Chapter V

Life Writing: Universal Engagement

5. i Cycles of Everyday Life

Everyday life is what a person does, feels, encounters and thinks every day. It is mostly customary in the sense that it is determined by the society and the existing environment. Though certain gestures are often repeated in daily life without a single thought on logic behind it, they cannot be ignored as trivial details. The everyday life is however never an inert aspect of a single life. It has its distinct effect and influence on the other people.

The habitual life has a little to do with conscious choice but is a residue that remains when one subtracts all the institutional structures, all the meaningful and significant practices (Grossberg,2012, 278). It is rooted in the culture. A definition of culture goes, 'the sense of ultimate values which a certain society has and according to which it shapes its life' (Husain, 2010, Introduction). This concept considers that individual qualities and attitudes are inspired by and related to the ultimate values of life. These values, at the same time, are embodied in the material aspect of life. Let us take for example the illustrious life of Dwarakanath Tagore. His intimacy with the English and for that reason, his alienation from traditional way of life was reflected in his domestic life. From this angle, culture is reflected in the everyday life.

A study of Lakshminath Bezbaroa's everyday life through his autobiography, *Mor Jivan Sowaran* might be an useful approach to understand the way by which the inherent heritage of Lakshminath and his childhood experience prepared the ground to stand for the wider society and to meet challenges of existence – both as individual and as a member of the community. Lakshminath's engagement with national and linguistic identity was because of his upbringing. In the winter season, particularly in the month of *Maagh*, he woke up with his mother early in the morning to have a bath in the nearby Dikhou river. Throughout the month of *Kaati* in autumn, they planted the holy *tulsi* plant in the front space of their home, wiped up the ground and lighted the space with earthen lamp. They also arranged hanging earthen lamps called *akashbanti* in the air. These small things perhaps had great sense in making the domestic environment quite contented and

peaceful. Some of the daily habits trained the young ones the value of discipline in personal life.

Lakshminath made an elaborate account of his daily activities to clarify that the sons of their family had to spend more time in religious practices at the cost of their study. Lakshminath listed the daily exercises in serial order upto the fourteenth number. There was no such variation in the routine with the changing seasons of the year. Dinanath used to wake up at the dawn and forced his family members to inculcate the habit of early rising. His sons too woke up early, had regular rites, took bath and joined their father in plucking flowers from the garden for offering in prayer. They sat for study but were unable to concentrate on their books. At about nine, they had a body massage with the mustard oil and a quick bath in the pond. They used to wipe the floor of the *gosain ghar* or the family temple clean. They cleaned their father's utensils daily used in worship. Then there was the first round of prayer followed by *carita tola*. Daily activities were likewise fixed till the last sitting for prayer after dinner at about eleven to twelve o'clock. The young ones had a good nap by the time of dinner. Dinanath listened the epics at bedtime read to him by Lakshminath and Srinath (Bezbaroa,1998,6,67-70).

Ever since his childhood, for a good part of his life, Lakshminath followed a routine. The blueprint of his everyday life was inspired by the ideals of his father. Lakshminath gave a detailed account of the life of Dinanath Bezbaroa both in service and retired life. He had a cherished desire of spending his retired life in discussion of the Holy Scriptures. When he returned to Sibsagar after years of government service, he started the practice. He took two of his sons, Lakshminath and Srinath for those sessions. After school hours they joined him with complete sincerity and enthusiasm. Dinanath himself read and explained the Sanskrit *Bhagvata Gita* to his sons. (Bezbaroa,1998,61-62). The day-to-day activities were crucial to their habit formation. They were guarded by their father lest they breached the code of conduct and bring disrepute to the family. He was trained in the everyday practice of Vaishnavism. Notion of cultural nationalism gradually developed in him. He had special sentiment for the Assamese Vaishnavite movement introduced by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. He discovered the literary and cultural richness of Assam at a very early age.

The influences and exposure received by Nalinibala Devi at home, in a way shaped up her public identity. She inculcated the habit of a disciplined life ever since her childhood. She

put into words her feelings, 'even from too young of an age, I had to abide by a daily routine with a sense of responsibility' (Translation by the present author). A morning was assigned for study. She could face the tutor only after her preparations of daily lessons. Even in absence of any kind of institutional affiliation, she followed the strict routine without any fail for quite long time. Her everyday life was like that of a student till her marriage. Nalinibala and her younger brother used to sleep with their grandmother who woke up very early in the morning. She prayed for some time, washed herself, took the betelnut served by her servant Gelibai. The old lady then chanted the *bargeets* and others followed her (Devi,1976,17,21). Padmanath Gohain Barooah learnt to follow a busy schedule and had rarely any rest. Theatrical performances like *jatra* and *bhaona* were popular modes of enjoyment during the childhood of Lakshminath Bezbaroa (Bezbaroa,1998,17-18,33,34). Simple things kept them engaged. Women from the aristocratic class were learned. Harakanta *Sadar Amin* recorded that one such lady, Padmapriya was erudite and well informed. She used to spend her evening time listening to the radio (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,65). This statement is quite doubtful simply for the reason that there was no radio service in India in the nineteenth century. Anundoram Borooah noticed vast difference between the popular attitude in the English society and the Assamese society. He found foreign etiquettes quite artificial as against the natural and loving feelings of his people. He appreciatied intimacy of relationship as one positive aspect of their social behaviour (Bhuyan,1966,35).

These accounts were evocative of Assamese rural life. It had the charm of peaceful living, not the stress of urban life. It was not complicated and people had close ties with their relatives and neighbours. They spent leisure time chatting with their neighbours and making religious discussion. They enjoyed their childhood despite the limited means of amusements. A child in those days used to have good time within the family association itself. They were told folk tales, Hindu mythological stories in addition to some moral lessons. Stories of generosity implanted in them seeds of humanism. They enjoyed fishing, egg-fights along with a few other popular games. Benefits of such upbringing were richness of diversity and strength of the community.

The day to day activities and beliefs of the people in the emerging Assamese society were still determined by inherited family and social codes. There was hardly any dispute over the established norms and value system. The average educated section considered their

custom to be unique to this part of the country. They were refined and easy sites of modification. Only a few intellectuals were critical of the received wisdom. A custom generally forbade any alteration; yet during the colonial days, the age-old customs in different corners of India had to face some challenge, with Assam being no exception. Concepts, practices and all rituals are sites of memory.

Socio-religious practices associated with the birth and growth of a child, child education in terms of formal, moral and other worldly wisdom were important concerns of every family and society. Useful knowledge passed from generation to generation. The literature of this era provided vital links between the ethics of medieval age and the standards of modern age. As in other parts of the subcontinent, the aristocratic class of Assam was always synonymous with elegance, luxury and style. According to caste-hierarchy, the Brahmins are at the top. They are called *dwija* or 'twice-born' in the traditional caste set up as they are entitled to don the sacred thread at the ceremony of *upanayana*, which is interpreted as one's second birth. Only members of the first three *varnas* namely, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya and the Vaishya are entitled to the performance of Vedic ritual. Caste is undoubtedly an all-India phenomenon in the sense that there are everywhere hereditary, endogamous groups which form a hierarchy and that each of these groups had a traditional association with one or two occupations. Everywhere there is a heterogeneous population with Brahmins, peasants, artisans, trading and service castes and some socially depressed groups. Relations among castes are invariably expressed in terms of pollution and purity (Srinivas,2005,3). The higher castes commanded respect in the context of hierarchy of caste and material resource.

Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua underwent the initiation ceremony of the twice born caste. He had the experience of arranging the sacred-thread ceremony for three of his younger brothers. Harakanta also noted some people's movements in the middle of the nineteenth century. Mass protests were organized for removal of beef shops from the town area of Guwahati. Some officials were dismissed in this connection. Brajakanta *Ray Daroga*, Mritunjoy *Sheristadar*, Kaliray *Peskar* were some of the victims. There were some other people for whom setting up of schools was a useless job. In 1842, the government ordered establishment of a school at Hajo. Bollodev Sarma Rajkhowa, who was given the responsibility, turned down the offer because he thought the job was not respectable enough. In Kamrup, the service of a Brahmin was forcefully taken for road

construction. In 1885, Harakanta took up his new residence with his elder wife. He completed the customary purification rites before entering his new home. The ceremonial occupation of the new residence took place in the month of *Bohag* that is April-May which was preferred for this kind of auspicious occasion. Harakanta's autobiography reflected combined feelings of the author; pride in following tradition and positiveness to the new ideas (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,43,30,37,41,249).

Respectable and resourceful Assamese families had many occasions to celebrate. Lakshminath Bezbaroa reminisced the ceremony at his home associated with the beginning of formal education. This function made the child feel grown up entering a phase of dutiful life. The boys in the family in their youth underwent the ceremony of the twice-born caste. Lakshminath did not hesitate to analyse the visible changes of social attitude. He observed that the Assamese youths of his time were made to think everything Bengali, be it language, music, style in hair cut or dress to be far superior to that of Assamese. The two brothers of Lakshminath frequently got their hair cut contrary to the Brahmin custom. That became a source of anxiety for their father Dinanath and the family. Mobile Bengali theatre groups became popular throughout the province. In some of the big *sattras*, *ankiya bhaonas* were sidelined by locally composed plays in Bengali. Even though their Bengali was erroneous, *Gosain-Mahantas* (*sattra* apostles) who composed them boasted of their efforts. Lakshminath was always critical about those who showed any tendency to cut off their cultural roots. He despised the habit of getting married at young age with the aim of extracting dowry. Dowry was unknown to Assam as a part of marriage (Bezbaroa,1998, 35-37,12,18-9,33,8). He lamented that the old and rather the healthy trend was infected by this new vice. He further noticed that the educated people were more prone to these vices. It had already become a nuisance in contemporary Bengal. The boys got married during their studies; their parents were virtually demanding dowries for financing the education and marriage of their sons. This evil practice entered Assam in the twentieth century (Choudhury, 1916).

Padmanath Gohain Barooah provided money to his elder son-in-law to continue his studies and to earn M.A. and B.L. degrees. Padmanath also managed for him the job of *Munsiff*. In a similar situation the expense of Padmanath's younger son-in-law was voluntarily born by the elder son-in-law to see the education of his brother-in-law get

completed (Gohain Barooah,1987,291). Padmanath was not forced to do so; in fact, he was happy to assist them, ultimately helping his daughters.

Lakshminath was ready to absorb the good things of modern life. At the same time he had the capacity to distinguish the good from the bad. He was confident of his own heritage. He had the natural pride in his own language, culture, history and institutions of Assam. He took upon himself the responsibility of keeping the educated Assamese on track. He thought very highly of the intrinsic social value of the Assamese and wanted its improvement on its own term. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami in his foreword to *Lakshminath Bezbaroa: Srijan aru Monan,* rightly remarks that Lakshminath was an advocate both of tradition and modernity. This outlook manifested itself in his personal life as well as his writings (Sarma,2014,Foreword).

Benudhar Rajkhowa was very much disturbed to see the eagerness of some people to copy the Bengali habit of giving Sanskritised names for Assamese girls. He considered it a useless exercise and a disregard to one's own language (Rajkhowa,1969,5). Benudhar was certain of the fact that there was no dearth of beautiful Assamese names that people can use. Earlier to him, Lakshminath Bezbaroa also did not approve of using Bengali surnames, most particularly the title called Dutta. He found no logic in taking names from the other communities as these were not applicable in the Assamese context (Bezbaroah,1998,38).

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan did not bother much in defying the age-old conventions. During the time of Anandaram, the most common wear of the Assamese gentlemen had been the *churia* (dhoti). Even while going for his own marriage as the bridegroom, Anandaram dressed up wearing trousers. He wore traditional costume only for the rituals to be over (Talukdar, 2012, Introduction). Anandaram all through preferred to make his appearance and behaviour as an Assamese aristocrat. He was far away from imitating the Europeans just for the sake of it. Gunabhiram Baroah praised Anandaram's capacity of adaptability in Calcutta. Anandaram first used to wear *dhoti* of *paat* Silk and turban. On Assamese attire, he was different from others. He did not like being a subject of people's curiosity and so he changed his apparel to *pyjamma, chapkon, kaaba* (Baroah, 1971,37,92,159). From Lakshminath Bezbaroa to Nalinibala Devi, everyone had his/her own notion of dress code for the Assamese nationality. Lakshminath was well acquainted with western dress and food-habits. Dinanath Bezbaroa also appeared in English clothes.

Lakshminath was however, never disrespectful to his own heritage. He recorded that one of his teachers used to appear in *muga churia*, which was quite 'old-fashioned', suggesting change of dressing style in Assam (Bezbaroa,1998,41). None of the individuals did actually recommend any dress code for women, but nearly all discourses preferred indigenous *riha*, *mekhela* and *chadar* for the Assamese women. They were apprehensive of the fact that some of the Assamese women were blindly imitating the dress of the Bengali women. In the travel account of one foreign lady, Jessie T. Moore, it was noted in 1885,

> Bogi's daughters wore Bengali *saree* which is a long strip (perhaps 6 yards) of cloth (Moore,1982,57).

Not by the tradition, more and more women were wearing *sarees.* Lakshminath always loved to see an Assamese woman dressed in the conventional *riha-mekhela*. The idea sounds narrow-minded, but nonetheless, he despised their perverted form of clothing. He felt that imitating the other people's dresses only cannot make one modern as it has a humiliating effect on one's heritage. He did not remark anything relating to men's wear. Regarding the colonial experience of copying the west, the analysis of Tapan Raychaudhuri is applicable in the Assam situation as well. He observed,

> The first generation of students at the centres of western learning in Calcutta and Bombay, especially the former, contained a highly vocal element who favoured a total rejection of tradition and an equally total adoption of western ways; but even among them only a handful practiced what they preached. The unquestioning imitators of western ways became subjects of ridicule virtually in every part of India. (Raychaudhuri,2005,9)

Coming back to the issue of clothes, it is true that both dress material and style of dress underwent change in the wake of colonial rule. The wealthy section used imported clothes in place of the homespun ones. The commoners even preferred it for festive occasions like marriages. Rajabala Das noted that the Assamese brides of her time preferred to be dressed in silk *mekhela-chadars* with fine patterns of golden thread on them. During the Non-cooperation movement, there were mass-level campaigns to boycott all kind of imports to India. Rajabala responded to this nationalist appeal; on being a bride herself, she was happy enough to wear only the *muga mekhela-chadar*. The other women in society were naturally critical about her choice of this unconventional get-up (Das,2004,52). That was the result of a coming trend which advised women to use

indigenous wares. As in the rest of the country, the Assamese women were thought to be the primary consumers of the imported products. Another aspect was that it was a hasty decision to violate traditionally presented image of an Assamese bride. But the nationalist fervour was effecting this woman comrade rather than her any kind of weakness for public comments. She was getting powerful within her. Nalinibala Devi was also having similar orientation of mind. In the marriage of her daughter Usha in 1922, the bride was given a hand worked *khaddar* cloth from Wardha to wear. The young girl was deprived from wearing the imported white silk with gold thread, just to foster the *swadeshi* spirit. Nalinibala recorded the ever long agony of her daughter over this matter (Devi,1976,102).

As regards social customs, there were local variations within Assam. Rajabala Das from her own experience observed that the Assamese society of Guwahati was more prejudiced than that of Dibrugarh. Just after her marriage she was told not to come inside the house with her slippers on. Moreover, the womenfolk in her new family never came out of their home. The practice of visiting neighbours and relatives which was there in Dibrugarh was not seen in Guwahati. Rajabala observed that her husband did not question the wisdom of Assamese custom and value system. Everything old was thought to be gold. In spite of being a graduate in medicine, that too from England, he did not want to disturb domestic peace and therefore never complained. Although he was happy with the western professional lifestyle, he did not offend his old-fashioned father who adhered to the old world values and followed all the injunctions in matters of food. Rajabala's father-in-law, Sonaram Rajmedhi was a renowned lawyer in Guwahati. He founded a school in his own name. A man of such stature was also a believer of rites of pollution. He was apprehensive of the water sources. He did not drink water from well; water from a nearby river was taken for cooking and was reserved for other uses for a couple of days. Running water of the river was considered purer than stagnant water of the well (Das,2004,54).

In Assamese society, few rules of hygiene had to be followed while dining. Food had to be taken in a suitably arranged portion of house in a peaceful and pure state of the mind. The general norm of the age distinguished activities outside home as 'impure' from those at home as 'devout'. One can see in it the contrast of the secular and the spiritual. Pollution refered to uncleanliness, impurity and sinfulness; while purity refered to cleanliness, spiritual merit and holiness. There was only a porous curtain between the two. Mostly depending on the immediate physical activities, one was placed in the

'pollution' measure. The daily routine was permeated with ideas of good and bad, pollution and purity. A person's normal condition was one of mild impurity and he exchanged this for short periods of purity. He had to be ritually pure not only while praying but also while eating. In order to be pure, he had to have a bath, change into ritually pure clothes and avoid contact even with other members of his family who were not in a similar condition. Women, especially widows and elderly men are generally more particular about observing the rules of pollution than others (Srinivas,2005,128-129). Taking food from unknown persons was not permissible among the Brahmins. It was not that only the personal cleanness and hygiene of the cook that did matter, but the server's position in the caste hierarchy was also taken care of. When Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was heading for Calcutta for his studies, a team of helpmates accompanied him and interestingly, the two of the Brahmin cooks were the essential component of the arrangement. Decades later, when Dinanath Bezbaroa came to know that two of his Calcutta going sons sent back the Brahmin cook to Assam and started taking the food prepared by an alien cook, he realized, what he called, the advent of the *kaliyuga*. It was believed that *dharma* that is right ritual and conduct was at its lowest ebb since ever. Dinanath, in later years had frequent words of repentence for the virtual 'loss' of his two sons. Certain things were prohibited for the 'higher' caste Hindus. Lakshminath mentioned that except fish and pigeon, lot of things like chicken, duck, tortoise were considered objectionable to be consumed. In those days, restrictions were also imposed on the daughter-in-laws of the high born castes from having any kind of cooked food at their parental home. Lakshminath did not have any personal prejudice. He always enjoyed the food served to him and was fond of Bengali cuisine(Bezbaroa,1998,13-14,18-19,49-50).

The cooking of food was believed to open the food to qualities from the outside imparted by contact (Cantlie,1984,186). In this sense, cooked food not only assimilated the intrinsic properties of the ingredients, but also the qualities of the person who prepared it. Therefore it was expected that one should always accept or refuse food according to the relative status of donor and recipient. Harakanta *Sadar Amin*'s elder brother consciously avoided food cooked by others. He did not take anything to the extent the betel prepared by his wife. So firm with his practice, he did not mind discomfort cooking for himself whether in his own residence or outside. Harakanta felt inclination to Shivakanta's

attitude and, therefore, made reference of this habit in appreciation of his brother's principles (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,19).

There were some rites and rituals relating to the dead. The purification norms were strictly followed by the relatives of the dead. A Vaishnavite monk from a place called Marangi had long been a well wisher of Harakanta's family. Since this ascetic had no one to be called as family, after his death, Harakanta engaged a person called Lakhiram to perform the last rites of this cleric (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,94-95). During his teenage, Benudhar Rajkhowa witnessed a sudden and an unexpected death of their family *guru* from the Dihing *sattra*. The entire family broke into tears. Though he was young, unending questions, regarding the basics of existence created a storm in his mind. He realized, for the first time, the temporality of life, 'life and death are nothing but the two opposite sides of the same coin' (Translation by the present author) (Rajkhowa,1969,41). The Hindus believed that uttering the holy name of *Rama* at the time of someone's end would ensure salvation of the soul. Rajabala recollected that a person about to die was unkindly taken outside the house because it was believed that if someone died inside, the house became 'polluted' and must be demolished (Das,2004,27,26).

The injunction against crossing the ocean was common to the Indian society. Assam was no exception. Those who wanted to travel abroad, particularly to England needed enough courage. England was a colonising power. Youths of India were willing to go to England for education and other useful knowledge which was not however easy. Even the Calcutta society was not free from this prejudice. It may be called prejudice because it was believed that crossing the ocean meant loss of caste. Let us take for instance the case of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. When he resolved to travel to England in 1842, his parents were shocked. They were unable to accept the idea that their only surviving son might undertake the proscribed journey across the black waters. They tried to distract him by arranging his marriage to a Hindu girl in early 1843. But they were not successful (Pollock,2004,227).

The father of Anundoram Borooah, Gargaram Borooah, although held a post under the British, was a man from the old school. He was a follower of beliefs; regarding the dos and do nots. Anundoram left Assam in 1865 for his studies and returned home after joining the Indian Civil Service in 1872. His father was preparing to welcome the successful son after long years. He wanted to make his society accept Anundoram again

who had been expelled after his decision to move to England violating the social norms. Gargaram could not defend his son; he also made separate temporary arrangement to put him up in a tent, because he was not supposed to enter the main dwelling for his association with the foreigners. He asked Anundoram to get ritually purified to make him accepted in the society. But Anundoram refused to do so; he argued that there was no point of it because his deviance from the traditional norms was unavoidable. It was his wilful decision. His choice of profession needed that kind of a lifestyle prohibited in the Hindu scriptures. Circumstances compelled him. So he preferred to stay excommunicated in his own right (Bhuyan,1966,13,34). Gargaram Borooah was hurt at this resolution but he had no other option and, therefore, tried to realise the compulsions of Anundoram. It was not the only incident of its kind. Ideological conflict of the old and new could be observed in the families sending their brood abroad. Higher education, then possible only outside Assam, was the single most reason for such confrontations. The large section of the less sophisticated people saw in such conduct a threat to ritual purity. The desirable ritual purity required extra-ordinary arrangement to maintain it in a colonial city. The students developed their own thinking and challenged the accepted norms of the society.

Assamese society examined closely the way of arranging marriages. This marriage relation evoked serious discussion among those concerned with family lineage. There was the practice that parents mostly arranged marriages for their children. Harakanta was also looking for a match for his daughter when his choice fell upon an Ahom prince named Ghanakanta. According to the prevailing custom, the horoscopes of the bride and groom had to match each other. The astrologers were reluctant to approve because the horoscopes did not match. Yet, the marriage was fixed because another soothsayer came to the rescue and saw nothing wrong in the proposed marriage. He believed that the bond of matrimony is perfect if the two souls were honest and willing to do so. Harakanta was emboldened by these words and he too preferred purity of intention to any other consideration (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,66).

Lakshminath's marriage with Prajnasundari in the month of March,1891 was performed according to the rites of the *Adi Brahmo Samaj* in Calcutta. It was certainly shocking news for his parental family at Sibsagar. Lakshminath later came to know about his grief-stricken parents over his decision (Bezbaroa,1998,18,22). They were perhaps fully apprehensive of the loss of cultural identity due to his marriage to a Bengali. That was an

instance of flouting the parental authority of fixing up their children's marriage. Lakshminath and Prajnasundari set a precedent of a successful marriage. They overcame difficulties of cultural differences.

Benudhar Rajkhowa noted that after his marriage with Ratnakumari was finalized, she had to wait for her turn by giving precedence to the marriage of her elder sister. It was in the year 1899. According to the accepted social norm, the younger sister was not allowed to marry before her elder sister. This was the practice with the boys also. At the turn of the nineteenth century, when Benudhar was in his early manhood the *Bohag bihu* was celebrated at Joypur with enthusiasm. People belonging to the Muslim community also joyfully participated the *bihu* dance. A Muslim boy and a *Kaivarta* girl fell in love in such a celebration itself. They got married; but both of them were condemned and excommunicated from their respective societies (Rajkhowa,1969,185-186,27-28). At a time when even inter-caste marriage was a rarity, the question of acceptance of inter-religious marriage was out of the question. In spite of the rigorous practice, like taboos in inter-dining and inter-marriage, one could observe mutual co-operation and dependence of communities during festivals.

Negotiated matrimonial relations did not go beyond the social boundary of religion. Within this limit inter-community marriage was, however possible. Haribilash Agarwala recorded that though his father Navarangaram belonged to a Marwari vaishya or the trading caste; he married an Assamese girl Sadari in the Assamese style of marriage (Agarwala,1967, 13,2). Navarangaram identified himself with the local life. He married a local girl to further consolidate his social position in the third decade of the nineteenth century (Agarwala,1998,9). Such marriage was then the rarest of rare to immediately influence the Assamese social life. By that time he had already been twice married to Assamese families. This inter-community marriage had far-reaching effects; Navarangaram decided to make Assam his permanent home. With the passage of time, the Agarwalas got absorbed into the mainstream of Assamese culture and society; and also contributed to its enrichment.

Anundoram Borooah remained unmarried forever. There might be different reasons for this decision. His junior contemporary, Bolinarayan Borroah wrote in 1919,

> Being wedded to literature alone, he devoted to it all his talents, all his capacity for work, all his energy and all his leisure. But let it not be supposed that he never meant to marry. For even so early

> as the age of 24, on his return from England he was said to have shown to a friend the portrait of what he called his 'intended bride'. But literature, his second love, seems to have displaced all other ties from his mind. (Bhuyan,1966,128)

It meant Anundoram did not prefer abstention by vow from marriage. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan on the other hand, looked into the contemporary social values for its root. He analysed that since the Assamese society did not allow anyone stepping in England, Anundoram was never received in his society after his coming back from London. Not a single family of repute could accept this 'exorcized' fellow as son-in-law. This was another valid justification behind his unmarried life. People in general were so pious to abide by the customs that two of the relatives of Anundoram, who dared to have intimate terms with Anundoram, were also condemned (Bhuyan,1966,66).

Ignorance and superstition had strong hold on popular imaginations. Enlightened section of the society some times preferred silence to protest. Benudhar Rajkhowa recounted that villagers living by the Dihing river spread a rumour that it would be impossible to proceed in the construction of a bridge over the river without human sacrifice (Rajkhowa,1969,26). This made the procurement of labourers all the more difficult. Many of them who came fled from the work site. The superstition did not last long. When one superstition disappeared another made its appearance depending on issues.

Despite the surface differences among the concerned personalities, they were similar in most of the ways. The grip of monotonous social customs became loose in Assam, although very slowly. The Assamese society followed the course of life shown by the elders. Society sanctioned certain codes, people followed them, and convenience was never a factor. In other words, there was acceptability and authority of only the tradition. There were a few to go for a breach, but it is considered only as an exception in history. In most cases, their compliance with the common customs and other social codes went on unnoticed. These autobiographers belonging to the socially alert group of people sometime questioned about their everyday customs. They were aware of the inevitable changes in the Assamese society. Their attitude was not so rigid. Their personal observations suggest that they were never in opposition to changing way of life as such, but they objected to the new element which tended to replace the old as weak and unusable. Modernity was in the air, it was somehow superficial and the fundamental attitudes were awaiting change.

5. ii Occupational Pattern

Some amount of importance was attached to the material concern and enjoyment of this life on earth. Most of the authors taken for the present study wrote about the ways and means of earning their living. Social situation in Assam could be explained from the general living standard, the value they attached to wealth and economic consequences of the political transitions.

The old aristocratic class was on the wane and the British substituted it with a new class of people befitting administrative exigencies under the new set up. By the mid-nineteenth century, a broad category of educated people emerged in India. The British in India needed brokers, agents, revenue collectors, lawyers and managers to help them in their transactions with Indian producers. In other words, they needed Indians as middlemen. C. A. Bayly made an estimate that around the country, men of modest landholdings, trading and service backgrounds who had acquired the necessary contacts and qualifications to enter into one of the modern livelihoods numbered half a million (Bayly,2005,149). These middlemen in Bengal became the core of the Bengali *bhadralok* class (Dasgupta, 2010,48). In English language newspapers, this class referred to themselves as the middling class and later as educated class or educated middle-class. They were characterised in the words of Swapna, M. Banerjee as,

> Heterogenous, upwardly mobile, cultural community of professionals, bureaucrats, and civil servants and worked as mediators between the foreign rulers and the subject population and were vital links for the maintenance of the British rule (Banerjee,2004,5).

Assam also witnessed the emergence of a new class in society in the nineteenth century. The Assamese high-class composed of the lower bureaucracy revenue collectors who were known as *mauzadars,* the Assamese tea planters and a handful of Assamese mercantile class who carried out their business either independently or in collaboration with the British. Precisely, the Assamese middle-class was composed of the land-owners, service-holders, professionals and possessors of some business enterprises.

Following the Burmese invasion to Assam, Raja Chandrakanta Singha imposed a house-tax, called *kharikatona* in Lower Assam. Harakanta justified that the Ahom authority sought to replenish royal treasury by imposing this tax upon its people. He noted that in 1824, David Scott appointed a Bengali *babu*. Bishnu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, *tahsildar*

of Kamrup was responsible for revenue collection (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,2,6). After the British occupation, land revenue naturally served as the engine oil of the bureaucratic establishments. Assistant Commissioner Captain Vetch was impressed by Navarangaram Agarwala's ability and rewarded him with several *mauza*s of the area in 1836-37 (Agarwala,1967,3). It was in the initial days of the British in Assam and a clear example that revenue collection was the prime consideration of British administration. Other considerations came later. Benudhar Rajkhowa was born into a family of *mauzadar*. Till the writing of his memoir, their family was still in control of a *mauza*. He recorded that his father Suchandram Rajkhowa's collection from the *mauza* doubled between the years 1868 and 1877 from an amount of cash rupees of three thousand. The tax payers used to keep the *mauzadars* pleased with seasonal offering and occasional free service. The *mauzadar*'s staff usually returned home burdened with sundry collection from the *ryots* (Rajkhowa,1969,1,29).

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan belonged to an aristocratic Brahmin family. When he returned from Calcutta to permanently settle in Guwahati, his paternal family still had considerable wealth. His father Holiram Dhekial Phukan was the Revenue *Sheristadar* of Lower Assam appointed by David Scott. He resigned his post after a dispute with White, the British Collector of Kamrup. In his early life, he was the Duaria Barua, an officer in charge of a custom house, *Chokee* at Hadira (Baroah,1971,18,35). It is recorded in history that it was established in the Ahom period. Each of the single boat carrying merchandise from Bengal was examined at this depot and the customary fees realised. Without the permission of the Duaria Barua, no boat could enter Assam (Bhuyan,2013,23-24). Like his father Anandaram was also an administrator. His loyalty to the British was clear in a letter to him from Colonel Matthie at the time of former's achievement of the position of Sub-Assistant Commissioner. Such honour had implications in terms of duty and responsibility. In 1850, he became the first Assamese and perhaps the first Indian Sub-Assistant under British rule (Talukdar, 2012,3). He rose to become a Junior Assistant of Nagaon District, just before his precious life was cut short in June,1859 at the age of twenty nine.

In 1850, Major H. Vetch, the district officer in charge of Dibrugarh took initiative to examine the possibility of extracting natural resource from the Sadia region. He particularly sent gold, silver and coloured stones along with some other products of

Assam to England for quality check (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991, 63). It was true to the spirit of colonial age. A colonial establishment was there to oversee the potential of draining out all kinds of resources of the colonized country. For the first time in 1886, there was considerable export of coal, nearly a lakh of maunds, from the Brahmaputra valley and imports to the valley had fallen off in value by nearly two lakhs of rupees. In the same report, it was mentioned that the Makum coal-mines supplied nearly all the coal required by the increasing steamer and railway traffic of the province and most of the coke used in tea manufacture (*Report on the River-Borne Trade of the Province of Assam During the Year ending 31March 1886*,5). A foreign construction Company had to put much effort to erect a railway bridge on the river Dihing under the Assam-Bengal railways (Rajkhowa,1969,121,77,26).

Benudhar Rajkhowa once visited the coal mines of Lidu. He also went to Margherita to see the saw-mill set up there. He could foresee the great future of those industrial establishments. He, however, described the insecure physical condition inside the mining sites (Rajkhowa,1969,78). He was shocked by the pitiable condition of the workers as if there was no measure for their protection. The first Coal Mines Act of 1842 had already prohibited the underground employment of females or of males less than ten years of age. It also provided for the appointment of inspectors of mines, but it was not effective. In a report on the health of the industrial workers in India, research on industrial health was emphasised. It had been a very wide field covering factory construction and ventilation, thermal environment, factory lighting, dust and dust diseases, tuberculosis, hours of work, nutrition, sickness and accidents (*The Health of the Industrial Worker in India*, 1946,17). Probably because of the isolated position of Assam, the safety provisions did not reach the people here.

Haribilash Agarwala wrote that during his father's time, the northern bank of the Brahmaputra was unsafe for the common man due to the frequent raids of the Dafla tribe. The *posa* system, an invention of the Ahom rulers was still in force. The tribes collected different kinds of clothes and most importantly salt as forms of tribute. Navarangaram permanently established his business in a village named Gomiri near Biswanath on the north bank. The entire area was beyond British jurisdiction and the old dispensation of the Ahom monarchy was still there. After the advent of the British power, things began to change. Navarangaram got a 'lower grade' police personnel and some subordinate

soldiers stationed just next to his *gola* protected his business establishment (Agarwala,1967,5,4).

When Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was appointed the *munsiff* of Nalbari in 1841, he drew a monthly salary of rupees eighty. His remuneration for Junior Assistant Commissioner of Nagaon in 1857 was rupees three hundred and fifty (Baroah,1971,73,138). Ragarding the monthly expense of his time, Harakanta mentioned his brother Gaurikanta's estimate in 1869 that his family could be managed for the whole month with a sum of twelve rupees. In 1871, Harakanta was chosen for the post of *Sadar Amin* at a monthly salary of rupees four hundred. He was very happy with his gradual rise in government service. He wrote that he was gradually promoted to the rank of a judicial officer similar to a *munsiff*; it was almost like a magistrate of the lower order (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991, 170,173,299). Being a qualified Civilian, Anundoram Borooah always held high rank in the government service. He used to draw high amount of salary. In 1887 when he joined as the Magistrate at Noakhali, he was entitled a sum of rupees nine hundred per month with an additional allowance of four hundred (Bhuyan,1966,49). Nalinibala Devi's grandfather, *Ray Bahadur* Madhab Chandra Bardoloi was holding the post of Sub Divisional Officer of Barpeta since 1897. His monthly salary was rupees eight hundred, the highest amount received by any native officer under the British. This money was wisely spent; Madhab Chandra allocated fixed amount of money in certain heads. Nalinibala looked back nostalgically at her childhood, agricultural produces were in abundance; her grandfather looked after their own orchard (Devi,1976,5,17). Naturally, the government jobs provided financial security to the newly emerging Assamese elites. Table 1 shows a list of native offices, their designations and their respective salary under the colonial regime.

Table: 1

Name	Designation	Year	Monthly Salary (In Rupees)
Anandaram Dhekial Phukan	*Munsiff* (Nalbari)	1847	80
Anandaram Dhekial Phukan	Sub-Asstt. Commissioner (Barpeta)	1852	250
Anandaram Dhekial Phukan	Junior Assistant Commissioner (Nagaon)	1857	350
Harakanta Sarma Majundar Barua	*Sadar Amin*	1871	400
Anundoram Borooah	District Magistrate (Noakhali)	1887	900
Madhab Chandra Bardaloi	Sub Divisional Officer (Barpeta)	1897	800

Source: Author's Compilation

Haribilash estimated that his father Navarangaram Agarwala's immovable assets could be worth of rupees fifty thousand in the year 1854 itself (Agarwala,1967,7). It was a very substantial amount in those days. Goalpara on the western part of Assam was a thriving commercial centre in the initial years of British rule. He mentioned that there was no ship on the Brahmaputra for transport. Goods were transported from either side in locally made large boats. His father's arrival at Gomiri, on the bank of the Brahmaputra was possible only for the existence of a regular system of water transport. Haribilash stated that when he himself travelled from Gomiri to Dibrugarh by the same river by a common country boat in 1851, the journey took nine days.

Haribilash stated some facts relating to economic condition of Assam during his father Navarangaram's early career. It was shortly after the beginning of the British rule in the region. Daily wage was an *anna* a day. It meant that the colonizers squeezed out the native labourers by paying them a minimal amount. Rice was not sold at a price, it was free for asking, paddy was priced two *anna*s per mound. The British realized the house tax, four *anna*s per house per annum. Haribilash noted that *ryots* lived in 'utter poverty'.

In a money-short economy land tax was painful for the *ryot*s. Anyone failing to pay land revenue was punished. There was no scope for the peasants to improve their condition by selling the produce as there was no market facility. Haribilash admitted, he being a *mauzadar* could not maintain good relation with the *ryots.* They feared his real temper. (Agarwala,1967,14,28).

Gunabhiram Baroah, while making a sketch of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, gave a pathetic account of the Assamese gentry during the Burmese rule (Baroah,1971,14-15). Benudhar Rajkhowa realised that the economic condition of the old gentry deteriorated. The government very often tried to realize arrears of revenue through auction of valuable assets of the defaulters. He was, in fact, very sorry to discover that even his favourite Dinjoy *sattra* failed to pay revenue regularly. The *sattra* did not escape the usual punishment for default. The whole economic situation was unfavourable to the indigenous people for the British policy of revenue maximization, without any measure to increase the productivity of their land. There was neither change in the crop pattern nor agricultural extension. More hard pressing on the peasants was the levy of additional taxes, like grazing tax and excise on opium. Increased taxation resulted in agricultural stagnation (Goswami,2007,17).

Benudhar Rajkhowa remembered that in his childhood, there was a single *gola* that is grocer's store in Khowang near Dibrugarh, owned by a Marwari trader. One explanation of this condition is that it was a self-sufficient economy and the people were least dependent on market. There was no person to buy or sell. The money transaction was very limited. Whatever surplus remained, it was bartered. It was not a monetized economy; there was paucity of cash. The business community in the rest of India did not have a counterpart in Assam (Agarwala,1998,4). In general, Assamese people had poor notion of trade and business. The house of Jagat Seth, however, did have several *golas* in Assam (Baroah,1971,16). Seth was the richest Indian banker who made his fortune in the early years of British rule in Bengal. Traders from many parts of the country, more particularly the traders from Rajasthan, Calcutta and Dhaka spread over the province of Assam to fill the vacuum. They sold salt, cloth and many other things of daily necessity (Agarwala,1967,14). Some of them became wholesale dealers and controlled various commodities in the market. Gradually, they became indispensable part of the locality. The Marwaris first settled in the several *sadar* stations and gradually extended their trade in

the interior markets as well. Tracing the history of entrepreneurship in eastern India, Tirthankar Roy observed that throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the Marwaris resettled themselves in new business towns as moneylenders and revenue-farmers. From that base they began to enter trade (Roy,2002,179).It is commonly perceived that of all, the Rajasthanis were the shrewdest and most hard headed to take control of the trade and commerce in Assam.

Benudhar Rajkhowa listed the constituents of the society in terms of occupational pattern. They were the tea planters, the Marwari traders, the Bengalis employed in literary professions and the 'land hungry' migrants from Mymensingh. He considered the tea planters to be the most influential class of people in Assam. Benudhar held the view that large chunks of population of Assam were 'imported' into Assam like other goods. While applying for the post of *tahsildar* in 1897, he introduced himself to the Chief Commissioner of Assam as a genuine Assamese by birth (Rajkhowa,1969,70,122). He seemed to have asserted his identity to register a distinction between himself and others coming from the Surma valley or any part of Bengal. He observed that within a short period, pattern of urban population changed. Jobs were limited; aspirants were many. It was obvious that he did not accept the change kindly.

The middle-class and a process of nationality formation are inextricably related to each other. In colonial India, new arrangement of factors under British rule shaped up the middle class to play the dominant role in the Indian society. The formation of the Indian middle-class as a historical process is summarized, in the words of Indrani Ganguly,

> With the introduction of western education in the early nineteenth century and the growth of new professional and commercial activities, there was gradually created a new class which in occupation, lifestyle and cultural orientation became westernized (Ganguly,1991,247-248).

She further pointed out that by the end of the nineteenth century this class had come to constitute a new elite providing social and political leadership for the indigenous population. Tracing back the roots of the Assamese middle class, Manorama Sharma proceeded with the assumption that the three components of economic viability, class consciousness and ideological unity are present in a group to be called a class. She argues that a middle-class was emerging in the social milieu of Assam only towards the end of the nineteenth century and particularly in the first decade of the twentieth century (Sharma, 1990,106-7).

In any case, colonial rulers opened avenues for the emergence of an educated professional class, widely discussed as the middle-class. Their emergence was one important legacy of the British rule. Rajen Saikia wrote that the Assamese middle-class was a compound product of colonial bureaucracy, English education and tea industry (Saikia,2001,163). Jaduram Barua, Holiram Dhekial Phukan, Hemchandra Baruwa were the products of colonial bureaucracy. English education, more particularly the education received by a section of Assamese youth in Calcutta provided impulse for the emergence of this middle-class. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baroah, Haribilash Agarwala, Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Benudhar Rajkhowa were the products of Calcutta based English education. Dinanath Bezbaroa, Manik Chandra Baruah, Radhanath Phukan were the personalities who engaged themselves in tea plantation. Except tea there was no other major industry in Assam.

Anundoram Borooah's father Gargaram was the last Ahom officer in the post of Majindar Barua. He lost this position with the coming of the British rule. The new administration made some of the recruitments from the native people for some of the responsible jobs. Educational qualification did not matter as there was no English education for the people of this region. The assigned duties could be handled with some intelligence and experience. The only criterion for consideration in these recruitments was one's legacy. In initial years, the colonial masters chose persons from the reputed families. Gargaram was given the post of *Sadar Amin* because of his good origin (Bhuyan,1966,13). H.K. Barpujari referred to the scions of the old aristocratic class who came closer to modern education for their own interest and practical expediency. This small section of the society was also the same known as the enlightened public (Barpujari,1996). Modern education paved the way for elites in Assam. It also enlarged the occupational base of Assamese society. Educated people had limited option and they preferred government jobs. Government jobs gave them status and security. A number of professions came up which were not related to the caste divisions of labour. The educated were gradually absorbed in the jobs of new of administration. It increased the material wealth of a section of the society. Various functionaries like officers, *munsiffs*, constables, clerks, land surveyors, landlords and local revenue collectors comprised a novel group of people. The new judicial system brought in the pleaders. The pleaders were an important component of urban population.

Just after his return to India, Anundoram Borooah was first appointed Assistant Magistrate at Sibsagar in 1872. In a short time he earned a good name. He was transferred to Bengal once forever in 1874. He was in different places; Mymensingh, Dinajpur and Bardhaman. It was because of his research pursuits that Anundoram took leave from his job for three years in 1881 to study in the British Museum. He came back in 1883 as the Magistrate of Noakhali. All throughout his service career his integrity could not be questioned. No other Indian, before Anundoram could earn the glory of serving as the administrative head of an entire district. After a few years, Rameshchandra Dutt and Beharilal Gupta received this honour of responsibility (Bhuyan,1966, 49). From the late nineteenth century, people coming from all these professions came to be called collectively, the middle-class. Interestingly, within this section, there were people from across the castes and communities, from different levels of wealth, education and profession. The people belonging to the middle-class were at the top of social hierarchy in Assam. All over the country, the Brahmin, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas , took advantage of the new opportunities under the British rule. The similar situation apparently prevailed in Assam. Few literates and job aspirants under the imperial regime and particularly majority of the *amlahs* belonged to the Brahmins and the descendants of the Ahom royal blood.

Dinanath Bezbaroa provided for the maintenance of some disciples of the Kamalabari *sattra*. He had huge landed property and was habituated to giving unconditional support to the needy people. A devout Brahmin, a learned *amlah* and a socially respected personality- all rolled into one in him. The presence of a dominant landowning caste was a feature of rural life in many parts of India. For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizeable amount of the arable land locally available, have strength of numbers and occupy a high place in the local social hierarchy (Srinivas,2005,10).

As there was no higher educational institution in Assam, children of the well-to-do families were mostly sent to Calcutta for higher studies. Those who had no sufficient formal education were appointed to clerical and labour supervising jobs in the tea-gardens, the steamer company, the railways, the post and the telegraph. As the number of educated people was limited, they rarely faced any problem of unemployment. This segment of society was juxtaposed with a tradition-bound society both trying to maintain their ideologies under the foreign rule.

Lakshminath's ancestral occupation was ayurvedic system of medicine. His father Dinanath Bezbaroa was appointed as a royal physician to the king Purandar Singha. Dinanath Bezbaroa took pride in his hereditary occupation; and he very much wished that one of his sons would carry forward the family tradition. Lakshminath reflected on his father's profound faith in the ayurveda. Both the father and his son seem to believe that service in this form is socially rewarding. His father wished to have continued the family heritage at least through one of his sons. With newer means of livelihood the next generation Assamese gained economic independence. Dinanath did not want his son Golap educated in medicine. It was an irony of time that his sons had no liking for the ayurveda but for western education. Govinda Bezbaroa wished to see his brother, Golap's ambition to be fulfilled. Govinda thought that if he could become economically self-reliant, he would be able to materialise the dream of his brother without depending on others. So he joined the job of Assamese translator in Calcutta High Court. Now he could help his brother with his resource. Golap went to Calcutta on the excuse of bringing labourers for their tea garden and then got himself admitted in a medical college. Govinda also managed to send Golap abroad (Bezbaroa,1998,55-56,94-95).

By that time a young Assamese passed out from the Cooper's Hill College of engineering. He was Bolinarayan Borroah, the first engineer among the Assamese. More people were eager for English education. Legal profession was also taken up. Lakshminath recorded that there were too many names in the register of the bar. He had the historical sense of keeping a record of the traditional occupations. He wrote about the clay workers, bonded labours, goldsmiths, artisans and teachers. Then came new group of people under the employ of the British, the *munsiffs*, landlords, Extra Assistant Commissioner (E.A.C.)s, advocates, clerks and various departments of the district collectorate. Lakshminath was a great admirer of S. P. Sinha known all over the country as the *Lord Sinha*. Satyendraprasanna Sinha (1863-1928) was a charismatic legal luminary of Bengal. Lakshminath thought if he were ever to be a lawyer he must try to be one like Lord Sinha. After his graduation, Lakshminath was twice offered the post of E.A.C. by the Assam government. But he did not accept it (Bezbaroa, 1998,5,37). He did not explain; it was very likely that he had two considerations in mind. First, he wanted to avoid any interference in his mission of establishing the Assamese identity and secondly he thought that a life in business would give him financial security than a job. He stuck in favour of an independent profession for the entire life even in tough times. In order to

pursue business, he stayed in places across Bengal and Orissa. This lover of Assam stayed away from home just for occupational compulsion. Bholanath Baruah (1853-1923) was his business partner and they became independent timber merchants in Orissa with head office in Calcutta.

Padmanath Gohain Barooah was awarded the position of an honorary magistrate in 1914 and the title of *Ray Saheb* in the same year (GohainBarooah,1987,240-241). Five years earlier, in 1908 Lakshminath was appointed the honorary magistrate for the district of Howrah (Goswami,1968, 236). They are important literary figures and the government granted them appropriate recognition.

Anundoram Borooah spent major part of his civilian career in several places of Bengal. His extraordinary ability in discharge of his duty won him undying popularity. It is recorded that a pond called *Borooah Dighi* and a market place called *Borooah Bazaar* in the erstwhile Kumilla district were named after this kind and honest bureaucrat. It was also because Anundoram made the first move towards giving the basic amenities to the locality. In the Noakhali region, a girls school was also established with the aid received from Anundoam Borooah (Bhuyan,1966,6,49). An Assamese was serving selflessly for the people in Bengal without having any sort of Assamese sentiment in conflict with the 'dominating' Bengali epithet. He might be aware of the contemporary discourse on some antipathy between these two neighbouring people, but his basic intention was to honour his job and serve the nation with the best of his capacity. He was keeping himself away from those confrontations.

Anundoram Borooah during his official term at Noakhali took initiative to begin economic transaction with the foreign commercial centres in England and America. He visualised some prospect of making Noakhali prosperous. He personally contributed rupees two thousand to raise a huge fund, and made a proposal to the leading people of the town. But the plan could not get materialised. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan blamed for it the incapability of the local Bengali residents (Bhuyan,1966,71,49). Actually, Anundoram came up with such a new vision, that the native people could no way follow him. The common people in Bengal just like the native people in the contemporary Assam were not at all having any idea on commercial enterprise. At the same time, the general economic condition of the colonised people was adverse for such participations. Overseas trade was

far beyond those people's vision. Another explanation is that there was inhibition of the indigenous people for an unfamiliar maneuver.

Before Anundoram Borooah, it was Anandaram Dhekial Phukan who never indulged in any kind of hostility for acquiring power and position. Anandaram believed that merit pays everywhere. The Assamese youths should work hard to make themselves employable for any profession or trade (Baroah,1971,111-112). He lamented their lack of entrepreneurship. In the *Orunodoi* (1846-83), he addressed them, 'you do not practise trade and business, you all prefer to pile up wealth underground rather than making ways for creating money' (Talukdar,1999,129). Anandaram had faith in the possibility of commercial ventures. In his view, commerce is the essence of English civilisation. So there is nothing wrong in choosing a career in trade and commerce.

Money entered the Assamese home rather slowly. Men of literate profession had regular flow of cash. The landlords had also some chances. People had strange notions about money. Harakanta was opposed to the idea of giving *faringati* land on auction on the ground that the beneficiaries of such auction shall be the rich. He believed that honesty was a rare trait among the rich (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,74). Benudhar Rajkhowa had his own philosophy of richness. Summing up his personal experiences, he wrote that wealth is not something that comes when one needs it, it comes spontaneously when one can never predict (Rajkhowa,1969,27). He spotted crime and corruption of some people in their desire of accumulating material property. He felt that only a few man can resist temptation for money.

The Assamese youths were reluctant to get into the art of money-making as a matter of habit. But the Marwaris and other business communities generally preferred to train the young boys in trading skills. Haribilash Agarwala was taught to keep accounts for their family shop. Even though Haribilash was eager to have his schooling in the Hindoo School, he had to wind up his aspiration and joined family occupation in Dibrugarh. It was not a big challenge for him. He soon became a successful trader and acquired the art of cultivating the goodwill of the British officers. Haribilash was learning to help his father in business just like the other boys from his community. He experimented with a good number of businesses. He came to know about rubber plantation by chance from a Junior Commissioner of Dibrugarh in 1862. He wrote to his father who immediately picked up the idea and made a successful venture. Starting in 1869, the Agarwala family

employed their resources to make more and more profit from rubber. In 1883, Haribilash purchased a saw mill and set up timber business. In 1903 he went to Chakradharpur to study the prospects of mica business, next he visited some industrial units of cane and cotton in Bengal. He gathered enough ideas on business. He represented the spirit of an entrepreneur who was eager to grow even with risks. Business agreements were also known in Assam. Haribilash entered such a contract at Dibrugarh in 1854 (Agarwala,1967,17,22,29-30,38-39).

Benudhar Rajkhowa was worried by the fact that he did not see the emergence of a strong leader who could rouse the idle people into action through which they could get rid of the stigma of unworthiness. He drew attention to the *Dhodar Ali* (Idlers Road), a road built during the Ahom rule by organising the idle people of the state. He felt the urgent need of a powerful leader for making the lazy people to work. He believed that a band of enterprising people can change the face of Assam. His discovery of a self-made man in the person of Radhanath Changkakati emboldened him. Radhanath Changkakati happened to be the owner of the *Times of Assam,* which was started with a mini printing press in Dibrugarh itself. As early as in 1901, Benudhar got his book, *Asamiya Bhai* published to inspire his countrymen for inculcating work culture and business entrepreneurship. He wanted to make the people of Mangaldoi independent in all possible ways. He took initiative for opening a garment shop and a sweet shop which, however, did not last long. He advocated for introducing course on financial literacy in school curriculum (Rajkhowa,1969,48,135).

Benudhar Rajkhowa had an opinion that the art of spending was no less important skill than the art of earning. Most of the people can make wealth and get richer by some way but a few can make its expense fruitful. He particularly referred to two social figures in this regard namely Radhakanta Handique and Shivaprasad Barua (Rajkhowa,1969,42). He was of the view that had there been more of such philanthropists, Assam could have made remarkable growth by that time. Rajabala Das, in her memoir expressed full gratitude to the same Radhakanta Handique for financially supporting women education in Assam. Handique donated huge amount for a girls' college in Guwahati. He also arranged scholarships for the needy and meritorious students. The college was, therefore, named as Handique Girls' College.

Benudhar Rajkhowa realized that there is no future without financial independence; there is no meaning without means. He made an appeal to the Assamese students in Calcutta to concentrate on their studies as their primary duty, after completion of which they should move for public charity. He was nostalgic in writing about his childhood when molasses, pulse and oil were produced within their house, which became a rare sight in later years. Benudhar wanted the Assamese youths to realize the worth of the natural resources. Had the youths realized the value of Assam's fertile land, there would have been no crisis for land, or no shortage of any agricultural product (Rajkhowa,1969,112,113,10,31).

In 1887, Harakanta *Sadar Amin* visited Lieut. R. Campbell for discussing matters of imparting nursing training in Calcutta (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,264). Rajabala Das realized the need of occupational competency among the girl students. A spinning and weaving centre was opened in Dibrugarh in early days of Non-cooperation movement. The Assamese woman derived strength through the nationalist struggle to come out to the public and joined the centre. In a similar direction, the Female Education Committee1908 reported,

> In the Assam Valley Division, weaving looms have been provided in four schools, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, the Victoria Girls' School, and the Model Girls' School in the same town. Something has been done in Assam in the direction of industrial education. In St. Mary's Convent at Shillong, training in laundry work, sewing, housework, and cooking is given to a limited number of girls (*Report on the Progress of Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam During the years 1907-08 to 1911-12*, Vol-I, 103).

During her visit to Britain, Rajabala Das discussed the prospects of the Domestic Science Training College with the India House. She visualized emergence of independent girls with proper training in weaving and home science. She observed that the creative potentiality of modern women was much more than it used to be in past. Rajabala was now ambitious of forming self-help social networks for the women in Assam. She could justify that their education and training in manifold profession was giving them a wider field (Das,2004,16).

The indigenous society responded to the capitalist economy with mixed attitude. There was cooperation, adjustment and resistence. Some people in the middle-class were beneficiaries of colonial administration and were loyal to the British Crown; but they had always a positive feeling towards Assamese language and culture and were critical of the

government on certain issues. Following colonial operations in Assam, there was occupational mobility associated with the social and geographical mobility of the native people. Individual wealth, power and status were its derivatives depending on the degree of involvement.

5. iii Extension of Material Culture

There is direct relationship between changing ideas with the visible change in material conditions. While initiating a discussion on the impact of colonial rule on India's urban life, Kanchan Jyoti stated that new technology, new education and new administrative structure coming in the wake of the British rule were so pervasive that they affected nearly all aspects of urban life (Jyoti,1991,207). Urbanization itself can be taken as a powerful factor in bringing about social change in India. K. N. Venkatarayappa observed its impact on the attitudes of men towards caste, property, health, education, modes of living, housing, recreation and also labour (Venkatarayappa,1973,Preface).

Since the nineteenth century, western education started to generate questions and arguments regarding many of the existing norms. It refused to recognize the traditional 'last word'. But scope for the rational discourse was delimited by the conventional authorities. The history of resistance can be identified as the history of modernisation. While discussing the problem of modernity, Yoshimi Takeuchi observed,

> There is no modernisation that does not pass through resistance (Takeuchi, 2005, 57).

Benudhar Rajkhowa reported that his father was not in favour of establishing post-offices, schools and police stations in the locality. He believed that the native people had a tendency to make complaints against anything or everything of their wish, if they had a *thana* nearby. From school education, the hitherto illiterate people would learn to write petitions against the *mauzadars.* If there was a post-office, one could easily leave an application at the dropbox (Rajkhowa,1969,35). These explanations were to delineate the futility of infrastructural development for the indigenous population. This kind of argument was an indication that conflict was not confined only to the changing values. Rather, the immediate factors of change were also resisted by an influential group of people within the Assamese society. The government institutions, public works and

services were perceived as some means of change. So they were opposed. The resistance did not work but it was there.

The attitude of the common people towards the newly introduced amenities of the British government could be traced from another depiction given by Benudhar Rajkhowa. In his youth, he used to wonder how the post-men could deliver the posts in inaccessible places like through dense forests full of wild animals. Benudhar was surprised when he came to know from such a post-man that he stood fearless even in front of a tiger because he was an 'agent' of Queen Victoria (Rajkhowa,1969,21). He was convinced that the Queen Mother would protect him from all dangers so long he was in Her Majesty's Service. This was the mentality of the subject people during colonial rule. They had faith upon their superior's authority.

A small fraction of the Assamese tried to copy the British administrators or the other European planters in matters of material culture. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's family was probably the first one in Assam to be acquainted with the European way of life. He himself was the first Assamese to lead an English lifestyle. Along with his uncle Jajnaram Khargharia Phookan, Anandaram first adopted the western mode of living with modern furniture and carpets. His new taste reflected in every sphere of his life. He brought four book cases filled up mostly with English books. This could be taken as a completely new experience in Assamese domestic life (Talukdar, 2012, Introduction). Since his return from Calcutta in 1845, Anandaram preferred to go in trousers, hat and shoes when he visited Europeans (Baroah, 1971,42,48-50). It was the coming of elements of modern lifestyle to Assam. In the neighbouring Bengal, a section of the emerging intelligentsia found no reason in keeping themselves aloof from the coming changes; some of them went ahead to use the western outfits. Anandaram's contemporary, Vidyasagar strongly protested against the restriction imposed on Indians in wearing footwear while entering the meeting hall of the *Asiatic Society* (Baruah, 1974, 61).

Many people in Assam had low opinion about the family of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan who used to live like the *Sahebs*. Many suspected that they had become Christians. Foreigners were not allowed to enter or eat at the high-caste Hindu homes. This was supposed to spoil the sanctity of the place. Anandaram was a perfect example of what is known as crossing the boundary of convention. It was the same spirit; crossing borders and breaking barriers that formed an abiding theme of the Bengal Renaissance (Dasgupta,

2010,92). Gunabhiram Baroah did not get so good a response that he expected from the biography of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan. Jogendranarayan Bhuyan explained that it was due to the fact that the contemporary society of Gunabhiram Baroah was not keen to follow the lifestyle of Anandaram (Bhuyan,2001,154). The rural-minded people found Anandaram too radical to be followed. They dithered in conferring on him the status of a national hero.

The elder brother of Anundoram Borooah, Parasuram worked under the British since the 1850s. This association shaped up his attitude. He was liberal, free from all dogmas associated with Hinduism. It was recorded that he did not even hesitate to drink. He could not take it to be a major offence. He offered his younger brother to drink. Therefore, from a very young age till the end, Anundoram Borooah used to drink. His biographer was however having a consolation that this 'ill' habit could not dilute Anundoram's perseverance (Bhuyan,1966,16). The particular mentioning of this personal habit suggests that consumption of liquor was quite uncommon and considered to be indecent in the social behaviour of the time. While narrating their own lives, both Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Benudhar Rajkhowa spoke up their anxiety over the growing practice of hunting in Assam.

Even without popular acceptance, there was change coming in. It had been a slow process of accepting meat of varied kind hitherto unknown to Indian culture. The British introduced club, liquor, dance, sports and hunting. During childhood, Lakshminath and his friends enjoyed the end number of indigenous sports and fun. The playing of cricket had just come to his Sibsagar town. He recorded that modern sports like football, hockey and tennis were a later addition in the history of sports in this part of the country. Some decades later in Calcutta, Lakshminath became habituated to the playing of lawn tennis and billiard. Gradually, he also developed a love for big games. The jungles of Orissa and West Bengal offered him enough opportunities for that. He himself admitted, 'there is no greater thrill than shooting a deer' (Translation by the present author). He referred the leisure pursuits of the Bengali *bhadraloks* in addition to the joys of Assamese folk culture. Entertainments in the Tagore family were indications of their high level cultural attainment. They were far above the average standard of the time (Bezbaroa, 1998,18,20,34,46,54,75). The elite people got familiarised with a few modern sports.

Colonal Sibaram Bora was a long time resident of Calcutta. Rajabala Das characterised them as an anglicized family; she remembered the lady tuning the piano (Das,2004,33).

After the annexation of Assam, the East India Company took different measures to study the economic potential of the newly acquired land. Within a short period they completed their investigation and explored possibilities of coal, oil and other mineral resources. As a colonial power they had to exploit them but first of all they must develop an infrastructure. Starting from secular education and uniform administration to waterways and telegraph, the colonial state showed remarkable activism. Harakanta wrote his diary documenting almost every activity of the British government. He recorded those events which he thought, important but he rarely interpreted them. In 1838, Company government's currency was introduced in Assam. The coins carried the imprint of Queen Victoria's face (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991, 29).

The British brought with them the printing press, effecting profound and many-sided changes in Indian life and thought. Books and journals made possible the transmission of modern as well as age old knowledge to large numbers of Indians. Knowledge was no longer be the privilege of a few hereditary groups and the newspapers made people in different parts of the far-flung country realize their common bonds. The first printing press for the Bengal region was set up in 1801 in Serampore near Calcutta by the Baptist Missionaries William Carey, Marshman and Ward. From the Serampore Mission Press itself, there came out the first printed book in Assamese, the *Dharma-Pustak* in 1813. It was the translated version of the *Holy Bible* (New Testament) in Assamese by Atmaram Sarmah at the initiative of William Carey. The Baptist Missionaries set up a printing press at Sibsagar and printed some texts in Assamese. Anundoram Borooah established a printing press in Calcutta in 1881 to publish his written words (Bhuyan,1966,43). Anundoram, besides having a professional career as a civil servant, also had the concern to get the light of books disseminated among the Indians and he ventured to it. The scenario remained similar till the twentieth century. During the 1890s Hemchandra Baruwa deplored the fact to Padmanath Gohain Barooah that the writers in Assamese had to face not only financial scarcity but also the paucity of printing press. Hemchandra was referring to his experience regarding the publication of the *Hemkosh* (Gohain Barooah,1987,52).

David Scott proposed the introduction of steam boat communication in the rivers in 1831. The coming of a steamer to Assam was vividly documented by Harakanta *Sadar Amin*. One day he saw big crowd of people on the river bank of the Brahmaputra at Guwahati. People who had been ignorant of anything like a steamer, were enormously enthusiastic about this 'smoking ship'. The Collector of Kamrup, Lieut. Colonel Matthie took a few persons including Harakanta for a ride on it around Ashvakranta to Sukreshwar. That was the beginning of regular trips made by a steamer carrying both passengers and freight across the river Brahmaputra. Harakanta recorded that this memorable event was in the rainy season of 1838. The motor boats were introduced by Indian Navigation and Railway Co. Ltd. The first ferryboat in the Brahmaputra was coming in August 1875. It was an innovation in the history of water transport in the province. Earlier, there were only small boats for the public to cross the river from one bank to the other (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,29,202). The first Government steamer was introduced in the region in 1846 (Baroah,1971,72). A similar kind of narrative was in Suryya Kumar Bhuyan's biography of Anundoram Borooah. He wrote that there was a huge gathering on either side of the river in 1846. The native people lined themselves to witness the majestic sight. It was to be a memory for life-time for many of them. These 'innocent' people considered it an occasion to worship the ship as the divine power. Anundoram Borooah experienced an alike situation at Noakhali in Bengal in 1884; the local people adored arrival of the first steamer into the region (Bhuyan,1966,47). The idolization of a ship was symbolic. People were amazed to see the giant power; they took it as manifestation of the Queen's authority. It was a typical attitude of a subject nation.

Rajabala Das reminisced her childhood days when bullock cart and horse cart were the only modes of transport at Dibrugarh (Das,2004,19). Some decades before her, Haribilash Agarwala noted that the northern trunk road along the bank of the Brahmaputra was built in 1849 with government funds. His father constructed a portion of it on government contract. Benudhar Rajkhowa remarked that until 1899, there were no metalled roads, railways and motor cars. He witnessed the construction of Dibru-Sadia railway line for the purpose of carrying coal during his school days in the 1880s. The Assam-Bengal railway was a later addition. Before the railways, there had been widespread river transport. Government report says that steamers carried over 87 per cent of the total traffic during 1884-85. The steamer trade of the Brahmaputra was carried by the India General Steam Navigation Company and the Rivers Steam Navigation Company. Part of

the trade of the Brahmaputra valley was also carried by the Northern Bengal State Railway to and from Jatrapur and thence by small steamers to Dhubri (*Report on the River-Borne Trade of the Province of Assam During the year ending 31March1887*,1). There was visible improvement in the water transport. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's journey to Calcutta by river boat in 1841 took twenty five days; the same distance was covered by Benudhar Rajkhowa in just eight days in 1889. The waterways and railways between Calcutta and Assam connected the region with the rest of the country which promoted commercial interest of the British and other Indians as well. In a contemporary account by Oscar Flex, one gets image of the system of transportation in Assam. He wrote in 1864 that the Brahmaputra and its tributaries formed the core water ways and existing form of roadways were some kind of raised land on raw soil, just like embankments. It connected the important places like Guwahati, Goalpara, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar (Flex,2012,15). The tenure of the fourth Viceroy of India, Lord Mayo from 1869 to 1872 is known for infrastructure development in the country by which an immense extension of roads, railroads and canals was carried out. T. K. Oommen suggested that improvement in communications contributed to the decline in the prestige of purely local style of living within the Indian societies (Oommen,2002,166).

Tube well was introduced for the first time in Guwahati in May, 1887. There was no public water service in Assam, whereas the provision of protected water supplies had already started in India in the capitals of three major provinces, Bombay (1856), Calcutta (1865) and Madras (1886) (*Report of the Health Survey and Development Committee,1945*,248). In city like Calcutta, Sumit Sarkar observed that civic funding and improvements tended to be concentrated on the White Town, which was the domain of the Europeans. Underground water pipes and drains in some urban areas were seen from the 1870s (Sarkar,1998,163). In 1887, the district administration of Kamrup installed an ice-making factory at Sukreshwar. There was a sales outlet attached to the manufacturing unit. A few interested people were associated with those ventures. On June 17, 1889, Harakanta noticed a number of pillars being carried near the Umananda and after drilling holes in the ground they were set up. This was an arrangement for connection of telegraph wires. The telegraph wire that ran through Umananda to the heart of Guwahati was effective from 24 October of the same year. It marked a new phase in the history of communication system in the province (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,262, 279-280). It was almost at the same time, telegraph facility came to the mofussil towns of Bengal.

During Anundoram Borooah's term of office in Noakhali, from 1887-89, he worked day and night to improve communication between Noakhali and the outside world. There was no rail connectivity to that place; establishment of the telegraph office was a breakthrough achievement for the people there (Bhuyan,1966,52). By the time of Benudhar Rajkhowa in the beginning of the twentieth century, telegraph offices were almost widespread in towns of Assam. In Dibrugarh, a kind of alarm was attached to the telegraph office which rang at one o'clock every afternoon (Rajkhowa,1969,73).

Though at the initial phase of the company rule, Assam was not considered a profitable region yet with the discovery of tea plant there were signs of hope and prosperity. Tea cultivation in Assam was started by the British in 1834. Harakanta could foresee the importance of tea in Assam and wrote about it. He said that experimental tea cultivation began in Assam in 1839. By that time, British in upper Assam came to know how tea could be procured. Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Barua was appointed dewan or civil officer of the Assam Tea Company at Nazira. Maniram Dewan opened two tea gardens (Sarma Majundar Barua, 1991,31). Haribilash Agarwala, nevertheless recounted that before 1860 tea was a rare sight. As a trader he realized the prospect of tea (Agarwala,1967,23-24). It opened new horizon in the field of trade and commerce. Tea had a profound effect in the social and cultural life of the province. Anundoram Borooah was willing to start his own tea garden in Assam. With that end in view, he visited Mangaldoi region, bought an estate and installed Manik Chandra Baruah as his partner and in its management (Bhuyan,1966,71).

By the end of nineteenth century new patterns of dwelling houses as well as new raw materials for construction works and other accessories enhanced the beauty of the towns. The coming of novel things in Assam under the British reflected the taste of the rising middle-class. Harakanta took note of the construction of a church in Guwahati by December, 1845. It was on the bank of the Brahmaputra and lay to the south of the Umananda temple. The church was a concrete construction; brickwork was a novelty by the standard of the time. A prayer hall was also constructed for the first time in the town with brick, sand and cement. The first masonry constructions were the government buildings, residences of the officers, educational institutions, jails and buildings of the tea gardens. In 1874, Haribilash constructed a similar *pukka* house at Tezpur. The building acquired a historic epithet *Tezpur Paki*. In 1880, Harakanta called on a contractor at

Guwahati for a discussion on the prospect of kiln industry. He intended to start a kiln industry if possible. By that time local people began to use burnt bricks for construction purpose. A few years later, in 1885, Harakanta got his new residence built. Its roof was covered with iron sheets (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,45,212, 249). A similar type of house was built by Haribilash at Dibrugarh in about 1900 (Agarwala,1967,33,51). Benudhar Rajkhowa noted that a private masonry building was erected by Bhabakanta Baruah, a head clerk of Dibrugarh High school, who also happened to be the most educated person in the town (Rajkhowa,1969,62). These facts of house building were supported by the census report of that time. It was reported in detail;

> Iron roofs are generally used in towns and in the better kind of village shops, but elsewhere the materials commonly used for houses throughout Assam are posts of wood or bamboo, with mud-plastered walls, and a thatched roof, and the only general difference between the dwellings of the wealthier classes and of the poor is that the former are larger, are constructed on higher plinths, have better posts, are more elaborately fenced in (*Census of India, Assam 1891*. 56).

Haribilash Agarwala noted about his own involvement in the first census in the jurisdiction of Gahpur *thana* in 1854 (Agarwala,1967,13,17-18). Benudhar Rajkhowa wrote about a competent British Deputy Collector, whom he called Dara *Saheb* who introduced 'Cadestral survey' and created the post of sub Deputy Collector in the province of Assam. The first complete census of the Indian subcontinent was done in 1881. The census operation in Assam was equally successful. The documents from the districts were taken to the provincial capital, Shillong for computing the findings including demographic details. Benudhar Rajkhowa added an anecdote to suggest the quick march of time. His elder brother, a government official travelled to Shillong with work related to the census of 1881. That journey from Guwahati to Shillong by bullock cart took eight days. But within a few decades, Benudhar covered the journey by motor car in four hours. Benudhar Rajkhowa rightly observed that this was a sign of a civilization. He expressed the hope that the Assamese youths would also make efforts to keep pace with the fast-moving world (Rajkhowa,1969,38-39). This experience followed the fact that the Guwahati-Shillong road was opened for traffic first in 1877.

The history of the motor car in Assam is younger than a century. Padmanath Gohain Barooah first saw the thing called motor car in Nagpur, during his visit to the Central Provinces in 1902-03. He reported that there was a big crowd gathered to witness it on the

road. He could know that the particular motor car was arriving at the Bombay dock from America only before a few weeks. The car manufacturing company was keen to have a market in the subcontinent and, in order to attract customers, it instructed that the car should be taken across the Indian cities. Padmanath further remembered that motor car was not imported to Assam till 1919. While presiding over that particular session of the Assam Association in the town of Barpeta, Padmanath walked the way to the venue of the meeting and the eager people escorted him in a procession (Gohain Barooah, 1987,164,233).

Lakshminath Bezbaroa recorded coming of certain new things to the Assamese civil life. Unlike many of his time, he was acquainted with a few of them in his life in the city like Calcutta and particularly because of his association with the Tagore family. He mentioned about the photograph of Prajnasundari, her expertise in oil painting as well as portrait painting. Quite a few decades later in 1930, when he was making an extensive tour in Assam, Lakshminath was happy to see the cultural performances in different towns. He saw the prospects of enriching the Assamese language by interactions with other Indian languages. He had no objection to the staging of good quality dramas of foreign origin; provided they were nice translations in Assamese. He appreciated the paintings and photography of the Assamese youths. In Dibrugarh, he met Muktanath Bardaloi, who could have outshined any other professional artist of his time. The condition was that Bardaloi must shift his studio to Calcutta to get that exposure (Bezbaroa,1998,13,46,106-107). These were some indications of acceptance and adaptation of the native youths to the new skills of fine arts and aesthetics. Benudhar Rajkhowa reminisced that Bhabakanta Baruah was considered as a ‘fashion maker’ in and around Dibrugarh. Bhabakanta’s fluency in English, dress, demeanour and personality attracted everybody’s attention. He was a finished model for ambitious young man like Benudhar Rajkhowa (Rajkhowa,1969,62).

Nalinibala Devi reminisced that in her childhood, there was not a single movie hall in Guwahati. They never heard of cinema. There was not even a vendor. There was nor any kind of artificial cosmetics for the girls. Perhaps, still in the early twentieth century, there was no small trader in Guwahati. In the Pandu Congress of 1926, there was no use of microphone (Devi,1976,6,109). This Congress session was held in great enthusiasm and with good amount of preparation. Therefore, it is hard to believe that such a kind of mass

meetings were to be addressed without the help of a loudspeaker. People were certainly ignorant of electronic technology. There was over all material backwardness in this region.

Nalinibala recorded the establishment of Guwahati Bank in 1936. It was the first and only kind of a financial institution in Assam. She was contented to see the progress of the bank; within a single decade it could open up a good number of branches in all the districts of Assam and one also in Calcutta. The Radio Station (All India Radio) was set up in Guwahati in 1948. Nalinibala mentioned the untiring effort of Gopinath Bardaloi in introducing broadcasting service in Assam. Nalinibala was nominated its adviser for three years. She enjoyed reciting her poems in the programmes broadcast over it (Devi,1976,126-127,284-285). It became a means of recreation, knowledge transmission and generating awareness.

Starting in the nineteenth century the British laid the foundations of a modern state by surveying land, settling revenue, creating modern bureaucracy, army and police, instituting law courts, codifying law, developing communications-railways, post and telegraph, roads and canals- establishing schools and colleges. Paper, printed books, furniture, concrete housing- all came as a result of the colonial influence in Assam. The hitherto self sufficient people now imported range of commodities to fulfill the needs of a new lifestyle. Material conditions were created for implantation of a modern society in India.

5. iv Health and Hygiene

In colonial time, diseases were studied as a community problem. Some socio-economic factors like insanitary housing, malnutrition, poverty and ignorance effected the general health of the people. Opium addiction was a chronic problem of Assam from late eighteenth century which ruined physical and moral health of the Assamese peasant society in particular. Opium was taken as a preventive and cure but the remedy in the long run turned out to be worse than the disease. A few intellectuals articulated their reservation for this very unhealthy practice. In his memorandum to Moffatt Mills, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan asserted that the use of opium made the Assamese weak, lazy and a deraded people (Talukdar,2012,186). Haribilash Agarwala recorded that his father, Navarangaram took to opium as a healing measure for some of his ailments

particularly for the liver problem. Haribilash was thankful to the government for ordering a total ban on the opium cultivation. In reality, it was never prohibited. Haribilash appeared before the Opium Commission in 1892 to plead for abolition of opium import (Agarwala,1967,5,12,23,45). Anti-opium movement continued till the nineteen twenties under the leadership of the Indian National Congress. Padmanath Gohain Barooah urged in the Assam Legislative Council for the opening of a public register for the province, to register the number of opium addicts so as to check its consumption gradually to a minimum level (Gohain Barooah,1987,40-50).

The depredation of the Burmese atrocities resulted in pestilences; at the end of the eighteenth century, hundreds died of cholera in Guwahati. Gunabhiram Baroah recorded how his ancestor, Lakshminarayan Brahmachari had treated many cholera patients with indigenous medicines (Baroah,1971,5). While Benudhar Rajkhowa was on board to Calcutta during his college education in 1890's, one of his accompanying friends, Paramananda took ill of cholera, the doctor available could not treat him well; the patient died on the ship itself (Rajkhowa,1969,63). It was an indicator of the fact that dreadful diseases like cholera was still there for some more following decades.

When the British began to influence the fate of the land, the local people were still nurturing medieval outlook. Harakanta referred to an incident of 1832. His elder brother Shivakanta fell seriously ill, his mother and some people observed that Shivakanta suffered as some evil spirit cast spell on him. Another man in the family, Srikanta Baruah, however did not accept the ghost story, ensured appropriate treatment and to everybody's surprise Shivakanta recovered gradually (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,8-9). This was one of the many cases. The people were reluctant to change their traditional practices. The hesitation to move towards western system of investigation and treatment was not typical of the Assamese society.

In 1845, Harakanta was blessed with a son but the baby fell seriously ill soon after birth. A bewildered father, Harakanta resolved to dedicate one lakh *tulsi* plantlets to the shrine at Hajo. The baby gradually got recovered. Harakanta heaved a sigh of relief and was doubly convinced that his offering of the sacred saplings might have wholesome effect in improving his child. Next year when his wife suffered several months of sickness, she was cured by the treatment of a traditional physician. In the winter of the year 1846, there was a terrible loss of human life due to a 'killer' epidemic (Sarma Majundar

Barua,1991,43-46,49). Harakanta was hesitant to firmly name the disease. People had such a dreadful perception that they did not even talk of it.

Malaria was a common disease in colonial India from the point of sickness and mortality. J.A. Sinton, a malariologist of international reputation estimated that at least 100 million persons suffered from the disease every year in British India (*Report of the Health Survey and Development Committee,1945*,143). Its occurrence was also detected in Assam. Haribilash Agarwala suffered from malaria for about a period of six to seven months in 1854. He was cured by the use of quinine. This medicine was given to him by one Inspector of Schools in Sibsagar, Priyalal Barua (Agarwala,1967,17). Quinine tablet was a guaranteed remedy of malaria. Quinine produced from a tree called Cinchona saved lakhs of human lives the world over. It came as a great relief to all the colonizing powers in the second half of nineteenth century (Hobhouse,1999,3-50). It was not uncommon for the time that due to scarceness of medical practitioners, educated class of people used to keep themselves equipped to heal some of the prevailing maladies.

In 1880, Harakanta had been to Guwahati to have a meeting with Danison, the Deputy Commissioner. They decided to form a committee and announced permission for the indigenous people for carrying out vaccination programmes (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,217). It was indeed a wise and bold step of involving local people in the modern way of treatment. Some years later, vaccination was reported to have been practiced by Dispensary Officers throughout Assam; but was not in general use in the Eastern Bengal districts. The total dispensary vaccinations in Assam were twenty six thousand five hundred and forty two (*Vaccination Returns of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the year 1905-06*). In spite of it, death rate exceeded in Assam over an European country.

Benudhar Rajkhowa could never forget the sudden death of his friend Kamal Chandra Sarma in Calcutta caused by diarrhoea. He drew a fatalistic conclusion that since the days of Anundoram Borooah many promising students from Assam cut short their lives in Calcutta (Rajkhowa,1969,87). This was perhaps a poor consolation, as we know that disease and death do not claim human lives selectively. The endemic diseases and the consequential deaths were somewhat unfortunate in the history of Assam. Table 2 shows the annual death-rate in the province of Assam and also the causes of mortality.

Table: 2

Year	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Cholera	0.54	2.79	0.90	1.49	2.24
Small pox	0.47	0.24	0.40	0.70	0.76
Fevers	15.52	16.52	14.30	13.67	13.03
Dysentery and Diarrhoea	1.33	1.62	1.34	1.43	1.52
Respiratory Diseases	0.99	0.98	0.81	0.77	0.82
Injuries	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	0.27
All Other Causes	4.40	4.84	4.46	4.66	4.79

Source: Annual Public Health Report of the Province of Assam for the year 1923, 2,7

The same report observed that though there had been preventive and curative measures all these years, the frequency and spread of the diseases could not be effectively controlled. Some important requirements were sanitation, ventilation, cleanliness and proper food habits. There was infant mortality, weak resistance and small longevity.

Habitual health disorders of the ruled perhaps created concerns even for the colonial masters. Anundoram Borooah in his capacity as the Magistrate, looked after the infrastructure and civic conditions at Noakhali. The traditional sewage was unhygienic and detrimental to public health. He, therefore, got improved the drainage system to the effect that there was no water logging in the town (Bhuyan,1966,48).

As an enlightened person Benudhar Rajkhowa had some perceptions of urban life. Though the municipality boards came into existence in Assam since 1893, he felt, urban growth in Assam continued to be haphazard. Benudhar regretted for the ‘tragic’ condition

of Dibrugarh town. Rush of people from various places seeking source of livelihood made the town both congested and unhygienic. There were no enough roads, drainage and water availability. This observation could be substantiated by the facts of the contemporary census reports. There were over ten thousand inhabitants in Dibrugarh, Guwahati and Barpeta only. According to the Census of 1911 in Assam, Dibrugarh, which was the headquarters of the most important tea district, had more than doubled its population since 1881 and had increased by nearly thirty per cent since the previous census (*Census of India, Assam 1911*. 9). Government dealt with the problem of improving man's physical environment as an essential part of promoting the public health. The demolition of overcrowded and insanitary blocks of houses and their replacement by hygienically constructed dwellings, in surroundings which were pleasant and conducive to healthful living, constituted the most urgent need (*Report of the Health Survey and Development Committee,1945*,218). In 1910 Benudhar was transferred to Golaghat. The town was already blacklisted for the lack of health facilities. He recorded the death of a few people known to him in some 'war-fever'. It was so infectious that the people dreaded to touch the dead. There is no precise account of the number of dead.

Benudhar Rajkhowa's wife kept indifferent health most of the time. Later, she was diagnosed by the Civil Surgeon of Tezpur, Wood, who prescribed operation that was available only in Calcutta. She was finally cured by Ghanashyam Barua, who besides being an advocate and astrologer, served people as an amateur homoeopath (Rajkhowa,1969,77,143,145,136). Nalinibala Devi remembered that at the age of eight she severely suffered from typhoid, which took several lives in her household. The doctors could not cure her in more than a month long treatment. Finally, an ayurvedic practitioner Baikuntha Nath Chowdhury did a miracle with cobra venom and by pricking her skin with the bones of a local fish. It was an instance of indigenous knowledge. Nalinibala also narrated how she was cured of jaundice by the homeopathic treatment of Durga Mohan Lahiri. Nabin Chandra Bardaloi was convinced of the efficacy of homeopathy and thenceforth, took to practicing homeopathy. He provided medicines for the poor and needy. His daughter, Nalinibala assisted him in her capacity (Devi,1976,43-44). There were indeed some famous ayurvedic doctors who could feel the pulse and correctly predict whether the illness was curable or not. But the service of such doctors was not available just for the asking.

When Anundoram Borooah became a paralytic patient in December,1888, the doctors in the Noakhali tried their best, but could not cure him. They prescribed for him regular baths in the sea. Anundoram followed the suggestion but it had no positive effect. Rather his overall health condition turned worse with the ill-advised sea bath. With his deteriorating health, he moved to Calcutta. Allopathic, homoeopathic and ayurvedic physicians of the day, with their untiring effort, could not recover Anundoram. He died in January,1889 (Bhuyan,1966,53-59). In a city like Calcutta, a man of such stature could not be cured.

Rajabala Das had a different experience. During her stay in Giridhi, her younger sister suffered from whooping cough. They were unable to find appropriate medicine to cure the disease. Rajabala then informed her parents by wire who sent a doctor all the way to Giridhi and cured the ill. Examples of competent doctors were between few and far. Even though Rajabala was successful in saving the life of her sister, a much greater shock awaited her. Her elder brother who served in a tea estate as a doctor was struck by the kala azar. In spite of the best efforts no treatment responded in his case and he died (Das,2004,31,26). The epidemic of the malarial fever, known as kala azar was the major factor of mortality for a couple of years, leaving behind it a decrease, both in population, the amount of land under cultivation and the land revenue, together with tracts of country from which all the inhabitants have been cleared off (*Report of An Investigation of the Epidemic of Malarial Fever in Assam or Kala Azar*, 1897, 145). Since 1884 the disease was thought to have spread gradually from the northern terai of Garo Hills through Goalpara subdivision, Mangaldai and districts of Kamrup and Nagaon. It was also observed that the people neglected simplest precautions; with the spread of education and awareness of cleanliness and sanitation, a perceptible improvement was expected (*Census of India, Assam 1891,* 65).

It is interesting to note that Lakshminath made frequent references to washing hands and feet, taking baths as ways of purification before any kind of pious act. Those were few norms of hygiene observed by children of organised families. Lakshminath's kind reference of Ghinlagi for her expertise in midwifery suggested the surviving practice of delivering babies at home. Childbirth was attended by aged women and midwives. The society at large was unaware of modern birthing practice and delivery system and the educated people also depended on the traditional midwives or the *dhais.* As elsewhere in

India, the *dhais* in Assam were a traditional occupational grouping, devoid of any incentive to develop their professional skills. The recruits were a caste-based restricted hereditary group and often the calling was handed within a family from mother to daughter (Mukherjee,2010,102).

Ailments were certainly very common in those days. As Nalinibala observed, from the every season of spring, people got affected by malaria and typhoid. Kala azar and diarrhea were also frequent in Guwahati. People in her neighbourhood often suffered from one or the other ailment. But there was an incredible practice among the youths to attend and care for the next-door patients. Nalinibala felt that the entire residents of Guwahati lived in the warmth like that of a family. Her father was also in the habit of nursing the people, irrespective of their caste and creed, in their illness (Devi,1976,42-43).

The British were conscious about the lack of medical facilities in Assam. When the British occupied Assam, medical care and health facilities in the true sense of the term were non-existent. For the first time, the British introduced Western medical practices. The masses continued to rely on the indigenous forms of medicine. Nothing was done to educate the masses even in the basic matters relating to medicine, hygiene or health care (Goswami, 1999, 225). It was in the same line of agreement with one government report. The report says,

> Regarding the indigenous systems of medical treatment, we realise the hold that these systems exercise not merely over the illiterate masses but over considerable sections of the intelligentsia. We have also to recognise that treatment by practitioners of these systems is said to be cheap, and it is claimed that the empirical knowledge, that has been accumulated over centuries, has resulted in a fund of experience of the properties and medicinal use of minerals, herbs, and plants which is of some value (*Report of the Health Survey and Development Committee*, 1945,455).

Epidemic, as it seemed, was a major cause of mortality depopulating large areas of the country. There had been a comparatively trifling amount of cholera during the years 1899, 1900 and 1901. As compared with 1900, in the year 1901, there were 1,665 less cases of cholera, 1665 less of dysentery and 1056 less of diarrhea, while admissions for all other diseases showed a general proportionate increase (*Triennial Report on the Working of the Dispensaries in Assam for the years 1899, 1900 and 1901*). People had no idea how to take preventive measures against cholera, no idea how to treat the cholera

patient and, therefore, whenever the disease struck people fell victim. The same triennial report of the government concerning public health observed that the small number of surgical operations done in Assam was always a matter of reproach to the people. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan discussed with John Butler, the Principal Assistant, about the possibility of opening a public dispensary but they could not materialise their plan for lack of public support. The people usually relied on their traditional system of medicine. Even the ayurvedic system of medicine was not available to the common man. Its use was limited to the elites. Allopathic medicine entered Assam in the late nineteenth century. While studying on the state of medicine and public health in the nineteenth century India, Sujata Mukherjee argues that Western curative medicine served a wider agenda of imperial rule that is a civilizing programme linking together the issues of gender and health care (Mukherjee,2010,95). It was generally available against malaria, kala azar, dysentery and very rarely against cholera. For the spread of Western medicine, the colonial state gradually set up the necessary infrastructure in the British India. In the hospitals and dispensaries, western medicine sought to establish its superiority over traditional medicines with combination of indigenous herbal remedies and spiritual cures.

5. v Breaking through Isolation

It is well-known that the influence of history and geography on human mind is too deep to be ignored. Located at a distance from the *Aryavarta*, the geographical isolation of Assam was not favourable for promotion of travel. Only on an occasion of pilgrimage the Assamese people did go out of home for a few months. Pilgrimage outside the state was, however, not a common and popular experience.

Only after coming of the British, Assam was opened up. It was mostly the Assamese businessmen who went out of their ancestral place in search of fortune. In 1836, Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Barua visited Dacca for treatment of rheumatic ailment. On his way back he successfully contacted the descendents of Jagat Seth at Murshidabad. As an enterprising person, Maniram visited the family of the famous banker Jagat Seth certainly with a purpose. As far as one can see Haribilash Agarwala was the only person from Assam who travelled widely across the length and breadth of India visiting the religious and historical places. He inspired others to travel. He was a curious tourist throughout his life. Sometimes he toured to enhance trade prospects. Though without any formal

education, he learnt a lot in course of travels. He took with him personal maids for cooking and other convenience.

Occasionally pilgrimages provided contact with new places, people, customs hitherto unfamiliar. It naturally opened up the mind. Haribilash visited the Jagannath temple in Puri, during the festival of *Durgapuja*. He went on a pilgrimage to some religious places of north India with a few family members. He went to Giridhi and Baidyanath for recovery from sickness. He made a long trip of Baidyanath, Danapur, Allahabad, Agra, Jaipur, Mathura and Brindaban. Taking rest for a few days in Delhi, he took a route from Ayodhya to Calcutta. Haribilash also visited Bombay, Lucknow, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Amritsar, Lahore and Rawalpindi. He loved to share his joy with some of his friends. He took Gobinda Bezbaroa to Agra, Gwalior, Ajmir, Ahmedabad and Mahabaleswar; ennjoyed the Diwali celebration in Puna; and was kind enough to bear the expense of his companion (Bezbaroa,1998,12). They sailed to Ceylon via Madras. Haribilash took his son Chandra Kumar and travelled to Burma in 1886, a year after the British conquest of the Upper Burma. He was interested in the *melas* or carnivals. He visited the famous Sonpur *mela* in Bihar in 1895. The same year, he attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. His wide travel experience covered places like Hrishikesh, Laxman-jhula, Madurai and Rameswaram (Agarwala,1967,33,41,47).

Anundoram Borooah was the first student from Assam to study in England. His biographer Suryya Kumar Bhuyan pointed out his moral strength in resisting all sorts of distractions. There were many students from India who lost their purpose in the lure of amusements in England. But Anundoram realized his commitment to the 'mother Assam' and resolved to achieve it (Bhuyan,1966,9,30). Thereby he was aptly making the best use of his time and availed all access to excellence in the capital of the British Empire. That was, perhaps, the most fruitful period of his life. He sowed the seeds of his spectacular career in England.

Rajabala Das also loved travelling. Her autobiography includes a chapter on her England visit with her family in 1949. She visited the important sites which any traveller to England could never miss. She also attended a session of the British Parliament. She visited the schools and colleges there in order to have an idea of the academic institutions. She travelled the countryside in train and enjoyed the beauty of the English rural life. She had been to some other European cities like Stockholm, Copenhagen, Zurich, Geneva and

Paris. In course of the travels by ship, train and electric train, she came to know many things about those countries from the co-passangers (Das,2004,78,83,88). It was generally seen that the educated Indians developed an admiration for the European system of education, social life and culture. They took interest of them and tried to accept some of their ideas.

Rajabala Das went to Calcutta to attend the annual session of the All-India Women's Conference in 1932; the *Asam Mahila Samiti* got the affiliation of the national body. She also attended the annual sessions of the All-India Women's Conference held in Madras and Gwalior as a member of its standing committee. In the Gwalior Conference, Rajabala protested against smoking at the conference premises. Later, she noted with satisfaction that public smoking was totally prohibited in the country. Rajabala was once taken to the Sundarbans by her elder brother for quick recovery after kala azar (Das,2004,58-60). Health resorts also provided some diversion from illness and occasion for travel. Some of the most common destinations were Benaras, Ranchi, Gaya and Shillong.

Nalinibala Devi recalled her visit to the holy places in and around Guwahati during her childhood. She accompanied the elder members of her family. Nalinibala admired the pilgrimage in the past when visitors suffered a great deal of hardship. She loved Calcutta and was lyrical in her praise of Calcutta. Kalighat, Dakhineswar and Bellur Math had particular appeal for her. She was also interested in the history and legends associated with the places of worship. She visited the famous temples in Benaras. Her narrating style pointed to her faith in Hinduism and respect for its shrines. Sarnath in Bihar was the famous Buddhist place of pilgrimage and Nalinibala included it in her itinerary (Devi,1976,9-11,174-175,195-199).

Nalinibala Devi had the good fortune of meeting many of her contemporary literary figures from Assam and beyond. Poets from Vienna and Norway came and interviewed her in 1968. In the same year, an admirer of Nalinibala's poetry came to meet her from Kerala. A Punjabi writer came to collect one of her books with her autograph. A young lady from Orissa initiated correspondences with Nalinibala; she later on translated all the poetry collections of Nalinibala. She was overwhelmed by their affectionate behaviour and their undying passion for literature. She was at times surprised by the apparent aloofness of the Assamese youths. There was no lack of enthusiasm for literature among the new generation. In 1975, she was invited to attend the World Hindi Conference held

in Nagpur. As one of the veteran poets in a modern Indian language, she was felicitated. It was a very rewarding experience for her in the august gathering of about thirty thousand literature lovers. Even at the age of seventy seven, Nalinibala was energetic enough to recite a poem of her own composition, 'Moi Bharatiya Nari' (I am an Indian Woman) in the poets' meet. The session was presided by the renowned Hindi poet Mahadevi Varma (Devi,1976, 341-342, 355-357). National recognition such as this certainly gratified a woman far from the literary heartland of Hindi and English. It provided her a rare opportunity to express the pride and faith in her Indianness.

Benudhar Rajkhowa noted that the people of Assam were mostly hesitant in visiting places like Sylhet. Benudhar was transferred to a place called Maulvi Bazar subdivision of the district in 1912 and he stayed there for a couple of months. After retirement from service, he could make time to visit several sites in Assam. He visited Majuli and Parasuram Kunda. He also visited and appreciated the historical monuments in Delhi (Rajkhowa,1969,146,181).

Most of these writers mentioned about their visits to their relatives. It was some sort of social custom to visit one's relations residing in far away places. These visits were a source of great joy and merriment. Nalinibala Devi remembered how much she enjoyed the six-day long journey from Guwahati to Dibrugarh on a ship to her maternal uncle's place. She experienced lot of new things in Dibrugarh (Devi,1976,14-16). Similarly, Padmanath Gohain Barooah fondly recalled his unbound joy on the top of an elephant on the way to his grandparents' place in Sibsagar. His stay there was full of fun (Gohain Barooah,1987,7). The family get-togethers were unforgettable moments of their childhood. Those were the few days amidst indulgence and freedom from the daily routine life under parental authority. This was the reason for which the young ones chose to enjoy their vacation being with their relatives.

5. vi Natural Calamities

Frequent occurrence of earthquakes disturbed the life in Assam. In August, 1845 Harakanta *Sadar Amin* experienced a series of devastating earthquakes across the region. The first tremor was felt at night, demolishing a few shrines at Guwahati namely Umananda, Kamakhya, Rudreshwar and Sukreshwar. Harakanta recorded that this was followed by another twenty five in the next three days. In another quake of the following year, the topmost portion of the church at Guwahati collapsed. This incident of the breakdown of the Church within a year of its erection, angered Lord Bishop of Calcutta. He fixed the responsibility of its weak construction to Barrack Master who was a village officer appointed by the villagers. He was fined rupees four thousand (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991, 45,48-49).

Recurrent flood and drought affected the people, especially the farmers. Flood in 1846 affected some of the famous *sattras*. Harakanta noted that deer in large numbers floated in the strong current of the Brahmaputra. Some of the helpless deer were caught by the people, while others were drowned. Deer meat was popular; Harakanta remembered the variations in its price. These kind of practices indicated that people were deficient in their feelings for the other creatures and wild instincts sometimes prevailed over kindness. Towards the end of the year, there was shortage of rain causing crop failure (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,49).

A major earthquake was felt in December, 1888. It was of such intensity that Harakanta's personal elephant could not stand it and fell down. Next year in spring, violent storms whipped Barpeta, North Guwahati and Nagaon. It took lives of a few. Dwellings of a few villages were destroyed. Harakanta particularly talked about a *rudraksha* plant in his ancestral place in North Guwahati that fell down in the storm (Sarma Majundar Barua,1991,278). It was a definite indication of his pain for this sacred plant.

Haribilash reported the major earthquake of the region occurred on 12 June, 1897 (Agarwala,1967,47). The great earthquake of 1897 affected Nalinibala's ancestors. Her grandfather was transferred to Barpeta, which was unfortunately the worst affected. The Chawalkhua river flooded the whole of Barpeta. Untold misery waited for the starved and unsheltered people. Madhab Chandra Bardaloi did his best to rehabilitate the people (Devi,1976, 1-2).

The Brahmaputra was causing large scale erosion in Dibrugarh. Benudhar Rajkhowa recorded the condition. He observed that earlier, the river had been flowing four miles away from its present course. In 1931, there was unprecedented flood in the entire town. He observed that the river was eating into the large tracts of land. At Maulvi bazaar in the district of Sylhet, Benudhar noticed peculiar kind of house building with buttresses. He was told that frequent storms in Sylhet compelled people to protect their dwellings (Rajkhowa,1969,67,181,157).

So much of natural disasters made the people realize how helpless they were before the whims of Nature. There was no mention of any kind of administrative relief measures at times of flood, drought, famine and epidemics. It was, however, in sharp contrast to the government's image of propounding humanitarianism.

The lives of a select enlightened personalities revealed that they were trained in their family environment to inculcate a sense of discipline in life right from their childhood. They followed some of their traditional custom and questioned some others. Traditional cultural elements were the key players in people's life. There were norms mainly associated with daily life. Following the colonial rule, there was expansion of livelihood of different categories. The middle-class loved to lead a rational way of life and they tried to copy the British in matters of material comfort and material culture. Pursuit of wealth, power and intellect were never neglected. There was penetration of commercial capitalism. The inevitable economic changes in certain field however, could not improve the economic status of the indigenous people.

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