

**Role and Contribution of Women of Assam in Indian
Freedom Struggle with Special Reference to the
Revolutionary Activities (1905-1947)**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Gita Devi**, do hereby declare that the research work embodied in the M.Phil Dissertation entitled "**Role and Contribution of Women of Assam in Indian Freedom Struggle with Special Reference to the Revolutionary Activities (1905-1947)**" submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my original work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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All the assistance and help received during the course of investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

We recommend this dissertation work to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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“Role and Contribution of Women of Assam in Indian Freedom Struggle with Special Reference to the Revolutionary Activities (1905-1947)”

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Dedicated to my Mummy, Didi, and to my Guide

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Chapter – I

Introduction

The Indian National Movement can be said to have started with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Though there were also revolutions before the formation of the Indian National Congress, in most of the revolts there was no participation by all classes. It was after the formation of the Indian National Congress that all the people came together and worked for the movement. Throughout the past several years, India has been in desperate need of a political organization to help mobilize people for the movement against British oppressive and unjust policies. This long-felt need was met by the establishment of the Indian National Congress, which helped to institutionalize Indian nationalism. Similarly, in the context of Assam, with the first Anglo-Burmese War ended with the signing of the Treaty of *Yandaboo* in 1826, and following the treaty, Assam came under British rule.

When the British annexed Assam, they immediately shared the fate of the other Indian provinces that had been under the control of the East India Company, which began British colonial expansion into North East India. After that, the British started to rule over Assam with different tactics. They also separated Assam from Bengal. On 16 October 1905, the British under J.B. Fuller Assam was separated from Bengal.¹ Before the partition, a sense of national consciousness had developed among the people of Assam. The people of Assam were compelled to look beyond their provincial borders and find common ground with the rest of India because of the common bonds created by British rule, similar sufferings, improved communication, shared discrimination, and dissatisfaction at every step. There were vehement protests

and demonstrations in Bengal as well as in Assam. They protested against the partition by boycotting the goods that were manufactured by the British. They began to employ homemade goods and promote national education. Amidst protest, Lord Curzon carried out the partition. After the partition, the Bengali intelligentsia also protested with a bath in the Ganges, mass prayers, and Rakhi Bandhan.

In the Dhubri district of Assam, there was a public *sankirtan* in the morning, where there was the participation of members of different communities Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.² They marched through the towns, singing the national anthem. They also used to shout slogans like *Bande Mataram* and *Allah-ho-Akbar*.³ The people of Assam, as a result of declaring the partition of Bengal, boycotted foreign goods and started using woven clothes only. The people of Assam also avoided the consumption of salt and started to use "*Khar*" (alkaline).

In the struggle for freedom, the women of India also played an important role, like their male counterparts. They established *Mahila Samities* to encourage the women's folk to join the movement. The women of Assam were no exception in this regard. They established Assam *Mahila Samiti*. In 1915, *Asom Mahila Samiti* was formed, and it worked for the upliftment of women. It played an important role in the freedom struggle.

In the year 1921, M. K. Gandhi came to Assam. After his arrival, the women of Assam were encouraged to take up spinning and weaving. The women of Assam participated in the non-co- operation movement through programs of spinning, weaving, and boycotting foreign goods. In the nineteenth century, the society of Assam was conservative, and there was a limitation on going outside the home and participating in the first phase of the non-cooperation movement. Many rural women

who joined the freedom movement were excommunicated from their community for breaking the social restrictions as they came out from home and participated in the freedom movement.

The educated elite women took the step to spread the movement among illiterate village women in Assam. They visited villages and organized *Rajmels* (popular assemblies) to enlighten the village women with the help of patriotic songs, poems, etc. They spread the feeling of nationalism and encouraged the rural women to get out of their homes to safeguard the country. They encouraged women to spin and weave, use *Swadeshi* goods, and boycott foreign goods. They also propagated against alcohol consumption. *Asom Mahila Samiti* (Assam Women Association) was upgraded to provincial form. They worked for the welfare of women. They established weaver's stores. The main objective of the store was to encourage the natives to weave for themselves as well as for others.

The women of Assam also played an important role in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Puspalata Das, organized *Banar Sena* (Monkey Brigade), and *Mukti Sangha* (Liberation Association) to mobilize girls in the national movement. The women of Assam also joined as *Satyagrahis* in large numbers by singing the *Satyagrahi* pledge. In the Quit India Movement, the women of Assam played an important role. They came out of their homes and took an active part in the processions, demonstrations, and picketing. Many of them enrolled as members of the *Santi Sena* and *Mrityu Bahini*.⁴

The women of Assam participated in the national movement from 1905 to 1947 with full enthusiasm. While participating in the movement, many women were killed by the police. Many women's names are just mentioned. It is necessary to look into their

contribution. The research work is an attempt to address this particular issue through an intensive and extensive study. This research has tried to excavate the history of the role of women in Assam during the freedom movement in a comprehensive way. An attempt has been made to organize the scattered existing literature on the subject for proper academic arena and policy-making in order to preserve the history of Assamese women's role in the freedom movement.

Statement of the Problem

The history of India cannot be read and researched without the contribution of women. The pages of the history of the Indian freedom movement cannot be complete without reading about the involvement of women. The case of Assam is not exceptional in this connection. The women of Assam joined in every phase of the Indian national movement. However, women's roles have not been given their due, and the very least attention is paid to the role of women from Assam in the freedom movement in India by academic researchers and historians.

The women of Assam participated in the national movement, before the advent of M.K. Gandhi from 1905 to 1920 and also after the advent of M.K. Gandhi from and also after his advent from 1921 to 1947, by joining the campaigns, protests, and fasts, and by donating funds to the cause of freedom. Before the advent of M. K. Gandhi, there were few women in Assam. They also celebrated *Rakhi* to show unity after the partition of 1905. The women of Assam used to go to *sankirtan*, or prayer halls, to discuss their new ideas against British policies. There is also a gap in the contribution of women of Assam during the period of 1905 to 1920.

After the advent of M.K. Gandhi in 1921, the women of Assam were encouraged to join the Freedom Movement. However, not all the women who joined the freedom movement got the special attention of historians or academic researchers. Most of the people of Assam are not aware of the fact that there were many revolutionary women who participated in the movement and helped the country in attaining the freedom. So, it can be said that, till now, in Assam, many of the brightest sides of history are hidden.

With the formation of Assam *Mahila Samiti* (Assam Women Association), the educated women of Assam started to encourage promoting, spinning, and weaving. They also organized *Rajmels* (People gatherings) and make aware the village women aware of the feeling of nationalism. After the formation of Assam *Mahila Samiti* (Assam Women Association) in every district, *Mahila Samiti* (Women Association) was formed. The women of Assam participated in the freedom movement by attending meetings, protest processions, propagating the use of *Khadi* and Charkha, and boycotting foreign goods. They also raised funds, and some women sold their ornaments to help the movement. Some women helped organize meetings in their homes, so that police could not suspect them.

The women of Assam also joined the Quit India movement by participating in protests like *hartals*, processions, demonstrations, picketing, and hosting the Congress flag on government buildings. They also joined *Mrityu Bahini* (suicidal squads), which means "do or die" for the country. The movement progressed, and police violence increased. The women also joined with their male counterparts as underground agents and attacked government buildings, damaged railway tracks, cut the connection of telegraph lines, etc.

The status of women's participation in the freedom movement was the same as that of men. As the women of Assam also fought for the sake of the country, standing shoulder to shoulder with the men, they also deserve the same place in history. The contribution of the women of Assam to the freedom movement is always overlooked by historians. Though some female freedom fighters got the attention of historians, the same cannot be said for all-female freedom fighters. Women leaders like Kanaklata Baruah, Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Nalini Bala Devi, etc. are highly researched women freedom fighters in the history of Assam, but other women such as Malati Mungri, Jaluki Kacharani, Krishna Maya Dahal, Mukta Devi Bhattarai, Sumitra Bhuyan, Guneswari Devi (Borthakur), and many other women's names did not get special attention. With a period, the history of these female freedom fighters will be disappeared from the realm of history if not researched as such history started to overshadow lost or mismatched. So, it needs time to conduct academic research to fill this gap in historical research regarding the contribution of the women of Assam to the Indian National Movement.

Review of Literature

Anil Kumar Sharma⁵, in his book "Quit India Movement in Assam," has discussed the start of the Quit India Movement in Assam. He said that like the other parts of the country, the people of Assam were also involved in both types of activities like constructive and sabotage activities. He has discussed the role of Kamrup in underground activities and the place where underground activities were confined in Kamrup. Further, he discussed the engagement of the people of Golaghat in underground activities. He also discussed the Sarupathar Railway Derailment Case in 1942, which was a part of underground activities. He has also discussed the student's and women's participation in the Quit India movement from the Golaghat sub-

division, Nehru's visit to Golaghat, the role of Golaghat in the formation of INA in Assam, the Anti-Grouping Movement, and the role of Golaghat in it. However, though he has discussed the participation of women in the 1942 movement it is not in detail. Many women have remained, and he has only talked about one district, which is Golaghat.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad⁶ in his book, "India Wins Freedom," discussed how he became Congress President, the Cripps Mission, the Quit India movement in India, and the division of India.

Narendra Nath Borah⁷ in his book, "*Bharator Swadhinata Sangramot Koliaborar Bhumika*", discussed the prominent leaders of Kaliabor, the establishment of the Kaliabor Congress Committee, the establishment of the *Shanti Sena* camp in Kaliabor, Jawaharlal Nehru's campaign to Kaliabor, and the Bahampur incident in Nagaon. He discussed the role of Kaliabor from the non-co-operation movement to Quit India Movement.

Purushottam Bhandari⁸ in his book, "Freedom Movement and Indian Nepalese" have discussed the role of Gorkha Graziers in the freedom struggle, the role of Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan in the Digboi Strike, the Quit India Movement, and the role of the Nepali people of Behali and Gamiri in this movement. However, he fails to acknowledge all the Nepali people's contributions to other districts and also ignores the women Gorkha fighters of Assam. He has also given details of Gorkha freedom fighters of Darjeeling.

Nalinibala⁹ in her book, "*Ari Oha Dinbur*", discussed her life and also her father's (Nabin Chandra Bardoloi) role in the freedom struggle. She has also mentioned that

during M.K. Gandhi's visit to Assam, there was a meeting organized in Tarun Ram Phukan's home. She mentioned that in that meeting many women also joined and, after the meeting, burned all the foreign clothes. She, with her own life story, has discussed some events of freedom movement. She also talks about the moment in 1942, and the brutal activities were done by the police on women. However, though it gives some idea of the freedom movement, it does not give us a detailed account of women's participation.

K.N. Dutt¹⁰, in his book "*Landmarks of Freedom Struggle in Assam*," discussed the annexation of Assam by the Company till India got its independence. He talked about the rebellions of the Ahom Kings against the British. He also discussed the peasant's uprisings like *Patharughat Ran* and *Phulguri Dhara*. He also discussed the role of the Assam Association and its replacement in the Assam Congress Committee. Though he has discussed all the incidents from the annexation of Assam by the British he did not discuss the role of women in the freedom struggle. Though he has mentioned some women freedom fighters, they are all prominent freedom fighters, like- Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Kanaklata Baruah, Puspallata Das, etc.

In an edited book, "*Bishnulal Upadhyay Rachana Sankalan*" by Khemraj Nepal¹¹ an attempt has been made by the author to give a brief description of Bishnulal Upadhyay and some Gorkha female freedom fighters.

In an edited book, "*Gorkha Jyoti*" compiled by Himlal Pandey¹² some Gorkha freedom fighters' life events have been discussed. In this book, Annapurna Devi's contribution to the freedom struggle has been discussed.

In an edited book, "*Nagaor Buranji*" by Rajen Saikia¹³, has discussed the history of the Nagaon district. He has talked about the history of the freedom movement in Nagaon. He said the region of Nagaon started rebelling against the British in 1861. It was the peasant uprising which is known as *Phulguri Dhara* was a peasant uprising in Assam in the Nagaon district. He mentioned that a person was also a delegate who from Nagaon to Nagpur session of Congress in 1920. He also said that during the non-co-operation movement, a meeting was organized in Jubilee Field in Nagaon. There were 1000 people present at that meeting. There were some teachers who as a mark of process resigned from the post of teacher of a school. He also said that in that meeting a group was formed. They used to go to different villages in this district and do meetings to encourage the people to boycott foreign goods, the use of opium and liquor. A National school was established, and student participation was also high in the district. However, he did not look into the contribution of women of the Nagaon district in the freedom struggle.

Subhash Mitra¹⁴ in his book, "Role of North East India's Women in Indian freedom movement", has discussed some history of North East India along with the freedom movement. He has discussed the formation of the North East States, the Battle of Kohima and Imphal, the Sino- Indian War, and insurgency in North East India. He discussed the freedom movement, giving the background of the freedom movement from early British colonialism, which he starts with the arrival of Vasco-da Gama, until the Anglo-Sikh wars. He also talks about the early rebellions, discussing MaveeranAlagumuthu Kone (1710-1757 from Kattalankulam, who was an early chieftain and rebel against the British in Tamil Nadu and was considered the earliest freedom fighter. He also mentioned Syed Mir Nisar Ali Titumir, who led a peasant uprising in the 19th century. He mentioned Rani VeluNachiyar, who was the queen of

Sivanga and the first woman to fight against the British. He also talks about Kuyli, who was the first woman to die for the country. Regarding the women freedom fighters of Assam and North East, he has discussed Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Rani Gaidelu, and Puspallata Das. He has given a brief account of their early life and their participation in the freedom struggle. However, he fails to discuss other women freedom fighters of Assam.

Prakash Koirala¹⁵ in his Assamese book, "*Assamor Gorkha Sakolor Oitishyar Ambleshan*", gives an account of Gorkhas in Assam from the ancient to the modern period. He discussed the contribution of Gorkhas of Assam in *Azad Hind Fauz*. He also focused on the Gorkhas of Assam and their contribution to the freedom struggle. He has also mentioned that during the freedom movement many Gorkha freedom fighters have to go for imprisoned. He has written that some Gorkha rifles also left their jobs and joined the freedom movement. During the freedom movement in the village of Batiamari in the Behali sub-division, there was the camp of *Mrityu Bahini*. There were 35 Gorkha trainers for that. Though he has given some account of the Gorkhas in the freedom movement he fails to look at Gorkha women freedom fighters that were from those areas only.

Guptajit Pathak¹⁶ in his book, 'Assamese Women in the Indian Independence Movement', has discussed the origins of the Independence Movement in Assam. He also discussed the contribution of Assamese women in the freedom struggle, especially Kanaklata Baruah's contribution. He has given details about the participation of Kanaklata Baruah in the freedom struggle, and how she was encouraged by the Kalyanpur camp meeting and joined the *Mrityu Bahini*. He also discussed some Assamese women of Assam from ancient times. He discussed about

the participation of Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Bhogeswari Phukanani, Pusalata Das, Amalprova Das, Ratna bala Bora, M. Arali Medhi, N. Sarala Sundari Devi, Lakheswari Bhuyan, and Bimala Bora. He has given an account of the prominent women leaders of Assam who took part actively in the freedom movement of India. However, there is a lack of information as he did not include all the women participants of the freedom movement but only discussed some women leaders as well, and he only highlights the participation of Assamese women in the freedom movement of 1942.

Harinder Kaur¹⁷, in her book, *'Role of Women in Indian Freedom Struggle (1885-1947)'* wrote about the role played by women in the Freedom Movement of 1905-1916, 1917-1928. She has also discussed Telangana movements and the participation of students in the freedom struggle. She gave an account of the freedom movement, especially in North India. In her work, she did not deal with the contribution of women from Assam.

S.L. Baruah¹⁸ in her book, *"A Comprehensive History of Assam"*, discussed historical incidents from the ancient period to the modern period of Assam. She has discussed in the book the Revolt of 1857 in Assam, the Growth of National Consciousness, the Non-Co-operation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement, and the contribution of the people of Assam to the Freedom Movement of India. However, she did not discuss in detail the participation of women of Assam in the Freedom Movement in India

Priyam Goswami¹⁹ in her book, *"The History of Assam from Yandaboo to Partition, 1826-1947"* discussed historical incidents like how the British started to rule Assam after the *Treaty of Yandaboo*, how the people of Assam struggled for independence.

She also mentioned the participation of women in the freedom struggle; she has given a brief account. She has mentioned only some female freedom fighters.

Guptajit Pathak²⁰ in his article, "*Impact of M.K Gandhi in the Indian National Movement with a special reference to the vision of Martyr Kanaklata Baruah of Assam*", wrote about how Gandhi's campaign had made a big impact on Kanaklata Baruah, an 18years old girl from Assam, how she was inspired and how she joined in *Mrityu Bahini* (Suicidal Squads) to make free her motherland from the clutches of British. He also discussed how she sacrificed her life for her country. He had given a brief description of Kanaklata's life. He said that the nationalist songs of Jyotiprashad Agarwala and revolutionary singer Bisnu Prashad Rabha's lectures encouraged her to join in the freedom movement. He discussed the Kalyanpur Camp event where a meeting was organized, which took place in Borangabari before taking out a procession on 20th September 1942.

Heerak Jyoti Nath²¹, in his article, "*Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle of India: A Gender Perspective*" discussed some women freedom fighters of Assam and their contributions to the freedom struggle of India. He argued that the women of Assam had responded to every phrase of M.K. Gandhi's call for the movement. He said that the women of Assam participated in the freedom struggle by picketing, and going to the remotest areas to propagate the movement. He said that the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam is attributed to women, as the women of Assam undertook M.K. Gandhi's constructive programs like spinning and weaving along with the task of removal of untouchability. He also mentioned that some women also went far beyond the constructive programs of M.K. Gandhi and joined in extremist activities and engaged themselves in cutting telephone lines, burning government

buildings, and damaging bridges so that the British administration would paralyze them. He also said the government also took some measures, like harassing the women folk mentally and physically, to suppress the movement. He also discussed some events like the donation of ornaments for the *Tilak Swaraj* fund by some women of Upper Assam and Gauhati.

Rekha Rani Sarmah Puzari and Kazumi Mazane²² in their article, '*Role of Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle of India*' discussed how in 1920, an outbreak of the nationalist movement got started, how Gandhi's campaign was respected and followed by Assamese men as well as woman. They have said that many women have meetings, organize processions, and boycott schools, courts, and offices. They mentioned that in the Quit India Movement, there were two types of programs, constructive and destructive. They wrote that some Assamese women, along with men, played an active part in the underground movement and helped to paralyze the British government by cutting the telephone and telegraph lines, burning government buildings, etc. However, they also failed to look at all women and focused on those women only, which are mostly described by other authors as well.

Dipti Sharma²³ in her book, "*Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle*," gives an account of women participants in the Non-Co-Operation Movement, and the civil disobedience movement, However, like the other writers, some women of other Communities did not get recognition in her book.

Kasturi Roy Chatterjee²⁴ in her article, "*Role of Women in the Freedom Movement*" gives an account of the participation of Bengali Women in the freedom struggle of India and how they left schools and started spinning wheels and helping their male counterparts.

Gautam Sarmah²⁵ in his article, *"Role of Tea Tribes of Assam in Indian Freedom Struggle"*, discussed the martyrs from the tea tribe community of Assam who fought for the freedom movement of India. He argued that the tea tribe communities have significance in the freedom movement from the very beginning like the other tribes of Assam. He started with the revolt against Planter Raj at Sonitpur's Rangapara of 1915 by a person who was publicly hanged by the company government in 1916. He also mentioned the first woman martyr of Assam, Malati Mungri, in the non-co-operation movement in 1921. He also discussed the imprisonment of some tea tribe people during the freedom movement. He also described some martyrs of the 1942 movement at the Darrang police station. He has described the problems of the tea tribe people in the article. However, he has discussed one woman participant and martyr but there are many women participants from the tree tribe community who faced torture, harassment, and imprisonment during the freedom struggle from the Rangapara sub- division under the Darrang district. They have just been confined in archives.

Navajyoti Saikia²⁶ in his article, *"Participation of Assamese Women in the Quit India Movement with special reference to the Women of Darrang District"* wrote about the women participants of Darrang district in the Quit India Movement. He also discussed Gohpur firing and Kanaklata's sacrifice. He also mentioned the Dhekiajuli Procession, the women participants in that procession, and the martyrs of the Dhekiajuli Procession. However, he failed to mention other women from those locations participating in the freedom movement. He also discussed some women participants, such as Sootea and Mangaldai, in the 1942 movement. However, he fails to give a detailed account of those women as well as other women.

Manjit Gogoi²⁷, in his article, "*Understanding the wave of Quit India Movement of 1942 in Present Jorhat District of Assam*" talks about the participants of Jorhat district and also the woman participants and woman organizing committee, and its role. He said that the present Jorhat district was part of the undivided Sivsagar district then. The last Ahom rulers in the Jorhat district participated in the freedom movement from the last days of Ahom rulers. He argued that during the Quit India movement the people of Jorhat district also participated like the other district of Assam. They also joined in constructive and sabotage activities. He said that in the Jorhat district there were two important places that played an important part in the freedom movement. Na-Ali of Dhekiajuli of Titabar and Saukhat *Mouza* were hotspot places during the Quit India movement in the Jorhat district. He also discussed some women participants in the Jorhat district. He discussed the Teok procession, which was led on 27 September 1942, and he mentioned that 200 women went to the procession. He also added that some women participants also were not satisfied with the constructive way of movement and accepted engaged themselves in sabotage activities with other men folk. However, in the article, he mainly focused on the incidents that happened at that time in Jorhat, including the train derailment case, and also how the people of Jorhat accepted M. K. Gandhi's call for freedom. He has not focused more on women's roles, though he mentioned some women's names and contributions.

Sanjib Kumar Chetry²⁸ in his article, "*Nepalis in Assam: A Historical Perspective (1816-1985)*" gives a brief account of the historical background of the Nepalis of Assam and also discusses the role of the Nepali people of Assam in the Freedom Struggle. He has argued that the Nepali people of Assam are the migrants after the British occupation of Assam, in search of life as *Gopalak* and soldiers. Later, the soldiers, after retiring, started milk production as their occupation. They started living

in the dense forests and hills, 'Chars' of the mighty Brahmaputra as it was surrounded by green vegetation. Their family was the Gorkha graziers. During the freedom movement, the Gorkha graziers played a very prominent role. He argued that they started to participate in the freedom movement in 1920. Chabilal Upadhyaya of the Nepali community was appointed as a leader of the Assam Association, which was the mouthpiece of the Assamese people as there was no political organization in Assam at that time. He has discussed some names of Nepali freedom fighter. He mentioned that during the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movementsome Gorkha freedom fighters were imprisoned. He has mentioned that more than three hundred Nepali volunteers were recruited in *Shanti Sena* and *Mrityu Bahini* from different places in the Brahmaputra Valley. However, he failed to discuss other Gorkha freedom fighters in Assam.

K.K. Mauktan²⁹, "*The Gorkhas in the Freedom Struggle of India*," has discussed the Gorkhas of India, and the contribution of the Gorkhas to the freedom struggle of India. He has especially focused on Shaheed Durga Malla, Ram Singh Thakuri, Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan, Bishnulal Upadhyay, and Chabilal Upadhyay. He has also talked about the Gorkhas' role in the Indian National Army and the Kargil War. However, he only focused on prominent Gorkha leaders in Assam.

Krishnanil Karki³⁰ in his book, "*Biswanath Jilar Agrani Gorkha Sakol*," discussed some unsung Gorkha freedom fighters of the Biswanath District of Assam. However, there are many other Gorkha freedom fighters who remain untouched in his book.

In an Assamese edited book of Swarnalata Gogoi³¹, "*Luit Parour Mahila Swadhinta Sangramir Jiban Gatha*", the author has comprised many articles in an edited book which gives an account of the life history of some women participants of

Brahmaputra valley in freedom movement of India.

Objectives

- To study the role of women in the Indian national struggle with special reference to Assam.
- To study the role of Assam in the freedom struggle.
- To study the participation of women of Assam in the Gandhian Movement.
- To study about some unsung women freedom fighters of Assam and their life history.

Methodology

This research is based on primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources like jail records, political records, lists of awardees of the Freedom Fighter pension, unpublished reports, proceedings, documents, manuscripts, and regional old newspapers, along with English and other local newspapers, have been used. For secondary sources, books, journals, and conference souvenirs in both English and other local languages like Assamese, and Nepali, have been used for this research.

Chapterization

The present study is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is titled Introduction. It deals with an outline of the research project, its research gap, objectives, methodologies, and chapterization of this research.

The second chapter is a brief history of Assam during the freedom struggle. This

chapter focuses on how Assam came under British rule and how the people of Assam reacted against British imperialism.

The third chapter, "Women of Assam in the Gandhian Movement," dealt with the participation of women from Assam in the Gandhian Movement from 1921 to 1947. In this chapter, it has been discussed how the women of Assam fought against the British by adopting the non-violence policies of M.K. Gandhi.

The fourth chapter, "Biographical Sketch of Unsung women freedom fighters of Assam" dealt with the life history of some women freedom fighters of Assam.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion and the final summary of the study.

Endnotes

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Chapter II

Assam in the Freedom Movement

By 1826 most of the parts of India were captured by the East India Company through different tactics. Assam also came under British rule by 1826. Before that Assam was an independent kingdom ruled by the Ahom's. The internal fight of the last Ahom rulers creates an opportunity for Burmese invaders to invade Assam. In the seventeenth century, Burmese invaders invaded Assam. They started torturing the people of Assam. To throw out the Burmese, Ahom's had to invite the British for help. The British agreed and there was a treaty between the Burmese and the British, after which they agreed to surrender the territories to the British. The treaty is known as the *Treaty of Yandaboo* and it was signed in the year 1826. After the treaty, Assam came under the rule of the East India Company.

The people of Assam did not like the rule of the British East India Company and were ready to free themselves from the clutches of British imperialism. Two years after the treaty of Yandaboo (1826), Assam revolted against British imperialism in the year 1828. It was first started by Gomdhar Konwar in the year 1828. He was supported by Harnath, Harakanta, Jiram Duliya Baruah, Dharma Dhar Rajguru, and Kandura Deka Phukan of the royal family.¹ This rebellion failed. The second attempt of rebellion against British imperialism was done by Gadhadhar Konwar who was a relative of Ahom King Jogeshwar Singha. But the second attempt of rebellion, also failed with the arrest of Gadhadhar Singha by British officials. He was then transferred to Gauhati.² Though the rebellion failed which was started by Gomdhar Konwar yet

it led to the arousal of a feeling of getting freedom from British imperialism in the Ahom royal family.

In 1830, Piyali Barphukan, son of Badan Barphukan started a rebellion and it was supported by the people of the royal families like Dhananjoy Borgohain, Piyali Borgohain, Jiuram Duliya Baruah, but it also met failure. The plan of rebellion was known by the officer at the earliest and Piyali Barphukan was captured with many other rebels who were in support. Piyali Barphukan and Jiyaram Duliya Baruah were hanged at Sivsagar in August 1830, on the banks of the Sivasagar Tank as they were found guilty of organizing the rebellion.³ But this sacrifice of Piyali Barphukan and Jiyaram Duliya Baruah did not go in vain. It gave a strong feeling to the people of Assam to revolt against British imperialism. K. N. Dutt, rightly said, “But though defeated and crushed the rulers of the unequal fight against the foreign rulers left behind them a burning lesson of patriotism and sacrifice which inspired later movements for freedom.⁴”

The freedom movement of 1857 also touched Assam. Almost all parts of India were in the full range of fire for freedom. The Hindustani Sepoys stationed at Dibrugarh and Gauhati tried to organize a revolt against the British.⁵ Maniram Dewan tried to organize a rebellion from Calcutta. Initially, Maniram Dewan was loyal to the British and served as a tehsildar of Upper Assam. But later on, he realized that under British rule there is no future for the people of Assam. Before the advent of the 1857 revolt in 1853, Maniram Dewan prepared a petition when A.I. Moffat Mills, who was a judge of the Sadar Court at Calcutta, visited Assam to report on the administration of the province. Maniram Dewan gave a critical analysis of the result of British rule in

Assam and pleaded for the restoration of the old rule. However, the petition was ignored. It gave a background for a rebellion against the people of Ahom Nobility. He wrote secret letters from Calcutta to king Kandarpeswar Singha and other reliable persons about him at Jorhat and Sivsagar. He urged them to make preparations to revolt against British imperialism and seize the power of authority in Assam from the British. The letters were sent to their destination through trusted messengers or by post unpaid.⁶ All the preparations were done well. They prepared for a rebellion during the time of Durga Puja in 1857. Raja's parlor was the main place for secret consultations. Arms and ammunition were gathered. Everything was as planned, but unfortunately, before the arrival of Maniram Dewan, his letters were caught by the district officer of Sivsagar, Captain Charles Holroyd who came to know about the preparation of a rebellion in Assam. Kandapeswar Singha was arrested on 7th September 1857. He was then sent to Alipur Jail for detention. Maniram Dewan was arrested at Calcutta and detained for a few days at Alipur and brought to Assam. He was then hanged at Jorhat for conspiring against the British. Peali Barua, who was helping Raja Kandepeswar, was also hanged on with Maniram Dewan at Jorhat. Madhu Mallick, Bahadur Gaonbura, Dutiram Barua, and Sheikh Formud Ali who were related to this conspiracy, were transported to Andaman, and many others were sentenced to long imprisonment.⁷ Though Maniram Dewan was hung to death and the rebellion of 1857 was suppressed before the outburst yet the sacrifice of Maniram Dewan helped the people of Assam to organize the revolt in a systematic manner. All rebellions till 1857 failed because it was not supported by the masses. It did not reach the general people. It was confined to the royal family only.

After the revolt of 1857, in Assam, the freedom struggle took a new turn. The struggle for freedom was not confined to the royal family. After the revolt of 1857, the economic condition of India totally deteriorated. In Assam, the British officials increased land revenue in Nowgaon and its neighboring three districts. Besides increasing the land revenue on dry croplands in 1861, they imposed stamp duty and tax on betel nuts, pan, and coconut trees.⁸ The heavy taxation led to the condition of peasants being more detrained. The economic condition of these peasants was also affected by the ban imposed on poppy cultivation in 1860 which was a great source of profit for them. Though British forces only introduced opium in Assam in 1793, it was popularized as an antidote to some diseases. It led to hatred toward the British. To share their problem with the Deputy Commissioner, these people organized *RaijMels* (Village Gatherings) but the Deputy Commissioner ignored them. In October 1861, the peasants of these places organized a bigger *RaijMel* (People's Assembly) which was held for five days. The people's Assembly was dispersed through the police forces. The police arrested some leaders, but people rescued them from the police outpost. D.C. sent armed forces to the place with reinforcement from Gauhati. The armed forces fired upon the gatherings of people, which led to several deaths. Norshing Lalung, and eight other peasant leaders, was punished with long-term imprisonment or transformation of life.⁹ This peasant rebellion is known as "*Phulguri Dhara*", which took place in Phulguri village under the Nowgaon District of Assam. Though the rebellion was suppressed by the government, it became an inspiration for the people of Assam to protest against British imperialism. Later on, the people of Assam continued the *RaijMels* or village gatherings to resist the increase in land revenue. It was the first rebellion of the peasant class of Assam.

Another anti-British uprising took place in 1894, in the village of Patharughat in the Darrang District. In 1892, under the new settlement policy, the British increased land revenue. It created dissatisfaction among the people of Assam. On 27th January 1894, J.D. Anderson, the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang District accompanied by a group of police under Lt. Barrington went to Patharughat in order to collect the outstanding revenue from the defaulting peasants of the village.¹⁰ The peasants of the village protested against the forceful collection of increased revenue in front of the Deputy Commissioner. They held mass demonstrations in the compound of the inspection bungalow. They were ejected by the police.¹¹ They protested with sticks and clods. The peasants pelted the police with clods and sticks and the police opened fire on them.¹² K.N. Dutt writes, "The people grew excited at the sight of fixed bayonets when Barrington drew up his men in battle order. The crowd pressed forward in spite of volleys of fire aimed at them and drew back only when scores of people lay dead or injured on the ground, but not before they had clods of earth and bamboo sticks some of them carried with them at their opponents".¹³ According to the government statement, only 17 people died, but unofficial public reports put the figure at 140, belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities.¹⁴ More than a hundred people were wounded. The Patharughat Ran makes history in the annals of the country.¹⁵

This peasants' rebellion gives the idea that the people of Assam by and large had a bitter experience with the British and were ready for mass movement if needed to get rid of British imperialism. This peasant rebellion also promoted the growth of nationalism in Assam.

Towards the end of the last century, a new awakening started. There was the creation of Political organizations. All Assam political organizations were formed in 1903. It

was also known as the Assam Association. It was led by Manik Chandra Baruah, Ghanashyam Barua, Jagannath Barua, Faiznur Ali, and others. The inaugural session of the Assam Association was organized in Dibrugarh. It was presided over by Raja Probhat Chandra Baruah of Gauripur, Assam and he was the chief promoter of the Assam Association.¹⁶ It served as the mouthpiece of the people of Assam in presenting their needs, grievances, hopes, and aspirations before the government of the day.¹⁷ The members of the Assam Association connected with Congress leaders in India. Later on, the Assam Association merged with the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. It helped Assam to join India's freedom struggle.

Swadeshi Movement

In 1903, under Lord Curzon, a scheme of partition was announced. Under the scheme, it was decided to constitute East Bengal and Assam into a separate province with Dacca as the capital, while other parts, together with Bihar and Orissa, would form a separate province with Calcutta as the capital.¹⁸ The publication of the scheme created a storm of protest all over the country. However, Lord Curzon was dauntless and did not dismiss the partition scheme. He asked the Muslim audience to accept the partition scheme and visited places like Chittagong, Dacca, and Mymensingh districts to convince the people to support the partition scheme.¹⁹ Though it was shown by Lord Curzon that the main reason for the scheme of partition was for administrative convenience yet, it was clear that the partition scheme was drafted to weaken the power of the Bengalese as they were at the forefront of the struggle for freedom. The partition day (16th October 1905) was observed as a day of national mourning. As a mark of protest, all shops were closed in Bengal. Shouting the slogan, "*Bande Mataram*" the people of Bengal marched through the streets. The people of Bengal

also showed their unity by observing the ceremony of *Rakhi bandhan* by tying *Rakhi* between the two halves of the Bengali people. In Calcutta, a huge public meeting was held on 16th October 1905. The meeting was held under the leadership of Ananda Mohan Bose.²⁰ In the meeting, a pledge was taken to maintain the unity of Bengal at all costs.

On 16th October 1905, Bengal was partitioned despite widespread protest.²¹ After the partition, J.B. Fuller took charge of the new provinces of Eastern Bengal and Assam. He was appointed as Lieutenant Governor, with headquarters at Dacca.²² A legislative council consisting of 15 members and a two-member board of revenue assisted him. The Calcutta High Court resisted the judicial authority. J.B. Fuller visited Assam after assuming office to assure the people of Assam that the proposed administrative changes will not affect the people of Assam like the employment and student scholarships. He tried to win the confidence of the people of Assam by conceding to them that though Assam will lose her individuality after the Partition of Bengal yet the changes would be beneficial to Assam. However, he did not succeed in assuring the people of Assam.

Swadeshi Movement in Assam

Apart from a section of tea planters and Muslims in Eastern Bengal and the Surma Valley, Assam supported the call against the partition of Bengal. Karimganz, Maulivi bazar, Habiganz, Silchar, Dhubri, Goalpara, Gauripur, Barpeta, Tezpur, and Dibrugarh were the places where the protest meetings were held in Assam. The meetings were attended by all the communities. *Rakhi Bandhan* and mass prayers were observed in some places where the protest meetings were held. For example, a public *Sankirtan* was observed on the morning of 16th October 1905 in Dhubri where

members from all communities like Hindu, Muslim, and Sikhs participated in the *Sankirtan*. In Dibrugarh also, a grand procession was organized in the evening that day, and Hindus and Muslims of that town passed through the town singing the national anthem and shouting slogans like *Bande Mataram* and *Allah ho-Akbar*.²³ The anti-partition movement was largely confined to the urban and semi-urban areas of the Brahmaputra valley.²⁴ In response to the call for boycotting foreign goods and producing goods in its own country, Assam responded by using *Khaar* (alkaline) instead of salt from Liverpool, England. The people of Assam also replaced foreign sugar with sugar from Benares. They also stopped using mill-produced clothes from Europe and started wearing indigenously woven cloth. In Assam at that time, the religious leaders wielded considerable influence on society, and the head priest of Kamakhya temple appealed to the *pandas* and grocers not to purchase or sell foreign items.²⁵ Indigenous shops were opened to sell *Swadeshi* goods. The students of Assam were also influenced by Ambikagiri Ray Choudhury, who was a poet and a nationalist, along with Govinda Lahiri as they instilled the concept of *Swadeshi* in the minds of the students.

In Surma Valley, the anti-partition movement was not confined to urban centers and was wide. The people of Surma Valley were highly influenced by the fiery speeches of Bipan Chandra Pal. In Surma Valley, many national schools were set up. The National Schools were set up at Sylhet, Habibganj, Srimangal, Baniachang, Lakhai, Karimganj, and Silchar.

As a result, boycotting educational institutions, opening new national institutions, and boycotting foreign goods hampered the British economy. The Government was not a silent viewer and it reacted to the anti-partition movement harshly. Many people who

participated in the anti-partition movement were fined and jailed. Meetings and processions were banned. Circulars were issued like the Carlyle and Risly Circulars, which ordered the management of educational institutions to make sure that students did not participate in any protest against the government. Strict actions were taken against the teachers and students who violated these laws. Sections of youth were provoked by the government's repressive measures. This youth takes on revolutionary activities. They were inspired by their counterparts in Bengal. They started to set up secret societies in Assam as like in Bengal. In the Surma valley of Assam, these societies like *The Tarun Sangha*, *Suhrid Samiti*, and *Arunachal Ashram* were very active. Ambika Giri Ray Choudhury founded *the Seva Sangha* in the Brahmaputra Valley. It turned into a terrorist organization. However, these organizations were not supported by the masses and were weak. As these societies were small and could not get all mass support, they conditioned fear on the heart of British imperialism.

Non-Co-Operation Movement

The anti-partition movement, which was started against the partition of Bengal, soon became a part of the freedom movement in India. It led the people of India to a sense of Nationalism. The people of India of every part were realizing that to accept British Governance means a loss of self-respect, loss of culture and civilization, loss of language, and in the long-term loss of everything. The cult of nationalism germinated more when Lokmanya Tilak gave a nationalist India the slogan, "Swaraj is our birthright." In 1906 Dadabhai Naroji declared Swaraj to be the objective of the Congress. Lokamanya Tilak passed away on 1 August 1920, at the age of 64.²⁶ After the death of Lokmanya Tilak, M.K Gandhi entered Indian National Congress. After the entry of M.K Gandhi into Indian Politics, new methods and techniques were used

to get freedom from British imperialism. He programmed a method to gain freedom from British imperialism by non-co-operating with the Government which is known as non-co-operation movement. In September 1920, a special session of the congress was held at Calcutta to consider the program of action prepared by Gandhiji.²⁷ The reasons for the non-cooperation movement are-

1. Montague-Chelmsford: Towards the end of 1919, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms were announced. The result of Montague-Chelmsford was disappointing.
2. Rowlatt Act of 1919: In 1919, an act was started that was known as the Rowlatt Act. According to this act, the British could arrest any Indian for two years without trial on the basis of suspicion that they were connected with terrorism. The Rowlatt Act causes nationwide protests. All the national leaders were against it. M.K Gandhi led a passive resistance movement against the cruel measures of the British Government. It led to *Hartals* and mass demonstrations in many parts of India.
3. Jallianwala Bagh Massacre: The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar where General Dyer openly gave permission to soldiers to fire on unarmed people. The imposition of martial law in Punjab led to Indian hatred growing more towards British imperialism.
4. Decision of partitioning the Ottoman Empire: The Indian Muslims were in hope that the British would ensure the protection of the Ottoman Empire; however, the decision to partition the Empire in Turkey made unhappy the Indian Muslims who had launched the Khilafat Movement. The motive of the non-co-operation movement was the promotion of Swadeshi goods, the revival

of hand spinning and domestic weaving, the removal of untouchability among Hindus and Muslims, the prohibition of the use of intoxicants, and alcoholic drinks and raising a fund of one crore of rupees to constitute the *Tilak Memorial Swarjya Fund*.²⁸

M.K Gandhiji said that the program of non-co-operation was necessary if we wished to achieve Swaraj and solve the Khilafat problem in a satisfactory manner.²⁹ Despite the non- acceptance of M.K Gandhi's idea of non-co-operation by Chitaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Maulya, Anne Besant, and Bipin Chandra Pal, non-co-operation in a non-violent method was passed in the Calcutta session.

Non-Co-Operation Movement in Assam

Assam came to the forefront of the freedom struggle when the Assam Association accepted the call for freedom movement from the Indian National Congress. As a participant from Assam Association and representing Assam, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Chandranath Sharma, Faiznur Ali, and others went to the program congress which was held in 1920 in September. Shri Topeswar Sharma of Mangaldoi also went to attend the Calcutta session.³⁰ But after the congress session of Calcutta, there was a differentiation in the opinion of the people of Assam Association. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Faiznur Ali, and Dalim Chandra Bora were supporters of Bipin Chandra Pal and were against the non-co-operation movement.³¹ But Chandranath Sharma, who also went to the Congress session in Calcutta, accepted the decision of the non-co-operation movement. To support the non-co-operation movement, Chandra Nath Sharma in fact left his job as a lawyer. He encouraged and make understand Nabin Chandra Bardoloi to get rid of British imperialism Assam should accept the call of non-co-operation because it is essential to be with mainstream politics to get freedom

from British imperialism. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Tarun Ram Phukan, and Chandranath Sarma, accompanied by a band of volunteers, organized meetings in different places to spread the idea of non-co-operation.³² The Assam political conference was held at Tezpur on Sunday, the 26th of December 1920, with Prasanna Kumar Barua in the chair.³³ There were several gates erected and the names of the gates were after the name of congress leaders like the Tilak gate, the Gandhi gate, the Saukat Ali gate, and the Swaraj gate. The gates were postered with some mottos like the swaraj gate postered as “Swaraj is our birthright”, Swaraj is no Swaraj gained without action: Swaraj is the only Government, etc. The Saukat Ali gate was decorated with pictures “How many Jallianwala Bagh will compete to sustain British rule in India, how many Lord Mayers will be murdered to keep Ireland in subjugation”. In the session, the decision was taken that Assam will accept the call for a non-cooperation movement.

In December 1920, the All-India Students conference was held at Nagpur. Following the decision of the students’ conference, the students of Assam started boycotting schools and colleges in January 1921. The large batch of students enrolled themselves as volunteers to spread the messages of non-co-operation in the villages.³⁴ The Non-co-operation movement was launched by students in Assam. The movement was further supported by women as well. The main propaganda of the non-co-operation movement was boycotting foreign goods, like British manufactured clothes, the propagation of Khaddar and Swadeshi, picketing in front of liquor and opium shops, foreign cloth shops, etc. It was believed that even by the means of propagation *Swaraj* could be achieved. In some places, like Boko in South Kamrup, which comprises an area of some six Mouzas, some no tax, no revenue campaign preparations were also done.³⁵ In Simaluguri, Bamun Pukhuri there were discussions on how to conduct

movement. Shri Ramedhar Bhattacharya, Shri Hemanth Phukan, and Dehiram Gogoi Hazarika traveled to the villages and told the public about the doctrine of the non-cooperation movement.³⁶ The villagers boycotted the foreign goods and the movement got rapid progress. Kuladhar Chaliha, Shri Debeswar Sarma, Shri Krishna Sarma, and Late Rohini Hati Baruah came to the village Simaluguri and established a congress government on the bank of the “Bamun Pukhuri”.³⁷

In the Mumbai session of Congress held in 1921, from Assam Tarun Ram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Kuladhar Chaliha, and Chandra Nath Sharma participated. It was the first meeting of the congress people of Assam and M.K Gandhi. On behalf of the Assam Congress Committee, Tarun Ram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Kuladhar Chaliha, and Chandra Nath Sharma invited Gandhiji to Assam. Tarun Ram Phukan informed M. K. Gandhi that the people of Assam had accepted Gandhi’s call for non-co-operation with Government and started spinning and weaving at home as their regular work.³⁸ Hearing this news M. K. Gandhi made up his mind to visit Assam and the tour to Andhra which was fixed earlier stopped for a period.³⁹ He promised Tarun Ram Phukan and others from Assam in the session to visit Assam on August 1921.⁴⁰ A huge arrangement was done by the Assam congress committee. On 18th August 1921, M. K. Gandhi along with Mohammad Ali, and his wife, Ajad Sobhani, Jamunalla Bajab, Acharya Kripalani, and some national leaders reached Gauhati.⁴¹ The visit of M. K. Gandhi to Assam led the non-co-operation movement to the highest height as it was already popular in both the valleys in Assam. From Pandu to Bharalumukh in Gauhati the whole road was decorated to welcome M. K. Gandhi. Thousands of people stood on both sides of the road in line to get the *Darshan* of M.K Gandhi.

On 18th August 1921, Gandhiji gave a speech in front of 25000 people in Gauhati. Tarun Ram Phukan translated all the speech into the Assamese language in that program. M. K. Gandhi asked the people of Assam who were present there that day if they were only listeners or solely followers of the non-cooperation movement. He requested that all the people burn the imported clothes. At the end of the meeting, everyone joined in boycotting foreign clothes by setting a fire in the home of Tarunram Phukan. The fire that was burning was so strong that it continued to burn for seven days.⁴² M. K. Gandhi visited other places in Assam like Tezpur, Nagaon, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Silchar, and Sylhet. Meetings were finished with burning barge heaps of foreign clothes. However, in Dibrugarh, there was no burning of clothes.

The love and admiration of the people of Assam for M.K. Gandhi made him emotional. Before coming to Assam, he mentioned the people of Assam in the book "Hind Swaraj" as *Pind*, etc., but after returning from Assam, he later wrote in "Young India" apologizing to the people of Assam.

After the visit of M.K. Gandhi to Assam, people were more excited to boycott foreign clothes. In Bajali foreign clothes were burned in great heaps at Pathsala and Patacharkuchi and the flames continued for 2 to 3 days.⁴³ Apart from burning foreign clothes, promoting the use of Khaddar was also a motive of the non-co-operation movement. Tarunram Phukan, and Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, were two people from Assam who used to promote Khadi clothes, as they used to carry the bags of Khadi Clothes and sell them in Fansi Bazaar.⁴⁴

The non-co-operation movement was at its full height when the Prince of Wales decided to visit India. The decision was opposed by congress. The Congress had declared that ‘...it is the duty of everyone to refrain from participating in or assisting any welcome to his Royal Highness or any function organized officially or otherwise in connection with the visit.’⁴⁵ Assam also protested against the visit of the Prince of Wales like the rest of India. Hartals, Meetings, and other forms of demonstrations were organized on 17th November 1921 in Assam.

Government Repressive Policies towards the participants of the Non-Co-Operation Movement in Assam

The Government initially did not take any measures thinking it would create a more revolutionary spirit among the people of Assam. But gradually the movement progressed and the authorities realized that the policy of being silent spectators should be changed. The boycott of the Prince of Wales, moreover, had been extremely humiliating and affected the prestige of the government.⁴⁶ The Viceroy, Lord Reading, seeing the government's position as humiliating, came up with three policies to handle the situation.

1. Giving honors and showering favors to influential leaders and stopping the movement by winning them.
2. Use of force to suppress the movement.
3. Break the unity of people by Exploiting communal violence.

The Government's measure of winning the leader's heart by giving honors failed as the Swaraj was in full swing in Assam. Failing in the first policy the Government used forces to suppress the movement. The government made extensive use of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908) and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act (1911) to arrest and imprison leaders and workers, to beat up crowds for gathering together at meetings, and to arrest volunteers engaged in picketing schools and Colleges and shops selling foreign clothes and liquors.

The Government arrested the main leaders like Tarunram Phukan and Nabin Chandra Bardoloi as a repressive measure against the non-co-operation movement.⁴⁷ After arresting them a British officer said two royal tigers of Assam have been arrested. The other leaders were also arrested. Umesh Bardoloi, son of Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, was also arrested and kept in jail for six months.⁴⁸ All the members of the volunteer corps were arrested as it was declared illegal. According to Payodhar Baruah when he was arrested, he saw nearly 450 political prisoners in jail along with Hareswar Pathak and Golok Chandra Pathak.⁴⁹ Punitive police were kept to watch the public in villages like Sipajhar and Patharughat under Mangaldai Subdivision.⁵⁰ Punitive tax was imposed on the people of these villages. The villagers did not pay the tax directly but the punitive police took away the various properties such as utensils, clothes, pigeons, etc of the public.⁵¹ With the help of elephants, serious damage was done to granaries to torture the people of that subdivision. Deucharan Upadhyay was a martyr of the non-co-operation movement in Assam. He was arrested and kept in Jorhat jail where he died for hunger strike 'Ansan'.⁵² Mandhos Chetri was an active participant in the non-cooperation movement in Assam. He used to ask the people of the Boko Hahimarea to participate in the non-cooperation movement with Tarun Ram Phukan and Gopinath Bardoloi. He was arrested and kept in jail for one month.⁵³ There was a

discussion on Bardoli to begin the civil disobedience movement. M.K Gandhi firmly told the Government that he will launch the Civil Disobedience Movement shortly. But he had to stop the non-co-operation movement and also the proposed date of the Civil Disobedience Movement because of the Chauri Choura incident of 5th February 1922. At Chori Choura, a group of processionist and armed forces have a clash between them. Following the incident, the armed police openly fired on processionist. The angry processions set fire to the nearby police station which led the twenty constables burnt alive. M.K Gandhi was very shocked to hear this news. On 11 February 1922, he took a decision to cancel the active civil disobedience movement after consultation with the congress working committee.⁵⁴ He then decided to go on fast for 5 days from 12 February. He also asked the people to devote themselves to constructive programs and work on temperance reform and educational activities.

A section of congress leaders was uncertain and puzzled by the decision of Bardoli. The leaders like Motilal Nehru, and Lala Lajpat Rai being puzzled and dismayed questioned the cancellation of the Civil Disobedience program.⁵⁵In Assam also the decision of M.K Gandhi gave a rude shock to congress leaders and they were very hurt. Chandranath Sarma criticized M.K Gandhi's decision to withdraw saying M.K Gandhi was suffering from "religious mania".⁵⁶ He also wrote that the decision of Bardoli was a disgrace to the nation. The news of the cancellation of the Civil Disobedience Movement also makes the people of Assam unenthusiastic. The first phase of the non-co-operation movement came to an end with the arrest of M.K Gandhi on 10th March 1922. Though the non-cooperation movement was suspended it can't be said as a lost battle against the British because it led to the arousal of the feeling of freeing themselves from the Clutches of the British among the people of India.

The withdrawal of M.K Gandhi from the non-co-operation movement was followed by Gandhi's arrest and his imprisonment for six years for creating an environment to show disaffection against the Government. It resulted in the division of nationalist leaders. The Gandhian strategy was questioned by many National leaders. C.R. Das, and Motilal Nehru, both prominent leaders took a step to keep the political spirit alive by suggesting a new line of political activity. They proposed to end the boycott of the legislative councils and instead asked members to obstruct the work of the councils from within.⁵⁷ The formation of the Swaraj Party was announced by Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das after a considerable debate. The *Swarajists* accepted all the programs of Congress and were only in opposition to boycotting the legislative councils. The *Swarajists* believed it was very essential to work in the council to fill the temporary political void. However, the opponents of the Swaraj Party felt that rural reconstruction was the only form of political activity that ought to be pursued during the movement's non-active phases.⁵⁸

The Swaraj party also influenced the people of Assam. In Assam, the Swaraj party was formed with the initiative of Tarunram Phukan. It was formed in July 1923 with Tarunram Phukan as president. R.K. Choudhury was selected as the secretary of the Swaraj Party and G.N.Bordoloi as the Assistant Secretary. Other leaders like Nabin. Chandra Bardoloi and Kuladhar Chaliha believed in revitalizing the congress by working at the grassroots level. Though the congress had grown a split in 1907 between extremists and moderates yet they realized the necessity for unity. They were also aware of the fact that to force the government to concede nationalist demands lay on the mass movement. In 1923, a special session of the Congress was held in Delhi. In this session, it was decided to accommodate the *Swarajists* by allowing Congress men to contest the elections to the legislative councils.

In November 1923, elections to the legislative council were held in Assam. However, the *Swarajya* party though contested all the seats failed to secure a majority. The party then decided to collaborate with the independent councilors to form a solid opposition to the government.⁵⁹ Faiznur Ali was elected as Leader, Brojendranarayan Choudhury was elected as Deputy Leader, and Kamakhya Baruah was elected as Secretary for, The Assam Nationalist Party. The councilors with determination and discipline intervened in every issue and outvoted the government. The important issues raised by them were the abolition of the unpopular grazing tax, the prohibition of opium, the reduction of land revenue, and restrictions on migrants from East Bengal. However, most of the proposals could not be passed because they were not in a position to force upon the government the desired changes.

The congress workers worked at the grassroots level when the Swarajist struggled in the council. The congress workers gave emphasis on rural construction by promoting Khadi, national education, communal harmony, a boycott of foreign clothes, and anti-liquor and anti-opium propaganda. Many regional organizations were formed after the suspension of the non-co-operation movement. These organizations acted as a way to question the Government regarding the abolition of the grazing tax, prohibition of opium, reduction of land revenue, and restriction of immigration of East Bengal Muslims to Assam. One of the cultural organizations was formed by Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury known as, *Asamiya Sangraksini Sabha*. Through *Asamiya Sangraksini Sabha*, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury wanted to arouse the Assamese people against the cultural invasion of Assam by the Bengali Muslim immigrants.⁶⁰ The *rayats abha* was formed in the economic field as a voice of farmers. Some of the *Rayat Sabhas* were those of Biswanath, Naduar, Saring-Solong, Ganak-Pukhuri, and a number of places in Cachar.⁶¹ Congress also keeps this *Sabha*'s propaganda under them. So, the growth

of regional organizations did not affect Congress rather it helped in some aspects.

As the congress took up the causes of *Rayat's* it led the popularity of congress increased. Therefore, the idea of holding congress sessions in Assam was felt by the local congress circles.

The Kanpur session of Congress was attended by Rohini Kanta Hati Baruah, the general secretary of APCC, and KrishnanathSarma, Secretary of the Assam branch of *All India Spinner's Association*. In the session on behalf of APCC, Rohini KantaHati Baruah and Krishnanath Sarma were invited to hold their next session at Gauhati, Assam to increase the spread of Congress ideology among Assamese people. The invitation was accepted. In 1926, the 41st annual sessions of Congress were held at Pandu, Gauhati with great enthusiasm. Srinivas Ayenger presided over the session. It was a morale booster for the people of Assam as it was attended by M.K Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prashad, Motilal Nehru, Mohan Malaviya, Vallabhai Patel, and the Ali brothers, Mohammad and Saukat. The township that was erected to accommodate all the delegates was built with bamboo and mud and adorned with *khadi*⁶² It was admired by all the attendees present there. Tarun Ram Phukan was elected as a member of the All India Congress Working Committee for the term (1926-27). It was the most important event of the congress session of Assam.

The congress session at Pandu though led Assam's prestige to rise in the eyes of the rest of the country, yet the expenditure was high and it led to problems for AICC for years. The people of Assam were more encouraged to join the freedom movement and their enthusiasm made M.K Gandhi feel that the country was almost ready for the next struggle.

The Simon Commission also added fuel to the burning fire in India. The Government appointed a commission under Sir John Simon in November 1927. The work of the Commission was to enquire about the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 or Montford Reforms. But the commission did not include a single Indian in the reforms. It created resentment and indignation in the people of India. The Indians felt humiliated and hurt that the British Government did not feel any Indians were suitable to look at the commission as the work of the commission was to enquire and decide the political future of the country. The Indian National Congress boycotted the commission and called for a boycott of the movement. Assam also expressed its anger towards the commission. A public meeting was held at Sylhet in November 1927, following a meeting at Jorhat which condemned the commission and also suggested the appointment of a parallel commission comprising Indians.⁶³ On 3rd February, many most of the towns in Assam observed *hartal*, on the day when Simon's commission reached India. In February 1928, despite the protest, the commission visited India and submitted its recommendation. Thereafter, the Congress agreed to accept dominion status, if granted on or before December 31st, 1931.⁶⁴ However, the British government failed to accept the full dominion status for India by 31st December 1929. The Congress party announced that it would adopt *Poorna Swaraj* (complete independence) as its goal. Congress also passed a resolution that it will also start a civil disobedience movement to get complete freedom. The Congress met at Lahore in December 1929 amidst mounting political tension.⁶⁵ On 31 December 1929 was hoisted the newly adopted tricolor flag of freedom.⁶⁶ The Congress also resolved to boycott the legislatures and the round table conference.⁶⁷ The Congressmen also asked *Swarajists* to resign their seats and refrain from participating in elections in the

future. On 26th January, 1930 Independence Day was observed all over the country.

Though the decision of the Lahore session of congress was received with mixed emotions in Assam, the province celebrated the first Independence Day with enthusiasm. According to Tarun Ram Phukan, Gopinath Bardoloi, and R.K. Choudhury, the decision to boycott the council was done in appropriate time as they felt the opposition in the council was essential to get Poorna Swaraj. They also had a view that Assam was not ready for a mass movement. Tarun Ram Phukan after deliberations with senior colleagues resigned from the Central legislative council along with 14 others who resigned from the Assam Legislative Council.⁶⁸ Tarun Ram Phukan also resigned from AICC as well and together with Gopinath Bardoloi and R.K. Choudhury formed a new party known as the Assam Swaraj Party and decided to contest the elections.⁶⁹ Before starting the civil disobedience movement congress in Assam was directionless in the absence of main leaders.

Civil Disobedience Movement

Another great struggle was started by M. K. Gandhi to get rid of British imperialism. The movement was given the name, Civil Disobedience Movement. The working committee of the congress party that met in February invested M.K Gandhi with full power to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. M.K Gandhi had already made up his mind that he would.

M.K Gandhi started the civil disobedience movement with his famous Dandi March on 12th March 1930 (year) from Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad to Dandi, a village on the Gujarat Sea coast. He was followed by 78 chosen followers.⁷⁰ The provincial committees were alarmed by a guideline from the congress to make

preparation for the Civil Disobedience Movement. The call for salt *satyagraha* came along with a call to boycott foreign cloth and liquor and the authorization of a “free hand” in political activities subject to pledges of non-violence and truth.⁷¹ The movement continued till 6th April 1930. On 6th April, M.K Gandhi reached Dandi, picked up a handful of salt, and broke the salt law as a symbol of the Indian people’s refusal to live under British-made laws and therefore under British rule.⁷² In Assam, there was a difference between the opinions among nationalist leaders about joining in the call of the civil disobedience movement. Tarun Ram Phukan, G.N. Bardoloi, and R.K. Choudhury was of the view that Assam was not ready for a mass movement. But, Bishnu Ram Medhi, a young congress leader, came forward to accept the responsible office of the president of the APCC and with other leaders like M.D. Tayebullah, the General Secretary, Sidhinath Sarma, Hem Chandra Barua, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury, and Omeo Kumar Das conducted the movement with great enthusiasm.⁷³ They created five congress circles at Gauhati, Chyagaon, Nalbari, Tihu, and Rangia to facilitate the implementation of programme.⁷⁴ But they have to face financial critics to train the volunteers also as the expenditure on the congress session of Pandu was a lot. They raised funds for the movement. They also propagated against the repressive laws and boycotts of British goods and propagated anti-opium and anti- liquor. The new leaders especially Bishnuram Medhi and Hemchandra Baruah went to various places and addressed many meetings. The first stage of the call of congress for the movement was not at a high level, but the people in some parts of Assam were restless to get a radical change. The people of Assam could not be far from Participating in India’s freedom struggle called by congress. Many congress leaders including M.K Gandhi were arrested on 6th April 1930. In many places, there were *hartals* and strikes against the arrest of M.K Gandhi.

After getting the news of the arrest of M.K Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Assam started to work for the movement rigorously. The people in Assam started to boycott foreign goods, use drugs, etc. The arrest of Nehru was followed by a *hartal* by the school children in various places, on April 14, 1930.⁷⁵ Hearing the news of the arrest of M.K Gandhi the people of Assam even from the remotest area protested on May 6, 1930. Nagaon, Tezpur, Dhubri, and some places were at full height in the freedom struggle, and Section 144 was imposed in these areas by the authorities. But the imposition of Section 144 could not suppress the zeal for patriotism in those areas and there was a continuation of organized processions and meetings. The students of Assam also protested organizing *hartals* against M.K Gandhi's arrest. The civil disobedience movement took a different turn when the D.P.I of Assam then issued a circular on May 30 which is known as "The Cunningham Circular". It created an unrest situation in Assam among the students. According to the circular, the students and their parents should give a written form, a guarantee that they will not participate in any kind of political activity. The students should give a guarantee that they will not go for picketing, *hartals*, school strikes, and political meetings and respect the rules and regulations of the Education Department. If the student failed to show they will miss future opportunities like scholarships and hostel seats and the student will also impose fines. The circular created a kind of harsh reaction from the students of Assam. The students of Assam felt humiliated that how an alien Government got a chance to ask them to repress their rights. The British authorities thought that this circular would help them to repress the students from participating in the movement. However, happened the opposite. The students of Assam felt humiliated and they burst out into burning flames. The Assam ChatraSanmilan held a special session at

Gauhati to evolve a new program of action.⁷⁶ They decided to picket government institutions and according to official records, 3,117 of 15,186 students left their institutions between July and August 1930.⁷⁷ A number of schools like the Kamrup Academy at Gauhati were started at this time by the public at different places such as Barpeta, Tezpur, and Dibrugarh, outside Government control, and these were filled up at once by vast numbers of students who have refused to give an undertaking in the Government and Government aided schools.⁷⁸ However, with time the circular was relaxed and students also rejoined the schools. The new schools which were opened without government aid by the people of Assam continued. It acted as a mark of protest against the circular imposition to make the movement continue in Assam. These students joined in picketing against liquor and opium shops. The peasants also supported the movement by demanding a 50 percent reduction in land revenue. The student movement of this time turned into the civil disobedience movement. The students were encouraged to join the movement by young leaders Omeo Kumar Das, and Hem Chandra Baruah and it succeeded by and large.

The congress committees were inspired by the speeches of leaders and the activities of students in Assam. To protest against the Government orders demonstrations and public meetings were held by the congress committee. In the Surma Valley of Assam also student unrest occurred. New schools were opened in Maulvi Bazar, and Habibganj. A campaign against the non-payment of the chowkidari tax was also launched by the people of Sylhet District. Thus, the Cunnigham circular added fuel and gave a new turn to the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was enlarged in every part of Assam. Nagaon was the most prominent town where the civil disobedience movement was in full swing.

The movement was led in Kaliabor a village under Nagaon District by Someshwar Bora with PurnaBhuyan, BishnuBhuyan, and Mahabob Ali.⁷⁹ They used to go to the homes of villagers and ask for funds, encourage the villagers for spinning and weave, remove untouchability, boycotting of foreign goods including foreign clothes as suggested by M.K Gandhi. In 1933, Shri Badan Bordoloi took a lead in a group and propagated of civil disobedience movement with Shri Rameswar Hazarika, Shri Dandi Ram Baruah, Shri Ramakanta Bora, Shri Gunaram Bora, Shri Purna Bhuyan in the roads of Nagaon by foot. A Camp was also organized near the Sankar temple of Koliabor. 48 people were enrolled in the *Sewadal* and they were given training like military training.⁸⁰ In Kamrup district also the civil disobedience movement was in full swing. It was led by Hare Krishna Das along with other congress leaders. They used to propagate boycotting of opium. The Congress leaders used to picket in front of liquor shops, opium shops, and shops that sell foreign clothes. In Barpeta, *Satra's Satradhikar* also imposed a fine on the people who used to consume opium.⁸¹ In Gauripur town, under Dhubri district picketing was done in front of the Marowary shops that used to sell foreign clothes. Forest laws were also violated by the people. On 22, March 1930, Ambikagiri Ray Choudhury asked in a public meeting to violate the forest law.⁸² As a response in the Kachari sub-division under Kamrup District, the forest law was violated. It was followed by Chapapur and Bijni. In Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts also picketing was done in front of the shops which sell opium, liquor, and foreign goods. In the Golaghat district, the movement was led by Rajendra Nath Baruah, Sankar Chandra Baruah, Dariki Nath Goswami, and many others.⁸³ The tea tribe of Golaghat also participated in the movement. Among them was Bharat Tati, Govind Tati, Ramsai Suri, Bideshi Majhi, Sutu Majhi, Nand Singh Ghatowar, etc.⁸⁴ The foreign clothes were also burnt in the Golaghat town which heap continued

for some days. In Sivsagar the volunteers used to sing a song to encourage the people to join the movement by joining in spinning and weaving. The congress volunteer from Sivsagar also joined in a procession to show the black flag when Irwin came to Jorhat.

In the Jorhat district, the movement was at full height and it was led by Krishna Nath Sharma, Sashidhar Boruah, Debeswar Sarma, Hari Narayan Baruah, and Rameswar Bhattacharya. In 1930, Debeswar Sharma again left his job as a lawyer at the call of congress. In that time in Jorhat town, there were only 7/8 congress volunteers. So, the volunteers of some villages under Jorhat used to go to Jorhat town and do picketing in front of Opium, and liquor shops. The people of Jorhat also protested when Irwin went to Jorhat by showing the black flag.

In Surma valley the movement was at full height. The movement in Surma valley was led by Shyama Charan Dev, Satish Chandra Choudhury, and Harendra Chandra Choudhury.⁸⁵ The village under Surma valley was also affected. In Hailakandi the movement was led by active congress workers like Maulana Abdul Matlib Mazumdar, Bidyapati Singha, and Harendra Kumar Chakrabarty.⁸⁶ In Sylhet, a district campaign was also launched for nonpayment of the *Chaukidari* tax.

The Government was not a silent spectator towards this movement. In the first stage, it was equivocal toward the movement. But with M.K. Gandhi's arrest when the movement was at its full height the Government tried to suppress the movement harshly. The civil liberties of people were cut off and the provincial governments were given the power to ban the organizations related to the movement. With the help of "The Indian postal act", the Government tried to capture all the letters and documents of the people who were associated with the movement. The civil

authorities at Gauhati were pressured by the government to arrest the picketers as the government felt it was necessary to suppress the movement. But it could not stop the movement. In Assam, on 12th August, the “Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908” was started. By the act, it was announced that the organization which was in support of congress was illegal. They banned the Working Committee of the APCC, the District Congress Committees of Dibrugarh and Barpeta, and the Assam Youth League in Kamrup district on the ground they had used as their agent’s school boys and youth in August 1930.⁸⁷ They started to arrest the people who were found picketing and also search the home of congress leaders. On 10th August 1930, the houses were checked by the Government authorities of the congress leaders like Bishnulal Medhi, Hem Chandra Baruah, Mohammad Tayebulla, and Siddhinath Sharma in Gauhati.⁸⁸ On 21st August 1930, Bishnu Ram Medhi was arrested and put in imprisonment for 6 months with 200 rupees fine.⁸⁹ In Koliabar under Nagaon district, Badan Bardoloi was arrested and was put in jail for 3 months.⁹⁰ Congress workers of Gauhati like Hem Chandra Baruah and Omeo Kumar Das were also arrested. On 19th August 1930 at Sivasagar 150 volunteers along with a 60-year-old man went for picketing at Gaurisagar market and on that day Narendra Nath Sharma and other workers were arrested.⁹¹ Many people were arrested from Barpeta, Dhubri, Goalpara, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Abhayapuri, Mangaldoi, and Tezpur, for joining the movement.

Despite these types of repressive measures adopted by the government the activity of congress continued. Many congress leaders went underground and continued the movement. They were dauntless to paralyze the administration so they continued picketing and propagating against the British though many leaders were put in jail. In 1930, the publication of Simon’s Commission’s report did not meet the expectation of

Indians as it did not mention the dominion status. It added fuel to the fire. However, the viceroy Lord Irwin suggested a Round Table Conference with repeating the goal of dominion status. In November 1930, the first-round table conference was held in London. It was attended by the Muslim League, the liberals, representative of the hindu untouchable, Ambedkar. Assam was represented by Chandradhar Baruah, but he appears to have no impact on the conference.⁹² The people who attended the conference did not represent the majority as congress boycotted the movement. The viceroy was forced to release M.K Gandhi and members of the congress working for the committee from jail. The government negotiates for agreement with congress. After getting release from jail M.K Gandhi signed a pact with the viceroy Lord Irwin in May 1931 which is known as The Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Gandhi-Irwin pact comes up with some conclusions.

1. All political prisoners will be released from jail except those who committed violence.
2. On the behalf of Congress M.K. Gandhi agreed to suspend the civil disobedience movement.
3. The Government agreed to concede picketing in a peaceful manner in front of liquor and foreign clothes shops.
4. M.K Gandhi agreed to join the Second Round Table Conference.
5. The Government concedes to make salt for consumption on the sea coast by the people.

The Gandhi-Irwin pact was not liked by some members of the congress committee. The pact left unanswered the question of India's Independence. It also remains silent regarding the Dominion Status. They were of the view that the pact did not fulfill the major demands of nationalists. Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were shocked by the decision of M.K Gandhi.⁹³ But M.K Gandhi was of the view that the starting of a mass movement will not meet all the expectations as he was not sure how far the movement would stretch.

The people of Assam reacted to the Gandhi-Irwin pact with mixed emotions. A section of nationalists said that granting an official pardon to a special section and not to revolutionaries was meaningless. Another section believed that M.K Gandhi was right to accept the pact because it was necessary for a space to prepare for the next movement. The congressmen in Assam, therefore, devoted their energies to invigorating the Party and to working at the grassroots level to politicize all social groups when they were released from jail.⁹⁴ As a representative of congress, M.K Gandhi attended the Second Round Table in September 1931. However, the British government refused to agree with the demands of congress. M.K Gandhi had to come back to India empty-handed on 28th December 1931. When M.K Gandhi came back to India, the Government started new repressions. Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan Abdul Gaffur Khan were arrested. Congress had no other option than to start the civil disobedience movement again. On 1st January 1932, the congress working committee met and decided to renew the civil disobedience movement. The renewal of the civil disobedience movement had created fear in the heart of the government of Lord Willingdon. The government started to arrest the people connected to the movement and the congress leaders. The congress and the organizations which were in support of congress were declared illegal. The government also cut the civil liberties of people.

Most of the congress leaders were in jail after a week of the renewal of the movement as a mark of repression of the government.

Like the other provinces in Assam also congress started the renewal of the Civil Disobedience Movement. In Assam, the people successfully participated in picketing and boycott, and swadeshi programs in Gauhati, Tezpur, Dhubri, Mangaldai, Nagaon, Goalpara, and Badarpur.⁹⁵ In many areas of Assam, there was also a campaign of no revenue. There was a campaign for the non-payment of *chowkidari tax* in places like Goalpara etc. As a mark of repression like in other provinces the government started to arrest the people. The prisoners associated with the movement were treated cruelly. They were beaten and awarded rigorous punishment. The property of the people who were arrested during picketing was confiscated. In jail, the prisoners were given extreme work and the women and children were also not left. The press was censored. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi a leader of the Congress party in Assam was imprisoned for the second time like the other leaders.⁹⁶ Though the movement was tried suppressed by the government with repressive measures yet it continued till May 1934 till M.K. Gandhi decided to withdraw the movement.

In 1932 certain constitutional changes were announced in the form of the communal award. This award allocated seats to various communities in the central and provincial legislatures on the assumption that India was not a nation but an assortment of diverse racial, religious and cultural groups each with their own castes and other vested interests.⁹⁷ An additional Explanatory Memorandum for Assam was incorporated. M.K Gandhi felt a need to modify the communal award and undertook a fast in jail for the modification of the communal award. He wanted to concede the depressed class a separate electorate within the Hindu fold. As a result, M.K Gandhi and Bhim

Ambedkar (the leader of the depressed class) signed a pact in 1932 which is known as Poona Pact. After the pact M.K Gandhi started a campaign against untouchability for two years, He visited Assam in the year 1934, and it was an impetus for a movement when political activity was negligible.

The Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya along with a few others established a Congress Nationalist Party within the congress. The congress was divided into two parties Congress Nationalist party and Congress Socialist. The main objective of establishing the Congress Nationalist party was to enter the council and obstruct them. From Assam, Tarun Ram Phukan and R.K. Choudhury joined this party. In 1934 elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were held. 45 seats were captured by the congress party of the 75 seats. Nabin Chandra Bardoloi and Basanta Kumar Das, both official congress candidates from Assam, won sweeping victories demonstrating once again people's faith in the Congress leadership.⁹⁸ The Civil Disobedience movement was successfully suppressed by the government. The emergence of Congress's socialist party and congress's nationalist party gave hope to the government that they can rule India without any problem because congress has internal disputes. But the government's expectation was shattered soon because the congress party realized how to get rid of British imperialism though they have internal disputes they have to solve and work together. The Congress party accepted certain changes in the congress constitution. They also reorganize the executive committee. All India Industries Association was also inaugurated. M.K Gandhi also gave his resignation from congress as he wanted to serve the country in a better way. These all incidents led to fear in the mind of the Government and they realized that M.K Gandhi was preparing for a movement in a more effective way. So, in fear, the British government thatch away before it started declaring a constitutional reform in the form of The

Government of India Act 1935.

The Government of India Act 1935 was passed by the British Government in August 1935. According to this act defense and foreign affairs remained directly under the control of the viceroy. The power of the elected ministers was also limited. Though the British government gave the provincial autonomy yet it was a promise only but not a reality. In reality, the governors of the provinces appointed by the British government were in high power. The governor of the provinces could veto legislative and administrative measures and could even take over the administration of a province if deemed necessary. The minister's advice if it meets the expectation of British imperialism was only accepted. The governor of the provinces has the right to reject the opinion of ministers. Thus, British authority with this type of tactic wanted to keep the political and economic authority among them. The act was boycotted by Congress. They protested against the reforms and demanded the formation of a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of an adult franchise, to frame a constitution for an Independent India. But the British government announced its decision to hold elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937. Congress decided to work on the reforms introduced by the Government of India Act of 1935. It won the elections held at the beginning of 1937 so far as the general or predominantly Hindu seats were concerned in both the central and provincial assemblies, and in the Muslim majority provinces except the North-West Frontier Province majority of Muslim seats were captured by the Muslim League.⁹⁹ The Muslims desired to form a coalition ministry with Congress but the congress did not accept the proposals of Muslims. In Assam which comprised a variety of constituencies for the composition of its

Legislature, the congress won 33 seats in a House of 108 forming a single group in it, and Gopinath Bardoloi was elected leader of the Congress Assembly Party.¹⁰⁰ As a part of congress's policy, Gopinath Bardoloi did not accept the coalition ministry. A ministry was formed by Syed Md. Saadulla with the help of European people and tribal and nontribal people. The congress group did constructive work like the prohibition of opium and the reduction of land revenue etc and impressed the people outside and also the House. However, the Muslim-dominated ministry in Assam failed to impress the people and also failed to make a good impression in the Legislative assembly. The Congress party with the help of independents and dissidents dislodged the power of the Ministry and finally, the Minister, Syed Sir Saadulla, gave his resignation from the ministry on 13th September 1938.

After the resignation of the Saadulla Ministry, Gopinath Bardoloi, a leader of the congress party formed a coalition ministry in Assam. The Congress party was supported by Independents and the Muslims who were out of the League. Subhash Chandra Bose and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad also came to Assam to put a coalition government in ministry. The coalition ministry formed by the congress party worked on the immigration problems, prohibition of opium, and taxation measures. To take tax from the rich and to benefit the poor the Assam Agricultural Income Tax Bill was adopted. It was not supported by the European planting members. Instead, the measure was adopted. The emergence of the Second World War in September 1939 led to a serious setback for this ministry. The British power without consultation with the congress party decided to draw India to the war. It hurt the sentiments of the congress party and the congress ministries in eight provinces resigned as a mark of protest to be a part of British imperialism. The coalition ministry in Assam under congress also resigned.

The resignation of the congress coalition ministry in Assam was soon replaced by the formation of Syed Saadula ministry in Assam again on 17th November 1939. The ministry under Saadula was cruel towards the people. It only tried to see the Muslim interest and to satisfy the British government. The Saudi Ministry resigned from the ministry on 24th December. After the resignation of Saadulah's government, Assam was placed under section 93 by a notification

There was internal dispute aroused in the people of India, especially among the Muslim league and congress, and the same situation was in Assam. The Government of Md. Saadulaah in Assam was a government led by the Muslim league. During this tough situation, the British government dragged the Indians to the war as Britain was involved in the Second World War. The British government was forced to give supplies of people and funds. M.K Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were opposed to it and asked the British government to make India an Independent nation and without it, they would not support the war. On August 8, 1940, the viceroy refused to concede the National Government on grounds of Hindu-Muslim disunity but made instead an offer to expand his Executive Council with a number of representative Indians, to form a War Advisory Council, and to set up after the war a representative body to devise the constitution for India.¹⁰¹ Subhash Chandra asked M.K Gandhi to start a passive movement and not to compromise with the situation and support Britain in the war. On 20th March 1940, the All-India congress committee decided to start a movement encouraging people not to participate in the war. An individual *Satyagraha* was launched in October 1940 under the leadership of M.K Gandhi. It was continued

in three phases. Vinoba Bhave was the first person to become *Satyagrahi* and get arrested in the first *Satyagraha*. The second phase of *satyagraha* commenced on 17th November 1940 and for the second phase, *Satyagrahis* were selected, congress leaders and legislators. The third phase of *Satyagraha* commenced on 5th June 1941 and by the end of the month of January 1941 more than 20, 000 *Satyagrahi* were convicted all over India.¹⁰² The *Satyagrahis* held meetings and propagated against the war. They also shouted anti-war slogans.

Assam also accepted the call for *Satyagraha* and with the leadership of Gopinath Bardoloi, Bishnuram Medhi, Omeo Kumar Das, and many others carried the movement in Assam. It also accepted the instruction of the All-India Congress Committee and celebrated the Independence Day of 1940. At Gauhati, a procession was organized in which a large number of students both boys and girls participated.¹⁰³ Eight thousand people gathered in the central field in Tezpur to celebrate Independence Day. The president of the Assam Pradesh congress committee Mohammad Tayebulla came to Nagaon district and stayed in the home of the president of the district congress committee of Nagaon in August 1940. They selected the names of *Satyagrahis* from Kaliabor under the Nagaon district and sent them to M.K Gandhi. M.K Gandhi accepted 14 names of the *Satyagrahis* among them were Thanuram Bhuyan, Shri Badan Bardoli, Shri Bhibiram Hazarika, Purnakanta Bhuyan, Keshram Bora, Binanda Saikia, Ramakanta Bora, Padmakanta Hazarika, Balo Bhuyan, Bhogeswar Neog, Bishnu Bhuyan, Koliram Baruah, Bhogeswar Kakati, and Dandiram Baruah.¹⁰⁴ They used to write the propagation on a paper and use to sing it. The *Satyagrahi* used to propagate against untouchability and also against war. Many prominent leaders were arrested during this *Satyagraha*. From Kaliabor, under Nagaon District Shri Thanuram Bhuyan and Badan Bordoloi were arrested.¹⁰⁵ Many

people have to give fines for participating in *Satyagraha*. Among those one was from Kaliabor Dandiram Baruah who was imposed with 50 rupees fine.¹⁰⁶

Thus, the people of India along with Assam participated in the *Satyagraha* as a mark of protest against dragging the Indians to the Second World War. The British government sent a mission which is known as Cripps Mission to discuss with congress leaders and it suggested that it will give dominion status to India if it accepts the proposal of the British government to help in the war. It was not accepted by congress as well as Muslim League. The Cripps mission failed as it could not fulfill the demand of Indians as they wanted self-rule before participating in the war.

In Assam, at that time the administration was taken by the British governor on 25th December 1941. The first work of governor Robert Neil Reid after taking administration was to scrap the controversial Land Development Scheme. Congress was under pressure to start a mass movement. After the failure of Cripps's mission, Congress was more pressured to launch a mass movement. The Cripps Mission did not accept the proposal of nationalists to give the power of self-rule in India. It was in the view that if the congress party of India accepted the whole plan of the British to help them with people and funds, they would give the power of self-rule to India after the end of the Second World War. The congress this time realized that it was just a manipulation of the British Government. The congress out of frustration prepares for a mass movement.

Quit India Movement

On 7th and 8th August 1942, the AICC held a session in Bombay, and in the session "Quit India " resolution was adopted. Because now the congress leaders were in view that Britain should leave India. M.K Gandhi proposed a non-violent mass movement. After the resolution, the very next day of which resolution was adopted Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K Gandhi were arrested. The news of the arrest of M.K Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru added fuel to the people and they started *hartals*, meetings, and processions demanding their release. Government properties like trains, buses, cars, etc. were damaged by the crowds on 9th August 1942. Post offices were attacked and looted. The police opened fire on sixteen occasions killing eight persons and injuring forty-four. In Pune, Ahmedabad and some urban areas of Mumbai similar incidents happened. Hartals were observed in these places. To paralyze the Government mills and factories were closed and telephone and telegraph lines were cut down; municipal and Government properties were damaged. Barricades were put on roads.¹⁰⁷

On 9th August 1942 Bengal also observed complete *hartal*. It was followed by processions, and meetings at Calcutta, Dhaka, and other places. Postal vans and tram cars were attacked. In Assam also the congress party accepted the resolution of M.K Gandhi and started the propagation of a mass movement. They started picketing, and *hartals* and meetings were organized. Md. Tayebullah, President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Bishnu ram Medhi, Debeswar Sarma, Chief whip of the congress party, Dr. Harekrishna Das, Lila Barua, and some others were arrested on the 9th of August, 1942.¹⁰⁸ Organizations like the *Shanti Sena's* (peaceful force) and *Mrityu Bahini* (Death Squad) were formed. *Shanti*

Sena's were formed to prevail the peaceful situation. The volunteers of Shanti Senas were given training. A section of people believed in non-violent but there was another section that was engaged in violent activities. Gopinath Bardoloi and Siddhinath Sharma went to the Bombay session and they were arrested after they came back to Assam. From the end of August sporadic cases of arson and interference with railway and telegraph lines occurred in the Assam valley districts, particularly in Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang, and Sivsagar.¹⁰⁹ The people of Assam started to attack railway lines, Government buildings, etc. They also started an underground movement. One of the main objectives of the Movement in Assam was to paralyze the communication network and for this, the following instructions were issued.¹¹⁰

1. All ways of communication are to be obstructed. Big bridges are to be broken. Railway lines should be pulled off so that there may be an obstruction in the military movement and bringing other articles.

2. Postal department is to be brought to a standstill by all means. If trains and steamers can be stopped, the postal department will be unworkable automatically. To stop the working of the postal department, try your best to obstruct railways and steamers.

3. Cut telegraph wires as early and in as many places as possible, in that case news from one place as possible. In that case news from one place to another will not reach and the Government will also not know about hampering in different places.

The underground movement in Kamrup district was confined to Bajali, Nalbari, and the Tihu region where guns were stolen, bombs were hurled, railway sabotage was attempted and large- scale arson resorted.¹¹¹ The students of Assam also participated

in the Quit India movement by joining *hartals*, processions, picketing, etc. Many students join the *Shanti Sena* organization.

The government as a mark of repression started the reign of terror in Assam. It cut the civil liberties of people. Many villages were put on fine for joining the underground movement. Kushal Konwar was hanged in connection with the derailment of a train at Barpathar.¹¹² He was the only martyr to be hanged in the whole country during the Quit India movement.¹¹³ In Nagaon, Tezpur, Goalpara, and Barpeta police openly fired on people.¹¹⁴ Many people were injured during the firings. Bogiram Deka, Mohan Chandra Nath, Nahar Nath, Mohan Chandra Deka, Bheluram Nath, Hem Baruah, Bogai Kachari, Khargeswar Baruah, Thuneswar Rajkhowa, Bholanath Bharali Baruah, Chandra Nath, Golapi Nath, Arjun Sharma, Gopi Koch, Maina Kachari, Ramcharan Gowala.¹¹⁵ In Bazali on 25th September 7 people were injured. On 20th September there was a hoisting of flags in Police *Thana's* in some places of Assam like Dhekiajuli, Nagaon, Gohpur, etc. The police open fire on the peaceful processions. The open firing in Dhekiajuli led to the death of 13 people. Manbar Nath, Man Kachari, Ratan Kachari, Somnath Chutia, and many others died in the firing. In Gohpur firing Mukunda Kakati, Kanaklata Baruah was shot dead. In Bahrapur Balaram Sut, Thagiram Sut, Lakshmi Kanta Hazarika, and Bhogeswari Phukanani were shot dead. Apart from these people many people died in the Dhekiajuli firing which is not listed till today. Goalpara and Barpeta also people died during the firing.

Despite the repression, the leaderless movement continued for 8 weeks. Saadulah's ministry was in power at that time in Assam. The people did not lose hope. After the end of the Second World War, the British realized the need to withdraw from Assam. They come with the Cabinet Mission. The Cabinet Mission was not supported by the

people of Assam because it talked about the joining of Assam with Eastern Pakistan. The viceroy Mountbatten came and gave the plan to start a Voting system in which the people of Assam can decide whether they want to stay as a separate state or merge with Eastern Pakistan. After the referendum results, were-56 percent were in favor of Sylhet's inclusion in Pakistan and 43.4 percent for an undivided Assam within India. This division of votes shows the communal problem in Assam. After the referendum, the boundary commission was entrusted under Cyril Radcliffe. According to the commission, the Muslim and non-Muslim areas were divided. The *thanas* of Patharkandi, Ratabari, Badarpur, and half of Karimganj remained in Assam and the rest was included in Pakistan.

India became independent on 15th August 1947 at the cost of partition. The people though in grief on the partition celebrated the freedom from the alien government. The effect of partition is still seen in Assam where it witnessed the refugees from Bangladesh (East Pakistan). It has affected the economy of Assam. The result of the partition is still felt in Assam today.

Conclusion

Assam gave an example of patriotism by not staying on the sidelines and accepting the call of freedom struggle. It also developed political relations with other provinces. The struggle for freedom would not be successful if it was not supported by farmers. In the role of attaining freedom in Assam, there is a big role of farmers of Assam who continued the no-tax campaign. The freedom struggle would also have been if it was not supported by students. In fact, the non-co-operation in Assam was started by students only. The civil disobedience movement also went to the highest height of the partition of students after the publication of the Cunningham Circular. The students

also participated in the Quit India movement. The communal dispute from the formation of the Muslim League also hampered Assam. A part of Assam was also joined with East Pakistan which result is also felt today. The government of Md. Saadula gave immigration problems to Assam as he let people come from Eastern Bengal to Assam and reside. By and large, the call for joining in the freedom struggle of India was accepted by Assam and the movement went into great enthusiasm in Assam.

Endnotes

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⁸⁴ *Ibid.*,166.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸⁶ Bhattacharjee, J.B. *Cachar under British rule in North east India*. New Delhi. 1977:282.

⁸⁷ Goswami, Priyam. 2012. *Op.cit.*, 256.

⁸⁸ Boruah, Sagar. 2015. *Op.cit.*, 168.

⁸⁹ Asamiya, 21 September. 1930.

⁹⁰ Borah, Narendra Nath. 1999. *Op.cit.*,19.

⁹¹ Sharma, Benudhar, *Congressor Kasiyali Rodot*. Gauhati: Manuh Prakashan. 1960:100

⁹² Goswami, Priyam. 2012. *Op.cit.*, 261.

⁹³ Baruah, S.L, 2015. *Op.cit.*,550.

⁹⁴ Goswami, Priyam. 2012. *Op.cit.*, 257.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Dutt, K.N. 1969. *Op.cit.*,79

⁹⁷ Goswami, Priyam. 2012. *Op.cit.*,258.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*,259.

⁹⁹ Dutt, K.N, 1969. *Op.cit.*,87.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*,87-88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*,95.

¹⁰² Sharma, Dipti. 2013. *Op.cit.*, 139.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*,140.

¹⁰⁴ Borah, Narendra Nath. 1999. *Op.cit.*, 31.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*,32.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Sharma and Anil Kumar. *Quit India Movement in Assam*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications., 2007:87.

¹⁰⁸ Dutt. K.N. 1969. *Op.cit.*,97.

¹⁰⁹ Sharma, Anil Kumar. 2007. *Op.cit.*,90.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Bhuyan, A.C and De, S(ed), *Political History of Assam, 1940-1947*, Vol.3. 1980:85.

¹¹² Goswami, Priyam. 2012. *Op.cit.*,270.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Mass movement in Assam. 1942 P.H.A. Record, Vol:207.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER – III

Women of Assam in the Gandhian Movement

The Indian National Movement was a long-drawn movement for independence from British rule by Indians of all sexes, castes, and creeds. The women of India shouldered many responsibilities to make the country free from the clutches of the British. Participation of women in the anti- British struggle started with Rani Velu Nachiyar and her army commander Kuyli. Rani Velu Nachiyar was a queen of the Sivaganga estate from 1760 to 1790.¹ She was the first Indian queen to fight against the East India Company in India. Her army commander, Kuyli, also participated in the campaign against the East India Company in the 18th century. She is said to be a suicide bomber, as she doused herself in oil, set herself alight, and walked into the storehouse.² Again in 1817, Bhima Bai Holkar fought bravely against British colonel Malcolm. She defeated him in guerrilla warfare. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Rani Tace Bai also fought in the battle of 1857 and showed great bravery. The stories of these great ladies became an inspiration to the women folk of India, and many women were keen on forming organizations to defend Indian freedom.

In Assam, the women folk started to organize themselves in 1915. The local women founded *Mahila Samiti* (Women's organization). The first *Mahila Samiti* was founded in Dibrugarh. These *Samities* acted as an organization whose prime objective was to uplift the Assamese society. With the initiative of Kiranmayee Agarwalla, *Tezpur Mahila Samiti* was formed in 1919. *Mahila Samiti* contributed as an individual organization to the freedom movement before the formation of *Asom Pradeshik Mahila Samiti* (All Assam Women Organization). In the year 1926, *Asom Pradeshik*

Mahila Samiti was formed.³ It played a very important role to make awareness among the rural women to join the movement. The decision of the Assam Association to join the non-cooperation movement also encouraged women to join the movement. They also propagated the constructive program of M.K. Gandhi. It was never an easy task for them to come out of the traditional family. There were iron ladies who dared to question the conservatism of society and started to work for the movement. At first, they were just used to spinning and weaving at home. But with time, they started to propagate about spinning and weaving and also about the prohibition of intoxicants.

Non-Co-Operation Movement and Women of Assam

M.K. Gandhi believed in participating in the freedom movement through constructive work. According to him, women in India were very suitable to join in the freedom movement through constructive work. He wanted the women of India to join in participating in the freedom movement through constructive work. He said, *“To call women the weaker sex is a libel, it is men’s injustice to women. If strength means moral power, then women are immeasurably superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing...has she not greater powers of endurance, has she got greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women. I have nursed this thought now for years.”*⁴

Women throughout India participated in the non-co-operation movement by accepting the call of M.K. Gandhi. Kasturba Gandhi (Gujrat), Basanti Devi (Bengal), Urmila Devi (Bengal), Parbati Devi (Agra), Bai Amman (Lahore), Sarojini Naidu (Bombay), Uma Nehru (U.P.), Sarala Devi (Punjab), and Kamala Chattopadhyaya (Bengal) were some women who participated in the non-co-operation movement in a constructive way on the Indian level. They went in the procession, picketing foreign clothes,

prohibiting opium and liquor, encouraging spinning and weaving, and also boycotting foreign goods. They became an example for other women to participate in the movement.

The women of Assam, like those in other parts of the country, also joined in the non-co-operation movement. In January 1921, as part of the movement's program, a group of women from Gauhati advocated taking out processions to breach Section 144 and get court arrest.⁵ Section-144 was a colonial-era law, and it was like an instrument to put down protests, ban people from assembling, and enforce the curfew. It was a way for colonial governors to suppress the rebellion against them. Bidyutprova Devi⁶ took the initiative for this movement. However, when M.K. Gandhi learned about the plan, he recommended that they should not undertake such programs at the time; instead, they should focus on organizational work.⁷ Bidyutprova Devi, Girija Devi⁸, Hemanta Kumar Devi⁹, and Dharmada Devi¹⁰, Snehalata Bhattacharya¹¹, Ganeswari Devi¹², enrolled as Congress volunteers in Gauhati.¹³ As part of the Non-Co- Operation campaign, they held meetings to teach the public, particularly rural women, about non-cooperation, spinning and weaving, the boycott of foreign goods, and abstinence from opium consumption and smoking. The women who were associated with teaching the rural women to join the freedom movement had to face many challenges. People thought that these women would make their daughters, and sisters disrespectful if they started to go outside frequently. When Hemanta Kumari and a few other women approached a village in the Dibrugarh area in 1921, the people forced the women workers to get out threatening them by taking some weapons in their hands.¹⁴ When Rajabala Das of Dibrugarh and her group tried to convince some local women of Tengakhat Village in the Dibrugarh sub-division to become Congress volunteers, they confronted a similar situation with significant peril

to their life.¹⁵ Angry villagers surrounded the group of female workers with weapons threatened to leave the village immediately if they did not want to get cut into pieces. Women of different age groups joined the non-co-operation movement. Even some old ladies also joined in the constructive programs of M.K. Gandhi. One such woman from the Kamrup district was the mother of Krishna Baruah. Krishna Baruah was a congress worker of Gauhati and was arrested in 1921.¹⁶ With his arrest, his aged mother entered the freedom movement. She traveled to several villages to promote the message of the non-co-operation movement. She founded a spinning school at *Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir*.¹⁷ With the start of the non-co-operation movement, women in Assam began producing *swadeshi* clothes in large quantities.¹⁸

The visit of M.K. Gandhi to Assam gave a tremendous impact on the movement. On 18th August 1921, there was a meeting in the house of Tarun Ram Phukan and the meeting was also attended by many women.¹⁹ After the meeting, M.K. Gandhi appealed to all the people presented there to burn foreign goods. Both the men and women burnt the clothes after the meeting, which was very costly but to them, it was not more precious than the love for the country. M.K. Gandhi addressed three women's assemblies in Gauhati on 19th August 1921 including Assamese, Marwari, and Bengali women.²⁰ The Assamese women's meeting took place in the Kamrup Theatre Hall. The women in attendance were all dressed in white *Khadi*.²¹ The women welcomed

M.K. Gandhi with open arms. He was given a *khaddar* woven with handspun yarn by an elderly lady, Ghanakanti Phukanani, and a few other ladies.²² He was delighted with their *Khadi* work and he shared the hope that Assamese women would be able to supply a significant share of the *khadi* cloth required by the entire nation. Begum Md.

Ali, secretary of the women's wing of the Indian Khilafat Committee in 1920 also came to Assam with M.K. Gandhi spoke at a number of women's gatherings held in both public and private locations. The momentum supplied by M.K. Gandhi's visit manifested itself in the subsequent period of the non-co-operation movement in the actions of women workers. The women from the remote areas also participated in the movement after the visit of M.K. Gandhi. From Barnagar, a rural area of Kamrup district, Guneswari Mazumdar took the lead in organizing the women of Barnagar.²³ In 1921, Barnagar *Mahila* Congress was formed. Guneswari Mazumdar was selected as the president of the Barnagar *Mahila* Congress.²⁴ She also organized a meeting at Kaniabhatha village near Barnagar. The meeting was addressed by Bishnu Ram Medhi and other leaders.²⁵ Following the conference, a large amount of foreign clothing was burned. She used to go to her village and propagate about *khadi* and spinning and weaving. She herself was also devoted to spinning and weaving. Accompanying her, some other local women also started popularizing *khadi* and devoted themselves to spinning and weaving. She also delivered a package of hand-woven *khadi* clothes to the Gaya Congress session held in 1923 for distribution to the underprivileged.²⁶

Women like Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Kiranmayee Agarwalla, Kiranbala Barkakoti, and Sarala Devi took the leadership of organizing women to join in the movement. Chandra Prabha Saikiani, who was from the very remote village of Kamrup, was working as a primary teacher in Tezpur.²⁷ She was closely associated with the Tezpur *Mahila Samiti*. Chandra Prabha Saikiani resigned as a teacher in response to the boycott call of M.K. Gandhi.²⁸ Some concubines of the European tea planters also participated in the freedom movement in the Darrang district. They donated funds in the name of M.K. Gandhi whom they addressed as '*Gandhi Baba*'. Malati Mungri

was one such concubine of European tea planters. She was married to a European tea planter. After the marriage, she also grew the habit of drinking by joining clubs. But later on, she was convinced to leave the habit of intoxicants by Omeo Kumar Das and other picketers who were picketing in April 1921 in that area.²⁹ After that she also started to picket up opium and liquor in front of the shops. As she was the wife of British officials, she also used to give some important information about the British to the people.

On 21st August 1921, M.K. Gandhi visited Tezpur. Only one public meeting was scheduled with him but he expressed a wish to have an extra meeting with women. As his wish, a women's meeting was organized at 2.30 p.m. at Bengali theatre Hall on the same day.³⁰ A large number of women gathered to listen to his speech. During the meeting, M.K. Gandhi applauded the weaving skills of the women of Assam. He also encouraged the women presented in the meeting to invest more time in spinning and weaving in order to increase the popularity of *khadi*.

During the visit of M.K. Gandhi to Tezpur in 1921, a meeting was organized at Poki, the residence of the Agarwala family of Assam, and here for the first time, Chandra Prabha Saikiani got the opportunity to meet M.K. Gandhi.³¹ She also burnt her own clothes, which had been woven from imported yarn, and took a vow, which she maintained till the last day of her life.³² The rural women of Darrang District were also influenced by the visit of M.K. Gandhi. It created an enduring influence in the minds of those women.

The women of Sootea in the Darrang District started the movement in a unique way. They exert indirect pressure on the people of Sootea to give up opium and intoxicants by making a rule that if they did not give up the habit of consuming intoxicants, they

would be socially boycotted. In many circumstances, this indirect pressure proved to be highly beneficial. Moladai Hazarika of Sootea, Rebati Bora of Jamugurihat, and Nirmal Prova Saikia of Kachari village were the few important women of Darrang District.³³ They used to visit every household educating people about the non-co-operation movement and popularization of *khadi*.

The participation of women in the Sivsagar district during the non-co-operation movement was remarkable. In the Sivsagar subdivision, Sundar Kakati, Lilawati Kakati, Bhadreswari Gogoi, Sashiprova Datta, and Tileswari Devi took the initiative in organizing the women of both urban and rural areas to participate in the movement.³⁴ Ananda Devi Borkotoky, Hemlata Bezborra, Sashiprova Chaliha, Nirmala Devi, Aiken Bhuyan, Mukheswari Devi, Tankeswari Bhattacharya, Basanti Malia Baruah, Maikan Bhattacharya, Senehi Bhuyan, Saduri Bora, Aseni Bora, Golapi Bora, Golapi Datta, Mohini Devi, Tulashi Devi, Padmeswari Devi, Sashiprova Datta, GunadaKhaund, Aidew Rajkhowa, and Premoda Devi, were some of the important workers of Jorhat Sub-division.³⁵ These women workers were mostly engaged in educating the rural women about the non-co-operation movement. They also used to popularize spinning and weaving. Some women of Jorhat used to go house to house to propagate and encourage women to spin and weave. Among them, the two leaders were Mukheswari Devi and Annada Devi Borkotoky. With their initiative, a spinning and weaving center was opened at Baligaon, near Jorhat for the women of that area.³⁶

The participation of women in the Lakhimpur district was not very large in number. The women who participated in the procession and meetings were very few. Khirada Phukan, and Khireswari Dastidarani of Talan village were the active women.³⁷ They

used to help the congress volunteers and also propagated about spinning and weaving, and the prohibition of opium among the village women. Besides these women, another active woman from this area who participated in the programs of the non-cooperation movement was Ratneswari Phookan.³⁸ Bhanumati Talukdar, Mangalu Talukdar's wife, was another prominent woman worker from Godebori, a Kamrup District interior village near Palashbari.³⁹ In 1921, she enrolled as a Congress worker, leaving her husband and three children at home to work full-time for the Congress. She wore a *khadi* cap like the male volunteers and carried a little bamboo pole with a Congress flag on her. She was given the name "*Volunteerani Bai*".⁴⁰ She was called the 'Sarojini of Assam' by M.K. Gandhi.⁴¹ When M.K. Gandhi visited Assam for organizational purposes, he attended the majority of the Congress meetings conducted throughout the region with her.

The women of the Golaghat subdivision were organized for the movement by Swarnalata Baruah with the help of Darikini Datta, Labanyalata Baruah, Dwariki Dasi, Kanakeswari Hazarika, Madhabi Sonowal, and a few others.⁴² Among the women of Golaghat, Pramila Medak was a courageous women organizer who came out for the movement and questioned the social restrictions. She was excommunicated from Mishing Community for participating in the movement.⁴³ Debeswari Hazarika, daughter of Gangaram Barmedhi and Pramila Barmedhi was an active participant in the movement. She was encouraged by her father to join the movement, as he was the president of the Golaghat Congress Committee. She used to visit villages and organized meetings in rural areas to encourage rural women to join the movement.⁴⁴

In the Dibrugarh district, the message of the non-co-operation movement was spread by Hemakanta Kumari. She propagated about spinning and weaving, and she herself was devoted to it. Nagendra Hazarika, Joytora Gogoi, Suprabha Datta, and Rajabala Das were other important non-co-operation workers. Rajabala Das of Dibrugarh was studying in Calcutta when M.K. Gandhi visited Calcutta in the year 1921, where he addressed a meeting in the house of C.R. Das.⁴⁵ After listening to M.K. Gandhi was so much influenced that she gave up her studies and came back to Assam. During the visit of M.K. Gandhi in Assam, Rajabala Das along with her mother met him.⁴⁶ The Women's Wing of the Dibrugarh District Committee was formed soon after M.K. Gandhi's visit in 1921. Rajabala Das became the Secretary of the Women's Wing Committee. She used to go to remote areas to promote spinning and weaving. She was accompanied by her aunt Sashiprova Datta. They also opened training centers in Dibrugarh and other places for the purpose of popularization of spinning and weaving.⁴⁷

On December 8, 1921, a meeting was convened by the women of Gauhati at the house of Nilakanta Baruah, where the usage of *khadi* and *swadeshi* goods was encouraged.⁴⁸ In the meeting, the women folk were requested to join as congress volunteers. On 9th December 1921, fifty women signed as Congress volunteers at Gauhati in Tarun Ram Phukan's house.⁴⁹ The women of Assam also contributed to the *Tilak Swaraj* Fund. The contribution of the women of Assam to the *Tilak Swaraj* fund was noteworthy. They responded very generously. They were ready to donate all their valuables for the country's freedom. The women of Gauhati also donated generously.⁵⁰ There have also been reports of people giving diamond rings as funds. Nikunjalata Chaliha, Bhubeneswari Devi, Kamalkoli Baruah, Nalinibala Chaliha, Labanyalata Chaliha, Kankanbala Mahanta, Thanewari Baruah, Mohini Baruah, and others from Sivsagar

district gave ornaments to the fund.⁵¹ However, the collection of funds was only limited to urban areas.

In 1922, Madan Mohan Malavya and Rajendra Prashad visited Assam. The visit provided great impetus for women to work for the movement. A women's meeting was held in Tarun Ram Phukan's house on 30th May 1922, where he advised the women folk present there to focus on making progress on spinning and weaving and popularization of *khadi*.⁵² After the tour of Gauhati, he went to Tezpur on 31st May 1922. During the non-co-operation movement, the government took many repressive methods to suspend the movement. Many women were jailed, fined, assaulted, and killed. Malati Mungri was killed by British officials for picketing in front of liquor shops. She was the first woman martyr of Assam who sacrificed her life for the country's freedom.⁵³ Debeswari Hazarika, wife of Raneshwar of Dergaon, was imprisoned several times during 1921-1922.⁵⁴ An active congress women volunteer Sashi Prova Datta was assaulted by police when she was participating in a procession in Sivsagar town. She got an injury on her hands and head. The police also tortured Guneswari Mazumdar, wife of Nandamohan Mazumdar of Sorbhog. Ratneswari Phookan of Lakhimpur was also arrested during this movement.

Civil Disobedience Movement and Women of Assam

During the period from 1930-34, the women in India fought more vigorously against the British. The women folk came to the forefront of the struggle when all the important national and state leaders were arrested for the movement. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote - "*Most of us men folk were in prison, and then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course, but now there was an avalanche of them, which took not*

only the British Government but their own men folk by surprise".⁵⁵ The women of middle-class families in Mumbai also joined the civil disobedience movement in large numbers. With the starting of the historic Dandi march of M.K. Gandhi on March 12, 1930, the people of Assam also started its preparation for the Civil Disobedience Movement. The people of Assam could not join the march physically as Dandi was very far away from Assam. So, they expressed their support by holding meetings in various locations, participating in symbolic processions, and defying government regulations and laws. The women of Assam like the other parts of the country also joined in the movement. They were no less compared to the other women from India who took part in the movement. The women of Assam joined the campaign by holding meetings in various places, including remote areas, to instill nationalism (a patriotic feeling for the country) in rural women's hearts. They also went for picketing and *hartal* against the consumption of opium and other intoxicants. Lilavati Kakati and Sundaribala Kakati of Sivsagar, Guneswari Devi of Kaliabor, Chandra Prabha Saikiani, and Bidyabati Baishnabi of Golaghat were among the prominent women of the civil disobedience campaign in Assam.

The women of the Darrang district took a very active role during the Civil Disobedience movement. Saibya Rani, Saikia⁵⁶ was an active participant in the 1932 movement. She left school and joined the movement. Sabitri Devi,⁵⁷ Basanti Devi, and Jetuki Devi were active participants during this movement (1930-34). Sabitri Devi participated in the year 1931.⁵⁸ Basanti Devi and Jetuki Devi participated in the 1932 movement.⁵⁹

The women of the Nagaon district also took a very active role during the Civil Disobedience movement. The women of Kaliabor under Nagaon district along with men went to Nagaon, a distance of 30 miles breaking the government laws. The participation of women was huge in number. Before this procession, 400 women went on a procession to Nagaon town on 26 January 1930 to celebrate Independence Day.⁶⁰ After reaching Nagaon, they faced police having the *Tiranga* flag in hand which led to a tug-of-war-like situation. The procession was led by Guneswari Devi along Darabi Mech, Mohini Gohain, and Kiranbala Bora. On 22 November 1930, the women of Nagaon took out a procession showing a black flag against Round Table Conference.⁶¹ The imposition of the Cunningham Circular sparked widespread dissatisfaction among the people of Assam, particularly the students. The Cunningham Circular was imposed by J.R. Cunningham during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam to discourage and stop students from participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Many women picketed against it along with the students who were both boys and girls. On 10 July 1930 picketing was started at Cotton College, Gauhati by women (elderly Hindu widows).⁶² It lasted till July 19th, 1930. All of these women were from elite families. Basantala Hazarika, Kamala Devi, Ratnabala Bora, Mukta Prava Agarwala, Sumitrabala Bhattacharya, Ratnaprava Bora, Anna Baruah, Durgaprova Bora, Ghanakanti Devi, Bhubaneswari Devi, and others were among those women participated in the picketing.⁶³

They were the first batch of ladies to picket Cotton College in 1930. The principal of the college, however, canceled the lecture to avoid any conflicts with police owing to the arrest or use of force against the picketers.⁶⁴ It led to the end of the picketing as the suspension of classes made the picketing meaningless. The Cunningham circular attracted a large number of female students to the movement. Among them was

Puspalata Das who as a student attended a meeting of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee's new executive on July 27, 1930, in Curzon Hall, Gauhati.⁶⁵ Following this meeting, she began to actively participate in the various programs of the movement. She was born on 27 March 1915 to Rameswar Saikia and Swarnalata Saikia in North Lakhimpur in Assam.⁶⁶ She was inspired to join the movement by her mother. Her mother, Swarnalata Saikia, was a very active women organizer. From 1930-1934, she served as the secretary of the Kamrup *Mahila Samiti*.

Puspalata Das intended to engage females for the national cause, thus in 1930, she founded the '*Mukti Sangha*,' an organization for girls.⁶⁷ Sarala Saxena, Jyotsna Mazumdar, and Punyaprova Baruah were active members of the *Sangha*, and Puspalata became its founder Secretary.

Puspalata, Sarala, and Jyotsna vowed that complete freedom for the country would be their only goal. They stated that they were willing to give up everything to attain their aim. Many women joined as members of this organization. The police kept a tight eye on the *Mukti Sangha* and its leader Puspalata's actions. Puspalata also served as the Union Secretary of Panbazar Girls High School in 1930.⁶⁸ During this period, Motilal Nehru died and Bhagat Singh was executed. On the initiative of Puspalata, a condolence meeting was convened to mourn the passing of Motilal Nehru. Students were outraged at Bhagat Singh's death sentence, and protests were conducted at various schools. Puspalata Das was also one of the organizers of the meetings who protested against the execution of Bhagat Singh. She called for picketing in front of the school gate in protest of government action as the school's union secretary.⁶⁹ It was a successful event.

Throughout 1930, the ladies of Sivasagar, together with those of Charing and Balighat, two neighboring villages, launched a drive to popularize *Swadeshi* and held women's assemblies in villages. They organized women to picket shops selling foreign clothes, opium, and other illegal substances. Sundari Kakati took the lead in organizing the ladies of Charing, while Kamalalaya Kakati and Sashprova Chaliha were two major women organizers in Sivasagar. Upama Duarani, Jogeswar Duarni, Aiti Phukanani, Lilawati Hazarika, Kusum kumara Duarani, Lilawati Duarani, Gunadalata Phukanani, and Khageswari Duarni, all over 70 years old, were among the elderly women who helped organize the picketing.⁷⁰

Sundari Kakati used to sing self-made songs and propagate Congress activities using the name of M.K. Gandhi-Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel-Matilal Nehru, Tarun Ram Phukan- Nabin Chandra Bardoloi in the marriage ceremony.⁷¹ There were girls like Pahila, Pakhila, Ramanilata, Makhanlata, Hemaprova, Sadarilata, and others who actively participated alongside these.⁷²

They were along with the elder ladies to participate in every congress activity in the Charing village. They used to go to every program of congress in their place. In the women's meetings, they used to do spinning and weaving, accepting the call of congress. Some women also used to write patriotic songs and poems and recite them in the programs. Among them was Subarna Lata Devi.

From Bajali, a prominent woman to join the Civil Disobedience movement was Chandra Prabha Saikiani. She was also a prominent leader in the non-co-operation movement. She was inspired to join the freedom movement by Kironmoyee Agarwala and Parmananda Agarwala who were the parents of Jyoti Prashad Agarwala.⁷³ During the 1930-34 movement, she used to tour different villages, encouraging women to join

the movement. She violated the 'Forest Law' in Goalpara district by cutting down 500 trees and launching a Civil Disobedience movement from there.⁷⁴ Her speech also encouraged the Kachari people of that region to break the forest law. She also went to give a speech on the movement to create awareness among the people. She also took a procession in Nagaon from Mahendra Bora's residence to the remote areas of Nagaon for the collection of funds.⁷⁵ She was forefront in the procession bearing the Congress flag, singing the song '*Xou je urise swaraaj nisaan, aha aha xobe hua agywan*' which means look the flying symbol of *swaraj*, come out all of you, be obedient and join the movement.⁷⁶ This procession ended with success. After the procession of Nagaon, she also went to Barpeta and encouraged the people. In the meetings, she used to encourage the womenfolk to join the freedom movement by saying, "Avail yourself of the opportunity of leaving something for your next generation. Let the freedom of the country be your gift to future generation".⁷⁷ The appeal of Chandra Prabha Saikiani did not go in vain. Many women joined in this movement in Assam even from the remotest areas. The women of Lakhimpur also played an active role during the movement. They used to go door to door encouraging women to join the movement. They also organized many meetings on awareness of the movement and its necessity when most of the Congress leaders in that area were not active. One of the women's meetings was organized in the house of Mahiuddin Ahmed of that area and in that meeting, 400 women from the nearby villages under Lakhimpur joined.⁷⁸

The prominent women of this movement were Dayamanti Saikia, Nirmala Devi, Ratneswari Phukanani, Jugleswari Baruah, Madhabilata Baruah, Hemiban Nisha, Sarifa Khatun, Ajalitora Neog, Khargeswari Pathak, Hemlata Phukan and Snehalata Devi.⁷⁹

The women of Golaghat took a very active role during the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930- 32). Swarnalata Baruah, Rajkumari Mohini Gohain, and Basantalota Hazarika led the formation of a women's wing, or *Nari Bahini*, at Golaghat in 1930-31. These ladies organized picketing in front of shops selling wine, opium, and other illegal substances. Debeswari, along with her elder sister, participated in the picketing activity. Rosheswari, Kanakprova, and Aita Gogoi protested outside an opium shop. Aikon Gogoi was also an active participant in the Civil Disobedience Movement. She joined Court Picketing in 1932.⁸⁰ Dariki Das, Baruah was an important women leader from Golaghat during this period. She used to do anti-opium programs like picketing in front of shops, government buildings, etc. She along with other women went on picketing against on 1st February 1932. Punyaprova Hazarika, wife of Kedarnath Hazarika of Cinatoli, village who was also an active participant in the non-co-operation movement participated in 1930 and also in 1932.⁸¹

The other women workers from Golaghat were Debeswari and Padumi, daughters of Gangaram Barmedhi. Padumi led a group of women volunteers from Golaghat to join the National Conference at Jorhat in 1932.⁸² The National conference was presided over by *Satradhikar* of Garamur Satra, Pitambar Deva Goswami.⁸³ The woman from Golaghat who participated in the Civil Disobedience movement with great enthusiasm was ProtimaSundari Barua, who was the wife of Bhola Baruah and Golapi Gogoi. Saru Aiti Dutta was also involved in the constructive work of congress from 1931. An old lady, named Charu Prabha Das, also participated in the movement from Golaghat. She participated in the movement after her husband's (Hireswar Das) death. Ambika Baruah, the wife of Sonaram Baruah, was also an active participant in the 1930- 32 movement.⁸⁴ Anadoi Kakati, daughter of Khagiram of Baktial Gaon joined congress in

1930-32. She also joined the movement of non payment of revenue and picketing.⁸⁵

Debalata Koch, daughter of Gangaram of Dergaon was also an active participant from Golaghat. Many women were put in prison during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Joyati Luthuri of North Lakhimpur district was courted R.I (rigorous imprisonment) for six months in the 1931 movement.⁸⁶ A woman named Kamalabala Kakati was arrested in Sivsagar and imprisoned for participating in the procession.⁸⁷ Golapi Gogoi was arrested and put in jail. Madhabi Sonowal, wife of Keshab Sonowal, along with Dharmeswari Gogoi was arrested at Parbatipur while they were proceeding to Calcutta to attend the Congress session.⁸⁸ Ambika Baruah was arrested and put in jail by the police in the 1930-32 movement.⁸⁹

Roseswar Phukanani was arrested on 26 February 1932. Swari Sut, Tarabati Nath, Himai Nath, Phuleswari Sut, Ghaneswari Nath, and Hareswari Sut were arrested in Tezpur.⁹⁰ Punya Prabha Hazarika, Birajbala Hazarika, Hemlata Dutta, Kanaklata Dutta, Premlata Dutta were arrested in Dergaon.⁹¹ Bidyawati Vaisnav from Golaghat was arrested and kept for six months in jail.⁹² Kaanklata Kakati, Khiroda Chaliha, and Laksheswari Bhuyan were arrested for the second time on the 1st of March, 1932.⁹³ Hem Kakati (Bhuyan), Punya Kakati, Bina Das (Hazarika), Kalpana Hazarika, Laksheswari Hazarika, and many others were arrested from Golaghat.⁹⁴ Sarumai Gogoi, Dariki Gogoi, Rupahi Gogoi, and Bhogeswari had to spend six months in jail during the movement. Debeswari Barmedhi, Aita Thengal, Madhabi Koch, and Malati Koch were also arrested by the police during this movement. Chandra Prabha Saikiani was arrested on the 9th of January 1931.⁹⁵

On the 1st February, 1932, Dariki Dasi Baruah, an anti-opium activist from Golaghat was arrested and imprisoned for six months for actively participating in anti-opium picketing. At the time of her arrest, she was in the early stages of pregnancy and she suffered from dysentery in jail and finally gave her last due to miscarriage. Anadoi Kakati was imprisoned for one day.⁹⁶ Pratima Sundari Boruah, wife of Late Bhola Baruah from ChowdangChariali Gaon was arrested with her husband on the way to Calcutta at Parbatipur in 1933. She was given rigorous imprisonment for one year.⁹⁷ Ambabati Dasi, wife of Kanak Das of Buragohain Khat, was imprisoned for one month for participating in the civil disobedience movement.⁹⁸

Satyagraha and Women of Assam

Women's participation in the freedom movement post-1930 intensified which led to the establishment of the women's wing of the congress at the national and provincial levels. It was established so that the womenfolk did not get any problems participating in the movement. Hence, the congress committee decided in April 1940 to open a women's wing of congress at the national and provincial levels. Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Aruna Ashraf Ali, Mridula Sarabhai, and Sucheta Kripalani led the charge in forming the congress Women's Wing. As a result, in Assam also Assam Pradesh Congress Committee women's department was established on September 19, 1940, with Pusalata Saikia and Amalprova Das as its joint secretaries.⁹⁹ Soon after the department was established, both secretaries toured nearly all of the provincial districts and spoke in a great number of women's meetings, especially in rural areas. They conveyed the messages of the congress, as well as the purposes and objectives of the women's department, during the meetings, and urged the women to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the constructive programs. The village women's response to the two leaders Pusalata Saikia and Amalprova Das was quite

encouraging. Annaprava Baruah and Sudhalata Datta worked tirelessly in upper Assam, establishing a strong organization under the women's department.¹⁰⁰

Training camps were held in Hajo, Nakachari, Goalpara, Barpeta, Gauhati, Tezpur, Jorhat, Sivsagar, Golaghat, and Mangaldoi to start the *Satyagraha*, a mass agitation that emphasized the power of truth, non-violence, and peaceful protest, more efficiently and in a more organized manner.¹⁰¹ Many *Satyagrahis* were trained in these camps in the *Satyagraha* method, (a method that focuses on non-violent methods) which also included a considerable number of women. The Sivsagar District *Satyagraha* Committee formed a group of 500, including a separate section for women, and established five training centers.¹⁰² The women's wing of the Sivasagar District was established in the first week of June 1940.¹⁰³ On 26 August 1940, a big meeting was held under the leadership of Pitambar Hazarika at Charing *Natya Mandir* at Sivasagar district which was attended by nearly one thousand people, which comprises both men and women. In this meeting, Hema Prabha Das, Guneswari Devi, Amalprava Das, and Puspallata Saikia, propagated the activities of Congress and encouraged the people to join the movement.¹⁰⁴

By singing the *Satyagraha* pledge, a large number of women joined as *Satyagrahis*. Nanibala Das of Goalpara, Subhadra Devi of Barpeta, Dobhagi Devi of Mongoldoi, and Premeswari Devi of Mangaldoi signed the *Satyagraha* promises in the first week of June 1940.¹⁰⁵ Within the third week of July 1940, Jayadabala Duara of Dibrugarh signed the pledge. In the third week of July, 12 women of Charing joined the *Satyagraha* pledge and became active Congress volunteers. Among them were Sundaribala Kakati, Bhadreswari Gogoi, Maniki Hazarika, Hiranya Bhuyan, Madhabilata Phukan, Hiranyaprava Phukan, Subarnalaata Kakati, Makhanlata Kakati,

Sadarilata Kakati, Kusum Gogoi, Ketekilata Hazarika, and Jogeswari Kakati. Fifty women of Sivsagar also enrolled themselves as *Satyagrahi*.

The women *Satyagrahis* in Golaghat did a lot of work collecting *Satyagraha* funds and enrolling volunteers. There were two prominent women *Satyagrahis* from Golaghat. They were Jogoprava Devi and Swarnalata Barua. They used to tour many villages to collect money for the fund. The response of the village ladies to the program was very positive. They used to donate wholeheartedly. On 15 June 1940, the annual function of the *Jehehuwa Parthamik* Congress Committee was successfully completed under the leadership of Kamaleswar Mahanta.¹⁰⁶ In this function there were people both men and women from 56 villages. The women folk presented in the meeting were busy spinning and weaving as a way to show respect for congress activities. On December 19, 1940, a meeting was held at Dhekial, near Golaghat town, in a *Satyagrahi Sangha* (club) under the presidentship of Sankar Chandra Baruah, a leading freedom fighter.¹⁰⁷ In this meeting, seven male and seven female *Satyagrahi* were selected. Lokeswari Bora, Premalata Hazarika, Maheswari Devi, Deveswari Devi, Someswari Bora, Sumthira Bora, and Jogoprava Devi were among the selected women *Satyagrahis*. In Dhekial town, there was also a *Satyagrahi* training camp, where several women *Satyagrahis* were being trained.¹⁰⁸

The women of Mangaldai became very active during the year 1940. Under the presidency of Dobhagi Devi, a women's meeting was held in Borsipajhar in the village of Jhargaon on 2nd June, 1940.¹⁰⁹ By this meeting, she wanted to encourage the women folk to join as *Satyagrahi*. After her presidential address, Haliram Koch, Sandesh Hazarika, Kabiram Sahariya, Premeswari Devi, and Bati Bari gave a speech, which encouraged the women folk to join the movement by reminding them of their

duties.¹¹⁰ In this year, eighty-three women from Mangaldai joined as a member of Congress.¹¹¹

The people of Mangaldai also took training in the *Satyagraha* camp. Twenty-three people took training in *Satyagraha* there and among them four were women.¹¹²

The women of Goalpara did not lag behind in joining this movement. The first woman *Satyagrahi* from the Goalpara district was Pandupriya Devi.¹¹³ On 18 January 1941, she offered *Satyagraha*. She led a procession to the Congress office in the evening after yelling anti-war slogans for almost two hours.¹¹⁴ In Barahi, Barpeta an annual function of Barahi Women *Samiti* was presided over on 24 September 1940, under the leadership of Kameswari Das.¹¹⁵ The president of this meeting was Congress worker Jagat Chandra Choudhury.¹¹⁶ In this meeting, more than a hundred women were presented and some of the women were 70, 80 ages. The president of the meeting talked about Congress and its activities and also about spinning and weaving. Kameswari Das was selected as a member and also encouraged the women folk for spinning and weaving. They also shouted slogans like “*Bande Mataram* and *M.K Gandhi Ki Jai*”.¹¹⁷ These types of activities in the village area were encouraging.

The women of Jorhat also joined in the movement. On January 17, 1941, PremalataBharali of Jorhat stated her desire to offer *Satyagraha*. However, she was unable to join and was detained. Jayanti Baruah, of Jorhat, also joined *Satyagraha*. On February 5, 1941, Sundari Barkataki of Charing, a 72-years old Congress worker from 1921, proposed *Satyagraha*.¹¹⁸ She was the Sivsagar subdivision’s first female *Satyagrahi*.

Kusum Kumari Deka of Tihu, who was also a part of the 1930 movement, offered *Satyagraha* in Tihu and Haribhanga on February 21 and March 31, 1940, respectively.¹¹⁹ Girijabala Baruah, wife of Liladhar Baruah of Gauhati, signed the pledge of *Satyagraha*.¹²⁰ Pusalata Das, who was the active women organizer of the 1930-34 movement, also performed *Satyagraha* at Heremdoi near Palashbari, Kukurmara on February 21, at Boko on February 22, and at Gauhati on 23rd February and 25th February 1941.¹²¹

The Government authorities, which were in favor of the British, made different rules and also arrested many women to sustain the *Satyagraha*. Swarnalata Baruah and Haripriya Dutta of Golaghat were the first two women of the Brahmaputra valley to court arrest and undergo imprisonment for offering *Satyagraha* in 1941.¹²² Pusalata Das was arrested from her home in this year 1940 for joining as a *Satyagrahi*. Premlata Bharali was arrested on 17th January 1941 for declaring that she would join the *Satyagraha*.¹²³

Quit India Movement and Women of Assam

The Quit India Movement began in Assam in a non-violent way. *Hartals*, Picketing, and hoisting of the Congress flags in the governmental buildings were done by the people as marks of the protest. In the Quit India Movement, the women of Assam like the man played a crucial role by coming out of their homes in huge numbers and participating in processions, demonstrations, and picketing. One of the key features of this movement was the participation of an enormous number of women. The women who have not gone outside the home also participated in this movement like the educated women. They gave their time and resources for the sake of the country's freedom by volunteering and protesting, fasting, and donating. Many of the women

folk enrolled themselves as members of the *Santi Sena* (peaceful force).¹²⁴ They took up the responsibility of organizing the movement as the male leaders were in jail.

In the history of the Quit India movement in Assam, the acts of women participants of Darrang, Nagaon, Sivasagar, Lakhimpur, and Kamrup were noteworthy. The people of the Darrang district started the movement with unwavering zeal and determination. Leaders like Jyoti Prashad Agarwala, Bishnu Prashad Rabha, and Phani Sharma, took the initiative to devise the plan and programs for the movement. They used to visit whole districts to encourage the people. The women like Amalprova Das, Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Pusalata Das, and others women carried on organization work as the Tezpur Congress leaders preferred to work underground instead of being arrested.¹²⁵ These women folk used to visit from place to place to encourage the people to join the movement. They intended to continue the campaign only on M.K. Gandhi's non-violent principles. Pusalata Das had been doing organizational work in the Darrang district, primarily among women. Under the presidency of Kiranbala Barkakati, a meeting was held at Tezpur on 3rd May 1942 to organize a women's volunteer unit or *Santi Sena* at Tezpur. After the meeting, many women enrolled themselves as volunteers.

Yogeswar Misra, an enthusiastic Congress activist, arrived in Behali from Bihar on September 16/17, 1942.¹²⁶ In Behali, a meeting was held by Misraji and Pusalata Das and both gave talks at that meeting. Their speeches were passionate and heartfelt. The patriotic people of Behali became more patriotic as a result of their enthusiastic statements, and the decision was made to hang the flag on Behali on September 20, 1942. Again, on 18th September 1942, Pusalata Das, spoke at another meeting in Barangabari, near Gohpur.¹²⁷ She was also accompanied by Jogesh Mishra. A large

number of people attended the meeting, which was held at the *Jaranial Satra* local *Namghar* (prayer hall). The meeting was presided over under the presidency of Maghiram Bora.¹²⁸

Puspalata Das discussed the goal of the congress programs in detail and urged the women folk, in particular, to organize themselves more effectively for the country's freedom struggle. It was a village women's meeting and, in this meeting, the young girls and women were sitting under the trees to listen to the speeches. Puspalata Das tried to encourage the women folk of that area by giving an electrifying speech, enlightening the women about the exploitation of the British and to get rid of exploitation of British and the need of accepting M.K. Gandhi's Do or Die policy.¹²⁹ She also recited the lines in the meeting written by Jyoti Prashad Agarwala (a patriotic poet and a freedom fighter), which addressed the people of Assam which meant, "Why are you at somebody's feet, why is your head bowed, why have you forgotten the might of victorious soldiers? Where are your arms?"¹³⁰ Remembering and reciting the lines quoted above she tried to instill a patriotic feeling in the hearts of people. She urged the people presented in the meeting to fight against the enemy even if it means sacrificing their own life.

After hearing the speeches of Pushpalata Das, and Jogen Mishra, Kanaklata Baruah, a seventeen years old girl, was determined to work for the country's freedom. She was born on 22nd December 1924 in Barangabari village under Kolongpar *mouza* in the present Biswanath district of Assam.¹³¹ She was the daughter of Krishna Kanta Barua and Karneswari. Before this, she used to attend the meetings of the *Santi Senas* without letting know about her grandparents. She expressed her desire to join the *Mrityu Bahini* (Death Squad) meeting with Puspalata Das.

At first Puspallata Das denied her to enroll her in *Mrityu Bahini* as the minimum age to join *Mrityu Bahini* was eighteen years and Kanaklata Baruah was just seventeen years old at that time. But Kanaklata Baruah requested her again and again. The spirit, courage, and determination of Kanaklata Baruah, made Puspallata Das allow her to enroll in *Mrityu Bahini*. She was the first girl of Assam to join the *Mrityu Bahini* at a small age.¹³² The Congress committee of Darrang District of Assam thus came up with a devised plan to raise the national flag on the police stations and the court buildings. Under the guidance of Puspallata Das, four places under the Darrang district Gohpur, Dhekiajuli, Bihali, Sootea decided to unfurl the national flag on 20th September 1942.¹³³

The women of Mangaldai organized a procession, on September 9, 1942, as a protest against British rule and in support of the Quit India Resolution.¹³⁴ Many women gathered in front of the Mangaldai sub-division court building and picketed in front of it. The women picketers were misbehaved by the Sub-Divisional Officer when he reached the venue. This incident hurt the sentiments of two courageous young girls, Jonai and Urmila. They went inside the office of the sub-divisional officer and dragged him out for misbehaving with the women.¹³⁵

The women from Behali sub-division under the Darrang district played an important role in the Quit India Movement. They were encouraged by the freedom fighters like Chabilal Upadhyay, and Hari Upadhyay of Behali. Bhogamaya Devi, daughter of Krishna Pokhrel and Basundhara Devi was a prominent Nepali women activist from the Behali sub-division. She went to the procession towards Behali police station on 20th September 1942.¹³⁶ She was in the strict eyes of the police as she was an active Nepali woman of that village to propagate against the British authority among the

Nepali people of her nearby villages. In fact, she was enquired by the police about Lakheswar Hazarika, Bisnual Upadhyay, Kumud Chandra Sharma, and other congress volunteers when they went underground.¹³⁷ She was threatened by the police that they will arrest her if she again joins the movement. But, Bhogamaya Devi was dauntless and continued participating in the movement.

Tileswari Devi, Gugeswari Devi, Tilarupa Devi, Annapurna Devi, Monmaya Devi, were the other active Nepali women participant of Behali (Mazgaon).¹³⁸ Mukta Devi Bhattarai was also a prominent women activist from Behali. Sona Maya Devi, daughter of Chandralal Pokhrel and Chandra Maya Pokhrel was also a percussionist in the movement of 1942. She went to Bihali *Thana* from Majgaon (Bangsbadi) from her school.¹³⁹ In a place like Gohpur, Dhekiajuli violence was caused by police by shooting at peaceful processions. However, the national flag was triumphantly hoisted in the Behali police station by Telaswari Mahanta.¹⁴⁰ She left school in 1942 to join the freedom movement.¹⁴¹ Baruah, Toradoi Bora, and Ghanakanti Gogoi were also active women participants in Behali.

The women, along with men from nearby places of the Gohpur area like Gamiri, Halem, and Hawajan, went in procession to Gohpur *Thana* under the leadership of Kanaklata Baruah. The people of Kalabari, Gohpur Borangabari, which falls within the jurisdiction of Gohpur *Thana*, etc, went in a procession to Gohpur *Thana*. On September 20, Kanaklata left her residence early in the morning and arrived at the meeting spot ahead of schedule.¹⁴² With the flag in her hands, she took her place in front of the female volunteers. The processions were organized in long rows, with the women in different rows. Someswari Bora, Debalata Baruah, Bhugila Bora, Jonaki Gogoi, Punyaprava Baruah, and Maichen Baruah were among the women who sat

close to Kanaklata in the first row.¹⁴³

Approximately 500 ladies from adjacent villages were expected to have participated in the march. All of the women were at the front of the procession, and they marched to the Gohpur police station, which is located seven miles from Barangabari. The police in charge were Rebati Shome at that time.¹⁴⁴ He entrusted the processions to stop or they will face terrible consequences. Kanaklata Baruah asked the policeman to leave the road to give them a way to hoist the flag inside. But, Rebati Shome did not agree and Kanaklata also continued the procession. Rebati Shome warned Kanaklata that he would open fire if she will host the flag in the *Thana* but Kanaklata replied “you can slay our body, not our soul”¹⁴⁵, and continued marching. Rebati Shome fired on open processionists and Kanaklata succumbed to death. Mukunda Kakati, a young man holds the flag from Kanaklata when she fell after getting a bullet injury and hoisted it in *Thana* and he also got injured by a bullet and later on, on the same day (22 September 1942) he succumbed to death by 8p.m.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Kanaklata sacrificed her life for the freedom of the country. Her story encouraged the people of Assam to work for the movement.



Figure 3.1: Statue of Kanaklata Baruah located near her birthplace, Tezpur, Figure 3.2: Image portrayal of an incident of 20th September 1942 at Gohpur Police station where MukundaKakati and Kanaklata Baruah died after getting bullet injury.



Figure 3.3 and 3.4: A souvenir given to the brother of Kanaklata Baruah, remembering the bravery of Kanaklata Baruah.



Figure 3.5: House of Kanaklata Baruah.

Apart from Kanaklata other women participated in the procession to Gahapur where Lakheswari Baruah. She joined congress in 1936 and was injured by police in 1942 at the Gahpur police station.¹⁴⁷ Snehi Borah¹⁴⁸ was also an active participant in Gahpur during the 1942 movement. She was bodily injured by police in 1942.¹⁴⁹ Lakheswari Baruah¹⁵⁰ who joined congress in 1936 also went to Gahapur in procession and was injured by police in 1942 at Gahpur.¹⁵¹ Ratna Prabha Barua,¹⁵² Punya Prabha Baruah¹⁵³, and Maisena Baruah were also participants of the 1942 movement from this area.¹⁵⁴

The women of Sootea, a village under the Darrang District, made a significant contribution to the movement. Under the leadership of Swarnaprova Mahanta, "*Mohila Mrityu Bahini*" was formed which consisted of 350 girls and women.¹⁵⁵ Following the devised plan of Pushpalata Das and the members of the Congress

committee of Darrang large number of people gathered in front of Sootea *Thana* on 22 September 1942 to unfurl the national flag. Guneswari Bhuyan¹⁵⁶, Padmini Baruah, Labanya Devi, Koseswari Devi, Premoda Barmudoi,¹⁵⁷ Purnada Devi, Basumati Koch, Dineswari Hazarika, and Padumilata Baruah were among the prominent women participants in this Sootea procession.¹⁵⁸ Maladoi Bora¹⁵⁹ was also a participant in the 1942 movement from Sootea.¹⁶⁰ Tilottama Boruah¹⁶¹ also left studies in 1942 and actively joined the movement.¹⁶² Matini Kakati¹⁶³ who was also an active participant in the 1932 movement also, was very active during the 1942 movement. She was arrested and kept for 20 days in jail *hajot*.¹⁶⁴ The people of Sootea were the first in the country to unfurl the national flag on the Government building.¹⁶⁵



Figure 3.6: Image Portrayal of Old Chatia Police station now Sootea which was established in 1903.

On 19 September 1942, a big meeting was held in Jahamari, a village under the Dhekiajuli police station. At this meeting all the people of this area were present. They discussed the plans and programs for the preparation of flag hoisting on 20th September 1942 in Dhekiajuli Police station. Both men and women of that area came united to discuss the procession of the next day. In the meeting, the responsibilities were divided between them. To lead the procession the responsibility was given to Kamakanta Das, and Phanidhar Das.¹⁶⁶ Manabar Nath was given the responsibility of hoisting the flag in the Dhekiajuli *Thana*.¹⁶⁷ A group of people for *Mrityu Bahini* was also formed so that they can give their life in the name of the country if needed. They sign for *Mrityu Bahini* promising that if the situation became violent also, they will not backslide. Other people present in the meeting shouted for the members of *Mrityu Bahini* saying “*Deshor Gourab, Deshor Gourab*” which means pride of the country. The people who signed as a member of *Mrityu Bahini* from the Jahamari area were Manbar Nath, Ratan Kachari, Maniram Kachari, Tileswari Baruahni, etc.¹⁶⁸ The women of villages under Dhekiajuli *Thana* under the Darrang District also went for the procession on 20th September 1942. The procession was led by the *Mrityu Bahini* member Kamalakanta Das.¹⁶⁹ It was led from the Jahamari office. The distance from the Jahamari office to the Dhekiajuli Police station was eleven miles. The procession started at 10 a.m in the morning. The people from nearby places like Ghatara, Kaboimari, Thelamara, Barhgaon, Keherukhanda, etc. also joined them. Kamakanta was accompanied by five thousand people both men and women.¹⁷⁰ The police were at the gate and the processions came face to face with them. The leaders tried to approach the police to allow them to enter the police *thana* and host the flag in a non-violent way. But they were denied by the police officers. The processionists shouted “*Bande Matram*” in front of the police.¹⁷¹ The police started to do *Lathi* charges on

people. Though they failed to get a positive response from the police officers yet Kamakanta Das requested the police officer to allow entering *Thana* for hoist the flag in a non-violent way. But he failed to get a positive response a second time also so he asked the processionists to enter *Thana* for hoisting the flag. The police in-charge ordered them to open fire on processions. Manbar Nath hoisted the flag amidst the firing and was shot dead after he hoisted the flag.¹⁷²



Figure 3.7: Dhekiajuli Police Station where the incident of 20th September 1942 happened, Figure 3.8: Image portrayal of an incident of 20th September 1942 at Dhekiajuli police station where Manbar Nath and Tileswari Baruah died after getting bullet injuries.

Three women died instantly in the open firing at the Dhekiajuli police station. They were Kumali Devi, Tileswari Baruah, and Khahuli Devi.¹⁷³ Kumali Devi was daughter of Bhuliram Nath and Amio Nath. She was 66 years old when she went to the Dhekiajuli police station for the procession.¹⁷⁴ Her son Golok Nath was also in the

procession and she died when she tried to protect her son from the bullet that police attempted to shoot by receiving the bullet herself. It is a great example of patriotism as well as a mother's love for her children.¹⁷⁵ Khahuli Devi went to the procession with her husband Poonaram Nath from Karani Village of Naharni Mauza. She was just 21 years old when she went to the procession.¹⁷⁶ She went to the procession leaving her children at home. Tileswari Baruah, daughter of Late Bhabakanta Baruah was born in the village Borgaon of Dhekiajuli in 1930. She went to the procession with her uncle Nandiram Borah.¹⁷⁷ She was just 12 years old when she went to the procession.¹⁷⁸ Ratan Kachari, a fifty-year-old man, was killed by police while attempting to protect women from Mymen Singh hooligans.¹⁷⁹ The goons were not satisfied with just beating women. They even allegedly tried to molest the injured women after stripping them naked. Many of the women arrived at their homes almost completely naked.¹⁸⁰ Muhila Devi, Sitoi Devi, Soneswari Devi, and a few other victims were among them. Women who suffered major injuries as a result of the *lathi* charge include Jetuki, Domili Devi, Dariki Devi, Madoi Kaharani, Bhogoi Devi, Daniki Devi, Tulai Devi, Bhogeswari Devi, Golapi Devi, and Thato Kacharani.¹⁸¹ Jaluki Kacharani was shot in the left shoulder and eventually died as a result of her injuries. Padumi Gogoi was critically wounded in the *lathi* attack on the bridge. She was arrested and sentenced to six months in prison.¹⁸² She was released from prison with a deteriorating health condition and died after a short period of time. Despite being injured in the firing, Lereli Devi, another active female worker, was arrested and imprisoned. Other active participants in the Dhekiajuli procession include Kamaleswari Das, Gongeswari Devi, Jayanti Devi, Satyaa Devi, Indreswari Hazarika, Thaneswari Bhuyan, Dibeswari Bhuyan, Moheswari Boro, Punyeswari Boro, and Ratneswari Boro.¹⁸³

Apart from these places of Darrang District women from other villages under Darrang District also participated in the movement. Bakuli Borah¹⁸⁴ was a leader for *Mahila Sena Bahini* and actively participated in the movement.¹⁸⁵ Labanya Bora¹⁸⁶ who left her studies in 1932 also actively participated in the movement.¹⁸⁷ Rewati Bora¹⁸⁸ was also an active congress worker and she joined the movement in 1942. She was arrested at the time of flag hoisting.¹⁸⁹ Another Rebati Borah from Baribarkalia village, P.O. Jamugurihat under Darrang district was also an active lady worker of the movement.¹⁹⁰ Aghoni Borah¹⁹¹ and Khirada Borah¹⁹² was also a participant in the 1942 movement. Ghanakanti Bora¹⁹³ also participated in the 1942 movement and she was arrested and put in Hazat for one day.¹⁹⁴ Hema Prova Baruah,¹⁹⁵ was also an active participant in the 1942 movement.¹⁹⁶ Indreswari Baruah,¹⁹⁷ and Golapi Bhuyan,¹⁹⁸ Jaymati Bhuyan¹⁹⁹ were also participants of the 1942 movement.²⁰⁰ Khadama Bhuyan,²⁰¹ Kali Dowerah,²⁰² Basanti Devi²⁰³ were active participants of the 1942 movement.²⁰⁴ Kali Dowerah, also went to jail for 3 months in 1942 for participating in the movement.²⁰⁵ Basanti Devi was also an active participant in the 1932 movement and worked as an underground worker in the ring 1942 movement.²⁰⁶ Jetuki Devi,²⁰⁷ who participated in the 1932 movement actively also worked the tirelessly during 1942 movement. She was arrested and put in imprisoned for 6months.²⁰⁸ Koushalya Devi,²⁰⁹ Subheswari Devi,²¹⁰ Gali Devi²¹¹, Premeswari Devi,²¹² Jasoda Devi,²¹³ Dobhagi Devi,²¹⁴ Joneswari Devi,²¹⁵ Urmila Devi,²¹⁶ Rukmini Devi,²¹⁷ Daneswari Devi²¹⁸ were active participant of 1942 movement from Darrang district. Koushalya Devi was arrested in the 1942 movement and was kept in jail.²¹⁹ Gali Devi was beaten by police for participating in the movement.²²⁰ Jonaki Gogoi,²²¹ Purnima Hazarika,²²² Phuleswari Hazarika,²²³ and Swarnalata Jam²²⁴ were also active participants of the 1942 movement.²²⁵ Protima Kochuni,²²⁶ was also an active

participant in the 1942 movement. She was arrested on 20th October 1942 under section 379/411 and was later released on bail.²²⁷ Bhoga Kochuni, Goby Kochuni, Pakhi Kochuni, Bibi Kochuni, and Moina Kochuni, were active women participants in the 1942 movement of P.O. Rangamati under Darrang district.²²⁸ They were arrested with Protima Kochuni on 20th October 1942 under section 379/411 and were later released on bail.²²⁹ Joyoshodha Keotani, Akeli Keotani, Pura Keotani, Akbali Keotani, Khahuli Keotani, Dhula Keotani, Barhaivia Keotani, Loke Keotani, Faguni Keotani, Sonamai Keotani of Rangamati were active participant during 1942 movement of Rangapara under Darrang District. They were arrested under section 379/411 on 20th August 1942 and were released on bail.²³⁰ Rewati Saikia,²³¹ Ambika Saikia²³², and Lokeswari Saikia²³³ were also active participants in the 1942 movement. RebatSaikia was arrested and imprisoned in 1942.²³⁴ Golapi Saikia,²³⁵ Swarnalata Sing,²³⁶ Saraswati Uriani,²³⁷ Bimala Uriani²³⁸ were active participants during the 1942 movement. Saraswati Uriani was fined rupees ten and imprisoned for one month under section 411, I.P.C.²³⁹ Bimala Uriani, was arrested on 20th October 1942 during the movement under section 379/411 I.P.C and released on bail.

The women of the Nagaon district also played an important role during the Quit India Movement. In Berampur, a place under Nagaon district, on September 16, 1942, a celebration day was observed which was known as “*Panchabir Diwash*”.²⁴⁰ It was observed in memory of five martyrs of Nagaon district Kolai Koch, Hemram Bora, Hemoram Pator, Gunavi Bordoloi, and Tilak Deka. On 18thSeptember, police came to the *Sabha*. The procession was led by Bhogeswari Phukanani. Ratnabala Phukan, daughter of Bhogeswari Phukanani and Panilata Saikia was in front of the procession.²⁴¹ The British official Finch tried to thatch the flag from the hands of Ratna Bala Phukan. She tried her best not to give him the flag and dishonor it. Ratna

Bala Phukan's mother, Bhogeswari Phukanani, who was only a few meters behind RatnaBala, ran to her daughter when she realized her daughter was putting her life at risk and that the national flag was about to be disgraced. She swung a bamboo stick at Captain Finch's head with all her might.²⁴² Captain's head was slightly injured as a result of this. He felt enraged and insulted, because of this incident so he pulled out his revolver and fired a close-range shot at Bhogeswari. Bhogeswari Phukanani received terrible injuries on her forehead and died three days later because of the injuries. It has been recorded that between seven to eight thousand women went to the procession on that day.

On 7 September 1942, a public meeting was organized in the Chatial village of Kaliabor in the Nagaon district to discuss the congress course of action, which many women from adjacent villages attended. During the conference, a gang of sixty armed police officers surrounded it and arrested several leaders, including the meeting's president.²⁴³ Kanak Hazarika, the European officer, in charge of the squad, requested that the crowd disperse after being told to do so by the European officer in charge of the squad.²⁴⁴ The cops launched a *lathi* charge without any provocation as the mob began to walk back, chanting slogans. The elderly ladies were not spared either. One elderly lady was inhumanely kicked from side to side. The cops produced a tumultuous atmosphere. The fleeing women were pursued for a long time and beaten, resulting in serious injuries. Hundreds of other courageous women from Nagaon stepped up to join the struggle under Guneswari Devi's capable leadership. Enamai Bora, Jyotimai Saikia, Maichena Saikia, Dayamanti Bora, Daivaki Das, Hemakanti Saikia, Kamaleswari Bhuyan, Sumitra Bhuyan, and a few others joined the moment.²⁴⁵ The women of Jorhat also participated in the Quit India movement wholeheartedly. They demonstrated their courage and enthusiasm by shouldering key

responsibilities during the movement. *Mahila Samities* played a pioneering role in Assam during the Quit India movement. Members of the *Jorhat Mahila Samiti* traveled to many rural locations in Jorhat to spread the movement's principles. Basanti Bordoloi was one of the most well-known leaders of the Jorhat *Mahila Samiti*.²⁴⁶ She not only coordinated many women's mobilization programs, but she also took on other crucial tasks in this respect. The women's agency, like their male counterparts, had been involved in several aspects of the movement. Women congress leaders including Subarnalata Hazarika, Bhanu Barthakur, Tilaka Saikia, and Bindu Pasoni Dutta involved in many women mobilization events with male congress leaders.²⁴⁷ Ful Hazarika²⁴⁸, resigned from a government job as a teacher.²⁴⁹

Kanmai Baruah,²⁵⁰ also participated in the freedom movement from 1942. She was beaten by the police force in 1943, while going for campaigning and picketing on 5th January 1943.²⁵¹ She was pregnant when she was arrested and kept in *Hazarat "Sorai Bahi Moujar Dhekiajuli"*.²⁵² In 1942, her family was harassed (husband) and they have to face torture. In 1937, she started working with congresspeople and she was bodily injured by the tortured of British when she went campaigning in 1943.²⁵³

Hemaprabha Baruah, daughter of Ambika Phukan, was a woman under Jorhat district who joined congress in the year 1942 and participated in the movement.²⁵⁴ She resigned from school to participate in the movement. She went to the procession by foot. She was arrested at Golaghat during the movement and kept for six months in jail.²⁵⁵ She was a co-worker of Reboti Lahon. Jayanti Baruah from Jorhat also participated in the 1942 movement.²⁵⁶ Netra Devi Bhuyan,²⁵⁷ was also an active member of the Jorhat sub-division. She discontinued her studies in the 1942 movement. Hema KantiChetia, wife of Dhani ram Chetia, of post office Balama,

under Jorhat district participated in the movement.²⁵⁸ Fuleswari Bhuyan,²⁵⁹ participated in the movement and discontinued her studies.²⁶⁰

Dharmeshwari Kakoty, wife of Dhaniram Kakati of *Garhmur Satra* village under KamlaPadi sub-division also joined in this movement along with Garhmuriya *Satradhikar*.²⁶¹ Women from Sivasagar also participated in the Quit India movement. One of the leading women, who participated in the movement, was HemkantiChetia, wife of Dhani Ram Chetia of Ugani Gaon village under the Gakhir Khua sub-division. She used to encourage the village women topicket. She also went campaigning till Simaliguri, Teok, and Titabar, with Rebati Lahon, Debajani Baruah, and Hira Baruah. Another woman from Karanga under Sivasagar was Konmai Baruah, the wife of Thogeswar.²⁶² The women of Sivsagar town also joined the procession, which was held on 27th September 1942. Two hundred women joined the procession.²⁶³ The women were at the forefront of the procession. On its way to the police station, the sub-inspector of police and a group of armed police prevented the procession from entering the *thana* premises. About one thousand women, mostly from nearby Chowkhat, participated in the procession.²⁶⁴ The women of Sivsagar also took out another procession a few days after the 27th September 1942 procession. This procession was taken out entirely by omen. They proceeded to the Teok police station in protest of police excesses. About one thousand women participated in the procession.²⁶⁵

Women's participation in processions and gatherings during the 1942 movement in Sivsagar town is especially remarkable. A big procession with a significant number of women from adjacent villages and the town itself was organized on the 8th of September, 1942. The prominent women in the front of the procession were Makhani

Bordoloi and Sabityra Nath.²⁶⁶ On September 20, 1942 another procession was taken out with people from the surrounding villages of Sivsagar town, where men and women both joined. They shouted slogans and ended the procession in a non-violent way. Kalpana Baruah and Lily Borah of Sivasagar town were also active participants in this movement.²⁶⁷

Netra Devi²⁶⁸ also participated in the freedom movement while participating in Procession with Shri *Garh Mur Satradhikar*.²⁶⁹ Saruaity Dutta²⁷⁰, was also a participant in the 1942 movement. Her properties were also put up for sale.²⁷¹ Pahiti Baruah, wife of Padma Baruah of village Kenduguri Bharalua was another active woman in the 1942 movement.²⁷² Sarumola Baruah, wife of Nagen Chandra Baruah of village Lchiang Gaon also participated in the 1942 movement like the 1930 movement.²⁷³ Aikon Bhuyan, wife of Bhola Nath Bhuyan, of village Amguri was also a participant in the 1942 movement.²⁷⁴ Kanmai Bora, wife of Bapi Ram Bora of village Baliaghat also participated in the Quit India movement as a lady worker.²⁷⁵

As in 1936, Makhani Bardoloi, wife of Mohendra Nath Bardoloi of village Dhekerigaon, participated in the 1942 movement.²⁷⁶ Devabala Chaliha, wife of Boloram Chaliha of village Charing also participated in the 1942 movement.²⁷⁷ Patila Chutia, wife of Naram Chutia of village Kathpara, was an active participant in the 1942 movement.²⁷⁸ Tileswari Devi, wife of Dhodai Nath, of village Telia participated in the 1942 movement.²⁷⁹ Aimala Gohain, of village Jabalting and Satyalata Gogoi of Dehingia Gaon, was active female worker of the 1942 movement.²⁸⁰ Muleswari Gogoi, Konwar of village khamon also participated in 1942 movement.²⁸¹ Kunjalata Gogoi, wife of Khirod Gogoi of village Cherekapar Changmaigaon, participated in the 1942 movement.²⁸² Rupa Gogoi, wife of Maho Ram Gogoi, of village

Kharghariadeodhai Gaon actively participated in the 1942 movement.²⁸³ Hiranya Hazarika of Hiloidari Gaon and Aiyana Hazarika of Dhunia Gaon were active female workers in the 1942 movement.²⁸⁴

Mileswari Khanikar daughter of Bolai Khanikar, Khanikar Gaon actively participated in the 1942 movement.²⁸⁵ Kanti Mohan, wife of Debananda of village Moranjan Gaon, participated in the 1942 movement.²⁸⁶ Sarumai Mohan, wife of Tankeswar Laiseng Gaon, and Mihi Prova Mohan, wife of Durgadhar of Dhemaji Bill Gaon, were active participants in the 1942 freedom movement.²⁸⁷ Putala Phukan, wife of Purneswar of village Bairagibarnangalamora, participated in the 1942 movement.²⁸⁸ Putali Sarma of village Amguri and Renuprova Saikia of Garhgaon were active female workers in the 1942 movement.²⁸⁹ Women in the Lakhimpur district also took an active role in the non-violent movement. They used to take part in huge numbers of processions and meetings and also used to be at the forefront. A peaceful demonstration was held on August 24, 1942, in support of the Quit India resolution and in protest against the imprisonment of Congress leaders. There were a lot of women in this procession. When the procession arrived at the sub-division residence, the police used *lathi* charges, injuring a huge number of people, including ladies.²⁹⁰ Following this incident, a series of meetings and processions were held around the district to oppose the government's actions. The government did not show any respect for the people's nonviolent attitude. On 10 September, police used a severe *lathi* charge against a peaceful rally, injuring a huge number of women.²⁹¹

The women of Lakhimpur also joined the procession on September 20, 1942, when Congress workers in the area attempted to hoist the flag on the *Thana* building in North Lakhimpur.²⁹² The women's processions were led by Buddheswari Hazarika, a

prominent woman leader in North Lakhimpur. A huge number of women joined in this procession. The police in front of *thana's* premises threatened them and prevented them from hoisting the flag in *thana's* building by doing a *lathi* charge. A woman named Labanya Bora was severely injured in a *lathi* charge and one of her hands became permanently invalid.²⁹³ The women of numerous villages under North Lakhimpur also joined the public assembly which was held in North Lakhimpur Town on 7 October 1942.²⁹⁴ All of the processions had women leading the way with flags in their hands. Buddheswari Hazarika, Dhannada Baruah, and Nandeswari were the women volunteers in the procession. Akamani Borah²⁹⁵ was an active participant in the Quit India Movement.²⁹⁶ Bichitra Baruah²⁹⁷ was an active participant in the movement.²⁹⁸ Lokeswari Borah of Kachikota village was another active lady participant in the 1942 movement under the Lakhimpur District.²⁹⁹ She used to propagate against the British and have to confront the police also. Other prominent active freedom fighters of the district were Nihar Baruah³⁰⁰, Koniti Baruah of Kharkhati, Hiranya Saikia, Khiroda and Phukan, and Snehalata Mazumdar.

The contribution of Golaghat women during this period of the revolution was unrivaled. The women of this area took part in a variety of activities. The leading woman in this area was Annaprava Baruah. She used to visit the rural villages and tea estates to propagate the organizational works. Buddheswari Hazarika of North Lakhimpur used to join her on her visits. The police during that period used to keep a close eye on Annaprava Baruah, Buddheswari Hazarika, and their colleagues.³⁰¹ They had to walk through jungles, tea bushes, the interior and underdeveloped rural pathways, muddy drains, and paddy fields to avoid being arrested by the police.³⁰² To avoid detection, they also used to take longer routes between villages, and they often had to walk 15 to 20 miles at a time.

Annaprava Baruah was also a mother at that time, so she had to take responsibility for being a mother, and also a volunteer, so she used to carry him with her whole day when she used to go for organizational work.³⁰³ Rajkumari Aideo, of village Bakial in Golaghat district, was also a prominent woman during the Quit India movement. She picketed in front of the Court.³⁰⁴ Roseswari Dutta, wife of Jogesh Dutta of Gohain Gaon, P.o. Kamarbandha was also an active woman in the 1942 movement.³⁰⁵ Sashiprova Khatoniar,³⁰⁶ also actively participated in the 1942 movement.³⁰⁷ The women of the Dibrugarh district also participated in the Quit India Movement. Hemprova Borkakati, wife of Rajendranath of Malibari village, Digboi participated in the movement in 1942.³⁰⁸ Pravawati Bhuyan, of Senchowa, Pukhuri also participated in the Quit India movement. Kiran BalaChetia, of Senchowa, Pukhuri participated in the movement of 1942.³⁰⁹ Suprava Dutta, of Mohanghat under Dibrugarh district was the woman who participated in the Non-Co-Operation movement and also in Quit India Movement.³¹⁰ Tankeswari Deuri of Dhala under Dibrugarh district, was a participant in the 1930 movement and again participated in the 1942 movement.³¹¹ Saroj Kumari Gogoi, of Gabharupathar, and Nagendra Hazarika, wife of Jatindra of Chowkidinghee, participated in the 1942 movement.³¹² The women of the Nalbari district also actively participated in the Quit India Movement. Among them were Ambika Baruah, Rebati Bujabaruah,³¹³ Dayamanti Baishya³¹⁴ of Nalbari Town.³¹⁵ The women of Kamrup district also participated in the Quit India Movement. Sarada Baishya, Medhi daughter of Uttam Ch. Baishya of village Bangshar was an active congress volunteer during the movement.³¹⁶ Sarala Das, of village Ganeshtola under Hajo, was an active participant in the 1942 movement.³¹⁷

During the Quit India movement, many women were tortured, beaten, put in jail, molested, and raped by British authorities. Netra Devi was *lathi-charged* by the superintendent of police of Majuli *Thana* when she was in a procession.³¹⁸ As a result, she became invalid. Budheswari Hazarika, Nandeswari, Hemeswari Phukan, Lila Pegunini, Bhogeswari Chutia. Hari Priya Dutta was given R.I. (rigorous imprisonment) for three months in 1942.³¹⁹ In Jorhat; Dharmeswari Kakoty was bodily injured while participating in the 1942 movement. Hemakanti Chetia was kept in *Hazat* for three days.³²⁰ Sarada Saikia,³²¹ was bodily injured during the 1942 movement.³²² Konmai Boruah, was bodily injury while participating in the 1942 movement.³²³

Conclusion

The women of Assam before the 19th century were confined to the four walls of the home. They were bound by the social restrictions imposed on them. The participation of women in political matters was only confined to the female members of royal households, especially in the matter of claims for the throne for near relatives or attempts to install a prince on it. The participation of common women in politics was not possible at the time as the people were confined to such social conditions. After the annexation of the British, also in the first phase, the political organization of Assam, the Assam Association, did not have any women representatives. Though in the *Swadeshi* Movement we find that some of the women participated in the movement by tying *Rakhi* to Muslims to show unity, the participation was not large, and we don't find any names of those women.

After the advent of M.K. Gandhi, in the freedom struggle, he came to Assam to propagate the non-co-operation movement. The participation of women of Assam in the earlier phase of the non-co-operation movement was confined to the women of the elite class. They were wives, daughters, and sisters of Congress leaders. The social condition of that time was not in favor of women. Society was not so congenial for common women to roam freely. The unpleasant experience faced by Rajabala Das and when they went to propagate about the spinning and weaving to the village women shows that in those days women did not have the right to do work on their own. But with time women from all communities started to join in the non-co-Operation movement. The participation of women of Assam in the freedom struggle increased during the 1930-32 movement compared to the 1921 movement. In this movement (1930-32) every woman joined. Many women were arrested in this movement. The women of Assam also joined in the Quit India movement like all the Gandhian movements. In this movement, the women from the remotest area also participated. They joined in *Shanti Bahini* (peaceful force). With the formation of *Mrityu Bahini* (death squad) women of Assam joined this group also. They were ready to die for the cause of the country's freedom. Many women died in police firing during the procession. They have contributed a lot to the freedom movement.

Endnotes

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² *Ibid.*

³ Sharma, Dipti. *Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle*. Gauhati: Ashok Book Stall, 2013:28.

⁴ Pal, Rina. "Role of Women in Indian Freedom Struggle (1905-1927)". *Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences (AIJSS)*:30.

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⁷ Sharma, Dipti. 2013. *Op.cit.*,49

⁸ Girija Devi was the sister of Tarun Ram Phukan.

⁹ Hemanta Kumari Devi was the daughter of Tarun Ram Phukan.

¹⁰ Dharmada Devi was the wife of Nabin Chandra Bardoloi.

¹¹ Snehalata Bhattacharya was the sister of Nabin Chandra Bardoloi.

¹² Ganeswari Devi was the daughter of Nabin Chandra Bardoloi.

¹³ Dutt, K.N. *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*. Gauhati: Lawyers Book Stall, 1969: 59-60.

¹⁴ Devi, Nalinibala. *Smriti Tirtha*. Gauhati: Dutta Baruah and Co, 1976:10.

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³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sharma, Dipti, *op cit.*, 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*,57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

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³⁸ Baruah, Swarna Gogoi. *Litor Paror Mohila Swadhinata Jiban Sangramir Katha*. Tezpur: Sadou Assam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, 2006:19.

³⁹ Sharma, Dipti. 2013.*Op.cit.*, 52.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,53.

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- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Baruah, Swarna Gogoi. 2006. *Op.cit.*, 85.
- ⁴⁵ Sharma, Dipti. 2013. *Op.cit.*, 58.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Sharma, Anil Kumar. 2007. *Op.cit.*, 126.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Sharma, Dipti. 2013. *Op.cit.*,52
- ⁵¹ Sharma, Anil Kumar. 2007. *Op.cit.*,126
- ⁵² Sharma, Dipti. 2013. *Op.cit.*, 58.
- ⁵³ Sarmah, Gautam. "Role of tea tribes of Assam to Indian Freedom Struggle". *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research* 10. (2019):36094.
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- ¹⁹² Khirada Bora was the daughter of Mangalu of village Mekanarchuk, P.O Bihaguri.
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- ²¹¹ Gali Devi was from Bargaon village and P.O. Bargaon.

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- ²¹³ Jashoda Devi was the wife of Haliram Mahajan, of village Bhalukmari.
- ²¹⁴ Dobhagi Devi was the wife of Haliram Mahajan, of village Bhalukmari.
- ²¹⁵ Joneswari Devi was wife of Haliram Mahajan, of village Bhalukmari.
- ²¹⁶ Urmila Devi was wife of Haliram Mahajan, of village Bhalukmari.
- ²¹⁷ Rukmini Devi was the wife of Uma Bardoloi, of village Khulikatia, P.O. Howajan.
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- ²²³ Phuleswari Hazarika was the wife of Dharmeswar Hazarika of Tenia Gaon, P.O. Dekargaon.
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- ²³³ Lokeswari Saikia, was from village and P.O Bargang.
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²⁶⁸ Netra Devi, from Komola Bari Mouja, of village Garhmur Bor Than, P.O: Garh Mur.

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²⁹⁵ Akamani Borah, was the wife of Dimbeswar Bora of village Jajiawalia, p. o:

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³²⁰ Relief Pension to Political Sufferers Cases of Jorhat Sub-Division. 1967.

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³²¹ Sarada Saikia was the wife of late Siba Ram Saikia, P.O: GaramurSatra under Jorhat District.

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CHAPTER – IV

A Biographical Sketch of some Unsung Women freedom fighters of Assam

India got its freedom from British domination seventy-five years ago, and for Indians, achieving this freedom from the clutches of British rule was never an easy feat. To achieve freedom, the people of India fought vehemently for a long period. While people from all sections of society were courageously standing against the unjust British rule, women were no less active when it came to their participation in the struggle for the nation's independence. However, some women have been confined in some archive materials and manuscripts and in oral stories in their families and in their regions. This chapter attempts to discuss some of these unsung women freedom fighters in Assam. The main aim of this chapter is to make people aware of some unsung women freedom fighters whose contributions have not been recognized in common textbooks. It aims to look into those unsung heroines whose names have started to vanish into obscurity. To know about their contribution to the freedom struggle archival documents, and souvenirs given to them during their old age or after death from village and district have been used as proof of their contribution as some women freedom fighters' names are not enlisted in pension awardees and archival lists. The souvenir dedicated to them and the manuscript published by the family members and the locals have been a source for it. Despite some archival details having been used, interviews have also been conducted with their families. Some unsung freedom fighters did not get their names included in the documents; however, in this case, the souvenir has been used as proof, along with some Assamese and

Nepali articles published as compiled books.

Guneswari Devi (Borthakur)

Guneswari Devi (Borthakur) was born in the Barbhagiya subdivision in the district of Nagaon. She was born in January 1892.¹ She was the daughter of Thari Aai and Sarudev Goswami. She was the only child of her parents. She started her primary education at her home because, during that period, girls' education was not given much priority in Assamese society. However, she was very interested in education, so she carried on with her studies at home. She was taught weaving and spinning at a very young age which was a common norm to make young girls ready to be desirable for marriage. Her parents followed the prevalent social regulations of Assam and got her married to Ganesh Borthakur at a very young age in 1901. She joined the fight for freedom against the British with her husband after her marriage. She was an active woman freedom fighter of Kalabar from the Nagaon district. She was a true follower of M. K. Gandhi, just like her husband. Guneswari and Ganesh, both were truly committed to the cause of the nation, so Ganesh Borthakur was selected as president of the Kaliabor Congress Committee. When M.K. Gandhi came to Assam for the first time Guneswari got an opportunity to meet him. M.K. Gandhi inspired to do work for the country by saying work hard for the country. They used to have a medicinal house, which was later transformed into the head office of the Congress Committee of Kaliabor. Both of them worked wholeheartedly for the movement. As a result of their fearless and active participation in the cause of freedom struggle, Ganesh Borthakur was arrested by the Superintendent of Police.² But, instead of being scared, she worked for the movement very vigorously. Guneswari went door to door encouraging a woman to join the cause of freedom, established a women's organization in

Kaliabor.³ Throughout 1921-47 women of Assam participated in the freedom movement, shouldering the same responsibilities as the men. In the Kaliabor region, Guneswari Devi and Ganesh Borthakur were the couples who shared the same responsibility. She went to Tezpur with her husband to participate in the *Swadeshi* Movement where they burnt foreign goods. She also gave a speech in front of her fellow revolutionaries present there. The speech attracted the people present there. During the 1930-32 movement, the people of Assam could not join the Dandi March with M.K Gandhi. So, in order to support M. K. Gandhi in their capacity, they started meetings and processions in Assam. The people of Kaliabor also participated wholeheartedly in the movement. The women folk of Kaliabor joined the movement with Guneswari Borthakur. She was the women's leader of Kaliabor during the freedom struggle. With the help of her able leadership, many women joined the movement in Kaliabor. She and her companions Mohani Gohain, Guneswari Bordoloi, Sumitra Bhuyan, and Satyabrati Hazarika worked for the cause of the nation, sacrificing many things and also facing hazards during the movement. On January 26, 1930, Guneswari Devi went to Jubilee Field an in-charge of a procession and was arrested for the same.⁴ When she came back to her home, she again started to work for the movement.

Gunehswari led a group of women from Kaliabor to Nagaon in a procession while singing the slogan "*Bande Mataram*" to fly a flag celebrating Independence Day on January 26, 1931.⁵ She was arrested then and imprisoned for four years. She traveled to promote the activities of Congress yet again in 1932. She was arrested three times before the Quit India movement. During the course of her participation in the struggle for independence, she had the chance to meet people who were very influential in the movement, including M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sudangshu Mohan Banarjee,

Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Tarun Ram Phukan, Gopinath Bordoloi, Bimala Prashad Chaliha, Kanak Chandra Sharma, Mahadev Sharma, Haldhar Bhuiyan, Debeswar Sarma, Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, and Tyagbir Hem Baruah. Guneswari was elected as the female president of the Rayat Sabha in 1931, which was held in Na-Duar. She used to go to places like Nagaon, Darrang, Jorhat, and Kamrup to distribute the Congress Bulletin and promote the activities of Congress.

Guneswari belonged to a Brahmin family, and she was subjected to many negative comments from some people in her society because then a Brahmin woman roaming around openly with men was not considered an accepted societal norm. Despite this, she used to go to every place for the work of Congress. She was again imprisoned for her anti-British activities during the Quit India campaign. As Guneswari commanded a lot of influence and connection with the public, the police kept a close check on her. Since she was the one who used to motivate the women to participate in the processions and the congress activities, a few others who supported the British, even attempted to harm her reputation. In order to damage her reputation, they also engaged in several plots and spread disparaging information about her among the people. Despite this, she continued to work for the movement till 1947. She died on August 25, 1962, in her home only.



Figures 4.1: Image of Guneswari Borthakur



Figure 4.2: House of Guneswari Borthakur

Sumitra Bhuyan

Sumitra Bhuyan was born in the village of Hatbar, in the Nagaon district. She was the daughter of Mahendra Nath and Sabitri Nath. As soon as she started her lower primary schooling, her parents died. So, she was married to Thanuram Bhuyan. She was the second wife of Thanuram Bhuyan as Thanuram Bhuyan married her after his first wife's death. She was encouraged to join the freedom movement by her husband, as he was an ardent member of the Kaliabor Congress Committee. He was arrested for participating as a *Satyagrahi* on 16 September, 1941 and was imprisoned for three months.⁶

During the freedom movement, their home was like a second home for many people. She always assisted visitors, feeding 20 people each day, especially those from *Mrityu Bahini*. She also joined the freedom movement with Guneswari Devi. She was an active female freedom fighter from Kaliabor. She was a victim of police brutality too when the Quit India agitation was in full swing. After her husband's arrest in August 1942, an armed constable of the Nagaon police force ravaged her house in Kaliabor. In August, most of the leaders were arrested, and after the arrest of the leaders, a big meeting was held at Kaliabor. A significant gathering was convened at Kaliabor following the arrest of the majority of the leaders in August. Along with her companions, Sumitra Bhuyan attended the conference and vehemently denounced the leaders' imprisonment and the atrocities perpetrated against the people. Since then, she has always been sought after by the police. Around 9 p.m. on November 15, 1942, six police officers broke into her home.⁷ At that time, her husband was in prison. They entered the shop belonging to the Bhuyan family, which was adjacent to their residence. Before entering Sumitra Bhuyan's bedroom, they tied Dolan Kakati, who was in the house as a caretaker. They tied him in the shop as he was in the shop. On

the pretext of searching Mahendra Hazarika and a few other Congress workers, they then forcibly broke open the door to her bedroom. They threatened Sumitra Bhuyan of setting fire to her home if she would not provide information regarding the whereabouts of the aforementioned people when enquiring about their whereabouts with indecent acts. The police also misbehaved with a young girl, Malini, who was staying with her. She yelled for aid at this point, but the group left with the valuables before anyone could respond. At that time, the cost of the valuables that the police looted was around thirty thousand rupees. A few minutes later, the police team had left, and the Bhuyan neighbors Hafijuddin Ahmed, Serajuddin (a teacher), and Dimeswar Sarma arrived. They opened the door of the shop and asked Dolon Kakati about the happenings. After this incident, Sumitra Bhuyan's house was given protection by the members of *Shanti Bahini*.⁸

Sumitra Bhuyan also appealed for justice with the help of social activists in Kaliabor like Puspakanta Khaund, Ganesh Chandra Khaund, freedom fighter Ganesh Barthakur, and Dimeswar Sharma. Two days after the incident, O.C. Bhabani Sharma of the police station came with the evidence and suspended the officers who were involved in that incident.

Sumitra Bhuyan assumed leadership of the Kaliabor Women's Congress after Guneswari Devi's imprisonment. But she was unable to carry out her presidential duties. She was forbidden from staying in her home and village. Sumitra was detained and sent to Kothari; a village located around 28 miles away from Kaliabor. She spent more than two weeks in solitary confinement in Kothari. She underwent several forms of humiliation there, including sexual molestation.⁹ In a society where being raped is considered an act instigated by the woman herself and blaming her instead of punishing the culprit, her husband was a very progressive man. Before society would

see her in a degraded sense, he said, “The British had been raping my motherland for a very long period of time. We are people, and the barbaric British have been raping us for many years. It might be God's decision. Our main objective is to liberate our country, India, from the British, and to do that, we must make countless sacrifices”.¹⁰ Despite having endured torture by the police, after receiving emotional support and comfort from her husband, she was able to regain her emotional strength back and began working for the movement once again. Other than her husband, she received mental assistance from her friends Someswari Bhuyan, Ratnaprava Hazarika, Guneswari Devi, Gunswari Bardoloi, Mohini Gohain, Satyabrati Hazarika, Sabitri Saikia, and Sabitri Bargohain. She put in more effort for the *Mahila Samiti* after this incident. She began spinning and weaving at home and encouraged the neighborhood ladies to learn the art by inviting them to her home. Thanuram Bhuyan was released from prison in 1945, as he was an important member of the movement from Kaliabor; after his release, he rejoined the movement. Their house was used as a meeting place and for planning and discussions during the movement. Sumitra Bhuyan supported her husband all through the movement, which lasted until 1947. After India gained its independence from the British, the Congress party was divided. The division also affected the people of Kaliabor. Thanuram Bhuyan and Sumitra Bhuyan both joined the Congress Socialist Party.

Thus, Sumitra Bhuyan was an active women freedom fighter of Kaliabor under the Nagaon District of Assam. She was also a very good homemaker. Even after the military torture, she toiled by herself while her husband was in jail. During her husband's three-year absence, she ran the home admirably. Her contribution to the freedom struggle is unknown to the people of India, and not only to the people of India but also to the people of Assam as a whole. The story of her courage, sacrifice,

and struggle is still missing from the pages of history. She passed away on June 30, 1974. She left behind one daughter and four sons: Rabin Bhuyan, Rama Kanta Bhuyan, Prahlad Bhuyan, and Dhruva Bhuyan.



Figure 4.3: Image of Sumitra Bhuyan



Figure 4.4: House of Sumitra Bhuyan

Purnada Devi

Purnada Devi was born in 1907 in a village named Bogalibari, Sootea.¹¹ It was initially part of the undivided Darrang district but is now part of the Biswanath district. She was the daughter of Durgeswar Bhagawati and Ghnakanti Devi. She began her pre-primary education at a girls' school in Sholal village. At that time, Assamese society was also like the rest of Indian society, and child marriage was common in Assam. As per the regulations of the society, she married Phanindra Chandra Deka of Tezpur at the age of nine. Unfortunately, three days after their marriage, her husband died due to a high fever. She began her widowhood at a very young age. So, she returned to Sootea after finishing all the rituals in Tezpur. After coming back to Sootea, she kept herself engaged with household chores and studies.

She again joined the school. She began her career as a teacher at Solal Girl's School in 1925. She also had the opportunity to study at a missionary school in Nagaon, with the support and encouragement of her mother. In Sootea, a new awakening began in 1928. To strengthen the influence of the Sootea Congress Committee, which was a branch of the Assam Congress Committee, the Sootea Boy's Union, the Sootea *Mahila Samiti*, the Sootea Literary Association, and the Sootea Student Sabha were established. Purnada Devi played a significant role in the *Mahila Samiti* and the *Soteea Mahila Sabha*. The social environment of the time was unsuitable for a woman traveling alone along an unfamiliar path. She had more than her fair share of jabs and criticism, yet she never wavered in her resolve to pursue her cherished purpose.

In the course of the struggle for freedom, Purnada Devi's house was crucial. It promoted the movement as it served as the platform for numerous discussions. In 1932, Rupkonwar Jyoti Prashad Agarwala established a *Sewadal* training center at Purnada Devi's residence.¹² He used to compose patriotic songs, and the people of *Sewadal* used to sing them while they went on the procession. These songs played a significant role in the hearts of the people of Sootea. Purnada Devi was initially inspired to join the movement by the environment she grew up in. She worked for the movement just as much as her brothers, Bijoy Chandra and Kamala Bhagawati, who were prominent freedom fighters of Sootea. During the 1930–1932 campaign, she traveled with her companions to many villages to inspire the local women to take up spinning and weaving, as well as to prohibit the use of foreign goods. She also participated in the Quit India movement. On September 22, 1942, a big procession was taken from Chaiduar to Sootea police station. Purnada Devi also went to the procession, singing the slogan "*Korim Kimba Morim*" which means do or die.¹³ She went to the procession with her friends Kosheswari Devi, Gulapi Bhuyan, and Padumi

Gogoi. She was arrested for 8 months along with her companions.¹⁴ During that time period, widowed Brahmin women used to refrain from eating food prepared by others. So, in jail, she was given the facility to make her own food. After getting released from jail, she still continued her work for women and for the country. She was a very strong woman who was an inspiration for many people as she used to work for the freedom movement, the poor, and women. She retired from her job in 1974, and after one year of retirement, she passed away on January 28, 1975.

Krishna Maya Dahal

Krishna Maya Dahal was born on September 21, 1920.¹⁵ She was born in a village named Telegaon under the then Darrang District, now Sonitpur district. She studied till the lower primary level and got married to Kamalpati Dahal at a very young age as per the prevalent social regulations of Nepali society. She was an unsung woman participant in the Dhekiajuli Procession of September 20, 1942.¹⁶ She made arrangements for a procession with the leaders of Talegaon the Dhekiajuli Procession. They marched in the procession, singing the slogan "*Bande Mataram.*" During the Dhekiajuli procession, many men and women were killed in Dhekiajuli Procession; however, Krishna Maya Dahal escaped from the police firing. She got hurt near her left eye while facing the *lathi charge*. Krishna Maya Dahal was inspired to join the Quit India Movement by her husband, Kamalpati Dahal, as he served as Assistant Secretary of Volunteers in the Telegaon region of the Darrang District. As her husband was the assistant secretary for volunteers, many meetings and discussions were held in their house.

Krishna Maya was tortured and harassed many times by British officials when they came to search for or arrest her husband, Kamalpati Dahal. They used to have *Talatal Ghar* (a building made from wood), and whenever the British officials used to come to arrest them, they used to hide in that as there was a passage to go downstairs to the basement and hide in it. Krishna Maya Dahal was an active participant in the Quit India Movement from Telegaon in Darrang District, now Sonitpur District. She passed away on February 4, 2012. But her name has not been recorded in the archival details.

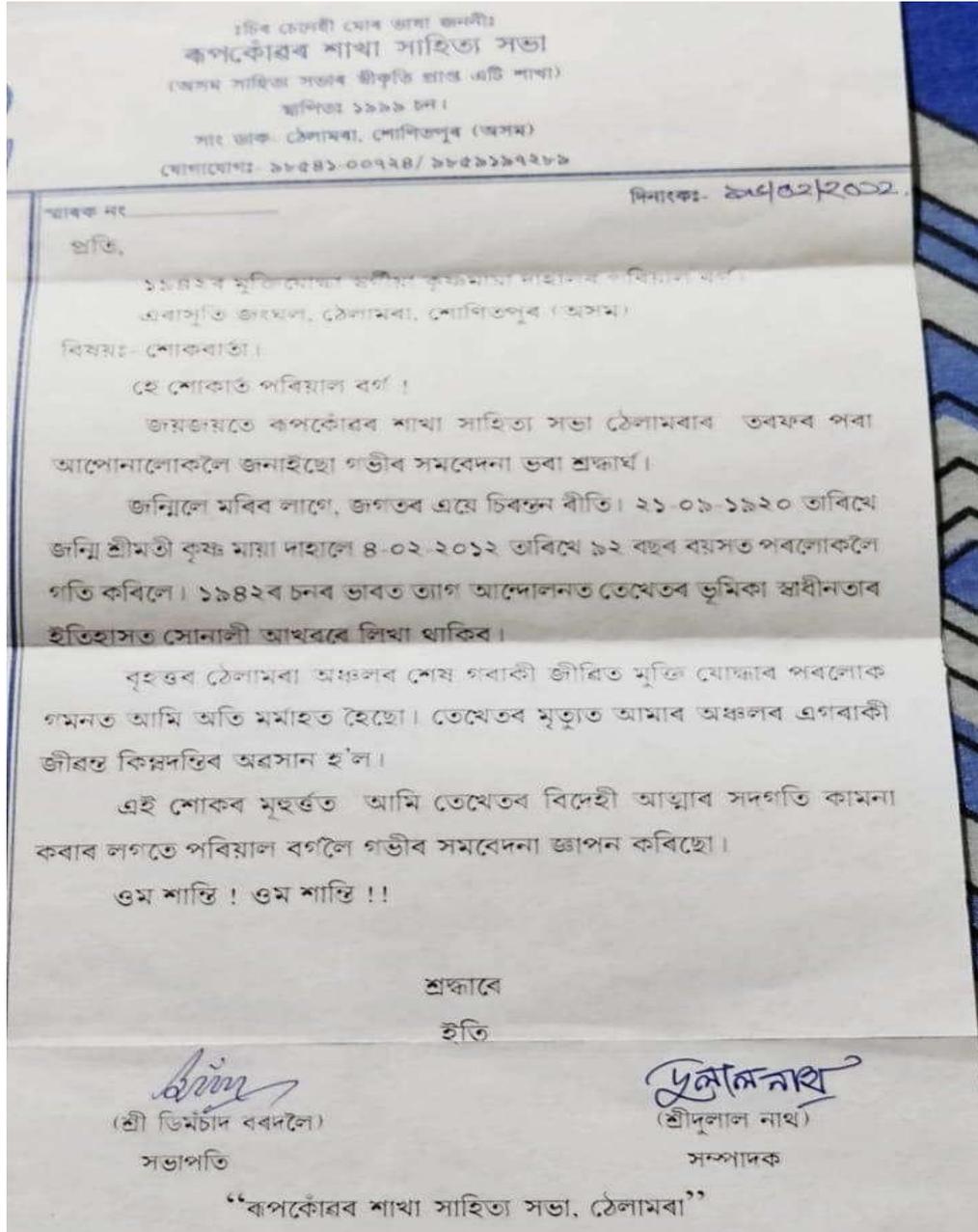


Figure 4.5: Photo of the Souvenir presented to Krishna Maya Dahal



Figure 4.6: Photo of Krishna Maya Dahal

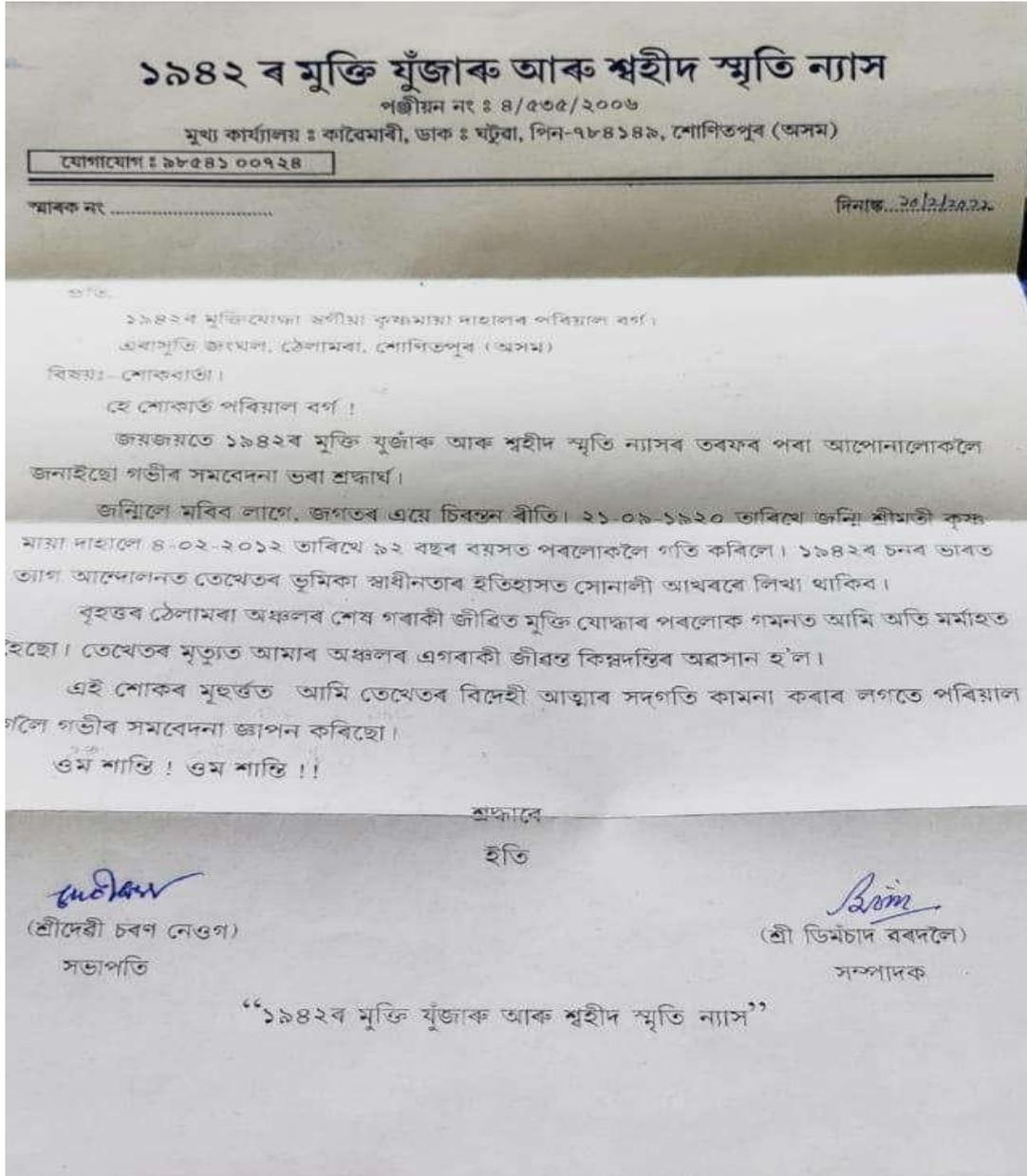


Figure 4.7: Photo of the Souvenir presented to Krishna Maya Dahal

Mukta Devi Bhattarai

Mukta Devi Bhattarai was born on February 22, 1928.¹⁷ She was born in the village Gangmouthan under the Behali sub-division. She was the daughter of Bishnulal Ghimire and Subhadra Devi. During the time of the freedom struggle, girls' education was not given much priority. But with the initiative of her father and uncle, the awakening of girls' education was started in Behali. She had the opportunity to get a

formal education till class five. She was also known as Khina Devi in her village. Mukta Devi Bhattarai was among the active female participants of the Quit India Movement from the Behali sub-division. She was inspired to join the movement as she was born into a family of patriotic people like Chabilal Upadhyay. She used to go picketing and also encouraged her village women to boycott foreign goods. She went to Behali Police station on 20th September 1942.¹⁸ She went to the procession with her friends Padma, Chaya, Tilarupa, and Maya, taking flags in their hands and shouting slogans marching along with the band party with patriotic songs.¹⁹ They used to sing Assamese and Nepali slogans like-

1. *Lakshya Lakshya Sipahi Britishor Senani, Bortop Guli loi thak thiyo hoi. Lathi aaru Sangin, Khos, Police or Jotar Kob, Aami Nadarau ...Teu Swadhin hom* which means "Oh, the British police, stay with bombs and guns, do *lathi* charge on us, walk over us, we won't be afraid, we'll become independent.

2. *Maar Lathi, maar guli..... Ami nadarau, Bharat amar, Janani amar, Bharat amar desh, Bharator hoke lage jadi eei janam korim khekh* which means you can *lathi* charge us, you can shoot us, we will not fear, India is ours, it is our motherland, it is our country, and for India, if it is necessary, we will give our lives.

3. *Ghoreghore Ghuruwa Jatar, Pindha Sobe Khati Sador, Jotoramar din mani, Kagsha Bodhi nanda kumar sacra name jotor amar, ghuruwa hera sakra khani, Jataramar din mani* which means lets everyone spin and weave in home, let's wear only the handmade cotton clothes.

4. *Cha jasko Bibechna (Chabilal), Mukhjaskolal (Ramlal), Unei Parein Darrang Karagarm, Yukti Garna Thal (Nikalna)* which means chabilal means who can think, and the one with the red face is Ramlal. They are in Darrang jail; let's work

to get them out. It was a slogan to encourage the Nepali people of the Behali subdivision to fight against the British so that can make come out the leaders' Nepali leaders Chabilal Upadhyay and Ram Lal Upadhyay of the Behali sub- division, who were imprisoned for taking part in the movement.

They also used to sing Nepali slogans after the country got its independence: - *Bharatmata Swadhin bhoin aaja, Saechale garun sakei kaja, Aunah basun-sureili, Su-Kirtan Gau, Swadhin Bharat ko Jai Manau* which mean "India got its independence today; we should do all our work with the honesty." Let's sing. Let's do *kirtan* (prayer), and let's enjoy the victory of independent India.

After India got its independence, she was married to Gyan Prashad Bhattarai of the Kochmara sub-division in 1948. She used to teach at a lower primary school. She was an active member of the *Bahumukhi Samaj*. She was the president of the *Mahila Samiti* of the Telegaon region, in the then Darrang district of Assam, from 1970-1990. After ten years of marriage, her husband died, and she had to accept widowhood. Her life was not easy, staying with little children in the village of Chapari (Telegaon). There was a constant attack by animals on humans as it was surrounded by jungles. She established a girls' school in Telegaon from 1962 to 1970 and worked as a teacher.²⁰ She also worked as the president of “*Bahumukhi Buwakota Samabai Samiti*” which aimed towards working for empowering women and skilling them in spinning and weaving. People used to call her, “*Mastorni Baideu*” in respect. She passed away on June 4, 2018, at Tezpur Hospital.²¹



Figure 4.8: Photo of Mukta Devi Bhattarai

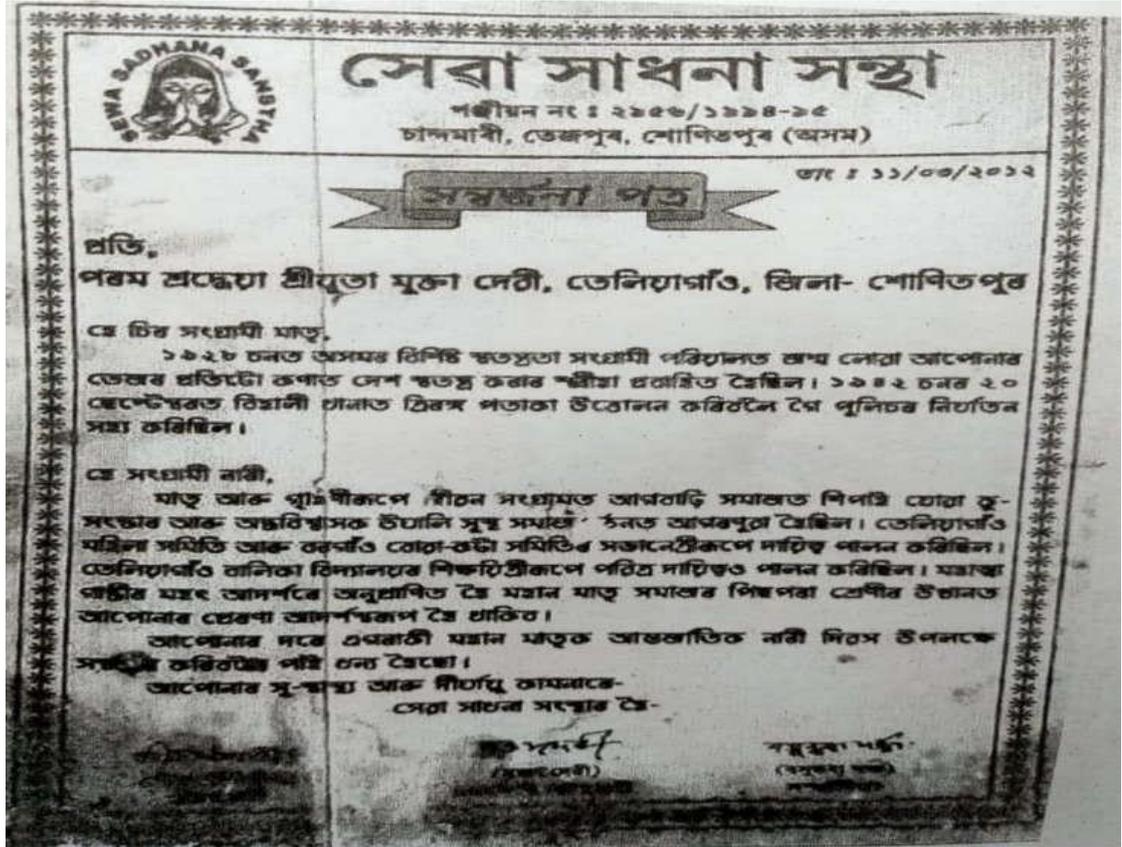


Figure 4.9: Photo of the Souvenir presented to Mukta Devi Bhattarai

Annapurna Devi

Annapurna Devi daughter of Hari Prashad Khatioda and Bishnu Maya Devi, was born on December 21, 1919.²² She was born in the village Kumrakhadi near Brahmaputra River. They used to have cow brawn there. As their house was in a very remote area they had to transfer to another place in Behali after her three days of birth. She started her school in Hatibandha Middle school when she was five years old. When she was six years old, her father died. Both her mother and grandmother were followers of Puranic beliefs. During her childhood, due to some social customs in Nepali families of girls being married before attaining puberty, she was married to her classmate Bishnulal Upadhyay. Later on, Bishnulal Upadhyay became a prominent freedom

fighter from the Behali subdivision. After her marriage, she started studying again. She studied till class 7 in the same school. She was appointed as a teacher in that school when she completed her education till class 7. She was also inspired to join the freedom movement after her marriage. She always used to listen to the discussions related to the freedom movement in her home. She also used to work for the movement. After her father's demise, she stayed with her grandmother and mother and continued her studies.

During the freedom movement, all of the schools were shut down as a mark of protest as the students did not visit. In Behali also the schools were closed. As soon as school was closed for the movement, the headmaster left her in charge of all the important work and documents of the school where she was working. When the vice principal of that school was called by the police superintendent of Behali, he asked Annapurna Devi to carry all the necessary paperwork with her to the Police station premises. She went to the police station with Bhogamaya Devi. The inspector in charge of that police station questioned them, indicating that perhaps the absence of the student was due to you, the teachers. Additionally, the chairman asked if they supported the movement. Annapurna's response was astonishing. To this she answered, "in supporting the cause of the freedom movement, we are no different from other Indians. Although I did not have a direct opportunity to engage in the movement, we do extend our moral support for it". The chairman asked the principal to suspend Annapurna Devi and Bhogayamay Devi. He added that it was acceptable if she had stated that they are supporting the movement only in appearance and not in reality, but she had stated that she had moral support, which means she would join in with the march when she gets the opportunity. Though the chairman advised the principal to suspend her, she continued to work in the school.²³

Annapurna also supported her husband in the freedom movement. In 1942, Bishnulal Upadhyay was arrested with Chabilal Upadhyay and other prominent leaders. There was an opportunity given by the British that if she signs a bond with the police he will be released from jail soon. The bond was that he will not participate in the movement. She had the responsibility of being a teacher, and a mother to her child at home, and at the time they were going through a financial crisis. Despite that, she did not sign the bond with the British. Instead, she encouraged her husband to stay in jail for six months as the main objective of Indians is to get freedom from the British not accepting their terms and conditions.²⁴ On 20th September she went to the procession to Behali Thana with Tileswari Devi, Maya Devi, etc. In Behali Thana they hosted the flag peacefully and went back to their home. After the freedom movement, she worked for the cause of national and women empowerment. In 1962, when China attacked India, there was a fight between India and China. At that time, the then Prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, asked for money from Indians to strengthen the economy whatever amount the Indians could give for the cause of freedom. Behali sub-division had a great role during the freedom struggle and when the country was in trouble and needed help to fight against China, the people of Behali also took steps when they were asked for help. In Behali High school a meeting was held. Puspalata Das, Mina Aggarwala, and two more leaders came and gave lectures inspiring the people to donate to the country's cause. Annapurna Devi also gave a speech in the program and said, "with huge efforts and extreme pain we have achieved freedom, now for the country, we need the support of the people". She tried to emphasize the importance of giving something in the name of the country in the need of the hour. She also said, "we exist only if our country exists; if there is no country we will also not be here". After saying these heartfelt words, she gave all the ornaments she had to

the fund. Many other women were inspired by her and also gave their ornaments to the fund.²⁵

Annapurna Devi was an active woman freedom fighter from the Behali sub-division. She was an inspiration for many other women in that village.

Conclusion

In light of the above discussion, it can be concluded that India got its independence with the sacrifice of many people. There was also a lot of contribution from the women. Some women got recognition and some did not come under the limelight. Along with Krishna Maya Dahal, Annapurna Devi, Guneswari Devi (Borthakur), Sumitra Bhuyan, and Purnada Devi, Mukta Devi Bhattarai several remarkable women from Assam who are rarely recognized even in their own region took part in India's war for independence. It is unfortunate that Krishna Maya Dahal, Annapurna Devi, and Mukta Devi Bhattarai's names are not included in the Report of the Enquiry Committee of Freedom Fighters' list of participants in the freedom movement. Although they contributed and took part together with revolutionaries from other regions of the nation, our history books do not tell the tale of their bravery, determination, sacrifice, and struggle. The significance of the role that they played during the freedom movement is only known by the families of those freedom fighters and the people of that region. If we ignore this side of history, it may go unnoticed by the majority of people. They were not only active freedom fighters but also social activists who brought significant changes in the lives of fellow women of the society. They questioned the regulations on women and worked for the movement along with empowering women.

Endnotes

¹ Sharma, Bhupen and BarthakurNabin. *Kaliaborar Mukti Senani*. Jakhlabandha: Keshab Mahanta, 2022:40.

² Barthakur, Nabinand Bhattacharya, Ranjit Kumar. *Mahiyashi*. Jakhlabandha: Keshab Mahanta: 2015: 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴ Baruah, Swarna Gogoi. *Lutor Paror Mohila Swadhinata Jiban Sangramir Katha*. Tezpur: Sadou Assam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, 2006:149.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁶ Sharma, Bhupen and Barthakur, Nabin. 2022. *Op.cit.*,30.

⁷ Baruah, Swarna Gogoi. 2006. *Op.cit.*, 139 & Interviewed Rabin Bhuyan, Elder son of Sumitra, Bhuyan, Sex: Male, Age-65 years, Kaliabor, Nagaon, Assam.

⁸ *Ibid.*,140.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 142 & Interviewed Rabin Bhuyan, Elder Son of Sumitra Bhuyan, Sex: Age-65years, Kaliabor, Nagaon, Assam.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹¹ Baruah, Swarna Gogoi. 2006. *Op.cit.*, 46 & Interviewed Satyakam Bhagawati, nephew of Purnada Devi, Sex: Male, Age-45 years, Sootea, Assam.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Report of Enquiry Committee of freedom fighters, Government of Assam, 1979:610

¹⁴ Report of the Enquiry Committee of freedom fighters. 1979.*Op.cit.* 612

¹⁵ Interviewed Kuber Kaushik, Son of Krishna Maya Dahal, Sex: Male, Age: 65 years old, Thelamara, Sonitpur, Assam.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Sedai, Devicharan. Ed. *Lakshya Lakshya Sipahi Mukti Yodha Mukta Devi*, Jai Tulashi Prakashan, Tinsukia, 2021:25

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ Sedai, Devicharan. 2021. *Op.cit.*, 25. Interviewed, Gitanjali Devi, Daughter of Mukta Devi Bhattarai, Sex: Female, Age: 60, Date: 27 June, 2022, Tinsukia, Assam.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Luitel, Jaynarayan “*Adarsha Nari: Annapurna Devi*”, in Bhim Maharajji.Ed. Gorkha Jyoti. North East Gorkha Festival Organizing Committee: Digboi, 2019:161.

²³ *Ibid.*,168-169.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter V

Conclusion

The women of Assam played an important role during the freedom struggle. The role played by the women of Assam in the freedom movement is a story of their dedication, selflessness, and patriotism. It will be remembered throughout Assam's history as one of the most outstanding contributions made in the quest for freedom. It has been mentioned that women from Dibrugarh and Dhubri used to sing *Sankirtan* and organize against the concept of division during the *Swadeshi* movement. However, there are no names found in the archival details. Only the fact that some women took part in the movement is highlighted. The Assam Association mentioned that several women had helped organize the work in a meeting that was held in 1921, but no names were given. There was no direct involvement of women in Assam Association. After M.K. Gandhi visited Assam, the women of Assam entered mainstream politics. The women of Assam were already weavers, but they stopped weaving at the beginning of the 19th century. The women of Assam were also influenced by foreign goods and clothes, so they stopped weaving and used to wear foreign clothes. However, after M.K Gandhi's call for spinning and weaving, the women of Assam resumed their weaving work, which greatly aided the campaign. The women who participated in the non-cooperation movement had connections with political activists in Assam. They traveled to the villages to educate the rural women to fight against British imperialism. Despite being limited in number, their involvement cannot be overlooked. As part of the 1921 movement, Congress also promoted picketing against opium and liquor, along with spinning and weaving.

Several campaigns were launched in rural regions on the initiative of some women in order to promote weaving and spinning among women, make them aware of their responsibilities to the nation, and cultivate feelings of nationalism by educating them about the negative effects of British rule. The Dibrugarh *Mahila Samiti* which was established in 1915, played a very important role in the movement. Assam *Mahila Samiti* was developed at the provincial level after Dibrugarh *Mahila Samiti*, which assisted the women of Assam in learning about their social and political rights. In addition to this, *Mahila Samities* were established in each district, which helped women to join the movement.

The women of India rose to the forefront of the movement between 1930 and 1934. The women of Assam also participated in the campaigns, organized demonstrations, held meetings, and picketed against liquor, opium, and foreign goods. The women who worked for the movement had to face *lathi* charges from the police and were arrested and imprisoned. Despite these suppressive measures adopted by the police officers, the women of Assam participated wholeheartedly. Compared to the non-cooperation movement, rural women joined in large numbers in the civil disobedience movement. The women of Assam also deserve the most credit for the success of the anti-opium campaign. Daiki Das, a martyred opium worker during this period, set an example for women's devotion to this initiative. The anti-untouchability campaign of this era was a program of comparable importance. Many women from high castes gave this program their full support and cooperation by sacrificing their traditional conservatism in order to abolish this evil practice. Following the Civil Disobedience movement, Assamese women dedicated themselves to constructive programs between 1935 and 1939. During the Satyagraha campaign of 1940–1941, the women of Assam played an important role. Women from the Sivasagar and Goalpara districts joined as

satyagrahis in large numbers.

Compared to the previous two movements, the Quit India movement attracted more women from India to participate. The women of Assam also joined in significant numbers. To achieve independence, they were willing to bear any consequences. During that time, a lot of women were raped and harassed by police officers. In addition, some women were rendered permanently invalid as a result of bayonet charges, and firings. Thirteen women from Assam gave their lives in the movement. In terms of bravery and sacrifice in the 1942 movement, the women of Assam may have outdone all other women in the nation. The women of Assam joined *Mrityu Bahini* during the Quit India movement. All of the women, even young girls, pregnant women, and elderly ladies, were attacked with *lathi* and bayonets. Despite that, the large participation of women in the Quit India movement shows the bravery, dedication, and devotion of the women of Assam. There were also some women who not only supported the idea of constructive programs but also destructive programs and engaged themselves in underground activities. The majority of police brutality against women occurred in the Nagaon region. They used to make derogatory comments about the women. The women were mistreated by the police within the prison as well. Sumitra Bhuyan was one of the examples of someone who faced molestation in jail during the Quit India movement.

The women of Assam participated in constructive activities between 1944 and 1946. They played a significant role during the anti-Grouping movement in 1946–1947.

But even though the women of Assam played a significant role in the war for independence, many of them remain unknown to the public. Even some of the Dhekiajuli procession's victims of violence toward women did not come forward to

share their experiences because it was somewhat embarrassing for them. But, despite giving their lives for the country, the women of Assam have not been included among the martyrs of the freedom movement. Some women, such as Annapurna Devi, Krishna Maya Dahal, and Mukta Devi Bhattarai, Mohini Bala Gohain, Purnada Devi did not receive recognition despite their participation in the freedom movement. Along with official records and common textbooks, their sacrifices ought to be honored by the public.

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