

Property Rights and Common Lands in Darrang District of Assam With Special Reference to Grazing Lands and Forests: 1826-1947

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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September 2021

DECLARATION

I, Barnali Kalita, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the M. Phil dissertation entitled “**Property Rights and Common Lands in Darrang District of Assam With Special Reference to Grazing Lands and Forests: 1826-1947**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in History**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled “**Property Rights and Common Lands in Darrang District of Assam With Special Reference to Grazing Lands and Forests: 1826-1947**” submitted to Sikkim University for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in History**, by **Ms. Barnali Kalita** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the Dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association, and Fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

I recommend the thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Assam was geographically divided into two Valleys, Brahmaputra Valley, and Surma Valley. The Brahmaputra Valley is an alluvial plain, about 150 miles in length with an average breadth of about 50 miles, covering with hills every side except the west. David Scott the first commissioner of Assam divided the Brahmaputra Valley into two parts; Upper Assam and Lower Assam for administrative maintenance. The Darrang District comes under Lower Assam.

The Darrang District is situated in a narrow strip of plain lying between Himalayas and the Brahmaputra. It is situated at the centre of the state, which comes under the North Bank Plain Zone (NBPZ) of Assam and occupies a geographical area of 1, 85,058 sq. km. The District is situated between 26° 12' and 27° 0' N and 91° 42' and 93° 47' E and it was about 130 miles in length. The total area of the district was 3418.26 square miles. To the north, Bhutan and Towang (a province of Tibet) bounded Darrang and also the hills occupied by the Aka and Dafla tribes. In the east, it adjoins Lakhimpur District; in the south, it was separated by the Brahmaputra from Nowgong; and in the west is bounded by the Barnadi River and the District Kamrup.

In 1872 the total population of Darrang District was two lakhs thirty six thousand nine, in 1891 three lakhs seven thousand four hundred forty and in 1901 total population was three lakhs thirty seven thousand three hundred thirteen. In Darrang District the Assamese people were not rich. They were mainly peasants. These small peasant properties drove the plough by themselves, and carried home the rice that has been cut by their family members. The main source of income of the poor villagers was their land only. Their main earning depended on the selling of their small amount of produce to the local markets.

According to the *Census Report of 1901*, pasture and agriculture covers 92 per cent of the total land. The staple food crop in Darrang is rice. In 1902-03, it covers 67 per cent of the total cropped area. Apart from rice many pulses were cultivated which covered 18 per cent. Common lands were mainly covered with tea plantation which

covered 14 per cent of cropped areas. But apart from that many lands were covered with grass lands and forest areas.

Apart from Bombay, Madras, Bengal Presidencies, all the remaining provinces of British India has a revenue system peculiar to itself. But most of these systems are based on the same principle of direct dealing with the individual cultivator and his separate holding, without any middleman landlord, or joint responsibility of a group of landholding and they are essentially 'rayatwari', though they may not be officially so designed. B.H. Baden Powell named this system of Assam as Allied System based on its different property rights on land.

The districts of Assam came under the British in 1826 after the Burmese war of 1824. Within few years of the war, a general supervision over the practically native administration was maintained under the orders of the Bengal Government, from 1830s onwards they started their rule in Assam. Till 1861 the revenue collected from the districts of Assam was at a normal rate. From 1860s the British started to impose revenue in the lands of Assam and first resettled the revenue in 1893 at a high rate. The peasants of Darrang District owned the ownership right. They were the owner of their land. But they were not the ultimate owner of their land. They had to give up their land to the British Government if they could not pay the revenue on time.

In India forests were common for all, prior to the coming of British. In Assam also Grazing lands were common for all, no tax was collected from them. Though Ahom had a relation with forest people they were free from invasion. In 1838 first special grant rules were issued where no revenue was to be assessed for the first five years if the land was under grass, ten years if under reeds and high grass, and twenty years if under forest; at the expiry of this term, revenue was to be assessed at nine *annas* per acre for the next three years, after which the rate was to be for twenty-two years R. 1-2 an acre.

The British government dominated all the lands of the Darrang District of Assam. As soon as they started their dominance on the land all rights of peasants in the common land had stopped. No one could use any land or product from the common land.

The common people of Darrang District did not like the behaviour of British. The Government increased the revenue too heavily that peasants had to go against the high revenue of the British Government which created movement like situation in Darrang District of Assam.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Darrang District, collection of land revenue was first introduced by *patgiri* in 1833. In this district owners of cultivable lands were peasants themselves, but they had to give up their lands in case of not able to pay the revenue to the British Government. For the collection of revenue some middleman like *mauzadar*, *tahsildar*, were there. They were also the mediator between the government and peasants. For the collection of more revenue, the British government increased revenues on the land time to time. They not only focused on the cultivable land that belonged to peasantry of Darrang District but also on the common lands. There are many forests and grazing lands in Darrang District.

Common lands like forest and grazing land were generally belonged to village communities. They were having traditional rights on the common lands such as grazing lands and forests. Actually nobody was having property rights on these lands though it was used by village communities. During the colonial period, the British government controlled such common lands through legislation, thinking that king was the owner of the land in India since pre-British period. However, it is a big debatable issue whether the king was having property rights on the lands or individual peasant or village communities in pre British period. Various views on property rights in India were discussed in the *Rule of Property for Bengal* written by Ranajit Guha.

The common lands were used by the local people for grazing and getting various forest productions. These common lands were not accessible to every individual during colonial period because of the new property rights introduced and implemented by the British. This naturally led to the imposition of several restrictions on common lands. Consequently, the people had to pay revenue for the grazing land which they had been using freely since long. Even in case of keeping cattle they had to pay tax. Forest which was a common property in pre-British period, property rights abstained them from using their lands. Once the British occupied this region, from

1830's onwards British started to put control on the common land. And these common lands gradually enclosed by the British government and started giving it to the planters or various people. If the forest people use forest for any purposes like cultivation then they had to pay tax to the British government. The new situation benefited to the British only, and condition of common people became worse. This situation led to peasant's insecurity in the response to it several peasant movement like Patharughat Uprising was emerged in the Darrang District.

Buffalo, cow, goat, sheep and ponies were the main livestock at that time. For this, people depended on forests and grazing lands. The British collected tax from the cattle graziers at a high rate and increased the revenue from time to time. The graziers could not use the grazing land in all over the year. They had to face problem in summer especially in the rainy season and in time of flood.

As grazing lands were far away from forests, the British government kept one official for grazing land and grazier *mauzadar* was also appointed to collect revenues from grazing lands and to keep some record regarding cattle. All graziers had to submit the actual numbers of cattle to the *mauzadar*. If they kept excess cattle secretly they had to pay tax in double. The main aim of British was how much the graziers were benefiting them through revenue by improving the breed of the cattle. The British even kept records of all income of graziers like how the dairy products and cattle had been sold. Herdsmen without the permit of the government had to face penalties as per the rule 33 of the Assam Forest Manual.

The forests of Darrang were divided into two main classes; the reserved forest and unclassified forest. The unclassified forests were in higher altitude than reserved forests in Darrang District. They were low lying land covered with high grass and reeds, and almost totally destitute of trees. The unclassified State forests were under the management of the local revenue officials.

In Darrang District there were many forests under the British. From those forests they had collected a big amount of revenue. From Charduar forest British collected a big amount from rubber plantation. Few people lived by pasturing cattle in forest also. Moreover, the British Government used to collect taxes from the people who used to cut and sale timber from forest. The whole uncultivated area which was

common for all, from which no tax was collected, after the coming of British it became one of the main source of revenue to the government.

In Darrang District because of the land policy introduced by the British from 1830 onwards, the common land that includes grazing lands and forests were completely disturbed. Apart from the cultivated land the British had collected revenue from common lands like grassland which people used for grazing, they had collected tax from each cattle of graziers at a high rate for which grazier faced troubles.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rajib Handique wrote in his article, “Colonial Wasteland Grants and Their Impact on the Ecology and Society of Assam”¹ about the wasteland of Assam. He mentioned some conditions that the British had adopted to take all wastelands on use from which they can collect revenue and also wrote about several rules that the British make for the expansion of tea cultivation in Assam. On wasteland in Assam, cultivation of rice was not encouraged as the lands were not suitable for that. They mainly focused on tea cultivation. Handique even mentioned about the requirements of coal and other important industries that had developed with the tea industries and about the labourers that imported from outside which created the problem in population incensement in Assam. The wastelands of Assam became the playing field for capital, organization, labours, merchants etc. All were outsiders. The labourers who immigrants from outside had to live a secluded and regimented life. Though Handique wrote about waste lands yet he has only focused on the problems related to the tea plantation.

S. L. Projapati in his article, “On Waste Land Grants in Assam: An Appraisal”² gave an idea about the Ahom rule after which British rule started in Assam. Projapati discussed about the ways that British had adopted to use uncultivated lands of Assam. He wrote how they manipulated cultivators to cultivate different crops like cotton, sugarcane, poppy, indigo etc. by adopting uncultivated

¹Rajib Handique, “Colonial Wasteland grants and their impact on the ecology and society of Assam,” *Proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 70, 2009-2010. pp. 733-740.

²S. L. Projapati, “Wasteland Grants in Assam: An Appraisal, *Proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 45, 1984, pp. 580-587.

lands of Assam. He discussed about some rules that had made by British for the expansion of wastelands on use, and also about problems faced by indigenous people for their changing method of rules frequently. He gave an idea about the growth of tea plantation in Assam and how it changed the whole scenario of Assam and the way of living of Assamese people. Projapati had discussed about crops that were cultivated in common lands but grazing lands and common forest areas were not discussed by him.

The article on “Forest Villages in Assam Continued Ghettoisation”³ written by Chandra Jyoti Sonowal focussed on the relations between tribal people and forest, and how the life of tribal people completely depended on the forest, shifting cultivation and forest dwelling etc. He also discussed about the various aspects of forest villages like, the creation of forest villages, role of Forest Department and its responsibilities towards the British imperial government. He discussed about the condition of migrant labourers, how they were treated by the Government and how British converted revenue villages to forest villages to transfer the ownership of land from common people to government. He discussed how people of forest were used by the government in different purposes and about the problems faced by the forest villagers as all land belonged to Forest Department and they could not do anything for their development. Here he mainly focussed on migrated labours and forest villages which were related with the tea cultivation in the forest areas only.

K.N.Ninan’s article “Agricultural Labourers and Poverty”⁴ comments on Joan Marcher’s article and her responses. In this article, he mainly focuses on the condition of the agricultural labourers of Kerala. For the analysis, he made two questions and to answer the questions he used some methods. He collected NSS data that gives some idea about the socio-economic condition of agricultural labourers in India. NSS data shows state wise per capita income of non- cultivating wage earners. Ninan mentioned about per capita income of non-cultivating wage earner in all states of India. His article focuses on the agricultural labourers of Kerala and discussed little about the per capita income of Assam.

³Chandra Jyoti Sonowal, “Forest Villages in Assam Continued Ghettoisation”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, No.39, Sep 27-Oct 3, 1997, pp. 2441-2443.

⁴K. N. Ninan, “Agricultural Labourers and Poverty”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 28/29, July, 10-17, 1982, pp. 1169-1172.

In the article, “Land Grant as a Method of Labour Control in Assam Plantations in Colonial Times”⁵ Ramakrishna Chattopadhyay tried to answer to some aspects of the questions raised by different scholars regarding land grant to the wage labourers of Assam. He wrote about the promise done by British to the labourers of giving land for cultivation and about the reports of Labour Enquiry Committee regarding land held by the labours. He further discussed about two forms by which lands were taken up by the tea garden labour. He had also mentioned about the steps that were taken by the Government for settling labourers with tea garden rice lands and extension of cultivation and how it helped to the planters and Government. Here Chattopadhyay mainly focus on tea plantation and tea labours.

Nayanjot Lahiri in her article, “Landholding and Peasantry in the Brahmaputra Valley C. 5th – 13th Centuries A.D.”⁶ wrote about the historical sources from which we can reconstruct the history of the Brahmaputra Valley of 5th to 13th century and about the position of the Brahmins in the system of Landholding and about the lands and its ownership during that period. She also wrote about common lands that were used by many hill people and their way and rules of living in the forests and their tax systems. She discussed about the position of different castes in the society. She also discussed about the mixing of culture between traditional Hindu and tribal peoples and about different tribal peoples of Assam who were engaged on cultivation permanently. Her article covers land holding of ancient period and does not cover British period.

Amartya Sen discussed in his *Poverty and Famine*⁷ about some famines that occurred in different parts of the world. He wrote about the failure of exchange entitlements of certain sections of the society due to the poverty. He examined about the entitlement relations of the people who starved most in the time of famine and what led them to be starved too badly and who can get relief from starvation and how. He further discussed some measures to identify the starved people by the state and how they can come out of that. By discussing four famines he tried to mention that

⁵Ramakrishna Chattopadhyay, “Land Grant as a Method of Labour Control in Assam Plantations in Colonial Times”, *Indian History Congress*, Vol. 49, 1988, pp. 520-523.

⁶Nayanjot Lahiri, “Landholding and Peasantry in the Brahmaputra Valley C. 5th – 13th Centuries A.D.” *Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol.33, No. 2, 1990, pp. 157-168.

⁷Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982.

food availability decline is not one and only problem to face famine in a place, by different way without decline of food availability also famine is possible. However, his work did not focus on how the peasantry lost the property rights on the common lands like grazing lands and forests. In fact, losing the common lands leads to the losing the entitlements.

In her article, “Agricultural Land Use in the Plains of Assam”⁸ Chandrama Goswami wrote the different factors that governed agricultural land in Assam that included nature endowment associated with land in a region and socio-economic factors that guided and governed the actual land use. She wrote that according to national forest policy of 1952 one third of the geographical area should be under forest. However, according to her data in many districts one-third portion of land was not under forest. Her findings on the discussion are that to increase the agricultural production through land shifts from outside the agricultural sector is not possible. For this, she asked to bring most of the cultivated area under irrigation. She wrote about the need of increased production for cultivation for more wastelands. She concluded her paper by saying to improve the agricultural production and to do proper utilization of state’s natural resources, particularly water. However, she has focussed mainly on post-independence scenario and discussed little about the British policies.

In her article, “Forests, Rivers and Society- A Study in Social Formation in Medieval Assam”⁹ Jahnabi Gogoi Nath wrote about the role of geography in social formation of Assam which was neglected by the historians. She wrote how Edward Gait tried to explain the fall of the Ahom monarchy and occupation of Assam by the British. She made a systematic attempt to relate ecology to historical developments in Assam. She also discussed how forests and rivers shaped the society in Medieval Assam, how the concept of wasteland was, and how it change its nature after coming of British. She mainly discussed on the medieval Assam and touched little about the British period.

⁸Chandrama Goswami, “Agricultural Land Use in the Plains of Assam”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 49, Dec, 2002, pp. 4891-4893.

⁹Jahnabi Gogoi Nath, “Forest, Rivers and Society- A Study in Social Formation in Medieval Assam”, *Indian History Congress*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 2007, pp. 464-474.

On “‘Waste’ and the Permanent Settlement in Bengal”¹⁰ Vinay Krishin Gidwani wrote the idea of wasteland of Bernold Cohn. He discussed in depth the meaning of ‘waste’ in modern culture. The issue of wasteland is a controversial one in India. The purpose of his essay was to understand how the English represented and applied the concept of ‘waste’ in Bengal under the Permanent Settlement of 1793. While discussing it, he took the help from two concepts of ‘value’ and ‘property’ and concluded as the meaning of ‘waste’ is changing which was fully incorporated within the discourse of modernity and British used the idea ‘waste’ as an instrument to serve their needs. He mainly focus on the concept of waste land only and he discussed little about more than that.

Vijay Kumar Thangellapali in his article “Impact of Colonial Institution in Andhra”¹¹ wrote about different impacts of property right in different regions of Andhra. He mentioned about some historians Banerjee, Iyer, Shilpi Kapur, and Sukkoo Kim who wrote that Ryotwary system was a good settlement, what he clarified was the conditions of the peasantry under Ryotwary Settlement were also not much better. He also discussed how British used the new property rights institutions to collect as much as revenue from Andhra, how different property rights systems created problems to the peasantry and how the new institution lead in increasing of the rural indebtedness in Andhra. Thangellapali discussed the property right system in Andhra but he did not discuss how the British controlled the common lands since the peasantry did not have any individual rights on them, which was necessary to use any land for any purpose.

Douglass C. North in his article “Institution”¹² wrote about the role of institutions in the economic development. He wrote how institutions helped in long distance trade. North argued that only by including institutions in the economic models one can understand broad historical patterns of economic growth. He also wrote about the institutional evolution in pre modern Europe from primitive systems

¹⁰Vinay Krishna Gidwani, “‘Waste’ and the Permanent Settlement in Bengal,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol-27, No-4, Jan, 25, 1992, pp. PE39-PE46.

¹¹ Vijay Kumar Thangellapali, “Impact of Colonial Institutions in Andhra”, *Proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 77, 2016, pp. 394-402.

¹² Douglass C. North, “Institution”, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter, 1991, pp. 97-112.

of exchange to long distance trade. He further said that better property rights provide better development.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine how the land revenue system of Darrang District of Assam affected the Property Rights of the peasantry.
2. To discuss the British colonial policies on the grazing lands, that caused the loosing of the rights by the peasantry and in turn faced the problems to maintain their cattle, the core requirement for agriculture.
3. To prove how the British forest policy affected the peasantry of Darrang District and also to compare this situation with the people usage of the forests as common property resource.
4. To understand peasant's response in the form of Peasants Movement to the British Land Policies

1.4 METHODOLOGY

For the present research work the analytical method will be used in order to interpret both primary and secondary sources to see the historical facts by studying the archival documents. Primary sources are Government records, Census Reports, contemporary literature like the individual reports on various issues etc. Secondary sources are books, articles, journal article etc. Assam state archive of Guwahati is the main source of all primary documents that collected for the research work.

1.5 CHAPTERISATION

The following is the Chapterisation of the study:

1. **Introduction:** In the introductory chapter, the Statement of the problem, review of literature, objectives, methodology and Chapterisation of the study will be explained.
2. **Land Revenue Systems and the Property Rights on Land in Darrang District:** In this chapter, how the new land revenue systems were introduced

by the British and how they affected the property rights in Darrang district will be discussed.

3. **Declining of Grazing Lands and Cattle:** This chapter deals how the British policies affected the common property resources like grazing lands. The grazing lands were shrunken due to the new property relations that made the concept of the common property resources as redundant.
4. **British Forest Policy and Its Impact on the Peasantry:** The British introduced new forest policy since mid-nineteenth century. These forests, once considered as common lands for various purposes by the peasantry became government lands and the peasantry lost their rights on them. This chapter will discuss these issues in detail.
5. **Peasant insecurity and their response:** The British Government increased the revenue on all the lands of Darrang District at a high rate which was a big pressure to the people of Darrang District. As a result a serious uprising occurred and the people of Darrang did not forget about the situation till a century and joined in the Gandhian movement to become free from the British dominion. This chapter will be dealt on that matter.
6. **Conclusion:** The last chapter will be the conclusion, in which the summary of the all chapters along with the final conclusion will be dealt.

Chapter Two

LAND REVENUE SYSTEM AND THE PROPERTY RIGHTS ON LAND IN DARRANG DISTRICT

The main source of income of the peasants of Assam is land. They lived based on the income from their cultivation. Under Ahom kings, the Land Revenue system was one of the personal service. The whole of the adult male population divided into groups called *Khels*. Each *Khel* consisting of 1000-5000 persons.¹ Further, they were subdivided into bodies of three men called *gots*. Each individual was styled as *paik*. It was compulsory that one *paik*, out of the three *paiks* in each *gots* was always engaged on the labour service for the state. In return, each *paik* had received eight *bigha rupit*² land which was free from any charge.³ More than that all peasants already had some land which was his private property on hereditary basis. That land was also free from charge. Moreover if they cleared more land from unused land for cultivation they had to pay tax to the Government. The unused land were not belonged to the state. Common people normally used minor product from them. But in case of clearing them for cultivation they got the hereditary rights on them. For this situation they had to pay some revenue to the Ahom Government.⁴

As a tributary area of Ahom, in Darrang District, one more tax was imposed which was called as *Juhal- Kar* (hearth tax).⁵ But coming of British completely changed the system. They started to collect tax from each possible thing. Apart from Bombay, Madras and Bengal, all other provinces had a revenue system more or less similar of all three Presidencies. But most of these systems are based on the same principle of direct dealing with the individual cultivator and his separate holding, without any middleman landlord. The revenue system was more or less like 'rayatwari' though they may not be officially so designed. B. H. Baden Powell named this system of Assam as Allied System based on its different property right on land.

¹Keya Dasgupta, "Plantation economy and Land Tenure System in Brahmaputra Valley", 1839-1914", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.18, No. 29, 16 July 1983, p.1280.

²*Rupit* land is transplanted rice land or ordinary land for cultivation.

³ B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, volume-5, Darrang*, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1996, p.188.

⁴ S. L. Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, New Delhi, 2013, 409-410.

⁵ *Ibid.* 410.

Peasants were the owner of land in Darrang District. But his property right was not complete because they were linked to the payment of the tax. So far they paid the land revenue they were the owner of the land. In case of not able to pay land revenue to the British Government the peasant had to give up their land. In Darrang District of Assam the land revenue was more. Various types of land revenue systems were there; like annual settlement, decennial settlement where they had to pay full revenue. One another system was *nisf-khiraj* system where they had to pay half of the full revenue. Among these land revenue systems, again the lands were divided into three more classes like, *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati* lands. Here lands were divided based on the form of revenue. Again lands were divided into different classes based on the fertility of lands; like first class land, second class land, third class land, tea land, waste land etc. This chapter will analyses the land revenue system in Darrang District of Assam. The analysis will be based on the statistical account of the various revenue systems between 1875-76 and 1946-47 of Darrang District of Assam. There were two subdivisions in Darrang District; Mangaldoi and Tezpur subdivision.

Assam came under the direct control of the British by signing the treaty of Yandabu on 24 February 1826, after Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26). After the occupation of Assam Valley, British had abolished the compulsory labour service and *paik* lands under Ahom rule were assessed to land revenue.

In 1827 David Scott (Agent to the Governor General) had started revenue Survey in Assam. They were carried out by local measurers under European Surveyors.⁶In Darrang District, Survey had completed during 1833-34. R.H. Phillimore had quoted about Hudson's report as "[Hudson himself reported that during season 1833-34 he had] entirely brought up and protracted the arrears of field work of the years 1830-31 and 32, and a part of 1833-34.... I have... supplied the Collector ... with a map of Desh Darrang, and ... I am now making a map of Southern Camroop [Kamrup] from the field work of 1833 and 34, which ... will require nearly another year to complete."⁷Hudson was one of the Surveyor of General's office draughts men who deputed to Assam to arrange and protract the unfinished revenue survey after the death of Scott.

⁶ R. H. Phillimore, *Historical Records of the Survey of India vol- IV 1830 to 1843 George Everest*, Surveyor General of India, Dehradun, 1958, p.200.

⁷ Ibid, p.201.

In Darrang District the collection of ordinary land revenue first introduced in 1833. The lands in each village were measured by an *amin*, leases were issued to the peasant by *patgiri*,⁸ who was responsible for the collection of revenue. Till 1836 British Government did not make any changes on land revenue system. From 1836-42 onwards, they started to make some short settlement for a circle of villages which was called as *mauza* with a collector or revenue former called *mauzadar*. The system actually adopted in practice was a system of annual measuring. In 1841-42, a new experiment for settlement had tried with the *Patgiri* for a term of years where he was responsible for any losses. But it proved to be an unsatisfactory and it again replaced by annual settlement under which fiscal officers were only responsible for the collection of the revenue.⁹

In Assam, land revenue system was directly dealing with the individual cultivators without any interference of Middlemen. It was similar to ryatwari system, though they may not officially so designated.¹⁰ But the settlement of Assam was quite different from the *ryatwari* settlement of Madras and Bombay. Baden Powell named it as the 'Ryotwori and Allied system'.¹¹

Originally the lands under peasant was always in annual leases, theoretically this gave no right beyond the year. In 1870 the Settlement Rules for the first time proposed to recognize tenure on a settlement for ten years. Till 1883 the system was not working properly but from that year ten year settlement started which took a shape like permanent in character.

By the 1870, lands divided into two administrative categories; Ordinary and Special Cultivation. Tea cultivations was normally categorized under special cultivation and peasant's cultivation was normally categorized under ordinary cultivation. The lands under ordinary cultivation further classified into three

⁸*Patgiri* is a title. In early British rule, *Mauzadar* of Darrang District of Assam was known as *Patgiri*.

⁹Allen, op.cit, p.198.

¹⁰B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land-System of British India*, vol-3, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1892, pp.392, 419.

¹¹Ibid, p.393.

categories depending on the form of revenue. They were *khiraj* or full revenue paying land, *nisf-khiraj* or half revenue paying land, and *lakharaj* or revenue free land.¹²

2.1 ANNUAL AND DECENNIAL OR PERIODICAL SETTLEMENTS

The land where the staple crops were grown by the real cultivator and held direct from Government, that land came under annual or periodic leases. The annual leases authorized the occupation of the land for a single year. It also recognized the rights of transfer and inheritance. But when Government required the land it could be resumed without payment of compensation to the occupant. Further, the periodic leases conferred the right of inheritable and transferable title.¹³

The following Tables No 2.1 and 2.2 shows the Annual Settlements and periodical or decennial leases between 1880-81 and 1946-47 in Darrang District.

Table No 2.1 Annual Settlements in Darrang District from 1885-86 to 1946-47

Year	Number of Settlements	Area in acres	Revenue in Rs.	Revenue per Acre in Rupees
1880-81	70378	-	-	-
1885-86	40459	57956	-	-
1890-91	57695	100918	190385	1.89
1895-96	64487	115839	289273	2.50
1900-01	74852	121800	304987	2.50
1905-06	-	-	-	-
1910-11	58123	70481	135307	1.91
1915-16	67807	103957	191752	1.84
1920-21	62566	127058	250913	1.97
1925-26	79748	156699	297402	1.90
1930-31	85137	214264	374568	1.75
1935-36	84279	181595	339403	1.87
1940-41	92453	222583	408473	1.83
1945-46	-	-	-	-

¹² Arupjyoti Saikia, "Landlord, Tenants and Agrarian Relations Revising a Peasant Uprising in Colonial Assam," *Studies in History*, Vol-26, No-2, August 2010, p.178.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.193.

1946-47	113786	300674	514484	1.71
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Note:1. the date mention in this table is with 5 years gape since mentioning all the year data in a single table is difficult.

2. Information for the year 1895-96 and 1945-46 is not available.

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81 to 1946-47.*

Table No 2.2 Decennial or Periodically Settlements in Darrang District from 1875-76 to 1946-47

Year	Number of Settlement	Area in acres	Revenue in Rs.	Revenue per Acre in Rupees
1875-76	-	1658		
1880-81	-	2550	-	-
1885-86	52740	-	-	-
1890-91	45557	133881	260096	1.94
1895-96	40992	121599	337416	2.77
1900-01	46928	129523	353637	2.73
1905-06	-	-	-	-
1910-11	87572	238624	601961	2.52
1915-16	97750	248621	613605	2.46
1920-21	109926	278356	686119	2.46
1925-26	111845	334098	769139	2.30
1930-31	110469	335584	785994	2.34
1935-36	97310	397253	1052076	2.65
1940-41	107892	416087	1085909	2.60
1945-46	-	-	-	-
1946-47	109035	403942	1085615	2.68

Note: Information for the year 1889-90 is not available

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1875-76 to 1894-95*

When the periodically (mostly decennial in Darrang District) settled land was resigned¹⁴ or vacated, it was generally resettled on annual terms; the *tahsildars* and *mauzadars* did not resettle such a land on the periodic term without order of the Settlement Officer. As per government rule, the peasant who took the resigned lands got the successorship for that land. This process of transfer from one category to other and changing of successorship were always going on, during the period under the study.¹⁵

¹⁴ Peasants had to resign their land in many conditions, sometime their condition were so bed that they could not pay the revenue so they had to resign their land for not being able to pay the revenue.

¹⁵ *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1891, p.13.

In the year 1875-76, 69123 estates of Darrang District had paid the revenue to the Government. Gradually people were having become accustomed to the higher rates of assessment introduced in 1869, so they started to taking up again the lands which they had resigned in 1868-69.¹⁶ In 1868, the rate of revenue doubled in all round, that time people of Patharughat assembled against the enhance land revenue. In 1865-66 the amount of revenue collected by Government was 1,94,846 but in 1868-69 it suddenly increased into 3,57,768. At that situation, many peasants resigned their land.

In 1875-76, 188255 acres of land were under full revenue paying and 4453 acres of land were under half revenue paying land.¹⁷In 1880-81, there were 73078 temporarily settled estates in Darrang District.¹⁸In 1885-86, it shows a decrease in the annually settled estates. (See Table 2.1) in 1880-81 the total annual holdings in full rate was 70378 which decreased to 40459 in 1885-86. It was because of the transfer of land to the decennial category.¹⁹

In the year 1890-91 many new leases were granted and many annual leases were transferred to decennial category. From that year onwards, *kala-azar* (black fever) had already made its way to the outskirts of the District from Kamrup District.²⁰

In the year 1895-96 we can see a large increase on the land revenue in annual settlement. The increased area in last 5 years is much less but the revenue increased on a high rate (see table 2.1). In the decennial settlement also, the areas of settlements were decreased and the revenue had increased on a high rate. (see table 2.2) This was because of the resettlement of the lands in Assam Valley Districts in 1893-94 by the proposal of the Chief Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts in which the land revenue were increased up to 100%.

¹⁶*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1875-76*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1877, pp.3-4.

¹⁷*Ibid*, pp.24-25.

¹⁸*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1882, p.4

¹⁹*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.7

²⁰*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1891, pp.8-13.

In the year 1900-01 though we can see normal increase on estates and areas, we cannot say that the wave of *kala-azar*, cattle disease etc. had gone from the District and they started to live a good life. The prevalence of cholera, *kala-azar*, and cattle-disease were still there. Even two more problems were added in the life of the peasants of Darrang District; that were: flood and a prolonged drought in September and October,²¹ but the peasants had no option and were bound to come to the world that the British Government had made for them.

In the year 1910-11 the settled estates, area and revenue all were decreased in the annually settled estates (see table no 2.1) and it can be seen an increase on the decennially settled estates (see table no 2.2), it means of transfer of annually settled estates to the decennially settled estates on a huge number. But the reason for the transfer of that much of land from annually settled estates to decennially settled estates is not clear.

The year 1915-16 shows an increase on the both settlements under the full rate. The increase in the Darrang District was due to the extension of ordinary cultivation, Made happened by the migration of new settlers from Sibsagar, Mymensingh and Nepal.²²

In 1920-21 decennial settlement had increased, (see table 2.2) and shows a decrease in the annual settlement (see table 2.1) which indicate about the transfer of estates from annual to decennial settlement. More than that there was an increase in area and revenue. The whole of the increase in the land revenue occurred in the *sadar* sub-division, and the opposite situation occurred in the Mangaldoi Sub-division. This was the result of the relinquishment of land carrying higher rate of revenue combined with the breaking up of new land which carried a low rate.²³

In the year 1925-26 and 1930-31, in both annual and decennial settlement leases and the areas were increased at the full rate [see table no 2.1 and 2.2]. According to the annual report of Assam, the increase was due to the general

²¹*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1900-01*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1901, p.4.

²²*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1915-16*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1916, p.5.

²³*Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1920-21*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1921, p.3.

extension of cultivation at the full rate.²⁴ Peasants may become accustomed with the situation and adopted more lands for cultivation with the higher rate.

The total settlements of both annual and decennial leases were divided into various classes, such as first class, second class, third class, fourth class, tea land etc. There were no fourth class of land in the Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang District. This classification is based on the productivity of the land. As an example, Table No 2.3 describes the revenues, number of settlements and areas in each class of annual settlement on full rate in the year 1895-96 of Darrang District.

Table No 2.3 Land Tax under Different Classes of Cultivation in Darrang District in 1895-96

Class	Number of settlements	Area settled in acres	Land Revenue In Rs.	Land Revenue per acre in Rs.
First class land	12752	13728	40529	2.95
Second class land	19275	37851	102246	2.70
Third class land	32430	64056	146124	2.28
Fourth Class Land	4	13	25	1.92
Tea land	26	187	128	0.68
Total	64487	115835	289052	2.49

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1895-96*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1896, p.4

2.2 NISF-KHIRAJ HOLDING

Nisf-khiraj is the half of the full revenue (half of the full rate). The term *nisf-khiraj* was adopted in 1871, in which a light rate was imposed on the waste lands. In *nisf-khiraj* land the cultivated area were assessed at half of the normal revenue rates.²⁵ A landholder liable to be assess the land at half of the normal revenue. *Nisf-khiraj* estates were generally settled for ten years, on the expiry of which a fresh settlement had been concluded. Normally *nisf-khiraj* lands were settled for ten years, though sometime it also settled for twenty years. Most of the *nisf-khiraj* lands, which come under twenty years of settlement are belonged to the family of Darrang Raja.

²⁴ *Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1925-26*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1926, p.3.

²⁵ Powell, op.cit, p.408.

The *nisf-khiraj* estates of Darrang District could be classified as following:

Ordinary *Nisf-khiraj* estate: Ordinary *nisf-khiraj* was the estate that the common people adopted from unused land. The ordinary *nisf-khiraj* settlement were assessed on the half of the normal rate. They were settled for 10 years. Once the settlement got expired the lands were exempted from the assessment and adopted as the annual settlement under full revenue paying land. After ten years once the settlement of ordinary *nisf-khiraj* expired, the land was *assessed* at one-eighth of the ordinary rate on *rupit* land (1 *anna* and 3 *pie* per *bigha*). The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang had reported that 28 out of 30 estates²⁶ under that class which had been settled by him. Remaining one was unassessed and the other was under the order of the officiating Commissioner Mr. Ridsdale, merged with the *mauza* in which the land was situated.

Estates of the Darrang Raja Resigned since the year 1859: Since the year 1859, there were seven *nisf-khiraj* estates that belonged to the Darrang Raja which were resigned by them. In 1879-80 these all were merged to the *mauza* in which they were situated. Some had been settled with the occupants, some for ten years and some for one year. Cultivation had been assessed at full rate and the waste at 1 and $\frac{1}{4}$ *anna* per *bigha*.

Estates of the Darrang Raja which were still in his possession till 1880s: In 1880s, by the orders of the Government of India, some settlements were initiated under Darrang Raja. Twenty years settlements were completed in 1879-80. There were 14 estates under Darrang Raja at that time.²⁷

The following Tables No 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 show revenue settlement for ten years and twenty years under *Nisf-khiraj* or half rant paying land holdings in Darrang district.

²⁶ These 30 estates were originally 23 estates. During the occupancy of the alliances these 23 estates were split up and when the settlement was made the number was found to be 30; *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1882, p.12.

²⁷ *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1882, pp.12-13

Table No 2.4 Settlement for ten years under *Nisf Khiraj*: Darrang District from 1880-81 to 1900-01

Year	Number of Settlement	Area in acres	Revenue	Revenue per Acre in Rupees
1880-81	79	17543	-	-
1885-86	78	16540	-	-
1890-91	78	16320	9691	0.59
1895-96	77	13395	8950	0.66
1900-01	79	13171	8886	0.67

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81 to 1900-01*.

Table No 2.5 Settlement for twenty years under *Nisf Khiraj*: Darrang District

Year	Number of Settlement	Area Settled in acres	Revenue	Revenue per Acre in Rupees
1890-91	13	17605	8577	0.48
1895-96	13	17907	8767	0.48
1900-01	14	17876	8768	0.49

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91 to 1900-01*

Table No 2.6 Total Settlements under *Nisf-Khiraj*: Darrang District

Year	Number of Settlement	Area Settled in acres	Revenue	Revenue per Acre in Rupees
1880-81	-	-	-	-
1885-86	92	-	-	-
1890-91	91	33925	18268	0.53
1895-96	90	31302	17717	0.56
1900-01	93	31047	17654	0.56
1905-06	-	-	-	-
1910-11	112	31007	16726	0.53
1915-16	123	30863	16673	0.54
1920-21	123	30863	16674	0.54
1925-26	123	30863	16674	0.54
1930-31	123	30862	16674	0.54
1935-36	147	29016	20935	0.72
1940-41	147	28999	20937	0.72
1945-46	-	-	-	-
1946-47	217	29068	21164	0.73

Note: Information for the year 1905-06 and 1945-46 are not available.

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1885-86 to 1946-47*.

Besides the 92 *nisf-khiraj* estates shown in the year 1885-86 in the district of Darrang (see table 2.6) there were 14 estates, covering 18350 acres, settled with the

Darrang Rajas for twenty years in 1879-80. In 1884-85, the area of those estates was 18506 and 156 acres of land were washed away by the Brahmaputra that year.²⁸

In 1890-91, out of 78 estates of Darrang District of ten years settlement, (see table no 2.4) 19 estates were resettled in the previous year in the Mangaldoi Subdivision of Darrang District up to 1898-99 on the result of cadastral survey. Up to 1898-99, same year remaining 29 estates were resettled for nine years. In the Tezpur Subdivision of Darrang District 29 out of 30 estates were resettled in 1889-90 for ten years and the remaining one estate was resettled for a term of nine years.²⁹

In the year 1895-96 in Mangaldoi Subdivision of Darrang District, 19 acres of land of an estate with revenue of Rs. 18 was resigned.³⁰ But we can see a decrease of an estate and a large decrease in areas and increased revenue which was 0.59 in 1890-91 and 0.66 in 1895-96 (see table 2.4). This was because of the resettlement of the land revenue at a higher rate in Assam by the British government in 1893-94. They even increased the land revenue on the ten years settlement at a high rate. So peasants relinquished their lands. As a result area decreased and the land revenue increased. But they did not make any change in the Twenty Years Settlement (see table 2.5).

The year 1935-36 shows a sudden increase in the estates but a decrease in the area. [see table 2.6] This increase in the number of estates was due to the partition of families only.

²⁸*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.13.

²⁹*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1891, p.14.

³⁰*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1895-96*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1896, p.19

2.3 USE OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF LANDS AND CHANGES ON ITS CULTIVATION

Apart from this, the cultivable land was divided into *Rupit*, *Faringati*, and *Basti*. *Basti* land is residential and manured and often highly cultivated land. *Rupit* land is ordinary or normal cultivable land; and the *faringati* land is high land.³¹

Table No 2.7 and 2.8 shows the area of different classes of land; *Basti*, *Rupit* and *Faringati* brought under assessment at full and half rates Darrang Districts.

Table No 2.7 Area under the three classes of lands in full rate in Darrang District

Year	<i>Basti</i>	<i>Rupit</i>	<i>Faringati</i>	Total
1875-76	15286	126100	46869	188255
1880-81	16618	148503	53311	218432
1885-86	17828	151471	56876	226175
1890-91	21548	159915	53336	234799

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1875-76 to 1890-91*.

Table No 2.8; Area under the three classes of land in half rate in Darrang district

Year	<i>Basti</i>	<i>Rupit</i>	<i>Faringati</i>	Total
1875-76	101	3668	684	4453
1880-81	1896	13384	2450	17730
1885-86	1893	13402	2274	17569
1890-91	1761	12832	10330	24923

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1875-76 to 1890-91*.

Normally rates were varied from time to time. Prior to 1865 land revenue was Rs. 0.37 per acre for *rupit* land. In 1865, the Commissioner Lieutenant Colonel Hopkinson proposed to discriminate between *basti* or garden and other land and raised the rates Rs.1 for *basti* and Rs. 0.62 for *rupit*, and Rs. 0.50 for other kinds of land.³²

Till 1892-93, the rates were Rs. 1 per *bigha* in *basti*, Rs. 0.62 per *bigha* in *rupit* and Rs. 0.50 per *bigha* in *faringati*.³³ But in 1894 by the resettlement of Assam valley District, the different lands (*basti*, *rupit*, *faringati*) were further divided into 3

³¹M.L. Bose, *Development of Administration in Assam with Special Reference to Land Revenue Justice and Police 1874-1920*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1985, p.59; Powell, op.cit, pp.416-17.

³²Allen, op.cit, p.189.

³³*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81 and 1885-86 to 1893-94*

classes of lands based on the fertility of the lands of each villages; first class, second class and third class of lands. In first class of land the existing rates were doubled, in second class lands the rates were raised up to 50 percent and in third class lands 25 percent of rates were increased.³⁴ As a result, peasant suffered a lot for the heavy increased in revenue.

In 1885-86 there was an increase in every head, owing to the extension of cultivation. And some *faringati* land was transferred to the *basti* and the *rupit* land. "The Chief Commissioner has lately ruled that lands under *bao* [deep water rice] cultivation, which has hitherto been classed as *faringati* in most districts, should be classed as *rupit*. This will tend to further transfer from *faringati* to the *rupit* category during the current year.³⁵

In 1890-91 large increase in *faringati* land (see table no 2.8) was due to the assessment of waste lands as the *Nisf-khiraj* estates.³⁶

Time to time in the name of cadastral survey³⁷ the Governments changed the lands from one to another types of lands. They had changed the most productive lands to the high revenue paid lands. For example, in the New Settlement Rule of 1893, some of the garden lands which were treated as *faringati*, at the cadastral survey were transferred to *basti*.

2.4 THE RELINQUISHMENTS

Relinquishments are the resignation of lands from cultivation. For different causes peasants had to resign their lands. In many cases, for the revenue system peasants had to relinquish their lands. Normally, land revenue charges on residential and cultivable land, and decennial leases do not bind the tenants to hold the land for ten years. The land in which the peasant could not cultivate had to resign in any year

³⁴ Home Public A. April 1894 No.110-31, Telegraph No.792-Rev/S440R, Government of Assam,dated 4th Nov.1893.

³⁵ *Proceeding of the Chief Commissioner of Assam*, Revenue Department, No. 5894, dated 30th sept. 1886; *Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.23.

³⁶ *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1891, p.17.

³⁷ Resurvey the Land and reestablish the boundary.

because unless he formally resigns the land, he must have to pay revenue for the land he had. So if peasants were not able to cultivate they had to resign their lands to the governments. The resigned land could be adopted by another peasants. But the conditions of all peasants were too bad as they had already been suffering from same problem. So, no peasants were ready to adopt more lands.³⁸ Gradual relinquishments of leases have continued throughout the division, while very few new leases had issued.

In the Gazette in October 1887 it was published that, in the same year a new rule, Settlement Rule 46, came out. Accordingly, the land owner who resigned their land and took it up again in the following year had to be assessed for one year at 50 percent above the ordinary rate. This rule was published specially on only two sub divisions of Darrang District they are Mangaldoi and Tezpur.³⁹It was published specially for these two sub division of Darrang Districts only, it may be because of more relinquishments in these sub divisions. The relinquishments had occurred highest in these two subdivision.

Peasants who had resigned their lands for any reason had to adopt their lands on the high rate. The peasants were already suffered a lot from cattle disease and *Kala-azar* or black fever for which they could not cultivate and did not get the normal amount of grain from their cultivation. If they resigned their land for not able to pay revenue and they wanted to adopt it again they had to pay extra rent. So, peasants felt insecurity and ultimately they had dared to stand against the enhanced rate when the Government increased the rate on their lands again.

Tables No 2.9 and 2.10 shows the resignation of estates and parts of estates annually and decennially settled in Darrang District. Here partial relinquishments or relinquishment of parts of *patta* had treated as entire relinquishment, so the statements shows not the *pattas* relinquished, but *pattas* in which relinquishment has occurred.

³⁸*Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.8.

³⁹*Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1887-88*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1888, p.8.

Table No 2.9 Relinquishment in annually and decennially settled estates in Darrang District

Year	Total number of <i>Pattas</i>	Total area in acres	Total number of <i>patta</i> relinquished	Total area relinquished in acres
Annually Settled				
1885-86	40459	-	5171	-
1890-91	57695	100918	7860	12652
1895-96	64487	115830	8274	13503
Decennially Settled Estates				
1885-86	52740	-	1495	-
1890-91	45557	133881	1088	2201
1895-96	40992	121599	1615	3052

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1885-86 to 1895-96.*

Table No 2.10 Relinquishment of Total Estates in Darrang District

Year	Total number of <i>Pattas</i>	Total area in acres	Total number of <i>patta</i> relinquished	Total area relinquished in acres
1885-86	93199	-	6666	-
1890-91	103252	234799	8948	14853
1895-96	105479	237429	9889	16555
1900-01	-	253227	-	22506
1905-06	-	-	-	-
1910-11	-	283074	-	10176
1915-16	-	327900	-	11424
1920-21	-	383035	-	11632
1925-26	-	446854	-	5248
1930-31	-	507440	-	1316
1935-36	-	532934	-	3517
1940-41	-	581327	-	2726
1945-46	-	-	-	-
1946-47	-	656990	-	356

Note: Information for the year 1905-06 and 1945-46 are not available.

Source: *Land Revenue Administration Report for the years 1885-86 to 1946-47.*

To avoid the relinquishments, the British government took one action which was only for decennial settlement. The Government gave the instruction to the *mauzadars* not to settle the *rupit* and *faringati* land for ten years on which the cultivation was of an uncertain⁴⁰ in character. This rule had been revised by the Chief Commissioner's Circular No.7 of 25th March 1886. The circular directed that the land held continuously for five years could be consider as holding of permanent, or a

⁴⁰*Faringati* land which was resigned after two or three years of cultivation and the *rupit* land on which harvest was not according to the character of season.

holding under decennial settlement. Moreover if an applicant hoped to hold land for ten years, the Deputy Commissioner could allow him to adopt the lease for ten years.⁴¹

For the year 1889-90, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang had explained:

The increase in resignations was chiefly in the Borbhagia and Gohpur *mauzas* bordering on the Bhorelli [Bhorali] and Brahmaputra rivers. The Bhorelli River has occupied another channel towards Borbhagia group of *mauzas*, and has submerged tracks in the Panpur and Chilabandha *mauzas*, doing much damage to the standing crops, &c. The rise of the Brahmaputra this year did much damage to the *ryots* of certain parts of Gohpur group, washing off and submerging vast tracts of *patta* lands. The high floods of the last three years have all contributed to this large increase in resignations this year. This increase is also due to the fact that while out on my cold-weather tour in December in the eastern part of the district, I received applications for resignation in camp. This has given the *ryots* facilities to file resignations, and many who would not have undertaken a long journey from that part of the district to the station availed themselves of the opportunity to file their resignations.⁴²

This indicates that the flood also took a major role in relinquishment of land. Many lands were washing off by the flood for which crops were damaged. At that time the Government also allowed the peasants to file for resignation of land. Taking advantage of that situation many peasants resigned their land.

Relinquished had occurred highest from 1892-93 to 1894-95 in the Darrang District as a result of the resettlement of Assam Valley Districts on a high rate by the British government. In July 1892, the Chief Commissioner proposed for a new settlement in all Districts of Assam.⁴³ According to his proposal, in 1893-94

⁴¹ *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.9

⁴² *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1890-91*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1891, p.19.

⁴³ Home Public A. April 1894 No.110-31, Government of Assam, p.26.

Government of India increased rent on revenue at a high rate. Simultaneously, in one side the British Government increased the revenue on the lands of the Darrang District and on the other peasants were suffered from *kala-azar* (black fever), cattle disease and depredations from wild elephants which made their condition worst.

Even G. Godfrey, the Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts wrote, "I am afraid that until the present wave of *kala-azar* has passed over we must not look for any increase in the land revenue in Mangaldoi, though of course the re-assessment will of itself bring about an increase."⁴⁴ But the rules of resettlement the British Government forced the peasant to pay the increased revenue by any means. So, the peasants had to resign their land. In the year 1900-01 the relinquished was high in Darrang District because of the never ending *kala-azar*, Cholera and the unfavorable season.⁴⁵

2.5 COLLECTORS

Mauza was a considerable area of cultivation, which may contain certain villages or sometime waste land aggregated for the purpose of record and revenue collection. *Mauzadars* were responsible for the collection of all revenue from his *mauza*. Inside the *mauza*, there were a number of circles. In each circle there was a *mandal* who did the work of measuring and recording.⁴⁶ Above the *mandal* supervisor *kanungo* was there, he was a peripatetic officer.⁴⁷ Like *mauzadars* in *mauza*, *tehsildars*⁴⁸ were there in each *tahsil*.

In Darrang District, 149 *mauzas* were there in the year 1853, contained an average 14 villages per *mauza* with a revenue of Rs. 1,215 per year. The main aim of the *mauzadars* was to increase the amount of collection. In 1867 the *mauzadars* were called to receive 15 percent of revenue as commission of Collecting Officer and were

⁴⁴ G. Godfrey, *Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley District 1892-93*, Assam Secretariat Press, Shillong, 1893, pp.17-18.

⁴⁵ *Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1900-01*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1901, p.4

⁴⁶ Powell, op.cit, p.420.

⁴⁷ Allen, op.cit, p.194.

⁴⁸ *Mauzadars* were normally poorly educated so a high educated official appointed to a local area. He was called as *tehsildar* and the local area was called as *tehsil*. The *tehsildars* were more efficient and less expansive according to the Governmental documents.

allowed half of the revenue of land reclaimed during the currency of settlement. But three years later commission was reduced to 10 percent. From 1872, 10 percent could be drawn on the first Rs.6, 000 of revenue, but after that they were allowed to take only 5 percent of revenue in case of excess of that sum.⁴⁹

In the year 1885-86 a new system that paying *mauzadars* introduced. Commission paid less to the treasury from the introduction of paying *mauzadars* but it did not help peasant with less revenue. In the Land Revenue Report of 1885-86, it was said: "Land revenue is now paid into the treasury, less commission due to the *mauzadar*, that is, the commission is deducted before the revenue is paid into the treasury. Consequently, there are no arrear of commission at the end of the year other than commission on arrears of land revenue, so the actual charges of the year under report on account of *mauzadars*, commission should generally exceed those of the previous year."⁵⁰ With the introduction of paying *mauzadar*, they were amalgamated with an officer called *tahsildar*. *Tahsildars* were paid by a fixed salary and were free from the responsibility that a *mauzadar* had, like paying of revenue on due dates. The idea of *tehsildar* first came into exists in 1883. The Government had replaced *tehsildars* in place of *mauzadar*. They were paid *Mauzadar*. The Government paid salary to them instead of allowing to take some percent of revenue from the peasant. But this system did not became popular as they were less experienced then the *mauzadar* in collecting revenue.

In Darrang District first *tahsil* was opened at Tezpur in 1884. The Second one was Hindughopa, which was subsequently transferred to Patharughat in 1886, Kalaigaon in 1888 and Mangaldoi in 1892.⁵¹ In the year 1885-86, lands settled by *mauzadar* and *tahsildar* divided into two settlement, regular and supplementary. From 1st April 1888 a new scheme has been introduced in Mangaldoi. The number of *mandals*' circle attached to each *mauza*.⁵² In the year 1888-89 a new *tahsil*, called the Kalaigaon or Northern *tahsil* was started in Mangaldoi.

⁴⁹Allen, op.cit, pp.198-99.

⁵⁰*Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1885-86*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1886, p.20.

⁵¹Allen, op.cit, p.199.

⁵²*Land Revenue Administration Report of the Assam Valley Districts 1887-88*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1888, p.24.

Mauzadars of Darrang district were not only the collecting officers, they were also Settlement officers. They had done also some miscellaneous work in addition to their collection and settlement duties. They also engaged on some census works.⁵³

Since the *mauzadars* acted as settlement officers, they also involved in the measurement of the lands under cultivation. The measurements were generally made by them after the lands were confined to the new cultivation. It was confirmed as final. Lands once measured and assessed by *Mauzadars* were not measured again unless a re-measurement was necessitated by the relinquishment of lots in any field or by any changes.⁵⁴In the report on the *Administration of Land Revenue in Assam 1875-76*, S. O. B. Ridsdale (Secy. To the Chief Commissioner of Assam) clearly mentioned,

The necessity for thoroughly testing the *mauzahdars*' measurement has always been recognised; but owing to the many demands upon their time, the District Officers appear to find it impossible to perform this important duty in anything but a perfunctory manner. With a view to, in some measure, remedy this evil, the Chief Commissioner during the year [1875-76] directed the District Officer to select annually some of their best *mauzahdars*, and depute them to test the measurements, giving them rewards for discovering errors. It remains to be seen how far this system may prove successful.⁵⁵

Further, in the *Report on the Administration of Land Revenue in Assam 1880-81* it was mentioned,

As the District Officer have not reported in what *mauzas* measurements were tested, no conclusion can be arrived at from the above statement as to whether *mauzadars*' measurements are or are not generally trustworthy. A *mauzadar* whose *mauza* lies in the vicinity of head-quarters or of the district roads along which the District or Sub-

⁵³*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1882, p.7.

⁵⁴*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1875-76*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1877, p.27.

⁵⁵*Ibid*, p.28.

Divisional Officer usually travels, will be more cautions in his measurements than the *mauzadars* of outlying tracts, which the District Officer rarely visits...⁵⁶

Among all the local officer, *mauzadars* were the most important official for the government. They maintained most of the work. They were collecting officer, settlement officer, and land measurer, worked on census and even on the miscellaneous work. But problem was that in case of land measuring government gave them the supreme power. Land measured by them were considered as the final one. Later after getting many complaint against the *mauzadar* in the year 1875-76 the Chief Commissioner of Assam ordered to all District Officer to select some best *mauzadar* to supervise the works of all the *mauzadar* and collect the report by the district officer and submit to the Government. But the attempt was a failure one because the *mauzadar* who were selected to supervise all the *mauzadar* did not work as per the government rules. The District Officer also had not submitted the report in time. They only visited the place near the head quarter, or the place come under the road to the sub-division. The rest other left as it is. Peasants were continuously facing such type of problem which were never been solved.

⁵⁶*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year 1880-81*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1882, p.16.

Chapter 3

DECLINING OF GRAZING LANDS AND CATTLE

The British government obtained wealth of Assam or Darrang District by the extraction from the earth by mining, by the use of water power, from agriculture and from forests and work done in the distribution of production. All expenditures like administration, police, road, buildings, education, health, enjoyments etc. were paid from the rupees that had collected from those sources.¹ Apart from that there were some common lands which were used for free till that time. The evidence of collecting tax from that land was empty in the history of Darrang District till coming of the British in Assam. The British started to collect tax from each possible thing. This chapter will try to discuss about the condition of grazing land of Darrang District after coming of the British.

In Darrang District because of the land revenue policy introduced by the British from 1830 onwards, the common land that includes grazing lands and forests were completely disturbed. Apart from the cultivated lands the British had also collected revenue from common lands like grassland which were used for grazing. They had collected tax from each cattle of graziers at a high rate. For that situation, the graziers faced troubles.

The main live stocks for grazing were buffalo, cow, goat, sheep, ponies etc. For that, the people depended on the grazing lands. The British had collected tax from the cattle graziers at a high rate and increased the revenue on it whenever they got any chance. Moreover, the graziers could not use the grazing land all over the year. They had to face problem in summer especially in the rainy season, in which was the time of flood.

The animal of grazier played an important role in the life of common people of Darrang District. They were the source of draught animals for the plough or the cart. They supplied milk and milk products to the neighborhood districts of Darrang Districts. *Ghee* was the main milk made product which was exported to the other

¹ H. P. Smith, C. Purkayastha, *A short History of Assam Forest Service 1850-1945*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1946, p.72.

Districts of Assam. From Kharupetia (Magaldoi Sub-division) to Guwahati (Kamrup District) and from Tezpur to Dibrugarh (Dibrugarh District) the *ghee* had been exported. We have also information about the export of *ghee* outside the province. Mainly to Naldi and Dacca.² A number of persons took part in the distribution of milk, milk products and draught animals etc.

3.1 TAX ON GRAZING LAND

By the regulation VII of 1891 or Assam Forest Regulation 1891, the British Government had restricted the power of the common people to use anything from the forest and from that land which were common for all till that time. Those were that land which were neither the private property of someone nor the property of Government. The British Government considered all the common property which were not belonged to anyone as the wasteland and the Government property. So, from that time common people were restricted to use them for pastures to their cattle in that grazing land and they started imposing tax on them.

Under the Regulation No 1147R, dated 7th May 1927 an enquiry committee was appointed to see the increasing tax on grazing lands. The committee was responsible to enquire³ all the grazing area and notice how the revenue can increase from that land and at what rate the grazing fee could levied.

The disposal of all minor produce started to regulate under permits or licenses. The Grazing by the professional graziers was also allowed by permits only.⁴ Grazing experiment that carried by the British government in the Darrang district of Assam in the year 1940-41. They said that moderate grazing was a distinct aid to *Sal* regeneration in keeping down weeds and thatch and the Divisional Forest Officer of Kamrup also supported this view.⁵ They only leave for grazing land from where they had some advantage. The land which were comfortable for any cultivation or

² *Grazing in Assam, 1916*, Assam Government, Shillong, 1916, pp. 10, 54.

³ Nila Nath Sarma, *Report of the committee to enquire into the incidence of grazing fees*, Assam State Archive, Lib/R105/S4/06, Letter No. 342R, dated Guwahati, 18th July, 1927.

⁴ A. V. Monro, H. Carter, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal And Assam for the year 1910-11*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1912, p.8.

⁵ C. Mackarness, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1940-41*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1941, p.33.

plantation, the British Government removed them from grazing land and added them to the plantation or cultivation. Because from plantation or cultivation they had received higher revenue than grazing.

3.1.1 Appointment of Superintendent in the Grazing of Darrang District

By the regulation no VII of 1891 the British Government asked all the graziers to take permit if they were interested to pasture their cattle in the grazing land. There were some graziers who did not take the permit till July 1917. So P.R.T. Gurdon, the Commissioner of Assam requested to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to appoint a Superintendent⁶ to supervise the grazier's business⁷ in the District of Darrang. He wrote:

I have honor to say that after careful consideration, and after consulting the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, Mr. Soames, on the spot, I have come to the conclusion that the appointment of a superintendent of grazing operations will be necessary for the District of Darrang also, because, up to date, not one of the graziers has applied for a permit, from which the Deputy Commissioner argues that a superintendent of grazing is necessary at once to go out into the district and assess the graziers' buffaloes and cattle to tax. I agree with the Deputy Commissioner in thinking that such a course is necessary.⁸

The superintendent was appointed based on the personal selection. As P. R. T. Gurdon wrote:

For Darrang I recommend Srijut Golap Chandra Das, B.A. son of Havildar Joyram Das, a man who gave Mr. Jackson much assistance in obtaining recruits for the Military Police and army and a man who is thoroughly conversant with the habit and the habitats of both graziers and their cattle in

⁶ The Superintendent of grazing fell under the category of a third class officer as classified in article 1002 of the Civil Service Regulation; Revenue Dept., Forest Branch, File No. IIIIF/18R, Nos. 600-621, Letter No. 388 R, Government of Assam, Gauhati, dated 7th July 1917.

⁷ Revenue Dept., Forest Branch, File No. IIIIF/18R, Nos. 600-621, Letter No. 3030R, Government of Assam, Shillong, dated 3rd September, 1917.

⁸ Revenue Dept., Forest Branch, File No. IIIIF/18R, Nos. 600-621, Letter No. 367R, Government of Assam, Gauhati, dated 5th July, 1917.

the district of Darrang. I have seen Srijut Golap Chandra Das, B.A., on two occasions, and have satisfied myself as to his fitness- at any rate he may be tried. He may be appointed on probation for one year and posted to the headquarters of the Darrang District.⁹

Gurdon selected Srijut Golap Chandra Das as Superintendent of grazing and asked to the chief Commissioner to appoint him as the superintendent of Grazing in Darrang District of Assam. According to him, Srijut Golap Chandra Das gave much assistance to Mr. Jackson in obtaining recruits for the Military Police and army. He was also thoroughly conversant with the habit and the habitats of both graziers and their cattle in the district of Darrang. Ultimately, they need an official who work for the British Government, so always they selected them who were in favor of British.

3.1.2 Appointment of Gaon Burha in Villages Grazing Ground

In the Grazing areas of Darrang District, Gaon Burhas¹⁰ were appointed by the government. The Darrang District was a heavy District from Grazing Point. So the Deputy Commissioner wanted to appoint 27 Grazing Gaon burhas officially. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang wrote to the Commissioner of Divisions:

I find that no experiment with Grazing Gaon burhas were made in this District in spite of the obvious necessity of having them by oversight of the then Grazing Superintendent Srijut N.K.Hajarika (now Circle Officer, Mangaldoi) and the Deputy Commissioner, (Mr. Mitra, I.C.S.) who apparently lost sight of the matter. Will you please let me know if the experiment has been confirmed in other District and if I may appoint the 27 Grazing Gaonburhas then sanctioned as from 1939-40, on the remission conditions quoted in your letter No. 778-R., dated the 2nd November 1936 addressed to Revenue secretary to the Government of Assam, because I consider they should be a valuable asset.¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Gaon Burha means Village Headman in Assam.

¹¹ Revenue Department, Land Revenue Branch, File No. LR/848, Nos. 654-655, 1939, Letter No 452-R, Government of Assam, dated 9th January 1939,

G. D. Walker, the Commissioner of Division permitted Deputy Commissioner to appoint them from October 1939-40.¹² The Gaon burhas were appointed directly by the British government. So they worked more like a government official than a traditional gaon burha.

3.2 VILLAGE GRAZING GROUND

In the year 1915-16 the Chief Commissioner observed that the question of village grazing grounds received the close attention of the local officers. The government made an enquiry on professional graziers. The enquiry was made by a special officer. After that, the government came with a conclusion that they should deduct the area of grazing and should add remaining all the area into other productive source. They decided not to allow all the professional graziers on the ground. They considered all that land as the government waste land. The government had also decided to exclude all the professional graziers and their herds from densely cultivated areas and to restrict them to the area in which there were still considerable tracts of wasteland.¹³

By the Regulation VII of 1891 of Forest, the government regulated or prohibited the cutting of grass and pasturing of cattle in the village forests and if any one made such cutting or pasturing their cattle, rules were made to collect payment from them and punish them.¹⁴

Table No: 3.1 Area of Reserved Village Grazing Ground.

Year	Reserved Village Grazing Ground in Tezpur in acres	Reserved Village Grazing Ground in Mangaldoi in acres	Reserved Village Grazing Ground total Darrang in acres
1915-16	-	-	21557
1920-21	20842	4642	25484
1925-26	24630	9043	33673

¹² Revenue Department, Land Revenue Branch, File No. LR/848, Nos. 654-655, 1939, Letter No. 762 R, Government of Assam, Gauhati, dated 20th June 1939.

¹³ B. C. Allen, *Resolution on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam for the year 1915-16*, Assam Secretariat, Shillong, 1916, p.14.

¹⁴ A. L. Home, *The Assam Forest Manual*, Government Central Printing Office, Shimla, 1898, p.17.

1930-31	29280	11926	41206
1935-36	29419	12541	41960
1940-41	30824	16342	47166
1946-47	30513	17384	47897

Note: Data for the year 1945-46 is not available.

Source: *Report on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam Valley Districts for the year 1940-41*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, for the year 1915-16, 1920-21, 1925-26, 1930-31, 1935-36, 1940-41, 1946-47.

Table No 3.1 shows about the reserved area of Darrang District and also shows about the Mangaldoi and the Tezpur sub-division separately. It is very clear from this table that the area of Grazing Reserve villages was increasing day by day. Here one thing we have to keep in mind that the Grazing area was not increasing day by day. The Government had tried to decline the grazing area since they started to work on that matter. The area was already there in Darrang district. Gradually all the land which were used for pasturing cattle considered as the grazing land. And the land which were not suitable for any cultivation were only allowed for the grazing land. Even in the unsettled¹⁵ areas also, the Government had made some restrictions. The Common people were not allowed to use that land also. B. C. Allen (Commissioner of Assam) wrote in his report of Land Revenue Administration of Assam

There is still plenty of waste land in the Barpeta, Mangaldoi [one subdivision of Darrang District] and North Lakhimpur subdivisions and more grazing grounds should be reserved before it is too late. Complaints have been received that some grazing grounds were so over grown by jungle as to be quite useless for grazing purposes. District Officers were therefore authorized to allow temporary cultivation to clear the land of jungle. As soon as this has been done the land will be strictly reserved once more for grazing.¹⁶

¹⁵ Already the British Government had settled many forests as the reserved forest where pastoring was prohibited.

¹⁶ B. C. Allen, *Report on the Land Revenue Administration of the Assam Valley Division for the year 1920-21*, Assam Secretariat, Shillong, p.10.

From the report of B. C. Allen, it is clear that they reserved all the grazing land and even to clear heavy jungle for grazing they used common people. They allowed temporary cultivation at that land where jungles were too heavy and not suitable for grazing. Once the work of clearing was finished the government reserved that land as the village grazing ground. As it is already mentioned that if the land was suitable for any cultivation or plantation they removed that land from the grazing land and added to the suitable work. Here it is clear that the land were not suitable for any other work. As common people had no idea about that land, whether the land was suitable for cultivation or not. After cultivation for once the land were reserved as the village grazing land by the British Government.

J. C. Higgins, the Commissioner of Assam wrote in the Report on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam, "The District of Darrang maintains its record for the satisfactory management of grazing work. [In the year 1935-36] The demand in this district shows an increase of Rs.4849 and its percentage of collection, namely 81 per cent is the highest among the plains district. ..."¹⁷

The government received the highest revenue from the Darrang District of Assam. Before collection of revenue from the grazing land the British officers were very conscious. In time of collecting the revenue they noticed, whether the man was or was not a professional grazier, whether the tax was due from him or not, whether the men did or did not get the greater part of his income from grazing. They did not allow to engage any middleman in that matter. And they had collected the maximum amount of revenue a grazier could pay. As a whole, more or less, the grazing business was well managed by the British Government in Darrang District. The only and most important problem was that all the profit from that business went to the British and the grazier received the minimum profit which was not sufficient to live their life.¹⁸

¹⁷ J.C. Higgins, *Report on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam for the year 1935-36*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1936, p.8.

¹⁸ Allen, *op.cit*, p.7.

3.2.1 Some Village Grazing Ground in Darrang District

The grazing ground was necessary for the villagers for their cattle. At that time the land that was not belonged to any villagers considered as the government waste. These lands were declared as the Reserved Grazing Land or Ground by the Government.¹⁹ There were hundreds of grazing reserves in the both sub-division of Darrang District. Some of the Village Grazing reserves of Darrang District are available here.

Grazing in Chinakona Mauza: There were three village grazing reserve in Chinakona *Mauza*. Barbalisitha, Jhargaon and Buduragaon. Barbalisitha reserve was a compact block with partly natural boundaries. They came under the Mangaldoi subdivision. In June 1921 commissioner had made some modification in these three grazing reserve on the request of A. J. Laine, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang.²⁰ In the year 1920-21, most of the land were reserved.

Bherua Grazing Ground of mauza Dipila: On 28th January 1920, the deputy commissioner asked for the reservation of grazing in Bherua grazing ground with an area measuring 74 *bigha*²¹, 3 *katha*²². The reserve came under Mangaldoi Sub-division.²³

Duni Grazing Reserve of mauza Dipila: The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang proposed for the reservation of grazing of village Duni of Mangaldoi Sub-division on 28th January 1920. The proposed area of the grazing ground was 51 *bigha* 1 *katha*.²⁴

Bandiya Chapori N.C Village Grazing Reserve of mauza Chopai: In the village Bandiya Chapori N.C. of Chapai *mauza* nearly 3000 *bigha* grazing lands were there.

¹⁹ Revenue Department, Revenue B Branch, File No. 60, 1920, Memo No. 4333R, dated Tezpur, 28th January, 1920.

²⁰ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 204, 1921, Letter no. 2983R, dated Tezpur, 1st Decemer 1921; Letter No. 1886R, dated Guwahati, 30th June 1921; Letter No. 1284R, dated Tezpur, 14th June 1921.

²¹ In Assam 1 *bigha* is equal to 0.3306 acre.

²² In Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, 5 *katha* is equal to 1 *bigha*.

²³ Revenue Department, Revenue B Branch, File No. 73, 1920, Memo No. 572R, Guwahati, dated 12th February 1920.

²⁴ Revenue Department, Revenue B Branch, File No. 59, 1920, Memo No 410R, Guwahati, dated 7th February 1920.

On 5th March 1923 the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang send a letter no 4467R and requested about the reservation of these land.²⁵

Grazing Ground in Jamuguri: Jamuguri grazing Ground come under Barchala *Mauza* of Tezpur Sub-division. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang proposed for the reservation of 108 *Bigha*, 4 *Katha* and 10 *Lecha*²⁶ of land as Grazing ground in this Village.²⁷

The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang wrote, “The field is necessary for grazing the cattle of the villagers. The land covered by the field is all Govt. Waste it may therefore be declared as reserved grazing ground.”²⁸

Grazing reserve in mouza Gahpur: Kamdewal grazing reserve was non-cadastral reserve till 1918. In 1918 Settlement Party traversed the area and concluded that 306 *bigha*, 2 *katha*, 8 *lecha* of the reserve came under Khatar pathar village and rest in Kamdewal grazing.²⁹ The Deputy Commissioner requested the commissioner of Assam Valley districts to sanction as Settlement Party designed. As per the report of Settlement Party all grazing reserve were bounded³⁰

Khatarbari Grazing Reserve near Brahmajan River: In the year 1920, government reserved non-Cadastral village grazing of Khatarbari. The area of Grazing was situated in a non- cadastral area which was traversed by the Settlement Party and the southern portion of that reserve comprising an area of 496 *bigha*, 2 *katha* and 9 *lecha* found too low and unfit for the grazing reserve.³¹

²⁵ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 124 of 1923, 1923, Memo No. 451 R, Guwahati, dated 21st March, 1923.

²⁶ In Assam 20 *lecha* is equal to 1 *katha* and 5 *katha* is equal to 1 *bigha*.

²⁷ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 319, 1923, Memo No. 1888R dated 21st September, 1923.

²⁸ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 319, 1923, Memo No. 2480 R, Tezpur, dated 19th September, 1923.

²⁹ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 1-302, 1920, Letter No. 2409 R, Tezpur, dated 23rd August 1920.

³⁰ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 1-302, 1920, Letter No. 3022R, dated 7th September, 1920.

³¹ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 259, 1920, Letter No. 1744R, Tezpur, dated 6th July 1920.

Dagaon Grazing Reserve of Mauza Biswanath: In the memo no 4333R, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang proposed for the reservation of a village grazing ground with an area of 197 *bigha*, 1 *katha* and 9 *lecha* on 28th January 1920. The ground was a non-cadastral area in the village Dagaon of Biswanath *Mauza* of Tezpur sub-division. The grazing ground of the village Dagaon bounded by cultivated land of a man named Laboram Kumar in the north, boundary of Dagaon cadastral in the south, Panibharal gaon in the east and the west bounded by Holargara Dagaon of wasteland.³²

Dhopabar No II Grazing reserve: The proposed area of the grazing reserve was 15 *bigha*, 4 *katha* and 10 *lecha*. Two *dags* were added later. These were dag no 527 and 556. The total area of the reserve by addition of these two *dags* was 105 *bigha*, 3 *katha* and 4 *lecha*.³³

Chewnigaon Grazing Reserve of Majikusi Mauza: The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang proposed for the reservation of grazing ground in the village Chewnigaon. Total area of this reserved land was 185 *bigha* 4 *katha* 9 *lecha*. This reserve was divided into two blocks. The block I was having 154 *bigha*, 3 *katha*, 13 *lecha*. The area of block II was 31 *bigha* 16 *lecha*.³⁴

Diring Pothai grazing reserve of Sokomotha mauza: The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang proposed for the reservation of 333 *bigha* grazing land in the village Diring Pothai of Sokomotha *mauza* on 28th January 1920.³⁵

Dhopabor No. II grazing reserve of Gahpur Mauza: Dhopabar is a village of Gahpur of Tezpur sub-division. Government reserved the grazing area of this village. The area of the reserve in the year 1921 was 105 *bigha*, 3 *katha* and 4 *lecha*.³⁶

³² Revenue Department, Revenue B Branch, File No. 60, 1920, Memo No. 415, Guwahati, dated 7th February 1920.

³³ Revenue Department, Collection No.1, File No. 149, 1920, Letter No. 190R, Tezpur, dated 18th April 1921.

³⁴ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 1– 82, 1920, Memo No. 499R, Guwahati, dated 12th February 1920.

³⁵ Revenue Department, Revenue Branch, File No. 74, 1920, memo no. 498R, Guwahati, dated 12 February 1920.

³⁶ Revenue Department, File No 1-149 of 1921, 1921, Letter No. 190R, Tezpur, dated 18th April 1921.

3.2.2 Professional Grazing Reserves in Darrang District

In Darrang District the professional grazing reserves were scattered over the whole district. The professional grazing reserves were generally situated near the rivers. Because near the river water and fodder were more plentiful than elsewhere which was most preferable place for the professional grazier.

In Mangaldoi Subdivision, the grazing in the north of Brahmaputra contained a large portion of grassland. But they were more suitable for cattle only but not for buffaloes. Those area in the central belt even did not contain large area that had been used in time of flood to feed buffaloes of Southern belt. Chapori or southern belt of the Brahmaputra was an alluvial land. It stayed under the water almost all time in the rainy season. There were some strips of land which was called as 'taris' (which represent the remnants of old banks of the Brahmaputra). The land was high enough to be above the ordinary annual flood level. Graziers normally had used those 'taris' for their *bathans* (where cattles are kept at night). They had kept their cattle as well as their families over the years there.³⁷ Flood was an unending problem of them. At least once a year they had to face the problem. In time of flood the grazier faced problem to feed buffalo. Then they had brought them to the central belt and even in the northern belt (if necessary). The graziers even affected by the deposit of sand on the land after flood. Some Grazing ground which were affected by the deposit of sand in the Chapori belt were, Baghpari, Badali, Aparia, Fahuratali etc.³⁸

In Tezpur major place like Biswanath, Tezpur and Singri were active on grazing. They contained the Southern belt of Brahmaputra and some small hills. All other lands were normally low lands. Only some strips of land called 'Taris' or 'Atis' were there. They were some high land of *Chars*. There was an absence of sufficient high land in central and northern part of Brahmaputra. Absence of sufficient high land created problem in grazing. Fortunately, Tezpur Subdivision was a small hilly area where water did not stay for many days. The grazing lands were suitable for tea cultivation and some crops. So, British had encouraged on the cultivation of any crop on the grazing land. That encouraged people including ex tea garden coolie who

³⁷ S.P. Desai, *Report of the Special Officer appointed for the examination of the professional Grazing Reserve in the Assam Valley*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1944, p.6.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.6.

started cultivation on the north and central part of Brahmaputra. Clearing of grazing land for cultivation means loss of grazing land. For this situation the area of grazing land started to reduce rapidly. That created problem to the grazier who used that land for grazing, especially in time of rainy season.³⁹ While writing about the subdivision Mr. Arbuthnot wrote:

...cultivation was encroaching on the grazing areas and that it was becoming more and more difficult to find areas for grazing in the rainy season. During the three decades that have nearly elapse since then conditions for the graziers and their animals have only gone, from bad to worse. The natural increase in the indigenous population (including ex-tea-garden coolies) has been reflected in the increased cultivation in the Northern and Central belts. This had correspondently reduced the area-whether reserved or not-which graziers used in the rains.⁴⁰

A.V. Monro, (Conservator of forest, Western Circle, Eastern Bengal and Assam) said, "Grazing in this Circle is not as a rule severe in its effects on vegetation, but the settlement of professional graziers leads to the destruction of forest growth."⁴¹

The officials of British were never happy with the professional graziers. They always felt like they did not received the maximum amount of revenue from that land. They did not leave any chance to use them better way. Only the land where nothing was possible to produce were left for grazing purpose from which they received less amount of revenue compare to cultivation and plantation.

3.2.2.1 Declining of professional Grazing Reserve

The professional grazing lands were declined day by day after coming of the British. The lands which were unused before coming of the British were common lands for all. Actually nobody was having property right on that land but traditionally villagers used that land for pasturing their cattle. That lands were used for grazing the cattle by the grazier. There were two types of graziers. One was professional grazier

³⁹ Ibid, p.9.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.9.

⁴¹ A. V. Monro, H. Carter, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal And Assam for the year 1910-11*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1912, p.5.

and other was peasant who took their cattle in the grazing land or unused land. The British government did not leave any chance to use that common lands in other purpose.

A. G. Patton, the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Assam in his letter no RD3/43/20, dated the 28th August 1943, “...government wish to come to an early decision so that as large an area of land may be brought under cultivation as possible during the ensuing cold weather...”⁴²

In the districts of Kamrup and Darrang further settlements of the indigenous population was encouraged. They encouraged in the sub mountain area and in other parts of the districts to open more land. They had done that to add them to the colonization areas.⁴³ People had migrated to that land by opening more lands and to be done particularly by de reserving the land that had reserved for professional graziers.⁴⁴

3.3 GRAZING AREAS ON FOREST

The Grazing grounds were available in two places. Some were known as village grazing ground that already have discussed which were controlled by the Deputy Commissioner and other were Grazing under Forest. Grazing under the forest were found in two way. One was in reserved forest and another one was in unreserved forest. Table No. 3.2 shows the area that had closed and open for animal in the Reserved and the unreserved forest of Darrang District of Assam. The area in square miles closed and open to Grazing in Reserved and unreserved Forest.

Table No. 3.2 The area in square miles closed and open to Grazing in Reserved and unreserved Forest.

Year	Area closed to all animal in Square miles whole year in Reserved Forest	Area open to all animal in square miles whole year in Unreserved Forest
1910-11	336	2007

⁴² Desai, op.cit, p.27.

⁴³ A. G. Patton, The proceeding of the Government of Assam, RD3/43/13, dated 24th August 1943.

⁴⁴ Desai, op.cit, p.26.

1920-21	564	1594
1930-31	507	1256
1940-41	551.5	-
1946-47	543	-
1950-51	543	-

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the Year 1910, and Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year 1920-21 to 1950-51.*

In the Reserved Forest the area that had closed for the animal was highest in the year 1920-21. In the year 1920-21, most of the area of reserved forest were covered with grass which were reserved as grazing ground. But the gradual decrease of area that had closed to animal indicate how grazing lands were declining from the Darrang District. Because the government tried their best to use that grazing land in some cultivation or any purpose from which they could collect some more revenue.

In the unreserved forest, the grazing area that open for all the animal were also decreased. There can be two reasons for which the area was declined. The Government had reserved the unreserved forest gradually and if that land were suitable for any cultivation they were removed from the grazing land by the British Government. Both could be the reason of the declining of the grazing reserve in the unreserved forest.

There were also many restrictions. They had to pay revenue against each cattle that had pastured on that land no matter they belong to reserved forest or unreserved forest. Even for the revenue free cattle's also many restriction were there.

The British Government had started to collect the revenue from each cattle that had pastured in the grazing lands of the Reserved Forest. The rate of each cattle were different. Table No.3.3 to 3.5 shows about the amount of cattle from 1920-21 to 1946-47 and fee that the government received from the graziers.

Table No. 3.3 Grazing at full Rate under Reserved Forest in the Darrang District

Year	Buffaloes	Cows and Bullocks	Goat and Sheep	Other animals	Fees received
1910-11	-	-	-	-	-
1920-21	40	150	-	-	350
1930-31	750	1532	-	9	4075
1940-41	970	2232	6	5	5358
1946-47	598	1266	-	3	3347

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the Year 1910, and Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year 1920-21 to 1950-51.*

Table No. 3.4 Grazing at full Rate under unreserved Forest in the Darrang District

Year	Buffaloes	Cows and Bullocks	Goat and Sheep	Other animals	Fees received
1910-11	12148	2107	-	11	12727
1920-21	4521	3721	9	16	30942

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the Year 1910, and Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year 1920-21.*

Table No. 3.5 Grazing under free under unreserved Forest in the Darrang District

Year	Buffaloes	Cows and Bullocks	Goats and sheep	Other animals	Total animal
1910-11	25390	171021	58881	-	255292
1920-21	25390	171021	58881	-	255292
1930-31	-	-	-	-	-
1940-41	230	409	193	-	832
1946-47	293	660	32	309	1294

Note: Information for the year 1930-31 is not available.

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the Year 1910, and Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year 1920-21 to 1946-47.*

Table No. 3.3 shows about a number of cattle, how it had increased. The number of cattle were increasing till 1940-41 but after that the number of cattle had decreased it happened because of the decrease of the grazing lands in Darrang. From 1920 onwards most of the grazing lands were reserved by the Government. Table no. 3.3 shows a speed increase of buffalo and cattles in the reserved forest. It was because of the increase of grazing land in the reserved forest.

The table no. 3.4 shows a decrease of animal in the unreserved area, it was because in 1920-21 most of the grazing area had reserved by the government. And the amount of revenue was also increased at a high rate. In the year 1910-11, total animal that came under unreserved forest were 14,266 and total amount of revenue that had collected from them was 12727, but in 1920-21 total animal that came under the unreserved forest was 12727 and the amount that had collected from them was 30942.

In the unreserved forest also the government had started to collect tax from the cattle for using grazing lands of unreserved forest. Table no. 3.5 show how the amount of animal which were pastured for free had decreased.

3.3.1 The Privileges Granted to some Indians in Reserved Forests

Some Indians were granted privileges in the reserved forests for grazing. The Government gave them the privilege for their benefit only. In return the people who got the privilege had to give unending service to the British. They were even bound to be loyal to the British Government. Moreover, their privileges were also not ultimate, they only could use those part in which they got the privilege. If they use anything more than that they had to pay penalty.

In 1879 Akas got privileges of fishing and grazing their cattle in the Nawduar Forest. The area where they got the chance was the foot of the Aka hills in the north, the Khari Dikrai River in the east and the Bhorali River in the south and west.⁴⁵

In the Khalingduar forest 9 houses with 20 inhabitants got the privileges to grazing their cattle in the reserve on the right bank of Nonoi river in 1879 on the

⁴⁵ T.J. Campbell, *A Brief History of the Forest Department in Assam*, The Government Central Printing Office, Simla, 1898, p.71.

condition that they do not set fire to any jungle in or near the reserve and they do not cut, destroy or injure any of the trees in the reserve. They even could not collect or even attempt to collect any forest produce.⁴⁶

In the Charduar Reserve only 21.12 acres of area from southern and western boundary gave to exercise of the privilege of grazing to the people of Kacharigaon in 1889.⁴⁷

Those who got the privileges to graze their cattle in the forest area without any fee, they were bound to help forest officers and any other British officials in any work in any situation. Even there were many restrictions on them. They were allowed to pasture their cattle in the forest means they could do that only. They were not allowed to use any other from the forest. They were also responsible to look after the forest at that place where they got the privilege. They were also completely responsible to save that place from fire and the villager if someone used any forest product secretly.

3.3.2 Grazing Under Unreserved Forest and Village Grazing Ground in Darrang District

Unreserved Forest was the land that the government did not included in any reserved or village forest or in any village grazing ground. And the 'Village Grazing Ground' was an area that reserved by the Deputy Commissioner under the Rules of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886.⁴⁸

In the village grazing ground and unreserved forest grazier had to pay tax to the government against all the cattle. Though unreserved forest were not reserved, the government restricted that forests also. The unreserved forest and the village grazing ground came under the rule of deputy commissioner in Darrang District of Assam. So, the fees were same for both. Fees were different for all the cattle. The grazing fees on all the cattle were like, three rupees per head per year for buffalo; six *annas* per head per year for other horned cattle; Fifteen rupees per head per year or one rupee and eight *annas* per head per month for elephant and half the rate for elephants for

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.71-72.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.72.

⁴⁸ Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, Vol.1, Chapter. 3, Page. 51-55; *The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923.

elephant calves. The rate was based on the Notification No 3079R, dated 24th November, 1925. The date for filing application for permit to keep cattle for grazing was 1st of June every year.

There were some exceptions from the rule of keeping cattle that was published in the *Correction Slip to the Assam Forest Manual*. The cattle and buffaloes of some persons were exempted from grazing tax. No fees charged for cattle or buffaloes if they were under two years old till the 1st of June. If the cultivator was not interested in dairy or cattle or buffalo breeding and cattle or buffalo trading business. He was free from grazing fee. And the common people other than cultivators, who kept cattle for their private milk supply and did not trade in any dairy produce or cattle or buffaloes, they were also free from the grazing tax.⁴⁹

Though that rules were adopted same time there were some restrictions. A herdsman or an owner of animal always had to be loyal for all dues payable in respect of animals. In the exception rule, it was mentioned that cultivators who were not interested in breeding of cattle and in trading were free from grazing tax, but some time they also had to sale their surplus stock of dairy produce or cattle or kids of cattle. So, in most of the cases, cultivators also had to pay grazing tax to the government.⁵⁰

3.3.2.1 Grazing Permit for Unreserved Forest and Village Grazing Ground

Without the permit from the government, no person was allowed to graze cattle or buffaloes or elephants in unreserved forest and village grazing ground. All persons had to take out permits, for all cattle or buffaloes or elephants kept under them. They had to issue the grazing permits on payment, cover the period of a year, from 1st July to 30th June. Before 1st June each year application for permits should state the number and kind of cattle or buffaloes or elephants and the place or places where they were about to graze their cattle. The application was to submit to the hand of *mauzadar* or sub-deputy collector and other officer as the Deputy Commissioner directed.⁵¹

⁴⁹ 1st June was the date of filing application for permit.

⁵⁰ Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, op.cit, pp.51-55.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp.51-55.

In time of submission of the application to issue the permit, they had to pay two-third of the grazing fees at the prescribed rate. Payment were received by the *mauzadar* or other government officer. And the remaining one third they had to pay on and before 1st December at the prescribed rate to the *mauzadar* or any other officer authorized by the Deputy Commissioner.

If a permit holder increase cattle or buffalo or elephant after issuing the permit and before the close of the year, he had to apply for an additional permit. In case of the permit issued before 1st of January, he had to pay fees for full year. If he issued it after 1st January, he had to pay half of the annual fees.

In the form that the graziers had to submit to the government for permit they had to fill some details. In the first column they had to write the year; in the second column they had to write the name of grazier and his father's name and about his residence; in the third column situation of *bathan* or *khuti*; fourth column was related to the number and kind of animals in his charge or ownership; and in the fifth column remarks was available. After that they had to declare solemnly that the details that they had made was true.⁵² More than that when a forest area was proposed to reserve, the grazier had to submit some more details. They had to submit the details of the situation and area of grazing land, boundaries, description of soil, description of forest, timber depots, timber markets, lines of export, list of village or private lands within the proposed area, rights of surrounding population, maps and the working plans.⁵³

All person who wanted to become a professional grazier were not eligible for a professional grazier. There were some restrictions in unreserved forest to become a professional grazier. First, in case of not bona fide domiciled cultivator, only those person who owned or had in his possession, or head of a joint family which owned or had in the possession and had a number of cattle for selling purpose could try to be a professional grazier. Secondly, In case of bona fide domiciled cultivator, any person who were the head of a joint family, had a written order to be a professional grazier or

⁵² Local Government notification no 771R, dated 26th February 1929, Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, Vol.1, Chapter. 3, Page. 51-55; *The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923.

⁵³ Unofficial Government order dated 9th July 1929 in File 9/R.F., 1929, Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, Vol.1, and Chapter. 3, Page. 51-55; *The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923.

a family of professional grazier by the Deputy Commissioner or by the sub-divisional officer⁵⁴ could be apply for a professional grazier.⁵⁵

The professional graziers were also bound to be regulated by some rules⁵⁶.

- All professional graziers were bound to take out the permits for all cattle kept in their charge.
- Grazier had to issue the grazing permits on time. They had to pay the payment at the rate that the government fixed for grazing. They covered the period from 1st July to 30th June. Only one year old cattle were free from charge in time of issue of the permit.
- Before the 1st of June of each year, all professional graziers had to apply for grazing permit. For a grazing permit they had to write to the Deputy Commissioner, Sub-divisional Officer or any special officer in charge of grazing business of the district or sub-division in which the *khuti* or *bathan* was situated. Sometime the grazier were under other British official. That officials were appointed by the Deputy Commissioner.
- At the time of filing the application to issue the permit, at least two- third of grazing fees had to pay and the remaining one third had to pay not later than the 1st December.
- Any professional grazier came from another district after 1st of June had to apply for a grazing permit within 1 month and the full fee had to pay who came before 1st of January and half for those who came after that date.
- After the issue of permit if any grazier buy any cattle and the cattle kid became liable to tax, they had to apply for an additional permit. If that additional permit issued before 1st of January they had to pay the fees for full year at the time of issuing permit and half of the annual payment in case of issue permit after the 1st of January.

⁵⁴ Deputy Commissioner or sub-divisional officer had to be satisfied to get the order for a professional graziers. More than that he had to have a possession with more than ten heads of cattle which were not used for plough and the main income of the person or family should be come from the sale of cattle, their calves or their produce.

⁵⁵*The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923, p.51.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp.52-54.

The person who held land of temporarily settled for ordinary cultivation at full revenue rate and were not a professional graziers were permitted for grazing without any fee.⁵⁷

3.3.2.2 Power of the Deputy Commissioner and Sub-divisional Officer on grazing ground

In the Grazing area, the Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-divisional Officer could fix the sites of the *khutis* or *bathans*. The Graziers could not remove their cattle or buffaloes from one *khuti* to another or a new site without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer.

3.3.2.3 Penalties

If any person failed to apply in time, for permit, he had to pay double of the full amount when the government came to know about that cattle. The excess amount that had collected in such cases gave to them who gave the information to the Deputy Commissioner about the existence of unpaid cattle or buffaloes.

According to the Cattle Trespass Act, 1871, the Forest Officer or Police Officer could seized and impounded the cattle of the Graziers if any cattle made any damage to a public plantation in a reserved forest or in a village forest. By the section 66 of the Regulation VII of 1891 the Fines for each cattle were Rs. 10 for each elephant, Rs. 2 for each buffalo, Rs. 1 for each horse, mare, gelding, pony, colt, filly, mule, bull, bullock, cow and heifer and Rs. 0.50 for each calf, ass, pig, ram, ewe, sheep, lamb, goat, and kids.⁵⁸

If any person had done anything different from the rules of the government they were imprisoned for a term which extended to one month or fined which could extended to one hundred rupees and if the government officials felt the mistake was harmful for them, the person had to receive both. In most cases some more panalties were also added.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.52.

⁵⁸ Home, op.cit, p.27.

⁵⁹ Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, op.cit, 51-55.

Chapter 4

BRITISH FOREST POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PEASANTRY

In the year 1862, the organization of a separate Forest Department was initiated in Assam by the Government of India. In the initial stage it was controlled by the Public Works Department which was the principle consumer of forest produce.¹ But until 1874, all forest matters were administered from Bengal. In the year 1874 Assam was constituted into a separate province and constituted Chief commissionership for Assam. But the Bengal Government kept the power to control the accounts and to inspect and make suggestions on Assam.²

By the 1874-75 an independent Forest Department with one Deputy Conservator in charge of the province had appointed. There were also some other officials, they were two Assistant Conservators, one Sub-Assistant Conservator as the superior staff, two untrained Rangers, 12 Foresters, 57 Forest Guards, 6 Clerks and some peons. They were set up and the following five division were sanctioned under a Conservator of Forest³:

1. Goalpara: Goalpara division was a comprised part of the Eastern Duars with headquarters at Goalpara.
2. Gauhati: Gauhati division comprising the Kamrup District and the western half of Nowgong district. Both of the place contained Sal forest. The headquarters were located at a place called Kulsī. At Kulsī experimental Teak, Sissoo and rubber plantations were being made.
3. Golaghat: Golaghat division comprised the Nambor Reserves of Sibsagar, Naga Hills District, the Mikir Hills and eastern half of Nowgong District with the Headquarters at Golaghat.

¹ H. P. Smith, C. Purkayastha, *A Short History of the Assam Forest Service 1850-1945*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1946, p.1.

² T. J. Campbell, *A Brief History of the Forest Department in Assam*, The Government Central Printing Office, Simla, 1898, pp.1,10.

³ Smith, Purkayastha, op.cit, pp.8,9.

4. Tezpur: Tezpur division covered the Darrang District. It also included the Charduar rubber plantations with headquarters at Bhairabghat, 5 miles from Charduar.
5. Cachar: Cachar division comprised the districts of Cachar and Sylhet with headquarter at Silchar.

Other forest areas were directly controlled by the Deputy Commissioners. In the Tezpur division, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang managed all village forests. After the inauguration of the new Department in Assam, the revenue had increased in the forests of Assam. In 1904 a new Province had formed, named East Bengal and Assam. The Province formed together with some districts of Bengal and Assam and that was continued up to the end of 1911 when the province was separated again. When the partition of Bengal ended in 1911 all the Districts of West Bengal joined Bengal government and Assam became a separate province. The first constitutional reforms were introduced in 1921.⁴

The Darrang District came under the Eastern Circle of Forest Administration for Assam and in Western Circle for the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam. In the 1st April 1909 a second Conservator was sanctioned in the Province of East Bengal and Assam. He divided the province into two administrative circles, Eastern and Western circle covering respectively the following Divisions based on its location:

Eastern Circle: Eastern Circle covered districts from both Bengal and Assam, they were Chittagong, Sylhet, Cachar, Lushai Hill, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur.

Western Circle: Western circle also covered districts from both Bengal and Assam, they were Jalpaiguri, Buxa, Goalpara, Garo Hills, Kamrup, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Darrang.

After re-separation of the Province East Bengal and Assam in the year 1911 one post of Conservator was cancelled for a short time. From 1911 to 1912, Assam had only one Conservator. From 1st April 1912 the Province had again two Conservators in charge in two circle. It was kept same as previous i.e. Eastern and

⁴ Ibid, p.19.

Western Circle. But the area of two circle had changed. The Eastern Circle comprised the North- East Frontier, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong and Darrang. The Western Circle comprised Sylhet, Cachar, Kamrup, Goalpara, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Lushai Hill Division.⁵

Till 1881, the control of government on the common lands of Darrang District was limited.⁶ In Darrang District, all the forests which were big in size and had a sign to earn more money were reserved by the British Government first; and the Forests which were small in size were converted into reserve gradually. Gustav Mann, the Deputy Conservator of forest of Assam wrote in his Progress Report of Forest Administration

In the Darrang district the forest not declared reserves are of comparatively small extent, and they have not been placed in charge of the forest Officer as yet, but the latter assists the Deputy Commissioner in forest management generally. This will be more satisfactory still when formal orders are passed by the chief Commissioner to make the Forest Officer the Assistant to the Deputy-Commissioner as regards district forest. The addition to the Charduar plantation reserve requires demarcation of the adjoining private lands before it can be finally declared, and this demarcation is to be carried out early next cold season.⁷

First, they had focused on demarcation work. They worked to manage all the boundaries of reserved forest first. Remaining all other works of small forests were left for the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang. The disposal of minor produce for trade was usually regulated under permits or licenses. The Grazing by the professional graziers was also allowed by permits only. In the Darrang District the tapping of

⁵ Ibid, p.20.

⁶ Campbell, op.cit, p.2.

⁷ Gustav Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1881, p. 44.

rubber also carried out by department.⁸ The road to all the reserved were well maintained by the government.

In Assam, forests were gazette, under the Act VII of 1865. Both reserved and unreserved forests were managed under the Bengal Forest Rules that sanctioned by the Supreme Government in Public Works Department Notification No. 13F, dated the 16th February, 1871, and published in the Calcutta Gazette of 1st March, 1871.⁹

In the Indian Forest Act VII of 1878, the Chief Commissioner adopted a new rule. By that rule the government granted rewards to the Government officers and also others. They had offered attraction to the people to give information regarding the preparation of forest offences. The rule was published in the Assam Gazette of the 8th January 1878.¹⁰ The working of that rule had favorably reported on by Divisional Forest Officers.¹¹

By the Resolution No. 1812, dated 29th December 1881, the common lands of forest were allowed to manage by the Forest Officer in subordination to the Deputy Commissioner. They were allowed to manage that forest which were not reserved by the government. The forests were termed as 'open forest' or 'district forest'. *Tahsildar* and *mauzadars* assisted the forest officer appointed by the Deputy Commissioner in the administration.¹²

The Assam Forest Regulation VII of 1891 was passed by the Secretary of State for India in Council. It was a regulation which changed the forest rule in Assam. They made the strong law relating to forest, forest produce and the duty imposed on each and every product of forest in Assam. The regulation extended to the whole of the territories administered by the Chief Commissioner of Assam.¹³ The regulation

⁸ A. V. Monro, H. Carter, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Eastern Bengal And Assam for the year 1910-11*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1912, p.8.

⁹ Gustav Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1876, p.2.

¹⁰ Published in the *Assam Gazette* of 8th January, 1878, p 13

¹¹ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, op,cit, p.3.

¹² Campbell, op.cit, p.2.

¹³ Assam Forest Manual, Vol-1, PT-1, Secretariat Administration, Assam Secretariat, Guwahati, 1891, p.5.

came into force in the 1st April 1892 as the Provincial Government by the notification in the official Gazette of Assam.¹⁴

Things that had found in the forests of Darrang District were: timber, charcoal, caoutchouc, catechu, wood-oil, resin, natural varnish, bark, lac, myrabolams, trees and leaves, fruits, grass, creepers, reeds and moss, wild animal and their skin, tusks and horns, bones, silk, cocoons, honey and wax, Peat, surface soil, rock and minerals, limestone, laterite, mineral oils etc. Apart from wild animals many cattle like Elephant, buffaloes, horses, mares, ponies, pigs, rams, ewes, sheep, lambs, goats were also found in the forests. Under the forests many rivers were there includes streams, canals creeks and some other channels of natural or artificial.¹⁵

4.1 RESERVE FORESTS OF DARRANG DISTRICT OF ASSAM

Before coming of British entire forest were common for all. In the land of forest neither any people had the property right nor any ruler. Anyone could utilized the land. But after coming of British in India they had started to give their strict eyes on the Forest Land which was 'waste' for them. And gradually they had established their power on them and the rights of common people to utilize the common land had decreased. By their rules, Act and Regulations, most of the lands were reserved by the Government which was known as the Reserved Forest.

As the Government declared one forest as the reserve forest, the common people lost their rights on that forest. Their boundaries had recorded strictly in the register of reserves by the forest department.

The Caoutchouc Tree or the Indian rubber was found in the foot and in the low tropical valleys of the Himalaya. They were found from the Machi River i.e. Nepal Boundary to the extreme eastern boundary of Assam. They were also found at foot and in the low valleys of the southern mountains of the Brahmaputra Valley viz.

¹⁴ Notification No. 612-R., dated the 23rd February 1892, Assam Gazette, March 1892; A. L. Home, *The Assam Forest Manual*, Government of India, Simla, 1898, p.7.

¹⁵ Assam Forest Manual, 1891, op.cit, p.6.

Patkai Mountain, Naga Hill, Kosari, Jayantiya and Garo Hill etc. Rubber was available in Darrang District also.¹⁶

Plantation was very expensive. Some areas of Darrang were already planted with exotic timber trees. By the timber Teak they judged the suitability of the soil and climate of the area for their cultivation. But the Chief Commissioner of Assam did not want to extend timber plantation of exotic trees there. Because from this they had receive a normal amount of revenue. They always looking for more revenues so they had focused on that plantation from which they got the highest revenue.¹⁷ In each forests they had focused on different plantation based on their need and advantage.

The reserves placed in charge of the Forest Department of Tezpur Division in 1875-76 were the Bhamaraguri Hill Reserve, the Garumari Sal¹⁸Forest, and the Charduar Rubber Plantation Reserve (east of the Diputa River).¹⁹ In 1875-76, in Darrang District 80.92 square miles were reserved by the British Government. Among those 80.92, 34.46 were placed under the officer in charge of the Tezpur forest division. Moreover apart from that many more small forests were there. The remaining were left under the Deputy- Commissioner of the Darrang District for management.²⁰

4.1.1 Bhamaraguri (Bhomoraguri) Hill Reserve

The Bhamaraguri Hill Reserve was a small hill. It was situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, about four miles above from the east of Tezpur. It was first sold as waste land for a tea-plantation. Again it repurchased in 1867, with a view of securing the site and supplying firewood for the Government steamers. During the year 1875-76 it was declared as the forest reserve under the Act of VII. Of 1865. The

¹⁶ Assam Commissioner, Forest Administration, File No-627, 1869-71. No. 33. Dibrugarh, Dated 3rd April 1869, p.1.

¹⁷ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.11

¹⁸ The *Sal* was the most valuable tree in Assam that being a good timber and was suitable for railway sleepers in the British Period. It grew gregariously and offered the best opportunity for systematic and profitable working; F. Beadon Bryant, *A Note of Inspection on Some of the Forest of Assam*, Government Monotype Press, Simla, 1912, p.2.

¹⁹ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.5.

²⁰ Ibid, p.6

forest covered an area of 986.7 acres. It was bounded by the Base of the Bhamaraguri Hill in the North. The West and South was bounded by the Brahmaputra River and the East bounded by a *Suti* of the Bhairabi River.²¹ Very useful area of that forest measuring about 162 square miles, have been selected as reserves on both sides of the Bhairabi River, about twenty miles north of Tezpur, from where any amount of firewood could be procured.²²

The soil was Loam soil with granitic rock. It was a minor lower hill forest and mixed plains forest. A Part of that forest was under tea-cultivation. The trees which were available there, were cut for firewood and used on the Government steamers at Tezpur. None of the wood was sold. All were reserved exclusively for the use of Government steamers. None of the villages or private lands were remained within the forest boundaries. So the surrounding people had no right on that forest.²³

Working Plan- According to the Government document, with a view of securing the site for the sake of the forest, the forest was re-purchased by the Government from its owner. First the Government sold the forest for tea cultivation.²⁴ It was actually happened because firewood was required by the Government for Government steamer. That reserve was only four miles from that place of Tezpur where streamers could conveniently stop to take in firewood. The forest growth in that reserve was protected. They did not allow to cut trees for any other purpose. In that reserve above 3 feet in girth, 4 feet above from the ground trees were cut out for Government steamer. They did not made any improvement of that forest. The soil of that forest was not so good and many large forest area were available in this District. On reserves when any funds were granted for the improvement of forest in the Darrang district, it was spent more advantageously²⁵.

²¹ Ibid, p.38.

²² Ibid, p.6

²³ Notified in the *Assam Gazette of 31st July, 1875*, p.402.

²⁴ Information is not available who brought the land for tea cultivation, it may any British Official or British tea planters.

²⁵ Notified in the *Assam Gazette of 31st July, 1875*, p.402.

4.1.2 The Garumari reserves

The Garumari reserve was a little forest where pure Sal Tree was available. It was situated about seven miles north of Tezpur, and one mile east of the Balipara road. The area of that forest was about an area of 0.32 square miles, or 205 acres.²⁶ The Garumari reserve bounded with Mara Dhansiri River in south and somewhat in the east of the reserve. The soil of that forest was Alluvial, chiefly sand with vegetable mould on the surface.²⁷

On Garumari forest almost 50 acres of pure Sal was available. The rest 155 acres of area was under grass-land.²⁸ Sal trees were the most valuable property at that time because Sal was so very scarce in Darrang District. Sal tree was not available anywhere higher up Brahmaputra. All trees were young. The trees of that forest were kept usually for using as firewood. The growth of the trees of that forest was healthy and vigorous. Until 1874-75 the forest was burnt annually. In the year 1874-75 most of the trees of the Forest had damaged by fire.²⁹ None of the villages or private lands were remained within the forest boundaries. So the surrounding people had no right on that forest.

The Government had protected the Sal Forest from fire by cutting of fire strips and by appointing three fire-watcher. The British had blamed the forester and villagers for fire. According to them "Different attempts were made to set fire to these forests, which it is suspected was done by a dismissed forester, and villagers whose cattle had been prohibited from entering the reserves. But although investigations were made by the police, the evidence was not considered such as to punish the offenders. Fortunately, the watchers kept a sharp look-out, so that the fires were soon

²⁶ As there were a vast area of waste land, the government named that land. Grant no.2 was one of them.

²⁷ Notified in the *Assam Gazette* of the 11th December, 1875, p.648.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.648.

²⁹ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.6

extinguished after they had been lighted, and the damage done was very trifling- not more than five acres, out of a total of 631 and half were burned.”³⁰

The Government had thought that the villager set fire in the Sal forest. The Forest rules prevented the villager to pasture their cattle in the forest and use forest produce. For which villager were doubted for set the fire in the *sal* forest of Garumari reserve.

4.1.3 The Charduar Rubber plantation reserve

The Rubber Plantation of Charduar in the Darrang District was a good source of revenue to the British Government in Assam. At first, the British Government started to collect rubber from natural forest. But they realized that the others also started to tap rubber from the forests and the natural rubber was not sufficient to fulfill their needs. So they started the artificial reproduction to increase rubber for financial proposition.³¹ H. P. Smith and C. Purkayastha described that,

The Charduar rubber plantation were started in 1874 from seeds and cuttings. A year's experience showed that seed germinated best on broken brick less well on broken charcoal and least well on the ground. The best time for planting cutting was between the middle of January to the end of May. The seedlings and cuttings were put 15' apart in 40' wide strips. By 1883-84 an area of 892 acres had been stocked with rubber trees and in 1889 the total area was 1043 acres. By 1891-92 the total expenditure on the plantations from their formation amounted to about Rs. 122,000. The financial soundness of the rubber plantations began to be questioned as the area began to increase from year to year. On the basis of an estimated net revenue of Rs. 60 per acre it was considered to be an unprofitable undertaking and further planting was discontinued from the year 1894 for a time. Experimental tapping was first made in 1899 when it yielded a net profit of Rs. 93 per acre.”³²

³⁰ Ibid, p.7

³¹ Smith, Purkayastha, op.cit, pp.6,7.

³² Ibid, p.7.

The Charduar Rubber Plantation was started in 1873 by the British Government. They had started the plantation with an objective of demonstrating that the rubber tree (*Ficus elastic*) which could be grown artificially in Assam. Another motive was of starting other plantation which was to be started afterwards by the private enterprise.³³

The Charduar Rubber plantation reserve was sanctioned in 1875-76 by the Chief Commissioner of Assam. It was the land on which the main Rubber plantation of Assam had started. The total area of that reserve was about 80 square miles, of which 33 and half square mile or 21,465 acres were situated east of the Diputa River. That 33 and half square mile of Charduar forest came under the direct management of the Forest Department of Assam. All over Charduar forest was covered with dense mixed evergreen and lower hill forest. In lines trees were cut for the planting of the Rubber-plants and rest of the trees were preserved for timber.³⁴

The Charduar Rubber Plantation Reserve was situated between the Dipota and Mansiri Rivers. It placed from immediately at the foot of the Aka Hills to about 18 miles north of Tezpur. It covered an area of 21,465 acres or 33.54 square miles. The North was bounded by a line between Bhutan and Aka Hills. East of the reserve was bounded by the Mansiri River. The South bounded by Mansiri River. West was bounded by the Dipota River.³⁵

The soil of that reserve was almost entirely alluvial with rich and deep vegetable mould on the surface. The high land in the southern portion was consist of rich loam. The forest was a lower hill forest where rubber tree (*Ficus Elastica*) was available very frequently. Chiefly the Government selected this reserve, with two motives. One was of planting Caoutchouc trees and another was to send timber to Bhairabi ghat or the Tezpur timber depot. None of the villages or private lands were

³³ F. Beadon Bryant, *A note of Inspection on some of the forest of Assam*, Government Monotype press, Shimla, 1912, p.6.

³⁴ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.7

³⁵ Notified in the *Assam Gazette* of the 29th January 1876, p. 91

allowed to stay within the forest boundaries. So the surrounding people had no right on that forest.³⁶

Working Plan- in the eastern portion of Charduar reserve, the Charduar rubber plantation had started. It was extended by 200 to 300 acres of lands annually. This was done by cutting lines of forest trees. They cut forty feet in width and 100 feet apart throughout the forest from east to west annually and planted those lines with rubber trees. If any better kinds of trees felled on that lines that were brought into the timber depot.

The Forest Department had kept a strong eye on the villagers and forest people. So that they could not use any forest produce and use that land for jhooming again. There were no danger from fire in Charduar Forest. Gustav Mann, the Deputy Conservator of Forest of Assam wrote that, “. . .There is no danger from fire, and all this forest requires in the way of protection is the watching of the people to prevent them starting jhooms in it.”³⁷

According to the report in the year 1880-81, for the first time, the Charduar Plantation was accomplished successfully thorough the protection of all the trees. After that all the lines on which the Rubber-trees were planted in the reserve were cleared three times a year. First was done in May and June, second was in August and September and third and last one was in December and January.³⁸

4.1.3.1 Methods and time of planting in the ground

Different methods were used for planting the rubber trees in Charduar reserve. They had planted in the ground on small mounds of earth about three feet in height. The best time of transplanting the rubber tree was November and December or just before the winter rains. Well rooted plants were greater than plants with short roots.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 91

³⁷ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.39.

³⁸ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, op.cit, pp.30-31.

Short root plants came from seedling. So later on, it became a rule to apply to cutting only not to seedling.³⁹

In December 1875, the Deputy Conservator carefully inspected the whole plantation. The young trees as well as old were looking excellent. In the report he wrote, "...by keeping the young Rubber-trees two or three years longer in nurseries, the great expense of fencing can be avoided altogether, and that the only precaution which will be necessary when using such large plants is placing one stout post to each young trees to prevent the large deer bending them down with their horns, to eat the leaves and young shoots."⁴⁰

In the year 1880-81 seeds of Nahor tree were sowing in the lines between the Rubber trees. It was started for the report of Deputy Conservator. It was proceeded with as fast as the seed was available there.⁴¹

Apart from those main reserve there were some more reserves.⁴² In the year 1875-76, the Nowduar reserve continued to be merged and protected by the Forest Department. But that year it had not registered as a reserve. The boundary between the Aka Hills and the Darrang district was not settled in 1875-76. After a year that forest came under reserved forest.⁴³

The Bamuni Hill Rubber Plantation was a small plantation. On that reserve, the growth of rubber was quite slow. According to the report, when the deputy Conservator inspected it in December, 1875 the plants looked healthy. During 1880-81 the growth of the trees was greatly improved. But compared to Charduar the trees were much less in size. From the year 1878-79 the growth at the Bamuni Hill plantation had increased.

In comparison to Charduar Plantation, Bamuni Hill Plantation had made on the high and dry ground. The area was quite in the open that exposed to the full glare

³⁹ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.14.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.5.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.15.

⁴² The information is not available about some reserve forest, for what they were famous and for which the government reserved such forests.

⁴³ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, p.7

of the sun and wind from the Brahmaputra. So, like the Charduar plantation the trees could never grow too high. So that reserve always got less interest from the government.⁴⁴

4.1.4 A Statistical Analysis about the Reserved Forests of Darrang District of Assam

In about 1868-69, the first forest officer came to Assam. While visited Darrang District he was not satisfied because common people were using the forest produces. According to his point of view, he found a disgraceful destruction of trees that being practiced in the Mangaldoi sub-division of Darrang District. It was done by the villagers of Mangaldoi by felling trees and over tapping. For him that should generally carried on by their employees only.⁴⁵

4.1.4.1 Annual Summary of Forest Revenue of the Darrang District.

The Government had collected a good amount of revenue from the Forest. Their main aim was to collecting more revenue from which they can collect. In the Forest they had collected revenue from the existing resources and artificial plantation.

Table no. 4.1: Annual Summary of Revenue of Forest in Darrang District

Year	Rs.
1875-76	1895.80
1880-81	18144.56
1890-91	29711.35
1900-01	-
1910-11	68903.23
1920-21	-
1930-31	79922.00
1940-41	93459.00
1946-47	342689.00

Note: Information for the year 1900-01 and 1920-21 is not available.

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year, 1880-81, 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11, 1930-31, 1940-41, 1946-47.*

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁵ Smith, Purkayastha, op.cit, p.86.

Table no 4.1 shows how the revenue of Forest produces had increased. This table discuss about the statistical account forest revenue in each 10 years. In the year 1880-81 the revenue collected from the reserved forests of Darrang District was 18144 which increased to 412536 till 1946-47.

Before 1875-76 the revenue collected by the government from the forest were very less compared to the coming years. In the year 1863-64 the revenue collected from Darrang District for rubber was 1525, and 1012 was in the year 1864-65.⁴⁶ After that they started artificial plantation of Rubber.

The revenue of the year 1880-81 of forests of Darrang District were collected from different sources. Rs.16449, As.12, P.9 from Timber that removed from forest by consumers or purchasers. Rs.1626, As.6, P.6 were collected from firewood and charcoal that removed from forest by consumers or purchasers. Rs. 38, As.5, P.9 were collected from bamboos that removed from forest by consumers or purchasers.⁴⁷

The revenue that collected from different sources in the year 1890-91 were, Rs.42, As.8 from grass and other minor product that removed from the forest by the government agency. Rs.7017, As.11, P.2 were collected from Timber that removed from forest by the consumers or purchasers. Rs.38 were collected from firewood and charcoal that removed from forest by consumers or purchasers. Rs.12, As.8, P.6 were collected from the bamboos that removed from the forest by the consumers or purchasers and from other minor product Rs.22333, As.10, P.0 were collected. Rs.50 were collected from drift and waif wood and confiscated forest produce. Rs.16 were collected from fines and forfeitures and Rs.2 were collected from refunds and from other sources 199 Rs. were collected in that year.⁴⁸

In 1910-11 the revenue were collected from different sources of Forest in the Darrang District. Rs.1351 were collected from timber that removed from the forest by the government agency. Rs.23 were collected from Firewood and charcoal that

⁴⁶ Assam Commissioner, Forest Administration, File No-627, 1869-71, No. 33, Dibrugarh, dated 3rd April, 1869, p.6.

⁴⁷ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, op.cit, Appendix; A.L. Home, 28th June 1881, Calcutta, Form No. 49.

⁴⁸ J. T. Jellicoe, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1890-91*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1891, p. 48.; A. C. Bose, 16th June 1891, Calcutta, Form No. 58.

removed by the government agent. Rs.23283 were collected from grass and other minor product that removed from the forests by the government agency. Total Rs.36366 were collected from the product that were removed from the forests by consumers or purchasers like Rs.5602 from timber, Rs.1333 from firewood and charcoal, Rs.57 from bamboos, Rs.12727 from grazing and fodder grass, Rs.4776 from other minor product and Rs.11871 from other items. Same year 446 Rs. were collected from drift and waif wood and confiscated forest product and Rs.6191 was collected from duty on foreign timber and other forest produce and from miscellaneous 1243 rupees of revenue was collected by the British Government.⁴⁹

In the year 1930-31 the revenue were collected from different sources in the Darrang District. The revenue collected from the produce that removed from the forest by the government agency were, Rs.17963 from timber, Rs.32 from firewood and charcoal and Rs.4 from grass and other minor products. The revenue collected from the product that removed from the forest by consumers or purchasers were Rs.33803 from Timber, Rs.6406 from firewood and charcoal, Rs.862 from bamboos, Rs.4075 from grazing and fodder grass, Rs.10530 from other minor products and Rs.600 from other items. 1523 rupees of revenue collected from drift and waif wood and confiscated forest produce, 11 rupees collected from duty on foreign timber and other forest produce and 4593 rupees were collected from some miscellaneous source.⁵⁰

In Darrang district the revenue of forest were collected from many sources in the year 1940-41. The revenue collected from the produce that removed from the forests by government agency were Rs.934 from timber and Rs.867 from grass and other minor product. The revenue collected from the product that removed from the forest by the consumers and purchasers were Rs.59609 from timber, Rs.9775 from firewood and charcoal, Rs.520 from bamboos, Rs.5358 from grazing and fodder grass

⁴⁹ A. V. Munro, H Carter, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1910-11*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1912, p.48.

⁵⁰ A. J. W. Milroy, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1930-31*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1931, pp. 44-45.

and Rs.200 from others. Rs1357 were collected from drift and waif wood and confiscated forest produce and Rs.5815 from some miscellaneous produce.⁵¹

In the year 1946-47 the revenue were collected from different sources of Forest in the Darrang District. Rs279 collected from the forest produces that removed from the forest by the government agency. The revenue collected from the produce that removed from the forests by consumers and purchasers were timber Rs.220260, firewood and charcoal Rs.10394, bamboos Rs.785, elephants Rs.42120, and from other forest produce 53979. Rs.7590 were collected from drift and waif wood and confiscated forest produce and Rs.8612 from miscellaneous sources.⁵²

4.1.4.2 Area of Reserved Forest of Darrang District

From the reserved forest, the British government had collected a vast amount of revenue which make them stronger gradually. The government became greedier of using more product from the District to collect more revenue. So they collected revenue from natural sources of forest produce. Apart from that they also started artificial plantation from which maximum profits went to them.

Table No 4.2: Area of Reserved Forest of Darrang District in acres

Year	Balipara Forest	Khalin gduar Forest	Charduar Rubber Plantation	Bhama raguri Hill	Garumari Forest	Nowduar Forest	Singri Hill	Total
1880-81	56224	13212	51200	386	205	52480	-	173707
1890-91	56224	13212	66983	386	205	52480	1200	190690
1900-01	-	-	-	--	-	--	-	205291
1910-11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	214774
1920-21	-	-	-	--	-	-	-	363374

⁵¹ C. Mackarness, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1940-41*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1941, pp. 98,100.

⁵² P. D. Stracey, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1946-47*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1947, pp. 72,74.

1930-31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	350237
1940-41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	379238
1946-47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	387079

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year, 1880-81, 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11, 1930-31, 1940-41, 1946-47.*

Table No. 4.3: Area of Reserved Forest of Darrang District in Square Miles

Year	Balipara Forest	Khalingduar Forest	Charduar Rubber Plantation	Bhama raguri Hill	Garumari Forest	Nowdua r Forest	Singri Hill	Total
1875-76	87.84	9.75	33.54	0.6	0.32	-	-	132.05
1880-81	88	21	80	1	-	82	-	272
1890-91	88	21	105	1	-	82	-	297
1900-01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	321
1910-11	-	-	--	-	-	-	-	336
1920-21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	568
1930-31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	547
1940-41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	592
1946-47	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	604

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year, 1880-81, 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11, 1930-31, 1940-41, 1946-47.*

Table No 4.2 and 4.3 shows how the reserved areas of forest had increased. In the Table No. 4.2 it can be see that how the area was increasing in each year from 1880-81 to 1946-47. In 1880-81 total reserved area of Darrang District was 173707 and it had increased to 387079 in 1946-47.

In 1912 F. Beadon Bryant, the Inspector General of Forest asked the Government of India to increase the revenue from that area. According to him the government did not receive maximum revenue from the forests. He wrote,

It may be argued that the present revenue returns from the forest reserves in Assam are so low, and that there are such large areas already reserve, but for the produce of which no present demand exists, that there is no justification for the formation of further reserves- but the way in which the forest revenues and net surplus have been increasing during the past few years particularly since two Conservators were sanctioned in November 1908, shows how quickly the demand on the forests is developing and is a most promising sign of what may be expected in the future. As the country develops and becomes more opened up by roads and railways, so surely, as has proved the case elsewhere, will the demand and necessity for forest produce both within and without the province increase, and the forest reserves as at present constituted will not suffice to meet these demands.⁵³

They had collected all expenditure they had made for improvement of forest from forest produce. For constructing roads and railway they collected more revenue from forest produce. F. Beadon Bryant, the Inspector General of Forest to the Government of India also wrote, "... Government should without delay establish its title to all waste lands containing forest of present or prospective value. There are still very large areas available in the un-classed forests, but these are rapidly being eaten into by *jhuming*, i.e., shifting cultivation or being damaged by excessive grazing, and I would suggest to the Local Government that a systematic policy of reserving all areas containing timber of known or likely value should be steadily pursued. I would recommend that as officers can be spared for this work they may be placed on special duty to select and propose large blocks with simple boundaries to be formed into reserves."⁵⁴

The government reserved all the area from which they could collected maximum revenue. After that all other forest area which was not suitable to take under direct control of Government were handover to the Deputy Commissioner's control.

⁵³ Bryant, op.cit, p.1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.2.

When a forest area was proposed to be use by someone, he had to face many restrictions by the rules of government. Apart from that for one unofficial order they had to submit some details like, situation and area, boundaries, description of soil, description of forest, timber depots, timber markets, lines of export, list of villages or private lands within the proposed area, rights of surrounding population, maps and the working plans.⁵⁵

4.1.5 The strict eyes of Government on Forest Product

The Government had kept their strong eyes on forest produce. They even managed their records to keep all information of trees that sold, send to depot, and all other activities.

In the *Progress Report of Forest Administration of Assam in 1880-81*, Gustav Mann, the Conservator of Forest in Assam wrote, “The permanent protective establishment has in this division also remained the same, pending a revision of all the forest establishments in the Province. It is not strong enough, and has, as in other divisions, to be supplemented largely by temporary men, to exercise efficient control over the northern boundaries of the reserves along the foot of the Bhutan and Akah Hills, where they are frequently entered by people who tap and collect Rubber.”⁵⁶In 1899, one Meghraj Bahadur and some others protested against the realization of a sum of Rs. 1500 by the Deputy Commissioner for taping rubber in the Dafla hill.⁵⁷

By the regulation VII of 1891 the British Government prohibited some action in the reserved forests. If any villager had done anything from the list that the government prohibited, they had to receive an imprisonment for a term of 6 months. Also they were fined with cash which sometime extended to five hundred rupees. Sometime even they had to pay both. In the condition, when the government officer felt like the person use the product more and it was a loss of government he was fined and also he had to receive an imprisonment for months.

⁵⁵ Unofficial Government order dated 9th July 1929 in File 9/R.F., 1929. Correction Slips to the Assam Forest Manual, Vol.1, Chapter. 3, Pp.51-55; *The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923.f5

⁵⁶ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, op.cit, p.29.

⁵⁷ Land Revenue Department, Commissioner’s Office, File No. 43, Memo No. 355 for/2681P, dated Shillong, 4th July 1899.

The action that had prohibited by the British Government for Reserved Forest were like, Making of any fresh clearing was prohibited in the reserved forest by the section 7 of regulation 1891. The villager could not sets fire in any forests, also they could not leave any fire burning in the forests. Fells, cuts, girdles, marks, lops and taps of any tree was strictly prohibited which was a common action of villager before coming all this restrictions. Mining of stone and burning of lime or charcoal was prohibited. They could not collect anything which could be use in any manufacturing process. Clear or breaks of any land for cultivation (*jhuming*) or any other purpose was also strictly prohibited in the reserved forest. Fishing in the rivers of forest was a very common action of villagers. It was like a tradition for them. But the rules prohibited fishing in the reserved forest. Killing of fish by the use of nets, traps were also strictly prohibited. They were some villager who got the privilege of using some product from the reserve forests. Except the permit holder within a provision, no person were allowed for any action like hunting, shooting, trapping or fishing within a reserved forest.⁵⁸

More than that some more restrictions were there. With the restriction there were a rules of fine also. The villager received penalties if they pasture their cattle in the reserve forests secretly. Also if any permit holder made any damage of any product of forest by negligence in felling any tree or cutting or take any timber he had to pay fine. In that case the Government punished with fine till 50 rupees if the amount of damage was less than 25 rupees. If the amount of damage was more than 25 rupees then they had to pay double of the amount.⁵⁹

4.1.5.1 Condition of common people that engaged on the Government work

Though they had received the minimum wages from the Government, the common people were engaged on the government work in many way. The common people were bound to work under the government at the low wage to live their life.

In the Darrang District much of the demarcation work was done by the local common people. Instead of giving payment in cash the government gave them a free grants to use some forest produce from the reserve forests. Many restrictions were

⁵⁸ A. L. Home, *The Assam Forest Manual*, Government Central Printing Office, Shimla, 1898, p15.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p15.

also there. If they made any damage of any forest product by their negligence they had to pay fine. The government had adopted the way for the demarcation work because this system helped them to complete all demarcation work on an exceptionally low cost.⁶⁰

When a person received a right of using anything in a reserved forest or village forest he became more responsible for government. If he received a permit to remove any forest produce or pasture cattle or practice even a small amount of *jhum* cultivation in a reserved forest, he was bound to assist Forest Officer and Police Officer in any work. Any person who got a job in the forest and the person who was employed by the government was bound to give information like fire, taping etc. to the nearest Forest Officer or Police Officer without delay. He was responsible to help the Forest Officer and Police officer in extinguishing any fire occurring in such forest. He was also responsible to help Forest Officer and Police officer in searching the reason of fire. If any villager had set fire he was responsible to find him.⁶¹

Table No. 4.4: Trees that found in the forests of Darrang District of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Tree	Scientific Name
1	Agar or Sasi	Aquilaria Agallocha
2	Ajhar or Jarul	Lagerstroemia Flos-Reginae
3	Amari	Amoora Wallichii
4	Boga Poma	Chiuckrassia Tabularis
5	Bola	Morus Laevigata
6	Bonsum	Phoebe
7	Cham or Sam	Artocarpus Chaplasha
8	Dhuna	Canarium Reziniferum
9	Gomari	Gmelina arborea
10	Gonseroi	Cinamomum Cecidodaphne
11	Hollock	Terminalia Myriocarpa

⁶⁰ Jellicoe, op.cit, p.2.

⁶¹ Home, op.cit, p.29.

12	Hollong	Dipterocarpus Pulosus
13	Muga Tree	Litsaea polyantha
14	Nahor	Messua ferrea
15	Pepper	Piper longum
16	Pine	Pinus Khasya
17	Sal	Shorea Robusta
18	Simul	Bombax Malabaricum
19	Sissoo	Dalbergia Sissoo
20	Sopa	Taluma Phellocarpa
21	Teak	Tectona Grandis
22	Titasopa	Michelia Champaca

Source: M.C. Jacob, *The Forest Resources of Assam*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1940,

4.2 VILLAGE FOREST

By giving a notification in the Official Gazette, the Local Government could add any land under Government or cancel such notification at any time. The Local Government could make rules for management of village forests. They had prescribed the conditions under the group of people lived there in that village. The duties regarding the protection and the improvement of such forest left to the local government. They were mainly managed by the deputy commissioner by appointing *mauzadar* or other government officials.⁶²

By giving a notification in the official Gazette, the Local Government could also declare any tree as reserved trees. They reserved some specified class of tree that stand on any land considered as land under the Government.

Under the Assam Forest Regulation 1891 some rules for the management of village forests were prescribed. Under section 29 of the Assam Forest Regulation, the procedure had adopted for the village forests. The rules were same as the rules of reserved forests. But the function of all section of village forests had given to the

⁶² Ibid, p. 16.

Deputy Commissioner of the Darrang District. In village some people were allowed to use forest produce. This privilege were granted to them who were closed to the British officials. Also some *lakhirajdar*⁶³ and *nisf-khirajdar*⁶⁴ got the privilege on such village forest.⁶⁵ The Deputy Commissioner could appoint a committee in any village to manage the village forest. He also could leave the management of village forest to any local official. Government also asked to make a village *samaj* for management of village forest under Local self-Government. If the work of formation of was pending he could leave the management of village forest to any official trustable for him. There were some managing authority who was responsible for looking after produces of village forest. They were responsible to save the forest from any destroy. They were also responsible to report everything to the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-divisional Officer. No villager were allowed to sell or barter any forest produce. They were not allowed to graze cattle in the village forests also. They were also not allowed to clear land for any cultivation or any building purpose. Any person other than them who got any privileged right had no right to use anything from forest.⁶⁶

4.2.1 Penalty to the Villager

If any villager graze their cattle secretly in the village forest they had charged with eight *annas* per head. And if the villager broke any of that rule he was fined which he had to pay in cash. If he used or damaged the forest product amounted less than 25 rupees he was fined with 50 rupees. If he made loss or used the product of village forest which was more than 25 he had to pay double of his amount to be pay.⁶⁷

4.2.2 Forest Village

The Forest Village were designed as a motive of getting suitable local labour. The people were also used by the government various way. There were some restrictions to become a forest villager. The person who were not habituated to some

⁶³ Lakhirajdar were them who were free from revenue to pay to the government for their lands. Brahmins were mainly Lakhirajdar.

⁶⁴ *Nisf-khirajdar* were them who paid half of the full revenue to the government. Some relatives of the Darrang Raja enjoyed such type of land.

⁶⁵ Notification No. 1130R., dated the 13th March 1918, *The Assam Forest Manual*, Vol-1, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1923, p.57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.57-59

⁶⁷ Notification No. 7525F., dated 29th October 1918, *The Assam Forest Manual*, 1923, p.59.

forest work, were only allowed to be a forest villager. The people who were not habituated with removal of timber and not worked in line clearing were accepted as the Forest Villager. They were bound to work for the British Government. They had to give compulsory labour service at least 10 days in the year ending. After that again they had to give 10 days' additional voluntary labour service. After giving the labour service the forest villager received ten *bigha* paddy land for cultivation as a rent for which they had to pay six *annas* per *bigha* annually.⁶⁸

To settle in the forest village, one had to take permission from Divisional Forest Officer. The divisional forest officer was responsible to the forest village. He was responsible to keep a register on which he had to keep the records of labour. The register showed the amount of labour done by the forest villages. But the officers of government could not use them officially in domestic work. Officially they were not responsible to employ such work like bringing water, washing cloth or cooking utensils, sweeping houses or compounds of subordinates etc. But officially they were responsible for bringing firewood, carrying baggage of officer on tour etc.⁶⁹

4.3 UNRESERVED FOREST

The forests which were not reserved by the British Government were managed by district officers. They were reserved within revenue limit. Also they were watched over as strictly as the reserved forest. This was directly done by the Deputy Commissioner and *mauzadars*. He was directly responsible for their safety. The Deputy Commissioner had a forest-ranger and peons under him. They employed him in collecting any information regarding the forests. The *mauzadars* were also completely responsible to collect information of forest and help forests officials in any needs.

For felling timber in the unreserved forest there were some restrictions. The Chief Commissioner of Assam laid down some rules under the Deputy Commissioners. In Darrang District the rules were for twenty nine types of timber.

⁶⁸ The Assam Forest Manual, 1923, op.cit, p.75.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.76.

There were four types of forms which people had to apply before felling any timber. The Form no 1 was an application for permission to fell Timber. First they had to fillup the name and residence of the applicator. In second part they had to describe about all trees that the applicant wished to fell. Thirdly, he had to write the locality and *mauza* from where he wanted to cut down the tree. After that he had to write the quantity of each tree he wished to cut down. They were allowed to cut tree above girth five feet over the ground. He had to write the amount of tax that he would pay for that tree. Finally he had to take signature from Treasure Officer, granting officer and forest ranger or other officer marking the trees to be felled. Form no B was a certificate. *Mauzadar* gave a certificate to them who cut trees from unreserved forest. In the certificate some information were available like his name and residence, and about his locality etc. After that he wrote about the trees that he felled and all registered number against the tree he fell, and the signature of *mauzadar*. Form no C was also a certificate of *mauzadar* showed trees which were imported to *Mauza*. The information was available about the name and residence of importer, about the locality where that trees were imported and about the description of the timber. They also maintained register against each tree that imported to the *mauza*. The *mauzadar* included all registered number in the certificate and about the quantity of tree that had imported to the *mauza*. Also he had to mention about the length and girth of trees that had imported. After that he had to sign in the certificate. Form no D was a register which showed the timber that felled or imported to *mauza*. They had to fill up the name and residence of wood cutter and importer and about the locality where the timber had felled. They also had to describe clearly about all the timber.⁷⁰

The following were the rules that lay down by the Chief Commissioner under the Deputy Commissioner for the regulation of felling of the timber. Felling of timber was prohibited. If any people wanted to cut tree he had to apply to the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang or the officer in charge of their subdivision.

They had to apply on an unstamped paper in the Form no. A mention above. They had to pay the tax on timber, at the same time at the prescribed rate. If the application was acceptable, the Deputy Commissioner or sub-divisional officer received the tax. After that the Deputy Commissioner registered his application and

⁷⁰ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, pp.17-18.

returned the application to the applicant. After that the applicant had to take the application to the forest-ranger. If the forest ranger was not available, some official could sign in the application. The officer was appointed by the Deputy Commissioner. Here the Forest ranger or the other officer who signed their application marked the tress which they could cut. Every timber that the common people wanted to cut were not allowed by the Government. After fell of tree the feller again had to apply to the *mauzadar* of that area in which they had felled the tree. Then he had to show the application form to the *mauzadar*. *Mauzadar* checked the entire log and compared it with the application whether it is same with the application or not. The *mauzadar* kept all record in Form no. D and gave a certificate to the feller which was Form no. B. After that only he was allowed to remove all timber he fell from the forest.⁷¹

If any person brought the timber to such place other than the place mentioned above he had to write an application to the *mauzadar* of the place he wanted to import. *Mauzadar* counted all the logs and register in form D. The *mauzadar* also gave a certificate to the importer that was form no. C.

Apart from them there were some people who got the privilege to use the land for free. But they were also bound to follow the same method. They also had to write application and all. They also could not cut all trees from the forest. Only privilege they got was they did not pay the timber tax to the government. Also for getting that privilege they were bound to help forest officials in anytime. Still the government made some attempt to stop the use of unreserved forest and tried to preserve forest produces for governmental use.⁷²

Table No. 4.5: The areas protected by the Deputy-Commissioner of Darrang as unreserved forest

Year	Square Mile	Acres
1875-76	309	-
1880-81	226	144759

⁷¹ Ibid, p.17

⁷² M. C. Jacob, *The Forest Resources of Assam*, Assam Government Press, Shillong, 1940, p.1.

1890-91	180	115377
1900-01	2174	1391354
1910-11	2007	1284417
1920-21	1594	1019903
1930-31	1256	803803
1940-41	784	501515
1946-47	353	225629

Source: *Progress Report of Forest Administration in Assam for the year, 1880-81, 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11, 1930-31, 1940-41, 1946-47.*

Table no. 4.5 has shown how the area of unreserved land had decreased in the forests of Darrang District. Most of that area had reserved by the British Government which were used as the source of revenue by artificial plantation, use of natural production, grazing and engage on any purpose which could make a good revenue.

H. P. Smith and C. Purkayastha in their book *A Short History of the Assam Forest Service 1850-1945* wrote, "...land cultivated in irrigated paddy fields is a better proposition than forests, as an almost equal wealth is produced and agriculture pays a better land revenue. Again, whatever improvements in wealth production can be achieved by more intense forest management can be offset by the increased wealth which can accrue by the use of better seeds, crop rotation, manuring and irrigation in agriculture. Hence if the land is correctly used, forest have no claim and press no claim to such land unless it is required to meet the everyday need of the local population."⁷³

Here it is also important to mention that many land from unreserved forests were used in agriculture. As there were sufficient cultivable land in Darrang District but the Government also encouraged all peasants to take more land to cultivation. Because from the cultivation the government had received the highest revenue compare to other source. That one also one of the reason of decreasing of unreserved forest in Darrang District.

⁷³ Smith, Purkayastha, op.cit, p.72.

4.3.1 Restrictions of Government on the Unreserved Forests

The British were not happy when the local people used forest product from non-reserve forests also. Gustav Mann the Deputy Conservator of Forest of Assam wrote,

When considering the financial results of the Forest Department, it has to be remembered that in this province much forest produce is removed from the forest without payment, since ryots are allowed to supply all their wants free of charge from the Government forests, except the reserves. Grazing-dues are unknown, and grass, timber, bamboos, firewood, and, in fact, almost everything except tax-paying timber (twenty-nine kinds) is removed, even for the purpose of trade, free of payment... Thus, the communities at large, and even traders, have enjoyed, and are enjoying, great advantages from the forest which do not appear in the accounts. The valuable Sal forests in the valley district had nearly all been worked out before conservancy commenced, and require many years' rest and care before felling can be recommenced in them; and the demand for the other reserved trees is as yet very limited, and confined to the Province. Naturally, these valuable, but exhausted, forests are under the management of forest officers, as they require the most care, and on these almost all the expenditure of the department is at present incurred, which makes the forest division appear in a very unfavorable light, when the results of the year's work is shown in figures, and a balance is struck between receipts and expenditure...⁷⁴

The chief amount of revenue from the unreserved forests of Darrang District was realized by the district officer. The Government official named Deputy Conservator was responsible to increase the receipts wherever that can legitimately be done. They had increased revenue by insisting on the strictest economy, Collecting tax from even smallest thing, and by giving strict eye on forests product and record all details.

⁷⁴ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1875-76*, op.cit, pp.23-24.

The Government had reserved almost all of the forest in Darrang District and left some area which were small in size and less important for the government. But that area also were not free to use. Government considered that area as Government waste and make some restrictions for the common people. They even had to receive penalty if any person use that area without the permission of the Government. The restrictions of the Government were like no person were allow to use of any forest-product though they were not reserved forest. Local government had also power to make personal rules to preserve the forest produce from the use of common people. They had prohibited the cutting of forest for *jhuming*. The government also had prohibited the felling, cutting, girdling, marking, lopping, tapping of tree or any other forest produce. They also had prohibited quarrying of stone, the boiling of catechu or the burning of lime or charcoal etc. Cutting of grass, pasturing of cattle, hunting, shooting and fishing were also not allowed. If anyone interested to do so they had to pay tax to the government for collecting resources from forest. Local Government was completely responsible to collect tax, manage forest and looked after the forest. The Local Government could exempt any person, or class of persons, or any local people, from any of such rule, and could cancel such exemption.⁷⁵

4.3.2 Rewards of the Government for Catching the Trespassers of the Forest

The Chief Commissioner of Assam issued a circular, No. 50 dated the 25th September 1879. According to the circular, people had to submit an application to the Deputy Commissioner or Officer in charge of a subdivision before using anything from unreserved forests. People were not happy with the decision of the Chief Commissioner. Because people were wishing to cut trees from the distance they could reach. For the permission they had to walk long. At that situation they had two options, either paid the *mauzadar* and felled trees without any further permission or paid nothing and risked being found out. The contractor, *Mauzadar* etc. were taken advantage of that situation. The government paid reward to all the people who could catch them who cut any tree from the forest. The Government allowed all non-gazette

⁷⁵ Home, op.cit, pp.17,18.

Government Officer and those who were not government employee to work on that matter.⁷⁶

In case of catching the villager in time of collecting forest product he had to pay fine. Some amount of that fine gave to the person who helped in discovering and catching him.

⁷⁶ Mann, *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the Province of Assam for the year 1880-81*, op.cit, p.45.

Chapter-5

PEASANT INSECURITY AND THEIR RESPONSE

After coming of British in Assam they had changed all over system of Assam which were continued since years. They had started to collect revenue from each possible thing. For collection of revenue they had not leave the land which were used by common people, in which the king of Assam never interfered. Agriculture was the main source of Income of Assam. Most of people of Darrang district were agriculturist. So the British had collected maximum amount of revenue from the peasant. Apart from agriculture the peasants had used some land for pasture their cattle and for need they had used trees and other essential produce of small forests which were never considered as someone's private property or the property of King. But the Government started to collect revenue from all these at a high rate. For that situation the peasants of Darrang felt insecurity against the British Government. The land revenue pressure were so heavy that no peasant were able to pay their revenue. So that situation forced them to go against the British Government. This chapter will discuss about the reaction of common people to the Government against the high revenue.

5.1 PEASANTS REACTION AGAINST HIGH REVENUE

The peasants of Darrang district raised against the increase land revenue in 1868 for the first time. In 1868, the rate of revenue doubled in all round by the British Government. The people of Patharughat assembled against the enhancement of land revenue. In 1865-66, the amount of revenue collected by Government was 1,94,846 but in 1868-69 it suddenly increased to 3,57,768. A group of villagers assembled at Patharughat. Colonel Comber was the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang District at that time. When the villager assembled in the Patharughat, Colonal Comber, the Deputy Commissioner; Mr. Driberg, the sub-divisional officer and Mr. Weldon, the District Superintendent of Police were present there. The villagers forced to surrender the officers of British and said to have been shut in, in a banglow.¹ No extreme

¹ This bungalow can be the same bungalow, where the Patharughat Uprising happened in 1894.

measures were resorted to on either side. But the information is not available what happened further.²

5.1.1 THE PATHARUGHAT UPRISING, 1894

In the year 1893 the British Government had increased the revenue on the lands of Assam again. They had increased the revenue on the request of the Chief Commissioner of Assam at a high rate. They rated according to the class of village in which they fell. In first class of villages the existing rates were doubled, in second class of villages, rates were raised up to 50 percent and in third class villages, rates were raised up to 25 percent.³ The people of the villages were too poor that they could not bear any enhancement of assessment whatever. And there were no village in Darrang District that could bear an enhancement of 100, 50 or 25 percent whatever. Because simultaneously in one side the British Government increased the revenue on the lands of the Darrang District and on the other peasants were suffered from *kala-azar* (black fever) and cattle disease. So that high rate was a big pressure on the poor peasantry. The pressure of increased rate of land revenue on peasantry created a serious condition in all the villages of Assam. Peasantry could not tolerate this type of pressure so this land revenue pressure has caused so much movement in the places of Assam.

The movement first started in Rangia⁴(Kamrup District) and later on it has spread to various places like Lachima⁵ (then in Kamrup District but now in Barpeta District), and Patharughat (Mangaldoi Subdivision of Darrang District).

One tradition of the 19th century village was that the villagers assembled in *Mels* (meeting) publicly if any problem occurred. Particularly, when the land revenue increased on their lands each time they had assembled in *Mels*. In the *Mels*, they had

² Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Home-A, September 1894, Nos. 220-344, No- 320, Telegraph No- 760G., Gauhati, dated 27th March 1894.

³ Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, Telegraph No. 18 of 1894, Calcutta, dated 14th March 1894.

⁴ Home Public A. April 1894 No.110-31, Telegraph No.2.T, dated Camp. Rangia, 12 January 1894, No- 112-A.

⁵ Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, Telegraph No. 4-T, dated 22nd February 1894; H.K.Barpujari, *Political History of Assam, 1826-1919*, Government of Assam, Gauhati, 1977, pp. 98-99.

discussed about the problem and tried to take a decision to solve the problem. That situation had happened in 1894 in Darrang.

On 24th of January 1894, Ransom, the sub-divisional officer of Mangaldoi sub-division of Darrang District telegraphed to the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang and send the information that the *Mels* were assembled in the Sipajhar *tehsil*. And the *Mels* were attended by enormous number of peoples from many other *tehsils* of Darrang District, mainly from Mangaldoi and Kalaigaon *tehsils*. He also informed to the Deputy Commissioner that the people stopped to pay their revenue in the three *tehsils*, i.e Sipajhar *tehsil* (Hindughopa, in which Patharughat was situated), Mangaldoi and Kalaigaon *tehsil*.⁶

At that time, the head quarter of Darrang District was Tezpur. Anderson, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang left Tezpur on 26th of January after hearing about the situation that had been started in Patharughat, similar to Rangia and Lachima.⁷ He left with Berington, the District superintendent of Police in command of seventeen police, eight of whom were armed civil and nine thannah men. They were also accompanied with two head constables and one havildar and twelve sepoy. Some military police were also with them who at the request of the Deputy Commissioner, Berington called from the Balipara guard on 25th January 1894.⁸

They reached Patharughat in the evening on 27th January.⁹ In the morning of 28th January 1894 (Sunday), by the order of the Deputy Commissioner, Berington went to one village near the rest house, with a party of Military Police, armed civil Police and *tahsildar*. Their motive was to seize the property of villagers. Because the *tehsildar* had warned them several times but they did not pay their revenues.

At that time nearly 200 people assembled in a paddy field and they noticed about the presence of Berington in their village. After seizing of property of one

⁶Confidential, Telegraph No- 4233, Tezpur, dated 16th February 1894.

⁷ When the government increased the revenue on Assam first the peasant of Rangia upraised against the British Government. That movement had spread to Lachima and Patharughat which is the main area of present study. The Patharughat was in Darrang district. But other uprising were in the nearby districts of Darrang.

⁸Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, p. 20. Mr. Js. R. Berington, Official Commandant of Military Police, Statement. P.20.

⁹Ibid, p.20.

peasant, Berington marched back to the rest house and reported to the Deputy Commissioner that “he had distrained one man’s property, but he had been interrupted by a large crowd who refused to disperse and whom he had only been able to keep from coming to close quarters by firing his revolver into the ground”¹⁰

When Berington left the village, the villagers who came to know about the presence of Deputy Commissioner in Patharughat, informed other villagers. Then all villagers went together to meet him personally. Because they were waiting for him to request him to reduce the revenue on their land.

On 21st January Dutiram Bamun¹¹ wrote a letter to all villagers and asked them to go to Patharughat for a *raij-mel* (public meeting) on 23rd January¹². On that day, they went to the house of *Tahsildar* and requested him to reduce the rent on their lands. *Tahsildar* assured them in that regard as the Deputy Commissioner was coming on the next day and said to the people to meet him.¹³

At about 1 P.M. on 28th January after getting the information of the presence of Deputy Commissioner at Patharughat the villagers went to meet him. When they were about to reach the rest house the sentry reported to the Deputy Commissioner that a large number of villagers were coming down the Mangaldoi road towards the rest house. Before the mob reached the rest house, the Deputy Commissioner and Berington went out from the banglow with their armed force. After seeing the unarmed villagers, the Deputy Commissioner ordered Berington to allow them to go to the front of the rest house. The Deputy Commissioner gave an idea about the big mob assembled there, “They come up the road quietly enough, and filled the whole of the space between the river and the belt of the trees surrounding the rest house”¹⁴ According to the official document nearly about 2000 people assembled there,¹⁵ but

¹⁰Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, No-114, dated camp Patharughat, 30th January 1894, p.15.

¹¹ A Brahmin who may lead the *raijmels*.

¹²Translation of the notice, Home Public A. April 1894 No- 110-31, p.19; original notice available on File No- 5(19), Dept. Office General, 1894, Commissioner Office.

¹³Narottam, *Patharighatar Ran or Dali Puran*, Student Union of Bamunpara, Bhebarghat, Mangadoi, 1949, pp.13-14.

¹⁴Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, No-114, dated 30th January 1894, p.15.

¹⁵Ibid, p.15.

according to the local documents nearly five to six thousand people went to that place on that very day.¹⁶

Then the Deputy Commissioner met personally to the villagers in front of the rest house. He addressed them in Assamese. First he warned them not to organize any *Mel* further, and if any such *Mels* were held, they would be dispersed by force. After that he informed the order passed by the Government of India regarding the rates of revenue. The Chief Commissioner also realized that the rate of revenue was too high¹⁷ after submitting the proposal. So he requested the government to reduce the revenue. But the government came with the conclusion that they will reduce rate on only *faringati* land, 12, 10 and 9 *annas* respectively in 1st, 2nd and 3rd class villages.¹⁸ The peasants were not happy by the rates that reduced by the Government and they tried to force the Deputy Commissioner to reduce revenue on other lands. After seeing the situation the Deputy Commissioner ordered them to disperse the place immediately but they did not listen to him.

So, he ordered Berington to order the villagers to disperse the place immediately. Berington ordered his men to move forward the villagers from the open space in front of the rest house if required forcefully. After that gradually the villagers returned from that place to their villages with a motive of taking some arms which would help them to force the Deputy Commissioner to reduce the rate of revenue.

About after half an hour the villagers went to the rest house with the motive to force the Deputy Commissioner to reduce the revenue. This time they carried sticks, clods of earth, bamboo and some articles made of bamboos like *baoka* (banga or yoke).¹⁹ The Deputy Commissioner ordered Berington to order his men to fix bayonets and advance towards the double down the bamboo line road (a narrow road lined with bamboo clumps on both sides in front of the rest house). The villagers raised a hue and cry and were advancing towards the rest house. After seeing the

¹⁶Dineswar Sharma, *Mangaldoi*, Mangaldoi, 1934, p.51.

¹⁷ Home Public A. April 1894 No. 110-31, Telegraph No. 18 of 1894, dated Calcutta, 14th March 1894.

¹⁸Home Dept. Public April 1894 No. 110-31, Telegraph No-67-Police/723-J, dated 12th Feb, 1894.

¹⁹It is a bamboo stick which was used to carry on shoulder by a man, where things were one in front and another in behind. They used it in market purpose as well as for cultivation. Now onwards villagers use it in cultivation.

armed mob Berington fired a shot over the heads of the crowd.²⁰ Then the angry mob started to throw sticks, bamboos and clods of earth to them.²¹

Then Berington ordered his men to fire on the crowd. According to the account of Berington and the Deputy Commissioner twelve men died on the spot at that incident and several other wounded. No one had died from their side.²²

According to the local source, 140 people died and about 150 injured on that incident.²³ The names of some of them are available²⁴ which preserved by the local people of Pathrughat at that place where the incident occurred on that day. But the names of the all 140 men are not available. As the people were illiterate no written documents are available regarding that incident.

Regarding the increased land revenue G. Godfrey, the Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts wrote in 1893,

The land revenue demand has nearly doubled compared with that in 1873-74. The progressive increase has been steady. In the five years ending 1879-80, the land revenue demand increased was only 5.55 percent. In the five years ending 1889-90 the improvement was 9.57 percent. The improvement in the three years ending 1892-93 was 4.56 percent. In the year under report there has been an increase of 33.36 percent, which is of course mainly due to the reassessment....²⁵

For the greatest decrease of areas of lands in the 1895-96 the Sub-divisional Officer said, "In the case of the Patharughat and Mangaldoi *tahsils*, decrease is no doubt due to resignation owing to kala-azar".²⁶ From the quotation of Ransom, the Sub-

²⁰Assam Exclusive Form No. 27(a), Telegram No-80 Police – 987 J, dated Shillong, 15th February 1894.

²¹Home, Public A. April 1894 No.110-31, dated camp Patharughat, the 30th January 1894, p.16.

²²Assam Secretariat, Home-A, September 1894, Nos.220-344, No 246, Telegram dated Mangaldoi, 28th January 1894.

²³Martyr's Memorial Patharughat.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year1893-94*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1894, p.18

²⁶*Land Revenue Administration Report for the year1895-96*, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1896, p.12

Divisional officer of Mangaldoi sub-division of Darrang and G. Godfrey, the Commissioner of Assam, it is clear that the condition of the poor villagers was worse at that time which forced them to go against the Government.

After that serious uprising no more serious uprising occurred in the Darrang District till the Gandhian Movement starts in India. People had the Patharughat uprising in their memories, therefore, they did not like to lead any other violent movement against British rule. They realized how powerful the State was. When the non-violent Gandhian movement started, the people of Darrang District, who were unhappy with the British rule, joined in it.

5.2 A GLIMPSE OF GANDHIAN MOVEMENT IN DARRANG DISTRICT OF ASSAM

The Gandhian Movement effected the Darrang District very much, as a result of which, movement had continued in Darrang many ways. The people of Darrang responded to the call of Gandhiji and to the freedom struggles that had launched time to time since 1921 onwards with great enthusiasm and sacrifices. In both Mangaldoi and Tezpur subdivision, District Congress Committee led the Gandhian Movement in Darrang District.

The people of Darrang District organized *Rayat Sabha* a few years before the establishment of Indian National Congress. The pioneers of *Rayat Sabha* were Joydev Sharma, Lakshmi Kanta Barkataki, Bhabani Bhattacharya, and Kalikrishna Barkataky etc. The Tezpur Rayat Sabha sent its delegates to the Indian National Congress in 1885. Omeo Kumar Das and Hem Baruah were the guiding spirit of congress men of Darrang District, especially in Tezpur Sub-division.²⁷

The Assistant Secretary of Tezpur sub-division of District congress committee, Darrang had described the activities of the Congress Committee and common people as, “in 1921 after the visit of Mahatma Gandhi at Tezpur British goods boycott movement started at and in many other places of Tezpur Subdivision. Burning of British Textile goods was publicly made. Simultaneously No-tax campaign and boycott of Liquor shop and prohibition of opium movement were

²⁷ Local Uprising, PHA Record, File No. 192, 1857, pp. 29,30.

carried out by congress workers. In 1930, District Congress held a public meeting in defiance of prohibitory orders in the support of breaking Salt Act and took out a procession which was broken by police *Lathi* Charge. In 1940, individual Satyagraha was launched at the call of Mahatma Gandhi resulting arrests of Several Congress leaders.”²⁸

5.2.1 Gandhian Movement in Tezpur Sub-division

In 1942 Tezpur District Congress Committee started to lead mass movement in Tezpur Subdivision. They led the movement by holding meetings, taking out processions and unfurling the Congress flag in police station and government buildings. On 20th September 1942 rural Nationalist under Congress made extensive damage of Government properties. Same day a peaceful procession was made by congress. In the procession they went to Gahpur Police station to hoist national flag. The procession was led by a 17 years old girl Kanaklata Baruah of Barangabari Village. When they tried to hoist national flag in police station the armed police started firing which resulted immediate death of Kanaklata Baruah and Mukunda Kakaty.²⁹

At about 2 PM, 20 September 1942, about four thousand people from Kalabari side and about 3 thousand from Barangabari side went to Gahpur Police Station. Both the processions met near the Gahpur Police Station. The Procession from the west tried to enter the Police Station by the western gate and the procession from east tried to enter by the eastern gate. But the eastern gate was closed. The women who were in the front from the both procession met in the western gate and led the mob. Kanaklata Baruah had the National Flag in her hand. For more than a half an hour they requested the o/c to let them go in to hoist the national flag peacefully. But the o/c did not let them to do so. Then Kanaklata said, “At least you allow us the womenfolk to go in. We will not create any trouble. We will simply hoist the flag and come out.”³⁰ After that the o/c said, “If you advance one step more, we will fire.”³¹ But the thread could not change the mind of the processionists. They went forward. Suddenly one

²⁸ Ibid, p.32.

²⁹ Ibid, pp.32-33.

³⁰ Report, The Atrocities Committed in 1942, Forwarded, PHA Record, File No. 76/14, 1942, p.67.

³¹ Ibid, p.67

gun fired without any warning. After a minute they fired another shot.³² The guns were aimed right at the upper part of the body. The first shot hit Kanaklata Baruah. The persons who lost their life were: Kanaklata Baruah. She was a young girl about 16 to 17 years old. Another one was Mukundaram Kakati. He was 35 years old³³. And the persons who received the serious bullet wounds were: Hem Baruah, Bagai Kachari, Khargeswar Barua, Thuleswar Rajkhowa and Bholanath Bharali Barua.³⁴

R.M. Shome, Official in Charge (o/c) of Gahpur wrote that about 5000 congress people went by the east and the western gates of Gahpur Thana at 2 PM on 20 September 1942. He with 6 armed and 4 unarmed constable police met them. They ordered not to come such way and ordered to leave the place. The mob shouted their slogans in front of the police station. According to R.M.Shome some of the people were armed with bamboo *lathis* (stick) who forced him and his companion, Constable no 183 Ram Tapeswar Ojha, 154 Sahab Uddin Ahmed, 262 Bagaram Kachari and 94 Golock Singh Manipuri. They tried to snatch away the loaded rifle from the hand of constable 262 Bagaram Kachari and accidentally fired itself in the crowd. After the accidental shot he again fired a shot in air to the mob. Two people martyred on that incident, one was Mukunda Kakati and the other one was Kanaklata Baruah. The Government placed the incident of shooting as an accidental one for which Congress people demanded an enquiry on that incident but the government refused it.³⁵

In 10th August 1943 one news published in the newspaper Hindustan Standard where the incident had been criticized. It was started as “The judgment in what is known as Gahpur Firing Case delivered by the Special Magistrate of Tezpur deserve more than a passing notice... if we are not mistaken, enquiry into them was refused in all instances”. The Premier of Assam refused to have an enquiry into that case when it was demanded on the floor of the Assembly.³⁶

Same day one more tragic incident had happened in the same subdivision. Police fired upon Satyagrahi at Dhekiajuli in front of the Dhekiajuli Police Station. At

³² Abstract of Intelligence, Assam Police 1942 & 1943, PHA Record, File No. 19, 1942, p.12.

³³ Hindustan Standard, August 10th 1943, PHA Record, File No. 315, 1943.

³⁴ Report, The Atrocities Committed in 1942, Forwarded, PHA Record, File No. 76/14, 1942, pp.66-68.

³⁵ Gahpur Ryoting Case, PHA Record, File No.315, 1943.

³⁶ Ibid.

about 1:45 P.M, about 2000 villagers assembled in the police station of Dhekiajuli. Pusalata Das³⁷ (a congress women) led the mob who asked the mob to capture arms and ammunition at first and to hoist the congress flag at police station. As a result an order to open fire was given.³⁸ Eleven persons had martyred there at that incident. The martyars of Dhekiajuli firing were, 12 years old Tileswari, Numali Devi, Khahuli Devi, Maniram Kachari, Ratan Kachari, Mohiram Koch, Dayal Pahika, Sarunath Chutiya, Mangal Chandra Kachari, Lerela Kachari, Manbar Nath.³⁹

5.2.2 Gandhian Movement in Mangaldoi Sub-division

After the tragic incident of Patharughat Uprising in 1894 no such incident had happened in the Mangaldoi Subdivision in the British Period. But the people of Mangaldoi did not remain in their homes but responded at any time to any movement under the guidance of the Mangaldoi District Congress Committee. They had co-operated in all the mass movements, joined in the ban of the use of foreign goods, use of khadi, untouchability movement, etc. They were well organized and joined in the movement peacefully through the non- violent means under their leaders.

Sri Jio Ram Deka, the Director of Mangaldoi District Congress Committee wrote a public notice on 1 January 1943, in which he requested the common people not to pay market tax to the government. He wrote the notice in Assamese language. The English translation of the notice is as follows:

Mangaldoi Congress Committee decided to stop to pay all tax of market from 1 January or 16 Puh. Therefore, one special request to you all from Mangaldoi Congress Committee, please be together and do not pay any tax related to Market from the date mentioned above. We will win. Do not fear. Do not waste time by thinking. Stop to pay from the date. Some people from the government will come to manipulate you “Market does not belong to government. They belong to local board. Board spent that money in making road, pond etc. So if you all stop to pay tax, common people will have to face problem” etc. Do not

³⁷ Mrs. Pusalata Das, M.A., was a District congress Committee member, who was the president of District congress meeting which was held on 12th September at Borgaon of Tezpur.

³⁸ Abstract of Intelligence, Assam Police 1942 & 1943, PHA Record, File No 19, 1942, p.12.

³⁹ Local Uprising, PHA Record, File No. 192, 1857, p.33.

go to this. All are fake. If any police or any government officer force you to do so you all have to be together and change your place of market. Win or Die. Bande Mataram.⁴⁰

Director of District Congress Committee of Mangaldoi asked people to Celebrate Gandhi Divas on 23th February 1943. In 14th Feb 1943 he wrote the notice. In his notice he wrote that Gandhi started his 21 days fasting in 10 February and started to pray to God to give justice. By the notice he also asked all to boycott all government sources, asked students to boycott school, colleges, and all officer to boycott their government office etc. He also asked all to join in Hartal, rally to force government to leave Gandhi from jail.⁴¹

The District Congress Committee translated the guidelines of Nikhil Bharat Congress Committee about hartals, meetings, mass movement and students' duty etc. Further, for the people of Darrang District, the District Congress Committee, Mangaldoi had added some instructions. District Congress Committee asked people to do meetings, rally daily in their villages apart from their fixed date of District Congress Committee. People were asked to spread the guidelines of Congress and to do rally with flag and national anthem with the slogan "British go back", "win or die" and "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Joy" etc. They were asked to establish an independent Panchayat in each village. They were asked to stop to pay any tax to the Government including land, vehicles and market tax. If any Government officer or *tahsildar* or *mauzadar* went to any village to seize the lands of villager, all villagers were asked go to their house and burn his property. Those who went to seize the property of villager had to lose their property. Even the villager who pay tax to the Government had to be punishable. The common people were asked not to give anything to the police, and if someone do so, he also had to accept punishment from the villagers. They also asked to stop export any edible things from Mangaldoi.

They were asked to use government land as much as they can use and asked to use trees, woods and other produce from forest which they had been using since long and had to give up for forest regulations. They were also asked not to take any pass

⁴⁰Jaruri Janani, Notice available in Assamese language, Case Record, Mangaldoi, P.H.A Record, File No.169, 1943.

⁴¹Gandhi Divas, Ibid.

from government to enter in the village forests. And lastly, they were asked to create problem where they met any people of government and give any punishment to them and were asked to submit their names to the District Congress Committee.⁴²

The rules of District Congress Committee obeyed by the common people very well. The available evidence shows that as per the guidelines given by the Congress Committee some of the villagers made their own Panchayat at Majgaon. In this Panchayat, Manjut Kasari was placed as secretary of Panchayat, and the members were Syamabari *Mauza*, Rati Ram Kachari, Mada Ram Kachari, Deu Ram Kachari, Ganda Ram Kachari, Aandha Ram Kachari, Malo Ram Kachari, Bhelta Kachari, Buddhi Ram Kachari.⁴³In the Panchayat, people were asked not to sell rice to Police or anyone who belonged to the Government. The Panchayat headmen wrote one notice in Assamese language, which shows how the common people can catch the situation in a beautiful way. The notice was:

Dear all, we all know why we are facing problem now. But our member of Congress Committee had said to create Syamabari *Mauza* and asked not to sell rice and obey what the congress says, we will definitely win. The females should join in weaving and males should join in agriculture. The police who oppress our women and children have to eat from the rice available in Mangaldoi only. They cannot carry from outside in this situation. So if they don't get rice from us they will not be able to eat anything. Till then we have rice with us we can survive without salt and mustard oil. So I request you all not to sell rice to anyone. If any beggar come to your place take him to Panchayat. If anyone go out of Panchayat, he had to stay out of Panchayat forever. If we can obey all this we will definitely win. Syamabari *Mauza* Gathan, Majgaon Panchayat.⁴⁴

Sri Maniram Christian Mahajan wrote one letter to the Inspector of Udan Gua Thana with a complaint against Hajira Champaram Baruah for spreading the news that the British had been defeated and it was not necessary any further to pay taxes to

⁴²*Mangaldoi Raijaloi Bisekh Janoni*, Ibid.

⁴³*Majgaon Panchayat Gathan*,Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

British Government or to take out forest permits. According to Mahajan he said that he will get independence, Japan will come and help them. He wanted to say the six flights that flied there yesterday as Japanese Flight. So he took him to Thana.⁴⁵ This was the first case in which villagers like Sentela Christian, gaonburha Tula Bikram Chetri etc. helped in arrested congress volunteer while making propaganda in Darrang District in 1942. Under the judgment on the section 38 (a) (5) of the Defense of Indian Rules Champaram Baruah was fined and sentenced to undergo 18 months.⁴⁶

Some Congress volunteer who were arrested for spreading anti British Propaganda and distributing leaflets regarding Gandhi Divas were Dhireswar Bardalai, Gajendra Sarma, Cheni Ram Baruah, Ghanakanta Baruah, Kanthiram Saharia, Dati Kosh etc.⁴⁷

In 1920 Topeswar Sharma a lawyer of Mangaldoi joined Congress Session. After listening the lecture of Mahatma Gandhi regarding non-cooperation movement he joined congress to start the movement successfully in Mangaldoi Subdivision. Shri Loknath Goswami cooperated him.⁴⁸ Dineswar Sharma, Sasi Dhar Sharma, Prafulla Chandra Baruah Abdul Khalek, Fijmur Ali, Bhabendra Chandra Das were some important personality of the movement. Ratneswar Sharma, Loknath Mahajan, Tankeswar Sharma were some student who resigned government School to join in the movement.⁴⁹ A few more also resigned their government service and joined in the congress. After that students boycotted their school and even they had established one national school where spinning was introduced. Picketing was started in Ganja, Liquor and opium shop. All men, women, girls and boys were joined that movement. The leaders who were arrested in that movement were Topeswar Sharma, Kumud Ram Borah, Fozlur Rahman, Abdul Khalek, Shri Lashidhar Sarma, Dineswar Sharma. Their trial started on 6th December 1921 and after trial they were imprisoned for one year. They were sent to Mangaldoi Jail.

⁴⁵Letters to the Inspector of Udan Gua Police Station, Case Record, Mangaldoi, P.H.A Record, File No.169, 1943; Form for Recording Deposition, Assam Schedule VIII, Form No.93, High Court Criminal Form No. (M) 83, Case Record, Mangaldoi, P.H.A Record, File No.169, 1943.

⁴⁶Judgment, Case Record, Mangaldoi, P.H.A Record, File No.169, 1943.

⁴⁷ Form for Recording Deposition, Assam Schedule VIII, Form No.93, High Court Criminal Form No. (M) 83, Case Record, Mangaldoi, P.H.A Record, File No.169, 1943

⁴⁸ Personal statement of Shri Topeswar Sharma Mnagaldoi, PHA Record, File No. 27, 1914.

⁴⁹ Personal Statement of Shri Dineswar Sharma, PHA Record, File No. 27, 1914.

Afterwards many workers also had to go to the jail. Punitive tax was imposed on the people of that subdivision. The people of Sipajhar and Patharughat areas did not pay punitive tax intentionally. So, the police took away various properties as utensils, cloths, pigeons etc. from the villages. The granaries were damaged with the help of elephants. But in spite of all those harassment people remained quite as Gandhiji said to be non-violent.⁵⁰

In 1930, when Gandhiji started Civil-disobedient movement. Dineswar Sharma and Tapeswar Sharma led the movement in Mangaldoi. This time all people did not help them. First 3 to 4 months they could not bring up people to fight against British, but Thaneswar Nath organized one meeting where nearly 2000 people assembled and after that all came to help Congress people in the movement again. But police arrested them so the movement could not be long lasting. 12 people were arrested along with Tapeswar Sharma, Bishnu Ram Medhi, Brajendra Narayan Chaudhuri. After Gandhi-Irwin Treaty they were released from jail. But again in 1932 Non-cooperation Movement had started which was led by Dineswar Sharma, Mani Ram Deka, Tapeswar Sharma, Khiteswar Nath etc. and nearly 25 people were arrested that time. There were two women Ratna Mala Devi and Tapeswari Devi who were arrested in 1932 civil-disobedient movement in Mangaldoi.⁵¹

In 1940 individual Satyagraha had started. Nearly 30 people arrested. Bipin Medhi from the first list and Tankeswar Sharma from the second list were arrested first. After that president of District Congress Committee Krishna Kanta Mahanta and Tapeswar Sharma were arrested. The leaders who were arrested in 1940 came out from jail in 1942 and they again led in mass movement of 1942. That time the congress divided into two parts. In one side Tankeswar Sharma, Pani Ram Das, Jio Ram Das were busy in promoting the words of Congress. Tapeswar Sharma and others led the mass movement.⁵² Bipin Chandra Medhi led the individual Satyagrahi in Mangaldoi in 1942. He was the first satyagrahi who arrested first in Darrang District. He was imprisoned for 9 months and fined 100 rupees.⁵³ One was Loknath

⁵⁰ Personal statement of Shri Topeswar Sharma Mnagaldoi, PHA Record, File No. 27, 1914.

⁵¹ *Mangaldoi Swadhinata Andolanr Abhigyata*, PHA Record, File No.27, 1914, pp. 11-17.

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 72-73.

⁵³ Personal Statement Bipin Chandra Medhi, PHA Record, File No.27, 1914.

Goshwami who led in quit India Movement in Mangaldoi.⁵⁴ Nearly 100 people were arrested in the mass movement of 1942.

Till the British left India the movement had continued in Darrang District. The common people also looted back to the government officials. But the common people did not harassed the police as they had done. The common people looted some articles which may create some problem to the police. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam that of Mangaldoi wrote to that, “With regard to seizures in Maangaldoi subdivision, the Sub-Divisional Officer writes “I Beg to inform you that from police Malkhana register it appears that no moveable or immoveable properties of any value except some personal properties, such as fountain pen, Rug, etc. were seized in this sub-divisional. The above personal properties of persons to return the properties to them on their release from jail. Some leaflets, proceedings of meetings, etc., were seized being incriminating and prejudicial articles and confiscated and some of them were destroyed and others filed with the case record.”⁵⁵

From the time when the British government had come to Assam till they left Assam or India, the people of Darrang District faced problem on the security of their property. They had to face many uncertainty for their property and life and had to live a worst life than common people lived ever in this region.

⁵⁴ Mor Sowaran, PHA Record, File No-27, 1914.

⁵⁵ Assam Secretariat, Confidential, File No. C. 48/46, 1946, Telegram No. 5481 R, dated Tezpur, 22nd August 1946.

CONCLUSION

The people of Assam lived based on their income on cultivation. Darrang District is one of them. In Assam many districts were under the permanent settlement. But apart from them there were some districts, where peasants owned their land and on which there were no middleman between the Government and the peasant. Among them one was Darrang District which is the main area of the study.

In Darrang District, peasants owned their land. But their ownership was not the ultimate ownership. They had to give up their land if they could not pay the revenue to the government. The Government increased the revenue on land time to time. Each time they had increased the revenue at a higher rate which was a big pressure to the poor peasantry. At that high rate peasants were bound to pay their revenue. As it is already mentioned peasants had the property right on their land if they could pay their revenue to the Government. For the high land revenue pressure many peasants had to give up their land. By that they had lost their ownership rights on that land. There were no middle man in Darrang District. It means there were no *zamindar*. But *mauzadar* who was the head of a *mauza*, *tahsildar*, who was the head of a *tehsil*, *mandal* were there. They collected revenue in the Darrang district. In case of not able to pay the revenue to the government, *mauzadar*, and *tahsildar* seized the property of peasants.

There were two types of land i.e. Annual and periodical on which peasants had to pay the full amount of revenue. There were one another types of land. That was *nisf-khiraj* land. On which peasants had to pay half of the full revenue to the government. To bring the uncultivable land to cultivable land *nisf-khiraj* land were continued. *Nisf-khiraj* lands were divided into two types. One was settled for 10 years and another was settled for 20 years. The privilege of getting *nisf-khiraj* land for 20 years enjoyed by the family of Darrang raja. Others received the land for 10 years. After ending of the settlement, the land was added to the annual or periodical settlement. The Government preferred annual settlement. All lands were again divided into 3 more classes, *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati* land. In 1893 the chief commissioner again divided the lands in to 3 more class of land based on the fertility of land in Darrang District.

In case of not able to pay the revenue peasants gave up the land to the government. No matter they could or could not cultivate, peasants had to pay the revenue on time. In Darrang district peasants had been facing two problems since long. One was kala-azar i.e. black fever and cattle disease. So, they could not get the normal amount of produce from their cultivation many times. But the government increased the revenue at a high rate. The rates were like in 1865-66, the amount of revenue collected by Government was 1,94,846 but in 1868-69 it suddenly increased to 3,57,768. In 1879-80, the land revenue demand increased was 5.55 percent. In 1889-90 the increase was 9.57 percent. The 1892-93 the increase was 4.56 percent. In the year 1893 the British Government had increased the revenue again in the name of resettlement at a high rate. In the year 1893-94 there has been an increase of 33.36 percent. Which was a big pressure on peasantry.

The Government had also focused on Forest land. Before coming of the British, forest lands were cleared by the villager and they cultivated there. That was known as *jhum* cultivation. But after coming of British the system replaced to plantation. The government did not like *jhum* cultivation. First they had started to reserve all the forest from which they got a handsome amount of revenue. They had focused on that forest from which they got the produce which they need to run their works. For example, Bhomoraguri hill was a small hill which was reserved by the British Government. They reserved the hill because it was located near Brahmaputra River and the Government steamer at Tezpur. The trees were used in the Steamer. Garumari Forest reserved because of Sal Tree. Because Sal tree was very rare in the Darrang District. Charduar Forest was reserved for Rubber. In Charduar Forest natural rubber was available. First the British tapped the rubber with the help of local people. When the local people came to know about its important they also started to tap secretly. And the Government also feel the need of more rubber from that particular area. So they started artificial rubber plantation in Charduar forest.

Apart from that Government banned the use of forest produce by the common people. The Government not only banned the use of forest produce in reserved forest but also in unreserved and village forest. In reserved forest only those who got the privilege to use the product of forest allowed to use certain produce from forest. But if they use any other product more than they got by the privilege they were fined and jailed. Those who got the privilege from the Government were bound to assist the

Forest officials any time. Even they were bound to tell if someone used forest produce secretly.

In the unreserved and village forest to use the forest produce the common people had to apply to the Deputy Commissioner and Sub-divisional officer. In time of apply for the pass they even had to pay the revenue for that product which they want to use. If deputy commissioner or sub-divisional officer accept them to use the produce they also accepted their revenue and allowed to use the produce. Also *mauzadar* played a very important role there. He was responsible to check their activities in the forest. If they had done anything wrong they were fined and jailed.

In the forest and in some land near river grazing lands were there which a common land was for anyone. Before coming of British no one owned that land. But British interfered on that grazing land also. Grazier pastured their cattle on that land. They started to collect revenue from each cattle that the grazier had. For each types of cattle they had charged different revenue.

The Government had done their best to reduce that land and use them in other work from which they can collect some more revenue. The land which were not suitable for any other work like cultivation and plantation were only allowed to keep as the grazing land. All the land were reserved by the government. Darrang was the District from which the government had collect the maximum revenue from grazing. They had collected the maximum revenue from the grazier. And if any grazier did not obey their rules he was fined and jailed.

The peasants of Darrang District suffered a lot due to the heavy land revenue on their lands. Their main source of income was only lands and the British increased the revenue on their lands so heavily that they could not pay the revenue. Even they had to give up to use any forest produce because government started to charge a heavy revenue on that produce also.

In 1868 the people of Darrang district gathered in one place near a government rest house at Patharughat, after increase the revenue at a high rate. One incident had happened that day. The common people forced the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, the sub-divisional officer and District Superintendent of Police to have been shut in, in a banglow. But further information is not available.

After that in 1993 the chief Commissioner of Assam ordered to increase the revenue at a high rate. The rates were like 100 percent in first class land, 50 percent in second class land and 25 percent in the third class of land. That was a big pressure on peasantry. That high pressure led a serious uprising at Patharughat, A place of Mangaldoi sub-division of Darrang District. At that serious uprising the common people requested the Deputy Commissioner to reduce the revenue. The deputy commissioner refused their request. At last, they want to force the Deputy Commissioner to reduce the revenue which resulted a loss of several life on 28th January, 1894.

After that serious uprising no more serious peasants uprising occurred in the Darrang District till the Gandhian Movement starts in India. At the Patharughat Uprising many people lost their life. At that time there were no any strong leader. For which after that serious uprising people started to pay the revenue on that high rate or relinquish the land if there were no way to pay the revenue.

But when the Gandhian Movement started in India, district congress committee was set up in each sub-division of Darrang District. The member of district congress committee led the movement in Darrang where the common people joined in the hartal, meeting, rally etc. By joining the mass movement they tried to run away the Government for whom they had faced trouble since long and who made their condition bed to worse.

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