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Assam is a strategic state guarding the North East Frontier of India. The state went under British rule in 1826 becoming one of the latest victims of British Imperialism in India. But for about five decades, till 1874, Assam remained a part of Bengal Presidency. A Legislative Council for Bengal was set up in 1862 by the Indian Council Act of 1861, but though Assam formed an integral part of the Lieutenant Governorship of Bengal, the Province was excluded from the scope of being represented in the Legislative Council.¹ Assam was also deprived of the benefits of the Act of 1872. The Province was not provided with an independent Legislative Council, and was instead given only one representative in the Imperial Legislative Council and that too to an Englishman, whose sole interest was to protect the European planters community. In this way, the interests of the people of Assam in general were disregarded.²

The Province had not received much attention from the Government till 1874, when Assam was formed into a Chief Commissionership with headquarters at Shillong. Due to its geographical location and difficulties of transport and communication the province could not attain much progress.

The Province received a huge setback when Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905 and formed a new Province by joining Eastern Bengal with Assam under a Lieutenant Governor. The partition had reversed the whole process of development which was set in motion since her separation from Bengal in 1874. By the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1912, Assam was again restored to the Province under a Chief Commissioner.

In 1917, when Montague, Secretary of State for India, came to India to ascertain Indian political views on the eve of giving India a fresh measure of self government, the Chief Commissioner, Beatson Bell, had suggested that on account of

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¹ A. Guha, Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947, New Delhi, 1977, p.25
her peculiar geographical position and the heterogeneous population, Assam should be treated separately. But the Surma Valley branch of the Indian Tea Association had gone to the extent of demanding exclusion of Assam from the reform scheme saying that there was no "intelligentia in Assam". Several communal organizations of both the valleys like the Surma Valley Mohammadan Association, Mahishya Samity of Sunamganj, Ahom Association and Assam Mohammadan Association pressed their respective claims for representation. The Assam Association had taken a bold stand by sending a two member delegation consisting of Nabin Ch. Bordoloi and Prasanna Kumar Barua to London, to argue convincingly before the Parliamentary Committee, appointed to scrutinize the Montague Chelmsford Bill, the stand of Indian National Congress, that full responsible government should be granted to all parts of British India. Because of their persistent effort, Assam was able to attain her rightful place as a major province in the new Reform set up.

On the basis of the Montague Chelmsford recommendations, the Government of India Act 1919 was passed in December 1919. It introduced a diarchy of provincial administration under which partial responsibility was granted in 'transferred' subjects but ultimate responsibility was vested with the executive on the 'reserved' subjects.

Assam remained an underdeveloped state as a result of long years of exploitation of its resources by the British, enhancement of the land revenue, imposition of new taxes, such as Income Tax, Stamp Duties and License Tax, and the Policy of discrimination in giving appointments. The financial condition of the Province was in a very deplorable condition. The economic reforms of 1919 and 1935 had not helped the Province to generate enough revenue. Rather, the reforms had not only increased the expenditure but had also failed to remove illiteracy, food scarcity, unemployment and the existence of an unhealthy social and civic environment. The

3. Political History of Assam Vol I, p.217
4. Ibid
5. Ibid., pp. 217-218
6. K. N. Dutta, Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam, Guwahati, 1958, p.52
financial constraints of the Province proved to be the major hurdle in the path of development.

The close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century saw a new awakening in Assam with the spread of modern English education which brought the message of nationalist and liberal ideas of the west. Development of Assamese literature, the rise of Assamese press or journalism and above all, the birth of all Indian political organizations, such as, the Indian Association and the Indian National Congress moulded the national consciousness of the people of Assam and convinced the Assamese educated class of the need of establishing organizations through which they could draw the attention of the authorities to the needs and just demands of the people.

Along with the rest of India, discontentment was also brewing in Assam against the repressive Rowlatt Acts passed on 18 March 1919. Under the Presidentship of Tarun Ram Phukan, a public meeting was held at Guwahati on 16 February, 1919 which expressed the deep sense of regret and demanded withdrawal of the Bills.8

The Indian National Congress, in a special session held at Calcutta in 1920 with Lala Lazpat Rai as President, decided to launch the Non-Co-operation Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi against the British Government in India. Most of the leaders in Assam intended to join the movement. In the Nagpur AICC session the principle of linguistic provinces for future Congress organization had been accepted and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi was elected as the first Assamese member of AICC. Gopinath Bordoloi, a young practicing lawyer at Guwahati, emerged in the political scene of Assam with the launching of Non-Co-operation movement. By his qualities of head and heart and undivided loyalty to the cause of Assam, Bordoloi soon won the hearts of the people of the Province and became a distinguished political leader.

Bordoloi's service to the Province from 1937 onwards revealed his efficacy as a constructive political leader and one of the builders of the destiny of the people of Assam.

8. APAI, Guwahati, 12 April, 1919, Office of the Deputy Inspector General of Police (S.B), Guwahati.
Assam. Having an in-depth understanding of the situation in Assam, he had stated in a speech:9

“Assam is a part of this great country—beautiful and wealthy in all that nature has given but poor and neglected in all that man has done. But I feel that if even today you begin to take an active interest in this part of India and her simple and unsophisticated people, much will grow and develop there, for which you will have reasons to be proud and happy.”

Being a true Gandhian, in his tribute to Mahatma Gandhi he had expressed his dream of modern Assam:10

“A new economic order must be brought into existence, where any kind of exploitation would not be possible. The moral conscience of man must be so trained that in place of unholy competition and exploitation of his neighbours, service to him and society must find full scope.”

He tried to fulfill his enthusiasm for building a new Assam after he had assumed the Premiership of the Province for the second time in 1946. He had told his Colleagues that he had accepted the responsibility only for one term and was unwilling to contest the next election. His aim was to build Assam as a progressive state like the other states of the country. He not only wanted expansion of roadways, schools, colleges and a university, but also tried to create a bond of brotherhood among different tribes and communities of the State. He had once told his friend the outgoing Governor, Sri Prakash, “I am a visionary. My heart always seeks to build and create something.” An article written by him, ‘Assam looks Ahead’, speaks volumes of his understanding of the potentialities of the Province and the necessity of raising its socio-economic condition:11

9. Speech Delivered by Gopinath Bordoloi in AICC session in May 1949 at Dehradun, G. N. Bordoloi Papers, Sl no 1, NMML
"Today Assam as an integral part of mother India is at the threshold of a new Dawn. Along with the rest of the country she is looking forward to a new life- a life which must be better, richer and fuller and more useful not only to herself but to India as a whole. She has many problems to solve, economic, industrial and educational and also to tackle the basic problem of the standard of living of her citizens particularly the cultivator of the plains and the highlander of the hills. She has to provide for the education of the backward brethren of the tribal area and the partially excluded territories. She has to develop her immense natural resources that lie scattered throughout the length and breadth of the territory, with unity and faith and the spirit of selflessness and to integrate economy of her own within the federal ambit of India, for the progress, prosperity and well being of every citizen of Assam irrespective of any class or community, religion or tribes."

In the following pages an attempt has been made to make an indepth and objective study of the socio-economic contribution of this great personality who had untiringly toiled to realize his dream of modern Assam, during his short tenure of life, inspite of many impediments in the pre and post independent period. As the Premier of the Province he had shouldered the task of building a strategically and administratively very different and difficult part of India.

His name is firmly rooted in the political annals of Assam as a freedom fighter, a Gandhian, a statesman, a humanitarian and above all a born leader of Assam. As the first Premier of Assam after independence, Bordoloi steered the state successfully but unfortunately he did not get time to translate all his ideas into reality. His socio-economic contribution is intricately knit with his political personage, so we can study them best in the context of Bordoloi as a leading political leader of Assam.

Bordoloi was aware of the complex social, economic and political problems which had kept the people of Assam in poverty and ignorance. He recognized that the very complexity and magnitude of these problems meant that effective solution could be organized only on the basis of national unity. Along with other Assamese leaders
Gopinath Bordoloi integrated the urge for freedom of Assam with nationwide struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He was the first Satyagrahi in Assam and his devotion to all aspects of Gandhian thoughts was total. Bordoloi's leadership during 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. Bordoloi was a politician who was eminently successful in harmonizing national and legitimate Assamese interests, which fitted well in the broad national framework. It was under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi that the people of Assam raised their voice against the Cabinet Missions Grouping Scheme which would have brought disaster to Assam. He stood like rock to save Assam and Assamese entity from the sinister Grouping plan of the Cabinet Mission by mobilizing strong public opinion against it. Assam's anti-grouping movement turned out to be a decisive contribution in the last phase of India's struggle for freedom. Bordoloi stood for a federal Union of India with autonomous units. He was a true representative of the composites cultures of the land.

The Problem of hill people occupied a special position in his mind. It was a policy of British imperialism to keep the hills deliberately separated from the plains in the north-east. The British adopted a policy of seclusion regarding the frontier provinces and sealed the borders of the tribal areas from all outside influence. As a true representative of the composite Assamese nationality, Gopinath Bordoloi was fully aware of the tribal psyche of the north-east. He was quick to realize that the tribals of Assam have contributed in a great measure to the building up of the composite culture of the modern Assamese people. In the historical and political context and perspective he made it clear that there could be no fundamental or major difference between the tribal and non-tribal common people of Assam and that welfare and progress of all depended only on their unity. When he had undertaken the constructive task of integrating the hills on the foundation of democracy and freedom, he had not only to confront the British imperialist legacy but also to cross the hurdles of opposition from
conservative sections of his Congress colleagues. Gopinath perceived that Assam's problems could be successfully tackled only by the people of Assam working in an atmosphere of national unity and center-state and inter-state cooperation. The Sixth Schedule, as a constitutional provision for decentralization of political power is a distinct contribution of Bordoloi to the Indian political system. Bordoloi called it a Gandhian method and found no alternative to it. But unfortunately he passed away before he could play his role in the implementation of these provisions.

He fully appreciated the value of rural industrialization, of the needs, of economic growth in Assam and the tradition of cottage and village industry amongst the people. He was greatly committed to Gandhi's call of rural reconstruction and promotion of khadi and village industries. In 1948 Bordoloi's Cabinet passed its industrial policy resolutions which outlined the industrialization programme for Assam. Gopinath was one of the prime movers of the cause of education in the north-east. With farsighted vision, he initiated the building of important institutions in all the key sectors of the growth of Assam. He promoted primary, secondary and higher education, established agricultural and engineering schools. He wanted to see an ideal institution of higher learning, that is University established in Guwahati and he could see it being established two years before he expired in 1950. Bordoloi also made very important contribution in the field of culture, literature, dance, music and arts of Assam. 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 and in this context he had written the biographies of five great prophets of the world. He gave every assistance to the growth of Assam's language, literature, culture and sports and encouraged interaction with the larger national cultural atmosphere.

Bordoloi, respectfully called 'Lokapriya', nurtured a dream for a modern Assam and worked ceaselessly to fulfill it. With his great vision, far sightedness, idealism, ability and statesmanship he could endear himself to all sections of the people of Assam. His leadership at a critical time of the country's history immortalized his name.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Though some work has been done on the political career of Gopinath Bordoloi, no substantial work has been on the constructive work undertaken by this great leader who was the Premier of Assam from 20 September 1938-15 November 1939 and again from 11 February 1946-5 August 1950. In the present study an attempt has been made to bring out Gopinath Bordoloi's contribution to the socio-economic development of modern Assam throwing light on his constructive schemes as the Premier of the Province. Though much work has been done assessing his role in the politics of Assam, no exclusive research has been done regarding his contribution towards the socio-economic development of this state, which is very important in the history of socio-economic reconstruction of the Province of Assam after independence. He had played a very vital role in shaping the destiny of modern India but unfortunately his name has not found a prominent place in the annals of the history of India. The Assam Prakashan Parishad had published Gopinath Bordoloi in Assamese in 2003, which is a biography of the great leader and includes a few articles on him. Bordoloi's close associate, Mahadev Sharma, had written in Assamese Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi, which was published in 1956. It is a very important, comprehensive and authentic biography on the great leader. The author in this book portrays Bordoloi as a successful political leader, but has not elaborated on the constructive work undertaken by him. Sula Sharma's Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi, which was published from Guwahati in 1992, book deals primarily with some of the political activities of the great leader. Birendra Kumar Dutta has edited a short biography of Bordoloi, which formed a part of a series – Builders of Modern India, published by the Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1986. It cannot be called a complete biography but a short account of the life and activities of this eminent leader. Bordoloi's daughter, Lily Mazinder Baruah, edited the book Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi, An Architect of Modern India. It is a collection of original writings, correspondence, reports and memoranda drafted by Bordoloi. Nirode K. Barooah penned the book ...
Gopinath Bardoloi, _Indian Constitution and Centre- Assam Relations_ which was published by the Publication Board of Assam in 1990. The book primarily deals with Bordoloi’s role in Cabinet Mission’s Grouping Plan and has brought new light to the problem faced by Bordoloi’s Ministry in their relation with the Centre. Bordoloi’s contribution towards the making of the Indian Constitution, specially the incorporation of the Sixth Schedule has been discussed in this book. A series of articles on Gopinath Bordoloi written by Nirode Barooah which discussed various aspects of Bordoloi’s political life were published in an Assamese fortnightly _Prantik_ captioned _Ejon Satyagrahir Rajniti_. The Assam Prakashan Parishad had also published some portions of the diaries of Bordoloi edited by Dr. Barooah in two Volumes, titled _Bordoloi Dinelekha_. The author had written another book _Ejon Satyagrahir Rajniti Gopinath Bordoloi aru Asom Tetia aru Etia_ in Assamese, published in January 2010, which gives an elaborate account of the political career of this great leader. The authors of _Political History of Assam Vol II and III_ has referred to different activities of Bordoloi as also Amalendu Guha in _his Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826- 1947_. No research work has been done on Bordoloi’s socio-economic contribution in the political context. The present work attempts to emphasize his contribution to the economy, education and culture of Assam and the socio-economic impact of his schemes.

**OBJECTIVE :**

_The objective of the present study are :-_

1. To make an indepth and objective study of the socio-economic contribution of Bordoloi during his tenure as Premier at a turbulent period of the history of the province. His socio-economic contribution is intricately knit with his political personage, so the study is made in the context of Bordoloi as a leading political leader of Assam.

2. To highlight the initiatives he had taken to improve the economy of this underdeveloped province.
3. To analyse the constructive schemes undertaken by Bordoloi and his untiring efforts for the development and modernization of Assam.

4. To analyse his relations with the Centre in the context of his reforms.

**METHODOLOGY:**

In studying the problem the historical method has been applied. Primary sources for this study mainly consist of official records preserved in the Archives, Dispur; National Archives, Delhi; Assembly Proceedings and Constituent Assembly Debates from the Assam Assembly Library; Congress papers from Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; old magazines, periodicals and newspaper preserved in Directorate of Historical and Antiquarian Studies; Secret Reports of the Special Branch of the Police Department and Intelligence Reports were consulted and a scientific interpretation of the data collected has been made. Secondary sources have also been consulted. The above mentioned data has been complimented and supplemented by interview with several family members and associates of Bordoloi.