

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Assam is a land situated in the North-Eastern part of India in between latitudes 24° to 28°N and longitudes 89°42 to 96°30E. The land has a continuous existence and was known by different names at different times. In the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, ancient Assam is mentioned as *Pragjyotisha*. The *Allahabad Pillar Inscription* of Gupta King Samudragupta for the first time mentions about ancient Assam as *Kamarupa*.¹ Assam, the present name of the State is apparently the English form of the word *Asam* which is in all probability an Ahom contribution made during the medieval period. According to Dr. B. K. Kakati the word *Asam* has been derived from a Tai or Ahom word *Cham* meaning ‘to be defeated’. The word *Cham* may again have something to do with *Shan*, a name of the Tai or Ahom people.²

The history of Assam has been divided into three time periods, namely, ancient, medieval and modern. The ancient period starts from the earliest times till the establishment of the Ahom rule in Assam in the first quarter of the 13th century (1228 A.D.); the medieval period starts from 1228 A.D. and continues till the beginning of the colonial rule in Assam in the 19th century (1826 A.D.); and the modern period is still continuing from 1826 A.D. onwards. Further, the above mentioned time period can be divided as pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period. The pre-colonial

¹ H. K. Barpujari, (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Volume-I*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2004, p. 59

² Jogesh Das, *Folklore of Assam*, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 8-9

period covers the ancient and medieval period in the history of Assam. The colonial period which marks the beginning of the modern period in Assam is from 1826 A.D.-1947 A.D. when it was under the British rule. The period after independence in 1947 A.D. constitutes the post-colonial period which is a part of the modern history of Assam and is still continuing.

The present state of Assam is only a part of the extensive Kingdom of the *Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa* of ancient times and also of the medieval Ahom Kingdom. The political boundary kept on changing from time to time. Assam at present is bounded by two foreign countries and seven Indian states. To the North of it is Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. To the East there are Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur. The Southern boundary is Mizoram and Meghalaya. To the West, there lie West Bengal, Bangladesh and Tripura.³

Assam may be broadly divided into two physical units, namely, the North-Eastern and Central hill tracts and the valleys of the Barak and the Brahmaputra. The physical divisions led to the emergence of two distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups in Assam, namely the dwellers of the hills and those of the plains. However, there had been frequent intercourse between the people of the hills and the plains. The people of the hills depended by and large on the plains for their foodstuff and other necessities, while the people in the plains used to purchase the forbearance and good behaviour of their neighbours by providing them their requirements.⁴ These people of the hills and the plains were constituted of the different races that migrated into Assam through different routes at different periods of history. There has been a racial

³ Amlan Baruah and S. B. Roy Choudhury, *Assam State Gazetteer, Volume-I*, Government of Assam, Guwahati, 1999, p. 3

⁴ H. K. Barpujari, (ed.), *Volume-I*, op. cit. pp. 2-4

intermixture in the population of Assam and their inter-fusion led to the development of a synthesized Assamese society and culture through the ages.

Land was the backbone of the economy of Assam. The economy from its ancient time was an agrarian one. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people and as such village was the pivot of the economic system. Majority of the Assamese people used to live in villages in a simple way with few wants.⁵ Agriculture was looked upon as a noble profession and every Assamese, except the Brahmanas knew how to plough.⁶ Every family through agriculture fulfilled almost all the requirements of day to day life. They cultivated rice, pulses, vegetables and fruits for their food; mustard to light their houses; and silk and cotton to provide their garments.⁷

Jean Baptiste Tavernier in his book *Travels in India* writes “The Kingdom of Assam is one of the best countries in Asia, for it produces all necessary to life of men and there is no need to go for anything to the neighbouring states”. Shihab-ud-din Talish who accompanied Nawab Mir Jumla in his invasion of Assam in 1662 noticed that the betel-nut sellers were the only traders who used to sit in the market for it was not the practice of Assam to buy food articles in the market as all the inhabitants used to store in their house one year supply of food of all kinds and were under no necessity to buy or sale any eatable. But the production was in consideration with the annual necessary need having hardly any surplus for sale and even for a rainy day.⁸ It has been

⁵ Priyam Goswami, *Assam in the Nineteenth Century: Industrialization and Colonial Penetration*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1999, p. 26

⁶ E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2003, p. 270

⁷ H. K. Barpujari, *Assam In the Days of the Company (1826-1858)*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1980, p. 263

⁸ H. K. Barpujari, (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Volume-III*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 1994, pp. 121-122

rightly stated by E. A. Gait that there is no distressing starvation or undue prosperity (*akalo nai, bharalu nai*) in Assam.⁹

The Assamese people were primarily agriculturist. But they used to combine agriculture with other trades.¹⁰ These trades were indigenous industrial activities like weaving, spinning, metallurgy, pottery, bamboo works, etc which were performed by the people in order to meet their basic needs as well as a subsidiary source of income. Almost all the people manufactured their products in their own homes, generally for their own use. There was little specialisation with indigenous industries becoming an integral part of every household. For instance, spinning and weaving were a part of every woman's work irrespective of caste or status.¹¹ A harmonious combination was there between agriculture and indigenous industries. Each village was a self-sufficient socio-economic unit containing persons skilled in all trades.¹² As such, the state of economy of Assam in the pre-colonial period was a prosperous and self-sustaining one though not entirely self-sufficient. A considerable quantity of salt was to be imported from Bengal, with most of the other requirements being locally available.¹³

Assam in ancient times was noted for many industries. A wide variety of industrial products were produced which earned universal acclamation for its finesse and beautiful workmanship.¹⁴ In weaving and sericulture and working in metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo, etc, their reputation was equal, if not superior to that of the craftsmen of other parts of contemporary India. This is evidenced by literature,

⁹ E. A. Gait, 2003, op. cit. p. 268

¹⁰ Priyam Goswami, *Indigenous Industries of Assam Retrospect and Prospect*, Anshah Publishing House, Delhi, 2005, p. 10

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 28

¹³ Priyam Goswami, *Colonial Assam: Trade, Development and Dependence*, ICHR Lecture Series Publication, Lecture VI, Guwahati, 2007, p. 7

¹⁴ Amlan Baruah and S. B. Roy Choudhury, op. cit. p. 425

foreign accounts and epigraphy which mentions about different professional classes like weavers, spinners, dyers, smiths, workers in ivory, metal, wood, cane, bamboo, etc.¹⁵ Even during the medieval times, Assam produced almost all items that were necessary for life in the light of the standard of living prevalent in those days. E. A. Gait in his book *A History of Assam* has stated that the industry was highly developed in the Ahom period. He referred to weavers, spinners, goldsmiths, potters and workers in ivory, bamboo, wood and cane.¹⁶

The traditional manufacturing like textiles; processing and production of metals like iron, gold, copper, brass and bell metal; earthen works like pottery, bricks and tiles; handicrafts like bamboo and cane works; ivory and horn works, etc had a glorious past.¹⁷ But the indigenous industries were considered as of subsidiary nature as the main profession of the Assamese people was agriculture. Specialization was only there in the making of bell metal and brass metal utensils, earthen wares, ornaments and a few other articles.¹⁸ In any case, no Assamese artisan was hereditarily attached to any particular trade in such a way as to tie him down to a particular community. A considerable flexibility existed in the social structure so far as the practice of trade was concerned.¹⁹ The *jajmani* system²⁰ was also non-existent. Hence, there did not emerge exclusive artisan castes in Assam.

¹⁵ P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1987, p. 338

¹⁶ E. A. Gait, 2003, op. cit. pp. 268-273

¹⁷ Prabin Baishya, *Small and Cottage Industries: A Study in Assam*, Manas Publications, Delhi, 1989, p. 66

¹⁸ A. Guha, *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam Society, Polity, Economy*, KP Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1991, p. 24

¹⁹ Priyam Goswami, 2005, op. cit. pp. 10-11

²⁰ Jajmani is an Indian socio-economic system where there is exchange of goods and services between landowning higher castes and landless service castes. The service castes are traditionally weavers, leather workers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, barbers, washer men, etc constituting an artisanal caste serving the community. The Jajmani system is based on agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services. It is the link between the landowning high caste groups and service castes.

In Assam, it was difficult to identify the artisans and cultivators as almost every people got some land and grew some crops.²¹ The Ahom King Pratap Singha (1611 A.D. - 1649 A.D.) introduced goldsmiths, blacksmiths and other artisans from Koch Bihar and tried to induce his subjects to follow similar occupations. Some of them did so, a section of the *kacharis* took to gold washing and became known as *sonowal kacharis*; some members of the *koch*, *kalita* and other agricultural castes became potters and came to be known as *kumars*; some of them became blacksmiths and came to be known as *kamars*; some became bell metal smiths and came to be known as *kanhars*, etc. But as they were all basically agriculturalists they refrained from forming a special occupational caste or sub-caste.²²

However, the indigenous industries in pre-colonial times remained developed only to an extent as it produced items to fulfill the demand of local consumption and there was no incentive to develop beyond it.²³ Still, internal and external trade was carried on both by land and water with the neighbouring provinces and adjacent countries like Burma, Tibet, China and Bhutan. It was the surplus production which was normally traded. The chief article of trade was silk, both raw and manufactured along with other valuable articles like lac, dyes, ivory, bell metal items, cotton cloth, gold jewellery, etc. But there was hardly any private trade because it was basically controlled by the State. This inhibited the growth of an independent merchant class.²⁴

²¹ H. K. Barpujari, 1980, op. cit. p. 263

²² E. A. Gait, 'Brass and Copper Wares in Assam' in *Notes on Some Industries of Assam From 1884 to 1895*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1896, p. 112

²³ H. K. Barpujari, (ed.), Volume-III, op. cit. p. 120

²⁴ Barnali Sarma, 'The Marwaris and the Economy of the Brahmaputra Valley in the Early Twentieth Century' in Priyam Goswami, (ed.), *Changing Patterns of Economy and Society*, Department of History, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 2007, p. 124

Despite of having no artisanal caste, little specialisation, less incentive for development and absence of independent merchant class, the indigenous industries of Assam with its fine products caught the attraction of foreigners. Among the Europeans, Assam received wide publicity as a result of its invasion by Nawab Mir Jumla. European merchants in Bengal showed direct interest in the progress of the expedition led by Mir Jumla as they mainly depended upon his support for their success in trade. Mir Jumla was accompanied by a number of Dutch, Portuguese and English sailors.²⁵ On their return they gave reports on the rich economic potentialities of Assam to their home governments which created eagerness on their part to undertake a survey of the region for collecting informations.

The first official of the English East India Company to survey the frontier of Assam and collect some information about the area was Major James Rennell. In 1765, he traced the course of the river Brahmaputra up to the point where the Bengal districts ended and those of Assam began. He recognized the identity of the Brahmaputra with the Tsanpo river of Tibet. But Rennell was not permitted to enter into the Kingdom of Assam.²⁶ It was finally in 1771 that the Court of Directors of the Company officially considered on a serious note the possibility of a profitable trade with the Kingdom of Assam.²⁷ In the meantime, internal disturbances started in Assam which continued to develop and it created lots of problem for the Ahom monarchy. These internal disturbances provided a golden opportunity for the Company to enter into some sort of formal relationship with the Kingdom of Assam.

²⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations: 1771-1826*, LBS Publication, Guwahati, 2008, p. 59

²⁶ Ibid. p. 62

²⁷ Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 42

Being unable to tackle the internal disturbances, the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha (1780 A.D.-1795 A.D.) and his officials made repeated applications to the Company for providing assistance. This finally led to the sending of Captain Welsh to Assam in 1792. Outwardly the motive behind sending Welsh was to restore the internal peace in Assam, but intrinsically a commercial motive was there as the Company was primarily a commercial concern. Lord Cornwallis (the then Governor General of the English East India Company) instructed Welsh to enquire into the trade and manufactures of Assam. The Governor General had admitted later that after the restoration of internal peace, he had hoped “to establish a free commercial intercourse that might be beneficial both to Assam and the Company’s provinces.”²⁸

Captain Welsh did not disappoint his Company. Though he was busy with active military measures and political negotiations, he was focused on the commercial objects of his deputation. Soon after his arrival at Gauhati (present Guwahati), Welsh had written to the Governor General of his confidence that with the restoration of peace and order “a new source of wealth and riches must flow to the Company.”²⁹ Hence, with the restoration of internal peace, on 28th February, 1793 an Anglo-Ahom Commercial Treaty was signed for establishing trade relationship between the subjects of Bengal and Assam for all singular goods and merchandizes. The expedition of Captain Welsh and the Anglo-Ahom Commercial Treaty proved to be a landmark in the changing relationship of the English East India Company with Assam.³⁰

²⁸ S. K. Bhuyan, 2008, op. cit. pp. 338-339

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 44

With a formal commercial treaty being signed, the Company from the very beginning tried to extend their trading activities into the interior of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Bengal merchants, both European and Indian expected to have a stable as well as profitable trade in Assam under the protection of the Company's force. But the change in the Governor Generalship of the Company altered its policy towards Assam. Lord Cornwallis was succeeded by Sir John Shore who followed a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in India. He did not like to continue the vigorous policy of his predecessor and issued orders for the withdrawal of the detachment from Assam. Welsh accordingly in 1794 returned back with his troops.³¹ This created panic among the Bengal merchants who were shocked at the sudden withdrawal of the protection provided by the Company's force. But the trade relationship continued.

The recall of the detachment from Assam proved to be a short sighted action in the long run. Infact, on receiving the order of departure, Welsh had reported that "if the detachment were withdrawn, confusion, devastation and massacre would ensue".³² Even the Court of Directors regretted the action of Sir John Shore in recalling the troops before they had accomplished the objects of their march. The Ahom king considered the measure to be a contradiction of the assurances of protection given to him and his subjects by the Bengal Government.³³ He requested several times for further staying of troops at least for some time and offered to pay the whole of the expenses of the troops.³⁴ But no heed was paid to the request and Company's troops were withdrawn creating a tense situation there.

³¹ S. K. Bhuyan, 2008, op. cit. pp. 409-410

³² E. A. Gait, 2003, op. cit. p. 217

³³ William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, Sanskaran Prakashak, Delhi, 1975, p. 174

³⁴ E. A. Gait, 2003, op. cit. p. 217

From the commercial perspective, it was a mistake on the part of Sir John Shore to recall the troops as it could have provided Welsh and his companion opportunity to survey more about the potentialities of Assam and to secure further economic privileges from the Ahom king. This would have been very beneficial for the Company. Soon after the departure of Captain Welsh, internal problems again started in the Kingdom of Assam eventually leading to Burmese invasion and subsequent re-interference of the Company in the affairs of Assam after a gap of almost 30 years. During these 30 years many petitions were made for direct assistance by the Ahom Government which were rejected strictly following the policy of neutrality and non-interference which was however abandoned by the successors of Shore in case of the Company's territory.³⁵

A strict vigil was however kept on the progress of internal troubles in Assam as it might disturb the peace of the Bengal frontier. Until no disturbances, the Ahom kings were asked to suppress the troubles by his own exertions without depending upon the help of any exterior agency. But when the Burmese occupied Assam and threatened the peace of the neighbouring districts of Bengal, the Company Government sent an army to expel the invaders from there.³⁶ On the eve of the march of British troops into Assam, David Scott (the Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier) addressed a proclamation to the people of Assam that "We are not lead into your country by the thirst of conquest, but are forced in our defence to deprive our enemy of the means of annoying us. We will never consent to depart until we

³⁵ In Assam, the policy of neutrality was rigidly followed as its case was quite different from that of other native states of India. Its troubles did not for a long time extend or threaten to extend beyond the limits of its frontier. There was as such no immediate danger in following that policy towards Assam.

³⁶ S. K. Bhuyan, 2008, *op. cit.* pp. 424-426

exclude our foe from Assam and re-establish in that country a government adapted to your wants and calculate to promote the happiness of the people of all classes”.³⁷

The Anglo-Burmese War commenced in March, 1824 and finally ended with the victory of the Company and signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24 February, 1826. By the article 2 of the treaty, the King of Burma “renounced all claims upon and promised to abstain from all future interference with the principality of Assam and its dependencies”.³⁸ But, Assam was not handed over to the Company. Rather, taking advantage of the political vacuum created because of the division in the Ahom royal family, the Company remained in Assam trying to regain its earlier lost position. During the expedition of Captain Welsh, the Company had secured a position in Assam as well as faith for her among its inhabitants. But all was lost because of the policy of non-intervention. Hence on re-intervening, the Company was in no mood to leave Assam, more particularly after being already aware of her economic potentialities.

Having remained in isolation, Assam herself was not at all aware of her importance in the light of the then world economy as a stock house of vast natural resources, large market, rich hinterland of Calcutta and forwarding agency for establishing trade with Burma, Tibet and China. But the Company had acquainted itself with these potentialities of Assam and after occupation looked upon her in a multi-faceted manner.³⁹ Still, immediate annexation of Assam was not possible for the Company as authorities in England prior to the outbreak of the Anglo-Burmese War

³⁷ H. K. Barpujari, 1980, op. cit. pp. 39-40

³⁸ H. K. Barpujari, (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Volume-IV*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2004, p. 4

³⁹ Priyam Goswami, 2005, op. cit. p. 13

had already declared that “to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of this nation”. Further, this was again reiterated on 20 February, 1824 in a despatch to David Scott by George Swinton, the Political Secretary to the Government of India, 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 permanent annexation of any part of it to the British dominion”.⁴⁰

With no decision taken on the future of Assam by the authorities in Calcutta, David Scott tried to shape the overall degraded condition of the region. This was very much necessary from Company’s perspective in order to enlist the support and loyalty of the local population. At that time in Assam, the administrative structure was non-existent, the economy was in shambles and the overall picture was of loot, plunder and decay.⁴¹ Still, Scott showed hope for the revival of economy and monetization of it. Reporting on the agricultural capabilities, he stated that the land throughout the division was fertile and produced far more luxuriant crops than any part of Bengal.⁴² He pointed out that Assam was an agricultural not a manufacturing country. He greatly encouraged the production of raw silk, more particularly *muga*. Infact, Scott since 1826 pressed for the development of the silk industry in Assam.⁴³

At the commencement of the colonial rule, the indigenous industries in Assam must have been in a disrupted condition with the whole economy being in shambles. Even the key occupation of agriculture was left out by the people who fled away to

⁴⁰ H. K. Barpujari, 1980, op. cit. p. 13

⁴¹ Priyam Goswami, 2005, op. cit. p. 12

⁴² Nirode K. Barooah, *David Scott in North-East India 1802-1831*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1970, p. 95

⁴³ Ibid. p. 105

jungles and survived there on jungle roots and plants in the fear of life under the Burmese atrocities. As such the continuation of the indigenous industrial practices which was a subsidiary source of income does not arise. But the revival of these indigenous industries was still possible as was the case of agriculture. It was because the products of these indigenous industries were the commodities required by the Assamese people in their day to day life. The products had a good local demand and also could be exported to other parts of India and neighbouring foreign countries because of its artistic and utilitarian quality. There was indeed every possibility of developing the indigenous industries of Assam under the atmosphere of peace and order re-established by the colonial regime.

But the beginning of the colonial rule in Assam coincided with the emergence of England as a major industrial power. This brought a change in the economic policy of England which the Company had to implement as its agent in India. The British economic policy in India can be divided into three phases, namely, acquisition, colonisation and exploitation. The annexation of Assam belonged to the third phase of exploitation where commercial gain was the prime consideration.⁴⁴ Under the phase of exploitation, India was viewed as a market for the British manufactured goods and supplier of raw materials for the infant industries in England. The growth of industries in India was discouraged and entry of finished products from India into English market was prevented with protective tariffs thereby encouraging the development of industries in their mother country. Contrary to it, the market in India was opened up for British goods by imposing the free trade policy. Assam was viewed in this context

⁴⁴ Priyam Goswami, 'Colonial Penetration and The Emergence of Nationalism in Assam' in Arun Bhuyan, (ed.), *Nationalist Upsurge in Assam*, Government of Assam Publication, Gauhati, 2000, p. 12

as a new open market for British goods. From the outset, the British aimed at suppressing the local industries and replacing the indigenous products with British goods.⁴⁵

A policy of de-industrialisation was inaugurated in India under which the traditional Indian industries suffered so greatly that most of these either decayed beyond recovery or were on the road to ultimate ruin.⁴⁶ Both the nationalist⁴⁷ and the leftist⁴⁸ writers hence opined that “Indian industries due to the policy of de-industrialisation witnessed a decline during the colonial period and the artisanal population saw a change in their occupational structure with shifting to agriculture”.⁴⁹ But an alternative opinion is put forwarded by historian Tirthankar Roy that there was no such de-industrialisation in Colonial India in the proper sense of the term. Rather, many major industries were formed and the traditionally existing one had an evolution due to the economic transformation which took place during that period.⁵⁰

Actually the general debate on de-industrialisation has nothing much resemblance with the situation in Colonial Assam. In comparison to the rest of India, Assam came lately under the impact of colonialism and hence the industrial debates do not bring the traditional industries of Assam into its periphery. Infact, the industrial position in Assam was different from other parts of India where indigenous commodities were manufactured in large scale and had wide extensive market. But in

⁴⁵ Priyam Goswami, 2005, op. cit. p. 14

⁴⁶ Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 45

⁴⁷ Dadabhai Naoraji, R. C. Dutt, etc

⁴⁸ Tapan Ray Choudhury, Bipan Chandra, Amiya Kumar Bagchi, etc

⁴⁹ Sudeshna Purkayastha, *Indigenous Industries of Assam: 1870-1925*, KP Bagchi and Company, Kolkata, 2005, p. 21

⁵⁰ See Tirthankar Roy, *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1999

Assam, there was limited production of commodities. Mostly, the commodities were manufactured for domestic consumption and only the surplus amount was sold. There was also no occupational caste or sub-caste in Assam to be solely engaged with the traditional industries.⁵¹

Still, the effect of the de-industrialisation policy followed in all India level had its impact on Assam. The indigenous industries running traditionally in Assam with age old technology were disrupted during the Burmese atrocities. Whatever opportunity for revival was there under the colonial regime was hampered by their de-industrialisation policy. Instead of providing impetus for the growth and development of the indigenous industries to cater to the needs of customers in and outside the province, the colonial rulers tried to discourage their growth. Further, they filled the markets with cheap machine made products creating unequal competition for the indigenous products. Impetus was rather provided towards utilizing the vast natural resources of Assam to feed the industries in their mother country.

The policy of de-industrialisation led to the precarious existence of indigenous industries in Assam. The artisans gradually failed to hold on to their crafts. The entry of the *kayans*⁵² and the *byaparis*⁵³ further deteriorated the condition of the indigenous industries as they gradually penetrated into these industries and took over its control. A favourable situation for the *kayans* and the *byaparis* to establish their commercial supremacy in the province was created by the colonial rulers as they could act as

⁵¹ G. N. Gupta, *A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam for 1907-08*, Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1908, pp. 5-6

⁵² The kayans were the Marwari businessmen. This non-indigenous business community came from the Marwar region of Rajasthan and settled down in Assam for establishing their trade and commerce.

⁵³ The byaparis were traders from Calcutta and Dacca who along with the kayans entered Assam. They acted as middleman between the kayans and the artisans.

British agents for supplying commodities to their armies and in conducting government finance.⁵⁴ No aptitude for commercial activities amongst the Assamese people further provided an open platform for the non-indigenous commercial castes to enter into the economic arena of the province.

With no artisan castes, there was lack of adaptability on the part of the Assamese artisans to hold on to the indigenous industrial practices under adverse situation. The artisans were all basically agriculturalist and under stress as well as strain they returned back to agriculture for a source of living instead of precariously hanging on to their subsidiary source of income in a region where the *jajmani* system did not take its roots to ensure a sense of security to them.⁵⁵ With an ease the indigenous industries capitulated without offering any sort of resistance. E. A. Gait ascribes this to the absence of occupational sub-castes among the Assamese people. He believed that it was because of this that the imported articles could supplant the indigenous articles so easily.⁵⁶ Even the elementary industry of agriculture cannot be considered to be in a very flourishing condition amongst the indigenous inhabitants of the province.⁵⁷

The healthy balance of the pre-colonial economy maintained by a co-ordination of agriculture and indigenous industries totally eroded within a few years of the British occupation of Assam.⁵⁸ As a result, Assam not only lost her self-sufficiency but also her external markets. The balance of trade totally shifted in favour

⁵⁴ Barnali Sarma, 2007, op. cit. p. 124

⁵⁵ M. C. Goswami, 'Bell Metal Workers of Sarthebari, Assam' in *Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology, Volume-II*, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 1973, p. 4

⁵⁶ G. N. Gupta, op. cit. p. 104

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 103

⁵⁸ Priyam Goswami, 2007, op. cit. p. 14

of the Company. Once an exporter of finished products, she soon became a large importer of foreign manufacturers.⁵⁹ Assam had a favourable balance of trade as its exports exceeded imports in the 1830s. During the period from 26 December, 1832 to April, 1835 the total value of exports and imports amounted to Rs. 7,00,325 and Rs. 5,50,455 respectively. During that period Assam had an export surplus which was to the tune of Rs. 1,49,870.⁶⁰ Custom returns reveal that brass-copper-iron wares, mats continued to be exported from Assam until 1835. But in subsequent years exports constituted mostly of the raw materials, while the import of foreign manufactured goods was on the increase.⁶¹

The various domestic products which so long satisfied the need of the people came to be replaced by imported items. At various levels, the impact of the import was strongly felt by the artisans. But they could neither obstruct the traders to expand market of imported items, nor expect people to keep away from the habit of using those ready-made goods.⁶² For instance, the women of the more well-to-do classes gave up their own special apparels, such as *paradya kapar* for Benares saris, etc, and among the middle class women the cheaper Manchester cloth was largely in vogue.⁶³ As a result, the local or indigenous industries like cotton, silk, pottery, earthenware, brass metal ware, copper ware, bell metal ware, etc had to struggle for its very existence.

⁵⁹ Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 46

⁶⁰ Jalad Baran Ganguly, *An Economic History of North-East India, 1826 to 1947*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 127-128

⁶¹ H. K. Barpujari, 1980, op. cit. p. 259

⁶² Rajen Saikia, *Social and Economic History of Assam (1853-1921)*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, p. 50

⁶³ G. N. Gupta, op. cit. p. 1

However, the decline in the traditional pre-colonial economy coincided with the creation of a new modern economy in Assam beginning with the tea plantation. Along with the tea plantation and in some cases in consequence of it, a modern industrial sector grew up in Assam with the establishment of such industries as petroleum, saw mills, plywood manufacture and coal mining.⁶⁴ Besides, a modern transport and communication system was also built during the British regime with the gradual development of river, road and railway transports as well as postal and telegraph services.⁶⁵ The total investment in tea, railways, road, steamer, coal, petroleum, saw-mill and tele-communication during 1881-1901 was about Rs. 200 million or Rs. 10 million per year which amounted to 15 to 20% of the total income of the province. But the most deplorable aspect of this huge investment was that such a big push could not lift the economy of the province to the take-off stage.⁶⁶

This new modern economy created by the colonial rulers in fact tightly bonded the economy of Assam into the heels of British economy in a subservient position. There was no growth in the traditional economic sector as growth stimuli generated by the modern economic sector was not applied to remove the bottlenecks and constraints surrounding the traditional economic sector comprising of agriculture along with indigenous industries. Rather, the investments made from outside to develop the modern economic sector was counter-balanced by massive drain of income. The gap between the income stream accrued and the income disbursed within the province increasingly widened. There emerged a serious imbalance between the

⁶⁴ Khorshed Alam, *The Economic Development of Assam Since Independence: An Analytical Study* (A Published Thesis), Department of Economics, Gauhati University, 1974, p. 171

⁶⁵ Prasen Daimari, *Five Year Plans and Industrialisation in Assam*, EBH Publishers, Guwahati, 2007, p. 1

⁶⁶ Prabin Baishya, 1989, op. cit. p. 79

fast growing modern economic sector and stagnant traditional economic sector.⁶⁷ This resulted in a colonial pattern of development in Assam with the creation of a dual economy, a small modern economic sector and a huge traditional economic sector existing side by side.

Local investments were also made in the modern economic sector. The Assamese middle class as was considered by Amalendu Guha⁶⁸ like Dinanath Bezbarua, Manikchandra Barooah, Malbhog Barua, Rahamat Ali and others in the 19th century preferred to invest their capital in tea plantation, saw mills and timber business. Mainly they preferred to invest in tea plantation having a secured market. This middle class did not want to take risk with their capital by either investing it in other manufacturing industry or in the traditional economic sector to develop the indigenous industry in the modern lines. An exception to this was Lakheswar Barthakur who in the early part of the 20th century after having training in Japan (1905-09) attempted to start a sugar factory, but was discouraged by the colonial authorities on various grounds showing their hypocrisy for improving the conditions of the economy as well as their dislike towards the emergence of an indigenous industrial class.⁶⁹

Actually, the Swadeshi Movement⁷⁰ (1905-11) in Assam revived the taste among the people for indigenous goods. This revival of taste led to the emergence of a new social section in both the Valleys' of Assam consisting of patriotic and business

⁶⁷ A. Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, ICHR, New Delhi, 1977, p. 40

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 341-343

⁶⁹ Prabin Baishya, 1989, op. cit. pp. 81-82

⁷⁰ The Swadeshi Movement broke out in 1905 as a protest against the decision of the British Government to partition Bengal into two provinces, 'Bengal Proper' and 'Eastern Bengal and Assam'. Assam was incorporated with the Eastern Bengal.

mindful middle class community who sowed the seeds of local enterprise in Assam in various fields like textile, sugar, lac, timber, brick, tiles and also in banking and insurance business.⁷¹ But these local enterprises termed by many as *swadeshi* enterprises⁷² were not laid down on a strong foundation. In addition to the paucity of capital, there was unequal competition, lack of technical knowledge, improper marketing network, etc which created hurdles in the way of these *swadeshi* enterprises for sustainability and development. Nevertheless their enterprising spirit must be applauded as it paved the way for entrepreneurial and industrial development in the province. Besides, there also developed a spirit of belongingness for domestic products which indirectly to an extent boosted the indigenous industries like cotton, silk, bell and brass metal, pottery, etc producing items of use in daily life.

Still, this *swadeshi* spirit did not revive the lost position of the indigenous industries in Assam. It indirectly seems from the 1911 Census Report that the indigenous industries in Assam during the first decade of the 20th century (1900-10) remained in a stagnant position with a future of uncertainty. Actually for the first time a proper census of handlooms and certain other cottage industries was conducted in the province of Assam only in 1921.⁷³ Hence, for the period from 1900-10, it is scarcely possible to estimate the progress of the indigenous industries which were all basically cottage industries⁷⁴. This fact is even testified by the *Provincial*

⁷¹ Sudeshna Purkayastha, op. cit. p. 132

⁷² The *swadeshi* enterprises refer to the local enterprises started in the realm of the *Swadeshi* Movement by investing local capital with a feeling of self-reliance and anti-British attitude.

⁷³ *Census of India, 1921, Volume-III, Assam, Part-I, Report*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1922, p. 6

⁷⁴ The term cottage industries basically refer to those indigenous industries where goods are manufactured with traditional technique to particularly meet the demands of the household.

Administration Report of Assam for the year 1911-12 where it has been stated that “the native manufacturers of Assam are not of great importance and the peculiar conditions under which they are carried on render it difficult to form an accurate estimate of their progress or decline”.⁷⁵

A separate Imperial Department of Commerce and Industry was created in India in the year 1905.⁷⁶ From that year onward, the Colonial Government started organising Annual Industrial Conferences in India and the First Industrial Conference was held at Benaras on 30 December, 1905 for the promotion of Indian industries. In the Conference, R. C. Dutt in his Presidential Address mentioned that “our old industries have undoubtedly declined and we have to recover the lost ground”.⁷⁷ The old unorganized industries are not less important for the economic advancement of the Indian people than the larger industries that can be developed. In this direction, Sir John Hewett in his Presidential Address at the Nainital Industrial Conference held in 1907 stated that “while it is the duty of the state to do all that it can legitimately do to foster the establishment of the larger industries, it is no less its duty to resuscitate and put new life into the arts and handicrafts that still have vitality in them by re-organizing them on modern lines and by placing at the disposal of those engaged in them the practical applications of modern scientific discoveries.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1911-12*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1913, p. 27

⁷⁶ *Report on the Indian Industrial Commission, 1916-18*, Bengal Secretariat Printing Office, Calcutta, 1918, p. 68

⁷⁷ Presidential Address delivered by R. C. Dutt, Esq., C.I.E. in the *First Industrial Conference*, 1905

⁷⁸ Rai Bahadur Kanak Lal Barua Bahadur, *Note on the Industrial Condition and Possibilities of Assam*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1916, p. 1

The Gauhati Industrial Conference held in 1913 recommended the creation of a Department of Industries for the province. It was emphasized at the Conference that hands of the Department of Education were already full and that no new functions in connection with industrial education could be taken up by that department. These functions can very well be performed by the Director of Industries unhampered by other duties.⁷⁹ Further, the Conference held that there was ample scope for a single officer in fostering co-operative societies and working up the various small industries of the province. As such, there should be an officer who should be the Director of Industries and Registrar of Co-operative Societies. The sanction of the Secretary of State to the proposed new appointment was received in 1915. But as the First World War (1914-18) was in progress, there was shortage of funds to give effect to the sanctioned proposals. It was finally in 1918 that the Department of Industries came into existence in Assam.⁸⁰

The Department of Industries in Assam was expected to take measures for building up the infrastructure of the indigenous industries, imparting technical and industrial education for developing the quality of the local artisans, disseminating commercial and industrial education, etc.⁸¹ But, it was a deliberate policy of the Colonial Government in Assam to assist through Department of Industries only those indigenous industries having prospect of commercial revival and future. Factors like adequate local demand of the products and local availability of raw materials as well as labour were also taken into account before selecting an industry. Attention was

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 12

⁸⁰ K. L. Barua, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1919-20*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1920, p. 1

⁸¹ K. L. Barua, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1920-21*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1921, p. 1

drawn towards regenerating industries like silk and sericulture, cotton, gold washing, leather and metal work.⁸² However, it was taken care of that this revival of indigenous industries should not adversely affect the British industrial interest in the province and hence the products of these revived indigenous industries were directed towards securing markets in other parts of Asia instead of competing with foreign goods at the local markets.

As the native enterprise was inadequate for industrial enterprise in the province of Assam, the Colonial Government during revival tried to attract the Indian capitalist with whose collaboration the British merchants could set up a profitable trade in the indigenous products. The Colonial Government organized some industrial exhibitions like Assam Home Industries Show and the Industrial Exhibition in Shillong, Gauhati and Sylhet.⁸³ But the works of the Department of Industries in Assam suffered from its initial period owing to policy of stringent economy pursued by the Colonial Government. All the development schemes were indefinitely shelved for want of funds.⁸⁴ In addition to money, the Department of Industries also lacked adequate staff to do anything towards the organization and development of the local industries.⁸⁵ Prof. A.K. Bagchi even observes that the Department of Industries suffered from the very beginning from “a shortage of staff and lack of priority in official attention.” This was not true only for Assam, but for many of the Indian

⁸² Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 168

⁸³ Sudeshna, Purkayastha, op. cit. p. 87

⁸⁴ K. L. Barua, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1922-23*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1923, p. 1

⁸⁵ I. Majid, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1930-31*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1931, p. 2

provinces where the Department of Industries were cropped up at about the end of the First World War.⁸⁶

Some of the indigenous industries undoubtedly could be worked on a co-operative basis, but the Department of Co-operative Societies like the Department of Industries being lowly staffed was hardly in a position to undertake such works. Although some indigenous industries were selected by the Colonial Government for regeneration through the Department of Industries, but its activities were mainly confined to the encouragement of handloom weaving and sericulture as well as to the spread of technical and industrial education. The inevitable result was that some of the indigenous industries, such as the manufacture of cane and bamboo articles, boat building, cart-wheel making, mat making, pottery, bell metal industry, ivory works, etc were in a declining condition with little margin of profit to those engaged in them and were gradually dying out.⁸⁷

Again in 1929-30 there was worldwide economic depression which seriously affected the cultivators and cottage workers⁸⁸. Money was scarce and the purchasing capacity of the people was at the lowest level. It was feared that this abnormal condition may further adversely affect some of the decadent industries of the province.⁸⁹ Most of the indigenous industries were hard hit by the economic depression and some of them became almost stagnant. The people who were engaged in the manufacture of brass and bell metal works, tin cases, steel trunks, shoes, mats,

⁸⁶ Sudeshna Purkayastha, op. cit. p. 91

⁸⁷ J. N. Chakravarty, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1929-30*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1930, p. 2

⁸⁸ The term cottage workers refer to the artisans working in the indigenous industries of Assam which were all basically cottage industries.

⁸⁹ I. Majid, 1930-31, op. cit. p. 2

umbrellas, jewellery, wood and cane furniture, etc were the worst sufferers.⁹⁰ This economic depression continued for several years and it became less acute only during the year 1935-36.⁹¹

Even after the end of economic depression, the Department of Industries in Assam failed to do much for the development of indigenous industries owing to paucity of men and money. As stated in the industry reports, the department could not undertake a general survey on the indigenous industries to determine its overall position. But this department, unlike the Department of Industries in other provinces, was not required to deal with the bigger industries of the province such as tea, coal, oil, timber, etc.⁹² It was to deal with only the indigenous industries.⁹³ Still, all other provinces in India made rapid strides in industrial development, but unfortunately Assam lagged behind in this respect. This was mostly because of the fact that the Director of Industries was not in direct touch with the major industries for which he could neither contribute much to the general industrial development of the province nor could help materially in the solution of the unemployment problem to any extent.⁹⁴

Infact, the industrial development in colonial Assam remain confined to only certain sectors, like tea, coal, petroleum, etc. Apart from tea, coal and petroleum, no other large scale industry was established in Assam during the colonial period. Few

⁹⁰ I. Majid, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1931-32*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1932, p. 3

⁹¹ S. L. Mehta, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1935-36*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1936, p. 3

⁹² S. L. Mehta, *Report of the Department of Industries, Assam, For the Year 1934-35*, Assam Secretariat Printing Office, Shillong, 1935, p. 2

⁹³ S. L. Mehta, 1935-36, op. cit. p. 1

⁹⁴ S. L. Mehta, 1934-35, op. cit. pp. 2-3

small scale industries were there like plywood, saw mills, printing press, etc. But, undoubtedly Assam had plenty of raw materials for establishing more industries.⁹⁵ Rather, the indigenous industries became stagnant or survived somehow in a decaying state. At an alarmingly faster rate the people from their traditional industries were driven out, but there was no proportionate growth of new industries to absorb the displaced persons. The worst effect of the decrease in the indigenous industries and the failure of new industries to take their place was that the economy of the province came more and more under foreign domination.⁹⁶ Overall industrial scenario of the province under colonial rule remained in an undeveloped stage with few modern colonial industries where capital investment and profit were all shared mostly by the Europeans.

At the time of independence, Assam in terms of industrial development was lacking far behind in comparison to the rest of India. Other than the few large scale and small scale industries, Assam was basically a state having indigenous industries. These indigenous industries were mostly unorganized and were running on traditional and family pattern as cottage industries without any formal registration, except few co-operative societies. These industries like brass and bell metal, pottery, woodcraft, sericulture, handloom weaving, etc provided full and part-time employment to the rural people.⁹⁷ In the light of the rural industrialization which was then focused on at the all India level, the indigenous industries along with the small scale industries had a prime importance.

⁹⁵ Khorshed Alam, op. cit. p. 180

⁹⁶ Priyam Goswami, 1999, op. cit. p. 208

⁹⁷ B. K. Sarma, *Industrial Landscape of North-East India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 67

The two Industrial Policy Resolutions of 1948 and 1956 reiterated the urgent need for developing the small scale and cottage industries which was focused on by Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom movement. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 emphasised the role of cottage and small scale industries as they “offer scope for individual, village or co-operative enterprises and means for the rehabilitation of the displaced persons”. While, the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 re-emphasised the role of cottage and small scale industries as they do “provide immediate large scale employment, offer a method of ensuring a more equitable distribution of the national income and facilitate an effective mobilization of resources of capital and skill which otherwise might remain unutilized”. Further, the Industrial Policy Statement of 1980 also reiterated that the government was determined to “promote such form of industrialisation in the country as can generate economic viability in the villages”.⁹⁸

A proper planning was as such required for developing the industrial scenario in Assam. Before the beginning of the planning period, in 1948-49 the Government of Assam prepared a plan to start several industries like paper, jute, sugar, cotton textile, cement, etc with a loan of Rs. 258 lakhs to be provided by the Central Government. But the plan failed as the expected loan was not materialized. Efforts were then made by the Government of Assam to encourage private enterprises to start these industries, but none came forward.⁹⁹ The real beginning of the planning in India was made in March, 1950 with the establishment of the Planning Commission of India. The Planning Commission in July, 1951 presented the draft outline of the first Five Year Plan. Similarly, different State Governments of India also presented their State Plans

⁹⁸ Prabin Baishya, 1989, op. cit. pp. 36-37

⁹⁹ P. C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1988, p. 201

before the Planning Commission for its approval.¹⁰⁰ Although planning started in Assam along with the other states of the country, but the aims of the first Five Year Plan were directed towards the development of agricultural sector neglecting the industrial sector.¹⁰¹

Still under the first Five Year Plan (1951-56), the Government of Assam tried to improve the condition of the small scale and cottage industries by offering training facilities to industrial workers.¹⁰² For this purpose, a *Cottage Industries Training Institute* was set up at Guwahati in 1951 to impart training in blacksmithy, carpentry, leather works, bamboo and cane works, potteries, etc. Several training centres were also set up at different places for providing training. But the programme for the improvement of the cottage industries did not succeed as providing facilities for training was merely not enough. Apart from training, the small scale and cottage industries needed financial assistance, supply of raw materials at cheaper rates, reduction in the cost of production and proper marketing facilities.¹⁰³

The Government of India in 1955 as a process for drafting the framework of the second Five Year Plan constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Karve for the development of Village and Small industries in different states of India. On the basis of the recommendations of the Karve Committee, the State Handloom Advisory Board, Small Industrial Development Corporation (SIDC) and Marketing Corporation were set up in Assam.¹⁰⁴ A survey was conducted on the cottage

¹⁰⁰ Prasen Daimari, 2007, op. cit. p. 65

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 159

¹⁰² Prasen Daimari, *Economic Development of Assam Problems and Prospects*, EBH Publishers, Guwahati, 2008, p. 171

¹⁰³ P. C. Goswami, op. cit. p. 158

¹⁰⁴ Prasen Daimari, 2008, op. cit. p. 171

industries in Assam by the State Government in 1954-55 in order to have detailed information on the problems and prospects of these industries whose development was considered during the second Plan period as an important line of industrial advancement in the country.¹⁰⁵ The National Council of Applied Economic Research even conducted a survey on the industrial potentialities of the State and an Industrial Conference was also held during the second Plan period. All these created a tempo for industrial development in the State with several applications coming before the Government of Assam for establishing small, medium and major industries.¹⁰⁶

As such, during the second Five Year Plan period (1956-61) two industrial estates, one at Guwahati and other at Dhekiajuli were established for the growth of small scale industries in the State. A sugar mill, a bamboo factory, two cotton spinning mills, two cycle factories, a plywood factory, many brick fields, etc started its production during this Plan period.¹⁰⁷ The Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board constituted in 1953 also sponsored some cottage and household industries like pottery, oil pressing, cane and bamboo, dyeing and printing, blacksmithy and carpentry, etc in some urban and mostly in rural areas of the State.¹⁰⁸ But the most important industrial development made during the second Plan was the establishment of a refinery at Noonmati (Guwahati) with crude pipe line.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Report on A Survey of Cottage Industries in Assam, Volume-I, Part-I (General)*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1958, p. 1

¹⁰⁶ Prasen Daimari, 2007, op. cit. p. 79

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Prabin Baishya, 1989, op. cit. p. 111

¹⁰⁹ *Third Five Year Plan, 1961-66, Volume-I*, Department of Planning and Development, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1960, p. 24

Emphasis was also laid in the third Five Year Plan (1961-66) on the development of village and small scale industries. It was stated in the Plan that “the village and small scale industries are the integral parts of the rural economy of Assam as they absorb quite a lot of the rural people providing them with employment and income and thereby raise their standard of living which helps to bring about technical changes and balanced and integrated rural economy.”¹¹⁰ The SIDC established during the second Plan was registered in 1961-62 with an authorised capital of Rs. 50 lakhs which resulted in the establishment of several small industries in the State.¹¹¹ Then for the promotion and development of large and medium scale industries in the State, the Assam Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC) was established on 21st April, 1965.¹¹² The refinery established at Noonmati started its production in January, 1962. The work of a fertilizer plant at Namrup, a cement factory at Cherrapunjee and a natural gas distribution project were under progress during the third Plan. Some major industrial units in the private sector were also commissioned during this Plan period.¹¹³

The overall economy of India during 1966 suffered a series of set-back resulting in the postponement of the fourth Five Year Plan and the adoption of Ad-hoc Annual Plans for a period of three years from 1966 to 1969. These Plans incorporated only some stop-gap measures as these were not normal and regular Plans. These Plans were designed to mainly maintain the level of development reached at the end of the last Five Year Plan and to prepare ground for implementation of bigger programmes

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 89

¹¹¹ Prasen Daimari, 2007, op. cit. p. 89

¹¹² P. K. Dhar, *The Economy of Assam*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p. 122

¹¹³ Prasen Daimari, 2007, op. cit. p. 89

in the next Five Year Plan.¹¹⁴ Still, during the three Ad-hoc Annual Plan periods, development in the industrial sector took place. The first phase of the cement factory started during the third Plan was completed and had gone into operation. The natural gas distribution project was also completed. For development of the cottage industries, the schemes for quality making and control, service making and control, training centres, etc were continued under the SIDC. Loan was provided to 220 units and power subsidy was provided to 58 units. The construction of industrial estates at Guwahati and Nalbari were completed. While the construction of industrial estates at Nagaon, Tinsukia, Jorhat and Sibsagar were in progress during the Ad-hoc Annual Plan period.¹¹⁵

The fourth Five Year Plan period (1969-74) witnessed the completion of the construction industrial estates started during the Ad-hoc Annual Plan period. As such the total number of industrial estates in the state got increased up to 8 and all total 75 industrial units were set up in these industrial estates providing employment to about 1500 persons.¹¹⁶ In addition to it some new industries like the Assam Co-operative Jute Mill at Silghat, Ashok Paper Mill at Jogighopa, etc were set up and capacity of some of the existing industries were expanded. Then under the fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78), other than the Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro-Chemical Limited, a cement factory at Bokajan, Assam Petro-Chemical Project at Namrup, etc were commissioned. For the development of cottage industries during the fourth and fifth Plan period, financial assistance were provided to clay potters, brass metal units,

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 82

¹¹⁵ P. K. Dhar, op. cit. p. 214

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 220

etc.¹¹⁷ The North Eastern Council (NEC) was also established in 1972 during the fourth Plan period to coordinate the planning in North-East India and initiate projects involving two or more states and union territories.¹¹⁸

For a period of two years (1978-80) after the completion of fifth Plan, two Ad-hoc Annual Plans were prepared which did not bring about much development in the industrial sector of Assam. The sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) made a large fund allocation of Rs. 57.65 crores for the development of industry and mineral resources in the State in comparison to Rs. 18.64 crores and Rs. 15.19 crores allotted during the fourth and fifth Plan period respectively.¹¹⁹ With the large fund allocations, a number of village and small industrial growth centres were identified. Then a number of village and small industries like bee-keeping, oil extraction, pottery, *gur* and khandsari, cotton and silk, soap making, etc were established. The Assam Industrial Promotion and Infrastructure Corporation was also set up for developing infrastructural facilities in the State. In spite of all these initiatives taken in the industrial sector, industrial development made in Assam till the end of the sixth Plan period was not at all satisfactory. Tea and oil industry still continued to dominate the economy of Assam.¹²⁰

The seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) aimed at establishing one industrial area in each district headquarters of Assam. More than 8000 small industrial units were also established during this Plan period. Then for the next two years (1990-92), Ad-hoc Annual Plans were adopted because of political instability at the centre.

¹¹⁷ Prasen Daimari, 2008, op. cit. pp. 172-73

¹¹⁸ P. C. Goswami, op. cit. p. 220

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 218

¹²⁰ Prasen Daimari, 2008, op. cit. p. 173

Thereafter during the eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), the small scale sector received considerable attention because of importance given by the Central Government and the NEC. By 1994-95, the number of industrial estates set up in the State increased up to 17. A Regional Development Centre was opened up at Guwahati in 1996 for helping in the growth of small industries in the State. Then the Central Government in 1996 facilitated the formation of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFI) with headquarters at Guwahati in order to provide finance and other facilities for the promotion, expansion and modernization of industrial and infrastructural project in the North-Eastern region. The NEDFI with its provision of financial support, data bank, etc for small scale industries brightened its scope for development. The construction of Numaligarh Refinery Limited and setting up of a Gas Cracker Project was also satisfactorily progressing in the State.¹²¹

The ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) witnessed the State Government and Central Government putting joint efforts for developing some resource based industries in Assam with active assistance in form of investments from some Indian private sector companies and foreign companies. A target was also made to set up 15500 small scale industrial units in the State and providing loan to 2000 such units. But in practice only 425 small scale industrial units could be established.¹²² In this way from the time of independence till the end of the 20th century, efforts were made to bring about industrial development in the State through a continuous system of planning. But still the State has not been able to occupy a significant place in the industrial map of India.

¹²¹ Ibid. pp. 174-75

¹²² Ibid. p. 175

Actually, Assam from the pre-colonial times was known for its indigenous industries which were all mostly cottage industries. The colonial period mainly witnessed the suppression of these indigenous industries. But even in the post-colonial period till the end of the 20th century, the required impetus in terms of technological innovation, proper supply of raw materials, product modification with changing market scenario, proper marketing facilities, financial assistance including grants-in-aid, etc were not provided to the indigenous industries under various planning period. These industries have great prospect and being traditional one are deeply rooted in the economy, society, and culture of Assam. These industries, if promoted, can occupy an important place not only in the national but also in the international market.

In this light, a study has been conducted on the condition and development of the two indigenous industries, namely, Silk and Bell Metal industry in Assam during the colonial and post-colonial period. These two indigenous industries have a continuous existence from the pre-colonial times. During the colonial period, amongst the indigenous industries, the silk and bell metal industry despite of facing colonial odds continued to survive and its products even caught the attraction of the colonial masters. Even in the post-colonial period, Assam is known for her silk garments and bell metal products amongst other items. A study on these two indigenous industries will provide a picture of the attention paid towards the growth and development of the indigenous industries in Assam by the Colonial Government as well as by the Native Government after independence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study related to development of industry in a State is a subject matter of research under the purview of the subject Economics. But with a multi-disciplinary

approach, the subject History under its branch 'Economic History' now a day used to study the subject matter of industrial development as per its subject related perspective. From that angle, an attempt has been made to study the developments which took place in the two indigenous industries of Assam, namely, Silk and Bell Metal during the colonial and post-colonial period.

Although the study is from the historical perspective, even there are insights from the discipline of Economics providing an analytical outlook into the study. As such books, journals, etc from both the disciplines, History and Economics are looked for in addition to the available primary sources for the study. On the silk industry, few studies have been conducted which are available in the form of books. But none of these as a whole has covered the colonial and post-colonial development of silk industry in Assam. However, on the bell metal industry there is no such book available. Two unpublished research works are there from geographical perspective on the bell metal industry in Assam. These two have touched only some post-colonial developments.

To study in general about the overall scenario of the traditional industry in India during the colonial period, we come across the works like *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1999) by Tirthankar Roy which focuses on manufacturing in India during the 18th century which was as advanced, diverse and productive as it was anywhere else in the world. The book compiles data on the history of traditional industries under colonialism dealing specifically with handloom cloth, gold thread, brassware, leather and carpets. The author puts forward the idea that rather than being destroyed by British rule, the traditional industries in colonial India were drastically reorganized inside modern

markets. This transition although was a tuff one for the workers but led to the revitalization of industries that remained traditional only in a categorical sense. But in this book no mention has been made about the condition of traditional industries of Assam during the colonial period.

In the book *Colonialism and Indian Economy* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010) edited by Amiya Kumar Bagchi, there are selected articles covering different aspects of the economic history of India during the colonial rule. The book projects a larger picture of Indian economic history providing an insightful account of the colonial period and effectively argues colonialism as structural adjustment. Debate on the de-industrialisation issue in India is also highlighted with new insights into it. However, the issue of de-industrialisation in the context of Assam does not figure out.

Another work of Amiya Kumar Bagchi titled *Private Investment in India 1900-1939*, (Orient Longman Ltd., Madras, 1975) deals with the history of private investment in India and its determinants during the period 1900-1939. The economic policy of the then Government of India and in its light the British Imperial Policy and the spread of modern industry has been elaborately covered in this book. A proper assessment has been made in this book regarding the aggregate private investment made in India and its share in the development of the industries. But the book covers only four decades of colonial history and there is no mention of Assam in it.

D. R. Gadgil in his book the *Industrial Evolution in India in Recent Times 1860-1939* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1971) sketched the evolution of Indian industries from middle of the 19th century onwards depicting its effect on the existing economic structure and the material condition of the artisans and agricultural classes. A detailed account is provided regarding the economic transition of India

from almost medieval to modern conditions along with the factors influencing the rate of progress. However, the economic transition of Assam is missing out in the book.

Another book on the same area titled *Industrial Evolution in India* (Hindu Office, Madras, 1912) by A. Chatterson discusses on the evolution of Indian industries in the light of the problems created in its realm. The book lays emphasis on the need of a systematized industrial training, study of local conditions for industrialisation, revival of native industries, development of small scale industries, etc. The book also devotes its pages towards the developments in the field of agriculture and engineering in India. But this book does not even provide an outline of the industrial development that took place in Assam.

Jalad Baran Ganguly in his book *An Economic History of North East India 1826-1947* (Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006) covers an overall picture of the colonial rule in Assam and also on a lesser degree in Manipur and Tripura. All far reaching changes in the political and socio-economic sphere of the region during that period have been covered in this book. The impact of the two World Wars, economic depression of 1929 and large scale immigration of population resulting in demographic changes have been critically examined. But in the book, the industrial development in colonial Assam has not been specifically dealt and rather has been covered as a part of the overall economic transformation.

Some works are also there in the context of industrial development in colonial Assam like *Assam in the Nineteenth Century: Industrialisation and Colonial Penetration* (Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 1999) by Priyam Goswami which is a pioneering work in the field of economic history of Assam in the colonial period. The book provides a critical analysis of the impact of industrialisation and

colonial penetration in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam during the 19th century. The 19th century is a very significant period in the economic history of Assam as British rulers after occupying Assam introduced a new economy in the province by starting modern industries like tea, coal and oil on which the book has devoted its prime focus. The book provides in a comprehensive manner the role of tea, coal and oil sectors in the economic exploitation and colonisation of Assam in the 19th century as well as in the context of British colonialism in India. An assessment has been made of the ancillary industries that grew in relation to the tea, coal and oil industry. Analysis has also been made of the factors behind British colonisation in Assam and policy for industrialisation adopted by the colonial rulers. Indigenous industries that suffered setback during the colonial period too have been highlighted by the book. By covering the industrialisation in Assam during the 19th century in a systematic manner, the book provides the base as well as scope to study the industrialisation in Assam during the 20th century.

Another book of Priyam Goswami titled *Indigenous Industries of Assam Retrospect and Prospect* (Anshah Publishing House, Delhi, 2005) elaborately discusses about the indigenous or traditional industries of Assam emphasising on the fact that the indigenous industries with its rich tradition and ample economic resources available in the State has an important role to play in the growth of regional economy. Before touching the focus area of study, the book highlights about the socio-economic structure of medieval Assam, how British realized about the economic potentiality of the region and occupied it and the policy adopted by British afterwards to disrupt the then Assamese industrial sector. As a backdrop, the book provides the historical background of the indigenous industries of Assam, before

discussing the colonial impact on these industries in the 19th century leading to stagnation there. As these traditional industries have got huge potential, the book analyses the causes of stagnation with suggestions for removing it as well as assesses the prospect of some traditional industries like sericulture, mask, cane and bamboo, horticulture, etc so that they can flourish in the present market scenario.

The book *Indigenous Industries of Assam: 1870-1925* (K P Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2005) by Sudeshna Purkayastha studies about the indigenous industries of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam in the light of the impact of industrial capitalism on these industries. The indigenous industries covered by this book are silk, cotton, metal industries, forest industry, etc. Special focus has been laid on the blacksmiths (*kamars*) and gold washers (*sonowals*). An image of the indigenous industries highlighting its structural features, co-relation between the artisanal population and production, the mode of production and technology with changes in it during colonial era makes the book significant one. The book also elaborately discusses the debate on de-industrialisation in the context of Assam. It also examines the growth of indigenous enterprises in the Surma Valley of Assam in the light of the Swadeshi Movement. However, the book confines its study on the indigenous industries in between the year 1870-1925 beginning from the second phase of colonisation in Assam covering till the rise and development of indigenous enterprise under the swadeshi impact.

The book *Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921* (Manohar Publication, New Delhi, 2000) by Rajen Saikia is mainly on the social and economic history of Assam emphasizing on the intrinsic inter-relation between society and economy. The book covers in an analytical manner the aspects of social and economic

history of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam in between 1853-1921. Disappearance of the traditional and artisanal industries of Assam and to what extent the foreign rule and inherent limitations within the industry were responsible has been critically examined in the book. The book throws light on the resilience shown by the handloom industry for its survival in spite of various odds. The British enterprises like tea, coal and petroleum as well as colonial exploitation of natural resources also have been discussed in this book.

For the overall progress made in the field of industrial development in Assam during the post-independent or post-colonial period, we have to deal with books mostly on the economy of Assam. Mention must be made of the book *Economic Development of Assam* (Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1988) by P. C. Goswami which discusses about every sector of the economy in the State. Regarding industrialisation, the book focuses on its progress and prospect. From cottage industries to tea, coal, etc, the book encompasses all of them in the context of its development. The development of agriculture, co-operative movement, development of transport and economic planning are also covered in this book. But the whole 20th century has not been covered by this book.

D. D. Mali in his book *Economic Problems and Planning in Assam* (Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1989) emphasizes on the fact that industrialisation is solely determined by the industrial policy adopted for it. While, determining the industrial policy we have to take into consideration the resources of the State which is the key element for setting up of the industries. The book in a lucid style and systematic way discusses the industrial policy adopted in Assam and makes an assessment of the resource potentiality of the province. The book deals with the industrial development

of Assam in the post-colonial period till the 1980s covering the handloom sector, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, etc. Decentralised planning and report of the task force on economic development of Assam have been also analysed in this book.

The economic backwardness of Assam and the issues related with it has been covered by H. K. Bhattacharyya in his book *Economic Development of Assam* (APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1998). The book focuses on the fact that fresh strategies have to be adopted for rapid economic development of Assam. As such industrialisation has to be adopted in a well-planned manner. Demand based and resource based industries should be set up on a priority basis to gear up the pace of industrialisation in the state. The seventh and eighth Five Year Plan in the light of the economic development of the State has been elaborately discussed in the book.

The book *Five Year Plans and Industrialisation in Assam* (Eastern Book House Publishers, Guwahati, 2007) by Prasen Daimari discusses the industrial development that Assam achieved under different Five Year Plans. For it, the book assesses the emphasis and priority placed by different Plans towards the industrial sector, allocation of resources for industrial growth and achievement and failure of various industrial products. Quite distinctively the book covers the Plan wise strategies for industrial development of Assam differentiating between village industries, small scale industries, medium industries and large industries. The book also highlights the role of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in the industrial development of the region.

Another book of Prasen Daimari titled *Economic Development of Assam Problems and Prospects* (Eastern Book House Publishers, Guwahati, 2008) analyses the developmental issues of Assam which includes industrialisation. Under

industrialisation, the book covers the development of industries under Five Year Plans, trends of industrial production, role of organised and unorganized industries, etc providing an in depth analysis of it. The book emphasises that industrialisation especially through establishing resource-based industries lay greatest possibility in ushering rapid economic development of Assam. An overall picture of industrialisation in Assam from the independence till few years of 21st century is provided in this book.

Prabin Baishya in his book *Small and Cottage Industries: A Study in Assam* (Manas Publication, Delhi, 1989) deals with the problems and prospects of the small and cottage industries in Assam in between 1970 to 1980. Although the book covers a decade of industrialisation, it is one of the significant works as it highlights the decaying conditions of traditional industries which under existing condition no longer could provide avenues of self-employment. The book advocates modernization of traditional industries and dispersal of modern small scale as well as big industries to the underdeveloped regions like Assam. The book provides an overall picture of industrial development of Assam and examines the National Industrial Policy. The book as area of field study covers the erstwhile Kamrup district emphasizing on rural industrialisation for economic development of the backward rural areas. Industries like handloom, pottery, smithy works, bakery, oil expeller, furniture making, etc are covered in the field study highlighting the structure of industries, employment and income features, problems, etc.

On all India context of silk industry, the book *Economics of Sericulture and Silk Industry in India* (Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1987) by D. V. Ramana is a notable work. The book provides not only a global view of the silk

industry, but also the overall picture of the silk industry in India. The growing potentiality of sericulture as an industry, management related issues of sericulture, problems creating hurdles for development of sericulture, etc has been well examined in this book. As an objective analysis, the book focuses on the growth of sericulture in South India, more particularly in Andhra Pradesh.

The book *Indian Ways of Silk Precious Threads: Bridging India's Past, Present and Future* (Bhabani Print & Publications, Guwahati, 2012) by Ole Zethner, Rie Koustrup and Dilip Barooah focuses on the Indian sericulture and silk covering the major aspects of silk production, biological factors and sericulture, technical and trading aspects of silk production, etc. The book even talks about the silk routes and the importance of silk in the history of civilisation in India and the world. In the context of Assam, the book makes an analysis on the modernisation process of *muga* and *eri* silk in Assam.

Regarding books on the silk industry of Assam, the first and foremost mention must be made on the books written by S. N. Chowdhury. In his book *Muga Silk Industry* (Directorate of Sericulture, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati, 1982), S. N. Chowdhury discusses about the history, classification, distribution, rearing process, reeling, spinning, weaving, marketing, etc of *muga* silk of Assam in a lucid manner so that it can be comprehended by all. The book also touches in an outline about the *tasar* culture in Assam. Then another book of S. N. Chowdhury is *Eri Silk Industry* (Directorate of Sericulture, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati, 1982) which elaborately deals on a similar pattern like the earlier book about the history, classification, distribution, rearing process, reeling, spinning, weaving, marketing, etc of *eri* silk of Assam in a simplistic way. The book also focuses on the *riha* culture in Assam.

Likewise, in his book *Mulberry Silk Industry* (Published by S. N. Chowdhury, Dibrugarh, 1984), S. N. Chowdhury deals with the *pat* silk of Assam. The book focuses on the process of mulberry cultivation involving the variety of mulberry, classification, life history, development process, environmental influence, genetic processes, etc along with reeling, spinning, weaving and marketing of the mulberry silk. Other than the mulberry silk, the book also throws light on the history and production of silk, importance of sericulture, handloom and powerloom weaving in India. All the three books of S. N. Chowdhury undoubtedly form the basis for undertaking research work on the silk industry of Assam. These books mainly emphasised on the scientific and technical aspect of the silk industry. The books however do not analyse from historical perspective the developments that took place in the silk industry of Assam from its very beginning.

A distinguished work on the silk industry is *The Silk Industry of Assam* (Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2005) by Prabin Baishya which examines different aspect of the silk industry in Assam in the post-colonial period during the 20th century. The book begins with the history of silk industry in India and makes a comparison of sericulture in India with Japan. Then the book mentions about different silk worm and its food plants. Regarding sericulture in Assam, its historical background, position in post-colonial Assam including income of the rearers and role of government in fostering sericulture after independence has been properly analysed. The specific case study on Sualkuchi in the book provides valuable insights into the working of the silk industry. Investment needed, employment generation, income, marketing of silk products, problems of the industry, etc are properly assessed in this

book. But there is no mention in this book about the position of the silk industry in Assam during the colonial period.

There is another book on the silk industry of Assam written by Rekha Kalita titled *The Sericulture Industry of Assam* (Unique Books, Guwahati, 2013) which provides history of the silk industry in Assam. But the book puts its prime focus on the silk industry in Sualkuchi during the post-colonial period. As such the book provides a clear picture on the different types of weavers in Sualkuchi, their socio-economic profile and the measures taken by the government for their upliftment as well as for development of the silk industry.

Another book by Mahua Bhattacharjee titled *Silken Hues, Muted Voices: Women in the Silk Industry of Assam* (DVS Publisher, Guwahati, 2014) mainly studies on the women silk weavers of Sualkuchi from the gender perspective. Within the conceptual framework of gender, the book analyses the concept of labour as well as sexual division involved in it. The book analyses the conditions in which women weavers worked in the silk industry of Sualkuchi during the post-colonial period highlighting the gender relation, working condition, recognition of women labour, the earnings of women weavers, etc. Besides, as a background the book provides an outline of sericulture and silk weaving in Assam from pre-colonial period to the end of the British rule.

The book *Textile Tradition of Assam: An Empirical Study* (Bhabani Books & Fabric Plus Pvt. Ltd. Guwahati, 2013) by Labanya Mazumdar provides a systematic account of the textile tradition in Assam highlighting its unique features, historical perspective, past and present status of textiles in terms of continuity and change, socio-cultural and economic context of traditional textile, etc. In the broad spectrum

of textile, the book touches roughly the history and current position of *eri*, *muga* and *pat* textile as well as its significance among the different tribes of Assam.

On the bell metal industry of Assam not much study has been conducted till date. Stray references are found in the books on the economy, history and culture of Assam. At present the bell metal industry is surviving prominently in Sarthebari. In the local literary works of the area which is in the Assamese language like *Kanh Shilpa Nagari Sarthebari* (Gyanodoi Book Stall, Sarthebari, 1994) by K. B. Deka and *Aekhan Sarthebari* (Rajendra Kutir, Sarthebari, 1995) by K. N. Deka we find some information on the origin and development of the bell metal industry there. Of course two doctoral works have been done on the bell metal industry of Sarthebari.

One of this doctoral works is titled *A Geographical Analysis of Bell Metal Industry in Sarthebari, Assam* (Department of Geography, NEHU, 2007) by Bhaben Kalita. This doctoral work studied about the factors affecting the growth of the bell metal industry in Sarthebari highlighting the impact of the geographical settings of the area. The research work also covers the production trend in the bell metal industry highlighting its traditional pattern of production in the age of modernisation, the marketing system of the bell metal products, occupational structure of the artisans and their standard of living and problems of the industry with suggestions for its sustainability.

Another doctoral work on the bell metal industry is *Bell and Brass Metal Industries in Assam: Present Status and Prospects for Development in the Changing Market Environment* (Department of Geography, G.U, 2012) by Ananta Deka basically provides a rough background of the origin of bell metal industry, determines the status of the bell metal industry, showcases the production process and products of

the bell metal industry, focuses on the socio-economic profile of the bell metal artisans, ascertains the role to be played by different stakeholders for the development of the bell metal industry and analyses the prospects for the development of the bell metal industry in the changing market environment.

These above mentioned books and doctoral works definitely provides a lot of valuable information in the form of secondary source for conducting the study. At the same time these literary works in general, more particularly those on silk and bell metal industry provides a wide scope for conducting the study as none of these works has made a continuous study on the condition and developments made in the silk and bell metal industry in Assam during its colonial and post-colonial period thereby providing a comparative picture of it.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To assess the condition of the silk and bell metal industry in colonial Assam,
- (ii) To examine the developments made in the silk and bell metal industry in post-colonial Assam.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study on the silk and bell metal industry in Assam during the colonial and post-colonial period covers the 19th and 20th century. The area of the study is the Brahmaputra Valley with some references to the Barak Valley of Assam.

SOURCE

For the study, both primary and secondary sources are used. The primary sources are in the form of Reports of the Department of Industries, Silk Industry Reports, Census Reports, Five Year Plans, Ad-hoc Annual Plans, Reports of Department of Sericulture and Weaving, Annual Survey Reports on Industries, Economic Survey Reports on Assam, Assam District Gazetteers, Statistical Handbooks, Evaluation Study Reports, Documents of the Assam Co-operative Bell Metal Utensils Manufacturing Society Ltd., etc. While, the secondary sources are in the form of books, journals, magazines, etc.

METHODOLOGY

Analytical methodology is mainly adopted for the study. The primary sources are analysed after ascertaining its authenticity. Case study has been conducted in Dhakuakhana, Boko and Sualkuchi for the silk industry and Sarthebari for the bell metal industry.

For conducting the case study, purposive sampling method has been used. In this method, a desired number of samples are selected purposively depending upon the object of enquiry. In this study, an enquiry has been made to know about the present condition of the silk and bell metal industry as well as the effectiveness of the policies adopted by the government in the post-colonial period.

For the case study on the silk industry, rearers, weavers, sellers, agents, etc are purposively selected and questionnaires are provided to them to secure information. Similarly, for the bell metal industry, bell metal smiths, sellers, agents, etc are

purposely selected and questionnaires are provided to them to secure information. The information thus gathered are analysed to arrive at a conclusion.

CHAPTERISATION

The study has been organised into five chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The chapterisation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Background of Silk and Bell Metal Industry

Chapter 3: Silk Industry in Colonial and Post-Colonial Assam

Chapter 4: Bell Metal Industry in Colonial and Post-Colonial Assam

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the **Introduction** chapter light has been thrown on the statement of the problem, existing state of knowledge regarding the subject matter, objective and scope, sources consulted, methodology adopted and structure of the study. The physical geography of Assam, socio-cultural background and overall outline on the economy of Assam from the ancient times till the end of the 20th century is covered in the statement of the problem.

In the second chapter titled **Background of Silk and Bell Metal Industry** a discussion on the origin of the silk and bell metal industry in Assam has been made. The royal patronage enjoyed by the two industries is highlighted. Besides, tools and implements used, method of production, items produced, etc are also covered in this chapter.

In the third chapter titled **Silk Industry in Colonial and Post-Colonial Assam** an assessment is made on the condition of the silk industry in colonial and post-colonial Assam. The policies taken by the Colonial Government, the experimental silk cultivation, silk trade, measures taken through the colonial Department of Industries, etc are covered in the colonial part of the chapter. While, in the post-colonial part, the establishment of the Department of Sericulture and Weaving and its activities, the establishment of the Central Silk Board and its activities in Assam, the fund allocations made during the Five Year Plans and Ad-hoc Annual Plans and measures taken within the Plan period, present condition of the silk industry in Dhakuakhana, Boko and Sualkuchi highlighting the effectiveness of the policies adopted by the government, etc are covered in the post-colonial part of the chapter.

The fourth chapter titled **Bell Metal Industry in Colonial and Post-Colonial Assam** examines the developments made in the bell metal industry in colonial and post-colonial Assam. In the colonial part, the condition of the bell metal industry under the colonial policies and domination of the *kayans*, decline of the bell metal industry from its different centres, attempts made for survival at Sarthebari, measures taken by the colonial Department of Industries, etc are covered. The post-colonial part of the chapter includes the survey studies conducted and measures taken by the State Government, the activities of the *Asom Samabai Kanhar Sangha Ltd.*, present condition of the bell metal industry in Sarthebari highlighting the effectiveness of the policies adopted by the government, etc.

The *fifth chapter* is the **Conclusion** where a summary of the study is provided along with the findings.