

Heritage Explorer

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

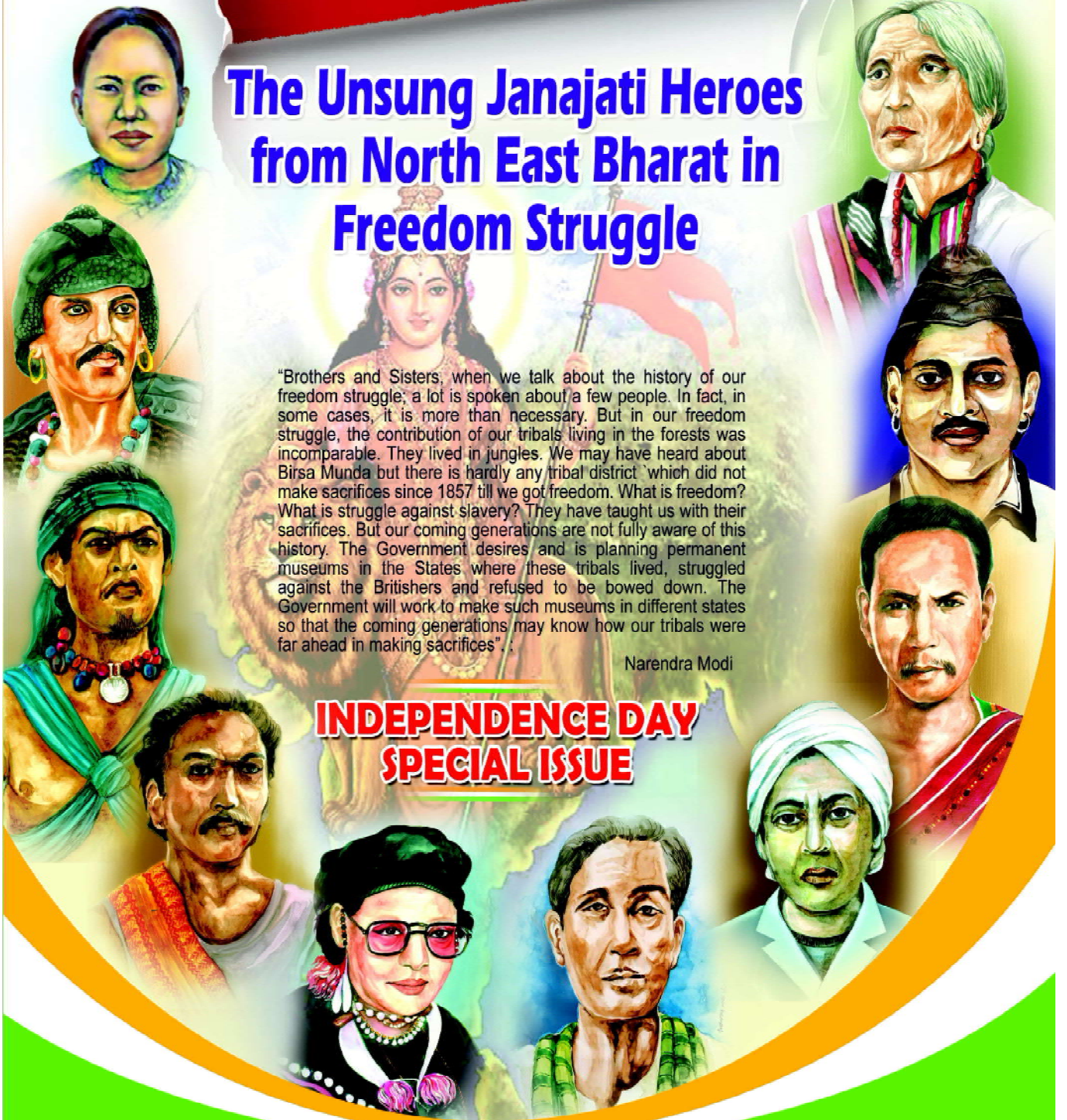
Vol. XXI
No. 6
August, 2022
ISSN : 2581-9313

The Unsung Janajati Heroes from North East Bharat in Freedom Struggle

"Brothers and Sisters, when we talk about the history of our freedom struggle, a lot is spoken about a few people. In fact, in some cases, it is more than necessary. But in our freedom struggle, the contribution of our tribals living in the forests was incomparable. They lived in jungles. We may have heard about Birsa Munda but there is hardly any tribal district which did not make sacrifices since 1857 till we got freedom. What is freedom? What is struggle against slavery? They have taught us with their sacrifices. But our coming generations are not fully aware of this history. The Government desires and is planning permanent museums in the States where these tribals lived, struggled against the Britishers and refused to be bowed down. The Government will work to make such museums in different states so that the coming generations may know how our tribals were far ahead in making sacrifices".

Narendra Modi

**INDEPENDENCE DAY
SPECIAL ISSUE**





অসম চৰকাৰ

75
Azadi Ka
Amrit Mahotsav

Har Ghar Tiranga
13th-15th August 2022

১৩-১৫ আগষ্ট ঘৰে ঘৰে জাতীয় পতাকা

তিনি বৰণীয়া জাতীয় পতাকা নীল আকাশত নাচে



দেশপ্ৰেমৰ পৱিত্ৰ আবেগেৰ
আমি প্ৰত্যেকেই জাতীয় পতাকা
উত্তোলন কৰোঁ আহক

আহক, ১৩ৰ পৰা ১৫ আগষ্টলৈ আমি সকলোৱে 'ঘৰে ঘৰে
জাতীয় পতাকা' কাৰ্যসূচীত আন্তৰিকতাৰে অংশ লওঁ।

আমাৰ লক্ষ্য – দেশৰ ২০ কোটি পৰিয়ালৰ সৈতে অসমৰ ৮০ লাখ
বাসগৃহ, কাৰ্যালয় তথা ব্যৱসায়িক প্ৰতিষ্ঠানত শ্ৰদ্ধাসহকাৰে আমাৰ
গৌৰৱৰ প্ৰতীক জাতীয় পতাকাৰ উত্তোলন।

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RO NO. 324/22

EMR/WT/PS/17/2022

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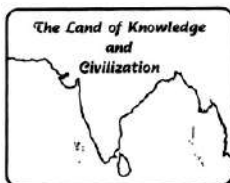
Independence Day Special Issue 2022

HERITAGE EXPLORER

(First Launched in 2002)

A Monthly Magazine

Vol. XXI. No. 6, AUGUST 2022



Heritage Foundation

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website : www.heritagefoundation.org.in

Heritage Explorer

A Monthly Magazine

ISSN - 2581-9313

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Annual Subscription Rs 100/-

Special Issue Rs 100/-

Subscription may be sent by M.O./ Cheque / Demand Draft to :

Heritage Foundation,

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e-mail: heritageexplorer19@gmail.com, Website: www.heritagefoundation.org.in

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IFSC CODE. PUNB0321300

Editor: Amarendra Brahma, C/o. Heritage Foundation, K.B. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati-781008,

Published & Printed by: Rituparno Tamuliphukan on behalf of Heritage Foundation, K.B. Road, Paltan

Bazar, Guwahati - 781008, Published at: **Heritage Foundation**, K.B. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati -

781008 (Assam). e-mail: ourheritage123@gmail.com, Website: www.heritagefoundation.org.in,

Printed at: Angik Prakashan, GNB Road, Ambari, Guwahati - 781001 & Saraighat Offset Press, Industrial

Estate, Bamunimaidan, Guwahati - 781021

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FOREWORD

Freedom, it has been said, is the open window through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity. As the country celebrates Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav – the festival of freedom to mark the 75th year of India's independence, it is indeed a very important occasion to look back and pay our obeisance to the hundreds of people who had contributed towards attaining this freedom.

In North-east India, the history of the freedom movement – which can be also called the anti-colonial movement – dates back to 1826 AD, when the British, who had already colonised a major portion of the subcontinent, had set their foot on the Brahmaputra Valley and Manipur. In fact, the first attempt to oust the colonial power began within about two years of the annexation of Assam to British India; it was led by Gomdhar Konwar, a member of one of the several Ahom royal clans in 1828. Gomdhar's attempt however was foiled, he was arrested, and sent to a jail in Rangpur (in present-day Bangladesh), where he is believed to have died in prison.

It is however important to note that the anti-colonial movement in Assam had actually begun in 1788 itself. The western portion of Assam, which was then known as Goalpara, had been occupied by the Mughals and Bengal Nawabs in the early 17th century. And when the British occupied Bengal following the Battle of Plassey, Goalpara or western Assam had also passed on to the hands of the colonialists. Goalpara then had constituted of several estates and zamindaris like Gauripur, Bijni, Mechpara, Parbatjhora, Chapar, Karaibari and Rangamati. Within 13 years of British occupation of Goalpara, it was Ranaram Choudhury, then zamindar of Mechpara, who had launched an armed attack on the British post at Goalpara. The date was November 22, 1788. Unfortunately, Ranaran, whose force must have also definitely had men from the local tribal communities, was defeated, and he took refuge in the Garo Hills, where he died in February 1790.

Taking a close look at the resistance move launched by Piyali Phukan in 1829-30, one finds that he had contacted and sought support of several prominent tribal leaders of the region. They included the Khamti and Singpho chiefs of Sadiya and beyond, some chiefs of the Naga communities adjoining Sivasagar, and several Garo and Khasi chiefs. U Tirot Sing, a prominent Khasi chief is also said to have even paid a visit to upper Assam when Piyali Phukan was organising his forces. Bom Singpho, a prominent Singpho chief, in fact was alongside Piyali Phukan and Jiram Dulia Barua during 1828-30, was among six prominent persons who were arrested, tried, held “guilty of treason” and a sentence of death was pronounced against them. While Piyali Phukan and Jiram Dulia Barua were hanged in Sivasagar on September 24, 1830, the death sentence of Bom Singpho and three others was reduced to life imprisonment. Bom Singpho was banished from Assam for 14 years and sent to Dhaka Jail for rigorous punishment. He however died of illness in prison, thus becoming the first person from any tribal community of the North-east to have attained martyrdom.

If observed minutely, one would find that tribal communities from all over the present-day North-eastern region had played a very significant role in the various anti-colonial resistance movements between 1826 and 1947. Unfortunately, while only a few of these great stories of struggle and sacrifice have

been documented, the large number of brave men and women who had shed their blood and laid down their lives for the honour of this sacred land have remained unrecognised even after 75 years of the country attaining freedom.

It will not be an exaggeration to state that historians, both local and national, have grossly neglected this chapter of the anti-colonial movements in the subcontinent. While the wars and battles fought by various communities in other regions of the subcontinent have been well-documented and recognised, similar battles which different communities across the present-day Northeast have been almost entirely ignored and forgotten.

Take for instance, the following incidents.

On January 28, 1839, Chow Pha Plung Lu Gohain – popularly remembered as Ranuwa Gohain – launched a massive attack on the British station at Sadiya, killing Colonel Adam White, the administrator of upper Assam and about 80 Hindustani sepoy. This was one of the bloodiest assaults on the British in India prior to 1857. Yet, it has never been discussed.

Between November 1857 and February 1858, at least 185 soldiers of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Companies of the Native Infantry, posted at Chittagong (now in Bangladesh), were killed in a series of clashes with the British forces inside present-day Barak Valley of Assam after they had abandoned their station and joined the national uprising launched by Mangal Pandey. Yet, it has never been discussed.

In October 1861, hundreds of tribals of Nagaon in central Assam took part in Phulaguri dhewa – the Battle of Phulaguri – the first ever peasants' uprising against the British in the subcontinent. Several of them attained martyrdom. Yet, it has never been discussed.

In January 1882, over a dozen tribal youth were killed fighting the British under the leadership of Sambhudhan Phonglo in Maibang in Assam. Fighting bravely, they had also killed a British officer and a few soldiers. Yet, it has never been discussed.

In May 1921, close to 100 tea plantation labourers, all tribals, were killed in firing and brutalities unleashed by the British at Chargola after they had abandoned the British-owned plantations in Assam's Barak Valley and wanted to join the freedom movement led by Gandhiji. Yet, it has never been discussed.

The great Singpho Resistance of 1825-1843, the great Adi Resistance of 1848, the Wanchoo Resistance of 1875, the Battle of Bordak of 1894, the martyrdom of Matmur Jamoh, Kai-ee Sha, Chen-Chen and Taji Mideren – all of present-day Arunachal Pradesh, have been never discussed.

The Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891, the martyrdom of Tikendrajit, Thangal General, Niranjan Singh, Pukhramba Phingiang and Chirai Naga, the Kuki uprising of 1817-19, the sacrifice of Haipou Jadonang, the story of Rani Gaidinliu – all of Manipur, have been never discussed.

The story of the Khasi Lion U Tirot Sing, Jaintia hero U Kiang Nangbah, the Garo Lion Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma, the amazing patriotism of Ka Phan Nonglait – all of present-day Meghalaya, have been never discussed.

The bravery of Lalsuthlaha, Ngura, Suakpuilala, Zakapa, Hnawncheuva, Ropuiliani, and Pasaltha Khuanchera – all of present-day Mizoram, and the brave heroes who had put of tough resistance to the British “expeditions” of 1871-72 and 1889 to the Lushai Hills, have been never discussed.

The heroes of the two Khonoma Wars of 1844 and 1850, the brave Nagas who defended Khonoma with all their might till it fell in 1879, the victims of the British “expeditions” into the heart of the Naga

Hills, have been never remembered and recognized.

Hundreds of tribal women of Assam had taken part in various phases of the freedom movement. Many of them, like Mongri Orang, Jaluki Kachariani, Dwariki Das, etc had laid down their lives for this sacred land. Yet, these incidents have been never discussed.

Two things have happened as a result of this. On one hand, the people of the rest of India have remained ignorant about the role and participation of the communities in the anti-colonial movements and the freedom struggle. On the other hand, the present generations of our own communities have been deprived of the stories of the heroic deeds, sacrifice and contribution of our previous generations. Because of this, two more things have happened. One, an impression has been created that the people of the North-eastern region had no participation in the anti-colonial movement of India. And two, a strong feeling of neglect and alienation has developed in the minds of the young people of the region.

The initiative taken by the editors of Heritage Explorer, a very valuable periodical published by Heritage Foundation, Guwahati, to bring out a special issue to highlight some important yet untold stories of the participation and sacrifice of different ethnic and tribal communities of the region in the anti-colonial struggle, is not only timely, but highly praiseworthy. Let us hope that some of the misgivings and feelings of neglect about the North-east will be wiped out with the publication of this valuable issue of Heritage Explorer. The readers in general and scholars in particular should immensely benefit from this issue. I heartily congratulate the editors of Heritage Explorer and also the authors who have contributed valuable articles for this issue.

Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap
State Information Commissioner, Assam

Editorial



Freedom Struggle and the Janajati heroes of North East Bharat

For last seventy five years we have enjoyed the benefits of freedom from the yoke of British colonial rulers and is now going to observe the 76th Independence Day very soon. Seventy five years is a long time but unfortunately we could not yet chronicle the accurate history of our freedom struggle and the life and deeds of all the individuals belonging to the tribal communities of North East, who sacrificed their everything to oust the oppressive colonial rulers and pave the way forward. It is sad that whatever documentation has been done on the struggle against the British, the contribution of freedom fighters from the northeast hasn't found its due place of honour in popular discourse..

Many of us believe that Mahatma Gandhi was the architect of independent India. He was of course a big contributor to the struggle for Indian independence, but he was not the lone fighter who forced the British out of Indian shores. We must also take into account the contributions of INA of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his ardent tribal Naga community supporters, who annihilated the British. We are well aware of the contributions made by the tribal freedom fighters like Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh of Chhattisgarh, Shri Alluri Seetha Ram Raju of Visakhapatnam, Rani Gaidinliu from north east, Birsa Munda from Chotanagpur's tribal region and Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu from Santhal Pargana but it is sad that most of the warriors of north east remains almost unknown. India's freedom struggle was strengthened by

several movements by the tribal communities such as Santhals, Tamars, Kols, Bhils, Bodos, Nagas, Khasis, Mizos and others. There are hundreds of tribal heroes from north east who fought the British tooth and nail, if not for Indian independence but definitely for protecting the all-round interests of their communities. Slowly but steadily we are re-mining the data of our freedom struggle and are coming up with new information and narrations. From what we have so far gathered from the oral history, music and lullabies of the tribal communities of north east, it seems the history of our freedom struggle needs to be rewritten. Here it is necessary to mention that the Government of India is highly proactive in finding out the full details of the freedom fighters including those belonging to the tribal communities of our country. They have already published a compendium of freedom fighters. Some of the north eastern states, where the tribal population is the dominant majority, have also started in-depth research into tribal history and their heritage. The effort will help in identifying the unsung heroes of our freedom struggle from north east. Above all the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recently organised a 2-day long workshop on the 'Principles and Recommendations to create Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museum at the UNESCO House in New Delhi to recognise the contributions of tribals in the freedom movements. It looks as if all have woken up to the need for proper evaluation and

chronicling of the history of our freedom struggle by the tribal communities of north east, which remained largely neglected.

Some people may question the need for classifying the community based contribution in the freedom struggle of India. It is necessary to tell them that it is meant to inspire our younger generation to take pride in their forefathers and to tell them in no uncertain terms that their forefathers were valiant heroes and not cowards afraid of the British might. Another intention that is no less important is to restore the self and community pride in their minds that they equally share the honour of defending our motherland like the people living in other parts of Bharat. When the history of our freedom struggle will be rewritten with new facts and figures our tribal youths from north east will feel more closer to mainland India and its love and dedication to our country.

Guided by the above motto and as a part of its

social commitment towards the tribal communities of North East, HERITAGE EXPLORER decided to contribute its might in unearthing the contributions of the Unsung Janajati Heroes from North East Bharat in Freedom Struggle and took up the same as the theme for its Special Issue, 2022 to be released on 15th August, 2022. Several social thinkers, academics, researchers and community leaders have contributed well researched articles on the theme of the present issue We are immensely grateful for their support .

We are particularly grateful to Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap. Veteran Journalist and the present State Information Commissioner to the Government of Assam for his kindly agreeing to pen the Foreword for the present Special Issue. We also feel privileged to place on record our sincere appreciation to the authors and contributors for placing their labour of love for publication in our Independence Day Special Issue, 2022.



Romen Chakraborty
Chief Editor

Resistance Movements in Eastern Arunachal Pradesh: A study of the Khamti tribe from 1826-1843

✍ Dr. Rubu Tani

Since the perspectives of the national movement and tribal resistance differ due to various reasons, therefore, much of the history of tribal resistance against colonization has not been documented in details. In colonial records, however, these resistance acts have been interpreted and depicted as an attack by wild tribes on civilized governments. And, this form of colonial interpretation of history has been perpetuated for decades without any critical analysis of the events. In other words, many researchers failed to look at it from a tribal point of view; they failed to study it as a phenomenon of indigenous resistance. Throughout India's tribal history, numerous heroic battles have been fought by the tribes against the colonial rule, but few of them have made it into history. This is particularly true of the adjacent hill tribes of Assam. The Khamti, who are considered as one of the most important community of Arunachal Pradesh who carried out resistance movements against the colonial ruler, but their gallant act of resistance is still missing in the pages of history books. Therefore, all those tribal resistance movements should be researched and brought into the history of the region. Hence, this paper makes a humble attempt to unearth the resistance movement of the Khamti.

Introduction:

On 28th January, 1839, the Khamtis of Sadiya staged an armed revolt against the British. They ransacked barracks, burnt down arms and ammunition stockades, indiscriminately ravaged the colonial subjects in Sadiya and even killed a British officer Major White.

This rebellion lasted for about five years and considered as one of the first popular armed uprising against the colonial rule in North East India. But, the existing knowledge about their movement against the British has been largely written and understood from the colonial perspective, and has been perpetuated by the post-colonial writers without giving much thought. The colonial documents have been taken as the primary point of reference by the scholars, and unconsciously or otherwise, accepted the general validity of tribal raids, plunder and attack as an act of savagery against the civilized society.

We have failed to take into account the opinion of the tribal people and how they perceived the events or encounters they had with the colonial authorities. Therefore, a serious lacuna still remains as the knowledge, with its intermeshing relationship with colonialism and colonial intervention in the Khamti area and the encounter with this tribe could never claim positions of neutrality and objectivity.

Therefore, this paper is a humble attempt to look the resistance movement of the Khamti from tribal perspective and bridge the gap between the existing colonial records and oral version of the resistance. This work is a historical study based on primary and secondary data. And attempts have been made to understand it within the framework of colonialism and its operation in order to give a scientific, perspective, and coherent picture of the Khamtis resistance movement.

This paper is divided into two parts. The first

part provides a general background of the Khamti and discuss in what condition the interaction between the two (Khamti-British) were made possible. The second parts examines, what were the developments that followed, which made the Khamti to carry out resistance and armed rebellion which forced the British to fight long five years' war against them in the remote eastern corner of Assam.

The Khamtis of Arunachal Pradesh

Khamtis migrated across the Patkai Hills from the area near the Irrawaddy sources called Bar-Khamti in the mid of 18th century. They were allowed to settle on the bank of Tengapani river in 1751 A.D during the reign of Ahom king RajeswarSingha.¹ However, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Singphos who too migrated from Burma dislodged them from Tengapani's bank and forced them into Buri-Dehing's region. When, the Moamaria Rebellion broke out during the reign of Ahom king Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795 AD) the Khamti took advantage of the chaotic atmosphere, ousted the Sadiya Khowa Gohain from Sadiya (Ahom Frontier Governor). The Khamti chief assumed the office of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain in 1794; and in passage of time especially during the period of Burmese invasion of Assam (1817-1824) they brought entire Sadiya tract under their control.² In this way the Khamti who migrated from Burma looking for new settlement had carved out an independent political space for themselves in Sadiya region.

At present the Khamtis settled in the lower

region drained by the Tengapani and Noa Dihang river and covers some sixteen villages in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh. They are a Theravada Buddhist community. According to Census of India 2001, their total population is 12,890. The word Khamti means, a land full of gold (kham=gold: Ti=place).³ Their society is patriarchal in its nature and they mostly live in nuclear family called as *Hong Huinleu*. They have a traditional political organization called *Mokchup* and the head of the political organization is called as *ChaoFa*. Regarding the economic pattern sedentary agriculture is mainstay of their livelihood. Khamtis are among a few tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who have their own script, originally derived from the 'Tai' language and they maintain chronicles which are known as *Chyatui*. They have their own law book called *Thamasat*.

Initial contact between the Khamti and the English East India Company

Internal rift within the Ahom court had brought the Burmese intervention in political affairs of Assam from 1817 onwards. Taking advantage of the chaotic political atmosphere in Assam, the Burmese established military control in 1822 under Mingimaha Bandula (Burmese Military General) and installed Jogeswar Singha as puppet ruler of Assam.⁴ Thereafter, they began to unleash the reign of terror in Assam and began to attack the rulers of Goalpara, Manipur, Cachar, and the island of Shahpuri on the Chittangong frontier.⁵ All these imperialist act of Burmese forced the English to give up the non-intervention policy and intervened in the affairs of Assam which resulted in the

¹Lakshmi Devi, *Ahom Tribal Relation*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati, 1968, pp. 241-42.

²L.N. Chakravarty, *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Director of Research, Itanagar, 1973, p.76.

³Lila Gogoi, *The Tai Khamptis of North East India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1971, p. xxxiii.

⁴Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam: From Yandabo to Partition 1826-1947*, Oriental Black Swan, New Delhi, 2012, p.15.

⁵Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam: From Yandabo to Partition 1826-1947*, Oriental Black Swan, New Delhi, 2012, p.15.

outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese War 1824-1826 A.D.⁶

Since, the British were not aware about the geography of Assam, therefore, appeal for cooperation were made to the people of Assam and various tribal chiefs of the adjoining hills like Cahar, Manipur and Jaintia, etc., against the Burmese.⁷ In this connection, an emissary led by Robert Bruce arrived at Sadiya, seeking active cooperation from the Khamti and Muttok against the Burmese and Singphos who were creating ravages in the adjoining villages in the east of the Rangpur.⁸ As stated above the Khamti did not have cordial relation with the Singpho, therefore, in hope to extirpate the Singphos menace forever from Sadiya region they agreed to give their assistance to the British against the Burmese and the Singpho.⁹ Therefore, with the help of the Khamti the British were able to secure the upper part of Assam from the disturbance of Singphos and Burmese.¹⁰ This assistance during the war was highly appreciated by David Scott, who visited Sadiya in 1825 and found out that the whole area of Sadiya was under the control of the Khamti.¹¹ In this way the initial contact between the Khamti and the British took place.

Roots of the Khamti Resistance: Encroachment through Administrative Development in the Khamti area

With the defeat of the Burmese at Rangpur in January 1825, the entire Brahmaputra valley was brought under the martial law of the East India Company of Britain. This was followed by a policy of securing all those strategic locations through which the Burmese armies might invade back. In this connection, Sadiya and its inhabitants were strategically important to guard against the Burmese reinvasion.¹² Therefore, efforts had been made to submit Sadiya to English control so that it could monitor the movements, behaviours, activities and communication of tribal groups beyond its frontier and prevent the Burmese from instigating hostilities against the British.¹³ With this objective from 1825 onwards, a slow but steady colonial penetration took place in Sadiya. A military station was established at Sadiya on 2 April 1825 to guard against the nearby tribes and Burmese re-invasion.¹⁴ In 1828, this military station was made as full-fledged British Agency under the supervision of Neufville the Political Agent of Upper Assam stationed at Bishwanath.¹⁵ Finally in 1834, the British brought more control

⁶Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam: From Yandabo to Partition 1826-1947*, Oriental Black Swan, New Delhi, 2012, p.16.

⁷H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826-58*, Lawyer Book Stall, 1963, p.39.

⁸R.M Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata, 2003, p. 15.

⁹ From F. Jenkins to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Political Department, letter no.4, 16th January, 1836. (National Archive of India, New Delhi).

¹⁰S.L. Baruah, *Last days of the Ahom Monarchy: A History of Assam 1769-1826*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, New Delhi, 1992, p.241.

¹¹ L. Gogoi, *The Tai Khamtis of North East India*, Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1971, p.27.

¹²M.L. Bose, *British Policy in North East Frontier Agency*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p.141.

¹³M.L. Bose, *British Policy in North East Frontier Agency*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p.141.

¹⁴ John F. Michell, *The North-East Frontier of India: A Topographical, Political, and Military Report*, p. 149, <http://www.southasiarchive.com/Content/sarf.143016/209522/005> (accessed on 28 Nov 2017 at 05:05:45)

¹⁵M.L. Bose, *The History of Arunachal Pradesh*, p. 154.

over the Singphos, Khamtis, and Matakas frontier tribes under their control by placing Officer-in-charge in Sadiya.¹⁶

Officer-in-charge, Lieutenant Charlton began to encroach in the affairs of Khamtis in Sadiya. He organized *panchayats* in Khamti villages shortly after arriving in Sadiya. Wherein, he gave equal representation to the Assamese *ryots* of Sadiya, whom the Khamtis considered as their subjects, hence socially inferior. A large concentration of Assamese *ryots* in Sadiya naturally acquired a majority in most of the villages' *panchayats*. As a result, the chiefs lost the privilege of dictating terms over the Assamese *ryots*.¹⁷ Apart from this, all the criminal and civil cases at Sadiya had to be reported to Charlton. This move curtailed the powers, of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain over civil and criminal matters over the inhabitants of Sadiya too. Further, Charlton proposed in December 1834, that census of the population be taken with the view to levying a capitation tax, to be renewed every five years, in lieu of military service to the state.¹⁸

Not only this, Charlton began to interfere in the personal affairs of Sadiya Khowa Gohain. In an instance, he accused Sadiya Khowa's brother-in-law of kidnapping and selling an Assamese subject to the Singphos in Burma. He also accused the Sadiya Khowa Gohain of shielding his brother-in-law when the former behaved with great authority denying Charlton's allegation, refusing to allow his brother-in-law to be brought under investigation.¹⁹ In such cases Sadiya Khowa Gohain was frequently summoned to the English court which was viewed as a great humiliation by the chief. The stand taken

by the Sadiya Khowa Gohain to protect his authority and to protect his brother-in-law was treated by Lt. Charlton as a violation of the agreement, and wanted to depose him from his position.

Besides this, in order to establish the colonial hegemony, the Khamti were viewed as a subjugator who had reduced the population of Sadiya into slavery. This was expressed by Jenkins as thus, 'the Khamtis did not pay any taxes to British government except in form of military aid in time of emergency. Whereas, they enjoyed the benefit of labour of Assamese subjects of Sadiya who constituted the bulk of the population and the entire productive classes were formed by Assamese subject whom the Khamtis considered nearly in light of their slave'.²⁰

Therefore, all these clash of interest that cropped up after the appointment of Officer-in-charge at Sadiya was interpreted by the Khamtis as an encroachment on their traditional rights and privileges by Khamti chiefs. And, on the other hand, Officer-in-charge's demand for a reorientation of the powers of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain was intensified and the colonial ruler was waiting for an excuse to dislodge the Sadiya Khowa Gohain from his position.

Dislodgement of the Khamti chief Sadiya Khowa Gohain

The question of dislodgement of Sadiya Khowa Gohain came to the forefront in 1834 when a dispute arose between Sadiya Khowa Gohain and Bar Senapati over the issue of the tract of land known as Saikhowa comprising of an area of

¹⁶New Delhi, NAI, Foreign Department Political Consultation (henceforth FDPC), letter from F. Jenkins to Lieutenant Charlton, no.78, 24th July, 1834.

¹⁷H. K. Barpujari, vol. I, pp. 76-77.

¹⁸ John Butler, *A Sketch...*, p.46.

¹⁹Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, letter from A. White to the Agent of the Governor General Assam, no.2, 13th March, 1835.

²⁰ New Delhi, NAI, FSC, letter no-4, 16th January, 1836.

21,600 acres situated opposite of Sadiya.²¹ Its land was very fertile and with prospects for cultivation of high quality paddy, sugar, opium, tea, and the early rice.²² The disputed tract was formerly *kbat* or land belonging to the Ahoms which they continued to hold till it was usurped by the Khamtis who founded claims over the area.²³

This conflict between the Khamtis and the Mataks worsened when Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Chousalan, died in November 1834 and was succeeded by his eldest son Chau-rang-pha. He was keen on eliminating the British from Sadiya and considered Saikhowa as a legal possession of his ancestors.²⁴ It was further complicated, when the matter was brought before Lt. Charlton in 1834, who asked both the parties to send their claims and till its resolution the land would be in possession of the British Government. This order was unacceptable for the new Sadiya Khowa Gohain who defied the order stating that, '*I am no one's slave... I will not conform to his order as he is going to seize the land that my father allowed them to settle there*'.²⁵ He defied the order and forcibly took possession of Saikhowa. This provided the British with an opportunity to dislodge him from his post. This defiance was reported by Charlton to Major White, the Political Agent, who then ordered his removal from his post. The removal order is recorded thus: *A direct disobedience of the officer order is sufficiently proved against the Gohain and that the*

*preceding fully shows that he had thrown off all regard to that officer's authority as the representative of the British Government at Suddeyab (sic). Upon this ground, I have from officer and recommended permanent removal from the appointment of Suddeyab Khowa Gohain at the same time.*²⁶ Accordingly, Chau-rang-pha was removed from his post in January 1835 and sent from Sadiya to Bishwanath in February 1835.

Consequently, the post of Sadiya Khowa Gohain was finally abolished and Lt. Charlton took over the direct responsibility of the Khamti tract. This act of resuming rights over the Assamese inhabitants was justified by proclamation that, 'the barbarous state in which it was kept by the Khamti chiefs has been broken through and it will gradually rise in civilization'.²⁷

Changes introduced after dislodging Sadiya Khowa Gohain

After dislodging Sadiya Khowa Gohain, the Political Agent brought under his control, the territories on either side of the river i.e. Sadiya, and Saikhowa. In right earnest, the investigative modalities were launched in the form of a census of the population of Sadiya, while ascertaining the resources of the territory the British asserted their supremacy.²⁸ Accordingly, a census was carried out at Sadiya which revealed that Assamese *paiks* constituted about 2/3rd of the population who were brought under assessment.²⁹ The Khamtis

²¹ Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, letter nos. 1-2, 13th March, 1835.

²² A.J. Moffat Mills, *The Reports on Assam*, Gian Publication, Delhi, 1980, p. 2.

²³ Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, letter from A Charlton to the Political Agent of Upper Assam, no.1, 6th Dec 1836.

²⁴ R.M. Lahiri, p. 248.

²⁵ Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, letter from A. White to the Agent of Governor General Assam, letter no. 2, 23rd Feb, 1835.

²⁶ Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, letter from Major White to the Agent of Governor General Assam, no. 2, 23rd Feb, 1835.

²⁷ Dispur, ASA, PDP, letter issued to the Government, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, no. 4, 16th Jan, 1836.

²⁸ Kolkata, WBSA, BPC, no. 1, 13th March 1835.

²⁹ H.K. Barpujari, *The Problems of Hill Tribes in North-East India 1822-42*, p.144

were 1,975 in number.³⁰ Subsequently, the British usurped the right to taxation over the *paiks* and Marwari as a monopoly. The peasants were taxed at the rate of Re.1/- per head in lieu of their personal service.³¹

The judicial power hitherto exercised over the population by Khamti was replaced by the British judicial system, administered by the officer-in-charge at Sadiya. While petty civil and criminal cases remained under the domain of the village *panchayats* who were exempted from the written disposition.³² Charlton persuaded the Khamtis to voluntarily commute their personal services for a payment in money at the same rate as fixed for the Assamese.³³ Hence, this proposal to bring them under taxation and simultaneous conduct of census in Sadiya magnified resentment among the Khamtis.³⁴ And, the previous system of providing muskets under Captain Neufville was also withdrawn.³⁵

However, it has to be admitted that the move to impose taxation on the Khamtis ran counter to the policy of Neufville, who consistently aimed at conciliating these warlike tribes to make them faithful allies against the Burmese.³⁶ On the other hand proposal had been made by Jenkins that a new treaty should be signed with the Khamtis; new census should be carried out to ascertain the population of Khamtis every five to ten years; and should made it known to the Khamtis that all

wasteland as the property of the state.³⁷ Through this wasteland policy, they categorized the unused/ community land as wastelands, and brought it under their domain. However, for the Khamtis, apart from agriculture, forest was a major alternate source for the economy, from where they procured firewood, forest produce and was a hunting ground for all kinds of animals and elephant catching. However, the net impact of such proposal was not all negative, as beneath, the apparent coolness in the surface, frustration was mounting, as the dislodgement of their chief, making Assamese population of Sadiya as equal to them did not only hurt their pride but also destroyed their economy which was largely dependent on the slaves and Assamese *paiks* at Sadiya.

All these act of British resulted into smoldering embers of discontent lay dormant to burst forth when an opportunity presented itself.

Colonial Intervention in the Institution of slavery

Slavery had been always a burning debate among the English parliamentarian. However, despite various disagreement and debates between the local administrators in India the Directors, the abolition of slavery order was implemented in letter and spirit among the Khamtis.³⁸ In order to delegitimize the institution of slavery and to convince the Governor General-in-Council of the effectiveness of such a move, the Khamtis were

³⁰ Lila Gogoi, p. 223.

³¹ R.M. Lahiri, p.249

³² Alexander Mackenzie, pp.58-59

³³ Dispur, ASA, PDP, letter from F. Jenkins to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, no. 4, 16th January, 1836.

³⁴ Kolkata, WBSA, BPP, letter from A. White to Captain Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General of Bengal, no.11, 24th November 1835.

³⁵ J. Butler, pp. 46-47.

³⁶ New Delhi, NAI, FSC, letter from F. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General to Major White Political Agent upper Assam Bishwanath, letter no-11, 8th October, 1835.

³⁷ Kolkata, WBSA, letter from Jenkins to the Political Agent of Upper Assam, no. 1, 13th August 1835.

³⁸ A.K. Thakur, p.125.

presented as refugees from Burma. They were shown in the bad light where they had reduced Sadiya and its population into a barbarous state. Therefore, it was the duty of the British to restore a semblance of order and civilization.³⁹ Hence, under the pretext of civilizing mission the institution of slavery was attacked just after the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam; by signing treaties with Khamtis in 1826. Neufville, insisted on the surrender of their large number of slaves, in lieu of a compensation of rupees four thousand. Of the slaves liberated, 300 were incorporated into the regular fighting forces under Captain Neufville.⁴⁰ The Khamti and Singpho chiefs, who were reluctant to release their slaves, were served notices with the threat of confiscation of property and expulsion from the lowlands.⁴¹

The Khamti royal class, who were largely depended on the slave population for agriculture and other domestic work, grudgingly accepted the terms of British agreement of 1826. Despite this agreement, slaves continued to be held by the Khamtis. However, the old tradition of the Ahom government of restoring fugitive slaves to their masters was curtailed under British rule.⁴² The British government directed the Political Agent that, 'It is the rule to refrain from any summary interference for compelling the return to a state of slavery individuals who may have affected their escape from it. Every individual must be presented to be in a state of freedom until the

contrary is proved'.⁴³ Therefore, the runaway slaves were not forced to return to their masters, rather protected them as British subjects.⁴⁴ The Governor General-in-Council issued instructions to Jenkins to reject all applications of the slave masters seeking restoration of the slaves claimed as their property.⁴⁵ So, taking advantage of the British military stationed at Sadiya, many slaves especially the women slaves ran away with military guards. In one such instance, a female slave absconded from the chief Tao Gohain, taking refuge in the Upper Assam with one of the *chuprassies* of a British Officer, Mr. Millar.⁴⁶ The escape of this female slave was not due to maltreatment, rather because, the *sepoys* and others serving under the company with higher salaries were capable of rendering them a comfortable life.⁴⁷ In addition, the British lured the slaves to work as wage labourers, especially the mature male slaves who frequently escaped into British jurisdiction. The slaves who remained with the Khamtis were usually old and aged who could not work for their masters, rather becoming a burden to sustain them.⁴⁸

The process of maintaining slaves was quite expensive as they were captured either through war or inherited from the family, while many were bartered with precious materials from other neighbouring tribes.⁴⁹ However, under British rule the slaves were freed without paying compensation and the freed slaves were engaged in constructing

³⁹Dispur, ASA, PDP, letter no. 4, 16th January 1836.

⁴⁰ Kolkata, WBSA, BSPC, nos. 22-24, 2 September, 1825.

⁴¹H.K. Barpujari, vol.I, p.38.

⁴²Meena Sharma Barkataki, p. 157.

⁴³Dispur, ASA, PDP, no. 3, 12 September, 1836.

⁴⁴New Delhi, NAI, FPC, letter from Vetch to Jenkins, no. 139, 8 June, 1840.

⁴⁵New Delhi, NAI, FPC, letter from Prinsep to Jenkins, no. 87, 9 November, 1842.

⁴⁶Meena Sharma Barkataki, p.157

⁴⁷Meena Sharma Barkataki, p.157.

⁴⁸ Interview with Chownawing Namchom, on 16th January, 2016.

⁴⁹ Interview with Chownawing Namchom, on 16th January, 2016.

of roads, building stockades, and houses for officers, and employed as soldiers etc. This action changed the attitude of the chiefs Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Tao Gohain, Ranua Gohain, and Kaptan Gohain, they were unable to tolerate the loss of Assamese slaves, their only source of wealth. The freed slaves were employed by the British officers, which created a lot of inconvenience, who considered this as an injustice.⁵⁰ Hence, all these development under British was considered as an encroachment upon their traditional institutions. Hence they were prepared to take up an armed struggle when the right opportunity arose and carry out violent attack over the British military station at Sadiya.⁵¹

Outbreak of Armed Rebellion in January, 1839:

It is therefore evident from the above discussion that the Khamtis were discontented under the new political dispensation in Assam. In 1835, the Sadiya Khowa Gohain defied the order of the Political Agent to protest against British encroachment over the traditional rights. However, this nascent opposition was unsuccessful, which compelled them to prepare for the greater resistance without showing any apparent signs of discontent. This clandestine preparedness for resistance accelerated with the news of Lt. Miller's departure from Sadiya and entrustment of duties of civil administration to Major Adam White. He was ordered by the Commissioner of Assam to relocate the headquarters of the Assam Light Infantry as well as Political Agency from Bishwanath to Sadiya in

September, 1838. This was in view of the considerable importance of the place and growing security concerns at the frontier.⁵² Accordingly, Major White relocated along with men and provisions of the Assam Light Infantry to Sadiya on 25 Jan, 1839. This move raised alarm among the Khamtis that the new administration was determined to stay at Sadiya. The loss of their privileges within their own territory galvanized them to prepare for an open rebellion before White consolidated his position in Sadiya.

Following the conclusion of the *darbar*, White retired to his official residence, while the chiefs dispersed. In the early hours of the morning, on 28th January, 1839, the station at Sadiya was attacked.⁵³ The attacking party consisted of Khamtis numbering about 600 fighting men who were armed with *daos*, spears, and muskets. They attacked at the vulnerable positions with extreme swiftness.⁵⁴ The experience of their chief Kaptan Gohain, who had been a leader of the Khamti militia was armed with a definite knowledge of the British settlement helped.⁵⁵ The other advantage was that their language was unknown to the Assamese population, which helped to keep their plans a secret.⁵⁶ To ensure speedy action they organized themselves into four groups under the chiefs- Chau-rang-pha, Tao Gohain, Kaptan Gohain, Chau-pha-Plung-lu Gohain, Ranua Gohain, who made simultaneous attacks on different vulnerable positions of the British post.

One group advanced upon the magazine guard situated close to the open gate of the stockade where 1 Havildar, 2 Naiks, 1 Bugler, and 31 Sepoy

⁵⁰Meena Sharma Barkataki, p.157

⁵¹ Interview with Chownawing Namchom, on 16th January, 2016.

⁵² New Delhi, NAI, FPC, no. 161-62, 17th October, 1838.

⁵³ New Delhi, PDFC, letter from F. Vetch to Captain F. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General of Assam, letter no. 1, 18th April, 1840.

⁵⁴New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, letter from F. Jenkins to the Secretary to Government of India, no. 159, 27th February, 1839.

⁵⁵ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, no. 159, 27th February, 1839.

⁵⁶ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, no. 159, 27th February, 1839.

were stationed.⁵⁷ The second group attacked the rear guard of the stockade, slaying the sentry, wounded three others and moving on to the centre of the stockade where the bells of arms were kept and set fire on it. While these two groups attacked the stockade and magazine guard, the third group found the bungalow of Second-in-command close on the left of the line. They attacked the left company lines, and setting fire on them. The fourth group went around the rear of the Light Company lines and was searching for White. Amidst this chaos, White left his own bungalow, proceeding by the new road to the lines when the fourth group who were evidently in search of him confronted him. He was stabbed at nine different places by a spear and was found dead by the Sergeant Major who arrived on the spot minutes after the occurrence.⁵⁸

This night attack of the Khamtis was swift and unexpected. This was one of the boldest attacks ever made by the hill tribes on the North-East Frontier against the British. They killed seventy men and set the barrack and the ammunition store on fire. They also burned down the hospital and all the stock of medicine.

However, the attackers surprisingly did not take anyone captive nor did they take any weapons and withdrew despite their success in razing the military station at Sadiya and retreated into deep forest to protect their families from a counter attack, and to make strategies to launch a counter-attack with other hill tribes.⁵⁹ Accordingly, the Khamti leader divided themselves into two groups and retreated in different directions. One group under the leadership of Tao Gohain and Kaptan Gohain retreated towards the Abors hills, while the second group under the leadership of Chau-pha-Plung-lu and Chau-rang-pha retreated towards Mishmi hills, and Singpho habitations to persuade the other frontier tribes to stand united against the British.⁶⁰ They were aware of the inferiority in arms made them vulnerable against open attack from the British. Therefore, they retreated to the forests and adopted guerrilla warfare strategy to attack the British.⁶¹ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, letter no.160, 27 February 1839.

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⁵⁷ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, letter from F. Hannay, Commander Assam Light Infantry to H. J. Prinsep, Secretary to Government of India, no-111, 22 May, 1839.

⁵⁸ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, letter no-111, 22 May, 1839. Colonel White had been a political agent with long experience in the region who had repressed an earlier rebellion of the Singpho.

⁵⁹ Chow KhokManpoong, 87 years of aged, male, retired Government Servant, renowned public leader of Khamti, Namsai, interviewed on 12th January, 2016.

⁶⁰ Interview with Chownawing Namchom, on 16th January, 2016.

⁶¹ New Delhi, NAI, FDPC, letter no.160, 27 February 1839.

Unsung Heroes of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills in India's Freedom Struggle

✍ Dr. Amena N. Passah

One of the lapses of colonial and even modern Indian historiography is the utter neglect of Northeast India's rich preserves of valiant women and men who resisted British imperialism in their region and whose names and exploits do not feature in the history books on India. Even before the Indian National Movement officially took off in 1885, there have been pockets of resistance in the Northeast in general and Khasi-Jaintia Hills of the present state of Meghalaya in particular. As it was in the rest of India, long before the onset of the national movement in India, there have been warriors who raised their banner of defiance against the colonial presence and exploitation in these beautiful Hills. The concept of a national movement was alien to them at that period. Many of the acts of opposition and confrontation were spontaneous resistance movements against the alien colonial rule. However, that did not take away the splendour, bravery and leadership skills of the leaders and warriors involved.

The Khasi-Jaintia Hills of the state of Meghalaya do have their share of their valiant heroes and heroines but their exploits and activities do not get adequate coverage and print space, not even cursory mention in the current standard texts.

It is interesting to see that British ethnographers like W.W. Hunter¹ wrote at length on the Khasi and Jaintia resistance, but does not name the two heroes, U Tirot Sing and U Kiang Nangbah while Alexander Mackenzie² mentioned U Tirot Sing, the Raja of Nongklao, there was studied silence on the names and activities of U Kiang Nangbah. However Hamlet Bareh, S.N. Lamare amongst others have dwelled at length on these heroes.³

We have read of the leadership roles of Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose and others during the Indian national movement which started officially in 1885. However, there are no courses in educational institutions on the great local heroes. It is hoped that the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav will lead to educational institutions focusing attention on these heroes. Notwithstanding the rest of India, even most of the Khasi-Jaintias themselves were unaware of their great heroes till organisations like the Khasi Students Union, Sein Raj took upon themselves to organise functions celebrating these heroes. The author has delivered talks on these unsung heroes outside and inside the state and was invited twice by the Syiem of Nongkhlaw to speak on U Tirot Sing but apparently no attempt was made by successive governments to honour

¹W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol.2, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, (First published 1879; reprinted 1975), pp. 205-208.

² Alexander Mackenzie, *The North East Frontier of India*, (1884), Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 220-230: 239-242.

³ Hamlet Bareh, *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Published by the author, Calcutta, 1967; S.N. Lamare, *Resistance Movements in North-East India: The Jaintias of Meghalaya, 1860-1863*, Regency Publications, New Delhi.

them, apart from declaring July 17th as Tirof Sing Day and 30th December as Kiang Nangbah Day. The time has come to showcase the leadership roles and sacrifices of these heroic men and women of Northeast India on a bigger platform. India and the world should know that such people lived on Indian soil, taking on the might of the British juggernaut with only rudimentary weapons such as bows, arrows and spears. Realising the impending danger to their people's freedom, the brave heroes and heroines of Khasi-Jaintia Hills pushed their insecurities, limitations and fears to the background and courageously challenged the hegemony of the British Empire which was at its peak during that period. Local traditions have been used to add flesh to the dry and sometimes biased data given by British official documents.

In the 19th centuries, amidst a plethora of brave hearts, the names of U Tirof Sing and U Kiang Nangbah stand out. However in the latter part of the 20th Century, there were six Khasi men, who in the capacity of soldiers in the British army, left for foreign climes but fascinated by the dynamic personality of Subhas Chandra Bose and his passion for obtaining India's freedom from colonial rule, joined the I.N.A (Indian National Army). During the Indian National Movement, the I.N.A including the six Khasi men played sterling roles. This chapter attempts to make visible these unsung warriors right from 1829 to the Independence of India and plead for their inclusion in the pages of history.

Prior to 1972, Khasi-Jaintia Hills, now in the state of Meghalaya, were part of the composite state of Assam. The Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826, which concluded the Anglo-Burmese War, 1824-1826, gave the East India Company (E.I.C.) a foothold in Assam. In fact it was in the Khasi Hills,

that the first incursion into tribal lands took place. However, the E.I.C's first knowledge of the Khasi Hills dates from the time when the Company acquired the *Dimani* of Bengal in 1765.⁴ The Khasis had never acknowledged any subjection to the 'Muhammadans' in Sylhet, etc (now in Bangladesh) and so they remained independent of the British power.⁵ The Khasis had the monopoly of the lime quarries, meeting the needs of Bengal. It has been said that the Writers Building in Kolkata was built on Khasi lime, marketed as Sylhetlime. The Europeans were casting envious, covetous eyes on the lime trade. Thus, the exigencies of commerce arising out of the Khasi monopoly of the lime trade, attracted the Europeans to this part of the country.

However, the other reason that drew the Europeans to these Hills was the salubrious climate, conducive to the establishment of sanatoria where British officials could regain their good health. Months before the declaration of war against the Burmese and two years before the Treaty of Yandaboo handed Assam over to the E.I.C, David Scott, Agent to the Governor General for the North East Frontier, had observed that it was a pity that the Khasi Hills was not better known and that the British were wasting money and time on voyages to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, instead of setting up sanatoria in these Hills.⁶

Scott soon planned for the construction of a road to link Sylhet with Assam, apart from building of a sanatorium and military bases. Soon, an opportunity for him to carry out his plans cropped up. A disputed case of road construction, and at the invitation of U Tirof Sing, the *Syiem* (Chief) of Nongkhlaw, led Scott to Nongkhlaw, (Nongk'lao) one of the twenty five petty Khasi States, in November 1826.⁷ He deemed himself fortunate

⁴W.W. Hunter, *op.cit*, p.205.

⁵*Ibid*.

⁶ Quoted in Imdad Hussain, 'The Hill Tribal People of the North East and India's Struggle for Freedom: Some Historiographical Issues' in Sanjoy Hazarika, (Ed.), *Little Known Fighters against the Raj: Figures from Meghalaya*, Amber Books, New Delhi, 2013, p.4.

to be a witness to the democratic elements of the open *Dorbar* or Assembly. The decorum of the deliberations greatly impressed him and he commented that it could not be surpassed even in a European society.⁸ The *Dorbar* gave the permission for the construction of a sanatorium at Nongkhlaw and allowing the construction of a road, connecting Sylhet with Kamrup via Nongkhlaw.

U Tirot Sing, the Khasi Chief was a valiant, courageous leader who would put up a stiff defiance and stiff resistance against the might of the colonial rulers. In fact, one of the greatest and first warriors to take up the cudgels against the alien British rule in Northeast India was U Tirot Sing.

Locally, U Tirot Sing has been immortalised in poems, songs, animation films, dramas, etc. But the multi million dollar question was, who was U Tirot Sing?

U Tirot Sing was the *syiem* (chief) of the *hima* (state) Nongkhlaw, in the West Khasi Hills District of present day Meghalaya. Nongkhlaw was one of the 25 Khasi States during the colonial period. He was just 25 years at his accession, resourceful and energetic. Local tradition informs that he had a deformity in his hand but that did not deter him from taking up arms. He successfully put the boundary disputes with his neighbouring Khasi states under control and took several steps for the welfare of his people. For a smooth and better administration, U Tirot Sing, in addition to his state *Dorbar*, set up local *durbars* village wise. The inter-

village disputes and appeals were to be decided at the general Conference of the State *Dorbar*. He also successfully improved the trade relations with the Plains which boosted the economic conditions of his people.

Scott established his Headquarters at Nongkhlaw. He held U Tirot Sing in high esteem. 'Personally, he bore no grudge against this powerful *Syiem* and he was attracted by his noble qualities and fine manner of life. The Company honoured him. Costly presents were sent to him.'⁹ However, discontent, suspicion and trouble was soon brewing. Some of the main reasons for the consequent flareup was the growing concern and disquiet of the *Syiem* and people 'of the gradual penetration of the British into their Hills in the early decades of the 19th century,'¹⁰ after the Anglo-Burmese War in 1826; U Tirot Sing's realisation that the Treaty of Friendship with the E.I.C in 1826 imposed several obligations on him and outweighed the advantages; the construction of a sanatorium at Sohra (Cherrapunjee) and Nongkhlaw; the construction of a road from Assam to Sylhet via Nongkhlaw; the construction workers were convicts from Assam and tradition tells us that these construction workers and lower ranked soldiers took articles and foodstuffs from the poor sellers in the market without paying for them. They ill treated the Khasi labourers employed in the service of the Company.¹¹ It was also alleged that they molested the women and children; and the people were riled by the arrogant provoking remarks of a Bengali *chapprasi*, who in a dispute with the Khasis claimed that his master, the British would take over

⁷Quoted in Imdad Hussain, 'The Hill Tribal People of the North East and India's Struggle for Freedom: Some Historiographical Issues' in Sanjoy Hazarika, (Ed.), *Little Known Fighters against the Raj: Figures from Meghalaya*, Amber Books, New Delhi, 2013, p.5.

⁸I.M.Simon, *Meghalaya*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1980, p.20.

⁹ Hamlet Bareh, op.cit., p. 142.

¹⁰ David R. Syiemlieh, 'Call of Freedom from the Hills: Tirot Sing and his Significance in the Freedom Struggle,' in Sanjoy Hazarika, (Ed.), *Little Known Fighters against the Raj: Figures from Meghalaya*, Amber Books, New Delhi, 2013, p.34.

¹¹ Hamlet Bareh, *op cit.*, p.143.

the Hills and subject them to taxation. The last reason was the final straw on the camel's back for the Khasis had never been subjected to British or any other taxation. This precipitated the Nongkhlaw massacre on 4th April 1829 in which two British officers were killed. However, there is no proof that that U Tirot Sing had a hand in the massacre.

Nevertheless, U Tirot Sing was aware of his people's growing resentment against the British. His people were putting pressure on him to expel the foreigners from their land. He soon showed himself one of the bravest of the Khasi *Syiem*s, as worthy and fearless as his ancestors. In the following years of warfare, he exhibited himself to be a 'stern diplomat' and 'adept strategist,' and till he was treacherously captured, he conducted a guerrilla warfare that was a thorn in the flesh for the Company. He infused the spirit of patriotism in the hearts of his people and allies long before the term became a catchword.

Under the dynamic leadership of U Tirot Sing, the Khasi States, with some exceptions, raised their battlecry. He was successful to forge a league of the Khasi Princes to resist and oppose the forces of intrusion into the land. One of his trusted confidantes and ally was BorManik, the Syiem of Myllem. He rendered all help to U Tirot Sing but as the war progressed, amidst much hardships of his people, with tears in his eyes, he surrendered to the British. Unable to bear the humiliation of deserting U Tirot Sing, Bor Manik abdicated his *Syiem*ship and fled to Tibet with hundreds of his followers, never to return.¹² A Khasi girl by the name of Phan Nonglaitis remembered till today for she was instrumental in luring the soldiers of the British Army into a drunken stupor and then seizing their guns and ammunition.

The Khasi states which remained neutral were

¹²Hamlet Bareh, *op cit.*, p.144.

¹³Ibid, p.147.

¹⁴ Hamlet Bareh, *Democracy*, Shillong, p. 108. Local traditions inform that Tirot Sing was captured at Laitkor or Myllem and not at Shilliang Um.

Sohra, Khyrim, Langrin, Nongspung and Nongstoin. However, Tirot Sing got continued support from Sohbar, Wahlong, Pamsanngut, Mawdon, Shella, Dawki, Mawsmi, Mawsynram, Rambrai, Myriaw, Nongpoh.¹³

U Tirot Sing and his allies moved with lightning speed from place to place, gaining more followers. Monbhut, Lorshon Jarain and Khein Kongor shone among his bravest supporters. Invitations for alliance were sent to Sirdars, Basans, Lyngdohs. Messengers were sent to the Jaintia Hills and to far off lands like Bhutan and the Ahom rulers of Assam, though some of them were captured midway. A large number of Garos joined hands with U Tirot Sing. Actually it became a pan Khasi tribal league. This speaks much for the charisma and networking skills of U Tirot Sing.

The Company's authorities at Kolkata (Calcutta) ordered for the immediate suppression of the revolt and the arrest of U Tirot Sing. They understood that as long as U Tirot Sing was alive, the spirit of resistance would never die. So they resorted to their divide and rule policy, culminating in the capture of U Tirot Sing. Military regiments of the Company were brought in from Goalpara and Sylhet. Soon the pressure of the military might of the British and the immense physical hardships of the women and children and the scarcity of food, led to the surrender of the allies one after another. When the Khasi Hills seemed conquered, U Tirot Sing stood tall and continued to fight, fleeing from one cave to the other. On 23rd August 1832, U Tirot Sing met the British and demanded the restoration of his land and that the construction of the road be stopped. Nothing came out of it. Four months later, on 13th January 1833, Lieutenant Inglis who was commanding a post at Shilliang Um¹⁴ was assigned the task for meeting U Tirot Sing. U Tirot Sing went there with his warriors. According to

Khasi custom, to assure U Tirot Sing that no harm would be meted out to him, Inglis took salt from the blade of his sword but actually, treacherously captured U Tirot Sing. Inglis was the official who had appropriated many of the limestone mines of the Khasis. Later, the official records stated that U Tirot Sing had surrendered. That is why there is the danger of over dependence on government records and official documents. There should be respect for oral traditions too. The two versions, judiciously used, can present a comprehensive view of history.

U Tirot Sing was brought to Sohra before the court of Mr. Robertson for trial. All attempts to make him accept British suzerainty failed. Traditions again inform us that in a loud voice, he shouted, "Better I die a freeman, than live a life of a slave king." He was sent to trial at the Faujdari Court in Guwahati, then house arrest at Dacca (in Bangladesh today) where he died on 17th July 1835. U Tirot Sing proved himself a hero and valiant warrior of his people.

On 16th December 1952, the Governor of Assam J. Doulatram, while laying the foundation stone of Tirot Sing Memorial at Mairang, stated that U Tirot Sing displayed rare courage and royal dignity and hoped that his name would be recorded in the history of India's independence.

Another brave warrior was U Kiang Nangbah from the Jaintia Hills. Between 1860 and 1863, he rose up against colonial interference in his traditional faith and culture. Unlike U Tirot Sing who was of a royal lineage, U Kiang Nangbah is believed to be a commoner. However, a local tradition informs that he comes from Jowai in the Jaintia Hills belonging to a respectable priestly house whose father was from Nangbah. Thus Nangbah is the name of his father's village and not his surname or lineage.

The Jaintia kingdom and the Jaintia Hills came into the Company's domain in 1835. The portion of the Raja's territory in the plains was annexed to the District of Sylhet and the Raja voluntarily resigned his hill portion.¹⁵ Following on the heels of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-1858, the colonial imposition of house and income taxes, and increased control on the Jaintias by the British, led to their resentment and the Jaintia struggle of 1860-1864.¹⁶

The Raja was annually paid only a he-goat from the hill portion and voluntary service from the Jaintias on *Raj* lands whenever needed. Initially, the Company only taxed the Jaintias a he-goat annually. In 1860, however, a house tax was imposed¹⁷, the highest limit of which was one rupee. This form of taxation was obnoxious to the Jaintias and they met in irregular gatherings where they decided to resist payment. Within a few months, the Jaintias were in open rebellion. It was a spur of the moment rebellion, with minimum adequate preparation in personnel and resources. Many efficient men were not recruited because primarily, there was little time to recruit them to active service. However, a large force of British troops under Colonel Richardson was close by¹⁸ and before the uprising could make any headway it was speedily quelled.

No sooner than this rebellion was suppressed, it was apparent the embers of discontent and distrust of the British by the Jaintias had not died down. The Jaintias were vexed with many other issues: *Raj* lands were transferred to the Government, people were ordered to construct roads, home made weapons possessed by the Jaintias were seized and fisheries were constructed, prevention of their traditional cremation of their dead near the Jowai police station, inability to restore their Raja to power again, royal disquiet at

¹⁵ W.W. Hunter, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

¹⁶ *Meghalaya at 50: 1972-2002*, Department of Education, Government of Meghalaya, 2002, p.80.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.206; Alexander Mackenzie, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

¹⁸ Alexander Mackenzie, p. 241.

the loss of their ancestral property and the arrogant behaviour of the Government officials. The catalyst however was the imposition of a stamp duty and income tax. Hamlet Bareh¹⁹ compares the imposition of the Stamp Act by the Company to the enforcement of the Stamp Act by the British Parliament in their American colonies, leading to the American War of Independence.

Local tradition tells U Manick *Daloi* of Jowai held a *Durbar* of delegates from all over Jaintia Hills to deliberate on the proposed taxation. This threw into the limelight a distinguished leader named U Kiang Nangbah who categorically condemned the new policy and urged the people not to accept the Government taxation scheme. It was apparent that U Kiang was not happy with the destruction of the Jaintia political edifice, the renowned and powerful Jaintia kingdom. Undeniably, the British had left the Jaintias much to their own devices, with least political interference for several years after 1835. But U Kiang in the preceding years was keenly aware of the British plans to control the Jaintias. His own brother called him a fanatic and persuaded people not to listen to U Kiang. So the latter spearheaded a movement to 'undo all traces of British rule in the land.' He toured widely and won many supporters. Local tradition again informs that he claimed himself to be an enlightened son of the heaven and a prophet of the new age. However, Khasi-Jaintias traditionally never went to war without a system of divination to find out whether the battle was worth fighting for. Thus a *durbar* was called at Madan Syntu Ksiar.²⁰ Then it was announced that whoever could dive into the bottom of the river Syntu Ksiar and bring to the surface an aquatic plant, would be regarded as the leader of the Jaintias against the British. Many able bodied men plunged into the river but only U Kiang successfully brought out the plant. The *Daloi* of Nartiang blessed him. Many may question how an

ordinary man was chosen to lead the Jaintias against the British, but detractors were silenced by U Kiang's feat in going down into the Syntu Ksiar and emerging with the required plant. An aura of divine power was bestowed on him, thus giving him the much needed authority and legitimacy to proceed further with his plans.

Impromptu *darbars* were held, barricades were raised, women and children were taken to caves and dense jungles, essential items were stored. U Kiang moved swiftly from place to place. His fellow leaders were Giri Daloi of Shangpung, Shan Laloo, Mylon *Daloi* of Mynso, Bang *Daloi* of Nartiang, Suwar *Daloi* of Sutnga and the *Daloi*s of Nongkhlieh and Rymbai. Though there was no standing army, U Kiang successfully recruited many able bodied men to the cause of evading taxation and driving out the British from their land. U Kiang, supported by many, burned down the Jowai Police Station on 17th January 1862, ushering the second phase of the resistance. As in the Khasi Hills, thirty years earlier, the Jaintias armed only with bows and arrows bravely stood up to the guns of the British regiments and an Elephant Battery. Once, they shot fire-bearing arrows on thatched roofs of the British military camps, but the soldiers used water pumps to douse the fire. The arrival of Major Rowlatt changed the tide of the battle in favour of the British. However, the 'Little War' dragged on beyond the expectations of the British. The Khasi chiefs, Raja Rabon Sing of Khyriem and Raja Ram Sing of Sohra (Cherrapunjee) appointed as Government emissaries to persuade U Kiang to withdraw hostilities failed to convince him. An interesting development was the information that U Kiang was soon moving from place to place, 'armed with a double barrel rifle, two pistols and a sword and was dressed up in the traditional fighters uniform'²¹ boosting the morale of the people in the difficult conditions. However, more stringent government actions were implemented with the

¹⁹Hamlet Bareh, *op.cit.*, pp.172-173.

²⁰Ibid, p.177.

arrival of Brigadier General G.D. Showers. The soldiers attacked the villages, burnt the houses, and destroyed the granaries. These acts however made the people more passionate in their resistance. Guns and pistols were recovered from the dead and captured warriors, indicating that they were able to procure weapons from the neighbouring areas. On 27th December 1862, while U Kiang was lying ill in his hideout, the traitor, U Long Sutnga led the soldiers there. He was arrested and was given a short mock trial at Iawmusiang, Jowai on 30th December 1862. Oral tradition tells us that the people were forced to witness his execution on the gallows to browbeat them into submission. It further informs that U Kiang clearly said that on dying, if his head swings to the east, his land will be free of British control in a hundred years, but if it swings to the west, the people would be enslaved for ever. Everyone watched with bated breath. On dying, his head turned to the east. As prophesied by him, India shook herself free from the colonial grip in 1947, even much before a hundred years. In his heroic uncompromising stand to the end, U Kiang set a worthy example to his people which should be emulated by Indians from North to South, East to West that one should not be lured by lucre or power and compromise on the inherent rights of all Indians. U Kiang Nangbah stands stall in the galaxy of unsung heroes who considered freedom and the rights of his people more important than government appreciation.

In the 20th century, freedom fighters from the Northeast also sacrificed their youth and comfort

for India's freedom from the exploitative colonial rule, like those in the rest of the country. Khasi men took part in the national movement, but on foreign shores. However, they returned home after the movement, not to a hero's welcome but to oblivion. The Khasis are proud to know that there were Khasi soldiers in Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army (I.N.A.).²² The Khasi Hills never became a scene of battle for the freedom movement but the Khasi men played a valiant role in it. The British government and the British Indian Army had looked down on the I.N.A. and termed them as traitors. They were called "Jiffs" or Japanese Inspired Fifth Columnists.²³ The two armies fought each other in Manipur and Naga hills during World War II. The I.N.A. soldiers were given a raw deal. Those Indian soldiers in the I.N.A. were first condemned as traitors by the British administrators and the British army, but they were also ignored by the Indian historians and the successive governments at the Centre and the State.

On 23rd November 2017, on his visit to Moirang, Manipur, the then President of India, Ram Nath Kovind lauded and praised the I.N.A. This holds out a promise for correcting the injustice meted out to I.N.A. personnel, particularly those from the Northeast, including the Khasis, who are yet to be written back to history. Northeast India is privileged that Bose "chose the Northeast India to be the final battleground in the struggle for our country's independence."²⁴ However, Bose was no stranger to the Northeast. He had first visited

²¹S.N.Lamare, 'The Little War- The Jaintias and the British,' in Sanjoy Hazarika, (Ed.), *Little Known Fighters against the Raj: Figures from Meghalaya*, Amber Books, New Delhi, 2013, p. 60.

²²Amena N. Passah, " Unsung Heroes: The Khasis in the I.N.A" in *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, 38th Session, Mirza,(Shillong), 2018, pp. 577-591.

²³Sushant Singh, "INA and Indian Army: A History of Conflict, a legacy of pride" 23rd November 2017 in <https://indianexpress.com>. accessed on 25th July 2018.

²⁴ The words of Dr.Sisir Kumar Bose, the nephew of Subhas, who at the age of seventeen drove the car to Gomoh station, escorting the latter on his way to escape from India, quoted by Abhijit Choudhury, 'Introducing the Theme,' in *The Cause: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birth Centenary Souvenir (1897-1997)*, Shillong, 1997.p.iii (henceforth cited as *The Cause*).

Shillong, East Khasi Hills in Meghalaya in 1927 to recuperate after his release from the Mandalay Jail in Burma.²⁵ He returned to Shillong in 1938 to settle the ministerial crisis in the province of Assam.²⁶ Gilbert Shullai, an eminent Khasi writer, had observed that the meeting which was scheduled to be held for Netaji at Shillong Club was cancelled under orders of the government. But Kongor Macdonald Basaiawmoit together with Steam Kharkongor, an intelligent young boy of class IX, managed to get a place for the said meeting at Nongkhlaw Enterprise, Polo Bridge, on the left bank of Wah Umkhrah, at the foothill of the present Tourist Lodge.²⁷

Khasis in the I.N.A. rubbed shoulders with the valiant soldiers of mainland India being inspired by the clarion call of Subhas Chandra Bose. It cannot be denied that the I.N.A. led by Netaji was a significant feature of the Indian Independence struggle or the Indian national movement.

Subhas Chandra Bose became President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 but due to opposition by Mahatma Gandhi, whose principle of non-violence he did not accept, Bose was forced to resign the next year. In 1941, planning to take advantage of the World War II to free India from colonial rule, Bose escaped to Germany, via Afghanistan, Russia and Italy, where he raised the Indian Legion with the Indian soldiers in British army who had been captured by Italy and Germany. Thereafter, he made his way to Singapore in a submarine to take over the leadership of the Indian

freedom struggle in Southeast Asia. He established a Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) in Singapore and organised the I.N.A. with the help of the Japanese into whose hands Singapore had fallen on 15th February 1942.²⁸

Bose moved his Headquarters to Rangoon in January 1944, to prepare for a frontal attack on India along with the Japanese.²⁹ The offensive on Imphal, codenamed U-Go, began on 8th March 1944 and on 14th April 1944, INA forces led by Shaukat Ali Malik, unfurled the Indian flag, stamped with Bose's leaping tiger in Moirang.³⁰ However, the British Indian Army under General Slim fought tenaciously and by 10th July 1944, the Japanese informed Bose that they were retreating from Imphal. On 21st August 1944, Bose announced from Rangoon the suspension of the offensive.³¹ The disappointed I.N.A. had to withdraw to Singapore, with most of its soldiers surrendering to Allied forces all along the way.

It is imperative to turn back the pages of history and record the lives of the patriots who responded to the clarion call of Netaji to wrest the freedom of India from the grip of the Colonial rulers. Indeed, for a very long time the INA soldiers were looked upon as villains of the piece and *persona non grata*. The same was true for the I.N.A. men from Khasi Hills in the state of Meghalaya. The fight for freedom was not fought in their Hills but the men were out in the major areas of the War fighting for their country's freedom from colonial rule. However, the truth was that while those who

²⁵The words of Dr.Sisir Kumar Bose, the nephew of Subhas, who at the age of seventeen drove the car to Gomoh station, escorting the latter on his way to escape from India, quoted by Abhijit Choudhury, 'Introducing the Theme,' in *The Cause: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birth Centenary Souvenir (1897-1997)*, Shillong, 1997, p. iii.

²⁶*Ibid*, see also, "Statement of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President" in *The Cause*.

²⁷ Helen Giri, "In Remembrance..." in *The Cause*, p. 22.

²⁸J.B.Bhattacharjee, *World War II and India*, Presidential Address, Modern India Section, Indian History Congress, Golden Jubilee Session, Gorakhpur, 1989, pp. 11-12.

²⁹Sushant Singh, *op.cit*,

³⁰*Ibid*,

³¹*Ibid*,

fought in the British army were decorated with many bravery medals, given a hero's welcome and monetary benefits, their comrades in the INA were instead, treated as traitors for many years, historically and academically ignored and monetarily denied any reward. When the list of freedom fighters and ex-I.N.A. personnel from Meghalaya was released by the Government of India, no Khasi was mentioned. This may perhaps lead people in other states to think that no Khasi-Jaintia-Garo was involved in the freedom movement.³² However, there were Khasis and Jaintias in the resistance movements against colonial rule, and Khasi soldiers in the I.N.A.

It was in the Khasi Hills of present day Meghalaya, that at least six great sons of the region were born. They all rose up in arms against the colonial policies of the British Raj at the call of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The six persons from this land, viz., Capt. T. Hodyson Dykes (Kharsyntiew), Mr. S. Lorot Singh (Nongtraw), Mr. Patied Cunville (Khongwir), Mr. Stoverwell Thangkhiew, Mr. I. Nongrum and Mr. L.P. Dredshon Khongwir,³³ all of them, part of the INA, contributed towards the armed struggle against the British under the command of General Shahnawaz Khan. Though their role may be insignificant in comparison, perhaps with the other members in the Indian National Army, their contribution most probably might have lifted the regional aspect of Khasi history to the national level.³⁴ These six British Imperial Army soldiers were P.O.Ws (Prisoners of War) during the Second World War. They were inducted into the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) after Netaji's pact with the

Japanese when he went to Singapore.

When Japan requested the Provisional Government of Free India, about 300 soldiers of the I.N.A. were trained as a "Special Force" to guard the frontiers of Malaya.³⁵ They were trained at Johore Bahru. On completion of the six month's course of training they were reorganised into four groups. One group was deputed to Alester, which was one of the Japanese Headquarters. At this time, Capt. Dykes and Patied Khongwir were at Alester.³⁶ The other group was under a Japanese Captain, O. Hara. Sub Officer S. Lorot Singh was with Capt. Basu in the Pahang Estate. The third group was under a Japanese Captain and Capt. Anand of the I.N.A. Lieut. Umesh C. Choudhury, an Assamese officer, who would become great friends with S. Lorot Singh was perhaps with Capt. Anand in Kuala Perlis. The fourth group was under Capt. Pande of the I.N.A. and a Japanese officer. It was at the time when they were called to combat terrorists at Japeh, the 2nd Division (300 INA soldiers) was recalled to Singapore for the historic march to Delhi. Some of the personnel had informed that the march was under the tricolour.³⁷ Some of them knew that they would be tried and court martialled. However, the Japanese forces soon had to surrender and the I.N.A did likewise when it was announced that Bose had died in a plane crash.

As on 1st January 1995 only Lorot Singh and Patied Khongwir were the two surviving legends of the I.N.A. Among these I.N.A. valiants, apparently only Lorot Singh was a matriculate. Lorot Singh was from the Nongtraw clan but was known as a Singh. Capt. T. Hodyson Dykes was actually Dkhar (Kharsyntiew), but anglicised it to

³²*Implanter*, November 4, 1972.

³³ No information was forthcoming on the last three Khasi I.N.A. soldiers.

³⁴ Helen Giri, *op.cit.*, p.22.

³⁵*Implanter*, *op.cit.*

³⁶*Ibid.*,

³⁷*Ibid.*,

³⁸ As told to me by the relations, Mrs.Kordor Kharsyntiew, Mr.B. Khongwir, Mrs. Patricia Ryntathiang on 5th May 2018.

Dykes since he was in the British army. Patied Khongwir was also known as P. Cunville in the British army. Apparently, Hodyson and Patied anglicised their surnames to be more respected and accepted in the army.³⁸

It was not easy to ferret out information on these I.N.A. stalwarts. I managed to locate relations of three men only and I am grateful to their relations who went out of the way to take me around and also to jog their memories to remember their illustrious ancestors.

S. Lorot Singh who was a havildar in the British Indian Army joined the INA in Singapore in 1941. Lorot was from the Khasi clan of Nongtraw, but during that period, most Khasis preferred to use the name Singh. In his obituary which was covered by the press, we learn that he served in Burma and Singapore under the I.N.A. in the Second World War.³⁹ He was born on 6th July 1920 at Pamsahmen under Sohra Syiemship.⁴⁰ He died on 2nd January 1995 at his residence at Jaiaw Langsning and was buried at Jaiaw Presbyterian Church cemetery.⁴¹ He passed his matriculation examination under Calcutta University in 1939.⁴² On 18th July 1941, he was drafted in the British Army (Corps IAOL) in the rank of Havildar office clerk. He went overseas on 1st October in the same year, to Burma and Singapore, arriving at Singapore on 7th November and was posted to 46 Mobile Workshop Company I.A.O.C.⁴³ He was shortly taken captive by the

Japanese after the fall of Singapore on 15th June 1942. When he was released after a year, he joined the newly formed I.N.A. under General Mohan Singh. When Netaji assumed leadership of I.N.A. Lorot Singh, who was inspired by Netaji's vision of an India free from British occupation, ⁴⁴ marched with the I.N.A. towards India, but on hearing of Bose's death on a plane crash, the I.N.A. was withdrawn. Subsequently, Singh and other fellow I.N.A. soldiers were sent to Allahabad to be tried. He was however acquitted and released. After Independence, Lorot Singh served in the Post and Telegraph office (DET) near Lady Hydari Park in Shillong. He suffered badly for seven years without pay before retirement with no one to help him. He was often asked how he felt when his I.N.A. friends from Assam received the I.N.A. freedom fighters pension from the Assam government. His constant reply to why he was not receiving a similar pension from the government of Meghalaya was, "If the state government is having the money, they can give, but if they don't have the money then I don't want it."⁴⁵ He was however, greatly respected at his workplace for his integrity. On 15th August 1972, he received the bronze medal from Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, 'on behalf of the nation, for his memorable contribution in the freedom struggle.'⁴⁶ He retired in 1979 with a pension only. Having fought for liberation from British rule, he was driven to take active part in the Hill State Movement which was instrumental for carving

³⁹ *Apphira Daily News*, January 4, 1995, p.1.

⁴⁰ Helen Giri, *op cit.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Apphira Daily News*, *op cit.*, p.1.

⁴² MFP-532 Army-2659-a-(a-474)-12-8-48-25,000, For use in substitution of a lost discharge certificate, I.A.F.Y-1949 as given to me by his son, Mr Mangkara Lyngrah.

⁴³ Lorot Singh's letter dated Shillong, 27th September 1948, addressed to The Deputy Accountant General, Post and Telegraphs (War Accounts Section), Nagpur, through the Divisional Engineer, Telegraphs, Shillong Division, Shillong on the subject, 'Reclassification of Ex-Indian Army personnel who joined the I.N.A. and financial concessions to them.'

⁴⁴ As told by his son, Mr. Mangkara Lyngrah on 22nd July 2017.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁶ As shown to me by his son, Mr. Mangkara Lyngrah on 12th August 2017.

the state of Meghalaya from Assam, under the banner of the A.P.H.L.C. (All Party Hill Leaders Conference).⁴⁷

Lorot Singh had reminiscence that “We Indians, wanted independence. We also came to know at the Indian Independence Week at Singapore that India wanted freedom from the British rule.”⁴⁸ He went on to say that they joined the I.N.A. because they were very keen to drive the British out of India. When they reached Burma from Singapore in 1945 and were about to enter the Indian territory, they received the news of the plane crash in which Netaji was believed to have been killed. This was a stunning blow to the I.N.A. in general and to the Khasi soldiers in particular. The I.N.A. was withdrawn and they had to surrender to the British. After surrendering, Lorot Singh remembers he was taken to various P.O.W camps like Magwe, Chittagong, Jhigerkicha in Jessore and to Multan till the historic I.N.A. trial was over.⁴⁹ Along with other I.N.A. soldiers, he was sent to Allahabad to be tried, but he was acquitted and released.⁵⁰ Speaking about his leader and mentor, Lorot Singh said that “Netaji was very much against the Partition. He did not want to see his country divided. He was a very great man.”⁵¹

Lorot Singh and his comrades came under the I.N.A. trial constituted under Major General A. B. Blaxland, with Norshirwan P. Engineer, Advocate General of India, Lieut Col. P. Walsh, Military Prosecutor and Col. F.C.A. Kerin as Judge Advocate. However the intervention of the Defence Counsel consisting of Kunwar Dilip Singh, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Bhulabhai Desai, Asaf Ali, Dr.K.N. Katju, P.K. Sen and others resulted in the immediate release

and an end to further court martial. Lorot Singh goes on to say that⁵²

.... the cause we fought for was just and of the triumph of the people’s verdict who stood by us in support of our freedom struggle under Netaji’s leadership at the call of the nation to march to its ramparts at the Red Fort. From the remnants of war in Singapore in the Far East to unloose them from the iron chains of slavery...when I surrendered on the 26th October under some trying circumstances, twenty days after that memorable news of April 4, 1945 in the Yenanyaung areas where we were told of the tragic news of setback and ordered to withdraw which we did the very next day and that place was captured that afternoon... we were brought somewhere in Magwe area near one airfield where we laboured and toiled as Prisoners of War from sunrise to sunset till its completion in Oct/ Nov. 1945. Severe dysentery attacked me during theretreat and the heavy pressure of work in this field and elsewhere told upon my health in later life now. From here we were taken by plane to our homeland and landed in Chittagong, kept in P.O.W Camp and never put at any other war work outside the Camp. From here we were taken to Jhigerkicha Camp in Jessore where necessary Courts of Enquiry started in separate cells and from there to Multan P.O.W Camp where we faced the same Court of Enquiry trying our case till I was dismissed on 27.3.1946. Here by luck, I met my O.C. Capt. Gulwant Singh, whom I feared I would never see again. For fear of contamination, the word I.N.A seems to have been obliterated but it did, within a year’s time that we left the chains of slavery within the prison camps, our country that we fought for so humbly under Netaji became free.”

⁴⁷As shown to me by his son, Mr. Mangkara Lyngrah on 12th August 2017.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Implanter, op.cit.*

⁵⁰*Apphira Daily News, op cit.,*

⁵¹Suraj Joshi, *op cit.*, p.6.

⁵²As told to me by his son, Mr.MangkaraLyngrah on 22nd July 2017; also quoted by Helen Giri, *op cit*, p. 23.

Capt. Hodyson Dykes, belonged to the Kharsyntiew clan which used the abbreviated name, Dkhar and later he anglicised it to Dykes when he joined the British Indian Army to fit in with a common desire at the time to be looked upon as an Anglo Indian⁵³ He lived at Saitsohpen under Sohra Syiemship and died in 1967 in Shillong.⁵⁴ His brother was Eldison who also served in the British Indian Army during the World War II. His relations do not know him so well or remember much about him for apparently he was not so sociable as his brother, Eldison. Tall, dignified and handsome, he won admiring looks when he donned his uniform.⁵⁵ He brought home many medals.⁵⁶ It seemed that Hodyson along with his son Fraser fought together in Burma against the Japanese. They were both captured by the latter. When the duo left the Japanese P.O.W. camp, they joined the I.N.A. Fraser apparently was not happy there and managed to escape to India and Shillong. Hodyson preferred to join the INA and was made a Captain. He must have displayed sterling qualities to have been conferred the title of Captain. Later, on reaching India, he was found guilty of the charge of treason and was sentenced to death by hanging and the hanging date was also set. To his good fortune, the hanging date was well after India's Independence. So instead of facing the hangman, he was actually awarded the *Tamra Patra* which was given by the Indian Government to all INA survivors as recognition of their services to the motherland.⁵⁷

Patied Khongwir, a sepoy, had joined the INA in Singapore in 1942. He died on 2nd February 1995. In a similar fashion as Capt. Hodyson Dykes,

Patied Khongwir anglicised his name to P. Cunville in the British Indian Army and INA. After the 1945 debacle, Patied Khongwir was taken back to Singapore and then again brought to India. According to him, the words of Netaji influenced him so much that he joined the INA leaving the British Indian Army. He remembered Netaji as having said, "We are all Indians and we will fight for the freedom of India. We do not care if you are Muslim, Christian or any religion, but we are all Indians. We will fight for India." Patied Khongwir worked as a mechanic in the Assam Transport Corporation on his return to Shillong.⁵⁸

When they were interviewed in 1992⁵⁹ both these unsung heroes, Lorot Singh and Patied Khongwir expressed their disappointment and unhappiness at the present situation in India. Speaking about his leader and mentor, Netaji, Lorot Singh said that "Netaji was very much against the Partition. He did not want to see his country divided." After living an active and exciting life during the War, both these INA soldiers were relegated to obscurity and uncertainty back home. Patied Khongwir was bedridden for the last fifteen years before his death. He had been provided a small house by his sister and was receiving Rs. 750/- as pension from the Central Government. In addition, he also received Rs.400/- from Assam State Transport as pension.

S. Lorot Singh was in a better position. Right from his youth, he was passionate for the freedom of his country. However, at his old age, he had to fight along battle for his pension from the Central Government as freedom fighter and ex-INA

⁵³I gleaned information on Capt. Dykes, mainly from Mr Danny Pariat, Camp: Wales; Mrs KordorKharsyntiew, Sohra; Mrs Tri Dkhar, Mrs Ida Kharsyntiew, Shillong.(between 2nd and 30th June 2018.)

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵ As told to me by Mrs.KordorKharsyntiew, Mrs Tri Dkhar.(between 2nd and 30th June 2018.)

⁵⁶ As told to me by Mr.DannyPariat on 30th June 2018.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Suraj Joshi, 'Last of the Mohicans' in *The Shillong Times*, Saturday, August 15, 1992, p.6.

personnel. It was only running from pillar to post that he at last succeeded in getting his pension from 1980. With regard to this problem, he had written to Mr. K.C. Pant, the then Minister of State for Home Affairs in 1973, Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan, Chairman of the five man panel of the Freedom Fighters Pension Scheme in 1972 and Minister of State for Agriculture in 1975. He had also taken up his case with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India, in 1975. There were many other top officials with whom he had got in touch regarding his plight. Eventually he tasted victory but with hurdles again. Instead of drawing his pension from August 15, 1972, he received it only from 1980. This vexed him greatly. He had said, "This is injustice done to me." He was also sore over the matter that the state government did not make any attempt to grant pension to the Khasi-Jaintia-Garo freedom fighters. These last "Mohicans" of the INA from Khasi Hills had fought for the freedom of their country, and had taken risks unheard of, but on returning to their homeland they were not accorded any respect at all and, on the contrary, were deprived of the grants due to freedom fighters and thoroughly disillusioned and sad before they died.

These are the unsung heroes. They are the heroes who were ignored, or declined to blow their own trumpet. The six INA freedom fighters had put their life on the line to gain independence from British rule. They were initially serving in the British Indian Army, but when they heard the clarion call of Netaji, they forsook allegiance to the British Raj and joined the INA with a red hot desire to free their country from the bondage of colonial rule. None can deny the stirring leadership of the Indian National Movement by Mahatma Gandhi but one cannot ignore the patriotism, commitment, passion and sacrificial struggle of the INA personnel for

the independence of our land. It is indeed a good practice to give a gun salute and different honours to the corpse of a soldier who is laid to rest. However, it is more wonderful to give the honour and respect to the soldiers when they return alive and strong after their sacrifices, valour and winning the cause. However, in the case of the INA soldiers from Khasi Hills this was ignored. They remained virtually unsung till the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birth Centenary Committee, Shillong, honoured them posthumously in 1997.⁶⁰ On 23rd January 1997, the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birth Centenary Committee, Shillong, felicitated posthumously and presented Plaque of Honour for the I.N.A. soldiers in recognition of their spirit of patriotism and self sacrifice. However, though the thought was well meaning, it was too late, for the recipients had died unsung and deeply disillusioned.

These Khasis were there at the formation of the INA and its struggle till they returned to India and then Shillong with the satisfaction that they had given their best and their efforts were not wasted for India had gained her freedom.

This work thus is not only a labour of love to retrieve our unsung heroes from the pages of history in the 19th and 20th centuries but a clarion call especially for the youth to be inspired by their bold courage, at the sign of danger or impediment to their freedom and to be people of integrity, never to be bought by filthy lucre or promise of power. Let not the sacrifices of the unsung heroes of North East India be in vain but actually an inspiration to everyone.

(The author of this article is a M.A. (Gold Medal), M.Phil., Ph.D. and is presently serving as Professor in the Department of History under North Eastern Hill University, Shillong)

⁶⁰ On 23rd January 1997, the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Birth Centenary Committee, Shillong, felicitated posthumously and presented Plaque of Honour for the I.N.A. soldiers in recognition of their spirit of patriotism and self sacrifice. However, though the thought was well meaning, it was too late, for the recipients had died unsung and deeply disillusioned

Anglo-ADI Wars in Arunachal Pradesh

✍ Gr. Captain Mohonto Panging Pao

Introduction

1. Arunachal Pradesh is the 25th State of India and the largest State in North East India. Arunachal is a strategically important state because it shares boundaries with three countries; China, Myanmar and Bhutan. The 1030 km border with China is also called the McMahon Line. Arunachal comprises mainly of mountains and hills of the Himalayas in the north and west. The southern areas comprise of the hills of Patkai hill ranges bordering Myanmar. The general terrain comprises of rugged mountains, steep gorges and valleys intersected by turbulent rivers and dense tropical forests. Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by 28 major tribes, 100 sub tribes, 50 distinct languages and dialects. The majority natives residing in Arunachal comprise of Tibeto-Burman and Mongoloid races. Arunachal Pradesh was earlier known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh in 1972.

History

2. Ancient Kalika Purana has many references to Arunachal Pradesh. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are fiercely independent with their own system of governance and democracy. While neighbouring areas were overpowered and defeated by invading forces, major tribes of Arunachal were never overpowered and administered by foreign forces till about 1911. Even the great Mughals, Ahoms (Ahoms ruled Assam for 600 years) could not overpower the tribesmen. Tribes from Arunachal regularly committed marauding raids in the plains of Assam during Ahom and British rule. To appease the tribesmen and prevent their marauding attacks, a system of paying tax to the

tribesmen of Arunachal called Posa was introduced which is being continued today also in few areas and tribes.

3. Assam was gradually brought under British rule after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. After establishment of British rule over Assam, many expeditions were launched by the British for goodwill visits and to punish marauding tribesmen. Some of the fiercest battles against the British forces were fought by tribesmen from Arunachal. Tribes like Aka, Nyishi, Miri, Apatani, Adi, Mishmi, Khampti, Singpho, Tangsa, Nocte, Wancho etc fought British forces at various instances. Hundreds of British soldiers and supporting personnel like porters, coolies were killed. What is astonishing is the fact that Arunachal tribesmen fought the British forces armed with modern weapons like rifles, mortars, artillery guns etc. with primitive weapons only like bows & arrows, spears, Daos (Local sword) and stone avalanches. Some of the most significant and fierce battles were fought by the Adi tribes residing in the Siang and Dibang Valley areas of Arunachal (Presently East Siang, Siang, Upper Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts). The Anglo-Adi wars ultimately led to major changes in the administration structure gradually bringing in British rule over Arunachal Pradesh. This article will focus on the major battles fought by the Adi tribes against the British forces.

First Anglo-Adi War 1858

4. Frequent raids were carried out by Adis in the plains of Assam during the reign of Ahom kings starting about 1600 AD. These raids continued even during the British rule over Assam. On 31 January 1858 Adis attacked a British post and the adjoining

villages just few miles north of Dibrugarh in Assam. The British authorities decided to launch an expedition against the Adis to punish the perpetrators. A British force of 200 Soldiers, Howitzer guns, 120 boats, 150 porters, 12 elephants under the command of Captain Lothar, accompanied by Captain Bivar, Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur assembled near Pasighat on 19 March 1958. Operations were launched on 20



March to assault the Adi village of Kebang in present Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The advance was made with boats followed by foot march. Fierce battles were fought, but the British forces were unable to reach Kebang village. The Adi warriors fought the British forces armed with rifles and bayonets just with poisoned arrows, swords (Dao) and spears. Finally the British forces were forced to retreat. The retreating forces were attacked and harassed by the Adis all along the withdrawal. The British forces suffered heavy casualties losing about 20-30 soldiers/coolies and several others injured.

Second Anglo-Adi War 1859

5. After the failure of the British expedition of 1858, Adi tribesmen carried out more daring raids in the British territories in Assam. British authorities decided to carry out another expedition to avenge the failed expedition of 1858. On 26 February 1859 a major force reached short of Pasighat. The force comprised of 600 troops including 12 Pound Howitzers and mortars led by Colonel Hannay and Colonel Reid. Pasighat and adjoining villages were defended by eleven heavily built stockades. The large stockades were made with layers of bamboo/

wooden stakes interlaced with stones and guarded externally with Panjis or pointed bamboo. The assault was launched on 27 February with Howitzers and mortars. Fierce battles were fought with the Adis fighting with poisoned bows & arrows and assaulting with stones against rifles, mortars and artillery. Many close range battles were fought with bayonets and Daos. After the stockades were assaulted and taken, the British forces burnt the nearby villages as punishment. During these operations the British forces lost 50-70 soldiers including officers with many others injured.

Lalimukh Conference of 1862

6. In order to pacify the Adis and prevent the frequent raids, a major conference was held at Lalimukh between the Adi representatives and British team led by Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur on 05 November 1862. The conference lasting for 7 days was attended by 34 Adi Chiefs or Gams and an agreement between both sides was signed at the end of the conference. A sixteen point agreement was signed by both sides amongst which the major points were:-

- (a) Agreement not to infringe and attack other's territory (Mostly along the foothills).

(b) Permission to trade freely and access to markets.

(c) Payment of annual tribute or 'Posa' to Adi Chiefs consisting of the following:-

- (i) 100 Iron Hoes.
- (ii) 30 Bags of Salt.
- (iii) 80 Bottles of Rum.
- (iv) 2 Seers of Opium.
- (v) 2 Bags of Tobacco.

Third Anglo-Adi War 1894

7. Trouble again erupted in 1892 and 1893 with skirmishes and raids committed by Adi tribesmen in Bomjir area of Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal. The British authorities decided to launch another expedition to Bomjir, Dambuk villages of present Lower Dibang Valley district and Silluk village of East Siang District of Arunachal. In January 1894 a large British force comprising of 600 troops with 7 Pounder guns and 1500 porters were assembled for the expedition at Sadiya. The force was led by Captain Maxwell and was accompanied by the Political Officer of Sadiya Mr Needham. The expedition started on 14 January 1894 and captured Bomjir village on 15 January.

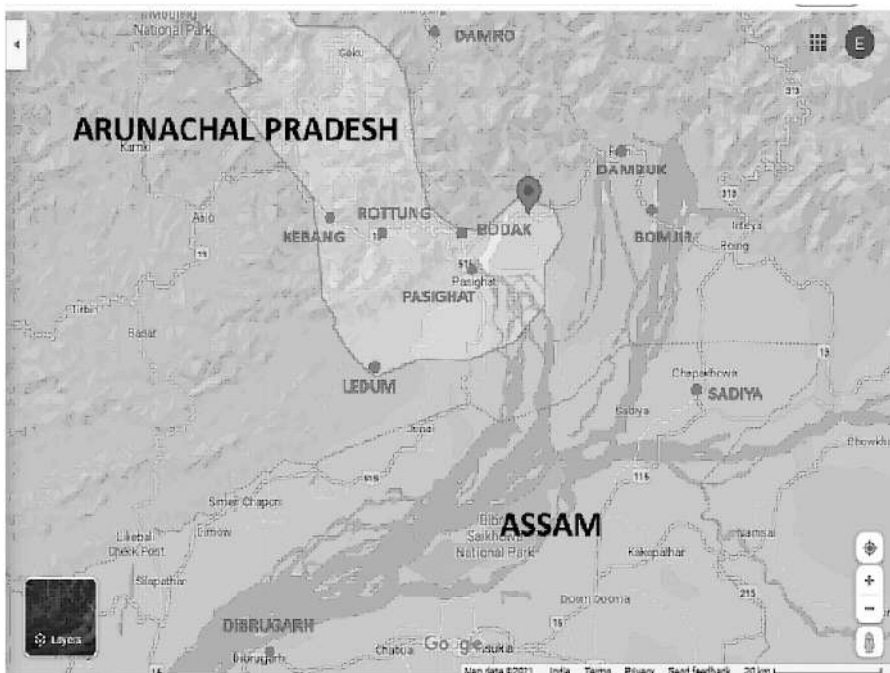
8. On 20 January the force advanced to Dambuk

village. The Adis had built a strong stockade one mile from the village. The stockade was 2000 yards long, 10 feet high and strongly built with 'Panjies' or pointed bamboo stakes. The stockade had 2-3 layers strengthened with stones. A general assault was launched which could not break through with the Adis fighting back with showers of poisoned arrows and stones. Finally the stockade was breached with the 7 Pounder Guns and rifles. Dambuk was found deserted by the Adis. The British suffered 25 killed and many injured during the battle.

9. On 28 January the force crossed the Sisar river and burnt the villages of Mimesipu and Silluk. During the skirmish at Silluk, 8 British soldiers were killed to the losses of 10-20 Adis. The force halted at Silluk from 29 January to 08 February. During the halt at Silluk, after inputs from informers, the British authorities decided to continue the expedition to assault the village of Damro, presently in Upper Siang district of Arunachal. On 10 February 1894 the force assaulted and occupied Mebo in East Siang district without opposition. The force thereafter occupied Ayeng village without opposition. Since Damro was still many days march ahead, the British forces decided to leave behind bulk of the rations near Bodak village. Due to differences of opinion

between the military commanders and political officer, it was decided to leave behind a small contingent consisting of sick and weak fighting men at the Bodak site. The small Bodak contingent consisted of 1 Subedar, 14 Sepoys and 44 porters.

10. Meanwhile the main British force left for Damro village on 22 February. The force occupied Silli and Padu villages without opposition. Thereafter the march towards Damro village was resumed. However, Adi



warriors of Damro and nearby villages offered stiff opposition with poisoned arrows, spears and stones. With mounting casualties, the force failed to reach Damro and decided to withdraw. The retreating British force was attacked and Adi warriors of Padu and Silli villages. Suffering many casualties the withdrawing British force burnt Padu and Silli villages.

11. On 04 March 1894, the retreating British force reached the rear camp at Bodak. To their horror, they found the rear camp at Bodak fully gutted and dead bodies littered all around. From the force left behind at the rear camp at Bodak only 2 persons survived. It was revealed later that Adi warriors had entered the rear camp disguised as load carriers. At the opportune moment the disguised Adi warriors whipped out their concealed Daos and attacked the unsuspecting camp inhabitants. Only 2 men out of the 60 odd rear party survived the massacre of British forces at Bodak by the Adi warriors.

12. With supplies dwindling due to the destruction of the rear camp at Bodak, the British force decided to withdraw back towards British controlled Sadiya. The withdrawing British force burnt Ayeng village on 06 March and Mebo on 09 March 1894. Thereafter the British force withdrew to Sadiya by boats from Komlighat near Mebo. During the entire expedition the British forces suffered 100 plus killed including 49 soldiers and many more injured! The British force could not reach Damro as earlier intended and had to retreat after the massacre at Bodak.

Murder of Noel Williamson and Party 1911

13. Noel Williamson had succeeded JF Needham as Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya in 1905. In 1908 and 1909 Williamson made several goodwill tours of Adi villages including the main village of Kebang. In response to an invitation by an Adi Gam, Noel Williamson accompanied by Dr Gregorson and a small party of coolies and porters set out for Komsing village in present Siang district. The party crossed the Siang river at Pasighat and

halted at Sissen village for one week caring for the sick coolies. While leaving behind Dr Gregorson to look after the sick, Williamson proceeded to Komsing village. On 30 March 1911, a group of Adi warriors attacked and killed Dr Gregorson and his party. Only one person from Dr Gregorson's group survived the massacre. On 31 March, at Komsing village, Noel Williamson and his party were attacked and killed by few Adi warriors led by Matmur Jamoh and Lunrung Tamuk.

Fourth Anglo-Adi War 1911-12

14. To avenge the murders of Noel Williamson and party, British authorities decided to send another expedition. Towards this a large force consisting of 8000-8500 troops and other ranks including 32 Sikh Pioneers, 1/ 2 Gurkhas, 1/ 8 Gurkha Rifles, Lakhimpur MP Battalion, Lushai Hills Battalion, Sappers & miners, 7 Pounder Guns and 3000 porters was assembled in October 1911. This large military force was led by Major General Bower. The force advanced and reached near Pasighat by 20 October 1911.

15. The force was divided into two columns. The left column of Ledum column comprising of 2 Companies 1/ 2 Gurkhas, 3 Companies of Lakhimpur Battalion, detachment of Pioneers and signallers was led by Colonel J Fisher. This force crossed Mangnang, Mikong, Ledum villages and reached Miising village on 29 October 1911. The force was engaged by many groups of Adi warriors and many fierce battles were fought with the Adis inflicting many casualties on the British forces. The force halted there and carried out patrolling missions attacking and burning many adjoining villages.

16. The main column led by General Bower comprising of 2 Companies of Lakhimpur Battalion reached Pasighat on 26 October and halted till 02 November collected supplies and building camps/ stockades. The main column advanced towards Kebang village on 07 November. The force was attacked by the Adi warriors with poisoned arrows and stone at several stockades built along the route.

Several British soldiers were killed and wounded. The British force reached Rottung village on 19 November. The main column halted at Rottung village for 10 days bringing up supplies and cutting roads.

17. Advance parties located a very large stockade over a precipitous rock face at Kekar Monying about 3 miles ahead. With reinforcements arriving from the Ledum Column, this large stockade was assaulted by General Bower's forces. A fierce battle was fought with the Adi warriors attacking the British forces with stone avalanches and poisoned arrows. In the intense fighting even General Bower was injured. The main target Kebang village was reached on 09 December 1911. The village was found deserted and was burnt. Nearby villages including Yemsing and Komsing were also burnt. Finally the Adi villages gave in and sent representatives with peace proposals. On demand of the British forces the main perpetrators who killed Noel Williamson and Dr Gregorson were surrendered.

18. The Anglo-Adi war of 1911 had far reaching consequences in the history of Arunachal Pradesh. After losing too many men, much property and many villages burnt, the Adis submitted to the British authorities. The general submission of Adis in 1911 led to the establishment of British rule in North East Frontier or Arunachal Pradesh. The Siang valley was officially brought under British administration and a post of Assistant Political Officer was created at Pasighat in 1911 with Mr TE Furze being the first Assistant Political Officer at Pasighat.

Conclusion

19. The fiercely independent tribes of Arunachal Pradesh fought many battles against British forces

to oppose British rule. Since 1600 AD frequent raids were carried out by the tribesmen in the plains of Assam during Ahom rule and continued during the British rule. Most of the battles were fought due to British expeditions to prevent the frequent, marauding raids by the tribesmen of Arunachal. Some of the most significant and fierce battles were fought by the Adi tribes residing in the Siang and Dibang valley areas of Arunachal. What is astonishing is the fact that the Adi warriors fought the British forces armed with modern weapons like rifles, mortars, artillery guns etc. with primitive weapons only like bows & arrows, spears, Daos and stone avalanches.

20. The Anglo-Adi wars ultimately led to major changes in the administration structure gradually bringing in British rule over Arunachal Pradesh. The general submission of Adis in 1911 led to the establishment of British rule in North East Frontier or Arunachal Pradesh. Siang valley was officially brought under British administration and a post of Assistant Political Officer was created at Pasighat in 1911.

21. To honour the Adi warriors martyred in these battles against British forces, many small war memorials have been built at different places by local communities and tribes. To honour these brave martyrs, the Govt needs to set up a Central War Memorial at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. Many fierce battles were fought by tribesmen of Arunachal Pradesh to oppose British rule. These stories are not known in most parts of India. These gallant stories need to be told to the nation. Salute to the brave freedom fighters of Arunachal Pradesh!

(The author of this article is a recipient of prestigious Vayu Sena Medal)



Thengphakri: The first Bodo women freedom fighter of Assam

✍ Dr. Banabina Brahma

Abstract:- The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of women of this land. The sacrifices made by the women would occupy foremost place. They fought with true spirit and undaunted courage and faced various tortures, exploitations and hardships to earn us freedom.

The period from 1757 to 1856 was an era of expansion and consolidation of colonial rule in India. This period saw the major changes in socio-political and economic structures of India. These changes did not go unchallenged. This paper tries to explore the resistance of the courageous Bodo Woman known as “Thengphakri”, against the oppression and brutal revenue collecting system of British. This is an untold history of a unique woman braveheart with a nationalistic approach who died to challenge the mighty British colonists in 1856 where most women in mainland India were still under purdah system and followed Sati system.

Introduction:-

India celebrated its 74th year of independence on 15th of August, 2021 from the British rule and also remembers the 200 years of struggle for freedom of our country. This independence of India, on the historic day in 15th of August, 1947, some 74 years ago was the culmination of numerous movements and struggles by some known and many unknown heroes throughout the time of the British rule including the historic revolt of 1857. This independence was achieved through the efforts of many revolutionary

freedom fighters, who took the lead in organizing the struggle which led to India’s independence. Although, they were of varied ideologies, their contribution to India’s struggle has been immortalized in the minds of every Indian. Some are known in history and some are unknown. In documenting the struggle against the British, however, some freedom fighter from the North East, specially from Assam has not found its due place in popular discourse.

“Thengphakri” alias “Birgwsfri Sikhla” was such an unknown hero of Indian Freedom Movement from Bodo tribe of Assam. She was born in 1810 at the Eastern Duars under the Bijni Raj Eastate. She was strong, courageous and intelligent from her childhood. She was appointed as the ‘Tehsildar’ or the revenue collector at the age of 32 by the British. In fact, she was the first female ‘Tehsildar’ appointed by the British in India. At first, she was appointed as the Irazdar of Sankosh, Manash, and Buridiya Ghat in 1842 but by dint of her sincerity, honesty and loyalty to the British, she was upgraded to the post of Tehsildar in 1845.

Research Methodology:

To write this paper, an amalgamation of three of the social research tools were applied as they are authentic and brilliant method to assemble statistic from multiple sources in a methodical and convenient way - (i) Archival Source, (ii) Folklore & Folktale and (iii) Interviews of senior citizen who possessed the knowledge of history and folklore of Bodos.

Objective of the research paper:

The main objectives of this paper are:

In depth study and bring into focus of individual Women Freedom fighter who fought for our freedom against British which has remained untold so far.

Tengphakri was a loyal British officer but after the death of her uncle Priyo Musahary, who was a revolutionist, she was shaken and vowed to fight against the British till her death. But before going into the details of the fascinating story of Thengphakri becoming a British Revenue Collector and her fight against the British we must know the history of Eastern Duars.

The “Eastern Duars” holds an important place in the history of Assam as well as in Indian History because of its typical geographical position. The entire tract called ‘Eastern Duars’ is the only connecting link between the entire Northeastern regions with the rest of the Indian Republic.

The terms ‘Duars’ literally means ‘door’ in English is used to refer the areas below the foothills which always carried the sense of border mark at the foot of mountain pass and the areas in its immediate vicinity. Duars therefore means the passes and valleys that led to the hills. It is known to all that social relation and economic interdependence between the hills and the plains of Northeast India have been there since the time immemorial. It is through this Duars that the people of Bhutan have been interacting with the plains people below their foothills since time immemorial. Along the Indo-Bhutan borderline, there are eighteen such Duars or passes on the frontier of Bengal and Cochin-Bihar are together called ‘Western Duars’ and the remaining and seven on the Assam are called the ‘Eastern Duars’.

The tract called “Eastern Duars” forms an integral portion of undivided Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang District of Assam. The Eastern comprises several Duars. In the Duars, covering the narrow strip of the plains, that is, the foot hills providing access to the mountain region

compressed within the limits of Assam there are 14 Duars; of these, five Duars, viz., Bijni or Bagh Duar, Chirang, Guma, Ripu and Sidli, collectively known as Eastern Duars, are situated in between the river Manash on the east and the Sankoch on the west. Five other Duars, viz., Baksa, Bijni, Chapaguri, Chapakhamar and Garkhola are situated between the river Bamadi on the east and the Manash on the west. The remaining three Duars, viz., Buriguma, Killing and Koreapara are situated between the Dhansiri on the east and the Bamadi on the west and Chariduar, situated further east. Koreapara is now situated in the present Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh and Chariduar is included in the present Darrang district of Assam. The Eastern Duars form a flat strip of country lying beneath the Bhutan Mountains. It is bounded on the North by the mountain of Bhutan, on the East by the River Manas, separating it from the district of Kamrup, on South by the main portion of Goalpara district and on the West by the River Gangadhar and Sankash, which separates it from the Western Duars attached to the Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal.

Political History

The political History of Eastern Duars is very peculiar. It had been ruled by different dynasties in different period. In the ancient period, it was under the rule of Kamrupa Kingdom. After the disintegration of the Kamrupa Kingdom, it came under the Koch Kingdom. Again in seventeenth century, the Mughals occupied the eastern part of Koch Kingdom. Finally, the Ahoms defeated the Mughals and the Ahoms established their control over this area. But the Ahom could not consolidate their rule over this area because of the Meches (Bodos under the banner of the Raja of Bijni, the Raja of Sidli and the Raja of Darrang) had resented the Ahom rule and tried to assert independence with help of the Dharma Raja of Bhutan. In such circumstances, the Ahoms were compelled to enter into a compromise with them and accordingly ceded the Duars region to the Dharma Raja of Bhutan in exchange of some tribute. With that

the hope of independence of the Bodos over alien rule has died, so far it was the first collective effort of the Bodo Chiefs of the Duars region to ascertain independence over alien rule. Now they have put under the Dharma Raja of Bhutan. The Dharma Raja could realize the fact that at any time the Bodos could try to overthrow his rule from the Duars plains; he adopted a very diplomatic policy towards the chief of Bijni, Sidli and Darrang. Instead of over lordship towards those Rajas; Bhutan's attitude was that of friendly and equality. These were allowed to collect revenue freely without any influence from the Dharma Raja. The Rajas were assisted in revenue collection with some 'Subbhas' or 'Choudharies' who were mostly the Bodos and were directly appointed by the Dharma Raja himself. The policy of equality adopted by the Dharma Raja of Bhutan had proved to be fruitful in the long run.

With the occupant Assam in 1826 by the British, the Duars also came under the subjugation. The British tried to maintain the old arrangement but the Bhutias were alert in establishing the rights in the area; the amount of which they paid to the Ahoms was increased which the Bhutanese did not care to clear off. It is for non-payment of tribute and the Bhutia's atrocity on the plain people of Assam, the Duars occasionally arrested and finally in 1841, the Kamrup and Darrang Duars were annexed by the British, and they agreed to pay Bhutan authority a sum of 10,000 annually as compensation for the loss of revenue from Duars.

The company authority in their anxiety to exercise their political control over the Bhutanese and to promote their trade and popularize European goods officially organized annual trade fairs at a number of places at the border. In addition to the people on the both sides of the frontier, the Europeans, Marwaris, Chinese and Tibetans attended these fairs that were organized in the winter season. Although the official fairs were for three days, the actual trade usually continued from January to March. Along with the

trade fair, various cultural and sport events were held where the local people participated enthusiastically. It was in such a sports event, Thengphakri was noticed by the British because of her strength and skill in defeating the opponent. She was inducted by British in 1842 and then she was promoted to Tashldar in 1846 for collection of revenue in Birjhar Dihi.

Thengphakri was physically strong and a expert horse rider. She rode to various remote places of erstwhile Bijni estate to collect revenue for the British. She was contemporary to Rani Abhoyeswari of Bijni kingdom and both of had a cordial relationship. But at that time situation were changing rapidly in mainland India. A wave of anti-British feeling had spread all over India. It has touched nearby Bengal too. The British were introducing new taxation policies all over India for massive revenue collection in Assam too, they introduced new revenue policy. This new revenue policy was disastrous to both social & economic life of the people of Assam. Land revenue was increased. They extracted revenue by prohibiting community fishing and fire wood collection which were common in Assam. They have introduced ploughing taxes, grazing taxes but did nothing to improve the condition of farmers. This was resented very much by the people. Anti British wave spread out amongst the Maniram Dewan and Piyoli Phukan from Assam established a contact with sepoy Mutineers in Bengal and tried to establish the last Ahom Monarchy in Assam, but did not succeed.

Thengphakri through Rani Abhoyeswari of Bijni kindon came in contact with the aids of Maniram Dewan. By then she had already realized about the devastating effect of British rule and their ever increasing taxation policy. She protested against the new taxation policy, but was paid no attention. The plight of her own kin's & people made her rebellious.

At the same time whole country was witnessing spread of nationalism and resentment against the foreign rule. In some parts of India agitation had

started against the British. The Indian sepoys under British were resenting over non-payment of their overseas dues. The Mughal empire was declining. At this juncture, the Sepoys prepared mutiny against the British under the leadership of Rani Laxmibai and Bahadur Shah Zafar. In Assam Moniram Dewan came into contact with the Sepoys in Calcutta and tried to bring the mutiny in Assam. At the same time a war broke out between Bhutan & British over the control of the Duars region in 1864. Taking the chance, "Thengphakri and some of her loyals tried to over throw the foreign rule from Easter Duars. And finally after the death of her uncle Priyo Mushahary, she had decided not to work under the oppressive British anymore and rebelled against them. She fled to jungle with some of her fellow sepahis and arms & ammunition that was provided to them by the British. She declared war on the British and started guerrilla warfare. She became hero of the people and her followers increased day by day. She challenged the mighty British empire by her valour and courage. But finally her all followers were brutally killed or captured and Thengkari herself was killed by the British in 1865 at the foothills of Birjhar Hill.

Thengphakri's fascinating story of heroism and supreme sacrifice finds no mention in history or other documents. If it survives today, it is mainly in local legends, folklore and two novels written by Gyanopeeth awardee and famous Ramayani Scholar Dr.Mamoni Raisom Goswami's last novel '*Thengphakri Tehsildaror Tamor Torowal*' and and Sri Bidyasagar Narzary's Sahitya Academy award winning novel in Bodo language '*Birgwsbri ni Tungri*'. There are several papers written on Thengphakri by scholars on several times. Amongst them, the most prominent are Dr.Prasun Barman of Cotton University, in his paper-"Birangona Thengphakri'r Sondhanot' and Dr. Jiten das on his paper 'Thengphakri Tetiya Tehsildar Nasil' and so on.

Going through these scattered resources, we find the picture of a woman who made a pivotal contribution to the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny at the

forfeit, who fought bravely against the British in 1865 during the Anglo-Bhutan war and was killed by the British at Birjhora Hills

Why is history silent?

The name of Thengphakri has not found a mention in any historical chronicle. Oral traditions are in abundance revolving around Thengphakri, about her patriotic values and sacrifices among the Bodos. The answer to the questions of history's silence on Thengphakri lies on the following hypothesis: Thengphakri though she was a loyal servant of the British at the beginning, but after her uncle Priyo Musahary's death, she was infused with patriotism and went against the British. She fought against the British. So, in the good book of the British she was an offender and a traitor. As a result, the people became tight lipped about her. She did not find mention in the history of colonial India. On the contrary, popular legends started growing around among the Bodos about the heroism and supreme sacrifices of Thengphakri.

Conclusion: -

Thengphakri was a very strong and able local administrator and tax collector. Her patriotism and heroism have to be brought to light in true historical perspective. The story of Thengphakri's participation in the Indian freedom struggle is the story of bold choice against injustice meted out by the British. On the auspicious occasion of celebrating Azadi-Ki-Amrit-Mahatsoy, it would be most befitting gesture on our part to pay homage to this great daughters of mother India who fought and contributed enormously to the success of our freedom struggle and all other nation building activities.

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Tribal resistances against the British imperialism in Arunachal Pradesh

✍ Nepha Wangsa

As India celebrates the 75th Year of Independence, the Government of India has initiated an intensive campaign known as Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav which aims to commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.

While the Government of Arunachal Pradesh taking cognizance of the campaign; the State Legislative Assembly on 28th August 2021 resolved to constitute a State Level Committee under the Leadership of the Hon'ble Dy. Chief Minister, Shri Chowna Mein to expedite the search for tribal unsung warriors and to give due recognition on 15th August 2022. The State Core Committee was constituted with Shri Chowna Mein HDCM as the Chairman, and members consisting of Shri Taba Tedir, Minister Education, Tai Tagak, Adviser to HCM, Prof. Saket Kuchwaha, HVC RGU, Dani Sulu, Secretary to Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

The State government endorsed the Rajiv Gandhi University (Central) Doimukh as the Nodal Agency, which entrusted the Department of History to expedite the research work. The Department of History convened its 84th Departmental Council Meeting on 28th October 2021 at 11:30 AM and discussed the Unsung Heroes of Arunachal Pradesh (UHAP). Subsequently the Department prepared the project proposal and forwarded the same for Government approval. On 12 November 2021 after holding appropriate review meeting, four research sub-committees under eminent academicians and scholars were constituted with designated districts

of the State.

In tune to the objective of theme the identification of unsung heroes from across the country is one of the primary objectives of the celebration. Arunachal Pradesh, the easternmost State of the Country has such unsung heroes, who defied the British regime in the land; such heroes who need to be given due recognition. In the quest to trace the historical events of the State. There are several incidents which are not known to the world, the four Anglo-Abor wars, resistance taken up by the Akas, the Mishmes, the Nyishis, Singphos, etc. The Tai Khamti-British War of 1839 is one of the most important events which reckons unsung heroes of the 19th Century who resisted the British subjugation in their land. Perhaps, the Tai Khamti-British War of 1839 is the most popular incident of war reported against the British regime. The Tai Khamti-Anglo war is one of the most remarkable incident in the North-eastern State.

The Wancho-Anglo war of 1875 is another major incident in the State. Khunjing Wangham, the Chief of Ninu village. Who was the paramount Chief of the area, designated as Nibang regime during the time led the war to drive out the British expedition team to the Wancho area.

Tai Khamti-Anglo War of 1839. An unsung uprising of Northeast.

The Tai Khamtis, are one of the major tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Currently the Tai Khamti people resides in Namsai District of Arunachal Pradesh and some parts of Assam. They have a

notable history with their rich culture and tradition, who are organised under a well-structured ruled of the Chiefs. The KHAMTI first appeared as KHANTI in Pagan inscriptions in the 11th Century¹. The word Khamti means, a land full of gold (Kham = gold; Ti = place) as the kingdom of Mao-lung or Mao-pung was remarkably rich in minerals, and especially as gold was abundant in that region, the place was known as Khamti, and later the people inhabited in that region also came to be known as Khamtis. While second version states that a Tibetan had attacked Shan State situated in North Burma and the king Sam-lung-pha pushed back the Tibetan army and closed the Nai-Khoma pass of the Patkai ranges for ever and the Shans lived there peacefully for several centuries, therefore the country was known as (Kham=to adhere to or stike to Ti = a place or country). A third version depicts that the Khamti is a royal title of the subordinate rulers given by the sovereign of Mung-kang.²

The people smitten by the values of Buddhism and the vibrant traditions affiliated to the greater Tai Community have embarked on a distinctive journey in upholding its faith and shaping its identity in their venture. According to the oral tradition the Tai Khamti founded their kingdom at Khamti Long in Upper Irrawaddy³. In about 1751 A.D during the reign of Raja Rajeswur Sing of Assam, the Tai Khamtis were reported to have emigrated from the mountains to the valley in Assam and settled about fifteen families at the vicinity of Tengapani⁴. In the later part of the 18th century in about 1781⁵ another group of Tai Khamti people led by their Raja Chau Phara Taka

settled down at Tengapani. He was the pious man and the one who brought the statue of Lord Buddha from Burma, which still has great relevance till today for the believers.

The Tai Khamti people gradually expanded their supremacy to Assam. In 1794, the Tai Khamti Chief ousted the Ahom Governor of Sadiya or 'Sadiya Khowa Gohain' usurping his title and dignity reducing the Assamese ryots to a position of subservience if not of actual slavery⁶. The Tai Khamti Chief declared himself as the "Sadiya Khowa Gohain" which the Ahoms accepted, and the Sadiya Tract was taken under the control of the Tai Khamti. Then, the Tai Khamti Chief exercised his rule discriminatorily and began to kidnap Assamese, Miris and other inhabitants and kept them as slaves. This led to clashes between Tai Khamtis and reigning Ahom rulers in the region. They could not hold on to their recently acquired power and the usurpation had a major setback in 1799. In 1810, during the reign of Chunderkant Rajah, the Tai Khamtis regained their firm position in the land⁷. When the Tai Khamtis began their rule in Sadiya, people believed that their great Raja Chaupha Planglu, later popularly known as the Ronua Gohain (the Warrior) was born.

In 1818 a Burmese army of 30,000 men invaded Assam and under their governance, the Assamese at Sadiya were placed under the control of the Tai Khamtis. In 1824-25, when the British government conquered the province and extended its rule in the upper Assam; acknowledged the dominions of the Tai Khamtis at Sadiya. Captain

¹Sai Kam Mong, The history and development of the Shans scripts, Silkworm books 2004.p.8.

² L.Gogoi. The Tai Khamtis of North east India. Omsons publications, New Delhi. 1971 revised edition 1989 P.xxxiii.

³ Alexander Mackenzie. The North-East Frontier of India. Reprinted by Mittal Publications, Delhi. 1976. p. 57.

⁴ Sketch of Assam by an officer (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1847), P. 39-40.

⁵ Chow Chandra Mantche. History and culture of the Tai Khamtis, Aayu publications, New Delhi. P. 22

⁶ PR Gurdon: on the Khamtis, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. Vol. xxvii (1895)

⁷ Sketch of Assam by an officer (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1847), P. 42

Neufville sanctioned the innovation and bestowing on the Khamti Chief the title of Sadiya Khowa Gohain⁸ and recognized their Chief Chausalan and was permitted to collect Poll-tax of the Assamese people⁹. The records of the Tai Khamti indigenous chronology records 'Chaet-teeh' states that the Britishers had arrived at Sadiya with an amiable approach and after developing a cordial relation with them, they seek the Chief for a plot of land for temporary settlement of its forces. It is stated that they asked for land measuring the side of buffalo skin, which when granted was converted into a thread and occupied a large plot of land deceitfully. This incident became the first intense of doubt of the real intentions of the Britisher intrusion in the land. Since the early years of settlement, the Tai Khamti people witness the gradual imposition of their rule over their territory and subjugating attitude. This series of incidents made a young Tai Khamti Chief Chaupha Planglu and his sons, brothers to plot against the British rule. From an early age, he had begun to dream to establish an independent State¹⁰.

During this period, the people of Assam had begun to resist the Britishers, particularly in Sivasagar, Jorhat etc. The Khamti Chiefs including Chaupha Planglu had plotted to oust the Britishers from Sadiya. The strains of communication between Peali, an indigenous renowned leader of Assam invoking the help of the Khamti Chief Sadiya Khowa Gohain, is found as

“...if you wish for a Surgeedo and the restoration (to power) of the seven noble houses, you will not neglect to send along with the youngman (Haranath) the soldiers under your

orders. We also have taken measures. If you think that his is false, send your own man to inspect (our force)”¹¹.

In 1835, a new powerful Sadiya Khowa Gohain took over the reign after his father's death Chausalan. Captain Charlton, the Officer in Charge of Sadiya and Saikhowa Districts took measures to check the traffic of slaves and protect the Assamese population from the oppressive exactions of the Tai Khamtis. The policy adopted by the Britishers made them unhappy as the slaves were an important source of economy for the people. In December 1834, the British authority issued instructions to carry out a census of the population with the pretext of levying the tax, to be renewed every five years and in lieu of the military service. However, the government having apprehensions of adverse implications by such innovations did not implement the plan fully. A tax of one rupee per head was levied on the Assamese population in Sadiya while the Tai Khamti people were exempted. However, the Tai Khamtis were pressed upon to perform military service to the government. Despite the insubordinate treatment on the Tai Khamtis, Charlton went beyond by taking back the muskets given by Captain Neufville¹². Moreover, the Sadiya Khowa Gohain strongly defied the instructions of the British government, to resolve a dispute of land with the Muttock (Matak) Chief. He forcibly took possession of the disputed land 'Saikhowa' and showed his anguish over the Government. In retaliation, the British authorities decided to remove the power and function of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain. F. Jenkins, the Agent of the

⁸ Sketch of Assam by an officer (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1847), P.43.

⁹ Alexander Mackenzie. The North-East Frontier of India. Reprinted by Mittal Publications, Delhi. 1976. p. 57.

¹⁰ ChowphaNawing Chief of Momong Village, interview on Chaupha Planglu's life based on Tai Khamti script records, 'Cha te'. On 16/11/2021 at Momong Chief's residence.

¹¹ Political History Assam volume-1 1826-1919, published by Publication Board of Assam Guwahati-2 014 p.24

¹² Sketch of Assam by an officer (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1847), p.38

Governor's General in his letter to W.H Macnaghten, Esquire Secretary to Government of Bengal dated 26th January 1835 intimated about his authorization to Major Adam White to suspend the Sadiya Khowa Gohain from his appointment and to send him to Guwahati prison¹³ and brought Sadiya by forceful occupation under their administration¹⁴. However, the Britishers on learning about the growing anguish over the detention of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain finally decided to release him, but the insult inflicted by the Britishers, and public humiliation could not be compensated. The frequent killing of the buffaloes which were domesticated for paddy cultivation by the people with the reason of creating nuisances near the Cantonment area aggravated the situation¹⁵. Unaccustomed to the rule of the foreigners and the very presence of the officer-in-charge of Sadiya and his active interference in their affairs, particularly in cases of slaves and bondsmen, cause great dissatisfaction among the Khamtis.¹⁶

A valiant Chaupha Planglu was growing impatient over the suppressing nature of the Britishers and he along with the ex-sadiya Khowa Gohain plotted to avenge the insult inflicted upon the removal of the office of Sadiya Khowa Gohain. The Tai Khamti Chiefs of Sadiya Ronua Gohain alias ChauphaPlanglu and Towa (Tao) Gohain, and

Captain Gohain (Kaptan) consolidated its forces to ouster the British regime from their land. They began the plot to strike the foreigners at an appropriate time.

In April 1837, intelligence reports surfaced of a warlike situation and plans of the Tai Khamti to drive out every European from the land. Taking cognizance of the report the government then, strengthened its military establishments at Sadiya. The people witnessed reinforcement of Assam Light Infantry at Sadiya by bringing more army, arms (Khaja), other weapons, but the report faded without any concrete evidence and Tai Khamti choose not to attack because of the floating news¹⁷. Chaupha Planglu had been a skilled warrior and quick-witted strategist who carried his designs with the least suspicion and secrecy. To his advantage, the Tai Khamti spoke and wrote a language entirely unknown, to the Assamese population or the troops of the Britishers¹⁸.

In January 1839, Colonel Adam White had called the Tai Khamti Chief Chaupha Planglu and others to attend his durbar¹⁹. On receiving the invitation Chaupha Planglu saw this as an opportunity to strike the enemies. He along with Towa Gohain gathered his men and chocked out the plans for the attack. He summoned his messengers or 'Tengso'²⁰ to inform all the important leaders of his chieftdom to gather at his house. In

¹³ Fort William Political Proceedings, 13th March 1835 No.1 & 2.

¹⁴ L. Gogoi, *The Tai Khamtis of North East India*, Omsons publication, New Delhi 1971 (Mackenzie, A., *History of the Relations of government with the Hill Tribe of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884 reproduced as the *North East Frontier of Bengal* Mittal Publication.), p. 28

¹⁵ ChowphaNawing Chief of Momong Village, interview on Chaupha Planglu's life based on Tai Khamti script records, 'Cha te'. On 16/11/2021 at Momong Chief's residence.

¹⁶ H. K. Barpujari, *problem of the hill tribes north-east frontier 1822-42*, published by shri b. N. Dutta Barooah, b.l. 1970 Vol-I p. 79

¹⁷ Chowpha Nawing Chief of Momong Village, interview on Chaupha Planglu's life based on Tai Khamti script records, 'Cha te'. On 16/11/2021 at Momong Chief's residence.

¹⁸ FOREIGN 1839 DEPT. Political Consultation: 27 February No. 159 Letter to H.J PrinseptEsquire Secretary to the Government of India in the Political Dept. Fort William. (National Archive of India)

¹⁹ Fort William political proceedings 11th March 1839 No. 16. (copy of a letter from Captain Jenkins)

²⁰Tengso: Indigenous designation for a messenger of Tai Khamti people.

the meeting, it was decided that if the Britishers do not accept their demands they should attack their camp and drive them out of Sadiya. They also took vows that if they win, they should occupy Sadiya and rule over it. If not, it should be left for the Britishers²¹. The Tai Khamti warriors had no firearms or sophisticated machine guns but battle axes, knives and long, light spears, the points of the latter poisoned with aconite and of deadly effect²² for the war. They organised themselves into four groups and were given designated directions to march. They were imparted with the signals and sign languages for the attack and instructed to burn down every house on their way. Chaupha Planglu and Towa Gohain who had close relations with the missionaries asked his men to spare their lives, which was acknowledged in their mission's report later.

On the 27th of January, it was Sunday and the day of Colonel Adam White's Durbar; the strategies for the attack were finalised and the Tai Khamti warriors had strengthened their positions in the vicinity of Sadiya. However, an unprecedented situation cropped up in the campsite; as in the afternoon Mr Brown, a missionary on his way to the neighbouring villages for preaching was nearing towards their hideout. The Chiefs cautiously sent his men to dissuade him from going further, but he did not listen and went ahead. The Tai Khamti men got on their guards to capture him if he came nearer to learn about their plans but to their great relief, Mr Brown returned after much persuasion²³ and the Tai Khamti men sighed out. On the 27th evening

the Khamtis had the Raja of Mooluck tribe and one Chowking²⁴ were sacrificed for the success of the War executed for his refusal to join them in the war²⁵. - Ronua Gohain, the Chief of the Tai Khamtis ordered his men to prepare for the intending war and assemble at the vicinity of Sadiya. The Tai Khamti villages of Dirack, Monglong and Sadiya were intimidated of the strategy of the war against the foreigners. They moved up to Bojool road and then encamped in the paddy fields. They gradually dispersed to into parties and surrounded the Cantonment²⁶.

On the 28th January of 1839, at about 2:00- 3:00 AM the Tai Khamti warriors were ready to strike and execute their much-contemplated plan to out throw the Britishers from Sadiya. The Tai Khamtis had called on other inhabitants of the district of Sadiya to join in the war.

“.....numbering about 600 hundred in number armed with daos, spears and muskets commanded their assaults from all sides, seized the magazine, set fire the sepoy lines, killing everyone on the way men, women, and children. Major White while he was hastening from his bungalow to the military lines was cut to pieces. Amongst others killed was the Subedar Major of the Gorkha Regiment²⁷.”

The Tai Khamti warriors marched into four directions, one advanced upon the magazine guard, which was placed over the side of the stockade. They killed the bugler wounded several sepoy, while the sentry was killed at the gateway of the

²¹Chowpha Nawing Chief of Momong Village, interview on Chaupha Planglu's life based on Tai Khamti script records, 'Cha te'. On 16/11/2021 at Momong Chief's residence.

²² Elizabeth W. Brown, *The Whole World kin: a pioneer experience among remote tribes, and other labor of Nathan Brown*, Alpha Editions, 2020. p.178.

²³ Ibid. p. 180

²⁴ Foreign 1839, Political Dept. Consultation 12 June No. 75.

²⁵ Foreign 1839, Political Dept. Consultation 10 July No. 61 (National archive of India, New Delhi)

²⁶ Political Proceedings (Foreign Dept. Political) 12th June 1839 No. 75.

²⁷ H. K. Barpujari, *problem of the hill tribes north-east frontier 1822-42*, published by shri b. N. Dutta Barooah, b.l. 1970 Vol-I p. 150.

Stockade. Witnessing the attack, the sentry at the Magazine inside the stockade of which they took procession and kept up a fire upon the Tai Khamtis from the Magazine guard. The second group targeted the Bungalow, of the 2nd in Command close on the left of the lines attacked the left company lines setting them on fire then, they rushed to the front evidently to secure the Bells of arms while third group attacked the rear guard, cutting down the sentry and wounded three other sepoys. They passed off the centre of the lines to the Bells of Arms burning the houses and cutting down everyone that came in their way²⁸.

Nearly the whole village and cantonments were in flames Capt. and Mrs Hannay, Lieut. Marshall, and the apothecary Mr Pingault and wife, were roused from their beds by the Tai Khamti war-cry and on coming out found themselves surrounded. They however all succeeded in reaching the stockade safely. There they found already in the hands of the Tai Khamtis, but with the assistance of the sepoys, the officers succeeded to gained possession of the magazine. The warriors fought every standing man and let the flames destroy every building, with clothing and all the possessions of English officers²⁹. Chaupha Phanglu as he met Colonel Adam White, with a loud war cry cut him down while his men attack with their spears. He was down death and with wounds by spears in nine different places besides four by dha (dao) and was found dead by the Sergeant Major of the Regiment who came up a few minutes after the melancholy event³⁰. The Tai Khamti men killed and wounded about 80 British subjects while they lost 21 men.

Miles Bronson, a British missionary recorded:

“..... had attacked Sadiya on Sunday night, had killed our esteemed friend Col. White and completely destroyed the place.....and the Ronua Gohain Chief of the Khamptis, the burning of all the houses at Sadiya, except the Stockade in which was the magazine...this they also held for a time; but in the very time when the Ronua Gohain was beating his gong and drinking his wine in token of victory...”³¹.

Captain Hanney immediately ordered a complete company under Lieutenant Marshall to proceed against the villages of Sadiya distance about 2 & ½ miles and the residence of one of the Chiefs, concerned in the attack; he also sought help from Muttock Raja Madjoo Gohain, requesting the assistance of 500 men and any other assistance he could give the Station. The BorGohain, the eldest son of Late Senaputtee, arrived there with a few men and 5 elephants to march against the Tai Khamti Warriors. Captain Hanney considering the atrocious conduct, announced a reward of 1000 Rupees for the apprehension of the Tao Gohain, 500 for his eldest son, and 500 for the Captain Gohain³².

The Assam Light Infantry under Lieutenant Marshall followed down the Khamti warriors led by Chaupha Planglu. He had escaped from their captive carrying his injured brother-in-law, in a daring act he jumped from a high wall into the drains and had injured himself. A group of fishermen known as Doom who was former slaves revealed about his hideout. He was then found near

²⁸ Federal A Foreign 1839 Dept. Political Consultation 27 Feb. No. 162 No 22, Captain Hanney letter to Captain F. Jenkins, 30th January 1839. (National archive of India, New Delhi)

²⁹ Elizabeth W. Brown, *The Whole World kin: a pioneer experience among remote tribes, and other labor of Nathan Brown*, Alpha Editions, 2020. p.178.

³⁰ FEDERAL A FOREIGN 1839 DEPT. POLITICAL Consultation 27 February No: 160 Sudiya 30th January 1839. (National Archive of India, New Delhi)

³¹ American Baptist Mission, Sadiya. Miles Bronson records. Reel No. 57, 3244. (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi)

³² Federal A Foreign 1839 Dept. Political Consultation 27 Feb. No. 162 No 22, Captain Hanney letter to Captain F. Jenkins, 30th January 1839. (National archive of India, New Delhi)

a riverside; he could not move any further with his dislocate hips. He then sat under a tree for prayers in a lotus position and untie his hair. He affirmed himself to die honourably rather than to be captured in the hand of the enemies. As they believed he had the protection of a divine grace ‘Talisman or Aka Lakpoi’³³ given by his mother, that would protect him from death. So, he removed the talisman and threw it in the river and waited for his enemies. As the Britisher Army called out to surrender, he was seated harmoniously until one of them came near to him, in an act of skilful and valorous swordsman slung his swords and killed the sepoy. In retaliation, the army fired at him, and he died instantly³⁴ and made his supreme sacrifice on the bank of River Kundil. As they saw their Chief being attacked, the Tai Khamti warriors fought back the British Army but were overpowered with their superior sophisticated weapons. Captain Hannay Commanding of Assam Light Infantry in his report to Major Hamfrags, Major of Brigade Sylhet on 29th January 1839 stated,

“... succeeded in killing the Runnouwah Gohain who with his brother the said Gohain were the principal Chiefs concerned I have also ascertained that number of the enemy have been wounded the killed arguably to the number of bodies found up to his days date is 24”³⁵.

The British sepoys beheaded the Tai Khamti warriors and brought the heads laid them in a row. A missionary Eliza Brown described that the sight had haunted her imagination for a long time, and

she recognised Ronua Gohain whom she exclaimed as ‘venerable Chief’ of the Tai Khamtis and who have been friendly to them³⁶.

In the punitive expedition, the British Army managed to capture Towa Gohain but he escaped and started to reinforce his men to march against the enemies. After the death of Chaupha Planglu, Towa (Toa) Gohain assumed the title of the Chieftainship of the Tai Khamtis³⁷. For over the next five years the Tai Khamti men fought against the successive punitive expeditions in the land and the British government came up with the wicked design to disintegrate the Tai Khamtis population and despatched them to different parts of Assam at Dibrugarh, Demaji, Lakhimpur, Chanpura, Narayanpur etc. which is significant population till today³⁸.

The new Chief of the Tai Khamtis Towa Gohain reportedly made his supreme sacrifice fighting the British forces in 1843.³⁹. The Tai Khamti people continue to celebrate and honour the supreme sacrifice of their great Chief Chaupha Planglu. As India celebrates Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, this is best opportunity to remember and honour such unsung heroes of the indigenous people. The Tai Khamti-Anglo War of 1839 has great significance for the State of Arunachal Pradesh, perhaps it’s the first incident of war reported against the British regime in the land. Subsequently, in the later years, there are reports of a series of confrontations with the British regime by different indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

³³ Aka Lakpoi, a material based on an indigenous practice and belief for protection given by a wife to a husband when he goes for wars.

³⁴Chowpha Nawing Chief of Momong Village, interview on Chaupha Planglu’s life based on Tai Khamti script records, ‘Cha te’. On 16/11/2021 at Momong Chief’s residence.

³⁵ Foreign 1839 Dept. Political Dated the 19 June No. 66, From captain Hannay Commanding Assam Light Infantry to Major Hamfrags Major of Brigade Sylhet Suddeah 29th Janaury 1839. (NAI, New Delhi)

³⁶ Elizabeth W. Brown, *The Whole World kin: a pioneer experience among remote tribes, and other labor of Nathan Brown*, Alpha Editions, 2020. p.177.

³⁷ Foreign 1839 Dept. Political consultation 12 Jun No. 84. National archive of India, New Delhi

³⁸ Foreign Political 20 January 1844 no. 61-66.

³⁹ Sketch of Assam by an officer (London, Smith, Elder & Co, 1847), P. 56.

Ninu: The Wancho-Anglo war of 1875 (A tale of the unsung Wancho warriors)

✍ Nepha Wangsa

It was January 1875; a British expedition team under the command of Lieutenant Holcombe, the then Assistant Commissioner of Sibsagar District, and Captain W.F. Badgley had been commissioned by the British Local Government to lead an expedition to the Patkai Ranges¹.

By the last part of January, after a week's long journey tracking through the land of the Wanchos, they reached Senua village. The expedition team before continuing their journey further halted for five days at the village². As the Lieutenant planned to proceed towards the Hills; Sombang Wangham, the Chief of Senua cautioned Lieutenant Holcombe of an intelligence report of the preparation of war and a probable attack by the Nibang³ men. However, the lieutenant disregarded the news and instead asked to provide him some men as guides⁴. The next

day, the 1st of February 1875, a sunny Monday, the expedition team encamped at *Sumjanuk*⁵. Everyone seemed exhausted by the journey, they had been marching for hours through the foothills, and crossing the river downstream have been very difficult and tiring. The team looked shabby and unkempt; all wet with sweat and worn out⁶.

As the team settled down, the villagers watched every step of the foreigners, the uniformed men, who had their rifles slung across their shoulders appeared odd and peculiar. The team had entered the remotest and the least accessible Wancho village when they were strife-torn with internecine feuds⁷ and the practice of headhunting was prevalent in the area. John Butler had reported that "I have deemed it right to record this here, as I believe that it has been said that '.....tribes are

¹ Colonel II. L. Thuillier, C.S.I, F.R.S & c, Surveyor-General of India. General report on the Topographical survey of India and of the Surveyor General's Department for season 1874-75. Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta. 1876. p. 51.

² Foreign Dept. Political December 1875 Con. 91-99 (No 91.- No. 2345, dated Shillong, 7 July 1875 Letter from H.luttman Johnson Esq. Secy. To Chief Commissioner of Assam to C.U Aitchson Esq. C.S.I Secy. Of India Foreign Dept.)

³ Nibang: villages or people associated with Ninu village and who paid tribute to the Chief of Ninu were known as Nibang.

⁴ Foreign Dept. Political Branch. Consultation no. 91-99, Naga expedition December 1875. (No. 92. No. 42 dated Samaguting, 30th April 1875, From Captain John Butler, PA, Naga Hills to H.Luttman Esq. Secretary to the Commissioner of Assam,) Appendix B. (National Archive of India, New Delhi)

⁵ Sumjanuk: was an abandoned agricultural Jhum land of Ninu village.

⁶ Interview with Longwang Wangham, Chief of Ninu village and other elders at Nginu village in 2017.

⁷ L.R.N Srivastava, Among the Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh, published and reprinted by Research Department Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar January 2010. P. 100.

inner Nagas, who have no communication with the plains' and..."⁸.

Across the region, anguish over the illegitimate entry was reported. An opinion by the villages endorsed Nibang as the sole regime who had the capability to drive out the foreigners, while the rival villages mocked Ninu for not restraining the entry. Weeks before the arrival of expedition team reports of their entry was circulated by the Borduria Chief.⁹ Similar information were also received from lower Wanchos area such as Runu and Chanu. The Wanchos of Ninu, never anticipated the intrusion by such a huge number of men from a foreign land, so they opted to wait and watch for the moment¹⁰. Khunjing Wangham was the elder son of Tumbang Wangham, who was the paramount Chief of the area, designated as Nibang regime during the time. Many villages paid allegiance to him. On receiving the detailed information he ordered for the preparation to oppose the intrusion in their territory.

On the day of their arrival, Captain Badgley was busy with his work on the road and reached the campsite hours later¹¹. When the Captain had arrived, Lieutenant Holcombe walked up to the village accompanied by some of his men. They paraded through the village and witnessed a typical countryside village completely far removed from the West and the lack of technology. They walked by the pattern thatched houses with dozens of animal skulls decorating the entrance, long-narrow grinding logs, and loads of rice husks around. There were distinctively a few large halls with very huge Log drums, which were social and cultural centres

or the bachelor's barrack (*Paa, morung*)¹². The foul-smelling smoke from the platforms in the graveyard, a kind Lieutenant R. G. Woodthorpe who visited Ninu in March 1875 described about a grave in a Naga village drew the attention of the Britishers.

"The dead was wrapped in mats and placed on platforms under small roofs, which are decorated with cloths and streamers, and have at each end a tall figure of wood dressed, painted, and tattooed after the manner of the men of the village, and carrying imitation spears and daos; gourds, basket, etc., being suspended above. At some villages the tombs are enclosed in small sheds with doors and are regular family vaults. These tombs are all just outside the villages. Cairns of stones are also erected, where the heads of departed villagers decorated with shells, beads, and bells are collected, earthen jar filled with the smaller bones being arranged beside the skulls. Each head is decorated so as to preserve its individuality"¹³.

While they were at the grave, one of the sepoy hit the corpse with his baton and sarcastically murmured pointing towards the replica of the late Prince. The spectators could not believe their eyes and were horrified by the scornful attitude. They looked boastful and annoying. The action of the sepoy was an intolerable offense; it was a taboo to touch a corpse and an unimaginable act, not fitting even to equalize with the highest code of punishment of the land. It was sacrosanct; even

⁸ Foreign Dept. Political Branch. Consultation no. 91-99, Naga expedition December 1875. (No. 92. No. 42 dated Samaguting, 30th April 1875, From Captain John Butler, PA, Naga Hills to H.LuttmanEsq. Secretary to the Commissioner of Assam,) Appendix B. (National Archive of India, New Delhi)

⁹ Foreign Dept. Political Branch. Consultation no. 91-99, Naga expedition December 1875.

¹⁰ Interviewed with NgotaPansa, elderly man in his nineties of Ngissa village in February 2022.

¹¹ Colonel H. L. Thuillier, C.S.I, F.R.S & c, Surveyor-General of India. General report on the Topographical survey of India and of the Surveyor General's Department for season 1874-75. Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta. 1876. p. 51.

¹² Interview with LongwangWangham, of Ninu village and other elders at Nginu village in 2017.

¹³ The Anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The Journal of the Anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Vol. XI London. Truber & Co. & 59 Ludgate Hill. 1882 P. 203.

the most notorious criminal would not dare to commit such a crime. The sepoy by his act had sealed his own and the fate of his party with the most dreaded consequence to encounter¹⁴.

The villagers watched the party silently but were grief-stricken. The whole village scraped up with emotions and ran to the Chief for his orders; for no one could ever imagine such audacity in the land. The villagers assembled with the rhythm of the log drums which signalled a state of war in the country. The signal echoed for alertness in other associate villages of Nisa, Longkai, Kaimoi, Kamhua, etc. with runners reaching out the information¹⁵.

The Chief's brother *Wangchin Wangsapa*¹⁶, the most important person in the Chief's Council; holding crucial roles in the governance, ordered for an assembly of all subordinate Chiefs, elders, and men at the Courtyard. The gathering was seething with anger and looked ferocious, ready to strike the offenders. The Shaman suggested that the outsiders who intruded into their soil had given sufficient reasons to be punished according to the codification of the customary law¹⁷. The Chief's younger brothers Kiwang Wangham, Kapchai Wangsa and Wangpho Wangsa had greater role to assist in the organising the warriors for the intending war. Lowang Wangham, the Chief of Nisa along with his brothers were also called into discussed the next day's venture.

The *Wangsapa* deliberated the details for the war, he would be the first to flash his *dao* (sharp machete)

to attack and all should wait for the sign of blood slash in his machete; then everyone should draw their *daos* together and attack upon the trespassers. By the twilight, the modalities of the attack were finalised. The young and the old discussed that the next day's venture could be a lifetime opportunity to bring home trophies and to be tattooed; to accord social recognition as a warrior (*Nowmai*). Thus, they spent their sleepless night sharpening their *daos* and spears for the war. The women, children, and the old were shifted to a safer place¹⁸.

On 2nd February 1875, by the dawn, the valley seemed calm and the green mountains stood still; fresh cold wind and the crispy air whistled captivating the morning. It was around 6:00 am, Khunjing and his brother Wangchin led the Wanchos warriors to the camp. The sepoys at the Sentry Post suddenly saw an army of men approaching, who then alerted the platoon. The Wanchos appeared in the camp; the interpreter informed Lieutenant Holcombe that the Chief along with others have come. The Wanchos were halted at the Sentry Post and the British army took their position behind the Lieutenant. This scene of the standing armies on their respective sides depicted a sharp contrast of two different worlds.

Captain Badgley in his accounts described, "*Sitting in my tent I heard one of the headmen say to Lieutenant Holcombe: 'the Raja (village headman) is there but is afraid of the gun'*"¹⁹. Lieutenant Holcombe took a rifle and gave it to the Chief, who then, placing the gun on his left and flashing *dao* on his right hand

¹⁴ L.R.N Srivastava, *Among the Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh*, published and reprinted by Research Department Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar January 2010. P. 102.

¹⁵ Interview with LongwangWangham, Chief of Ninu village and other elders at Nginu village in 2017

¹⁶ Wangchin Wangsa: was the Brother of the chief of Ninu who led the wanchos is described by British reports 'Vanting, the Vansa (Second chief) of Nibang.

¹⁷ Interview with LongwangWangham, Chief of Ninu village and other elders at Nginu village in 2017.

¹⁸ *ibid*.

¹⁹ Colonel II. L. Thuillier, C.S.I, F.R.S & c, Surveyor-General of India. General report on the Topographical survey of India and of the Surveyor General's Department 1874-75. Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta. 1876. p. 51-53.

sang the song of the wars and bravery of men. He incited his fellowmen to attack. One of the men handed a gong to the lieutenant, which he tried to blow. Then, the Wanchos threw off their shawls, under which each had a machete. Lieutenant Holcombe was taken by surprise and when he turned to draw the sentry's bayonet, Wangchin the *Wangsapa* struck him with a blow on the side of his head. The Wanchos were all in position flashing their *daos*.

Within seconds, war cries were heard all around, the high-pitched voices reverberating back and forth in the hills; the camp was surrounded by the Wanchos, who then came out like a swarm of bees and attacked the camp in frenzy.

The Sydney Morning Herald dated April 12, 1875, page 5 (from the Calcutta, Englishman, February 20) reported that

“Nagas were all about the camp, on the pretext of selling fowls, potatoes, & other eatables. to the men. Suddenly one of the Nagas gave a shout, bill hooks were out, and each small group of Nagas struck at the heads of the men nearest to them and Lieutenant Holcombe was the first to receive his death-wound, a blow from a bill-hook and he fell to the ground”.

Captain Badgley was in his tent when four men rushed in and attacked him; though wounded, he retaliated firing his revolver and escaped.

Captain Badgley describes,

“I sprang up to draw my pistol hanging to the back of the pole, as several of them rushed in. Firing into them, I made my way out behind (my tent providentially being

made to open at both ends), was followed by two of them, whose blows I avoided as well as I could, firing meanwhile, when at the moment I fired the fourth shot I tripped over a stump and fell. When I got on my feet again the men had disappeared, and a wail was rising from the camp instead of the cries and shouts of a moment before. Running to where Lieutenant Holcombe lay, I found him with two cross cuts on the right side of the head exposing the brain, the sentry near him with his head hanging by a strip of skin...”²⁰.

The camp was then completely vanquished with headless mutilated bodies scattered with blood stains. Captain Badgley encouraged his team to search for the wounded, rice, arms, and ammunitions as he led them to the opposite side. The Wanchos continued to venture down the hills, the White men seemed handful and all nearly wounded. Senua and Niaunu were reported to have cut down some of the fugitive on the bank of the river but the heads of the enemies were carried to Ninu. Wanchos warriors of Kaimoi, Longkai, Kamhua Noknu & Noksa were said to have participated in the war along with the Chief of Ninu.

Dr. H. K. McKay, the officiating Surgeon in of the 44th Sylhet Light Infantry treated the wounded. In his letter to the Editor of the “INDIAN MEDICAL GAZETTE” dated 1st March 1875, he wrote about the graveness of the attack, the nature of the wounds received, and the attack of the Wanchos that had befallen upon the team. On 7th of February, the Surgeon reported that of the 197 men, 80 were killed, 51 wounded and 66 unharmed²¹. Lord George Hamilton²², the then

²⁰ Colonel H. L. Thuillier, C.S.I, F.R.S & c, Surveyor-General of India. General report on the Topographical survey of India and of the Surveyor General's Department 1874-75. Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta. 1876. p. 51-53.

²¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/?term=the+massacre+in+the+naga+hills> US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, The Massacre in the Naga Hills, H. K. McKay. Ind Med Gaz. 1875 Mar 1; 10(3): 81–82. PMID: PMC5170914.

²² <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/.../assam-murder-of-lieutenant-holcombe>. UK Parliament. Official report of Debates in the UK Parliament. Assam –murder of Lieutenant Holcombe – Question. 27th April 1875.

Under Secretary of State for India confirmed the news of the attack at Ninu and informed of a successful punitive expedition in the UK Parliament proceedings on 27th April 1875. His official statement was published by the "The Times"²³ news daily in London on 28th April 1875.

The Wanchos after a successful venture rushed to their villages and hammered the log drums with the beats of victory. There were rejoicing for a victorious return. The Raja announced a banquet for the people. The Priest (*gampa*) got busy with the rites. There were cheers all around; while the men danced and sang the songs of victory, the womenfolk prepared indigenous beverages for them. Meanwhile, the elders treated the wounded and prepared graves for their men who died in the war. Amidst the feasting, an elderly man observed, "*the White men are treacherous by their skills and seem that they have some roots; they may return*". A week later, the villagers were directed to organize themselves into the existing clans and construct rehabilitation huts beyond the mountains²⁴.

The killing of 80 British subjects gave a big blow to the mighty British Government. Major W.S Clarke, then Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur wrote about the incident to the Chief Commissioner's office who then decided to send a strong army within a month to avenge the attack. In a letter dated 24th February 1875, J.J Driberg²⁵, Personal Assistant to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, issued an instruction to send a large

contingent of 500 strong Army to the Wancho villages.

The punitive expedition team was sent under the command of Brigadier Nuttall along with Captain Butler which were to be conducted under the directions of Colonel Keatings, Chief Commissioner and Brigadier Stafford as instructed by Government of India²⁶. The expedition which was organised to punish the Nibang were to leave Dibrugarh by 27th February enroute for Jyepoor. The team comprised of 400 troops from 42nd Assam Light Infantry, 44th Sylhet Light Infantry, The Lakhimpur, and 50 men of Naga Hills Frontier Police with 500 coolies²⁷.

When the team reached Senua it was occupied without much confrontation. The Raja of Senua admitted that about five men from the village were involved in the Ninu incident; they had brought back four guns but no heads²⁸. The three guns taken by the Senua men were also surrendered.

On the 18th March when they managed to cross the river and Ninu was about 3 hours march from the bank. The Wanchos were ready for the next venture; armed with their bow and arrows. The Chief of Ninu had called upon all the associate villages to join the war. Lieutenant R. G Woodthorpe described in his accounts as,

"As we marched along under a burning sun, we saw large numbers of Nagas, in full war-dress, coming down through the fields

²³ <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/33105218/>. "The Times" (London, Greater London, England) 28th April 1875 p. 8.

²⁴ Interview with Longwang Wangham, Chief of Ninu village and other elders at Nginu village in 2017.

²⁵ shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2478/7/07_chapter%203. Colonial period Chapter 3. p. 89, 90.

²⁶ Foreign Department, Political A, Govt. of India, March 1875, Nos. 480-498. Measures for punishment of Naga villages concerned in the attack of Lieut. Holcombe and his party. Rf. No. 491. p.7.

²⁷ Ibid. no. 495 p. 9, 10.

²⁸ Foreign Dept. Political Branch. Consultation no. 91-99, Naga expedition December 1875. (No. 92. No. 42 dated Samaguting, 30th April 1875, From Captain John Butler, PA, Naga Hills to H.Luttman Esq. Secretary to the Commissioner of Assam,) Appendix B. (National Archive of India, New Delhi)

on our left, from Longkai. We turned a corner, and found ourselves only half a mile from Ninu, which the long grass had hither to hidden from our sight. As we continued on our way, a column of smoke rose slowly from some houses in front of us; at first we thought that the enemy intended burning their own village, and not making any stand, but seeing that these houses were a few detached from the main village, which would have afforded shelter to our skirmishers covering the attacking party, on the very strong stockade which surrounded the village itself, we gave them credit for their military skill, and hoped they intended to make a good defence, which hope was strengthened by their calling out “come on; we are quite ready for you” and at once opening fire on us. We had caught glimpses of the 42nd approaching up the other spur; they arrived almost as soon as we did, and were received on their side by a body of Nagas stationed outside the stockade with a volley. When we, on our side, were close up to the stockade the firing ceased, and again an ominous cloud of smoke, followed at once by flames rose again, this time within the stockade, which the Nagas had now abandoned. Had they stood up a little more boldly and fire more carefully, we must have suffered severely, as our advance was necessarily made over open ground, up very steep approaches, very thickly planted with “panjees”. We clambered over the stockade without delay, but the Nagas were quicker, and

before half-a-dozen of us were over, the greater portion of the village was in flames, the Nagas dispersing in every direction. After the fierce heat of the sun, the change to the fiercer heat of the burning houses closely built was not a pleasant one, and we ran through the village as rapidly as possible, our pace being accelerated every now and then as some large house subsided suddenly, threatening to involve us in its fall, and covering us with a shower of fire brands while the hot, pungent smoke blinded us. At last we were once more clear of the village, and could see the Nagas rapidly retreating along all the slopes in the direction of Nisa, a village four miles distant from Ninu”²⁹.

After overcoming the confrontation, the British Army split themselves in groups to attack other associate villages. Colonel Nuttall sent a telegram of a successful expedition from Ninu to the Quartermaster-General, Simla dated 27th March 1875 citing of successful expedition and villages of Ninu, Nisa, Upper and Lower Kamhua, Longkai and Kaimoi were burnt down³⁰.

The team then marched back and reached Dibrugarh on the 11th of April. Indeed, before the year was out another expedition had to be sent to destroy Ninu, which had been rebuilt, yet again.

The military expedition against Ninu was almost constant in the country. Five men of Senua Nokdon, Chunle, Mikbong, Janphua and Janchoi whom Lieutenant Holcombe had taken as guide, Choakat of Kamhua were arrested, Sombang Wangham and Kali were kept as hostage³¹. The photograph

²⁹ Colonel II. L. Thuillier, C.S.I, F.R.S & c, Surveyor-General of India. General report on the Topographical survey of India and of the Surveyor General’s Department 1874-75. Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta. 1876. p. 61.

³⁰ Abhilekh-patal.in 18 Foreign Department, Political A, Govt. of India, Progs October 1875, Nos. 233-258. Reports of the proceedings of the Naga Hills expedition. No. 247. p.6.

³¹ Foreign Dept. Political Branch. Consultation no. 91-99, Naga expedition December 1875.

captured by Oscar Jean Baptiste Mallitte³² of the four men in the prison in 1875 is one of the rare evidence that speaks volumes about the struggle of the Wanchos in their fight against the Britishers and their desperate attempt to subjugate the community.

On 15th April 1876, another operation team led by Lieutenant R. G. Woodthorpe was sent to Ninu. The expedition team comprised of 42nd Assam Light Infantry, 2 Native Officers, 3 Havildars, 55 Sepoys, 1 Bugler, 1 Inspector, 1 Head-Constable, and 15 Constables³³.

The punitive expedition team held many of the women folk of the villages hostage during the entire campaign as to ascertain the reasons the attack and for the surrender of their men. The women folk had to face untold misery and hardship while they were chased down by the expedition team.

Meanwhile, a man accused in the War had taken refuge at Ninu. The Britishers demanded his surrender but the Raja of Ninu had outrightly rejected their demand; as Lieutenant R. G. Woodthorpe³⁴ reported the Raja say: *“If I give you up, on that day with the sun let my glory set; and when the moon sets may my glory set, and my name as Raja be forgotten on the face of the earth.”* The brave Wanchos never gave up in their engagement against the Foreigners. It is eminent the fact that the Britishers had visited the Wancho area since 1841 and faced violent retaliation. There were a series of violence

reported in 1844, 1851, 1853, and 1869. The treacherous incident of the war of 1875 convinced the Britishers that the policy of active control in the region was defective and pernicious; they avoided frequent visits to prevent unnecessary feuds, Thus, the Wanchos were successful in defending their territory.

Nevertheless, the series of war incidents made an abiding impression on them, and even after the Indian government took over the administration, they took time to accept the initiatives. The Wanchos who were smitten by the traditional vows of their community fought against the Britishers to protect their territory and to avenge the insult inflicted upon their culture. This institution of the Chieftainship continues to guide the social life of the Wanchos.

The valour of the Wancho warriors who made it into the contemporary Indian history of that time appears to have been forgotten forever. Moreover, with the passage of time and the demise of the older village folks; the oral history and folklore attached to the war is slowly fading away from the domain of public memory. Hence, this article is an honest attempt to bring out the historic event and pay tribute to the unsung souls who laid down their lives for their society.

(The author of this article is the Member Secy. Sub-Committee on Unsung Heroes of Arunachal Pradesh and can be reached at nephawangsa@gmail.com)



³² Michael Aram Tarr&Staurt Blackburn, Tribal Cultures in the Eastern Himalayas. Through the Eye of Time, Photographs of Arunachal Pradesh 1859-2006. 2008. P. 104 fig. 85.

³³ Foreign Dept. Political-A consultation no. January 1877. 146/51 P.18.

³⁴ Himalaya.sacanth.cam.ac.uk/collection/naga/records. Report of the survey operation in the Naga Hills 1875-1876 by Lt. R. G Woodthorpe. (and also printed at the Assam Secretariat Press 1876: Shillong)

U Kiang Nangbah The Freedom Fighter of Jayantia Hills of Meghalaya

✍ Dr. Alok Singh

India is a country where many freedom fighters were born. All of them fought for freedom of our motherland from the British colonial regime. We can say that today we are free from the shackles of subjugation of the foreign rulers because of the sacrifices of these freedom fighters. Some of these freedom fighters chose the path of non-violence and some of them opted for revolutionary path in words and deeds. All these freedom fighters wanted to throw out the foreign rulers from India. The freedom fighters sacrificed their everything for the independence of India. The History has witnessed our struggle and sacrifices for the freedom of our motherland. India got freedom due to the collective struggle by all Indians but unfortunately there is very little mention of the sacrifices made by our tribal heroes from North East who were no less in any respect from other parts of our country. In our history of freedom struggle very few names from north eastern region finds mention. Today when we talk about the independence movement of India, it is felt that it is very necessary to remember those freedom fighters of North-East, whom the History has not given place in its pages. If we talk about the participation in the struggle for the freedom of India, we always remember the unforgettable leadership and participation of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Maharani Lakshmi Bai etc, but there were also some such freedom fighters from north east who actively participated in the freedom movement. Our main purpose is to introduce the heroism of these unsung heroes by drawing attention of the people of India

and the importance of these freedom fighters of North-East, specially the freedom fighters of Meghalaya, because these freedom fighters had an important role in motivating the common people to rise against the colonizers of our motherland. If we open the pages of history, the revolution of 1857 is called the first freedom movement of India, but in the states of North-East, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Sikkim, there were movements for safeguarding the sovereignty of our motherland before this first freedom movement. Very few Historians admit that the freedom fighters of North East too had important roles in the national freedom movement. The freedom fighters from eight states of the North-East who played important role in the full armed struggles against the British were- Maniram Dewan, Hem Baruah, Dineshwar Sarma, Tankeshwar Sarma, Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Birangana Kanaklata Baruah, Gopinath Bordoloi etc from Assam, U Tirot Singh, U Kiang Nangbah, Pa Togan Sangma etc from Meghalaya, Rani Gaidinliu, Jadonang from Nagaland, Surveer, Pasaltha, Mizo Queen Ropuliani etc from Mizoram, Veer Tickendrajit Singh, Veer Janaral Thongam, Paona Brajabashi, Jananeta Irawat etc from Manipur. Here I am telling about the importance and participation of an important revolutionist of Meghalaya, U Kiang Nangbah, who led revolution against the British armies and struggled for the rights of his people. When Khasi Jayantia were independent states, then U Kiang Nangbah protested against the British. This was the time when in the eighteenth century, the British did not

rule the hills of Meghalaya. There Khasi and Jaintia tribes lived independently. 30 small villages of Bangladesh and Silchar were in this area. Amongst the villages, one was Jayantiapur. When the British attacked Jayantiapur they forced the Jayantiapur people into the hills and plains. With this, they also started the conversion of the local people. The rulers of the states were forced to tolerate this due to the brute force of the British, but the common people did not agree with this. They chose U Kiang Nangbah instead of the king as their leader. U Kiang Nangbah formed an army of the daring tribals and came to Jowai Kshetra with the army, fought with the British and defeated them. But the British were more powerful. In 1860, they imposed tax of two rupees on the whole area. Jaintia society protested against this and under the leadership of U Kiang Nangbah, the people of that area fought against this proclamation of the British. U Kiang Nangbah was not only a freedom fighter but also a flautist. He used to sing folk songs with flutes. In this way he appealed the people to take up both arrow and sword. The British did not understand it, but the local people gathered together due to this call and started challenging the British. When the British tried to collect the taxes in a strict way, the people responded to the appeal of U Kiang Nangbah and refused to pay the taxes. After that the British arrested many innocent people and threw them in the prison. In spite of their best efforts the British could not apprehend U Kiang Nangbah. He gathered the youths who were ready for the sacrifice for their country in the villages and hills. He formed a huge army. U Kiang Nangbah attacked the British army camps in seven places at the same time. He succeeded in all the places. Though the local people had their traditional weapons, they succeeded due to their Guerilla battle techniques. They attacked suddenly and after that they hid themselves in the hills. In this way, this battle continued for 20 months. The British

were annoyed and irritated with these attacks. They wanted to catch U Kiang Nangbah alive or dead anyhow. They took Udolai Terak, one of the partners of U Kiang Nangbah under their fold by offering the allurements of money. At that time U Kiang Nangbah was injured very badly, his partners kept him in Munshi village for his treatment. Udolai, the friend of U Kiang Nangbah, gave this information to the British. As a result the British army under the leadership of Saimon, covered the Munshi village from all sides. At that time, U Kiang Nangbah was not in a position to move. Due to this and also because of the absence of his partners, he could not face the British. Still he did not surrender and continued his fight. The British caught the injured U Kiang Nangbah. They proposed to him that if his soldiers surrender, they would leave him, but the hero that he was, U Kiang Nangbah did not agree to this proposal. The cruel tortures of the British could not force him to surrender. He was hanged on the day of 30th December, 1862 in Usmamiyang of Jowai town of West Jaintia district for waging war against the rules of the British. On the day of 30th December, 1862, when he was going to be hanged, U Kiang Nangbah addressed his compatriots in following words. "Dear brothers and sisters, when I will die please please notice my face. If my face move towards the East, then my country (Khasi Jaintia) will be free from the British within 100 years and if my face move towards the West, it will be a omen of goodness for our people. In remembrance of the soul of this great hero, the Indian government released a postal stamp in his memory. U. King Nangbah will for ever be remembered for his bravery and unparalleled patriotism for our motherland Bharat.

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Freedom Waves: The Unsung Heroes of Mishmi Hills Ponge Dele and Taji Dele

✍ Dr. Razzeko Delley

On 15th August 2016 Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India spoke thus from the ramparts of Red Forts

“Brothers and Sisters, when we talk about the history of our freedom struggle; a lot is spoken about a few people. In fact, in some cases, it is more than necessary. But in our freedom struggle, the contribution of our tribal brethren living in the forests was incomparable. They lived in jungles. We may have heard about Birsa Munda but there is hardly any tribal district which did not make sacrifices since 1857 till we got freedom. What is freedom? What is struggle against slavery? They have taught us with their sacrifices. But our coming generations are not fully aware of this history. The Government desires and is planning permanent museums in the states where these tribal community lived, struggled against the British and refused to be cowed down. The Government will work to make such museums in different states so that the coming generation may know how our tribal communities were far ahead in making sacrifices”.

The Bebejiya Mishmi Expeditions

The three Bebejiya Mishmi military Expeditions to the Mishmi Hills in Dibang region were the result of longest struggle in Arunachal Pradesh against the British Government by the Mishmis of Ithun Valley. This historical episode is also testimony of inhuman colonial repression of the tribal people from frontier region. Moreover, the constant fight back by a small group of tribal manifest the struggle against the colonial exploitation which resulted in blocking the colonial expansion to the vast frontier region, the land of tribal people. The Bebejiya Mishmi Military Punitive Expeditions were carried out by the British Government in 1899-1900 (1st December 1899 to 8th February 1900), March 1914 and December 1920. The British archival records link the expedition with series of earlier raids carried out by the Idu Mishmis especially the Bebejiyas¹.

The martyrs and warriors under the leadership of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele fought against British in three Bebejiya Mishmi Expeditions; 1900, 1914 And 1919. They died fighting the British anti tribal oppressive policies and fought for the tribal ethos, struggled for the freedom to live the life by holding high in their own land. However the historical phenomenon which had impacted and plagued British government for nearly a quarter of century is today only in the domain of dusty archival files and have become subject of few lines in the books written by the historians.

The immediate consequence of the First Bebejiya Expedition however was revenge raid on British subjects in Mitaigaon village by the people of Abragon village for the killing of their clan member Thruso Dele.

The British government had moreover planned to undertake the expedition in 1857 itself after

¹ *Idus of Ithu Valley*

series of raids. However, due to revolt of 1857, the Raj could not execute their mission against the Bebejiya Mishmis². Therefore in 1899, the Raj desired to punish the whole tribe.

J.F Needham, the Political Officer on to Chief Commissioner and recommends a punitive expedition.³ He also contends that the whole tribe and not the individuals should be punished:

“The whole tribe must be held responsible, and we must give them thoroughly understand that whenever any outrage like the present one is committed, we shall held the whole tribe responsible.”⁴

The British force left Sadiya on 1st December 1899 with over 600 troops, 27 British officers, 6 doctors, 86 sappers and miners with dynamite, gun cotton and wire rope, and 2,000 coolies⁵. The troop consisted of 1 Coy. Sappers and Miners 2 Coy. 10th Bengal Infantry, 1 Coy 4.J Rd Goorkha Rifles, 3 Coy. 42nd Goorkha Rifles, 2 Coy. 44th Goorkha Rifles, of the Lakhimpur M.P. and 2 Mountain guns⁶.

The British force under Needham reached Maiyu Pass (Mayudia in present times) on 20th December 1899. Few Mishmis had gathered in Mayudia region to confront the British force. However owing to snowfall during that time they had to retreat after laying several booby traps and panjeeing the whole route. The force reached Hunli on 1st January 1900.

The imperial force burnt down the village, destroyed agricultural plots, butchered and ate the cattle and other domestic animals. The troop even destroyed and burnt all the bamboo species and felled the Sago palm which is used as swine fodder. The similar destructive approaches were carried out in all the villages wherever they went up to Enaya⁷.

On 6th January 1900 the force marched to Apali and burnt down the whole village similar destructions were carried out at Pika, Chani and Denge on 18th and 19th January 1900 under Colonel Molesworth and Major Anderson⁸.

On 21st January 1900 the troop went ahead to punish the main Mitaigaon raiders from Abrangon village. However Aholo Mideren (Awelo Dele) and his people had deserted the village and taken shelter in forest. The force carried out the same type of destruction. And on 25th January they entered Elanpu (Elope). In pretext of convening a meeting Ponge Dele (Pongon Midere in British account) Ekhrome Dele (Ekhoma Midere in British account) of Elope and Malu Mimi (Malon Mimi in British account) of Rango village were called and arrested as Needham wanted them as ‘hostage in exchange of main culprits’⁹.

After carrying out destructions the force marched to Echomra on 28th March 1900 and halted at Amili from 29th January 1900 to 2nd

² Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (1884) p.50

³9th June letter No.357-Foreign., dated the 11th July 1899

⁴ (Assam Secreta⁴ Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (1884) p.50

⁴9th June riat File no. 32-49 Foreign A. Political July 1899, *Proposal for an Expedition against Bebejiya Mishmis* .P.5

⁵ Robert Reid, *History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam*, 1942. p. 210

⁶ Shakespear, L. W *History of the Assam Rifles* (1929): p. 122).

⁷ J.F Needham, *Report on the Bebejiya Mishmi Expedition*, 1899-1900. (1900) p.4-5

⁸ Ibid p: 12

⁹ Ibidpp.9.10

February 1900. On 31st January 1900 Colonel Morsworth sent a troop under Kerr of 44th Goorkha Rifles, of the Lakhimpur M.P to destroy Anaya village. The village was destroyed on 1st February 1900¹⁰.

On 2nd February 1900, the troop left Amili and marched to Kronli (Konyi in British account). On 3rd the force left Kronli and reached Aounli. On 4th February, while marching from Aounli towards Nijamghat before reaching Aiyi River, the handcuffed Ekhome Dele overpowered the 4 sepoys after a short scuffle and escaped by jumping off a cliff¹¹.

The troop reached Nijamghat on 5th February 1900 at 3 P.M. and they were back in Sadiya on 8th February 1900.

Needham in his report, while admitting the failure to arrest the main culprits points that the expedition in itself was successful and beneficial for the British government. Moreover he anticipates that the Bebejiyas will never dare to attack the British subject again as most of the culprits will die in blood feuds the root of which the Political Officer and his team has sown in the region . He wrote thus

“I think it may fairly be said that the expedition has successfully accomplished the major portion of the task which was set it, and we have demonstrated, in a forcible manner, to both tribes that, difficult as their country is, we can penetrate it with ease whenever it suits us to do so, either by using the Maiyu pass, or by entering the hills *via* Nizamghat. We failed to arrest any of the murderers,... but we nevertheless phished them and their clansmen severely by destroying their houses and property, and loitering about in their country at a time when fresh lands have to be cleared, and prepared for next season’s crops, etc., and

there can be no doubt that these men will, now that we have left the country, still further suffer, and that some of them may even lose their lives...¹²

Mr. Cotton the Chief Commissioner of Assam while sending the report (letter No. 231-For., dated the 17th April 1900) of the expedition to higher authority observes:

“The darkness which lay over the Mishmi country has been dissipated. The home of the Bebejiyas is no longer a *terra incognita*, which had never been visited by a European. The Bebejiyas, who had hitherto been described as a fierce race of cannibals, a very savage, blood-thirsty, and dangerous race, are now known to be no better nor worse than their neighbours. They are undoubtedly responsible for the outrages with which they have been charged, but these outrages do not appear to have been perpetrated from mere wantonness or devilry as was supposed, but to be due to the ordinarily blood feuds which always prevail among these frontier tribes They have now learnt the strength of the British power ; they know that if they commit murder and plunder within the area of British political control, they will be punished, and the Chief Commissioner does not hesitate to express his belief that there will now be peace on a frontier where there has hitherto been continual raiding. It may be confidently expected that for a generation at least quiet will be restored”

However the revenge raids and attacks post 1900 Bebejiya Expedition by Ponge Dele and his clansman proved how Needham as well as Cotton had misjudged the Mishmis.

The British government spent £ 16,000 (1 200000) and lost 34 lives. The Expedition was

¹⁰ J.F Needham, *Report on the Bebejiya Mishmi Expedition*, 1899-1900. (1900) 10-11

¹¹ Ibid pp. 11-18

¹² J.F Needham *Report on the Bebejiya Mishmi Expedition*, 1899-1900. p.12

severely criticised by the Viceroy Lord Curzon, and he recorded a minute on the 14th May 1900, in which he expressed his views in uncompromising terms. "So far", he said, "from regarding this expedition as having been satisfactory, either in its inception or in its results, I hold it to have been marked by serious miscalculation from the start, by a sacrifice of lives which ought, with reasonable precautions, to have been avoided, by an expenditure of money for which there has been no proportionate return and by political and scientific result that are all but worthless." In a letter to the Secretary of State, dated the 22nd February 1900, he referred to the Expedition as "an absolutely bootless though costly excursion, with no result whatsoever but the capture of two inoffensive and worthless prisoners"¹³.

The hostages Ponge Dele and Malu Mimi were released on 16th May 1900 as per the order of the Chief Commissioner of Assam vide letter no. 231 Foreign-1379 Political dated Shillong the 17th April 1900 (written by the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam). The letter addressed to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department orders the release of the hostages thus:-

"... it is proposed to detain them (Ponge Dele and Malu Mimi) as hostages in the expectation that their detention will lead to the surrender of the actual perpetrators of the Mitaigaon massacre. The Chief Commissioner cannot, however, approve of this course. He thinks that their arrest was justified, and he deems it possible that their indefinite detention might lead to the result contemplated. But he does not wish them to be kept in confinement any longer. He considers that the operations against the Bebejiya Mishmis have closed, and that the time has passed for taking any further

steps for the punishment of the offenders. With the return of the troops, we should present, as it were, a clean slate in our political relations on this frontier. The Chief Commissioner has therefore, instructed Mr. Needham to allow these hostages to go back to their country."

However, the subsequent episodes proved that the slates were far from clean and many more chapters of history were to be written with blood.

Ponge Dele after being released fought back and took revenge of his imprisonment by killing three British subjects in July 1905 at Sadiya, Dikrang Block House. He was accompanied by clan fellow Taji Dele¹⁴. On the way back they also attacked and burnt down British military stockades at Kherempani and Bomjur¹⁵.

Subsequently a blockade was imposed on the Mishmis of Dibang region and amount of Rs. 2000 was declared as cash reward. The blockade however was revoked in 1909 as the British Government found ineffective and alternatively a punitive expedition to Elope was proposed vide File no. 95 Foreign Political August 1909. Responding to the proposal for Punitive expedition put forward by Assistant Political Officer Noel Williamson, the Secretary to the Government of East Bengal and Assam while writing to the Commissioner of Assam Districts vide letter no. 3884G, dated Shillong, the 24th July 1909 observes:-

... The blockade against the Mishmis appears to have failed in its object, in as much as Pongon (Ponge Dele) the perpetrator of the Dikrang outrage in 1905, is at large, and no impression appears to have been made by the blockade on offending tribe. You accordingly recommend the withdrawal of the blockade

¹³Ronaldshay's *Life of Curzon*, Vol. 11, p. 113

¹⁴ File no. 13-70. Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Political A 1907

¹⁵ Ibid p.4

and the despatch of a punitive expedition to Elapoin (Elope) in accordance with proposals made by Mr. Williamson in his letter no. 13G., dated 2nd , the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Nicholas D. Beatson-Bell gave the history of confrontation as follows April 1907, to address of the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur . You also urge that if no further steps be taken to punish the offenders in this case Government prestige on the frontier is likely to suffer, and further outrages of a more serious nature may take place”¹⁶.

The three Mishmis of Elope Ekhrome Dele, Rosha Dele, and Bapo Dele in order to avenge the martyrdom of Taji Dele attacked the Nizamghat Military outpost in 24th November 1918. One sepoy was killed and several others injured. Thereafter, the British Government planned to undertake one more military expedition against the Mishmis of Elope. While sending up proposals for an expedition to punish the Mishmis of Elope:-

“2. The murder of the rifleman appears to have been but another step in a long series of blood feuds. In the month of July 1905, as reported in paragraph 13 of the Report on the Frontier Tribes of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the year 1905-1906, three British subjects were murdered by Bebejiyas near the Dikrang block-house. This outrage seems to have been committed in retaliation for the detention in jail of a man named Pongon, during the Mishmi Expedition of 1900. The chief culprits in the murder of 1905 were found to be the same Pongon (Ponge Dele) and one Taji Mideren of Elapoin village in the Ithun Valley. In consequence of the murder a blockade was declared against both the Bebejiya Mishmis and the Chulikatas through whose territories the murderers had passed. This blockade was maintained down to the time of the Mishmi exploration of 1912, subject only to some relaxation in the case of friendly villages. In 1913 Captain

Dundas and Captain Nevill, while engaged in the Mishmi exploration, visited Elapoin and tried to arrest Pongon and his confederates, but found the village deserted. ... Nothing more happened until December 1917, when Taji Mideren came down to Sadiya, apparently thinking that the outrage of 1905 has been forgotten. He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death, and his appeal for mercy having been rejected. The British troop under Captain Dundas and Captain Nevil undertook a military expedition to Elope in March 1914. The Expedition turned out futile as no one could be arrested. The troop after reaching the village burnt the houses, destroyed agricultural fields, bamboos and whatever destruction they could do. The troops stayed in village for many days carrying out destructions and returned back¹⁷.

The next turn of event occurred in December 1917 when Taji Dele was arrested while coming to Sadiya for trade. In a hasty manner he was tried and sentenced to death. His appeal for remission of the sentence was rejected by the Governor General in Council rejected by the Governor General in Council and he was hanged at Tezpur Jail on the 29th January 1918. In his Report on the Frontier Tribes for the year 1917-18 Mr. Dundas, Political Officer of the Sadiya Frontier “Tract, anticipating the revenge attack wrote;

“The villagers of Elapoin have now sworn to revenge his death. This is not idle talk. Some innocent person will certainly be ambuscaded and done to death. It may not be this year, but it will happen.” The murder of the rifleman in November 1918, a few months after Mr. Dundas wrote that report, is striking evidence of the accuracy of Mr. Dundas’ knowledge. In his letter of the 30th November 1918, of which a copy was submitted to the Government of India with my letter No.9652-P., dated the 6th December 1918, Mr. Dundas reported that he had received information that the persons responsible for the murder of the

¹⁶ File no. 95 Foreign- Political August 1909.

¹⁷ Shakespear, L. W. *History of the Assam Rifles* (1929): London, Macmillanp.p.136

rifleman at Nizamghat were Ekhrome Mideren, Bapo Mideren and Kosa Mideren of Elapoin, and it seems certain that the murder of the rifleman at Nizamghat was the work of Pongon and his confederates in retaliation for the hanging of Taji Mideren.”¹⁸

The British Government of India was, however, averse to any sort of “military commitments” and they asked that the operations should be deferred.

But in December 1919, the Chief Commissioner reopened the matter, pointed out how they were supposed to be exercising “loose political control” in these areas as approved in Despatch No. 105, dated the 21st September 1911 and Secretary of State’s orders dated the 8th November 1911, and undertook that the operations would entail no risk of any situation arising which could not be controlled by local forces.

The Government of India agreed on the 31st December 1919, but owing to the lateness of the season the expedition had to be postponed. It took place under Mr. O’Callaghan who had succeeded Mr. Dundas, in December 1920. The troops commanded by Captain R. P. Abigail (lent from the 3rd A.R.) and Lieut. J. Murray Grant, with Mr. O’Callaghan as Political Officer reached Elope on the 9th December. This time people of Elope which consisted of 40 houses decided to directly confront the British forces. The Mishmis of Elope were pushed back forcing them to retreat as their machetes and arrows were of no match to the British guns and artilleries. Ponge Dele died fighting. Colonel W. Shakespeare in his book *History of the Assam Rifles* (1929) reports the confrontation thus:

“The force moved out from Nizamghat in October up the left bank of the Dibong river, the precipitous nature of the country making the progress of men and transport coolies most

difficult. Before reaching Elapoin (Elope) the Mishmis held a stockaded position well sited, which brought about a sharp little fight before it was taken. Here the clan lost a number of men, amongst them being Pangoo (Ponge Dele), the leader of the trouble, who was shot dead. Elapoin (Elope) was duly destroyed, and two posts were left for a few months in that part of the country till all fines were paid up”. (Pp.138-139).

Similarly Sir Rober Reid, the Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942 in his book *History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941* (1942) writes:-

“They reached Elapoin on the 9th December. An ambush was laid for our troops and one Mishmi was shot who very fortunately turned out to be Pongon Mideren himself, the leader and instigator of the whole previous trouble and a consistent nuisance for some 25 years. There was no further difficulty and the troops returned to Sadiya by 27th January 1921. Punishment was inflicted where required and many outstanding disputes settled. “The Chief Commissioner was satisfied that the result of the expedition had “gone far to re-establish the authority of Government after the enforced non-intervention of the last few years” (p.254).

Conclusion

The British belief after 1st Bebejiya Mishmi Expedition that the ‘Bebejiyas have learnt the strength of British power’ and therefore will never strike them again proved gross miscalculation. The constant struggle by a small tribal group also manifests the undying spirit to fight for the tribal right and pride which is inherent in the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh¹⁹. However, the historical phenomenon which had impacted and plagued British government for nearly a quarter of century is today only in the domain of dusty archival files and have become subject of few lines in the books

¹⁸ *Assam Secretariat File, Political, B, December 1919, Nos.1-28.*

¹⁹ Among the Idu Mishmis handcuffing is a grave offence. Only slaves can be tied. Ponge Dele was a highly influential man in whole Ithu valley and owned many slaves.

written by Indian historians. Nearly all the historians of North East like H.K Barpujari (*Problem of the Hill Tribes North East Frontier, 1873-1962*) and M.L Bose (*History of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997*) have just quoted few lines of British officers which prejudiced view. One can find elaborate writings on the subject in Robert Reid (*History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, [1942]*) and L. W Shakespear (*History of the are highly derogatory as well as one sided Assam Rifles [1929]*).

The local lore of the struggle still echoes in Mishmi Hills. The tribe still revere the people who died fighting the British anti tribal oppressive policies. They fought for the tribal ethos, struggled for the freedom to live the life by holding high in their own land.

Academic writings have appeared on the history of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele. The Union Public Service Commission Civil Service Exam Main paper 2009 had a question on Taji Dele (Taji Mederen) Similarly a brief write up and report was published in Eastern Panorama, August 2009. In the same spirit Times of India (electronic version) carried historical research writing on September 18, 2012 written by Amaresh Misra titled, Assam: The very idea of India under attack – Part III, links the incessant struggle of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele to the larger freedom movement of Assam.

Community Initiatives:

With the proclamation of Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India to recognise the tribal peoples who have fought against the British as

freedom fighters, the Idu Mishmi cultural and Literary Society submitted a memorandum to the chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Shri Pema Khandu on 8th January 2017.

The same appeal was made to Shri Kiren Rijju, the then Hon'ble MOS Home on 22nd July 2017. The Idu Mishmi society has been undertaking various programme to pay homage to the freedom fighters Late Ponge Dele and Taji Dele from the tribe. The following are worth mentioning.

Ponge Dele Award

During the Golden Jubilee Central Reh Celebration in 2018 an award named after the martyr; Ponge Dele Award was constituted by the tribe. It is the Second Highest Community Award conferred to the Idu Mishmis who have achieved exemplary distinctions, who have served the community in various spheres and the people from other community who have remarkably worked in the Mishmi Hills)

Martyrs' Pillar to Commemorate the Martyrs.

The foundation stone for the 'Metaro' or Martyrs Pillar, honouring the martyrs and warriors who fought against the British in three Bebejiya Mishmi expeditions (1900, 1914 & 1919), under the leadership of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele, was laid on the occasion of the Pre Reh celebration at Elope village in Lower Dibang valley district on 30th January 2020. (Detailed Newspaper report enclosed).

Glossary of Misspelt English Names and Actual Idu Mishmi Names

English Misspelt Name

Actual Idu Mishmi Name

Chullikatta Mishmis	Idu Mishmis those who spoke Midu dialect especially residing in the foothills of Roing region.
Bebejiya Mishmis	Idu Mishmis of Ithu Valley especially those who speak Mithu dialect.
Pongon Midere	Ponge Dele (Earlier traditionally it was Midele clan, now they are known by Dele today).
Elanpu	Elope

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Arunachal Times News clip on Martyrs' pillar to commemorate Mishmi warriors who fought British Empire 30th January 2020.

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Contribution of North East India in India's Freedom Struggle (With special reference to Mizo chief Dokulha, an unsung hero)

✍ Dr. Vanlalringa Bawitlung

Abstract: India's freedom struggle lasted almost a century from the so called "the first war of independence" in 1850. Since then there had been discontentment and movements against Colonial imperialism in different parts of the country; the Northeast India was no exception to this. The kings and traditional rulers/chiefs fought against Colonial intervention in their respective areas. Their contribution to this effect was also significant to India's freedom struggle. Mizo chiefs also started to move against Colonial imperialism in 1890 when the erstwhile Lushai Hill was included into the British India. Some of them moved so far as to sacrifice their lives in their struggle for freedom even after their land had been snatched away from them. Here is such an unsung hero who never stopped fighting against Colonial rule until his life was sacrificed to the cause of freedom.

The first movement of Mizo chiefs against Colonial imperialism recorded was in 1826 when they attacked Colonial subjects in Sylhet.ⁱ Since then, there had been hostility and warfare between Mizo chiefs and Colonial power. As Colonial penetration started on the western front, the nearest Mizo chief in the border Lalsuthlaha countered Colonial imperialism by attacking the areas

adjoining to him in Sylhet side. Colonial authorities soon despatched a retaliatory expedition under Capt. Blackwood to subjugate Lalsuthlaha and his people. Lalsuthlaha was captured and sentenced to lifetime imprisonment; and became the first martyr amongst Mizo chief for freedom struggle. The news of what had happened to Lalsuthlaha spread like a wildfire throughout the length and breadth of Mizoram. It resulted in widespread disturbances and conflicts against Colonial intrusion.ⁱⁱ Many chiefs like Suakpuilala, Vanhnuailiana, Bengkhuaia, Pawibawia, Lalburha, Vanpuilala, Hausata, Dokulha, Zakapa as well as chieftainess Ropuiliani etc emerged as freedom fighters.

Sailo chief Suakpuilala continued to defend his freedom by bravely fighting Colonial intrusion. He managed to evade Colonial retaliatory expedition. In the meantime, he took every opportunity to oppose Colonial expansion and intervention in the Hills. Along with his sons (who were also chiefs) formed a formidable team obstructing further Colonial intervention. But due to internecine rivalry and hostility among themselves, he was compelled to make peace with Colonial power thus succumbed to Colonial appeasement policy.ⁱⁱⁱ However, many

ⁱ R.G. Woodthrope., *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1978, reprint, pp. 11-12.

ⁱⁱ Prof Sangkima., "Role of the Mizo in India's Struggle for Freedom" Presidential Address delivered on the occasion of Ruby Jubilee Celebration, Mizo History Association in *Historical Journal Mizoram (A Peer-Reviewed Journal)* Vol. XXII, 2021, Aizawl. P.3.

ⁱⁱⁱ Suhas Chatterjee., *Mizoram Under The British Rule*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1985, p.91.

other chiefs still carried on their confrontation against Colonial imperialism. But they could not stand long against Colonial might when the second Expedition known as 'Chin-Lushai Expedition 1890' was sent against them.

Gender contribution to freedom struggle was also significant. Chieftainess Ropuiliani became a popular Mizo freedom fighter who sacrificed her life in her struggle for freedom.^{iv} Despite chiefs and their people rendered their best effort, they could not defend their freedom. In spite of fighting bravely against Imperialism, they had been annihilated and failed to rise up against Colonial power in the Hills.

Who was Dokulha?

Dokulha was amongst those powerful Mizo chiefs at the time of Colonial intervention in Mizoram. Unfortunately, however, he seemed to be the least known freedom fighter whose resistance against Colonial power was second to none amongst Mizo chiefs. Dokulha was a Chinzah chief of Fungkah village which situated in the south eastern part of Mizoram. He had been a formidable hurdle for the British penetration particularly in the south Mizoram.^v He along with his brother chief Hausata fought bravely against the Colonial intrusion in the Hills which eventually led to the British southern Lushai campaign popularly known as 'Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890'.^{vi} According to the report of the Superintendent of Police of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1854, there have been nineteen raids, in which one hundred seven persons had been slain,

fifteen wounded and one hundred eighty six persons were taken as captives. All these forays were believed to have been the work of Lai (Pawi) and Mara (Lakher).^{vii}

As independent rulers, Dokulha and his brother did not submit to Colonial power but continued to fight them until they were overpowered. Even after he was defeated Dokulha could not adjust himself to be a cordial and friendly chief but continued to create problems for the Colonial administration. His hostile attitude and continued struggle against Colonial rule ultimately led to sacrifice his life for his land and the people. His struggle for freedom from Colonial domination was later recognized the Government of India. He was regarded as a martyr and mentioned his name amongst the Indian martyrs in a book named 'Who's who of Indian Martyrs' published by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India.^{viii}

Dokulha was the second son of the Lai (Chinzah) chief Taihmunga whose ancestors hailed from the Chin Hills of Myanmar in the last part of the 19th century. He was born in 1851 at Cherhulun village.^{ix} He had two brothers namely, Hausata and Vantura who also became chiefs. They moved to establish a village at Lungtian in the mountain ranges of Phawngpui (Blue Mountain), the highest peak in Mizoram in about 1972.^x His elder brother Hausata became chief at Lungtian village. Dokulha being the younger one further moved south and established his village at Fungkah which was situated a few miles away from his brother's village.

^{iv} Vanlalvuana Sailo., Mizoram Humhalhtu Lal Vandula leh Ropuiliani, Aizawl, 1999, p.95.

^v L. Chinzah., Laitlang, Lawngtlai, 1974. P.2.

^{vi} Sir Robert Reid., The Lushai Hills, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, Aizawl, 1976, reprint, p. 121. 7

^{vii} A. Mackenzie., North-East Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884, reprint. 338.

^{viii} Dr P.N. Chopra (ed.), Who's Who of Indian Martyrs Vol. I, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Govt. of India, 1972. P.84.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x S.R. Chinzah., Khuafu Hnam Chhuina, New Millenium Computer Centre, Aizawl, 2003. P.57.

Confrontation with Colonial Power:

Together with his brother, Dokulha was able to establish a strong chieftainship prior to Colonial intervention. It was the time when Colonial power started infiltrating into Mizoram in the west. Dokulha learnt about this Colonial penetration and moved with his warriors to repulse the infiltrators and defend the land. On February 3, 1888, British Survey Party under Lt. Steward was moving inside Mizoram. They took a position and attacked them by killing Lt. Steward, two British soldiers, six Indian soldiers and two porters^{xi} and this seems to be the first Colonial army ever killed in Mizoram. They returned home with five rifles, a pistol, knife etc.^{xii}

This exploit was misinterpreted by Colonial writers as a move on the part of Hausata and his brother Dokulha purely to kill a whiteman and take his head for bringing back former's wife who returned to her parents' house due to couple's friction.^{xiii} In this connection, it must be important to note that Hausata, (brother of Dokulha) was married to a daughter of a powerful Thlantlang chief Zahuata who is said to have ruled over twenty one villages in present Myanmar.^{xiv} It is said that Chief Hausata and his wife had misunderstanding on certain issues which eventually led to the departure of his wife and moved to her parents. His wife's father Zahuata (chief of Thlantlang) was greatly disappointed on the incident and showing his displeasure, demanded a whiteman's head in exchange of his daughter's return. It was a time when raids were rampant, being an inferior chief Hausata feared to be subjugated. He sent peace emissaries to his wife's father and to bring back his wife. However, his wife's father did not welcome

them without a whiteman's head. It seems that Zahuata's demand of a whiteman's head was in fact, a show of his displeasure and superiority over Hausata as well as to minimize Colonial power.

Knowing Colonial intrusion in the western side, Dokulha, (brother of Hausata) and his warriors moved to counter and attacked Lt. Steward and his party. Colonial accounts/narratives on this matter were not completely reliable due to the fact that They did not mention whether Hausata actually brought a whiteman's head to Zahuata in exchange of his wife. In fact, they went to the extent of showing their sentiment and hatred against the chief who had attacked and killed their people. N.E. Parry, the then Superintendent, in his book named 'The Lakhers' mentioned that the bones of chief Hausata were eaten by pigs.^{xv} This never was true but a show of hatred, disdain and a feeling of superiority over the people whom they treated and regarded them as savage. With this background, Dokulha did not trust the Colonial administrators and continued to have a problem with Colonial administration throughout his lifetime. A renown local historian B. Lalthangliana maintains that the attack on the Colonial survey party under Lt. Steward was not merely to kill the Whiteman and take his head for calling back the chief's wife but primarily to defend their land. He further maintains that the Chinzah chiefs laid their western boundary as far as Chandragon which the Colonial administration encroached several times.^{xvi}

Colonial Retaliatory Expedition:

In pursuance of Simla Conference resolutions, 'Chin-Lushai Expeditions of 1889-1890' was conducted under the command of Brig. Gen. Tregear with 1250 soldiers against the Lai (Pawi)

^{xi} A.S. Reid., Chin Lushai Land, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, Aizawl, 1976. Reprint, P.16.

^{xii} S.R. Chinzah., op.cit, p.65.

^{xiii} Sir Robert Reid., op.cit. pp.1-2.

^{xiv} B, Lalthangliana(ed.), Mizo Lal Ropuite Vol II, Aizawl, 1989, p.105.

^{xv} N.E. Parry., The Lakhers, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, Aizawl, 1976 reprint. P.10.

^{xvi} Ibid

chiefs in the Phawngpui (Blue Mountain) ranges.^{xvii} Before reaching the target location Lungtian village, Intelligent Officer Capt. J. Shakespear with the help of Darbilhi, chieftainess of Darzo village came to learn that Hausata the main culprit had already been dead. However, they continued to march on to Lungtian village. They digged Hausata's grave and found Lt.Steward's gun along with Hausata's body. Dokulha being the brother and successor did not escape the suspicion of the Colonial authority. As a matter of fact, he was the leader of the attacking party and equally responsible for the death of the Colonial armies.

Intrigue and Hostility:

Chinzah chiefs had been able to rule almost the whole Lai Autonomous District Council area prior to Colonial intervention and collected tribute even the region beyond their direct control. In 1891, Vantura (the younger brother of Dokulha) was attacked and severely wounded on his way back from collecting tribute in Maraland thus soon succumbed to his injuries.^{xviii} Dokulha wanted to take revenge for his brother's death but the Colonial authority intervened and ordered that no such kinds of revenge or murder was strictly prohibited under Colonial rule. He however complained that the Colonial rule was bias on the ground that they refrained from taking action to punish the people who were responsible for murdering his brother but went scot free. He however was restrained from taking action against the culprits. So, challenging the Colonial authority he murdered two men who were responsible for the death of his brother. The Colonial authority leveled charge sheet against him for the death of two Colonial subjects. Capt. J. Shakespear SDO, Lunglei immediately moved to Dokulha's village Funkkah. Before Capt. J. Shakespear reached Funkkah, Dokulha went away

to jungle. However, J. Shakespear was able to capture him by deploying treachery on February 20, 1892.

Undaunted Spirit:

Dokulha was convicted and awarded him a murder case for killing two Colonial subjects, so he should be hanged. But he challenged and vehemently complained the government's verdict that his conviction was a sheer injustice and partial judgment on the ground that while the murderers of his brother went scot free, he was convicted to be hanged in the same deed. His case was therefore converted from criminal into political and sent to Hazaribagh Jail in Bihar. As a chief, he refused to go on foot, so he was handcuffed and carried in stretcher towards Aizawl. While moving on a narrow footpath in a steep hill, he suddenly kicked the side-rock so as to make them fall down in the cliff. They somehow managed to maintain their balance and escaped tragedy. Not only his hands were now tied his legs were also tied in order to avoid such hazard. After finding him as a dangerous man he was hastily transported to Hazaribagh Jail.

During his imprisonment, his subjects frequently approached J. Shakespear for his release. J. Shakespear was also convinced when he visited Dokulha's village that he was a great chief with whom the subjects could do business and depend upon. So, he tried to get him release from prison with a view to have a better administrative convenience by reinstating him. He wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts requesting him to release chief Dokulha provided that his village should submit 40 guns to the Colonial authority. Dokulha's subjects submitted 40 guns and got his release on August 6, 1896.^{xix}

^{xvii} Fr. Extl. A. October 1888. Nos 87-117. C.S. Murray, Off. District Superintendent of Police, Chittagong Hill Tracts. Dated Rangamati, the 28th Feb. 1888. P.4. (Govt. of Mizoram)

^{xviii} N.E. Parry., op.cit. p.10.

^{xix} S.R. Chinzah., op.cit. p.52.

Dokulha never accepted Colonial rule and continued to disobey their authority. He claimed that he was already a chief who never submitted to any authority even before Colonial power came to his land. So, he found Colonial intervention in his administration as an imposition and high-handed. Barely a year has passed since his release from prison, he was charged again with six other villagers in the murder case of a Muslim fakir/wanderer who had incidentally come to his village. Although, six other suspects claimed that Dokulha was innocent in the case, yet convicted and put him behind the bars. As a man who would be easily dealt with, Dokulha was quite unhappy with the verdict started creating problems even behind the bar.

The Superintendent J. Shakespear tried for the second time and convicted him to be hanged. Dokulha lodged his complaint and asked for reconsideration of his case by claiming that he was absolutely innocent in their accusation. He strongly condemned the judgment meted out to him as baseless and fabricated and firmly stuck to his claim that he was innocent. He repeatedly submitted petitions to review the judgment and firmly stood in his claim that he was not guilty in the charges. He further claimed that he was convicted without adequate evidence. His case was therefore reviewed by HJS Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam and sent him to Andaman Jail for lifetime imprisonment due to lack of evidence.

Even in Andaman Jail, Dokulha used to show that he was still a chief and frequently abstained from work. In this Jail, he was joined by his friend Hnawncheuva who was also convicted of life imprisonment on account of the murder of a Colonial Interpreter named Satinkhara. It is said that Chieftainess Ropuiliani wanted this Interpreter to be murdered and the task was

fulfilled by her warrior Hnawncheuva.^{xx} This Sailo Chieftainess Ropuiliani also fought against Colonial imperialism to her last breath. Dokulha proposed to his friend to show their undaunted spirit to fight the Colonial imperialism when they were pardoned and set free. While his friend decided to go home straight without creating anymore problem Dokulha preferred to continue to fight the Imperialists than going back to his village. At last, he gave his life to the cause of freedom for his land.^{xxi} Unfortunately, there was no record of his death, no date and year of his demise cannot be confirmed till date. All we can say is that he did not return from Andaman Cellular Jail.

Concluding Remark:

Dokulha was no doubt a freedom fighter who never accepted Colonial suzerainty in the Hills. He did not stop fighting the Imperialists unto his last breath. He however was fully aware of the fact that he was no match to Colonial power especially after the Colonial power swept over the Hills. Still, he continued to show to the Colonial authority that he was a chief who would not be easily submitted to Colonial intruders. The Colonial power on the other hand also developed hostile attitude towards him for his role in Lt. Steward's murder. It is a wellknown fact that the Colonial administration was unforgiving as well as prompt to take actions against those rulers who disobeyed their suzerainty. They replaced those chiefs who dared to fight with those people who helped them in their expansionist policy or the people who were instrumental and obedient to their administration. Dokulha was indeed a great and powerful chief who was able to make all his five sons chiefs in different villages in southern part of Mizoram. When he was about to be deported from Lunglei to Aizawl after his conviction, he conveyed his Will and said that he

^{xx} S.R. Chinzah., op.cit. p.52.

^{xxi} R. Raltawna., Andaman Jail, R.D. Print Tech, Aizawl, 2001, p.108.

had tried his level best to defend his land from imperialists and he rendered his best to the cause of freedom. That he might not come back alive from such unknown far away land.^{xxii} That his will be well materialized. Dokulha was indeed a powerful chief who was able to put a vast area under his control. He also received tribute from a number of villages other than directly ruled by him. Thus there were about fifteen thousand

people under his rule in 1912.^{xxiii} He was no doubt an unsung freedom fighter who sacrificed his all. His role in India's freedom struggle should never be forgotten rather his place in the history of our freedom .movement should be restored with reverence and gratitude of the entire nation.

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^{xxii} T.K. Chizah., “Lai History” (Lai), Lawngtlai, 1988, unpublished, pp.55-56.

^{xxiii} Census of India, Vol. III, Part. III, 1922



অসম চৰকাৰৰ দায়বদ্ধতা - আৰ্ত্তজনৰ আৰ্থিক নিৰাপত্তা

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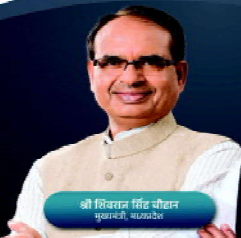
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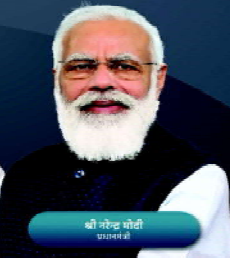
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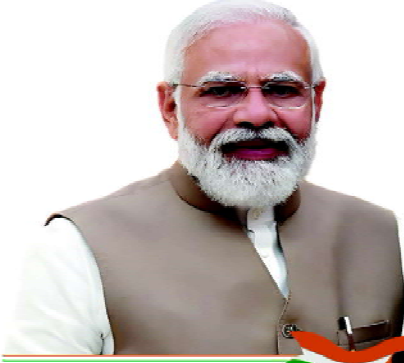


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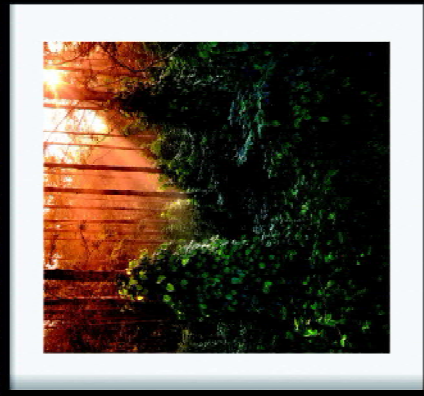
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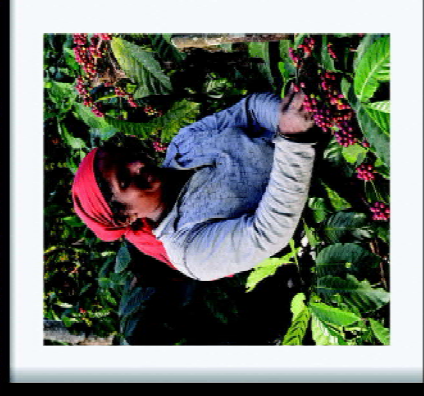
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Unsung Janajati Heroes of North East Bharat in Freedom Struggle



Haipou Jadonang
(1905 - 29 August 1931)

Haipou Jadonang was a Naga spiritual leader and political activist. He established the Heraka religious movement.



Rani Ropuiliani
(1828 - 3rd January 1895)

Ropuiliani was the daughter of a great Mizo chief of North, Lalsavunga. Ropuiliani was one of the bravest souls in Mizoram who opposed British aggression.



Sambhudhan Phonglo
(12th March 1850 - 12th February 1883)

He vehemently protested against British authority over the people of Assam. With the intention to create a rebellion, he united a large number of youths to fight against the British.



U Tirot Sing Syiem
(1802 - 17th July 1835)

He was one of the chiefs of the Khasi people of the early 19th century. His death is commemorated in Meghalaya as U Tirot Sing Day.

Unsung Janajati Heroes of North East Bharat in Freedom Struggle



Pa Togan Sangma
(Died 12th December 1872)

Pa Togan Nengminja was a brave warrior, born in the village of Samanda near Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya. He fought and died for his own motherland and community.



U Kiang Nangbah
(Died 30th December 1872)

U Kiang Nangbah was a Jaiitia freedom fighter from Meghalaya who led an uprising against the British. A postage stamp was issued by Government of India to commemorate him in 2001.



Kamala Miri
(1894 - 22th April 1943)

Kamala Miri participated in the Quit India movement along with the youths from his own Mishing tribe in Golaghat. In 1942 he was arrested for participation in the Quit India movement.



Chengjapao Doungel
(4th March 1868 - 28th August 1928)

Chengjapao Doungel, the unsung Kuki Hero of India was born in Aisan village in Sadar Hills, Manipur. He fought against british to attempt to protect the sovereignty of the Kukis

Unsung Heroes of Phulaguri Dhewa: Lakar Deka, Sonbor Lalung and Rongbor Deka

✍ Dr. Tridip Kr. Goswami & Dr. Ahique Elahi

Introduction

Phulaguri Dhewa was the first revolt against British, which was started 150 years before in the history of Assam; it was the first peasant revolt. Phulaguri is situated in Nagaon District. The revolt is known as Phulaguri Dhewa as it is named after the place Phulaguri. The significance of the revolt is based on the economic exploitation by the British and imposition of unjust taxation on the common farmers by a series of economic policy formulations. The farmer uprising in the Phulaguri area of central Assam occurred in October 1861. It was the first ever peasant movement in the context of Indian freedom movement, which took place under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It was also the first ever non-cooperation movement of Indian freedom struggle because the farmers of Phulaguri region had refused payment of taxes to the British administration.

At that time the place was mostly populated by the Tiwa Community people who chiefly lived by Poppy cultivation. For the Economic benefit of the British, they started selling Opium, which was totally against the tradition of the Tiwa Community of greater Phulaguri. Consequently, in 1861 the British Government fully banned the Poppy cultivation but they continued to sell opium for increasing their revenue. This resulted in a great loss to the Tiwa community people and truly speaking, this forced the people to think against the British.

Objectives of the Study: The study has

following objectives-

1. To know about unsung heroes of Assam and their contribution to the freedom movement.
2. To know about causes and consequences of Phulaguri Dhewa peasant movements.

Methodology: This article is based on qualitative methods of analysis. Secondary sources of data has been used in this article for understanding problem.

Besides the British government imposed tax on “Tamul-Pan” (Battle-Nut), this again disturbed the economic condition of the Tiwa people more badly than before. This news spread all over Assam and more than 1500 peasants assembled at Phulaguri and organized a “Raijmel” to oppose the decision of the British. The Raijmel concluded with a decision that they would submit a petition to the Deputy Commissioner of Nagaon for withdrawing the ban on Poppy Cultivation and not to fix any type of tax on “Tamul Pan” for the greater benefit of the Assamese people in general and the Tiwa people in particular.

Herbert Sconce, the then the Deputy Commissioner of Nagaon was not interested at all with these issues and he misbehaved with the Tiwa people who met him as the representatives of the “Raijmel”. After this incident, the peasants once again gathered at Phulaguri for discussing issues and they continued it for five consecutive days from 15th October, 1861 onwards. Initially, the members of peasants were about one thousand, all armed with bamboo sticks. By 18th October, the number increased to 4000. This news reached the ears of

the Deputy Commissioner and he sent his assistant commissioner Lieutenant singer to discuss the matter with the peasants. In this meeting, Assistant Commissioner was against the views of the peasants and one Jati Kalita, explained how the views of the commissioner were against their interest. Singer did not like all these and ordered all to leave the place at once. He also strictly ordered his “Sepoys” (Soldiers) to snatch away the bamboo sticks of the peasants while these was going on, a peasant struck singer on his head and felled him. By this time, other furious peasants also come to the spot and repeatedly struck Singer from all corners and consequently, Singer died and they carried his dead body and threw it to the Kalang River. The other police personnel who accompanied Singer, left the place immediately after this incident. After this, many peasants were arrested and sent to temporary jails at Raha and Phulaguri. In connection with this riot, Lakkar Deka, Songbor Lalung and Rongbor Deka were hanged and some other peasants were sent to Kaliyapani.

In the eyes of the British, it was a very unimportant incident but in reality, this incident of Phulaguri brought out the fact that the people of Assam knew how to practice and preserve their rights. This highlighted the unity of the Tiwa community and the Fishing community people who loved their native land more than their lives. At that time, other community people also supported the rioters and taught a lesson to the British. After this, the British government had withdrawn all kinds of taxes.

Some Major Causes of Phulaguri Dhawa Movements:

The immediate cause was the exorbitant taxes imposed by British administration on the farmers of Assam. The British also introduced many oppressive taxation measures, which were not in keeping with the income level of the people as well as the economic situation of that time.

The colonial regime of the British had upset

the common people as well as the erstwhile ethnic rulers of the region. British also imposed taxes on the forest products made from bamboo, cane, wood etc.

Conclusion

In the history of Assam as well as of India, the freedom struggle movement in north east was largely ignored and none of its exploits could find a honourable mention in the history of freedom struggle of India. Truly speaking, opposition to the British rule in the north east was the beginning of the non-cooperation movement in Assam. This was a genuine and effective inspiration to the peasants of the other parts of India. The British disturbed the social fabric of the people of this region and inflicted inhuman atrocities on the common people. They forced Laxman Singh Deka Senapoti, Rangbar Deka and Changbar Lalung, all leaders of the uprising, to surrender before the colonial administration. The trio confessed to have killed Lt Singer. All of them were hanged in the Nagaon Jail. Some other leaders were banished to the Cellular Jail in Andaman Island. Thus a peasants movement was Suppressed ruthlessly.

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Vir Sombhudhan Phonglo

✍ Ron Kemprai

Early part of life:

Sambhudhan Phonglo was born at dawn on 12th March' 1850 in the tiny village of Lonkor, near the ancient temple of Goddess Ranachandi of the Dimasa Kachari Kings at Maibang in the Dima Hasao.. The day was Phalgoona Purnima as per Indian almanac. His father was Depronao Phonglo and mother Kasaidi Phonglo, who had five sons namely Sambhudhan, Umakant, Ramakant, Ramcharan, alies Ramen and Haisholong. Amongst them Sambhudhan was the eldest and Haisholong was the youngest. He spent his childhood at Longkhor. His parent was shifted to Gungjung in 1860 (aprox) and then again shifted to Saupra, a small village near Nanadisa. His parents again left this village and went to Semdikhor (Present Dihorphonglo village near Dautohaja Rail Station). While he was there at Semdikhor, he got married to Nasadi, daughter of Santudao Naiding, the village head. Sambhudhan dug a well there nearby the Moti-Nala, which name is presently identified as Sambhudhan ni Dikhor. History of Kachari Kingdom by Dr. S.C Goswami

Sambhudhan was a devotee of Sivarai. He was found much inclined to lord Siva since his childhood. He professed that Siva should be adored as the root of the three stages of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. Every day, Sambhudhan used to worship the Lord Siva and meditate at a place named Gragong, sitting in padmasana on a large rock in the river of Diyung. Every day, after returning home, he attended a large number of people who came to meet him. Surprisingly he grasped indigenous knowledge on traditional medicine to cure many diseases and

ailments. He appointed Desain Kemprai for assisting him in collecting herbs, shrubs from jungle which can be used as medicines. He cultivated many wild plant in his village and kept them in the form of herbarium and stored them for future used. His name and fame spread and people from many corners came to him with many hopes. People look upon him as theosophist and curer of ills. (Oral note of Gumidon Kemprai in 2006 of Longma near Haflong.)

Revolt against whites (British):

The British annexed Southern part of Dimaraji i.e Dimasa-Kachari Kingdom of Cachar in 1832. But the hills Division of Dimaraji, comprising the north of Cachar, Dayung Valley, Khopili Valley and Dhansiri Valley including the ancient capital Dimapur, "the Brick City" of Dimasa-Kachari Kingdom (1015-1535 A.D) was retained and held by Tularam, the General of the King of Cachar. But after the death of Tularam, the hill Division was annexed by the British in 1854. Subsequently, in 1866, different parts this territory like Dayung Valley, Kopili Valley had been merged to the district of Nowgong and Dhansiri valley and part of North Cachar was merged with newly created District, Naga Hills. The rest formed the North Cachar hills comprising exclusively the hilly region.

Sambhudhan was not happy with the divide and rule policy of the British, which was intended to weaken the native people. He could not console his mind that the white foreigners should rule the Kacharis of Dimaraji. Sambhudhan therefore decided to rebel against the British. He observed that although the British had annexed the territory but they were not able to conquer the heart of the

native people. He therefore considered that everything was not lost. He resolved to prepare for a last-ditch battle.

Sambhudhan toured extensively in the North Cachar Hills for mass contact and organising people. He recruited a large number of youths to form revolutionary force against the whites. He was in search of his Principal Adviser and Subordinate Commander to look after his force. He appointed Mansingh Kemprai as Principal Adviser and Molonthong Thaosen as subordinate Commander and established his training camp at Maibang near the Goddess Ranachondi Temple. For smooth functioning of his training centre at Maibang, Sambhudhan had to meet a considerable amount of expenditure; he therefore collected levy from the local people. The increasing activities of Sambhudhan had caused to be a great concern to the British, and which bound to the British to deal with firm hands on the charge of revolting against the Sambhudhan's group. The Sub-Divisional Officer of North Cachar had issued summons to Sambhudhan and his Principal Adviser Mansingh Kemprai and subordinate Commander Molonthong Thaosen. But they did not care to appear before him. On further advice from the Deputy Commissioner, a warrant of arrest was issued by the Sub-Divisional Officer and dispatched a police-force under a police officer for apprehension of the Sambhudhan and his group. But the officer failed to execute the order and came back with a letter from Sambhudhan.

The letter was written by Mansingh on being dictated by Sambhudhan in the following format

You whites bubble
If you have any desire for food
To eat on this earth,
And
If you have any desire for water
To drink on this earth,
You should leave our kingdom
Before I reach you (at Gunjung)
No army would induce Sambhudhan

To appear before an illegal authority
And
Any army despatched to Maibang
Would be completely annihilated.

Mr. Soppi, who held the charge of SDO, considered that the situation of the Sub-Division is going to deteriorate and therefore he met Deputy Commissioner, Major Boyd at Silchar. They crushed the movement almost brutally. Therefore, in January, 1882, the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by the Sub-Divisional Officer, marched to Maibang with a contingent of 25 Frontier Police.

Sambhudhan was quite aware of probable attack by the British at any moment. Therefore, he had alerted his men before-hand that should outside force visit Maibang. The Major Boyd and his party reached Maibang in an afternoon. On next day, they marched to the Sambhudhan Camp in the early morning. Strangely he found no man there, only the scattered huts of Sambhudhan's cadres on the top of the hills. Suddenly, after few moments the alarm rang and men of Sambhudhan rushed from the surrounding hills equipped with double edged swords. Major Boyd alerted his force and ordered not to fire until hard-pressed. Sambhudhan came out from one side of the hills followed by his men and marched toward Major Boyd. As he came closer the security of Major Boyd stood in between them, but Sambhudhan fearlessly struck the security guard with his sword which glanced off his rifle causing his instant death, and Major Boyd also at the same time lost his right arm, which resulted in his fatal death. Whereupon, Mr. Soppit, SDO, had taken charge and ordered them to fire. As firing was commenced, Sambhudhan's cadres from surrounding attacked them. Finally Mr. Soppit, the SDO, had lost the battle. More than 20 sepoy men had been killed. Luckily some of the sepoy managed to escape from there, and returned to Gunjung with death body of Major Boyd. The success of Sambhudhan in killing of Major Boyd and his force has made him to claim the title of "Vir". Oral history cited by Himkant Phonglo of

Sampari village, the victory of Maibang battle encouraged and inspired Sambhudhan and he planned to attack the Sub-Division, North Cachar, headquarter at “Gunjung”. On reaching Gunjung they killed two horses of SDO, and burnt all the Government buildings and documents of the Sub-Division office. The British had to temporarily shift their office to Silchar. Finally, as a result of the incident, the British Govt. shifted their Sub-Division headquarter from Gunjung to Haflong in the year 1898.

Having being successful in driving out the British from the hills, Sambhudhan now turned to the plain of south Cachar to organise similar movement against the British rule there. There he then contacted Uzir Dibragede, an ex-army commander of last the Dimasa Kachari King, Raja Gobinda Chandra of Cachar. He collected iron with the help of his followers and gathered huge amount of donation from the villager, in order to make a weapon to fight with British. Sambhudhan had visited many Siva Temples established by the Dimasa-Kachari Raja of Cachar and he also built a Siva Temple at a place east of Sadagram and installed Mahadeva therein. Therefore, the place had been known as Mahadevapur.

In the meantime, the British Government got information of Sambhudhan’s organisational works in the plains near Silchar. The British made a policy to catch Sambhudhan alive from his house and arranged a woman “Rangsiringdi” to make friendship with his wife. One night this woman stayed in his house with the intention to remove his arms from his house. In the morning, he found no arms in his house to defend himself and his

house was cordoned by British force. Immediately he started running toward the jungle. While he was running a British sepoy threw his Khukri at him and it made a deep cut on his right leg. Still he continued on running and went to the jungles of Bhuban hills. He became weaker and weaker due to profuse bleeding. At last he was caught by the British force after 2 days of the attack on him. Sambhudhan took his last breath on 12th February’1883. Sombhudan, thus died a death of a martyr at a small and unknown place beside a spring near Igraleing in the North Khaspur locality. After his body was brought to the headquarter at Silchar, a police force was sent to bring Vir Sombhudan’s wife, Nasadi. But she was not there in the village. His old mother Kasaidi had received the death body of Vir Sombhudan.

After a year, Mansingh Kemprai, the Principal Adviser of Sombhudan was arrested in Tripura and brought to Silchar; and sentenced to penal servitude for life. There he fasted unto his death in the Silchar district jail. Desain Kemprai, the well known herbalist and Gadao Kemprai, were settled down at Sadagram, near the Snan-Gat.

Living blood relation of Sombhudan:

After the death of Vir Sombhudan, his wife Nasadi and daughter Dauridi were taken by relatives to the village Longma near Haflong. Dauridi got married with Mohendra Dibragedea resident of the village Phaiding near Dautuhaja Railway station.

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Rani Ropuiliani

✍ Ankur Dewri

The history of Indian's freedom struggle has abundant presence of great personalities with their awe inspiring accounts of courage and sacrifice for the motherland. In a similar tone, Rani Ropuiliani is also a revered name in Mizo society. They way people, a century after her death, recall stories of her struggle against the British Raj to ensure protection of her people and her state, it feels like an incident that took place yesterday.

Ropuiliani was the daughter of King Lalsavunga. Since childhood, her unique personality stood out amongst that of her friends and contemporaries. In 1848-49, an adult Ropuiliani was married to Vandula, nephew to the king of the western part of Mizoram. Therefore, she went on to become famous as the Queen of Western Mizoram. Around the year 1859 after their marriage, Ropuiliani and her husband began to live in Komjol leaving her own village Belpui. In the subsequent years, they kept shifting to other villages. It was in the year 1893 she was arrested by the British for raising her voice against them. Ropuiliani was then staying at Denlung, the place where her husband Vandula, her daughter Lalrengpui and son Dautona breathed their last.

Her son Dautona died fighting against the British. He was killed by a British officer called general Triger at Aithur village. General Triger wanted to bring a few places nearby Aithur under his control thereby diminishing the power Ropuiliani had over these places. Following which, a brutal battle broke out between the two but Dautona could not last longer before the general's army. He died in the battle eventually. In May 1889, when her husband Vandula died, she became the

Queen and continued the struggle for freedom along with her people. To force out the British powers by rising against them was her goal. She urged her people to be united against the British and their exploitative acts such as coercing them to work as slaves, extortion of taxes, felling of trees to construct roads etc. To raise awareness as well as form resistance among the masses against the injustice and oppressions of the British, she expressed that they (the British) have no right to rule over us by entrapping us with their deceptive policies. She knew very well about colonialist principles of the British and kept no stones unturned to form resistance against them. But the British started to get the Mizo kings under their control gradually by manipulating them.

Despite being uneducated, Ropuiliani was well aware of the plans of the enemies. She pledged that she will never allow their wishes to be fulfilled until she breathed her last and hoisted high the flag of resistance. First of all she stated to bring all the kings of small territories under one roof and ordered her army to stay ready for battle. But there was something else fated to happen. Whereas Rani Ropuiliani was getting ready to fight the british, it was her brother in law who did not want to die fighting. Therefore, he insisted to compromise instead. It was because they had already lost their faith upon themselves, and were of the opinion that they could lose everything through war and bloodshed, since they would not be able to fight the british army.

He told everyone that they might compromise instead of fighting against the British. But Ropuiliani was adamant to her resolution and she

neither compromised, nor had any talk with the English. To her, the only way out is through betting on everything thereby to continue with struggle till death.

By then, a new plan was devised by M.C. Murray the then Officer of Western Lushai Hills. His main objective was to diminish the control of Laldhuama, the youngest son of Ropuiliani, over his territories by reducing his mass base, to further compel him to abide by their orders. But Murray's plan went in vain.

Rani orders all the kings under her to be prepared with arms and ammunitions. But there was a traitor amongst them. Captain Murray came to know about the Queen's war strategies through a spy. On August 10, 1893, while the queen was getting ready for the war, Murray's army entered the Queen's village and arrested her along with her younger son Tyalhuama. She fought them with all her strength.

After she was arrested, Rani Ropuiliani was carried on a palanquin to Lungleias she refused to walk. On 12th August, 1893, Ropuiliani was put inside Lunglei Jail. British officers tried their best to convince her, presented before her many alternatives and even gave assurance of returning her the throne on certain conditions. But Ropuiliani turned a deaf ear to all their offers and remained glued to her view that the British must leave Mizoram and they don't have any right to rule over the Mizos by enslaving them. With her saying so, the British officers remained baffled.

Rani Ropuiliani was kept in jail for ten months. Despite being in jail, she kept motivating her fellow fighters to keep up with the struggle and warned

them not to trust the british. Few days later, two fellow inmates of Ropuiliani escaped the jail by tricking the soldiers. After this incident, British soldiers began to be vigilante, as they did not want to get into more trouble by allowing the Queen to escape. On 20th January, 1894, groups of Mizo army prepared for battle, approached the jail on the advice of Ropuiliani. Following that the British officers decided to take her to Chitagong Jain (Bangladesh) via Tlabung. She was taken to Chittagong Jail thereafter.

Queen Ropuiliani had to be carried on palanquin and after several days on 18th April, 1894, she was kept in Chittagong Jail. British Officers were well aware of Ropuiliani's popularity. She was kept in a separate cell with four persons to take care of her, as they suspected that keeping her with her fellow inmates might give birth to revolt.

Under the Regulation Act of 1818, a case of sedition was filed against Ropuiliani. After staying five months behind bars in Chitagong (Bangladesh) she suffered from diarrhea. On 3rd January, 1895, Rani Ropuiliani left for heavenly abode. On being informed about her death, Captain Shakespeare reached Ropuiliani's village with 25 soldiers. Her brave army took on their shoulders the task of bringing her lifeless body to Shalweng from Chittagong and arranging her funeral thereby paying their final tribute to the valorous patriot. On 22nd February, 1895 her mortal remains arrived from Chittagong and her funeral and other rituals were conducted with great honour. Although Ropuiliani is no more, she would always remain a symbol for patriotism and utmost respect to the soul of this country.



A Brief Account of Anti-Colonial Movements in the North East Hill

✍ Lungjengkwan Kameih

North East India is a mosaic of races and cultures. It is also the most important Tribal belt of the country, covering eight states (also known as the Asta Lakshmi) viz., Assam, Manipur and Tripura with sizeable tribal population and the tribal states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. In the historical process of migration and settlement which was a struggle for economic and social survival and political domination, there were contacts between various ethnic groups resulting into integration and assimilation of their respective traits. Yet despite the impact of the contact with the Hindu kingdoms, the conquering Ahoms, the invading Muslims and the British colonial administration, the tribes, more or less preserved their distinctive identity amongst India/s national life.

The Colonial Phase

After the British conquest, the hill tribes came under their colonial policy which aimed at the extension of the British empire, collection of revenues, maintenance of law and order, adjudication of disputes, exploitation of natural resources for capitalist enterprises, encouragement of the Christian missionaries for proselytizing activities on the pretext of civilizing the tribal people and provision of deceptive social welfare services. The British were the heir to the previous Ahom and Manipur regimes. In the early phase they followed a policy of intervention, than a policy of non-interference and later on a forward policy towards the hill tribes. They were either by design of circumstances, drawn into the conquest of the tribal territories. Though a personalized

administration was at the ground levels, they curtailed their military feuds and raids, introduced payments of house taxes and exploited the natural resources specially the forest in their areas.

The new British administrative policy reduced the former tribal kingdoms into districts or smaller administrative units, destroying the political and social status of the traditional tribal rulers and the elite which supported them. At the same time, new tribes who were hitherto, unadministered during the previous regimes, were conquered and brought under British administration. They started clubbing the tribes under major groups for administrative convenience which produced both exogenous and endogenous impact on the tribes themselves. For the first time, the tribes were confronted with a technologically superior civilization who intended to enforce their standard law and administration, their ethical and moral values and to exploit the natural wealth in the tribal areas for their own benefit and profit. The tribal contact with the colonial administration was the beginning of their exposures to the outside world. At the same time, the colonial authorities took the burden of ensuring the moral welfare of the tribes they called a "Civilising mission". Even the nature of the ownership of land in the tribal areas was decided to suit the colonial interest or design to deal with chiefs rather than the community or the clan.

Anglo Khasi Relationship

The Khasi state lies between Jantia and Garo hills. The first British contact took place after the annexation of the district of Sylhet and Assam by

the East India Company and after the grant of Diwani right of Bengal in 1765. Thereby, the Khasi became the company's neighbor to the north. Which until 1826, no European had visited this place. The Khasi were known to the British as troublesome intruders.

In the year 1826, David Scott realised the important of friendly relationship with the Khasis, with a specific objective to constructs roads between the newly acquired Assam and Sylhet through the Khasi hills. David Scott was impressed with the climatic condition of the Khasi hills. He was also thinking of getting a suitable land in the hills for building sanatoria.

The negotiation for opening of roads began when U. Tirot Singh, the Syeim (Raja) of Nonghlow expressed his desired to recover some portion of land, that had been once held by his ancestors in the plains. Mr. Scott granted his request on the condition that permission be granted for the unrestricted passage of British subject through his territories. The Raja convened a meeting for the discussion at Nonghlow. The principal Chieftains of Tirot Singh were present and the matter was discussed for two days, in the presence of David Scott and a treaty was concluded, by which the Khasis allowed to help them in constructing roads through their territories.

The relationship between the Khasis and the East India Company was very cordial at the initial stage. Bungalows were constructed, roads had been clear, improved system of agriculture and new vegetable were introduced. However, on 4th April 1829, the situation was changed with an act of cruelty inflicted by the Khasis, and converted their friendship into formidable enemies. The immediate cause was due to a Bungalow Charprasee, who told the Khasis that they were subjected to the same taxation as levied on the inhabitant of the plains. The Khasis who were suspicious of the real motive of the British rose against the British which led to the murder of two officers of the company, Lt. Bedingfield and Lt. Burtton and about 50 or 60 native subjects.

Lt. Bedingfield despite the warning of his friends entered the conference hall unarmed and was slaughtered. Lt. Burtton with his small numbers of army defended in his Bungalow, but on their way to Assam they were mercilessly killed. Troops were immediately called up from Assam and Sylhet to avenge the atrocious murder. Captain Lister, commanding the Sylhet Light Infantry drove the Khasis from post to post, stormed their entrenchment, penetrated in their camp, the Khasis being unable to fight the English, confined themselves and attacked upon small parties of five or six individual only. On October 1829, Zut Singh, the chief of Ramrys surrendered to the British, but he was murdered on November alongwith Nijchan Koonwar and Lall Chand. On 5th January 1831, a most serious assault was made by the Chief of Ramryn with the help of the Garros and attacked on the troop of Dewan (Pantan) Bogar, Bongnang in the British territory. It was an encounter against British Light Infantry in Sylhet as stated by Pemberton.

The company now felt the necessity to subjugate the neighbouring states of Dewan. A reward was offered for the apprehension of Lall Chand, the leader of the attacker of the Dowans and a collective fine of Rs. 5,000 has imposed upon the 8 (eight) villagers of Ramryn, and Rs. 10, 000 to the Chief of the six other states. Lall Chand could not be traced until he personally surrendered to the native officer incharge of the post of Nonglow.

Few days after the attack on the Dowars, a border village near Sylhet was attacked under the leadership of Munboot, they were pursued and defeated by Captain Lister. This was perhaps the last attempt made upon the settlement in the plains, though unequal contest was still continuing in the hills. Munboot had killed one chieftain of Tirot Singh and sought asylum for fear of Tirot Singh. After learning that his life could be spared, he surrendered on October 1832, to Lt. Townshont posted at Nonglow.

On 19th September 1832, Captain Lister and Lt. Rutherford were deputed by the T.C. Robertson

for the purpose of negotiating for surrender by Tirot Singh, but he refused to meet the officers, except at the residence of Singh Manich on the condition that they should be unarmed. The negotiation took place, without any positive outcome. Singh Manich begged that they should grant another interview in presence of two members of Tirot Singh, Jeet Roy and Man Singh, but this two failed to go ahead as Tirot Singh failed to attend the meeting on the ground of illness. Tirot Singh was unable to continue hiding any longer in the caves. So he was eventually captured by the British on 9th January 1833, and he was sent to Myning, from there he was taken to Guwahati and deported to the Dacca jail, where he stayed as state prisoner for life.

Rujind Singh, was installed by Captain Jenkins on 29th March 1834 on the condition that the British can construct bridge and shall have the right to construct road in whatever direction they want. Though the rebellion was suppressed, the heroic struggle made the British recognize the Khasi Syeimship (Kingship) and made term with them when the Khasi states accepted the British paramountcy which remained till the British rule was rooted out from the Indian soil in 1947.

British Relation with Garo

Garo hill was treated as a part of British India from the very inception of British rule in the country. Initially, it formed a part of Goalpara; the area bordering the plains was under the control of the Zamindars. The Muhpara and Kairairbari states were forced to pay tribute and attacked them many times and brought them under their control. In 1815 the Garos attacked the two states and massacred the entire family of Mohendra Narayan. The Garo uprising of 1815, was not a new thing. The Garos from the beginning of the British rule, continued to be a terror to the people living in the adjoining lands. David Scott, who was sent to enquire into the episode, was of the view that the Garo raid during 1815, was the result of the oppressive rule of the Zamindars and he suggested that Garo hill must be separated, and put under the direct control of the British. His proposal was accepted by

Governor General in Council and the area came under direct British rule.

After, the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo-1826, Garo hills along with Diwani Thanas of Goalpara Karaibari and Bijni was transferred to Assam, Scott became the first Commissioner of Assam. He followed the policy of recognizing local chief as Zamindars (known as Laskar). The Laskar had to sign a written agreement.

Apart from the Laskar, the post of Zamindar were also created. Later Captain Morton the RC of Goalpara suggested the creation of the post of police Zamindar in 1865. Zamindars were also given limited criminal and civil power. They were also given old muskets and some ammunition. They had to execute the agreement bonds and were given sanads by the government. Thus the post of Zamindars were intended to replace the British police, which had no jurisdiction over the hills. The collections claimed by the Zamindars and duties levied on the hills were abolished. The Garos continue to create trouble to the British by raiding, inspite of the non-interference policy followed by the British.

As in the case of the hill tribes, the raids by the Garos were followed either by expeditions or by blockade. As these measures failed to bring direct result, a separate district with headquarters at Tura was formed in 1869, by separating it from Goalpara districts. Similar arrangement was made for roads, buildings and police as in the Naga hills. The office of Laskar and Zamindar were at the same time amalgamated, and a rough judicial system inaugurated under Lt. Willimson's control.

This step met with favourable success in villages within the administered areas, however, the situation still remained uncontrolled. In 1871, and 1872 the Garos in remote villages gave some trouble by attacking the surveyors and raiding some protected Garo villages. It was therefore, decided to bring them under subjugation and this was done without any difficulty in the cold season of 1872-73. Three detachment of police made through the country and easily overcame all resistances. The

headmen, who were responsible in the recent raids surrendered and a peaceful administration was established throughout the district by passing the Act XXII of 1822. By Regulation I of 1879 which gave a legal effect to the finally-demarcated boundary between the hills and Goalpara. Many skirmishes and some cases of confrontation still arose due to inter community feuds but were ultimately settled in accordance with the customary law enforced by a panchayat of hill men. The most remarkable of these customs is that of 'dai' or 'compensation'.

The Garos were the first mountain tribe with whom the British came in contact. In 1816, the Garos invaded the territory of the Kariabari Zamindar and burnt the residence of David Scott. The Commissioner of Cooch Behar, was sent by the government to enquire into the incident and there after they came to know that the cause of the raid was the oppressive rule of the Zamindars. Therefore, ultimately the Garo hill was brought under the direct control of the British power in 1873.

Anglo-Jaintia Relation (Upto Annexation & Revolt)

By the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26, the Burmese were expelled from Assam and the Jaintia Raja Ram Singh was confirmed as the controller of both in the hills and the submountainous tract in the north bank of the Surma river. During the unsettled condition after the Anglo-Burmese war, the Raja of Jaintia hills used to raid on the Southern border of the Nawgong districts between 1830-1832, he was repeatedly called upon to remove the outposts which he established without authorisation at Chappar Mukh, at the confluence of the Kopili and Doyang rivers.

In 1832, the Raja of Gobha, in the west of Nawgong, one of the petty chieftains dependent on Jaintia, acting under their orders assassinated and seized 4 British subjects three of them were immolated at the shrine of Goddess Kali and the fourth one escaped and gave information's of the

occurrence. At this time, Raja Ram Singh died and Rajendra Singh surrendered. He was asked to give up the perpetrators of the outrage and warned him that he would be dealt seriously, if he failed to do the same as well as stop protecting of the past perpetrators- which he had made on the lives of the British subjects in the district of Sylhet. The young Raja remained adamant; at last, the British government resolved to disposses him of his territory.

On the 15th of March 1835, Captain Lister with two companies of the Sylhet Light Infantry, took formal possession of Jaintia and issued a proclaimed announcing the annexation of the Jaintia parganas to British territory, a few weeks later Gobha was also annexed. The Raja, out of frustration gave up the hilly tract which was unproductive to the English. Hence the whole areas passed into the hands of the British.

It was placed under the political officer of Khasi Hills, and direct management was vested in the Assistant who was stationed at Jowai. No revenue was demanded, heinous offences were tried by the Political Agent or his Assistant, petty cases both civil and criminal cases were dealt by the local headmen of whom – there were 15 Dalois, four Sardars. By the Act IV of 1835, provision of Judicial control was extended over Khasi and Jaintia hills. Raja was given Rs. 500/- a monthly pension, and made him retired in Sylhet with all his property.

Anglo Jaintia Relations (Revolt) 1860-1862

The English having come into contact with the Jaintias and developed relationship between the two after the First Anglo-Burmese War which was concluded by the Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826. The Jaintias revolted against the colonial rule of the British after the Jaintia hills was annexed to the British territory. During the Revolt of 1857, the Jaintias Kings were excited to hear that the British Raj was coming to an end and some ex-Rajas began to intrigue the people with a view to regain their positions. Though the English did not want to interfere with the Jaintias it was not averse to

consolidating its authority over to the already conquered territory. In 1858, Mr. Allen of the Board of Revenue proposed that the Syntengs should contribute revenue in acknowledgement of the British Supremacy. He further Pointed out that a light and judicious taxation would help preservation of tranquility and good order in the Jaintia hills. After considering the proposal for 2 years, in 1860 a house taxes was imposed on the Syntengs. The Jaintias rose in revolt against the imposition but the British force put it down before it could make any head way. As a result, the government took up immediate administrative improvement in the hills. The civil officer was appointed and posted at Cherrapunji. He was empowered to remove the Dalois (head man) for misconduct. The Dalois were to report all criminal offences to the police but at the same they were also given more power. The police were forbidden to interfere with the internal affairs of the village for unnecessary cases.

But during such congenial administrative reformation in the Jaintia hills, when the Imperial Finance imposed an income tax throughout British India, Jaintia hills was also included in the scheme. Besides house tax, the income tax too was imposed in the Jaintia hills. The whole Khasi hills escaped from the scheme, some 310 persons of the Jaintia hills were required to pay this new tax amounted to Rs. 1,259. The rate of income tax was varied – highest rate was Rs. 9/- Rs. 5/- and Rs. 4/- per annum. For one or two years from 1860 -61, they paid it without complain but when they heard a rumor that another tax would be imposed on the Pan (betel) and on trade, an order against the use of arms by the tribesmen, created a general discontentment against the British. The immediate cause of the revolt was the high handedness of the police, imposition of restrictions on the burning of dead bodies near the station building and interference in some religious ceremonies.

Major Rowlatt said that the Rebellion in 1862, was due to the establishment of the Christian Mission. Mr. Gengal Showers mentioned the taking away of the shield of the chiefs was another cause

of the revolt. Whatever be the case, all the above was the contributing factors for the Jaintia's Rebellion in 1862.

Events

The Rebellion broke out in January 1862. Jowai police station was burnt to the ground and all show of British authority was swept away. Two Regiments of Sikhs and the Elephant Battalion moved into the hills to crush the revolt but the Jaintias with bows and arrows faced them with stiff resistance. They planted bamboo spikes all along the roads leading to the village but after four months, the Jaintias began to be losing the ground and the force searched them even in the jungle and then general pacification was followed. Peace was not disturbed after that.

Results

A British officer with full power of supervision was posted accordingly in the Jaintia hills. House-tax was retained, Dalois were to be chosen by people subjected to the civil officer's approval and to hold office during their good behaviours.

Panchayats were to be formed with villages officers who had to exercise some civil and criminal power subject to the revision of the British officer in important cases. Dalois and Sirdars were responsible for police duties, Education was to be liberally encouraged, in this Welsh Mission was entrusted for educational extension, European officer who would be at Jowai were to know Khasi languages, and proposed to open up some 8 roads. Income tax was virtually withdrawn.

Anglo-Naga Relations (1832-1850)

The hilly tract of land inhabitant by the various tribe of the Nagas had never been subjugated by any other king and until the Burmese occupation of Cachar, it was not part of the British policy to absorb it. The idea of expedition to this land began when the British wanted to open a direct route from Manipur to Assam, through the country of the Nagas, which the Nagas were strongly opposed to. This led to a conflict between the two.

The Anglo-Naga relation can be divided into three broad periods:

- (i) Period of Exploration;
- (ii) Period of Expedition, and
- (iii) Period of Subjugation

1. Period of Exploration:

In their course of expedition to open a direct communication between Assam and Manipur. The British came into conflict with the Nagas. As a result two successive expeditions had been sent, the first in 1832, led by Captain Jenkins and Pemberton, the second expedition led by Lt. Gordon accompanied by Gambhir Singh. In both the cases the British confronted similar disruption from the Nagas. In spite of such difficulties they somehow managed to cross the wild country. But, the mission proved futile due to raids by the Nagas which became more and more frequent. Therefore, the government of Bengal empowered the local authorities to devise measures in consultation with the Kachari chief Tularam and the chief of Manipur to put down the uprising of the Nagas. However, the situation in the Naga hills deteriorated and demanded strong action. So in, 1838, expedition to the Angami areas under direct British officer was formally approved by the court of directors, but was annulled due to the threatening attitude of the Burmese and sub-Assistant Grange was entrusted to conduct the task.

2. Period of expedition

As entrusted in January 1839, Mr. Grange undertook his first expedition against the Angamis Nagas. But, transportation difficulties and failure of expected aid from the superintendent of Cachar forced him to cut short his mission.

Though the first expedition failed, Grange himself was dispatched for a second expedition in 1840. With much difficulty he manages to reach the first Naga village in the Samugating hills on 24th January 1840. There he meted out deterrent punishment to Popolongmai and Japomah Nagas, because the former had killed a porter while the

latter attacked him on his return from demonstration. He also, established Military post at Dimapur, Senkhar and Mahunggoliya for the protection of the well dispersed and encouraged of intercourse between the people of the plains and the hills. This expedition of Grange though unable to subdue the Angamis, suspended their raids to some extent.

Meanwhile, there was definite change in policy of the British government towards the hill tribes of North East to remain on the defensive and to bring them to reason by friendly intercourse, the government, playing as a role of peacemaker.

Notwithstanding, this human sentiments, reckless raids by the Nagas still continued, who displayed the heads of the victims as a trophy of victory. Seeing the gravity of the situation, the government adopted a most stringent measure against the barbarous tribe in order to contain them from repetition of their outrages. Therefore, during 1850-51, as many as ten expeditions had been sent under Vincent. As a result of which Khonoma a stronghold of the Angami tribe was captured and severe punishment was meted out to offending tribe. The Governor General, Lord Dalhousie laid down a policy of non-interference in regard to the Nagas, which lasted for ten years. Accordingly, British troops were withdrawn from the hills and the Nagas were left to their own fate.

3. Period of Subjugation

It is worth mentioning that the relation between the British and Nagas before and after the introduction of non-interference was shocking episode of raids committed by the Nagas. Though, the British tried to be friendly in many ways, the Nagas who had been addicted to raiding continued their reckless raids resulting in the loss of the many British subjects including some officers. In short, the period from 1822 to 1850 was a period of feuds and raids.

In 1873 Sir George Campbell the Governor, though to established political control and influence over the tribes without any association of actual

sovereignty over the tribal areas. The plan was accepted by the government. In February 1894, the Naga hills were made over the charge of chief commissioner of Assam. Still the raids continued.

In February 1877, the Magemah people attacked the Kachari village. This naturally compelled the government to change its policy of non-interference. In accordance with this policy the government proposed to establish head quarters station in the interior of the hills with a view to strengthen the administration. The secretary of state for India, agreed and in 1878, Kohima was occupied and made Headquarters of the District. Thus, the Naga Hills were annexed.

Anglo-Lushai Rebellion and Expedition

Mizoram which was known as Lushai Hills during the colonial period received their attention of British imperialist after the annexation of Assam by the British in 1825. The British capitalist began to extend their commercial exploitation of the region with the introduction of tea plantation. Under the circumstances the British officials had to invoke their frontiers policy which was mainly determined by the need for the protection of their economic interest. Another determinant factor of British frontier policy was the Burma-phobia (fear the Burma). Therefore, the British intended to form the whole hill regions between Burma and Assam as a buffer zone.

The tension between the Lushai and the British started from 1834. One significant fact was that the Lushais did not evolve a common kingship to deal with the British imperialist. In North Lushai hills alone there were as many as 35 chiefs and in the South-Lushai hill there were 21 chiefs. So the Lushai Chiefs could not put up a unified front against the British. Either some Chief were in the side of British and other Chiefs put a great fight against British. The history of Anglo-Lushai expedition was marked by raid and counter-raid. As a result the British had to send military expeditions against the Lushai Chiefs. In 1842, series of raids were conducted in the inhabitants of British-India district of Arakan.

The Lushai forces also killed some Sylhet wood cutters. At this British officials at Sylhet sent three intermediaries of whom one was killed and the remaining two intermediaries were released later on for a substantial ransom which was paid by the British. To avenge the killing of this Sylhet wood cutter, the British sent the first military Expedition under Sir Arthur in 1842, but, the military expedition proved a failure. Again on 16 April 1844, about 200 Lushai committed raid on Partabghar (North of Kailashar) and chopped off the heads of about 20 people and carry their heads along with six captives. On hearing this news the British sent the second expedition under the command of Captain Blackwood in 1844. Blackwood commanded the Sylhet light infantry but, because of inaccessibility of the jungle, Blackwood could not make much progress. Another Military Expedition was sent under the command of Colonel Lister in 1850, which was quite successful. Because of the intertribal war, the Lushai chief captured 400 Kukis as captive and Colonel Lister wanted to liberate these Kuki captives from the Lushai chiefs. Lister was of the view that all the hostile Lushai chief could be subdued only by military power alone and therefore he suggested that war should be waged against them and control over all these frontier regions should be enforced once for all. However this suggestion was not acceptable to the than British military strategists. Colonel Lister recognized the need for an appropriate intelligence service to keep up with the activities of belligerent Lushais in the Lushai hills. The British authorities doubted the efficacy of inter military expedition against the Lushais.

Another turbulent tribes were the Lakhers, against whom Lt. Hopkinson expedition was sent. The Lakhers destroyed any villages which were in anyway suspected of having assisted the British. In 1860, the daring raid against the British was conducted by Rothangpuia. It was this chief who had recently raided one village in Tripura resulting in the killing of 186 British subjects. The chief make some understanding with the Haolong Sailo group

of Christians but, threaten the impending invasion from Laher Rothangpuia, later on sought an assistance and protection from the British against the Lakhers by means a garrison of 40 British troops against the Lakhers was established at his village. In Anglo-Lushai relation Lt. Colonel Tomb Herbert Leewin played a very important role in establishing the relation between the Lushai and the British. Tomb Leewin was popularly known to the Lushai as Thangliana. He wrote a book "A fly on the Wheel". He died and buried there.

The British officials blew hot and cold policy against the Lushai in 1864, the British adopted what is known as 'Appeasement policy'. To implement the policy Captain Steewart the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar began to establish some good understanding with Lushai chiefs but, a conflict between the Lushai Chiefs and the Nagas made the policy unworkable. Captain Steewar was succeeded by the Mr. Edgar as the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. Mr. Edgar was a lion-hearted man. So Mr. Edgar set off on a dangerous mission to make contact with the Lushai rulers. But as we have indicated there was no supreme power in Lushai hills with whom negotiation could be made. While, Mr. Edgar was actually carrying on a negotiation with Suatpuilala, another group of Lushai began to attack the British subjects. In spite of this difficulty Edgar made a settlement with Suatpuilala, which was published as 'Sanad' in 1871. One significant Lushai raid which changed the relationship between the Lushai and the British was the raid of Alexanderapore, Anerkhal, Monierkhal and Nudigram. In the raid of Alexandrapore, Dr. Winchester was shot down on his own tea-estate and his daughter Mary of 5 (five) years only was kidnapped and taken to the Lushai hills, where she was keep safely for a year or two by chief Bengkhuaia of Sailo village near Sialsuh. The Lushai raids led to the Lushai Hills Expedition in 1871-1872 and ultimately, the Lushai Hills was conquered and constituted into a Lushai Hills district in 1896 under the province of Assam. The British adopted the Chin Hills Regulation -1896, and recognized the Lushai Chiefs and indirect rule

was introduced in the district which is now state of Mizoram. General administration and political contact was exercised by the British Superintendent leaving all the village level administration including land ownership to the chief who administered thir jurisdictional area as per provisions of the customary laws.

Anglo-Dimasa Kacharis Relation

The Dimasa –Kacharis with their long history of independence in upper Assam, Maibong hill and Cachar plain with their capital at Khaspur, after the British conquest of North East India was split into plain Cachar and hill Cachar. The kingdom of Cachar was annexed by the British in 1832 and was incorporated in the district of Cachar under one superintendent and latter on a Deputy Commissioner, while the hill Cachar known as the North Cachar hill were put under the autonomous suzerainty of Tularam Senapati in 1854, it was annexed into the British province of Assam. Thus the Kacharis lost their political independence.

Anglo-Arunachal Pradesh Relation

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were free people in the literal sense both during the Ahom rule and early British rule in Assam. Only the considerable of the British hegemony over Tibet and peace in the foothills made the British to make an attempt to exercise loose political control by sending out occasional expedition to suppress uprising. The famous expedition being the Anglo-Adi conflict, known as Abor war in 1911. These tribes were brought under the Balipara Frontier Tract and Sadya Frontier Tract, which were latter on combined into North Eastern Frontiers Agency (NEFA) now Arunachal Pradesh.

Anglo –Tribal Relation in Manipur

In the case of Manipur, the hill tribes had an autonomous status during the precolonial Period. After the British conquest of Manipur, they were brought under a common administrative system. But they were separated from the administration of the valley of Manipur. The British followed a policy of protection of the hill tribes from the

oppression and exploitation of plain men and Maharaja of Manipur. A policy which was resented by the Maharaja of Manipur. But this policy however did not win over the tribe who were to pay taxes to the British while they paid nothing to the Raja of Manipur. Indeed, the root cause, inter-alia of Haipou Jadonang and Haipei Rani Gaidinliu anti British movement was the imposition of taxes in the hill areas of Manipur.

Perspective for the Future

If the past is any indication, there will be a more intense struggle for the control of the natural resources of the tribal areas between the indigenous tribals on the one hand, and the state or monopoly, both tribal and non-tribal capitalist interests. The best example is in Manipur hills and Tripura. In Manipur, the tribes are demanding the VIth Schedule district autonomy and are opposed to the introduction of the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 which they fear, will alienate the tribal lands. The demand for the autonomous state in North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong, the Bodoland, Zeliangrong Homeland and the continuing Naga and Meitei insurgency, the Zomi integration movement show that the tribes who are suffering from deprivation due to neglect and exploitation by the vested interests, in most cases, the capitalist forces, and the state are asserting their own rights to protect their lands, culture, language and economy by raising demands for autonomy. The existing district level autonomy under the VI th Schedule is not adequate to meet the tribal aspirations.

There is a need for examining the prospect of re-organisation of states in tribal areas of not only in the North East but in the whole of the country. But the basic question is the tribal rights of self management of their resources and their participation in the development programmes are to be fully acknowledged and implemented.

The tribes of north eastern India, during their long history have indicated that they are destined to live within the Indian Union, enjoy the benefits of the democratic, socialist and secular constitution of the country, and share the common joys and sufferings of the nation.

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Freedom Movement in North-East India

✍ Dr. Phirmi Bodo

“A people without knowledge of their past and correct History, origin and culture is like a tree without roots”

Introduction:

India is a land of wisdom and knowledge. However, since the medieval history period all these were plundered by foreign invaders which led to the weakening of the foundation of this ancient repository of knowledge and rich culture. Now, what we see as Sri Aurobindo says ‘diminution of the power of thought, the spread of ignorance in the birthplace of knowledge’. Post 1947, many western scholars representing the academic world voyaged to India to study this ancient civilization, which led to the distortion, misinterpretation and misinterpretation of culture, tradition and history of India. Many facts were ignored or were not studied in depth, many were assumed depending on the inclination and bias of the scholars from West. It is a challenge to have a clear and true understanding about Indian history, where most textual and theoretical studies are European narrative penned during the British times that continued even after the independence. This has severely eroded the centuries old oneness and the cultural continuity of this ancient civilization. India is a land of freedom and free thinkers. The most non-radical, non-fundamentalist country ever existed in the history of human civilization was this Indian civilization or Indic civilization one can think of. However, due to our failure to deal with the motivated distortion and crooked maneuvers of the anglicized historians, this land of ours had to endure the brutal intellectual assault coupled with foreign invasion.

Specially, north-east India has been remaining a challenging region in this context. It has been the site of separatist movements from a very long time. The alienation factor is one the most disturbing element. The British policy of institutionalized segregation of the hills snapped the centuries old social, cultural and commercial ties that existed between the people of the plains and the hills.

A myth was propagated by the then academicians and historians that there was no connection between north-east and the rest of India. The north easterners were branded as semi-naked/naked people living in the hills and jungles with no social connection with the people of plains and remained excluded from the region. Such kinds of false and colonial narratives were propagated by British academia.

Freedom achieved by India is a combined result of the sacrifice and relentless struggle of many brave warriors of our country. It was the contribution and devotion of those thousands selfless souls who fought against the tyranny, petty politics of divide and rule and above all in order to free their land from foreign rule. As already said India is a land of freedom and free-spirited people, especially the people of north-east. The slogan which gained popularity during French revolution - Liberty, Equality and Fraternity was actually practiced in this land of ours since time immemorial. That is why, India, the largest democracy in the world had seen a very long history of freedom struggle against the foreign invasion

be it Turks, Mughal and British.

Millions of natives came out to fight the British rule and gave their lives to break the shackles of oppression. The determination to free India from the British colonialists were as strong and significant in northeast like the rest of India. Along with the rest of India, there were thousand great freedom-fighters who sacrificed their lives in the north-eastern part of our country. Like the rest of India, even in north-east part of India many such kshatriya warriors were born and laid down their lives for the sake of their motherland such as Bir Tikendrajit Singh, Rani Gainginliu, Haipou Jadunang, U Tirot Singh etc. These heroes fought valiantly for freedom because absence of freedom was slavery for them.

The need of the hour is to bring to the fore the heroics of all such warriors of north-east India and pay homage to their hallowed memory for they laid down their lives for our tomorrow. It is our moral duty to recognise their struggles and rewrite our history of freedom struggle for our posterity.

India's fight for freedom was a very long and arduous struggle for ousting the foreign domination. Keeping pace with the rest of our country many heroes from north-east also fought relentlessly against colonial powers of British regime. However, their stories were side-lined from the pages of history of Indian freedom struggle for one reason or the other. Such stories need to be acknowledged and highlighted in their true perspective opposed to the distortion meted out by the colonial as well as our anglicized historians.

Unsung Heroes

Veer Sambudhan Phonglo is one such name who was a pioneer in launching movement against the British and fought relentlessly for the cause of motherland. He was one such mighty figure from Assam who inspired many youths of his community to join his army to wage war against the hegemonic rule of British. It is an attempt to give a true understanding of such courageous and brave warrior who belong to Dimasa Kachari community

and to establish the fact that how the ethnic communities of Northeast unanimously participated in this national freedom movement of India.

Jaya Thaosen was such valorous freedom fighter of the Dimasa Kachari community. The Kachari kingdom, was once flourishing royal dynasty before the British destroyed it. Jaya had grown-up listening to the stories of the glorious past of her region. The stories about the grandeur of the Cachar kingdom, the contributions of Dimasa King and Sanskrit Pandit Raja Gobind Chandra and Senapati Tula Ram, also fought relentlessly against British and the contribution of freedom fighters such as Shambhudan Phunglo had inspired her to the core. She became resolute to repulse Britishers from India. Even as a young girl, her feeling of 'svraj'(self-governance) made her understand the unreasonable and brutal nature of the British. Often, she would question their conduct in the open which made her popular amongst the people. In 1944, Jaya formed an organisation of young patriots including Arjun Langthasa and Jowte Dao Kemprai who shared her passion and devotion for the freedom of the country. She procured arms for her compatriots and even provided training to them. After receiving the information of the INA reaching Manipur, she decided to join the INA and left for Kohima in Nagaland with 54 other compatriots. This encounter soon turned into a battle in which Jaya Thaosen and her compatriots fought valiantly and injured many of the Britishers. But unfortunately, Jaya Thaosen was martyred in this battle.

In the spring of 1944, Azad Hind Fauz ousted the British from a large part of North-East India. Netaji Chandra Bose came to Ruzazho village and established Azad Hind Govt with the active support of the Naga people. He appointed several Gaon Bura Dobashi and area administrator. Ruzazho was Netaji's first administered village in Naga Hills from 5th April to 13th April 1944.

Gainginliu, famously known as Rani Gaidinliu, joined the struggle against the British at the young

age of 13. Born on 26 January, 1915 at Nungkao (aka. Longkao) village in the present-day Tousem sub-division of Tamenglong District, Manipur, she belonged to the Rongmei Tribe, one of the three Zeliangrong Tribes. Her journey as a revolutionary began in 1927 as she joined her cousin Haipou Jadonang, who led the Heraka Movement, a movement for the revival of the Naga Tribal religion. At the age of 17, she led this movement against the British, which resulted in her arrest and a 14-year long imprisonment. At 17, she valiantly led many guerilla forces to fight against the British, and became a target for the British forces. She persuaded Zeliangrong people not to pay taxes and not cooperate with the British. They united as one and refused to assist the British which led several repressive measures imposed by the police and Assam Rifles, such as collective fines on the villagers. Her forces engaged in armed rebellion against the British in Cachar Hills (16 February 1932) and the Hangrum village (18 March 1932). The British forces launched a manhunt for her, which forced her to go underground. She moved across villages of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. The British Government declared monetary rewards for any valuable information about her location, including a 10-year tax break for the informant. Acknowledging her role in the struggle against the British, Jawaharlal Nehru called her the “Daughter of the Hills” and gave her the title “Rani” or queen.

There has been a trend to ignore the valour of the North-eastern region right from ancient history to modern history. I can say this that most of the people never heard the names of our own brethren who valiantly fought the British disregarding their individual safety and security. It is ironic that Indians are taught more about the invaders and destroyers of our country rather than our own heroes.

Unfortunately even today many amongst us including scholars suffer from the same attitude of separateness with north east region and the region is viewed as an isolated frontier with no

connection to the cultural continuum of India. I believe it's high time we become the voice for many such unheard of facts from the past, and began to accord the civilisations of the north-east their place in the history of India.

Tirot Sing is one of the most celebrated freedom fighters to have risen out of the Khasi Hills. The Tirot Sing Cave is an important memorial of this vivid, brutal, and often-ignored chapter of sub-continental history. An early 19th-century chief, Tirot Sing belonged to the faction of Khasi leaders who did not support the growing influence of the British in these eastern frontiers. The Anglo-Khasi war was fought and Tirot and his band of faithful followers used guerilla tactics to evade and strike the militarily superior colonial forces – a battle between guns on one side, and swords and arrows on the other side. After four years of struggle and a breach of trust amongst his own camp, he was eventually captured and sent to a Dhaka prison where he died in 1835. You can retrace the events of this war with a trip to the Tirot Memorial in Mairang and most notably, a cave system where the great warrior spent eluded the British officers and their loyal Indian agents who hunted him. His mastery of guerrilla warfare tactics along with the ability to organize his Khasi warriors played a great role in helping him take on the British. He was an inspirational leader who was fully aware of the necessity of gathering intelligence to facilitate decision-making. He was also an adept tactician and organizer. Meghalaya government declared 17 July as Tirot Sing Day in honour of this braveheart freedom fighter. The state has also instituted a prestigious award Tirot Sing Award for Arts and Literature in his name. A commemorative stamp has also been issued in Sing's memory.

Moje Riba was a patriot and one of the noblest sons of our motherland. He was motivated to join the Indian National Congress. Moje Riba and the village representatives of Daring Village assembled at Daring and decided to go to Sadiya to present their support to the Indian National Congress (INC) where they met Gopinath Bordoloi and Lalit

Hazarika. The latter asked him to garner support for the Indian National Congress. As per family sources, Moje Riba after joining the Indian National Congress (INC) became the first president of INC from Arunachal Pradesh. For his invaluable services and sacrifice for the Independence of India and Arunachal Pradesh he was honoured with Tamra Patra by the then Prime Minister of India Smti Indira Gandhi on the red-letter day of 25th years of Indian Independence on 15th August 1972. The great soul left us in 1982 at his native village Daring. His strong feeling of patriotism, boldness in action will remain as an inspiration to the generations to come. In his death Arunachal Pradesh has lost a great son of hers. Riba, credited with hoisting the national flag first in the state on 15.08.1947 at Dipa village in Lower Siang district, was born in 1890 (approx) to Lt. Gomo Riba in Dari village. He had joined Indian National Congress (INC) in 1920s and taken part in many freedom movements for which he was jailed in 1930s either at Sadiya or Pasighat. In late 1930s, he was appointed as INC president of North Eastern Frontier Tract (now Arunachal Pradesh). He was conferred with Tamra Patra by Govt. of India on 22.01.80 in recognition of his invaluable services before his death.

Lt. Matmur Jamoh, a native of Yagrung village with his team of 7 members had murdered Noel Williamson who was the then Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya and Dr Gregorson on 31st March 1911 along with their entire entourage of sepoys and coolies at Komsing and Pangi village respectively. This incident led to the famous Anglo-Abor of 1911. Eventually he along with Lomlo Darang and Bapok Jerang were given life imprisonment and sent to Kala Pani in Andaman & Nicobar Island and never returned even after we achieved independence. Late Jamoh had fought against the slavery policy of the Britishers. Matmur Jamoh killed the British officer Williamson at Komsing village, while another band of his followers killed one Dr Gregorson at Pangi, both in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, on

March 31, 1911. The village chief of Yagrung, nearly 20km from here, had at last avenged the humiliation he had suffered at the hands of Williamson two years before the twin strikes by the Adi warriors he led. However, he died in obscurity and very few records were available of his last days at Cellular Jail, where he was sent after he surrendered, along with some others a few months later, unable to hide any longer in the face of an intense operation called the Abor Expedition of 1911-12.

Paona Brajabashi: One of the most revered figures of the Anglo-Manipur War in 1891 was Major Paona Brajabashi, a soldier of the Kangleipak kingdom (Kingdom of Manipur) under Maharaja Kulachandra. Battling the British undermanned and under-armed in the Battle of Khongjom, Paona valiantly led his soldiers in one of the fiercest battles in Indian history on 23 April 1891. Engaged in a bloody clash, the Manipuri soldiers, including Paona, fought until the last man by some accounts. Before he was killed, however, he was given a choice." A Manipuri British Army Officer asked Paona Brajabashi to switch sides and join the British army. The British insisted that he could switch sides in exchange for a plum post. However, Paona reportedly replied that death was more welcome than treason. Paona took off the cloth wrapped around his headgear and asked the British Officer to behead him.

The people of Manipur had resisted the British ever since their advent, however, one of the major wars was fought in 1891 when the king of Manipur- Maharaja Kulchandra Singh adamantly refused to accept any form of British Authority or interference in his kingdom and its affairs. This led to an outright war in which Kulchandra Singh's army was led by Tikendrajit and General Thangal. In this war, British Lieutenant Brackenberry along with the British Chief Commissioner Quinton, Colonel Skene, Mr. Cossins and Lieutenant Simpson were killed on 24 March 1891. The fierce battle of Khongjom, which was gallantly led by Paona Brajabashi, was also fought during this war. Owing

to this war, the Britishers were never able to establish direct control over Manipur and it remained a princely state.

Bir Tikendrajit Singh, the crown prince of Manipur, who laid down his life along with his General Thangal for protecting the territorial integrity of the state against British imperialist design, should be revered as a hero of supreme sacrifice and extraordinary valour” Relations between the Manipur Kingdom and the British were peaceful until the death of Maharaja Chandrakiri in 1890 when a power struggle for the throne ignited a civil war. It was this incident that triggered what was later called the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891.”To save their motherland, the Manipuris fought very bravely under the direction of Tikendrajit. But it was all in vain against the superior might and arms of the British. On 27th April, 1891 the British occupied Manipur. Tikendrajit was arrested and after a farcical trial by a general court-martial, he was publicly hanged on 13th August 1891.

U Kiang Nangbah: A freedom fighter from Meghalaya, led an uprising against the British during the 1860s. Although very little is known about his early life, historians claim that he was born before the British had annexed the Jaintia hills in 1835. “U Kiang Nangbah lived in a locality we now called Tpep-pale and Kiang Nangbah’s family’s hut was located on the hill top across the valley between the two hills where Yawmusiang and Tpep-pale stand,” When the colonial government sought to impose taxes and interfere with traditional customs, the tribes of the Jaintia Hills began harbouring an anti-British sentiment. All hell broke loose in 1860 with the imposition of house tax on the tribes inhabiting the Jaintia hills. That’s when they joined forces under the leadership of Nangbah. His forces soon attacked a British police station and set fire to all its weapons. What followed was a series of guerilla attacks which paralysed the colonial administration. In response, the British launched a full-scale military operation against Nangbah and his men. The British captured him in December

1862 after one of his men had tipped off the enemy. After a mock trial, he was hanged three days later.

Pa Togan Sangma: Also known as Togan Sangma or Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma, he was a 19th century Garo (A-chik) warrior and leader from Garo hills, Meghalaya, who died battling British forces on 12 December, 1872. Born in the village of Samanda near Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, he was known for his muscular body frame and physical combat capabilities.”In 1872, British soldiers entered the Garo hills and set up a camp near Chisobibra village. Pa Togan Sangma and other warriors launched an attack against the British forces, only to face a barrage of bullets. Being ill-equipped, the warriors suffered grave losses, and Pa Togan Sangma died on the spot in his quest to save his motherland and his people,” There are other important freedom fighters from the Northeast who valiantly took on the British, who have not been mentioned here like Kushal Konwar, Shoorvir Pasaltha Khuangcher, Trilochan Pokhrel, Matmur Jamoh, Bhogeswari and Krishna Nath Sharma. These are names that have made it into the annals of regional history. It’s time they received national attention too.

Born on 22nd December, 1924, in Borangabari Village of the undivided Darrang district of Assam Kanaklata Barua was the youngest freedom fighter from Assam. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s Quit India Movement, 17-year-old Kanaklata joined the movement. A rebellious young Assamese girl, Kanaklata embraced death at the peak of the Quit India Movement in 1942. She was inspired by the stories of contemporary Assamese freedom fighters such as Kushal Konwar, the then President of the local Congress Committee, whom the British falsely implicated on a charge of a train derailment. At the age of only 17 years, Kanaklata joined a suicide squad called Mrityu Bahini consisting of young volunteers. Earlier, her plea to join Subhash Chandra Bose’s Azad Hind Fauj was rejected because she was still a minor. As a teenager, Kanaklata attended the secret meetings of various

students' organizations then active in her village. On September 20, 1942, the revolutionary wing of the Gohpur sub-division of the undivided Darrang district decided to remove the British flag and unfurl the national flag of India at the local police station at Gohpur. The revolt, known as 'Phulaguri dhawa', in which a British official was killed and several police officers were injured, was triggered by a ban imposed on opium cultivation and a proposed taxation on betel leaf and nut.

Significant Events:

18th October 1961 is a day of inspiration for the peasant movement in Assam. It was the beginning of the first organised peasants' movement in Assam. This movement was the outcome of the resentment, against the deprivation and repression of the peasantry by British imperialism. With the imperialist intention to gain as much profit as possible, the British administration introduced a rigorous taxation policy from the beginning of their rule in Assam. Along with the land revenue under Ryotwari System, the British also introduced many oppressive taxation measures like grazing tax, tax on cutting grass and trees in jungles. They also taxed opium seeds, bamboo, timber and even water. In fact there was no item of regular use that was spared from taxation. The amount and forms of revenue collection was so high as well as diverse that soon the people became restless. The Phulaguri

uprising – the Phulaguri Dhawa - shook the British administration in Assam for the first time. To control it the British regime killed 39 peasants and hanged many of the leaders. This first peasant movement of Assam inspired many more movements by the peasants against British tyranny.

Conclusion:

Like in other parts of our country, the freedom-fighters from north-eastern states shed their blood and laid down their lives and suffered inhuman atrocities in the hands of tyrannical British rulers. The policy of divide and rule applied by the British had created unrest among many rulers and community chiefs of northeastern region of India. It is sad that we know very little about the innumerable unnamed anti-colonial heroes of north east who fought the British tooth and nail and annihilated the British regime. The history of anti colonial movement and freedom struggle in north east India very inadequately portrays the names of only a few local heroes whereas the names of thousands of true patriots of the region got lost because of the callous attitude of our educated populace and west oriented historians. This article is an attempt to wake up our sleeping compatriots as also to urge them to rediscover the life and deeds of our forgotten heroes.

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Kaisha Manyu: The Unsung Hero of Mishmi Hills

✍ Dr. Razzeko Delley

Introduction

The British India archival records mention four prominent military punitive expeditions against the Mishmis. The first being expedition against Kaisha Manyu in 1855 and other three being Bebejiya Expeditions of 1900 against the people of Ithun valley and other two against the people of Elope in 1914 and 1920. Colonial Punitive Expeditions manifests the undying Mishmi spirit of fighting for the pride and dignity of the tribe. The history also reveals the deception as well as exhibits the British policy of divide and rule by sowing the seed of discord.

1855 Expedition against Kaisha Manyu and Aftermath

The earliest history on the tribes of North East, *History of the relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal* (1884) by Alexander Mackenzie gives the following account,

In 1851 M. Krick, a French missionary, made his first journey into these hills under the guidance of Chief of Sadiya, the Choukeng Gohain. Avoiding Jingsha's village, he reached in safety the Thibetan Settlement of Qualong (Walong), where he was well received. Beyond that village, as far as Sommen, he found extensive cultivation and a well-peopled tract along the open valley of the Upper Brahmaputra. On his return he stopped at Jingsha's village, where he would have fared badly had it, not been for his medical skill. In 1854 he returned to the hills with a colleague, M. Bourri, and, under the escort of the Tain Chief Khosha, was brought safely through to Thibet. He was, however, followed across the border of that territory by a Mezlio Chief of the Menong clan, named Kai-ee-sba, who murdered both the missionaries

and carried off their property and servant in utter disregard of the Thibetan authorities of Rima, a small post near which the travellers had encamped. The news reached Assam in November. It seemed almost hopeless to attempt to punish the murderers. But both the local officers and Government felt that, if possible, something in the way of retribution should at least be attempted. Lord Dalhousie, moreover, was not the man to trifle with such a matter. The neighbouring Mishmis, who appreciated our bazars and dreaded their closure, undertook to assist the passage of any avenging force, and their offer was accepted.

In the end of February 1855 a small party of twenty Assam Light Infantry, with forty Khampti volunteers and a few hill porters, marched from Sadiya under the command of Lieutenant Eden. Foreight days this little band pressed on by forced marches, swinging across dangerous torrents on bridges of single canes, climbing for hours at a time without water and in bitter cold, till in the grey dawn of amisty morning Kai-ee-sba was surprised and captured in his village on the Du, his elder sons slain in open fight, his people dispersed, and the murdered Frenchmen to the full avenged. Such an exploit did not fail to astonish and awe the tribes around. Kai-ee-sba was hanged at Debroogurh, but not before he had in prison killed two of the guards appointed to watch him.

Similarly, furnishing a heroic account of 1855 expedition against Kaisha Manyu, Col. Shakespeare, in his book *History of Assam Rifles* (1929) calls it "... one of, if not the most successful minor expedition of all our punitive outings in Assam". And further elaborates the successful expedition thus:

"A friendly Meju chief, by name Lumling, with some of his own followers, joined Eden in time for the sharp

fight which at once ensued, in which Kaisha was captured, his two sons and many of his men were killed, and the village was destroyed. The murder of the missionaries was amply avenged Eden brought Kaisha back, who was duly hanged at Dibrugarh, but not before the sturdy ruffian had managed to kill two warders". (1929; 46)

It is important to note that the Raj had planted a mole within the Mishmis itself in form of Lumling and Krosha for 'successful' expedition. Deception is one of the most influential tools of the British colonists.

It will be very difficult to know what led to murder of Krick and Bourri. Colonial powers had concealed most of the facts and revealed the aspects which would only demonise Kaisha Manyu. The biggest example is the secret government communication prepared by N. Williamson reports the incident thus:

'I also heard last night that the reason for Kai-ee-sha's murdering Messr. Krick and Bourri was due to some trouble about a mithun. It is said these gentlemen were camped near Samehlyng and one night the mithun roamed about their camp and annoyed them a good deal. One of the mithuns which belonged to Kai-ee-sha was shot by the missionaries. Kai-ee-sha considered that he had not received a present sufficient for his services. The small offer combined with his loss of mithun, angered him so much that he rose in his wrath and following the strangers slew them near the border where they had gone from Samehlyng via the Du river route.' (Assam Secreteriat, 1886, File No. 1735, Tribal Records, p. 26)

From this report two things are certain; Kaisha Manyu was not paid adequately for his work as guide and porter.

Second aspect is more significant as well as more reasonable. Mithun is not just an animal for the Mishmis as well as most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They have social as well as cultural

significance. As a social symbol they are nearly equalent to humans in many aspects. According to the tribal ethics of Arunachal Pradesh, slaying of someone's mithun is equal to killing the owner or killing the clan member of the owner. Today also slaying someone's Mithun is one of the gravest offence second only to killing a human, therefore, the slayer is made to pay huge penalty amounting to three or four times the price of the killed Mithun. If penalty is not paid, the blood fueds are carried on for generations. Getting away by killing someone's mithun is unthinkable in 1855.

According to the local version¹, apart from killing Kaisha Manyu's Mithun, the missionaries' were engaging themselves in hunting spree wherever they went. As mentioned earlier, Mishmis being territorial might have had reservations for this action. The missionaries should have respected the regulations of the land. The consequence of a Mishmi, or for that matter, anybody indulging according their will freely in 1855 France is unimaginable.

Another local version also mentions of Kaisha Manyu's son dying in Sadiya by drowning while being employed as a porter. Moreover, the family was not paid any wages of the deceased man. For this episode also, Kaisha Manyu was considering himself as a wronged man.

The colonial accounts also exhibit the air of white supremacy and deep contempt for tribal culture. Being a missionary, by nature they might have also demeaned the Mishmi belief system. The disparaging of indigenous culture and branding them demonical is still prevalent tool for the missionaries to proselytize in tribal regions of India.

Capturing of Kaisha Manyu and subsequently hanging him had a far reaching effect on the Mishmi-British relationship. The British ambition

¹ Local oral history were collected from Shri SokhepKri (State Gazetteer, Itanagar), book of Shri HakreshaKri (Extra Assistant Commissioner, Hayuliang) and Shri RitemsoManyu (Youth Leader from Manyu Clan)

of extending the imperial commerce to China through Tibet and plan of scuttling the Chinese tea trade monopoly was stalled forever. Moreover the most significant aspect was the collaboration of both Mijus and Idus (Chullikata) to avenge the death of Kaisha Manyu. The archival reports attribute series of raids in Sadiya mostly in Khampti territory carried out by the Chullikatas were to avenge the death of Kaisha Manyu. Apart from TT Cooper (1880.pp.244-245), Hamilton throws light on Mishmi-British relation in the light of Kaisha Manyu episode thus:

For many years from this date, the Kaisha affair 1856 and 1857 the same tribesmen For many years from this date, the Kaisha affair became one of the burning questions of the border ; for, in his operations against Kaisha's village, Lieutenant Eden had been assisted by the supporters of a Meju chieftain by the name of Lumling. This circumstance not unnaturally roused the ire of Kaisha's people, and when the news of Kaisha's execution was received by his son, that youth enlisted the help of the Chulikattas and immediately attacked the renegade village. Lumling, who had received both money and gifts for his services, appealed for aid to the British authorities at Sadiya, but was refused, with the result that he and his people were massacred. A little later, Chulikattas contrived the seizure of three of Lieutenant Eden's servants, while in carried out some successful raids on the Kampti villages near Sadiya. During the next few years, in part by way of avenging themselves on the Kamptis for their share in the Kaisha expedition, one or other of the Mishmi tribes constantly harried the Kamptis in the region about the Kundil and Deopani Rivers. So serious did the resulting situation become that in 1866, the British authorities, as the only means in their power, issued firearms to the Sadiya Kamptis, when the raids at once ceased. Two years later, moreover, peace had been so far restored that a large party of Chulikattas, as a special concession, was allowed to settle in the Kundil Valley. Unfortunately for the general condition of the border, the act of grace shown to the Chulikattas had little immediate effect, for Mr. J. T. Cooper was turned back by the Meju chiefs at Prun, a few miles

west of the point reached by Wilcox in 1827, when he attempted in the winter of 1869-70 to travel along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra to Tibet". (1912.pp.195-196).

As mentioned by Hamilton, Cooper was sent to survey for a viable trade to Tibet and China, but the Mishmis stopped him from further advancement. The account of TT Cooper attribute apart from Kaisha Manyu episode to scheming Chinese Officers and intolerant Lama Priests. However, viewed from the perspective of the Mishmis, they were against the advancement of British Government. The following reasons can be drawn after studying the various sources, why Mijus were averse to the European presence in their soil: The British interferences had resulted into depravation of many Mishmis who use to levy taxes from the pilgrims in Brahamakund since ages. Many slaves were accorded free status by the Raj. They had now settled in British territory as free people. Many of the slaves were even armed to fight against their masters. The most significant and immediate reason was inapt handling of Kaisha Manyu episode. He had become the symbol of imperial atrocities. He and his family had to face the brunt despite they being wronged party in the first place.

1. Another reason for mistrust is due to betrayal of the Mishmi people who had collaborated with the Raj in arresting Kaisha Manyu. Despite their plea, British government declined to offer any aid when Kaisha Manyu clan members in collaboration with the Idu Mishmis (Chulikattas) attacked them. Subsequently they were all killed in revenge feud.

2. The Mishmis also might have sensed the danger of being deprived of their traditional taxes which they had been levying in different trade routes. The colonial trade route would have surely stripped them of this privilege. Moreover the relationship between the Tibetans and Mishmis were time tested and continuing since many ages. Therefore it is not hard to see the preferences of the Mishmis.

Kaisha Manyu, despite being the Man to check the British colonial expansion is a forgotten figure today. There was a football tournament in his name couple of years back by students at Tezu stopped that. On the contrary, the French Missionary Krick and Boury who were imperial agents working on behest of Colonial power to exploit the tribes and the figures responsible for misery of many Mishmis has a school named after them. Christian Missionaries in collaboration with few Mishmi converts has established Krick and Boury School at Tezu.

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Unsung Heroes of Freedom Struggle in Karbi Anglong

✍ Mondor Teron

Cause of the tribal discontent varied from region to region and it may be said that these were quite different from those of the plains. For example, 'Excise Duty' was imposed in the hilly regions, but this constituted one of the main causes of the discontent among the people of the hills. Again, in the hilly region of the Jaintia Hills, people very much resented the imposition of 'House Tax' and 'Stamp Duty' etc. by the British. But most of the hilly tribes revolted due to political cause, loss of their freedom. There are a lot of 'Karbi Freedom Fighters'. But due to lack of proper information and records we could not list all the names of 'Karbi Indian Freedom Fighters'. As per availability of the records and information that we could gather after a proper research and investigations we could cite only few names of the 'Karbi India Freedom Fighters. Their names are listed below.

Nongjirong lekthe

Nongjirong Lekthe family was permanent inhabitant of Nongjirong polling station under Amreng constituency of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. Father's name of Nongjirong Lekthe was Langtuk Lekthe and his mother's name was Karik Kropi. Nongjirong Lekthe was the Raja of Nongkhalow of present Meghalaya. In the time of outbreak of the sepoy mutiny one incident took place on the foot hills of Hang-ik hill in Karbi Anglong, the erstwhile Mikir Hills. On that day some British officers came there to Survey for the installation of 'Ariel Point' on the top of the hills. This installation of 'Ariel point' was popularly called among the Karbis as "Nison Ketar" in Karbi dialect. They are

still seen on the top of the Inghongpo (Singhason) hills in Karbi Anglong. So the British Officers went to the forest in search of Ariel Point through the village of Nongjirong Lekthe. They suddenly appeared in the village and the people of the village thought that they were outsiders and intruders. So in order to defend the village Nongjirong chased the British Officers and killed one of them with 'Chinjor' (an earth excavating instrument) in his hand. Nongjirong Lekthe was arrested on the charge of killing of a British Officer and remanded to the custody of Jorhat Central Jail. After long adjudication he was punished with death sentence.

Jorkhalor Teron

In the year 1840-1870 there was a Karbi freedom fighter among the karbis and his name was Jorkhalor Teron. The name of his wife was Kajor Englengpi. His real name was Jor Teron. Jorkhalor Teron was a combined name of his wife Kajor Englengpi and his name Jor Teron. So, later he was popularly called Jorkhalor Teron, he was the forefather of Chatra Sing Teron. Ex Minister, TAD, Govt. of Assam. Jorkhalor Teron was the inhabitant of Rongmarjong which was situated in between Nelie and Amsoi. He was the contemporary of U. Kiang Nongbah, the Khasi Pnar warrior of Jowai, Meghalaya. From his childhood Jorkhalor Teron was very much interested in the art of bamboo craft to black magic and witchcraft which was inherited from his forefathers and also learned it from Tiwa community. He possessed good knowledge about them. The news about the incident of Rongmarjong was spreading out like wildfire and

reached the ears of U.Kiang Nongbah, the warrior of Khasi pnar who was fighting against the British rule in India. One day Jorkhalor Teron came in close contact with U.Kiang Nongbah at a place and discussed about the strategy to oust the British rulers from the soil of his country and U.Kiang Nongbah requested him to take the help of the people. Jorkhalor Teron also requested his subjects but they refused him out of fear of the British administration. However, Jorkhalor Teron and U.Kiang Nongbah jointly fought against the British rule during the colonial period.

Semson Sing Ingti

Darkness of ignorance prevailed in the soils of Mikir Hills, the future of the Karbis were very bleak during the British rule. The karbis saw a beam of light, the emergence of a personality, who was a great institution in himself. He is no one but late Semson sing Ingti. Semson sing Ingti was born on 8th February, 1910 – 28th February, 1948. The parents of Semson sing Ingti were originally settled at the Tika Hills in West Karbi Anglong. But after his conversion from Hinduism to Christianity, he was instrumental for the work of preaching Christianity with J.M Carwel an American Missionary in Karbi Anglong. One was the most illustrious representative of the first Karbi educated elite under the direct guidance of the American Baptist Missionaries. An ardent educationist and passionate social reformer, who sacrificed his career as a colonial education officer to take up the cause of his fellow tribesmen and led a spartan life to achieve that goal. He later completed his studies from Murarichan College, Sylhet (in present Bangladesh) in the year 1933 and became the first Karbi Graduate during colonial education service and he was appointed as Inspector of school by the British Administrator. He was entrusted with the responsibilities of influencing the people about the need for education in the erstwhile Mikir Hills. During those days of colonial era he used to meet the members of the constituent Assembly and pray for a special provision for the upliftment of all the backward classes like the Karbis of India In 1942

Khorsing Terang (1906-1955) a prominent figure of “Karbi Adorbar” was elected to the legislative council for the first time. The general mass was assured that soon after India’s Independence Assam will be re-constituted and will be covered by special provision in the sixth schedule and shall be given the status of Autonomous District. He was among the most prominent of the 12 members of District Council (MDC) and because of his status and experience as the first Karbi legislator, he became the natural choice to adorn the post of the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the newly created Mikir Hills Autonomous District Council in 1952 till his untimely death in 1955.

Khorsing Terang

Khorsing Terang was born in the year 1906 at a small village Ronglongchor, a beautiful hill of Inglongpo (Singhason). His father’s name was Longkam Terang, also known as Sar-ik Terang, and mother’s name was Kaku Tissopi. In the year 1937, Khorsing Terang joined politics, while he was holding the post of Mouzadar and contested in the election for M.L.C. Seat from Mikir Hills Tract. He had defeated his only rival candidate, once of the prominent leaders in those days. Sarkari Gaonburas were allowed to cast their valuable votes and had the right to elect their representatives to the Legislative Council. He was elected as Assam Legislative Councilor for the first time from Mikir Hills.

In 1937, soon after expiry of its term, another M.L.C. election was held in 1942. In that General election of M.L.C. there was three strong contenders for the post of one M.L.C. seat in the Assam Legislative Council. The candidates were-Semson Sing Engti, Khorsing Terang and Biren Teron, it was a triangular contest for the single seat of M.L.C. but ultimately Khorsing Terang won the election for the second time by securing maximum number of votes after counting was done. Thus, he was elected as M.L.C. for three consecutive terms from 1937 to 1952. He was inducted as ‘co-opted member for Bordoloi Committee’ from Mikir Hills. He became the

Presiden of Karbi Adorbar from 1951 to 1952.

Semson Sing Ingti and Khorsing Terang who together made the first representation to the Colonial Governor, Sir Roberth Neil Reid, pleading for separate Karbi District in November 1940 at Mohongdijua. Govnornor Sir Robert Neil Reid in fact had a plan to set up the district 'headquarters of Mikir Hill's at Mohongdijua under a Sub-Deputy Collector, such was the importance of 'Mhengdijua' long before Diphu had replaced it as the modern hub of Karbi life and politics.

The two prominent figures of Karbi Politics died young leaving behind contrasting and often contradictory legacies which often happen with societies, politics and history.

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Contributions of the Rabhas in the Freedom Struggle of India

✍ Charumohan Rabha

In the year of 1826, Assam went under the British. Immediately after this, the language, culture, politics, economy etc of Assam faced a downhill trend. Many local patriotic brave hearts of Assam started opposing the British colonial regime and started fighting them to free their motherland from the British. In the year 1921, Non-Cooperation Movement started in India against the British under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The 'Khilafat Movement' started in Punjab located in the west of our country. The British branded this 'khilafat movement' as illegal and started torturing and punishing the people for their support and involvement in the movement. Due to this harassment, the people of India became united and started freedom movement against the British. This movement woke up the patriotism in each and every people of India and inspired them to come forward to fight the British. Like other states, in Assam also people came forward to fight against the oppressive British regime. People irrespective of being educated, half-educated or uneducated, farmers and wage earners all became aware of the oppressive British government. The Rabha tribe also were active to parry the tortures and harassments of the British. Huge crowd of people from the villages of Kamrup like Rani, Borduar, Bholagaon, Loharghat, Boko, Bongaon, Luki, Bekeli, Saigaon, Pantan etc were also awaken. In the same way, the Rabha people from the villages of Goalpara and Lakkhipur, Aagia, Bordamal, Krishnai, Dudhnoi, Shalpara, Hatigaon, Dhanubhanga, Dhupdhora, Rongjuli also started taking part in this movement. Moreover, the people from Barama, Tamulpur of

Nalbari, Bangaigaon, Tongla, Mongoldoi, Paneri of Darrang, Pora of Kokrajhar also participated in this movement. The main aim of this movement was to give up the use of foreign clothes and to get rid of opium addiction poison. After this, the British Government tortured and harassed the Assamese people and treated them like dogs and stray animals. In the year 1922, the Sarpanch of Laat, Dayaram Rabha, was arrested from Samuka of Hahim. He was brutally tortured and later locked up in police custody for three days.

A Congress Session was held on Pandu in the year 1929. Through this session, the Congress leaders like Tarunram Phukon, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Chandranath Sarma etc passed the message of freedom against the British amongst the people. In response, the common people started taking stand against the British. The freedom seeking leaders who participated in the Congress Session were- Sarpanch Memera/Agsia, Sarpanch Pahiram (Batakusi), Nidan Rabha (Bakarapara), Bipin Dakua (Khatlapara), Garogao Burha (Kenduguri), Paniram Mahajan (Tangabari), Hendela Rabha (Dakwa Para), Pritthwiraj Mahajan (Kumarpara), Sanaram Mahajan (Singra), Tikhuram Rabha-Amarsingha Rabha (Singra-Sirma) etc and many.

In the years of 1930-1934, Uday Chandra Rabha (Sarpanch) was one of those who actively participated in the activities of Congress organisation. Other leaders were- Nabin Chandra Kalita, Umacharan Das, Purna Chandra Das etc. The Deputy Commissioner of the British, Benting

harrassed the Congress workers mercilessly and punished them. Because of this reason, those who were in good positions of the government jobs, resigned their jobs and participated in the freedom movement.

The intensity of the freedom movement increased in all the districts of Assam including the Kamrup district from the years of 1930 to 1945. Thousands of people joined in this movement. An agitation was also created amongst the Rabha people of Kamrup and Goalpara district. Everyone came forward for their nation and motherland forgetting the differences among them.

In the year 1942, the Congress session announced the Quit India Movement. Therefore, like the other parts of India, in Assam also hundreds of people joined the movement. The Congress leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Azad Patel including the hero of this movement the Great Human being Mahatma Gandhi were arrested in Bombay. This had a great reaction in the whole country. In Assam also, the freedom movement touched the people of every tribes and castes, including the Rabha tribe, and every people from lower and upper Assam joined the movement. Already the sad memories of hanging of Maniram Dewan, Piyoli Phukan, Kushal Konwar were not set up from the minds of the people. With the people of whole Assam, the Rabha people of Kamrup and Goalpara too participated in the freedom movements by themselves. The name of those persons are following in the below-

The Rabha Freedom Fighters and participants in Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921 from Goalpara district

(1) Abdul Ram Rabha, Father- Dempusingh Rabha, Rangasai, Agia, Goalpara.

(2) Bhabaram Rabha, Father- Brispoti, Bhalukdubi, Bolodmari, Goalpara, 1930.

(3) Lalit Chandra Rabha, Kothakuthi, Dhupdhora, Goalpara, he was arrested in the crime of picketting in the shops of foreign clothes and opium on the day of 23rd February, 1931.

(4) Titaram Rabha, Goalpara, he was arrested in the crime of picketting in the shops of foreign clothes and opium in Dhupdhora on the day of 23rd February, 1931.

(5) Bhagaban Rabha, Hatigaon, Goalpara, he was arrested in the crime of looting in Mespara, Jamidar, Balijana, Kosari and later he got bailed.

(6) Baluram Rabha, Father- Rathuram Rabha, Baida, Goalpara, activist in 1942.

(7) Anandaram Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, prisoned in Goalpara jail, 1942.

(8) Akhil Chandra Rabha, Shalpara, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, prisoned in Goalpara jail in 1942.

(9) Akshay Kumar Rabha, Tiapara, Agia, Goalpara, activist in 1942.

(10) Anjaram Rabha, Father- Chairram Rabha, Baida, Goalpara, activist 1942.

(11) Bhabendra Narayan Rabha, Father- Terrosingh Rabha, Madang, Dhanuvanga, Goalpara, he gave up e his educational life refused Govt. scholarship for participating in Quit India movement in 1942.

(12) Bhim Chandra Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, prisoned in Goalpara jail in 1942.

(13) Baburam Rabha, Father- Bahuram Rabha, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, activist in 1942.

(14) Hakim Chandra Rabha, Thekasu, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, prisoned for three months for participating in the movements in 1942.

(15) Jogendra Narayan Rabha, Bordamal, Agia, Goalpara, on the day of 8th May, 1943, he was arrested in the crime of looting kosari of Mechpara manor for six months rigorous imprisonment according to 380 no Indian penal code by Goalpara subdivision court.

(16) Jogendra Narayan Rabha, Bodahapur, Agia, Goalpara, six months rigorous imprisonment for participating in the movement of 1942.

(17) Khargeshwar Rabha, Madang Dhanubhanga, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(18) Desaru Rabha, Father- Nagen Rabha,

Baida, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(19) Dhani Ram Rabha, Village- Ambuk, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(20) Damal Rabha, Village- Pokapara, he had to face the justice in the 1942 movement.

(21) Golap Singh Rabha, Hatigaon, Agia, Goalpara, he was arrested in the crime of looting the kasari of Mechpara menor on the day of 8th May, 1943.

(22) Gulong Rabha, Bodulong, Nagbari, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(23) Ghanashyam Rabha, Shalpara, Dudhnoi, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(24) Gobinda Rabha, Father- Poyan Ram Rabha, Satabari, Baida, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(25) Kalitaram Rabha, Shalpara, Krishnai, Goalpara, imprisoned in Goalpara jail in 1942.

(26) Kabil Rabha, Madang Dhanubhanga, activist of 1942 movement.

(27) Khadiram Rabha, Bordamal, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(28) Lakshman Rabha, Father- Ania Rabha, Shalpara, Baida, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(29) Lebaram Rabha, Father- Bhagoram Rabha, Mother- Juri Rabha, Village- Shalpara, Dudhnoi, later permanent address is Hatigaon, Agia, Goalpara, imprisoned for three months in 1942, later again three months rigorous imprisonment.

(30) Muhit Chandra Rabha, Father- Babu Rabha, Thekasu, Dudhnoi, imprisonment according to Goalpara 38 (5) penal code, and got bailed in 6th January, 1934.

(31) Nandeshwar Rabha, Sekobari, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(32) Pabindra Chandra Rabha, Father- Jastharu Rabha, Hatigaon, Agia, Goalpara, imprisonment according to 380 no Indian penal code by Goalpara court in the crime of looting Balijana Kasari of Mechpara menor on the day of 8th May, 1943.

(33) Pujaru Ram Rabha, Thekasu, Dudhnoi,

Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(34) Rishikanta Rabha, Father- Boromal Rabha, Hatigaon, Agia, Goalpara, imprisonment according to 380 no Indian penal code by Goalpara court in the crime of looting Balijana Kasari of Mechpara menor on the day of 8th May, 1943.

(35) Ramesh Chandra Rabha, Darrangiri, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(36) Sarat Chandra Rabha, Father- Maija Rabha, Shalpara Krishnai, arrested in 1942 movement.

(37) Sasarang Rabha, Father- Hakaru Rabha, Shalpara, Baida, Goalpara, activist of 1942 movement.

(38) Thakiram Rabha, Galsira, Lakhipur, Goalpara, undertrial freedom fighter of 1942.

(39) Nidhanu Ram Koch, he injured a British officer during the collection of Dudhnoi wholesale fine, later he was martyred in the bullet of the British.

(40) Lalit Rabha, Kothakuthi, Dhupdhora, Goalpara, arrested for participating in the movement of removing foreign clothes and opium.

(41) Titaram Rabha, Goalpara, he was arrested and prisoned in 1931 for removing foreign clothes and opium in Dhupdhora.

Kamrup district:

(42) Gandhoram Rabha, Nadhiapara, Boko, Kamrup. Though he was an government employee of forest department, he participated in the freedom struggle of India by resigning his job.

(43) Nidan Rabha, Boko, he was an activist of Kamrup Non-Cooperation Movement.

(44) Sailen Rabha, Boko, he was an activist of Kamrup Movement.

(45) Udai Chandra Rabha, activist of Boko Kamrup, imprisoned for four months in 1921, was an activist of Quit India Movement of 1942.

(46) Kameshwar Rabha, Nambarjuli, activist of Kamrup Non-cooperation movement.

(47) Kalisaran Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for three months in 1922.

(48) Dewan Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for three months in 1922.

(49) Bidur Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for three months in 1922.

(50) Petai Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, a case filed against him in the crime of associating in removing drugs in 1922.

(51) Chandra Ram Rabha, Father- Mondar Rabha, Bamunigaon, Kamrup, arrested for picketing in Saigaon market for removing foreign clothes in 1921. He was also imprisoned for participating in the Quit India movement.

(52) Pendhar Rabha, Palashbari, Kamrup, activist in Non-cooperation movement of Kamrup.

(53) Prabhat Chandra Rabha, Loharghat, Kamrup, Foreign clothes removed in Fency Bazar, Guwahati on 28th and 30th September, 1930.

(54) Pushparam Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, arrested in Samaria, Boko on 21st January, 1932 and imprisoned for three months.

(55) Bhandoram Rabha, Father- Sachi Rabha, Satokona, Saigaon, Kamrup. Arrested in 1942 and imprisoned for one day.

(56) Katiram Rabha, Kenduguri, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for three months in 1942.

(57) Khargaram Rabha, Boko, Durapara, Kamrup, imprisoned for 32 days in 1942.

(58) Nandaram Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for one day.

(59) Rajaram Rabha, Chakrapani, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for one day in 1942.

(60) Shishuram Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, imprisoned for one day in 1942.

(61) Chandraram Rabha, Father- Mendar Rabha, Nilaghat, Bamunigaon, Saigaon, Kamrup, Imprisoned for one day in 1942. Imprisoned for the movement of removing foreign clothes in 1921.

(62) Sattaram Rabha, Father- Pamua Rabha, Jarapara, Boko, Kamrup, activist in 1942.

(63) Gobinda Rabha, Father- Laisingh Rabha, Nadhiapara, Boko, Kamrup, activist in 1942.

(64) Mondola Rabha, Father- Baputi Rabha, Jorhat, imprisoned for three months in 1940.

(65) Sarpanch Garo Rabha, Village- Kenduguri, Boko, Kamrup, joined in the Non-cooperation movement in 1921 by resigning the government post of Sarpanch.

(66) Landura Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, activist in 1942 movement.

(67) Udai Ram Rabha, Boko, Kamrup, activist in 1942.

Source:

(1) Dr. Jiten Das- Rabha Buronjir Abha Probondho, 2004

(2) Memoir Book 'Hasongi Rasong' of Silver Jubilee of Nikhil Rabha Student Association.



Role of Martyr Kamala Miri in the freedom struggle of India

✍️ Tarun Loying

Those persons who have fearlessly sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their motherland from the bondage of the colonial rulers are seen to be worshipped as God. The contribution of the martyrs who thought that their motherland is much superior than the heaven, have become the source of inspiration for the younger generation. One of such martyrs was Kamal Chandra Loying, who is also known as Kamala Miri. Kamala Miri was born in Opor Temera village of Rangamati Mouza in Shivasagar district (at present Golaghat district) in the year 1894. Later, the Opor Temera village was divided into many parts and the village in which Kamala Miri was born is nowadays known as Gulung Temera. Kamala Miri's father was Chikou Loying and mother was Mangali Loying. At that time there was no educational institution in the village Opor Temera, and therefore Kamala Miri move had to Bholaguri for his education. It is known at Bholaguri he became friendly with a famous freedom fighter Aapiram Gogoi. According to some people, Kamala Loying took his primary education from a person named Sonaram Mitra who knew Bangla. Kamala's partner Sondhan Pegu, a freedom fighter of Pathari village also took his education from Sonaram Mitra.

The freedom struggle started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and succeeded to spread the message of patriotism in every nook and corner of India. The message of patriotism also encouraged Mising youths like Kamala Miri and his friends in Golaghat district (at that time Shivsagar district) of Assam. By getting inspiration from the slogans, thousands of youths came forward to free India from the shackles of British

rulers. Though it is not known exactly since when Kamala Miri started participating in the freedom struggle of India for the first time, but a well-known Mising writer named Tankeshwar Loying took an interview from the closest associate freedom fighter of Kamala Miri, Sondhan Pegu in the year 1966 and mentioned in his writing 'congresor nirjatito karmi Sondhan Pegu somu kahini' that from the year 1926, including Kamala Miri, Baloran Loying, Bepung Pathori, Korddik Morang etc participated in the freedom struggle of India actively. After coming in contact with Rajendra Barua, Sankar Barua etc, Kamala Miri, specially in four Mauzas, joined the freedom struggle of India against the British inspiring the common people with the slogans of patriotism. In this matter, Kamala Miri took the responsibility of organising the Mising tribe villages. Specially in the villages like Opor Temera, Dusuti Mukh, Morongial, Narmari, Nam Temera, Seleg Gao, Bhakat Sapori, Pathori Gao, Gulung Gao, Medok Gao of Rangamati Mouza, Na Bhangamising Gao, Saroh Gao, Birina Gao, Gorumora Sapori, Dubi Gao of Misamora Mouza, Dhansiri, Bankual, Bortika, Saguri, Nam Temera, Gutung, Nikori Gao of Mahura Mauza, Dhemaji, Bahguri, Tayung village of Dergaon Mouza and Bihia village of Bokakhat Mouza, he went for the mission of admission of members. He admitted more than 700 people as members in the villages including the Mising Gao, Nepali Gao, the village of tea tribes in Barbam etc and also he prepared a list of members in a copy book.

Under the leadership of Kamala Miri, Bikaram Miri, Bejia Loying, Bhutai Loying, Dhaturam Pegu, Bonda Loying, Shambhuram Miri and many

others participated in the freedom struggle of India in Bankual of Mahura Mouza. Moreover, two Mising women named Pramila Medok of Medok village and Bogimola Morang of Bortika village also actively participated in the programmes of freedom movement. At that time, Kamala Miri devoted himself fully for the freedom struggle by giving all the responsibilities of his family to his wife Kaniki Loying. It was very difficult and needed hard work to manage the family matters with her five children in the absence of her husband. But Kaniki Loying did it very efficiently. For this devotion to her husband and family Kaniki Loying can be recognized as a great woman. The notes preserved in the house of Kamala Miri gives clear indication of the role of Kamala Miri in the freedom struggle. Sometimes, he could not admit members after holding meetings in some villages for eight days. For example, in the copy dated 16th August, 1938 titled 'Proposal of Golaghat Miri Congress Committee', it is written as '*sokolu rajjok bujaute gol*' and '*aakou rajjok bujaisu mane kono pokkboi nubuje*' on the date of 27th August, 1938. At that time the fees of admission of members was 4 ana as mentioned in the notes. It is also mentioned therein that Kamala Miri also visited Tezpur for advancing the cause of independence struggle on 30th March 1939. It is further stated that he had to stay in Tezpur from 30th March, 1939 to 2nd April, 1939.

At that time, there was no train and the roads were also not good enough. People had to go to Golaghat located at about 20 Miles away from Opor Temera village on foot. At that time, it was very difficult to cross hazardous roads to contact the Central Committee members. But those sufferings were not anything for a patriot. The decisions were taken by central workers and related official documents were given to Boloram Loying, Secretary from Golaghat. These documents were checked by Boloram Loying and if some changes were needed then he would do that before sending it through Kamala Miri. At

that time, the shelter house for the revolutionary leaders like Shankar Baruah, Rajendranath Baruah was located at Mising tribal villages. One day, the spy found out the hiding place of Shankar Baruah in Opor Temera village and surrounded the house where Kamala Miri, President and Boloram Loying, Secretary were holed up. Then the voluntaries cunningly shifted Shankar Baruah and Kamala Miri in Gulung-Pathori village by crossing dense forest. At that time the British announced a reward of 5000 rupees to any one who would help them in catching Shankar Baruah. The police butchered all the pets of the villagers in the house of Kamala Miri. At that time the villagers were very much afraid of the police and they considered entry of outcasts inside their household and Mouram (Kitchen) would cost them their own caste superiority. Two police personnel wanted to forcibly enter into the house of Kamala Miri. Four young girls who were pounding the rice nearby the house, warned the policemen and prevented them from entering the house. At that time there was a folk belief that when four young girls pound rice in mortar then four acres area of land shakes. It is believed that the police did not dare to enter the house that day after getting the warning of the girls.

It is also known that Kamala Miri held meetings on flood, land issues etc including admission of members into the party. At that time the villages from Opor Temera to the north of Gelabil were badly affected by drugs like opium, cannabis etc. Specially, the village Opor Temera was filled with drug addict people, Kamala Miri and his associates evicted those junkies from the village and till today people fondly remember that this was the achievement of Kamala Miri and his associates.

On 8th August, 1942, 'All India Congress Committee' under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi announced Quit India Movement against the British. Reacting to this announcement the British authorities the British authorities arrested several Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and later sent them all

to jail. To register protest against hasty action of the British regime a team named as Peace Troops was formed in the village Opor Temera of Rongamati Mouza on 18th August, 1942 and 18 people out of them were selected for picketing under the leadership of Kamala Miri in Golaghat. As per decision taken in the meeting Kamala Miri was entrusted the leadership and Sondhan Pegu, Malidhar Pegu, Baloram Loying (Secretary), Bepung Pathori (Hero), Jarmon Morang, Korddik Morang, Bomba Bori, Fedela Loying, Thagi Bari, Belem Loying, Mekona Loying, Bura Bori, Dosoya Bori, Komol Loying, Alok Pathori, Nadiram Loying, Metung Bari etc were given the responsibility of performing other activities of Peace Troops. After that, another meeting was held at Opor Temera on 22 August, 1942 under the presidentship of Najir Miri. All the members present in the meeting fully supported the decision taken in the meeting of All India Congress Committee held on 8th August, 1942. They also demanded immediate release of Mahatma Gandhi from jail through this meeting. In the meeting held next day on 23rd August, Kamala Miri called upon the people of Rongagorha and Dukhuti Mukh to hold protest demonstration and observe Hartl on 30th August, 1942. Another meeting was hold in Opor Temera village under the leadership of Kamala Miri and presidentship of Fedela Loying on 29th August, 1942 where four proposals of Peace Troops of Miri Conference were presented. The proposals were-

- 1) To extend full support to the programmes of Quit India movement of All India Congress Committee held on 8th August 1942 in Bombay.
- 2) To protest against the colonial policies of the British.
- 3) To free the leaders including Mahatma Gandhi from jail.
- 4) To participate in the programme of Hartal on 30th August by the peace troops.

Kamala Miri had leadership qualities in him. He was therefore given the responsibility of

Presidentship of Congress Committee of Rongamati Mouza. His responsibility had increased after becoming the president of a mouza. In the last part of the September, 1942, while he was working in the office of congress party, the British police arrested him and his associates. On 8th October, 1942, Kamala Miri and his associates were sentenced to 8 month jail term and sent them to Jorhat Central Jail. In the jail, Kamala Miri met leaders like Gopinath Bordoloi, Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed, Mohammad Taibulla, Amiya Kumar Das, Hem Barua etc. In the jail, Kamala Miri learned how to read Hindi from Gopinath Bordoloi, and make cotton thread in spinning wheel. The health of Kamala Miri deteriorated during his prison term and he was admitted in the Jail hospital. His health condition was not improving rather deteriorating fast. The Jail authorities wanted to get rid of very sick Kamala Miri. The offered Kamala release from hospital provided he promises in writing that he will not he would not join the movement again. To this Kamala replied fearlessly that- 'I am not in prison for doing anything wrong. I will prefer to die in jail than to give any written promise. If at all I am to promise anything I will give my promise to God only.' Due to his worsening health condition, the jail authority decided to release Kamala Miri on 23rd April, 1943. To celebrate this good news, Gopinath Bordoloi gifted Kamala a spinning wheel on that day. That spinning wheel is still preserved in a very dilapidated condition at Kamala Miri's home. Though he was about to be freed from the jail, but this great patriot died as prisoner at 12:30 AM of 22nd April, 1943, just few hours before his scheduled release. If he wished, Kamala Miri, who owned huge property, could live a life of comfort and luxury. But the real patriot that he was, Kamala Miri, loved his country as his own mother and never compromised his patriotism for any material gain. He could understand very well that if he deviates from his path of true patritism, it could destroy his country. India could gain independent only because of the great patriots like Kamala Miri and because of their great

sacrifices for the country. Sudhakontho Bhupen Hazarika therefore musically paid his tributes to this hero.

“.... if my weeping mother asks again and again what you have done for me?

What I will say?

What I will say?”

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1) Sri Bagi Loying : Second daughter-in-law of Kamala Miri, assumed age : 80 years

2) Sri Chanmoti Loying : Youngest daughter-in-law of Kamala Miri, assumed age : 70 years

3) Sri Binod Loying : Head Master, Gulung Temera Kamala Miri High Secondary School

4) Sri Arun Pathori : Teacher, Opor Temera Government Lower Elementary School

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Singing for the Unsung: Recounting the Contribution of the Koch-Rajbangshis of Lower Assam in Indian Freedom Struggle

✍ Dr Surajit Ray

Introduction

India achieved its freedom at the cost of supreme sacrifices of lacs of people of this land, irrespective of their caste, creed, and religion. Prior to 1947, India had experienced numerous invasions by the foreign rulers from time to time. The latest is the systematic and tactical subjugation by the colonial British over India for more than two hundred years. The people of India stood up and plunged into the freedom movement against the British Raj. The people's uprising was a spontaneous and comprehensive to end the longstanding colonial subjugation over the people of India. Thousands of freedom fighters laid down their lives in their continual march towards snatching independence from the colonial forces, who took control of the political and economic independence of India. The freedom fighters did not fight only under the banner of any single party, rather the fight for independence was a collective contribution of several parties and organisations and institutions. Even some people at their individual levels stood up against the colonial rule by writing songs, poems, plays, and by drawing pictures and cartoons, to make the common people aware of their exploitation by the British. Fed up with the British colonial rule, people started movement to overthrow the colonial plunder and domination. In their continued struggle, thousands of people attained martyrdom and thousands of events occurred at different places across the country.

Although the freedom struggle was the people's

struggle, a limited number of people and events got mentioned in the pages of history of India's independence. In this connection, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi's observation demands a mention here. While addressing a gathering after unveiling a hologram statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose at the India Gate on the 125th birth anniversary of the freedom fighter, the Prime Minister said "India's freedom struggle involved the sacrifices of lacs of people, but attempts were made to limit their history. But today, decades after independence, the country is correcting those mistakes". Nowadays, it is a common allegation that, the history of India's independence does not completely portray the real picture of the freedom fighters and the events related to the freedom struggle. Rewriting the unwritten encompassing all the unsung freedom fighters and unheard events bears significance, to give a true and comprehensive history of India's freedom struggle to the posterity.

Through the celebration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav across the country, the nation pays homage to the men and women, who laid down their lives and paved the way forward. In documenting the freedom struggles against the Imperialism, however, the contributions of freedom fighters from Assam in general and those belonging to the Koch-Rajbangshi community from Lower Assam in particular have not found its due place in popular historical discourse. In view of poor portrayal of the freedom fighters and

historical events from this region and in consonance with the fresh efforts of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in correcting the history of Indian's freedom struggle, the present paper is motivated to make a humble effort in documenting and recording the contributions of the unsung freedom fighters of the Koch-Rajbangshi community from Lower Assam.

The Backdrop

The aboriginal Koch-Rajbangshis are the largest trans-border ethnic community in South Asia. They are spread across Assam, Meghalaya, North Bengal, Tripura and are also found inhabited in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. Historically, the Koch kingdom predominantly came into being with Biswa Singha as the ruler from 1515 AD. He was not only brilliant, but also mentally and physically very strong with regard to administrative skills. After his death, his son Naranarayana ascended the throne and ruled for about 50 years with the assistance of his younger brother Shukladhwaja alias Chilarai as his Commander-in-Chief. During their times, they had to be engaged in the fight against the Muslim invaders to keep their kingdom safe and secure. The Maharaja Naranarayana and his brother General Chilarai and thereafter their descendants had to engage in fights with the Mughal and the British. Finally, the Koch kingdom under the rule of Maharaj Jagadipendra Narayan got merged with the Dominion of India on August 20, 1948. However, due to reorganisation of Indian States in 1956, the erstwhile Koch kingdom got divided into pieces, resulting in the division of this group of people into different nationalities and separating the kingdom into provinces and nations.

It is worth mentioning that, Kashi and Varanasi-educated Maharaja Naranarayana and his brother Shukladhwaja were well-versed in various subjects such as Sanskrit, Grammar, Literature, Law, Astrology, etc. Shukladhwaja, a skilled war strategist, who got his name Chilarai because of his fast movement in the battle field just like a Chila (Eagle), adopted Guerrilla Warfare successfully and was known as a pioneer of Guerrilla Warfare.

Bir Chilarai, the Commander-in Chief cum erudite Sanskrit scholar and litterateur, played an instrumental role in giving safety and shelter to Srimanata Sankardeva, the socio-cultural and spiritual Guru of Assam, in their kingdom. Sankardeva enjoyed a special place in the royal court of Naranarayana and Chilarai. Due to royal patronage offered to him, Sankardeva was able to establish the Ek Saran Nam Dharma. Under the patronage of Chilarai, Vrindabani Vastra was prepared. This apart, Chilarai and Naranarayana reconstructed the Kamakhya Temple. The 380-mile-long highway from Koch Behar to Narayanpur (Lakhimpur), known as Gohain Kamal Ali, was constructed by Gohain Kamal, the engineer brother of Chilarai in 1546 AD.

The Koch-Rajbangshi people, the descendants of the Koch kingdom, actively took part in the freedom struggle of India, with a strong sentiment of patriotism for their motherland. They participated in the freedom struggle in various ways such as by joining various parties, organisations, and institutions. Even they jumped into the freedom struggle at their individual levels. The Zamindars belonging to the Koch-Rajbangshi community also extended helping hands to the freedom fighters directly and indirectly.

Role of the Koch-Rajbangshis in the Freedom Struggle

Along with other parts of the country, the wave of the freedom struggle of India swept over Lower Assam. At the appeal of the leaders of freedom movement of India, the Koch-Rajbangshi people of Lower Assam also plunged into the movement. They took an active role and contributed a lot towards the attainment of independence. Several of them joined the Civil Disobedience Movement that started in 1930 and the Quit India Movement that fired up in 1941 for which they were convicted for participating in the movements against the colonial rule. What follows is a brief account of the freedom fighters of the Koch-Rajbangshi community, who contributed in making history of freedom movement of Assam and India.

Lower Assam has produced some of the valiant fighters for liberating the country from the clutches of the colonial rulers. The introduction of new economic policy of the colonial government rendered the people of Lower Assam dissatisfied and compelled them to revolt against it. The British government wanted to collect more revenues from the people of peasantry class in the form of land revenue. Accordingly, lands were divided into various categories and high rate of taxes were levied. Businessmen also had to pay high taxes. Even fishermen were not spared. They had to pay Jalkar too. According to Chakdar (2019), taking advantage of this situation, the educated youths and middle class people of the Koch- Rajbangshi and other communities started various movements in the region of North Salmara during 1915-1942.

The Koch-Rajbangshi people of North Salmara gave a valiant stand against the colonial regime. In an act of defiance to the British rule, the people of Baripukhuri put up a strong protest which later created a ruffle effect across the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Fed up with the continual atrocity of the British government, the people of Abhyapuri, Deohati, Srijangram and North Salmara became united and gheraoed the only Police Station at North Salmara and as a result, the police personnel became confined within the Station. To set them free, additional forces were rushed to the place and thereafter began inhuman atrocities on the local people. A majority of the sufferers are the Koch-Rajbangshis, who were arrested and tortured. They were late Durga Prasad Ray, Bhabani Prosad Ray, Umesh Chabraborty, Bhabani Prosad Singha, Debendra Chandra Ray, Nimai Chandra Dutta Baruah, Lalit Mohan Das, Maheswar Das, Dharmeswar Ray, Tyagi Bhushan Mukherjee, Ratneswar Das, Uma Kanta Ray, Bhuban Chandra Ray, Gauri Ray, Bhaben Narayan were remarkable. They had to undergo torture and inhuman atrocity from the British forces.

The people of the Koch-Rajbangshi community used art and literature as weapons in the freedom struggle. According to Nurul Islam Chakdar

(2019), the freedom fighters namely, Bidyadhar Choudhury, Sarbananda Das, Panchanan Barua, Nareswar Ray, Bhuban Mohan Barua, Rajeswar Ray, Pabin Ray, Khargeswar Ray and Lalmohan Ray of village Deohati and Jadap Chandra Adhikary of village Talguri composed patriotic songs and wrote plays as well. Some of them drew pictures and cartoons to awaken the masses towards the oppression of the British. These apart, the people of other communities of villages Pachania, Chalantapara, Mojairnmukh, Talguri, Maligaon, Bakarchar, Baripukhuri, Deohati and Kakoijana (currently under Bongaigaon district) resorted to unusual mode of protests against the British empire. Notable among them are the late Harendra Kalita of Chalantapara, Ramani Kanta Das of Pachania, Biren Das of Baripukhuri, Lakshi Kanta Nath of Mojaimmukh, and Janardhan Das of Talguri, Kalicharan Nath and Puren Nath of Maligaon, Md. Ali Sarkar of Balarchar, Sashi Bhushan Fouzdar of Kakoijana.

Similar patriotic fervour and sentiment ran through the veins of the people of Paglijhora village near Bolbola at Agia. It was the 5th of November, 1942 when the local freedom fighters dared to prevent the British military from entering their village. They blocked the roads by felling trees, cut off the telecommunication lines and set the British Bungalow ablaze. As a punishment, the villagers were levied fines of five hundred rupees each. In those days, five hundred rupees was too big an amount for the poor villagers to pay. Hence, some of them revolted against the order of the colonial government. One of them was Nidhanuram Rajbangshi, who defied the order, saying that it was their country and so he declined to pay the fine to the foreign rulers. He cried out at the government official saying, *karenge ya marenge*. When this slogan reached the British government, government officials and military forces surrounded his home and yet he declined to pay the fine. Nidhanuram Rajbangshi had an argument with the government officials. Ultimately, Rajbangshi was shot dead on the spot at the order of a police

officer. Till his last breath, he continued to decline to pay the fine and exclaimed “Vande Mataram”.

A place called Hakama, near Bilasipara, played a significant role in inspiring men and women to join the freedom struggle. Guru Durga Kingkor Shastri, who used to run a Sanskrit Toll at Hakama, encouraged a lot of people to jump into the India's struggle movement. Several freedom fighters from different parts of the country took shelter in the Toll. After completing Sanskrit education from this Toll, several students got influenced and inspired and joined the freedom movement. Being influenced by Shastri, several women formed self-help groups to extend helping hands to the freedom struggle. Members of the self-help groups wrote songs and articles to awaken and inspire the common people. Late Taru Bala Devi was one of the remarkable women, who managed the self-help groups.

During the times of freedom struggle, Golakganj (presently in Dhubri district) played a pivotal role in terms of communication between Assam and the rest of the country. Golakganj was the gateway to Assam from present Bangladesh. Late Bhuban Chandra Prodhani of Golakganj, a freedom fighter of the Koch-Rajbangshi community, jumped into the freedom movement of India after completing his graduation from Bidyasagar College in Calcutta. Being inspired by the Non-cooperation Movement, launched by MK Gandhi, the late Prodhani set up a training centre for those who joined the movement.

MK Gandhi visited Assam three times in 1921, 1926 and 1934. Whenever Gandhi came to Assam, he had to come through Golakganj as Golakganj was the only Railway Junction in Assam that was constructed in 1901. When Gandhi visited Assam for the first time in 1921, he was welcomed by Nabin Chandra Bordoloi at Golakganj. Late Kailash Chandra Prodhani, a Zamindar of Golakganj was also present in the welcome programme. In 1926, when Gandhiji visited Assam for the second time, thousands of people of Golakganj were waiting for him at the Railway

Junction for which the train could not depart in time.

On April 10, 1934 when Gandhiji visited Assam for raising fund for the Harijans, he was felicitated at Golakganj by Amio Kumar Das, Debendra Nath Sarma, Kailash Chandra Prodhani and his brother Bhuban Chandra Prodhani. On this very day, Gandhiji took rest for a while in the house of the Zamindar Kailash Chandra Prodhani and thereafter he attended a public meeting. Late Kailash Chandra Prodhani offered a packet of gold coins to Gandhiji. The Zamindar of Rupsi also contributed to the cause of the freedom movement. After Golakganj, MK Gandhi visited the Zamindar of Rupsi where he took shelter for the night. The Zamindar and the local people altogether donated one thousand rupees to Gandhiji.

Late Sarat Chandra Singha from Chapar of undivided Goalpara district, the former Chief Minister of Assam, had to undergo rigorous imprisonment for one year and two months in 1921-1922 for his active involvement in the freedom struggle. He was then the District Secretary of the Congress.

One of the unsung freedom fighters of the Koch-Rajbangshi community from Lower Assam is late Faskatu Ray of village Purni, under PS Golakganj in the present Dhubri district. He courted arrest when he dared to hoist the national flag on the premises of District Court at Dhubri. For his heroic act, he had to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 21 days in 1931.

One such unsung hero was late Prafulla Singha of Chapar, who was behind bars for 17 days in 1931 for his involvement in staging Dharna against the use of foreign cloths. Likewise the late Mohadeu Adhikary of Bijni was behind bars for three months in 1921 for standing against the British. Apart from the above, there are several freedom fighters from the Koch Rajbabgshi community who actively participated in the struggle against the British. Among them are: late Kabir Ray Prodhani, former Minister of Assam of

village Bison dai under PS Golakganj, late Jadabananda Adhikary of Kachakhana. Late Adhikary was an active Congress worker at the district level.

Conclusion

The freedom struggle of India is a comprehensive mass movement against the oppressive rule of the colonial British where the people of each and every community actively participated. Every nook and corner of the country, including Lower Assam erupted in unison in reaction against the cruel colonizers. People across the country stood up with one aim, that is, to drive the British out from the soil of India.

The history which is widely read and taught at colleges and universities depicting the freedom struggle of India appears to be silent on some remarkable events and supreme sacrifices of several freedom fighters in different regions. The Lower Assam is a shining example in this regard. Selected and a limited number of people and events got their places in the pages of history. While India is celebrating its Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is a high time to rewrite the unwritten, with a fresh effort to fill up the gaps and to correct those mistakes.

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Contribution of Janajati people of Dhekiajuli in Quit India Movement

✍ Om Parkash Basnet

The role of Dhekiajuli in India's Freedom Struggle is immense. Specially during 'Quit India Movement' Dhekiajuli played a pivotal role to engrave its name in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle. Right from the very beginning of Freedom Movement, many people of Dhekiajuli area not only took part to disperse British from the country but also sacrificed their lives in the process to reap the harvest of freedom.

On 20th September 1942 Dhekiajuli witnessed a valorous act of self sacrifice for the cause of the Nation. More than 13 people lost their lives and several others were injured when the British police opened indiscriminate fire on some innocent village people of the locality, who came to hoist Congress Party flag at Dhekiajuli Police Station as a part of Quit India Movement. All people of the locality irrespective of caste, creed and religion joined the movement at Dhekiajuli. It was a joint venture of all. However among them most of the participants were from 'Janajati (Scheduled Tribes) community. On the auspicious moment of India's 75th Independence year, today we shall discuss about some freedom fighters of 'Janajati' community who took part in the procession of 20 September 1942 from Dhekiajuli' area. Dhekiajuli is a small township under Sonitpur district, 35 kilometres west from Tezpur. The adjoining areas of Dhekiajuli are mostly populated by Scheduled Tribes people of Boro community. Hence, here we shall try to discuss about the contribution of some 'Janajati' people of this area who took part in India's Freedom Struggle.

1. Ratan Kachari

Ratan Kachari is an exponent of true self sacrifice who died while trying to save women folk of the procession from the atrocities of some hired miscreants deployed by the Thana. After the firing, when Ratan Kachari saw some miscreants hitting the helpless women and girls with sticks and rods on the road, he jumped up and uprooting a bamboo pole of the market hut tried hard to defend the women and girls near the bridge. But his resistance was too feeble to save them. He fought for sometime to make the women escape, but was beaten very badly by the miscreants there. Ratan Kachari was born in 1892, in small village 'Barpukhuri' under Bargaon Mauza. His father Chatai Kachari was a marginal farmer who, despite poverty, sent his son to the school, but Ratan dropped out after class I. He got married but had no offspring. Ratan Kachari was a dedicated Congress volunteer chosen for the "Mrityu Vahini" to hoist Swaraj Flag at the top of Dhekiajuli Police Station on 20th September's programme. When Ratan Kachari was protecting the women folk from the hired Gundas, he was hit by a bullet fired from the police station and fell dead. Ratan Kachari is one of the martyrs of freedom struggle from Dhekiajuli. His name has also been inscribed on the wall of the "Shahid Stambha" at Dhekiajuli town.

2. Maniram Kachari

A "Mrityu Vahini" volunteer, Maniram Kachari was born in April 1887. Despite being born and brought up in a poor tribal family, Maniram could

carry out his study up to class III. His father, Thotha Kachari was a poor tribal farmer of the village Gelabeel under Orang Mauza of then Darrang District. He married a girl from Barpukhuri village under Bargaon Mauza and settled down there. He used to make both ends meet by cultivating a small plot of land of his own. Maniram joined the Congress party as a volunteer in 1920. He was so honest and dedicated to his work that he soon got very close to the Provincial Congress leaders of that time. It is pertinent to mention here that Ratan Kachari accompanied Omeo Kumar Das to the All India Congress Committee session in Nagpur and Gaya in 1920 and 1922 respectively. He had also served a brief term in prison after being arrested during the Non-cooperation movement in 1922. Father of a son Hiralal and two daughters Lalita and Godhuli, Maniram was enrolled as a member of the “Mrityu Vahini” in September 1942 and was hit by a bullet from behind on the main road near the Post office of Dhekiajuli when he was trying to run to a safe place as the police had started indiscriminate firing on the people assembled there. He kept running on despite the bullet injury and remained untraced until his body was recovered from a paddy field three days later. Maniram Kachari was a real hero of the time with full of human kindness and a sense of strong desire for independence. He is also one of the thirteen martyrs of Dhekiajuli incident who’s name has also been inscribed on the wall of the “Shahid Stambha” at Dhekiajuli town.

3. Lerela Kachari

An inhabitant of Keherukhanda village under Sonitpur district, Lerela Kachari had also took part in the procession of 20th September 1942, to the Dhekiajuli Police Station, to hoist the Congress party flag as a part of Quit India Movement. At that time he was 21 years old. His father Gop Kachari was a farmer. Contrary to the Assamese meaning of ‘Lerela’, Lerela Kachari was a young and well built stout man. Born in 1920, Lerela could attend school only for three years because of poverty. He used to earn livelihood

by tending cattle and ploughing land for other people of the village. Attracted by the Congress volunteer training camps held from time to time in his village, Lerela could not resist enrolling himself as a volunteer and would take part in various programmes. He was not a member of the “Mrityu Vahini”. But when he saw from close quarters the police firing indiscriminately on the peaceful unarmed Satyagrahis, he could not stop himself from stepping forward to snatch the rifles and sticks from the police constables. Even as he was engaged in a tussle with an armed policeman while trying to snatch his rifle, a bullet fired by another policeman hit him, throwing him to the ground. One policeman then also charged him with his bayonet. Lerela however survived, only to be picked up, arrested and sent to jail, where he died without any medical treatment. He was a bachelor and died in a very pathetic condition. His name has also been inscribed on the wall of the “Shahid Stambha” at Dhekiajuli town.

4. Kanta Ram Boro

Kanta Ram Boro was one of the participants of “Quit India Movement” at Dhekiajuli. He was also arrested and sent to jail for his anti British activities. He belonged to Maduribil village of Missamari area.

5. Kanduram Kachari

Kanduram (Kundu) Kachari was also one of the processinists of 20th September incident at Dhekiajuli. On the very day of 20th September 1942, he succumbed to bullet injury on his right leg. Leading a life of a handicapped, he died in a pathetic condition.

6. Ghinai Boro

Ghinai Boro was also a participant of 1942’s protest against the British government. The British government got him arrested and put in to jail.

7. That Kachari

That Kachari was also one of the processinists of 1942 Quit India Movement at Dhekiajuli. He got injured for taking part in the procession leading

to the Dhekiajuli Police Station to hoist Congress party flag.

8. Darjeeram Boro

Darjeeram Boro was also a freedom fighter who took part in 1942's Movement. He was also imprisoned for his anti British activities.

9. Dutiram Boro

Dutiram Boro was also injured for participating in the procession to hoist the Congress party flag at the Dhekiajuli Police Station.

10. Dupar Kachari

Dupar Kachari joined the procession of 20 September 1942 at Dhekiajuli as a part of Quit India Movement and got injured.

11. Maniram Basumatary

Freedom fighter Maniram Basumatary was born at Ghatuwa village under Sonitpur district. He joined Congress Party in 1935. Maniram Basumatary joined the procession of 20 September 1942 at Dhekiajuli.

12. Maila Kachari

Maila Kachari was born at the village Siporiya Barabari. He also joined the Congress procession to hoist the Congress party flag at Dhekiajuli Police Station on 20th September 1942 and got head injury. He lost mental balance and after few days succumbed to his head injury.

13. Mithuram Kachari

Mithuram Kachari joined Congress party in the year 1931-32 and became an active freedom fighter. He was imprisoned for six months as a punishment for getting engaged in picketing against the British government. He also had joined the procession of 20 September 1942 at Dhekiajuli to hoist the Congress party flag at Dhekiajuli Police Station as a part of the Quit India Movement.

14. Mogora Boro

Mogora Boro was born at Thelamora under Bargaon Mauza. He was also a freedom fighter who joined the procession to Dhekiajuli Police Station

to hoist the Swaraj Flag there and got injured.

15. Rajendra Nath Basumatary

Rajendra Nath Basumatary was born at Baligaon village under Sonitpur district. He was also a freedom fighters of Quit India Movement. He joined the Congress procession of 20 September 1942 from Thelamora and got bullet injured at the knee. He remained absconding for few days and succumbed to the bullet injury.

16. Lambaram Kachari

Lambaram Kachari was also a freedom fighter of Indian Freedom Struggle. He joined Congress Party in 1921 and became an active freedom fighters who joined the Congress procession of 20 September 1942 to hoist Congress Party flag at Dhekiajuli Police Station.

17. Habang Kachari

One of the prominent freedom fighters of Dhekiajuli area is Habang Kachari. His home was at Keherukhanda village under Sonitpur district. He joined the Congress procession of 20 September 1942 from Thelamora to Dhekiajuli to hoist the Swaraj Flag at the Dhekiajuli Police Station as a part of the Quit India Movement and got bullet injury. After few days he died with the bullet in his body. On the occasion of Shahid Divas, the Dhekiajuli unit of All Assam Students Union, declared Habang Kachari as a martyr.

Besides the above few, we have more Janjati peoples who also joined the freedom movement to make our country free from the British rule. They are Mohanram Boro, Bheburam Kachari, Nakowa Boro, Bapuram Kachari, Bamuni Kachari, Monikunda Kachari, Maneswar Barmahaliya, Muzum Kachari, Madhuram Das Musahari, Jaduram Kachari etc. There is even a controversy over Manbar Nath, the hero of the procession who voluntarily came forward to lay down his life for the sake of the country. Some people want to identify him as a Janajati man Manbar Kachari. Their point of defence is that since the great leader Jyoti Prasad Agarwal in one of his article has

written him as “Manbar Kachari” he should be a Kachari fellow. But we can not support this view for the fact that Jyoti Prasad Agarwal had mentioned in the article that he had written that article on the basis of the narration of someone else. It is still a mystery why and how a leader like Jyoti Prasad Agarwal had made such a blunder. On the other hand the evidential sources and facts available do not support this claim that he was a Kachari. These unsung Janajati heroes of Indian Freedom Movement are not known to all. I feel proud to mention their names when India is celebrating “Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav” as a part of 75 years of Indian Independence.

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Sneha Kumar Chakma- A Forgotten Hero of Indian Freedom Struggle

✍ Dr. Binayak Dutta

Forgetting Partition- A Problem of Indian History

While celebration of independence from colonial rule in India is over seven and half decades old, the story of its struggle has not been completely unfolded. Since the transfer of power in 1947, various shades of historians have tried to view this momentous process of anti-colonial struggle from their own perspective which have often been institutional and elitist. Cutting across ideological frameworks, in practical terms, the discipline has hardly recognized the contribution of common people who were in fact the real movers of the anti-colonial movements beyond a century.

While studies of the dominant leaders of the national movement are important and their contributions must be acknowledged, it's also important to record that the contribution of the masses and the grassroots leadership beyond mega anti-colonial movements like Swadeshi-Anti Partition (1905) and the Gandhian Movements, wherever possible. Thus, absence of indigenous response and participation in the anti-colonial movements can no longer be normalized and is gradually being understood as a major drawback of existing scholarship. Over the years, historians are also waking up to the geographical imbalance reflected in historical narratives and their textual representations about anti-colonial movements. Therefore, the overwhelming silence on exemplars from eastern India and more specifically northeast India are aberrations that need correctives.

In the last seven decades, as the independent Indian state celebrated independence with all pomp and pageantry, there was almost a calculated silence on partition and the tragedies of the decolonization discourse. It can hardly be denied that a major problem historically exists, as the overwhelming predominance of focus in most of the state sponsored history books were on the leaders of the Congress. A bigger oversight is in the reticence of historians to engage with the category 'undivided India' as there continues to persist silence on the struggle of leaders who resisted the partition of India and subscribed to the ideals of Indian national unity and opposed partition. Even till recent times when the state began to recognize grassroots nationalist volunteers as freedom fighters, those struggling against partition were not readily granted this status. It is important to recognize that while the national leadership of both the Congress and the Muslim League had come to accept partition as a fait accompli by June 1947, it was leaders at the grassroots in eastern and northeast India who not only resisted this idea but were also at the forefront of this struggle to resist partition of the country and ensure its unified passage from colonialism to independence. Their struggles and sacrifice have not received the attention it deserved.

A Forgotten Hero- Sneha Kumar Chakma

One such case is that of the Chakma Leader Sneha Kumar Chakma who hailed from the Chittagong Hill Tracts which was located on the south-eastern part of colonial north-east India.

When the second world war came to an close in 1945, the grassroots leaders of the Chittagong Hill Tracts formed the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples' Association (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samity – PCJS) of which Shri Sneha Kumar Chakma was the General Secretary. As the Memorandum of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples' Association pointed out, 'Chittagong Hill Tracts was a frontier district of Bengal in the east bounded by native state Hill Tippera on the north, by Arakan on the south, by the Lushai Hills on the east and the district of Chittagong on the west.' Contrary to most popular beliefs, decolonization was more complex process in colonial north-east India than has been hitherto articulated and the decolonization struggles of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are clear pointer to this complexity which straddled the binaries of religious communalism and ethno -linguistic contradictions at the same time. While the debate on Pakistan centred around securing Muslim majority areas under a single nation state in the Indian subcontinent, the inclusion of the Chittagong hill Tracts in it was indeed an aberration as out of the total population of 247053 people the tribal indigenous non-Muslim population numbered 233392 which was 97% of the population.

When discussions on decolonization picked up at the right earnest post Second World War Sneha Kumar Chakma was sent by PCJS to confer with the leaders of the Indian National Congress that had emerged as the dominant Non-Muslim Nationalist voice in Indian politics. He had elaborate discussions with the nationalist leaders and as per the demand of the PCJS was included in the All India Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. When the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten constituted the Boundary Commission on the 30th of June, 1947, Sneha Kumar Chakma opposed the Commission on the ground that the Commission had no jurisdiction over the Chittagong Hill Tracts (hereinafter referred to as CHT). After a stout defence of his position at

the hearing of the Boundary Commission, Sneha Kumar Chakma rushed back to Rangamati the 'declare CHT as India' and raise the Tri Colour. In his own words, On myself fell the active responsibility of protecting the interests of Chittagong Hill Tracts in an Indian Partition." As he reported, "Our veteran leader Kamini Mohan Dewan declining all our requests to do the job, the Action Committee forced me to hoist our National Flag at sunrise on the 15th of August, 1947. For two full days, the people and leaders of the CHT remained under the impression that they were in Indian dominion. But when the Radcliffe Award was made public on the 17th of August, Chittagong Hill Tracts found itself within East Pakistan. The Action Committee convened an emergency meeting and resolved to oppose the Radcliffe Award and launch a resistance struggle against the integration of the CHT with Pakistan. Sneha Kumar Chakma came to India through hill Tippera and met the Indian leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, who refused to support the CHT cause. Sneha Kumar felt betrayed by the Congress leadership in India who, despite their initial assurances of support did not play a proactive role to retain the non-Muslim indigenous space of Chittagong Hill Tracts in India. Despite his best efforts, Chittagong Hill Tracts merged with Pakistan and Sneha Kumar Chakma passed away as a heartbroken hero of a betrayed cause.

Conclusion

While the Chakmas continued to suffer as Buddhists in a Muslim homeland, the atrocities against them only increased leaps and bounds over the years acquiring various forms. An obvious mode was the eviction of the indigenous population of the CHT through the construction of the Kaptai Hydel Project. The Chakmas had no choice but to migrate to India as the only means to escape state persecution in East Pakistan and even Bangladesh. They first migrated to Assam in 1964 and were subsequently relocated to Arunachal Pradesh. Today the settlement of

citizenship of the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh is a contested issue and its important to recover this story of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sneha Kumar Chakma within larger Indian historical narrative of anti-partition resistance movements in order to have a better historical understanding of the national movement and the effects of decolonization of north-east India. This is something that we are yet to wake up to. In recent

years, as scholars have attempted to recover nationalist leaders beyond the Congress pantheon, its important to recover leaders such as Sneha Kumar who believed in the ideals of 'united India' and wanted to merge their lands with India when partition became an unfortunate reality.

(The author of this article is presently serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong)



Shahid Mata Rashimoni Hajong

✍ Hajong Arnab

We are acquainted with the thrilling stories of Rashimoni Hajong coupled with undaunted heroism, her dynamic personality and the supreme sacrifice she made, during our childhood.

As we found out, Rashimoni was a woman of extraordinary persona, who with her indomitable leadership qualities, played pivotal role in the movement against the exploitative Zamindari System. As the legend goes, bullets can't pierce through her *Paatin*, an ornament worn by Hajong women. Rashimoni took guerrilla training and mastered it so well that her fellow trainees were asked to shoot her with firearms and arrows, but they all failed due to her excellent warfare techniques. On being asked about the reason behind this, she answered with a tinge of mystery, that it was magic. But in reality, she mastered the tactics of warfare so well and maintained her mental strength and high spirits all the time that her opponents never succeeded in penetrating her defense. That is what she termed as 'Magic' to her fellow guerrilla members who are mostly unarmed. . "Bullets can't pierce through her *Paatin*"- that is to mean that even a bullet gets diverted by the sheer power of her efficiency.

Towards the last part of the British Raj, a movement called 'Adhikar' is born amongst the Hajongs inhabiting the foothills of Garo Hills located in the Northern part of Greater Mymensingh District. No movement, irrespective of its size, is born in a day, and this movement of the Hajongs is also not an exception. Through many small protests and resistance stemming up against centuries of exploitation, oppression and deprivation by the British, this movement started

to develop its wings. It is found that a series of movements came into being, e.g., the Movement for disobedience to the King (Raja Amanya Andolan) and movement for driving out the elephant (Hati Kheda Andolan) in the first and last half of the nineteenth century, respectively; peasant's movement in the first part of the mid-twentieth century and Tanka Movement as well as the movement for rights (Adhikar Adai Andolan) in the later part of that time. The Tanka Movement and the movement for rights had the active participation of Rashimoni Hajong.

Rashimoni was born at Maijpara (under the then Durgapur Police Station of Mymansigh District), a village nearby Garopahar and under Dhobaura Police Station area in Netrakona District of present day Bangladesh. Bagajhora village is at a few kilometres away from the north east of Maijpara. Many believe that Rashimoni was born in Bagajhora. She spent most of her childhood days with her relatives at Bagajhora, which has perhaps led many people to think of this village as her birthplace. Rashimoni was first married to Gyanendra Hajong, who was known by his nickname Dhaparam. Following a few years of their marriage, Dhaparam breathed his last. After that, Rashimoni, who did not have a child yet, returned to her parental home. As time passes by, she was now married to Panjilal of Arapara village. Panjilal was a famous Kabiraj (a local practitioner of the Ayurveda) in his locality and was also an expert in sorcery. For his fame as a Kabiraj and his proficiency in sorcery, people of that area used to refer to him as Sadhu or Panji Sadhu. From her husband Panji Sadhu, she had been able to learn about paediatrics and gynaecology along with

midwifery. This knowledge helped Rashimoni involve herself in social work. Soon, she became famous as an eminent and trusted social worker in the area.

Leadership qualities of Rashimoni were evident from her childhood. She always stood at the forefront during sports and amusements with her playmates as well as in discussions. Consequently, with the peasant's movement emerging and the Tanka movement becoming inevitable, it was the characteristics of her leadership qualities that urged Rashimoni to go forward with flow of these movements. Accordingly, she formed an unit of Women's Guerrilla Army. The fame she had as a trusted social worker was beneficial to her role as an organiser of the movement.

Northern India and the then Bengal province, greater Mymensingh district, northern part of greater Sylhet and Jamalpur Districts located in the south of Khasia and Garo Hills in present day Bangladesh are few places where the Hajongs live. Moreover, Jhilaigati and Nalitabari in Sherpur District, Haluwaghat in Mymensingh District, Dhobaura, Susang Durgapur and Kalamakanda in Netrakona district, Madhyanagar in Sunamganj district and Biswambharpur etc. are the sub-districts where Hajong people live. The Hojongs are basically farmers and their economic structure is agriculture based.

In Susang Pargana of British India, the Zamidars imposed the Tanka system on peasants, through which peasants were bound to give certain amount of paddy to the Zamidars as payment of tax against lands they used for cultivation through agreement. Even in cases of crops being damaged due to natural calamities or cultivation being not possible because of unavoidable circumstances, the peasants were compelled to share their fixed amount of paddy to the Zamidars, irrespective of whether there were any yield or not. Peasants never had any title or any right over the lands. On the contrary, the burden of debts of these *Tanka* farmers began to be passed on to their successors too. Instead of being title holders, they had to inherit debt. Hajong cultivators in Susang Pargana were victims of this

infamous Tanka system. The peasants' movement and the Tanka movement of the Hajongs started against such oppressive as well as exploitative policies. These movements awakened the masses and spurred them for a sense of entitlement thereby becoming a movement for freedom and eventually blended into the national movement for independence.

Centred upon the abolition of the Tanka system, the peasants' movement started to turn intense gradually. To take part in the movement parallelly with men, Rashimoni Hajong formed Women's Guerrilla Army and led this army herself. As the agitators stopped paying their taxes, i.e., paddy, to Zamindars, violent clashes broke out with the police in many places. On the other hand, the women's army also equally participated in the campaigns for propagation of the idea of liberation from the colonial forces through public meetings and processions.

The then District Magistrate of Mymensingh, Bastin Saheb deployed Eastern Frontier Rifles to suppress the movement of the Hajong peasants and the armed group of soldiers started with their restraint policy. During such an armed operation on 31st January, 1946, a group of the Eastern Frontier Rifles entered Baheratali village. Baghmara is the headquarters of South Garopahar district in present day Meghalaya state of India. Close to Baghmara, there is a river called Simsang flowing southwards from the north, which is known by the name Someswari in Bangladesh. The village Baheratali is located at a distance of 4-5 Kilometres from Baghmara towards south on the western bank of the river Someswari. Durgapur, the capital town of Susang is on the eastern bank along the river Someshwari at a distance of 4-5 Kilometres further south from Baheratali village. This place was the capital of King Susang.

The soldiers under Bastin's command came to Baheratali searching for peasants' group, but after failing to gather any information regarding their whereabouts, they forcefully abducted a woman named Kumudini Hajong who was the wife of a

peasant. A group of protestors consisting of Guerrilla warriors were at nearby place called Changara. In this group was Rashimoni accompanied by her fellow mates of the women's army. The news of soldiers entering Baheratali and abducting Kumudini reached to the groups of protestors. After coming to know about this news of the woman's abduction, Rashimoni became agitated and decided to counteract quickly instead of wasting time. The group started to argue among themselves over the matter that whether it was reasonable for the unarmed guerrilla groups to confront the armed British soldiers in broad daylight or not. But for Rashimoni it was not a time to delay further. Protecting the dignity of a woman is what she referred to as the topmost priority at that time and accordingly quashed all other arguments by expressing her decision of launching an attack at that moment itself. With anger and agitation she roared, "I am a woman, I shall protect women's dignity, or else I will die, you stick to your rules." Saying so, she moved fast. 10-12 members of the guerrilla group followed Rashimoni, their leader. The group then advanced northwards to the village Baheratali. Understanding the circumstances, a group of men's guerrilla group led by Surendra Hajong headed southwards to Baheratali.

Pratham Gupta, a prominent leader directly involved in the Tanka movement describes this confrontation in his book *Je Sangramer Shesh Nei*, ".....The group of soldiers deployed by Bastin was blockaded from both side on the western bank of Someshwari filled with dry sand. To their east was Someshwari, with her currents too strong to cross, hence the frightened soldiers tried to escape leaving Kumudini alone. But the sandbed of Someshwari was the hindrance. Their pace came down accordingly. Meanwhile, the groups led by Rashimoni and Surendra already began to launch attack on the soldiers with arrows, spears and

stones. Thus being blockaded on the sandbed with protestors attacking from both sides, the bewildered soldiers started to fire their weapons indiscriminately. Paying no heed to the rain of bullets the group led by Rashimoni jumped on the soldiers and started to attack them with spears and choppers striking several blows. Many of them were wounded by the soldiers. Standing at the forefront amongst them, Rashimoni kept fighting them dauntlessly like a battle angel. Beside them, Surendra was also fighting with the spear on his hand marked by skill and toughness. Rashimoni hit a blow with her chopper and beheaded the soldier who had brutally oppressed Kumudini. Soon another soldier fired at Rashimoni, and her severely wounded body collapsed on the sand. In retaliation, Surendra pierced the chest of the soldier who killed Rashimoni. Suddenly, a bullet hit Surendra and thus he attained martyrdom. The lifeless body of Surendra rested on the lap of Mata Rashimoni. The battle between the two sides lasted for about three hours.

The remaining soldiers eventually fled the place saving their lives thereby putting an end to the battle. After the battle was over, everything stood still in calmness and silence. The air of Baheratali remained still; the sandbeds of Someshwari became numb, nature was voiceless and the greeneries tranquil. Only a few leaves of trees continued to fall down silently.

Hajong women's group and Men's guerrilla groups paid their tributes to the departed souls of their leaders Mata Rashimoni Hajong and Surendra Hajong with a heavy heart and returned carrying their lifeless bodies on shoulders. An unconscious Kumudini returned home on her husband's shoulder. The guerrilla men and women were holding their bloodstained weapons on one hand and blood-soaked red flag on the other.



“Our Government has been steadfast in its efforts towards empowerment of our tribal communities and preservation of their traditions. We are working tirelessly to transform the tribal-rural economic system.”

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



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प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी की प्रेरणा से मध्यप्रदेश विकास की ओर अग्रसर
**हर वर्ग रहा खुशहाल
निरंतर विकास के**

 श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

 श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री

2 साल

पिछले 2 वर्षों में किसानों को 1 लाख
72 हजार करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की सहायता

जल जीवन मिशन - 47 लाख से अधिक
ग्रामीण परिवारों को नल कनेक्शन से जल

प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना-ग्रामीण एवं शहरी
विगत दो वर्षों में प्रदेश में 10 लाख से अधिक आवास पूर्ण

88 लाख घरेलू बिजली उपभोक्ताओं को लगभग
6 हजार 400 करोड़ रुपये की राहत

केन-बेतवा लिंक परियोजना
(8 लाख 11 हजार हेक्टेयर में सिंचाई)
और अटल प्रगति पथ (313 कि.मी.) स्वीकृत

प्रदेश में 650 से अधिक नई औद्योगिक इकाइयों में
40 हजार करोड़ रुपये से अधिक का निवेश,
1 लाख नये रोजगार सृजन के अवसर

ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन अंतर्गत महिला स्व-सहायता
समूहों के लगभग 9 लाख सदस्यों को आर्थिक गतिविधियों
के लिए लगभग 2000 करोड़ रुपये के ऋण वितरित

हर तरह के माफिया के खिलाफ जीरो टॉलरेंस
की नीति अपनाकर उसे नेस्तनाबूद किया गया,
21 हजार एकड़ से अधिक शासकीय भूमि मुक्त कराई गई

पिछले 2 वर्षों में 8 हजार 276 करोड़ रुपये
की लागत से 5322 कि.मी. लंबाई की
सड़कों का निर्माण

पिछले 4 माह में कुल 10 लाख 27 हजार से अधिक
हितग्राहियों को स्वरोजगार के लिये 5430 करोड़
रुपये से अधिक की ऋण स्वीकृति

आईडीटीफिकेशन, आइसोलेशन, टेस्टिंग, ट्रीटमेंट और वैक्सीनेशन की सुनियोजित रणनीति से
जनभागीदारी के साथ कोरोना की तीनों लहरों का कुशल प्रबंधन एवं नियंत्रण

दो साल शिवराज के-साहस के विश्वास के