

The Ahom Throne

The Pivotal point of Loyalty and Unity

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The throne of the Ahom dynasty who ruled Assam from the early thirteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century was considered to be sacred; and according to the constitutional practice of the Ahom dynasty, only a scion of the family of Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom royal dynasty in Assam was entitled to it. The three ministers, namely, the Buragohain, the Borgohain and the Borpatragohain could only jointly select a worthy prince from the family of Sukapha to be installed as king. This constitutional practice followed by the Ahom dynasty was equally respected and adhered to by all other people. It was for this reason that no person of non-royal origin could ascend the Ahom throne. Attempts were, however, made on several occasions particularly during the later period of the Ahom rule, to install persons of non-royal blood on the Ahom throne and also by a few ambitious persons of non-royal origin to elevate themselves to the position of a sovereign by capturing the throne. But everytime, such attempts ended in failure.

The first effort in this direction was made by king Surampha (1641-1644 A.D.) who sought to install his adopted son of non-royal blood on the Ahom throne. The next attempt was made by the two queens of king Jayadhwaj Singha and his father-in-law who contrived to place their adopted son of non-royal origin on the throne after Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.)². The next attempt was made by an Ahom General named Baduli Phukan at the time of Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam during the reign of the same king. This competent general betrayed his sovereign as well as his country and joined hands with Mir Jumla in the hope of becoming king of Assam with the

help of the latter³. He seems to be the first of the Ahom officials to aspire for the throne which all people in the country held in extreme reverence and considered it to be as sacred as to be occupied only by the scion of the family of Sukapha.

Debera Barbaruah, a powerful official of the Ahom government was another person who strived to capture the Ahom throne. Debera came out first as a saviour of the Ahom king and the country from the perilous jaws of an alien religious preceptor named Paramananda from Brindaban. But subsequently he emerged as the destroyer of the Ahom sovereign authority. It is evident from what he said to one of his adherents, Bakal namgila Hazarika. "The Ahoms are enjoying their sovereignty through the blessings of their tutelary image in Chengdeo, they have enslaved all people by the black letters enscrolled on paper, and trained men are employed to seduce wild elephants from the jungle. Therefore, know thee, O, Namgila, I shall throw the Chengdeo image into water, release the elephants, and set fire to the state documents".⁴ Such expressions clearly exposed his real intention to annihilate the dynastic rule of Sukapha and ascend himself as the allpowerful lord of the country. From this, it also appears that he aimed at convincing the people that it was not the person of royal blood but even a man like him could become king if he strived for that, and that he wanted for himself the people's support to capture the throne. But the common people, by and large, continued to behold the throne and the king on it in great love and respect and considered it to be the most sacred as many patriotic and loyal officers did.

Embittered by the nasty political situation created by the colossal desire of Debera Barbaruah to promote personal aggrandisement, some nobles and officials of the time suggested that the

sacred throne destined to be occupied only by the scion of the family of Sukapha be occupied by Atan Buragohain, the premier of the Ahom sovereign. Such suggestions only indicated that reverence and sanctity attached to the throne by the general body of the people began to be ignored by many of the ambitious officers and nobles of the time. Otherwise they would not come out with the desire to see Atan Buragohain, who was not of royal blood, occupy the throne. Atan's stubborn refusal to carry out the suggestion, however, confirmed that he held the Ahom authority in great esteem and reverence as all other common people of the country did. On the first occasion, he said, "only a scion of the royal family should become king"⁵. similarly on other occasions also. he went on to insist on the observance of the same practice and tradition in matters of selection of the king from amongst the members of the royal family only. Soon his close associate Laluk Sola Borphukan, a high and powerful officer of Debera's nature, murdered him and ventured to become king. With 'this end in view, Laluk sola Borphukan took resort to the ghastly act of wiping out the existence of any person of the family of sukapha so that general people of the country would not buzz if he mounted on the throne. Sulikpha, known as Lora Raja, or 'Boy King', was installed on the throne by him only to befool the people. He even surrendered Gauhati to the Mughals and became friendly with them to obtain help from the latter in accomplishing his selfish design. But his plan was foiled and he was murdered by a few commoners, namely, Aghona Kachari, Madho Tamuly and Bhotai. These commoners are said to have conferred amongst themselves saying, "Let us see who can save him. We shall do all the best we can "⁶.

During the reign of king Lakhmi Sinha (1769-1780 A.D.) the Moamariyas rose into rebellion against the Ahom authority under the guidance

of their spiritual preceptor, Chaturbhuj. This religious preceptor strictly ordered his followers that if they succeeded in deposing the ruling king they should install an able prince of the same dynasty on the sacred throne and none of the rebel leaders should try to install himself as king there. But the order was violated by the rebels and they placed the son of the preceptor on the throne. This enraged the preceptor who later threatened to banish his son for ever. The son, therefore, relinquished the kingship and returned home. But the enraged father did not allow him to tread the precinct of his abode. From this, it appears that the revolt of the Moamariyas was actually not against the institution of monarchy but against the king in person. It symbolises the people's love and reverence to the throne of the Ahom King.

The Muhammadan community of the Ahom Kingdom who "has become not only more loyal, but more disposed to cheerfully incorporate itself into the existing political organisation" ⁸ too bore deep love and respect towards the Ahom throne and considered it to be a sacred article to be adorned only by a prince of royal blood. It is on record in history that some Muslim leaders of the time organised a rebellion against the ruling ahom king for his imbecility and gained popular support of all sections of the common people. But these Muslim leaders also pledged to replace the imbecile king regnant by another able prince from the same royal family.

It is necessary to mention here that there were two occasions when the Kingdom was governed by the councillors in ¹⁰the absence of suitable rulers of royal blood. But never was there an occasion when a person of non-royal blood was installed as king on the Ahom throne. All these go to show that all sections of the people looked upon the institution of kingship as founded by Sukapha and occupied only by the descendants

of his family with great love and reverence as the pivotal point of loyalty, unity and progress of the country.

From the instances cited above, it is now amply clear that in the Ahom period great sanctity was attached to the Ahom throne which could be mounted only by person belonging to the royal family or of royal blood. any attempt to capture it by person of non-royal blood was sincerely crushed. Sanctity attached to the Ahom throne generated extreme love, loyalty and veneration of the people towards it and it went a long way to keep the long-continued independence, unity and integrity of the land peopled by diverse languages, religions and cultures.

Notes & References

1. S.K.Bhuyan, Deodhai Asam Buranji, p.87.
G.C.Baruah, Ahom-Buranji, p.127
2. S.K.Mahanta, Assam Buranji, p.86
3. S.K.Mahanta, Assam Buranji, p. 81
4. S.K. Mahanta, Assam buranji, p.109
5. H.C.Goswami, Purani Asom Buranji, p.118
S.K.Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p.98
6. S.K.Mahanta, Assam Buranji, p.120
7. G.C.Baruah, Ahom Buranji, p.301
8. Hunter, Imperial Gazetter of India, Vol.II, Quoted by U.N.Gohain, Assam under the ahoms, p.86
9. S.K. Bhuyan, Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh, p.182 ff
10. First interegnum 1376 - 1380 A.D.
Second interegnum 1389 - 1397 A.D.