

Lesson -6

Moanariya Rebellion

A. SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS :

1. How did Hindu religion enter into Ahom royal family?
What was its reaction in Assam?

Ans: Many historians are of the opinion that one of the primary causes for the outbreak of the Moamoria rebellion in Assam was the change of religion and the persecution started by the Ahom rulers. The Ahoms had come to Assam around the eighteenth century and for many centuries thereafter they followed their own religion, customs and ways. They had their own sacred books and the priestly class. But as a result of the intermingling of cultures and religions over the years, the Ahom , the Ahom rulers too accepted Hinduism.

Towards the middle of the 18th cent., they started bringing the Hindu teachers from Bengal and became initiated in Brahmanical sect of Hinduism. Saktism was a part of this development and many of the Ahom rulers eventually became strong supporters and promoters of the Sakti movement in Assam.

The change of religion on the part of the Ahom rulers had a lot of repercussions in Assam. It brought about a

religious clash between the Brahmanical sect and the Vaishnava sect. In the fifteenth century, Vaishnava movement had risen and spread in different parts of India. Under the leadership of Sri Sankardeva and Sri Madhava Deva Vaishnavism began to spread quite fast in Assam. But the Ahom rulers remained steadfast in their Brahmanical ideology. As a result, there occurs a clash of beliefs. Under the influence of the Brahmanical gurus, they started persecuting the Vaishnava Satras which had become highly influential-politically, socially, economically and religiously. Ahom rulers such as Gadadhar Singha, Siva Singha and his queen Phuleswari, Rajeswar Singha, Lakshmi Singha, Gaurinath Singha, etc. were noted for the persecution of Vaishnavas.

Neo-Vaishnavites preached a classless and casteless society. The Moamariya Satra started by Aniruddha Deva was one of the firm believers of this Vaishnava ideology. But the Ahoms did their best in blocking the spread of this new ideology. In fact, due to opposition, Sri Sankardeva and Sri Madhavadeva were forced to flee from Assam to the Koch Kingdom of King Narayana. After the death of Sri Sankardeva, his disciples came back to Ahom kingdom and established Vaishnava centres. Within a short time, the movement became very popular and thousands of Assamese population particularly the people of Moran community joined the movement. The Ahom rulers, however, gave a lot of support to Vaishnava Satras such as Auniati Satra, Dakshinapat Satra, Garhmar Satra, Kuruabahi Satra, etc. which basically belonged to Brahma

Sanghati. As a result of the royal support, these Stars became very rich and eventually started challenging the might of independent Moamariya Satra forcing the Moamariyas to fight for their existence and rights. Thus, the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion was one of the results of the change of religion on the parts of the Ahom rulers.

2. Describe the causes of second and third Moamoria uprising during the reign of Gaurinath Singha.

Ans: The outbreak of Moamoria rebellion in 1769 is an important episode in the history of medieval Assam. The rebellion passed through several stages or phases. The first phase of the rebellion began during the reign of Lakshmi Singha in 1769 and ended with the rescue and re-installation of Lakshmi Singha in 1770.

(i) Cause of second Moamariya uprising :- (1782) The second phase started in April, 1782 and lasted only, for a few months. After the death of Lakshmi Singha in 1780 Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795) ascended the throne. He was a firm believer of Shaktism. He was a bitter enemy of the Vaishnava culture. Therefore, soon after coming to power he started a series of persecution against the Moamariya Satra and its disciples. His ruthless persecution led the Moamariyas to rise up to revolt against him. This time they suddenly attacked the king midway while he was returning to his palace in Rangpur, the capital city. Several attendants and body guards of the king got killed and the king riding an elephant managed to reach the palace in safety. This

was the starting point of the second phase of the rebellion. Soon the Moamariyas rose up in rebellion in different parts of upper Assam and thereafter marched towards the Ahom capital, Rangpur. However, the royal forces led by Ghanshyam Buragohain put up a strong resistance against the advancing Moamariya forces. Due to his military capability and better organization, he was able to keep off the Moamariya forces for some time. This phase of the rebellion seemed to have ended towards the end of 1782.

(ii) Cause of the third phase of the Moamoria rebellion :- (1786 to 1794) After the death of Ghanashyam Burhagohain in 1782, his son, Larhi Burhagohain popularly known as Purnananda Buragohain succeeded as the new Rajmantri. Soon after his accession to power he continued the work of his father in organising the Ahom military forces against the rebellious Moamariyas. Eventually, he captured all authority of the state and started to control the affairs of the state in an autocratic manner. This alienated the vast majority of the Moamariyas who wanted independence and freedom of religion.

The Moamariyas felt that they would not be allowed to continue their work under the new Buragohain. Therefore, they took up arms and started the third phase of the rebellion sometime in 1786. This time the major part of the rebellion was organised by Dafla Bahatiyas under the leadership of certain Harihar Tatni. Thereafter, the Moamariyas managed to reach the capital, Rangpur and installed Bharath Singha, one of the relatives of the

Moamariya Mahanta as the new king. The new arrangement continued up to the arrival of Capt. Thomas Welsh in Upper Assam in January, 1794. Within a short time, he was able to subdue most of the chiefs of the Moamariyas. But unfortunately, before he could complete the task he was called back by Sir John Shore who followed the policy of non-intervention.

3. Describe the causes of the First Moamoria uprising and its results.

Ans: The outbreak of Moamoria rebellion in 1769 is viewed as a landmark event in the history of medieval Assam. The event is a major turning-point in her history because it initiated a series of developments in Assam in the later years which changed her very face.

(i) Causes that prepared the ground for the first Moamariya uprising :- The rebellion that broke out in 1769 and ended in 1805 emerged as a result of several causes. The rebellion passed through several stages or phases. The first phase which began in 1769 lasted up to 1770. The main factors that prepared the ground for the outbreak of the uprising are the following:

(a) Murder of Nityanandadev during the reign of King Bhaga Raja.

(b) Destruction of Satra institutions by Gadadhar Singha.

(c) Misuse and exploitation of the paik system under various rulers.

(d) Oppression of the Vaishnavas by Siva Singha and his queen Phuleswari and Rajeswar Singha, under the leadership of Kirti Chandra Barbaruah.

(e) Lowering the position of Ahom nobility by the various actions of Kirti Chandra Barbaruah, etc. Immediate cause for the rebellion: The immediate cause for the outbreak of the first phase of the Moamoria rebellion in 1769 was mainly the persecution of Vaishnavas initiated by Lakshmi Singha under the leadership of Kirti Chandra Barbaruah. Both were firm believers in Shaktism and used their Royal power to spread this culture in Assam.

Under the influence of Brahminical Chandra let loose a reign of severe persecution against the Moamariyas belonging to the Momariya Satra they were the strongest supporter of Vaishnavism in Assam. Secondly, Kirti Chandra refused to accept the annual tribute which consisted of some elephants brought by Naharkhowa Saikia and Raghab Neog on behalf of the Momariya Satra. He severely punished both the men on the pretext of supplying defective elephants to the king.

It was an insult which the Moamariyas couldn't forget. All these forced the Mom Areas to take up arms and fight for their existence and rights. Thus, originated the first phase of the rebellion in 1769. Nearly 7,000 Momariyas

got together and put up a strong front against the Ahom forces.

(ii) Results of the rebellion :- the first part of the rebellion started from November 1769 and ended with the re-installation of Lakshmi Sinha in April 1770. The phase of the rebellion was mainly organised by Gagini deka alias Bayan Deka, Raghab Neog, etc. During the first stage, the rebels organised the Revolt near the capital Rangpur and captured the Ahom king Lakshmi Singha. The Rebels also captured Kriti Chandra Barbaruah and killed him along with his three sons.

Mohanmala Deo, eldest son of Rudra Singha was also killed. Thereafter, the rebels appointed Ramakanta or Ramananda, son of Nahar Khowa was the new Ahom ruler. Raghab Neog became the Borboruah. Later, Raghab was killed by the royalist With The King of Kuranganayani, the Manipuri queen of Rajeshwar Singh whom Raghab forcibly taken as his wife. Subsequently many of the main Moamariya leaders including Ramananda were killed. King Lakshmi Sinha was rescued and made King again. The first part of the rebellion and that with the re-installation of Lakshmi Sinha in 1770.

One of the major consequences of the first phase of the rebellion was the continuation of the persecution against the Moamariyas. Once Lakshmi Singh got back his son in 1770 after his rescue from the Moamariyas' captivity, he started a series of severe persecution against the Moamariyas. The Moamariya Mahanta and

his son Gagini Deka were arrested and killed police top hundreds of innocent Momo who has killed without trial. The ruthless persecution also resulted in the revolts of certain Momariya groups in different parts of the state. A group of Momariya under the leadership of Gobinda Gaonburha revolted in the Sagunmuri area. The Hating Morans too raise the banner of Revolt against the royal powers. All this led to the weakening of the Ahom power and position.

The villages and political persecutions initiated by Lakshmi Singha and his Barbaruah alienated the Moamariyas who waited for an opportunity to strike at the Ahom royal power once again. Thus, the actions of Laskhmi Singha and Kriti Chandra prepared the ground for the outbreak of the second phase of the rebellion which began in 1782.

4. Under what circumstances did Gaurinath Singha seek help from the British?

Ans: The military expedition under captain Thomas Welsh to Assam is a major event in the history of Assam as it brought far-reaching consequences in Assam in later years. The expedition was undertaken on the basis of the special request of them at Ahom King Gaurinath Singh who beset by the following rebellions.

(i) Moamoria rebellion :- The most important rebellion that threatened his throne was Moamariya rebellion which began in Upper Assam. This rebellion had broken out during the reign of Gaurinath's father, Laskhmi

Singha in 1769. The Moamariyas rose up in rebellion for second time in 1782 during Gaurinath's time. The third phase of the rebellion started some time in 1786 on a stronger scale. This time they captured the capital, Rangpur and raised up Bharath Singha as the new Ahom king. Under these circumstances, King Gaurinath Singha was forced to run away from his capital Rangpur to Guwahati.

(ii) Rebellion of Krishnanarayan :- Krishnanarayan was the ruler of the kingdom of Darrang. During the reign of Gaurinath Singha, he revolted against him because Gaurinath Singha had hatched a conspiracy and got Hansa Narayan, his father, killed. The cold-blooded murder infuriated his son Krishnanarayan, who raised a flag of rebellion against the king. In his revolt he was helped by Choudhary brothers named Hardatta-Bridatta. The rebellion got a wide support from the people of the region.

(iii) Establishment of independent kingdoms :- The rebellion of Moamoria inspired the people of different regions of Ahom kingdom to rise up against the Ahom ruler particularly because of the oppressive policies of the Ahom officials. The people of Majuli under the command of Gobha and the people of Bengmara (Tinsukia) under the leadership of Sarbananda rose up in rebellion. Each of them carved out semi independent regions within the Ahom kingdom with little allegiance to the Ahom authority.

(iv) Revolt of Bairagi Raja of Guwahati :- Due to the various rebellions that took place in Upper Assam, the Ahom king Gaurinath was forced to run away to Guwahati. But here too, he had to face a rebellion. This was organised by a man named Bairagi Raja. With the help of 100 men, he forced Gaurinath Singha to flee from Guwahati to Goalpara. Later, Bairagi declared himself to be the king of Guwahati.

Thus, by 1792 Gaurinath Singha was surrounded by rebellions all round him. Therefore in his despair, Gaurinath sent an urgent request to the British to help him in his trouble. The British who were waiting for an opportunity to come to Assam sent a military expedition to Assam under the leadership of Captain Thomas Welsh in 1792.

5. Why did Captain Welsh lead an expedition to Assam?

Ans: The arrival of a British military expedition under captain Thomas Welsh to Assam should be viewed as an important event in the annals of Assam. The event had far reaching consequences full stops the expedition had been despatched by the British government in Bengal with several goal in mind.

(i) Collect information :- One of the primary goals of the military expedition headed by Captain Thomas Welsh was to collect detailed information about the state and its Political situation. The British hardly knew anything worthwhile about the state and the hilly region that surrounded the state. The foreigners were not welcomed

in this region. Therefore the Bengal Government under which Assam and the entire north-east fell wanted to get first-hand information about the region.

(ii) To support the Ahom Ruler :- The British military expedition was sent on the explicit request of Ahom ruler Gaurinath singha who had to run away from the capital, rangpur in Upper Assam due to Moamoria rebellion which broke out in 1769. The rebellion had spread far and wide in Upper Assam. Beside, many parts of lower Assam were also revolting against the central our Ahom rule. Therefore, the King sought help to crush this rebellions. The British wanted to please the ruler as they were interested in concluding a commercial treaty with him and thereby make an opening in the region.

(iii) To block the Burmese expansion :- By 1792, the Burmese had conquered Manipur and Cachar. They were waiting for an opportunity to conquer Assam. The British was concerned about the rising power of the Burmese. The British knew that King Bodopaya was a capable ruler of Burma who started a period of military conquest and territorial expansion. They knew that their next target would be Assam and so wanted by all means to prevent the conquest of Assam by the Burmese. For this British had to get a foothold in Assam before the inched their way to Assam.

(iv) To make a base for conquest of Assam and the neighbouring states :- By 1792, many parts of India had been conquered by the British. The British were

determined to bring the whole of India under their sway. The vast region of North-East India remained practically cut off from the British influence or control. This vast region could not be left independent as the British wanted the entire India to be brought under their control. Secondly, Assam was the best from where the British could move towards the hilly region of Manipur, Nagaland North-eastern Frontier areas. Therefore, they had to bring Assam under their control sooner or later. This was another important goal of the expedition.

(v) The immediate objectives :- the military expedition the lead by Captain Thomas Welsh had the following immediate objectives in mind:

(a) To establish law and order in Guwahati by explaining the Bairagi Raja.

(b) To bring about a settlement between Krishna Narayan of the Darrang and and GauriNath Singha.

(c)To suppress the Moamoria rebellion that existed in Assam.

(d) Enthroned Gaurinath as the Ahom king after crushing the Moamoria rebellion.

(e) To prepare a report on Assam for future consultation.

(f) To make a commercial treaty between the company and Assam which is favourable to the British.

With these aims in view, the British government in Bengal sent a military expedition under Capt. Thomas Welsh in November, 1792. The Expedition remained in Assam for about one and half years and returned to Bengal in July, 1794.

6. Narrate the role played by Purnananda Buragohain in Moa Mariya uprisings.

Ans: The outbreak of the Moamoria rebellion during the time of Lakshmi Singha in 1769 is a turning-point in the history of Assam. The event had far-reaching consequences in the social, economic, cultural, religious and political aspect of the state. The rebellion passed through several stages or phases. The third phase of the rebellion started soon after the accession of Larhi Buragohain popularly known as Purnanand. The third phase seemed to have become very strong by the beginning of 1786 and lasted upto 1794.

Purnananda became the Buragohain for the Prime Minister of the Ahom kingdom during the reign of Gaurinath Singha. He was the Rajya Mantri or Buragohain from 1782 to 1817 a period of nearly 35 years. Since Gaurinath was an inefficient and a lazy ruler all authority and power passed on to the Buragohain. Purnananda taking advantage of the situation took complete control of the administration. Not only he capture all state power and authority but also put to death all those who opposed him or stood on his way.

Soon after coming to power Purnananda continued the work of his father in organising the military forces against the rebellious Moomias. Rajyamantri's or reorganisation of the state and its various administrative machinery alienated the vast majority of the Moomariyas who wanted Independence and freedom of religion. The Moomariyas felt that they would not be allowed to continue their work under the new Buragohain.

Although Purnananda did not persecute the Moomariyas on grounds of religion yet his attempt to reduce their power and position compared them to rise up in rebellion once again. This time the Moomariyas were much stronger and better organised. They managed to defeat the royal forces forcing Gaurinath Singha to flee to Guwahati. Soon after the capture of Rangpur, they declared Bharth Singha as the new king of Assam.

Purnananda Buragohain meanwhile tried his best to put up a strong fight against the Moomariyas. But he had to suffer some defeats. Later he got a contingent of 30,000 men sent by Gaurinath Singha. He attacked the Rebel areas with his new forces but unfortunately he couldn't get much success. With lots of efforts he tried to erect a line of forts from the Bar-Ail to the Karikatiya Ali along the Namdang River. However, the scarcity of food stuff for his troops compelled him to retreat to Dibrugarh in 1789. Eventually he built a strong centre of Defence in and around Dichai. The Centre later became the nucleus of the town of Jorhat. From Jorhat Purnananda tried his

best to attack the Moamariyas and push them back from Rangpur. He encouraged the villagers around the Rangpur to fight against Moamariyas. He even gave help military training to the people and inspired them to fight against the Moamariyas. He also took help from many satradhikars in his fight against the Moamaiyas. But Purnananda's efforts didn't bear much fruit. The Moamariyas continued to cause havoc in different parts of the country until 1805. But the great defence put up by Purnanand prevented them from spreading further. This was one of the greatest achievements of Purnananda.

7. How far Kirti Chandra Barbaruah was responsible in Moamariya uprisings?

Ans: Moamariya rebellion is one of the most significant episodes in history of Assam. It is one of the those events which greatly affected the social, economic, religious and political fabric of Assam. The rebellion came about as a result of several causes. One of the major factors that contributed for the outbreak of this great uprising was the role played by Kirti Chandra Borboruah. He contributed for the outbreak of the revolution in two ways:

(i) Alienated the Ahom nobles: Kirti Chandra was the son of Rupchandra who was the Borboruah during the time of Siva Singha. On the death of Rupchandra in 1714 King Siva Singha appointed his son, Kirti Chandra to the post of Borboruah. Soon after becoming the Barbaruah he became very powerful and captured most of the royal

power. Therefore, when rudrasingha died in 1751 kriti chandra Rajeshwar Sinha instead of MohanMala Deo the eldest son of Rudra Singha.

(1774-1751). Kriti Chandra made Rajeshwar Singh the king (1744 – 1769) even when most of the high officials of the kingdom supported the cause of Mohanmala Deo. Not content with this, Preeti Chandra exiled Mohanmala Deo to the forest of Nampur. As he has become very powerful there were few men who could stand against him. A good number of Ahom official were against the autocratic functioning of the Barbaruah. After the death of Rajeshwar Singha in 1769, once again gain Kriti Chandra followed his wins and fancy is in installing a new king. This time kriti Chandra was determined to make his favourite Laksmi Singh her the son of Rajeshwar Singh that King.

The other group consisting of Bhagi Buragohain and others favoured Mohanmala. But Kriti Chandra opposed all moves and made sure that his favourite was appointed to the post of the kingdom. Thus, by his various actions he alienated most of the higher officials of the Ahom kingdom. The antagonised the Ahom nobles waited for an opportunity to hit back. During this long spell of being the burger over 55 years (1714 to 1769) is various action alienated the not only the people but also the Ahom nobility.

(ii) Oppression of Vaishnavas :- Another factor that contributed much for the outbreak of the out uprising in 1769 was the oppression of the Vaishnavas Satra and

its disciples. The reign of King Siva Singha was noted for severe prosecution of the vaishnavas. Both the king as well as the Queen Phuleswari were firm believers of Shakti cult and got Royal support for the spread of this new culture in Assam. They, therefore began to persecute the vaishnavas who were opposed to this new culture. The work of prosecution was mainly undertaken by Kirti Chandra who had also become an important figure of his movement. The Queen and Kirti Chandra forced the Vaishnavas Satradhikars, mahantas and bhakats including those of the Moamaiya Satra to participate in certain Shakti religious rites which were imposed by them.

As Shiva Singha ruled over 30 years 1714-1744 the persecution of the wisers was last long alienating a good number of people. The persecution organised by the Barbaruahs were continued on a higher scale as well as and during the reign of the next king Rudra Singha (1744-1751) as well as during the reign of Rajeshwar Singha which ended in 1751. When Lakshmi Singh became the new king in 1769 the persecution of Vaishnavas particularly those belonging to the Moamariya Satra had reached a peak.

Kirti Chandra was determined to wipe out the Moamariya Satra had they been the strongest pillars of the Vaishnava Movement in Assam. When the oppression became too much to bear the Moamariyas took up arms to fight for their existence. The result was the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion.

Thus, there is no denying the fact that the factor that contributed most for the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion was the high-handed actions of Kriti Chandra Barbaruah. During the long 55 years as Barbaruah, he alienated the Ahom nobility and the general masses leading to a public outburst in April, 1769.

8. Describe the role Captain Welsh to suppress the Moamoria uprising.

Ans: The arrival of Capt. Thomas Welsh in Assam in 1792 is an important chapter in the history of Assam. The event had far-reaching consequences in later years. The event marks the beginning of the British domination of Assam and the neighbouring states. The Moamoria rebellion began in 1769 with the accession of King Lakshmi Singha. The main cause for the rebellion was the persecution of Vaishnavas particularly those belonging to the Moamariya Satra. Secondly, the high-handed actions of Kriti Chandra Barbaruah alienated not only the masses but also the Ahom nobles who waited for an opportunity to hit back.

Although the first phase of the rebellion ended in the 1770, yet the Moamariyas rose up a second time in 1782 and a third time some time in 1786. During the third phase of the rebellion rebels captured Rangpur, the Ahom capital forcing Gaurinath Singha to flee to Guwahati. Soon after this, the Moamariyas put up Bharath Singha as the new king of Assam. Even in Guwahati, Gaurinath Singha had no peace and was surrounded by rebellions that he faced. The British who

were looking for an opportunity to come to Assam took the chance and sent a military expedition under Capt. Welsh. Welsh reached Assam in November, 1792 and immediately tried to bring peace and order in the Ahom kingdom. Firstly, he directed his attention to the revolt of Bairagi of Guwahati and got him killed in the battle. Therefore, Capt. Welsh tried to bring peace between Gaurinath Singha and Krishnanarayan, the ruler of Darrang. Capt. Thomas Welsh managed to bring some sort of peace and order was brought in Lower Assam.

Therefore, he turned his attention to the main problem that confronted the state. The Moamariyas had established a government of their own. They set up Bharath Singha as new Ahom ruler. Therefore, Capt. Thomas Welsh moved with a huge force, towards Rangpur the centre of Moamoria rebellion. Captain Welsh started his operation against the Moamariyas in January, 1794. The captain had brought with him 360 soldiers who knew the use of firearms. That he was with their bows and arrows were no match for the European weapons. As a result of their superior weapons and better strategy, the rebels had to suffer a lot of defeats at the hands of company's forces.

In the fight that followed, Bharat Singh was wounded. Hundreds of Moamariyas died in the battlefield. Finally Moamariya left Rangpur and Captain Welsh was able to occupy that city. Ahom king Gaurinath Singha was reinstated as the king of Assam, on March 21, 1794 in the presence of the Captain Welsh and other dignitaries of the state. The Moamariyas continue to fight against the

royal forces in different parts of Upper Assam. Captain Welsh tried to bring the Moamariyas into peaceful negotiations but he failed in the attempt. Therefore the British forces under the guidance of Captain Welsh commenced their attack on the Moamariyas. The British continued and took them at Baghmara, another centre in the month of April, 1794 and much of their resources. By this time, Sir John Shore had become the British Governor-General in India and he was noted for his policy of non-intervention. In line with this policy he ordered Captain West to stop all military operations and return to Calcutta.

Accordingly all military operations against the Moamariyas were stopped. The British contingent returned to Goalpara in July, 1794 and soon thereafter they left for Calcutta.

9. Describe the nature of Moamariyas uprisings.

Ans: The Moamoria rebellion which lasted over 36 years from 1769 to 1805 is one of the most momentous periods in the history of Assam. The event brought far-reaching consequences in the social, economic and religious and political life of the people of Assam. It is viewed as one of the turning points in the history of the state.

Different views :- Historians of Assam have expressed the following main views regarding the nature of the rebellion:

(i) It was religious war.

(ii) It was present uprising.

(iii) It was the first public uprising against the Ahom feudal administration.

(i) It was a religious war :- Many historians view the Moamoria rebellion as a religious war. The main arguments given to support this view are the following:

(a) The main cause for the beginning of the rebellion was the persecution of Vaishnava sect with the help of Brahmanical rulers.

(b) Most of the fighting were organised by Moamariya Mahanta of the Moamariya Satra, the pillar of neo-Vaishnavism in Assam.

(c) During the rebellion there was a serious attempt on the part of the Brahmanism to destroy Vaishnavism.

(ii) It was a peasant uprising: Some historians view the Moamoria rebellion as peasant uprising. The following arguments have been put in support of this view:

(a) In many places the peasants took active part in the rebellions. The Daffals, the people of Nagaon, the Demoriya tribe, etc. took part in the uprising as a result of certain defective economic policies of the Ahom rulers.

(b) One of the important causes for the uprising was the high taxes imposed on the peasants.

(c) Many families of the peasants had to face starvation as they had to work three or four months for the king.

(iii) It was the first public uprising against feudal administration :- There are also some historians who consider the Moamoria rebellion as a public uprising against the feudal system. They have put up the following arguments in support of this view:

(a) The ordinary masses had to suffer a great deal due to overburdening of the Paik duty. The governments granted to many exceptions and the bureaucratic class were exempted from such service. Many rich people could buy of exemption from Paik service.

(b) The Ahom officials lived a luxurious life and while the ordinary people lived a life of starvation and extreme poverty. The economic condition of Assam deteriorated from bad to worse during the 18th century due to defective economics policies and misuse of Paik system.

(c) As a result of the constant wars the peasants were heavily taxed causing immense hardship to the general public.

(d) Destruction of paddy fields and cultivation during wars brought untold misery to the people. The result of all this was the address of public anger through a

rebellion. A study of the rebellion shows that the rebellion had a touch of all the above mentioned opinions.

Therefore, we can say that the Moamariya rebellion was partly a religious war, a peasants uprising and also a public uprising. This seems to be the correct view.

10. Discuss the description of Captain Welsh on Assam.

Ans: The British government sent military expedition under captain Thomas Welsh to Assam in 1792 with a view to help the Ahom king, Gaurinath Singh during his stay in Assam some 1792 to 1794 came into contact with a lot of people. During this period he practically controlled every aspect of the Ahom administration. Towards the latter part of his stay in Assam, captain Welsh sent a detailed report which touched among other things the following aspects:

(i) Political condition of Assam.

(ii) Administrative set-up.

(iii) Agricultural products.

(iv) Mineral and natural resources.

(v) State of internal and external trade.

(vi) Achievement of military expedition made so far, etc. Although there were many factual errors in his report, the report was exhaustive and touched every aspect of Assam's life and Customs. It was an eye-opener for the

British authorities in many ways and people at the ground for future occupation of Assam.

(i) Government :- According to captain Welsh, the Ahom government was monarchical, aristocratic and followed a fraternal system of succession (brothers succeeding). The aristocracy consistency of Patra-mantri-Buragohain, Bargohain, Barpatra Gohain etc. They were permanent and hereditary the officials. Each of them had certain administrative jurisdiction. The government had four division civil, military, judicial and religious departments.

Nearly 12 Phukans and 20 Pharaohs functioned in the civil department. The main vassal kings were of Darrang, Na-duar, Dimoria, Beltolta, Rani, etc. Several tribes in the hilly regions of the state paid their annual tributes to the Ahom king. He also spoke of the paik system extensively. Capt. Welsh mentions about the autocracy of Kriti Chandra Barbaruah, rejection of the throne by Mohanmala Gohain, murder of Moamariya Mahanta, resentment of common people, the cruelty and idleness of Gaurinath Singha, etc.

(ii) Trade :- Capt. Welsh mentioned that Assam had abundance of natural resources. He gives a detailed account of things produced in Assam and by the hill tribes such as Miri, Dafflas, Bhutiya, Khamti, Naga, etc. He also gives an account of the existing salt trade that existed between Bengal and Assam. Import trade consisted consisted of copper and long pepper, ginger, wheat, blankets, cow-tails, rock salt, various types

of clothes, Naga spears, etc. The main items of export consisted of cotton, ginger, gold, musk, pony etc. The main agricultural products of Assam according to Capt. Welsh were sugar-cane, black pepper, opium, indigo, mustard, tobacco, betel-nut, dried betel-nut, ginger rice, etc. The main mineral products were gold, iron and saltpetre. Other items produced in Assam were lac, muga thread, muga cloths, ivory, rhinoceros horn, buffaloe-skin, deer-skin, etc.

Assam had excellent commercial relationship with neighbouring countries such as Cachar, Sylhet, Manipur, Jayantia etc. The medium of trade was gold and salt. The price of the commodities was very cheap.

(iii) Description of Guwahati and Rangpur :- The report mentions details of the two major towns of Assam, namely, Guwahati and Rangpur. According to the report, Guwahati was a populous town. The Brahmaputra river touched the town. He also speaks about the cargo house which was situated close to the river. According to the report Rangpur was a big popular town.

The whole town was surrounded by paddy fields. Most of the lands were owned by the king and the nobles. He concluded his report saying that anarchy would prevail if the British were to go back. This information proved detrimental to the interest of Assam and on the pretext of expelling the Burmese from Assam they occupied Assam.

B. WRITE SHORT NOTES ON :

1. Treaty between Captain Welsh and Gaurinath Singha .

Ans : One of the major objectives of the military expedition under the command of Capt. Thomas Welsh to Assam was to get the Ahom ruler sign a commercial treaty with the British. After putting down most of the rebellions that confronted the Ahom administration, Capt. Welsh made king Gaurinath Singha sign a commercial treaty with him on 28 February, 1793. The treaty contain 14 binding clauses. The main causes of of the treaty were the following:

- (i) 10 per cent duty was to be imposed on all kinds of imports into Asam from British territory.
- (ii) 10 per cent duty was to be imposed on all kinds of exports from Assam to British territory.
- (iii) Rice and grains of all kinds were to be exempted from all kinds of duties.
- (iv) Two custom houses were to be established one at kandahar and the other at Guwahati.
- (v) No European merchant was to be allowed to stay in Assam without the permission from both the government company and the government. By this city, the British established a small foothold in Assam which proves to be an opening for further British action in the ensuing years.

2. Purnananda Burhagohain.

Ans : Larhi Burhagohain popularly known as Purnananda became the Buragohain for the Prime Minister of the ahom kingdom during the reign of Gaurinath Singha. He was the Rajmantri aur Burhagohain from 1782 to 1817 a period of nearly 35 years. Since Gaurinath singha was an efficient and weak ruler, the new Buragohain captured most of the royal authority and eventually to complete control of the administration. One of his great achievements was that he was able to unite the Ahom forces and put up a strong resistance against the advances of the Moamariyas who started the second phase of the Moamoria revolution in 1782.

Because of the strong resistance put up by him the Moamariyas could not make much progress. After the arrival of the British he joined them in the fight against the Moamariyas. Later he learned the Western style of fighting and integrated many of their ideas and method into the Ahom Army. The credit of developing Jorhat as defence town for the Ahom administration goes to Purnananda.

3. Kriti Chandra Barbaruah.

Ans : Kriti Chandra Barbaru borboruah was one of the leading Ahom official who contributed much for the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion in 1769. He was the borboruah of ahom kingdom from 1714 to 1769 – a period of 55 years. He was the son of Rupchandra. He

helped King Shiva Singha and queen phuleswari in oppression and destroying the Satra and the Vaishnava sect. Under the influence of the queen he promoted the cause of Shakti cult in Assam with all Royal might. He continued the persecution of the vaishnavas particularly, the disciples of Moamariyas Satra during the time of Rudra Singha, Rajeswar Singha and Lakshmi Singha. Kirti Chandra was also responsible for the association of Rajeshwar Singha in 1751 and Lakshmi Singha in 1769 instead of the rightful persons. His action thus alienated not only the Moamariyas but also the nobility who wanted the continuation of our home practices and traditions.

4. Krishna Narayan.

Ans : Krishnanarayan who was the ruler of the kingdom of Darrang. During the reign of Gaurinath he revolted against him because Gaurinath had a hatched conspiracy and got Hansanarayan his father, killed. The cold-blooded murder infuriated his son, Krishnanarayan, who raised a flag of rebellion against the king. In his revolt, he was helped by Choudhary brothers named Hardutt-Birdetta. Soon after the arrival of the British military expedition to Assam, Capt.

Thomas Welsh mediated between two rival camps. Captain Welsh made King Gaurinath Singha to recognise Krishna Narayan as the king of Darrang and accordingly he was enthroned as the king of the Darrang on May 24, 1793. On this part Krishna Narayan sent away all the Barkandazes soldiers. He also agreed

to pay an annual sum of Rs. 58,000 in lieu of Paik service a kind of forced labour which people had to render for the state. With the end of Krishnanarayan's revolt was the rebellion of Hardutt-Birdetta Kamrup also ended.

5. Moamariya Mahanta.

Ans : The Vaishnava movement in Assam was started by Sankardeva and his disciple Madhaavadeva. As a result of their efforts ,many Vaishnava Satras were established. The most famous and the most important among them was the Moamariya Satra which was established by Aniruddha Deva. This Satra eventually became very rich and powerful. So much so the Mahanta or the Satradhikars of Moamariya Satra became almost like a mini-king wielding a great deal of power. This led to a clash between the Moamariya Mahanta and Ahom rulers.

With their power and position the more Moamariya tried to control the affairs of the state and started to dictate terms to the Ahom rulers. The rulers opposed their clout and power and wanted them to be in a subordinate position to the king. This clash between the Moamariya and the Ahom ruler was partially responsible for the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion in 1769 during the time of Lakshmi Singha.

6. Matak Kingdom.

Ans : One of the direct result of the Moamoria rebellion was the establishment of Matak kingdom. After the death of Bharth Singha, the Moamariyas of Bengamara (Tinsukia) region rose in rebellion under the leadership of certain Sarbananda. They invited the Burmese twice to Assam causing a great deal of anxiety to Purnananda the Prime Minister. Each time Purnananda Buragohain returned them by offering bribes.

Realizing the importance of keeping the Burmese away from Assam, Purnananda of the administration thought of making Sarbananda a feudal chief. Therefore, he allowed Sarbananda to carve out a territory of his own where the Moron population mostly lived.

This new Kingdom came to be known as Matak Kingdom. The area of the new Kingdom consisted of the region lying between the Brahmaputra and the river with Bengamara Centre. Thereafter Purnananda signed an agreement with Sarbananda in 1805 allowing him to rule the region independently of the Ahom control.

Sarbananda on his part agreed to pay the annual tax or a tribute to the Ahom ruler. In this manner, the Matak Kingdom came to be established.

7. Paik System.

Ans : It was a traditional custom by which all the male persons of the Shom kingdom had to render some physical service to the king for three to four months in a year. All the paiks were organised into got or units which consisted of three or four paiks. One khel consisted few

gots. The first member of the pack got called mul' while the second and the third were called 'dewal' and 'tewal' respectively. Over the years, the paik system came to be exploited by the Shim rulers. They granted exemption from such service to bureaucrats, priests, Brahmins, religious saints, bhakats, etc. One could get exemption from paik service by offering certain amount of money. As a result, the burden of paik service on the ordinary masses increased which created a lot of ill-felling and public anger against the monarchy.

The extension of paik service to longer duration and exploitation of the paik system were some of the important causes for the outbreak of Moamoria rebellion. This was because most of the disciples of Moamariya Satra consisted of the Moran community. Therefore, this suffered due to the exploitation of the paik service. The Moamariya, is therefore, reacted by rebelling against the existing administrative system.

8. The Moamariyas.

Ans : The Vaishnava movement in Assam was initiated by Sri Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavadeva. Later, due to the persecution they fled to Koch kingdom. Some of the disciples set up Vaishnava centres or Satras in different parts of Assam during the later periods. The important Vaishnava Satra among them was the Moamariya Satra which was started by certain Vaishnav Saint named Anniruddha Deva. The disciples and followers of the Satra came to be known as

Moamariyas. They belong to many tribes such as Kacharis, Chutiyas, Boris, Kaivartas and many Hindus group as Brahmamanas, Kayasthas and Kalitas. However, the majority of the Moamariyas consisted of the members from the Moran community. The Morans were quite active in the political, military and in the socio-economic life of Assam. Therefore, their presence in this sect made the Moamariya Satra famous and one of the most wanted Satras of Assam. The result was that within a short time the Moamariyas became very rich and started wielding a great deal of economic and political power in the state.

9. Raghab Neog.

Ans : Raghab Neog was an important Moamariya leader who played a significant role in the first phase of the Moamoria rebellion which began in 1769 during the time of Lakshmi Singh. He belonged to the Moran community. One of the reasons for the starting of the rebellion in 1769 was the insult heaped upon Naharkhowa Saikia and Raghab Neog who had gone to the palace of Lakshmi Singha to submit their annual tribute which consisted of few elephants.

Kriti Chandra refused to accept their tribute on the pretext that the elephants were defective. The action of Kriti Chandra was an insult on the Moamariya Satra and this was one of the factors that precipitated the crisis in 1769. After the capture of Rangpur by Moamariyas appointed Ramananda or Ramakanta as the new king and made Raghab Neog the Barbaruah.

Soon the Moamariya rebel managed to capture Lakshmi Singh and kuranganayani the mother of Lakshmi Singha. The lady was forcibly taken as wife of Ragha Neog. But unfortunately, he was killed by royalist in 1770 during a Huchari party.

10. Flight of king to Nagaon.

Ans : During the third phase the Moamoria rebellion, the rebels had raised up Bharath Singh's as their new forcing the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha to flee from Rangpur, to Nagaon. However, the king couldn't stay long in Nagaon as the people of the area didn't want the presence of the king in their area due to the oppressive rule of the Ahom officials under the leadership of Sindhura Hazarika. As a result of the continuous war against the Moamariya rebels, the people under the leadership of Sindhura Hazarika. As a result of the continuous war against the Moamariya rebellion the people under the ahom domination was heavily taxed.

Their period of paik service was also extended far beyond four months. All these alienated the people of Nagaon as they had to suffer a lot of hardship due to the presence of king in their area. Secondly, the fear of Moamariya attack over the area made the people turn against the king and so they compelled the king to flee from Nagaon to Guwahati. That is why the people of Nagaon came to be known as 'Raja-kheda Nagayanas'.

C.VERY SHORT TYPE QUESTIONS :

1. Who was the religious teacher of Lakshmi Singha?

Ans: (please consult teacher).

2. What was constructed in Molou field?

Ans: (Please consult teacher).

3. Under what community did the majority of the Moamariyas belong?

Ans: The majority of the Moamariyas belonged to the Moran community.

4. What punishment was given to Nahar Khowa Saikia?

Ans: The annual tribute by him was not accepted by Kirti Chandra Barbaruah.

5. Whom of Ahom Royal Dynasty was brought under the control of the Moamriyas?

Ans: The Ahom king Lakshmi Singh's brought under the control of the Moamariyas.

6. Who killed Raghab Neog?

Ans: Royalists killed Raghab Neog during a Huchari party organised with the help of Kuranganayani, the Manipuri princess.

7. Who was made the king by the Moamariyas in the first rebellion?

Ans: During the first rebellion, the Moamariyas made Ramakanta or Ramananda, the son of Nahar Khowa the king.

8. What was the Ahom name of a Gaurinath Singha?

Ans: Gaurinath Singha took the Ahom name of Suhitpungpha.

9. Which was the second capital of the Ahom during the reign of Gaurinath Singha?

Ans: The second capital of the Ahom during the reign of Gaurinath Singha was Jorhat.

10. Who was made the king of Bengamara by the Moran?

Ans: Sarbananda was made the king of Bengamara by the Morans.