CHAPTER I
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The two centuries under the Darrangi Phaid (1616-1826 A.D.) were marked by considerable progress and significant changes at all levels: political, social, and economic. Politically, the Darrangi Rajya, which was independent during the time of its ruler Dharma Narayan, was transformed into a tributary state following his death. Socially, remarkable transformation took place. The social stratification was based on gender, occupation, wealth and power rather than caste alone, and social mobility was discernible through a process of sanskritization. The system of bandi-golam was prominent as a status symbol. Besides, the rajya also made significant progress and development in religion, art, culture and literature. Economically, rich in natural resources like forests, rivers, gold-dust, the rajya made remarkable progress in agriculture with the application of dong irrigation, woodcraft, subsidiary crafts and industries like cane and bamboo, pottery, brass and bell-metal, textiles, etc. External trade in mustard and other goods were carried on chiefly through periodical trade-fairs which linked the state to the world market. However, the establishment of Ahom hegemony had an adverse impact on the rajya, and as such, a series of revolts took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Darrang consists of a strip of level land lying on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river extending from the Barnadi river in the west to the Bhareli river in the east, parallel to the Himalayan ranges, situated between 26° 14' 0" north latitude and 91° 45' 0" and 93° 50' 0" east longitude.1 Darrang was a riverine state. The Brahmaputra river, which formed the southern boundary of the rajya flowed from the east to west of the rajya. The other rivers originating in the mountains of the north were all tributaries of the Brahmaputra. The most important tributaries were Bhareli (Bhairabi), Jia Dhansiri, Nanai and Barnadi. Moreover, there were about twenty-six other small rivers and streams, which had a great impact on the life and economy of the area. Most of the rivers flooded during the rainy season and inundated the catchment areas and formed chaparis.

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Historians are not certain about the definite beginnings of the use of the word ‘Darrang’. The nomenclature ‘Darrang’ has been in use since the ancient times. The Siyalavaishnav Charit refers to a large territory called Darranga Desh under the old kingdom of Kamrupa, which covered Mangaldai and its surrounding areas making it clear that the name Darrang was in use prior to the establishment of the Darrangi Phaid in 1616 A. D. by Bali Narayan alias Dharma Narayan (1616-1637 A. D.). Under the rule of the Darrangi Rajas this territory came to be known as the Darrangi Rajya.

There are differing views regarding the nomenclature ‘Darrang’. Some scholars are of the opinion that the word ‘Darrang’ is derived from the word ‘Dau-Ranga’, which means ‘the land of pleasure (Ranga Bhumi) of gods’. Other scholars opine that the hilly states of Bhutan, Tibet and Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh were at one time called ‘Ranga’ and the low lying plains situated to the south of these lands was low land or ‘Da’. So, the name of the low land was called ‘Da-Ranga’ and hence the name Darrang. According to Bani Kanta Kakati, the word ‘Darrang’ is derived from Austric words ‘dorr’, meaning a bridge and ‘hong’ or ‘ong’ meaning water. Rajmohan Nath is of the opinion that the name Darrang is borrowed from the Daflas or the Bhutias’ word ‘Duar-Ganga’. Their main duar or pass for coming to the plains from the hills lay along the course of Barganga river and they called it ‘Duar-Ganga’, which got corrupted first to ‘Duaranga’ and then to ‘Darranga’ or ‘Darrang’. The name ‘Darrang’ is also believed to have been derived from an incident, which had occurred during the first settlement of the Darrangi Raja. The Darrangi Raja who had established himself at Dhalpur (Dalpur) had erected a mud-fort there but with the commencement of rains the site became flooded and infested with wild beasts, which compelled him to move to the village of Mangaldai (Meydah). This incident so amused Pratap Singha, the then Ahom king (Assam raja), that he directed that the

then Darrangi Raja Dharma Narayan’s (its first raja) country should be called Darrang. The word ‘Dur’ signifying disaster or ‘durjug’ and ‘rang’ anything amusing. But this view cannot be accepted as the name of Darrang existed before the establishment of the Darrangi Phaid.

However, the majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the name ‘Darrang’ is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Dwaram’, meaning ‘duar’ or door. Just below the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Himalaya, there were several ‘Dwaram(s)’ or ‘duar(s)’ on the northern border of the district. The hill people used these ‘duars’ or pass to come down to the plains to barter their products with the people of the plains. There are still some places in the erstwhile Darrangi Rajya with the suffix duar such as Satguri Duar, Burhigoma Duar, Khalling Duar, Kariapara Duar, Char Duar and Na Duar. This view does not hold good because the duar areas were once dominated by the Kachari. So the influence of Sanskrit in this area is doubtful. Considering the geographical domination of the Kachari or Bodo people in this area it can be quite definitely assumed that their language has had a strong influence on the nomenclature of Darrang. According to Dhireswar Boro Narzi the name of Darrang is derived from the Boro word ‘dar-hong’ where ‘dar’ means door, area or a piece of land (place) and ‘hong’ means ‘wide’. So the wide area at the foot hills came to be called Darhong which subsequently became Darrang.11

The Darrangi Phaid or the Darrang dynasty was established in 1616 A.D. by Bali Narayan alias Dharma Narayan with his capital first at Kherkeria12 at the foot of the Bhutan Hills and then at Mohanpur popularly known as Houli Mohanpur, two miles north-west of present Mangaldai town and continued to be ruled by his descendants up to 1826 A.D. The Darrangi Rajya was under their rule for about two centuries. It

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has generally been assumed that Dharma Narayan was installed by the Ahom king Pratap Singha as the tributary raja of Darrang. Scholars like Edward Gait, S. K. Bhuyan, Lakshmi Devi and others describe Dharma Narayan as a tributary raja, using the Kamrupar Buranji as a source.

However, a probe into this area shows that Dharma Narayan was not a tributary raja, but an independent ally of the Ahom king; the Darrangi Rajya was a buffer state between the Ahoms and Mughals. The tributary status of the Darrangi Rajas is apparent only from the year 1637 A. D. after the death of Dharma Narayan. Kamrupar Buranji too does not indicate the tributary status of Dharma Narayan rather it states that Bali Narayan was installed as raja of Darrang and given the name Dharma Narayan. Suryakhadi Daibajyan, a court poet of Raja Samudra Narayan, states in the Darranga Rajvansaali, that Dharma Narayan received the Darrangi Rajya as dowry from the Ahom king, when he got him (Dharma Narayan) married to a girl namely Ratnamala belonging to the Sonari clan. Gait too later substantiates the independent status of Dharma Narayan when he maintains, “When Dharma Narayan died his son Sundar Narayan (Mahendra Narayan) was installed in his place by the Ahom king, who instructed him to consult the Barphukan on all important matters. He made his headquarters at Mangaldai. From this time the eastern Koch kings (the Darrangi Rajas) can no longer be regarded as independent rulers.” The last statement clearly indicates that the Darrangi Rajya was an independent during the time of Raja Dharma Narayan.

It is also evident that on the arrival of Bali Narayan (Dharma Narayan) at the Ahom Court, he was asked by the Patramantree (minister) to prostrate before the Ahom king and to seat himself on a plantain leaf. Bali Narayan refused to do so saying that such ceremonies were performed only by the lowest of the king’s subjects. Acknowledging his stance Pratap Singha desired that he be provided a cushion and was allotted the

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16 Edward Gait, op. cit. p. 65.
Foro (a kind of palanquin) and saranao (a kind of boat), as befitting an independent king. William Robinson also admitted the independent status of the Darrangi Rajas when he said that formerly Darrang was under the independent princes called Darrangi Rajas. Moreover, the Darrangi Rajas like Surya Narayan, Hangsa Narayan II and Krishna Narayan revolted in the succeeding periods to recover their independent status which will be discussed subsequently in the fourth chapter.

The history of the Darrangi Rajya enters a significant phase with the establishment of the Darrangi Phaid. The Darrangi Rajya impacted several changes in the society and economy of the time. In the social structure, patriarchy prevailed, and the family formed the lowest unit. The joint-family system prevailed in Hindu, Muslim and ethnic societies. During this period the history of the rajya underwent a social transformation. The society was stratified on the basis of caste, occupation, wealth and power. The people were broadly divided on the basis of racial groups and religion. Therefore, Darrangi society consisted largely of Hindu and Muslim and also ethnic groups such as Kachari and Rabha. The Hindu society was further divided on the basis of caste, professional and other social groups. Upward social mobility and a process of ‘sanskritization’ took place, thereby introducing important social changes. The Koch caste to which the rajas belonged became the dominating caste of the rajya by extending its membership through ‘sanskritization’.

The Muslim society was composed of migrants and converts from the lower orders of the Hindu society. As they were mainly Hindu converts their manners and customs were similar to that of the Hindus. Professing the religion according to Islamic norms, they participated in the Hindu festivals actively. The performance of Suknani Sanggit by the Muslim Ojha in the Durga puja was unique. The Hindu-Muslim integration was a unique feature of the Darrangi society. The ethnic groups of people basically comprising of the Kacharis and the Rabhas had their own social practices and beliefs. It is significant to note that the patriarchal system prevailed in the Kachari society. There were some professional social groups such as Kamar, Kumar, Hira, Barhai, Tati, etc. These professions were hereditary. However, the rajas had the authority to

18 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, Sanskaran Prakash, Delhi, India, 1975, p. 291.
debar a particular man from his profession. The practice of keeping bandi-golam or bondsmen was another feature of the Darrangi society. It was widespread in the society. The maintenance of bandi-golam was a status symbol of the upper class people.

The people of the Darrangi Rajya professed Hinduism and Islam, while others followed their own ethnic religious believes. Hinduism was the principal religion of the rajya. All the three cults of Hindu religion i.e. Saktism, Saivism and Vaishnavism were prevalent, although the former became the prominent cult as the rajas adhered to it. Although the rajas had followed a policy of religious tolerance and made liberal grants to other religion, however, it is interesting to note that they had the intention to infuse sakta elements into the Vaishnava cult through the introduction of sakta malachis in the Biyasar Ojhapali. Thus a process of infusion and assimilation of cults had begun. Islam too flourished without any hindrance and the influence of Buddhism is also noticeable. The ethnic groups of people retained their traditional faith while showing a leaning towards Hinduism, the dominant religion. The society was marked by the co-existence of different social and religious groups with their distinct identities under the rule of the Darrangi Rajas.

Social differentiation was apparent in the kind of dola used, possession and non-possession of cows, elephants, construction of batghora or entrance shed of houses, etc. While the upper class used dola, and singhasan, the lower class people used chang or a temporary structure of bamboo for carrying dead to the crematorium. Gender discrimination and domination of men in the patriarchal society was prevalent. The Brahman widows were not allowed to take non-vegetarian food. The women and the common people were not entitled to any kind of formal education. Caste hierarchy placed both the lower caste people and women in a humiliating position.

The rajas paid attention towards the growth of education. The formal education i.e. imparting education through regular tol or school was limited to the high caste male population only. The women and common people remained outside the pale of formal education. However they received non-formal education i.e. knowledge handed down

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19 A decorated covered wooden seat which was carried on poles by two or four men and served as a form of transport for one person.
through generation to generation on different matters such as weaving, carpentry, etc. Literature made progress under their rule. The enlightened *Darrangi Rajas* also patronized literature and many outstanding scholars like Suryakhadi Daibajyan, Sagarkhadi Daibajyan, Sukabi Narayandev, Dwija Bhabananda Mishra, Govinda Mishra, Ratikanta Dwija, Pitambar Sidhanta Bagis, etc., who contributed immensely towards the enrichment of the Assamese literature adorned their courts. The participation of the members of the royal family in the literary activities is also notable.

A process of assimilation of art and culture was brought about in the *rajya*. The *Darrangi* culture was marked by the assimilation of traits from other cultures. Different kinds of traditional arts were prevalent in the *Darrangi Rajya* some of which were transformed and transmuted into new forms, which became very popular under royal patronage. As a result, art forms like *Biyasar Ojhapali*, *Suknani Ojhapali*, *Deodhani* dance, *Dhepadhulia*, *Cheradhek*, *Nangali git*, *Kalia*, *Chiya git*, *Mahau Kheda*, *Kherai* dance were popularized and practiced. The influence of the Mughals and Bhutias on the *Darrangi* culture is evident, which further enriched the *Darrangi* culture.

Traditional festivals were very popular and some also received royal patronage. The *rajas* introduced festivals like *Durga puja* which along with the *Deul utsav* gained popularity and were celebrated in the *rajya* with joy and pomp. Even the Muslims participated actively in these festivals. The *rajas* patronized the development of games and tournaments for recreation and amusement like *Tanguti* and *Dhopkhel*. During this period medical treatment for both human beings and animals made progress. It was based on the traditional knowledge system.

The abundant natural and forest resources had a great impact on the economy of the *rajya*. The sands of the rivers of the *Darrangi Rajya* contained gold-dust which was of great export value and had impact on the revenue of the *rajya*. The forests of the *rajya* had valuable trees like *agaru*, *chandan*, *sal*, *titachapa*, *sonaru*, *gamari*, *kadamba*, *kahir*, etc. Some of wood, particularly *agaru* was much in demand especially with the Mughals. Timber was used for house-building, different furniture for household needs and also used for making different kinds of boats. Bamboo was
also found in great abundance, which too was used for house-building, different kinds of fishing and hunting implements and household furniture and other implements. Different kinds of animals, big and small, like elephants, rhinos, tigers, buffaloes, bears, deer and pigs abounded in the forests. Wild elephants and buffaloes were domesticated. There was a great demand for elephants in the Mughal territory. Elephants were used both for transport and in wars. Though the horse was not indigenous to Darrang, horses from Bhutan and even from Turkistan were largely used for transport.

During the period of study the Darrangi Rajya was almost entirely dependent on agriculture. A self-sufficient village economy was the basic feature of the economy of Darrang with almost every family, high or low engaged directly or indirectly in cultivation. Paddy cultivation was the chief economic pursuit of the agricultural population. They cultivated rice, pulses, vegetables and fruits for their own consumption and mustard oil as fuel to light their saki or lamp and also for consumption, and silk or cotton for their garments. The surplus was exported.

One significant feature of Darrangi agriculture was the introduction of the art of irrigation and this was especially common in tracts inhabited by the Kacharis. The large number of ponds both old and the ones dug during the reign of the Darrangi Rajas provided minor irrigation facilities to the cultivators. It is noteworthy that the technology used in the construction of the ponds was unique and innovative. Agricultural implements like nangal, joali, mai, bindha, jabka, kodal, kanchi, etc., were crude and simple. The wood or bamboo required for these agricultural implements were locally available and made by the cultivator himself. The local Kamar or blacksmith made the iron implements, except the iron hoe, which was supplied from Khasi Hills. This indicates trade with the neighbouring states.

The cultivation of paddy was a joint effort of the men and women of the family; sometimes with hired labour. The system of sauri, bheronia or bhenia, marakia and adhi were very common. However women played a pre-eminent role in the agricultural economy. Some of the processes of the agricultural work i.e. from transplanting the seedling, husking and cooking were almost exclusively done by the women. The Darrangis raised three varieties of paddy i.e. salidhan, ahudhan, and
Mustard was another important crop extensively cultivated in the Darrangi Rajya a small portion of which was internally consumed and the surplus exported. Sugarcane was another crop of Darrang. Various kinds of pulses, spices, bay leaf (tezpat), yams, brinjal, til (sesame seeds) and vegetables too were cultivated in the family garden. Numerous fruit trees, tobacco and bhang (an intoxicant herb) were also abundant.

Another significant feature of the Darrangi self-sufficient economy was the production of several crafts. Darranga Rajvansaali and Hatibarua Vansaali mention several professional groups such as Kamar, Kumar, Barhai, Sonari, etc., in the Darrangi Rajya of the period under review. Weaving and spinning industries were primarily the forte of the women. The Darrangi Rajya was also known for its three principal varieties of silk viz. pat, muga and endi or eri. Both pat and muga became articles of export. Pottery making, iron and gold smithy were other important crafts. It is significant to note that women were largely employed in the pottery making.

Under the Darrangi Rajas the rajya grew into an important trade centre with the mountain passes (duars), the rivers and the land roads serving as the main routes of communication. Boats, animals and human carriers were the chief means of transport in those days. Trade with the outside world was chiefly transacted in the annual fairs with the barter system the primary mode of transaction. Trade with Bhutan was flourished and beneficial for the Darrangi Rajya. The rajya was linked with the world market through its production of mustard, pat and muga.

The revenue system of the Darrangi Rajya was more or less similar to that of the Ahoms which was based on the paik\textsuperscript{20} system. Revenue was realized in the form of compulsory labour, production and presents. A hearth-tax or chooro kar was also imposed. Some professional taxes were also realized. Moreover, sale-tax was imposed on some of goods, especially on cow. A change of the revenue policy of the Darrangi Rajya was brought about with its tributary status. The Darrangi Rajas had to pay tribute to the Ahom king, which was subsequently enhanced. Besides, the rajas had to

\textsuperscript{20} The whole male population between the ages of fifteen and fifty with exception of the nobles, priests and persons of high caste and their slaves were liable to render service to the state as labourers and soldiers. They were known as paik.- Edward Gait, op. cit., pp. 227-28.
offer rich presents to the Ahom kings on different occasions especially at the time of
coronation ceremony which had impact on the economy of the rajya. This led to
economic distress for the people as well as the rajas, and had serious consequences.

An interesting and unique feature of the Darrangi Rajya was that a series of protests
and revolts, led by both the rulers and the ruled, against the Ahom rulers occurred
between 1616 to 1826 A.D. With the accession of Mahendra Narayan the history of
the Darrangi Rajya enters a new phase. From this time its independent status was
slowly undermined through a series of measures, leading to a series of revolt by the
rulers. Rajas like Mohendra Narayan, Surya Narayan, Hangsa Narayan II and Krishna
Narayan revolted against the Ahom kingdom, which had some far-reaching
consequences. Besides, the liberal social and religious ethos created a strong sense of
unity which enabled the Darrangi people to protest and revolt against injustice and
exploitation. As such Darrangi Raij Mel played a significant role in the society and
politics of the time.

The royalists and nobles of the Ahom Kingdom who had taken shelter in the Darrangi
Raiya, during the Moamoria rebellion oppressed the local people. On these occasions
the gaonburhas or village heads emerged as the leader of the people. It is significant
to note that in this situation the Darrangi Raij Mel put forward the idea of non-
cooperation as a method of revolt. The Darrangis took an oath of non-cooperation
with the Ahom Government. The people’s mandate was so strong that the two rajas
complied with the decisions of the Raij Mel. Thus, the Darrangis had the power to
control their rulers. The democratic principle of “Raijei Raja” implying people’s
power, unknown in other parts of Assam is in itself a progressive idea. One significant
feature of the revolts of the Darrangi Rajas was the employment of mercenaries from
beyond its frontiers. Without a strong social base such united action would not have
been possible.

Hence the present study has been undertaken to look into the various aspects of the
society and economy under the Darrangi Rajas.
Study Area:
At the time of the installation of Bali Narayan alias Dharma Narayan (1616-1637 A.D.) as the raja of Darrang by the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.), the Darrangi Rajya was bounded on the east by the Bhareli (Bhairabi) river, on the west by the Karatowa river, on the north by the Bhutan Hills (Gamarigiri) and on the south by the Brahmaputra river (Parbatsiri). At that time the territories west of the Barnadi river was under the Mughals and did not come under the control of the Darrangi Rajas. This newly established Darrangi Rajya incorporated the five great divisions i.e. Desh Darrang, Desh Chutia, Chatguri Duar, Char Duar and Na Duar. Besides, Burhigoma Duar, Khalling or Railing Duar and Kariapara Duar were brought under their jurisdiction.

The political boundary of the rajya did not remain stable but changed from time to time. After the death of Raja Dharma Narayan in 1637 A.D. the territory west of the Bhareli river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra was ceded to the Mughals by the Treaty of Ghiladharighat (1662 A.D.) concluded between the Ahoms and the Mughals. In this way the Darrangi Rajya passed into the hands of the Mughals. However, this owner-ship was short-lived and in name only. Further the Ahom government made over the duars in the north of Darrang to Bhutan in consideration of an annual tribute. After surrendering this tract the northern boundary of the rajya was reduced and extended up to the Gohain Kamal Ali only. During the time of the Raja Aditya Narayan (1725-1732 A.D.), the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha reasserted the boundary of Darrang through a tamra patra (copper plate) as Dhansiri river in the east, Barnadi river in the west, Gohain Kamal Ali in the north and the Lohitya (Brahmaputra) river in the south. S. K. Bhuyan has rightly summed up that the jurisdiction of the Darrangi Rajas remained continually shifting in the seventeenth century. Sometimes it included the whole of Kamrup on the both banks of the Brahmaputra, and sometimes a part, and again it extended on the east as far as the river Dikrai and included the district of Char Duar, and a portion of Na Duar, which

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21 Suryakhadi Daibajyan, op. cit., verse, 789, p. 145.
23 Edward Gait, op. cit., p. 296.
lay between the rivers Bhareli on the west and Dikrai on the east. He also pointed out that the general tendency of the Ahom overlords was to reduce the extent of the Darrang territory. Hence the study area of the present work is confined to the geographical limits of the area bounded by the Barnadi river in the west, Bhareli river in the east, Bhutan Hills in the north and the Brahmaputra river in the south as illustrated in Figure 1. Chronologically, the study is limited to the period from 1616 A. D. to 1826 A. D. since this period covers the reign of the Darrangi Rajas.

An investigation into the society and economy under the Darrangi Rajas will be undertaken with the following objectives: First, to highlight the contributions of the Darrangi Rajya towards the growth of Assamese society, particularly in the cultural sphere and retrieve the contributions of women as far as possible; second, to analyse the strong influence of the village head and the Raij Mel which symbolized social unity and was a platform for social revolt and change; and lastly, to review the economy of the Darrangi Rajya, particularly as a lucrative trade centre integrated into the world export market via Bengal to Great Britain and via Bhutan to Tibet, China and Afghanistan.

A survey of literature related to the topic has shown a marked absence of any attempt to study the society and economy under the Darrangi Rajas. In the book A History of Assam, Edward Gait, while narrating the events of Assam of the medieval ages, does not pay much attention to the Darrangi Rajya. He points out the installation of Bali Narayan as the raja of Darrang in the Koch context. Moreover, only brief references are made to the affairs of Krishna Narayan and some related issues of the Darrangi Rajya.

The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, edited by H. K. Barpujari, discusses political events of Assam of the medieval period and references to Bali Narayan, his fight against the Mughals are made in the Ahom-Mughal context. The subsequent cooperation and help of the Darrangi Rajas to the Ahom kings are also referred to. Dissatisfaction of the rajas and the people against the Ahom kings are also briefly narrated.

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27 S. K. Bhuyan, op. cit. p. 259.
Figure 1: Map Showing Darrangi Rajya (1616 AD-1826 AD)
In *Medieval Assamese Society (1228-1826)*, Sarbeswar Rajguru has made an elaborate study on the medieval Assamese society. The author mainly confines his discussion to the social, economic and cultural conditions of Assam of that period. A complete picture of the society and economy under the *Darrangi Rajas* has not been discussed by him. In the discussion on political conditions, the author highlights the different ruling dynasties in different areas of Assam, but remains silent about the *Darrangi Rajas*.

*A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 AD)* by Satyendra Nath Sarma, is a comprehensive history of the social, economic and cultural scenario of medieval Assam. In this book the author observes the socio-political changes, which steadily paved the way for the evolution of a unified and dominant Hindu society in Assam. Some elements of the society, economy and culture of the *Darrangi Rajya* are referred to in the discussion. In chapter II, the author makes a stray reference to Darrang, but remains silent about the course of history of the *Darrangi Rajya*. The author only points out that with the death of Bali Narayan in an encounter with the Muslims in 1637 A.D., with which the history of the eastern Koch Kingdom practically came to end, although his descendants continued to rule as tributary rulers in Darrang till the Burmese invasion and British occupation.

The book on *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam (Society, Polity, Economy)* by Amalendu Guha, investigates the medieval Assamese society from a different angle, and the first six chapters of this volume highlighted certain peculiar aspects of feudalism, which underwent a political and moral collapse even before the British came on the scene. In his opinion, an economic crisis culminating in peasant revolts hastened this collapse, as he believes that a historical process is not determined by a mere series of accidents, nor is it determined by ideology or economic factors alone. Yet it is the predominant role of the material conditions of social life, and the class struggle within it, that underlies the dynamics of change, is how he looks at the developments in medieval Assam. In this book some information of socio-economic aspects of Darrang are incorporated.

*Darrang District Through the Ages* by Lokeswar Nath, contains the physiography, the population structure including different groups of people and their agriculture and
industries of ancient, medieval and modern times of Darrang district. The author makes a general outline of the political and social history of the Darrangi Rajas.

In *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, Lakshmi Devi, the author incorporates some information relating to the Darangi Rajya in the Koch context. The establishment of Dharma Narayan as the raja of Darrang, his fight against the Mughals, dissatisfaction of the Darrangis and the rajas against the Ahom kings, revolts of Krishna Narayan are cited.

Hence the review of literature reveals the lack of an in-depth analysis of the society and economy under the Darrangi Rajas. The present study has been undertaken to fill up this lacuna. In the recent decades the trend of writing of history has changed. The focus of writing history is not anymore on political developments, but on other economic, social and cultural aspects. More particularly, attention has been diverted to the common masses, the peasantry, etc., rather than the kings and the noble class. Historians have chiefly dealt with the political events of the Darrangi Rajya in the context of Ahom affairs, the society and economy is yet to be explored, which reveals the different aspects of the common people who are the real makers of history. They brought a change and transformation in the society and economy and an assimilation of cultures which could establish unity and integrity among the people of the rajya. Undoubtedly, this project is a part of the endeavour to unearth the significance of the social values shaping a state. The society and economy of the Darrangi Rajya is an interesting field for investigation and research.

The present work is based on the following hypotheses: First, the existence of a self-sufficient village economy and a lucrative trade under the Darrangi Rajas brought about a strong social base; Second, the strong social base enabled the people of the Darrangi Rajya to revolt against injustice and exploitation of the Ahom rulers. The methodology for the present work is based on a critical use of sources, both primary and secondary. Objectivity would be maintained and an analytical and gender-sensitive approach would be adopted.

For a systematic study, the thesis has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, defines the geographical boundary of the state, discusses the
independent status of the *Darrangi Rajas*, nomenclature of Darrang and introduces the objectives, survey of literature, rationale, source, hypotheses, methodology, etc. of the research work.

The second chapter titled: **Social and Cultural Transformation** deals with social structure and the socio-cultural changes in the society during the *Darrangi Phaid*. In this chapter an attempt has been made to discuss the social divisions, social stratification, status differentiation, gender discrimination, sanskritization, upward and downward mobility, religious orientation and cultural assimilation. It also includes development in the fields of medicine, medical treatment, education, literature and art and culture.

The third chapter, **Technology, Agriculture, Industry and Trade**, is an account of the economic activities of the people. Agriculture was the chief economic pursuit of the people of the area and all its different aspects are touched upon. An attempt has been made to look into the technological developments and innovations in the period. Light is also shed on the progress and development of the various crafts and industries of the time. In this chapter the trade-related activities of the people and development of internal and external trade are looked into. The trade with Bengal and Bhutan was lucrative, the abundance of natural resources, the extensive network of roads and other modes of communication are all dealt with here.

The fourth chapter on **Rajas, Raij Mel and Revolts** discusses how political and economic pressure under the Ahoms led to a series of protests and revolts by both the *rajas* and the people. It discusses the strong protest demonstrations against the revenue settlement of the people under the banner of *Raij Mel* and effectiveness of the method of non-cooperation against Ahom exploitation. The role of the *gaonburha* or village head in the protests and revolts is sought to be highlighted. It also sheds light on the revolts of *Raja* Mahendra Narayan, Surya Narayan, Hangsa Narayan II and Krishna Narayan. The revolt of Krishna Narayan shows the use of outside mercenaries.

The final and fifth chapter includes the **Conclusion**. It consists of the summary and concluding remarks of the preceding chapters. The *Darrangi Phaid* witnessed great
changes and developments in the society and economy of the rajya. The society of the Darrangi Rajya was a Hindu dominated society where the Muslim and ethnic groups coexisted and maintained their distinct identities. Although the society was rigid and stratified, social unity was maintained. Gender differentiation and patriarchal domination was prominent. Religious tolerance was the guiding principle of the rajas. The growth and development of literature enriched the Assamese literature. Significant developments were made in the spheres of art and cultural. The economy of the Darrangi Rajya was a self-sufficient village economy in which both men and women made important contributions. Agriculture formed the backbone of the economy of the rajya and people also took up various crafts and industries to supplement agricultural income. The state was linked to the world market through markets. The people were overburdened by the tribute payable to the Ahom king. The political and economic exploitation by the Ahom kings made the people and the rajas rise in rebellion against the Ahom king, and eventually lost their power and prestige with the onslaught of the Burmese invasions and the coming of the British.