

LOKOPRIYA GOPINATH BORDOLOI



Lily Mazinder Baruah

Foreword by
DR SHANKAR DAYAL SHARMA

Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi was the product of the Ganhian renaissance when social service was the keynote of public life. Responding to the call of the Mahatma he plunged into the freedom struggle and became the beloved leader of his people and the tallest public figure in eastern India. He played the crucial, secular and historical role in saving Assam from merging with East Pakistan under the Transfer of Power Act.

Subsequently he served his people as the Chief Minister of the greater Assam - perhaps the most universally popular and non-controversial executive the state ever had. He was Lokopriya in every sense of the term. In the core of his heart, however, he remained the humble social worker who strongly held the view that Swarajya was incomplete till we got rid of poverty and illiteracy.

A highly cultivated, well-read and civilised person, he spoke and wrote effectively and abundantly. The book is a unique collection of his speeches, writings, letters and addresses. Together they form a slice of India's pre-and post-Independence history, throwing light on yet explored areas of national politics and public life. His personal letters to leaders, friends, common men, wife and children bring out the sterling qualities of the head and heart of one of the all-time great leaders of contemporary India.

Rs.350

Dr Lilly Mazinder Baruah graduated from Cotton College, Guwahati, did her M A and Ph D in Botany and secured distinction in Bodo language from the Institute of North-eastern Languages Society. She heads the Department of Botany in B.Borooah College, Guwahati. Inspired by her mother, she became a Sarvodaya worker, serving social service institutions such as Harijan Sevak Sangh and Kasturba Memorial Trust. She has represented her state in world conferences, conducts human values programme, and writes frequently on a variety of subjects - social, scientific and biographical.

Dr Baruah is the youngest daughter of Lokopriya Gopinath Borodoloi, and Shrimati Surbala Borodoloi, which explains her access to her father's rare correspondence and intimate portrayal included in this volume.

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GOPINATH BORDOLOI
An Architect of Modern India

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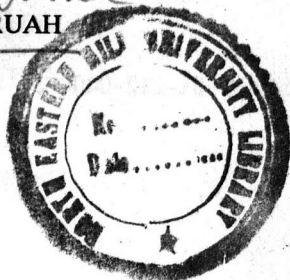
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An Architect of Modern India

Edited by

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LILY MAZINDER BARUAH



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In the Sweet Hands of
Smt. SURABALA BORDOLOI
MY BELOVED MOTHER
and
WIFE OF LOKOPRIYA

FOREWORD

Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi whose birth centenary was celebrated by our nation last year, belongs to that remarkable generation which won freedom for India.

Bordoloi personified the cultural ethos of Assam and deeply felt aspirations of the people of Assam. He was a dearly loved leader. The respect and affection with which he was held by the public had grown over long years of close and intense personal interaction between Gopinathji and the people of Assam. He had mingled with and become one with the common-folk in the towns, villages and hamlets and even in areas difficult to reach. He had first hand information of the requirements of the people and possessed the ability to organize social action along with party initiatives. The Naga Leader Phizo's admiration for Bordoloi is well known (he had acknowledged Bordoloi as a "Friend of Nagas"). The personality, perceptions and leadership of this outstanding patriot bear a continuing relevance today.

Gopinathji was acutely aware of the formidable complexity of social, economic and political problems which had kept the people of Assam trapped for centuries in poverty, ignorance and despair. He was aware that the people of Assam, though exceptionally gifted with the highest aptitudes, in a land richly endowed with natural resources, were poor and suffered greatly. Bordoloi represented the urges and aspirations of the masses for peace, social justice and progress.

He appreciated, unerringly, that the problems and the challenges that confronted Assam, comprised only the Assamese facets of a sub-continental crisis that gripped the entire country. He saw that the causes of poverty, ignorance and frustration in Assam, as in the rest of India, were the same. He recognized that the very complexity and magnitude of these problems meant that effective solutions could be organized only on the basis of national unity and the power of concerted nation-wide effort. Such

an approach was to him not only a matter of political ideology, but of indispensable, urgent and practical necessity.

It was therefore natural for Gopinathji to integrate the urge for freedom in Assam with nation-wide struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji selected Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi as the first Satyagrahi in Assam, and, in turn, Bordoloi's devotion to all aspects of Gandhian thoughts was total. His commitment to Gandhiji's call of rural reconstruction and promotion of Khadi and Village industries was reflected in the Gauhati Session of the Indian National Congress in 1926, where even the material for tents was made of Khadi. Gopinathji fully appreciated the value of rural industrialization of the context of the needs of economic growth in Assam and the tradition of cottage and village industry amongst the people.

Gopinath Bordoloi's leadership of the freedom struggle in Assam gave a larger dimension to the entire movement for Independence in India. A province in one corner of the sub-continent had come into the mainstream of national politics. His vision, dynamism and popular leadership contributed significantly to the totality of the nation's efforts to free itself from the foreign yoke and to emerge as a sovereign, independent nation wedded to the ideals of democracy, secularism and social justice. At the time of Partition, Gopinathji's understanding of the inner wishes of the people of Assam, his firm resolve, vision and leadership, account in great measure for Assam's position in the Union of India, and Assam's Statehood.

The experience of success during the struggle for freedom resulting from nation-wide action by people from different provinces, was clear proof of Gopinathji's perception that Assam's problems could be successfully tackled only by the people of Assam working in an atmosphere of national unity, and Centre-State and inter-State cooperation.

He was conscious of the fact that the requirements of the masses of India comprise a vast market encouraging sustainable socio-economic growth in Assam. The infrastructure in Assam that Gopinathji strove to develop was designed to draw upon the national economy for building Assam and contributing also to national wealth thus creating further potential for Assam's development. He realized that a closed economy confining Assam within itself would only constrict and retard Assam's potential for prosperity and security.

With far-sighted vision Gopinathji initiated the building of important institutions in all the key sectors of growth of Assam. He promoted primary, secondary and higher education, established agricultural and engineering colleges, Gauhati University, institutions for technical training and industrial development. It was Gopinathji of workers committed

to the task of reviving and reconstructing Assam's socio-economic life.

In a crucial sector of public life—the identity of people of Assam, their culture, literature, dance, music and arts - Gopinath Bordoloi made a very important contribution. He was fully aware of and justly proud of the beauty, richness and ancient origins of Assam's cultural heritage and its intimate, living links with the ethos of Indian culture. (Gopinathji himself was an accomplished exponent of Assam's fine music and folk dance-forms.) He gave every assistance to the growth of Assam's language, literature and culture and encouraged interaction with and the enrichment of the larger national cultural atmosphere.

It is this approach of cherishing, preserving and nourishing local cultural heritage and coordinating harmoniously with kindred cultures in the rest of the country that can strengthen the overall positive features of Indian society. Gopinathji's leadership in this respect was very significant and salutary.

Such a great individual—one who suffered personal hardship in the struggle for freedom, a leader who rendered historic service not only for the freedom of Assam but the creation of conditions of growth and well-being for the people of Assam, who contributed so richly to political and economic life and to cultural and literary processes and yet, who always remained modest, simple and true to the great mission of national reconstruction—such a person: Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi: belongs to that band of outstanding Indians whom the nation will always remember with respect and gratitude.

I congratulate Dr. (Mrs.) Lily Mazinder Baruah for her initiative in bringing out this biography. This biography of Bordoloi, by his daughter, is a valuable contribution which deserves our appreciation and gratitude.

S. D. Sharma

(SHANKER DAYAL SHARMA)

Vice-President

India

17 July 1991
New Delhi

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I owe my deep sense of gratitude to all those who have rendered their valuable time and services to carry on the project, particularly to Dr. K.N. Baisya, Under Secretary, Assam Legislative Assembly who has constantly helped me to finalise the manuscript. Mrs. Puspalata Das, Ex-M.P. guided me to write the context of Bapuji's letters and advice report for which I remain thankful to her. Mrs. Rose, Mr. Rama Krishna and Mr. Banerjee need deep appreciation for their labour in getting the manuscript typed.

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My thanks are due to my brothers late Brig. Dhiren Bordoloi (Rtd.), Professor Birendra Nath Bordoloi, Capt. Robin Bordoloi, Mr. Robin Bordoloi and his staff of Tata Tea who inspired me to do the work. My late husband Dr. IKSM Baruah helped me tremendously to preserve the materials which have been added to this volume.

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I thank the Editor, the Assam Tribune for allowing me to utilize his good office in order to compile the work and use the excerpts already published.

Last but not the least, I wish to thank the Gian Publishing House, New Delhi who came forward to publish this project work on Late Gopinath Bordoloi.

Guwahati

Lily Mazinder Baruah
Editor

PREFACE

The book was compiled by the editor while the birth centenary celebration of Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi—a true architect of modern India—was being observed throughout the length and breadth of the country. The work, thus, bears the prime significance of time.

Since 1857 turmoil was taking place into British India Lokopriya was born in 1890. He established his profile as a leader of backward State like Assam. He completed his academic career in 1917 obtaining M.A. and B.L. degrees although he began teaching as the Headmaster of a school. He later worked as an advocate at the Bar. But he was impressed by Gandhiji's clarion call to join the Non-Cooperation Movement, and having seen in him his political Guru in 1921 inspired to jump upon the freedom movement of India. A careerist and an outstanding legal practitioner Lokopriya became a changed man; he gave up regular earning professions and engaged himself in nation-building devotion till August 6, 1950 while he died in harness as the First Premier (Chief Minister) of Assam in free India.

Amongst the stalwarts of the freedom movement, statesmen, leaders and administrators of India in transition, Lokopriya was the man of words. And he was also a man of few words, but he remains alive : "Kirtiryasya sa Jivati" and his speeches too remind us of Bhavabhuti's saying: "The speeches of ordinary good men follow facts, while facts follow the utterances of primeval sages". His own writings and speeches as the editor embodied in this work are the ample proofs in highlighting Lokopriya's acumen on different contexts and occasions. The editor has done a marvellous task by collecting significant facts from its original writings which have been very carefully preserved either by herself or by her near and dear ones. Thereby she proves her eager and love to bring things in their originals in the true pursuit of knowledge to one who craves for it and is the real perspective. These original historical collections on per-

sonal endeavour are shined as pearls and added to the beauty of the book that needs in true perspective. Ten significant speeches, as many as twenty-eight personal letters corresponding with Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Shri Prakash, Akbar Hydari, A. Clow, Mr. Debeswar Sarma and others would bring the readers of the book to understand the actual gravity of the political situations in the prevailing circumstances and how to handle them with a view to problem solving measures from the time point of view in the greater interest of the largest number of masses.

Similarly, four discussions and five articles of his own mind expressed on political philosophy, ethics, love for humanity are supplemented by as many as twenty-one articles written by Kalelkar, G.B.Pant, Dr. P.Sittaramaya, Jagjivan Ram, Dr. B.K. Bhattacharya, Prof. C.K. Mehta, Hem Barua, Satish Chandra Kakati and others. Ample references in this regard are the addition of obituaries.

His discussions with Mahatma Gandhi on a number of occasions would surely draw attention of everyone who would go through them.

Out of three Appendices of it, 'diary' reveals a part of the busy daily life which he led during pre-independence period of India. But prison life gave Lokopriya the tease he needed to make plan for future activities if India would win political freedom. Both leisure and a measure of detachment of his prison life shaped the future course of action firm in his mind. Whatsoever, it might not be unthinkable sometimes, the injustice, the unhappiness, the uncertainty, the brutality of the world oppress one and darken one's mind. With the British Government's inhuman actions and repressive Laws Lokopriya's mind and heart were occupied with patriotic and nationalistic ideas, cult of Swedeshi and Gandhian ideology but against colonial rules.

Out of six chapters of the book, Chapter III consists of the reports and memoranda which bear the report also drafted by Lokopriya as Chairman of the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee and submitted to the Constituent Assembly that was chaired by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The report strongly reflected the feelings of Gopinath Bordoloi about tribals of North-East as well as other areas of India. Ultimately, his observations and dream came into reality while Sixth Schedule took place in the Draft Constitution of India which was signed and approved by the Members of the Constituent Assembly on November 9, 1949.

Of many things, work, life, ethics, philosophy whatsoever may be,

the present volume leads one who reads it as poet Rabindra Nath Tagore in his Gitanjali prays to behold :

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost the
way into the dreary desert stand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee
into ever widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
Let my country awake."

The editor hopes to get a response from one and all and with full appreciation for her painstaking work.

Dispur
The 19th March, 1991

Dr. K.N. BAISYA,
Under Secretary,
Assam Legislative Assembly

SOME SIGNIFICANT SAYINGS OF LOKOPRIYA

"When an individual of a society respects the freedom of another and tries to work with goodwill, democracy becomes effective."

"By self-discipline and by such self control, every Constitution of the society such as Government employees, industrialists, merchants etc. should think in the same lines as to how he can work for the betterment of the society."

"Through a feeling of brotherhood, justice and morality it is our own duty to remove all these evils of the society."

"Congress does not want a constituent Assembly which will be subservient to the British Government. The British Government at least should give up the best for colonialism in India and until it recognise india to be an independent nation they should never hope to form any constituent Assembly."

"Hatred will lead to hatred; love will turn to love. Therefore if one is in quest of truth he will have to live a truthful life."

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

There may not be dearth of materials on Gopinath Bordoloi. Much has in the meantime been written on his meteoric career. His untiring efforts towards mapping Assam as well as framing the new Indian Constitution lined with Gandhian idealism had drawn sharp attention of each and every top ranking national leader then and have now been sense of esteem and love from every walk of life, people called Gopinath "Lokopriya". Over the years, Lokopriya has emerged as a veritable legend. As a true architect of modern India his birth centenary celebration is also nationwide observed in India. But even as we have discovered his versatility, there are reasons to claim of our own, we seem to have lost the 'man', Lokopriya Gopinath beneath a bevy of public roles. The reason behind urges us to bring to the public much more about Lokopriya which are not published till date. Hence, our endeavour in bringing out this book to public has been to present our readers not only the first Premier of Assam in Independent India, but Gopinath Bordoloi, the man, a leader, also a true architect of Free India. I hope, the study of present volume would benefit readers interested in the contemporary backdrop of geo-politico-sociology in general and researchers and students in particular who are keen to know the critical political scenario of India on the eve of Independence and immediately thereafter.

If we see it, the very theme reveals to most of us what he is a name in the political annals of Assam—a Gandhian, a freedom fighter, a statesman, a humanitarian, a born leader and saviour of Assam.

Gopinath Bordoloi was born in a small village called Raha in the district of Nagaon on the 6th of June, 1890. His father, late Dr. Budheswar Bordoloi was a Government servant. Among the five children, Gopinath

was the third. Radical by nature, Gopinath was interested in studies from his childhood. It is worth mentioning that he completed reading the Mahabharata at the age of seven. Gopinath's elder sister Sashikala used to make fun of him, when she noticed him coming out of his room in the evening after his day long homework.

Gopinath also showed interest in games, drama, music, songs and art from his childhood. As his father was in a transferable job, his primary education was not confined to one place. It is noteworthy to mention that he had an innate sense of rhythm and had a natural ability to pick up tunes. Even in his later life, he would sing the folk songs of the various places he had been to with his father.

Gopinath lost his mother Praneswari, while he was only twelve years of age, at Barpeta. After this sad incident his father decided to settle in Guwahati. His only sister Sashikala was a widow. So with her four younger brothers she remained with her father.

Late Manik Chandra Baruah and Swami Sureshananda of Panchabati Ashram were the two personalities who stood by Gopinath when he was struggling to complete his education in Calcutta. His father, late Dr. Bordoloi had an earnest desire to see his son, Gopinath as a graduate in the family. But God snatched him away before Gopinath could attain the Bachelor of Arts degree. At that time, he fell seriously ill and narrowly escaped from collapse. A torrential outpour of misfortunes befell on Gopinath. He lost his elder brother, Indreswar who used to give him moral and financial support. Gopinath's days became cloudy for some time. Soon after, he overcame all those difficulties and came out successful in securing MA BL degrees in 1917.

His widowed sister, Sashikala had to burden herself with the responsibilities of all her younger brothers. Their income being meagre, she started weaving clothes to maintain the family. She was a poetess and a devoted social worker. Sashikala is remembered in Silpukhuri for the Naamghar she had built for the household ladies to offer their prayers in a common place.

She became busy with searching for a suitable match for her advocate brother, Gopinath. But the would be groom, who had already become a devotee of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phookan, started acquiring a passion for politics.

Being a Headmaster of Sona Ram School, Bordoloi almost regularly visited Phookan, his Guru. It was through him that he had heard about Gandhiji and turned with a fervour to the Independent Movement of India. Therefore, Gopinath was apprehensive that with his involvement in politics he may not be able to lead a happy conjugal life. But with his approval, the marriage took place. The bride was the only daughter of late Bhumi Kanta Mazinder Baruah of North Guwahati. Pretty Surabala, then a child of thirteen, got married to Gopinath on a moonlit night of April. She entered a house full of bachelors with the widowed sister, Sashikala as the only guardian. With the tender care of her sister-in-law and her husband's love the girl child learnt to manage the household chores. Under the loving guidance of her husband, she started learning sewing, reading, writing and also cooking non-vegetarian dishes. Hardly, after a year of their married life, there came Gandhiji's clarion call for the non-cooperation movement. Gopinath, a young man with a rebellious spirit, could not but respond to Gandhiji's call. He at once gave up legal practice and involved himself in the movement.

In 1921, when Gopinath Bordoloi saw Gandhiji for the first time in his life, he became a completely changed person. Bordoloi had a taste for fine clothes and preferred a comfortable life but after meeting Gandhiji he realized that one could go well without fashion. This is how Gandhiji influenced Bordoloi. He underwent a total transformation of mind and soul which lasted till the end of his life. The letters to his wife and children speak of the spiritual bent of mind that Gopinath possessed. He cherished a deep reverence towards all religions. I can't resist the temptation of quoting him from a letter written to his wife—"I have started writing on the lives of Prophets meant for boys of Bapa's age (teen aged Dhiren, his eldest son). As I did not get good books on Buddha and Mohammed, I have purchased some books.... At present I work 12 hours daily, 3.5 hours in spinning and winding, 1 hour in Geeta recitation, 1.5 hour in reading newspapers and journals and the rest 6 hours I read". Thus, late Bordoloi did not waste time, rather he had utilised it in a valuable way.

He sought Gandhiji's advice for every bit of work. He was his friend, philosopher and guide. It is found that the indomitable courage Bordoloi possessed was the source of all that he attained from Gandhiji. He followed Gandhiji in thought, word and deed.

Bordoloi was a man of few words. He believed in action. While in or outside the jail, we found him always busy with constructive work. Inside the jail, he alongwith his co-prisoners, always sat together and discussed about their future plan of work after attaining independence. He used to teach Kamla Miri how to read and write and spin.

The problems of the hill people of Assam occupied a special position in his mind. This is evident from his article entitled, "Our hill brethren of Assam," (included in Chapter V), which he wrote while in jail wherein he had very sensitively revealed his viewpoints. Discussion in the jail reveals his sentiments towards the hill people of Assam. He, thus, wrote, "What should be the boundary of the province under the new Regime of Independent India and what should be its composite parts? The principle of excluded area and partially excluded area should go. Representative Government should extend to these areas also. But arrangements for their protection and development should be specifically provided in the Constitution. A body of specialists with intellectuals of the locality should be set up to determine what protection and development should be given and how to give them. The frontier tracts such as the Balipara and the Sadiya frontier should also be included in the provincial administration".

Towards the border tribes of Assam, he said, "The policy to be followed should be one of complete non-aggression. The province should render all cooperation to develop themselves in their respective areas, and friendship with them should be cultivated. (A board of specialists, to study their mode of living etc., and to investigate the real needs and above all their psychology, should be set up)".

The above quotation is taken from his writings wherein he had expressed his concerns for the tribal people of Assam. An admirer of Gopinath Bordoloi, Sri Gurudatta Bhagavati while paying glorious tributes wrote about a discussion he had with Gopinath Bordoloi on the subject of the hill people. Bordoloi had expressed that independence would come to India only when not even a single tribe would be left uneducated. The feeling of hatred among hills and plains would vanish from the mind of the people.

Gopinath assumed power as the leader of the ruling party. He had also discharged the responsibility of framing the Constitution of India. He became the Chairman of the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee. Bordoloi, who was a cardiac patient, did not pay heed to his health. He single mindedly threw himself into his activities. His report to the Chairman, Advisory Committee of Fundamental Rights, Minorities Tribal Areas, etc. says, "The report has been drawn up by us after a tour of the province which included visits to the Lushai Hills District, the North Cachar Hills Sub-Division, the Mikir Hills, and the Naga Hills District. The Committee could not visit the Garo Hills District on account of bad weather and difficult communication and the Jowai Sub-Division of the Khasi Hills District could not also be visited

for the same reason." The Naga Hills District and the Lushai Hills District hit a movement for secessionists. Bordoloi in his report mentioned, "In the Naga Hills the Committee had to face similar situation in the sense that certain officials were influencing extreme elements of the Naga National Council. Our proposals correspond fully to the spirit of the resolution of the Naga National Council passed at Wokha in June, 1946 and we feel confident that the majority of people in th Naga Hills District will find that our proposals go a long way towards meeting even their present point of view".

Bordoloi's untiring efforts to preserve and protect the interest of the Tribals of the Hills was duly felt by them. His sudden demise in 1950 was a bolt from the blue particularly to the Hills and plains tribal people of Assam. In a message to the Governor they said, "The whole of plains people of Assam convey to the Government of Assam their condolences on the sad demise of Sri Gopinath Bordoloi, the late Chief Minister, who through many diversities and difficulties successfully fought for the cause of Assam in general and of the plains and Hills Tribals in particular, before and after the transfer of power and at the time of framing the Constitution of free India."

Late A.Z. Phizo of Nagaland poignantly wrote in his condolence message, "With only a few others, Bordoloi saw, years ago amidst the gathering storm a patch of blue sky. In that great vision of his and his unremitting contribution towards its realization truly depicted the impress of his character which neither death nor time can rob away. In life Bordoloi was a friend of the Nagas whose friendship they held dear. Nagas have been made power today that he has gone".

While coming to the North Cachar Hills Sonaram Thaosen, Ex:MLA, a reputed leader, expresses with gratitude the efforts of the late Bordoloi, "The Bordoloi Sub-Committee has recommended for the district autonomy empowering the District Council to make laws and regulations on land, water, cattle markets, social customs, primary education, appointment of village headman and the chiefs etc. The recommendation was accepted in its entirety by the Constituent Assembly as a result of which the Sixth Schedule was incorporated in the Constitution of India and subsequently the District Councils were functioning in the hills since 1952". But analysing the present political situation in the state due to the tribal people, it seems that instead of trying to understand the spirit and objective of the Sixth Schedule and following the principles, the new leaders of the District Council are involved with ambitious schemes of the Government of India in which they have neither experience nor the public

spirit and honesty to manage the schemes. This is the cause of the failure of the Sixth Schedule. Had Bordoloi lived for another five years, the relationship and political atmosphere may have remained healthier.

R. Thanlira, Ex.-M.P., Mizoram states, "Gopinath Bordoloi was definitely one of the major architects of the Sixth Schedule. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule have now become so popular that they are in use in every state." He further states, "During the three days he stayed in Aizwal, Gopinath Bordoloi could endear himself to the Mizo people so much so that the unexpected news of his death barely two weeks after his departure from Aizwal, struck the Mizo people like a bolt from the blue. In a heartfelt resolution adopted at a huge memorial service held on the 7th of August at Aizwal, the people of Mizoram expressed their due acknowledgement of Gopinath Bordoloi's love, sincerity, honesty and untiring effort to serve the country and, in particular, the backward and undeveloped tribal people."

Late Bordoloi's immense love towards the hill people made him write for them, work for them and represent their feelings in the AICC Session held in Dehradun. His writings found in his brief case four decades ago seem to have relevance today. We have not deleted any idea or expressions from the article in order to give an idea to the readers as to how late Bordoloi's heart cried for the well-being of the entire people of the region. We fervently hope that the present generation of the various ethnic groups mentioned and described in the article will appreciate the spirit and not act to the write up otherwise.

It is well known that Gopinath was one of the prime movers of the cause of education in the North East Region. To this end he wanted to see an ideal institute of higher learning, that is University, established in Guwahati, the seat of learning in the Assam of those days. And he could see it established two years before he expired in 1950. The article, "A case for a University in Assam," might be the write up he submitted as a memorandum to the then Government of Assam headed by Sir Saadullah against its proposed University Bill. We leave it to the readers to find out for themselves for this article why and how late Bordoloi fought for a University in Assam.

The article on Gandhiji's birthday, although it is a brief one is an eloquent tribute. Late Bordoloi wished to pay to the greatness and glory of the unique life of Mahatma Gandhi even while behind bars on the completion of his seventieth year. This shows his deep conviction in the ideology and philosophy of Gandhiji. It is worthwhile to note here how

late Bordoloi could realize even in those far off days that the only answer to the question of extinction of all lives as faced by today's humanity lay in the Gandhian approach to life whether individual, social or political.

Late Bordoloi's personal letters as compiled in Chapter IV were available in our small collection. Apart from the political life of this personality, his letters from jail reveal his character as a responsible father in the proper sense of the term. Gandhiji has left an indelible imprint on his mind which made him follow a spiritual path. The tremendous task which he undertook after the death of Gandhiji to follow the path led by him to the political world was awe-inspiring.

Gopinath Bordoloi's contribution in the literary field was also immense. Being deeply involved in constructive works throughout his life, he made proper use of the short span of time, when he was in jail, to pursue his literary interests. He felt that one can serve humanity through writing also. To guide children and educate them into the values of life, he wrote the biographies of five prophets of the world. In his writings we find a tinge of romanticism. Vinoba Bhave on receiving Gopinath Bordoloi's "Gandhiji" wrote to Smt. Surabala Bordoloi, "*Bordoloi ki likhi huyi kitab ko hridayangam bi hogi.*"

The book is in six chapters. All this is the history of Bordoloi who was a student of history. Now he himself created history—a legend. Although quite a few things said and discussed in, these writings have a great deal of relevance to the present state of affairs in the country. We hope the readers will be inspired to translate Bordoloi's dream into a living reality, which has in the present context become so great a necessity.

Late Bordoloi is remembered by Gandhian stalwarts like Kaka Kalelkar 'as one of the noblest sons of India'. The Governor of West Bengal stated that Sri Bordoloi was "a selfless patriot and a pillar of strength to the national struggle in past years and now his statesmanship was an asset not only to Assam but also to whole of India." Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India poignantly remembered Bordoloi, "with his death a void is created in the public life of Assam and India which it will be very difficult to fill". Bordoloi had borne the burden of administering a most difficult province in very trying times. He was greatly loved and respected not only in Assam but outside the province also as a great fighter in the cause of freedom, and a good and considerate administrator. The Prime Minister Pandit Nehru remembered him thus, "For all of us and Assam particularly, this is a great loss of a brave fighter for freedom and one who in his high position as a Chief Minister of Assam

faced courageously the many problems of that state". Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel was shocked at the sudden demise of Bordoloi. He stated, "Assam's loss is too great to contemplate". Govind Vallabh Pant expressed shock saying, "The sudden death of Bordoloi caused an irreparable loss to the country particularly Assam. One of the foremost leaders in the struggle for independence he was the architect of new Assam, a universally esteemed and loved by his people, a thorough gentleman and a true friend. "The then Chief Minister of Sourashtra Dhebarje expressed Bordoloi's demise as, "a loss to India." Shukla, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh expressed shock over Bordoloi's death as "a national loss". Asaf Ali from Orissa stated that the "premature death is a serious loss not merely to Assam but to the whole country." Morarji Desai was grieved to hear of sudden death of Bordoloi. Balvant Rai Mehta expressed his grief at the sudden demise of Bordoloi saying, "India loses a tried and veteran patriot who has rendered yeoman services to the motherland in her hour of trial."

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