Effect of the British Rule: It has been shown in the preceding chapter how people reacted to English rule. Their reaction found expression in several uprisings aimed at either ousting the foreign rulers from their soil or checking the penetration of their power into the interior of their land. Though the people of Assam proper, i.e., the Brahmaputra valley where the Ahoms held their sway did welcome the advent of the British in the initial stages in the interest of peace after the Burmese depredations, it came to be realised gradually that the coming of the alien rulers could provide no relief to the people in the way they wanted it. To their utter surprise the people noticed that the English were not only leaving but trying to consolidate their rule. Herein lay the cause of popular antipathy and sense of revolt and actual uprisings against the British. Though these uprisings were easily suppressed, these compelled the shrewd Englishmen to adopt suitable means to cool down the war-like temper of the people. Thus they entrusted the administration of the Upper Assam to Purandar Singha. But this was only a device to gain time to consolidate their power without facing any uprisings. As soon as the British felt secure it was their turn to act decisively. Meanwhile a series of administrative measures were taken to consolidate their rule. The English officers were put in important positions, the rights and privileges of the natives were curtailed, indigenous traditional institutions were moulded to suit the English interests through the introduction of payment of cash revenue as well as the Mausadari system. Then Purandar Singha was dislodged and the administration of the upper Assam was taken over. Purandar Singha was removed on 31 July 1839. His dismissal did not provoke any popular reaction. But there appeared protests in the shape

1. EF(NB) p. 8
of constitutional appeals. Purandar Singha and after him his son Kameswar Singha lodged a number of protests-cum-appeals against the takeover of Upper Assam. During this period the English were able to annex into their dominion the territories of the Khamptis, the Khasis and the Jayantias and of the Cacharies along with those of the Singphoes. With the annexation of the territories of Tularam Senapati, the Cachari Chief of North Cachar Hills, due to the unsatisfactory administration of his son Nakulram and Brajanath the Britishers could finally consolidate their rule over the major part of Assam. The Britishers entered Assam with a declaration that they had neither any intention to conquer Assam nor to rule it but to check the Burmese depredations on their frontiers and to compel them for ensuring tranquility for their own frontier districts; it was also explained that they intended to establish a native Government under an Ahom Prince after saving its people from the Burmese. But the Britishers began to spreading out their diplomatic snarls to consolidate their own hold over the country. Lands were made available at a very cheap rate of revenue or in some cases free for cultivation of tea as a result of which the hilly regions of Assam "came to be dotted with innumerable tea gardens." A clear picture of what the Britishers did since their occupation of Assam can be found in the Observation on the Administration of the Province of Assam, made by one of the illustrious sons of Assam, late Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and the two Memorandas, made by another illustrious son of the soil, Maniram Dewan. Those were submitted to Mr. Andrews John Maffat Mills, the Judge of the Calcutta Dewani and Nizamat Adawlat, who visited Assam in 1853 to inquire into the affairs of Assam. He arrived at Silsagar on 5 June 1853

2. IMES., p.13.
3. RA., p.18.
4. Ibid.
5. ADPJ., p.117.
on a board of ship named Yamuna. On 15 May 1854 he arrived at Gauhati. The Memorialists were not identical in their approaches, yet on a number of points their observations were similar. While Anandaram Dhakial Phukan preferred direct English rule over entire Assam, Maniram Dewan pleaded for the restoration of native rule on tributary basis either by re-instating any Ahom prince on the throne of Upper Assam or offering the same to him. On 4 July 1853 Anandaram submitted his memorandum personally to Mr. Mills at Gauhati. On that occasion Mr. Mills had some discussion with him in respect of condition of the country. Anandaram expressed gratitude on behalf of himself and people of Assam to Government for ensuring people's "lives and property which they never had the happiness of feeling for ages past." He also rejoiced at the institution of such an inquiry which "the heads of the Government have never taken occasion to inquire into the state of the country; and although twenty-eight years have elapsed since the annexation of Assam to the British Empire, little change has been affected in the condition of the people and the good Government of the Province." Anandaram's criticism of the administration was indeed very mild. He criticised the revenue administration and held that it was not favourable to the advancement of cultivation and general improvement of the country. He submitted that principles of assessment surely needed modification and that the fiscal officers should have a more lasting interest in their charges so that they might devote their energy for improving the cultivation. The Government ought to protect the Ryotwari and preserve the ancient Ryotwari system in Assam.

6. MD., p.129.
7. SAJ., p.69. Anandaram submitted his memorial at Gauhati on 4 July 1853; Sadaramin recorded Mills's arrival at Gauhati on 15 May, 1854. This shows that Mills had visited Gauhati more than once.
8. MD., p.89; EPS(B), p.9.
9. ADPJ., p.119.
11. Ibid., p. xxxii.
recognising their rights as proprietors of the respective holdings. He pointed out the demerits of the system of Istafas, i.e., resignation of the ryots' lands and the system of issuing distresss which proved to be most oppressive means at the hands of the landholders. He further pointed out that the rates of assessment were not proportionate to the paying capacity of the ryots and cited a number of instances calling for reduction of the rates of assessment. He regretted that since the occupation of Assam no exertions were made by the Government to improve the agricultural prospects of the country. The means of irrigation and drainage were seldom resorted to and generally no attempts were made to create embankments, or devise means for protection of lands from encroachments of flood or other natural calamities. The result was that often drought or inundations entirely destroyed the crops, famine ensued and the population was actually reduced to conditions of unspeakable misery. Maniram Dewan also shared similar views. Anandaram pleaded for the introduction of European implements, foreign seeds and for securing the services of an establishment of agriculturists from Europe or Upper India for a period of two years to improve the agricultural prospects of the country. He also urged introduction of improved methods of manufactures for conferring the benefits of civilized life by establishing a number of specialised schools for instructing the people in the important and useful branches of European manufactures. He held it against the Government that it did not encourage ancient learning and the native language, i.e., Assamese. He held that education was in a retrograde state under English rule. Since the annexation learning of Sanskrit had gradually been abolished owing to want of encouragement. Maniram Dewan had also criticised the Government for not patronising the learning of Sanskrit. On the contrary, the English authorities established a number of institutions styled as vernacular schools where instruction was imparted through
the medium of Bengali which was alien to the culture of the people. Neither the teachers nor the pupils could understand Bengali and if they did, it was done very imperfectly. Anandaram urged that the vernacular schools be re-modelled and Bengali replaced by Assamese, the lingua franca of the Province. He also preferred the establishment of Normal Schools and an independent Department of Education. He also made some suggestions for the successful dissemination of English education. Further, he pointed out the needs for construction of roads connecting all the divisions of Assam and, construction of bunds, embankments and other means of public utility.

The rulers of Assam made numerous endowments and grants for the maintenance of various religious and charitable institutions throughout the country and under the former administration every precautions was taken to see to it that objects of such endowments were fulfilled. This side of native administration was ignored by the British. Anandaram submitted that he was unable to understand "why the same liberal and lenient policy which induced the Government to uphold in Bengal all the rent free tenures, held as such before the acquisition of the Dewanny, without any reference to their validity, should not been observed" (in case of Assam) "and why the genuine grants made by the ancient rulers of Assam should have been assessed at half the rates imposed on rent-paying land." In Assam all the charitable and religious grants made by the ancient rulers of the land were subjected to judicial inquiry about the genuineness of their performance; where the judiciary was convinced about satisfactory performance of a particular endowment it was declared valid and was assessed at half the rates imposed on rent-paying lands. Other endowments were declared invalid. Anandaram hoped that the British Government

would deem it fit to act upon the same liberal and lenient policy which the Government had adopted with reference to all other provinces of the British Empire.

On the occupation of the Province the Britishers introduced Government opium at a very cheap rate and prohibited local cultivation of the poppy. Anandaram said that as a result of official encouragement, opium eating became almost universal in Assam. He pointed out that before the establishment of British authority, twenty-eight years ago, the use of opium was not half so universal. He opined that universal use of opium had converted the Assamese, once a hardy, industrious and enterprising race, into an effeminate, weak, indolent and a degraded people. Maniram Dewan's views in this respect were similar. Both of them suggested adoption of suitable measures to minimise the use of opium so as to enable people to free themselves from the evil. Anandaram was more critical and clear in his language in his condemnation of the judicial system introduced by the British. Although a supporter of English rule in Assam, he was not blind to its defects. According to him the Judicial system as introduced by the British in Assam had utterly failed to afford any satisfaction to the people. He summarised his views in this respect as follows — "the public courts of justice are exclusively for the benefit of the rich and powerful, that it is both imprudent and foolish for men in humble life to resort to them for relief, that cunning and deceit falsehood and perjury beset the courts on all sides, and that in the civil and criminal courts, truth is often transformed into falsehood, and falsehood into truth." He assigned the following reasons for the failure of the judiciary: first, the inefficiency of the Police; secondly, small number of courts, and their distance from the interior of the district; thirdly, the defective, tedious, dilatory, expensive nature of

the law and proceedings, and above all, the universal corruption which prevailed amongst the ministerial officers attached to the courts of justice. According to him Police system of the country, whether rural or urban, was wholly inefficient since they failed to preserve the life and property of the people. The sordid corruption which was found amongst the ministerial officers of the courts was also present among the darogahs. The temptations offered by the rich people often induced those functionaries to wink at the doings of the darogahs. When murder, homicide or robbery occurred in a locality the people of the concerned area had to purchase their safety by the levy of a general contribution for the darogah. Only this kind of protection was offered to the people by the British administration for a long period of twenty-eight years. Anandaram pointed out the absence of regular village Police which gave rise to a sense of insecurity in the rural areas. He also pointed out the defects crept into the lengthy procedure of law. During the period of native rule, redress was often obtained in the course of a fortnight or a week and sometime sooner than that. But under the system introduced by the English it became impossible to obtain any redress without submitting to a vexatious and harassing course of procedures, extending from at least six months to an unlimited length of time, howsoever trivial might be the nature of the complaint. The system of examination of witnesses by the omulag or mohurra was also found defective because generally such functionaries were bribed by the party to orient the procedures of law in their favour. The abolition of the system of oath-taking in the courts was the reason, according to Anandaram, for extensive perjury in the courts. He preferred the re-introduction of the native system of oath-taking; this was because of the fact that extreme ignorance and want of education made the people incapable of understanding the sense of solemnity and the character of the affirmation laid down in the
British Judicial system as introduced in Assam. Anandaram pointed out that the British rules relating to execution of decrees of personal claims were so palpably defective and inefficient that judgements had often proved fruitless. He pointed out how qualified judges and pleaders were very few which called for creating favourable conditions to find the right type of people and in adequate numbers. He criticised the Government more severely for introducing Bengali as the court language of Assam. Under the provisions of Act XXIX of 1837 the vernacular language of the district was to be used in the court and, for ten years after the annexation, Assamese was the court-language in Assam and then it was replaced by Bengali. Maniram Dewan also censured the Government for introducing Bengali as court-language in Assam. Anandaram expressed his inability to find out any reason as to why the Bengali had been allowed to suppress the native vernacular. He further pointed out that in Bengali had no closer resemblance to the Assamese than it had with the Uria language, and if the courts in Orissa be allowed the privilege of using their own language there was no ground for discrimination against the Assamese. Anandaram pointed out the necessity for establishing registry offices in the Nofussil areas because very few people in the country were able to sign their names, and almost all the deeds of documents were signed by their writers for the party who executed them. There were many cases where this practice led to the ruin of various individuals and the production of numerous deeds in the courts supported by hired evidence only.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was an ardent supporter of the English throughout his life. Maniram Dewan also began by praising the British but, later on, he turned a rebel. When Mills came to Assam, he submitted two memoranda to him. The first memorandum related to the Dewan's

14. BPA, Appendix I., pp. xxxi-lx.
personal problems. He complained of hardship caused to him by the British rule and appealed to the authorities to restore to him all his previous rights and powers of which he had been deprived. The second memorandum was more important. It was submitted on behalf of Prince Ghanakanta Singha and others who were free of any encumbrances. It contained enough relating to conditions of life of the people and the Province under twenty-eight years of British administration. In the second memorandum, Maniram Dewan did not make an outright condemnation of British rule. On the contrary, he duly acknowledged what he considered as good effects of British rule. The advantages derived by the people under the British rule related to abolition of the old practices like cutting off noses and ears, and extracting eyes of offenders and forcible abduction of women against the will of their parents; the abolition of wayside transit duties which resulted in improvement in trade; and establishment of regular postal service and offering opportunity of making drafts to other countries; establishment of schools though the exact effects thereof were yet to be ascertained; abolition of the system of labour and the earlier judicial procedure. He held that, if the courts of justice were established in the manner of the recommendations of Mr. Scott and Robertson, the people would derive great benefits.

But the list of disadvantages under British rule that was appended to the memorandum was a rather long one. Dewan pointed out that disadvantages flowing from British rule far outweighed the advantages under the enlightened rule of the English and that was why he pleaded for restoring native rule at least in Upper Assam where Purandar Singha had been recently dethroned on very flimsy grounds.

The Dewan pointed out that the disadvantages from which the people had been suffering resulted from abolition of the old established
customs and the native administration of the Province. His list includes the following disadvantages: (1) resumption of the Khata, Reels, allowances etc., formerly allowed to Hill Tribes and their Chotangs, Katakies, etc., with the result that there arose a constant state of warfare among them; (2) stoppage of puja in the Kamakhya Temple; (3) abolition of respectable offices and freeing the logswas and Dickhows; (4) compelling the formerly-exempted classes to pay revenue; (5) reduction of all castes to the same level; (6) undermining the influence of the Hindu Priests; (7) placing in charge of the districts short-tempered young military officers who were devoid of any regard to the manners and customs of the people; (8) making the Khamptiss and other Hill Tribes disaffected by depriving them of their slaves and compelling them forcibly to work on the roads; (9) spreading disaffection among the Nagas by taxing them and abolishing Nagakhats; (10) introduction of cheap Government opium in the country while prohibiting local cultivation of the said drug resulting in universal use of opium; (11) causing the disappearance of local artisans except Ironsmith and Goldsmith as well as destroying cultivation by neglecting mathaoreas; causing (12) causing gradual disappearance of Persian knowledge; (13) introduction of a lengthy procedure in the Judicial system resulting in peoples' suffering and harassment; (14) introduction of causing loss of castes of the convicts by compelling them to eat in mess; (15) introduction of the system of Istafa (resignation of lands held under pattas) resulting in sufferings to both the rypas and Mausadara.

In the memorandum submitted on behalf of Ghanakanta Singh Jubaraj, Maniram traced the beginning of the administration from the time of Scott's departure. "By the departure, however, of the above-named gentleman, the people had been reduced to the most abject and hope-
less state of misery from the loss of their fame, honour, rank, caste, employment, etc., " In this memorandum Dewan compared British rule in Assam to the law of the jungle, exercised by the Tiger saying that "we are just now, as it were, in the belly of a tiger." He showed how the inhabitants of Assam had silently passed into the deadly entrails of this tiger, i.e., British rule. He drew the attention of the authority to the fact that the traditional institutions of Assam had been being neglected in a cruel manner and the Hill Tribes had been brought to a point of rupture with the plains people. He observed as follows —

"During the long-continued sovereignty of the Assam Rajas, the Hill tribes that border on Assam, viz.,- the Nagas, Duflas, Abors, Mismees, Kimumptis, Singphoes, Akas, Bhotes, Garoows, Meerees, Harrahs, Meekaers, Laloongs (Dooaneeas) and Fakeeals (Dooanees) were effectly kept in check, and the whole Province governed with a force of only nine Companies of Sepoys. Besides this, all the different ranks of Assamese noblemen and officers, from the Borahs and Sykeesahs to the three Pangsarees (Misters of State) were honourably and respectfully maintained; the various grades of Mohuntas comfortably provided for, the Poojahs seasonably performed, and offerings punctually made at the several Hindoo-temples and places of worship and the expenses involved under such a Government, were duly met by the former Rajaars, without difficulty or failure, besides supporting the Royal family. But under the present administration (British administration), although revenue is collected from those who were formerly exempted, immunities and privileges (resumed or) removed, that had existed for 600 years without intermission, the Abors brought under taxation, and the sources of revenue increased four-fold, yet the Government, in twenty-nine years, have derived no substantial benefit from the Province. This is indeed a source of great wonder."

15. BPA. Appendix B. E. p. lxv.  
16. Ibid.  
17. Ibid., p. lxvi.
The Dewan also pointed out that "the abolition of old customs and establishment in their stead of courts and unjust taxation; secondly, the introduction of opium in the district, for the gratification of an opium-eating people, who are daily becoming more unfit for agricultural pursuits; thirdly, the making of this Province Khas and discontinuing the poojahs at Kamakhya (temple) in consequence of which the country had become subject to various calamities, the people to every species of sufferings and distress, and the annual crops to a constantly recurring failure." He also drew the attention of the authorities to the fact how the people were suffering under the British rule.—"The Upper and middle classes have seen those offices abolished, which were most suitable for them, their loguwas and lickchows taken away, and their male and female slaves set free. Those classes who had been exempted from the payment of revenue for 600 years are now brought under the assessment. Those again whose ancestors never lived by digging, ploughing ploughing or carrying burdens, are now nearly reduced to such degrading employment; .... The Dewan warned the authorities that "so long as the present state of things continues, we can see no prospect of improvement in the future," and advocated the removal of these evils and pleaded for the restoration of the native Government in the country coupled with a warning in which one may trace the revolutionary origins of his mind; the Dewan gave enough indication of the shape of things to come if such things continued unabated;—"In the Shasters it is written, that Rulers ought to practice righteousness and govern their subjects with justice while studying their welfare. These are not now done, but the very contrary; and for such sins and negligences, due rewards will

18. RPA, Appendix K.B., p.lxvi.
19. [Footnote text]
20. RPA, p.lxxvii.
be meted out even in a future state. May we therefore pray that, after
due investigation and reflection, the former native administration be
re-introduced and the old habits and customs of the people re-establis-
shed in the country, with the exception of the power of to commit those
cruel acts noticed above, viz., putting out eyes, cutting off ears and
noses, and forcibly taking away young women from their parents? Hence
it is noticed that Maniram Dewan was not an one-sided critic of the Eng-
lish administration. He gave credit to the British for introducing bene-
ficial measures by prohibiting the practices of chopping off ears and
noses, extracting eyes, abducting young women and utilizing forced la-
bour, etc. But it was his conviction that the evil effects of the Bri-
tish rule on the life of the people far outweighed the advantages result-
ing from British administration. He summed up his views on the effects
of the British rule in Assam in his two memorials

The memorials, one by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and the two others
by Maniram Dewan gave an assessment of British rule as far as it touched
the people of Assam in those early days of the alien administration.

The British power was initially welcomed by the people of Assam
with the expectation of a peaceful reign in the country and release from
the anarchy resulting in mal-administration in the later Ahom period
coupled with the successive Moamaria rebellions, confusion and dissen-
sion inside the ruling class and the Burmese invasions. But the hope
for peaceful reign remained unfulfilled. Popular frustration was the
main factor in "keeping alive the feeling of discontent which found ex-
pression in more than one rebellion in the Brahmaputra valley itself.

22. Ibid., pp. lxiii-lxviii.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
24. Ibid.
The early English administration in Assam was mainly based on the principles envisaged by Scott. He tried his best to increase the collection of revenue as far as possible keeping conformity with, at least for the show of it, to the native system. Thus since the occupation of the province the collection of revenue went on at an increased rate in each succeeding year. The replacement of personal service towards State was the earliest alteration affected in the native revenue system. In its place a Poll Tax of rupee three per naik was introduced signalling the beginning of direct money-taxation. The Pall-Tax was very soon replaced by a regular assessment of land under which rates of assessment ranged from 7 annas to one rupee per 24 bighas.

Under the Ahoms there was land tax. During the Ahom rule specified areas known asKhela or Parganas were placed under the Ahom nobles who were the authorities in their respective areas to administer justice and collect revenue in kind and not in cash. The British introduce the system of placing parganas under the Choudhuries with various titles such as Mauzadars, Bisavas, Kakatis, and Patgiris. They were simply collectors of revenue without any proprietor right in land. They were entitled to receive a commission of 10% of the collections they made, as their remuneration but they had to additionally perform the duties of a Magistrate in petty criminal cases. By making the office of the Choudhury's elective an attempt was made to give a democratic character to the system. But its elective character gave rise to a good number of vices in the system. According to Barooah though the Choudhuri was an elected official, it was only payment of bribes, more often than not, to the officers of the Gauhati court, that made him eligible for election. He was in the nature of a contractor: after election he was

required to furnish a security almost equal amount to his remuneration. Moreover he had to pay six months' revenue before any collection could be made. For these reasons, the Choudhuri was often forced to take loan at an interest at times to the tune of 120%. The money-plyxus did not end here. Sometimes the Choudhuri bribed the revenue officials for ensuring election or re-election. In the ultimate analysis, it was the poor peasant who had to bear the brunt of extortion at the hands of the Choudhuri who did not fail to recover all the payments he had to make."

At the very outset of the British rule Scott had abolished the Ahom system of personal service, rendered by paiks and in its place a Poll Tax of rupees three per paik per annum was introduced. The duty of collection of the revenue was first entrusted to the Chief of Khels but soon it proved impracticable and a new method of collection of the revenue on territorial basis was introduced. The whole area of the district was divided into blocks called Mauzas or Mahals and the duty of the collecting dues from the inhabitants of a particular Mauza was entrusted to the Officer who was in charge of that Mauza or Mahal. Such officers were

28. The Ahom administration employed every adult male in the service of the State either as labourer or a soldier. He was registered as Paik.
29. With the exception of the nobles, priests and persons of high caste and their slaves known as lamuwas and lickhows, the whole male population between the age of fifteen and fifty were liable to render service to the State. They were known as Paiks or footsoldiers. Four paiks (later three) constituted a squad, known as got. Each paik of a got was required to serve the Government in turn, and the normal works of an absentee paik in his village had to be look after by his home-keeping comrades.
30. Twenty paiks were placed under an officer known as Borah, a hundred under a Saikia, and a thousand under a Hazarika. The head of the unit under whom the paiks served was called a Barua, and sometimes a Phukan; if the unit was of greater importance. Each unit was called a Khel; and its components of the Khel considered themselves to be member of one political fraternity.
variously known as Mausadars, Bishnupras, Choudhurs, Kakatis or Patgrias. The Poll Tax was abandoned in favour of a regular assessment of land, based on actual measurement and, the Mausads or Mahals were to resettled annually. Such annual resettlement continued up to 1835. For the purpose of assessment, the cultivated area was divided into basti or homestead; runpit or land on which the transplanted rice called Sali is grown; Baotali or land growing bho or rice and Farrinsetti or land growing dry crops, such as mustard and ahu rice. For a time in Kamrup, Basti land were assessed at from Rs.3/- to Rs.1-8-0 per house. Per runpit the runpit lands were assessed at one rupee, the baotali at twelve annas and the farinsetti at four annas. These rates were gradually raised and in 1848 they reached Rs.1-4-0 per Pura for runpit, and one rupee for all other kinds of land including basti. The rates differed slightly in other districts. In the initial stage annual settlements of the land revenue were there but subsequently it was abolished and peri-local settlements were made with the Mausadars. From 1836 to 1842 the plan of settling a circle, i.e., Mausa for a short period with the Choudhuri or Mausadar as the case might be was tried. But by the year 1854, the system of annual settlement was again revived. It offered the rulers an opportunity annually which was not possible under the system of peri-local settlements for a longer period of time to enhance the rate of revenue. The Mausadars being administrators of justice and collectors of revenue, they could extort "a host of their taxes," under any pretext. A Mausadar could realise a poll tax of Rs.2/- per paik and in addition he, the paik, had to pay for the "Choudhuri commission and profit and loss account." The result was that the ryots often had to pay as much as five or six times of the actual rent.  

31. Ma., p.229.  
32. RI., p.15.  
33. Ibid.  
34. MA., p.229.
Cases of confiscation of property became a common occurrence. "When the peasant failed to pay taxes as demanded by the Choudhuri, the revenue collector, he was chastised by the Choudhuri, the magistrate. As a result sometimes the remnant of the defaulter tenants was confiscated and at times they had to save their skins by leaving their hearth and home. Such was the plight of the Assamese peasants as result of the British-imposed Choudhuri System." The following table of the land revenue clearly shows how the peasants were gradually compelled to pay more and more revenue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Districts</th>
<th>Amount of land revenue realised Districtwise (in Rupee)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In 1832-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>1,10,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>41,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>31,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 1832 the Poll Tax was replaced and land tax was introduced in its place. After a decade since the introduction of land tax in five Brahmaputra valley districts, land revenue of the five districts stood at Rs. 6,14,332 and after another decade, the figure stood at Rs. 7,43,689. Thus it is evident that the rate of land revenue under the British rule was an ever-increasing burden in Assam. The increased revenue and the extortions made by the collecting officers overburdened the peasants.

35. RI., p.15.
36. Quoted from RI., p.16.
The judicial system as introduced by the British in Assam proved itself unsuitable. It had succeeded only in contributing to the sufferings of the Assamese people.

At the bottom of the judiciary there were the Panchavata, the councils of local gentry with powers of disposing of ordinary civil and criminal cases; important cases were to be tried by Assistants to the Commissioner while appellate authority lay with the latter. The Britishers abolished the cruel systems of punishment such as chopping off ears or noses, etc. Thus the penal system introduced by the British was much milder than what was under the Ahom rule. During the early days of the British rule increase in criminal cases was noticed in the Lower Assam. One may say that due to the mildness of British penal laws such increase took place. This, however, was not the case. The fact was that "the system of administration reduced vast masses to poverty, many even left Assam for Bhutan when their last hopes of remedy were cruelly belied. The defeat of revenue resettlement aroused feelings which often found expression in criminal offences. ... Further those in charge of dispensing justice were mostly corrupt which quality they combined with a rude behaviour to the people."

The judicial procedures were also defective; it usually took long time unnecessarily in dispensing justice and hence, it gave rise to corrupt practices. As the Agent to the Governor-General during the early part of the Company's rule was virtually the judge, magistrate and collector of Lower Assam, naturally maladministration followed. Barroque is of the opinion that "it seems the foreign Government cared more for revenue than for material improvement of the people." The early British

37. BL, p.16.
38. Ibid., p.17.
administration was also responsible for creating a separatist psychology among the hill people by backing the missionarles in their evangelic activities among the hill people of Assam. David Scott himself distributed copies of Assamese version of Bible among the people. "The operation of the principle of 'divide et impera' in the hills and plains of Assam may be traced to that period, though it was the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 which formally separated the hills from the plains". The Courteen Act of 1833 opened many avenues to the British capitalists to exploit the people of Assam by spreading their financial tentacles. The Act deprived the East India Company of its monopoly rights and offered India to the British capitalists as a favourable ground for exploitation. Indeed the Act opened the door of export of foreign capital to Assam. As a result of this Act the tea gardens sprang up in Assam and gradually the tea kings grabbed more and more areas under their possession and tried to exclude, if they could, whatever competition from the native side. Early British rule by its political and economic measures reduced Assam completely to the status of a part of British India. Thus it is rightly observed that "Assam was suffering from the same basic evils of foreign domination as as other parts of India did, though there was difference in degrees. Thus, the message of 1857 naturally produce its echo in Assam."

Echoes of the Revolt of 1857—Activities of Maniram Dewan: In 1857 India witnessed the mighty Rebellion which started as a Sepoy mutiny and gradually assumed the character of a national war of independence. It was Mangal Pandey, a Sepoy of 34th Native Infantry, stationed at Barrackpur who fired the first shot against his English masters on 29 March 1857 signalling the first act of open armed rebellion. When the Sepoy Mutiny
broke out, Manlram Devan, the man who turned out as the connecting link between Assam and 1857, was at Calcutta for the third time and the last time. It was the accumulated evils of British rule which eventually turned Manlram Devan, a friend of the English in the early stages of their rule, into an enemy goading him to seek ways and means to get rid of the British.

Manlram was the scion of an Assamese noble family. He was born on 44 Baisakh 13, Saka 1728 (A.D. 1806) at Saring under the district of Rangpur in one of the four Families of Changkakati. The name of his father was Ramdatta and his mother's name was Kashalyadevi. Ramdatta became the Dulakashari Barua during the reign of the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha (A.D. 1795–1810). When the Burmese were in possession of Assam, Ramdatta was upheld in the office and dignity of Bor Kagutee, and on the conquest of the province by the British in 1825, Mr. David Scott, Colonel Richards, Captain Nobeen (Nieufville), not only retained his father (i.e., Maniram's father Ramdatta) in that office, but availed themselves of his knowledge of the revenue system that prevailed under the former rulers, and ordered him to make a fresh peal (Census) of the district (i.e., Rangpur) with the view of making a new settlement.

Manlram cooperated with the English ever since they decided to enter Assam for repulsing the Burmese. He and Bhulanath Parbatia Phukan acted as guides to David Scott when he entered Nowgong through the Jayanta kingdom. They showed him roads through Chouripur, Jayantiapur, Chayagni, Momtrong, Mukjee, Lunting, Mishing Dolagaon, Chouri, Rahachoki and Nowgong. Manlram had also rendered great services to the British in establishing relations with the Singphoes and the Mataks. Since their advance to Assam the Britishers utilised the services of the Dewan in a number of ways.

44. MD., p.37; 45. RBB, p.102.
45. MD., p.37; 46. Appendix K.B. p.lxiI; 47. MD., p.35.
46. Ibid., p.45.
47. Ibid., p.51.
On the expulsion of the Burmese, Scott intended to construct a road via Jayantia to link Sylhet and Assam for which the Government accorded their sanction in 1827. It was Maniram Dewan who helped completion of the road by 1829. This was the first road constructed in Jayantia. The road subsequently came to be known as Brigs-Terrace. Since Maniram's association with Mr. Scott, he served the latter in various capacities. In 1828 Maniram was appointed as Revenue Sheristadar at Rangpur under Captain Neiufville who had been put in over-all charge of the Upper Assam on 26 May 1828 with the Headquarters at Rangpur. How Maniram Dewan's services to the English can be appreciated through his own words. In his petition to Mills in 1853 he said: "I was appointed by Captain Nobeen, Sheristadar and Tuhasheeldar of the District, the result of which was that while in the year 1825-26 and 27 the revenue did not exceed Rs. 35,000/-, after my appointment the country was made to yield a lac of rupees per annum. ... for (5) five years I supplied russia, without any assistance from the Commissariat, to the Assam Light Infantry Regiment and (5) five Companies of Mahput ka Pultan; and during that time no loss occurred to Government.

Furthermore, I acted in the Engineer's Department, by supplying coolies and building the Regimental Lines, as well as all the gentlemen's bungalow. Becoming the Revenue Sheristadar he increased the revenue of the district by imposing taxes on paiks at the rate of Rs. 8/- per got of general paik; Rs. 4/- per got of Dewali paik (paik attached to a temple) and Rs. 6/- per Miri paik who had never been taxed before. He also imposed revenue on every kheldar at a rate ranging from Rs. 22-8-0 to 33-12-c per annum; and even in some cases per Plough a revenue of Rs. 7-8-0 had also been imposed; and the system of auctioning the markets, Perrys and the Fisheries was started. Becoming the Revenue Sheristadar he improved the system of collecting revenue in such a way that collections

48. MD., p.55.
49. PPA., Appendix K.B. p.lxxxii.
continued to increase: in 1828 it was Rs.1,20,000/-; in 1829, Rs. 1,22,000/-, and in 1830, it was Rs.1,26,000/-. He also served the British in the Khasi Hills as a Captain of the Assam Militia in their war for suppressing the Khasi Rebellion in the year 1829.

On Baisakh 1, 1755 Saka (22 April 1833) Purandar Singha became the tributary king in Upper Assam. He had agreed to pay Rs. 50,000/- annually as tribute to the East India Company. Purandar Singha appointed his officials in the traditional manner. He appointed Haranath of the Family of Dharsila as Parbatia Barua and Maniram as Bar Bhandar Bawua.

By the latter part of 1838 Purandar Singha was dethroned and Upper Assam was brought once again under the direct administration of the British on the charge of maladministration and default in paying the tribute amounting to Rs. 1,50,000/-. No consideration whatever was shown to Purandar Singha's difficulties. Lt. Brodie was placed in over all charge of Upper Assam. With the expulsion of Purandar Singha, Maniram lost almost all his offices numbering not less than twelve. According to him -"On the country being resumed by the Government Lieutenant Brodie abolished all the Beesayas" (i.e. offices) "whereby I lost those I held, except the Mauzadarship of three Mauzas and Sheristadarship on Rs. 50 a

50. MD., pp.59-60.
51. Ibid., pp.65-66. In 1825 the Assam Militia also known as the Regiment of Five Company was started by Captain Richards and Lamboodar Barphukan was appointed as its Captain with a salary of Rs.300/- per month and with the power of imposing fine of Rs. 50/- and thirty days imprisonment for six months. Lamboodar held both the offices of the Captain and that of Barphukan. When the need arose for despatching Assam Militia to the Khasi Hills Lamboodar Barphukan showed negligence towards his duties as Captian, on which his Captainship with all the powers except Barphukanship were removed and vested on Maniram.

52. Ibid., p.75. Becoming the king in Upper Assam Purandar Singha appointed Krishnakanta as Mazumdar Barua, Maniram as Revenue Sheristadar, Kashinath Tamuliphukan as Dewani Sheristadar and Lathou Kharghanphukan as Fausadari Sheristadar. See SAJ., p.11.
month; as these did not yield me a sufficient maintenance, I resigned these and entered the Assam Company's service as Dewan. ... took away from me what I had, or in other words Maunzes that I held for twenty-one years have been bestowed on others, together with my houses and lands, while I have been made a dependent ryot of a mean individual; ... I have hereby lost my rank, honour and livelihood." He also pointed out that "the duties that were formerly performed by your humble servant" (i.e., himself) singly are now done by as many as nine Hakims." The deposal of Purandar Singha meant great personal losses to the Dewan also. It was this that gave teeth to Maniram's opposition to the British.

Maniram was determined to defend the cause of Purandar Singha and this led him to visit Calcutta in the winter of 1838 to plead with the Governor-General on behalf of the deposed Purandar Singha about the much needed restoration of native rule. It goes without saying that Purandar Singha's restoration would mean the automatic restoration of his own power, position and privileges. He took the help of Pramathamath Dev alias Latu Babu, who was his host in Calcutta. The Dewan met Governor-General of Bengal, T.C. Robertson, defended the deposed king Purandar Singha and advocated his restoration. He said that "If Purandar Singha or, failing that, a scion of the Ahom royal family could not be restored, he himself should be vested with royal rights. As security against non-payment of tribute, Maniram offered to pay to the Supreme Government one and a half lakh of rupees then and there as three years' tribute computed at Rs.50,000/ per year." But he tried in vain. The Government paid no heed to his request and, yet, Maniram was offered the Dewanship of the Assam Company. He accepted the offer. It was probable that main

53. RPA, Appendix B, p.1xiii.
54. Ibid.
55. II*, p.19; MD*, p.89.
thought of his argument was his immense personal losses due to Purandar Singh's deposition and hence, his acceptance of the personal offer made to him. Maniram served the Assam Company as Dewan till 1844 with a monthly salary of Rs. 600/- at the Headquarters at Nazira where he began functioning in November 1839. But he gave up the Dewanship when differences arose between him and the Company authority over the question of acquisition of land by the Company within the compound of Gargaon. There were other reasons also. The European employees of the Company who received lesser pay than the Dewan were jealous of him; then there were quarrels with Europeans like Hart and Alexander of Dikhowmukh ever inflated bills submitted by the latter for procuring the services of coolies.

After his resignation as Dewan, Maniram started two tea gardens of his own at Chanimara and Chenglung. But he was denied the privilege of reduced rate of revenue for tea cultivation and land. Such privileges, however, were granted to the European Tea gardeners. Stepping into the tea business was Maniram's challenge to British economic interests in that he wanted to break alien monopoly in the tea business. Naturally therefore, Maniram had to contend with the opposition of the British tea interests. With the passing of time this rift between Maniram and the Englishmen became gradually wider. It was this circumstance that led to the Dewan's transformation for an earlier supporter to an opponent of British rule in Assam. His memoranda to John Moffat Mills in 1853 were indeed critical of the alien administration. For his part Mills did not make any enquiry into the roots of evils of the English rule as were pointed out to him through the memorials. Mills admitted that—"it would appear that since the year 1848-49, there has been no great advancement in cultivation and general improvement of the province". Yet he

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56. [Source].
57. [Source].
58. [Source].
59. [Source].
found reasons to dub Maniram as a "Clever but untrustworthy and intriguing person". This rebuff from Mills did not dishearten Maniram. He intended to move the Supreme Government personally by going to Calcutta for redress of the grievances. What he wanted then was restoration of native rule in Upper Assam under British protection. Thus he proceeded to Calcutta and on 6 May 1857 submitted a representation to the Governor General on behalf of Saring Raja Kandarpeswar Singha, the grandson of the deposed King Purandar Singha for elevation to the throne of Upper Assam on a tributary basis. Maniram represented the class interests of the dispossessed nobility in submitting the representation to the Company Government. The far-reaching changes that had been effected under English rule had caused irritation and sufferings to the families of nobles who had solely depended on the services of others through the Paik system. The nobility was long accustomed to a life of ease, and comfort and they were ill at ease when they were deprived of their traditional rights and privileges. They possessed neither land nor much of movable property; hitherto, the state provided all their requirements through the services of the paiks. The changes effected by the British reduced a large number of higher families to great poverty. Thus it was quite natural that a large majority of the Assamese nobles could hardly reconcile themselves to the Company Raj. On transfer of the Upper Assam to Purandar Singha the nobility hoped that they would very soon be able to retrieve their losses. But their hopes were belied. When Purandar Singha was deposed, they appeared to become desperate. It has been rightly observed that "as years rolled on, after the resumption of Upper Assam, their (i.e., nobility's) lot became more and more unbearable. Some of them became desperate; they felt that their salvation lay

60. RL, p. 28-29.
61. RL, p. 164.
62. For details, see ADC, pp. 151-53.
in the restoration of the old regime, and only through such an event could they hope to retrieve their fortune. Naturally, they look forward to find out some one to organise and lead them in a war of liberation. Thus when Maniram decided to visit Calcutta for advocating for the restoration of the native rule, he was easily and readily supported and financed by the majority of the Assamese nobles especially of the Upper Assam who believed their fortune lay in the resumption of the native rule.

The deposed king, Purandar Singha became more popular amongst the Assamese nobles by his refusal to accept the pension of Rs.1000/- p.m. granted by the Company Government. Purandar Singha tried to impress upon the Government about the necessity of restoring his rule in view of mounting disaffection among various classes. He refused to accept the pension in the hope of restoration of his rule. Government's refusal to concede his claim led to bargaining on his part, as it were. He scaled down his demand from restoration of Upper Assam to a mere Zemindarship; in July 1845 he applied to the Government for Zemindarship of the Jorhat town in addition to a stipend of Rs.1500/-p.m. "with retrospective effect, so as to enable him to liquidate the debt incurred for his livelihood." It appeared that the Government would consider his case sympathetically in that it sought some information from the Commissioner of Assam in respect of the financial position of the Ex-Raja and of the other members of his family. But Purandar Singha was not destined to enjoy the pension that was ultimately granted since he breathed his last on the first of October 1846.

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63. ADC. T.153.
64. Ibid., p.155.
65. Ibid., p.156; SAI., p.49.
Purandar Singha was survived by his son, Kameswar Singha, an aged mother, two queens and a daughter. After Purandar Singha, his son Kameswar Singha, although less firm and of weaker will than his father, also did not accept the monthly pension of Rs.1000/-. He was, however, given the privilege of using the title of Maharaja. He lived a very short life after the expiry of his father. Kameswar Singha died in June 1851 leaving the family in utter hardship due both to non-acceptance of the monthly pension and his extravagant nature. During his lifetime he exhausted whatever wealth was left by his father Purandar Singha. Kameswar Singha was survived by three widows and a son Kandarpeswar Singh alias Charing Raja, a boy of eleven years. Kameswar Singha left a heavy burden of debts on his son. Kandarpeswar Singh soon realised that unless something was done to gain the royal fortune, it was impossible for him to bear the responsibility of the family which had been in utter hardship since the time of his Grandfather Purandar Singha. There was no prospect in sight for regaining his fortune unless efforts in that regard were started afresh in Calcutta. Thus he took Maniram Dewan as his guardian with the hope of succeeding in his efforts to regain Upper Assam by moving the Company Government.

During this period the other branch of the royal family headed by Chandra Kanta Singha was living at Gauhati with a monthly pension of Rs.500/- only. Thus members of this family were also found nourishing the hope of restoration of the country to them. Chandra Kanta Singha was earlier removed to Kaliabar with a monthly pension of Rs. 500/- on the elevation of Purandar Singha to the throne of Upper Assam. Chandra Kanta Singha regarded Purandar Singha's elevation, although on a tributary basis, as an injustice towards himself. He also claimed the throne 66. Ibid., p.157. 67. Ibid., p.158. 68. Ibid., p.153.
of Upper Assam. In 1836 he obtained permission from the Government to visit Bengal for pilgrimage but on his way back he visited Calcutta and halted there for a few days inspite of the condition that he should not try to visit Calcutta. Early in 1837 he arrived in Calcutta and pressed his claim to the throne of the Upper Assam. But his endeavours bore no fruit and he returned to Gauhati in utter despair. At Gauhati he died in early 1839 leaving behind three widows, two sons and a daughter. A few months after his death the monthly pension of Rs.500/- was transferred to his son and successor Ghanakanta Singha Jubaraj. Ghanakanta Singha was called upon to shoulder the heavy burden of huge debts incurred by his father. Thus, alike with the Chaling Raja, Ghanakanta also dreamt about restoration of native rule as the only means of redress. Thus when Maniram came forward to appeal for restoration of the native rule in the country he easily got support and consent from Ghanakanta Singha for submitting a memorandum to Mills in his name.

The question might arise that while Maniram submitted his second memorial to Mills on behalf of Ghanakanta Singha Jubaraj for restoration, why did he subsequently took up the cause of Kandarpeswar Singha for claiming restoration. It is probable that Ghanakanta Singha, having observed the adverse attitude of Mills towards Maniram and his two memorials, was afraid to incur the displeasure of the Company Government which might lead to the loss of the monthly pension. So, acting on the advice of Harakanta Sadaramin, Ghanakanta refrained from offering any further help to Maniram in his attempts to move the Government for restoration. Thus Maniram got no co-operation from Ghanakanta Singha in his final attempt and, as such, he pleaded for Kandarpeswar Singha.

69. ADC., p.154.
70. SAJ., pp.88-91.
When Mills visited Assam, Kandarpeswar Singha waited upon Mills and urged in a "petition he presented to him his right to hold Upper Assam as an independent tributary." Though Mills "himself made searching criticisms on different aspects of Government; he spared no one—the high or the low, whenever he found a loophole, and offered suggestions of his own for the general improvement in the administration" for consolidating the possessions of the British and for tightening their grip over the administration, and thus he suggested to the Government of India to inform the "Charing Raja not to entertain any hope of restoration in future." He also pointed out to the Government that the evils referred to by Manlram Dewan were full of exaggerations. Having witnessed the fate of his appeal to Mills, Kandarpeswar Singha in October 1864 submitted a desperate appeal to the Supreme Government for restoration but without any result. He renewed his appeal once again in May 1866 but this time not for restoration but for a zamindary in Upper Assam besides a monthly pension of rupees one thousand only with retrospective effect. This time also here— it bore no result. In all these efforts on the part of Kandarpeswar Singha Manlram Dewan, whose relationship with the local authorities was already strained because of the memorials he submitted, was the chief counsel of Kandarpeswar Singha. Manlram Dewan was not a man to yield easily. When Mills in his report failed to satisfy local expectations, Manlram decided to visit Calcutta to plead before the authorities personally on behalf of Prince Kandarpeswar Singha and on his own behalf. Nevertheless, undaunted by the adverse circumstances he stood firm in his decision to proceed to Calcutta. "Funds were raised; the deposed king" (in the present case Kandarpeswar Singha) "the
dispossessed ministers and the other nobles contributed their humble mite, each according to his ability for meeting the expenditure of Maniram's journey to Calcutta. The Charing Raja made available to the Dewan, gold and silver as much he could. On his way to Calcutta, the Dewan halted at Gauhati where he tried to get help from Ghanakanta Singha Jubaraj but in vain. But he was greatly assisted by Chandrasen Sadaramin, Deputy collector Mahesh Chandra Barua, Baloram Phukan, Deobar Sadaramin and a good many other notabilities.

Maniram Dewan went to Calcutta in 1856 to plead on behalf of Kandarpeswar Singha. But he was refused any interview with the Governor-General due to lack of any credential from the Charing Raja. This compelled him to come back to Upper Assam to have the credentials. He came back to Gauhati accompanied by Kandarpeswar Singha. "At Gauhati, Maniram had the credentials or the Wahejnama, issued in his name by Kandarpeswar Singha and started once again for Calcutta. On the other hand, Kandarpeswar Singha, accompanied by Rudranath Gagoi, son of Madav Rajkhowa and Uma Choudhury, joumied back to Jorhat."

Armed with the credentials Maniram came to Calcutta for the third and last time in his life in the early part of 1857. This time he succeeded in having an interview with the Governor-General. Maniram stated his brief for the restoration of the throne of Upper Assam to Kandarpeswar Singha. But his pleadings went in vain. It was in such circumstances that news arrived about the Sepoy mutiny. He saw in it an opportunity to strike at the Company Government. Awakened by the new consciousness at the upsurge of the Sepoys in Northern India, Maniram perceived that so far he had been pursuing the Will-O the Wisp; that his was the same

76. RA., p.25.
77. Ibid.
78. EFS(B), p.27.
79. RA., pp.26-27; SAJ., pp.94-95.
80. ADC., p.163.
81. BFS(B), pp.27-29.
path that had already been chalked out by the mutineers of Hindustan. ... What Ke could not achieve by prayers and entreaties must now be accomplished at the point of the sword and sword alone."

With this end in view he started sending letter after letter full of patriotic spirit and instructions for armed insurrection to Kandarpeswar Singha and other leading men in Assam.

"Maniram gauged Kandarpeswar Singha to unfurl the standard of revolt with the aid of the local sepoys and through his friend Madhu Mallick, a Bengali Mukhtear, he prepared the ground for the insurrection." The contents of Maniram's letters as follows: 1) If we cannot drive out the Firinigis from our land, we shall rot in the hot He hell. It is a sin to neglect our duties." (2) Here the house is leaning. In our side, keep ready bricks and mortar to build a new house." (3) "From one end of Hindustan to the other everyone is preparing to drive out Firinigis. Now Salim Singh and Pragdutt Singh are no more our enemies. Rather, these men of Kunwar Singh's place will help us. No more shall we sit tight."

Activities of Peoli Baiua and other at Jorhat: Martyrdom of Maniram Dewan and Peoli Bawna: After the receipt of messages from Maniram Dewan, a series of secret meetings were held at the palace of Kandarpeswar Singha at Jorhat. People from all walks of life attended these meetings ostensibly for organizing dramatic performances, religious ceremonies and like others but really

82. ADC., pp. 163-64.
83. A long list of Maniram Dewan's patriotic letters is incerted in MD., pp. 168-170.
84. PHA., p. 69.
85. MD., pp. 168-170.
for making preparations for the coming insurrection. In such meetings Maheschandra Gabharumelia Barua alias Peoli Barua was the man who played the main role. Maniram's first letter suggestive of encouragement to action was received in May-June 1857 through Madhu Mallick, a Bengali. This was the beginning of despatches of letters from Calcutta from Maniram Dewan for insurrection. Such letters from Maniram flowed till the end of August 1857. The first of such letters was a small slip of paper sent to Madhu Mallick concealed in a long letter dealing with indigo and other business. That slip of paper contained subjects like rising of the Hindustani sepoys in favour of Bahadur Shah Badshah and imminence of the fall of Calcutta. Madhu Mallick handed over the letter to Kandarpeswar Singha with a suggestion to assemble "some of the Baruas and Phukans living round Jorhat in order to make arrangements with the sepoys to gain possession of the country. This was done accordingly... Kandarpeswar Singha's palace at Jorhat became the rendezvous of his adherents where they matured the plans and issued directions for the execution.

86. Peoli Barua was the third son of Ram Gabharumelia Barua, who was not only the Chief of the Gabharu Mel but was also an authority on Ayurveda. The mother of Peoli was Bhagyavati Devi of the family of Jambhari Phukan. In 1860 Ram Gabharumelia Barua was the Mauzadar of Diapar Mauza in Sibsagar. Ram Barua's father was Jurai Barua who had been first appointed as the Chief of the Gabharu Mel. Ram Barua, who had great interest in literature and history, educated his son Peoli properly at a very early age. Being a man of twenty-five, Peoli got the title of 'Pandit ji' from Hindustani Sepoys and this was possible only because of his depth of knowledge and upbringing. He also gained sufficient proficiency in music which became a great help in preparing the ground for insurrection. See MP., pp. 213-15.

87. Maniram Dewan had himself sent Madhu Mallick from Calcutta to Jorhat a few months before the outbreak of the disturbances for the purpose of starting an Indigo factory in Assam. Madhu Mallick was engaged as the tutor of Kandarpeswar Singha. Madhu Mallick used to stay in a house of Maniram Dewan situated in the bazar at Jorhat. See SHA., p. 167.

88. SHA., p. 169.
Among those who attended the deliberations at the palace were Peoli Barua alias Mahesh Chandra Sarma Baura Mauzadar, Madhu Mallick, Luki Senchowa Barua, Kamala Saringiabarua, Bahadur Gaonburah and Farmud Ali, a violinist. There were other supporters who lived outside Jorhat. They included Mayaram Barbarha of Golaghat and his brother Chitrasen, Debidutta Sarma Mauzadar, and his brother Lakshmidutta Sarma of Dergaon.

It was Peoli Barua who proceeded to Sibsagar to induce Dutiram Barua Sheristadar and other leading persons to join the cause of Kandarpeswar Singha. Peoli succeeded in his mission. Accordingly Sheristadar Dutiram Barua resigned from his post and joined the rebel camp. Then Peoli Barua with one Nirmal Hazarika, a Brahmin, went to Golaghat with the aim of winning over the sepoys stationed there. His efforts were successful here as well. Soldiers who were on leave came in contact with Kandarpeswar Singha. The Subedar of the Infantry stationed at Dibrugarh agreed to help him by all means. Nur Muhammad, Jamadar of the First Assam Light Infantry, taking leave for personal reasons came down from Dibrugarh to Jorhat to meet Kandarpeswar Singha by way of discussing matters relating to the assistance to be afforded by the sepoys. This was followed by the visit of Rustam Singh Jamadar who conferred with Kandarpeswar Singha about the arrangements made with Peoli Barua when the latter visited Golaghat. It was decided that Bhikum Singh Subedar should come down to Jorhat at the time of Durgapuja for the purpose of enthroning Kandarpeswar Singha. A good number of men from Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Nowgong and

89. Mayaram and Chitrasen belonged to the family of Bhatia Barharah. Saruman Barharah was seventh in descent from Purnananda Giri Bhuyan, the earliest recorded ancestor of the Bhatia Barharah Family. Saruman had three sons- Sombar alias Memera, Jeuram and Krishnaram. Juran Phukan, Mayaram and Chitrasen were the three sons of Krishnaram. Juran Phukan was rewarded by Lord Amherst with an estate of 100 puras of revenue free land known as Mankhat and a Sanad in recognition of his services rendered to the English in expelling the Burmese from Assam. His brothers Mayaram and Chitrasen were the trusted friends of Kandarpeswar Singha. Juran Phukan had a son Narayan by name. See SHA,p.163-65.

91. SHA,p.168.

92. ABP,p.211.

93. BFP,1858; July 29,No.115 Halroyd to Young, June,28 & BFP, 1858, Jan. 14; No.159 as cited in AJP.,p.167-71; SHA,p.169.
Gauhati supported the king's object. Besides those named above, other supporters included Nawbaisha Phukan, Gandhia Barua, Saru Gohain, Ugrasen Gohain, and others of rank and influence who readily responded to the call of Maniram Dewan. Marangikhowa Gohain, grandson of Purandar Singha through a co-wife of his daughter Rupahi Aideo, arranged men and provisions from that area and Madhuram Koch, a Tea-garden contractor, stopped the work of European tea garden proprietors. "Madhu Mallick and Peoli Barua once accompanied Kandarpeswar Singha mounted on his elephant named Motimalla, and contacted an influential grandee for the purpose of winning him over to their side. The rice necessary for the enterprise was to be collected in the house of Madhu Mallick; Arms and ammunition as well as foodstaff for the rebellious army were collected. It was decided that on the day of Astami of the Durga Puja in the year 1779 Asa (A.D. 1857) the Europeans were to be sacrificed and Kandarpeswar Singha was to be declared king of Assam in the presence of Maniram Dewan who was scheduled to come back at that time.

But Captain Holroyd, the Magistrate of Sibsagar and Principal Assistant Commissioner received timely information about this development at Jorhat through Haranath Parbatia Barua who was placed in charge of the investigation in his capacity as Inspector of Police at Jorhat Police station. The mishap took place in this way. "One courier carrying a letter from the Dewan and addressed to the Charing Raja, wrongly delivered it to Haranath Parbatia Barua," who instantly went to Sibsagar to report the matter to Captain Holroyd. This happened in July 1857. Thus the Government got the first authentic information about the threatened
insurrection. Colonel Jenkins, Agent to the Governor-General, Captain Bivar, Principal Assistant of Dibrugah and Colonel Hannay, Commanding officer of the troops stationed at Dibrugah, and Captain Holroyd at once adopted vigorous measures to deal with the situation. All the civil Europeans took shelter either in churches or boats. At Dibrugah Colonel Hannay found the Hindustani Sepoys of Dibrugah were showing signs of revolt against the English and were in favour of placing Kandarpeswar Singha on the throne of Assam. So he took steps to deprive the Hindustani members of the regiment of the opportunity for communication with each other, and for combination by sending them to the small outlying posts, while he concentrated at Dibrugah the loyal Gurkhas and the hillmen attached to the crops." At Nowgong as part of precautionary measures bridges on the river Missa and Diju were destroyed under the order of Mr. Morton, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong to prevent the rebels from Jorhat from establishing possible contacts with Nowgong. At Gauhati also precautionary measures were taken by Mr. E. A. Rowlatt, Principal Assistant Commissioner and Collector of Kamrup. He engaged the services of Keramatulla Sadaramin and Munshee to serve him as his bodyguard. Rowlatt himself used to move out at night in the town in disguise for collecting intelligence about the insurrection. In the way he had occasion to visit the residence of Ghanakanta Singha Jubaraj but found nothing objectionable.

After adopting these precautionary measures Kandarpeswar Singha was arrested on a nightly raid on the palace at Jorhat on 9 September 1857. With the help of his Policed guide Captain Lowther entered the palace, and was soon brought to the presence of the Saring Raja. After some

100. HA., pp. 327-28.
101. ADPJC., p. 136; ADC., p. 169.
102. SAJ., p. 104.
hesitation, the prince made his surrender and delivered his state word. The Captain had despatched" (on the day break)" a party of men to the town to arrest an educated Bengali, agent to the conspirators; who was obviously Madhu Mallick, as there was no other Bengali associated with the plot." Peoli Barua was also arrested at the same time from the palace. This was followed by the arrest of other associates of Kandarpeswar Singha. Maniram Dewan was arrested at Calcutta and imprisoned in the Alipur Jail. Both the brothers Mayaram and Chitrasen along with their nephew Narayan, son of Juran Phukan, were arrested by Haranath Parbatia Barua. A letter written by Maniram Dewan was found/under the pillow at Mayaram’s bed. It read, inter alia: "the plantain leaf in this part of the country is in a drooping condition, and the sickle has also become sharpened. It will be proper to remain in preparedness and sharpen the sickle in our part as well." It was Kandarpeswar Singha who made over this letter to Chitrasen, a member of a semi-military family. Chitrasen consulted his brother Mayaram and agreed to support the proposed insurrection. With the arrest of the leaders and accomplices of the attempted insurrection, the Revolt of 1857 in Assam turned out to be still-born.

In Chittagong the three Companies of the 34th Native Infantry revolted against the English. After burning their lines, breaking open the Jail and plundering the treasury they advanced in the direction of Comilla and then into the jungle of Hill Trippearah and finally entered into the south-east corner of the Sylhet district. Their aim was to join in Cachar with Narendrajit Singha, a pretender to the throne of Manipur and his followers. On their way to Cachar they had an encounter with a deta-

104. SHA, p.170.
105. Ibid., p.164.
106. Ibid.
achment of the Sylhet Light Infantry on 18 December at Latu in the district of Sylhet. In the encounter Major Byng, the Commandant of the detachment lost his life but the rebels suffered heavy casualties. They were closely followed and repeatedly intercepted when they entered Cachar. Only three or four escaped death or capture. At Dacca the Sepoys of the 73rd Regiment organised a revolt. A fraction of them crossed the Brahmaputra at Chilmari and entered Goalpara where they destroyed the Kardoiguri Outpost in the south-west of that district. They plundered the market and carried off the Jamadar and the Burkhendazes of the Outpost. Harakanta Sadaramin of Gauhati wrote in his autobiography that two or three of the attackers were later on executed for the alleged participation in the insurrection.

Trial and Execution: As many as sixteen persons were prosecuted for treason under the Act XIV of 1857 which was extended to Assam in order to stamp out the rebellion. The list included Maniram Dutta Dewan Barbhandar Barua, Peoli Barua alias Mohesh Chandra Gabharumelia Barua, Madhuram Koch, Mayaram Barbarah Nazir, His brother Chitrasen and their nephew Narayan Barbarah, Umakanta Sarma, Ganesh Chandra Kath Barua, Neelakanta Suladhara Phukan, Kamala Charingia Barua, Lukee Senchow Barua, Harangikhowa Gohain, Dutiram Barua Sheristadar, Sheikh Farnud Ali, Sheikh Babadur Gaonburah and Madhu Mallick. Besides them, thirty other persons were arrested in connection of the preparation for insurrection.

Kandarpaswar Singha was not brought up for trial. On Wednesday 9 September 1857 he was arrested and latter sent as prisoner to Alipur Jail from Jorhat. In Calcutta he defended himself through his solicitor.
tor Mr. Ferguson which bore fruit. The authority viewed him as a tool in the hands of his counsellors and judging his tender age he was released from the jail without any trial. For reasons of security he was interned at Burdwan where he lived till December 1860. After being detained there, he was allowed to return to Guwahati with a monthly pension of Rs.500/- with the condition that he would not be allowed to visit Upper Assam. At the time of his arrest Lowther and his party took his entire wealth. This was never returned to him. Thus he lost his entire property.

All other fugitives were brought to trial before the Court of Captain Holroyd who became the Commissioner under the Act XIV of 1857 with the power to try those who were accused of treason and conspiracy in the Sepoy Mutiny. Two pavilions were constructed at Jorhat. In one of them the Court of Colonial Charles Holroyd had its sittings while in the other Haranath Parbatya Barua conducted his office for the purpose of facilitating the trial by preparing evidences mainly through intimidation. Holroyd, the Judge, was so biased against the arrested persons that he wanted to execute them without proper trial. This became evident from his utterance that -"We'll hang you first, try you afterwards."

Madhuram Koch was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for seven years on Saturday, 31 January 1858. Peoli Barua was sentenced on Tuesday, 9 February 1858 by Holroyd in his capacity as Commissioner. The sentence passed against him read as follows:-

115. ADG.,p.178.
116. LFPS.,p.20.
117. RAS.,p.61.
118. Ibid.,p.75; RI.,p.25.
To
The Magistrate of Seebsaugar,

Whereas at a Court of the Commissioner held at Joorhath in the Seebsaugar district under Act XIV of 1857, for the year 1858 on the 9th day of February 1858, Mohes Chandra alias Fealie, son of Ram Sarma, having been convicted of treason, be it ordered that said convict be hanged by neck until he is dead. Further it is ordered that execution of the said sentence respecting the aforesaid convict be made and done by you on or before the 26th day of the month of February, 1858, in such manner as prescribed in the regulation enacted by the Governor-General and that you do return this warrant to me with an endorsement attested by your official seal and signature certifying that the sentence as ordered herein has been executed. Herein fail not. Given under my hand, this 9th day of February in the year 1858.

C. Holroyd
Commissioner Appointed under Act XIV of 1857.

Commissioner Holroyd asked the Magistrate Holroyd—the same person in two different capacities, to execute the sentence.

Maniram Dewan, who had been arrested at Calcutta and lodged in Alipur jail, was brought to Jorhat to face the trial which was but a misnomer of a trial. In this court no convict was allowed any opportunity to defend himself, neither was there any opportunity for cross-examining the witnesses. Maniram Dewan was put on board of

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120. EF3(B)., p. 39.
the steamer 'Koladyne' on 31 December 1857 for being conveyed to Assam to stand his trial there. He was escorted by a hundred seamen sent to help the authorities in Upper Assam. Maniram was produced from before the Court of Holroyd on 23 February 1858. He was charged with waging war against the Government and was sentenced to death by hanging. The Judgement given by Commissioner Holroyd read as follows:-

Court of the Commissioner Appointed Under Act XIV of 1857 For Seebsaugor in Upper Assam. Trial No. 4, 1858.

To The Magistrate of Seebsaugor,

Whereas at a Court held at Joorhath in the Seebsaugor district under Act XIV of 1857 for the year 1858 on the 23rd day of February, 1858, Maneeram, son of Ramdutt, having been convicted of treason and sentenced to suffer death by being hanged by neck until he is dead. It is hereby ordered that execution of the said sentence be made and done on or before the 26th of the month of February, 1858, and that you do return this warrant to me with an endorsement attested by your official seal and signature, certifying the manner in which the sentence has been executed as commanded by the regulation enacted by the Governor-General in Council and now in force. Herein fail not. Given my hand this 23rd day of February in the year 1858.

C. Holroyd
Commissioner Appointed under Act XIV of 1857.

121. SHA, p. 170.
122. IMGS, p. 18.
123. EFS(B), p. 38.
124. From RA, pp. 67-68.
Maniram Dewan was produced before the Court on 22 February, convicted the next day and was ordered to be executed on 26 February. All this proves beyond doubt that Holroyd was very much anxious to put an end to Maniram as early as possible. The Dewan was to be executed on the same day on which Peoli Barua was also to be executed. Here also Commissioner Holroyd asked the Magistrate Holroyd to carry out the sentence. Maniram was convicted on inadequate evidence. The role of the Prosecutor-cum-judge was indeed very abominable. It has been rightly observed that "in fact, the fate of Maniram had already been decided in 1854 in the Report on the Province of Assam by Mills."

On the morning of 26 February 1858, the day of Meshed of Holi festival of the Hindus Maniram Dewan and Peoli Barua were hanged on the western bank of the river Tokolai, to the east of Kunwari Punkhuri near the present Jorhat Normal School, by Beeral Chowdang, who had been sentenced to transportation for life. People soon began to regard them as myth martyrs.

An Estimate of Maniram Dewan and Peoli Barua: During Maniram's stay at Calcutta Peoli Barua was the minister-guide and counsel of Kandarpeswar Singha. Peoli was the man on the spot who undertook necessary preparations to bring about the uprising. It was he who visited several camps of the Sepoys at Golaghat and other places along with one Nirmal Hazarika to secure help for the Charing Raja. His knowledge in music became a boon to him and this facilitated his entry into the Sepoys' camps without undue suspicion. His proficiency in music enabled Kandarpeswar Singha to give a cover to the secret meetings held in his palace at Jorhat. Peoli who was the chief contact man of Maniram Dewan.
Dewan in Assam when the Dewans's letters were sent from Calcutta. He was instrumental in collecting necessary provisions for the rebellions army in the making. The Government's report on the proceedings of the rebels showed how Peoli Barua played a very important role in preparing the ground for the insurrection. It said:

"At the end of the month of Assar or beginning of Sawan Pealie was deputed to Golaghat with letters from the Saring Raja finally to arrange matters with the native officers and sepoys on that command. When there he visited other people also of influence in the vicinity and arranged that the intended rising should occur about the time of the Doorga Pooja, when Maniram stated he would arrive."

"During the months of Assar and Sawan the Saring Raja held frequent meetings at Joorhat, at which Pealie. Mudoo Mullick, the Hensow Boora and Kumla Saringaa Boorua took an active part; among others who attended were Mahommadan Bahadur Gaon Boora and Furmood, who excelled themselves to induce others of their persuasion in the place to unite in aid of the Raja's designs."

There could be no doubt that while Maniram Dewan played the role of a philosopher-guide to the 1857 movement in Assam Peoli Barua was its organisational leader.

Dewan Maniram was the product of English rule while his patriotism reached its meridian splendour during the days of the rebellion of 1857. When the Britishers entered Assam to expel the Burmese, Maniram was in his early twenties. Since then he came in contact with the English in various capacities. It was the English rule which produced in him an astute administrator. But the patriot in him revealed itself a number of times whenever occasions demanded it. His qualities of astuteness in administration, cleverness in diplomacy, love for maintenance of old traditions, and education and history, and his skill in conducting business --- all these flowed from his intimate association with the British. He served the British for about two decades and gained much experience in administrative affairs. From his long experience

129. BJF. 1858, July 29 No. 115; Holroyd to young, June 28; as cited in ADC., p.167.
he gained the necessary insight into problems and this enabled him to 
divine the English imperialistic policy. This new realisation ultimate-
ly made him what he was in 1857.

Maniram Dewan was born aristocratic and feudal-minded by upbrin-
ging. He turned out as the representative of the feudal class. Which 
was why he set forth in his memorials demands relating to restoratio
of feudal privileges. "His feudal instincts were also revealed by the 
fact that he wrote the Buranji-Vivek-ratna not in current Assamese 
but in a mixed Assamese language with queer jumble of Sanskrit, Ben-
gali, Urdu and a few English words. Again, Maniram did make no efforts 
to publish his Buranji; the intention to limit its circulation among 
a select few, as was the feudal custom, was manifest." In his private 
life he was also a feudal man. He married four times and his family 
consisted of 185 persons including dependants and servants. His family 
head a large estate for which he had to pay annually Rs. 500/- as land 
revenue. In his memorial to Mills he advocated establishment of schools 
in villages with necessary expenditure to be provided by the Governmen
He also offered financial help to the Missionaries for continuing the 
publishation of Orunodi, the first Assamese Journal, published from 
Sibsagar, and offered financial aid to the author of Assamiva Lorar 
Mitra to publish the said book. He himself wrote two other books namely 
Barabhuwan Charitre and Bhakti-Pradip. Thus it is rightly observed t
that"Maniram stood on the border-line of mediaevalism and modernism."

And he was wholly a genius. It goes to his credit that he was 
the first man from Assam to understand the significance of the opportu
nity offered by the Sepoy Mutiny to strike at the British in Assam

130. RI., p. 23.
132. RPA., Appendix K.B., p. lxiii.
He possessed the power of kindling patriotism in the hearts of others. If he were present at Jorhat to take direct charge of the preparation for 1857 in Assam, it is possible to think that some organised action in the actual field could have been there.

It was true that his advocacy of the national cause merged with his own self-interest. He was a true representative of his class and rose above it with all glory in 1857. His responsibility for failure in paying the annual tribute to the English cannot be fully denied. In this respect he was not beyond suspicion. This suspicion grew further when he himself wanted to be the king. His act of coaxing Ghanakanta Singha to finance him for his journey to Calcutta by giving a hint to secure restoration in his favour was an act of double-crossing, as it were, since it was Kandarpeswar Singha who financed him liberally to champion his cause only. It is hard to find any justification for his attempt to get financial help from Ghanakanta Singha. But these aberrations on the part of a drowning drowning man could not detract from his positive role which ultimately cost him his very life. Therefore, he came to be remembered by generations to come not as a crafty man but as a hero, a martyr. The significance of his career lies in the fact that "the cause for which he had to lay down his life was patriotism and it is precisely this living sense of patriotism that had endeared him to the hearts of the millions of people.

Trial of other Patriots: Ganesh Chandra Kathbarua, son of Adiram, Umakanta Sarma alias Umai Muktear, son of Saruman Sarma, were also tried on 12 March 1858 along with Narayan of Bhatia Barabarah Family. They were sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment each and were

134. SAI, p.90; Dainik Janambhumi, 8 & 21 September 1972.
135. MD, p.90.
136. RT, p.27.
committed to Sibsagar Jail. The judgement passed by Holroyd against them read as follows:

"The prisoners however are inferior Omiah, and not persons of any great weight or substance; they appear to me like ignorant fools to have followed in the wake of the others, without considering the enormity of the offence they were committing. I do not consider it necessary in their instance to pass a very severe sentence. I accordingly dismiss them from Government employ, declaring them incompetent to serve the Government in any capacity; declare all their goods and effects to be forfeited to Government; and sentence them each respectively to three years imprisonment with hard labour in the District Jail."

On the same day, i.e., on 12 March 1858 Marangikhowa Gohain was also tried and was sentenced for transportation for life to the Andaman islands. Short of capital punishment the sentence was only a degree less than the one passed on Maniram and Peoli.

Mayaram, Chitrasen and their nephew Narayan were tried and sentenced for imprisonment. Mayaram was sentenced for transportation for fourteen years; Narayan was sentenced for three years; While Chitrasen's term was not clearly known. But the fact that on release from imprisonment Chitrasen had to pass the rest of his life at Brindavan showed that he was also sentenced for transportation. Their properties including Mankhat were confiscated and all privileges, granted to them under the Sanad issued by Lord Amherst, were withdrawn. Mayaram was charged with the offence of reading out to the Sepoys at Golaghat newspapers with a view to inciting them and for having carried on seditious communications with the Charing Raja. On 18 March 1858 the judgement against Mayaram was passed: he was to serve his term in Alipur Jail while Narayan was to do it in Sibsagar Jail. Subsequently they were released.

137 SHA, p.166.
on their appeal to the Supreme Court. On release "Mayaram returned home, but Chitrasen passed his rest of life in Brindavana. Narayan also did not return home and he died at Karnal in the Punjab."

On the same day, i.e., 18 March 1858 Neelakanta Shuladhara Phukan, Kamala Charimdia Barua and Luki Senchowa Barua were also tried and sentenced for fourteen years deportation to Andaman islands.

On 26 March 1858 Madhu Mallick the only Bengali participant in the plot was tried by C. Holroyd under the Act XIV of 1857 on the allegations that Madhu Mallick "having during the months of Jeth, Ahar, Sawan and Bhadra, 1779 Assam Suk, May, June, July and August 1857, conspired with Saring Raja of Joorhath to rebel and wage war against the Government, and having sided and abetted against the State." He was sentenced to be transported as a felon beyond seas for the term of his natural life."

Subsequently when in 1863 Dutiram, Mayaram, Bahadur Gaon Burah, Farmud Ali were released, nothing definite was known about the mitigation of Madhu Mallick's terms. In respect of Karangikhowa Gohain it was learnt that he "shuffled off his mortal coil far away from his own home."

Kamala Senchowa also died in prison. The trial of Dutiram Sheristadar, son of Krishnadhar Kakati of the famous pedigree of Mamatial Kakati was held on 19 August 1858. He was charged for the complicity in the crime of insurrection and was sentenced to transportation for life. He had published some controversial writings on Assam in 'Bhaskar' and 'Samachar Chandrika' the two Bengali journals published from

138. SHA, p.165.
139. Ibid., p.171.
140. FPS(B), p.40.
141. APB., p.212.
Calcutta. This he did through his son Priyalal who was at that time was a student of Hoogly College. Dutiram Sheristadar was carried to Port Blair on 2 September 1868 on board the 'Boanerges', where he was eventually disembarked.

On the charge of seducing the Muslims of Jorhat and neighbouring areas, Bahadur Gaonbarua alias Sheikh Badil and Sheikh Formud Ali, a violinist, were tried on 19 August 1858 and were sentenced to transportation for life to the Andaman with forfeiture of their property.

Following the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 when a general amnesty was granted, Dutiram Sheristadar, Bahadur Gaonbura, and Formud Ali on their appeal were set at liberty on 16 September 1863 and were allowed to return to Assam.

The martyrdom of Maniram and Peoli and the imprisonment of the others showed that Assam's contribution to the rebellion of 1857 was not purely academic. The list of convicts speaks about the participation of people from all walks of life. Maniram Dewan and Peoli Barua belonged to Upper Classes, Maringikhowa Gohain and Neelakanta Shuladhara Phukan were of royal blood; Sheikh Formud Ali was a court musician and Madhu Koch was a tea-garden contractor.

The causes of failure of the otherwise heroic attempt may be briefly discussed. The main factor for the failure of the Assamese patriots was that they started their endeavours too late. The Assamese rebels started working on attempts at revolt when the British had attained

142. BHG., p. 19.
143. ADC., p. 171.
144. Ibid., p. 178; BHG., p. 23; RA., pp. 78-79; SSSJ., pp. 72-78; ND., pp. 220-22.
145. The noted historian Shri R.C. Mazumdar is of opinion that there was no trouble in Assam; he totally ignored Assam's role in 1857. See SFR., p. 224. Dr. S.N. Sen in his Eighteen Fifty Seven in page 408 makes a mere reference to the execution of Maniram Dewan and the imprisonment of Madhu Mallick only.
success in suppressing the mutiny in its main centres. This enabled the alien rulers to have an easy ride over Assam. The mutiny at Meerut began on 10 May 1857 and after it spread to Delhi, the embers died down with the recovery of Delhi in September. Everything began late in Assam as far as preparations were concerned. The Dewan started posting his letters from Calcutta only when the revolt in other parts of Hindustan was going on in full speed. The letters took their time to come in those days of slow communication. Delayed attempts were however suppressed by the alien authority. The Government took prompt measures to deal with the situation after it was posted with facts through the wrongly delivered letter. Col. Hannay practically disbanded the Dibrugarh Regiment while disaffection in the Kamrup Regiment was erased by dismissing the tribal recruits and imprisoning some of them. Thus there was only disaffection among the Sepoys stationed at Golaghat. This disaffected but scattered sepoys failed to come to the aid of the civilians who did not find time enough to put up an organisation.

Another reason for the loopholes in the organisation was the absence of Maniram Dewan on the spot. Against the organised attack of the Assamese patriots were lacking the "co-ordination in the leadership. The Chain-letters of Maniram Dewan took time to reach the hands of all.

Meanwhile the situation would change."

The cause for which Maniram wanted to launch a rebellion was for the restoration of the feudal privileges through the restoration of the native rule i.e.; Ahom monarchy. But by this time it became a lost cause as the people were losing faith in the merits of a native monarchy. There was not universal demand for such restoration. Moreover

146. BL., p.23; 147. BMFS., p.23. 148. BMFS(3)., p.43.
there was lack of solidarity among the nobility. Some of them favoured restoration of native rule while others disfavoured it. Their choice was for the 'enlightened' English rule. Some of the Raja's own relatives disclosed the intelligence of the proposed insurrection to the English. Thus the failure of the Assamese patriots was partly due to their failure to organise a united front of the nobility against the English. The cause of restoring native rule in the country had not been favourably received by the submerged sections of the people—especially by those who had just been emancipated from the bondage by the British rule. Such people did not bother about the question whether they were under foreign rule or under a native rule. To the down-trodden people the question of bread stood foremost than the question of living under an ideal type of Government.

Lack of vigilance was also there on the part of organisers of the proposed insurrection. The misdelivery of Maniram's letter hastened the discovery of the attempts at insurrection. There was "essential weakness of the organisers of the revolt." The patriots at Jorhat were found wanting in maintaining proper vigilance so that under no circumstances the Britishers got any clue of the proposed insurrection.

Repressive Measures of the English: The local authorities stood vigilant against any disturbances that might break out in the wake of the 1857 revolt in other parts of India. Holroyd got the intelligence of preparations in the palace of Kandarpeswar Singha from Haranath Parbatia Barua, the Daroga of Jorhat. Holroyd rose to the occasion and immediately reported the matter to Mr. Jemkins, the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam, stationed at Gauhati, and Holroyd himself proceeded to arrest Kandarpeswar Singha as early as
possible. Not only Holroyd but almost all the local European officers and their most obedient and faithful native functionaries presented a united front and started repressive measures in their respective areas.

Major Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam, lost no time in drawing the attention of the Bengal Government to the goings-on in Assam. In his despatch of 29 August 1857, he urged the Bengal Government to send immediately an European contingent "to save the Province from the (impending) revolution." Due to the dearth of sufficient armies, the Bengal Government despatched on 11 September 1857 a small force of 104 English sea-men, half of them were newly recruited under Lieutenant Davis on board the Harronghatta.

On the receipt the information about activities and of the proceedings of the Sepoys that took place at the residence of Sheikh Bhikhun, the Subedar of the detachment, stationed at Golaghat, Major Sannay, the Commanding Officer of the Assam Light Infantry, caused the arrest of Sheikh Bhikhun Singh, the Subedar and other ringleaders of the rebel-minded Sepoys. They were brought to Dibrugarh to stand their trial before a court martial. At Dibrugarh many Sepoys were court-martialed. Balavant Singh, Ramahol Singh, Kirpa Ram, Seshwai (Shahai) Singh, Chandan Singh, Aly Khan, Shaikh Oogni (Gani ?), Chandar Singh and Hidayat Ali were sentenced to transportation for life. Some of the Sepoys had to suffer long terms of rigorous imprisonment, while a good number including the Sepoys of Golaghat, were discharged from their duties. Captain Holroyd and Haranath Parbatia Barua went to the extremes in their vendetta against all probable sympathisers for in-

surrection and many were unnecessarily harrassed, some for mere personal enmity with them. Holroyd fully utilised the services of Haranath Daroga in procuring evidence against the Assamese patriots; strangely enough, several men of rank, who had hitherto been the close associates of Kandarpeswar Singha and as such knew the entire attempts at insurrection also submitted deposition against the king Kandarpeswar Singha and his other co-patriots. We have already noted how Holroyd had conducted the proceedings against Maniram Dewan and other patriots in a purely vindictive manner. Above all Haranath's policy of persuasion and open intimidation compelled many including even Kinaram Pandit, the tutor of Charing Raja Kandarpeswar Singha, to become the approvers in the case. At the instance of Holroyd, Haranath and his servants used Munesshe and their other associates like Maniram Sharma, Ganeshia Barua, Mahidhar Sharma Muktear, Kinaram Pandit, Nirmal Hazariika, Krishnaram, Ghinloha Gogoil, Durgeswar Burahgobain and others organised a vigorous search not only in Sibsagar district but also in other parts of Assam from all directions for tracing out and rounding up the Assamese patriots or those with whom they had personal enmity. Even Anandaram Dakhinal Phukan, a strong supporter of the English rule in Assam, was also suspected. A letter had been published witout the name of the writer in 'Bengal Harana' implicating Anandaram in the proposed rebellion. Anandaram had to shoulder much labour to remove such suspicion. Two Assamese women were also implicated. They were Rupahi Aideo, Daughter of the deposed king Purandar Singha, and Lemboi Aideo. Both the ladies

154. LMF., p.19.
155. APR., p.209; SAJ., p.103.
156. LMF., p.19.
157. RA., p.44.
158. * It is probable that this Nirmal Hazariika had once accompanied Peoli Barua to the camp of the Sepoys at Golaghat, and subsequently became approver in the case. See ADG., p.166.
159. RA., pp.44-45.
160. ADPJC., pp. 141-42.
suffered loss of property. Rupahi Aideo also lost the Government possession.

At Gauhati due to over-vigilance on the part of Mr. Rowlatt, the Principal Assistant Commissioner of the Lower Assam, a good number of leading persons like Boloram Phukan, Gourinath Choudhury, Haliram Naosalia Barua and Somdatta Barkakati, suffered humiliation of exaction resulting loss of their honour and prestige. Thus it becomes evident that the British authority in Assam struck terror in the land by taking various measures to stamp out all manifestation of revolt. A few months after the suppression of the revolt, harrowing news of assault on respectable persons, slaughtering of cattle by the English sea-men at Dibrugarh, arsons and such other outrages began to appear in the journals. A report said: "It appears from their manners and expressions that they, as if instruments of torture and cruelty, are employed to bend the unbroken spirit of a newly acquired territory to the yoke of subjection."

Implementation of Government of India Act of 1858: Apart from the North-West territories of India the Rebellion of 1857 had its impact on the Eastern Frontier of Lower Provinces, especially Assam. Sir Frederick Halliday, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1854-59), himself wrote in respect of Assam that "had it not been for the judicious measures of the authorities on the spot and the despatch of assistance from the Presidency, an insurrection would have broken out damaging not only the tranquility of the Province itself but also perilizing the safety of the whole of our Eastern Frontier." The Rebellion lashed over the country with such severity that it "absorbed all thoughts

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160. RA, pp. 83-84. MIFS, p. 20; RI, p. 27.
161. RA, pp. 83-84.
162. RA, p. 5.
163. Hindoo Patriot (Calcutta), 21 October 1858 as cited in RA, p. 5.
and so dislocated the machinery of the Government—both the Supreme and Local—that little else could be attended to during 1857 and part of 1858. Because of the cataclysmic events, Company Raj came to be replaced by direct rule of the British Crown ostensibly for ensuring "better Government" in India. Thus the Act of Government of India, 1858, came into force which enacted that "the territories previously in the possession and under the Government of the East India Company, should henceforth be governed by and in the name of Her Majesty, and vested in Her Majesty all territories and powers of the Company". The Act was passed on 2 August 1858 and was enforced thirty days thereafter. Accordingly a Proclamation, known as Queen's Proclamation, was issued under the command of Her Majesty from Allahabad on 1 November 1858 by the Governor-General, to the princes, chiefs and people of India notifying the assumption of the Government of India by the British Crown.

The Queen's Proclamation ended the Company Raj in Assam as well. Queen Victoria promised in her Proclamation to respect "the rights, dignity and honour of the native princes as our own." However, in the case of Purandar Singh, the deposed king of Assam and his heirs, this promise was not followed. The wrong in shape of depriving Purandar Singh of the throne of Upper Assam in 1838 had not been rectified after the Queen's Proclamation.

Although the endeavours of Maniram Dewan and his other associates were nipped in the bud, failure did not mark the end of people's movements in Assam. In the changed situation the people consulted their interests and took steps to promote the growth of popular movements in conformity with the demands of the times.

165. BLG., Vol. I., p. 35.
166. Ibid., p. 50.
167. Ibid.
168. Id., p. 30.