CHAPTER - II
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POLITICAL CONDITION OF NALBARI AND BARPETA DISTRICTS

The dimension of the research work centered around Nalbari and Barpeta districts of Assam. Earlier these two districts are the part of the Kamrup district as sub-divisions. However, on 14th August, 1985 and on 15th July, 1983, Nalbari and Barpeta separated respectively from Kamrup district with an upgraded status of a district. At the time of freedom movement of India these two districts were amalgamated along with Kamrup district.

Assam was known as Kamarupa in ancient times, had a glorious ancient heritage. Her history goes back to the several centuries before the Christian Era. The Treaty of Yandabo (24th February, 1826) was the turning point of the history of Assam. It ended the grim stories of the days of Burmese who ruthlessly invaded Assam. It also ended the glorious six hundred years of the Ahom Royal Family. The new era of British rule had changed the political system and it effected the society. The Treaty of Yandabo, was very remarkable for the context of Assam. According to the treaty of Yandabo, the king of Ava yielded the Province of Arakan and Tennasserim\(^1\) to the British and also paying a heavy compensation besides rejected all claims of victory over Assam and her dominions.

The immediate result of the Treaty of Yandabo was the whole of Brahmaputra Valley came under the control of the British rule. At first when the British entered into the Brahmaputra Valley

\(^1\) Dutta, K.N.: *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, 1998, p 1
they declared that they had not entered into Assam with the
intention of conquest but to expel the Burmese from this country.
But after expulsion of the invaders (Burmese) the British wholly
ignored their previous assurance. The British, without any of Ahom
army, defeated the Burmese and made up their mind to settle in
Assam in their own way. The British had divided the valley into
three parts - Lower Assam comprising of Kamrup, Nagaon and
part of Darrang, Upper Assam extending from Biswanath to the
Buridihing and the Matak country. First, they annexed Lower
Assam and put it in charge of a Commissioner and David Scott
who was the first Commissioner of this part. The condition of
Upper Assam was still confusion and in 1838, when the Ahom
king Purandar Singha had failed to fulfill the certain conditions,
the Upper Assam also annexed to the British dominion.

POLITICAL CONDITION OF NALBARI AND BARPETA:

Medieval period:

The political condition of Kamarupa was more chaotic
in the 14th century. Although some minor kings like Arimatta
(1365-1385) had came to power but did not succeed. The petty
Bhuyans asserted their independence in everywhere where they
settled. These Bhuyan rulers traced their descent from some
legendary or historical persons and entered into reciprocal clash
for supremacy in the region. One Niladhvaj who established the
Khen dynasty by uniting several Bhuyans at Kamatapur. Relating
this matter Gait observed-- It is said that the founder of the dynasty
was a cowherd whose master, a Brahman, is said to have foretold that he
would become king and helped him to overthrow the last degenerate,
descendant of the Pala family. On ascending the throne he embraced the Hindu religion, assumed the name Niladhvaj and made his old master his chief mantri or minister. He is reputed to have imported many Brahmans from Mithila. But the reign of Niladhvaj could not long remain peacefully. In 1498 Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1579) the Sultan of Bengal, captured the capital city of Kamatapur and adjoining territory upto Hajo. After 1515 the Khen dynasty ceased to exist its power.

Koch Power:

About two centuries before the Ahom occupation Kamarupa passed through a confused period. The rise of Bisu, an adventurous Koch youth, in the beginning of the 16th century was the important event in the history of not only Koch Bihar but also in the part of Kamrup and Assam. After foundation of a Koch kingdom, Bisu assumed the name Visva Singha (1515-1540). After the death of Visva Singha in 1540, his eldest son Malladev ascended the throne of Koch Bihar and assuming the name Naranarayan (1540-584). His younger brother Sukladhavaj better known as Chilarai was his right hand man of his all military activities. He was also the general of Koch royal army. The rise of the Koch power under king Naranarayana who sought to build up a powerful Koch kingdom covering a large part of ancient Kamarupa was short lived. The successors of Naranarayana had

3. Ibid., p.42
going to wreck mutual clash among them and as a result the mighty Koch kingdom was divided. At that time in the western part of the Koch kingdom, the Mughals became powerful and the eastern side the Ahoms became powerful rulers. It led to hostilities between the Ahoms and the Mughals. From 1616 to 1639, the present Kamrup changed hands in several times. A treaty was signed in 1639 between Ahoms and Mughals at Kaliabar and according to this treaty Bar Nadi in the north and Asur Ali in the south were fixed as the boundaries between the Ahom and the Mughal territories.\(^6\)

The Mughals introduced a new administrative system in Kamrup during the period of their administration. They divided their newly occupied area into four Sarkars, viz. Sarkar Kamrup, Sarkar Dhekeri, Sarkar Dakhinkul and Sarkar Bangalbhum. A Sarkar was split up into a number of Pargana and a Pargana was subdivided into taluk. Village was the smaller unit of this system of administration. For civil and revenue administration they created new system of Administrative division as– Choudhury, Patowary, Talukdar and other posts.\(^7\)

About twenty years later of the treaty of 1639, in 1658, the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha recovered Kamrup from the hand of Mughal rulers. The consequence of the occupation of Kamrup by Jayadhwaj Singha was the Mughal invasion of Assam under Nawab Mir Jumala in 1662. In this invasion, the Ahom suffered huge defeat at the hand of Mughal army who later successfully captured the Ahom capital Gargaon. According to the treaty of

\(^6\) Dutta, Debabrata : *History of Assam*, 1998, p-74
Ghiladharighat on 9th January, 1663 the Ahoms were compelled to restore Kamrup to the Mughal. But in 1667 Chakradhwaj Singha wrested back Kamrup from the Mughal and the Ahom retained its possession till 1679, when Laluk Barphukan, Viceroy of Ahom king at Guwahati entering into a collusion with the Subedar of Bengal, Sultan Ajamtara. But again Kamrup came to the hands of the Ahoms in 1682 after the battle of Itakhuli. It was the final battle among the Ahoms and Mughals. According to Lakshmi Devi, *The Ahoms came in complete possession of present Kamrup district only in 1682 AD during the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96AD).* From the reign of Godadhar Singha the position of Kamrup was same till the 1824, when the East India Company took over Assam after defeating the Burmese.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that Kamrup was the conflicting place among various races and invaders. In medieval period it was mainly the battle field of Ahoms and Mughals. The layman of Kamrup has confused by the series of various wars. Kamrup has always been a premier place of Assam because of its advantageous location. Kamrup serves as the gateway to the east from the west, so outsider invaders had an eye on Kamrup. At first the Ahoms were not much interested in occupying Kamrup. But they had to take Kamrup because the Mughal power was posing a threatening from the western front of the Ahom kingdom.

After the occupation of Kamrup, the Ahom ruler had classified it as Desh and its administration was instructed to a

new high-ranking officer, called Barphukan and his headquarters at Guwahati. He was assisted by a host of subordinate officers.\textsuperscript{11} The Barphukan was the Chief-Executive Officer and he also enjoyed the post of a Chief Judge of Kamrup.

The Barphukan assisted by a groups of Phukans (Subordinate Barphukan) and other officials. His another important role was that he was the supervising officer over the vassal states in Central and Lower Assam. Due to the distance from the capital, the Barphukan enjoyed greater authority.\textsuperscript{12}

From the rest of the Ahom kingdom, the revenue and land settlement in Desh Kamrup was different. In the directly administered areas of the Ahom kingdom the Paik system to succeed in its full form. But in Kamrup, the Pargana system earlier introduced by the Mughal was to be kept by the Ahom Government. Besides that, this allowed the Chaudhury, Talukdar, Patowary of the Mughal days to continue.\textsuperscript{13} The Barphukan has collected the land revenue from the ryots by his subordinated officers. Another peculiarity in Kamrup was that, a class of landlords existed and the landlords paid revenue in cash. A considerable amount of trade was carried on in Kamrup with the neighbouring states and a class of traders existed. As a result of it important trade centres were grown-up. At that time Hadira was the western gateway of Assam and all trade with Bengal passed through this border post.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Sarma, Amulya Chadra: \textit{Tai Ahom System of Administration}, 1986, pp.115-117
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p. 115
\item \textsuperscript{13} Neog, Moheswar (ed.): \textit{Prachya Sasanavati}, 1974, p-132;
\item \textsuperscript{14} Barpujari, H.K. (ed.): \textit{The Comprehensive History of Assam} [Vol.III], 1994, pp.124-25
\end{itemize}
At the medieval period the political condition of Nalbari and Barpeta area were not peaceful. But after 1682 to the Burmese invasion, according to supporting historical texts the political condition of these two areas were peaceful.

The reign of Tungkhungiya dynasty, rise of the Sakta faith (faith in mother goddess of Hinduism) in though people prayed religious. They had granted land to Brahmin for religious organization in charging temples. There are many existing Hindu temples in Kamrup which were built under the patronage of Ahom rulers, for examples Umananda, Sukreswar, Rudreswar and Navagraha in Guwahati. The Ahom rulers had also patronized the satras of Kamrup. These Vaishnavite religious institutions (Temples, Namghars and the Satras) had played a vital role in the socio-cultural life of the Kamrupi people.

During the Ahom rule, the Kamrupi people enjoyed peace and prosperity, they were free from the raids of the hill tribes.

Political condition of Nalbari and Barpeta in colonial period:

The Treaty of Yandabo, initiated a new era to the history of Assam. The beginning of Company Raj was the important result of the Treaty of Yandabo. The British came to open trade with this land but gradually developed the political awareness with this land and grasped over all political arena of Assam.

15. Sarma, Satyendra Nath : A Socio Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200 AD to 1800 AD), 1989, p-192
Administration of David Scott (1826-1831):

Before annexed the Upper Assam in 1838, Lower Assam had annexed by British in 1826 and David Scott, Agent to the Governor General had introduced a new administration system in Lower Assam. But actually, the British administration in Lower Assam began in 1824-25. 16 After the occupation of Brahmaputra Valley the first concern of David Scott was to the revenue administration. Scott had built up his revenue system in the old khel and paik system. In Lower Assam, Scott had to keep the Mughal system of administration. After recovery of Lower Assam (1681) from Mughal, the Ahoms also continued the Mughal system of administration. According to the Pargana system Choudhury was in-charge of Pargana and he had collected taxes from the khels, which consisted a got. A got was formed by three or four paiks.

The new British administrator, David Scott had retained the system of the Parganas and Choudhuries in Kamrup. But Scott abolished the practice of paying revenue in service and instead of it he introduced the system of payment in cash. The main duties of the Choudhuries' was the collection of tax. The Patowary or village accountant was an important portfolio in the Scott administration. The main duty of Patowary was to collect money and deposit it in the Pargana treasury. They were the subordinate officers of Choudhuries. 17 Another important portfolio of this administration was Thakuria. The Taluks were again subdivided and Thakurias were placed in charge of these small

units. In his jurisdiction he also enjoyed administrative and judicial power.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Choudhuries' }had received their remuneration from rent free lands and service of a number of \textit{paiks}. The subordinate collectors like \textit{Patowary} and \textit{Thakurias} also received rent free grants as remuneration.

The next step of Scott was the survey of land in lower Assam. Under the supervision of Mr. Mathews the survey was held in 1825-26.\textsuperscript{19} According to the report of the survey there were 1,60,00,000 \textit{bighas} of arable land in Lower Assam of which 4,80,000 \textit{bighas} were rent free.\textsuperscript{20}

David Scott had also abolished the \textit{Kandahar Chowky} (it was the frontier land between Lower Assam and Bengal) for incensement of the trade and commerce.

Another important step of Scott relating with revenue was the withdrawal of \textit{Narayani Currency} and introduced the Company’s \textit{Sicca} rupees.\textsuperscript{21} The value of Rs.100/- \textit{Sicca} rupees was Rs. 126-27/- \textit{Narayani} rupee.\textsuperscript{22}

For the revenue establishment of Lower Assam Scott had created a post of a native \textit{Seristadar} and the first native \textit{Seristadar} was Haliram Dhekiyal Phukan.\textsuperscript{23}

After the death of David Scott in 20th August, 1831,\textsuperscript{24} in 1834 Mr. Robertson was succeeded as Commissioner and Agent

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p.60
\item \textsuperscript{19} Dutta, Debabrata : \textit{Op-cit, 1998}, p-5
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.5
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.6
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.6
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.6
\item \textsuperscript{24} Gait, Sir, E.A. : \textit{Op-cit, 1992}, p.281
\end{itemize}
to the Governor General by Captain, afterwards General, Jenkins.\textsuperscript{25} At that time Brahmaputra Valley was divided into four districts, viz. Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang including Bishnath and Nagaon.\textsuperscript{26}

In 1834, the formation of districts under the \textit{Company Raj} was the important event in the history of Assam. In 1835 the population of Kamrup district was 3,000,000.\textsuperscript{27}

After the final annexation of Lower Assam in March, 1828\textsuperscript{28} the Company Raj had continued her policy of annexation upto 1854. Relating this matter B.B. Hazarika observed,\textit{-Thus with the occupation of Assam, the British authorities adopted the policy of annexation and in course of three decades (1824-54) different parts of both the valleys of Brahmaputra and Surama were annexed to the British dominion.}\textsuperscript{29}

After the death of David Scott, in early 1832, Cracroft, an able civil servant of Company, who received his temporary duties by T.C. Robertson secured the Supreme Government's permission to transfer six Western \textit{Parganas} of Kamrup, viz. \textit{Bause, Chake Bouse, Barnagar, Barpeta, Bagaribari} and \textit{Nagarberra} had amalgamated along with North East Rangpur.\textsuperscript{30} Following these six Paragana was the first frame work of present Barpeta district. But after two years later, in 1834 following these six \textit{Parganas}

\textsuperscript{25. Ibid., p.283}
\textsuperscript{26. Ibid., p.283}
\textsuperscript{27. Ibid., p.284}
\textsuperscript{29. Hazarika, B.B.: \textit{Political Life in Assam During the Nineteenth Century}, 1987, p-225}
again separated from North East Rangpur and its headquarter was established in Guwahati.\footnote{31} 

According to Mills Report in 1833-34, the land settlement was first introduced in Kamrup by Captain Bogle.\footnote{32} He had abolished the \textit{Pargana} and instead of it he created \textit{Mouzas}. These \textit{Mouzas} were the small unit of revenue. After establishment of \textit{Mouzas} the previous \textit{Choudhuries} (head of Parganas) had known as the rename \textit{Mouzaders}. The \textit{Mouzaders} were the head of the \textit{Mouzas}.

Barpeta was the next important town in the district of Kamrup and it located in the midst of a purely agricultural population.\footnote{33} Its importance amongst the town was due solely to its being the site of celebrated Vaishnavite \textit{Satra} or monastery founded by Sri Sankaradeva at the end of the fifteenth century.

In March, 1841, Barpeta had announced as a sub-division of Kamrup\footnote{34} and John Batler\footnote{35} was the administrative officer (Sub-Assistant) of Barpeta sub-division. His monthly salary was Rs. 250/-.\footnote{36} After establishment of sub-division at Barpeta, one \textit{Munsif} Court also established. From 9 October, 1852 Anandaram Dhekial Phukan\footnote{37} had appointed at Barpeta by the alien Government as Sub-Assistant permanently. In 1861, the Company Government had changed the name of the post of Sub-Assistant to

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \footnote{31}{Das, Digambar : \textit{Barpetar Buranji}, 1995, p.103}
  \item \footnote{33}{Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : \textit{Op-cit}, p.338}
  \item \footnote{34}{Das, Digambar : \textit{Op-cit}, p.102}
  \item \footnote{35}{Ibid., p. 104}
  \item \footnote{36}{Ibid., p.104}
  \item \footnote{37}{Ibid., p.104}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Assistant and instead of that it was rename as 'Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC)' had coming to the office. In 1886 a Municipal Board was established in Barpeta town.\textsuperscript{38}

According to sub-divisional administration the Barpeta sub-division was divided into two circles and two police stations. These two circles and police stations were - Barpeta (headquarter, Barpeta) and Barnagar (headquarter, Chakchaka), and Barpeta (Sadar, Barpeta) and Bajali (Sadar, Patacharkuchi).

According to Miles Report of 1853, the Kamrup district was divided in six police stations (Thanahs) and six out-posts, and it shown in the table\textsuperscript{-1}\textsuperscript{39}

Table : 1

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<tr>
<th>Name of the Thannahs</th>
<th>Daroga</th>
<th>Mohurr</th>
<th>Jamadar</th>
<th>Kakotia</th>
<th>Borkandiy</th>
<th>Tekhlias</th>
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<td>Barpeta</td>
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<td>Bajali</td>
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<tr>
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\textsuperscript{38} Barpujari, H.K.(ed.): \textit{Op-cit}, p.338
\textsuperscript{39} Mills, A.J. Moffatt: \textit{Op-cit}, p.328
From the above table (Table No. 1), we know that at that time (1834) the formation of police station in Nalbari and Barpeta area was the important step of British administration. According to Miles, -There has been an increase in the cases of burglary and theft and the Magistrate remark that few cases of petty theft and cattle-stealing are ever reported to the police. But it is gratifying to observe that heinous crimes are comparatively rare in the district. From this remark, it is proved that at that time in Nalbari and Barpeta area baring the cases of burglary and theft, the heinous case were rare.

At the time of F. Jenkins, Captain Bogle, the Deputy Collector of Kamrup was asked to make an indepth study on the revenue and judicial administration of the Kamrup district. After a comprehensive study Bogle prepared a report with statistical information on the revenue administration of Kamrup in 1834-35. Bogle had established large fiscal units and appointed large numbers of Choudhuries in these units and he subdivided the whole district (Kamrup) into seventy six Parganas. 41

Khata, Upar Barbhag, Barkhetri, Bahjani, Chand Kuchi, Pokowa, Natun Dehar, Namati, Nam Barbhag, Dharmapur and Saru Khetri were the Parganas of present Nalbari district. In 188743 one Tahsil (Collectorate) had established in Nalbari. There were about eight or ten Mouzas (a fiscal unit) in Nalbari Tahsil 44 and one Tahsildar (Collector of revenue) was appointed in Nalbari Tahsil. Before establishment of Nalbari Tahsil one police station

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40. Ibid., p. 229
42. Deka, Leena(ed.): Souvenir, Reception Committee 55th Annual Conference of Assam College Teacher Association, April, 2008,p.99
43. Rajbongshi, Kamaleswar: Nalbarik Janu Aahak, 2007, p.3
44. Deka, Leena(ed.): Op-cit, p.95
was established in Nalbari town in 3 May 1857. In 1883 there were three primary schools established in Nalbari town area (Malikuchi, Nalbari Satra and Katlabarkuchi). In 1887, in Nalbari, Tahsil one English School was established. At that time the migration of Rajastani people (Marowari) to Nalbari was another important event in the socio-economic history of Nalbari. In 1888 under Nalbari Local Board, one Dispensary was established. In the last part of the 19th century, the establishment of police station, schools and post office was the important event of its step of urbanization. In 1905, the Nalbari Railway Station was established and it was the another important steps of the development of communication. In the 15th March of 1938, Nalbari has been announced a town with four wards.

Political condition of Nalbari and Barpeta area after the Peasant Movement of 1894:

After the revolt of 1857, the role of raij mel became prominent to the revolutionary history of Assam. From 1860 to 1894 the raij mel had protested the British Government policy for an excessive enhance rate in tax. The ryots were told by the Tahsildar, If you do not pay your property will be attached. On the other hand raij mel told him, If you do pay you are cursed and excommunicated. The raij mel also directed the people not to buy auction property of others. The decision of the raij mel was

45. Rajbongshi, Kamaleswar : Op-cit, p.3
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p.4
mandatory for the *ryots*. If the *rayots* were disobey the *mel* decision they would have to face social ostracism as well as they have to face the fines. It proved that, the people obeyed the resolution of the *mel* more sincerely. This social responsibilities of the people was very important for their future preparation of the Indian National Movement.

We know that the Ahom State had become a part of British India in 1826. But till 1840 this process was going on. The long thirty years (from 1840 to 1870) period the British rule was firmly established on the whole of Assam. From 1870 we begin to see the main impact of British rule in the gradual progresses of socio-economic development of Assam.

After annexation of Lower Assam in 7th March 1828, Assam became a division of Bengal Government under a Commissioner and David Scott was the first Commissioner and Agent to the Governor General of India in the North East Frontier. After the death of David Scott (1831) T.C. Robertson had been appointed as a Commissioner of the same post of David Scott. After Robertson, in January, 1834 Captain F. Jenkins assumed the office of the Commissioner. After him in 1861 Colonel Henry Hopkinson succeeded Jenkins and he continued his duty till the starting of Chief Commissionership rule in Assam in 1874.

By a Proclamation of 6 February, 1874\textsuperscript{50} the administration of the province of Assam was going under the control of Chief Commissionership and control of the Governor General in Council. The first Chief Commissioner of the province of Assam was Colonel R.H. Keatinge (1874-1878) who had taken his charge

\textsuperscript{50} Barpujari, H.K.(ed.) : *Op-cit*, p.227
as a Chief Commissioner of 7 February, 1874.\textsuperscript{51} The rule of Chief Commissionership had continued upto 1905. From 1905 to 1912 British dominated Assam province was ruled under the Lieutenant Governors (East Bengal and Assam) and the first Lieutenant Governor was J.B. Fuller (1905-06). From 1912 to 1921 the province of Assam had again going under the rule of Chief Commissioners and this record stage, A. Earle (1912-14) was the first Chief Commissioner of Assam. From 1921 to 1947 the province of Assam was ruled by Governors and N.D. Beatson Bell (1921) was the first British Governor of the Assam province. The post of Governor is running as the head of the province Assam still today.

After the Peasant Movement of 1894 to 1921, the long twenty seven years, except the Swadeshi Movement of 1905, there were no important revolutionary event in Nalbari and Barpeta area. Before the Peasant Movement of Rangia, Nalbari and Lachima in 1882\textsuperscript{52} Barpeta was recognized as the next important town of Kamrup district and constituted a Municipality (1882). At that time Barpeta town was located in fully agricultural majority. The famous \textit{Vaishnavite Satra} (monastery) founded by Srimanta Sankardeva at the last quarter of the 15th century was the glorious heritage of Barpeta town.

In 1883, except one \textit{Tahsil} (Collectorate) and one police station there were no important administrative arrangement in present Nalbari district.

\textsuperscript{51} Assam Secretariat Records (AS), File No. 620 of 1874
ESTABLISHMENT OF POPULAR SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Before the peasant uprising of Kamrup in 1892-94, in 1884 the establishment of Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha and Tezpur Ryot Sabha was very important for the rise of nationalism among the people of Assam.

Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha (1884):

Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha was formed in 1884 at Jorhat under the guidance of Jagannath Barua (1851-1907). Tea planter origin, Jagannath Barua was prosecuting his higher studies at Calcutta when a new wave of enlightenment swept through Bengal. He was greatly influenced by the activities of the British India Association and Indian Association. Barua became its Secretary and its activities had spread all important areas of Assam.53 The welfare of the ryots was the main aim of the Sarbajanik Sabha and its membership was open to all caste, creed or community. The Sabha protested against the Assam Land and Revenue Regulations of 1886 through an ordinance, making the point that this device deprived the people of their right of discussing an important measure through the legislature.54

At the time of popular peasant outbursts in the early 1890's, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha stood by the reason of the peasantry. The Sabha had also submitted its memorial to the Royal Commission on opium in 1893. The Sabha claimed for the abolition of the cultivation of poppy and it was important step of Sarbajanik Sabha.

54. Ibid., p. 40
At the time of partition of Bengal (1905) the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha also rendered a great service or protecting the interest of the Assamese people. In 1908, Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah had attended Bombay Congress Session (held on 26th December, 1908) as a representative of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha.\textsuperscript{55} The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha had maintained its separate identity till 1921\textsuperscript{56} when Mahatma Gandhi on his visit to Jorhat. Krishnakanta Bhattacharjya, Upendranath Barua and few others had welcome Mahatma Gandhi at Jorhat on behalf of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha.

Tezpur Ryot Sabha (1884):

The Tezpur Ryot Sabha was set up in 1884 in Tezpur. It was formed mainly for protesting against the increasement of land revenue by the alien Government. It was established by the able guidance of Haribilash Agarwala, a merchant planter of Tezpur. Lakshmikanta Barkakati, Lambodar Borah (a Lawyer), Jaidev Sarma, Bhabani Chandra Bhattacharjya, Mohendra Dey, Lakshmikanta Das and several others had been related with Tezpur Ryot Sabha. Tezpur Ryot Sabha was a well organized body in comparison to the fortuitous raij mels. It had a broad base in the rural areas. Tezpur Ryot Sabha had sent Kalikrishna Barkakati as its delegate to the National Congress in 1885 and continued to sent delegates to the subsequent sessions.\textsuperscript{57} In 1903, with the emergence of the Assam Association the Tezpur Ryot Sabha merged with the Assam Association.

\textsuperscript{55} Hazarika, B.B. : Op-cit, p. 419
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Assam District Gazetteers, Darrang, 1978, p-84
By 1886 there were other popular organizations that had been set up in the province, viz. the *Shillong Association*, the *Nowgong Ryot Sabha*, the *Sylhet Association* and the *Habiganj Peoples’ Association*. But there were no detailed account of these organizations is available.

**BIRTH OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND ASSAM ASSOCIATION:**

The Congress took its birth in December, 1885 at Bombay. It was an organization formed by the elites of the society—lawyers, landlords, journalists, industrialists and all well-to-do people. They assembled at one platform under the guidance of a retired British Civil servant, Alan Octavian Hume. The Congress thus embarked upon its chequered to be working well under the stewardship of the armchair politicians for about two decades. Bal Gangadhar Tilak attempted to convert it into a military body of the nationalists. In this, he had only a partial success. It was therefore, left for Gandhiji to make the Congress a mass organization. He gave a new orientation to its programmes and plans for action to work together for the freedom of the country and social and moral uplift of the people.

The establishment of Indian National Congress had influenced the Assamese intellectuals and its important result was the establishment of a valley wide organization called the *Assam Association* in 1903. Before the establishment of the *Assam Association* at least twenty\(^{58}\) *Assam* delegates participated in the National Congress Session. Among them Kalikanta Barkakati, Devicharan Barua, Satyanath Bora, Radhanath Changkakati, 

\(^{58}\) Guha, Amalendu : Op-cit, pp.284-85
Ghanashyam Barua and Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua were most prominent. But before the establishment of Assam Provincial Congress Committee in 1921, there was no formal National Congress related functions had started in Assam.

**The Assam Association (1903):**

In 1903\(^{59}\), the establishment of the *Assam Association* by the educated gentry of Assam led by Manik Chandra Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Faiznur Ali, Jagannath Barua and others was the important event in the political history of Assam. It was an All Assam Political Organization and its achievement was more prominent for the political consciousness among the masses of Assam. Raja Probhat Chandra Barua of Gauripur was one of the Chief encouragers of the Association and he had also presided over the inaugural session at Dibrugarh.\(^{60}\) At the beginning of the first two decades of the 20th century the *Assam Association* had served as the mouth-piece of the people of Assam. The Association had been presenting the needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations of the Assamese people before the foreign Government. Manik Chandra Barua, the enlighten personality of Assam was the first able General Secretary of the Association.

Although several meetings were held from time to time to discusses the vital issues, until 1916 the *Assam Association* had no regular annual sessions.\(^{61}\) During the period from 1903 to 1915 it undoubtedly proves that the Association was a one-man show.\(^{62}\)

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59. Dutta, K.N. : Op-cit, p. 41
60. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p.116
because that long period Manik Chandra Barua was the General Secretary of the *Assam Association*. Manik Chandra Barua continued to be the General Secretary till his death (September, 1915) when this office was occupied by Ghanasham Barua. The period 1903 to 1915, when Assam formed a part of newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam (from 1906 to 1912) the Association had marked passive activity and marginal participation. So, at the time of partition movement (1905) the role of Assam was very marginal and passive.

But after 1915, the activities of the *Assam Association* had been going to very strong. Because, from 1916 onwards, younger men of advanced political views had joined as member of the Association and give it a new voice and energy. The Association had give up their old policy of petitions and prayers to the authorities and accepted a new vigorous policy. From the chair of President of the Goalpara Session in December, 1918, Tarun Ram Phukan said, 63 *The Government is bad and bureaucratic. It should be democratic. The English officers and English traders and also a section of Indians do not advocate popular government and Lord Sydenham and others say that India is not fit for self-government. But one cannot learn swimming without plunging in water. If India is not fit for self-government even after a century and a half of British rule, who is responsible for this? It is the British rule which is to blame. The British officials who come from England to rule here know neither the language nor manners or customs of the country and if they can manage to rule well why not educated Indians who know the country and the people so well? Indians today are*

much better fitted for self-government than the Canadians when self-government was given to Canada.

After 1915, Tarun Ram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Chandranath Sarma, Gopinath Bordoloi, Rohini Kumar Chowdhury, Bishnuran Medhi, Kuladhar Chaliha, Padmadhar Chaliha, Bidyadhar Sarma, Jogendra Nath Barua, Faiznur Ali and many others had joined in the arena of Assam Association and in later period these personalities had played a very key role in the freedom movement of India. The Assam Association was the foremost platform of their political training. According to K.N. Dutta – They were the men who introduced an element of extremism into the politics of the Association and replaced it in 1921 by the provincial congress organization.  

The Assam Association had focused its attention on all public related questions in the province. The Association had launched a strong upheaval against the unpopular grazing tax introduced by the Government on grazing of cattle in the forest reserves of Assam.

The Association also protested the opium policy of the Government. The Assamese people were in the habit of taking opium (Kaani). The habit was prevailing among them and it was spreading far and wide from the beginning of the British administration. It was the slow-poisoning to the Assamese society. According to M. Tayyebulla, before 1795, there were no use of opium in Assam. The fight against opium was another important achievement of the Assam Association.

64. Dutta, K.N. : Op-cit, p. pp.43
The Association had protested the intension of the *Zamindars' Association of Goalpara* and other interested parties to transfer the district of Goalpara to Bengal. In this issue the Association was successful for preservation of the integrity of Assam.

Later, the *Assam Association* strongly opposed the evil plan of excluding Assam from the reforms scheme in 1918. But while various associations and social organizations like the *Surama Valley Muhammedan Association, People's Association of Sylhet, Sunamganj Mahishya Samiti, European Tea Planters' Association and Ahom Association* laid pressure on their respective communal or partial interests, the *Assam Association* alone stood for the unity and integrity of Assam. In regard to the reform issue, the *Assam Association* had taken its bold step and sending a deputation to London and they had ultimately convinced the British authority and established its demands. As a result of the mission, Assam was declared a major province with other provinces of India. It was the great achievement of the *Assam Association*.

Although the *Assam Association* always extended its attention to the specific problems of Assam, yet it did not cut-off her relations with Indian politics. At initial stage, the Association had closely observing the main flora of the nationalist movement. After the failure of the new reforms (Montague-Chelmsford Report on 1918 and the *Government of India Act, 1919*) in satisfying the national feelings and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh (13 April, 1919), the Indian National Congress had taken a mass movement (Non-Cooperation) against the alien Government. Chandranath Sarma, young worker of the Association had played a very prominent role to the national consciousness among the people of Assam. In
December, 1920, the annual session of the *Assam Association* held at Tezpur under the President-ship of Prasanta Kumar Baruah and this session it was analysed to adopt the programme of Non-Cooperation as drafted by the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress. From the time on the Association had realised to identity itself with the aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress. After that the Association had taken a resolution and decided to merge itself the neonate (new-born) Assam Provincial Congress, which was affiliated to the Indian National Congress.\(^{66}\)

**ASSAM ASSOCIATION AND NALBARI AND BARPETA :**

After the establishment of the *Assam Association* in 1903, there were several branches that had been founded at Goalpara, Barpeta, Guwahati, Nagaon, Tezpur, Golaghat and Dibrugarh. But there were no branch in Nalbari. But till 1916, there was no outstanding activities on the part of *Assam Association*. Hence there no considerable development was achieved by *Assam Association* during that period in Nalbari and Barpeta.

**SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND NALBARI AND BARPETA :**

After 20 years of the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1905, the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, the Governor General of British India was the important event in the history of freedom struggle of India. Lord Curzon came to India as the new Viceroy in December, 1898. During his period of Viceroyalty, he imposed extremely unpopular measurers which

intensiﬁed the opposition to British rule. He had said that he
would assist in the ‘peaceful demise’ of the Congress. When he
left India, the Congress and the nationalist movement were stronger
than ever before and, in fact, assumed new dimensions.

Curzon’s most unpopular act was the partition of Bengal. The object of the measure was given out as administrative
convenience. The leaders could clearly see that it was actually a
measure to divide the people. East Bengal was to be Muslim
majority province and the West Bengal a Hindu majority province.
The partition was designed to disrupt Hindu-Muslim unity and
thus weaken the nationalist movement. However, the effect of the
measure believed the hopes of the British Government. It proved
an agitation and such angry reaction against British rule that
partition measure had to be annulled.

The result of the partition of Bengal was rise to the
Swadeshi and Boycott Movement. It developed later into the form
of militant nationalism and political terrorism. The Congress also
abandoned its path of pursuing long resolutions of its loyalty to
the British sovereign and its constitutional approach. It accorded
its full support to the Swadeshi Movement. The movement
continued for seven years until the partition of Bengal was
annulled in December, 1911. The Swadeshi Movement was a great
victory of the nationalism over imperialism. It converted the national
consciousness into the national struggle for freedom of the country.

By Curzon’s Act of Partition Assam also included with
East Bengal under a Lt. Governor. This injustice act had effected
the public feelings of the Assam also. At that time some Bengal
anarchists came to Assam and they influenced the Assamese youth
for the *Swadeshi Movement*.\textsuperscript{67} At that time Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, Triguua Barua, Bishnuram Medhi, Raktim Barua and some other young men had influenced by he anarchism for sometime.

At that time in Assam, mainly Guwahati the spirit of *Swadeshi Movement* had started among some young students by Govinda Lahiri,\textsuperscript{68} the Manager of the Assam Valley Trading Company. By the inspiration of Govinda Lahiri, in spreading the ideas of the Swadeshi among the people, the young students of Guwahati including Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury had selling coarse cloth manufactured by Banga-Lakshmi Cotton Mills of Calcutta, from door to door and encouraging Assamese girls to weave cloth at home and requesting Bengali girls to learn the art of weaving.\textsuperscript{69}

After that the establishment of the *Seva Sangha*\textsuperscript{70} by Govinda Lahiri, Nidhiram Das and the young students was important event at the time of *Swadeshi Movement* in Assam. Nidhiram Das was as the Captain Secretary and Govidna Lahiri, Manager of the Assam Valley Trading Company was the treasurer of this organization.\textsuperscript{71} The students like Triguna Barua, Bishnuram Medhi, Balek Dasgupta, Pitambor Chakravorty and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury was the member of this organization.\textsuperscript{72} The student members of this *Seva Sangha* went to the steamer-*ghat* and the railway station and requested Rularam Punjabi, the Railway Station Master, Raibahadur Bhuban Chandra Das, the steamer-*ghat* agent

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\textsuperscript{67} Dutta, K.N. : Op-cit, p. 48
\textsuperscript{68} Sarma, S.N.(ed.) : *Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, Rachanavali*, 1986, p. 656
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p.657
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
and Sabharam Das, the steamer-ghat sub agent respectively and cooly Sardar Sumeswar Chowdhury that they may be allowed to work as cooly every sunday. After their assent, a large group of students united and worked there and the European travelers pay them (students) four to five time higher than the coolies and this collection went to the treasury of the Seva Sangha.73

At that time of Swadeshi Movement the young Assamese students had influenced by the leftist influence of Bengal. The 'Volunteer Brigades' of the Seva Sangha had played a very key role in Swadeshi and Boycott Movement of Assam. At that time one nationalist drama of Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury Bandini Bharat had staged at the Gauhati Government High School. After over the show, the police seized the part of the drama.74 According to Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, at the time of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement Ractim Bora, Triguna Barua, Pitambor Chakravorty, Balek Lahkar, Nidhiram Das, Binanda Barua and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury was the fountain head of the Swadeshi Movement.75

The final phase of the Swadeshi Movement was marked by actual direct violence practiced by the terrorist organization. Gradually, the Seva Sangha developed into a terrorist organization on lines of the Anushilan Samiti of Bengal without support of Nidhiram Das.76 As a result under the able guidance of the young students the anarchist organization had established on the anal of Assam and the main objective of this organization was to driven back the British from Assam. The members of the anarchist party

73. Ibid.
74. Ibid, p.658
75. Ibid, pp. 658-59
76. Ibid.
performed regular physical exercises like lathi, wrestling, sword and dagger play. They also collected arms.

Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Upendranath Sen were the strong supporters of the anarchist organization, who promised to defend their case in court.\(^\text{77}\) The first terrorist activity if the anarchist party was in seating fire to the *Anand Bungalow*.\(^\text{78}\) It was a club reserved for British men and women. After succeeded this plan, for the association of Chief Commissioner of East Bengal and Assam, J.B. Fuller in 1906 Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury planned a dynamite at Shillong Gauhati Road, near Jagiroad.\(^\text{79}\) After these incident Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, Binanda Bora, Raktim Bora, Triguna Barua and Pitambor Chakravorty had targeted by the police and CID. Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury was hunted by the police and he took shelter in Barpeta because of this anarchist role.\(^\text{80}\)

According to a correspondent of the Bengalee, who made a tour of the important towns of Assam Valley during the beginning of the movement, it was found that the attitude of the Assamese people on the *Swadeshi Movement* was favourable.\(^\text{81}\) He found much enthusiasm among the buyers for the *Swadeshi* goods at Dhubri, Goalpara and Gauhati. At Gauhati, he (the correspondent) found the educated Bengali and Assamese people were using *kurta* instead of Liverpool salt, Benares sugar instead of foreign sugar and indigenous cloth instead of Manchester cloth.

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77. Ibid., p. 661
78. Ibid., pp. 659-60
80. Ibid., p. 99
81. News Item , The Bengali 18 November 1905, see the *Swadeshi Movement*. 
The Kamakhya temple's head priest also appealed to the pandas, grocers and sweetmeat sellers not to accept foreign goods and not enforce their sale and purchase in the Nilachal hill.\textsuperscript{82} For the sale of swadeshi goods shops were started in different places. There were four important shops at Gauhati and among them, the Assam Valley Trading Company was most prominent and the majority of its shareholders were local pleaders.\textsuperscript{83} The students and local shop-keepers of Tezpur and Barpeta had taken the leading part in popularizing the use of swadeshi goods.\textsuperscript{84}

From the above discussion, it is clear that, in Brahmaputra Valley Gauhati was the main place of Swadeshi Movement. According to Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury the Swadeshi Movement did not get public support and it did not touch other places except Guwahati, because it was the only place connected to Calcutta by a river-way or railway.\textsuperscript{85} In the words of V.V. Rao, in Brahmaputra Valley, there were not much activity in this regard. In Kamrup district no industrial concern was started as a result of the Swadeshi Movement, but some shops were selling swadeshi goods.\textsuperscript{86}

Nevertheless, the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 had influenced the people of Kamrup and other parts of the Brahmaputra Valley. The people of Nalbari and Barpeta had also influenced by the voice of Ambikagiri. Although, it was not spread in full swing, the people of Kamrup was influenced by the objectives

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. 8 September, 13 and 19 October, 1905
\textsuperscript{83} Abstract of Intelligence, Eastern Bengal and Assam Police, 26 January, 1907, Kamrup, 19 January.
\textsuperscript{84} Barpujari, H.K. and others (ed.): Political History of Assam, Vol. I, p. 187
\textsuperscript{85} Sarma, S.N.: Op-cit, p.656
\textsuperscript{86} Rao, V.V.: A Century of Government and Politics in North East India (Vol.V), 1993, p-24
of the *Swadeshi Movement*. It was the important step of the political consciousness among the masses of Nalbari and Barpeta. Barpeta was the birth place of Ambikagiri and at the middle of the *Swadeshi Movement*, he took shelter in Barpeta. In this period he influenced the masses of Barpeta by various ways.

In December, 1911, the British Government had annulled the partition Act of Bengal. It was the great triumph of the seven years *Swadeshi and Boycott Movement*. It becomes a new symbol of nationalism. Thus when the Government annulled the partition of Bengal in 1911, the people felt elated with national pride. They also got the hint that their prayers must be supported by the strong will power and determination if they were to achieve their fulfillment.

**THE ASOM CHATRA SANMILAN OF 1916 AND NALBARI AND BARPETA:**

The establishment of *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* (known in English first as the Assam Students’ Conference and then as Assam Students’ Federation) in 1916 was an important event in the political history of Assam.87 According to Gaurishankar Bhattacharyya, the Assam Students’ Literacy Conference was the first student organization in Assam.88 It was a state level organization in Assam and the second of its kind in India, the *Bihar Chattra Sanmilan* (1906) being the first.89

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89. Deka, Meeta : *Student Movement in Assam*, 1996, p-62
Although, the *Asom Chatra Sammilan* (1916) was the first state level organization in Assam, but the memorandum submitted by Assamese students led by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan to A.J. Moffat Mills on his visit to Assam in 1853\(^90\) was the first important step of the Assamese students. We know that the submission of memorandum has no important achievement. But this activity of these students was very significant in the history of student movements in Assam.

The second important effort of the Assamese students’ studying in Calcutta viz. Manik Chandra Barua, Ganga Govinda Phukan, Jagannath Barua and Radhikaram Dhekial Phukan had submitted a petition to Viceroy of India, Lord Northbrook on May 21, 1871\(^91\) on behalf of the *Asomiya Chatrar Sahitya Sabha* (Literary Club of the Assamese Students).

After that in August 25, 1888, the establishment of the *Asomiya Bhasar Unnoti Sadhini Sabha* (Progressing society of the Assamese literature) by Calcutta based Assamese students like Rajani Kanta Bordoloi, Bishnu Prasad Agarwala, Lakshminath Bezbaruah and Tirthanath Kakati was important event in the history of Assamese language and culture.

The Assamese students studying at Calcutta soon came in to contact with Bengal renaissance. Among them many students came into personal contact with Raja Ram Mohan Roy.\(^92\) After spread of education, the development of the Assamese press was

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90. Ibid., p. 39
91. Ibid., p. 40
92. Bhuyan, Arun(ed.) : Op-cit, p.4
another important event in the history of 19th century Assam. Papers like the *Assam Bilashini* (1871), the *Mau* (1886) and the *Assam Bandhu* (1885) had played a key role in the field of Assamese journalism.

The first session of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* (Assam Students’ Literary Conference) held at Guwahati on 25 December, 1916 under the presidency of Lakshminath Bezbaruah. But the conference would have nothing to do with any political propaganda.

All the college students of Nalbari area had joined the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* of 1916. The college students of Barpeta area had also joined the *Chatra Sanmilani* and the ideology of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* helped the spread of nationalism among the masses of these two areas. According to one source, one session of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* was held in Nalbari also and Sriman Prafulla Goswami, Prabhat Narayan Choudhury, Prasanna Chandra Goswami, Prabhat Chandra Goswami, Promod Chandra Goswami, Haricharan Pathak, Kanak Chandra Sarma, Mohidhar Sarma and Krishna Sarma was the active students who heartily joined themselves to fulfill the Nalbari session. But there were no mention which year the Nalbari session was held.

From its beginning in 1916 to around 1923 the secretarial address had reflected the cries for revival of Assamese identity and language and for prevention and development of

93. Ibid., p. 217
94. Ibid.
96. Ibid., p. 31
Assamese literature. The continuous call for service to the motherland was another motto of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan*. This motto had helped the establishment of the strong foundation of the Assamese nationalism among the masses.

The important achievement of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* was to create a cadre of student leaders. These student leaders had played very prominent role in the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movement. Omeo Kumar Das, Chandranath Sarma, Hem Chandra Barua, Padmadhar Chaliha, Rohini Kanta Hati Barua, Lakshmidhar Sarma, Bimala Kanta Barua, Taraprosad Barua, Kanak Chandra Barua, Moheswar Barua, Umesh Chandra Bordoloi, Prafulla Chandra Barua, Mahendranath Phukan, Benudhar Sarma, Rudra Sarma, Daksharam Barua, Tilak Sarma, Kedarnath Goswami, Bogiram Saikia, Kamaluddin Ahmed, Sriman Prafulla Goswami, Biswadev Sarma and Harkanta Das had came from the platform of the *Asom Chatra Sanmilan*.

Before the establishment of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee in 1921 for the creation of the spirit of Assamese nationalism, the role of *Asom Chatra Sanmilan* was very prominent.

From the following discussion, it is clear that, before 1921 in Assam a situation of political consciousness has been started and it influenced the people of Nalbari and Barpeta area also. The influential role of the *Assam Association, Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Tezpur Ryot Sabha* and *Assam Students’ Conference* had played a very key role for the establishment of the path of freedom. The *Swadeshi Movement* of 1905 was also influenced the youths of the Assam and Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury
has played a very dominant role in Kamrup district. The people of Nalbari and Barpeta had also been influenced by these nationalistic spirit and it helped them for the future struggle movement of 1921-22, 1930-34 and 1942.