

Chapter : 3

The Moamoriya Rebellion

HISTORY

Very short answer type questions:

Q.1: What is Mayamara ?

Ans: Mayamara was the name of a Vaishnava Sattrā which came within the fold of the Kaal Songhoti.

Q.2: What is Sattrā ?

Ans: The Sattrā was a religious and cultural organisation of devotees concerned with the dissemination of the principles and devotional practices of Neo- Vaishnavite religion preached by Sankardev and Madhabdev.

Q.3: What is Songhoti ?

Ans: After the death of Sankardev, the Neo- Vaishnavite religion became fragmented due to the ideological differences among his disciples. As a result the sattriya movement was divided into four divisions called 'Songhotis', viz Brahma, Purush, Kaal and Nika.

Q.4: During the reign of which King did the Moamoriya Rebellion begin ?

Ans: Swargadeo Lakshmi Singha.

Q.5: During the reign of which King did the Moamoriya Rebellion conclude ?

Ans: Swargadeo Kamaleswar Singha.

Q.6: Which Ahom king is said to have adopted the title of Swargadeo/ Swarganaryan ?

Ans: King Suhungmung.

Q.7: During the reign of Surampha Bhagaraja which sattradhikar was murdered ?

Ans: Guru Nityanandadeva, the Sattradhikar of Mayamara Sattra.

Q.8: Which Sattradhikar was humiliated in the royal court of Rudra Singha ?

Ans: Chaturbhujdev Mahanta.

Q.9: Who was the chief deity of the Ahoms ?

Ans: Somdev.

Q.10: Which Sattradhikar did Jaydhwaj Singha accept as his religious preceptor ?

Ans: Sattradhikar Niranjandev of Auniati Sattra.

Q.11: Which Sattradhikar did Rudra Singha accept as his religious preceptor ?

Ans: Sattradhikar Keshadev of Auniati Sattra.

Q.12: Who was Krishnaram Bhattacharya ?

Ans: Krishnaram Bhattacharya was a Shakta Brahmin Pandit from Nadiya in Bengal whom Swargadeo Rudra Singha summoned to Assam to promote Shaktism in the state. Krishnaram settled in the Nilachal Hill and he along with his successors became popular as Parbotiya Gosain.

Q.13: During which Ahom king's reign did Shaktism become very strong ?

Ans: Swargodeo Siva Singha.

Q.14: Who was Gagini ?

Ans: Gagini was the son of Moamoriya Mahanta Ashtabhuja who invited the disciples of Neo- Vaishnavite sect to build a borbheti at Malou pothar near Jorhat.

Q.15: Whom did the Moamoriyas first establish as king ?

Ans: Ramakanta or Ramananda, son of Nahar Khora Saikia (a Moran disciple leader of Mayomara Sattra).

Q.16: How long did Captain Welsh stay in Assam ?

Ans: From November 1792 to May 1794.

Q.17: Where was salt produced in Assam ?

Ans: Sadiya and Nagapahar.

Q.18: Why were the common people of Assam unable to use salt ?

Ans: The common people of Assam were unable to use salt because it was very expensive.

long answer type question:

Q.1: Who were the Moamoriya ? Can this rebellion be called a mass uprising ?

Ans: The Moamoriyas were the followers of the Mayamara Sattra. This Sattra was within the Kaal Songhoti, one of the four Songhotis that the Vaishnava sattra was divided into after the death of Sankardev. The main disciples of the Mayamara sattra were the people belonging to the Moran tribe. This sattra influenced various other castes and tribes in Assam like Kachari, Chutiya, Ahom, Kaibartta, etc. Since the Sattradhikar (religious preceptor) of the Mayamara sattra belonged to the Sudra Caste, called sudra sattradhikar (Mahanta), the number of disciples joining the sattra increased and contributed towards rising dignity and prestige of both the sattra and the Mahantas.

The Moamoriya Rebellion took place in the 18th century between the Moamoriyas and the Ahom royal power. Lasting for 35 years, it was the longest rebellion in the history of Assam and can be regarded as a mass uprising because a large number of common people like peasants and other professionals like potters, blacksmiths, artisans, etc. participated in the rebellion. This rebellion shook the very foundation of the Ahom monarchy and went on to completely destroy the age-old Ahom power and authority.

Q.2: Analyse the political of the Moamoriya Rebellion.

Ans: The important political causes for the outbreak of the Moamoriya Rebellion were:

(i) **Murder of Nityanandadeva:** The seeds of the rebellion were sown about a century before it actually took place, with the murder of Guru Nityanandadeva, the sattradhikar of the Mayamara sattrā with the consent of the then reigning king Surampha Bhagaraja (1641-44). This unholy murder created a lot of ill-feeling among the masses against the Ahom rulers.

(ii) **Murder of Sattradhikar Baikuntha Mahanta:** The murder of Baikuntha Mahanta on royal orders of Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha infused the people with the fire of rebellion 'against the Ahom monarchy.

(iii) **Humiliation of Chaturbhujdev Mahanta:** During the reign of Siva Singha, Chaturbhujdev Mahanta was

humiliated in the royal court of Rudra Singha, on the directions of Bor Raja Phuleswari. This humiliation created discontentment in the hearts of the Moamoriyas.

Q.3: Do you think the change in the religious policy of the Ahoms was a cause of the Moamoriya Rebellion ? Discuss.

Ans: The Moamoriya Rebellion was caused due to several religious factors. One of the important causes of this rebellion was the oppression of Vaishnavas and the suppression of the Sattras institutions by the Ahom King Gadadhar Singha. King Jaydhwaj Singha was a firm believer of Vaishnavism. Influenced by Sattradhikar Niranjandev of Auniati Sattras, he established various Sattras to promote Vaishnavism. Over the years, these institutions amassed immense wealth and riches and each Sattras became a parallel kingdom within the Ahom kingdom. This enabled them to wield a great deal of power to the extent of influencing even the political situation in the state. In fact, many of the leading Sattradhikars were involved in the political feuds of the Sattradhikars and thereby curb their ability to interfere in the political affairs of the state. The following two actions of King Gadadhar Singha outraged the general masses:

(i) He raided most of the Sattras institutions and looted away their wealth.

(ii) He practically removed all the privileges enjoyed by the inmates of these institutions.

The other religious causes that led to the outbreak of Moamoriya rebellion were:

(i) King Rudra Singha used the policy of divide and rule. He gave special privileges to Brahmanical Sattras by which he created a rift between them and the Sudra Sattras.

(ii) Queen Phuleswari insulted the Sudra Mahantas by forcing them and their disciples to smear the blood of sacrificed animals on their forehead as 'tilak'.

(iii) The Sudras looked upon their Guru as the God and they never bowed down their heads to anyone else except their Guru.

Q.4: How far was the paik system responsible for the Moamoriya Rebellion ? Give your own opinion.

Ans: One of the major factors that contributed or prepared the ground for the outbreak of the Moamoriya Rebellion was the exploitation of the common man by the paik system. Paik labour was a type of obligatory state service to be rendered by every male member for the welfare of the state. But unfortunately, the burden of paik service increased on the ordinary people as years went by. This created a social discontentment and public displeasure against the Ahom administration.

(ii) Increase in the duration of paik service :During the reign of king Rajeshwar Singha, the number of paiks available for state service decreased considerably. Earlier,one paik was recruited for obligatory state service in rotation from the 'got' or 'unit' of 4 paiks for 3 months in a year. But due to the decreasing number of paiks, king Rajeswar Singha started the system of 3 paiks forming a unit and so each of them had to do obligatory service for 4 months. As a result the burden of physical labour on the paiks, increased considerably which affected their family income. This caused social unrest and hostility against the Ahom administration.

(ii) Exemption from paik service: The misuse of paik service was another major reason for public anger. Over the years,many people got exemption from this obligatory service. The rich could get exemption from paik service by paying money. These people came to be known as Chamua paik. The paiks who did not get such exemption were called Kanri paik. The Chamuas were considered a higher class of people. So the paik system further created division in the society . The continual increase in their number decreased. As a result,the Kanri paiks became the main supporters of the Moamoriya Rebellion.

Q.5: Discuss the results of the Moamoriya Rebellion.

Ans: The main results of the Moamoriya Rebellion were:

(A) Political results: (i) British military expedition to Assam : The most important after- effect of the Moamoriya Rebellion was the arrival of the British military expedition to Assam.

The Moamoriya Rebellion broke out during the time of king Gaurinath Singha in 1782, thereby forcing him to flee from the capital Rangpur to Gauhati. In his desperation, he invited the British to come to Assam and assist him in crushing the rebellion. The British sent a military expedition under Captain Thomas Welsh, who remained in Assam from November 1792 to May 1794. Captain Welsh sent a detailed report to the British government in Bengal which helped them later to take all policy decisions on Assam.

(ii) Decline of Ahom administrative mechanism and independence: Due to the failure of Moamoriya to develop a central administrative mechanism, the common people began to lose faith in the Ahom monarchy as well. The beginning of the Moamoriya rebellion for the second time in 1782 resulted in the fleeing of the Ahom King Gaurinath Singha from the capital and this marked the end of Ahom independence. Thereafter, the Ahom King was a ruler only in name. Various local rebellions totally destroyed the royal authority and the Ahom rulers completely lost their supremacy.

(B) Socio-economic results: The Moamoriya Rebellion had devastating impact on the socio-economic scenario of the region.

(i) Fleeing of common people to jungles, mountains, neighbouring states, etc. to escape from intolerable atrocities of both the Ahom Monarchy and the Moamoriyas, led to depopulation.

(ii) Frequent occurrence of famines due to the destruction of paddy fields.

(iii) Killing or maiming of expert Moamoriya artisans in the rebellion led to lesser production of weapons, thereby weakening the strength of army.

(iv) Classification of the state, based on religions-Hindu Brahmanism and Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism.

(c) Creation of the Matak Kingdom: As a solution to the Moamoriya Rebellion, the Ahom Burhagohain, Purnanada signed a treaty with Sarbananda Singha and recognised the area between the Dihing and Brahmaputra rivers as Matak Kingdom. Sarbananda was made a tributary ruler with the title of Borsenapati.

Q.6: Do you think the Moamoriya Rebellion was successful or unsuccessful? Give logic for your answer.

Ans: The Moamoriya rebellion is one of the most significant events that changed the history of medieval Assam. The original aim of the most rebels was to rise against the atrocities of the Ahom rulers, and dethrone them, and possibly set their own representative on the

throne. The rebels wanted a better life for the common man where they would not be dictated by the whims and fancies of the changing rulers. The Moamoriya rebellion did greatly weaken the Ahom monarchy to such an extent that its rulers were forced to flee the capital. Hence the Moamariya rebellion was successful in destabilizing the Ahom monarchy. However, when the Moamariya once got the opportunity to ascend the throne, they began to fight among themselves for power. Also in their desire to avenge the wrongs done to them, they continued to commit atrocities on the common man. So the people of Assam continued to suffer. They abandoned their homes and fields causing famines and more misery for them. So the Moamoriya rebellion was unsuccessful in bringing peace, harmony and prosperity for the people of Assam; rather it was the prime cause of foreign invasions and loss of independence for the region.

Q.7: Under what circumstances did Captain Welsh come to Assam ? Why did he leave his expedition incomplete and go back ?

Ans: The British military expedition under Captain Thomas Welsh is a major event in the history of Assam, as it drew the attention of the Britishers to Assam. The expedition was undertaken on the special request of the then Ahom King Gaurinath Singha, who was surrounded by various rebellions. King Gaurinath Singha sent a written appeal thereby seeking military assistance from the English East India Company's

Government in Bengal. The Government sent a military expedition to Assam under Captain Thomas Welsh. The following factors were mainly responsible for the military expedition of Captain Thomas Welsh:

(i) Moamoriya Rebellion: The most important rebellion that threatened the throne of Gaurinath Singha was the Moamoriya Rebellion, which began in Upper Assam. This rebellion which first broke out during the reign of Gaurinath Singha's father, Lakhmi Singha, restarted in 1782 during Gaurinath's time. Facing defeat king Gaurinath Singha had to run away from his capital, Rangpur to Gauhati in 1788. After reaching Gauhati, Gaurinath Singha requested the Kings of Manipur, Cachar and Jayantia to help him, but they did not come forward to his rescue.

(ii) Rebellion of Haradatta- and Krishnanarayan: Haradatta Choudhury of Kamrup rose in rebellion against King Gaurinath Singha regarding various issues. He joined hands with Darrang Raja, Krishnanarayan, who received mass support from the general public to revolt against the Ahom monarchy.

(iii) Revolt of Sindhura Hazarika: Due to the revolt of During Raja Krishnanarayan and Haradatta, Meanwhile, Sindhura Hazarika started a revolt in Nowgaon and Gaurinath Singha had to flee to Gauhati.

(iv) Revolt of Bairangi Raja: In Gauhati, the Kaibartta Community headed by king Bairangi Raja, became violent and set fire to the king's residence. As a result, Gaurinath Singha had to run away Gauhati too.

Q.8: Describe the role played by Captain Welsh in suppressing the Moamoriya Rebellion. How far was he successful ?

Ans: The existing political and socio- economic situation in Assam in 1792 was alarming. The common people were terrorized by the Moamoriyas and the burkandazes of Bengal, and the monarchy had utterly failed in delivering them from the atrocities. This led Gaurinath Singha to seek help from the British Government in Bengal, who sent an expedition under Captain Thomas Welsh. The expedition had far reaching consequences in the ensuing years and initiated a series of changes that altered the very face of Assam.

On reaching Assam in November 1792, Captain Thomas Welsh first set out to suppress the rebellions of Bairagi Raja, Haradatta and Krishnanarayan, and then signed a trade treaty with King Gaurinath Singha, which was to great advantage for the British. This necessitated dominance over the Moamoriyas. After bringing some semblance of law and order in Lower Assam, Captain Welsh turned his attention towards the Moamoriya rebels who had established themselves in Upper Assam. He requested for more military platoons from the then Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, and with the Assamese army forced the Moamoriyas to flee Rongpur.

Thus Gaurinath Singha regained the capital and the throne. Captain Welsh suppressed the Moamoriyas but could not take further action against them as he was recalled by the new Governor General, Sir John Shore. However on his return journey he torched and destroyed many Moamoriya camps. The fourth phase of the Moamoriya rebellion began once Captain Welsh left Assam; so he could not totally suppress it.

Q.9: Discuss the Captain Welsh's Account of Assam.

Ans: On a special request of the Ahom King, Gaurinath Singha, the British government in Bengal sent a military expedition to Assam under Captain Thomas Welsh, with the main intention being to collect detailed information about Assam. Captain Welsh remained in Assam from Nov 1792 to March 1794. Towards the later part of his stay in Assam, Captain Welsh sent a detailed report to the English East India Company's government in Bengal. The report touched every aspect of Assam's life and customs. It was an eye-opener for the British authorities in many A brief outline of the Report sent by Captain Welsh is as follows:

(i) Political condition of Assam: (a) The government of Assam was monarchical and aristocratic. The King enjoyed executive authority and absolute power in the country.

(b) The administrative mechanism was handled by five principal ministers who were always fighting among themselves for power.

(c) He blamed the murder of the Moamoriya Mahanta, dictatorship of Kirtichandra Borbarua, competition for power among the high officials and the immoral denial of the throne to Mohanmala Gohain, for the political deadlock in the Ahom Kingdom.

(d) He mentioned the steps he took to re-establish peace in Assam.

(ii) Trade and economy : (a) Large-scale trade with Bengal earned a revenue of ₹ 90,000 per year, however only 26,000 reached the royal treasury.

(b) Grains were the primary produce, the other essential products were mustard, ginger, indigo, areca nut, betel leaves, sugarcane, iron, lac, gold, etc. Grains could not be sold in the market.

(c) Salt and gold were the medium of exchange.

(d) Salt was in scarcity and it was the most important commodity to be imported. Annually, around 1,20,000 maunds of salt was imported from Bengal as only small amount of inferior quality salt was produced in Sadiya and Nagapahar in Assam.

(e) People suffered from scarcity of money.

(f) The report focused on the presence of immense natural resources in Assam.

(iii) Description of Gauhati and Rangpur:

Thomas Welsh mentioned that Gauhati was a big populated town situated along both the banks of the river Brahmaputra. He described a very large building near the river which had walls 6 feet high, and could house Welsh's entire army. For Rangpur he said that its boundary was about 20 miles. The capital was surrounded by productive agriculture land. The King or the high officials were the owner of most of the properties.

Write Short Notes On :

Q.1: Kirtichandra Borbarua.

Ans: Kirtichandra Borborua was a disciple of the Dihing Sattrā, which was at constant loggerheads with the Mayamara Sattrā. Thus Kirtichandra grabbed every chance to humiliate followers of the Mayamara Sattrā. The atrocities of Kirtichandra on the Mayamara Sattrā and its disciples contributed to the beginning of the Moamoriya Rebellion. During the reign of Swargodeo Laksmi Singha, Kirtichandra insulted the Mahanta of the Mayamara Sattrā and also humiliated Nahra Khora and Ragha Moran, by cutting off an ear and by flogging respectively. This act of Kirtichandra lightened the fire of Moamoriya Rebellion, Kirtichandra, due to his misdeeds

can be directly held responsible for decay of the Ahom Monarchy.

Q.2: Mayamara Sattrā.

Ans: Do your Self.

Q.3: Purnanada (original name- Lari Gohain), the son of Ghanashyam Burhagohain became the Burhagohain of the Ahom Kingdom during the reign of Gaurinath Singha. He was the Rajmantri or Burhagohain from 1782 to 1817, i.e. for a period of nearly 35 years. Since Gaurinath Singha was not an efficient leader, the entire authority and power was passed on to the Burhagohain. Purnanada taking advantage of the situation took complete charge of the administration. He became very powerful and was given more importance than the King. He was however a very able administrator and leader. He suppressed all the major rebellions that took place during his tenure and re-established the Ahom Kingdom. During the Moamoriya rebellion he protected his subjects like a bird does her young ones. His courage, valour and devotion to duty is admired even today.

Q.4: Kanri paik and Chamua paik.

Ans: One of the unique features of Ahom monarchy was the practice of paik service by which all male members had to render free service to the state. An individual was supposed to render 3 to 4 months of compulsory service

to the state. The paik system was divided into two classes - Chamua paik and the Kanri paik. Chamua paiks were those who could free themselves from the forced labour by paying a certain amount of money. They were considered a higher class or a gentleman class. The Kanri paiks were those who could not exempt themselves from paik service and hence they held a lower status than the Chamua paiks. The number of Chamua paiks gradually began to increase, thereby increasing the burden of paik service on the Kanri paiks. Thus the paik system gave rise to social inequality.

Q.5: Trade treaty between Welsh and Gaurinath Singha.

Ans: One of the achievements of Captain Thomas Welsh's expedition was the conclusion of a trade treaty with the Ahom King, Gaurinath Singha. The treaty was signed on 8 February 1793. The treaty controlled the trade of Assam to the advantage of the Britishers. The important clauses of this treaty were :

(i) 10% tax was imposed on any commodity imported into Assam from any English dominated region.

(ii) 10% tax was imposed on any commodity exported from Assam to any English dominated region.

(iii) Grain and rice were to be tax-free.

(iv) To facilitate collection of import and export duties, two custom offices were established in Gauhati and Kandhar.

(v) No other European traders were permitted to trade in Assam without the prior consent of the Ahom or the English governments.

Q.6: Bar Raja Phuleswari.

Ans: Queen Phuleswari was the wife of Siva Singha, the Ahom ruler. She was a powerful woman who wielded considerable power. She was given the title 'Bor Raja', which means the real or chief king. She strongly opposed the Vaishnava cult, and popularised Shaktism. Some of the head priests of the Sattras called Satradhikars were restrained and forced to smear the blood of sacrificed animals on their foreheads as tilak. Her actions and unpopular measures heightened the already existing social and religious discontentment in Assam.

Q.7: Parbatiya Gosain.

Ans: Swargadeo Rudra Singha summoned the Shakta Brahman pandit- Krishnaram Bhattacharya, from Nadiya in Bengal. The main object of the arrival of the Brahman was to promote Shaktism in Assam. Rudra Singha's son Siva Singha who was also a great follower, became a disciple of Krishnaram Bhattacharya. Later, he established Krishnaram in the Nilachal hills. Krishnaram

and his successors came to be known as 'Parbatiya Gosain' as they resided on top of the Nilachal Hill.

Q.8: Sarbanada.

Ans: One of the most affected regions during the Moamoriya Rebellion was Bengmara (presently-Tinsukia).The people of this place who were suffering due to the oppressive policies and system of Ahom ruler rose up in rebellion. A person named Sarbanda Singha declared himself as the king of Bengmara and ruled over the area till the end of the Moamoriya Rebellion. All throughout his rule,he maintained a rebellious administration against the monarchy.

Q.9: Bharat Singha.

Ans: Raja Bharat Singha,a Moamoriya,was a relative of the Mahanta of the Mayamara Sattra.

During the second phase of the Moamoriya Rebellion,the rebels in the Upper Assam rose against the Ahom ruler and occupied the capital city,Rangpur. The Ahom king,Gaurinath Singha was forced to flee from the capital and seek refuge in Gauhati.

Therefore,the rebels installed Bharat Singha as the new Ahom king. In 1794 when the joint British army led by Captain Welsh and the Assamese Army under Purnananda Burhagohain attacked Rangpur,Bharat Singha was badly injured and somehow managed to flee alive. He was however killed in the fourth phase of the Moamoriya rebellion.

Q.10: Rangpur city.

Ans: Rangpur was the capital of the Ahom Kingdom. The capital was surrounded by a brick fortification extending over an area of about 20 miles. Rangpur was characterised by fertile land suitable for agriculture. Most of the land of the capital Rangpur belonged to the King or the high officials of the Ahom Kingdom. When Captain Welsh marched towards Assam along with the Assamese soldiers, the Moamoriyas fled to Rangpur. In 1794, Captain Welsh suppressed the revolt and freed Rangpur from the clutches of rebels.