



# THE MIDDLE-CLASS ROLE IN THE SOCIAL-INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NINETEENTH CENTURY ASSAM

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## ABSTRACT

*Nineteenth century is a very important period of Assam. The political changes taking place at this time have expanded the influence of Assam on all sectors. The nineteenth century was of special significance to Assam because the Treaty of Yandabu (1826) between the British and the Burmese brought to an end the six hundred years old Ahom monarchy in Assam and paved the way for the eventual establishment of British rule. The British introduced many new rules for their convenience. The British put an end to slavery and started the circulation of currency in exchange for the practice of exchange. In this way, there was a lot of change in social life during the British rule. The Socio-Intellectual background of nineteenth century Assam was created due to the influence of various factors. The British had created a new middle class to facilitate their rule. This middle class took an influential role in the social intellectual background of Assam.*

**Keywords:** Nineteenth Century Assam, Social-Intellectual background, Role of Middle class.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century is a very important period of Assam. There was a lot of change in Assam in the Nineteenth century. For their convenience, the British introduced many new rules in the socio-economic administration area of Assam. The British brought many people from Bengal to Assam to help in their work. The British also created a middle class in Assam to expand their capitalist empire. The middle class was in favor of the British. According to Hiren Gohain, this middle class is built by the British.<sup>2</sup> This middle class was given a lot of convenience by the British Government. The British government also gave various posts to the people under this

middle class. They were also given the position of collecting revenue by the British. According to the places, those people used to call Maujadar, Chaudhary, Kakoti and Patgiri etc.

## **2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this research is to an analytical study about Role of middle class in Social-Intellectual Background of Nineteenth century Assam..

- This study is necessary to know the Social-Intellectual Background of Nineteenth Century Assam.
- Nature of middle class.
- Explain the role of middle class played in the socio- Intellectual background of Assam.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology followed in this study is historical and analytical. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary source used here are contemporary literature and journal etc. The secondary data including critical reference and journals.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Nineteenth Century Assam**

Nineteenth century is significant time of Assam. In this period Ahom monarchy was end. According to the condition of the Yandabo treaty, the British took control of Assam in their hands. It caused manifold changes in the future life of the people of Assam. First, the kingship along with the feudal was abolished and a new system of administration with bureaucrats and assistants had been established. Secondly, the old revenue system met its end and the Rupee was introduced to play a vital role for all time to come. Thus the plinth for capitalism had been erected which caused the emergence of new social classes in the country for future. Thirdly, it opened the door for the introduction of the western system of institutional education which could be obtained by all, irrespective of their caste and creed, and thereby it gave birth to a class of new elite to mould new social and literary values in future.<sup>3</sup> Based on all these areas can study about Nineteenth Century Assam.

### **4.2. Nature of the Middle Class**

Most of the people of Assam were against the British Government. Because the British Government exploited ordinary people in Assam for their own benefit. But the middle class people created by the British were in favor of the government. In the name of revenue collection, one type of middle class people was exploited over ordinary people. Some middle-class people also indulged in misdemeanor. The middle-class people who took the faciality from the British government helped in the expansion of colonial rule. They had never opposed the British government for their selfishness. The middle class was never opposed even by the British increasing the amount of revenue. There are two type of people under this middle class. One type of people used to think only their own benefit and one type of people used to think about the progress of the country by staying under the discipline of the British Government.

### **4.3. Role of middle class in Social-Intellectual background of Nineteenth century Assam**

The British create a Social Class in Assam to facilitate their rule. One type of this middle class people thought for their selfishness and their nature was also not good. But not all the middle class people was same. From within this middle class, a class intellectual emerged. The middle class has great influence in the Social Intellectual background of the Nineteenth century Assam.

A lot of people tried under the middle class for the development of Assamese language, literature, culture and society. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Barua and Hemchandra Barua were the representatives of this category. In 1836, the British boycotted the Assamese language from the school-court of Assam. The government introduced Bangla in place of Assamese in all government areas of Assam. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was the first Assamese person who had first voiced the Assamese language with the Missionaries. In 1853, the British government sent Moffat Mills to Assam to review of economic condition of Assam. Moffat Mills was responsible to inspect all the areas of Assam and report it to the government. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, a middle class representative and intellectual of Assam gave a memorial letter to Moffat Mills. In the memorial letter named *Observation on the Administration of province of Assam*, there was a lot of attention to the needs of Assam as well as the government. In the memorial letter, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan asked the mother tongue to be the medium of school and court. Moffat Mills submitted *Report on the province of Assam* to the government in 1854. But the Council of Education and Government did not accept the Moffat Mills Report. After this Anandaram Dhekial Phukan published a book named *A Few Remarks on the Assamese language and on Vernacular education in Assam*. He gave this book to the British government and to well-known people of Assam. In this book Anandaram Dhekial Phukan has explained the characteristics of Assamese language and the difference of Assamese language from Bangla language. In this way, with the efforts of missionaries and Assamese intellectual, the Assamese language resumed in the school court of Assam.

There were no higher education institute establishment in Assam in the early Nineteenth century. So under this middle class intellectual went to Kolkata to pursue higher education. The British government also helped them take higher education. Anandaram was helped Englishmen Jenkins and Methi in pursuing higher education. In this work too, the British government its own profits. They wanted a class of English educated intellectual emerged to help in the work of them. At that time many people of Assamese society believed in superstition. There were many injustice in the name of religion and caste. A category of intellectuals educated with modern education took the role for the revision of society. At that time the people of Brahmin sect of Assamese society were against widow marriage. Against the unbridled customs rules prevalent in the society of intellectual of contemporary times. Gunabhiram Barua wrote the drama *Ramnavami* in support of widow marriage. Gunabhiram Barua went against the Brahmin society and married Parashuram Barua's widow Bishnupriya Devi. Gunabhiram Barua supported women's education. Gunabhiram studied his daughter Swarnalata at the age of nine in Bethun School, Kolkata. The *Assam Bandhu* was published in the editing of Gunabhiram Barua. The intellectual Hemchandra Barua of that time also opposed the unbridled rules prevailing in the society. To make the Assamese language pure, he composed the grammar of the Assamese language. In his editing, *Assam News* also played a role in the areas of Assamese language and literature. At that time, the prevalence of Opium in Assamese society had increased. Many people of Assam had lost everything due to consumption of opium. Hemchandra Barua composed the *Kaniyar Kirton* by mentioning the loss from Opium. These intellectual had played a better role in the areas of Assamese language literature society and culture. They had tried to develop the concern of the people of Assamese society through their work and creations. They never opposed the British government.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the study of this topic that the middle class played an excellent role in the social intellectual background of Assam in of the Nineteenth century. They had their own benefit in the support of the British government. The British also created this social class for their own benefit and under it, the intellectual had made education arrangements. People of this class spread the flame of knowledge in the society of Assam. The overall background of Nineteenth

century Assam will be incomplete without a middle class study. Under this middle class, only intellectual changed the value of ethics of the people of Assam. The study of above the role of middle class criticized the activities of a limited number of middle-class people. There is a more detailed study leave in this subject.

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