

1857

IN NORTH EAST

A RECONSTRUCTION FROM  
FOLK AND ORAL SOURCES

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SUBIR KAR

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## A RECONSTRUCTION FROM FOLK AND ORAL SOURCES



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## Preface

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The hundred and fifty years of 1857 is calling at the door. The slogan 'to us belong our Hindustan, to none else' is still reverberating I feel it is the right time to 'Hail and Salute' the Martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the noble cause of the country and share with the readers, the sagas of our ancestors, who might not have taken arms in their hands but heartily believed that the uprising was for the freedom and the failure was the great tragedy of the nation. Like other parts of the Country like Brij area of Meerut, Bhojpur of Bihar, Oudh, Jhansi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi etc., the common people of the North-East Region who mainly belonged to the fishermen community and peasantry, composed innumerable songs and ballads on the historical incidents of the great Mutiny 1857. Till today these are recited in groups and individually sung by the bards in mass gatherings. Besides these folk songs and the ballads on the great Rebellion, the mass also sing the songs composed on the Revolt of Nawab Radharam, Maniram Dewan, Bir Sambhudhan who sacrificed their lives in the struggles against the British Regime. The people of the tea garden areas of Assam, till today, sing the popular songs of the heroic tales on Kunwar Singh, the great father of Bhojpur.

The most popular ballad '*Jangiyar geet*',— the songs of the warriors, constitute a very valuable source material in formulating appropriate history of our glorious past. The

revolt of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry Regiment at Chittagong, on November 18, 1857, as a sequel to the great Sepoy Mutiny, and its follow up actions and reactions that occurred throughout the entire region from Chittagong, Sylhet ( now in Bangladesh), and the areas of the present district of Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar, Assam, has been narrated in detail in the folk ballad. This was recorded at the period of field survey in the month of December, 1979, from the mouth of an octogenarian village bard Haji Md. Asfar Ali, son of late Motor Ali Shah of the village Inat Pur, three kilometers away from Karimganj town and hardly five kilometers from Latu Bazar, where a fierce fight took place between the Mutineers and the Sylhet Light Infantry on December 19, 1857.

This ballad is a complete episode with a regular sequence of events beginning with a convincing cause which stirred the sentiment of the common people to rise and stand united against the oppressions and cruelty of the British regime.

All these events recall the glorious history of the brave people who sacrificed their lives for their motherland during the period of 'the War of freedom 1857'.

I felt attracted to this folk-ballad and the tales and songs for many reasons. Firstly, a few stray songs sung by passersby on the street and river sides enchanted my mind from my early boyhood. Secondly, the pitched battle that took place at Latu between the mutineers of 1857 and Sylhet Light Infantry, and the route the fugitives followed in all these areas are closely associated with me as I personally belong to this region. And the common people commemorate the incidents and orally transmit it to the next generation which they have acquired from their ancestors. Later, I started collecting historical data and documents which threw light on the mutiny

timately it was realized that these folk songs and the ballads are the part of our rich national heritage. The emotion and the aspiration of the people, the heroic spirit coupled with a feeling of patriotism and religious and social solidarity and the heroic march of the rebellious group in order to wipe out the foreign authority from the country are indeed the prime theme of this folk-ballad the '*Jangiyar Geet*' as it is popularly known in the region of Surma ( now in Bangladesh) and Barak Valley in Assam. Sri Jayanta Bhushan Bhattacharjee Professor and the former Vice-Chancellor of Assam University, Silchar, mentioned excerpts of such three songs, which were collected from the mouth of one Janmejy Barman, a scion of the Royal clan, that contain contents bearing on the Sepoy Mutiny.

There in the village Mohanpur of Hailakandi district, the rural people, specially an octogenarian muslim professional folk -bard sings the episode of the '*Jangir Larai*', 'the War of the Rebellious', the prime theme and the object of which is also the Mutiny 1857. In the hills and valleys of Bhuban, Jalenga, Binna Kandi, Sares Pur, the people till today sing stray songs and commemorate the incidents which occurred during the period of struggle between the fugitive mutineers and the British soldiers.

The characters and personalities narrated in the ballad and the local geographical account available in the verses are real one. The picture of the agricultural land, the marshy swamps valley, impenetrable hills and jungles, rivers, purity of love and affections, role of the common people, the role of the cruel autocratic and arbitrary nature of the men in power and prestige, — all have been portrayed in an authentic realistic value in this narrative. The Geet emphasizes more on the attitude towards the confrontation and suffer-

ings of the life that emerged from a serious socio-religious and political problems of Indian National history.

All these songs and tales definitely provide us with the fact that the people of the region observed closely the activities of the mutineers and heartily shared the cause for which the warriors dedicated their lives.

Other than these in the Valley of Brahmaputra the people still remember the sacrifice of Dewan Maniram who was hanged in the mutiny period 1857, and sing the popular folk songs on these incidents composed by the unknown village bards.

There are also many such folk- songs composed on the historical events of confrontation and struggles with the independent king of Jayantia and the British before and after Mutiny of 1857. The revolt of Sambhudhan of North Cachar in 1881-1882 is also commemorated by the tribes of the region in folk songs saluting the incidents.

The preservation of these songs and ballads in the folk-minds through ages determined the fact that, the sentiments and the imaginative vision of heroism were aroused by the events of the bygone days, a living experience of the people passed into the pages of history, and the living memory of the people came down through their folk-traditions.

The unwritten literature, composed in the form of local Bengali dialectical character, handed down through oral traditions has been reproduced in narrative form in the relevant chapter of the book.

I am indebted to Professor Sajal Nag and Dr Suryasikha Pathak, department of History, Assam University, for their persuasion and encouragement.

I am also indebted to Sanjib Deb Laskar who voluntarily came forward to translate the folk songs of the ballad from its original Bengali dialectical form into English. My affectionate niece Debasree and my Research scholar Sri Ramakanta Das, Lecturer, Radhamadhab College, Silchar, who helped me in computer works time to time deserve my heartfelt thanks.

At last I recall my sweet memories of those days when my life-partner Mrs Rita Kar who with her joyful heart shared all troubles in copying the entire episode recorded in the cassettes, in written form overcoming all her serious illness and rendered relentless services towards the completion of my Ph.D. works. In this moment her loss is felt ever more deeply.

—Subik Kar

## “QAUMI TARANA”

### **The Flag Song 1857**

“To us belongs our Hindustan  
and to none else  
Our sacred motherland  
dearer than Heaven  
The world is aglow  
with the light of her soul.

How old, how new  
and unique of its kind  
To us belongs our Hindustan  
and to none else.

Ganga and Jamuna making  
our lands fertile  
And overhead the snow-clad mountain  
Our sentry towering  
Beating against the coasts below  
the trumpets of the seas.

And gold and diamonds from our mines  
Over flow.

Our pomp and splendour evoking the  
envy of the world..

And then came the Firangi  
and such magic spell he cast.

Pillaging and plundering our motherland

He ruled.

The martyrs call you, O countrymen  
do you hear?

Smash up the chains of slavery  
and pour out fire

Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs –  
all of us brothers.

Hail and salute it,  
Here is our flag of freedom!

*[It was first published in the contemporary, Payami Azadi, whose original is reported to be in the British Museum. This song is quoted from P.C. Joshi's book '1857 IN FOLK SONGS'.]*

# 1

## Mutiny Period in North East: An Overview

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All the renowned historians, who have written and reviewed the history of the Sepoy Mutiny, 1857, have not given detailed account of the outbreak of Dacca and Chittagong uprisings and its impact on the North East Region of the country specially Surma-Barak Valley. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar writes, "Bengal was practically unaffected by the Mutiny with the exception of two sporadic outbursts at Dacca Chittagong. On November 18, the 34<sup>th</sup> N.I. at Chittagong mutinied and followed usual procedure. They found no sympathy among the people and, being defeated by the loyal Native Regiment, marched northwards through Sylhet and Cachar. Being defeated they turned towards the east and were joined by some discontented chiefs of Manipur living in Cachar. But they could not enter Manipur whose ruler, at the request of the British, sent his troops and captured a number of them. They were handed over to the British and the rest betook themselves to the neighbouring hills and jungles."<sup>1</sup>

E.A. Gait stated, "The great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 left Assam almost untouched. The situation was at times by no means free from danger; and the comparative immunity which this part of India enjoyed was due very largely to the

watchfulness and recourse displayed by the civil and military officers on the spot. Shortly before the first outbreak Mr. Allen of the Board of Revenue, had been deputed to visit the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Fredrick Halliday took advantage of his presence at Cherrapunji, then the capital of that district, to place him temporarily in charge of the Eastern Frontier, including Sylhet and Cachar. Exaggerated stories of the fall of the British power caused some excitement amongst the Khasi chiefs, and the ex-Raja of Jaintia began to intrigue with some of them with a view to the recovery of his lost possession. Mr. Allen thought that to cause his arrest would invest the matter with undue importance. He therefore contented himself with ordering him to reside in Sylhet town, where he would be under the eye of the British authorities".<sup>2</sup> Gait's statement that the mutiny 'left Assam untouched' is simply a recorded official version of the British historian.

R.C. Mazumdar's statement regarding the revolt of 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry Regiment that it was a 'sporadic' outburst, and the view of the historians that 'they found no sympathy among the people', all these opinions are the reproduction of the contemporary accounts of the British officials and the historians. In fact the colonial aggression of the East India Company, their land-hungry character and unbounded greed and business motive all these attitudes made the people both of the plains and hills hostile towards the foreign intruders. Behind the policy of annexation of the tribal areas of North East, how far the commercial motive of the British was effective that can easily be assessed from the following report; "There is much reason to believe that the country is rich in many natural products. Its cotton trade has always been considerable, and the Lieutenant Governor hopes that instead of our having to burn large quantities of cotton in punish-

ment of outrage, as was unhappily necessary in a few instances, we may find here a new source of supply to Manchester. The Deputy Commissioner is now doing what he can, by the introduction of improved seed and by encouraging trade, to develop this cultivation. The timber of the hills is also expected to prove valuable, and, ... Government may expect a fair return from judicious forest operations. Wild elephants are said to be very numerous, and probably *Khedda* (trap for capturing wild elephants) operations would prove profitable at an early date."<sup>3</sup>

Let us now look into the entire political scenario of the North-East Region except Surma-Barak Valley, which includes the districts of Sylhet and Cachar, and its impact on the people of the region under British since its annexation up to the period of the great Mutiny 1857.

On the day of February 24, 1826, the Treaty of Yandabo was signed and Assam came under the rule of the British. In the treaty, His Majesty the King of Ava, renounced his all claims upon 'the principality of Assam and its dependencies'. The Burmese also had to withdraw their possession in the neighboring states of Manipur, Cachar and Jayantia. "At this present (moment) the growl of tiger is every where heard; as many as thirteen (to) fifteen (thousand) Europeans have been destroyed. There is no account of their numbers. In the west all the gardens are destroyed and the owner of them together with (their) wives and children have been destroyed beyond calculation...the few that escape, the mad dog devours by the way. The old hunters are extinct; if news have been sent for new hunters to come, till the tigers are so numerous, how many can the hunters kill? To escape the present calamity, many say, will be difficult; and the place where you reside, the owners are in great fear when they may decamp,

there is no knowing. At the moment this occurs, you having kept your ears open, must stand up; and the forces there you must bring over to your side by means of gold and by persuasion, by any and every means in your power...agree to augment their pay in future; without doubt good must follow.<sup>4</sup>

This letter was written by the hero of the Mutiny, Maniram Dewan, to Maheedhur Sarma, a Mooktear of Jorhat, Assam. At the period of mutiny Assam was not far away from the revolt. The deprived and disgraced King and his kinsmen and other nobilities of Assam who ruled over the vast territory in Brahmaputra valley for more than six centuries were very much aggrieved with the policy of the foreign rule. "To persue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of this nation"; - that was the declaration of the British authority in England. After the Burmese war George Swinton, the Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier and the Political Secretary to the Government of India, reaffirmed the position by a statement that, 'although by our expulsion of the Burmese from the territory of Assam, the country would of right become ours by conquest, the Governor General in Council does not contemplate the parmanent annexation of any part of it to the British dominion'. David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier, just before the march of his troops into Assam, in a proclamation, addressed the people of Assam by the following words, "The wished for opportunity of relieving you from the hands of your oppression has now arrived. Our victorious army has crossed the boundary and ere long we will derive the barbarians beyond the Burmahkund nor cease to destroy them until we restore peace and security to your distracted country. Come forward, therefore, without fear for

the present or for the future... We further declare that we are not led into your country by the thirst of conquest; but are forced in our defence to deprive our enemy of the means of annoying us. You may therefore rest assured that we will never consent to depart until we exclude our foe from Assam and re-establish in that country a Government adopted to your wants and calculated to promote the happiness of the people of all classes."<sup>5</sup>

But very soon the attitude of the shrewd British power came out with its ulterior motive of colonization of Assam, 'to promote the happiness' of their own.

Narrating the contemporary incidents H.K. Barpujari states, "Of the fugitive princes of Upper Assam, after the capitulation of Rangpur, Jogeswar Singha settled himself at Jogighopa, on the north of Goalpara where he died in 1825. Chandra Kanta Singha, on account of his intriguing nature, was removed to Kaliabar in Central Assam. He was given a pension of Rupees two hundred besides one hundred pykes and rent-free grants. Purandar Singha returned to Gauhati; no allowance was made in his favour, he was reported to have then considerable wealth in his possession. Pecuniary assistance and rent-free grants were made to several members of the royal family." It is interesting to note that on the eve or during the period of the Burmese war there was no agreement or any sort of negotiation on the part of the British authority and the Princes of the royal family of Assam. Even Mr. Scott at his will proposed to the government of Bengal to restore the Ahom monarchy in Assam under the security and protection of the East India Company. The Burmese war taxed heavily and in that period the debt of the Company mounted up to nearly ten million pounds sterling. To solve the crisis Scott proposed for the retention of the lower

parts of Assam which yield a revenue of more than three lakh rupees and Upper Assam might be annexed by the right of conquest and administered by the Barphukan of Gauhati almost independently. Finally in March 7, 1828 in an announcement Assam was annexed to the British dominion, and the question of surrendering Upper Assam to an Ahom prince was denied on the ground that, "since none of the aspirants did afford to the British any aid during the last war which could establish the slightest claim to a renunciation of any part of their right by conquest."<sup>6</sup>

It is evident that the British authority gradually succeeded to consolidate control over the whole region of Assam and the North-East. In the transformation of the internal social relations within the different communities, and the strategic and monopoly merchantile interests dragged Assam to a land of confusions and turmoil.

"About this time, to champion the cause of the nobility", narrates, the learned historian, Barpujari that, "there had emerged from an unexpected quarter the man of the hour Maniram Barua hitherto one of the most loyal official of the British Government. The energy, ability and intelligence of Maniram had attracted the attention of Captain Neufville who made him after the dismissal of Janardan Barbarua the Tahsildar and later Sherestadar at Jorhat. Maniran revealed his administrative genius in the revenue reforms which he immediately took up; he reorganized the confused 'khels', scrapped unnecessary expenses and tapped new sources of revenue. The receipt which could hitherto hardly meet the charges on the establishment gradually exhibited a surplus. In the war against the Khasis, the Bhutias and the Garos, Maniram rendered valuable services to the Government by supplying labours and provisions." This man of ability had

to forego his job and refused to hold office under British and joined the Assam Tea Company at Nazira as the Dewan or chief executive. There he opened up several gardens and raised the profit and prestige of the company. Then he started a new venture by opening two tea gardens of his own at Jorhat but failed to obtain revenue concession like the privileged European planters. Deprived and frustrated Maniram then realized that under the foreign rule there was no future of his survival with a household consisting of 185 souls and his countrymen. With a vision to restore the former regime of the land he threw his fortune with the Maharaja Kameswar Singha, the son and the successor of Purandar Singha. "Leading all along a gay of life, the young prince is said to have squandered away the few pieces of silver and gold which his father had bequeathed to him, and is also reported to have quarreled with the widows of the family driving them to beseech the liberality of the British Government. Kameswar terminated his inglorious career in June 1851, leaving behind three widows and Kandarpeswar Singha alias the Charing Raja, a boy of eleven, burdened with a huge debt".<sup>7</sup>

In the middle of June, 1853, A.J. Moffat Mills, the judge of the Sadar Dewani Adalat, arrived Assam to look into the matters of the local administration. At that period Maniram submitted representations before the authority wherein, he in a loud voice actually expressed the lamentation and agony of the disgraced voiceless. Maniram states: "The upper and the middle classes have seen their offices abolished, their lagnas and lixos taken away, male and female slaves set free...exemption and presumptive rights that had lasted for six hundred years removed, the fame and honour of respectable people destroyed and by making them pay revenue like other people they have been reduced to the greatest distress.

“It is supposed by giving pensions to some respectable Assamese great benefit has been conferred on them; but the fact is, that those who ought to have got pensions did not get any while those whose services had been of short duration and claims insignificant proved most successful”.

In violent terms Dewan Maniram denounced the British government and bursted out:

“We are just now as it were in the belly of a tiger and if our misfortunes yielded any advantage to the Government, we should be content; but the fact is, there is neither gain to the people nor the government, and so long as the present state of things continue, we see no prospect of improvement in future.”<sup>8</sup>

Maniram vehemently opposed the appointment of the foreigners like Mawaris and Bengalis from Sylhet as mouzadars, criticized the policy of introduction of taxes on opium and the destruction of the indigenous art, culture and religion. He also deplored the attitude of the government officials specially those in the military and stated that, “The bad temper of the young military officials is a source of much tribulations...their youth and indiscretion prevent their discriminating between good and evil or regarding with any consideration the manners and customs of the people.”<sup>9</sup> He tried to convince the authority by every art of conviction that the restoration of the Ahom government in any form might be the only solution to save Assam from further degradation. For obvious reasons Moffat Mills took offence at the attitude of Maniram and suggested to the Government of India to inform the Charing Raja not to entertain any sort of hope for his restoration in future.

Mills' decision enraged Maniram against the British and

to plead the case of the Prince and of his own he left for Calcutta and arrived there in the early part of 1857. There he came in contact with the news of the flame and fire of the uprising of the Mutiny and took determination to free his motherland from the yoke of the foreign rule.

In the mean time the activities of the rebellious forces of Meerut, Kanpur and Delhi reached in the Brahmaputra Valley by different sources. The visitors, personal letters, newspapers even through the Fakirs the incidents of the mutiny in the form of harrowing tales spread over the region. As to the dissemination of the news, "I heard letters (were) read, they were in nagree... to this effect that all the country was taken by the king of Delhi and calling on them to do the likewise in Assam...the newspapers were read by the Sudder Ameen and the collector's Peshkar; and the Omlahs used to read them in the cutcherry and some of the sepoy used to go therein and hear. I used to read the Samachar Darpan...the Sahib (Mahony alias Masters) used to read to us the news in the Friend of India. Krishna Chandra Majumder, Vakeel, used to take...Peshkar's paper to his own house; near the man's is a house belonging to (a) Bramasari Fakir, where all the Fakirs of the place used to assemble. The Vakeel, above named, used to read the paper to them; all the Deswali sepoy, both Hindu and Mussulman, used to assemble there to talk over the affairs in India...."<sup>10</sup>

From the dispatches of the authority it is noticed that the sepoy of the Assam Light Infantry remained absolutely loyal and passive up to the month of August, 1857. In Assam the composition of the regiment was homogeneous. The majority of the sepoy were belonged to the different communities like Nepalee, Manipuree, Rabha, Jarrowa, Doaneah and other loyal tribes. The number of the Hindusthani sepoy in

the Regiment were not so countable. The Commissioner of Assam was confident on the prevailing situation and in his report he stated in the month of June, 1857, that 'despite pressing invitation of the rebels, both the Regiments stationed at Gauhati and Dibrugarh had not only expressed their loyalty to the Government but even some of them also volunteered their services for joining in action against the rebels'. But when the news of the defection of Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur and the outrage of the Danapur Regiment in Bihar arrived the sepoys, specially those who were from Arrah became restless. In the mean time Shaikh Bhikam, the Subedar of the detachment of Golaghat, in the district of Sibsagar, joined hands with Nirmal Hajari and Peali alias Mahesh Chandra Barua, the suspected agents of the prince Kandarpeswar Singha with a conviction to kill the Sahibs and to place the Raja as the King of the land. The message was hurriedly spread over the contingencies of Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Saikhowa. The entire plot of the insurrection was planned guided by Maniram Dewan residing in Calcutta. Madhu Mallick, a Bengali Muktear, a close friend of Maniram was the prime architect behind the scene. The call was readily responded by Peoli Barua, Gandhi Barua, Kamala Barua, Nowbaisha Phukan, Saru Gohain, Ugrasen Gohain and many other dignitaries of different ranks and influence. Narrating the incidents Charles Holroyd reported to the authority: "In the month of Assar, Noor Mahomed Jamdr., of the 1st Assam Lt. Infy. came down from Deebrooghur to Jorhat on private leave and had interviews with the Raja regarding the assistance to be afforded to the sepoys, and of the remuneration they were to receive for placing him on the Guddee.

"In the month of Sawan (July-August), Roostam Singh Jamdr., and two sepoys went to Jorhat, and having visited the Saring Rajah by night, conferred with him regarding the

arrangement made with Pealie at Golaghat. In the month of Bhadra, Debidutta Surmah Mouzadar (brother to Luckiedutta) received gold from the Rajah for the collection of Russud for the troops; for a similar purpose gold was also distributed to the other parties.

“In the month of Sawan Luckiedutta Surmah, brother to the Thakur of the Dewargaon Temple, received gold from the Rajah for performance of Poojah in the temple. The Poojah was actually performed, and about this time a list was made of the several temples and Shastes (Satras) to which Ghee and Oil was to be distributed for a similar purpose ... to accomplish which, money was paid by the order of the Saring Rajah.”<sup>11</sup> Every attempt was also made to get the support of the Muslims who were supposed to possess number of muscats with them.

‘In his deposition Maniran Sarmah, the Gandhia Barua, said that Bahadur Gaoburah received gold from Kandarpeswar to make a feast to the Mussalmans of Jorhat who were in possession of several guns. Danforth, the American Baptist, viewed the role of the Mussalmans: from a different angle. In his report to his Foreign Secretary, he wrote: ‘Mussalman population are very impertinent, and tell the native Christians that the Co’s reign is at an end, the Sahibs will be cut up, and Islamism once and forever established.’<sup>12</sup>

Barpujari described the situation as such, — “The preparations made by the rebels and the alarm thereof spread far and wide. The European planters, several of them, left their gardens and took shelter at Gauhati. The missionaries abandoned their churches; some of them made preparations to leave the country. ‘We at Gauhati still alive’, reported Danforth, the American Baptist, ‘but we cannot say safe, the stroke may come at any moment.’ The Commissioner of

Assam was rudely awakened about the middle of August 1857, on the receipt of a report from Holroyd to the effect that 'two or three native officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, of the first Assam Light Infantry on duty with a detachment at Golaghat, proceeding on leave through Joorhath, and on coming and going interview with the young Charing Rajah, Kandarpeswar Singha, and offered the assistance of the men of both the Regiments to reinstate him on his throne and maintain the country for him.' In a communique of 20 August, 1857, the Commandant of the Assam Light Infantry further reported: 'at this station (Dibrugarh) what I have all along expected has taken place an intended rise of the Muttocks and their intrigues also to get adherents.'<sup>13</sup>

In this period of crisis there was not a single European soldier in whole of the North- East to protect the Englishmen. It was also a problem to sent troops from Calcutta for immediate help. Considering the alarming situation the authority urged upon the government of Bengal to despatch troops hurriedly to save the province from the threat of revolution. The authority in Calcutta forthwith sent on 11 September, European force of 104 men despatched to Dibrugarh under lieutenant Davis of whom half of the sepoys had some military training and the rest were seamen.

On the other hand the rebels finalised their plan of action to attack the targets in the early part of October when it was expected that Moniram Dewan would also reach Assam with arms and ammunitions. It was also planned, 'that Maniram was to be the Prime Minister... that Mudoo Mullick was to be immediately under him rank and position, that he (Peali) was to be the Barbhandar Barua, Lockeenath Hensoa Barua was to be the Nowbaisa Phukan, that Kamala Saringia Barua was to be made Subedar and Darogha of Jorhat... there

would be no Khazna (revenue) but liksos as in olden times... no revenue on barilands and (only) one rupee per poorah on the rupit lands as in former times; that all the Sahibs from Gauhati upto Dibrugarh were to be (transferred) to Jorhat and made over to the Rajah. That Roostam Singh and Noor Muhammad were to be Subedars.... That Budram Subedar was to be made Subedar Bahadur.<sup>14</sup>

On 29 August 1857 at about 9 p.m. the sepoy's attacked the residence of Shaikh Bhikam. The incident as narrated by one native doctor, named as Keramat Ali who claimed himself as an eye witness, runs as follows, "On arriving, I saw a number of men collected in front of Subedar's house; in the midst the Subedar Shaikh Bheekun, Chunder Singh, the Jamadar of police, and Ramtohal Singh, the Kote Havildar, were seated in morahs; the rest being on the ground...Jelladar Misser, Bhola Panday and Sewsahai Singh (one after another) addressed the gathering...Hear brothers! If you are desirous of our own good and favour with the Rajah, you will listen to what we say and do what we tell you without drawing back; and whoever draws back or reveals anything shall be killed; and if he be a Mussalman, he will eat pig and if a Hindu he will eat cow, this shall be the curse on him...the others replied, what! Are we not born of man that we should desert the cause? ...let us sound the bugle and each man taking five Ghullali with him let us go this night to Jorhat; first cut Huronath Barooah's head off; it is said that Raghoobear Singh Jamadar is there with 20 sepoy's and is loyal to the Government. We can make him join us, if not we will kill him; we will (then) go and put the Rajah on the throne...we will go at once to Sibsagar and first set fire to Holroyd sahib's house...and kill all the Europeans there; we will make the sepoy's there join us and take the magazine and treasury. We can leave some men there to keep charge

and go on with the rest to Debrooghur, there set fire to the houses and kill all the Europeans".<sup>15</sup> It is also learnt from the report of Danforth that, "The day was fixed to murder every European, and everything ready. In fact they were only waiting for the bugle to sound, to commence the work of death, when a slight circumstances occurred to lead them to decide on waiting for a few days for further information."<sup>16</sup>

But bugle was not sounded, confusions and chaos ultimately ruined the rebels. Immediately on receipt of the secret intelligence of the proceeding of the sepoys, the Commandant of the Assam Light Infantry arrested Shaikh Bhikan and other ring-leaders and removed them to Dibrugarh for the trial before a Court Martial. Raghubir Singh, who succeeded to the command of the detachment, was punished with vigorous measures of discipline. The authority ruthlessly dealt the matter and succeeded to establish their right of power and governance.

Meanwhile the Commissioner of Assam directed Holroyd to apprehend the Charing Raja; but the latter acted with circumspection lest any haste in the seizure of the Prince should precipitate a crisis. In early September 1857 Holroyd intercepted a bundle of letters written by Maniram Dewan or under his direction which authenticated the complicity of the Raja and the Dewan in a plot against the British. Accordingly on the midnight of September 7, with a party of 20 sepoys Holroyd took the boat and joined at Dikhowmukh a detachment under Captain Lowther and arrested Kandarpeswar and Madhumallick who resided in a rented house of Maniram Dewan at the nearby bazaar. The prince was conveyed on the same evening to Mahghur, wherefrom he was sent down to Calcutta and kept as a state prisoner at the Central Jail Alipur. This was followed by officials and

non-officials in upper Assam—Peali Barua, the Marangikhowa Gohain, Mayaram Nazir, Dutiram Barua, Bahadur Gaoburah, Shaikh Farmud and several others—all alleged to have been participants, directly or indirectly, in the plot.<sup>17</sup> When the arrest of the Raja was made known to the sepoys, the latter believed 'that he would be kept either (at) Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Seeksagar or Gauhati...wherever they took him, still he would be in their hands, for every where there are sepoys (Hindustanees)'.<sup>18</sup> They were also in false hope that Jung Bahadur, the Rana of Nepal, with a force 10,000 strong would be coming soon to their succor. Their hopes were doomed on the evening of 2 October 1857 when the Naval brigade arrived at Dibrugarh.

Again the outbreak of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry Regiment at Chittagong and the revolt of 73 Dacca regiment and their advancement towards the north made the authority alert in Assam and they were apprehensive of the repercussion which might have endangered the state of affairs in the neighbouring frontier tribes. The news of the Dacca fugitives and their march crossing the river Brahmaputra towards the South-West of Goalpara and the incidents that took place in and around Chilmari made the British fearful. The mutineers at Chilmari devastated the police station at Karaibari, plundered the bazaar and lifted the Jamadar and the sepoys attached to the outpost.

In the mean time the authority succeeded to take control over the entire situation. Whiting reported on 20 February, "The province is now quiet. About 200 sailors are in the valley; of whom sixty are at Jorhat, forty at Sibsagar and the remainder at Dibrugarh. Several sipahis have been transported for life. Several Assamese have also been transported for life; and Moniram, the chief instigator, who was at

Calcutta, has been brought up and being tried at Jorhat.”<sup>19</sup> Dewan Maniram and Peali Barua were tried on 9 and 23 February and were sentenced to death. Both of them were hanged publicly on February 26. Madhu Mallik, Trinayan, Kamala Barua, Dutiram Barua, the Marangikhowa Gohain, Mayaram Nazir all of them were transported for life. Shaikh Formud Ali and Bahadur Gaobura, ‘on charges of seducing the Mussalmans of Jorhat’ were transported to Andaman and their properties were forfeited.<sup>20</sup>

The trial of Maniram was a fierce. Holroyd the arch enemy of Dewan acted as both Prosecutor and Judge. The evidence on which he was convicted was insufficient and the accused was not given the chance of self defence. Dewan Maniram and Peali embraced the glorious death of Martyrs. Their patriotism and self sacrifice is contained in the folk memory. The bards, till today sing the stray songs in the hills and dales of Brahmaputra Valley and commemorate the sacrifice of their valiant heroes in folk- songs composed in Assamese.<sup>21</sup>

The King Gambhir Singh of Manipur was vested with the status of a sovereign ruler of his country on condition of the payment of Rs. 10,000 /- as tribute to the East India Company. He proved his loyalty and gratitude by rendering all possible help and service to the British at the time of the Burmese War. Considering the geo-political situation and the security of the Eastern Frontier part of the region, the British authority decided that, “The establishment of an independent government in Manipur in alliance with us would undoubtedly prove to be the most powerful and effectual check upon the Burmese government”. David Scott, the Joint Magistrate of Rongpur was aware of the strategic and vulnerable position of the frontier pointed out, “the Assamese and the

Cacharees are, unfortunately, so timid and effeminate... that the defence of these countries must be provided for in great measure by extraneous means; the Nagas, the Singphos, the Khamtis and other tribes to the eastward of Assam are perhaps too little advanced in arts of civilization and of government to be able to make any effectual resistance against the numerous armies of the Burmese. Manipuries on the other hand are imbued with all Military spirit, that distinguishes the Rajput tribes of Northern Hindustan". Pemberton writes, "the history of Muneepoor, and the vicissitudes through which it has passed, the determined character of the people and their rooted aversion to the yoke of the Burmese are clearly shown."<sup>22</sup>

After the death of Gambhir Sing in 1834, his infant son Chandrakirti became the Raja of Manipur. Since then the throne became the center of conspiracy and turmoil. Senapati Nur Sing failed to succeed in the conspiracy was fled away from the country. In 1847 the British government warned the disgruntled Manipuri Princes in Cachar not to create disturbances in the district or on the border of Manipur, otherwise they would be transported to Bengal. Then Debendra Sing succeeded to the throne after the death of his brother Nur Sing.

In the mean time Chandrakirti Sing with his mother appeared in the scene with a determination to capture the throne by force. The British authority recognized the succession of Debendra Sing and decided to remove the mother and the former Raja from Manipur to Dacca.

Chandrakirti successfully escaped the arrest. And afterwards Captain MacCulloch, the Political Agent, withheld the recognition of Debendra Sing and Chandrakirti again succeeded to the throne of Manipur as de facto Raja. Frustrated

Debendra Sing and his brothers frequently made attempts to regain the lost power and threatened the supremacy of the authority. To overcome the situation MacCulloch made some propositions. He stated, "that in my opinion the establishment of good order and the maintenance of authority in this country can be effected only by the British government. In a country which, like this, owes its existence, and owns that it does so, to the British government, the influence of that government ought, I humbly conceive, to be paramount and capable of effecting this; but oft-repeated contests for the throne have lessened that influence, and will, I fear, if not prevented, destroy it eventually altogether: a successful attempt from Burma would do so at once.

"Towards the effecting of good order and maintenance of authority the stationing of British troops in Manipur would be the most effectual means. These troops however, could not be paid either in whole or part, and I have not contemplated this measure; but a more formal acknowledgment of the Rajah, with a declaration that he will not recognize as Rajah any Prince who by force may dispossess him, would, I think, prove a strong check upon these frequent attacks, would induce a feeling of security in the Authorities, and with that an inclination to improve rather than grind the people, and in this manner put a stop to these contests for the throne, so injurious to the country and British interests."<sup>23</sup>

At the period of Sepoy Mutiny 1857 the Rajah of Manipur was obviously loyal to the British. The authority was satisfied and recorded with note of appreciation that, 'the conduct of the Rajah during the mutiny was reported to have been praiseworthy, and the satisfaction of Government was accordingly expressed on this subject.'<sup>24</sup>

Tripura was an independent kingdom for long

centuries. The problems she had to face after the transfer of Bengal Dewani to the East India Company was primarily the border disputes with the adjoining district of Sylhet and Hill Tripura. In the year 1822, at the time of Lt. Fisher's survey, the king of Tripura strongly raised objection on the matter. The British authority laid down the principle for the arbitrators was that, 'all land included within the decennial settlement had been, and shall be, within the Company's territories'. Further, it was ordered, 'that the mere fact that any land had not been settled in 1790 should not alone be proof that it belonged to the Tripura state'. Mr Yule in his report submitted to the government in January 1851, proposed that, 'the country thus finally declared to be British territory, as consisting both of hill and plain covered for the most part with swamp and jungle. The hills however produced cotton, the cultivation of which might be greatly increased; while the plains bore here and there rich crops of rice not liable to inundation; and also mustard and sugarcane.' Yule also strongly urged upon the government that, 'colonies of Manipuris or others should be encouraged to take it up on lease'.<sup>25</sup>

The State of Jayantia is situated in between Cachar and Sylhet. In 1774, Major Henniker attacked the independent state with a plea of some aggressions that took place against the inhabitants of the plains of Sylhet. In the year 1821, for the purpose of immolating certain British subjects from the Sylhet district, as per the version of the authority, some emissaries of the state were detected and punished. The Supreme government took this incident seriously and the Raja was cautioned and warned by the words that, 'any repetition of so horrible an offence would be followed by the immediate confiscation of his territory.'<sup>26</sup> When the Burmese invaded the territory of Cachar and intended to march to Assam

through Jayantia, the British authority in Sylhet, came forward to a negotiation with the king. Mr. Scott, the agent of the Governor General, opened the talk with the condition that the Raja should follow the usual procrastinating policy of all natives before entering into the treaty and he was, 'promised the assistance of the government troops, if his own resources were actively employed in repulsing the enemy.' The Raja of Jayantia was also threatened with punishment if he allowed to enter the Burmese in his territory. It is interesting to observe that the British authority how nakedly came out with a false claim over the territory of Jayantia to manage the situation. Narrating the incidents Pemberton writes, "He (the Raja of Jayantia), had collected a force, which was said to consist of several thousands archers, but which most probably amounted to only a few hundreds; and he was conjectured to be favorable to the British power, though unwilling to compromise his independence by any engagements, until the destruction of his country, or compliance, became the only remaining alternatives. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1824, a letter was addressed by Mr. Scott to the Commander of the Burmese force in Cachar, prohibiting his entering in the territory of Jayantia, on the ground that the Rajah's ancestors had received that country as a gift after conquest from the Honourable Company; that he had himself sought British protection; and that the Burmese having openly threatened war, they could not be permitted to occupy that, or any other favourable position, for commencing hostilities."<sup>27</sup>

From his accounts it is also revealed that, the Burmese commander too sent a letter to the Raja claiming his presence in the Burmese camp, 'on the affirmed ground of his own known vassalage to the princes of Assam, which latter country had become tributary to Ava.' Shortly afterwards a party of Burmese troops appeared near Jayantia Frontier. In

the mean time a detachment of 150 men, under a British officer was sent to the frontier to assist the Jayantia Raj and ultimately the Burmese force was withdrawn. Later in the month of April a treaty was signed with the Raja wherein he formally acknowledged his dependence and, 'pledged himself to abstain from all independent negotiations with any foreign power', and committed to provide with all sorts of help even with a military contingent in any war waged in the eastern part of the river Brahmaputra. Subsequently the Raja denied the treaty with the British and the authority took offence at this, and the disgusted Captain R. Boileau Pemberton in his report with anger states, "None of these conditions, however, did he fulfill with sincerity; and it was notorious that during the war he permitted a Burmese detachment from Assam to occupy his territory, in direct violation of the treaty which had preserved his country from the calamities that overwhelmed the less fortunate states of Kachar and Manipur."<sup>28</sup>

In 1830, at the confluence of the rivers Kopili and Dimla near Chaparmukh, Jayantia Raj established a Chowky and did not pay any attention to the repeated order issued by Mr. Scott and Robertson for its removal. Again in 1832, Chhatra Singha a dependent of the Raja of Jayantia, captured four subjects of the British and were carried to a temple of Goddess Kali for immolation. Among them three were sacrificed and one person was able to escape in Sylhet and reported the matter to the authority. Immediately the Government demanded the culprits and issued orders to Ram Singh, the Raja of Jaintia, which ended in a fruitless exercise. Then in November 1832 Raja Ram Singh died and his twenty years old nephew Rajendra Singh became the successor of the territory. The British reminded him the acts of betrayal of his predecessor and finally decided to occupy the plains areas

of Jayantia forcefully. "Firm however, in his determination not to surrender the guilty perpetrators of this most barbarous sacrifice, and led by a few crafty Bengalees to believe that they possessed influence sufficient to effect the restoration of his principality, he refused to continue in possession of any reduced portion of it"<sup>29</sup>. This attitude of Rajendra Singh made the authority furious and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1835, Captain Lister, with two companies of the Sylhet Light Infantry, forcibly took possession of the independent territory and by a proclamation annexed the plains areas of the country to the British domination. By issuing an order on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1835, Jayantia was taken under the administration of the Political Agent, and Khasi Hills and Jaintia both the territories came under the Judicial control by the Khasi Hills Act VI of 1835. Raja Rajendra Singh was compelled to retire in Sylhet and the Company handed over to him his own personal property, amounting to more than one and half lac Rupees, as assessed by the authority. The people observed the incidents closely and became frustrated with the treatment of the British with their kings and expressed their love and affection to the Raja Ram Singh and Rajendra Singh in folk-songs and ballads. They portrayed the British as intruders and demons in their composition.<sup>30</sup>

During the period of Sepoy Mutiny 1857 when the news of the revolt of 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry Regiment and their advancement towards Sylhet and Manipur was received like other parts of North-East India the Khasi chiefs were also in belief that the British power in India is in danger and began to intrigue with some of them with the aim of recovering the lost territorial possessions. But the overall situation with the territory was remained peaceful. After the annexation of Assam Scott's negotiations with the Khasi chieftains made the territory an alley to the British. In fact the natural resources

of the region allured the colonial administrators immediately after the annexation of Assam. The possibilities of improving and extending the agricultural and horticultural produce in the region elevated Mr. Scott and in 1830 he expressed his opinion as such: "These mountains are probably capable of producing opium at a cheaper rate, and of a better quality, than any part of our lowland possessions; the quantity obtained from a small patch of land, having been fully three times as much an equal extent of soil is capable of producing below. Wheat is also found to thrive well on the lower hills, and potatoes, turnips, and beet-roots, are produced in such abundance in the higher region, as to render the two latter most profitably applicable to feeding cattle during the winter months." Pemberton further added to more future prospects and mentioned that, "The mineral productions of this extensive region are too generally known, to require any particular mention here; they consist of inexhaustible supplies of the finest limestone procurable in India; of coal and iron, in scarcely less abundance; and slate and grey sandstone, particularly well adapted for building purposes. Years may elapse, ere the full value of the controlling influence we have established in these hills becomes generally appreciated, or their resources fully developed; but we already begin to read the advantages of our position, in the cessation of those murderous visitations, which for years kept the border villages of Sylhet, and Assam, in a state of constant anxiety and alarm; and from which, we were liable to the eruptions of a horde of unknown barbarians, at moments when, struggling against the invasion of a formidable foe, from a more remote quarter, we might have been less able to guard our defenceless frontier and its timid inhabitants. The Cossyahs have now felt our strength; and having been severely punished for their treachery, have quietly submitted

to the control it has been found expedient to exercise over them."<sup>31</sup>

The British first came in contact with the Garos among the hill tribes of Assam after the transfer of Bengal Dewani to the East India Company. After the occupation of Rangpur and Mymensing the British had to face fierce resistance from the people.

In 1775, one Mahammadan Fakir named Karim, declared himself as a reformer and sooth sayer. The Raja of Susung allowed him to live in Loterkandi where he got together a band of followers whom the neighbours called as 'Pagals' or Fools, and among themselves they addressed one another as Brethren (Bhai). In 1813 Karim was succeeded by his son Tipoo. Tipoo and his mother (called 'Mah Sahibah' or 'Lady mother' by the Pagals) both according to the local belief possessed miraculous power. Under their spells, wooden guns and swords turned into effective weapons in their hands and even the artillery fires had also no effect against them. The 'Lady mother' had only to blow on her clothes, and shake her under garment, to call a hidden army in to existence; and to her alone was restricted the power of seeing in to the future. It was perhaps from the want of this power, that Tipoo ceased to be a mere religious fanatic, and betook himself to more dangerous courses. 'He gradually formed a following of armed men, acquired much wealth by plunder, and perpetrated many crimes. In the state of the country, racked by the feuds of conflicting Zamindars, he formed a center of intrigue for all the discontented ryots. The Sherepore Zamindars had never carried out the permanent settlement rules, and always collected cesses from their tenants at their discretion. In November 1824, when called on by Government to provide supplies for troops passing to Assam to fight

the Burmese, they made this as usual the excuse for imposing heavy extractions on the ryots. The ryots appealed to Tipoo who promised them a time when they should only pay nominal rents. On this the peasantry took up arms and entered in to closer alliance with the Paghuls, and began to refuse to give the customary tole of labour or pay rents'.<sup>32</sup> Among these ryots many of them were Garos who were settled on the low areas of Garo hills. In the month of January 1825 about 700 followers of Tipoo assembled at Sherpur and attacked the Zamindars of the locality. They raised arms against the abnormal enhancement of the rent. In the year 1793 the rent of these low land areas settled by the Gird Garos was fixed at Rs. 20/- and in 1825 it was paying Rs. 20,000/- to the Zamindars. In a fierce fight they heavily assaulted the Zamindars and then the district authorities intervened the situation to protect the mutual interests of both the Government and the Zamindars. After tough fights Tipoo was arrested and put into Jail and very soon he was also released. Then Tipoo raised a 'Royal Killah' made of bamboos, which is popularly known in Bengal as 'Banser Kellah', and raised his Jihad against the atrocities of the Zamindars and the British with his followers. The outrage of Tipoo was strongly dealt by the authority and was suppressed. Again in 1833 the followers of the 'Pagal-Panth' stirred up and caused to peasants insurrections.

Then again in 1836 independent Garos of Shibkujora launched a movement to stop the collections of tributes of the government and the Commissioner of Assam recommended for forceful submission of these turbulents. Narrating the actions taken by the government Alexander Mackenzie quoted from the Political proceedings, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1836, writes, "Scott's plan had (the Commissioner said) been to march into a village and give notice that if the chief did

not surrender himself in two days and pay tribute, the village would be burnt and cultivation laid waste. In December he visited Singamari, where most of the Garo chiefs of that quarter came to meet him; and then enquiry proved that the most of the Garo disturbances had arisen from the oppressive conduct of our own native officers at the frontier markets."<sup>33</sup>

In the subsequent years of 1839, 1844 and upto the closing of 1856 the Garos of different groups raided in various occasion against the authority. Between the months of July and October 1852, they raided seven times in the frontier areas and killed fortyfour persons and made havoc of the life and properties. The British authority took offence of these incidents so seriously that Lord Dalhousie had to take review of the Garo policy in his hands. In fact the trade and revenue of the Company was affected for these disturbances and even 'the attempt to secure the upland Garos for the Frontier Police had also failed'. "The local authorities", writes Mackenzie, "proposed an expedition to demand the surrender of the principal offenders, to levy a fine on their village, or burn it in default of payment, to exact hostages and written engagements from the chiefs, and to survey the hills, and the education of Garos...An expedition was accordingly dispatched which burnt a village. As no overtures were made by the Garos for the surrender of the raiders, the Commissioner next proposed to government to the closing of the frontier markets. The objections to this plan in the case of the Garos was, that the no blockade however rigid could prevent them from getting supplies from Mymensing, while the innocent inhabitants of the plains, who depended for their livelihood on the cotton trade carried on with the Garos, were the principal sufferers".<sup>34</sup> Lord Dalhousie at that time recorded his opinion as such; "I have said that I deprecate these

extreme measures, while anything else remained untried. But as these savages will neither treat, submit, nor rest, it is due to our own subjects, whose lives and property are in jeopardy, that we should have recourse to punishment, which though severe, is the only thing that they comprehend or feel. I consider that further military operations would be a waste of life uselessly. It is probable that the exclusion of the Garos from the plains will be effectual. It has been so when tried on the hill people on the opposite frontier of the North-West. I request, therefore, that they may be rigidly excluded from the plains, and that the Chiefs may be informed that the exclusion will be continued till satisfaction is made by the delivery of the murderers. They are at the same time to be informed that, if they are found in the plains while thus in resistance to the government, they will be seized and disposed of as the government may think fit. I am aware that these measures will probably inflict injury on the innocent while punishing the guilty. I regret it, but individual interests must yield to the public interests, when there is, as in this case, no alternative."<sup>35</sup>

The measures adopted by the authority was temporarily proved successful. Mackenzie rightly assessed the profit and loss business of his government; "It was found that the trade in cotton had become so material a source of profit to the Garos, that the closure of the haats was really felt as a severe punishment. They gave up some of the offenders and promised to arrest and deliver over the others."<sup>36</sup> Looking into the future prospect the government adopted adequate measure for 'the re-imposition of the old duty on cotton at the Garo markets.'<sup>37</sup>

But the hostilities of the people continued up to 1879. It is observed that between May 1857 and October 1859 nine

numbers of assaults and raids were made and twenty heads taken by the Garos in the surrounding localities. Narrating in brief about these incidents Mackenzie stated that, "however, they again recommenced, and were numerous and atrocious on both the Goalpara and Mymensing frontiers. On each occasion attempts more or less futile were made to procure the surrender of the offenders, but no comprehensive was laid down, nor was any vigorous effort made to change the nature of our relations with the hillmen."<sup>38</sup>

The simplicity of these hillmen, their folk-beliefs and their age old traditional weapons like spears, two-edged swords and the shields made of banana trunks were so helpless before the gun and the might of the British that Piannazi spared no words to ridicule them in his statement. He described the incidents that took place in a protected Garo village areas of Damukchiki where the independent Garos attacked a party of Surveyors in 1872. Piannazi narrates: "One of the last portions of the interior to submit was Rongreng. Rumour had reached those independent chiefs that Government soldiers had hollow spears that spat fire at a great distance; and Gwal, the bravest of them, who acted as a sort of commander-in-chief, was impressed by the news. He saw that a means of quenching those firing missiles must be found, and his fertile imagination was not long in hitting upon a good one. While chiefs and warriors were down-heartedly commenting upon the unwelcome news, he was busy heating up his spear and thrusting it, red hot, into a banana stem...sure enough the iron was cooling: hurrah!

Every Garo warrior was directed to bind large pieces of succulent banana trunks in two moist layers over his bamboo shield; and wild joy of the discovery swept fear away from the assembled tribesmen....It was very early morning. The sepoy had come up and were quietly camping in a clear-

ing in the jungle some way from Rongreng village and the Garos planned to take them by surprise. In high spirits and full of confidence in their new shields, two-edged swords and spears in readiness, they stealthily crawled through the thick jungle and soon were near the camp.... A wild yell, a rush...but before they could reach the campclearing, the roar of a volley stopped them. Deafened and disconcerted by the noise, they halted and wavered. A second volley; groans near them; there on the ground prostrate on their banana shields lay Gwal and two of their bravest. Confidence melted away, fear of the mysterious fire-spitting spears again filled them, and shouting, scampering, throwing down their weapons they gave up their fight."<sup>39</sup>

The relation of the British with other minor hill tribes of North-East since 1826 up to the Mutiny period 1857 was also hostile. The policy of non-stop operation of, as Mackenzie advocated, 'iron fists in velvet gloves' as an order for 'succession of becoming' obviously invited confrontation. He also advised to take the policy of consolidation considering the fact that, "There was a pressing necessity of bringing under more stringent control the commercial relation of our subjects with the frontier tribes living on the borders of our jurisdiction."<sup>40</sup>

It is evident that the antagonistic attitude and the outrage of the people of the region was induced by the British policy of intervention and aggression in the territory of the land, economy, aristocracy and the culture. The hill people primarily depend for their livelihood on hunting, fishing, rubber-tapping, elephant catching and shifting cultivations etc. The colonial rule for their interest in trade and commerce occupied the vast land for tea plantation. It is observed that by the year 1871 more than three lakh acres of wasteland were settled with the tea planters on nominal fees or simple

rates. On the other hand the land revenue on the ordinary farmers was heavily taxed. All these reports, incidents etc. etc. undoubtedly confirm the agenda of the land-hungry British Colonial Power and its mischeivous governance in the garb of the policy of reformation and so called 'non-interference'. Obviously the people had to suffer terribly and the situations compelled them to act violently against the forceful imposition of the supremacy.

### NOTES

1. Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra: *Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 88.
2. Gait, Edward: *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1926, pp. 327-28.
3. Chakravorty, Birendra Chandra: *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam since 1858.*, quoted from Bengal Report for 1872- 73, Calcutta, 1981, p. 36.
4. Quoted from *Assam in the Days of The Company*, H.K.Barpujari, Gauhati, 1980, p. 204.
5. Barpujari, H.K.: *Assam in the Days of The Company*, Gauhati, 1980, p. 40.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 182-83.
11. *Bengal Judicial Proceedings*, July 29, 1858. No. 115; Holroyd to Young, June, 28.
12. Barpujari, H.K.: *Assam in the Days of The Company*, 1 Gauhati, 1980, p. 185.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
21. See appendix A.
22. Pemberton, R.B.: *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India. Second impression*, Gauhati, 1966, pp. 49-50.
23. Mackenzie, Alexander: *The North East Frontier of India*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 154.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
26. Mackenzie, quoted from Pemberton, p. 217.
27. Pemberton, *Ibid.*, p. 220.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
30. An excerpts of a popular song runs as follows:  
"Mui kai jaum re, kothaye gele tari  
Hakim haila hukumdar, peda praner bairi  
Batti-rutti Indra Singh re, mukhe rekha dari  
Bandi kari thaila niya, Murari Chander bari  
Mui kai jaum re" —  
—Where I will go for shelter and protection. Hakim (the British) is now the all powerful administrator. Our beloved king Indra (Rajendra) Singh, the young, short and stout, whose beards are not yet prominent on his face, has been arrested and kept confined in the house of Murarichand (Dewan). Oh, where I will go—  
[Quoted from, Kar, Subir, *Uttar Purba Bharater Loka Sahitye Bidroha Chetana*. "Loka Charyya", p. 26, Guwahati, 2003.]
31. Pemberton, *Ibid.*, p. 264.
32. Mackenzie, Alexander: *Ibid.*, p. 255.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
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36. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
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