CHAPTER III

FACTORS FOR CHANGES

( A )

NEW ADMINISTRATION

The British administration in Assam started soon after the entry of British army in March, 1824, when Des Kamrup comprising of 26 parganas came under their occupation. With the gradual advance of the British by repulsing the Burmese troops, the whole of Assam came under their administration by the middle of 1825. The Treaty of Yandabo (1826), which closed the first Anglo-Burmese War brought no change in the administration of Assam. David Scott, who was appointed as the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier in November,
1823, took over the charge of the civil administration of Assam under the jurisdiction of the Government of Bengal. But soon he was over-burdened with his administrative duties in his capacity as the Political Agent to deal with the neighbouring chiefs like Sadiya Khowa Gohain of Sadiya and Bar-Senapati of Mattak and other chiefs. These led to the creation of the post of Junior Commissioner, and Col. Richard was appointed as the first Junior Commissioner with headquarter at Rangpur. In 1827, Adam White was appointed to assist David Scott in the administration of Lower Assam. In the next year, Captain Neufville was posted as the Political Agent in Upper Assam after Col. Cooper and the post of Junior Commissioner was abolished.

1 H.K. Barpajar, Assam In the Days of the Company, (1826-1858), Gauhati, 1984, pp. 32-33
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. 36-37.
As it was not possible for David Scott to perform his multifarious duties with inadequate staff of assistants in ordinary criminal and civil affairs he began to take the help of the local gentry and formed councils known as panchayat. The Commissioner's Assistants in both Upper and Lower Assam had to try all the serious cases with the help of the Panchayat, but for the final judgement the case should be referred to the Commissioner with their opinions. In revenue administration, the districts were divided into mauzas or mahals and the revenue of those divisions were to be collected by the mauzadars, bishaya, choudhuri with the assistance of kakati or patgiri.

David Scott was in favour of administering the land with the help of the local people. For this purpose he appointed some of the officials of the former Government in the Offices and courts but as they were not accustomed to and acquainted with the new British

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4. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
5. Ibid.
administration and were ignorant of the English language, they soon proved themselves incompetent. This had compelled the government to change their policy and to fill up all the posts with the duly qualified persons recruited from outside of Assam, specially from Bengal.

In 1835, Act was passed which placed all functionaries in British Assam under the control and superintendence, in civil and criminal cases, of the Sadar Court and in revenue cases under that of the Revenue Board in Lower Assam. The Act also declared that their management should be exercised in accordance with the instructions forwarded from the Government of the Fort William in Bengal. 6

In April, 1832, T.C. Robertson, "a man of untiring zeal approved talents and of high moral character,"7 assumed the Office of the Commissioner and Agent to the

6 Ibid., p. 299; An Account of the Province of Assam and Its Administration, 1903, par. 75, p. 59.
7 H.K. Barpajari, loc. cit., p. 68.
Governor - General, North-East Frontier, soon realised that "grave injustice had already been done to this much neglected province by reposing its responsibilities entirely in a single solitary functionary - the Agent to the Governor-General, North East Frontier over-burdened as he was with multifarious duties." Robertson was successful in convincing the Supreme Government for an administrative re-organisation in Assam. Accordingly the territories on the west of the river Dhansiri were divided into 5 district -

1. North-East Bengal or Goalpara.

2. Six-parganas, roughly the present subdivision of Barpeta, including Nagarbera.

3. Lower Assam with twenty parganas, mostly on the north and the nine duars on the south.

4. Central Assam comprising Naduar, Charduar and Darrang.

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8 Ibid., pp.73-74.
on the north, Nowgang and Raha on the south of the river Brahmaputra.

5. Biauanath from the river Bharali to Biswanath on the north together with territory extending from Kaliabor to the river Ohansiri.\(^9\)

Each district was placed under an officer designated as the Principal Assistant to the Commissioner who was to act as Judge, Magistrate and Collector. A post of Junior Assistant was also created to help the Principal Assistant Commissioner.\(^10\)

In 1853 the Brahmaputra Valley was administered by the Commissioner who was assisted by a Deputy Commissioner and a Principal Assistant in charge of each district, three Junior Assistants and eight Sub-Assistant.\(^11\) In 1861 a change was brought in the designation of the

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\(^9\) Ibid., p. 75.

\(^10\) Ibid.

officers serving under the Commissioner; the Deputy Commissioner was now Judicial Commissioner; the Principal Assistant as Deputy Commissioner; the Junior Assistant became the Assistant Commissioner; and the Sub-Assistant was designated as Extra-Assistant Commissioner. In 1872 the separate establishments of Sadar Amins and Munsifs were abolished and some of those officers were appointed as Extra-Assistant Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner became the Sub-Judge and the Assistant and Extra-Commissioners were entrusted with the power of a Munsif.

In 1874 an important change was made in the administration of Assam when on 6th February by two separate proclamations, the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgang, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, the Khasi, Naga, Garo Hills and the district of Cachar and Sylhet were separated

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
from the Government of Bengal and was formed a new province under a Chief Commissioner with Lt.Col.R.N. Keatinge as the first Chief Commissioner.\textsuperscript{14}

With the establishment of the British rule, new districts and sub-divisions were created with their headquarters at Dibrugarh, Mangaldaai, Barpeta, Goalpara, Silchar, Karimganj, Nowgong, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Dhubri etc. These headquarters, for their own necessity, provided with facilities of drainage, water supply, Hospital, Educational institutions, good communication and new type of buildings. The people from different parts of the province and also of India began to gather in those headquarters as Government officials, traders, school masters. In this way those headquarters were transformed into towns and potential urban centres. In 1872, the number of towns in Assam was only 4,

\textsuperscript{14} An Account of the Province of Assam and Its Administration, 1903, par. 104, p. 84.
In 1881 the number was 5 after ten years one more was included and in 1901 the number of the towns in Assam rose to 12. In 1901 out of twelve town 4 towns were with a population of less than 5,000, six towns with a population of 5,000 to 9,000 and two with more than 10,000 population. None of these towns fell into the category of I, II, III class. The urban population in Assam was very small being only 1.8% of the total population in 1891. After ten years in 1901 the increased of the number was also not so large. It was 2.9% including Manipur and only 1.9% excluding Manipur. The reasons behind this small urban population were that there was no large industries to encourage the growth of towns and the main occupation of the vast majority of the people was agriculture, having their own land. So

17 Ibid., p. 5.
18 Census Report, 1901, par. 15, p. 6.
most of the towns that developed were district headquarters or of sub-divisional headquarters which were dependent mainly on officials and traders for their existence. Sylhet was the largest town in the province, but due to the lack of any scope of business the town was in a decaying condition and its population was decreasing gradually. In 1881 the population was 14,407, and in 1901 it came down to 13,893 souls.\textsuperscript{18} Gauhati, the most ancient town in the province, had a population of 14,244 in 1901, while Dibrugarh, which was little more than a village having a population of 2,774 in 1872, became the most important town in the province due to the development of tea industry and the scope of trade and commerce, having a population of 11,227 in 1901.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Census Report, 1901, par. 16, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pars. 17, 18, pp. 6-7.
New Revenue System:

On the British entry into Assam

David Scott, the first Agent to the Governor-General in North-East Frontier, made arrangement for the revenue and judicial administration of the occupied territory. The old khel system was retained but abolished the paik system i.e. the rendering of personal services or supply of kinds. In Upper Assam Jaduram Barbarua was placed in charge of the revenue department and he was to be helped by Hazarikas, Saikias, and Boras of the old khels. Instead of a poll-tax of rupees three was collected from each paik annually. In Lower Assam revenue department was placed under a Sheristadar, assisted by some subordinate officials like pashkar, treasure, rebuker, mostly required from Bengal. In Lower Assam and

20 H.K. Barpujari, Assam in the Days of the Company, p. 27.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 28.
Central Assam (Darrang, Nowgang, Raha) a rupees of two known as gādhan was imposed on the paiks as they were holding two puras of land. In addition to this they also had to pay the poll-tax, which in Kamrup known as kharikātana and in Nowgang as capitation tax. The amount of the poll-tax varied from place to place. In Kamrup it was levied on the number of ploughs and per plough one rupee was collected, similarly in Darrang it was collected on the number of mass-pots in the household, varying from rupee one to annas 8. Besides, the rent-free devottar, brahmottar, and dharmattar land of the Ahom age were also brought under assessment. In both the division of Upper and Lower Assam a professional tax was imposed on braziers, gold-washers, fisherman, etc. and duties on

23 Ibid., p. 30.
24 Ibid.; John McCos, Topography of Assam, p. 123.
hats, ghats, and fisheries were levied like the previous rulers. As the revenue were accepted not in articles, but in cash, the people of Assam who were accustomed to pay the tax not in cash but in kind or personal service, now were in great trouble. They produced all their requirements in their own land and very few, that were not produced locally, collected from the neighbourhood in barter system. So they had nothing to do with money. Apart from this, the lack of trade and industry and profitable market, the money circulation in the province was not so sufficiently increased. Besides, people of Assam could not yet forget the dreadful remembrance of the Burmese atrocities. So when the British Government levied taxes on them and collected not in kind for personal service, they became anxious and so to avoid it they took shelter in the jungles or in the neighbouring Hills where the taxation was absent or very nominal. The people instead of finding the British Government a power who

26 Ibid.
would protect them with enjoyment of their hearths and homes, have fled by hundreds in all directions not only to the neighbouring zamindaris of Bengal but what is more painful to contemplate, to the lawless reasons of Bhutan.

In spite of all these difficulties no change was made in the revenue system in Lower Assam till 1833 and in Upper Assam till 1838. In 1836-37 poll-tax was abolished in Nowgong and Darrang and in 1838-39 it was withdrawn from Kamrup.

In Upper Assam the Khel system was abolished in 1838 and the revenue was fixed in 1839-40 on the cultivated land at the rate of one rupee per pura of rupit land and eight annas for all other lands. In 1854 the land was classified into three categories - 1. basti or bari (homestead land); 2 rupit or low rice land; 3 faringati or high lands. The tax assessed on those three categories

28 Revenue Administration of Assam, 1849-50, p.67.
of land was not uniform in each district. It was highest in the district of Kamrup - six annas per bigha for rupit and four annas for all other lands. These rate of revenue was re-assessed in 1867. On the other hand the Government also began to impose taxes on fishery, jalkar in the rivers and beels, timbers, reeds, grazings. The stamp act was also introduced in 1885. To check the habits of eating the opium of the people of Assam, the Government in 1860 hand the cultivation of Opium in the province and introduced the excise opium at a high price which caused a severe reaction on the people who had been edicted to eat for a long period. So this prohibitory order on opium along with the burden of taxation, created dissatisfaction specially among the agriculturists who were the worst sufferer of such innovation which was found expression in the

29 Land Revenue Manual.
30 H.K.Barpujari op.cit.,p.228.
31 Ibid.
Phulguri uprisings in the later part of the year 1861.

The village Phulguri was situated at a distance of
10 miles from the Sadar station, Nowgong and was inhabited
by the Lalung tribe. Similar protest was also raised
against the assessment of revenue again in 1893 in
Rangiya, Lachima and Patharughat in Mangaldoi Sub-division.

To give protection to the ryots against the exortion
of tax collectors, the Government revenue officers had to
furnish returns on showing the names of each ryot, the
quality and quantity of the land they hold and the number
of the hearths and home they possessed. After a careful
scrutiny on the basis of the statement furnish, settlements
were made directly with the ryots and pattas were issued
to them. Thus for the first time each ryot got the right

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33 H.P., 1894, April, Nos. 110-31; 30th January, 1894, from
District Commissioner Darrang to the Commissioner
Assam Valley Districts.
on the landed property as their under the British
Government. In the word of Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan -

"Every ryot in Assam is the absolute master
of his own lands from which he is never
liable to be ousted until he relinquishes
it out of his own free will. His liabilities
too are ascertained under the immediate
superintendence of the Public Revenue Authorities
and clearly laid down in the pattas issued to
his under the seal and signature of the
collectors, so that any attempt to exaction is
easily detected and retained."34

The revenue system that was introduced by the new
regime had greatly affected the age-old social life of
Assam. The abolition of the paiK system not only a great
loss of the free service of the paiks that were so long

   Appendix -3, p.97.
enjoying by the royal aristocracy of the Ahom age but also caused great troubles to the people of this section of the society and also degraded them from their high status and position. The granting of Pattas to all and the collection of taxes through the Officials of the new Government who were employed irrespective of class and creed from all section of people having due qualification, practically reduced all classes of citizen to the same status. The land holder aristocracy of the pre-British period, being deprived of their slaves and free service of the paiks could no longer manage their estates and this compelled them either to sale or to surrender it to the Government. Though this system helped in extinguishing the division of the society according to the birth and rank of the Ahom age and in establishing a classless less society it degraded the upper class of the previous regime into a deplorable stage. "Those whose ancestors never lived by digging, ploughing or carrying burden are now reduced to such a degrading
employments; while those even who are Mauzadars, or employed by government, or receive pensions, are reduced to such deep distress that they will be soon compelled to follow the above occupations; and if any one of them should happen at present to fall into any difficulty, he should find it impossible to get the loan of a single Rupee, even if he should give a bit of his own flesh in exchange. 35 The new system was a great benefit for the common class who had to suffer due to the class restrictions of the Ahom age, but it was perhaps too advanced than the time in Assam and as a result it could not satisfy the people. The Ahom aristocracy, who considered this as a policy of degrading their position and status, being dissatisfied, turned against the new government.

During the Sapoy Mutiny a section of this dissatisfied group also took the advantage and conspired against the government, in which Maniram Dewan took the leading part.

Introduction of medical facilities:

The humid climate, heavy rainfall, proximity of dense wooded marshy jungle, boggy land and marshes and the existence of greater number of old uncleaned tanks, lack of good drainage system and unhygienic condition, all these made Assam the very hotbed of the germs of diseases. The prevailing diseases were fever, marsh-fever (malaria), bowel complaints, rheumatism, enlargement of the spleen, goitre, leprosy, elephantiasis of the leg, pulmonic affections, cholera, small-pox, verminous, diseases, venereal and cutaneous complaints and dysentery. 36

36 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 22
The new government turned its attention to improve the sanitary condition of the land and at the same time took some preventive measures by introducing vaccination, establishing dispensaries and thus giving the scope to avail the benefit of the modern medical science to the people of Assam.

Before the coming of the English and the Christian Missionaries, the people of Assam had no idea about the modern medical science. There were some Baidyas who made treatment of the diseased person applying some herbs and shrubs. But as they generally lived in the town areas, the common people could not get the benefit of their treatment. The people of Assam believed that the illness of a man caused due to the dissatisfaction of some evil spirits, so to cure the sick man

they depended on the incantations, and sacrifices to satisfy the evil spirit. 38

After the establishment of their authority, the British government established dispensaries in each sadar station under the charge of a medical officer and to help him an apothecary and some natives were also appointed. 39

Sometimes at the initial stage, medical centre was running with the help of an apothecary, sometimes visited by the medical officer of other station. 40 So the medical department in Assam, till the middle of the nineteenth century could do little progress nor it could make the natives interested, except few educated group, about the benefit of the modern medicine. As Anandaram Dhekial

39 John M'Cosh, Topography of Assam, p. 91.
40 Ibid., pp. 94–95.
Phukan in his 'Observations on the Administration of the
of Assam' in 1853 commented - "A most perfect
knowledge of the science of medicine has contributed
materially to augment mortality in Assam. Since the
last few years the ravages of sickness and specially of
cholera, have been so great that the annual deaths in
some localities are supposed to have exceeded twenty
per cent." He also pointed out that the ignorance of
the people about serious effect of the most malignant
diseases and their confidence on sorcery, sacrifices and
the influence of the priests stood in the way of making
the modern medical science popular among the natives of
Assam. So Anandaram Dhekial Phukan requested the
government to take some arrangement for the training to
impair knowledge of medical science to the people. He

thought that the "establishment of a couple of medical schools in the country will confer on the population the full benefit of the European science of medicine."\(^{42}\) He also suggested that, "instructions given in the vernacular language will enable the youth to acquire a knowledge of the science with speed and facility; and intelligent young men from all parts of the country will resort to these schools on express motives of realising a future livelihood."\(^{43}\)

In 1875 in Kamrup district two dispensaries existed one at Gauhati and other at Barpeta. Charitable dispensary, one at Tezpur in Darrang district and at Nowgang in Nowgam district, existed. Health centre of the

\(^{42}\) Ibid.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
same category also existed at Sibsagar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, and North Lakhimpur in 1875. The following table will show the number of the indoor and outdoor patients treated in those dispensaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensary at</th>
<th>indoor patient</th>
<th>outdoor patient</th>
<th>total patient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauhati &amp; Barpeta</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>1,359</td>
<td>1,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tezpur</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>3,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgang</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>1,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>3,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>1,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>875</td>
<td>10,669</td>
<td>11,544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1883-84 there were 29 medical centres in the

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45 Ibid.
province of which 4 were supported by the government, 2 managed by the Missionaries having a small grant received from the government and the remaining 23 were under the Local Boards. After ten years in 1894-95 the number of the dispensaries increased to 93, within ten years 64 more health centres were established in the province. Of those 93 dispensaries 7 belonged to the category of 1st class, 85 2nd class and only one belonged to the 3rd class. In 1900 the number of the dispensaries rose to 128 of which 19 belonged to 1st class, 102 2nd class, and one 3rd class and six were private.

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48 Ibid., 1900, p. 1.
In 1883, total indoor patients were 3,294 of which 887 were Assamese and the remaining 2,407 were foreigners.\footnote{Ibid. 1884-85, par. 519, p. 173.} In 1886 after three years the number of the indoor patients treated rose to 3,664 of which the number of the foreigner was 2,266 and the natives 1,398.\footnote{Ibid. 1886-87, sec. III, p. 153.} The people treated as outdoor patients were 1,03,571 in 1884, 1,31,058 in 1885 and 1,52,731 in 1886. So in those three years the gross daily average under treatment rose from 968.4 to 1,065.72, which indicated that the people were gradually accepting the modern medicine and treatment.\footnote{Ibid.}

In 1894, 5,575 indoor and 4,98,409 outdoor, total 5,03,984 patients were treated in the 93 dispensaries of which the number of the men was 3,20,193, women 64,207 and children 1,19,584.\footnote{Ibid. 1886-87, sec. III, p. 153.} In 1900 the number
of the indoor patients treated were 6,369 and outdoor
patients were 69,624. So total 7,02,590 persons were
treated in 128 dispensaries in the province of which the
number of the men were 4,45,644, women 86,861 and
children male 93,660, female 56,824.53

The increase of both the indoor and outdoor
patients and also of dispensaries indicated that the
attempts of the government to give the modern medical
facilities to the people of the province were gradually
accepted by the people of Assam. Discarding their age-
old beliefs and superstitions they were marching
towards a new age.

The government introduced the vaccination
among the people as preventive measure against small-pox.

53 A.D.R., 1900, pp.1-2.
In this field the popular prejudice produced some obstructions and the Gossains of some of the Satras were against it. They even did not hesitate to fine their disciples who were inoculated. Sometimes physical torture was also made on them. In spite of all those oppositions, the government introduced the Compulsory Vaccination Act in Gauhati, Sylhet and Dibrugarh Municipal areas in 1882-83. The number of operations rose from 45,246 in 1881 to 57,839 in 1882-83, and in the next year it increased to 88,693. The following table will give a comparative statistics of the success of the vaccination operations in the province district-wise in 1881-82, 1882-83 and 1883-84.

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54 Report on the Vaccination in Assam, 1883-84, par. 64, p. 13; 1884-85, par. 18, pp. 6-7.
55 Ibid.; Ibid.
56 Ibid., Table No. II, p. 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total No. of Vaccination</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>1882-83</td>
<td>1883-84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Khasi Hills</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>3169</td>
<td>2432</td>
<td>7263</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>5890</td>
<td>6940</td>
<td>14477</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>11966</td>
<td>6687</td>
<td>8788</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6279</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgang</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>2548</td>
<td>5194</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>5391</td>
<td>3155</td>
<td>3606</td>
<td>5847</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2236</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>2113</td>
<td>3087</td>
<td>5398</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>16199</td>
<td>23241</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>3302</td>
<td>4692</td>
<td>5073</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Garden (by tea garden Agency)</td>
<td>4937</td>
<td>2243</td>
<td>10336</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2694</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makum, Naga Hills</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45246</td>
<td>57839</td>
<td>88693</td>
<td>25367</td>
<td>12774</td>
<td>12593</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So in 1881-82 to 1883-84 there was an increase of 12,593 cases of inoculation in the province. This indicated that the popular prejudices against the form of protection was gradually waning away. Even the attitude of the Gossains was also gradually changing. In 1882-83 the Vaccination report disclosed that at the request of the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgang District, the Dihingia Gossain in a letter, addressing the Deputy Commissioner, withdrew his prohibition on the vaccination.57

In 1890-91, the number of persons vaccinated were 1,87,110 and in 1899-1900 the number increased to 2,72,265.58

In their programme of vaccinating the people, the Government employed some local people by giving them

57 Ibid., 1882-83, par.14, p.9.
58 Ibid., 1891-92, p.2; 1899-1900, p.3.
necessary training. Generally the government employed the local people as vaccinator on the realisation that they could influence the others to overcome the prejudices and accept it.  

The government also took some steps to keep the tanks and streets and the area, inhabited by the people, clean. "The large tank from which much of the water supply is derived, are kept scrupulously clean. Polluting the tanks in any way is punishable by a byelaw. The streets are cleaned, the surface drains open and free from obstructions and the inhabitants, both European and native, are obliged to attend to the conservancy of the grounds about their houses." But instead of this, the sanitation of the land was not so satisfactory till 1875, specially in those areas inhabited not by the Europeans.


and as W.W. Hunter in his account wrote, "Sanitary state of the quarter inhabited by the Europeans is good but little or no sanitation is paid to conservancy by the natives." About the district of Sibsagar, he commented, "No sanitary or municipal committee exists in Sibsagar. The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for the conservancy arrangements of the district and these the Civil Surgeon states are carried out as far as local circumstances and the means at his disposal render desirable or practicable. European inhabited areas of civil station is healthy and its conservancy arrangements are good and effective. The sanitary condition of the district in general, however, is said to be exceedingly bad." 62

61 Ibid., p. 219.
62 Ibid., pp. 285-86.
The formation of Municipality Board opened a new chapter in the improvement of the sanitation of different towns. As early as 1836 a Town Improvement Committee existed in Gauhati which was running with the government grants. In 1878 Gauhati was formed into a first class municipality. Dibrugarh municipality was constituted in 1876. In 1886-87 the number of the municipal bodies was 14, of which only Gauhati was belonged to the first class municipality, Dhubri, Goalpara, Dibrugarh, Sylhet and Barpeta belonged to the second class and Silchar, Sibsagar and Shillong constituted the three stations and Jorhat, Habiganj, Golaghat, Balaganj and Sunamganj formed the unions. In 1893-94, Sylhet and

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63 N.N. Bhattacharjya, Monopoly of the Towns of Assam with Special Reference to the City of Gauhati, p. 37.

64 Ibid., p. 17.

65 Ibid., p. 17.
Dibrugarh the two towns were raised to the first class municipality and Silchar was included in to the second class municipal board. In this way gradually almost all the towns and district headquarters were brought under the municipal corporation, who had to look after, along with other things, the sanitation of their locality. The municipal board undertook the drainage project of its area, the scheme of supplying pure water.

The drainage scheme at Gauhati was taken up at the end of the cold season. In 1882 the total cost of sanitary works in the province was £ 56567 and in the next year 1883 it was increased to £ 83483. The main work carried out during 1883 was the water

67 Progress Report, Public Works Department, 1875-76, p. 37.
68 A.R.A. 1883-84, sec. 5, par. 526, p. 175.
supply for Shillong which costed Rs 15,000. Besides, the scheme of drainage work in Goalpara was completed which brought a great improvement in the sanitary condition of this once water-logged town.\(^{69}\) In 1888-89 the expenditure on this ground in municipalities of the province was Rs 79,476 which was raised to Rs 98,681 in 1889. The amount was used for disposal of deads, development and construction of markets and slaughter houses and also for the supply of water in Dhubri, Goalpara by filling with galvanised iron pumps on wells and tanks.\(^{70}\) In this way the government gave full attention on the sanitation in urban areas, but the sanitation of rural areas, even in the beginning of the

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 1888-89, sec. 5, par. 406, p. 150.
twentieth century, was in a condition of far from satisfactory. As to quote B.C. Allen and others—"There are no conservancy arrangements, and the water supply is usually drawn from sluggish rivers and the tanks explored to every form of pollution, or from shallow wells."

In 1896 a sanitary inspection book was maintained in 110 villages but it also could produce little fruits. 72 The government constructed a considerable number of masonry wells in some villages but as in the words of B.C. Allen, "unfortunately the Assames often declined to use them."

71 Gazeteer of Bengal and North-East India, B.C. Allen and others, Delhi, Reprint 1979, p. 123
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
Judicial Administration:

At the beginning of the British administration, David Scott, Agent to the Governor General, North-East India along with other administrative duties, was entrusted with the judicial administration of the newly conquered territories, who tried to administer with the help of the local people, and Panchayats. In Upper Assam, for the trial of civil cases, Lambodhar Barphukan was appointed in May 1825, who had to try the cases along with the Barbarua of the Revenue department. To decide the minor cases some panchayats were constituted. Criminal cases were tried by the Junior Commissioner with final recommendation of the Political Agent.

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74 H.K.Barpujari, Assam.: In the days of the Company, p. 30
75 Ibid., p. 31
In Lower Assam, the senior Commissioner tried the civil cases of all types. But in case of criminal offence he could not give the sentence of death. 76

For the quick disposal of the civil and petty criminal cases, Scott set up three native courts. The first was constituted with a Rajkhowa and three assessors, the second court was consisted of one Barphukan and three assessors. This court could decide the civil cases and gave the verdict not exceeding Rs 1000. It also had to hear appeals from the lower courts. The third court was formed to decide the criminal of minor importance and appeals from the Rajas, the Choudhurie and other revenue officials who were also entrusted with some judicial functions in their respective jurisdictions. 77 Scott also set up some

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., p. 32
In 1834 Robertson, the then Commissioner of Assam, made some modification on the administration of justice in Assam. In civil cases the Principal Assistant was vested with the powers to give the verdict on original suits from Rs 500 to Rs 1000 and also to hear the appeals from the Lower Courts. All other cases above rupees one thousand and appeals on the judgement of the Principal Agent were to be referred to the Commissioner.

In criminal cases the Principal Assistant had the same authority as the Magistrate of Bengal. He also had the power to investigate the capital cases with the aid of Jury. In each district there existed two other courts.

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78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
80 Ibid., p. 78
the Sadar Munsiffs Court and the Munsiffs Panchavat. The former vested with the power to try original suits from rupees one hundred to five hundred and the later to decide the minor cases upto rupees one hundred only. The Mofussil Panchayats were abolished and the cases so long tried by this tribunals and by the revenue officials were to be tried by the Panchayats at Gauhati and Munsiffs court at Biswanath, Charduar and Nawduar and Nowgang.

In 1834 another modification was made in the judicial administration. Now the Principal Assistant was given the original jurisdiction of an unlimited extent. All appeals from his court lay with the Commissioner and in special cases with the Sadar Court. He also had the power to transfer cases to the

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
subordinate courts and also to withdraw any case from this tribunals and try them personally or to refer to some other courts. Criminal cases were as usual tried by the Principal Assistant without or with the help of juri and if any disagreement arose, the proceedings with the comment of the Principal Assistant were forwarded to the Deputy Commissioner for final decision. All sentences of imprisonment for life, sentences of death and punishment for offences against state were required to be confirmed by the Sadar Court, which was the highest Court of Justice. The Junior Assistant enjoyed the
same power like that of a Deputy Magistrate in Bengal. But the Sub-Assistant, Sadar Amins and Punsiffs were vested with a limited jurisdiction both in civil and criminal cases.

The European judicial officers, by their justice, uprightness impartiality than the generality of the Native had given more satisfaction to the people than the generality of the Native Judges. As they had to follow a uniform code of laws, which made no distinction between the high and low, rich and poor, they could not give their verdict arbitrarily. The Principal Assistant and other high Judicial officer had to examine the witness personally particularly in criminal cases, but as they were overburdened with their multifarious duties and cases, they failed to

87 Ibid.  
complete the recording of the evidence and which was usually fell on the Amlahs who were not duly Qualified for the purpose. Consequently, "in ninety cases out of a hundred, the Mohurir is paid by the party at whose instance the witnesses are summoned,... In no instance has the examination of witness by the mohuris admitted of such injury as in criminal cases. The evidence for the prosecution is, generally, taken without the presence of the defendant or before he is summoned, and there is nobody to watch the examination. The mohurir puts down whatever he thinks best conducive to the interest of the party who buys him over to his side."

Besides, long distance of the Sadar stations from the interior places of the districts created great troubles for poor ryots to seek the justice. If he took

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89 Ibid., pp. 123-24

90 Ibid.
the troubles of journey of two or three days, carrying all his requirements including rice and other victuals, it might take long time to complete the hearing of the case. Consequently, very often they had to return home, leaving their cases behind them to take their destined course. 91

The Munsiffs and the Mofusal Panchayats, inspite of their dissolution in the early years of administrati . , confusion, continued to decide cases with their limited powers, in several distri.ts, But they also could not redress the grievances of the ryot by giving proper verdict because: most of the functionaries of those tribunals were of " inferior ability, and seem to have been selected some on account of their respectibility of character, others from political motive more than on account of their sagacity." 92

91 Ibid., pp. 116-17.
92 Ibid., p. 38.
to protect the lives and properties by maintaining the law and order in the interior, the police out-post, thana, were established under the charge of a thanadar or daraga. He was empowered to arrest the suspected persons, to detain them and even to hold preliminary trials before sending them to the headquarters. He had to performed his duty with the help of a jamadar and few constables. The Choudhuris, the Patgiris, and the Mejadars were to assist the daraga in the detection and apprehension of criminals. A thana with its few establishment have to maintain law and order over a vast area of not less than 81 km, full of jungles and marshes having no good communication system. This made the rural police utterly ineffective.

The coming of the British and the introduction of the new system in all the departments of the administration brought a remarkable change in the six hundred years old administration of the Ahoms. The new regime brought the whole of this eastern region under the banner of one flag and introduced the same rules and regulations throughout the region which gradually created a sense of oneness among the mind of the people of Assam.

At the initial stage the new government tried to administer the land with the help of the officials of the Ahom regime. But soon they proved themselves inefficient for the new system as they were ignorant of the English language and also of the British system. This compelled the government to change its policy and to recruit all the officials from outside of Assam specially from Bengal who were duly qualified for the job.
Under the Ahôme, the appointment in some posts were reserved for some families and for which no educational qualifications were required, except the family tradition. The British government liberated all the posts from the hands of a particular class and opened for all having the due qualifications. This encouraged all the section of the people of the society to get the light of education, and in the schools the boys belonging to all sections from lowest to the highest were found getting their instructions sitting side by side, leaving aside their old prejudices of the caste and class system.

In this way education was no longer remained within the authority of a particular caste or class in the society.

The class distinctions that existed under the old regime also got a great shock under the British rule. The restrictions that were imposed on wearing dress, taking of umbrella, travelling on palanquin and elephant, and also in taking seat according to the status and position of a person were no longer existed under the
new government. The granting of patta to all not simply
granted the personal right on lands, but also left some
effects on its society. Now the people belonging to
lowest ebb of the society became the owner of the land.
Besides, the abolition of slavery and the paik system
also greatly affected the traditional Assamese society.
The men of rank, who were so long enjoying all the
privileges and facilities generation to generation
now suddenly came down to the same level with all
those who had been till recently their subordinates.
In this way the class restrictions of the last reign
smashed away under the new regime.

But this levelling policy of the British
Government was too early for the time to be obliterated
for a country like Assam where distinction according to
birth and rank was very deeply ingrained. Consequently,
it created some dissatisfaction specially among these
* whose ancestors never lived by digging, ploughing or
carrying burdens are now reduced to such degrading employments." As Maniram Dewan, who once welcomed the advent of the English in this way -

The Sarkar Bahadur having vanquished the Burmese occupied the Killa (fort) of Rangpur, and brought the whole country of Assam under their subjection. As the reward of this pious action in rescuing the people of Assam from the sea of Burmese troubles, may God continue their uninterrupted and undiminished sovereignty till the end of Kalpa (i.e., 4,4,320,000,000 years) and make them as vigorous and powerful as the Lord of Amarawati (i.e., Indra) and everglorious like the Priyavrata Raja (a mythical king).  

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The Upper and middle classes have seen those officers ... their loguas and lickaras taken away, male and female slave set free ... exemption and prescriptive rights that had lasted for 600 years removed, the fame and honour of respectable people destroyed, and by making them pay revenue like other poor people they have been reduced to the greatest distress. So a group of aristocracy of the Ahom age could not reconcile themselves with the British Government. They thought as reflected in the words of Maniram Dewan, 'We are just as it were in the valley of a tiger; and if out misfortune yielded any advantage to the Government, we should be content; but the fact is, there is neither gain to the people not the Government; and so long as the present state of things continues, we see no prospect of

improvement in future.*' The grievances of this section found expression in 1857 when the Sepoy Mutiny broke out in India and Maniram Dewan, along with some others, also conspired though fruitlessly, to overthrow the British authority from Assam.

SPREAD OF EDUCATION

The civil wars and the Burmese invasion had greatly disrupted the existing system of education in Assam and at the British occupation the number of educated people was very few Captain John Butler from Nowgong reported.

"In 1838 perhaps thirty educated individuals could not be found in this district." ¹ This position prevailed throughout the region. The reason behind this situation was that the education in pre-British Assam was restricted to some particulars class and classes like the Brahmin. The traditional tols and pathaselas were deplorable state.

David scott, the first Agent to the Governor-General in the North East frontier, realised the need of

imparting education to the local people for appointment in the offices. He wanted to make the local people as piller for buttressing British rule in Assam. In October, 1828 with the approval of the Government of India, he established eleven Schools mostly in Lower Assam. One each in Guwahati, Nilachal, Pati Darrang, Hajo, Bajali, Seela, Biswanath, Nowgong, Deah Darrang and two in Nine Duars. At his request the Government granted thirty auras - of land each for the support of the school masters, two of whom were granted 5/- per month in addition to the land. Each School Teacher or Pandit was required to teach atleast thirty pupils. In these schools Sanskrit and the subject relating to Shastras were taught. In 1831 Adam White, the Collect of Guwahati, along with Rao, a Christian Missionary, established a school at Guwahati. David scott was

2 Political Consultation, Foreign Department, 1854, 10 July, No. 211; Revenue Consultation Bengal, 1836, March 1, No. 40.
3 Ibid. ; Ibid.
4 H.K.Barpujari, A Short History of Higher Education In Assam(1826-1900), Golden Jubilee Volume Cotton College Gauhati, 1951-52, p. 3.
in favour of encouraging the indigenous system of Schools.

But Jenkins was of the opinion that the indigenous, "Schols having fallen into the hands of Brahmins, they have very little inducement to extend the spread of useful Knowledge." 5

He also pointed out that, "the learning, taught being entirely Brahmanical, these Schools only propagated the very knowledge for the acquisition of what know country in India, could previously boast of more splendid endowments one quarter nearly of the cultivated lands having been bestowed by the Rajas, Brahmins, Devotees Shastars and other religious sects and foundations." 6

Scott at the very beginning reinstated some of the old officials of the Ahom Administration in the revenue

5 Political Consultation, Foreign Department, 1834, July 10, No. 211.

6 Ibid.
and judicial departments. But as they were quite ignorant of the new system and also of English Language, they proved themselves failure in this new position and became a "mere headache to the European officials." This compelled the new Government to recruit duly qualified youths from the neighbouring provinces like Bengal. This policy of recruitment of the officials from outside, however, could not solve the problem, it rather aggravated the situation. The newly appointed persons called Amlahas had no attachment to the land but had come to take some advantage of the situation to earn money. Besides, the pre-élégéed class who lost their power and position turned into a dissatisfied group under the new new regime. Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam (1834 - 61) realised the gravity of the situation when he found all posts occupied by the non-Assamese. He, therefore, pointed out to the Government of India in

In regard to property. On completion of our recent settlement fewer will want the secured means of comfortable subsistence and but fewer will possess more. These fewer in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on the duties of our courts, the officers in which are mostly filled by natives of Sylhet and Rangpur. So that the old families of Assam are still losing influence in their own native province from being debarred those situations which lead to power or decent maintenance. This state of things appear to me pregnant with evil and I know no other method by which it could be remedied than by the Government taking some active measures to provide instruction for the Assamese youth ...

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8 Ibid., 1834, July 10, No. 211.
Jenkins also realised that in Assam education should be a state responsibility. He thought that "to trust the diffusion of knowledge in this province to native hands alone would be to protract from centuries what without aid may be performed in a brief period of years. To leave the natives alone would approach nearly to parental neglect of the children." He also realised that if the official aristocracy of the Ahom Government would not be properly treated, they in near future would appear as a strong obstacle in the consolidation of the new empire. So to win the confidence, they must be provided with employment; Which fast required was the proper instruction. Jenkins in his letter dated 21 July, 1834, urged the Government of India to establish at least one

9 Ibid. 1834, May 10, No. 211.

10 Ibid. 1834, July 10, No. 211.
school at each of the Sadar stations—Gauhati, Darrang, Goalpara, Nougong, and Biswanath, to impart English Education to the Assamese youth. He suggested that for the pan city of English educated local teachers in Assam some well trained teachers capable of instructing in English and Bengali, would have to be procured from Bengal and at the same time a group of Assamese youths of a rank should be selected with the help of Raja Purandar Singha and sent to Calcutta for necessary education and training at the expenses of the Government so that, in future they could be appointed as teachers in those schools. To reduce the expenditure of establishment of such schools Jenkins also suggested that the building of the schools would be constructed by employing the convicts which would cost less. The total expenditure of the whole scheme was estimated at not more than
Rs. 12,000 per annum. 11

The Government of India referred Jenkin's letter to the General Committee of Public Instruction which recommended the establishment of only one school at Gauhati and accordingly in June 1835 the school opened with Singer as its headmaster on a monthly salary of Rs. 150. 12 At first this English school had 58 students. The Gauhati school marked the beginning of a new era in the history of western education in Assam. Fortunately the school could draw the interest of the local people who had no hesitation to send their children to it. There was thus a gradual increase of the enrolment of pupil from 58 in 1835 to 150 in 1838 and 380 at the end of 1840. 13

11 Ibid.
12 Bengal Political Consultation, 1835, June 27, Nos. 2-5.
Following this good number of people of high name forward, with their charitable hands for the development of the school. The Raja Coach Behar, Dayaram Baruah Choudhury of Dharampur and Jagnyaram Phukan, Sadar Amin of Gauhati, the Dihingia Gossain of Kurua village on the north bank Brahmaputra were some of the contributors who donated a total sum of Rs. 1500 to the Gauhati School. Soon demands were raised by the people of Upper Assam for the establishment of such schools in that region. As a result in 1841, one English School was open at Sibsagar with D. Souza as its headmaster. The people were so enthusiastic that instead of waiting for Government help, they took the initiative to start school in their locality and thus within a short period a number of schools began to grow up, entirely at public cost, at Pandu, Kamakhya, 

14 Ibid.

Beltala, Amingaon and North Guwahati. 16

The appointment of the people in the offices not according to birth or caste but by qualifications drew the interest of the people to educate their children. Besides, the assessment of the land the introduction of the written Patta system aroused not only the curiosity but created necessity even among the common people to have some knowledge of reading and writing so that they might not be deceived by the officials of the court. In this way people belonging to each and every section, became eager to educate their children, and raised the demand for the establishment of school in their own locality as lack of good communication system and poverty made it impossible for the people of remote areas to send their boys to the schools of far away

To meet the growing demand of the people, James Mathie, the Collector of Kamrup put forward a new scheme of village schools to the Government of India in 1838. He proposed to implement his scheme by improving the standard of the existing indigenous schools and if necessary by increasing the number also. The General Committee of Public Instruction though was not in favour of implementing mass education, due to the strong recommendation of the President in Council, the scheme, however, received the sanction of the supreme Government. In August 1835, 21 vernacular schools were existing in Kamrup and in 1843 the number was 22 in Kamrup, 12 in Nowgong and 5 in Darrang.

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17 Bengal Revenue Consultations, 1838, August 14, No. 65.

Due to such growing demand for schools in Assam, the Christian Missionaries came forward. Inspired by the proselytising spirit, the Missionaries came to Assam with their evangelical works, but ignorance, idoltry and prejudices of the natives against a foreign religion, created obstacles in their way and soon they realised that without diffusing knowledge it would not be possible for them to undermine the fabric of the present system of Hindu idolatry and prejudices of the natives. So they considered education to be the mightiest of all their methods for the gradual destruction of the local religions and for implementing Christianity in their place. They believed that education could illuminate the individual mind, which in turn would arouse conviction in the truth of the Gospel. So the establishment of schools was
recognised by the Evangelical Missionaries as one of the means to be adopted for the introduction of Christianity in India in addition to preaching and translations.  

On 6 January, 1837 Rev. Nathan Brown and Rev. Oliver Cutter started a school at Sadiya, the first Missionary school in Assam. By 1845 the American Baptist Mission started 14 schools in Sibsagar, 3 in Nowgong and 5 in Kamrup. The Missionaries gradually extended the area of their evangelic works in every several areas of both hills and plains of Assam and at the same time they also established schools to impart education in Christianity to the local people. In 1874-75 under the American Baptist Mission 19 schools with an average attendance of 238 pupils were running in full swing in Garo Hills; in Darrang 21 schools with 422 in the rolls, in Nowgong 10 schools were running smoothly under the American Baptist

In the Khasi Hills, the American Baptist Mission started three schools at Sawrai, Mawsmai and Mawmluh as early as 1832 under the initiative of Alexander B. Lish. After six years Lish himself left Khasi and Jayantia Hills and with him stopped the works of the Baptist Mission in Khasi Hills. In 1841 the Welsh Calvinist Mission arrived in this region which marked a landmark in the history of the development of education in the Khasi Hills. Rev. Thomas Jones, the father of the Khasi literature, started the first school at Mawsmai in 1842 heralding the beginning of education and educational institution in Khasi Hills.

In 1892-93 there were altogether 280 Missionary Schools with an enrolment of 5,808 pupils in the province.

22 N. Natarajan, loc. cit., p. 63
The following tables show the number of the Mission schools in 1892-93 and 1893-94 along with the pupils. ²³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missions</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. of pupils</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1892-93</td>
<td>1893-94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santhal Mission, Goalpara</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Baptist Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>Kamrup</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Calvinist Mission, Khasi Hills</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society for the propagation of Gospel, Darrang</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total in the Province:</strong></td>
<td>280</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Missionaries also considered the language as the easiest way to reach to the people. So they first learnt the local languages of Assam and then translated and published religious and other books for the people of the land. They took Assamese language as the medium of instruction in their schools and even in 1836 when the British Government introduced Bengali as the medium of instruction in the schools, the Missionaries remained strict to their own decision regarding the medium of instruction as they believed, "It would be vain to attempt enlightening a country through the medium of any language besides its own." 24

The taught in the Missionary schools included geography, history, arithmetic, reading, writing from diction and "some useful information bearing on their probable

wants in life - i.e., the use of quinine in dealing with the common fever of the country, the best method of the obviating the bad effects of wounds, snake bites etc. 25

The curriculum of the public schools in the junior classes were Wilson’s Chronology, Yate’s Elements of Natural Philosophy, English Grammar, the use of globes, Arithmetic, translation and composition. The curriculum of the senior classes were consisted of Marshman’s History of India, Homer’s Iliad by Pope, Elements of Natural Philosophy, geography, arithmetic, up to Vulgar frictions, composition and translation. 26

Except in the Mission school, where Assamese was the medium of instruction, lessons were imparted in the village school in Bengali. But in Sadar Schools two separate departments English and Bengali were maintained

to impart education.\(^{27}\)

The temptation of jobs in the new administration at first attracted many young men of Assam to the western education. But learning of a foreign language both as a subject and language of instruction was very tough work for a beginner. As a result there was a rapid fall in the enrolment in the English classes. This problem finally compelled the Government to make English optional in the schools of Assam and the schools at Gauhati and Sibsagar were converted into Anglo-Vernacular schools in 1844.\(^{25}\)

At the same time the Government also turned its attention to increase the number of vernacular schools in the province. In 1852 the number of vernacular schools were increased to 74 with an enrolment of 4,025, of which 26 schools were in Kamrup, 13 in Nowgong, 9 each in the Districts of Sibsagar and Nowgong, 11 in Goalpara and

\(^{27}\) Report on Public Instruction Bengal, 1838, pp. 71-72; 1839, pp. 68-69.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 1844-45, p. 11.
5 in Lakhimpur. Cashar fell behind in the development of education. It was in 1865-66, 7 schools were opened in Cashar to impart education to the people. In Sylhet, however, the progress was far better having 28 schools with an enrolment of 1,127 students.

The village schools were established under the supervision of Mofussil or Patgiri and some inhabitants of the locality. At Sadar Stations local Committees were formed with the Principal Assistant as Chairman to look after the schools. In 1841 for the development of schools, William Robinson, the Headmaster of Gauhati school was appointed as the Inspector of Schools. The local authorities were also authorised to visit to school and to bring to the notice of the school Inspector all irregularities and

abuses in the school and also to encourage the people to avail themselves of the means provided by the Government.

But this new policy of the Government could do little improvement in the condition of the schools. "The schools were conducted according to no system, or each had a system of its own. In most of the village school master kept know regular register of daily attendance nor had (they) a list of pupils even. The book of instruction was issued but it was seldom opened; neither was there a fixed curriculum nor any list of text book and in fact, text books so scare that the teachers were compelled to devote much of their time to writing letters, petitions and keeping accounts or engaged in religious studies." 32

As a result, to quote Anandaram Dhekial Phukan: "Even the most advanced students were just able to read only

32 Ibid., p.12.
a few pages of their text books without any comprehension, whatever of their meaning and not unoften the teacher himself ... their hand writing illigible, orthography much more words, of arithmatic they literary knew nothing."

He also wrote" the knowledge which they acquire seldom makes them fit for discharging any higher duties than those of a Gaon Kakati or Village Accountant." 34

As regards the Sadar school the condition was not better than that of the Village schools. In words of Anandaram Daskial Phukan, "the few that avail themselves of these two Government Institutions seldom derived any substantial benefit. Not a single student has been hither to able to acquire even the standard laid down for junior scholarship in the Government schools and colleges."

33 A. J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix J.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
The Assamese by no means want intelligence," as observed by Jenkins in a letter written to C.E. Travelyons, the Deputy Secretary to the Government of Bengal. The students of Assam were not the cause of this underdevelopment of the education of the land. A.H. Danforth, a member of the American Baptist Mission, Gauhati, pointed out the reason of this deplorable condition of education in Assam as "Education is growing up here nearly as a foreign plant." The language in which education was imparted was Bengali, a language foreign to them, and most of the pupils random spoke in that language as soon as they the school.

In 1853 when A.J. Moffatt Mills, was sent by the Government of India to Assam to submit a report on the land, the people of Assam demanded the re-introduction

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36 Letter June 1834, Jenkins to C.E. Travelyons, Deputy Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

37 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix 1 A.p. AXXIV-XXX.
of Assamese language in schools and courts in Assam instead of Bengali. Anandaram Dhekiai Phukan in his administrative Observation pointed out that "A certain number of Institutions styled vernacular schools has been established in the country. Instruction in these schools were imparted in a foreign language viz., the Bengali which is but imperfectly understood by the teacher themselve not to speak of the pupils ... The few books that are used on the different branches of Elementary learning are composed on a foremgan tongue, which necessarily prevents their being of any popular use. Much time is in the first instance wasted in acquiring a knowledge of Bengali for the vernacular Assamese." 

In our humble opinion, he suggested, the following arrangements appear to be best calculated to promote the cause of education viz., the substitution in the Schools of the vernacular in lieu of the Bengali, the publication

38 Ibid., Appendix 3.
of a series of popular works on different branches of
native and European knowledge in the Assamese language,
the establishment of a normal school to train up a
body of teachers and the creation of a separate
department for the study of Sanskrit in the several
vernacular schools." 39 Mills in his report also candidly
admitted, "We made a great mistake in directing that
all business should be translated in Bengalee and that
Assamese must acquire it." 40 He recommended the
suggestion made by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan to the
Council of Education for its consideration. On the
question of the re-introduction of Assamese language
in lieu of Bengali in the schools, the greatest support
came from the American Baptist Mission in Assam. A.H.
Danforth, a member of the American Baptist Mission,

40 Ibid.
Gauhati, submitted a memorandum arguing strongly in favour of the re-introduction of Assamese language as the medium of instruction. In his opinion, "The boys are set to learning Bengalee, they spend a year or two in running over, parrot-like, meaningless words and sentences without the slightest idea of what they read. They then commence with explanations, translations and definitions, thus by degrees they are introduced into the mysteries of the Bengalee. Under these circumstances, how could we expect there should be either interest in education, advancement in study? There is nothing to awaken a taste of satisfy it when awakened until the scholar is far advanced in his studies. It is like learning to swim without going near the water." He also pointed out the injurious effects of the foreign language as the medium of instruction. In his view, "This feature of the

41 A.J.Maffett Mills, op.cit., Appendix I.p.XXXVIII-IX.
"this feature of the educational policy pursued in Assam is not only absured but destructive of the highest motives of education and must necessarily cripple the advancement of the schools as well as separate them from the sympathies of the people." 42

Not only this, when Robinson, the Inspector of schools, tried to prove that *the language spoken in Assam to be essentially the same as the Bengali,* 43 it was strongly protested by the Missionaries. Among them were Bronson of the American Baptist Mission, Nowgong Nathan Brown of Sibsagar, J Stoddard of Nowgong, A.H. Danforth of Gauhati, Rev. Ward of Gauhati, Rev. Bronson bearing for Assamese language said, *In all the Government School in Assam Bengali is studied the same*

42 Ibid.

43 'Some Remarks in Defence of the Use of Bengali in the Government Schools in Assam.' Robinson, Bengal Government's Selected Papers, p. 155.
as Latin and Greek are studied in England or as Persian would be, if Persian instead of Bengali was the language of the courts ... On the play ground, in the family circle, at home, on their religious assemblies when their shastras are explained, the first word the new born child hears from his mother the first word he learns to lip, the rude song of the boatman as he piles the oar or spreads his sail, the joyous songs of the reapper, as he shouts the harvest home, always and every where the language used is Assamese and not Bengali ... The Assamese is the common medium of intercourse with the mountain tribes that surrounded this valley. There is nothing to show that Assamese race and their language have not existed in the valley from time immemorial and it is surprising that during the change of rulers, the oppression and
misrule in which they have been subjected, there are no trace of any material change in their language." 44

Robinson, the then School Inspector, tried to prove that the Assamese was nothing but an offshoot of the Bengali language so have no difference from it. Nathan Brown, a member of the American Baptist Mission, Sibsagar, commented on Robinson's view, "it is too full of misrepresentations to pass unnotice, though I see no definite tangible statement of facts or arguments that requires reputation. It appears to contain mere assertions, which he never would have made had he himself been familiar with the language of the country ... It is not at all necessary to go to books to show that the two languages are distinct. It is quite sufficient to put a company of Assamese and Bengalis together and see whether

44 Correspondance relating to the question, whether the Assamese or Bengali language should be introduced in Assam's schools, pp. 151-54.

45 Ibid.
they understand each other. Does Mr. Robinson mean to say that a language which can not be understand by the people is there vernacular tongue ... 46 The view that "Assamese was only patois of the Bengali language and had no literary of its own," 47 was strongly opposed by 'A Native' who was none but Anandaram Dhekian Phukan, in a pamphlet titled 'A Few Remarks in the Assamese Language,' published from the American Baptist Mission Press in 1855. In this pamphlet the writer tried his best to prove the gulf of differences in between the two languages by pointing out that out of 287 words in an Assamese passage 112 were entirely different from Bengali, 98 derived from Sanskrit and only 77 had some resemblance with the Bengali language.

46 Ibid., pp. 160-61.
47 Ibid.
48 A Native, Few Remarks on Assamese Language on Vernacular Education in Assam, 1855.
In this article the writer also pointed out a list of Assamese literature of 62 religious and over 40 dramatic works to prove that Assamese had a literature of their own. The then Commissioner of Revenue in Assam also strongly pleaded for the introduction of Assamese language in Assam. The Commissioner of Assam, Henry Hopkins, was though in favour of the retention of Bengali but the Deputy Commissioner who was more experienced in practical field almost all of them pleaded for the substitution of Assamese for Bengali. Considering all these memoirs and memorials George Campbell, the Lieutentant Governor, unhesitatingly decided on the 9th April, 1873 in favour of the re-introduction of Assamese language in the courts and schools on the Brahmaputra valley subject to the condition that when a class of 12 or more boys with for it, Bengalees may be seperately
taught them as a language. " This was a great triumph of the people of Assam.

However, the progress of English education was slow for which state some of the local authorities said that " Assamese would never improve in European knowledge." This view was also strongly refuted by Anandaram Dekaial Phukan in his famous observation. He wrote "it would be both unfair and unjust to judge the capacity of a people to receive improvements from the trial of a period not extending beyond five or six years. We are inclined to believe that the slow progress made by English school in Assam must be imputed more to defects in the systems of instruction pursued in them than to the want of zeal and promptitude on the part of the students."  

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49 Assam Secretariate, Assam Commissioner, File No. 471, 1862-73.
50 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix J
51 Ibid.
Wood's Despatch in 1854 opened a new era in education in India. Repudiating the theory that education should spread from higher to the lower stratum of the society, it recommended the establishment of middle and primary schools on grant-in-aid basis. A number of self-supporting indigenous schools on grant-in-aid were thus brought into existence in Assam with the object of diffusing useful and practical knowledge to the masses. Thus in 1853-54 the number of primary Schools increased to 63 from 47 in 1843-44. However, the number of high school which was two, one at Gauhati the other at Sibsagar, in 1843-44 and 1853-54 remained the same. In 1858 the Gauhati school was affiliated to the Entrance Standard of the Calcutta University and 1861 two students successfully passed the Entrance Examination from the school. Among the successful in the Entrance Examination


The student of Assam who passed the Entrance Examination had no scope for further studies as Collegiate section was not opened in Assam. The Government award of scholarship of Rs. 10/- each to those successful candidates who proceeded to Calcutta for higher education insufficient to meet all the expenses including boarding and lodging. Apart from financial factor, social prejudices, caste bar, long distance, foreign atmosphere, acted as deterrent to parents of the majority students for sending their children to Calcutta for higher studies. Again stage of the education which the students of Assam were receiving in Assam was not sufficient for appointment them in the high post of administration. Gradually the demand for a high school or a College was growing up. In 1862 representations were made to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal by

the people of Assam when he visited the province for the establishment of a college or collegiate school at Gauhati. William Robinson, the school Inspector of Assam, was also in favour of the establishment of a provincial college in Assam. His successor, Murry, also laid stress on the requirement of the development of collegiate education locally in Assam, as it would not only encourage the local people to higher education but would, in near feature, produce the qualified educated people in the land and so the necessity of recruiting of subordinate officials and school masters from outside of the province, at a high salary, could be shunned. However, considering the high post to maintain a college for a few students then coming out from the two existing schools, Murry suggested to raise up the standard of the Gauhati School to teach up to the F.A. course of the Calcutta University.

55 Assam Secretariat File No. 507, 1862.
56 Ibid.
57 Centenary Report, Collegiate School, Gauhati, pp. 21-22.
The Government of India unhesitatingly accepted Murry's proposal and in July, 1865 recommended the proposal of raising of Gauhati school to Collegiate Standard with an establishment of Rs. 1200 hundred per annum. From May, 1866 the Collegiate Section was started at the Gauhati School with affiliation to the First Examination in Arts and Babu Lakshminarayan Das, Officiating Professor of Mathematics of the then Benares Hindu College, was appointed as the Headmaster of the school. The School was also affiliated in Law classes as well from 1870, but as the number of the successful candidates at the Entrance Examination was very few which was not sufficient to maintain the Collegiate classes. The following figures

shows the results of the Entrance Examination for six years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1873</th>
<th>1874</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeared</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1870-71 the total number of pupils in this section was only 17 and in 1875-76 the number reduced to only 7.

In consequence the cost of collegiate education of a pupil was much more higher at Gauhati in comparison to other parts of India. In 1873-74 par-head of a student at Gauhati Collegiate school was Rs.1086 while at the Presidency College, Calcutta it was Rs.210, Patna College Rs.498, and at Calcutta High School it consted Rs.408. Besides the

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60 General Report on Public Instruction, Assam, 1874-75, p.37.
61 Ibid., 1877-78, p.65.
62 Ibid., 1874-75, p.46.
result of the school in the University Examinations was also not at all satisfactory. The figures given below show the actual position for six years since 1869.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1873</th>
<th>1874</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate appeared</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate passed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1876 the Government finally took the decision to revert the Gauhati school to its former position.

The number of the High School in Assam which produced students for the Collegiate Section was also very few. During 1873 - 74 the number was only 6 and during the session 1874-75 only one addition was made. These

63 General Report Public Instruction, Assam, 1873-74, p. 4.
64 Ibid., 1874-75, Appendix B, Education form, I.
schools could not produce the required number of successful candidates to fulfill the needs of a second-grade college. Therefore, instead of increasing the number of the feeder schools it was futile to hope for the success of an institution for higher education at Gauhati. Besides, it was also too expensive to appoint duly qualified teachers. As Murray reported, "Unfortunately with the same money allowed for schools in Bengal, we have to send for inferior men from Dacca and Calcutta for higher posts and are obliged to be content with teachers for the lower classes who know little more than a smattering of anything."65

In 1874 Assam was constituted as a new province under Chief Commissionership and with this a separate Directorate of Public Instruction was created for Assam.

65 Centenary Report, Collegiate School, Gauhati, p. 27.
The constitution of the new province and the establishment of a separate Director of Public Instruction for Assam created new hopes and aspiration among the enlightened and educated people in Assam. The re-introduction of the Assamese language in place of Bengali in the schools and colleges in Assam in 1873 made people more conscious of their right and power and became more and more enthusiastic about education and their language. They now came forward to help the government to solve the problems that were faced by the government in the wake of re-introduction of the Assamese language as the medium of instruction in the schools of Assam. Within a short period a number of books were written and published for the pupils of Assam with the help and cooperation of the officials and non-officials. Amandaram Dhekial Phukan, Hem Chandra Baruah, Gunabhiram Baruah, Padmabati Devi and several other persons
wrote books for the students of Assam. The contributions of the Christian Missionaries also significant in this field. They not merely extended their strongest support in favour of the re-introduction of Assamese language but also prepared the ground by writing and publishing a number text books on this language, such as *A Grammar of the Assamese Language* by William Robinson, *Grammatical Notes of the Assamese Language* by Nathan Brown, *Dictionary in Assamese and English* by Bronson. *Arunodai*, the first periodical in Assamese was also published by the American Baptist Mission from Sibsagar and was printed in their own press. The periodical also appeared as a torch to enlight the people of the world, religion, world's affairs, natural science, geography, history etc.

The following is the list of authorized Assamese text books as existed in 1885-86. 66

66 General Report on Public Instruction, Assam, 1885-86, p. 39. The list is given in the next page.
To encourage the people to write text books for the students the government also declared prizes.

1883-84 the Nougang Text Book Committee have examined 36 books out of which 23 books were selected as worthy of reward and their authors received award amounting Rs 1885. Hem Chandra Barua also received Rs 100 for his literary activities.

A new zeal for education was flowing through out the province, causing the growing up of a number of new educational institutions. In 1874-75 the number of schools of all categories was 1191 with an enrolment of 58755 pupils. In 1894-95 the total number of public schools of all categories was 2939 and in 1901 the number reached 3171.

67 AIR A, 1883-84, p. 186.


69 Assam Commissioner's Office File No. 471, 1872-73, p. 43.
The people gradually left aside their prejudices regarding the learning of foreign language and became enthusiastic in English education. This led to growing up of a number of English schools in the province causing a rapid fall in the number of Middle Vernacular Schools. Some of the Middle Vernacular Schools were even converted into Middle English Schools.

The following figures show clearly the gradual increase and decrease of the number of the Middle English and Middle Vernacular Schools in Assam in 1873-74, 1883-84, and 1899-1900.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1873-74</th>
<th>1883-84</th>
<th>1899-1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>31st March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2608</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular</td>
<td></td>
<td>870</td>
<td>2176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1744</td>
<td>1528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1528</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daily</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>2266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1483</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Indian Education Commission headed by Hunter in 1882 laid stress on the introduction of the Grant-in-aid system of the Secondary Education. But in Assam till 1874 due to the slow progress of English Education and the general poverty of the people of Assam the suggestion of the Hunter Commission could not be introduce in this province. Except few Middle English and almost all Middle Vernacular Schools were under the management of the government. In 1874-76, the number of the government schools were 20, aided schools were 60 and the number of the un-aided schools were 9. In 1884-85, the number of the government schools were 28 which rose to 30 in 1893-94. The number of the aided schools in 1884-85 were 54 and in 1893-94 it increased to 80. The unaided schools in 1884-85 were 14 in number which rose to 16 in 1893-94. The table as given in the next page will give a clear view of the position of the three categories of the schools in 1874-75, 1884-85 and 1893-94.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1874 - 75</th>
<th>1884 - 85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Aided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. Unaided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Vernacular</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1893 - 94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1893 - 94</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle V Vernacular</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle English</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The spread of education made the people of Assam alert of their right and they began to think that they should have to be given the first preference in all the high posts in the administration. This apprehension of the local people was focused in a memorial submitted by the Jorhat Sarvajanik Sabha to the Commissioner on the 14th December, 1892, which reads as follows: "As regards the employment of the natives of the soil in the service of their own province the proportion in which they have been employed is much discouraging... Times has however arrived when the main body of the service should be recruited from the native of the province and the proportion of such should not be less than three fourths of the whole."

At the same time the educated youths of the land realised the necessity of acquiring the requisite qualification to get appointment in the high posts. Besides

73 Assam Secretariat, Home A, July 1894, Nos. 185, 296.
the problems which the Assamese had to face in their journey to Calcutta and also of fooding and lodging at Calcutta made the people to raise the demand for the re-introduction of the Collegiate classes in Assam. In 1878 a group of intellectuals of Assam submitted a representation to Stuart Bailey, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, for the re-opening of Collegiate classes in Assam. The Commissioner agreed to start the Collegiate classes again in Assam if half of the funds required for the purpose be raised from the public. But this was incomprehensible at that time.

In 1882, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam Sir Charles Elliott, assured the people of Assam that he would consider the demand of the natives of the province if the university results continued to be satisfactory. At the same time to facilitate the students of Assam in getting higher education at Calcutta he raised the value of Scholarship to Rs. 20/- a month for those who passed

Extrance Examination and went for higher studies at any colleges of Bengal. In the Surma valley the value of the scholarship was raised to Rs. 15/- a month. Accordingly in 1882-83, 15 students were awarded scholarship in the Brahmaputra Valley. In 1883-84, 17 boys of this Valley got the scholarship for their further study in Bengal. In the Surma Valley only 9 students got the scholarships. At the end of the year 24 students of Assam in the 1st year, 22 in the 2nd year, 8 in the 3rd year and 3 in the 4th year were studying in the colleges of Bengal with Government scholarship. The assurance of Sir Elliott and the increase in the value of the scholarship satisfied the local people for the time being. But in 1887 the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, William Ward, to the utter disappointment of the people of Assam, reduced the

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75 A R A , 1883-84, p. 183.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
number of scholarship to 14 for the Brahmaputra Valley and 3 for the hill districts and 8 for those who were not the natives of the land. He also prescribed some new condition for scholarship. The scholarship should be awarded on the basis of merit. The junior scholarship would be given for two years of B.A. course. It was also provided that all students who passed the F.A. Examination with in two years of passing the Entrance Examination were entitled to have a scholarship for a further two years to continue their study for B.A. Degree. It was also provided that a student holding senior scholarship could convert their scholarship tenable for five years in the Medical and Engineering colleges at Calcutta. However, the new policy of William Ward could not satisfy the people of Assam. Consequently soon the demand for opening collegiate classes got its momentum. But on the question

of the location of the college and some other points divergent opinions sprang up. A section of the people including William Booth, the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, was against the location of the second grade college at Gauhati on the ground that Gauhati was neither healthier nor centrical. They opined in favour of Jorhat or Sibsagar as the suitable site for the establishment of a second grade college in Assam. Another section, though few in number, was against the establishment of any college in Assam. They held the view that the Assamese students should be encouraged to resort to Bengal for higher studies where they would get a sounder education and wider experience. 79 As a result of all such controversies the demand of the establishment of a college in the province remained shelved and Government also did not take any decision on the subject till 1899.

Ibid., Education A, 1900, May, Nos. 1-5.
In 1899 a number of representations were submitted to the Government urging strongly upon the Government for opening a college in Assam. In his memorial submitted by Manik Chandra Baruah, an eminent Assamese of the age on 28 March 2 1899, he strongly opined in favour of the establishment of a college at Gauhati. He also pointed out, "Assam is the only province which has not got a college. Indeed it has not a high institution worth the name. A college at Gauhati with a European Principal will be better appreciated by the students than the similar private institutions in Calcutta (owning by native gentlemen) to which they generally resort." 80

About Gauhati as the location he opined, "it is much easier for people from Upper Assam to come down stream to Gauhati than for those of Lower or Central Assam to go up stream to Sibsagar or Dibrugarh. Further it would

be cheaper for people of Upper Assam to stay at Gauhati (which is about half way than Calcutta)." He argued that Gauhati "possess some natural advantages which no other districts of Assam has. The town is just on the river, there is no difficulty about the ghat etc. It is also nearer to Bengal than any other station and the construction of the railway on the north bank it will be directly connected with Calcutta." 82

If the Government considered that the time was not yet suit for a college in Assam, M.C. Baruah urged the Government to establish a hostel for the students of Assam at Calcutta and also to increase the number of and value of the scholarship for the time being to solve the lodging and food and financial problems of the pupils of Assam. 83 The then Chief Commissioner of Assam Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton, 84 a sincere lover of the

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
people, conscientious on duties and highly liberal in his views", considering all the opinion of the question of the establishment of a college at Gauhati issued a note reviewing all aspects and scope and policy of his predecessors he gave his opinion that the time was not ripe for a college in Assam. He considered the withdrawal of scholarship by opening a college a fatal blow to higher education in the province. As divergent opinions appeared on the question of the establishment of a college and also on the location of the college among the natives of Assam, the Chief Commissioner Sir Henry Cotton thought that in this circumstances the establishment of a college would create a sense of provincialism among the people of different of the land. So with a view to discouraging the spirit of provincialism which was too ripe in the land at that time on

84 Education A, May 1900, Nos. 1-5. Note by the Chief Commissioner, Sir Henry Cotton.
85 Ibid.
this issue it is very desirable that the Assamese students should be encouraged to resort to Bengal for their higher education and that they should participate in the wider experience ... They are dependent on Bengal as Welshmen are dependent on England. Such dependence is not inconsistent with a truly national sentiment. 86 Sir Henry Cotton, therefore, suggested a hostel for Assamese students in Calcutta in lieu of a college in the province. 87 But Cotton was not in favor of implementing his scheme into practice without judging public opinion. So he invited the public opinion on his note. In response to his circular a number of representations in the form of memorials or proceedings of public meetings began to reach from all quarters of the Province, which included those of Manik Chandra Baruah, Gauhati 21 July and 9 August 1899, of G. Bezbaruah 20 July 1899,

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
Babu Jaduram Baruah and others from Dibrugarh (2nd August 1899), Balinarayan Baruah, Executive Engineer (1st August 1899), Babu Durgaprasad Baruah and others from Siksaqar (22nd August 1899), Babu Ramakanta Borkakati, residing at Calcutta (25th August, 1899), the Assamese language improvement society, Tezpur (proceeding of the meeting held on 15 August 1899), Babu Rudraram Bordoloi of Nowgong (22 August 1899), resolutions of a public meeting of the students and all other Assamese residence at Calcutta (held on 13th August 1899), from the members of the Sylhet Suhrit Samity residing at Dacca (24 August 1899), resolutions passed at the meeting of the residence in inhabitants of Karimganj (held on 26th August 1899), representation from the Secretary to the High School at Karimganj (29 August 1899), proceedings of a general meeting of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha (held on 16th July 1899), proceedings of a meeting of the Shillong Assam
Club (held on 2nd September 1899), and memorial from the inhabitants of Surma Valley residing at Silchar (31st August 1899). As in all those representations the people opined in favour of a college and not the hostel scheme the Chief Commissioner Sir Henry Cotton gladly accepted the people's verdict and in September 29, 1899 took the famous resolution of the establishment of a second-grade college at Gauhati. On 3rd November 1899, Sir Henry Cotton in a public meeting at Gauhati declared, in amid joy and appreciation of the people, the decision of the Government of the establishment of a college at Gauhati and of the starting of its session in the academic year of 1901-02. On June 20, 1900 college was formally opened by the Chief Commissioner and was named after Sir Henry Cotton. It started with 57 students in the academic year of 1901-02. At the beginning it had 5 teachers including the Principal F.W. Sudnerson.

88 Ibid.
89 Progress of Education in India, 1897-98 to 1901-02, Nathan, Vol. I, p.69.
The intermediate course was of two years with English, Second Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, History and Logic.

The syllabus of B.A. (Arts) classes was English, Physiology and one of the following subjects, Classical Language, History and Mathematics. For B.A. Science the subjects were English, Mathematics and any of the following subjects, Physical science, Biology, Geology. 90

The college building was constructed by the Public Works Department under the supervision of Sir Subhrendu Mohan Goswami, Asstt. Engineer and then a supervisor of the Department.

The establishment of the Cotton college in 1901 marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the higher education in the province. In 1879-80 the number of School was 1200 with an enrolment 35891 pupils.

In 1889-90 the number of the institutions increased to 2349 and pupils to 74899 and in 1901-02 the number rose to 3171 and 108020 respectively.

The close of the 19th century opened a new chapter in the technical education of the province. Before 1900 there was only one technical school in Assam - the William Artison School at Jorhat, which was conducted under the supervision of the Manager of the Jorhat State Railway. The students of this school were receiving scholarships from the funds and those who showed promise were also allowed to hold scholarships from the same source to the Sibpur Engineering College. In 1886 the Chief Commissioner sanctioned eight scholarships payable from provincial revenue and tenable in the Mechanical Apprentice class, Sibpur. Of those, four of the value of Rs. 10 per month

91 General Report on Public Instruction, Assam, 1889-90, p. 2
92 AIRA, 1886-87, p. 160.
each were reserved for those whose fathers were at the
time of death desidents or employed in the Brahmaputra
Valley or any of the hill districts and remaining of two
of the value Rs. 7/- per month were reserved for those
boys whose fathers were residents or employed in Surma
valley. These eight scholarship were tenable for two
years if the boy passed the apprentice at the end of
the second year to the annual examination at Sibpur college
his scholarship would be renewed for 18 months more
and if he passed the final examination this would be
extended for more 18 months to allow him to complete
his practical course. 93 Four Medical scholarship tenable
at the Dacca Medical school was granted to the pupils
of Assam. 94 In 1900 with the establishment of the Berry
White Medical School at Dibrugarh a new chapter opened

93 A B A, 1886-87, p. 160; General Report on Public
Instruction, Assam, 1888-89, 189-90, pp. 26, 27.
94 Ibid.
in the development of technical education in Assam. It was the first school of Medical Science in Assam. The school was managed by the Government with the aid of a bequest of Rs. 45,000, the greater portion of which was spent on buildings and equipments. The school had 70 students at the end of 1901-02. Apart from those pupils, five medical scholars from Assam were reading in the Dacca Medical School and one Khasi girl with a scholarship in the Campbell Medical School, Calcutta.  

95 Progress of Education in Assam, 1889-90 to 1901-02. p. 244.
THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

The earliest attempt of the Christian Mission to sow the seed of Christianity in Assam was in the translation of the Bible into Assamese in 1813 at Serampur Mission. This was done with the help of Atmaram Sarma, an inhabitant of Kaliabar, Nowgong.¹ But till 1829 none of the Christian Mission made any attempt to establish their Centre in Assam. After the conquest of Assam by the British, David Scott, the first Agent to the Governor-General, North East Frontier, who had a close friendship with Carey, the member of the Serampur Mission, and was the donor of this Mission, invited the Serampur Mission to start their activities in Assam and in response to this a branch of the Serampur Mission was established

¹ M. Neog, Pavitra Assam, 1969, p.49; A. K. Gurney, Kamini Kantar Charitra, p.6.
at Gauhati under James Rao in 1829, which was the first missionary centre in Assam. But this Church could do little success in their activities in Assam.

The attempt of the American Baptist Mission in Burma under Kincaid to enter and start their evangelic works Sadiya in 1835 failed owing to the insurmountable natural difficulties. In the same year Jenkins, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, requested the American Baptist at Calcutta to work at Sadiya among the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Mission earnestly responded to the invitation by sending Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter with a small printing press. They arrived at Sadiya on 23rd March 1836 and started their evangelic works among the tribes by establishing a centre. They entered into the Khampti village and acquiring their language printed

2 H.K.Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, pp.300-

3 *Papers and Resolutions of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Jubilee Conference, Nowgang, 1886*, p.20

some books in their languages as a first step to educate the local people and to make them understand the Gospel of Christianity and thus to spread Christian religion among them. 5 In April, 1837 Miles Bronson and Thomson followed them but the latter died in an accident of falling of a tree on his boat, in which he was travelling from the bank, on the way to Sadiya. Bronson, without proceeding to Sadiya, halted at Jaipur in Upper Assam and stated his works among the Singphos of that area and after two years he started evangelic works also among the Nagas of Namsang near Jaipur. 6 In this way the American Baptist Mission first started their activities of spreading the Gospel of Christianity among the tribes of Upper Assam. But the insurrection of the Khamtis in 1839 compelled the Baptist Mission to stop their works at Sadiya and to shift centre of their works to the

5 H.K. Barpujari, op.cit., p. 301

plains of Assam. In October 1841 Rev. Miles Bronson came down to Nowgong and laid the foundation of the Mission work at Nowgong. 7

Although a branch of the Baptist Church was established as early as 1837, the members of the Church were devoting much more labour for the people of the hills, such it could not make much progress in their activities till 1843. 8 In Goalpara the Baptist Mission established its centre first in 1867. 9

The Mission, however, failed to introduce Christianity among the Assamese. "The Assamese are very slow to accept Christ. They think, by obeying and by thinking on God and respecting His name, they will be saved." 10 As J.T. Moore wrote in his book *Twenty Years in Assam*. So from sixties of the nineteenth century the Baptist Mission

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7 Ibid., p. 31.
8 Ibid., pp. 41-43.
9 Ibid., p. 43.
10 P.H. Moore, *Twenty Years in Assam*, 1901, p. 54.
again turned their attention to the Hills of Assam, which they stopped due to the Khamti insurrection in 1839. In 1855 Rev. White of the Baptist Church again came to Sadiya and his arrival marked the beginning of the evangelic activities again after the interval of fifteen years.\(^{11}\)

In 1867 Rev. Stoddard, a member of the Gauhati Mission, extended the works of the Mission among the Garos. In 1868 he went to Tura and opened a branch of the Mission there.\(^ {12}\) The first attempt to work among the Mikirs was made under Rev. E. Scott and Mrs. Scott in May 1863 but failed.\(^{13}\) In 1871 under Rev. Neighbour another attempt was made who was successful establishing a centre of their Church and in converting some people into Christianity.\(^{14}\)

\(^{11}\) Papers and Resolutions of the American Baptist Missionary Union, \textit{op.cit.}, p.31.
\(^{12}\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp.54,59.
\(^{13}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p.35.
\(^{14}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p.80.
As mentioned earlier, the evangelic works among the Nagas was first started by Rev. Miles Bronson of the Baptist at Jaipur in 1838. No attempt was made by this Mission to commence their activities again till 1871. After 1871 Rev. Clerk and his wife made a number of tours in the Ao Naga villages but till 1876 no branch was open. On February 9, 1876, first established a centre of their Mission in Haimung village by Rev. Clerk and in the next year Mrs. Clerk also joined him. In 1885 Rev. S.W. Rivenburg and his wife reached Molung village and commenced the evangelic works among the people. The first attempt to carry the Gospel to the Angami Nagas was made by Rev. C.B. King in 1878 but could not achieve any success. All his fellow men were killed by the head-hunters, Rev. King somehow escaped and found his way to Sibsagar. In 1879 he renewed his adventure and

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 81.
17 Ibid., pp. 84-86.
reached Kohima where he laid the foundation of the Baptist Mission for the first time.\textsuperscript{18}

The American Baptist established their branch at Cherrapunli in 1832 under Alexander B. Lish but after six years when he returned from Cherrapunji, the centre of the Baptist Mission also ended in Khasia and Jayantia Hills in 1838.\textsuperscript{19}

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission (Welsh Presbyterian Foreign Mission) was to start a firm base for Christianity in the Khasia Hills. Rev. Jocov Tomlin first visited Cherrapunji in 1840 and it was on his recommendation the Welsh Mission sent its first missionaries Rev. Jones and his wife in 1841, which marked the beginning of the missionary work of this society first in this area. Soon he was joined by Rev. and Mrs. William

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid., p. 60.}
Lewis and Dr. Owen Richard in 1843. In 1864 the Welsh Mission extended its centre of works to Upland Plateau, Mawlai and Laitumkhra of Shillong which became the district head quarters of the Mission. By 1867 the Mission brought Nangsaulis, Sheila and other areas of the Khasia and Jayantia hills under the centre of their evangelic works. During 1878 to 1888 the number of converts in the western areas of Khasi alone was increased from 203 to 684. The following table will show the success of this Mission in the Khasia and Jayantia Hills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churches and preaching places</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in Schools</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>2666</td>
<td>4625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people who came to listen to preaching</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>3326</td>
<td>9567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1881 the total number of the native Christian of the Welsh Calvinist Methodists Mission was 1796. The number

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21 N. Natarajan, loc. cit., p. 61;
22 Ibid., p. 66.
rose to 6941 in 1891 and in 1901 to 17126.23.

The Roman Catholic Mission first came to Gauhati in 1850 but left in 1857. It again came in 1972 and remained to Gauhati till 1890.24 This Mission first established branch in Khasia and Jayantia Hills at Laiteynsew ib the Shella area and by 1890 it extended its centres to other parts of the hills succeeded in converting 551 persons.25

In Cachar no Mission centre was established till 1881 though it was visited by the American Mission. The Christian who appeared in the Census report were the tea garden coolies like the Kols and Santhals who had immigrated from outside of Assam.26 In 1896 the Catholic Mission established a Chapel at Silchar.27

23 Census Report, 1881, p.45 ; 1891, p.95 ; 1901, p.37.
24 N. Natarajan, op. cit., p.73.
27 C. Backar, loc. cit., p.124.
First Assamese convert was Nidhi Levi Farwell, who was baptised at Jaipur by Rev. Miles Bronson of the American Baptist Mission in 1841. The first Mikir convert was baptised in 1863, two Garos were baptised also in this year and nine Ao Nagas in 1872. In Khasia and Jayantia Hills around 1813 seven Khasis were baptised by one Krishna Chandra Pal, a Bengali disciple of William Carry of the Serampur Mission. The Welsh Calvinist Methodist Mission baptised two Khasis, U Amor and U Rajan on 8th March 1845 at Cherrapunji. In 1872 the total number of Christian people in eight districts of Assam except Khasia and Jayantia hills, Naga hills and Garo hills were 1947. Of the 1947 Christian 739 were Europeans and Eurasians and the remaining 1208 were the natives.

28 Papers and Resolutions of the American Baptist Missionary Union, op. cit., p. 22.
29 Ibid., pp. 34, 54, 81.
30 N. Natarajan, op. cit., p. 60.
31 Ibid., p. 65.
In 1881, out of 48,81,426 population in the province, 7,093 were Christians of whom 5,462 were natives.\(^{33}\)

In 1872 religious statistics of eight districts were available. In those districts the number of converts had increased from 1,208 persons to 2,908 persons i.e. 1.40%.\(^{34}\) The increase of native Christians was mainly due to the immigration of Christian Kols and Santhals to the tea gardens of Assam from other provinces. The table given below shows the Christian people in Assam in 1872 and 1881.\(^{35}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Christian &amp; Eurasian</th>
<th>Natives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>39,46,054</td>
<td>1,947*</td>
<td>739*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>48,81,426</td>
<td>7,093</td>
<td>1,631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*these figures exclude the three hill districts)

\(^{33}\) Census Report, 1881, p.37.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
The number of Christian people in each district of Assam in 1872 and in 1881 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1881</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>Europeans &amp; Eurasians</td>
<td>Natives</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>205027</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>293738</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>1719539</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1969009</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golaghat</td>
<td>407714*</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>446232</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>561681</td>
<td>204*</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>644960</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darang</td>
<td>236009</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>273333</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogighat</td>
<td>256390</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>165*</td>
<td>310579</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siliguri</td>
<td>296589</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>370274</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>121287</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>179893</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasia &amp; Jayantia Hills</td>
<td>141838</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>169360</td>
<td>2107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>109548</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total in the Province: 3946054: 1947° | 739 | 1209 | 4881426 | 6977° | 1515 | 5462

( In 1881 in the above statement 116 Europeans and Eurasians were omitted in the total number of the Christian people and the number of European and Eurasians who were travellers and temporary visitors in the province.

* Census Report, 1881, p. 37.*
In 1872 out of total population of 39,46,054, 1947 were Christian of which 1208 were natives. The following table shows the different sex of Christianity professed in the province in the year 1881.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Church</th>
<th>Europeans and Eurasians</th>
<th>Natives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>1036</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterians</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Calvinists Methodists</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutherans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarians</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1631</strong></td>
<td><strong>5462</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. 39.
The number of the native Christian in 1891 were 14762 which rose to 33595 in 1901. The number of the Christian was highest in the Khasia and Jayantia hills where the number had increased from 7144 in 1891 to 17321 in 1901 and the number of native Christian rose from 6941 in 1891 to 17125 in 1901 i.e., 8.4% of the total population were returned as Christians belonging to the Welsh Calvinist Mission. The highest figure of conversion of the native people in the hills of Khasia and Jayantia hills was possible due to the fact that "There is no caste for social prejudices amongst the Khasis to act as an obstacle to conversion, they came but little under the influence of Hinduism." When the Missionaries approached them with a programme of education providing them with medical facility they were easily attracted by the greatness of Christianity.

39 Ibid., 1891, p.89; 1901, p.45
40 Ibid., 1901, p.45.
41 Ibid.
The following figures of Christian in each district of Assam shows in 1891 and 1901 will give a clear idea of the number of the Christian population in Assam in 1891, 1901.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>1891 Population</th>
<th>1891 Christians</th>
<th>1901 Population</th>
<th>1901 Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>367542</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>414781</td>
<td>957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>2154593</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>2241848</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>457304</td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>462052</td>
<td>3495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>634249</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>589187</td>
<td>1479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>307761</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>337313</td>
<td>3158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>344141</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>261160</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>457274</td>
<td>1365</td>
<td>591969</td>
<td>2489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>254053</td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>371396</td>
<td>3112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Cachar Hills</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>102402</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasia &amp; Jayantaia Hills</td>
<td>197904</td>
<td>7144</td>
<td>202250</td>
<td>17321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>121570</td>
<td>1184</td>
<td>138274</td>
<td>3647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42 Ibid., 1891, pp. 88-89; 1901, pp. 45, 52.
The Missionaries could achieve little success among the Hindu population of the plains of Assam. The age-old prejudice, caste system, and the religious belief acted as serious obstacles to Christianity in this regard. In his book *Twenty Years in Assam*, P.H. Moore noted, "The Assamese are very slow to accept priest. They think by obeying their Gurus, by their good works and by thinking on God and repeating His name, they will be saved." 43 He also quoted the comment of an Assamese Lady who not only declared, "The Hindu religion was good enough for our fathers and it is good enough for us," but also boldly made the Missionaries and the Christian religion responsible for all troubles "If we have been true to our religion we should not have been in trouble now. It is because you have brought this new religion that we have been trouble. We do not want your religion." 44

43 P.H. Moore, *Twenty Years in Assam*, p.54.
44 Ibid., p.59.
Besides, it was also not easy to collect the local people and to explain to them about the Gospel of Christianity. "In some of the villages the women and children were afraid to come before a Whiteman." The Missionaries found it hard to get the local people assembled to hear them while they entered Village. In order to attract the inhabitants, they visited the village markets on the Market days and delivered lectures in Assamese on the Gospel of Christianity and distributed to the Bible and other books from which they translated in the local language. As the womenfolk had played an important role in the family and social life of Assam, the Bible Women tried of giving them religious instructions. These Bible women went from door to door to meet the female members of the family and tried to make them understand of the Gospel of Christianity. Sometimes we met welcome, sometimes

45 Ibid., p.36.
indifferent, and sometimes humble hearer,"46 as wrote by Miss Orreu Keeler in her paper on "Women's Work Among the Assamese" which she read and discussed in the Jubilee Conference of the American Baptist Mission Union, held at Nowgang in 1886. But very often they found the door closed on their face, while they went for giving religious instructions. The Missionaries adopted other methods such as imparting training to the women of Assam on knitting and needle works. As in the words of Miss Keeler," We could only gain access to many of the higher castes by teaching some kind of needle works, and when we entered in a house all the women of neighbouring houses came out."47 But this policy did not achieve much success, as admitted by Miss Keeler," When


47 Ibid., p. 189.
we continued to teach Christianity we were not welcomed welcomed.\textsuperscript{48} Besides, very often the husbands were strongly opposed to our religion and did not want their wives to hear it.\textsuperscript{49} In many places Hindu priests too stood as a great hindrance in their works.

The women of Assam did not listen blindly to the religious instructions of the Bible Women. They had the knowledge and courage to protest and prove that Hindu religion was not inferior to Christianity. When the Bible Women visited the Hindu Women they giving a listen to them did not hesitate to declare that "her parents were Hindus and grand-parents were Hindus and therefore she was a Hindu and if she was sincere in that religion it would be all right with her."\textsuperscript{51} In this way, while the

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{50} P.H. Moore, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.
Christian Women tried to convince the native women of the superiority and truthfulness of the Christian scriptures, Assamese women boldly declared, "Our scriptures are also good." Sometimes they blamed the Missionaries for all the miseries or troubles.

The Missionaries on the other hand believed that age old prejudices, superstitions, the caste system and illiteracy as the factors which prevented them from spreading of the Gospel specially among the Hindu people of the plains. So they concluded firmly that, "the more, therefore, true knowledge is diffused among the natives... the more they will be necessarily prepared to forsake the false system of religion to which they are respectively devoted and to embrace that doctrine which as it is the only true one, is alone able to guide men to overlong life." So they considered the spread of

52 Ibid., p. 52.
53 Ibid., p. 59.
education to be the mightiest of all their weapons for
the gradual destruction of all local beliefs and
religions and for implanting Christianity in their
place. In addition to preaching and translations of the
Bible and other books in the local languages, the
establishment of schools was, therefore, recognised as an
important means for the spread of Christianity. Where ever
and where ever they established branch of their mission
they started schools. Rev. Nathan Brown and Rev. Oliver
Cutter started a School at Sadiya and within a week
twenty pupils enrolled themselves with great enthusiasm.55
By 1845 the American Baptist Missionaries opened 3
schools in Nowgang, 5 in Kamrup and 14 in Sibsagar with
an average attendance of 347 pupils.56 In 1832 Alexander
B. Lish started 3 schools at Saurai, Mauismai and Maumluh

55 V.H. Sword, Baptist in Assam, 1936, p. 38.
56 Report on the American Baptist Mission, 1845, p. 27.
in the Khasia Hills having 36 pupils in the roll. In 1871, Mr. Neighbour of the Baptist Mission opened a school in the Mikir Hills and secured government aid of Rs. 1500/- a year, Rs. 600/- for the normal school for the training of the teacher and Rs. 900/- for the maintenance of these village schools. By 1886 in Garo Hills 36 schools were under this Baptist Mission.

The Missionaries also started imparting education to women at a time when the public attempt in that respect was almost lacking and the government was also not in favour of taking any steps. Being the pioneer, the Missionaries had to face considerable obstructions in that phase. But the proselytising spirit to spread the Gospel among the natives made them persistent enough to overcome all the troubles and oppositions. The credit of establishing the first

57 N. Matarajan, op. cit., p. 60.

58 Papers and resolutions, of the American Baptist Missionary Union, op. cit., p. 34.

59 Ibid., p. 68.
school for females in Assam goes to Mrs. Barker and Mrs. Cutter of the American Baptist Mission when they started a school at Sibsagar in 1840. In 1843, Miss Bronson opened a school at Nowgang, in 1850 at Kamrup by Mrs. Barker and in 1874 at Goalpara by Mrs. Keith. In 1843 Mrs. Lewis of the Welsh Mission laid the foundation of the female education in the Khasia and Jayantia Hills by starting a school for the girls at Mausmai.

Due to the lack of students and also the reluctance of the high caste and class Hindus to send their girls in the public school under the care of a Christian teacher, the Missionaries, at the initial stage, had to depend on the 'Bazar Girls' to start school. A few Bazar Girls were persuaded to come to the Mission.

60 Ibid., p.184.
61 Ibid.
bunglow where they were taught by the Missionaries." For the collection of students they went out "in the high ways and by ways and sought the orphans and the homeless to start a school." They went from door to door to make the people understand of the need of women education in the social life and of the upliftment of the existing society and also of their family life.

To attract the people they supplied books, pencils, free of cost, presented valuable and attractive things to the girls and even lucrative amounts were paid to the students so that the neighbouring girls would be attracted to come to the schools. As "skill in weaving cooking and husking paddy was considered greater complements in a girl than her education, the


64 Ibid., p. 185.

65 P.H. Moore, op. cit., p. 16.
Missionaries started special coaching in weaving, knitting and cooking along with that of reading and writing.  

In this way, sacrifice and great perseverance of the Missionaries opened the door of education to the girls of Assam for the first time and gradually female education gained popularity, though slowly but firmly. In 1881 the numbers of the literates in Assam was only .8% per mile, in 1891 it went up to 2.2% out of every 1000 females and in 1901 it was 4 in every 1000 women.  

In Khasia and Jayantia Hills the Missionaries achieved grand success in female education. In 1901 it was as high as 34 in 1000, while it varied from 5 in Lakhimpur and North Cachar to 1 in Nowgong and Naga Hills. The following statistics show the number of literates:

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mission schools during 1892-93 and 1893-94.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missions</th>
<th>1892-93</th>
<th></th>
<th>1893-94</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of</td>
<td>No. of</td>
<td>No. of</td>
<td>No. of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhal Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Baptist Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo Hills</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga Hills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noulgang</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh Calvinist Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasia &amp; Jayantia Hills</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3364</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society for the Propagation of Gospel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>58008</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>5810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Missionaries even tried to win the heart of the people by rendering humanitarian services like dispensaries or extending medical care to the people and supplied all medicine and other necessary things free of cost.  

In this way, gradually they broke the ice with the people and by persuasion, example and tremendous amount of zeal, devotion and perseverance slowly won them over. The Hindus of the plains adopted eagerly all the humanitarian and beneficial contributions of the Missionaries but not their Gospel. But in the Hills, specially in Khasia and Jayantia Hills, the Missionaries achieved extra-ordinary success, as in Khasia and Jayantia Hills alone 8.6% of the total population of the district returned themselves as Christian in the census of 1901. This was due to the fact that caste or social prejudices

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71 Census Report, 1901, p. 45.
was not existing in the society of the tribal people of the Hills of Assam and they also came but little under the influence of Hinduism. So when the Missionaries with their valuable and humanitarian services landed the field to spread Christianity, except the opposition of some people at the initial stage, got good and encouraging response.

The Missionaries in course of their activities which they adopted in achieving their aim of spreading the Gospel of Christianity among the natives of Assam, directly or indirectly contributed to changes of the society in Assam. The Missionaries liberated the door of education from the grip of a few high caste and class people and was opened to the mass people, irrespective of caste and creed and class. The spread of education among the people gradually changed the authoritarian outlook of the people to realism.

The Christian Missionaries were not literary men but they prepared the mind of the people for
evangelisation by eradicating blind beliefs and prejudices and for this purpose they also adopted the policy of instruction the people in local languages. According to them mother tongue would be the easiest way to reach the mind of the people. So they themselves took to the learning of the local language assiduously and not only preached the Gospel in local tongue but also introduced the language as the medium of instruction in their schools even when the government introduced Bengali language in the schools and courts of Assam. The Bible and other religious books were translated into Assamese, and in Khasi language.

They also translated the New Testament, Notes on Gospel and Hymns.

Besides the religious books, the Missionaries

72 A.K. Gurney, Kaminikantar Charitra, p. 6; M. Neog, Pavitra Assam, p. 49.

73 N. Natarajan, op. cit., p. 123.
also contributed greatly in the development of secular literature in Assam. Since they introduced the Assamese language as the medium of instruction in their schools, they had to write books on different subjects including grammar and dictionary for the students. William Ronimson wrote the *Grammar of the Assamese Language* which was published in 1839. Bronson's *Grammatical Notes of the Assamese Language*, S.R. Ward's *Anglo-Assamese Vocabulary* and H.B.L. Cutter's *Anglo-Assamese Phases* were published in 1888, 1864 and 1877 respectively. Besides, other books on different subjects such as *Bare-Matarī, Pratham Kitāp, Prārtha Vidyā, Pratham Gananā, Afrikār Konwar, Maurī Cāoli, Eqālār Bāh, Dhārmik Chahā* were also published. A.K. Gurney's *Kāminikāntar Charitra* was published in 1877 and Mrs. Gurney's *Phulmati Āru Karunā Kānta* in 1877.

Brown and Cutter, the two members of the American Baptist Mission, established the first printing press in Assam in 1836 and from this press the first Assamese
periodical "Arunodai" was published in 1846. It was a monthly paper devoted to religion, science and general intelligence; it helped much in enlightening the people of Assam by supplying news and developments of the modern world by publishing articles on various topics on geography, history, science, religions etc. It "constitutes a milestone of literary history and progress." Centering this periodical a group of new writers got the scope to expose their literary talents. "The Arunodai, the printing press and the schools that the American Baptist Mission established helped to bring the fruit of western science, literature and education within the reach of a considerable section of the people." Nidhi Levi, the first Assamese convert, published a number of articles on natural science in Arunodai. "The modern literature in Assamese whether Christian or non-Christian may be said to be the product of"

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75 Ibid.
of the last sixty years of the 19th century. Brown, Bronson and Nidhi are the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founder of the Assamese Christian literature.\textsuperscript{76}

The role of the Missionaries in the development of literature and language of other linguistic groups was also significant. The Welsh Calvinist Mission contributed greatly for the development of the Khasi literature and language. In 1841 the Roman script was first introduced by T. Jones, who was known as the father of the Khasi literature, language and education, wrote \textit{First Khasi Reader} and \textit{God Mother}, two text books during 1843 and 1861. The \textit{New Testament} was translated and published in several editions in Khasi language by Rev. William. He and Mrs. Lewis also wrote and translated several books in this language. In 1855 the first Khasi grammar was

\textsuperscript{76} B. K. Barua, \textit{History of Assamese Literature}, p. 105.
published. This Mission also published the complete Bible, a play of Shakespeare and a series of Khasi Readers in 1891. The first Khasi periodical was also published by this Mission in 1889. 77

Some of the Garo books and literary works were also written and published by the American Baptist Mission. Rev. Miles Bronson compiled his Phrases in English and Garo in 1868, which was followed by W. J. Williamson's A Vocabulary of the Garo and Koch Dialects in 1869. Rev. T. J. Keith published his Dictionary of the Garo Language: Garo and Bengali-English in 1873. Rev. Ramke Momin published the Bengali-Garo Dictionary in 1887. All these had been of great help to other writers of that age in translating the books from English or Bengali to Garo language. These books helped in the development of Garo language. Besides, Rev. J. J. Steedward published Primes and a small Catechism

and Hymns, Rev. M. C. Mason published Tracts Translation and Gato Arithmetic and New Primer, I. II & III and Garo Hymns written by Rev. E. G. Phillips. 78

The Missionaries liberated the Assamese literature from the old mythological theme to modern secular character dealing with the life and society of the mortal millions. They for the first time brought the literature within the reach of the common people. A number of literary society and circle sprang up in the towns. Old beliefs, ways and concepts slowly yielded place to new one. The western literary forms such as - lyrics, dramas, sonnets, novles, short stories and biographies also entered into the literature of Assam. The Missionaries not only liberated the spirit of the Assamese from the bondage of old-world ideas in the domain of thought, but they also removed the confines of the language and made it quite suitable for modern use. 79

78 Ibid., p. 75.

In 1836 when the British Government imposed Bengali as the medium of instruction in all the schools and courts of Assam, the Missionaries kept Assamese as the medium of instruction in their schools. They realised that, "It would be vain to attempt enlighting a country through the medium of any language besides its own." and that the mother tongue would be the ablest and shortest way to reach the mind of the people. So when the youths of Assam raised their voice for the reintroduction of the Assamese language, whatever their ulterior objectives, the strongest support came from the Christian Missionaries. They not only joined with Amandaram and others in urging the government to reinstate Assamese in its rightful place as the language of schools and courts of Assam, but also prepared the ground by publishing a number of books in that language. They submitted a number of memorandums to the government in favour of the reintroduction of the language and tried their best to prove that the Assamese
is a language of its own bearing a separate identity like that of Bengali. Rev. Miles Bronson of the American Baptist Mission in his memorandum remarked, "Assamese is the language usually spoken by the entire population of the Brahmaputra Valley and in most cases it is the only medium of intercourse with the bordering hill tribes. There is nothing to show that Assamese race and their language have not existed in the Valley from the time immemorial and it is surprising that during the change of rulers, the oppression and mis-rule in which they have been subjected, there are no trace of any material change in their language." A.H. Danforth in his memorandum pointed out injurious effect of the use of Bengali in education, "The boys are set to learning Bengali, they spend a year or two in running over parrot like, unmeaning words and sentences, without the slightest idea of what they read," so this could not made the students

80 Correspondance relating to the question whether the Assamese or Bengali language should be taught in the schools of Assam, p. 151.

81 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix-I, p. XXXVIII, IX
interested in reading and writing. Bronson commented that "In all the Government schools in Assam, Bengali is studied the same as Latin and Greek are studied in England or as Persia would be, if Persian instead of Bengali was the language of the courts." So he requested the government and hoped, "Your honour will not now retard the elevation of this people by suppression of their mother tongue, but that you will open to them at once the true, the natural means of their elevation - the means of learning the science and reading in their own language, the wonderful works of God."

In this way the Missionaries offered their strongest support in favour of the reinstatement of the Assamese language in the courts and schools of Assam and finally the controversy over the language was solved with

82 Selected Papers on the Question whether Assamese or Bengali should be the language of the schools and Courts of Assam, Government of Bengal, p. 154.
83 Ibid.
the victory of the Assamese elite on 9 April, 1873. Through their mouth-piece, Arunodai, they made the people of Assam conscious of the social evils like child marriage, polygamy, caste system, and the dreadful effects of the opium eating. In one article published in this periodical the terrible effects of opium eating is described as follows:

"ati manda vastu kāni
ji khāy bar agyāni
Sanchita bastu ṭoy tār hāni
mukhe kay manda bāni
sakal a loke jāni
kāni khāy manda prāni
si nahay aansarāt gyāni
kathāi tār aprmāni."


(opium is bad thing. The opium eater is not a wise person. He gradually lost his property, quarrelled with all people, lost the peace in his mind, and morality also. He lost his health and proceeded to the death. This is the fate of the opium eater.)

The American Baptist Mission, Gauhati also submitted a memorandum before the Royal Commission on opium in 1992-93. In this memorandum they opined in favour of complete abolition of the opium in Assam.

"We are led by observation to see and believe that the consumption of opium by the people of Assam undermines veracity, honesty, ambition and thrift in the consumer and his descendants; and because we have seen and known cases where the body was, within a few years wrecked and death ensued, evidently as a result of the abuse of this drug, which the law compels druggists of other lands to
level; poison', we are, therefore, unanimously of the opinion that the present system of sale of opium is wicked, is ultimately unprofitable to the government, is an abomination in the sight of Almighty God, and should be abolished.  

In this way, the Missionaries did much to contribute in the social changes in Assam.

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86 Royal Commission on Opium, 1892-93, Appendix -XXXIII, p. 460.
Pre-British Assam did not face any problem of influx of population from outside. No doubt the Ahom kings took initiative of inviting scholars, architects, artisans, saints, and Brahmins to settle in the kingdom. They were, however, not allowed to return to their respective states. Rigorous restrictions were imposed for the entry of foreigners in the Ahom kingdom other than those men of qualities invited by the kings. Therefore, the number of immigrants, before the coming of the English to Assam, was very limited who in course of their stay completely assimilated with the people of the land by adopting the local language and culture.
The population of Assam, before 1769, was estimated by Gunabhiram Barua at about two million and a half. Following the Ooamaria disturbances, Burmese invasions, and the consequent anarchy there had been considerable depopulation. "Large tracts, once inhabited by a happy and numerous population have been converted into extensive and unwholesome jungles and ceased not only to be the haunts of man but had become hostile to human life." By thirties of the nineteenth century the population of Assam, as estimated by John M'Cosh came down to 7,99,519 souls. But with the restoration of political stability by the British authority in this region, the population began to increase gradually.

1 Gunabhiram Barua, Asam Bandhu, Publication Board, Assam, 1984, p. 84.
3 John M'Cosh, Topography of Assam, p. 129
In 1853 it became 12,01,151, of which in Kamarup the number of the people inhabited was 1,87,775, Nowgang 2,41,300, Darrang 1,85,569, Sibsagar 1,59,573, Lakhimpur 85,296 and Goalpara 14,138. In 1872 the population of the Brahmaputra Valley was 17,89,650 which rose to 22,25,771 in 1881 and 24,49,782 in 1891. The number of population reached to 26,19,077 in 1901. The population of the whole province, as found in the Census Report, was 39,46,054 in 1872, which increased to 48,81,426 in 1881 and rose to 54,76,833 in 1891 and after ten years in 1901 it reached to 61,26,343. The following table shows the population of Assam as a whole

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6 Ibid., 1901, p. 4.
7 Ibid., 1881; 1891; 1901;
and separately of that of the Brahmaputra Valley and Surma Valley and Hill areas in 1872, 1881, 1891, and 1901.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valleys and Hills</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmaputra Valley</td>
<td>1,879,650</td>
<td>2,225,771</td>
<td>2,449,782</td>
<td>2,619,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surma Valley</td>
<td>1,924,566</td>
<td>2,262,747</td>
<td>2,523,135</td>
<td>2,697,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill areas</td>
<td>1,418,384</td>
<td>3,929,081</td>
<td>5,039,161</td>
<td>5,253,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in the</td>
<td>5,346,054</td>
<td>9,881,426</td>
<td>16,476,033</td>
<td>18,026,343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth of population is depended chiefly on the extent to which birth rate exceed the death rate and on the number of immigration which took place. In 1891 the population of Assam increased by 3,95,407 or 12.19%. In 1891 the population of Assam increased by 5,95,407 or 12.19% of which 3,65,445 or 7.48% increased due to

8 Census Report, 1881, p. 30; 1891, p. 67; 1901, p. 5.
immigration. The real natural growth was somewhat less as the figure included a population of 70,050 in North Lushai and the Mokokchung sub-division of the Naga Hills which were not included in the year 1881. So excluding the population of those area the natural growth of the population of the province was 6.09% in ten years from 1881 to 1891. After ten years in 1901 the population of the province as censused was 6,126,343 , an increased of 325,776 or 5.99%. The persons born in the province was increased by 67,200 or 1.36% while the number of the immigrants from other provinces had increased by 50.85%. In 1901 of the total population 6,126,343 in the province 7,75,844 were immigrants i.e. nearly 1.36% of the total population.

9 Ibid., 1891, p. 78.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 1901, pp. 24-25.
The reasons behind this large-scale immigration in Assam were to be found in the administrative necessity, scope of service and trade, the importation of coolies and labourers following the development of tea gardens.

Immediately after the occupation of Assam by the British, attempt was made to administer it with the help of the local people. David Scott, the first Agent to the Governor-General, reinstituted some of the old officials of the Ahom administration in the revenue and judicial departments. But as they were quite ignorant of the English language and the intricacies of the new administration, they proved themselves incompetent in the performance of their duty.¹² In such a situation, duly qualified persons from the neighbouring provinces, specially of Bengal had to be recruited. The administrative requirements thus compelled the new government to

¹² Political Consultation, 1833, May 30, No. 89.
appoint clerks and officials recruited from out-side of the country which caused the inflow of immigrants in Assam from the neighbouring provinces.

At the time of British occupation of Assam, the density of population was about 26.11 per square miles which indicates that the major portion of land remained fallow and uncultivated, covered with thick jungles and marshes. Consequently, the revenue derived from the land was not sufficient to the new government. In order to increase the revenue, the government adopted a policy of bringing more areas under cultivation. Although lands were offered on liberal terms no encouraging response came from the local people, and those who applied for such grants could not fulfil the condition laid down by the District Collectors.  

13 Bengal Revenue Consultations, 1852, 12 August, No.6.
decided to encourage the foreign enterprise to enter and start the cultivation of varieties of crops for commercial purpose and to open new industries in the waste land of Assam. The government by passing a law declared that no grant should be made of less than five hundred acres and unless the person, applied for the grant satisfied the collectors that he possessed the sufficient means for its utilisation.\textsuperscript{14} It was also declared that one-fourth of the granted land was to be exempted from taxation and the remaining three-fourth was to be given as tax-free for twenty years and after the end of the twenty years, the land would be brought under assessment of an increasing rate of one anna and half to six annas per acre.\textsuperscript{15} Such condition did not go in favour of the native people of Assam. On the other hand, the discovery of high quality tea plant, capable of

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, 1855, 31 May, No. 10.
capturing the world market, encouraged the foreign entrepreneur to come and avail the opportunity of the liberal terms of the waste land policy of the government.

The gradual development of the tea industry had created acute problem of procuring labourers as the local people were highly reluctant to offer their services in the plantations. Only a few Kacharis come forward to work for a few months during the interval of their cultivation to earn something extra. Even the attempt of the Bar-Senapati, the chief of the Matta ks and Raja Purandar Singh, the king of Upper Assam, to convince and compel the local people under them to work in the tea gardens also failed. 16 The planters were, thus, compelled to import labourers from Chhotanagpur, Midnapur, Birbhum and other places of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh. From September

1st, 1859 to 31st August 1860, 2049 persons were recruited as labourers for the tea plantations and in the next year 1860-61, 3,081 persons were imported to serve as labourers. In 1870, the number of the labourers recruited from Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and Bengal were 2,098. The following figures show the number of persons imported to work as labourers in Assam during 1870-73 to 1877-80.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of labourers recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>2,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>9,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>14,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>52,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>31,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>43,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>24,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>15,913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1883-84 the entire labour force in the tea gardens numbered 2,37,404; the number of imported labourers increased to 4,78,293 in 1893 and it rose to 6,45,000 in 1901. From 1883 to 1893 the total number of the labour force was increased by 2,40,889 i.e. within this ten years the number was more than doubled. From 1893 to 1901 the total number of immigrants (including those in tea gardens) in Assam stood at 7,75,844 of which 6,45,000 persons were the imported tea garden labourers. So about 83% of the immigrants were the imported labourers of the tea gardens. The following table below will indicate the position in

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19 Administrative Report on Assam, 1883-84, p. VII.
20 Ibid., 1893-94, p. 155; Census Report, 1901, p. 34.
21 Ibid., 1901, p. 34.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Immigrants</th>
<th>Tea Garden Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>39,46,054</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>48,81,426</td>
<td>2,80,000</td>
<td>1,70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>54,76,833</td>
<td>5,10,672</td>
<td>2,65,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>61,26,343</td>
<td>7,75,844</td>
<td>6,45,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The labourers were recruited on contract basis through contractors, who visited the villages of those provinces to collect the people. Some of the labourers renewed their contract and continued to work while others settled in the rural areas and engaged in cultivation. Only a very few of them returned at the end of their contract. In 1891, 97,113 persons were censused in the whole province who came as labourers but settled as cultivators in the villages and in 1901 their number increased to 1,21,368.

22 Ibid., 1881, p.21 ; 1891, p.78 ; 1901, p.34.
The following figures show the number of persons born in the Central Provinces, North-Western Provinces, Madras, Rewa, and five districts of Bengal who came in Assam as tea garden labourers but censused in the villages of seven districts of Assam in 1901.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>18,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>2,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>6,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>32,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>16,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>16,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>28,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,21,368</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Public Works Department also imported some labour force for the construction of roads from the places like Nadia, Hoogly, Twenty-four Parganas.

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23 **Ibid.**, 1901, p.35.
24 **Ibid.**
For the construction of railway lines, the Assam Railway and Trading Company Ltd. alone employed about 100 European employees of whom 69 persons were brought out direct from Europe. The number of coolies imported from other districts was 5872. A good number of people also came from Dacca, Moinansingh and Rangpur as traders, boatmen and Khalasis on the mail and cargo steamers. The merchants were mostly from Rajasthan and persons from Bhutan were temporary visitors who came down in the winter season to barter salt, musk, and spices for rice and returned with the commencement of summer.

The natives of Nepal were mostly recruited for the local regiments and military and police battalions.

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25 Public Works Department, Progress Report, 1871-76, p. 12
28 Ibid., p. 193
29 Ibid.
After their retirement many of them settled permanently in Assam. The European came to Assam as Government Officers, Tea planters, and members of different Christian Mission. The following figures show the number of outsiders who entered in Assam from different countries and provinces of India in 1891 and 1901.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province and countries</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>4,18,360</td>
<td>5,03,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Province</td>
<td>3,844</td>
<td>48,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western Province</td>
<td>57,851</td>
<td>8,41,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>10,654</td>
<td>21,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>6,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>1,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejputana</td>
<td>4,877</td>
<td>9,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Isles</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>1,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>11,377</td>
<td>21,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Else Where</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>18,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5,10,671</td>
<td>7,75,844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 Ibid. 1891, Statement No.11, p.191; 1901, Table No.111, p.38.
The development transport system after the British occupation made journey easier and comfortable, this also encouraged the outsiders to enter the land and to avail the charms of service, trade etc. In this way Assam had to provide shelter to a great number of outsiders which caused an increase of her population. The following figures show the variation in the density of the population in Assam district-wise in 1872, 1881, 1891 and in 1901.

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31 Ibid., 1901, Subsidiary table No.1.p.10.
Table in the next page.
The immigration of the outsiders caused the gradual increase in the density of the population in the Province. In 1826 the density in Assam proper was about 26.11 and in 1872 the number rose to 78 in the Brahmaputra Valley and in 1881, 1891, 1901 the number increased to 93, 102 and 108 respectively. Similarly in the Surma Valley the density of population was 256 in 1872, 301 in 1881, 336 in 1891 and 353 in 1901 and in the hills it was 16, 19, 23 and 27 in 1872, 1881, 1891, 1901 respectively. In 1872 the density of population in the province of Assam was 91 in 1881 the number rose to 105, in 1891 it increased to 103 and in 1901 the number reached to 109.

Besides a group of people also migrated out of the provinces contrary to the age-long belief of the people of other parts of India about Assam that, "A person entered in Assam would never return back." In 1881 a total 41,038 persons who were born in Assam, were censused in other provinces. In 1891 the number of persons increase
to 43,611 and in 1901 it reached to 51,323. The following table shows the number of persons in Assam but censused in other provinces of India in 1881, 1891 and 1901.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajmir Marwar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boroda</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>40,807</td>
<td>40,704</td>
<td>48,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buram</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Province</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Province</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1,790</td>
<td>834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajputana</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coorga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>41,138</td>
<td>43,611</td>
<td>51,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 Ibid., 1901, p. 36.
33 Ibid., 1891, Statement No. 113, p. 196; 1901, p. 36.
Of those 51,323 people, who were censused in other Provinces in 1901 but born in Assam, Bengal only absorbed 94% of the whole. The number of people who immigrated in and migrated from the province of Assam in 1881, 1891, 1901 was as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Migrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>48,81,426</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>41,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>54,76,833</td>
<td>5,10,672</td>
<td>43,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>61,26,343</td>
<td>7,75,844</td>
<td>51,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statement though shows the migration of 41,038; 43,611 and 51,323 people in 1881, 1891, and 1901 from Assam but in comparison to that of the immigration the number was very nominal. So the large-scale immigration of outsiders from various parts of India and abroad

34 Ibid., 1881, p. 29; 1891, pp. 78, 196; 1901, pp. 24, 25, 36, 38.
Made Assam the meeting place of divergent culture. The co-existence with the people with separate culture, gradually gave the local people the scope to know of their cultural aspects in the matter of clothing, hair style, food habits and furniture and thus to influence them in some way. Specially those who got the light of education and was appointed in the offices and came in close touch with the foreigners, were highly influenced with the western culture and put on trousers, shirts, hats, shoes. They furnished their house in western style with modern furnitures like chairs, tables, carpets, art glass, organ and lusters. These educated youth also changed their hair style and did not hesitate to

35 Lakshminath Bazbarua, Mor Jiban Suarani, pp. 12, 18-19, 43, 88, 114, 135; ADPJ. PP. 8, 50.

36 Ibid., p. 50; Ibid., pp. 12, 18-19, 34, 88, 114, 135; A. Guha, "Impact of Bengali Renaissance on Assam", Indian Economic and Social History Review, p. 292.
to accept the new hair cutting ignoring the time honoured customs of keeping long tail. Some of them besides used European dress, who wear against western culture, began to put on the dress of Bengal like Punjabi, shawl and shantipuri dhuti. Some of them, however, dressed themselves on choga-chapkan and the ladies of some enlightened families began to wear sarees.

With the coming of the Christian Missionaries, the Christian religion a new faith to the people of Assam, came to Assam. In 1901, 35,969 Christian people were inhabiting in Assam of which 2,099 were members of European and allied races, 275 were Eurasians and 33,595 were the natives of the land. Only in Khasi Hills 17,125 natives were censused as Christian in 1901. There were 1,797 Jains of whom 1,600 were censused in

37 Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Amar Jiban Shakti, p.25.
39 Census Report, 1901, p.45.
40 Ibid., p.46.
the Brahmaputra Valley. They were mostly the Marwari who monopolised the trade of the Valley. 41 The number of the people belonging to the Sikh faith were 505 who came in Assam being employed as the military and police men. 42 The followers of the Brahmo religion in Assam were 360 in number but majority of them were also outsiders and except few educated persons like Gunabhiram Baruah who was openly admitted into this faith, in most of them were immigrants from Bengal serving in ministerial appointment. 43

Apart from this among the Hindus, who were the majority, comprised the major portion of the population that is 34,29,099 souls or 56% of the total population of 61,26,343. 44 With coming of some Hindu immigrants the worship of goddesses like Durga, Saraswati was becoming

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p.42.
popular among the people of Assam. During the Ahom age
this was confined to temples and aristocracy, but now
began to be worship publicly. In 1874, in the district
of Nowgong alone Durga Goddess was worshiped in three
areas. A news published in Sadharani, a news paper
published from Calcutta, on 20 February, 1876 that the
Hindus living at Shillong worship goddess Saraswati,
which was attended by English and Khasi people.
Haliram Dhekial Phukan used to perform the worship of
the goddesses Lakshmi, Chandi, Basanti and god Narayan,
Ganesh every year in his house with great festivity.
At the time of such religious functions jatras parties
from Bengal was often invited to entertain the people.
Bengali musicians, drummers, dancers, began to recreate
the people at the time of festivals and marriage
ceremonies of the well-to-do families. Even some

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45 Sadharani, 8 November, 1872, No. 2, p. 21. P. H. Moore, Twenty
Years in Assam, Delhi re-print 1981, (1901), pp. 27-28.
46 Sadharani, 20 February, 1876, No. 17, p. 94.
47 ADPJC., pp. 23-25.
48 Haliram Dhekial Phukan, Assam Buranjii, p. 103; GB., pp.
202-203; Padmanath Gohain Barua, Mor Suwarani,
Gauhati, 1971, p. 82.
of the Gossains of the satras began to prefer foreign musical instruments than those of their own and some of the elite of the society even felt ashamed of their Bihu dance and songs. 49

The appointment of outsiders in almost all offices and schools on the basis of educational qualifications and not on caste and class, encourage the local people of all sections to get their children to be educated. This gradually helped in demolishing Brahmonical superiority in the matter of education and also in social life. In 1901 out of every 1000 literate persons in the province besides the high castes, Brittle Baniya 2, Barni 5, Baria 2, kamar 3, kumar 3, Nadiyal 17, Kaibarta 7, Hira 1, Bhumij 1, Namassudra 1, Goala 4, Napit 7, Keusat 11, Saha 42; Teli 10. Which indicated the spread of


education among all the sections of the society. In the schools the children of all the castes and classes, high and low were getting their instructions sitting side by side without any hesitation. 51

The people of Assam produced most of their requirements in their own villages. The advent of the Europeans and with them the vast number of the people of other parts of India caused the increase of the population in the province and the food grains produced by the local people for their own consumption, was quite insufficient for feeding the increased people of the province. Consequently Assam, by the middle of the 19th Century had become a deficit area in food grains. The annual rice were estimated at not less than three mound in 1873 and during the eighties and early nineties of the 18th Century it rose from four to five lakhs mounds per year. 52

51 A. Guha, "Impact of Bengal Renaissance in Assam," *Journal of Indian Economic and Social History Review*, p. 292.

52 B. C'Allen, *Gazetter of Bengal and North-East India*, Delhi, 1979, p. 127.
Not to speak of rice, the varieties of consumer goods required by those migrated people could not be produced locally or in sufficient quantities to meet the demand of the people. As a result, though the Government applied various improved methods to increase the production, but for immediate necessity various commodities had to be imported from outside of the province. The following statement gives an idea of some of the commodities that were imported into the province in 1890-91 and 1900-01 (in thousand of rupees).

53 B.C. Allen, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India*, re-print Delhi, 1979, p. 127.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>1890 - 1891</th>
<th>1900 - 1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton twist and yarn</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton piece goods</td>
<td>8677</td>
<td>8666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gam and pulse</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>1384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals</td>
<td>2714</td>
<td>3968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil, Kerosine</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>1171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oils, others</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>2141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (husked)</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>3841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>2055</td>
<td>2065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other articles</td>
<td>6158</td>
<td>12550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>27110</strong></td>
<td><strong>40305</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the small domestic market of the province was not large enough to supply all varieties of consumption good required by those migrated people in the land and as all those commodities had to import from outside of the province, the prices of the consumer's goods increased.

Apart from this, the people of Assam who were their own weaver, cultivators, black-smith, potters were also drawn by all these attractive, low-priced and fine imported goods. This caused devastating effects on the cottage industries of Assam, on the other hand the cheap but lucrative British products made people luxurious.
DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

During the Ahom rule, the chief means of communication for all sections of the people was the boat, horse, elephant, and the palanquin were, however, restricted to the higher classes of the society.¹ Most of the roads that were used during the Ahom age on both banks of the river Brahmaputra turned impassable due to the want of total repair.²

This state of communication system created serious handicaps for the British Government in consolidating their authority over the kingdom and its

¹ J. Butler, Travels in Assam, p. 223.
² Foreign Department, 1832, part A; Political Consultation, 15 October, No. 1142.
neighbouring principalities which they acquired by fighting the Burmese. Moreover it caused great difficulties in military supplies and in transporting the commodities required for the consumption of the increased population as the local product was not sufficient to fulfil the demands. So the government felt the necessity of the development of transport system in the region.

Steamer:

Colonel Richards, the Junior Commissioner of Assam, as early as 1825 suggested the maintenance of a few steamboats in Assam for towing up supplies, stores and troops. In 1830, David Scott, the Agent of the Governor-General, requested the Governor to send a steamboat for the communication and transportation of grain in and from Assam. Accordingly in 1831 the Chief Secretary sent a steamer to Assam expressing the inability

3 Foreign Consultations, January 6, 1826, No. 43.
of the government to introduce a regular steamer service in Assam. As the government was in dark about the revenue that would be received from this region and so till 1832 they could not take any firm decision on Assam, whether to retain it or to return it to the old Ahom authority, the new regime, therefore, was reluctant to expand a heavy amount in introducing the steamer service regularly in Assam.

This irregular service with one steamer was inadequate to solve the transport problem of Assam. The starting of the tea plantation on large scale by forming the companies like Assam Tea Company (1839), Jorhat Tea Company (1859) increased the problem and the new industries had to face great trouble in transporting the production of the factories. The local boats were not only very expensive and a long time factor

4 Foreign Department, 1830, Political Consultations A, 7 May, No.51; 6 May, 1831, No.21.
but also were not sufficient to carry the increased production to Calcutta. In 1839 the Assam Tea Company started its own fleet of country boats. The Company also purchased a steamer of its own at the cost of £13,000 and tried on the Brahmaputra.5

But this also could not solve the problem of transport of the company. As the native people were loath to work as labourers in the factories and those few natives who came to work as labourers at the interval of their cultivation was not enough to meet the labour problem of the plantations, the planters had to import labour force from outside of Assam which also required the introduction of regular steamer service to and from Assam.

5 Bengal Spectator, 18 December 1842, No. 14.
In 1847 the Government took the decision to start steamer service from Calcutta to Gauhati. On 13 August 1847 a steamer named 'Jomesh' left Calcutta with three hundred passengers and reached Gauhati on 29th of the same month. The fare of an independent cabin was costed about ₹150/- . A person could take his servant with him without any extra fare in the cabin. If two persons wanted to travel with a servant in a cabin he had to pay extra ₹4/- more. Travelling in an ordinary seat from Calcutta to Gauhati costed ₹11 and 12 annas as only fare of the journey according to the rate of half anna per mile and for feeding, if any desired, extra two annas were charged per meal from him. 6

This steamer service was opened for once in a month. So till 1853 the Tea planters had to depend

6 Arunodai, September, 1847, No.9.
on this monthly service of the Government steamer which could not fulfil the growing demand of the Tea plantation. In 1859, 68 gardens with an area of 759 acres under tea cultivation yielding 1205689 lbs. of tea existed in Assam. This rapid growth of the tea garden and the gradual increase of tea production made transport problem more critical. Besides, as the steamer service Gauhati and Dibrugarh was not introduced the planters had to depend fully on local boats which was not only very costly but also unsuitable to carry sufficient carriages.

In 1853 when A.J. Mills visited Assam at the instruction of the Government to submit a report on the land, the tea planters of Assam sent representation pointing out their difficulties due to this undeveloped transport system of the region and request him to take necessary action so that "the existing steam
communication be extended to Dibrugarh, in Upper Assam. They also urged the Government to fix a moderate fair of journey for the coolies imported by the steamers in Assam to fulfill the growing demands of the Gardens. They also entreated that a monthly communication be maintained with Gauhati and the trips to Dibrugarh be periodical at intervals not extending beyond two months and that the steamers plying be accompanied by a cargo flats for the conveyance of goods and passengers.

The planters thought that the measure is eminently calculated to benefit and advance the interest of Assam generally, simultaneously with our own, by giving an impulse to immigration and affording facilities for general enterprise in the fertile province suffering from paucity of population, hitherto tedious of access,

7 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix -E

8 Ibid.
and hence up to the present time a comparative wilderness."

In 1856 the Government extended the steamer service up to Dibrugarh. Till 1861, however, no step was taken to introduce a regular steamer service in Assam. In 1862 the Indian Steam Navigation Company first started regular steamer service on the Brahmaputra river to fulfil the crying demand of Assam. In that year the Company made seven trips to and from Assam and from the following they started the regular monthly trips.

Soon another company known as the River Steamer Navigation Company entered in the field with three steamer and three fleets in 1862. By 1863 the River steam Navigation Company paid more attention to Cachar

9 Ibid.
11 A R A., 1874-75, pp. 93-94.
12 Ibid.
and in 1875 the Company started a fortnightly service to Cachar. They also started weekly steamer service on the river Brahmaputra. By 1869 the number of their steamers was sixteen, fleets thirty-two and barges five. 13

In 1874 the Chief Commissioner of Assam, A. Keatings requested the Government of India for the introduction of a daily express service to Assam. 14 In 1880-81, the names of some of the steamers plying in the rivers of Assam under the supervision of the Government were - Koladyne, Sunamukh, Condor, Konai, Gora and Hawk. 15 The Government established a number of ferries throughout the province and in 1880-81 total 275 ferries were in service under the private and Public Works Department

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 1880-81.
for inter-state traffic movement in Assam valley's six districts. 16

In 1882 the River Steamer Navigation Company entered into an agreement with the Government of Assam for running a daily service called the Assam Mail Service between Dhubri and Dibrugarh. 17 In the next year two Companies—Indian General Steam Navigation Company and the River Steam navigation Company aided by Government subsidy started a daily steamer service on the river Brahmaputra. This was the speediest and regular service of small passenger’s steamer which took a week to reach Dibrugarh from Goalkunda. It also carried mail. 18

Journey by the speediest steamer was appeared as very attractive and interesting to the people of other provinces who were not accustomed to such journey through the jungles and rapid current of the river. As to quote

16 Ibid.


M. Barkar, "there is a pleasurable excitement to be obtained in watching the skillful handling of the steamer through the narrow twists and bends in the river, which in many places is shallow and difficult of Navigation." 19

The development of the steamer service owed much to the tea plantation and at the same time it may be remembered that the river transport enable the tea Industry to take root in Assam more than half a century before the construction of the long distance railway lines.

The introduction of the steamer service also helped greatly to the construction of the railways in Assam around 1882. Almost all materials needed for the construction of the railway line in this province were carried by the water-ways.

The trade of Assam with Bengal was carried principally by boats and after the introduction of steamer

19 Ibid., p. 38.
service between Calcutta and Dibrugarh on the river Brahmaputra and between Calcutta and Sylhet and Cachar on the Surma river by the steamers in 1881. The Report on the River Born Trade of the Province of Assam, 1881 revealed that on an average eight steamers loaded with goods of every description left Calcutta for Dibrugarh every month. The steamers of East Bengal Railway Company also ran at frequent intervals between Goalkunda and Cachar. In 1887 the Indian General Steam Navigation Company and River Steam Navigation Company also extended their services up to Silchar.

The size, speed and capacity to carry goods and passengers of the steamers gradually improved. In 1883

21 Ibid., p. 2.
22 Ibid., p. 1.
23 P.C. Medhi, op. cit., p. 23.
the size of the steamers was 145 feet in length with an
capacity to carry 60 tons of goods and 400 passengers
and in 1901 its size was almost doubled 240 feet in
length having a capacity to carry 470 tons of goods and
about 2,000 passengers. 24

Roadways:

The Ahom rulers had built a splendid
road system in Assam not to be found elsewhere in India
during the same period. 25 But the suffered from devasta-
tion and disrepair due to political instability caused
by the Mooraria uprisings, civil wars and the Burmese
invasion towards the end of the Ahom rule.

Under the circumstances, the Government
had to take some initial steps to construct some new
roads and to repair the old ones. The first step towards

24 Ibid.

the construction of a new road was taken up by David Scott, the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, when in 1826 the construction of a 126 miles road connecting Sylhet with Assam through Khasi Hills was started from Charapunji via Nungklao, the work was undertaken with the consent of Tirut Singh, the chief of Nungklao, who signed an agreement with David Scott in 1826, and other Khasi chiefs. By the beginning of 1829, while the road was fairly completed and a police out-post and convalescence camp were established at Nungklao, a party of 500 Khasis suddenly attached the British Officials causing the death of Lt. Bedingfield on the spot and Lt. Burlton along with about 60 followers while retreating towards Assam. Consequently, the construction of the road was stopped.


27 E. Gait, A History of Assam, pp. 302-03.
In 1828, the road from Jayantiapur, the capital of the Jayantia Kingdom, to Raha of 130 miles long, was surveyed and repaired. The Rajas, Choudhuris and Malgoozers were given the responsibilities for the repair and maintenance of the roads within their territories by David Scott. In 1835 the order of William Bentinck that all public works in Assam should be conducted by the Executive Officers of Dacca at the direction of the Military Board put some hindrances to the speedy works. At the suggestion of the Commissioner Jenkins, the Government appointed J. Martin as the Local Supervisor in 1836 who also had to work under the authority of the Military Board. The construction of Cachar-Manipur road starting from Baskandy to Bishenpur was undertaken under Captain Guthic in 1842 but due to

29 H. K. Barpujari, op. cit., p. 218.
30 Ibid., p. 219.
31 Ibid., p. 220.
difficulties and heavy expenditure the project could not be completed. 32 The construction of another road from Gauhati to the border of the district of Nowgong at the first stage and thereafter to the river Dhansiri which was to be gradually extended to Dibrugarh via Jorhat and Sibsagar was taken up. It was also to connect with Goalpara in the west. This road, known as Seoni Ali or South Trunk Road, in Upper Assam, was started in 1842-43. 33 By 1845, North Lakhimpur was connected by road with Dhakuakhana, the river Lohit and Badatighat and from there the road was extended to Nadua in Darrang. 34 In 1853 the North Trunk Road from Kuruaghat to Tezpur was under construction. 35 The construction or repair of all those roads under the supervision of the Military Board till the fifties of the

32 Ibid., p. 221.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
nineteenth century was mainly for the purpose of Military communication so did not fully serve the need of the people nor of the newly developed tea industry. Consequently the tea planters themselves had to take some measures for the construction of the new roads or repair the old ones. The Assam Tea Company alone constructed or repaired about 1,280 kilometres of road and erected 266 bridges. 36

In spite of these attempts, the road communication, however, remained unsatisfactory. In 1853, when Mills came to Assam, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan in his representation pointed out the deplorable condition of communication in Assam. He thought that the lack of good road way caused a serious obstruction in developing the trade and industry of Assam. So he urged for the necessary steps for the improvement of the roadways. 37 From the


Report prepared by A. J. Moffatt Mills in 1853 it is learnt that in that year Government had granted rupees six thousand (₹6,000/-) at the disposal of the Magistrate of Kamrup District for the repair of the district roads and with this amount about 36 miles of roads had been placed in passable condition. This amount also included the erection of several large and numerous wooden bridges over streams and construction of about 83 miles of roads under the supervision of the Executive Officers. In Darrang district ₹2,315 - 10 - 7 were expended for the construction of three roads— the Trunk road from Kuruaghat near Gauhati to Tezpur the branch line from Tezpur to Badiparah, and another from Orang to Udalguri and a special grant of ₹2,409 - 15 - 10 for road in Naduar and ₹8,765-9-1 for the road to Balipara were made by the Government. But inspite of this

38 Ibid., p.332.
39 Ibid., pp.420-21.
Mills was not satisfied of the progress of this Department. In his report on Sibsagar district he said that the road constructed under the Ahom regime, "has been almost neglected by our Government ... a neglect the more to be lamented, as I believe it has done much to retard the prosperity of this fine district." In his report he also pointed out that "the outlay on the roads has been considered, but it has been lost to the country by their being allowed to fall into disrepair." He also objected to the policy of erecting of the temporary bridges in Assam as the expenditure required for maintenance and repair of those bridges in many instances had exceeded cost of the masonry bridge. So he suggested that the two main-roads one from Bengal to Saikua on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra linking Goalpara, Gauhati, Nowgong, Golaghat, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh and the other on the north bank extending from Gauhati via Mongaloo, Tezpur to Lakhimpur should be

40 Ibid., p. 503.
41 Ibid., p. 22.
under the charge of the Executive Officer. These roads should be embanked of sufficient height masonry bridges. He also opined that the magistrate should have to look after the roads which connected the stations with the Thanas and markets and a fixed amount should be granted annually for the repair and maintainance of those roads. According to him "it is of the greatest importance to open out the jungles in Upper and Middle Assam; Whenever the jungles are opened, the people settle along the road on the new waste lands; the money too would be expended amongst the people."

The rapid growth of vegetation, the heavy rainfall and flood that submerged the valley had created problem in keeping those roads in good condition. In the words of Lt. Col. Pollock, "The country is subject to inundation that make roads fit for traffic all the year round very heavy embankments are required." Till 1861 no

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
remarkable development was attained in the road ways in Assam and Colonel Hopkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, drew a gloomy picture of the isolation of Assam due to the lack of good road ways and carriage — "not a single road fit for wheeled carriage even passable at all for a greater portion of the year." He further, "a terrible sense of isolation, by which enterprise is chilled and capitalist is not always to be found who will venture his money in a country to which access is so difficult." 45.

The creation of the Public Works Department in 1868 opened a new phase in the development of road and communication in Assam. The project of constructing of a Trunk road running through the province was undertaken in 1866 *with the design of making the road a first class

46 Ibid.
metalled and embanked highway 24 feet wide and aligned in a manner that should render it possible to convert it at any time into a railway." 47 But in 1870 the Government had reduced the total average expenditure on the budget of the public works during 1870-71 to 1873-74 due to the economic crisis. Consequently the Public Works Department had to curtail some of its plan. So the project of the railway formation of the trunk road was given up. It now adopted a policy of "connecting the fragmentary portions of the main road that fell on the through route into a continuous trunk road and to extend it towards Bengal Frontier." 48 The construction of this road was completed by the end of 1876-77 enabling a considerable number of carts" to pass over it the whole way from Dhubri to Sadiya." 49


48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., 1876-77, p.10.
A number of inspection bungalows and temporary caravansarai were also established on the road side for the use of the travellers. 50

In 1874-75, of the project of the Shillong cart road connecting Shillong with Gauhati, 65 miles from Gauhati to Nongpoh was opened for traffic and in November, 1875 a tonga service running twice a week and a daily cart service were started. In 1877 the work of the road up to Shillong was completed and it took two days to reach Shillong by a tonga. 51 In Cachar district four main roads - the Sylhet Cachar road, 70 miles in length, the Hailakandi road 13 miles, Silchar to Jirighat Manipur road 24 miles and Companyganj and Therriaghat road 9 miles. 52

The following were some of the important roads that

50 Ibid., 1874-75, p. 9; 1876-77, p. 2.

51 Ibid., 1874-75, p. 9.

52 Ibid., p. 40.
were constructed and maintained by the Public Works Department in 1877-78.

In Kamrup: 53

1. The Assam trunk road from Gauhati to Agia 81 miles in length.
2. The Assam Trunk road from Gauhati to the Kalang river 15 miles.
3. The Gauhati Shillong road 65 miles.
4. Old Nowgong of Sonapur road from Gauhati to the river Dibru 16 miles.
5. Gauhati to Maflong via Nankhlan 82 miles.

In Sibsagar: 54

1. The Assam Trunk Road 133 miles.
3. The Gar Ali from Jorhat to Kamargon 14 miles.
4. The Na Ali from Titabar to Jorhat 13 miles.


54 Ibid., pp. 139-99.
Besides some roads were maintained by the District Board Committees under public management. In 1874-75 there were about 2000 miles local roads throughout Assam which were maintained by this Committees. As these were not metalled roads so most of the roads were merely fair weather roads and became impassable during the rainy season. Some of the roads under the District authority were:

1. Khaguli road two miles long.
2. Green Wood road 4 miles.
3. Amingaon and Hajo road 14 miles

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55 Public Works Department, Progress Report, 1874-75, p.9.
56 Ibid.
In Sibsagar district the following roads were under public managements -

1. The Bar Ali, extended from Nazira to Dikhowmukh 32 miles.
2. Commissioner Ali from Jorhat Kokila Mukh 12 miles.

In Darrang and Lakhimpur districts some of the important roads, besides the Trunk Road, were -

1. Udalguri - Bhairabkund road 4 mile.
2. Bengabari via Kaliagaon to Mongoldoi and Rangamati road 25 miles.
3. Rangagora road 18 and 7 miles.
7. Maria Ali 3 miles.

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58 Ibid., pp. 139-99.
In 1880, the management and construction of road were placed under the Local Boards. The fund for this purpose was acquired from two sources - 1. A grant from provincial revenues and 2. the receives from local collections on ponds and ferries and also from half of the proceed of a local rate. The formation of Local Board hastened the development of the roadways in Assam and in the beginning of the twentieth century 5915 miles of road were fit for wheeled cart and 2283 miles as bridle-paths. The rivers that intersected the roads of the province had compelled the government to introduce some ferry service. One such ferry was at Dhubri over the river Brahmaputra which linked the Assam Trunk Roads. In 1874-75, 34,634 persons crossed this ferry and in the next year their number rose to 53,323 and  

60 E. Gait, op. cit., p. 346.

61 Ibid., pp. 346-47.
in 1876-77,58,799 persons crossed the river by this ferry. The increase of the passengers in the ferry service indicates that the people were availing the opportunity of through traffic along the Trunk Road into Assam.

With the development of the roads, wheeled cart were steadily introduced into the province making travelling easier and comfortable. By 1876-77, almost all the roads became passable for cart except in some areas during the rainy season, as the Public Works Department reported that, a few years "to hire a cart anywhere in Upper Assam has an impossibility, now natives had taken to keeping carts on hire and cart can be obtained in most places." Carts can now travel from the Bengal boundary to Sadiya, the last point of the civilisation close to the mountain that divided India from China, a distance 480 miles and that the cart traffic is rapidly springing up throughout the whole Assam valley. 

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62 Public Works Department, Progress Report, 1876-77, p.10.
63 Ibid., p.25.
64 Ibid., p.1.
The number of the bullock-cart in Assam proper increased from 3,990 in 1890-91 to 10,529 in 1898. At the beginning the carts were mainly used for carriage of goods for tea gardens. But with the coming of outsiders, the situation rapidly changed and the carts were begun to be used by others even for travelling. In 1900 Radhakanta Phukan brought two by-cycles from outside of Assam which were first by-cycle used in Jorhat.

The works of the construction of all these roads were started with the help of some of the Cachari people who were employed as coolies. But as the Public Works Department were undertaking more schemes, those Cachari labourers, who came to serve only for few months during the off season of their cultivation, became insufficient to complete the works. This compelled the Government to import some labourer from Nadiya, Howly, 24 Parganas, Faridpur in Bengal and Bihar and also from Rohilakhando1.


Railways:

The extension of the railway line to Poradaha in 1862 was the first railway route that proceeded towards Assam. In 1879 this line was extended up to Konoia and Goalkunda, an important transhipment centre about 240 kilometres east of Calcutta and in the junction of the rivers Brahmaputra and Padma.

Till the formation of the Assam Railway and Trading Company in 1881 no plan was undertaken to construct the railways in Assam. It was practically due to the unremitting energy and perseverance of Dr. J. Berry White, retired Brigade Surgeon of Bengal army, that the Assam Railway and Trading Company was established which mainly contributed for the development of the railways in Assam. Berry White was the chief military and civil surgeon in Upper Assam. In 1878 while he was on leave at Shillong he received several letters from tea planters of Assam, soliciting his help to push the government to take immediate steps for the development
of transport system as it caused heavy loss to their industries. Berry White represented all these letters along with a suggestion that as it was impossible to keep unmetalled roads in order with the annual increasing traffic and as metaling with bricks would be very costly, it would be cheap and much more advantageous to have a permanent iron way like tramway or railway to Sir Stuart Bayleey, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam and Colonel Trevon, the Chief Engineer for their consideration and necessary action. After a long discussion the Chief Commissioner recommended to the Government of India to sanction annual subsidy of Rs.80,000 for a line of light railway from steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Sadiya and also an extra subvention of Rs.20,000 per annum for the Makum coal field line on condition that Berry White and his friends should realise the capital required to construct the line and exploit thoroughly the mineral
and timber resources of Makum. Berry White, to fulfil the condition, made correspondence with Messrs Show Finlayson & Co. As his attempt did not get any encouraging response from that company, he contacted with Benjamin Pieray M.I.C.E. of March-Wick Hall Denbigh Shire and No. 8 Drapers Gardens London who agreed to accept the project and in 30th July 1881 the Assam Railway and Trading Company was formed. 68 With the formation of this company a new chapter was opened in the development of railway and at the same time transport system in Assam.

The Assam Bengal Railway and Trading Company started its works in January 1882 and on 1st May of the same year the first locomotive Engine passed over the line from Dibrugarh Steamer Ghat to Joypur. By December 1882 the line was extended upto Chabua for goods traffic. In the

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next year the line was opened for passenger with great rejoice and enthusiasm of the people. The Dibru-Sadiya metre-gauge rail line was constructed in 1882 and Jorhat provincial railway line was opened for the traffic in 1883. In the same year Tezpur - Bindukuri line was completed.  

The construction of these three railway lines altogether about 200 kilometres helped the process of development of railways in Assam. These lines remained completely separate from each other and also had no link with any railway of India. These lines covered almost all the tea gardens and collieries of Upper Assam connecting them with the river Brahmaputra. So whatever rail transport existed in Assam in the eighties of the nineteenth century was nothing more than feeder to the river transport.  

69 Ibid., p. 148.
In April 1892 the Assam-Bengal Railway Company was formed in England which marked as turning point in the construction of railways in Assam. The company took up its projects on 4th November, 1892. For the speedy of its works the lines were divided into three sections.  

1. From Chittaganj to Silchar and with a Branch line of 32 miles from Laksam to Chandpur total 303 miles long.

2. From Badarpur to Lumding, through North Cachar Hills, of 118 miles long.

3. Gauhati to Makum junction about 320 miles long.

The works in these sections were started in the same year 1892. The company completed its project of the section-1 in 1896. With the completion of this Scilcher-Chittaganj line Assam was connected by railways with the outside world for the first time.  

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70 Administrative Report on the Railways of India, 1892-93, part I, p.3.

71 Srihattar Itibritta, p.55.
In 1897 though the company opened the Gauhati Jamunamukh Section, but owing to the heavy damage caused by the great earth quake, the line could not be opened for traffic.

The Company started the construction of the line from Badarpur to Lumding in 1892. As this line had to pass mainly to the jungles and hill of North-Cachar, the had to face great troubles in carrying necessary goods to the spot and also in supplying the labour force. So it took long time of eleven years to complete and in 1904 it was opened for traffic. "The steepest grade of this line was one in 37-40 for nine miles. While approaching towards the hills, the train rises from an altitude of 117 feet to an elevation of about 1860 feet until it came down into the plains of Assam Valley."72 This line consisted of 37 tunnels aggregating 15569 feet

in length. The longest tunnel is 1922 feet alone. The line was also drawn over the rivers and springs by constructing 560 Bridges. The steel bridge that was constructed over the Barak river was more than 150 metres long. This line is a testimony to the unique engineering skill of railway engineering.

Besides in 1895-96, survey was made for a railway route over the Patkai range via the Hukong Valley to link the railways in Assam with that of Burma. But considering it would be unjustifiable to link this two countries from political, military and commercial point of view, the work was not undertaken.

The construction of the railway lines in Assam provided for the cheapest and easiest way to carry goods to and from the province. It solved the transportation problem of the newly developed industries of Assam, which were so long carrying their business through water ways with great considerable difficulties. In 1892-93,

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73 Ibid.
2,13,030 tons of goods were carried by the railways causing a net income of Rs.4,01179 of the Government. In 1892-93 the number of passengers travelled by railway was 1,06,157.

The following shows the number of passengers of different classes travelling by rail and the earning of the Government there from in 1891-92.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st class Passengers</th>
<th>1st class Earnings</th>
<th>2nd class Passengers</th>
<th>2nd class Earnings</th>
<th>3rd class Passengers</th>
<th>3rd class Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2776</td>
<td>6808</td>
<td>2059</td>
<td>2857</td>
<td>87023</td>
<td>49894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>3653</td>
<td>7142</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>2757</td>
<td>101130</td>
<td>59061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: +277 +334 -85 -70 +14107 +9167

Increase is shown by + and decrease is shown by - sings.

75 Administrative Report on the Railways of India, 1892-93, part I, p.112.
76 Ibid., part II, p.139.
77 Ibid.
The introduction of the railways opened new scope of service. In the Dibru-Sadiya section of 77.50 miles railway, 670 persons were employed in the general administration including agency, audit, accounts, paymasters, stores, medical, barrack, printing, stationary and police establishment in 39 stations. Out of 670 employees 644 were the natives. 78

The establishment of modern means of transport and improvement of communication system primarily served the economic, political and military interests of the English in Assam. The construction of the railway line and road was confined within the areas under the consideration of the British interests as a result of which the development remained insufficient and lop-sided, which was reflected in the words of Lt. Col. Pollock, "The high officials of Assam went year after year along certain routes where everything was prepared for them but even

78 Ibid., part I, Statement No. 33, p. 159.
they knew nothing of the interior of the country or of the difficulties experienced by the Europeans in penetrating it. 79 Whatever may be the purpose behind this development of transport system, it objectively played a progressive role in the history of the people of Assam.

The introduction of modern means of communication made the country easily accessible causing an enormous influx of outsiders, some for administrative need, others for trade and commerce, a group to try their luck and a great bulk of them as labourers in the tea gardens. This ever-growing inflow of outsiders not only made Assam the meeting place of divergent culture of different parts of India and other foreign countries but also led to the increase of her population. In 1872 the population of Assam was 35,46,054, the number increased to 48,81,426

79 Col.Lt.Pollock, Sport in British Burma Assam and the Cassyak and Jayantia Hills, 1879, p.78.
in 1881, 5,47,68,332 in 1891 and it rose to 61,26,343 souls in 1901.  

The natural growth of her population in 1891 to 1901 was 67,200 or 1.36% while the number of immigrants increased by 50.85%.  

The facility of the modern transport was also made the people of increased inter-district migration. The Census Report of 1901 reveals 5,203 persons came and settled in Kamrup from other district in 1901. Similarly as a result of inter district migration 13,182 persons were found came and settled in Darrang, 5,271 in Sylhet, 7,259 in Cachar and 7,293 in Nowgong in 1901. 

The development of the means of communication encouraged the inhabitants of the province to go out of the land also. The Census report 1901 reported 51,323 persons who were born in Assam but censused in other

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80 Census Report 1881, p.30; 1891, p.67; 1901, p.4.  
81 Ibid., 1891, p.65; 1901, pp.24-25.  
82 Ibid., 1901, p.56.
provinces. The number of such persons was 43,611 in 1891 and 41,038 in 1881. The local people, who made little journey, now did not hesitate to make tours as the journey became more comfortable, less expensive and more safe. In 1901, 2,630 natives of Assam were census in Calcutta.

The impact of the development of the means of transport was also felt in the economic life of Assam. The home-consuming market was transformed into a world market due to this development. In 1882, 6,82,882 lbs. of tea were exported to U.S.A. The Assam company also exported 27,18,000 lbs. to Austria and Newzeland and 6,41,000 lbs. to America. Not only tea other commodities like rubber, coal, and coke, stone and lime, oil-seeds, jute, cotton raw, rice (untrusked), wood, oranges etc., were also exported. Some goods such as

83 Ibid, 1901, p.36.
84 Mrs.S.R.Ward, Glimpses of Assam , p.110.
rice, salt, sugar, oil, kerosine, cloth and some other luxurious goods were imported to Assam. The importation of all those low priced and fine articles attracted the people. Although it had some devastating effects on the cottage industry, it also raised the standard of living of the people to some extend. The restrictions in wearing dresses and in travelling of elephant, palanquins etc., under the Ahom regime were now slowly withered away. The people who had the capacity to purchase could use all those goods. Unlike the Ahom age commodities were now carried either on animal's back or on cart or by steamers and goods train.

Before the introduction of modern means of communications the people if made any journey used to travel either in their own boat or hired a boat for the purpose. They brought with them own attendance, cook, utensils as required. They could therefore travel maintaining strictly all the rules of caste and class. The introduction of steamer service and railways, all the people
irrespective of low and high caste and classes, were travelling side by side in the same compartment. As a result those who took to travel in railways could not strictly observe the traditional rules of castes, and changes their habit of life relating to food for instance became inevitable and they had to accommodate themselves to such exchange. Imperceptively and unconsciously this led to social changes in the traditional ways of life."

The Growth of Tea Industry:

The most profitable industry that developed in Assam in the 19th century was tea. Tea, though an indigenous shrub of Assam remained in wild form till 1826. It was in that year, A.C. Bruce, while commanding a division of gun-boats against the Burmese in Upper Assam, found this plant growing in natural state in the jungles of Assam. He sent some samples of plants and seeds to David Scott, the Agent to the Governor-General, who forwarded these to the Botanists at Calcutta who found them as of the best quality. However, till 1834 no importance was given to the cultivation of tea. Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General, took up the matter and a

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committee was formed to enquire about the possibility of tea cultivation in Assam. Gurdon, the Secretary of the committee was sent to China to procure tea plants and seeds from there and also some Chinese experts in order to commence tea cultivation in Assam. On the basis of the report of Col. Jenkins, the commissioner of Assam, and A.C. Bruce, a committee of three scientists consisting of Dr. Wallich, Assistant Surgeon, Dr. Mechell and Griffith proceeded to Sadiya in 1833. Mr. Griffith expressed great prospect for the success of tea plantation as "there was great similarity in configuration of the valley and in the climate to those parts of China the best known as tea producing." A.C. Bruce was put in charge of the tea nurseries by the Governor-General, and he started his nursery with those Chinese plants brought

2 Ibid.
3 Mrs. S.R. Ward, Glimpses of Assam, p. 99
4 Mrs. S.R. Ward, Glimpses of Assam, p. 99
by Gordon. But this experimental plantation failed and none of those 20,000 plants survived. Bruce therefore depended on the indigenous plants and succeeded in sending 46 chests of tea to the tea committee, of which 12 chests were sent to England in 1838. The Assam tea was found of very high quality capable of competing with the Chinese tea in the world's market. The indigenous tea was so favourably recommended that an offer was made to contract for 1000 chests at an average of 1s.10½d. to 2s. per lb. This has new incitement among the people of both England and of India. A company was formed in England in 1839 and another at Calcutta. Afterwards these two companies amalgamated into one company

5 Ibid, p.101
6 Ibid.
known as the Assam Tea Company with T. Dickens, J. Pattle, Dwarakanath Tagore, W. Pricep, J. Beecher, S. Remgry, J. Coloquean, A. D. S. Larpén, H. Holroyed, Matilal Seal, Prasanna Kumar Tagore as its members. The company sent J. Masters to start the plantation in Upper Assam. At the instruction of Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India, two-thirds of the government plantation, comprising an area of 70,000 acres was transferred to the Assam Tea Company and Bruce also joined in this company. In 1840 the Assam Tea Company produced 300 chests of tea while the production from the government factories was 200 chests. Till 1852 the prospect of the company was

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7Ibid.
8T. Pinny, Old Times in Assam, p. 101
10S. R. Ward, op. cit., p. 101
not so bright but from 1852 the company gradually began to improve. In 1859 the company possessed nearly 4000 acres of land under tea cultivation with a outturn of more than 760,000 lbs of tea.\textsuperscript{11}

The tea cultivation was also extended to other districts of Assam. In 1850 Colonel Hannay started a garden in Dibrugarh and in 1853 there existed three private gardens in Sibsagar district, and six in the district of Lakhimpur. The first plantation was started in Darrang and Kamrup in 1854 and in 1855 tea was first discovered in Cachar and in the next year in Sylet. In Goalpara district the tea cultivation was first started in 1860.\textsuperscript{12} In 1859 the Jorhat Tea Company was formed and another company, the Maijan Tea Company started tea plantations at Mothola, Mojilani, Sukdongia, Bokapara, Barbarua, Nagaghuli and Deosal. During 1858-59 about

\textsuperscript{11} Assam Land Revenue Manual, p.x111.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
8000 acres of land were brought under tea cultivation of which the Assam Tea Company alone possessed half of the land, producing a yield of nearly 7 lakhs pounds of tea in 18 factories.\(^\text{13}\) In 1859 there were 63 factories in Assam proper with an area of 7599 acres under cultivation yielding 1205689 lbs of tea. From 1866 to 1867 there was an increase of 5000 acres in the produce of tea of 375000 lbs and 9600 labours were imported in the province. In 1869 the area under cultivation in Cachar was reported at 24151 acres with an outturn of 4234794 lbs. In Sylhet in 1868 the area under cultivation was 2050 acres and outturn at 250906 lbs.\(^\text{14}\) This rapid expansion of tea cultivation in both the valleys of the Brahmaputra and Surma created a great problem of labour force in the plantations.

\(^{13}\) Antrobus, *The History of the Assam Tea Company*, p.102.

\(^{14}\) Mrs. S.R. Ward, *Glimpses of Assam*, pp.102, 166.
In 1874 a total of 1,32,341 acres of land of which 83,086 acres of land in the Brahmaputra Valley and 49,256 acres in the Surma Valley were brought under the tea cultivation. Acreage under tea increased from 59864 acres in 1875 to 93802 acres in 1881. 107492 acres in 1885, 154389 acres in 1895 and 204285 acres in 1900. The total production of tea in 1875 was 12602098 lbs, it rose to 236,83,721 lbs in 1881. 325,30,061 lbs in 1885, 564,97,593 lbs in 1895 and the production increased to 751,25,176 lbs in 1900. 

The expansion of tea industries both in acreage and production during a period of 25 years is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total areas under tea. (in acres)</th>
<th>Total (approx) yield. (in lbs)</th>
<th>Average yield per acre.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>59864</td>
<td>12602098</td>
<td>228.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>89475</td>
<td>21465551</td>
<td>311.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>107492</td>
<td>32530061</td>
<td>358.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>154389</td>
<td>56497593</td>
<td>114.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>204285</td>
<td>75125176</td>
<td>426.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 Mrs. S.R. Ward, Glimps of Assam, p. 119
In Surma Valley, of the 247 tea gardens 17383136 lbs of tea were produced in 1882, and in 1885 the total out-turn of the Surma Valley was 20998978 lbs of the total of 53617020 in the province. In the province, Cachar, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Sylhet were the chief tea producing areas. The districtwise progress of the tea industry in Assam in 1895 is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>No of Gardens</th>
<th>Area acquired for tea (acres)</th>
<th>Area under tea (acres)</th>
<th>Produced (lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>143222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24123</td>
<td>4953</td>
<td>660328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>113895</td>
<td>28750</td>
<td>11036662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawgang</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56036</td>
<td>12239</td>
<td>3861357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>242432</td>
<td>63264</td>
<td>22240698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>187589</td>
<td>45183</td>
<td>18695548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar (plains)</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>280172</td>
<td>58216</td>
<td>20169133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>160370</td>
<td>62979</td>
<td>22710626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K&amp;j Hills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 The Assam Land Revenue Manual, p.XIV.
18 Ibid.
In 1901, of the total 338,186 acres of land under tea cultivation in the province 132,834 acres were in the Surma valley and 205,352 acres in the Brahmaputra Valley and the tea produced in the Surma valley was 62,365 lbs and 72,530 lbs in the Brahmaputra Valley. The total area of land and total out-turn of tea in each district of Assam in 1901 is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Acres under plantation</th>
<th>Approximate out-turn in pounds (thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>3698</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>40437</td>
<td>13943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgang</td>
<td>12540</td>
<td>4470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>79317</td>
<td>26800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>68690</td>
<td>26538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylhet</td>
<td>72288</td>
<td>31278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>60546</td>
<td>31087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total in the Province</strong></td>
<td><strong>338,186</strong></td>
<td><strong>134,896</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 An Account of the Province of Assam and its Administration, 1903, p. 29.
20 Ibid.
The average out-turn per acre in 1901 was reported as 499 pounds for Sylhet and Cachar, i.e. Surma Valley and 395 pounds for the Brahmaputra Valley. This rapid progress of tea industry necessitated the opening of new markets and "the tea syndicate is rapidly opening new markets for Indian teas in Australia, the USA and on the continent of Europe. In 1882, 6,82,882 lbs were sent to the USA. The Assam Tea Company reported to have sent 27,18,000 lbs of tea to Australia and New Zealand and 6,41,000 lbs to America in 1882."

Silk Industry

Since the remote past Assam had been well known as a land producing Silk of a high degree of perfection. But this skilful art of Assam was not utilised for commercial purpose but for her home consumption only. "This manufacture, like most others, is carried on without capital, without division of labour, by single individual, each of whom spins, weaves, and dyes his own web."  

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21 Mrs. S. R. Ward, Glimpses of Assam, p. 118.
22 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Asam, p. 227.
It was David Scott, who saw the prospect of making this industry commercially viable. Since 1826 he had been trying to convince the government of the prospect of developing this industry with a view to improve the economy of the land and also increasing the revenue. Some specimen of the Assam silk were sent to Calcutta for convincing the Board of Trade of its quality and value. But the unfavourable reply of the Board made the Government refused the plan of Scott as unprofitable. Scott himself however started an experiment on Assam silk not for commercial purpose but for the benefit of the inhabitants of the land and also with hope to increase the revenue of the government.

In 1830, Scott again urged to the government for the trial experiment of Assam silk. He observed "the inhabitants of Assam are already so universally acquainted with the analogous operation of winding the silk called mooga that there is every reason to think that they would soon become

23 Nirode Kumar Barooah, David Scott in North-East India, ..., 1802-31, pp. 105, 106.
competent to prepare the ordinary raw silk in a manner superior to that which can be expected from the cotton clothed natives of Bengal, among whom the art of rearing silk warms and the subsequent treatment of the produce was by no means so generally known and where it is indeed still in a great measure confined to a particular class.\textsuperscript{24} He believed that silk would bring about ultimate economic prosperity to the common people of Assam.\textsuperscript{25} He therefore suggested the establishment of the government plantation of the mulberry to show the inhabitants of Assam the improved mode of cultivating that plant and also to improve the art of rearing silk warms. Scott also requested the government to establish a commercial residency at Gauhati for the purpose of creating a steady demand for the articles.\textsuperscript{26} To implement this

\textsuperscript{24}Foreign Department 1830, Political A, 7 May, No. 51.

\textsuperscript{25}Nirode Kumar Barooah, \textit{David Scott in North-East India}, p. 111.

\textsuperscript{26}Foreign Department 1830, Political A, 7 May, No. 51.
scheme Scott established an outlay of about Rs 12,000. to Rs 15,000. If the government was not ready to invest this amount Scott suggested the imposing of an extra tax on the people of Assam.27 "The trifling additional burden to which the people would thus be individually subjected," Scott assured the government, "would be speedily and amply rapid by the increased value of the land and by the introduction of an article of exchangeable value so much wanted at present to enable them to provide for the payment of revenue."28 This time also the experts, and business circles, though recognised the quality of the Assam silk as the best type, were doubtful about its present mercantile value. Consequently, the government did not take any step for the development of this industry in Assam, though Scott continued to plead for its

27. Foreign Department, 1830, Political A, 7 May, No. 51.
28. Ibid.
for its development. He, however, at his own initiative commenced the plantation of mulberry in 12 acres of land in Darrang in 1831 so as to encourage the people of Darrang and Nowgang. But his premature death brought the scheme to a close.29

During the last quarter of the 19th century several attempts were made by private parties to establish large scale sericulture farms in Assam. In 1872-73 Messrs Lister & Co under C.H. Lepper at Lakhimpur made the first attempt. As the soil of the area was not suitable for eri silk cultivation the attempt failed.30 Another attempt was made by an European in about 1889 in the neighbourhood of Kangia in Kamrup also failed mainly because of widespread plant disease.31

30 Notes on Some Silk Industries of Assam from 1884 to 1895, pp. 4-5.
At this stage the increasing demand for the waste silk in England, drew the interest of the Marwari traders of India on eri cocoons and silk thread of Assam. They began to purchase these from the Rabhas, Mechus, Kacharis, Kukis, Mikirs and others. The value of the thread varied from Rs. 4 to 7 per seer and the pierced cocoon sold in Calcutta at Rs. 60 to 70 per maund and cocoons containing the desicated chrysalis sold at the rate of Rs. 2000 to Rs. 1500 or 9 annas per seer of 700 cocoons.\textsuperscript{32} About 400 to 500 cwt. of the thread of Assam silk were exported annually from Goalpara to Calcutta for shipping to London in 1884 to 1895.\textsuperscript{33} The Muga silk which was also a special product in Assam was not produced in any other parts of India except Der ha Bum. The price of Assam Muga varied from Rs. 8 to 12 per seer. The Mamwaris also purchased this silk and exported it to Calcutta and

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.11.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p.6.
There was gradual increase of export of Assam silk as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mounds</th>
<th>cwt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>20027</td>
<td>14713.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>18464</td>
<td>13563.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>14199</td>
<td>10431.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>17071</td>
<td>12541.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>26277</td>
<td>19305.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amount shown in the above statement include only of the registered export. Nothing is known about unregistered export.

Saw Mills:

Assam is very rich in her forest resources but till the eighties of the nineteenth century no attempt was made to utilise those resources for commercial purpose. The development of tea industry and the export of tea necessitated a large number of wooden boxes, and as the forest of Assam had enough timbers,

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34 Ibid., p. 19.
35 Notes on Some Industries of Assam from 1884 to 1895, p. 61.
the industrialists began to think over preparing such boxes in Assam utilising its own resources. The earliest saw mills that started in Assam were one at Dihingmukh and another in Badarpur in Cachar in 1880. The operation was confined to the production of tea chests from local soft wood species—such as Simul or Bhelu—which were obtained at a nominal value from the forest. During the year 1889-90 there were 9 saw mills in Lakhimpur district—one at Maring in near Golaghat and another at Tezpur that were producing the tea chests and plywood in Assam. But the real development in the plywood industry in Assam was started actually in the twentieth century. The development that took place in this industry was only due to the tea

36 H.P.Das, Geography of Assam, pp.113-114.
37 Ibid., p.114.
38 Ibid.
plantations and they had to survive competing with the imported tea-chests which was favoured by the foreign tea planters.

Mineral Industry:

Mineral resources in which Assam was rich was first unveiled and commercialised by the mercantile people of England in the last part of the 19th century.

The existence of coal in Assam was first known in 1825 but till 1840 the government did not give any importance to it as Upper Assam, which was the main centre of this mineral, was placed under an Ahom ruler from 1833 to 1838. It was after its annexation in 1838, the question of opening out a coal-mine was first raised by a coal committee that assembled at Calcutta in 1840. In 1865 Medlicott was sent by the
Geological Survey of India to examine the area. During 1874-75 and 1875-76 Mallet was again sent who made a careful inspection of all coal outcrop from the Tirup to the Desoi rivers and submitted a report in which he pointed out the existence of at least five coal fields at Makum, Jaipur, Nazira, Jhanzi and Desoi. Several attempts were made to work the coal at Makum fields but due to the lack of labour and good transport system only a small amount of coal could be brought out. When the scheme of the construction of a light railway line from the steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Saikhowa on the Brahmaputra opposite Sadiya threatened to fall off, White suggested the construction of a branch line from DumDuma to Makum which would not only help in exploring the valuable minerals like coal and patroleum of that area but also would increase the

39 An Account of the Province of Assam and its Administration, 1903, p.39.
traffic. The Chief Commissioner also promised to recommend an extra subvention of Rs. 20,000 per annum for the Makum branch. White then communicated with Messrs Show, Finlayson & Co., the agents to his tea estate in Dibrugarh, and the firm agreed to finance the undertakings on the proposed condition. So correspondences ensued between the government of India and the Company. As a result several concessions were granted to the Company for the construction of a railway line in the Dibrugarh district, with conditional subvention of Rs. 1,00,000, the working of the entire Makum coal fields then in the hands of the government and the conclusive right to fell timber for half a mile on each side of the Makum branch line on payment of the ordinary royalties. So in 8th December 1879 the Messrs Show, Finlayson & Co. brought out the Assam Railway Co. Ltd. But owing to the lack of sufficient subscriptions

from the public, the Company could do nothing.  
Benjamin Piercy of Marchwick Hall Denbighshire &
No. 8 Drapers Gardens, London on getting the information
on the scheme came forward and deputed his brother
Robert Piercy to make enquiries on the prospects of
various enterprises. Accordingly in 1881 Robert Piercy
made a thorough investigation on the mineral wealth of
the area. He reported that "the coal fields of Makum
were vastly greater in quantity and better in quality
than had ever before been suspected." So he was in favour of
taking up of the scheme of the construction
of the railway line. On this report a syndicate was
formed and on the 33th July 1881 the Assam Railway and
Trading Company Ltd. was incorporated into the scheme.
When in 1881 the Assam Railway and Trading Company got

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41 T. Kinney, op. cit., p. 144.
42 Ibid., pp. 145-46.
the lease of the coal mines at Makum, a railway line was constructed linking this area with the Brahmaputrap ghāt. The great development took place in the coal industry of Assam. Coal was vigorously extracted from the mines resulting the gradual increase of its output which were used by the steamers navigating in the Brahmaputra river and also by a large number of tea gardens in Assam as fuel. Apart from this a considerable quantities were also exported to Bengal. The following statement shows the annual output of coals in thousand of tons exploited from the Makum coal field from 1889-90 to 1900-01.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Output in tons thousand's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-99</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 An Account of the Province of Assam and its Administration, p.38.
Coal mines were also started at Dikhu and Nazira, south of Sibsagar on lease by the Assam Railway and Trading Company but the output was not enough; Coal field was also discovered in Jaipur but no step was taken to exploit till 1900-1901. In some portions of Garo and Khasia Hills also coal had been found though the work to extract coal had not started till 1900-01.

Petroleum:

Petroleum was also a valuable mineral - wealth that was first utilised under the British regime in the second half of the nineteenth century it is a heavy well containing a comparatively small proportion of the light illuminating hydrocarbons but held excellent lubricating qualities and yields a large proportion of paraffine wax. The first attempt to extract well was made in Nahor Pung, and Makum in 1868 and though a

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44 Ibid., p. 41.
considerable well could be extracted from Makum, it was totally a failure at Nahor Pung. In 1882-83 some concessions were given to the Assam Railway and Trading Company for the exploitation of oil in the Makum area and in 1892 similar concessions were granted to work in the neighbourhood to this company and also to a Syndicate. The out-put of crude petroleum extracted from this region was 382 thousand gallons in 1900-1901.46 Petroleum was also reported in some portions of Cachar and Khasia and Jayantia Hills but no attempt was made to extract oil from that region.

Trade:

During the period of Ahom rule in Assam, the people produced almost all their requirements by themselves. They cultivated rice, pulses, fruits, vegetables

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
to supply their tables; mustard to light their houses, silk, cotton to provide their garments." 46

There was, therefore, very little or no need for import of articles from outside of the country. The only thing in which Assam was deficient was salt which was imported, since the eighteenth century from Bengal. The common people mostly used a kind of alkaline which they called khar obtained from several sources. 47

Besides, the people of Assam having limited wants were satisfied " with the humblest of food, plainest of cloths and smallest of habitations." 48 consequently the production was limited to such commodities as were required by them. After the occupation of Assam by the British, there was a great influx of people in Assam. As a result, Assam with her small home consuming market could not supply the commodities for increasing number of people. These immigrants were accustomed to certain

47 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 271.
48 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix -I.
goods which was not produced in Assam. This had resulted in the importation of all those goods including the food grains from outside of the province. To encourage trade and commerce in Assam, the government established a number of hats and markets in almost all sadar stations of Assam where the traders even from Dacca and Calcutta arrived with varieties of goods. The government too abolished the existing chokeys and free-trade was introduced in 1838. As the indigenous people did not show much interest in trade and commerce, consequently the Marwari and Bengali traders availed the opportunity and monopolised the entire internal trade - export of raw materials and imports of various manufactured consumers goods right from the beginning of the British rule. 49 In the Brahmaputra Valley mainly the Marwari

49 Report on the River-Born Trade of the Province of Assam during the year ending 31st March 1881, p.2.
merchants occupied the whole of the markets of towns and villages. Writing on the Marwari merchants, the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur District remarked, "The enterprise and endurance of the Marwaris is surprising. They lived the whole year round in miserable houses, sometimes in the most unhealthy situation and slowly stored what they buy from the hill tribes and country produced for export. They hardly ever quarrel with the people amongst whom they dwell."

The boats and steamers were the main transport of the province. The steamers were plying between Calcutta and Dibrugarh on the Brahmaputra river and between Calcutta and Sylhet and Cachar on the Surma river. In 1881, eight steamers were running in a month on

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50 Ibid.
the Brahmaputra river.\textsuperscript{51}

In 1841, the value of trade as estimated by William Robinson, was in between 5 to 6 lakhs of rupees in Assam proper.\textsuperscript{52} In 1876-77 the total value of exports from the province of Assam was Rs. 362,178,78 and the imports in the province was Rs. 122,994,56.\textsuperscript{53} In 1880-81 the entire value of the river-trade was increased to Rs. 527,183,51 of which the value of the exports was Rs. 358,529,75 and imports Rs. 168,653,76. In the figures the amount of the imports value of Rs. 175,329,5 of the opium was not incorporated.\textsuperscript{54} The total value of the trade amounted to imports Rs. 890,967,4 and exports Rs. 1,287,430,9, excluding the value of the opium.\textsuperscript{55} In 1884-85 the total value of the trade on water was increased to

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.2.

\textsuperscript{52} William Robinson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 244.

\textsuperscript{53} Report on the River-Born Trade of the Province of Assam, 31st March 1881, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 1880-81, p. 2.
Rs.3616890 in the Brahmaputra Valley of which the imports amounted to Rs.11795940 and exports Rs.24372964, an increase of imports Rs.564945 and exports Rs.2287799 in comparison to the year 1880-81.56 In the Surma Valley the value of the exports amounted to Rs.15399826 and imports Rs.16230626 so the total value of the trade in this valley increased to Rs.31630452 an increase of Rs.9846469 than that of the year 1880-81.57 After five years in 1889-90 the value of the trade on water reached to Rs.11894958 of the imports with a net increase of Rs.493183 and exports Rs.32758689 having an increase of Rs.2812877 in the Brahmaputra Valley and Rs.12255784 of the imports with a net increase of Rs.937788 and having a net increase of Rs.2608931 the value of the exports reached to Rs.20248986.58

56 Ibid., 1884-85, p.13.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 1889-90, pp.13,16.
Table as given below will give a picture of the gradual progress of river-born trade in the two Valleys of the province in 1880-81, 1884-85 and 1889-90.\(^{59}\)

### Imports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880-81</th>
<th>1884-85</th>
<th>1889-90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By steamer</td>
<td>Rs. 6221313</td>
<td>Rs. 9785900</td>
<td>Rs. 9964115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By boat</td>
<td>Rs. 1734389</td>
<td>Rs. 2007040</td>
<td>Rs. 1930838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 7955702</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 11795940</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 11894958</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880-81</th>
<th>1884-85</th>
<th>1889-90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By steamer</td>
<td>Rs. 20155975</td>
<td>Rs. 21810009</td>
<td>Rs. 27247395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By boat</td>
<td>Rs. 2822701</td>
<td>Rs. 2562955</td>
<td>Rs. 5511294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 22978676</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 24372964</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 32758689</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**River-born trade in the Burma Valley -- Imports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880-81</th>
<th>1884-85</th>
<th>1889-90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By steamers</td>
<td>Rs. 4179614</td>
<td>Rs. 8190774</td>
<td>Rs. 5966330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By boat</td>
<td>Rs. 4730060</td>
<td>Rs. 8039852</td>
<td>Rs. 5966330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 8909674</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 16230626</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 12255784</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The imported articles to Assam included - cotton piece goods (European), cotton twist (European), salt, rice, gram and pulse, sugar refined and unrefined, iron, brass and copper, spices, tobacco, oils etc. The commodities exported from Assam were - lime and lime-stone, rubber, cotton raw, fruits like oranges, paddy, paddy, tea, mustard seed, timber, stick and other kinds of lac, lac-dye, jute raw, potatoes etc. 60

The extension of the railway line in Assam in the later part of the nineteenth century also helped in carrying the mercandise. According to the report of the railways of India total 178516 tons of goods were carried in the train in and from Assam in 1891-92 and in the next year it increased to 213030 tons. The important traffic on the train were - coal the amount that was carried was 148485 tons in 1891-92 and in 1892-93 it rose to 156820 tons, metals and timber having the quantity of 616 tons in 1891 and 3364 tons in 1892. The increase in metals was due to the carriage of machinery etc. carried for the tea gardens and for the Assam Railway and trading Company's works in the mines of petroleum and colliery and the increase of the timber traffic was due to the demand of the timber of Assam in the saw mills.

61 Administrative Report on the Railways of India, 1892-93, p.112.
62 Ibid.
The following figures show the progress of rail and river-born trade of Assam with other provinces in 1999-91 and 1900-01.63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles imported</th>
<th>1890-91</th>
<th>1900-01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cotton twist and yarn</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piece goods</td>
<td>8677</td>
<td>8666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grain and pulse</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>1384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metals</td>
<td>2714</td>
<td>3968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oils, kerosine</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>1171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oils others</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>2141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice husked</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>3841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt</td>
<td>2055</td>
<td>2065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sugar</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tobacco</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all other articles</td>
<td><strong>6158</strong></td>
<td><strong>12550</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td><strong>27110</strong></td>
<td><strong>40305</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63 S.C. Allen and others, Gazetter of Bengal and North-East India, table IV, p.126.
### Article exported from Assam

( in thousand of rupees )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles exported</th>
<th>1890-91</th>
<th>1900-01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coal and coke</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton raw</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hides and skins</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jute</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>1510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lac</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil seeds</td>
<td>3608</td>
<td>2590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oranges</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice (unhusked)</td>
<td>3277</td>
<td>3136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stone and lime</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tea</td>
<td>33974</td>
<td>44666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other articles</td>
<td>3824</td>
<td>6875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>48348</td>
<td>63465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64 Ibid.
After the coming of the British, roads were also constructed for traffic or old roads were repaired. The wheeled cart which was unknown in Assam till the coming of the English gradually introduced in the province and with the development of road and communication, land trade also developed. The following table shows the foreign land trade of Assam in 1890-91 and 1900-01.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>1890-91</th>
<th>1900-01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses and Ponies</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wax</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other articles</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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65 B.C. Allen and others, op. cit., Table VI, A, p. 127

66 Ibid.
Exports from Assam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles exported</th>
<th>1890-91</th>
<th>1900-01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton twist and yarn</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton piece goods</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice husked</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other articles</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite of the endeavours that had been made by the new government the material progress of the province was not so improved as compared to Bengal. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan as in his 'Observation on the Administration of the Province of Assam' bewailed that a period of about 27 years of their rule the

67 ibid.
British government could do little " to improve in any material degree the condition and prosperity of the country or even to repair the loss, it had lately sustained from the domestic wars and foreign invasions." Instead of the liberal term that was offered by the government, the vast tracts of land remained as fellow land. Land under agriculture in the Assam Valley division, excluding the permanently settled estates in Goalpara greatly increased. In 1889-90 to 1900-01 the net area under crop was 2388 and 2706 sq. miles respectively.

But in spite of this, the development of trade and industry since the coming of the British in 1826 had a great far-reaching impact on the trend of social changes that took place in the society of Assam in the period 1826 to 1900. The development of divergent industries accelerated the development of the communication and

68 A. J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix-J
transport system of Assam which made it easy for the outsiders to enter in the land and the local people to move from one place to another.

The development of trade and industry enlarged the small home consumed local market and transformed it into a national market. The introduction of new techniques in agriculture under the British Government, the introduction of the British Micca Rupees brought about the emergence of a national economy and also led to the transform of the rural economy of Assam, which was based on the barter system, into a national form and barter gave way to exchange through the medium of money. Excepting few exceptional figures like Maniram Dewan who was the owner of some of the tea plantations which were confiscated by the government while he was arrested for the intrigue against the British Government in the Sepoy mutiny in 1857, and
harabilash Agarwala and some others, the whole markets and trade and industry were under the hands of the outsiders. So the benefits of this new economy that developed were reaped by the new government and the outsiders and "the Assamese see a set of strangers in the land getting rich before their own eyes, none ever follows their example and they appeared to have no inclination to enter into competition with these foreigners." But though the local people were indifferent to join in this competition in large scale, the growth of national economy, the immigration of the outsiders in large-scale, and the influence of the western culture and ideas made them to think themselves not the people of this eastern region but of the India as a whole.

69 S.K. Barpuzari, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, p. 245,
After the occupation and consolidation of the British rule in Assam and the entrance of different Christian Missions with their evangelic works, there began a wave of reforming activities which influenced the minds of her people and opened a new era of awakening in the Social life of Assam. Some of the local intelligensia played the role of pioneers and did a lot to accelerate the space of social changes. Among them mention may be made of Jognyaram Phukan, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah, Hem Chandra Baruah, and others. They shook off the ancestral prejudices regarding the learning of foreign language and began to get themselves educated in English. Their enthusiasm
forced the government to open schools in Assam. Some of them like Hem Chandra Baruah, belonging to the orthodox family, had to face strong objections, did not hesitate to learn English without the knowledge of their guardians. As there was no scope for higher education in Assam, a group of those energetic youth—Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Parashuram Baruah, Pawal Chandra Baruah, Anandaram Baruah, Gunabhiram Baruah, Lakshminath Bezbaruah proceeded to Calcutta, the centre of Higher education in eastern India. Diffusion of knowledge in geography, natural science, History induced the horizon of their world outlook. Some of them at first had to take with them the family deity, a cook belonging to their own caste, attendants and even utensils so that they should have to dine with others and thereby lose their caste. This was not repeated in their second journey. They liberated themselves from the orthodoxy of the day and considered it not


objectionable or reprehensible to dine with others even with the Europeans who were Christian in religion, in the same table and the dishes kept before them.  

While at Calcutta the students from Assam besides acquiring higher education also came under the influence of the new western ideas and culture. Consequently, they dressed themselves in western style with hat, coat, trousers, and shoes and instead of keeping the traditional tail, cut their hair in foreign fashion. When they came back from Calcutta, they furnished their houses with modern furnitures like table, chair, bookself, carpet etc. In this way imbued with western ideas and culture the young generations of Assam started their march towards a new age and inspired others to join the race. 

Apart from this the wave of renaissance of Bengal

5 Ibid., p. 42; Ibid.  
6 A.D.J.C., pp. 42, 49.
that started as early as from the last part of the 18th century also stirred these youth of Assam at Calcutta. They came in close touch with the great social reformers of Bengal like Raja Rammohan Roy, Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dwaraka Nath Tagore and others and were highly inspired by their reforming zeal and activities. Jagnaram Phukan was one amongst those who attended the prayer with Raja Rammohan Roy according to the Brahma faith. Gunabhiram Baruah not only came in close touch with Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, the greatest social reformer of Bengal, but also attended the first widow remarriage that was arranged at the initiative of Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar at the Sooken Street, Calcutta. When those enlightened youths came back, they not only got themselves employed under the British government, but at the same:

7 A.D.F.J.C. p.18.
time took up various steps and activities, if necessary put pressure on the government, for the welfare of the people and their society. Among those mention may be made of Anandaram Dhakial Phukan, the apostle of modern age who in his famous "observation on the Province of Assam" submitted to Mills while he visited Assam in 1853 at the instruction of the Government of Bengal to give a report on the condition of Assam, not only pointed out the present undeveloped condition of the province and the failure of the government to improve the situation but also offered suggestions. Gunabhiram Baruah appearing before Royal Commission on opium, strongly pleaded for the prohibition

of the opium. Polygamy, child marriage, ban of the widow re-marriage, which prevailed among the high caste people of the Hindu society, and the bar on women education, the supremacy of the Gossains and the Brahmins in the taking of opium, all these social evils stung those enlightened people who left no time to launch on a movement to eradicate all those abuses of the society. They took up pens in their hands as a weapon to fight against all these social evils. They wrote articles after articles in the contemporary periodicals, like Arunodai, May , Asm Bandhu, Jonaki, Bijuli pointing out the evil effects of the child marriage, polygamy, ban of widow, re-marriage on the society. They tried their best to diffuse education among the people by opening Schools in their locality. To make the people understand the necessity of education in their family as well as

10 Report on the Royal Commission on Opium 1892-93, p. 265
social life, they wrote articles in the contemporary periodicals. Not only this, they also raised their voice for the establishment of government schools throughout the country. When the Missionaries launched on a programme to enlighten the women, those pioneers advanced their help and advocated strongly in favour of the introduction of female education in Assam. Haliram Dhekial Phukan wrote a number of articles supporting the necessity of the female education for the betterment of society in some contemporary newspaper published from Bengal like Hindu Patriot, Samachar Darpan.¹¹ His son Anandaram Dhekial Phukan took the initiative in this field first by imparting education among the ladies of his own family.¹² Gunabhiram Barua sent his children and wife to Calcutta


¹² A.D. R.G., p. 58.
and stayed in a rented house at Maniktala where his
daughter Swarnalata was admitted in Bethun College. 13
Another enthusiastic figure in this field, was
Gangagovinda Phukan who to enlighten his wife with
higher education, sent her to Calcutta. 14 As the high
caste Hindus were reluctant to send their daughters far
away from their homes or to send them under the care of
the Christian Missionaries, they opened classes in their
own houses if necessary by appointing private tutor. 13
The sufferings of the widows also attracted the notice
of the reformers of Assam. Gunabhiram Barua in his famous
drama Ram Navami Natak made an attempt to focus the
sufferings of the widows and the bad effects of the
widowhood in the society 15. Through his actress Navami
Gunabhiram tried to make the high caste people to realise
that remarriage of the widows was not an illegal act or a

13 Ibid.p.52.
15 Ibid.
sin and so without producing any bad effects it would help in avoiding some of the social evils. Gunabhiram Barua not simply advocated for the introduction of the widow remarriage in the society but himself married a widow and also gave his daughter's marriage for the second time after the death of her first husband.16

The habit of eating of opium (locally called kani) by the people in large scale also drew the notice of the reformers. They published a number of articles exposing the bad effects on the people, their health, wealth, and even morality causing severe harm on the society. Anandaam Dhekial Phukan in his 'Observation urged for the prohibition of Kani. He suggested for the complete prohibition of the sale of opium in the land to put a check on the opium eating by the people.17 Appearing before the

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17 A.J.Moffatt Mills, op.cit., Appendix J.
Royal Commission on opium in 1891, Gunabhiram Barua demanded the complete abolition of opium. The oppositions also came from the Sambojanik Sabha, and a number of associations were formed known as Kani Nibarani Sabha in several districts of Assam to liberate the people from that dangerous habit. Hem Chandra Barua in his famous drama Kaniar Kirtan pointed out the harms of the kani on the people and society. He depicted the life of a person who lost his property, health, morality and gradually marched towards death in an early age due to his habit of opium eating.

In their attempt to liberate the society from these abuses, the pioneers faced opposition from the orthodox section in which such abuses existed. They out-casted those families who imbibed themselves with

19 Ibid; P.N.Gehain Baruah, Mor Suwarani, pp.47, 50,
the modern ideas and culture. 20 When Anandaram Baruah returned from England his father Gargaram Baruah tried to bring his son back to the society by purifying him, but Anandaram refused to do so on the ground that in England he dined those things which was considered as impure by them consciously at his own accord. 21 Anandaram remained as a bachelor. The reason for this as S.K.Bhuyan opined, may be due to the fact that being outcasted no one dared to offer the hands of his daughter to him. 22 Even those who had connection with Anandaram Baruah were outcasted and had to purify them by doing preychitya to reenter the society. 23 Even some relatives of Anandaram

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p.66.
Dhakial Phukan began to cherish the notion that as the Dhakial Phukan's family adopted the western culture and mixed with the western people they were not in same position within the caste. Consequently, when Nandiswar Phukan married Padmavati, the daughter of Anandaram Phukan, he was excommunicated from his caste. In the periodical *May*, a poem was published titled 'Asamiya Babu' in which the writer criticised the adoption of the foreign culture by the people of Assam by discarding their own culture. Similar protest also came from those orthodox section of the people when the pioneers turned their attention for the introduction of female education in the province who still thought that 'education makes a girl dusta (bad).’ They not only refuse to sent their girls to the schools, but also wrote articles

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discouraging it. In the same periodical *Mau*, an article was published under the title "Tiratar Ban Ki?r (What is the duty of a woman?)" in which the writer focused the authoritarian outlook of those orthodox class of the Assamese society by putting question who would marry a girl having the qualification of higher education and took the profession of the doctor or lawyer. When the American Baptist Mission published the first periodical from their press in Sibsagar, some people who believed that a person would lose caste if learned the foreign language, did not read the periodical *Arunodai*, and also forbade others to read it. Lakshminath Bezbaruah write in his autobiography that they had to take their bath just after returning from the school to purify

27 Ibid., No. 1, December 1886.
28 Benudhar Sarma, Maniram Dassan, pp. 199-200.
them. He also wrote that when the news reached that the son of Gopal Bezbaruah, was studying the Medical course in Calcutta without his knowledge he was panic-striking as to study the medical science, dissection of the dead-body was a necessity which would caused the out-casts from the society of the Hindus specially of the Brahmins and so at the order of his father Gopal had to come back and had to do purification.

Inspite of the opposition of those orthodox section of the Hindu society, the movement that started by the pioneers of Assam could achieve good response from the people specially in spreading the English education. In 1901 out of 61,26,343 persons as censused in the province 2,22,386 had been returned as knowing how to read and write, of whom 2,09,254 were men and 13,134 were women. 4 women in every 1,000 of each sex

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29 Lakshminath Bezbaruah, op. cit., p.78.

30 Ibid., p.105.
Discarding the prejudice against the learning of foreign language, 21,511 persons returned themselves as being literate in English of whom 20,170 were male and 1,341 females. Out of every 1,000 men English was known by 116 Christians, 8 Hindus, 3 Muslims and 1 Animist. By deducting the Christian people whose mother tongue was English 18,023 men and 254 women acquired this form of speech in 1901. In this way, education, which in the pre-British age was confined to a limited high class and caste people, was now opened to all and the sons of the high caste and class families were getting their instruction in the same school, sitting side by side with the sons of the low caste and class people of the society.

Here an attempt has been made to re-collect the contributions and the sacrifice of some pioneers of the

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31 Census Report, 1901, pp. 97, 99.
32 Ibid., p. 99.
Haliram Dhekial Phukan:

Haliram Dhekial Phukan was the earliest apostle of modernism in Assam. Born in 1724 Saka, i.e., 180 A.D. His father was Parasuram Baruah and mother was Kameswari Davi. His parents died at an early age, he brought up as adopted son by one Lakshmi Narayan Brahmachari of "Dravida Desha", who came and settled in Assam during the reign of king Gaurinath Singha (1780-1794). As the prejudice against the learning of foreign language was deeply rooted among the Brahmins, who believed that learning of foreign language caused the loss of one's caste and so had to lose the right to perform the obsequies of his parents or to offer

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33 A.D.P.J.C., pp. 2-3.
"Pinda" for fore-fathers, Haliram, being the eldest son was not allowed to learn any foreign language. However, he got his instructions in Sanskrit language and Hindu Shastras. After the death of Lakshmi Narayan Brahmacari in 1816 A.D. Haliram, a boy of 14 years old, was appointed as the 'Duwaria' of Gauhati. During the Burmese invasion, Haliram with his family shifted to Jogighopa. After the occupation of Assam by the British, Haliram at the advice of David Scott, the then Agent to the Governor-General of Bengal, in North East India, returned to Gauhati and was appointed as the senior officer. When Brahmaputra valley was divided into two administrative divisions Haliram Dhekial Phukan became the Chief Collector of Lower Assam and later on promoted to the post of Assistant Magistrate at Gauhati with a salary of ₹230. He died in Saka 1754 at the age of thirty.

34 A.D.P.J.C., p. 13.
36 Ibid., pp. 18, 22.
37 Ibid., pp. 22-23.
Borning the death of Haliram Dhekial Phukan, Samachar Darnan, a contemporary news paper of Bengal, published an article "Death of Haliram Dhekial Phukan. Record with feelings of the deepest regret the death of Haliram Dhekial Phukan at Gowahatty in Assam on the 11th Shravan last. He had just entered on a situation of very great responsibility when death closed his eyes. He was selected by Late Mr. Scott for the public services and by his talent and exertion most aptly justified the choice. Though young in years not being at the time of his death more than thirty five his attainments were very great. His thirst for knowledge was boundless, his abilities of the highest order. For his country he had a peculiar affection. Rejoicing in its being delivered from the joke of the Burmese and its annexation to the British Empire he spared no pain to elevate his fellow countrymen in the scale
of civilisation. At his own expense he purchased a large number of different works in Bengali language for distribution among his country men. He was the first subscriber to the native newspapers in Assam and so encouraged to follow his example. That at present time a greater number is circulated in Assam than in any province of Bengal. About three years ago he compiled a work called "Assam Buranji" and printed it at his own expense. It contains the only authentic particulars we have of the country. The death of a young man of such active benevolence, such honourable ambition is a loss to Assam which will not be easily replaced, a loss second only to that of late Mr. Scott."

Though born in a time when the prejudice and conservatism was deeply rooted in the society, specially of the high caste Haliram being a member of the high caste, was an

38 Samachar Darpan, August 15, 1832, No. 776, pp. 386, 87.
exception to the age who was too liberal to adopt modern views and ideas. Haliram Dhekial Phukan was the first person to advocate in favour of the female education in Assam and wrote a number of articles in the support of the introduction of women education in the country in the guise of 'Patra Kasyachita Hindu Darpan Pathakaaya Iti'. Haliram was liberal in his outlook regarding caste system and mixed freely with all the people irrespective of caste and creed and religion. He visited the 'Bungalows' of the Europeans, and even called for the European Doctor for the treatment of the members of his family. Haliram was not proud-conceited but was self-conscious and self-respecting person and so could not tolerate a person having no sense of self-respect.
He used to go to the court in the palanquin and did not get out of it even if he meet the Agent Mr. Scott, while others did. 43 This sense of self respect appeared as an example to the people of Assam and thus to shake of the restrictions of sitting and travelling of the Ahom age. This made Haliram bold enough to protest any illegal activities and un-mannerly behaviours of others. Consequently very often he was misunderstood by the European officers and had to involve in a clash with them. 44

Though liberal in view Haliram Dhekial Phukan never dishonoured local customs and manners. He was religious minded man and made pilgrimage to Srikhetra, Kashi, Gaya, prayag and other places of India and every where he was familiar of his benevolence. 45 He was the first person

43 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
44 Ibid., pp. 18, 20.
to introduce the worshiping of the deity 'Mangal Chandi' in Assam from Kashi. He offered the pitcher which was established on the temple of Goddess Kamakhyā and also other various things as oblation to the temples of Haigrib Madhav, Ugrata Ramananda and others. This proved, Haliram Dhekial Phukan, though liberal in view he was not blind to imitate the others, and had great respect towards his own culture. Haliram Dhekial Phukan was great learned man, specially in Sanskrit and like his mother tongue, Assamese, he could speak fluently in that language. His thrust for knowledge was boundless and his abilities of the highest order. He wrote in Sanskrit Kamakhyā Yatra Padhati, a valuable book for the people to have a knowledge of Mother Goddess Kamakhyā.

46 Ibid., p. 23.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
Haliram also wrote a History of Assam, titled *Assam Bura* in Bengali language and was published from 'Samachar Chandrika Press' at Calcutta. It is, even at present also, a very valuable book for the people to have a full but clear view of the contemporary Assam. He contributed this Buranji to the people in free of cost.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Apostle of the age:

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, son of Haliram Dhekial Phukan, was born in 1829 at Guwahati. He lost his father at an early age of 3 years and grew up under the care and guidance of his uncle, Jagnaram Phukan, the first among the English educated persons in Assam to imbibe western culture and ideas. It was on his interest Anandaram was admitted into the English School at Guwahati in 1837. Soon

51 *Samachar Darpan*, November 7, 1829, No. 29, pp. 292-93.
he lost his father-like uncle Jognoram, in 1838. But Anandaram came under the care of James Mattheia, the then collector at Gauhati who took the responsibility of his education gladly, as Jagnoram before his death requested him to take the care of the boy and to look after the family.\textsuperscript{53} At the advice and initiative of Mattheia Anandaram proceeded to Calcutta for higher studies and was admitted to the Hindu College, the centre of the most advanced and liberal ideas of Bengal at that time. While at Calcutta Anandaram came in close touch with celebrities like Devendra Nath Tagore, David Hare, Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Motilal Seal, Sitianath Ghosh.\textsuperscript{54} Their contact inspired him to do something for the welfare of the Assamese people and for the development of the society. Ill health and domestic problems, however,

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{A D P J C}, pp.29-30.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, p.37.
compelled Anandaram to return home closing his collegiate study. Yet on the advice of James Mattheie and Jenkins, Anandaram took his lesson on English from Bland and also of the laws and Government rules from Sadar Amin.  

Anandaram entered into service life in 1847 when he was appointed as the Jimmadar ' of Pargana Khata in Kamrup district and in November 16, 1847 he was appointed as the 'Munsef' at Nalbari. His capability skill promoted him to the post Sub-Assistant. Though Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was employed in the Government Service, he kept himself abreast with progressive ideas of the age through the Bengali periodicals and news papers which he subscribed and the contact with the distinguished persons of Bengal. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was the apostle of the new society of Assam and devoted his life for the welfare of the society. In 1853 when J.F.Mills

55 Ibid., pp. 50, 61.
56 Ibid., pp. 70, 73.
57 Ibid., p. 85.
58 Ibid., pp. 35-37.
came to Assam to give a report on Assam to the Government, Anandaram submitted his 'Observations on the Administration of the Province of Assam', to Mills. In this classic document, Anandaram pointed out the defects and weakness of the Government and offered various suggestions on the modification of existing administration, education, communication, trade and industry and for the all-round development of Assam.\(^{59}\) In his article 'Inglendar Viberan' published in the Arunodai, Anandaram made a comparative discussion on the two countries and regretted that though Indian civilisation was much more ancient than the English, yet India now fell behind. He pointed out the key of the success of the English as their indomitable courage, spirit of freedom and their perseverance. He appealed to his

\(^{59}\) A.J. Moffatt Mills, *op.cit.*, Appendix -J.
countrymen to awake from their slumber and to compete with the Englishmen in the race of making the country more advanced in education, agriculture, industries and trade and commerce, and he firmly believed that his countrymen would achieve a grand success if they considered it as their duty for the advancement of the country as a whole. In this way Anandaram not only made an attempt to awaken the people from their slumber but also to raise the national feelings among them.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan realised that an agricultural country like Assam necessitated the introduction of improved methods of cultivation for the production of enough and various but marketable crops, to improve the condition of the peasantry. So he requested the Government to introduce the cultivation of the marketable crops through the application of improved methods and also to bring some experts from outside of the country.

60 Ibid.
to give training to the local people on the new methods of cultivation by applying improved methods, so that the local people should not have to depend on the foreigners for the implication of the new machinaries and systems. Amherdam wanted to see his countrymen as self-reliant and self-sufficient. He declared that, "No nation can assure to itself the blessings and comforts of civilised life until it had manufacture of it own ... No country can rise to wealth and importance that is deficient or imperfectly versed in manufactures." Hence he pleaded for the establishment of technical schools throughout the country to give training to the natives of the land in the modern technic of manufactures. He realised the necessity of the development of the transport system for the progress of the country and so requested the Government

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61 Ibid.
to introduce the steamer service in Assam and to develop the transport system of the country.62

Being an ardent advocate of western education, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan boldly pointed out the defects responsible for the slow progress of western education in Assam, discarding the view that "the Assamese would never improve the European knowledge."63 He wrote, "we are inclined to believe that the slow progress made by English schools in Assam must be imputed more to defects in the system of instruction pursued in them than to the want of zeal and promptitude on the part of the students since it had never been advanced by any body that the Assamese are inferior in their intellectual capacities to any other Indian nation.64 For the development of English education in Assam, he requested the Government to appoint

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
duly qualified adequate number of teachers in the English medium schools to instruct the pupils on improved methods. He was the first person to raise the voice of protest against the introduction of Bengali as the medium of instruction in the schools and courts of Assam. He realised that the foreign language, as the medium of instruction, was the most formidable cause of the slow progress of education of the pupils of the land. Hence he argued in favour of the reintroduction of the Assamese language in the schools and courts of Assam. He also suggested for the publication of books on various subjects in Assamese and the introduction of a mobile library of vernacular books so that the great mass would get the opportunity to be enlightened of the new age. Anandaram also advocate for the establishment of a normal school in the land for the training of the local people as teachers.

Anandaram Dhakial Phukan published in 1855 'A Few
Remarks on Assamese Language on Vernacular Education in Assam, in which he strongly refuted the impression that "Assamese was only patois of the Bengali language and had no literature of its own", and pointed out that out of 287 words in an Assamese passage 112 were quite different from Bengali and 98 words derived from Sanskrit and only 77 had some similarity with Bengali language. Anandaram Dhakial Phukan felt the necessity of making the natives of Assam familiar with the benefits of the modern medicine, and suggested the establishment of district medical schools so that the people would not only realise the advantage of modern medical science but would be enthusiastic in prosecuting medical studies as a profession, and would gradually waver of their faith on incantations, charms and amulets. Anandaram was a great patriot who loved his country from the core of his heart.

65 A.J. Moffatt Mills, op. cit., Appendix -J, p. XXXIX.
he gave as he prayed, "O'God the Gracious, lend such mind to the people of Assam by which they can make their country more civilised, learned and virtuous; give them knowledge so that they may know their necessities and miseries; and by your wonderful power make them fit to culture and make them know you and make them fit to carry out your wishes ... when Assam will be converted from a forest into a flower garden, the canoes of the rivers will be converted into ships, bamboo cottages will be replaced by buildings of stones and bricks; when there will be thousands and thousands of schools, educational gatherings, dispensaries, hospitals, for the poor and the destitute; and when people, instead of entertaining jealousy will cherish love for one another. None will give false evidence for two tolas of opium and will rather throw aside lacs of rupees in such cases, when no one will do mischief to others being offers bribes of crores of rupees, prostitution, opium and wine.
will be unknown in the country, that time O'God the Almighty, Father, bring about in no time." To make Assam of his dream Anandaram devoted his life for the spread of western education in the country. To wipe out the social abuses and to make the people acquainted with the new ideas he himself took the responsibilities of imparting education to the female members of his family, furnished his house with modern furnitures like chair, table, bookself, carpets and dressed himself in modern style, discarded the chewing of 'Tambul Pan' which was a common habit of the people of Assam, who could live without food but not without 'Tambul'.

He mixed freely with all irrespective of caste, creed. Even the Europeans were cordially invited to his house on the ceremonial occasions and himself used to visit their Bunglows.

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67 *A D P J C*, p. 52.

Though liberal in his views, and was highly imbued with the western culture and ideas, Anandaram was not perverted with the ideas to neglect his own culture. He himself performed his daily prayer and worship and never neglected the native music and songs. 69

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the true representatives of the modern society, did not survive long to see his dream to be fulfilled. He died at an early age in 1859.

Gunabhiram Baruah:

Gunabhiram Baruah, the great reformer of Assam, was born in 1837 at Jorhat. He was the son of Ranaram Baruah, one of the adopted sons of Lakshmi Narayan Brahmachary. After the death of Ranaram in 1838, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, with great affection, took the responsibility of the education of Gunabhiram Baruah. Gunabhiram with his merit and intelligence attracted the

69 Ibid., p. 52.
attention of the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, Col. Jenkins, who granted Rs. 3/- per month for his education. He was getting his education in the Gauhati English School. On the advice of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, he proceeded to Calcutta for higher studies who maintained all the expenses of his education at Calcutta.

Getting the Junior Scholarship from the Kolatala Branch School in 1854, Gunabhiram got his entrance in the Presidency College. He was interested in medical science but at the desire of Dhekial Phukan, he studied the law courses. In 1859 he joined in the Government service as the Assistant Commissioner at Tezpur.

The nineteenth century Calcutta was the burning centre for social reforms and Gunabhiram Baruah was in Calcutta for higher studies in that period of renaissance. Being brought up under the shadow of Anandaram Dhekial

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70 A D P J C , p. 84.
Phukan, the apostle of the modern age, he had already imbribed with the liberal views of the Dhekial Phukan's family. At Calcutta Gunabhiram soon came in close touch with the great reformers of the age, Isvar Chandra Vidhyasagar, Devendra Nath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, and others and was highly influenced by their spirit of social reforms. He even entirely joined in the reformation movement along with those renounced reformers of Bengal. The polemical war carried by Isvar Chandra Vidhyasagar in support of remarriage of the widows, at whose instance Government passed the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act in 1835, influenced Gunabhiram Baruah highly who attended the first widow remarriage that was celebrated at the Sukha Street, Calcutta at the initiative of Vidyasagar on 23rd Agrahtayan, 1263 Bangabda, and was also present in two or three such other ceremonies.  

71 D. Neog, op. cit., p. 376.
He wrote a drama *Ram Navami Natak* in 1857 on the sufferings of the widows and effects on the perpetual widowhood on the society. Through the character of Navami, Gunabhiram tried his best to make the people understand that remarriage of the widow was not at all an illegal thing. He pointed out through his drama that it was the widowhood which was the cause of many illegal evils. Widow remarriage was a necessity in the society. Gunabhiram Baruah was the greatest exponent of the widow remarriage and considering that example is better than percept, he himself married Bisnupriya Devi, the widow of late Parashuram Baruah, in 1870. He also gave his daughter's marriage for the second time after the death of her first husband.  

Gunabhiram Baruah was also a great exponent of education. He not merely advocated but tried his utmost...

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to make the women education familiar among the people of the land. He contributed by making financial aid for the establishment of school. He was not against the higher education of the women and so sent his family at Calcutta for the higher education of his daughter, Swarnalata who was admitted in the Bethun College at Calcutta.73

Addiction to kani which was eating into the very vitals of the Assamese society also attracted the attention of Gunabhiram Baruah. Appearing before the the Royal Commission in April 1891, he demanded the total abolition of opium 'since the opium-eaters themselves felt that the term kania (opium addict) was a by word of reproach.'74

Gunabhiram Baruah was one of those 'The Trinity' others being Hemchandra Barua and Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, who laid the foundation of modern Assamese

73 A D P J C , p. 177.
74 Royal Commission on Opium, 1992-93.
language and literature. The Assam Buranj a comprehensive history of Assam on modern lines, was published in 1884. Gunabhiram Barua was the first to write modern drama Ram Navami Natak, the first Assamese biography Anandaram Dhekial Phukanar Jiban Charitra and also the first to publish Assamese journal Assam Bandhu. He also wrote a number of articles on various topics in the contemporary periodicals.