

SYLLABUS

HISDSC302T

HISTORY OF ASSAM FROM 1826 TO 1947 CE

Unit-I

1. First Anglo-Burmese War and the Treaty of Yandaboo
2. Annexations of Cachar, Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills.

Unit-II

1. Advent of the British
 - a. Administrative Reorganization under David Scott
 - b. Annexation of Lower Assam
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Unit-III

1. Factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness
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Unit-IV

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CAREER STUDY
The Learning App

UNIT – 1

ONE MARK:

1. **Q:** When did the First Anglo-Burmese War take place?
A: 1824–1826 CE.
2. **Q:** Which treaty ended the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: Treaty of Yandaboo.
3. **Q:** In which year was the Treaty of Yandaboo signed?
A: 1826 CE.
4. **Q:** Which British Governor-General led the war against Burma?
A: Lord Amherst.
5. **Q:** What was the main cause of the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: Burmese expansion into Assam and Manipur.
6. **Q:** Which kingdom did the British help restore after the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: Ahom Kingdom (through local rulers).
7. **Q:** Which territories did Burma cede to the British under the Treaty of Yandaboo?
A: Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintia Hills.
8. **Q:** What was the significance of the Treaty of Yandaboo?
A: It ended the war and established British control over Assam.
9. **Q:** Who became the first British political agent in Assam after the war?
A: Captain Welsh.
10. **Q:** When was Cachar annexed by the British?
A: 1835 CE.
11. **Q:** Which ruler of Cachar was deposed by the British?
A: Raja Govinda Chandra.

12. **Q:** Why did the British annex Cachar?
A: Due to political instability after the death of Raja Govinda Chandra.
13. **Q:** When were the Jaintia Hills annexed by the British?
A: 1835 CE.
14. **Q:** What was the reason for the annexation of Jaintia Hills?
A: Death of the local king without a male heir and administrative issues.
15. **Q:** Which Khasi chiefdoms were annexed by the British?
A: Khasi Hills (east Khasi Hills and west Khasi Hills).
16. **Q:** When did the British annex the Khasi Hills?
A: 1835–1840 CE.
17. **Q:** Who was the last ruler of Jaintia Hills before annexation?
A: Raja Rajendra Singh.
18. **Q:** What system did the British introduce in the newly annexed areas?
A: British administrative and revenue system.
19. **Q:** How did the First Anglo-Burmese War affect Assam's political status?
A: Assam came under British rule.
20. **Q:** What was the financial impact of the First Anglo-Burmese War on Britain?
A: It caused a heavy economic burden on the British East India Company.
21. **Q:** Which Burmese king fought in the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: King Bagyidaw.
22. **Q:** What role did the Treaty of Yandaboo play in trade?
A: It opened Assam for British trade and revenue collection.

23. **Q:** Which river marked the boundary between British Assam and Burma after the war?
A: The Dibang River (and other parts of eastern Assam).
24. **Q:** Who led the British forces in the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: General Sir Archibald Campbell.
25. **Q:** What happened to the Manipuri kingdom after the Treaty of Yandaboo?
A: British restored Churachand Singh as ruler under their supervision.
26. **Q:** What administrative change did the British make in Cachar after annexation?
A: Introduced British magistrates and revenue officers.
27. **Q:** Which hill tribe resisted British annexation in Khasi Hills?
A: Khasi tribes under local chiefs.
28. **Q:** How did the local people react to the British annexations?
A: Mixed reactions: some cooperated, while others resisted.
29. **Q:** What was the long-term impact of the annexations on Assam?
A: Assam became fully integrated into British India.
30. **Q:** What year marks the official beginning of British administration in Assam?
A: 1826 CE, after the Treaty of Yandaboo.

TWO MARK:

- ☐ **Q:** When and why was the First Anglo-Burmese War fought?
A: The First Anglo-Burmese War was fought from 1824 to 1826 CE due to Burmese expansion into Assam, Manipur, and neighboring areas, which threatened British interests in northeast India.

□ **Q:** What was the outcome of the First Anglo-Burmese War?

A: The war ended with the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 CE, resulting in the British gaining control over Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintia Hills, while Burma agreed to pay indemnity.

□ **Q:** Who signed the Treaty of Yandaboo on behalf of the British and Burma?

A: The Treaty was signed by General Sir Archibald Campbell for the British and King Bagyidaw for Burma.

□ **Q:** What were the key terms of the Treaty of Yandaboo?

A: The treaty required Burma to cede Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and Jaintia Hills to the British, pay a war indemnity, and allow British trade in Burmese territories.

□ **Q:** Why was Assam important for the British?

A: Assam was strategically important for the British as it provided a buffer against Burma and access to tea plantations and trade routes.

□ **Q:** Who became the first British political agent in Assam after the war?

A: Captain Welsh was appointed as the first British political agent to administer Assam and stabilize the region.

□ **Q:** How did the First Anglo-Burmese War impact the local rulers of Assam?

A: Some local rulers were restored under British supervision, but overall, the region came under British administrative control, reducing the power of traditional kings.

□ **Q:** When was Cachar annexed and why?

A: Cachar was annexed in 1835 CE after the death of Raja Govinda Chandra, leaving no strong heir, which led to administrative instability.

□ **Q:** How did the British administer Cachar after annexation?

A: The British introduced magistrates, revenue officers, and a structured administrative system to maintain law and order.

□ **Q:** Who was the last ruler of Cachar before British annexation?

A: Raja Govinda Chandra was the last ruler of Cachar before it was annexed by the British.

□ **Q:** When and why were the Jaintia Hills annexed?

A: The Jaintia Hills were annexed in 1835 CE due to the death of Raja Rajendra Singh without a male heir, creating administrative difficulties.

□ **Q:** How did the annexation affect the local population of Jaintia Hills?

A: The British imposed their administrative and revenue systems, but local chiefs retained some authority, leading to partial resistance and cooperation.

□ **Q:** Which Khasi chiefdoms came under British control?

A: The Khasi Hills, including east and west Khasi Hills, were brought under British rule between 1835 and 1840 CE.

□ **Q:** What challenges did the British face in the Khasi Hills?

A: The Khasi tribes resisted British control, and the hilly terrain made administration and revenue collection difficult.

□ **Q:** Who was the last ruler of Jaintia Hills before annexation?

A: Raja Rajendra Singh was the last ruler of Jaintia Hills.

□ **Q:** What was the financial impact of the First Anglo-Burmese War on Britain?

A: The war was very costly for the British East India Company, leading to huge expenditures on military campaigns and administration.

□ **Q:** How did the annexations contribute to British expansion in Northeast India?

A: The annexations gave the British control over strategic areas, ensured security from Burma, and allowed access to natural resources.

☐ **Q:** How did the Treaty of Yandaboo affect trade in Assam?

A: The treaty opened Assam to British trade, enabling revenue collection and development of commerce in the region.

☐ **Q:** Which local ruler was restored in Manipur after the treaty?

A: Churachand Singh was restored as ruler under British supervision in Manipur.

☐ **Q:** How did the British maintain law and order in newly annexed areas?

A: They introduced British magistrates, police systems, and revenue collection mechanisms.

☐ **Q:** What role did the First Anglo-Burmese War play in shaping Assam's history?

A: It marked the beginning of British administration in Assam, replacing traditional rule and integrating the region into colonial India.

☐ **Q:** What was the reaction of the local people to British annexation?

A: Reactions were mixed: some tribes resisted, while others accepted British administration for stability.

☐ **Q:** How did the annexations affect tribal autonomy in Assam?

A: Tribal chiefs lost much of their independent power but retained limited authority under British supervision.

☐ **Q:** Why did the British annex Jaintia and Khasi Hills gradually rather than immediately?

A: Due to difficult terrain and resistance from local tribes, the British annexed these areas gradually over a few years.

☐ **Q:** What was the long-term significance of these annexations for Assam?

A: These annexations established British political control, integrated Assam into India, and laid the foundation for modern administration.

BOARD ANSWER:

1./ **Discuss the causes, course, and consequences of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826).**

Ans: The First Anglo-Burmese War, fought between 1824 and 1826, was a significant event in the history of Assam and northeast India, marking the beginning of British control in the region. The primary cause of the war was the aggressive expansion of the Burmese kingdom under King Bagyidaw, which threatened the territories of Assam, Manipur, and other neighboring regions. The Burmese annexation of Cachar and their interference in Manipur's affairs alarmed the British East India Company, who considered these regions important for trade, security, and as a buffer against further Burmese expansion into British India. Additionally, border disputes and the Burmese attack on British allies in the northeast provided immediate triggers for military confrontation.

The course of the war was long and arduous due to the difficult terrain and the determined resistance offered by Burmese forces. The British, under the leadership of General Sir Archibald Campbell, launched multiple expeditions into Assam and Manipur, facing challenges such as dense forests, rivers, and hostile weather conditions. The conflict saw a series of battles along the Brahmaputra valley and surrounding regions. The British combined military strength with strategic diplomacy, gradually pushing Burmese forces back. Despite initial setbacks and high casualties on both sides, the superior organization, artillery, and resources of the British ultimately forced the Burmese to negotiate for peace.

The war concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24 February 1826, which had profound consequences for Assam and the wider region. Under the treaty, Burma ceded Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and the Jaintia Hills to the British, while also agreeing to pay a large indemnity for the cost of the war. This marked the beginning of direct British administration in Assam, with Captain Welsh appointed as the first political agent to oversee governance. The treaty also facilitated

the restoration of local rulers in Manipur, such as Churachand Singh, under British supervision, establishing a system of indirect control alongside direct administration. The First Anglo-Burmese War had severe financial implications for the British, costing millions of pounds and highlighting the strategic importance of the northeast as a buffer zone. For the local population, the war and subsequent annexations meant the end of traditional kingdoms and the introduction of British administrative, legal, and revenue systems, which laid the foundation for modern governance in Assam. Economically, the war opened Assam to trade, allowing the British to exploit resources and establish a framework for commercial development. Politically, it secured the British frontier from Burmese incursions and integrated Assam firmly into the colonial structure, significantly influencing the region's future trajectory.

2./ Explain the Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) and its significance in shaping the political history of Assam.

Ans: The Treaty of Yandaboo, signed on 24 February 1826, marked a defining moment in the history of Assam and the northeast region of India, formally ending the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826). The treaty was signed between the British East India Company, represented by General Sir Archibald Campbell, and the Burmese king, Bagyidaw, following two years of intense military engagement. The immediate cause of the treaty was the prolonged and costly war, which had drained Burmese resources and exposed their inability to sustain military campaigns against the organized forces of the British. For the British, the war highlighted the strategic importance of Assam, Manipur, and surrounding territories as a buffer against Burmese expansion and as a gateway to trade and commerce in northeast India. The signing of the treaty thus formalized British control over key regions while simultaneously establishing the framework for indirect administration and political stability in previously contested areas.

Under the terms of the Treaty of Yandaboo, Burma ceded control of Assam, Manipur, Cachar, and the Jaintia Hills to the British, effectively ending Burmese authority in these territories. Additionally, Burma agreed to pay a substantial indemnity to the British to cover war expenses, signifying the economic and military cost of their failed expansionist ambitions. The treaty also allowed for the restoration of local rulers, particularly in Manipur, where Churachand Singh was reinstated under British supervision, highlighting the policy of indirect rule alongside direct administration. The British were thus able to establish a stable political order while ensuring loyalty from local elites, a strategy that minimized resistance and facilitated governance in newly annexed areas.

The significance of the Treaty of Yandaboo in shaping Assam's political history was profound. Firstly, it marked the beginning of formal British administration in Assam, replacing centuries-old Ahom rule and traditional governance systems. Captain Welsh, appointed as the first British political agent, implemented structured administrative, judicial, and revenue systems, laying the foundation for modern governance in the region. Secondly, the treaty consolidated British control over the northeast frontier, providing strategic security against future Burmese aggression and stabilizing a region that had been politically fragmented and vulnerable to external invasions. Thirdly, the treaty opened the region to trade, allowing the British to exploit natural resources such as timber, tea, and minerals, while integrating Assam into the broader colonial economic network.

Politically, the Treaty of Yandaboo reshaped local power structures by reducing the autonomy of traditional rulers and tribal chiefs, while simultaneously co-opting them into the British administrative framework. This balance of direct and indirect rule enabled the British to maintain order with minimal military intervention, while introducing modern concepts of law, taxation, and governance. Socially, the treaty marked the beginning of a new era in Assam, where traditional practices gradually coexisted with colonial regulations, setting the stage for long-term socio-political transformation. Moreover, the

treaty's impact extended beyond Assam; by securing the northeast frontier, it enhanced British influence over neighboring regions such as Manipur, Cachar, and the Jaintia Hills, which played critical roles in regional politics and trade.

3./ Examine the process and reasons for the annexation of Cachar by the British.

Ans: The annexation of Cachar by the British in 1835 marked a critical phase in the consolidation of British authority in Assam and the surrounding northeastern territories. Cachar, a small but strategically significant kingdom located in the Barak Valley, had been ruled by Raja Govinda Chandra, who was the last sovereign of the region. The kingdom was of interest to the British due to its fertile lands, trade potential, and its strategic position connecting Assam with Bengal and Manipur. The annexation was primarily the result of a combination of internal political instability within Cachar and the British colonial objective of securing their northeastern frontier.

The immediate reason for the annexation was the death of Raja Govinda Chandra without a strong, legitimate heir. His demise created a power vacuum, which led to political chaos, succession disputes, and administrative disarray in Cachar. The lack of a competent ruler rendered the region vulnerable to external intervention and instability. The British, concerned about the possibility of further Burmese or local disturbances, decided to intervene under the pretext of restoring order. This intervention aligned with the larger British policy of consolidating their northeastern borders after the First Anglo-Burmese War and the Treaty of Yandaboo, which had already transferred Assam, Manipur, and Jaintia Hills into British hands. By annexing Cachar, the British ensured political stability and extended their administrative control to the southern parts of Assam.

The process of annexation involved careful British planning and negotiation with local elites. Initially, the British attempted to mediate

succession disputes by supporting minor claimants or influential nobles; however, ongoing conflicts and resistance from local factions made this approach unviable. Consequently, the British assumed direct control over the territory, appointing officials to administer revenue, law, and order. Magistrates and revenue collectors were introduced, and the traditional systems of governance were gradually replaced by British administrative structures. Military support was also deployed to suppress any local resistance and to establish the authority of the colonial administration firmly. The integration of Cachar into British India was thus a combination of political maneuvering, military oversight, and administrative restructuring.

Several underlying factors motivated the British annexation of Cachar. Strategically, the Barak Valley served as an important link between British Bengal and the northeastern frontier, making it crucial for trade, communication, and military logistics. The fertile land of Cachar, suitable for agriculture and resource exploitation, added an economic dimension to the annexation. Moreover, the annexation allowed the British to prevent any resurgence of Burmese influence or local conflicts that could threaten their northeastern possessions. Politically, the annexation reinforced the authority of the British East India Company over smaller kingdoms, demonstrating their capacity to intervene in succession disputes and stabilize territories under indirect threat.

The consequences of the annexation were significant for Cachar and the region at large. Politically, the kingdom lost its independence, and British officials assumed authority over governance and revenue collection. Economically, the integration of Cachar facilitated trade and resource exploitation, providing revenue to the colonial administration. Socially, the annexation introduced British legal and administrative systems, altering traditional power structures and redefining the role of local elites. The annexation of Cachar also set a precedent for subsequent British interventions in nearby hill regions, such as Jaintia and Khasi Hills, where similar strategies were employed to consolidate colonial control.

4./ Analyse the annexation of the Jaintia Hills and Khasi Hills. Discuss the challenges faced by the British in these hill regions.

Ans: The annexation of the Jaintia Hills and Khasi Hills during the early nineteenth century was a significant episode in the consolidation of British authority in Assam and the northeastern frontier of India. Following the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826 and the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo, the British sought to stabilize the region by bringing smaller hill kingdoms under their administrative control. The Jaintia and Khasi Hills were strategically important due to their location between the plains of Assam and the regions of Bengal and Sylhet, as well as their rich natural resources, including forests and minerals. The process of annexation in these hilly regions, however, presented unique challenges, primarily arising from difficult terrain, independent tribal societies, and the complex political situation following the demise of local rulers.

The annexation of the Jaintia Hills was largely triggered by the death of Raja Rajendra Singh without a male heir around 1835. This created political instability and a vacuum in leadership, leading to disputes among local nobles. The British, aiming to prevent unrest and possible Burmese influence, intervened and gradually assumed control of the kingdom. Similarly, the Khasi Hills, composed of several independent chiefdoms, were annexed between 1835 and 1840. The Khasi chiefs had traditionally maintained autonomy over their territories, resisting external interference. To establish British control, the colonial administration had to negotiate with the chiefs, provide assurances, and sometimes use military force to enforce authority. The annexation process was thus a combination of diplomacy, coercion, and administrative restructuring.

The challenges faced by the British in the Jaintia and Khasi Hills were both geographical and socio-political. Geographically, the region's hilly terrain, dense forests, and difficult river crossings made military campaigns, revenue collection, and administration logistically challenging. Communication between British outposts in the plains and

the hill regions was slow and unreliable, complicating governance. Socio-politically, the local population was fiercely independent, and tribal chiefs were resistant to British interference in traditional practices and customs. This required the British to carefully balance the imposition of colonial authority with the retention of some tribal autonomy, a strategy aimed at minimizing rebellion while ensuring control over revenue and law enforcement.

Economically, the British sought to exploit the natural resources of these hills, but the resistance of local communities and the rugged terrain limited immediate returns. Forest resources and minor trade routes were gradually brought under British supervision, providing revenue and access to strategic locations. Administratively, the British introduced magistrates and revenue officers, while retaining some local chieftains in ceremonial or advisory roles to facilitate governance. This dual system of administration, combining direct and indirect rule, was a hallmark of British policy in hilly and tribal regions and helped to maintain relative stability.

The annexation of these hill regions had lasting consequences for Assam and the surrounding areas. Politically, it extended British authority and integrated the Jaintia and Khasi Hills into the colonial administrative framework. Socially, it disrupted traditional power structures, reducing the autonomy of chiefs while introducing colonial legal and revenue systems. Strategically, it secured the northeastern frontier, preventing potential Burmese incursions and stabilizing trade and communication routes between Assam and Bengal. The process also set a precedent for the administration of other tribal areas in northeast India, where the British employed a combination of negotiation, coercion, and structured governance to bring independent territories under their control.

5./ Assess the overall impact of the First Anglo-Burmese War and subsequent annexations on Assam's political, administrative, and economic systems.

Ans: The First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826) and the subsequent annexations of Assam, Cachar, Jaintia Hills, and Khasi Hills marked a watershed in the history of Assam, profoundly transforming its political, administrative, and economic structures. Politically, the war and annexations brought an end to the traditional monarchies and independent tribal chiefdoms that had ruled the region for centuries. With the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, Assam and neighboring territories were formally ceded to the British East India Company, establishing British sovereignty and integrating the region into the colonial framework. Local rulers, such as Churachand Singh in Manipur, were restored under British supervision, while other areas, like Cachar and the hill regions, were directly administered by British officials. This created a dual system of governance that combined direct and indirect rule, gradually undermining traditional authority while maintaining relative political stability. The British control over Assam also ensured a secure frontier against Burmese expansion, reinforcing strategic stability in the northeast.

Administratively, the annexations introduced modern governance structures in the region. The British appointed political agents, magistrates, and revenue officers to oversee law, order, and revenue collection. Traditional methods of administration, which relied on local chieftains and kings, were gradually replaced by standardized colonial systems. In the plains of Assam, the British established regular courts, police, and revenue collection mechanisms, while in the hill areas such as Jaintia and Khasi Hills, a modified system was implemented that allowed limited local autonomy under the supervision of colonial officers. This administrative reorganization facilitated effective governance, reduced local conflicts, and enabled the British to exercise control over previously fragmented territories. The introduction of written records, surveys, and systematic taxation marked the beginning of structured governance in Assam, which had long-lasting implications for the region's development.

Economically, the war and annexations had significant consequences for Assam. The region's integration into the British colonial system opened new avenues for trade and resource exploitation. Fertile plains, forest resources, and mineral wealth were gradually brought under colonial revenue systems, providing a steady source of income for the British administration. The Barak Valley, including Cachar, became important for agriculture and trade, while the hill regions offered timber and minor minerals. The British also introduced a framework for commerce that connected Assam with Bengal and other parts of India, facilitating the movement of goods and resources. However, the economic policies were primarily designed to serve colonial interests, often prioritizing revenue extraction and trade advantages for the British rather than local development. Despite this, the integration laid the foundation for modern economic structures in Assam, including the later development of tea plantations, road networks, and market systems.

The social impact of the war and annexations also deserves mention. Traditional power hierarchies and local governance systems were disrupted, while new administrative roles and revenue obligations were introduced. Tribal chiefs and local elites were co-opted into the colonial administration, which created a class of intermediaries but simultaneously reduced their independent authority. Furthermore, the political stability provided by British rule allowed for the gradual introduction of education, law, and modern infrastructure in Assam, shaping its social and cultural development.

6./ Compare and contrast the annexations of Cachar, Jaintia Hills, and Khasi Hills under British rule.

Ans: The annexations of Cachar, Jaintia Hills, and Khasi Hills under British rule during the early nineteenth century were key events in the consolidation of colonial authority in Assam and the northeastern frontier. While all three regions were incorporated into British India, the processes, reasons, and challenges varied significantly due to

differences in geography, political structures, and local resistance. A comparative examination of these annexations highlights both the common strategies employed by the British and the distinctive features of each region's integration into the colonial framework.

Cachar, located in the fertile Barak Valley, was annexed in 1835 following the death of Raja Govinda Chandra without a strong heir. The immediate cause of annexation was political instability and succession disputes, which left the kingdom vulnerable. The British intervened primarily to restore order and prevent external influence, particularly from the Burmese or rebellious local factions. Administration in Cachar was relatively straightforward due to its plains geography, and the British quickly introduced magistrates, revenue officers, and systematic law enforcement. The process of annexation faced limited resistance compared to the hill regions, as the local population was more accessible, and the economic benefits of British trade and revenue policies facilitated compliance.

In contrast, the Jaintia Hills, annexed around the same period, presented different challenges. The death of Raja Rajendra Singh without a male heir created political uncertainty, but the region's hilly terrain and independent tribal society complicated British administration. The annexation process required careful negotiation with local nobles and sometimes military intervention to establish authority. The British had to balance the imposition of their administrative system with the autonomy traditionally exercised by Jaintia chiefs, which led to a hybrid system combining direct and indirect rule. Resistance from local elites was more pronounced than in Cachar, reflecting the social and political independence of the hill communities. Economically, the Jaintia Hills were less fertile, and revenue potential was limited compared to Cachar, which influenced British administrative priorities.

The Khasi Hills, annexed gradually between 1835 and 1840, also differed significantly from Cachar and Jaintia Hills. The Khasi region consisted of several autonomous chiefdoms, each led by independent chiefs, and the British faced a highly decentralized political structure.

The annexation required prolonged diplomatic engagement, including negotiations, treaties, and occasional use of military force. The challenging hilly terrain, dense forests, and dispersed settlements made governance and revenue collection difficult. The British adopted a system of indirect administration, allowing chiefs to maintain ceremonial authority while ensuring that strategic decisions, law enforcement, and revenue collection were supervised by colonial officers. Resistance in the Khasi Hills was persistent, reflecting the strong local identity and reluctance to accept external control.

Despite these differences, there were notable similarities in the British approach to annexation across the three regions. In all cases, the British justified intervention on grounds of political instability, succession disputes, or the need to maintain security and order. They employed a combination of diplomacy, negotiation, and, where necessary, military support to consolidate control. The introduction of British administrative structures, such as magistrates, revenue officers, and legal systems, was a common feature, although the extent of direct control varied depending on geography and local resistance. Economically, all regions were integrated into the colonial system, although the emphasis differed: Cachar offered fertile plains and trade potential, while Jaintia and Khasi Hills were valued for strategic and resource-related considerations.

UNIT – 2

ONE MARK:

1. **Q:** Who was appointed as the first British Commissioner of Assam after the Treaty of Yandaboo?

A: David Scott.

2. **Q:** When did David Scott start his administrative work in Assam?

A: In 1826 CE.

3. **Q:** What was the main aim of David Scott's administrative reorganization?

A: To establish British control and organize governance in Assam.

4. **Q:** Name one key feature of David Scott's administrative reforms.

A: Division of Assam into districts for better governance.

5. **Q:** Which areas came under Lower Assam during British annexation?

A: Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang regions.

6. **Q:** When was Lower Assam formally annexed by the British?

A: In 1826 CE.

7. **Q:** Which territories were included in Upper Assam under British rule?

A: Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and surrounding regions.

8. **Q:** When was Upper Assam annexed to British India?

A: In 1838 CE.

9. **Q:** Which indigenous ruler opposed British annexation in Upper Assam?

A: Purandar Singha.

10. **Q:** What was the main objective of British annexation of Assam?
A: To consolidate territorial control and establish law and order.
11. **Q:** Name one key administrative change introduced by David Scott in Assam.
A: Introduction of revenue collection through appointed officers.
12. **Q:** Which uprising occurred in Lower Assam between 1826–1830?
A: Phulaguri revolt.
13. **Q:** Who led the anti-British uprising in Upper Assam during the 1820s?
A: Local tribal chiefs and supporters of Purandar Singha.
14. **Q:** What was a common cause of anti-British uprisings in Assam?
A: Dissatisfaction with British administration and taxation policies.
15. **Q:** Which hill tribes resisted British control during this period?
A: Khasi and Jaintia tribes.
16. **Q:** Name one method used by the British to control anti-British uprisings.
A: Military intervention and suppression of rebels.
17. **Q:** What role did David Scott play in preventing uprisings?
A: He negotiated with local chiefs and reformed administration to reduce discontent.
18. **Q:** Which administrative system did the British introduce in Assam under David Scott?
A: District-based administration with officers for revenue and law enforcement.

19. **Q:** Name one economic reform introduced during David Scott's tenure.
A: Standardization of land revenue collection.
20. **Q:** What was the reaction of the Assamese peasants to British revenue policies?
A: They often resisted, leading to localized uprisings.
21. **Q:** Which region witnessed continuous unrest after annexation?
A: Upper Assam.
22. **Q:** How did the British establish control over newly annexed territories?
A: Through a combination of military presence and administrative reorganization.
23. **Q:** Name one key challenge faced by David Scott in Assam.
A: Resistance from local rulers and tribal chiefs.
24. **Q:** Why was the annexation of Upper Assam delayed compared to Lower Assam?
A: Due to resistance from local rulers and difficult terrain.
25. **Q:** Which treaty formalized British control over Assam after the First Anglo-Burmese War?
A: Treaty of Yandaboo (1826).
26. **Q:** What was the role of British political agents in Assam?
A: To oversee administration, law, and revenue collection.
27. **Q:** Name one prominent tribal leader who resisted British authority.
A: Gobinda Konwar (one of the leaders in early uprisings).
28. **Q:** How did anti-British uprisings affect colonial policy?
A: They forced the British to reorganize administration and strengthen military presence.

29. **Q:** Which revenue system did David Scott emphasize?

A: Land revenue collected directly by British-appointed officers.

30. **Q:** What was the overall impact of the administrative reorganization under David Scott?

A: It established British control, reduced local unrest, and laid the foundation for modern administration in Assam.

TWO MARK:

☐ **Q:** Who was David Scott, and why is he significant in Assam's history?

A: David Scott was the first British Commissioner of Assam appointed in 1826 after the Treaty of Yandaboo. He is significant for reorganizing administration, establishing British control, and laying the foundation of colonial governance in Assam.

☐ **Q:** What was the primary goal of David Scott's administrative reorganization?

A: The main goal was to establish law and order, improve revenue collection, and integrate Assam into the British administrative framework.

☐ **Q:** Name one key administrative reform introduced by David Scott.

A: He divided Assam into districts, appointing officers for law enforcement and revenue collection to ensure effective governance.

☐ **Q:** Which areas formed Lower Assam under British annexation?

A: Lower Assam included Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang regions.

☐ **Q:** When was Lower Assam annexed by the British?

A: In 1826 CE, immediately after the First Anglo-Burmese War.

☐ **Q:** Which territories were included in Upper Assam?

A: Upper Assam included Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and surrounding areas, previously under Ahom rule.

☐ **Q:** When did the British annex Upper Assam?

A: In 1838 CE, following prolonged political negotiations and conflicts.

☐ **Q:** Who opposed British annexation in Upper Assam?

A: Purandar Singha, the former Ahom prince, led resistance against British annexation efforts.

☐ **Q:** What were the causes of anti-British uprisings in Assam between 1826–1830?

A: Causes included dissatisfaction with British revenue policies, loss of sovereignty, and interference in local administration.

☐ **Q:** Name one uprising that took place in Lower Assam during 1826–1830.

A: The Phulaguri revolt was one such uprising in Lower Assam.

☐ **Q:** Which tribes resisted British authority in the early annexation period?

A: Khasi and Jaintia tribes in the hill regions resisted British control.

☐ **Q:** How did the British suppress uprisings in Assam?

A: Through military action, negotiation with local leaders, and administrative reforms to reduce discontent.

☐ **Q:** What was the impact of David Scott's reforms on local governance?

A: His reforms established structured administration, minimized local conflicts, and introduced modern revenue systems.

☐ **Q:** How did the annexation of Lower Assam help the British?

A: It secured strategic territories, stabilized the frontier, and allowed control over fertile plains and trade routes.

☐ **Q:** How did the annexation of Upper Assam differ from Lower Assam?

A: Upper Assam annexation faced more resistance due to Ahom royal claims, tribal autonomy, and difficult terrain, whereas Lower Assam was relatively easier to control.

□ **Q:** What role did local rulers play during anti-British uprisings?

A: Local rulers often led or supported uprisings to resist British interference and restore traditional authority.

□ **Q:** Name one economic reform introduced during David Scott's tenure.

A: Standardization of land revenue collection and appointment of revenue officers to ensure regular taxation.

□ **Q:** What was the reaction of Assamese peasants to British revenue policies?

A: Many peasants resisted by revolting or refusing to pay taxes, leading to localized uprisings.

□ **Q:** How did the British establish control over the newly annexed territories?

A: Through military presence, administrative reforms, and negotiation with local elites.

□ **Q:** What challenges did the British face in the hill regions?

A: Difficult terrain, independent tribal societies, and scattered settlements made administration and control challenging.

□ **Q:** Why was the Treaty of Yandaboo significant for British administration in Assam?

A: It formally ended the First Anglo-Burmese War and ceded Assam, Manipur, and neighboring regions to the British, providing legal authority for governance.

□ **Q:** What administrative system did the British adopt in Assam?

A: District-based administration with appointed political agents, magistrates, and revenue officers.

□ **Q:** Name one consequence of anti-British uprisings on colonial policy.

A: They prompted the British to strengthen administration, increase military presence, and negotiate with local chiefs.

□ **Q:** How did David Scott address local resistance?

A: By negotiating with chiefs, implementing reforms, and balancing direct control with limited local autonomy.

□ **Q:** What was the overall significance of the British annexation of Assam?

A: It secured political stability, integrated Assam into British India, introduced modern administration, and laid the foundation for long-term colonial governance.

BOARD ANSWER:

1./ Discuss the administrative reorganization of Assam under David Scott. How did his reforms establish British control in the region?

Ans: David Scott, appointed as the first British Commissioner of Assam in 1826 after the Treaty of Yandaboo, played a pivotal role in reorganizing the administration of the newly annexed territories. His tenure marked the beginning of structured British governance in Assam, which had previously been under Ahom rule in the plains and loosely governed in the hill regions. The primary aim of Scott's administrative reorganization was to establish law and order, streamline revenue collection, and integrate Assam effectively into the British colonial system. Recognizing the political fragility and diversity of the region, Scott introduced reforms that balanced direct colonial control with the cooperation of local elites, thereby laying the foundation for long-term governance and stability.

One of the key features of Scott's administration was the division of Assam into manageable districts, each overseen by a British officer responsible for law, revenue, and civil administration. This district-based system allowed the British to exert control over vast territories and standardize governance procedures. For revenue collection, Scott appointed officers who conducted land surveys, assessed taxes systematically, and ensured regular collection, replacing the

inconsistent and traditional methods previously practiced under local rulers. The introduction of standardized revenue policies not only enhanced colonial income but also reduced disputes over land and taxation, which had often been sources of conflict under earlier regimes.

Scott also recognized the importance of maintaining political stability through diplomacy with local rulers and tribal chiefs. In areas where direct administration was challenging, such as the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, he allowed limited autonomy to local leaders while retaining oversight of strategic and economic matters. This approach, known as indirect rule, helped reduce resistance and fostered cooperation from influential local elites. At the same time, the plains of Assam, including Lower Assam and eventually Upper Assam, came under more direct administration due to their fertile lands, dense population, and economic significance. Scott's dual approach of combining direct and indirect rule demonstrated his understanding of the region's social and political complexities and ensured British authority was respected and recognized.

The administrative reorganization under Scott also included reforms in law enforcement and judiciary systems. British magistrates were appointed to handle civil and criminal cases, replacing traditional informal mechanisms that had often been inconsistent and biased. The establishment of regular courts and police forces enhanced law and order and curtailed localized unrest. Furthermore, Scott introduced mechanisms to monitor the performance of local officials and prevent corruption, ensuring that the administration functioned efficiently and adhered to British colonial standards.

Scott's reforms had profound implications for Assam's political and economic landscape. Politically, they consolidated British authority, ending the power vacuum left after the decline of the Ahom monarchy and suppressing early anti-British resistance. Economically, the systematic revenue collection and regulation of trade facilitated integration with the broader colonial economy, allowing Assam's agricultural and resource potential to be exploited effectively. Socially,

while traditional power structures were disrupted, the inclusion of local elites in administrative processes ensured a degree of continuity and mitigated unrest. By establishing effective governance and administrative control, Scott not only stabilized the region but also set the stage for future expansion and consolidation of British power in Assam, including the later annexation of Upper Assam and the surrounding hill regions.

2./ Examine the annexation of Lower Assam by the British. What were the reasons and process of its integration into British India?

Ans: The annexation of Lower Assam by the British was a significant step in consolidating colonial authority in the northeastern frontier following the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826). Lower Assam, comprising regions such as Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang, was strategically and economically important due to its fertile plains, riverine trade routes, and proximity to Bengal. The Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) formalized the cession of Assam to the British East India Company, providing the legal framework for annexation. The integration of Lower Assam was driven by a combination of strategic, administrative, and economic considerations, reflecting the British aim to secure their northeastern territories and establish an effective colonial administration.

One of the primary reasons for the annexation was the strategic necessity of stabilizing the region after the First Anglo-Burmese War. The Burmese occupation of Assam during the early 1820s had created political instability, weakened local authority, and disrupted traditional governance. The British, keen on preventing further Burmese incursions and consolidating their northeastern frontier, considered direct control over Lower Assam essential. Additionally, the region's fertile plains and abundant resources offered economic advantages, as the British sought to exploit agriculture, trade, and taxation for revenue generation. Securing Lower Assam also facilitated the eventual

expansion into Upper Assam and the surrounding hill regions, thereby completing the integration of the entire valley under colonial rule.

The process of annexation involved a combination of military presence, diplomatic negotiation, and administrative reorganization. Following the Treaty of Yandaboo, the British initially deployed troops to secure key towns and communication routes, ensuring the region remained pacified during the transition. Political agents, including David Scott, were appointed to oversee governance, law enforcement, and revenue collection. Traditional rulers and local elites were either co-opted into administrative roles or replaced by British-appointed officers, depending on their willingness to cooperate. The district-based system introduced by Scott divided Lower Assam into manageable units, each under the supervision of a magistrate or revenue officer. This facilitated systematic revenue assessment, law enforcement, and the implementation of colonial policies, reducing the potential for resistance and unrest.

The British also faced challenges during the annexation, primarily from local populations dissatisfied with foreign rule and changes in traditional governance. Peasants and tribal communities resisted new taxation policies and disruption of customary practices, occasionally resulting in localized uprisings. To address these challenges, the British adopted a dual approach of military enforcement and administrative accommodation. Military interventions were limited to suppressing major resistance, while negotiation with influential local leaders and incorporation of their support into the administration helped stabilize governance. The combination of coercion and cooperation allowed the British to consolidate control effectively without triggering widespread revolt.

Economically, the annexation facilitated systematic revenue collection and integration into the broader colonial economy. Land assessments were standardized, and trade along the Brahmaputra and other rivers was monitored and taxed, creating a reliable revenue stream for the East India Company. The fertile plains of Lower Assam were gradually brought under cultivation, and infrastructure improvements, such as

roads and administrative offices, strengthened colonial control and promoted economic exploitation. Politically, the annexation eliminated the power vacuum created by the decline of local rulers and reduced the influence of remaining Ahom officials, ensuring that the region was firmly under British authority.

3./ Analyse the annexation of Upper Assam and the challenges faced by the British in incorporating this region.

Ans: The annexation of Upper Assam by the British was a critical step in consolidating their authority over the Brahmaputra Valley and completing the integration of Assam into British India. Upper Assam, comprising areas such as Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and surrounding regions, had been the heartland of the Ahom kingdom, which had ruled Assam for nearly six centuries. The decline of Ahom power, combined with political instability following the Burmese occupation during the early 1820s, provided an opportunity for British intervention. The annexation, completed in 1838, was motivated by strategic, political, and economic considerations, but the process presented significant challenges due to local resistance, difficult terrain, and the complex socio-political structure of the region.

One of the primary reasons for the annexation was the desire to stabilize the region politically. The death of the last Ahom rulers and the collapse of centralized authority created a power vacuum, which led to factional struggles and instability. Purandar Singha, a scion of the Ahom royal family, attempted to reclaim authority in Upper Assam, which resulted in localized conflicts. The British, seeking to prevent renewed unrest and potential Burmese influence, intervened and gradually assumed administrative control. Politically, the annexation allowed the British to secure the strategic Brahmaputra Valley, ensuring communication and trade routes between Lower Assam and the northeastern frontier were under their supervision.

The process of annexation involved a combination of negotiation, coercion, and administrative restructuring. Initially, the British recognized Purandar Singha as a nominal ruler under their supervision, granting him limited authority while retaining ultimate control over key administrative and revenue matters. This indirect rule strategy helped minimize open rebellion while establishing British dominance. However, as resistance persisted and the region's instability threatened colonial objectives, the British gradually removed royal authority, placing Upper Assam under direct administration. They introduced district officers, revenue collectors, and magistrates to oversee law, revenue, and governance, mirroring the administrative structures established in Lower Assam.

Upper Assam presented unique challenges for the British compared to Lower Assam. Geographically, the terrain was hilly and forested in parts, with dense river systems that complicated communication and transport. The dispersed population, often organized along tribal or local chieftain lines, resisted external control and continued to follow traditional customs and governance practices. The British faced sporadic uprisings, led by local elites and tribal chiefs who resented colonial interference in political and economic matters. Suppressing these revolts required a careful combination of military intervention and diplomacy, balancing firmness with conciliation to avoid widespread rebellion.

Economically, Upper Assam's incorporation was also challenging. While fertile in some regions, the Brahmaputra Valley's infrastructure was underdeveloped, and trade routes were less organized than in Lower Assam. The British introduced systematic revenue collection, land surveys, and taxation policies to generate income, but enforcement was difficult due to local resistance and the lack of established administrative networks. Over time, the establishment of British-controlled courts, police stations, and administrative offices helped integrate Upper Assam into the colonial economy and governance system.

4./ Evaluate the causes and nature of anti-British uprisings in Assam between 1826 and 1830. How did these revolts influence British policy?

.Ans: The period between 1826 and 1830 in Assam witnessed several anti-British uprisings, reflecting the widespread discontent among the local population following the advent of British rule. These revolts were primarily fueled by political, economic, and social grievances arising from the abrupt transition from traditional governance under the Ahom monarchy and local chieftains to a structured British administration. The uprisings were localized in nature but collectively posed significant challenges to the consolidation of British authority in Assam, prompting the colonial administration to revise its policies and administrative strategies to establish effective control.

One of the primary causes of the uprisings was the political vacuum created after the collapse of the Ahom monarchy and the end of Burmese occupation. The British annexation of Lower and Upper Assam disrupted existing power structures, displacing local rulers and tribal chiefs who had traditionally exercised authority over their territories. Leaders such as Purandar Singha in Upper Assam and other local elites in the hill and plain regions resisted the loss of political autonomy, organizing armed resistance to challenge British supremacy. These revolts were often led by individuals with strong local influence, who mobilized peasants, tribal groups, and disaffected sections of the population against foreign rule.

Economic grievances were another significant factor contributing to unrest. The introduction of British revenue policies, including systematic land taxation and standardized collection methods, often burdened peasants who were unaccustomed to fixed monetary obligations. Many farmers faced difficulties in paying taxes due to unfamiliarity with British systems and occasional high assessments, which fueled resentment. Trade regulations and the monopolization of economic resources by the colonial administration further aggravated dissatisfaction, particularly among merchants and artisans whose

traditional privileges were curtailed. Consequently, economic pressures intertwined with political grievances, leading to widespread participation in revolts.

The nature of these uprisings was largely localized, sporadic, and primarily defensive rather than offensive. In Lower Assam, revolts such as the Phulaguri uprising reflected peasant resistance to revenue demands and British interference in village administration. In Upper Assam, supporters of Purandar Singha led movements aimed at restoring Ahom authority. In the hill regions, tribal communities such as the Khasi and Jaintia resisted British attempts to impose control over their autonomous societies, conducting raids and obstructing colonial officials. These revolts, though fragmented, collectively demonstrated the unwillingness of the population to accept foreign rule without negotiation or accommodation.

The British response to these uprisings was twofold: military suppression combined with administrative reforms. While armed intervention was employed to quell immediate threats, the British recognized the need to address underlying grievances to prevent future unrest. This led to policies emphasizing negotiation with local chiefs, gradual incorporation of traditional elites into the colonial administration, and the careful implementation of revenue and judicial systems. David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam, played a crucial role in this strategy by balancing firmness with conciliation. Through district-based administration, appointment of magistrates and revenue officers, and selective acknowledgment of local autonomy, the British were able to establish long-term stability while maintaining overall control.

5./ Compare and contrast the annexations of Lower Assam and Upper Assam under British rule. What differences and similarities can be observed in their administration?

Ans: The annexations of Lower Assam and Upper Assam under British rule were critical phases in consolidating colonial authority in the

Brahmaputra Valley, yet each region presented distinct challenges and required tailored administrative strategies. While both annexations were motivated by strategic, economic, and political considerations, differences in geography, political structures, and local resistance influenced the methods employed by the British. A comparative analysis reveals both the common features and contrasting elements in the integration and administration of these regions.

Lower Assam, encompassing areas such as Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang, was annexed immediately after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. The region's fertile plains, established trade routes, and relatively accessible terrain facilitated direct British administration. The annexation was relatively smooth due to the limited resistance from local elites and the absence of a strong centralized ruler after the decline of Ahom influence and the retreat of Burmese forces. British administrators, including David Scott, introduced a district-based system, appointing magistrates and revenue officers to oversee law, order, and taxation. The plains' accessibility allowed for effective enforcement of revenue policies, introduction of courts, and establishment of infrastructure, ensuring a high degree of control with minimal reliance on traditional authorities.

In contrast, Upper Assam, comprising Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and surrounding areas, was annexed more gradually, with formal consolidation completed around 1838. This region was the historic heartland of the Ahom kingdom, and the presence of Purandar Singha, a scion of the royal family, complicated the annexation process. The challenging terrain, characterized by hilly areas, forests, and dispersed settlements, hindered direct administration. Resistance from local elites, tribal groups, and peasants was more pronounced than in Lower Assam, reflecting the population's attachment to Ahom authority and traditional governance structures. To manage this, the British initially allowed limited autonomy to Purandar Singha under supervision, gradually transitioning to direct control as resistance was subdued. This combination of indirect and direct administration marked a key

difference from Lower Assam, where direct governance was feasible from the outset.

Despite these differences, both annexations shared common objectives and administrative methods. In both regions, the British aimed to establish law and order, collect revenue systematically, and integrate Assam into the colonial economy. District-based administration was employed in both Lower and Upper Assam, with appointed magistrates, revenue officers, and political agents supervising governance. Military intervention was used selectively to suppress uprisings or enforce compliance, while negotiation and incorporation of local elites were strategies employed to reduce unrest. Economically, the British implemented standardized taxation and land revenue systems in both regions, aiming to ensure predictable revenue streams for the East India Company.

The differences in administration primarily arose from geography, local resistance, and political conditions. Lower Assam's plains allowed easier access and more uniform control, whereas Upper Assam's difficult terrain required a more flexible approach combining indirect and direct rule. The intensity of resistance in Upper Assam necessitated prolonged negotiations and temporary recognition of local authority, unlike Lower Assam, where traditional elites had already lost significant power. Socially, Upper Assam's annexation required sensitivity to tribal and Ahom traditions to prevent widespread revolt, while Lower Assam presented fewer such challenges.

6./ Assess the overall impact of the advent of the British and their administrative policies on Assam's political, economic, and social structures.

Ans: The advent of the British in Assam following the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 marked a turning point in the region's history, leading to profound political, economic, and social transformations. British administration, initiated under leaders such as David Scott,

aimed at consolidating territorial control, establishing law and order, and integrating Assam into the colonial economy. While the British brought political stability and administrative efficiency, their policies also disrupted traditional governance systems, altered socio-economic relations, and reshaped Assamese society in ways that had long-lasting effects.

Politically, British rule replaced the decentralized and hereditary governance of the Ahom kingdom with a centralized colonial administration. The annexation of Lower and Upper Assam, along with the gradual incorporation of hill regions such as the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, eliminated the power of local rulers and tribal chiefs, consolidating authority under British officials. District-based administration was introduced, with magistrates, revenue officers, and political agents overseeing governance, law, and revenue collection. This system established law and order and curtailed internecine conflicts, rebellions, and feudal disputes that had characterized pre-British Assam. However, it also marginalized traditional power structures, reduced local autonomy, and diminished the political influence of indigenous elites, creating tensions that occasionally manifested in localized revolts and resistance movements.

Economically, British policies significantly altered the region's traditional agrarian and trade systems. The introduction of standardized land revenue collection replaced customary systems of taxation, imposing fixed monetary obligations on peasants and altering landholding patterns. While this enhanced revenue predictability for the colonial government, it often burdened local farmers, leading to resentment and occasional uprisings. The British also integrated Assam into the wider colonial economy, promoting the cultivation of cash crops and facilitating trade along the Brahmaputra and other rivers. Infrastructure improvements, such as roads and administrative offices, enhanced communication and transport, enabling better exploitation of natural resources and markets. These changes laid the foundation for economic modernization, but they primarily served colonial interests and often disrupted traditional agrarian livelihoods.

Socially, the British introduction of formal education, judicial systems, and law enforcement had both stabilizing and transformative effects. Traditional community structures and customary laws were gradually replaced or modified to conform to colonial standards. While local elites were sometimes co-opted into administration, common peasants experienced a shift in social hierarchies due to changes in revenue obligations and the imposition of British legal norms. Cultural practices, especially in hill areas and tribal regions, were affected by increasing exposure to colonial policies and the gradual introduction of missionary activities. On the other hand, the establishment of schools and administrative institutions eventually provided opportunities for new social mobility, creating a class of educated Assamese intermediaries who would later play significant roles in political and cultural movements.

The British administrative policies also helped integrate Assam into broader colonial structures, facilitating the regulation of trade, control over frontier regions, and expansion of British influence into neighboring areas. Military presence and the establishment of law enforcement reduced internal conflicts and provided security, which encouraged economic activity and settlement in previously unstable regions. Nevertheless, these benefits were accompanied by social displacement, erosion of traditional governance, and economic exploitation, highlighting the complex and ambivalent nature of colonial impact.

UNIT – 3

ONE MARK:

☐ Q: What was one of the key factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness in Assam?

A: The introduction of British administrative and revenue policies that affected local rulers and peasants.

☐ Q: Which economic factor contributed to political awareness in Assam?

A: Exploitative land revenue and taxation systems imposed by the British.

☐ Q: How did education influence political consciousness?

A: Modern education created an informed class that could challenge colonial policies.

☐ Q: Name a social reform that indirectly stimulated political awareness.

A: Efforts to modernize society, such as the spread of literacy and social reforms.

☐ Q: Which political factor encouraged early political movements in Assam?

A: Displacement of local rulers and traditional authority under British rule.

☐ Q: What role did tribal and regional issues play in political consciousness?

A: They highlighted grievances against colonial interference, fostering local activism.

☐ Q: Name the earliest political organisation in Jorhat.

A: Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha.

☐ Q: In which year was the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha founded?

A: 1880.

☐ Q: What was the main objective of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

A: To address public grievances and promote political awareness among the people.

☐ Q: What type of issues did the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha focus on?

A: Administrative reforms, taxation policies, and social matters.

☐ Q: Which organisation was formed to unite Assamese intelligentsia at the provincial level?

A: Assam Association.

☐ Q: When was the Assam Association established?

A: 1903.

☐ Q: What was the key aim of the Assam Association?

A: To promote political cooperation and represent Assam's interests to the British government.

☐ Q: Name the student organisation formed in Assam to promote political awareness.

A: Assam Chhatra Sanmilan.

☐ Q: In which year was Assam Chhatra Sanmilan established?

A: 1920.

☐ Q: What was the role of Assam Chhatra Sanmilan?

A: To involve students in political and social issues, encouraging active participation.

☐ Q: Which organisation represented political interests in the Surma Valley?

A: Surma Valley Political Conference.

☐ Q: What was the main goal of the Surma Valley Political Conference?

A: To voice regional concerns and unite local leaders against colonial policies.

☐ Q: Name one factor that economically motivated political consciousness.

A: Decline in traditional handicrafts due to colonial economic policies.

☐ Q: Which legislative reform inspired political awareness in Assam?

A: Introduction of local self-government and municipal reforms.

☐ Q: How did exposure to national movements affect Assam's political consciousness?

A: It encouraged local leaders to participate in broader anti-colonial activities.

☐ Q: Who primarily led the early political organisations in Assam?

A: Educated elites, professionals, and former officials.

☐ Q: Name a prominent leader associated with the Jorhat Sarbajanic Sabha.

A: Radha Kanta Handique.

☐ Q: Name a prominent leader of the Assam Association.

A: Chandranath Sarma.

☐ Q: What was a key strategy of early political organisations in Assam?

A: Petitioning the British government and raising public awareness.

☐ Q: How did the Assam Chhatra Sanmilitan contribute to national movements?

A: By mobilising students in support of broader Indian nationalist activities.

☐ Q: What social change encouraged the formation of political organisations?

A: Rise of an educated middle class aware of rights and colonial exploitation.

☐ Q: Which event highlighted regional grievances and stimulated early political activism?

A: Imposition of heavy land revenue and administrative centralisation by the British.

☐ **Q:** How did regional organisations like the Surma Valley Political Conference strengthen political consciousness?

A: By providing platforms for discussion and coordinated action on local issues.

☐ **Q:** What was the overall impact of early political organisations in Assam?

A: They laid the foundation for organized political movements and future participation in India's freedom struggle.

TWO MARK:

☐ **Q:** What were the main factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness in Assam?

A: Political consciousness in Assam emerged due to multiple factors. The annexation of Assam by the British disrupted traditional governance, displacing local rulers and tribal chiefs. Economic grievances, such as heavy land revenue and exploitation of peasants, fueled dissatisfaction. The introduction of modern education created an informed class capable of understanding colonial policies, while exposure to national movements inspired local leaders to seek reforms and rights, collectively fostering political awareness.

☐ **Q:** How did British administrative policies contribute to political awareness in Assam?

A: British administrative policies, including centralization of authority, revenue reforms, and the imposition of law and order, altered traditional power structures. These changes often marginalized local elites and upset established norms, prompting them to organize and voice their concerns, thereby increasing political consciousness among the population.

☐ **Q:** What role did education play in the rise of political consciousness in Assam?

A: Modern education introduced by the British created a literate and informed middle class. Students and educated elites became aware of

their rights, the exploitative nature of colonial rule, and the need for reform. Educational institutions also provided forums for discussion, debate, and the dissemination of nationalist ideas.

□ **Q:** How did economic exploitation fuel early political movements in Assam?

A: Heavy land taxes, disruption of traditional agriculture, and decline of local crafts under British economic policies created widespread discontent. Peasants and artisans, affected economically, supported local political organisations that sought to address grievances and resist exploitation, linking economic hardship with political activism.

□ **Q:** What was the significance of social reform in awakening political consciousness?

A: Social reforms, such as efforts to modernize education, improve literacy, and challenge regressive practices, encouraged people to think critically about governance. Awareness of social issues naturally extended to political awareness, leading to the formation of organisations advocating change.

□ **Q:** What was the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

A: The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, established in 1880 in Jorhat, was one of the earliest political organisations in Assam. It aimed to voice public grievances, address administrative issues, and promote political awareness among the local population, serving as a model for future regional political groups.

□ **Q:** Who were the main leaders of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

A: The Sabha was primarily led by educated elites, local professionals, and former officials, with Radha Kanta Handique being a notable leader who actively represented public interests.

□ **Q:** What were the main objectives of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha?

A: Its objectives included addressing grievances related to revenue, administration, and social issues, mobilizing public opinion, and serving as a platform for discussing reforms under British rule.

□ **Q:** What was the Assam Association?

A: Established in 1903, the Assam Association was a provincial-level organisation aimed at uniting the intelligentsia and leaders across Assam. It sought to represent Assam's political and social interests to the British authorities and coordinate efforts for reforms and rights.

□ **Q:** How did the Assam Association contribute to political awareness?

A: By organizing meetings, submitting petitions, and articulating regional demands, the Assam Association fostered political engagement and educated people about their rights and the importance of participation in governance.

□ **Q:** What role did students play in early political movements in Assam?

A: Students formed organisations like the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian, established in 1920, to engage youth in political and social issues. They participated in awareness campaigns, debates, and national movements, serving as catalysts for broader political activism.

□ **Q:** What was the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian?

A: The Assam Chhatra Sanmilian was a student organisation that encouraged political participation, promoted discussion of public issues, and mobilized young people to engage with the ideas of reform and nationalism.

□ **Q:** How did student organisations influence regional politics?

A: Student organisations created a politically aware generation that pressured local leaders and the British administration, helping to shape public opinion and advocate for social and political reforms.

□ **Q:** What was the Surma Valley Political Conference?

A: The Surma Valley Political Conference was a regional political organisation that represented the interests of people in the Surma Valley. It provided a platform to address local grievances and coordinated political action in the region.

□ **Q:** Why was the Surma Valley Political Conference important?

A: It strengthened regional political organisation, highlighted local issues, and helped connect Assam's political movements with broader national developments, increasing political consciousness in the area.

□ **Q:** How did regional grievances contribute to political organisation?

A: Excessive taxation, administrative interference, and marginalisation of local leaders created resentment. Addressing these grievances required organised political action, leading to the formation of bodies like the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha and Surma Valley Political Conference.

□ **Q:** What was the significance of petitions in early political movements?

A: Petitions allowed local organisations to formally communicate demands to the British government, drawing attention to grievances and advocating for reforms without immediate conflict.

□ **Q:** How did exposure to national movements affect Assam's political consciousness?

A: Nationalist movements in India inspired Assam's leaders to adopt similar strategies, encouraging unity, organised protest, and awareness about rights and colonial exploitation.

□ **Q:** Who primarily led the Assam Association?

A: The Assam Association was led by educated elites, professionals, and former officials who were influential in mobilising public opinion and coordinating regional demands.

□ **Q:** What social change facilitated political awareness among peasants?

A: Awareness of revenue policies, agricultural exploitation, and the decline of traditional rights prompted peasants to support political movements and early organisations.

□ **Q:** How did regional organisations balance local and national issues?

A: Organisations like the Assam Association and Surma Valley Political Conference focused on local grievances while aligning with broader Indian nationalist ideals, integrating regional concerns with national movements.

☐ **Q:** How did the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha communicate its demands?

A: Through meetings, petitions, and correspondence with British officials, highlighting administrative and social grievances.

☐ **Q:** What role did newspapers and publications play in political awareness?

A: They disseminated information about colonial policies, reforms, and political ideas, helping educate the public and spread nationalist sentiments.

☐ **Q:** How did educated elites influence political movements in Assam?

A: They provided leadership, articulated grievances, organised petitions and conferences, and mobilised the masses, bridging local and provincial concerns.

☐ **Q:** What was the overall impact of early political organisations in Assam?

A: They laid the foundation for structured political activism, mobilised people around social, economic, and political issues, and prepared Assam for participation in the Indian freedom movement.

BOARD ANSWER:

1./ Discuss the factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness in Assam during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. How did these factors influence the political mobilisation of the Assamese people?

Ans: The emergence of political consciousness in Assam during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the result of multiple

interrelated factors, including political, economic, social, and cultural changes introduced under British rule. The annexation of Assam following the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 marked the beginning of British administrative control over the region. Traditional power structures, including the Ahom monarchy and local chieftains, were either dismantled or subordinated under colonial authority. This displacement of indigenous political leadership created a vacuum and generated widespread awareness among the Assamese people about the need to safeguard their rights, culture, and local interests. The loss of political autonomy and the marginalisation of local elites were thus crucial catalysts for the rise of political consciousness.

Economic factors further intensified awareness and dissatisfaction among the Assamese populace. The introduction of British revenue systems imposed fixed monetary taxes on peasants who were previously accustomed to traditional, flexible systems of land revenue. Heavy taxation, combined with the disruption of customary agrarian practices and the decline of traditional handicrafts due to colonial economic policies, created widespread economic hardship. Merchants, artisans, and peasants alike began recognising the link between economic exploitation and colonial administration, which motivated them to demand reforms and participate in collective political action.

The spread of modern education was another significant factor in fostering political consciousness. The establishment of schools and colleges under British influence created a new class of educated Assamese elites, who became aware of their rights and the broader nationalist movements emerging across India. Educated individuals could critically assess colonial policies and articulate grievances, thus acting as leaders and organisers for political mobilisation. This educated class not only participated in local organisations but also connected Assam to national-level movements, gradually integrating regional political concerns with India's larger struggle against British rule.

Social and cultural factors also played a critical role in awakening political awareness. Efforts to reform traditional social practices and the exposure to modern ideas of justice, equality, and civic responsibility encouraged critical thinking and discussion within the community. The rise of print media, including newspapers and journals, facilitated the dissemination of political ideas, enabling people to stay informed about administrative decisions, regional grievances, and nationalist ideologies. Cultural revival movements, which sought to preserve Assamese language, literature, and identity, intertwined with political activism, reinforcing a sense of collective identity and purpose among the populace.

Furthermore, regional factors such as local grievances and ethnic identity influenced political mobilisation. Discontent arising from the imposition of British authority in the Brahmaputra Valley and surrounding hill regions led to the formation of early political organisations, including the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha and later the Assam Association. These organisations became platforms for expressing public grievances, coordinating political action, and mobilising people to demand reforms. They addressed issues such as land revenue, administrative efficiency, and social welfare while fostering political awareness at both local and provincial levels. Student organisations, such as the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan, played a pivotal role in engaging youth, promoting discussion on political and social issues, and encouraging active participation in public life.

2./ Examine the role and objectives of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha in awakening political awareness among the people of Assam. How did it address public grievances and contribute to early political movements?

Ans: The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, established in 1880 in the town of Jorhat, Assam, holds a significant place in the early political history of the region. Emerging during a period when the Assamese people were grappling with the socio-political and economic changes brought by

British administration, the Sabha played a pioneering role in awakening political consciousness and mobilising public opinion. Its formation was largely a response to the growing dissatisfaction among educated elites, local landholders, and peasants over colonial policies that disrupted traditional governance, imposed heavy taxation, and threatened socio-cultural norms. The Sabha served as a platform to articulate grievances, demand administrative reforms, and encourage civic participation, thereby laying the groundwork for organized political movements in Assam.

One of the primary objectives of the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha was to create awareness about governance and administrative practices under British rule. With the annexation of Assam and the centralisation of power, many local rulers, traditional leaders, and common people felt marginalized. The Sabha sought to bridge the gap between the people and the colonial administration by informing citizens of their rights and providing a forum to discuss administrative inefficiencies and injustices. By educating the populace about revenue policies, law enforcement, and judicial matters, the Sabha empowered citizens to articulate grievances effectively and seek redress through organized and lawful channels rather than sporadic revolts.

The Sabha also focused on addressing public grievances, particularly in the areas of revenue collection, land administration, and social welfare. Heavy taxation, arbitrary assessments, and exploitation of peasants were widespread under British policies, leading to resentment among the rural population. The Sabha collected information on these issues, represented them in petitions to British authorities, and lobbied for reforms that would alleviate economic hardships. Through these efforts, the Sabha acted as a mediator between the colonial administration and the people, facilitating dialogue and negotiation that helped prevent widespread unrest while fostering a culture of political engagement.

In addition to addressing economic and administrative concerns, the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha played an important role in promoting social

and cultural awareness, which in turn strengthened political mobilisation. By organizing public meetings, discussions, and debates, the Sabha encouraged people to critically assess colonial policies and understand their implications for Assamese society. It also fostered a sense of collective identity by highlighting the importance of preserving Assamese language, culture, and traditions, connecting cultural consciousness with political activism. This combination of social awareness and political engagement helped nurture an informed citizenry ready to participate in larger regional and national movements in the future.

The Sabha's activities significantly influenced the early political landscape of Assam by inspiring the formation of other political organisations. Its model of petitioning, public discussion, and peaceful advocacy became a blueprint for groups such as the Assam Association, which emerged later to represent provincial interests at a broader level. Moreover, the Sabha encouraged young people and students to participate in political activities, laying the foundation for organisations like the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan. By mobilising different sections of society—including educated elites, peasants, and traders—the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha demonstrated that political action could be organized, structured, and impactful, even under colonial constraints.

3./ Analyse the formation and significance of the Assam Association. In what ways did it unite the intelligentsia and articulate the political aspirations of Assam at the provincial level?

Ans: The Assam Association, established in 1903, emerged as one of the earliest provincial-level political organisations in Assam, marking a significant development in the region's political history. Its formation was largely a response to the increasing socio-political and economic challenges faced by the Assamese people under British rule. Following the annexation of Assam and the consolidation of colonial administration, the displacement of traditional elites, imposition of revenue systems, and marginalisation of regional interests created

widespread dissatisfaction. There was a growing need for an organised platform that could represent Assam's concerns at a provincial and national level. The Assam Association thus brought together the intelligentsia, local leaders, and concerned citizens to coordinate political action, articulate grievances, and influence policy, becoming a bridge between the people and the colonial authorities.

The primary objective of the Assam Association was to provide a unified platform for discussing and addressing political, social, and economic issues affecting the province. Unlike earlier local organisations such as the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, which operated mainly at a town or district level, the Assam Association had a broader provincial vision. It aimed to represent Assam in discussions with the British administration and, increasingly, in the broader Indian political discourse. The Association focused on issues such as administrative reforms, protection of local interests, improvement of educational opportunities, and preservation of Assamese language and culture. By providing a structured forum for debate and advocacy, it encouraged active participation among the educated middle class and local leaders, fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose.

One of the most important contributions of the Assam Association was its role in uniting the intelligentsia of the region. Educated professionals, former officials, writers, and teachers joined the Association, forming a cohesive group capable of influencing both public opinion and colonial policy. This unity was crucial in articulating Assamese aspirations in a systematic and organised manner. Through meetings, resolutions, and petitions, the Association raised awareness about issues such as unfair revenue practices, inadequate infrastructure, lack of representation in provincial administration, and the need for educational reforms. By mobilising the intelligentsia, the Assam Association provided leadership, guidance, and credibility to the political movement in Assam, ensuring that the voices of the province were effectively heard.

The Assam Association also played a significant role in linking regional concerns with broader Indian political movements. Its members participated in discussions related to national reforms and Indian nationalist politics, thereby connecting Assam's local issues with the larger struggle for political rights and representation. This dual focus—addressing provincial grievances while remaining informed about national developments—enabled the Association to articulate a balanced political agenda that resonated with both the local populace and colonial authorities. It encouraged civic engagement, petitioning, and legal advocacy as methods of pursuing reform, laying the groundwork for more assertive political movements in subsequent decades.

Furthermore, the Assam Association inspired and facilitated the creation of other organisations that catered to specific groups, including students and professionals. For example, student organisations like the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian emerged as extensions of the political awareness fostered by the Association, involving youth in political discourse and activism. The Association's emphasis on unity, dialogue, and structured advocacy became a model for future organisations, demonstrating the importance of collective effort in achieving political objectives.

4./ Evaluate the contribution of student organisations, particularly the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian, in promoting political consciousness and participation among Assamese youth. How did students engage with broader political and social issues?

Ans: Student organisations in Assam, especially the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian, played a pivotal role in promoting political consciousness and active participation among the youth during the early 20th century. Formed in 1920, the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian emerged in a period marked by the rising influence of nationalist movements across India and growing local discontent over British administrative policies. Students, being a socially aware and educated section of society, were

uniquely positioned to act as catalysts for political change. The organisation provided a structured platform where young people could engage in discussions about political rights, social reform, and cultural preservation, thereby creating a politically conscious and proactive youth community in Assam.

The Assam Chhatra Sanmilian was established with the objective of fostering awareness among students about regional and national issues while encouraging active participation in social and political matters. Recognising the limitations of passive observation, the organisation aimed to mobilise students through debates, public meetings, and awareness campaigns. It created an environment where young minds could critically analyse British policies, understand the implications of colonial governance, and identify strategies for reform. Through these activities, the organisation nurtured leadership qualities among students and instilled a sense of responsibility toward societal welfare and political activism.

One of the major contributions of the Assam Chhatra Sanmilian was its role in connecting Assam's youth with broader political movements in India. Students actively participated in discussions on national reforms, the Indian freedom struggle, and the promotion of civil rights. By aligning regional concerns with the larger nationalist agenda, the organisation encouraged Assamese students to view their local struggles in the context of India's fight against colonial rule. This engagement fostered a sense of solidarity with the national movement while reinforcing the importance of addressing regional issues such as economic exploitation, educational inadequacies, and cultural preservation.

The organisation also played a significant role in promoting social reform alongside political awareness. Students were encouraged to engage with issues such as literacy, social justice, and community welfare. They conducted campaigns to raise awareness about education, hygiene, and civic responsibility, thereby linking social progress with political consciousness. By combining social activism

with political education, the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan ensured that the youth were not only politically informed but also socially responsible, creating a generation capable of contributing to holistic societal development.

Moreover, the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan inspired other youth-oriented organisations and movements across the province. Its activities served as a model for student participation in civic life, demonstrating the effectiveness of organised dialogue, peaceful advocacy, and community engagement. Students were encouraged to form local chapters, organise debates, and participate in public forums, which helped in decentralising political activism and extending its reach to remote areas. This grassroots involvement was crucial in spreading political awareness beyond urban centres and among the wider population.

The Assam Chhatra Sanmilan also played an educational role, guiding students in understanding the nuances of governance, law, and public administration under British rule. By engaging with contemporary political literature, newspapers, and national discourses, students developed a comprehensive understanding of both local and national issues. This intellectual foundation enabled them to articulate informed opinions, draft petitions, and participate in campaigns that addressed both regional grievances and national concerns, strengthening the link between Assam's youth and the wider political movement in India.

5./ Discuss the objectives and activities of the Surma Valley Political Conference. How did regional political organisations strengthen political awareness and address local grievances during the early colonial period?

Ans: The Surma Valley Political Conference was a prominent regional political organisation established in the early 20th century in the Surma Valley region of Assam, which is now part of present-day Barak Valley. Its formation marked a significant stage in the evolution of organised political consciousness in Assam, especially in addressing local issues

and grievances specific to the region. During the early colonial period, the imposition of British administrative control, exploitative land revenue systems, and marginalisation of local elites created widespread dissatisfaction among the people. The Surma Valley Political Conference emerged as a platform for voicing these grievances, mobilising public opinion, and promoting political awareness among the local populace.

The primary objective of the Surma Valley Political Conference was to provide a formal organisational framework for articulating regional concerns and ensuring that local voices were represented in discussions with the British administration. The Conference focused on a variety of issues, including administrative reforms, land revenue policies, educational development, and the preservation of regional cultural and linguistic identity. By concentrating on the specific needs and challenges of the Surma Valley, the Conference differentiated itself from broader provincial organisations and became a crucial vehicle for addressing grievances that were often overlooked by the central authorities in Assam.

One of the key activities of the Surma Valley Political Conference was the organisation of public meetings, seminars, and discussions, which served as forums for raising awareness about colonial policies and their impact on the people. Through these activities, the Conference educated the population about their rights, the effects of exploitative revenue systems, and the need for collective action. It also encouraged participation from various sections of society, including landowners, peasants, educated elites, and professionals, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and unity in addressing common challenges.

The Conference played a vital role in submitting petitions and representations to the British authorities, demanding reforms in

administration, revenue collection, and public welfare. By using formal channels of advocacy, the Surma Valley Political Conference demonstrated that organised, peaceful political action could achieve tangible results. These efforts helped in reducing arbitrary administrative practices and provided a model for responsible civic engagement in the region.

In addition to its political objectives, the Surma Valley Political Conference also contributed to social and cultural development. Recognising the link between social awareness and political mobilisation, it encouraged educational initiatives, literacy campaigns, and cultural activities that promoted regional identity. By strengthening local institutions and fostering pride in linguistic and cultural heritage, the Conference ensured that political activism was grounded in the socio-cultural context of the Surma Valley. This approach enhanced community participation and created a politically aware and culturally cohesive society capable of advocating effectively for its rights.

The influence of the Surma Valley Political Conference extended beyond immediate regional issues. It inspired the formation of similar organisations in other districts, demonstrating the effectiveness of regional political mobilisation in addressing local grievances while contributing to broader provincial and national movements. By connecting regional concerns with wider political developments, the Conference helped integrate the Surma Valley into the larger framework of Assam's political awakening and India's emerging nationalist movement.

6./ Assess the overall impact of early political organisations in Assam, including Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Assam Association, Assam Chhatra Sanmilan, and Surma Valley Political Conference, on the political, social, and regional awakening of the people.

Ans: The early political organisations in Assam, such as the Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, Assam Association, Assam Chhatra Sanmilan, and the Surma Valley Political Conference, played a transformative role in shaping the political, social, and regional consciousness of the Assamese people during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their emergence was closely linked to the widespread socio-economic and administrative changes brought by British colonial rule, which disrupted traditional governance, imposed exploitative revenue systems, and marginalized local leaders and communities. These organisations collectively laid the foundation for organised political activism, empowered various sections of society, and fostered a sense of regional identity and civic responsibility, thereby marking a crucial phase in Assam's socio-political evolution.

The Jorhat Sarbajanik Sabha, established in 1880, was one of the first structured political organisations in Assam. It primarily focused on raising awareness about administrative grievances and public welfare issues. By articulating the concerns of peasants, landholders, and the educated elite through petitions, public meetings, and discussions, the Sabha provided a formal platform for dialogue with the British authorities. Its emphasis on peaceful advocacy and informed representation helped cultivate a culture of political engagement, demonstrating that organised action could influence policy and administration. Moreover, the Sabha's promotion of social and cultural awareness reinforced the connection between civic responsibility and political participation, inspiring subsequent regional and provincial organisations.

The Assam Association, founded in 1903, extended political mobilisation to a provincial level by uniting the intelligentsia and local leaders across Assam. Its objectives included advocating for administrative reforms, educational development, and the protection of Assamese cultural and linguistic identity. By providing a structured forum for debate, petitioning, and coordination, the Association successfully articulated regional political aspirations to the colonial

administration and created a coherent provincial voice. The Association's ability to connect Assam's concerns with broader nationalist movements in India strengthened political awareness among the educated class and encouraged collaboration between regional and national political initiatives.

Student organisations, particularly the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan, played a crucial role in engaging the youth in political and social issues. Formed in 1920, the organisation provided students with a platform to discuss governance, social reform, and nationalistic ideas. By promoting debate, literacy, civic responsibility, and activism, the Sanmilan nurtured politically conscious and socially responsible young leaders. Students not only became aware of local grievances and administrative shortcomings but also participated in broader movements, linking Assam's youth with the national struggle for independence. Their involvement ensured a continuity of political awareness and inspired future generations to engage actively in public life.

The Surma Valley Political Conference focused on regional mobilisation, addressing grievances specific to the Surma Valley area. It concentrated on local administrative issues, revenue reforms, educational development, and the preservation of cultural identity. Through petitions, public meetings, and awareness campaigns, the Conference educated the population, empowered local communities, and facilitated constructive dialogue with the British administration. Its efforts strengthened grassroots political participation and demonstrated the effectiveness of regional political organisations in complementing provincial and national movements.

Collectively, these organisations had a profound impact on Assam's political, social, and regional awakening. Politically, they cultivated civic engagement, developed leadership among the intelligentsia and youth, and provided mechanisms for articulating grievances and advocating reforms. Socially, they promoted literacy, education, cultural preservation, and civic responsibility, ensuring that political awareness was linked with community development. Regionally, they

fostered a sense of Assamese identity, united diverse communities around common issues, and strengthened Assam's voice in provincial and national political discourses. Their legacy lies in laying the foundations of organised political activism, creating a politically informed society, and preparing the ground for Assam's active participation in India's broader nationalist movement.



CAREER STUDY
The Learning App

UNIT – 4

ONE MARK:

A. The First War of Independence 1857 & South Assam

1. **Q:** In which year did the First War of Independence take place?
A: It took place in 1857.
2. **Q:** Who was the British officer responsible for maintaining order in South Assam during 1857?
A: David Scott's successors under the Cachar administration (mainly British civil officers).
3. **Q:** Did the 1857 revolt directly spread to South Assam?
A: No, it had only indirect effects and limited participation.
4. **Q:** Name one factor that limited the spread of the 1857 revolt in South Assam.
A: The absence of large sepoy cantonments in the region.
5. **Q:** Which group showed signs of unrest in Cachar during 1857?
A: Some tea garden labourers and local hill tribes.
6. **Q:** What was the primary impact of the 1857 revolt on South Assam?
A: Increased British vigilance and stricter control over administration.
7. **Q:** Which district formed the main focus of British concern in South Assam in 1857?
A: Cachar district.
8. **Q:** Did the First War of Independence strengthen British administration in South Assam?
A: Yes, it led to reinforcement of administrative and military measures.

B. Formation of Chief Commissioner's Province in 1874

9. **Q:** In which year was the Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam created?
A: In 1874.
10. **Q:** Which areas were included in the newly created Chief Commissioner's Province?
A: The Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley (Cachar and Sylhet), and adjoining hill tracts.
11. **Q:** What was the capital of the Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam in 1874?
A: Shillong.
12. **Q:** Which earlier administrative unit did Assam separate from in 1874?
A: Bengal Presidency.
13. **Q:** Name the first Chief Commissioner of the new Province of Assam.
A: Richard Harte Keatinge.
14. **Q:** Why was the Chief Commissioner's Province created in 1874?
A: For administrative efficiency and closer supervision of the frontier areas.
15. **Q:** Which valley's inclusion in 1874 led to discontent among its Bengali population?
A: Surma Valley (especially Sylhet).
16. **Q:** What was the immediate administrative effect of creating the Province in 1874?
A: More direct British control and separate provincial identity for Assam.

C. The Swadeshi Movement in South Assam

17. **Q:** In which year did the Swadeshi Movement begin?
A: 1905, after the Partition of Bengal.

18. **Q:** Which district of South Assam became a centre of the Swadeshi Movement?
A: Cachar district (especially Silchar).
19. **Q:** What was the main slogan of the Swadeshi Movement?
A: Boycott of British goods and promotion of indigenous products.
20. **Q:** Name one method used by Swadeshi activists in South Assam.
A: Organising public meetings and promoting indigenous education.
21. **Q:** Which section of society actively participated in the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam?
A: Students and the educated middle class.
22. **Q:** What was the impact of the Swadeshi Movement on South Assam's economy?
A: It encouraged local industries and the use of indigenous goods.
23. **Q:** Which British policy triggered the Swadeshi Movement?
A: The Partition of Bengal in 1905.

D. Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam

24. **Q:** In which year did the Non-Cooperation Movement start?
A: 1920.
25. **Q:** Who was the national leader who launched the Non-Cooperation Movement?
A: Mahatma Gandhi.
26. **Q:** Name one prominent local leader of the Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam.
A: Kuladhar Chaliha (Assamese leader associated with the movement).

27. **Q:** Which sections of society in South Assam joined the Non-Cooperation Movement?
A: Students, peasants, and professionals.
28. **Q:** Name one form of protest adopted during the Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam.
A: Boycott of schools, government jobs, and foreign cloth.
29. **Q:** What was the major impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement on South Assam?
A: It strengthened nationalist feelings and linked the region to the wider freedom struggle.
30. **Q:** Did the Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam have long-term effects?
A: Yes, it prepared the ground for future mass movements like Civil Disobedience.

TWO MARK:

A. The First War of Independence 1857 & South Assam

1. **Q:** Why did the 1857 revolt have only a limited impact in South Assam?
A: South Assam had very few sepoy cantonments and was geographically isolated from the main centres of the revolt. As a result, there was no large-scale mutiny, only scattered unrest among tea labourers and some hill tribes, which the British quickly suppressed.
2. **Q:** How did the British react to rumours of revolt in Cachar during 1857?
A: They increased surveillance, strengthened police posts, and stationed extra troops in sensitive areas to prevent any uprising from spreading to the Surma Valley.
3. **Q:** Name one social group in South Assam that showed discontent during 1857.

A: Some tea garden workers and local tribal communities expressed sporadic discontent, which reflected the indirect influence of the revolt.

4. **Q:** What administrative lesson did the British learn from 1857 in South Assam?

A: They realised the need for closer supervision of remote districts, leading to stricter policing, intelligence networks, and stronger district administration.

5. **Q:** Did the 1857 revolt encourage any future nationalist feeling in South Assam?

A: Yes, even though participation was limited, the stories of rebellion inspired later generations to view British rule as oppressive and sowed early seeds of political consciousness.

B. Formation of the Chief Commissioner's Province (1874)

6. **Q:** Why did the British separate Assam from Bengal in 1874?

A: To improve administrative efficiency, secure the frontier, and give more direct attention to tea and oil industries in the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys.

7. **Q:** Which regions were included in the new Chief Commissioner's Province?

A: The Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley (Cachar and Sylhet), and adjoining hill tracts were all brought under the new province.

8. **Q:** What was the capital of the new province and why?

A: Shillong became the capital because of its cool climate and central location, which was convenient for British officers.

9. **Q:** How did the creation of the province affect the Surma Valley population?

A: Many Bengali residents resented being separated from

Bengal Presidency, leading to petitions and protests against the move.

10. **Q:** Name one economic reason for creating the province in 1874.

A: The British wanted more focused supervision of tea plantations, revenue collection, and resource extraction in Assam.

11. **Q:** What was the immediate administrative benefit of 1874?

A: It allowed a separate provincial budget, appointments, and policies tailored to Assam's needs rather than Bengal's priorities.

12. **Q:** Who was the first Chief Commissioner of Assam?

A: Richard Harte Keatinge, who initiated administrative consolidation in the new province.

13. **Q:** How did this separation shape Assamese identity?

A: It gave Assam a distinct administrative and political identity, which later fuelled regional consciousness and movements.

C. The Swadeshi Movement in South Assam

14. **Q:** What triggered the Swadeshi Movement in Assam?

A: The Partition of Bengal in 1905 angered people in both Brahmaputra and Surma valleys, sparking protests and boycotts.

15. **Q:** Name one key activity of the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam.

A: Public meetings, processions, and the promotion of indigenous goods and schools were organised in towns like Silchar.

16. **Q:** Which section of society played a leading role in Swadeshi activities?

A: Educated youth and students were at the forefront, leading boycotts and spreading nationalist ideas.

17. **Q:** How did the Swadeshi Movement affect local industries?

A: It boosted small-scale weaving, khadi, and indigenous crafts as people rejected British products.

18. **Q:** Did the Swadeshi Movement unite different communities in South Assam?

A: Yes, it brought together Hindus and Muslims on a common anti-colonial platform, at least in its initial phase.

19. **Q:** Name one form of cultural expression used in Swadeshi agitation.

A: Songs, plays, and patriotic speeches in Assamese and Bengali languages were used to mobilise people emotionally.

20. **Q:** What was the British response to Swadeshi protests?

A: Authorities increased surveillance, restricted meetings, and arrested local leaders to curb nationalist activities.

D. Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam

21. **Q:** When did the Non-Cooperation Movement begin and under whose leadership?

A: It began in 1920 under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership as part of a nationwide call to withdraw from British institutions.

22. **Q:** How did students in South Assam participate in Non-Cooperation?

A: They boycotted government schools and colleges, joined national schools, and helped spread Gandhian ideas.

23. **Q:** Name one prominent leader from Assam associated with the movement.

A: Kuladhar Chaliha was one of the important leaders supporting the movement in Assam.

24. **Q:** Which form of economic protest was common during Non-Cooperation in South Assam?

A: Boycott of foreign cloth and promotion of khadi became a visible form of protest.

25. **Q:** What was the long-term impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement on South Assam?

A: It integrated the region more firmly into the national struggle, strengthened local leadership, and prepared the masses for later movements like Civil Disobedience.

BOARD ANSWER:

1./ Discuss the causes and limited impact of the 1857 Revolt in South Assam.

Ans: The Revolt of 1857, popularly known as the First War of Independence, was a landmark event in the history of India. It began as a mutiny of sepoys in Meerut but soon spread to major parts of North and Central India. The revolt challenged British authority and exposed the growing discontent among different sections of Indian society. However, its impact was not uniform throughout the subcontinent. In South Assam, which comprised areas like Cachar and the Surma Valley, the revolt did not assume the scale it reached elsewhere. Understanding the causes of the revolt and why its impact remained limited in South Assam helps us appreciate the unique political and social conditions of the region during the mid-nineteenth century.

Causes of the Revolt of 1857

The causes of the 1857 revolt were manifold. First, there was **political discontent** due to British annexation policies such as the Doctrine of Lapse and the annexation of kingdoms like Awadh, which angered Indian rulers and soldiers alike. Second, there was **economic exploitation**; heavy revenue demands,

destruction of traditional industries, and preference for British goods created misery among peasants and artisans. Third, **military grievances** played a major role. Indian sepoy in the Bengal Army were paid less than their British counterparts and denied promotion, which bred resentment. Fourth, there were **religious and social causes**. Conservative Indians feared that the British were deliberately interfering with their customs, promoting Christian missions and enacting laws such as the abolition of sati and legalisation of widow remarriage. Finally, the immediate trigger was the **introduction of the new Enfield rifle cartridges** allegedly greased with cow and pig fat, which offended Hindu and Muslim soldiers. These factors collectively erupted into an armed uprising in 1857.

Why the Revolt Had Limited Impact in South Assam

Although these grievances were widespread in India, South Assam remained relatively untouched by large-scale rebellion. Several factors explain this limited impact. First, South Assam lacked large **sepoy cantonments**. The revolt in 1857 was largely led by Indian soldiers stationed in the Bengal Army, but the Surma Valley and Cachar did not have major military bases from which mutiny could spread. Second, the region's **geographical isolation** acted as a barrier. Situated far from the heartlands of rebellion like Meerut, Kanpur and Delhi, South Assam was separated by difficult terrain and poor communication networks, making coordination with rebels impossible. Third, the **social composition** of the region was different. Large sections of the population consisted of recently migrated tea-garden labourers and hill tribes who were outside the mainstream of the sepoy army and thus did not directly share its grievances. Fourth, the British administration in South Assam was still relatively new and locally entrenched. British officers kept close surveillance over tea plantations and hill tracts, which helped them detect and suppress any signs of unrest quickly. Finally, the **economic interests** of certain groups in the region were

tied to British rule. Local elites, planters and traders benefitted from the tea industry and were unwilling to risk their positions by joining an uncertain revolt.

Indirect Effects of the Revolt in South Assam

Although the 1857 uprising did not lead to open rebellion in South Assam, it did have indirect effects. The British became more cautious and strengthened their administrative and military grip on the region. Police posts were reinforced, intelligence networks expanded and stricter laws were imposed to prevent future unrest. The event also generated **latent nationalist feelings** among sections of the educated classes who saw the revolt as a heroic struggle, even though they had not participated in it. Later political organisations and movements in Assam drew inspiration from the idea that British rule could be challenged.

2./ Explain the circumstances and significance of the formation of the Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam in 1874.

Ans: The formation of the Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam in 1874 marked an important milestone in the administrative and political history of the region. Prior to this, Assam was administered as part of the Bengal Presidency. The decision to carve out a separate province emerged from a combination of administrative, political, and economic considerations. This development not only created a distinct territorial identity for Assam but also laid the groundwork for future socio-political awakening in the region.

Circumstances Leading to the Formation

After the British annexation of Assam in the aftermath of the Anglo-Burmese Wars (1824–26), the region was governed as a part of Bengal. Over time, however, the vastness of Bengal Presidency and the remoteness of Assam created difficulties in governance. The British officials in Calcutta often lacked direct knowledge of the conditions in Assam, leading to administrative inefficiency and neglect of local

issues. Moreover, the discovery of tea, coal, oil, and other resources in Assam during the mid-nineteenth century increased the region's economic importance for the colonial state. The British realised that a more focused administration was necessary to supervise the exploitation of these resources.

Another important circumstance was the inclusion of the Sylhet district and adjoining areas into Assam. This area had a large Bengali-speaking population and closer links with Bengal's economy, which created administrative overlaps when managed from Calcutta. The British government felt that a separate administrative unit under a Chief Commissioner, directly responsible to the Governor-General of India, would ensure better governance, revenue collection, and infrastructural development.

Formation of the Province in 1874

In February 1874, the Government of India officially announced the separation of Assam from Bengal and its reorganisation as a new province under a Chief Commissioner. The new province included the districts of the Brahmaputra Valley—Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, and Lakhimpur—along with Goalpara (earlier part of Bengal) and the Sylhet district from Eastern Bengal. Shillong was selected as the administrative headquarters. The creation of this province under a Chief Commissioner meant that Assam was directly under the control of the Governor-General of India rather than the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. This administrative change gave Assam a distinct territorial identity within British India for the first time.

Significance of the Formation

The formation of the Chief Commissioner's Province had far-reaching consequences. Administratively, it allowed for more efficient governance. The Chief Commissioner could now focus solely on Assam's issues, leading to better management of land revenue, policing, infrastructure, and development of tea plantations and transport networks.

Politically, the creation of the province gave Assam a separate platform to articulate its interests. Though the people of Assam were not yet given representative institutions, the establishment of a separate province indirectly stimulated political consciousness among the educated classes. Later, organisations such as the Assam Association (formed in 1903) could build on this separate administrative identity to raise demands for reforms and self-government.

Economically, the British administration could now channel its efforts to promote tea, oil, and coal industries more systematically. This increased revenue for the colonial government, but it also intensified the inflow of migrant labour and settlers, especially from Bengal. This migration had long-term demographic and cultural effects on Assam.

Culturally, while the creation of the province offered an opportunity for the Assamese people to revive their language and identity after decades of marginalisation under Bengali administration, it also created tensions due to the inclusion of Sylhet and other Bengali-dominated areas. These tensions over language and identity would later shape Assam's politics in the twentieth century.

3./ Trace the origin and development of the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam after the Partition of Bengal.

Ans: The Swadeshi Movement was one of the earliest mass movements in India against British colonial rule, triggered by the Partition of Bengal in 1905. While the movement is often studied in the context of Bengal proper, it also had a significant impact on Assam, including its southern districts such as Cachar, Sylhet (then part of Assam), and adjoining areas. In South Assam, the Swadeshi Movement became an important platform for mobilising people against colonial policies, promoting indigenous enterprise, and stimulating political awareness among the educated middle class.

Origin of the Movement in South Assam
The roots of the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam lay in the

resentment over the Partition of Bengal announced by Lord Curzon in July 1905. By this administrative decision, Eastern Bengal and Assam were merged into a new province with Dhaka as its capital. The move was widely perceived as a “divide and rule” policy aimed at weakening the growing nationalist sentiment in Bengal. In Assam, particularly in Sylhet and Cachar, people who had strong cultural and economic links with Bengal saw the partition as an attack on their identity and interests.

Educated elites, students, lawyers, and professionals in South Assam, many of whom maintained close ties with nationalist leaders in Bengal, responded quickly to the call for Swadeshi. The local press and public meetings in towns such as Silchar and Sylhet became centres for expressing discontent. Initially, the movement was spearheaded by the educated Bengali middle class in Sylhet and Cachar, but it gradually found resonance among Assamese-speaking people as well.

Development of the Movement

Following the official implementation of the Partition on 16 October 1905, South Assam witnessed boycotts of British goods, protests, and public meetings. Students played an especially active role by participating in processions, singing patriotic songs, and raising funds for Swadeshi schools and organisations. Teachers and local intellectuals also encouraged the boycott of foreign cloth, sugar, salt, and other goods. In many parts of Cachar and Sylhet, small Swadeshi stores were opened to sell indigenous products, and cooperative ventures were initiated to encourage the use of local goods.

One of the distinctive features of the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam was the emphasis on educational reform. National schools were set up in Sylhet and Silchar to replace government-aided institutions that followed colonial curricula. These schools aimed to instil patriotic values in students. In Sylhet, for example, a number of students boycotted government schools and joined newly established nationalist schools. This aspect of the movement deepened political consciousness among the youth and provided a training ground for future leaders.

Public meetings in South Assam often echoed the themes of self-help, economic self-reliance, and revival of indigenous industries. Local leaders like Abdul Karim, Surendranath Sen, and others in Sylhet played a significant role in popularising Swadeshi ideals. The movement also found support from sections of the Muslim intelligentsia who opposed the partition, though their participation was more limited compared to the Hindu middle class.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its initial momentum, the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam faced several challenges. The region's economic dependence on tea plantations and colonial trade networks made it difficult to sustain a complete boycott of foreign goods. Many of the Swadeshi stores and cooperative ventures lacked capital and organisational strength. Moreover, the rural population, particularly tea garden labourers and peasants, remained largely outside the movement due to social and economic barriers.

Another limitation was the colonial administration's repression. The government kept a close watch on public meetings and student activities. Some nationalist leaders were arrested or harassed, which weakened the movement's organisational capacity. By the time the Partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911, the movement had already lost much of its initial fervour in South Assam, although its legacy endured.

Impact and Significance

The Swadeshi Movement in South Assam had lasting consequences despite its limitations. It fostered a spirit of economic self-reliance and indigenous enterprise. Even after the movement subsided, the idea of supporting local industries remained strong among sections of the educated class. Politically, the movement broadened the base of anti-colonial sentiment in the region. It also marked the first major instance of students and youth participating actively in a nationalist campaign in South Assam.

Culturally, the movement contributed to a revival of local languages, literature, and folk traditions. Patriotic songs, plays, and essays circulated widely in Sylhet and Cachar, creating a shared sense of purpose among different communities. It also prepared the ground for future mass movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920s, in which South Assam again played an active role.

4./ Describe the nature and impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam (1920–22).

Ans: The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22) was a landmark in India's freedom struggle, marking the first time Mahatma Gandhi's call for non-violent mass protest resonated widely across the country. In Assam, and especially in its southern districts such as Cachar, Sylhet and adjoining areas (collectively known as South Assam at the time), the movement created a new wave of political activism. It not only linked the region more closely with the national movement but also shaped the political consciousness of its people.

Background of the Movement in South Assam

The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by the Indian National Congress in response to widespread disillusionment with British rule following the Rowlatt Act (1919), the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919), and the perceived betrayal of Indian hopes in the post-World War I settlement. Gandhi's programme called for boycotting government institutions, law courts, foreign goods, and elections, and for promoting swadeshi (indigenous goods), national schools, and panchayats as alternatives to colonial structures.

In South Assam, the movement built upon the earlier political awakening generated by organisations like the Surma Valley Political Conference, the Assam Association and the Swadeshi Movement. These earlier efforts had already mobilised students, professionals, and the urban middle class. When Gandhi's call reached the region, it found

a receptive audience among politically conscious groups in Sylhet, Cachar and Hailakandi.

Nature of the Movement in South Assam

The Non-Cooperation Movement in South Assam combined both political and social aspects. Its most visible feature was the boycott of government institutions. Many lawyers in Sylhet and Cachar gave up their legal practice in colonial courts to express solidarity with the movement. Students withdrew from government schools and colleges and joined newly established national institutions inspired by Gandhian ideals.

Public meetings, processions and conferences were organised across South Assam to spread the message of non-cooperation. In towns like Silchar, Karimganj and Sylhet, volunteers took out rallies urging people to boycott foreign cloth and adopt khadi. Spinning wheels were distributed to households to encourage self-reliance. Local branches of the Indian National Congress became more active, enrolling volunteers and training them in non-violent protest.

The movement also had a strong social reform component. Inspired by Gandhi's emphasis on eradicating untouchability and promoting communal harmony, many activists in South Assam began campaigns for social upliftment, literacy and hygiene. In some areas, particularly in Cachar, efforts were made to promote indigenous industries and cooperative societies as an alternative to dependence on British imports.

Participation of Different Groups

While the leadership of the movement in South Assam was largely in the hands of educated elites—lawyers, teachers, students and professionals—it also drew support from traders, small peasants, and sections of the rural population. Students played a particularly dynamic role by organising strikes, picketing shops selling foreign goods, and spreading nationalist literature. Women's participation was limited but not absent; some women helped in spinning khadi, organising meetings, and encouraging men to join protests.

At the same time, the tea garden labourers—who constituted a large portion of South Assam’s population—remained mostly outside the movement due to social isolation, economic dependence on plantation managements, and lack of direct mobilisation. This limited the mass character of the movement in the region compared to parts of Bengal or the United Provinces.

Impact of the Movement

The Non-Cooperation Movement had several significant effects on South Assam. Politically, it transformed the Indian National Congress from an elite organisation into a mass platform in the region. Membership increased, and Congress committees became active in towns and rural centres. It also created a new generation of local leaders who would later participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement and other phases of the freedom struggle.

Economically, the boycott of foreign goods and promotion of khadi gave a boost to indigenous crafts, albeit on a limited scale. Many people in Sylhet and Cachar began wearing khadi as a symbol of resistance. Shops selling British goods faced picketing, and some closed down temporarily. Although these effects did not fundamentally alter the region’s economy, they helped cultivate a sense of self-reliance.

Socially, the movement deepened the spirit of nationalism and unity among the people of South Assam. It also encouraged educational reform through the establishment of national schools, where students were trained in civic responsibility and patriotism. The emphasis on communal harmony was particularly significant in a region with a mixed Hindu-Muslim population, though such harmony remained fragile under colonial policies.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its achievements, the movement in South Assam faced several limitations. The British administration used repressive measures, including arrests, fines and surveillance, to curb protests. Many leaders and volunteers were imprisoned, which weakened organisational

capacity. The withdrawal of the movement by Gandhi after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922 also demoralised many activists in the region.

Furthermore, the lack of participation by the tea garden labourers and the broader rural masses meant that the movement remained largely urban and middle-class in character. As a result, its economic impact was limited and its political reach uneven.

5./ Compare and contrast the Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation Movements in South Assam with reference to their aims, methods, and outcomes.

Ans: The Swadeshi Movement (1905–1911) and the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) were two important phases of India's struggle for freedom. In South Assam — which included districts like Cachar, Sylhet and parts of the Surma Valley — both movements left significant imprints, but they emerged in different contexts and adopted different strategies. A comparative study of these two movements in South Assam highlights the evolution of nationalist politics in the region from a limited urban movement to a broader mass-based agitation.

Background and Context

The Swadeshi Movement in South Assam was a direct reaction to the Partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon, which separated the largely Bengali-speaking districts of Eastern Bengal and Assam from the rest of Bengal. This partition aroused strong resentment in Assam and particularly in the Surma Valley, which had close cultural and economic ties with Bengal. Educated elites, lawyers, teachers and students in Sylhet and Cachar played a central role in organising boycotts of foreign goods and promoting indigenous enterprises.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, launched fifteen years later under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, was not tied to a single administrative issue but to a general disillusionment with British rule after the First World War, the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It

called for complete withdrawal of cooperation from colonial institutions and a constructive programme of swadeshi, self-reliance and social reform. In South Assam it found a field already prepared by earlier movements but broadened the scope of participation.

Aims of the Two Movements

Both movements aimed to challenge British authority but their immediate objectives differed. The Swadeshi Movement's chief goal was the annulment of the Partition of Bengal and the revival of indigenous industries. It was essentially a protest against an unpopular administrative decision.

The Non-Cooperation Movement had a more comprehensive aim — to achieve self-government (Swaraj) by non-violent means. In South Assam, this meant not only boycotting foreign goods but also giving up government schools, law courts and jobs to weaken the colonial administration.

Thus while the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam was a reactionary protest with economic overtones, the Non-Cooperation Movement was a proactive mass struggle for political self-rule and moral regeneration.

Methods of Protest

The methods adopted by the two movements in South Assam also reveal differences. The Swadeshi Movement relied primarily on boycotts of British goods, promotion of indigenous handloom and handicrafts, and organisation of public meetings and cultural programmes. Swadeshi schools were opened, and nationalist songs and literature spread the spirit of self-reliance. Its tone was assertive but remained largely moderate and legalistic.

The Non-Cooperation Movement went further. It not only continued the swadeshi boycott but also involved mass resignation from government institutions, picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth stores, and creation of parallel national schools and arbitration courts. Volunteers were trained in satyagraha and disciplined non-violence. Students, teachers, lawyers and even small traders in Sylhet and Cachar joined in large numbers. The movement combined political action with

Gandhian social reform such as spinning khadi, promoting communal harmony and upliftment of the downtrodden.

Extent of Participation

In terms of participation, the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam remained largely an urban middle-class phenomenon led by lawyers, professionals and students. Women's involvement was minimal, and the rural masses, particularly tea garden labourers, were largely untouched.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, though still dominated by the middle class, made greater inroads into the rural population. Students left government schools to join national institutions, local Congress committees multiplied, and volunteers mobilised peasants for meetings and boycotts. However, as with the Swadeshi Movement, the tea garden workers remained mostly outside its ambit due to their isolation and dependence on European planters.

Outcomes and Impact

The Swadeshi Movement in South Assam succeeded in fostering an initial sense of political identity, encouraging indigenous enterprise and promoting vernacular education. It produced a generation of early nationalists and cultural leaders but failed to mobilise the masses on a sustained basis. With the annulment of the partition in 1911 and increased government repression, the movement declined.

The Non-Cooperation Movement had a more dramatic, though short-lived, impact. It transformed the Congress in South Assam into a mass organisation, increased the use of khadi, established national schools, and trained a cadre of disciplined activists who would later participate in the Civil Disobedience and Quit India movements. Although it was called off in 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident, its influence endured, leaving behind stronger political networks and a deeper spirit of nationalism.

Comparative Assessment

In comparison, the Swadeshi Movement in South Assam was narrower in aim and scope but laid the groundwork for later struggles. The Non-

Cooperation Movement built on this foundation to create a more comprehensive and participatory agitation. Both emphasised swadeshi and boycott but the Non-Cooperation Movement combined them with non-cooperation with government institutions and Gandhian social reform.

The similarities between the two included reliance on non-violent methods, focus on swadeshi and education, and leadership by the educated middle class. The differences lay in their goals, scale of participation and the degree to which they challenged the colonial state.

6./ Assess the overall impact of the 1857 Revolt, the 1874 reorganisation, and the Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation Movements on the political consciousness of South Assam.

Ans: The history of South Assam during the colonial period is marked by a gradual but steady rise of political consciousness. Events such as the Revolt of 1857, the creation of a separate Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam in 1874, and mass movements like the Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation Movements each played a distinctive role in shaping the region's political identity. Together, they transformed South Assam from a peripheral outpost of colonial administration into an arena of organised nationalist activity. Assessing their cumulative impact helps us understand how the people of South Assam became increasingly aware of their political rights and responsibilities.

The 1857 Revolt and its Limited but Symbolic Impact

Although the Revolt of 1857 did not assume a massive form in South Assam, its indirect effects were significant. The region's isolation, the absence of a strong sepoy garrison and the lack of prior mobilisation prevented a large-scale uprising. Yet sporadic discontent and minor incidents of resistance revealed an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with British rule. The revolt also made the colonial government more cautious about the loyalty of local elites and soldiers. For the people of South Assam, news of the rebellion in northern India served as an early

exposure to anti-colonial ideas, planting the first seeds of political awareness even though they could not participate fully at the time.

The 1874 Reorganisation and its Political Significance

The creation of a separate Chief Commissioner's Province of Assam in 1874 was a turning point for South Assam. The inclusion of the Surma Valley districts, such as Cachar and Sylhet, in this new province brought administrative changes that affected revenue, education and public works. While the British justified this reorganisation on grounds of administrative efficiency, it generated mixed reactions among the people. Many in Sylhet resented their detachment from Bengal, while others welcomed the increased attention to local governance. The debates around this change sharpened regional identity and stimulated early expressions of public opinion through petitions, meetings and associations. It laid the groundwork for later political organisations by making people aware of the link between administrative decisions and their own welfare.

Swadeshi Movement: The First Mass Awakening

The Swadeshi Movement after the Partition of Bengal in 1905 represented the first real mass political agitation in South Assam. In Sylhet, Cachar and adjoining areas, educated elites, students and traders rallied against British policies by boycotting foreign goods and promoting indigenous industries. Public meetings, cultural programmes and swadeshi schools spread the message of self-reliance. Although participation was still largely urban and middle-class, the movement gave the people of South Assam practical experience in collective action. It also nurtured a sense of economic nationalism and linked the region's grievances to the broader struggle for Indian unity. The Swadeshi phase thus marked the transition from isolated protests to organised political mobilisation.

Non-Cooperation Movement: Broadening the Base

The Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920–22 under Mahatma Gandhi took nationalist activity in South Assam to a new level. It combined swadeshi with a more direct withdrawal of cooperation from colonial institutions—boycotting schools, courts and foreign goods, spinning

khadi and forming national schools. In towns like Silchar and Sylhet, students, teachers, lawyers and small traders actively participated. Though tea garden labourers and the rural poor remained largely outside, the movement expanded the Congress's organisational reach and trained a cadre of disciplined activists. It also infused a moral dimension into politics by emphasising non-violence, social reform and communal harmony. This broadened both the scope and the ethical foundation of political consciousness in South Assam.

Cumulative Impact on Political Consciousness

Taken together, these four episodes produced a layered political awakening in South Assam. The Revolt of 1857 served as a distant but powerful symbol of resistance. The 1874 reorganisation made the people aware of their regional identity and the importance of administrative decisions. The Swadeshi Movement gave them their first taste of organised economic and political protest. The Non-Cooperation Movement deepened this process, converting local grievances into participation in an all-India struggle for self-rule.

This cumulative experience created a new generation of leaders, expanded the base of the Indian National Congress in the region and fostered a sense of unity among different communities. It also taught the people of South Assam various forms of political engagement—from petitions and meetings to boycotts and satyagraha. The consciousness generated during these phases would later feed into the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement and post-independence regional politics.

UNIT – 5

ONE MARK:

Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam

1. **Q. When did the Civil Disobedience Movement start in India?**
A. It started in 1930 under Mahatma Gandhi.
2. **Q. Who led the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam?**
A. Local Congress leaders such as Kamini Kumar Chanda and Tarini Charan Choudhury played key roles.
3. **Q. What was the main form of protest in the Civil Disobedience Movement?**
A. Non-payment of taxes and breaking salt laws.
4. **Q. Name one area of Cachar where the Civil Disobedience Movement was active.**
A. Silchar subdivision.
5. **Q. Which Congress session inspired Civil Disobedience in Assam?**
A. The Lahore Session of 1929.
6. **Q. What was the main objective of the Civil Disobedience Movement?**
A. To achieve complete independence (Purna Swaraj).
7. **Q. Mention one impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam.**
A. Growth of nationalist feelings among masses.
8. **Q. Which group actively participated along with Congress in South Assam?**
A. Students and women organisations.

Quit India Movement in South Assam

9. **Q. In which year was the Quit India Movement launched?**
A. 1942.
10. **Q. Who gave the slogan 'Do or Die'?**
A. Mahatma Gandhi.
11. **Q. Name one South Assam leader involved in the Quit India Movement.**
A. Kamini Kumar Chanda.
12. **Q. Which district in South Assam witnessed police firing during the Quit India Movement?**
A. Cachar.
13. **Q. What was the primary demand of the Quit India Movement?**
A. Immediate British withdrawal from India.
14. **Q. Name one student organisation supporting the Quit India Movement in South Assam.**
A. Silchar Students' Association.
15. **Q. What was the impact of Quit India Movement on the youth of South Assam?**
A. It radicalised and energised the youth for freedom struggle.

Sylhet Referendum

16. **Q. When was the Sylhet Referendum held?**
A. In July 1947.
17. **Q. The Sylhet Referendum decided whether Sylhet would join which country?**
A. Pakistan or remain in India.
18. **Q. Who administered the Sylhet Referendum?**
A. British authorities under Sir Cyril Radcliffe's plan.
19. **Q. What was the result of the Sylhet Referendum?**
A. Majority voted to join East Pakistan.

20. **Q. Which part of Sylhet remained with India after the referendum?**
A. Karimganj subdivision.
21. **Q. What was one impact of the Sylhet Referendum on South Assam?**
A. It changed the demographic and territorial boundaries of Assam.
22. **Q. Name one community severely affected by the Sylhet Referendum.**
A. Bengali Hindus.
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Impact of Partition in South Assam

23. **Q. When did India achieve independence and partition occur?**
A. 15th August 1947.
24. **Q. Which two countries were created after Partition?**
A. India and Pakistan.
25. **Q. Name one district of South Assam which became a border area after Partition.**
A. Karimganj.
26. **Q. What was one major economic impact of Partition on South Assam?**
A. Disruption of trade routes with Sylhet and East Bengal.
27. **Q. What was one social impact of Partition on South Assam?**
A. Influx of refugees from East Pakistan.
28. **Q. Name one major refugee settlement area in South Assam post-Partition.**
A. Silchar.

29. **Q. Which riverine communication link was lost after Partition?**
A. River routes through Sylhet to Calcutta.
30. **Q. What was the overall impact of Partition on South Assam's political life?**
A. Rise of new political issues like refugee rehabilitation and border security.

TWO MARK:

Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam

1. **Q. Why did the Civil Disobedience Movement start in 1930?**
A. The Civil Disobedience Movement began in 1930 after the Lahore Congress resolution of 1929 which declared Purna Swaraj as India's goal; it aimed to defy unjust colonial laws, especially the salt tax, and pressurise the British Government to grant complete independence.
2. **Q. How did people in South Assam participate in the salt satyagraha?**
A. Volunteers in areas like Silchar and Karimganj prepared and sold salt in defiance of the British salt monopoly, symbolising mass resistance and encouraging ordinary citizens to join the nationalist struggle.
3. **Q. Mention one role of students in South Assam during the Civil Disobedience Movement.**
A. Students in South Assam boycotted classes, took out processions and spread nationalist literature which helped mobilise the rural masses for the movement.
4. **Q. What was the British response to the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam?**
A. The colonial authorities resorted to arrests of local leaders,

lathi-charges and strict surveillance which temporarily weakened but could not completely suppress the movement.

5. Q. How did the Civil Disobedience Movement strengthen nationalism in South Assam?

A. By uniting different communities through common protests such as tax refusal and picketing of liquor shops, it broadened the base of nationalism in the region.

Quit India Movement in South Assam

6. Q. What was the immediate cause of launching the Quit India Movement?

A. The failure of the Cripps Mission and growing discontent during World War II led Gandhi and the Congress to demand immediate British withdrawal, resulting in the 1942 Quit India call.

7. Q. How was the 'Do or Die' slogan reflected in South Assam?

A. In South Assam, underground groups of youth attempted sabotage of government offices and communication lines, demonstrating the resolve behind Gandhi's slogan.

8. Q. What role did women play in the Quit India Movement in South Assam?

A. Women acted as couriers for underground workers, organised meetings and raised funds, showing that the struggle had become a people's movement.

9. Q. Why did the British Government impose harsh repression during Quit India in South Assam?

A. Because spontaneous strikes, picketing, and acts of defiance disrupted administration and war logistics in the region, the British responded with mass arrests and shootings to crush the movement.

10. **Q. What was one long-term effect of the Quit India Movement in South Assam?**
A. It inspired a new generation of leaders and created a permanent sense of urgency for freedom, making compromise with the British increasingly impossible.
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Sylhet Referendum

11. **Q. Why was the Sylhet Referendum held in 1947?**
A. It was held to decide whether the district of Sylhet would remain in India or join East Pakistan as part of the Partition arrangements under the British.
12. **Q. How did the result of the Sylhet Referendum affect Assam's boundary?**
A. Most of Sylhet was transferred to East Pakistan but Karimganj subdivision remained with Assam, thereby altering the state's territory and demographics.
13. **Q. What was the impact of the Sylhet Referendum on minority communities?**
A. Hindu and other minority communities faced insecurity and large-scale migration into Barak Valley and adjoining areas, changing the social composition of South Assam.
14. **Q. Who supervised the Sylhet Referendum and why was it controversial?**
A. It was supervised by British officials but criticised for irregularities, communal tensions and inadequate safeguards for minorities.
15. **Q. How did the Sylhet Referendum influence politics in South Assam?**
A. The loss of Sylhet and influx of refugees became key political issues, affecting elections, resource allocation and community relations in the region.

Impact of Partition in South Assam

16. **Q. What was one immediate demographic impact of Partition on South Assam?**

A. Partition caused a heavy influx of displaced persons from East Pakistan into South Assam, leading to refugee settlements in Silchar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.

17. **Q. How did Partition disrupt trade in South Assam?**

A. Traditional river and rail routes through Sylhet and East Bengal were cut off, hampering the flow of goods to Calcutta and other markets, which hurt the economy.

18. **Q. How did Partition affect communication links of South Assam?**

A. The severing of steamer and railway connections forced the region to depend on poor road networks and delayed its integration with the rest of India.

19. **Q. What was the political impact of Partition on South Assam?**

A. Issues such as refugee rehabilitation, communal harmony, and border security became dominant in the political discourse and administrative planning of the area.

20. **Q. How did Partition influence cultural life in South Assam?**

A. Refugee influx brought new cultural practices, dialects and tensions but also enriched the social fabric of towns like Silchar and Karimganj.

21. **Q. Why did Karimganj remain with India after Partition?**

A. Although part of Sylhet, a plebiscite and boundary commission decision retained Karimganj with Assam to maintain connectivity and safeguard local sentiment.

22. Q. How did Partition change landholding patterns in South Assam?

A. Abandoned lands of emigrating Muslims or Hindus were redistributed, often creating disputes and altering agrarian relations in the region.

23. Q. What administrative challenges did South Assam face after Partition?

A. Sudden rise in population, shortage of housing, pressure on schools and health services, and the need to guard a new international border created immense strain.

24. Q. How did Partition shape the economy of the Barak Valley?

A. It led to a decline in jute and tea trade through East Bengal ports but encouraged new road and rail projects linking the valley with mainland India.

25. Q. What was the long-term impact of Partition on communal relations in South Assam?

A. While initial years saw tension and suspicion, over time a mixed population and shared hardships fostered localised cooperation but left behind sensitive identity issues in politics.

BOARD ANSWER:

1./ Discuss the causes, nature, and impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam. How did local participation shape the nationalist struggle in the region?

Ans: The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34) was one of the most decisive phases of the Indian freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, and its effects were visible even in regions far from the political centres of India, including South Assam. This region, comprising the Barak Valley with its diverse population of Assamese, Bengali and tribal communities, responded to the national call for non-

violent defiance of British authority. Understanding the movement in South Assam requires an examination of the causes of its emergence, the nature of its activities, the local leadership and participation, and its overall impact on the nationalist struggle and political consciousness in the area.

The **causes** behind the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam were closely linked to the nationwide grievances against colonial economic exploitation and political subordination. The salt tax, high land revenue, and discriminatory excise policies affected the peasantry and small traders of the Barak Valley. There was also resentment over the lack of representation for South Assam in provincial councils and the neglect of local issues by the colonial administration. The influence of earlier movements, such as the Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation Movements, had already sown seeds of nationalism and prepared the ground for a more radical phase of protest. Local Congress committees and nationalist workers in Sylhet and Cachar spread Gandhian ideas, linking local grievances with the broader demand for swaraj (self-rule). Thus, when Gandhi launched the movement with the Salt Satyagraha in March 1930, the people of South Assam were ready to translate these national ideas into local action.

The **nature** of the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam reflected both the national programme and region-specific issues. Civil disobedience in the Barak Valley took the form of boycotting foreign cloth and liquor shops, non-payment of certain taxes, picketing of government offices, and holding public meetings to denounce the British administration. The movement also mobilised students, who left government schools and colleges to participate in processions and distribute nationalist literature. In rural areas of Cachar and Sylhet, peasants refused to pay enhanced land revenue and protested against forced labour. Women, inspired by Gandhian ideals, began to take part in picketing and in spreading khadi, which was a new feature compared to earlier movements. The local Congress leaders—such as Kamini Kumar Chanda, Tarini Charan Dey, and student activists from Sylhet—played a vital role in sustaining the movement and linking village

protests to urban centres like Silchar and Karimganj. Though the movement remained non-violent, it witnessed repeated arrests, lathi charges, and imprisonment of volunteers by colonial authorities.

The **local participation** was significant because it gave a distinct regional character to the national movement. While the movement in Bengal and western India focused on salt and large-scale strikes, South Assam's participation was centred on agrarian grievances, students' unrest, and the assertion of civil rights. The involvement of different communities—Assamese, Bengalis, Manipuris, and tribals—helped to create a sense of shared political identity across the Barak Valley. The Congress committees in South Assam also coordinated with neighbouring districts, reflecting the growing organisational capacity of the nationalist forces in the region. This localised yet connected participation not only broadened the base of the movement but also ensured that the struggle resonated with the everyday lives of the people.

The **impact** of the Civil Disobedience Movement on South Assam was multifaceted. Politically, it deepened the reach of the Congress and nationalist leaders into rural society, breaking the monopoly of traditional elites in public affairs. It also produced a generation of local leaders and student activists who later played crucial roles in the Quit India Movement and in post-independence politics. Socially, the movement fostered greater unity among different linguistic and religious groups by highlighting common economic and political grievances. The active participation of women and students marked a shift towards more inclusive politics. Economically, although the immediate effect was limited—since the British quickly repressed tax refusal and boycotts—the movement popularised the use of khadi and local goods, thereby reinforcing the ideals of self-reliance. At a psychological level, it strengthened people's confidence that they could challenge colonial authority through collective action.

Finally, the Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam also had a **lasting legacy**. It prepared the region for the more intense phase of the Quit India Movement in 1942 and provided organisational experience

to local Congress units. It also demonstrated to the colonial government that even peripheral regions like South Assam were now politically mobilised and could no longer be ignored. In this sense, the movement in South Assam was both an extension of the national struggle and a distinct local expression of anti-colonial nationalism.

2./ Examine the role and activities of the people of South Assam in the Quit India Movement (1942). In what ways did their participation reflect the spirit of “Do or Die”?

Ans: The Quit India Movement of 1942 marked the final mass upsurge of the Indian freedom struggle, launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Known for its historic slogan of “Do or Die,” the movement aimed to paralyse the British administration and secure immediate independence. Although the British tried to suppress it quickly by arresting national leaders, the movement spread like wildfire across the country, including the distant region of South Assam. The Barak Valley districts of Cachar, Sylhet (then part of Assam), and Karimganj became vibrant centres of anti-colonial activity. Understanding the movement in South Assam involves examining the local role and activities and how they reflected the spirit of defiance embodied in Gandhi’s call.

The **background and causes** of the Quit India Movement in South Assam were tied to both national and regional conditions. The outbreak of the Second World War had led to severe inflation, scarcity of essential commodities, and heavy taxation in the Barak Valley. Labourers, peasants, and small traders were especially affected. Moreover, the region had already experienced waves of political awakening through the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements. Students and local Congress committees had been sensitised to nationalist politics and were ready to act when the call for mass struggle came. The presence of key rail, road, and river communication routes in South Assam also gave the movement a

strategic dimension: disrupting these routes would hamper British military operations during the war.

The **role of local leaders and organisations** was crucial in sustaining the movement. With the national leaders imprisoned, the task of mobilising people fell to regional Congress workers, student leaders, and social activists. In South Assam, prominent figures like Kamini Kumar Chanda, Tarini Charan Dey, and young leaders from Silchar and Karimganj organised clandestine meetings, prepared pamphlets, and planned strikes. Local Congress committees coordinated with student unions and trade groups to ensure that the movement was not limited to urban centres but spread into rural areas. The involvement of these leaders showed that the region had developed a cadre of experienced activists through earlier movements who were now ready to take up leadership in the absence of central guidance.

The **activities of the movement** in South Assam reflected both non-violent and more radical forms of protest. Students walked out of schools and colleges, held processions, and hoisted the tricolour on public buildings despite police restrictions. Workers in tea plantations and railway lines engaged in strikes and slowdowns. In rural Cachar and Sylhet, peasants organised demonstrations against revenue demands and disrupted supply lines. There were incidents of cutting telegraph wires, blocking roads, and burning government records to symbolise the rejection of colonial authority. Public meetings were held secretly to avoid police lathi charges and arrests. Women also participated actively by spreading messages, hiding activists from police raids, and collecting funds. This broad-based participation turned the movement into a mass uprising rather than an elite-led agitation.

The **spirit of “Do or Die”** was vividly expressed in South Assam’s participation. Despite the heavy presence of colonial police and the imposition of curfews, people continued to hold protests and face arrests. Many students and volunteers willingly courted imprisonment and endured brutal repression without retaliation, showing their commitment to the cause. In some cases, when police fired on

demonstrators or arrested local leaders, the protests became even more intense, demonstrating the resilience of the movement. The willingness of ordinary villagers, tea garden labourers, and small shopkeepers to risk their livelihoods and safety for national freedom reflected the deep penetration of nationalist sentiment into everyday life. This courage and defiance mirrored the nationwide mood that Gandhi had captured in his August 8th, 1942 speech.

The **impact of the Quit India Movement in South Assam** was significant despite its suppression. Politically, it deepened the roots of the Congress organisation in the Barak Valley and produced a new generation of leaders who later played important roles in post-independence politics and administration. Socially, the movement brought together diverse linguistic and religious groups—Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri, and tribal communities—under a common anti-colonial platform, strengthening regional solidarity. Economically, while strikes and disruptions temporarily hurt trade and transport, they also highlighted the vulnerability of British control over strategic areas like tea plantations and railway links. At the psychological level, the movement instilled a sense of power among the people, showing that even a remote region like South Assam could challenge colonial authority through collective action.

The **legacy** of the movement was also enduring. It prepared South Assam for the turbulent period of the 1947 Partition by fostering political awareness and organisational networks that would later help the region articulate its demands. The sacrifices made during the Quit India Movement became part of the region's collective memory, reinforcing its identity as an integral participant in India's freedom struggle rather than a peripheral observer.

3./ Trace the origin and outcome of the Sylhet Referendum of 1947. How did its results affect the territorial and demographic composition of South Assam?

Ans: The Sylhet Referendum of 1947 was one of the most significant political events in the closing phase of British rule in India. It was

directly linked to the question of Partition and the future of Assam's Surma Valley region. Sylhet, which had been a part of Assam since 1874, was a Bengali-majority district with a mix of Hindus, Muslims, Manipuris and other communities. By the 1940s, the region had become politically sensitive due to the rise of the Muslim League and growing demands for the inclusion of Sylhet in East Bengal if Partition occurred. The referendum held in July 1947 decided whether Sylhet would remain in India as part of Assam or join East Bengal (soon to become East Pakistan). To understand its implications, it is necessary to examine the origin of the referendum, its conduct and outcome, and the effects on the territorial and demographic composition of South Assam.

The **origin of the Sylhet Referendum** can be traced to long-standing issues surrounding the inclusion of Sylhet in Assam. When Assam was separated from Bengal in 1874 and made a Chief Commissioner's Province, Sylhet was attached to Assam for administrative convenience. However, Sylhet's cultural and linguistic ties were primarily with Bengal. Over the decades, sections of Sylhet's Bengali Muslim population felt culturally and politically alienated within Assamese-dominated politics. During the 1940s, as the idea of Partition gained momentum, the Muslim League intensified its demand that Sylhet be merged with East Bengal to form a contiguous Muslim-majority area within Pakistan. The Indian National Congress initially opposed the idea but was compelled to accept a referendum as part of the negotiations leading to the Mountbatten Plan of June 1947. The plan provided that Sylhet would hold a plebiscite to decide its future.

The **referendum itself** was held on 6–7 July 1947 under the supervision of the British authorities. All adult residents of Sylhet were entitled to vote. The campaign was intense: the Muslim League mobilised support for merger with East Bengal by emphasising religious solidarity and promises of economic benefits, while the Congress and Hindu organisations appealed to voters to remain within India, stressing cultural pluralism and shared history. The voting took

place in an atmosphere of high tension but generally remained orderly. When the results were declared, out of roughly 5.8 lakh votes cast, about 4.3 lakh favoured joining East Bengal while around 1.8 lakh opted to stay in India. This clear majority meant that Sylhet would be transferred to East Bengal at the time of Partition.

The **outcome of the referendum** was thus the separation of most of Sylhet from Assam and its inclusion in East Pakistan. However, the Boundary Commission awarded a small portion of Sylhet—the Karimganj subdivision and some border areas—to India, incorporating it into Cachar district. This decision created a new administrative map of South Assam, reducing Assam's territory but leaving a mixed population of Sylheti Bengalis, Manipuris and others within India's borders. The referendum also triggered massive population movements across the new border.

The **impact on the territorial and demographic composition of South Assam** was profound. Territorial loss meant that Assam was now cut off from its old connection with much of Sylhet. Only Karimganj and some areas of Patharkandi remained on the Indian side, while the rest of Sylhet became part of East Pakistan. Demographically, the Partition and referendum caused large-scale migration. Many Hindu Bengalis and Manipuris moved from East Pakistan's Sylhet to Indian Assam, particularly to Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Simultaneously, some Muslim families shifted from Indian-held areas to East Pakistan. This influx altered the population balance of the Barak Valley, increasing its Bengali Hindu population and creating new challenges for land, employment, and social integration. The refugee influx also introduced new political issues, as displaced persons demanded rehabilitation and citizenship rights.

Economically and administratively, the loss of Sylhet deprived Assam of an economically developed district known for its tea, trade and educational institutions. Silchar and other towns had to adjust to new patterns of communication and commerce because traditional routes now lay across an international border. Culturally, however, the connection between the people of Barak Valley and their kin in Sylhet

persisted, leading to continued cross-border ties despite political separation.

4./ Analyse the immediate and long-term effects of the Partition of 1947 on South Assam with reference to migration, economy, administration, and cultural life.

Ans: The Partition of India in 1947 was a watershed event that not only divided the country but also profoundly affected the North-East, including South Assam (then mainly comprising the Surma Valley districts of Cachar, Sylhet, and adjoining areas). While most scholarship focuses on Punjab and Bengal, the repercussions in South Assam were equally intense, creating challenges in migration, administration, economy, and cultural life. Understanding both the immediate and long-term effects of Partition on this region is essential to grasp the roots of its present socio-political reality.

Immediate Effects: Mass Migration and Refugee Influx

The most striking immediate effect of Partition on South Assam was mass migration. The Sylhet Referendum of July 1947 led to the transfer of Sylhet (except the Karimganj sub-division) to East Pakistan. This unexpected political boundary forced large numbers of Hindus, especially Bengali Hindus and professionals, to migrate from Sylhet to Cachar, Karimganj, and the Barak Valley. Simultaneously, some Muslim families from Cachar and Karimganj moved into East Pakistan. This abrupt influx created a refugee crisis in towns like Silchar and Hailakandi, straining public services, housing, and food supplies.

Economic Disruptions: Loss of Markets and Trade Links

Economically, Partition disrupted the established networks of trade and commerce. Before 1947, Sylhet served as an economic hub for tea, rice, and small industries linked to Cachar and the Barak Valley. With its transfer to East Pakistan, South Assam lost direct access to its traditional markets, river ports (such as Chhatak and Sunamganj), and transport routes through Sylhet. The tea gardens in Cachar and

Hailakandi faced logistical problems in exporting produce. Local artisans and small traders who depended on cross-border movement found themselves isolated. In the immediate years after Partition, scarcity of goods and a rise in prices became common in South Assam.

Administrative and Political Challenges

Partition also posed acute administrative problems. Karimganj, which remained in India, had to be reorganised and integrated with Cachar district under new boundary arrangements. Government offices previously located in Sylhet had to be shifted to Silchar or newly established centres. The influx of refugees compelled the Assam government to create special relief and rehabilitation measures, diverting resources from development. Policing the new international border added an additional burden to the local administration, which was not adequately staffed or equipped.

Cultural and Social Transformations

Culturally, the Barak Valley experienced a sudden demographic shift. The arrival of Hindu Bengali refugees brought new cultural organisations, educational institutions, and socio-religious associations to Silchar and adjoining towns. While this enriched the cultural life of South Assam, it also sharpened linguistic and communal identities. Sylhet had been a cultural heartland of Bengali Muslims and Hindus alike; its loss to Pakistan left many families divided. Over time, these demographic changes reinforced the Bengali character of South Assam but also contributed to tensions with Assamese-speaking areas in the Brahmaputra Valley.

Long-Term Effects on Economy and Infrastructure

In the longer run, Partition led to a partial reorientation of South Assam's economy. The refugee population provided a skilled and semi-skilled labour force, which gradually revitalised trade, education, and small industries in Silchar and Karimganj. However, the severance of transport routes through Sylhet meant that South Assam became geographically isolated from the rest of India. This isolation delayed industrialisation and large-scale infrastructure projects until decades

later. The Barak Valley's economic underdevelopment today can be traced partly to the disruptions caused by Partition.

Long-Term Social and Political Impact

Politically, Partition deepened the sense of marginalisation in South Assam. Having lost Sylhet, the Barak Valley became a minority pocket within Assam, dominated by Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims. This contributed to the rise of regional demands for better representation and administrative autonomy in the decades after Independence. Culturally, the refugee influx strengthened educational and literary activities in Bengali, leading to the eventual Language Movement of 1961 in Barak Valley. Thus, Partition sowed the seeds of both solidarity and conflict in South Assam's identity politics.

5./ Compare and contrast the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements in South Assam with reference to their objectives, methods of protest, and outcomes.

Ans: The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34) and the Quit India Movement (1942) were two landmark phases of India's struggle for freedom under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. While the former emphasised breaking unjust colonial laws through non-violent defiance, the latter marked a final, more radical call for the British to "Quit India" immediately. In South Assam, encompassing the Barak Valley districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj, both movements found expression in local protests, student activities, and the mobilisation of workers and peasants. A comparative study of their objectives, methods of protest, and outcomes highlights not only the continuities in nationalist politics but also the changing character of mass participation in the region.

Objectives of the Two Movements

The Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam was primarily aimed at undermining the moral legitimacy of British rule by openly defying its laws. Inspired by Gandhi's call for salt satyagraha and the

boycott of British goods, local leaders in Cachar and Karimganj organised campaigns to refuse taxes, boycott foreign cloth, and propagate khadi. The focus was on demonstrating self-reliance and weakening the economic foundations of colonial authority. By contrast, the Quit India Movement in 1942 arose in the context of World War II, when the British government had dragged India into the war without consulting Indian leaders. In South Assam, as elsewhere, its objective was far more direct and uncompromising: to force the British to leave India immediately and transfer power to Indians. Unlike the more symbolic defiance of 1930–34, the 1942 movement carried the revolutionary slogan “Do or Die,” which inspired participants in South Assam to take bolder risks against colonial authority.

Methods of Protest

During the Civil Disobedience Movement, protests in South Assam largely followed non-violent and disciplined patterns. Students and volunteers held public meetings, picketed liquor and foreign cloth shops, and promoted the use of khadi. Salt law violations, though on a smaller scale than in coastal areas, were symbolically performed. Women also began to take part in demonstrations, spreading nationalist ideas in towns like Silchar. The movement retained an essentially reformist character—its aim was to embarrass the colonial administration rather than paralyse it. In the Quit India Movement, the methods of protest shifted dramatically. British repression of Congress leaders at the outset forced the movement underground. In South Assam, students and workers disrupted railway lines, cut telegraph wires, and attacked symbols of government authority. Secret meetings were held in villages and tea garden areas. Many participants adopted a more militant posture, and acts of sabotage became common, reflecting a heightened sense of urgency and defiance. Thus, while Civil Disobedience relied on disciplined satyagraha, Quit India in South Assam reflected a mix of non-violent protest and clandestine resistance.

Outcomes **and** **Impact**

The Civil Disobedience Movement in South Assam achieved modest but significant results. It helped expand the organisational base of the Indian National Congress in the Barak Valley and spread political awareness among students, women, and sections of the peasantry. However, due to harsh repression, lack of coordination, and the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931, the movement gradually lost momentum. It did not directly threaten colonial control, but it deepened nationalist consciousness and prepared the ground for more intense struggles later.

The Quit India Movement, on the other hand, though brutally suppressed, left a more dramatic imprint. In South Assam, hundreds were arrested, including key local leaders and students. The disruption of rail and communication lines demonstrated that the region was no longer a passive periphery but an active arena of anti-British resistance. The experience of underground organisation built networks of trust and radicalised many young activists, some of whom later joined socialist or revolutionary groups. Although the British regained control by 1943, the movement signalled that colonial authority had lost legitimacy and could no longer govern without massive coercion.

Comparison **and** **Contrast**

Both movements shared the ultimate goal of ending colonial rule and relied on mass participation, but their approaches differed sharply. Civil Disobedience in South Assam was more symbolic and legalistic—violating specific laws like salt, forest, and tax rules to delegitimise British authority. Quit India, however, aimed at an immediate overthrow of British rule and tolerated greater militancy. In terms of outcomes, Civil Disobedience built the organisational capacity of the Congress and created a cadre of trained volunteers, whereas Quit India exposed the limits of British control and convinced many Indians that independence was inevitable. The first was a preparatory stage; the second was a decisive confrontation. In South Assam, this shift manifested in the transition from peaceful boycotts and picketing to sabotage, underground networks, and direct challenges to the state.

6./ Assess the combined impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement, Sylhet Referendum, and Partition on the political consciousness and identity of South Assam.

Ans: South Assam, comprising the Barak Valley districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj, witnessed a distinct trajectory of anti-colonial mobilisation during the first half of the twentieth century. From the Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement to the Sylhet Referendum and the traumatic Partition of 1947, the region experienced a series of political upheavals that reshaped its society, economy and identity. Each of these events left its imprint on the collective consciousness of the people. Taken together, they transformed South Assam from a peripheral outpost of colonial administration into a politically alert region with a complex sense of its place in independent India.

Impact of the Civil Disobedience Movement

The Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–34) served as the first large-scale, coordinated challenge to British authority in South Assam. Although it was inspired by Gandhi's nationwide campaign, local leaders adapted it to regional issues such as land revenue, tea garden workers' grievances and boycott of foreign goods. Students, women and traders in Silchar, Karimganj and Hailakandi held meetings, picketed liquor shops and propagated khadi. This participation created a sense of empowerment and brought nationalist ideas into everyday life. Even though the movement was suppressed by 1934, it left behind a network of activists and familiarised ordinary people with techniques of non-violent protest. In this way, the movement laid the foundation of a more sustained political consciousness that would mature in the 1940s.

Impact of the Quit India Movement

By 1942, the Quit India Movement represented a far more radical confrontation with colonial power. South Assam, like other parts of

India, saw arrests of local Congress leaders at the outset, which pushed the movement underground. Students and workers cut telegraph wires, disrupted rail services and held secret meetings in villages and tea garden areas. The repression was severe, yet the courage shown by ordinary men and women deepened their sense of collective agency. The “Do or Die” spirit of the movement eroded the fear of colonial authority and convinced many in South Assam that independence was inevitable. The Quit India Movement thus turned political consciousness into a more militant and self-confident force.

Impact of the Sylhet Referendum

The Sylhet Referendum of 1947 posed a direct challenge to the identity and territorial integrity of South Assam. Held to decide whether Sylhet would join East Pakistan or remain in India, the referendum was marked by intense campaigning and communal polarisation. Its outcome—Sylhet joining East Pakistan except for the Karimganj subdivision—resulted in the redrawing of boundaries, large-scale migrations and the separation of cultural and family networks. For the people of South Assam, this was not merely an administrative change but a traumatic experience that highlighted the fragility of territorial and communal coexistence. The referendum politicised everyday identities, forcing people to think in terms of citizenship, religious affiliation and national belonging. It also left South Assam geographically more isolated from the rest of India, reinforcing its sense of being a borderland region.

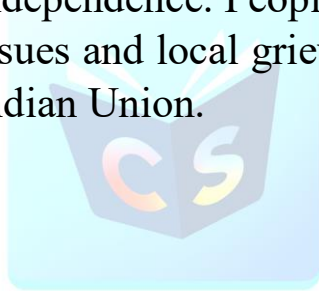
Impact of the Partition of 1947

Partition compounded the effects of the referendum. The sudden influx of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan and the outflow of Muslims from South Assam altered the demographic composition of towns and villages. This produced pressures on land, employment and public services, while also creating opportunities for new political alignments. Administratively, South Assam had to adjust to new borders, disrupted trade routes and a reconfigured security environment. Culturally, Partition generated nostalgia for lost homes and reshaped community relations. Yet, the experience of dislocation also created a heightened

awareness of rights, identity and representation, making the people of South Assam more vocal in demanding attention from the state.

Combined Impact on Political Consciousness and Identity

Taken together, these four developments produced a layered and complex political consciousness in South Assam. The Civil Disobedience Movement introduced the tools of non-violent resistance and linked the region to the all-India nationalist struggle. The Quit India Movement radicalised that struggle and created networks of underground organisation. The Sylhet Referendum politicised questions of territory, religion and citizenship, while Partition forced the population to confront issues of migration, integration and regional neglect. This combination gave South Assam a dual identity: on the one hand, as an integral participant in India's freedom movement; on the other, as a borderland with unique socio-cultural challenges after independence. People in the region became more alert to both national issues and local grievances, demanding equitable treatment within the Indian Union.



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