese middle class. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the nationalist movement in India. Though no representative from Assam was sent to attend the first session in Bombay (now Mumbai), yet a telegram was sent wishing it all success.<sup>77</sup> The second session in Calcutta (1886) was attended by Debicharan Barua and Gopinath Bordoloi as the representatives of the *Upper Assam Association*, the *Shillong Association* was represented by Kalikanta Barkakoti whereas the *Nagaon Ryot Association* was represented by Satyanath Bora.<sup>78</sup> The delegates from Assam took active part in Congress deliberations. For example, Debicharan Barua spoke about the defects of the *jury system* in the second session while Lakshminath Bezbarua advocated the reintroduction of the same in the Allahabad session in 1892.<sup>79</sup>

### **Birth of the Assam Association**

The Assam Association, founded in 1903, was the outcome of the efforts made by a band of Assamese elite who felt the need of a broad based provincial organisation. It was founded by Manik Chandra Barua, Prabhat Chandra Barua, Jagannath Barooah, Radhanath Changkakoti, Prasanna Chandra Ghose, Mathuramohan Barua and a few others.<sup>80</sup> The organisation had its headquarters at Gauripur and Guwahati with branches in several towns of Assam valley. In its first session held at Dibrugarh in April, 1905 the association formally elected Manik Chandra Barua as its General Secretary and Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua and Jagannath Barooah as its President and Vice-President respectively.<sup>81</sup>

### Partition of Bengal and *Swadeshi* Movement

The Government of India, apprehending the rapid growth of nationalist activities in Bengal, thought out a plan to destroy the national spirit of the people by getting the province partitioned. However, its implementation on 16 October, 1905 was marked by vehement protests and demonstrations throughout the two Bengals. The Congress in its annual session in 1903 and 1904 had voiced its opposition to the scheme.<sup>82</sup> In Assam, both the Assam Association and the *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* expressed their apprehension of the plan. A leading newspaper of the time, the *Advocate of Assam* criticised the scheme on financial ground holding the view that the new province would be acting "as a sort of drag on the exhausted Indian exchequer."<sup>83</sup>

In the Barak Valley too strong public resentment against the partition was expressed. The Bengali-speaking people of Surma Valley opposed the partition as they would be cut off from their kith and kin in Bengal if they joined Eastern Bengal.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, the European planters of both the valleys welcomed the partition subject to the condition that under no circumstances the name 'Assam' for which its tea was universally known, should be dropped.<sup>85</sup> Padmanath Gohain Barua reacted sharply through his editorial of the *Assam Banti* on 10 July, 1905 and made a fervent appeal to the Assam Association and the *Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha* to rise to the occasion.<sup>86</sup>

The injudicious partition was a rude shock to the people of Assam and Bengal who were determined to oppose it tooth and nail. October 16, 1905, the day when partition became effective, was observed as a day of national mourning all over Bengal. People observed the day with bathing in the Ganges, mass prayer and *rakhi bandhan*. In Assam, *sankirtan* was made by people of all communities at Dhubri. At Dibrugarh, people irrespective of castes and communities paraded the streets singing nationalist songs and shouting *Bande Mataram* and *Alla-ho-Akbar*.<sup>87</sup> Guwahati also witnessed a huge procession of many thousand people carrying flags and singing national songs. Resolutions were passed at public meetings at Maulavi Bazar renewing the *swadeshi* pledge.<sup>88</sup>

The people of Assam responded whole-heartedly to the *swadeshi* call. Boycott of foreign goods and popularisation of *swadeshi* had become almost universal.<sup>89</sup> *Swadeshi* shops were opened in different towns of Assam. Among these the Assam Trading Company and the B.N. Dey and Company of Guwahati were the most important.<sup>90</sup> The students and local shopkeepers took leading part at Tezpur and Barpeta in popularising the indigenous products.<sup>91</sup>

The frequent visit of Bipin Chandra Pal and the stirring speeches he made at public meeting in the Surma Valley did help the message of *swara* spread among the masses.<sup>92</sup> Pal also spelled out his extremist views through the columns of *New India* and formed with Tilak and Lajpat Rai, the extremist trio 'Lal-Bal-Pal'.<sup>93</sup> In response to the clarion call of Bipin Chandra Pal to boycott schools owned or aided by government, forty students of Barak Valley left their schools.<sup>94</sup> To accommodate them the Sylhet National School was opened. Political leaflets and pamphlets like *Swadhin Bharat* and *Bande Mataram* were widely circulated among students. Such leaflets also reached the major towns in the Brahmaputra Valley.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, some educated young men like Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhury, Raktim Bora, Triguna Barua and others came under the spell of terrorism and established contacts with the revolutionary leaders of Bengal. They set up the *Seva Sangha*, a terrorist organisation. Ambikagiri wrote a patriotic drama, *Bandini Bharat*, which was intercepted by the police in 1906.<sup>96</sup>

Notwithstanding increasing popularity of such activities among a section of young men, the Assamese intelligentsia in general had little faith in revolutionary activity and denounced it outright. Lakshminath Bezbarua, in his article 'Born' published in *Kripabar Barbaruar Bhabar Burburani*, condemned the cult of violence.<sup>97</sup> The *swadeshi* movement was commanded by the local press but it condemned the violent activities of the revolutionaries.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the Government of India passed several repressive measures to combat terrorist activities. Lal Bal-Pal, the trio, were put behind bars.<sup>99</sup>

### Early Legislative Politics and Assam

It was in 1906 that Assam came to enjoy the right of representation in a provincial council formed under the Act of 1892.<sup>100</sup> In 1909, Manik Chandra Barua was elected a member of the Assamese community to the Legislative Council.<sup>101</sup> Barua had already made a mark in public life as a true spokesman of the Assamese middle class interest.<sup>102</sup> He pleaded for special measures to protect the Assamese and their language and more specially, the exclusive right of "the children of the soil". He argued that the Assamese had already been over-taxed than the East Bengalis and protested against the gradual enhancement of land revenue and urged upon the Government to improve the means of transport, communication, trade and industry and public health and agriculture in Assam.<sup>103</sup> Later,

due to the tireless efforts of Manik Chandra Barua Assam was able to get a legislative council of its own with effect from November, 1912.<sup>104</sup>

In the newly constituted Legislative Council the Government members were in majority viz. 14 out of 25 members. Prominent among the non-official members were Manik Chandra Barua, Kamini Kumar Chanda, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Tarun Ram Phukan, Ghanashyam Barua, Radha Binod Das, Mohammad Saadullah and Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua.<sup>105</sup>

The most pertinent question before the Council was the opium policy of the Government. The habit of taking opium by the Assamese had already become widespread and the Government made no sincere efforts to contain its consumption. It was generally believed that the fate of the Assamese people would be sealed unless the vice was stopped altogether.<sup>106</sup> Under no circumstances the Government was prepared to relinquish any part of the revenue on this account. The consumption of opium, as a result, was fast increasing during 1890-1910.<sup>107</sup> In his budget speech on 5 April, 1919, Raibahadur Phanidhar Chaliha pleaded for total prohibition of opium and declared. "If opium trade is retained the Assamese race will be almost extinct".<sup>108</sup> He had described the opium revenue as 'tainted money'. This observation of Chaliha created wide uproar in the Council and the President, Sir N.D. Beatson Bell, tauntingly asked him to return the 'tainted money' he received as his salary and allowance as a Government servant from the Government.<sup>109</sup> Soon after the incident Chaliha resigned from the Council but the remarks made by the President casting slur on all its members had great repercussion throughout the country. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and other eminent Congress leaders had occasions to criticize the opium policy of the Government later.<sup>110</sup>

It was Manik Chandra Barua who took a leading part in the debates and discussions in the Council. He exposed the European planters' grip over the Local Boards and demanded their partial democratization. Barua used the Council floor to highlight how the planters benefitted at public expense, to press for changes in favour of an elective system and to demand measures for regularizing the Boards as institutions of rural self-government.<sup>111</sup> Expressing his concern Barua drew the attention of the Government to the large-scale immigration of the East Bengal Muslim peasants to Assam, which was going on for last several years. He asked the Government "to take precaution that they may not come into conflict with the local villagers". He

further urged the Government to amend the Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, so as to make a rent-law for Assam, defining thereby the rights of the tenants in different classes of land.<sup>112</sup> But nothing concrete could be achieved by way of legislative measures.

### **The First World War: Its Impact on Assam**

Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 in Europe, India also decided to join it. The Congress, led by the Moderates, had pledged its support and cooperation to the war efforts by Britain in the hope of securing radical changes in the political situation after the war which would strengthen its demand for self-government.<sup>113</sup> Assam, too, along with the rest of India had helped the British with men and money in return of *which she expected the grant* of a provincial status to Assam.<sup>114</sup> Both European and Indian members of the Assam Legislative Council extended their whole-hearted support to the British Government in the hour of this great crisis.<sup>115</sup> A few Assamese young men joined the Bengal Regiment and two hundred thirty-nine youths helped the British Army as Royal Artillery men. It was estimated that in terms of money rupees twenty-five thousand was subscribed as war-loan and another nine lakh was contributed as war-charities. Further, nearly rupees fifty-five thousand and goods and materials worth rupees twenty thousand were collected for the war fund from Assam.<sup>116</sup> Manik Chandra Barua while delivering his last speech in the Council said, "Great Britain and India have a common cause."<sup>117</sup> Tarun Ram Phukan also expressed his satisfaction for making contribution in the war efforts by Assamese young men fighting shoulder to shoulder with their countrymen in the war front.<sup>118</sup> However, some terrorists who established their hideouts at Fancy Bazar and Athgaon areas of Guwahati attempted to wrest power from the British through their terrorist activities, but without success.<sup>119</sup>

The War had a profound economic impact on Assam. Large sums were spent in "urgent and imperative" needs but not in development works.<sup>120</sup> The War broke the backbone of Assam's economy to such an extent that the rising prices of essential commodities made the peoples' life miserable. Even an ordinary *dhoti* cost not less than eight rupees though before the War a pair of such *dhotis* could be purchased at rupee one only. In this situation the Assamese weavers rendered yeoman's service by supplying woven goods to the villagers.<sup>121</sup> Scarcity of foodstuff led to incidents of looting and plundering of *hats* and *bazars*.<sup>122</sup>

In 1915 Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa. At the beginning he took a pro-British stand but his hopes were shattered to pieces when the Rowlatt Act was passed (March, 1919) and the barbaric act of killing of hundreds of innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh was perpetrated (13 April, 1919). This genocide and the subsequent defence of it by the British press and the public brought about a revolutionary change in the minds of the nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru.<sup>123</sup>

The Assamese people too raised their voice against the Rowlatt Bill. Protest meetings were held at Guwahati and Dibrugarh against the bill. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre also stirred the nationalist sentiment of the people of Assam. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was moved by this ghastly tragedy after his return from London.<sup>124</sup> The Assam Association stood for constitutional agitation. As some of its leading members viz. Ghanashyam Barua, Phanidhar Chaliha, Tarun Ram Phukan and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi were also legislators at that time, they focussed their attention in the floor of the Legislative Council by referring to the demands and resolutions of the Association from time to time.<sup>125</sup> Like some other associations of the time, the Assam Association also represented mainly the interest of the rising middle class.<sup>126</sup> But the tide of events took a different turn when political agitation by peasants and workers spread all over India and the Indian National Congress took the leadership of an anti-British movement. The leaders of Assam too reacted differently to the British rule.<sup>127</sup> In 1920 a special session of the Assam Association was held at Guwahati under the presidentship of Faiznur Ali where the Association decided to join the Indian National Congress. The annual conference of the Association held at Tezpur from 26 to 29 December, 1920 ratified the decision taken at Guwahati. Thereafter, the leaders of the Association, pledging themselves to the non-cooperation programme, made it the virtual forum of the Indian National Congress. The Association became defunct with the formation of the Assam Provincial Congress in 1921.<sup>128</sup>

### **Non-Cooperation Movement and Assam**

The last few years of the second decade of the twentieth century were extremely critical for India. The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the martial law clamped in Punjab had belied all the generous war time promises of the British. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, announced towards the end of 1918, with the ill-considered scheme of dyarchy could satisfy only a few.<sup>129</sup> The Muslim population of the country were particularly alarmed by the

defeat of Turkey in the War. The Khilafat leaders were told quite clearly that they should not expect more and the Treaty of Sevres signed with Turkey in May 1920 made it amply clear that the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire was complete. Gandhiji, who had been in close touch with the Khilafat leaders since he was made a special invitee to the All India Khilafat Conference in November, 1919, had all along been very sympathetic to their cause. In February 1920, he suggested to the Khilafat Committee that it should adopt a programme of non-violent non-cooperation to protest against the Government plan of enforcing a very harsh treaty on Turkey. On 9 June 1920, an all party conference at Allahabad unanimously accepted Gandhiji's suggestion of non-violent non-cooperation and asked him to lead the movement.<sup>130</sup> Meanwhile, the Congress had become sceptical of any possibility of political advancement through constitutional means. It was disgusted with the Hunter Committee Report.<sup>131</sup> In the circumstances it agreed to consider a programme of non-cooperation with the rulers. The AICC met in May 1920 and decided to convene a special session in September to enable the Congress to decide on its future course of action. Gandhiji had already decided upon a programme of non-violent non-cooperation with the Government and asked the Indian National Congress to adopt a resolution to that effect in its special session in Calcutta in September, 1920. Accordingly, the famous resolution on non-cooperation was passed which recommended the renunciation of Government titles, the boycott of the legislatures, law-courts, schools and colleges aided and patronised by government and subsequently non-payment of taxes.<sup>132</sup>

Subsequently, in the thirty-fifth session of the Indian National Congress held at Nagpur in December, 1920, Gandhiji won over his opponents to his side and got the decision of the Calcutta Congress on non-cooperation adopted.<sup>133</sup> The most remarkable feature of the non-cooperation programme was its intense mass appeal. Mahatma Gandhi roused the Indian masses from their slumber. People of all classes — students, labourers, peasants and others felt the urge of *swaraj* and responded to the clarion call of the nation. Assam soon found herself in the forefront of the struggle. The Assam Association had promptly responded to the call of the Indian National Congress to resort to non-operation for achieving freedom.<sup>134</sup>

In January, 1921 the students of Assam, following the decisions of the All India Students' Conference held at Nagpur in December, 1920 to participate in the non-cooperation movement, launched a strong

agitation for boycott of schools and colleges. As a result the students struck schools and colleges and large number of them enrolled themselves as volunteers to spread the message of non-cooperation in the villages. It were the students who began the movement in Assam and contributed immensely towards its progress.<sup>135</sup> Boycott of foreign goods, especially Manchester cloths, propagation of *khaddar* and *swadeshi* and picketing of liquor and opium shops were the salient features of the programme for achieving *swaraj*. Boycott of government aided schools and colleges and law courts was also successfully carried out.<sup>136</sup>

With the launching of the movement Bordoloi and Phukan found in Chandranath Sarmah, the leader of the delegation to the All India Students' Conference at Nagpur, their ablest lieutenant. This young nationalist worker roused the dormant spirit of the Assamese youths and inspired them to dedicate themselves for the cause of the country.<sup>137</sup> Meanwhile, the Assam Association, which met at Tezpur in December, 1920, with Prasanna Kumar Barua in the chair, ratified the decision of non-cooperation taken already at Guwahati. The Tezpur session was virtually converted into a Congress forum with its pandal gates named after national leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, Shaikat Ali and others. The nationalisation of the Assam Association was thus complete by the end of 1920.<sup>138</sup> The Association had earned some sort of a distinction in its last session at Jorhat on 18 April, 1921 with Chhabilal Upadhyaya in the chair where almost all the leaders of Assam Valley were present.<sup>139</sup> In the meantime, Chandranath Sarmah visited a number of towns of Assam to organise and collect volunteers for the ensuing movement. Due to his tireless efforts District Congress Committees were established at Dibrugarh on 12 February, 1921, at Jorhat on 16 February and on 11 April at Tezpur.<sup>140</sup> This was followed by a representative provincial meeting of all Congress workers and supporters at Guwahati on 5 June, 1921 to elect the first office bearers of the Pradesh Congress. As Tarun Ram Phukan was still continuing his legal practice he had to step down from contest for presidentship. Kuladhar Chaliha, the other aspirant for presidentship, who had already suspended his legal practice, was unanimously elected President. Continuance of legal practice, however, did not come in the way of Nabin Chandra Bordoloi's unanimous election as General Secretary.<sup>141</sup>

A few prominent Congressmen of Assam attended the Bombay session of the AICC held in July, 1921. Invited by them to visit Assam, Gandhiji along with the Ali brothers, arrived at Guwahati on 18 August

on a ten-day provincial tour.<sup>142</sup> The visit gave fillip to the non-cooperation movement, which was already gathering momentum in both the valleys of Assam. Large crowds gathered at wayside of the railway stations to have a *darshan* of the Mahatma and offer him hearty ovations as he passed through Assam. In the meetings held at Guwahati, Tezpur, Nagaon, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Silchar bonfires of foreign cloths were made in presence of thousands of onlookers. These had a great impact on the sellers of foreign cloth and yarn. At Silchar all the cloth merchants with the exception of three, met Gandhiji and signed the pledge of boycott of foreign cloth. Similarly, the cloth merchants in the vicinity of Lakhimpur town gave similar assurance. The meeting of Gandhiji at Tezpur on 22 August was attended by many tea garden labourers who came from Rangapara circle by a special train.<sup>143</sup> It was on Gandhiji's advice that the agitation in the Brahmaputra Valley was given primarily an anti-opium orientation. Hundreds of young men took up the cause of temperance and preached against opium, *ganja* and other drug habit. They held public meetings, stood outside the excise shops urging people not to buy intoxicating drugs. The movement gathered further momentum during the three months after Gandhiji's departure. Gandhiji also expressed happiness when he learnt that out of seventy-eight Assamese lawyers in the province, fifteen had already suspended their legal practice. N.C. Bordoloi and Md. Tayyebullah relinquished their legal practice in September. According to the police intelligence report, a majority of the Assamese pleaders and their clerks suspended their practice during the course of the movement. Meanwhile, thousands of spinning wheels were distributed among the people. The Congress struck its organisational roots by setting up offices in every sub-division all over the Assam plains.<sup>144</sup>

It was actually in the wake of Gandhiji's visit that the non-cooperation movement gained greater momentum in Assam. It was now that a large number of lawyers, teachers, students and numerous people from other walks of life plunged headlong into the movement. Congress volunteers who were prevented from entering the tea gardens and addressing the workers there, appealed to the local traders to boycott the garden *hats* and *bazars* and establish new markets in the outskirts of the gardens.<sup>145</sup> Almost everywhere the liquor shops and foreign cloth shops were shut down and people were encouraged to wear *khadi*. In November, 1921 the National Volunteer Corps was formed, which according to Congress sources, enrolled 70,000 persons as members.<sup>146</sup> In both the valleys the Congress and the

Khilafat Committee had the same office bearers. Thus the Hindus and the Muslims made a united front against their common enemy the British.<sup>147</sup>

### **Leaders of Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam**

Prominent among the leaders of the non-cooperation movement in Assam were Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Chandranath Sarmah, Tarun Ram Phukan, Kuladhar Chaliha, Kanak Chandra Sarma, Faiznur Ali, Laksheswar Barua, Basanta Kumar Das, Sibendra Nath Biswas and Brajendra Narayan Chaudhury amongst the elder politicians and Gopinath Bordoloi, Bishnuram Medhi, Rohini Kumar Chaudhury, Gopendralal Das, Md. Tayyebullah, Omeo Kumar Das, Hem Chandra Barua, Debeswar Sarma, Mahadev Sarma, Kumudram Bora, Dhaniram Talukdar, Jadav Prasad Chaliha, Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhury, Harendra Chandra Chaudhury, Gauri Kanta Talukdar, Kameswar Das, Haladhar Bhuyan, Durgaprasad Borthakur, Sarbeswar Barua, Bhuban Chandra Gogoi, Rajani Kanta Barua, Nidhiram Das and Krishna Nath Sharma amongst the comparatively younger ones. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Tarun Ram Phukan and Gopinath Bordoloi later attained all India heights of eminence by their political acumen, achievements and sacrifice for the cause of freedom. Chandranath Sarmah, the 'fiery petrel' of non-cooperation in Assam was snatched away by the cruel hands of death in 1922 and in his death Assam lost a leader and an organiser par excellence. Sankar Chandra Barua, Rohini Kanta Hatibarua and Lakshmidhar Sarma were among the many brilliant young leaders with lots of promise but the latter two were the victims of untimely death.<sup>148</sup> Amongst other prominent workers of the movement were Jatindra Nath Das, Abdul Farukki, Govinda Chandra Sarma, Akshay Kumar Das, Santiram Lahkar, Payodhar Barua, Mohibuddin Ahmed, Golok Chandra Pathak, Atmasing Chetri, Jogsing Chetri, Bhuban Chandra Handique, Rameswar Bhattacharyya, Mohi Chandra Bora, Bedanath Borthakur, Bidyadhar Sarma, Parasuram Dutta, Deben Kakati, Bairam Sing, Chhabilal Upadhyaya, Rudra Bora and Phukan Sangma.<sup>149</sup>

In Golaghat district two young advocates, Gangadhar Borthakur and Kamaleswar Sarma were the first to boycott the court. Among the students who left Cotton College to join the movement were Gokuleswar Hazarika of Marangi and Nabin Chandra Goswami of Dhekial. The two brothers of Golaghat town Tara Prasad Barua and Maheswar Barua who were then prosecuting their law studies in Calcutta left their institution. Another student Jogen Rajkhowa also relinquished his studies forever. Gunindra Nath Barua, the worthy

son of Raibahadur Dandadhar Barua of Golaghat town, then serving as a lieutenant in the army resigned his job and joined the non-cooperation movement. He was arrested and kept behind the bars. So also, Bhola Barua of Balijan, who was serving as Station Master in the Railways, resigned his job and joined the Congress.<sup>150</sup> During the period of non-cooperation other prominent persons of Golaghat district who rendered valuable services for the cause of freedom were Gangaram Bormedhi, Purnadev Thakur, Hemadhar Patrabora, Dwarika Nath Goswami, Kedar Hazarika, Gandharam Gogoi Hatibarua, Kerketua Kalita, Gerela Pathak, Tilak Sonowal, Bogai Dutta Saikia, Kamaleswar Mahanta, Bogai Saikia, Sariful Hussain, Poal Sheikh, Badan Goswami, Nalin Bora, Hem Barua, Kamal Kalita, Syed Sonti Dewan, Sheikh Hafijuddin, Someswar Notkalita, Kanak Das, Uma Das, Kama' Sarma, Bogai Das, Keshab Chandra Sonowal, Madhabi Sonowal, Anandiram Barua etc.<sup>151</sup> Special mention may be made here of Sankar Chandra Barua who relinquished his tea garden job after having a *darshan* of Gandhiji in 1921 at Jorhat. In 1923 he came to Golaghat to settle permanently there. Since then he devoted his time and energy for the cause of freedom of the motherland.<sup>152</sup> Barua, from the very beginning, tried his best to raise a strong band of volunteers with Congress ideology in the district. At his initiative Rajendra Nath Barua, son of Raibahadur Dandadhar Barua of Golaghat town, joined the Congress and since then this 'duo' made relentless sacrifices in the struggle for freedom.<sup>153</sup>

### **Women Participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement**

The Indian women despite social barriers came to the streets at the call of Mahatma Gandhi and took part in all the constructive programmes like spinning, weaving, boycott of foreign goods etc. They were inspired by some prominent ladies like Kasturba Gandhi (Gujarat), Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi and Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya (Bengal), Parvati Devi (Agra), Bai Amman (Lahore), Sarojini Naidu (Mumbai), Uma Nehru (Uttar Pradesh), Sarala Devi (Punjab) etc.<sup>154</sup>

It can be presumed that women participation in the non-cooperation movement in Assam was limited. At first those who joined were the near relatives of the Congress leaders and workers. In January, 1921, an attempt was made to defy 144 CRPC under the leadership of Bidyut Prova Devi, wife of Tarun Ram Phukan in Guwahati. But when Gandhiji came to know about this, he advised them to devote themselves in organisational work only. In Guwahati prominent women participators in the movement were Bidyut Prova Devi, Girija Devi, Dharmada Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Guneswari Devi, Snehalata

Bhattacharyya etc.<sup>155</sup> Gandhiji's Assam visit (1921) gave new inspiration to the Assamese womenfolk. At a meeting held on 18 August, 1921 at the residence of Tarun Ram Phukan several ladies were present. They also joined in the bonfire of foreign goods. Hemanta Kumari Devi, Guneswari Devi and Nalinibala Devi established a centre of spinning and weaving at Guwahati during this period. At their initiative 500 *khadi* caps were made for use by the Congress workers during the period of Gandhiji's visit.<sup>156</sup> In other places of Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon and Lakhimpur the women came forward to spread the message of non-cooperation in the interior villages.

In Golaghat Swarnalota Barua, Donikona Dutta, Labanyalota Barua, Dwariki Das, Kanakeswari Hazarika, Madhabi Sonowal, Pramila Medak and Debeswari Hazarika took part in spreading the message of non-cooperation. At the initiative of Annada Devi Borkotoky and Mukheswari Devi, a weaving centre was opened at Baligaon near Jorhat for popularizing *khadi*. Pramila Medak, a Mishing woman, who came forward to join the non-cooperation movement had to bear the agony of social ostracism. Another important woman was Debeswari Hazarika of Dergaon who was arrested for joining the movement in 1921.<sup>157</sup>

### **Repression During the Movement**

During the period of the non-cooperation movement repressive measures were adopted under such laws as the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, 1911 leading to large-scale arrest and imprisonment of leaders and workers of the movement. *Lathi* charging and beating of crowds assembled in meetings, which were prohibited, and of volunteers engaged in picketing before schools and colleges and foreign cloth and liquor shops had become a regular feature. Punitive fines were also imposed at several places.<sup>158</sup> Censorship of the press was promulgated and writings on *Gandhism* or *Swaraj* were proscribed. Two Assamese weeklies, *Assam Bilasini* and *Asomiya* and two papers in the Surma Valley, *Janasakti* and *Surma* became victims of this regimentation.<sup>159</sup>

The Government also resorted to other repressive measures. It demolished the Congress offices and arrested the Congress leaders injudiciously and inhumanly. In all nearly 1500 Congressmen were kept in detention in different jails of Assam. The savage treatment meted out to the detainees by the jail authorities compelled one Deo Charan Tripathy to undertake a fast unto death in Jorhat jail; but nothing came out of it. He died in December, 1922, a few days after

breaking his fast.<sup>160</sup> There were also reports of police atrocities from several places of Assam, the most serious being from Kassaighat in Surma valley where police fired on an angry crowd on February 15, 1922 causing death to six persons and injury to many.<sup>161</sup>

The sudden suspension of the movement following the Chauri Chaura incident (5 February, 1922) frustrated young leaders like Chandranath Sarmah who died soon after (July, 1922). Though failed to achieve its goal, the movement expedited certain reforms in Assam. For example, it forced the Government to modify its opium policy which eventually led to a gradual decline of opium consumption in the Province.<sup>162</sup>

### **Swarajya Party and Assam**

After the suspension of the non-cooperation movement, a section of the Congressmen led by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the *Swarajya* party within the Congress and contested the next elections to the Council. The Assam branch of the *Swarajya* party was formed at the initiative of Tarun Ram Phukan in July, 1923, with himself as President, R.K. Chaudhury as Secretary and Gopinath Bordoloi as Assistant Secretary. Though the number of the top party leaders was only eight, all of them entered the Assam Legislative Council in 1924. Phukan himself was returned to the Central Legislative Council. But the *Swarajya* party failed to make a mark in Assam politics.<sup>163</sup>

After the suspension of the 1921 movement, some socio-cultural organisations were formed in Assam with the purpose of moulding public opinion in favour of abolition of the grazing tax, prohibition of opium, reduction of rates of land revenue, restriction of immigration of East Bengal Muslim peasants to Assam etc. Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhury, a poet and a humanist, founded at this time the *Asom Sangrakshini Sabha*.<sup>164</sup> Chaudhury had been trying to arouse the Assamese people against the cultural invasion of Assam by the Bengali Muslim immigrants through his writings in the *Cheitana* and *Deka Asom*. His ideology was based on the historic past of Assam and he maintained that *swaraj* for India must also mean *swaraj* for each component unit like Assam, giving it full freedom to preserve its individuality in respect of language, culture and social structure from aggression from outside or by the outsiders from within. The organisation was later transformed into the *Asom Jatiya Mahasabha* which sought to bring the indigenous population of the hills and the plains of Assam and all others who identified themselves with those of the Assamese people to a common platform.<sup>165</sup>

### **Pandu Session of the Congress (1926)**

With a view to make Congress ideology reach the mass people of Assam, Krishna Nath Sharma and Rohini Kanta Hatibarua while attending the Kanpur session of the Congress (1925) extended to it an invitation on behalf of the APCC to host its 41st session at Guwahati. The invitation was accepted unanimously with great enthusiasm. The session was held at Pandu (within greater Guwahati) from 26 to 28 December 1926. Some of the principal organisers of the session were Kuladhar Chaliha, Chandradhar Baruah, Prasanna Kumar Barua, Md. Tayyebullah, Lakhidhar Sarma, Debeswar Sarma, Omeo Kumar Das, Gauri Kanta Talukdar, Rohini Kumar Chaudhury, Bishnuram Medhi etc. The session was presided over by Srinivas Ayenger and was attended by Gandhiji and other frontline leaders like Motilal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Abul Kaiam Azad and the Ali brothers, Muhammad and Shaukat. The session decided not to acquiesce in the Monford Reforms.<sup>166</sup> Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhury and Umesh Chandra Chaudhury, staunch non-cooperators and poets, composed a soul-stirring song that marked the opening of the session. The Assam leaders headed by Tarun Ram Phukan and N.C. Bordoloi spared no pains to make the first session of the Congress in Assam a grand success.<sup>167</sup>

Along with the Congress session the annual conference of the *Hindu Mahasabha* was also held at the same place under the presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya. The welcome speech in Assamese was delivered by Pitambar Deva Goswami, the head of the *Garmur Satra* and the same was rendered into English by Tarun Ram Phukan.<sup>168</sup>

### **The Civil Disobedience Movement and Assam (1930-32)**

By the end of 1929 India was on the threshold of a bigger struggle for freedom. The Bardoli *satyagraha* and the boycott of the Simon Commission by the Congress and the refusal of the British Government to accept the demand of full Dominion Status for India within the deadline of 31st December, 1929, as set in by the Congress, raised popular expectations to a height of excitement. In mid-February, 1930 the Congress Working Committee meeting at Sabarmati *Ashram*, invested Gandhiji with full powers to launch the civil disobedience movement at an appropriate time and place to be chosen by him. By the end of February an idea began to emerge as Gandhiji began to talk about salt: "There is no article like salt outside

water by taxing which the State can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise." He then informed the Viceroy of his plan of action as he believed every true *satyagrahi* must do.<sup>169</sup> Meanwhile, the Congress rejected the proposal of holding a Round Table Conference in London for solution of the vexed constitutional problem as suggested by the Simon Commission. It, on the other hand, declared in the Lahore session (December, 1929) 'Complete Independence' as the future goal of the Congress. Accordingly, on 26 January, 1930 the 'Independence Day' was observed all over the country which became a regular annual practice since then till independence. In Assam, the first Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. But there soon appeared a difference of opinion regarding Assam's joining the Civil Disobedience Movement. The differences and infighting in the Congress prompted veteran leaders like Tarun Ram Phukan, Gopinath Bordoloi and Rohini Kumar Chaudhury to resign their offices in the Provincial Congress.<sup>170</sup> At this critical hour of the Congress Party in Assam Bishnuram Medhi came forward to shoulder the responsibility of the presidentship of the organisation. By the time Gandhiji started the civil disobedience campaign by his famous march to Dandi beginning on March 12, 1930 to make salt in defiance of the existing salt law, the Assam Congress was ready to launch a mass Civil Disobedience Movement in the province.<sup>171</sup> Synchronizing with the march eminent public leaders of Assam like Hem Chandra Barua, Bishnuram Medhi, Siddhinath Sarma, Md. Tayyebullah and Ambikagiri Rai Chaudhury assembled on 12 March, 1930, the day on which Gandhiji launched his campaign, at the Judges field at Guwahati and expressed their solidarity with the *satyagrahis*.<sup>172</sup> It is heartening to mention that two volunteers from Golaghat, Keshab Chandra Sonowal and Kanak Das took part in the famous Dandi march of Gandhiji with other fellow volunteers.<sup>173</sup>

When the news of arrest of national leaders like Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru reached Assam, a complete *hartal* was observed by the school children in various places of the province on April 14, 1930. They also organised public meetings in their respective localities.<sup>174</sup> The news of Gandhiji's arrest and imprisonment had such an electrifying effect that the villagers of the remotest corners struck work to voice their protest on May 6, 1930. The authorities clamped Section 144 in Nagaon, Tezpur, Dubri and other places. Between May 6 and 15, 1930 the students of the high schools of North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Sibsagar, Nazira, Jorhat,

Nagaon, Tezpur, Guwahati, Nalbari, Palasbari and Dhubri went on strike. As a result the Government schools at Dhubri, Nagaon, Tezpur and the Sibsagar Bezbarua School were closed down for a long vacation. Meanwhile, a special session of the *Assam Chatra Sanmilan* was held at Guwahati with Omeo Kumar Das in the chair to protest against the Cunningham circular.<sup>175</sup> The *Sanmilan* decided in favour of boycotting Government schools and colleges.

In spite of large-scale arrest and imprisonment of party leaders and workers the movement gained greater momentum day-by-day as new and new batches of workers came forward to fill up the void thus created. Meanwhile, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, paid a visit to Assam and arrived at Jorhat on January 4, 1931. A demonstration was organised at that place under the leadership of Debeswar Sarma.<sup>176</sup> In the rally organised in front of the Gymkhana Club at Chinamara near Jorhat, Congress workers from Golaghat viz. Sankar Chandra Barua, Dhiren Dutta, Nandeswar Gogoi, Harish Chandra Gogoi, Bogai Saikia, Khagiram Kakoti, Dharmeswar Thakur, Purna Chandra Goswami, Gangadhar Borkotoky, Uma Phukan, Bhadra Kanta Phukan, Keshab Chandra Sonowal, Rameswar Bhattacharyya, Bhola Barua, Tilak Chandra Sonowal and Surendra Nath Phukan staged a black-flag demonstration amidst tight police security. While shouting slogans like 'Irwin Go Back' some of the demonstrators had to be victims of police *lathi-charge*.<sup>177</sup>

After the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 4th March, 1931, Mahatma Gandhi agreed to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Congress. But the Conference failed to achieve its objects and Gandhiji returned to India empty-handed. In view of this the Congress Working Committee met on 1st January, 1932 and decided to renew the movement which was kept suspended following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.<sup>178</sup> Three days later Gandhiji was arrested. The Congress was again declared an unlawful body. The Government promulgated repressive measures to curb the movement. Congressmen in Assam defied these measures and faced police repression. Large number of men and women were arrested. Even man like Nabin Chandra Bordoloi who kept himself aloof during the first phase of the movement was not spared.<sup>179</sup>

Prominent among the Congress workers of Assam convicted and imprisoned were Chandraprova Saikiani, Hem Chandra Barua, Purna Chandra Sarma, Gahan Chandra Goswami, Bijoy Chandra Bhagawafi, Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Sudhangshu

Banerjee and young firebrand workers like Jyotiprasad Agarwalla, Hemanga Biswas and Dhiren Dutta.<sup>180</sup>

One fascinating aspect of the Civil Disobedience in Assam was the heroic role played by the Naga 'Queen' Gaidiulieu who "dreamt of freedom for her people ... raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it". But she had to pay dearly for her patriotism. She was captured and kept in the Imphal jail and subsequently sentenced to transportation for life in January, 1933 by the Political Agent of Manipur.<sup>181</sup> Since then Gaidiulieu became a legendary name and a source of inspiration not only for her men but also for the people of the entire north-east.

After his release from jail in May, 1933 Gandhiji temporarily suspended the mass civil disobedience. However, the movement dragged on for yet another year in the form of individual civil resistance. In Assam, however, the movement came to a close long before that date.<sup>182</sup> Although the movement could achieve no significant political success, its impact on the socio-economic life of the people was indeed very great. In Assam, as in the wider national sphere, the movement made the people of all classes and strata politically much more conscious and trained them to meet greater challenges in the near future.<sup>183</sup>

### **Mahatma's visit of Golaghat**

Gandhiji's visit of Assam in April, 1934 on the mission of *harijan* uplift gave added impetus to the constructive programmes of the Congress. It was on the 15th April Gandhiji reached Golaghat. Thousands of people, both men and women, lined up on either side of the road from Furkating railway station to Golaghat town to welcome him. The town wore a festive look on that day as people from different places of the district thronged at the court field to have a glimpse of the Mahatma. As per unofficial estimate nearly forty thousand people gathered in the place of the meeting to listen to him. A remarkable feature of the assembly was that about three hundred women volunteers coming from different places of the district exhibited their skill in spinning in their *charkhas* before the Mahatma.<sup>184</sup> It was really a memorable sight. The volunteers placed their Gandhi caps before the people like begging bowls for collection of money for the welfare fund of the *harijans*. A sum of rupees seven hundred eighty seven, twelve annas and nine pais was reportedly collected in the site of the meeting. Various public institutions and organisations of Golaghat also contributed an amount of rupees one thousand seven hundred thirty five, fourteen annas and three pais to

Gandhiji. From these activities one can easily have an idea about the Congress base in Golaghat and the growing national consciousness of the people of the district.<sup>185</sup>

### **Congress Coalition Ministry**

On the resignation of the Saadullah ministry on 19 September, 1938 Gopinath Bordoloi, the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, formed a coalition ministry in Assam with the support of a number of Independents and Muslim members outside the League.<sup>186</sup> During this period the Congress workers of Assam were busy in extending the base of their organisational work to the nooks and corners of the province. At Bordoloi's initiative a national conference of the Assam Congress was held at Golaghat town in 1939 which was attended by several provincial leaders. A delegation of leaders and workers from Manipur under the leadership of Airawat Singh also took part in the Conference. Incidentally, this Golaghat session was the largest and the most significant of all the sessions of the Assam Congress in the pre-independence period.<sup>187</sup>

Just before and after the formation of the Bordoloi ministry a new batch of workers of Golaghat had come to the forefront of the freedom struggle. In the first election to the Assam Assembly held in 1937 both the seats of the district were won by the Congress candidates, Sankar Chandra Barua from Golaghat South and Rajendra Nath Barua from Golaghat East constituencies.<sup>188</sup>

### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. *Gazetteer of India*, Assam, Sibsagar District, p. 2.
2. *Ibid.*, Bora, Hem, *Golaghat Itikotha*, pp. 22-24.
3. *Gazetteer of India*, Assam, Sibsagar District, p. 2.
4. Dutta, Sisir Kumar, 'Golaghat Bhowgolik Biboron'. in the *Smritigrantha Dhansiri, Asom Sahitya Sabha*, Golaghat Session, 1978, p. 2.
5. *Gazetteer of India*, Assam, Sibsagar District, p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.
9. *Ibid.*
10. District Records, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Golaghat, No. GCA.PA.6/2000.
11. *Gazetteer of India*, Assam, Sibsagar District, p. 2.
12. *Ibid.*
13. District Records, Office of the Deputy Director, Department of Economics and Statistics, Golaghat, No. 15/90-91/MISC-TECH/332.

14. *Ibid.*
15. *Gazetter of India*, Assam, Sibsagar District, p. 89.
16. *Ibid.*
17. District Records, Office of the Deputy Director, Department of Economics and Statistics, Golaghat, No. 15/90-91/MISC-TECH/332.
18. Dutta, Sisir Kumar, 'Golaghat Bhowgolik Biboron', in *Smritigrantha, Dhansiri, op. cit.*, pp. 28-32.
19. District Records, Office of the Deputy Director, Department of Economics and Statistics, Golaghat, No. 15/90-91/MISC-TECH/332.
20. The Assam Accord was signed in August 1985 at New Delhi between the representatives of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the Central Government, which ended the six-year long Assam agitation on foreign national issue.
21. Bora, Hem, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-60.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-52.
25. Das, Jibon, 'Golaghat Mohkumar Bonoj Sampad' in *Smritigrantha, Dhansiri*, pp. 43-49; Bora, Hem, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-39.
27. District Records, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Golaghat, No., GCA. PA. 6/2000.
28. Gait, E.A., *A History of Assam*, p. 328.
29. Mills, A.J.M., *Report on the Province of Assam*, pp. 603-09, Appendix K.B.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Baruah, S.L. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, p. 490.
32. Sarma, Benudhar, *Maniram Dewan*, p. 101; Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 490.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 491; Kakoti Bora, Sankar and Barua, Ajit (ed.), *Sonali Smriti*, p. 72.
35. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, vol. I, pp. 70-1, Baruah, S.L. *op. cit.*, p. 493.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 496.
39. Guha, A., *Planter-Raj to Swaraj, Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*, p. 58.
40. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 126.
41. Dhekiyal Phukan, A., 'Observation on the Administration of the Province of Assam' in Mills, A.J.M., *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94, Appendix J.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Barua, Gunabhiram, *Assam Buranji*, p. 164; Sarma, Banikanta,

*Asomiya Bhasa Sahityaloi Missionary Sakalar Abadan*, p. 18.

44. *Ibid.*
45. Barua, Gunabhiram, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
46. The Cotton College was named after Sir Henry Cotton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, who was equally enthusiastic in the establishment of the college, the first in the whole of the north-east India, Sarma, B.C., *Asomar Jubak Aru Chatra Andolan*, p. 7; Hazarika, B.B., *Political Life in Assam During the 19th Century*, p. 412.
47. Sarma, B.C., *op. cit.*, p. 7.
48. Guha, A., *op. cit.*, p. 60; Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 512.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Saikia, Chandra Prasad (ed.), *Radhanath Changkakati*, pp. 4-5.
51. Guha, A., *op. cit.*, p. 61.
52. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 513.
53. *Manideep*, August, 1966, p. 688.
54. Downs, F.S., *The Mighty Works of God*, p. 36; Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 150.
55. Goswami, Hem Chandra, 'A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of Journalism in the Assam Valley', reproduced in Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 249-252, Appendix C.
56. Saikia, Chandra Prasad (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 98.
57. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 151.
58. *The Mau*, December, 1886 and January, 1887.
59. Talukdar, Nanda, *Sambad Patrar Rod Kachalit Asomiya Sahitya*, pp. 98-119; Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 152.
60. Saikia, Chandra Prasad (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99. This *Assam Bilasini* had no connection with the *Assam Bilasini* published earlier in 1871.
61. *Somprakash*, 22 July, 5 August and 12 August, 1867.
62. Bhattacharjee, J.B., *Cachar Under British Rule in North East India*, p. 242.
63. Neog, D., *New Light on the History of Assamiya Literature*, p. 391.
64. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 158.
65. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 516.
66. *Sankranti*, Special Issue, 1 January, 1989, pp. 8-10; Sarmah, Satyendranath, *Asomiya Sahityar Itibritta*, p. 233.
67. Sarma, Benudhar, *Arghavali*, p. 28; *Sankranti*, Special Issue, 1 January, 1989, p. 3.
68. Gohain Barua, Padmanath, *Mor Suwarani*, pp. 47-50; Talukdar, Nanda, *Kaliram Medhi*, p. 84.
69. Goswami, Shrutidev, *Aspects of Revenue Administration in Assam*, pp. 28-29, 144-145.
70. Mills, A.J.M. *op. cit.*, p. 24.

71. *Ibid.*, Kamrup District, p. 323.
72. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.
73. Goswami, Shrutidev, 'Rajj versus the Raj : The Nowgong Outbreak (1861) in Historical Perspective', in J.B. Bhattacharjee (ed.), *Studies in the History of North East India*, pp. 125-127.
74. Goswami, Shrutidev, 'The Rajj Mels : Their Historic Role in Peasant Movement in Assam', in *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, Shillong, 1989, pp. 301-302.
75. Guha, A., *op. cit.*, p. 63.
76. ASR, Commissioner's Office, File No. 409, 1861-62, Hopkinson to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 8 November, 1861.
77. *The Assam Tribune*, Congress Supplement, 18 January, 1958.
78. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Goswami, P.D., *Manik Chandra Barua Aru Tenor Yug*, pp. 54-55; Sharma, Ajit Kumar, "An Account of Assam Association" in Barua, P. (ed.), *Commemorative Volume, Golden Jubilee, Handique Girls' College, 1939-1989*, pp. 115-117.
81. Barua, P.K., *The Assam Delegation*, pp. 9-10.
82. Zaidi, S.G. and A.M. (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. IV, p. 627; also Baruah, S.L. *op. cit.*, p. 518. As per the partition scheme the province of Bengal was divided into two parts Bengal proper which also included Bihar and Orissa and Eastern Bengal and Assam, which became basically a Muslim majority province.
83. Home Political-B, August, 1911, No. 64, cited in H.K. Barpujari (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 181.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.
85. *Ibid.*
86. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, pp. 518-519.
87. *Ibid.*
88. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 185.
89. Tayyebullah, Md., *Karagaror Chithi*, p. 23; *The Bengalee*, 13 and 19 October and 21 December, 1905.
90. Abstract of Intelligence, Eastern Bengal and Assam Police, Kamrup, 19 January, 1907.
91. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 187.
92. Abstract of Intelligence, Eastern Bengal and Assam Police, Kamrup, 23 February and 2 March, 1907.
93. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 185-187.
94. *HFM*, Assam Unit, History Sheet of B.C. Pal.
95. Abstract of Intelligence, Eastern Bengal and Assam Police, Kamrup, 9 March, 1907.
96. Rai Chaudhury, Ambikagiri, *Mor Jivan Dhumuhar Echat*, pp. 16-26.
97. Sarmah, Satyendranath, 'Kripabar Barbaruar Rajniti', in Saikia,

- Chandra Prasad (ed.), *Lakshminath Bezbarua*, pp. 230-232.
98. *Ibid.*
  99. Majumdar, R.C., *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. 11, pp. 329-330.
  100. Guha, A., *op. cit.*, p. 74.
  101. Gohain Barua, Padmanath, *Jivani Sangraha*, p. 55. In the newly created Legislative Council two seats were reserved for Assam. Later under the Indian Councils Act, 1909 the number was raised to five. Guha, A., *op. cit.*, p. 78.
  102. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
  103. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 205; Goswami, P.D., *op. cit.*, pp. 59-61.
  104. Guna, A., *op. cit.*, p. 81.
  105. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 523.
  106. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 209; Goswami, Shrutidev, 'The Opium Evil in Nineteenth Century Assam', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 3, pp. 365-376.
  107. *Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Report*, Jorhat, 1925. Appendix X, pp. 90 and 138.
  108. *ALCP*, Phanidhar Chaliha's speech, 5 April, 1919.
  109. *Ibid.*, President's Budget speech, 5 April, 1919.
  110. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, p. 45.
  111. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, pp. 525-526.
  112. *ALCP*, Manik Chandra Barua's speech, 13 March, 1915.
  113. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 212.
  114. Das, Omeo Kumar, *Ashohojug Andolanot Asom*, p. 6.
  115. *ALCP*, President's speech, 10 November, 1914.
  116. Das, Omeo Kumar, *Jeevan Smriti*, p. 67.
  117. *ALCP*, Manik Chandra Barua's speech, 9 April, 1915.
  118. *Ibid.*, Tarun Ram Phukan's speech, 6 April, 1916.
  119. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.
  120. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
  121. Das, Omeo Kumar, *Jeevan Smriti*, pp. 66-77.
  122. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
  123. Bhattacharjee, Arun, *Assam in Indian Independence*, pp. 43-44.
  124. *Ibid.* Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was a faithful and loyal subject of the British Government. As a moderate he pinned his faith on constitutional agitation and took a leading role, as a delegate of the Assam Association in representing the demands of this neglected province before the parliamentary committees both in Calcutta and London.
  125. Goswami, P.D., *op. cit.*, p. 49.
  126. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 516.
  127. *Ibid.*

128. Saikia, C.P. (ed.), *Tarun Ram Phukan*, p. 7.
129. Chandra, Bipan and others, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 184.
130. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
131. The Hunter Committee constituted on 14 October, 1919, instead of condemning police firing on innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh, at the orders of General Dyer held that "firing was necessary to put down the mob excesses". About General Dyer's conduct the Committee observed that "Dyer's object of producing a sufficient moral effect was a mistaken conception of duty." Chand Tara, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, p. 484.
132. Chandra, Bipan and others, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
133. Sitaramayya, B. Pattabhi, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, p. 206.
134. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.
135. *Ibid.*
136. *Ibid.*
137. Barpujari, H.K. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243.
138. *APAI*, Darrang, 8 January, 1921.
139. Tamuli, Lakshminath, *Bharatar Swadhinata Sangramat Asomor Abodan*, pp. 216-217.
140. Bhattacharyya, B.K. (ed.), *Karmabir Chandranath Sarmah Smritigrantha*, p. 81.
141. Borthakur, P., *Swadhinota Ranar Sangsparsat*, pp. 32-34; Guha, A. *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.
142. *Ibid.*
143. Saikia, C.P. (ed.), *Asomot Mahatma*, p. 50; *The Mussalman*, 2 September, 1921.
144. Gandhi, M.K., "Lovely Assam" in *Young India*, September, 1921, cited in Saikia, C.P. (ed.), *Asomot Mahatma*, p. 65.
145. Bhuyan, A.C. and De, S. (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II, p. 49.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
147. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 542.
148. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.
149. *Ibid.*
150. Saikia, Chidananda, *Swadhinota Sangramat Golaghatar Abodan*, p. 8.
151. *Ibid.*
152. Saikia, Chidananda (ed.), *Biplabi Bir Sankar Barua-Karma Aru Jivan*, pp. 4-5.
153. Saikia, Chidananda (ed.), *Desh Permot Utola Tez*, p. 44.
154. Sharma, Dipti, *Mukti Jujot Luit Poria Nari*, p. 34.
155. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
156. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

157. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-42; Saikia, Chidananda (ed.), *Desh Premot Utola Tez*, pp. 10-15.
158. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.
159. ALCP, 1922, Vol. 2, p. 790.
160. Gupta, D.C., *Indian National Movement*, p. 85.
161. ALCP, 1922, Vol. 2, p. 93.
162. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 543.
163. *Ibid.*, p. 544.
164. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
165. *Ibid.*
166. Sarma, Benudhar, *Congressor Kachiali Rodot*, p. 223; Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 546.
167. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, p. 71.
168. Bhuyan, A.C. and De, S. (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 111.
169. Chandra, Bipan and others, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
170. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 547. The offices held by these leaders were:  
(1) Tarun Ram Phukan, President, APCC, (2) Gopinath Bordoloi, President, Guwahati DCC and (3) Rohini Kumar Chaudhury, Councillor (Guwahati), Swarajya Party.
171. *Ibid.*, Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, p. 73.
172. Bhattacharjee, Arun, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
173. Saikia, Chidananda, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
174. Home Political, File No. 254, FR. 1st half of May, 1930.
175. ALCP, 1930, Vol. 10, pp. 725-726. J.A. Cunningham, the D.P.I. of Assam on 3 May, 1930 issued a circular which required the students as well as their parents and guardians to give an undertaking in writing that the former would refrain from participating in the ongoing movement. This was known as Cunningham Circular.
176. Sarma, Debeswar, *Herai Jowa Dinbor*, pp. 161-162.
177. *Ibid.*, Saikia, Chidananda (ed.), *Desh Premot Utola Tez*, p. 15.
178. Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.
179. Bhuyan, A.C. and De, S. (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 191-192.
180. Baruah, S.L., *op. cit.*, p. 551.
181. *Ibid.*
182. *Ibid.*, p. 552.
183. *Ibid.*
184. Saikia, Chidananda, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
185. *Ibid.*
186. Bhuyan, A.C. and De, S. (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 352; Dutt, K.N., *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.
187. Saikia, Chidananda, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
188. *Ibid.*