

The Phulaguri Uprising of 1861 : A Peasant Mass Movement,

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The genesis of the peasant mass movement in Phulaguri in the Nowgong district of Assam in 1861 has got to be found in the taxation policy of the British administration of the period. After the suppression of the great rebellion of 1857-58, the British Indian Government had completely restructured the taxation policy, including the land revenue, in the country so as to enable it to exact the entire cost of the suppression of that historic event from the Indian people themselves. As a matter of fact, the cost of the suppression of the rebellion was estimated at a staggering figure of £ 40 million.(1) This was one side of the medal. There was another aspect connected with the rebellion and its suppression. This is that the suppression of the rebellion marked the transfer of the Indian Empire from the hands of the English East India Company to that of the British Crown. For this the shareholders of the Company were compensated and the payment of compensation to them was made chargeable from the Indian revenues. R. C. Dutt writes, "The Empire of India was purchased by the Crown from the Company, but the people of India were charged with the purchase money. The value received by the shareholders of the Company's stock was not paid by the British Crown which won an imperial property, but was added to the Indian Debt". (2) Thus the cost of the suppression of the rebellion and the purchase of the Indian Empire by the British Crown was added to the public debt of India. The Indian debt stood at £ 60 $\frac{1}{2}$ millions on 30th April 1858. The annual interest charged on the debt was also enormous and Indian tax-payers were required to pay this additional demand also.(3)

Thus it is seen that the Indian financial position and measures needed a major restructuring immediately after the suppression of the rebellion mainly to meet the requirements of the British Imperial interests. For undertaking this job of restructuring the Indian finances, James Wilson, a known political Economist, who was Financial Secretary to the Treasury of England, was sent to

India as the Financial Member of the Vice-roy's Executive Council. He did, at the first instance, three major innovations ; i) introduced a state paper currency ii) a licence tax and iii) an Income tax in 1860 in India. (4) His financial arrangements had contributed much towards the aggravation of the economic position of the peasantry in the country and this led to the growth of restlessness amongst them in the post-rebellion period in the nine teenth century in India. (5)

The land tax or revenue and its almost regular enhancement had become a great source of misery and discontentment among the peasantry in India and it was more so in the Brahmaputra Valley. Already the peasantry in the Valley had been overburdened with numerous taxation. For instance by the time Mills visited Assam, the som trees, on which the Muga worm feeds were assessed to revenue. (6) Excise duty was levied in the district headquarters of Kamrup, Nowgong and Darrang by the same time, (7) and everything procured by an Assamese peasant free of cost from the forest, such as timber, thatch and reeds for the construction of his dwelling houses ; the fisheries called beels, and fodder for his domestic animals, were all brought under taxation, (8) In the midst of the great rebellion, stamp duty was imposed in Assam. In 1860, a ban was imposed on the cultivation of the poppy and thereby on the indigenous production of opium. This was to make room for the expansion of the trade of Government opium and this measure largely affected the peasant economy of Nowgong, where opium was also produced for market to a large extent mostly by the Lalung people. (9) The imposition of the Income tax and the Licence tax in 1861 had added to the misery of the people of the Brahmaputra Valley, and all these measures had pushed the peasants to the point of extreme exasperation and tumultuous resistance in an organised manner. To be precise, the peasants of Nowgong at Phulaguri, a place about nine miles away to the south of Nowgong town, rose in open rebellion in the month of October 1861 against the unjust taxation policy of the British Government, in which Lieutenant G. B. Singer, the Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong lost his life. (10).

To begin with, the imposition of Income tax was a matter of serious concern to the people of the Brahmaputra Valley and it caused them much annoyance. Close on the heels of the introduction of this tax, Government imposed the Licence tax, and it soon passed the 'Act for imposing a duty on Arts, Trades and Dealings' and made inquiries through the District Officers regard-

ing the Pan cultivation throughout the Valley as per the instructions of the Board of Revenue, dated August 1861, for the imposition of a tax on it. (11) The Government measures for the imposition of such taxes were in a situation when the taxation on the dry crop land, on which Linseed and Mustard were grown, was enhanced, as per Board's estimate, to the tune of Rs. 11,222 in the district of Nowgong alone in 1861. This measure resulted in an increase of land revenue on the dry crop land in the four districts. Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, to the tune of Rs. 60,000 in 1861-62. (12) That enhanced taxation was a source of grave discontentment among the peasantry of the Valley can be gleaned from a contemporary report of the American Missionaries in Assam in 1862, which inter alia, states; "There is a growing spirit of discontent among the people in consequence of the greatly increased taxation. They openly murmur and all sorts of evil stories are in circulation in the villages, calculated to increase this discontent. (13) Therefore, the new measures of taxation had annoyed the people to the point of exasperation throughout the Valley, and to the overt acts of tumultuous resistance in Phulaguri in the district of Nowgong. Henry Hopkinson, Agent to the Governor-General, North East Frontier, wrote in one of his official despatches thus; "The feelings of the people of Assam have been profoundly stirred by the Income Tax. I do not think that it is the amount levied from them under it which has disturbed them, nor so much the manner in which it has been collected; but it is the principle on which, in their understanding, it is based that has so greatly alarmed them; they regard it as an assumption of the right by the dominant power to make inquisition into, and take as much or as little as it like of every man's property,—four per cent. now, forty per cent hereafter perhaps; and they conclude that our exactions, henceforward, will be likely to know no other measure than their endurance. In a word, the measure has alienated their confidence, and there is nothing too outrageous for their belief of what we may do next". (14) Hopkinson believed "that this was the temper in which the Nowgong people were when news of the passing of the "Act for imposing a duty on Arts, Trades and Dealings" began to be spread among them..." (15) He further added that "In Central and Lower Assam I suspect that the majority of persons who pay Income tax are hostile to the Government; and that partly from malice, and partly with the idea of procuring a repeal of the obnoxious impost, they spare no opportunity of formenting general discontent by the circulation of false and unfounded rumours, and

I doubt not that this was done at Nowgong".¹⁶ Not only in Nowgong, the situation was far from satisfactory in the district of Kamrup also. Hopkinson "ascertained that great uneasiness has been felt in Kamrup at the rumour that Pan cultivation was about to be taxed".¹⁷ But though the peasantry became restive in Kamrup, they did not flare up to overt acts of resistance against the Government measure then and there. However, in Nowgong the peasantry created history by their timely and just defiance of the Government authority. Lieutenant Herbert Sconce, the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, said about the cause of the outbreak in the following terms; "*Remotely* the cause of the outbreak is the interference with the cultivation of the poppy and dread of further taxation. *Directly*, there is no doubt, it is attributable to an anticipated tax upon pan. This subject interests every native in the country, great and small. The better educated classes quickly discovered that the Government had proposed to pass a law to tax pan cultivation. It was not long, therefore, before the matter was widely discussed, and occasioned uneasiness. This being the state of feeling, the receipt of "questions regarding pan cultivation", circulated under the Board's Memorandum No. 274, dated 31st August, was most inopportune. It was no wonder that the news of these inquiries soon spread from the Office to the District, and this sufficiently accounts for the alarm...."¹⁸

As a matter of fact, the peasantry of Kaliabor area were the first to show "signs of dissatisfaction with the measures of taxation which they believed to be impending over them".¹⁹ About 1500 peasants from this part of the district marched in a body to Nowgong, the Sulder station, on 17th September 1861 and surrounded the office of the Deputy Commissioner for laying their complaints before the Government against the unjust taxation.²⁰ The overbearing and haughty attitude of Herbert Sconce, the D. C., was best known to the people,²¹ and at one time, therefore, the peasants 'beseized (his) office' for the redressal of their grievances. Herbert Sconce, thereupon, instead of personally meeting and addressing the peasants, sent communication to them to submit their grievances to him 'respectfully' in a petition through some of their 'principal men'.²² Exasperated by this haughty attitude of the D. C. towards them, a group of fifteen to twenty peasants "burst through a closed door in an uproarious manner" into his chamber, where he was transacting business.²³ The authority arrested the peasants and kept them in the police station. However, one Dheer Singh, 'an influential native merchant of Now-

gong, got their release from the Deputy Commissioner towards the evening.²⁴

The D. C's behaviour towards the peasants and his subsequent action in putting some of them into the police station seemed to have grievously hurt the sentiment of the peasants en masse. However, after this there was another demonstration of the peasants before the D.C's Office at Nowgong on 9th October. This time the peasants were accompanied by some Gaonburhas, and they submitted a petition to the D. C. complaining therein first the hardships they had undergone due to the 'stoppage of Poppy cultivation', and then pointed out about the contemplated measures of the Govt. to impose taxes on houses, garden produce, and pan and betel-nut cultivation. The D. C., thereupon, in an attempt to alienate the fears of the people, wrote two things on the back of the Petition, that there was no such order for the pan and betel-nut cultivation to bring under taxation, and 'a brief explanation of the provision of the law for taxing Arts, Trades and Dealings', and then returned the Petition to the peasants for their full knowledge of the intents of the Government.²⁵ But this did not seem to have removed the misgivings of the peasants. Hopkinson writes; "The patient who fears that he may have to undergo a disagreeable operation is not often soothed by the assurance that it will give him little pain; but be this as it may, the people at Phoolgooree adopted it as an additional grievance that the Deputy Commissioner had refused to hear their complaints, had driven them away when they came to his office and had fined some of them as disturbers of the Public peace".²⁶ The D. C. did not attach much importance to the grievances of the peasants, and by his imprudence, both on 17th September and on 9th October, contributed greatly to transform the excitement of the peasants into a devastating fire to consume the British Rule in the Brahmaputra Valley.²⁷

The peasantry, faced as they were by the multiplication of taxes, had been holding 'Rajmels', termed 'boisterous assemblies' by Herbert Sconce, among themselves to chalk out measures to counter the Government policy since the days of the suppression of the poppy cultivation in several places of the district of Nowgong.²⁸ The anti, Government posture of these rajmels got momentum during the months of September and October 1861. One special feature of the rajmel was its continuous session for days together so as to enable the participants to speak out their views on matters related to common interests before arriving at a decision, and a decision once arrived at was to be binding on all

for its execution and implementation. Herbert Sconce, having heard that the peasants were in the habit of holding mels at Paulaguri, ordered the Daroga of the Nowgong Sudder Thana on 14th October to disperse the people gathered at the mel and arrest their leaders as well as those who refused to disperse and accordingly one Jamadar and four Barkandazes were sent to the place of the mel. The party at their arrival found a number of 1,000 peasants gathered at the mel on the 15th. The peasants did not leave the place of the mel even after they were asked by the police to disperse, rather "they abused and attacked the police, and drove them all, away, except one, who remained a prisoner in their hands".²⁹ The Jamadar reported all these developments at Phulaguri to the D. C. in the night. Thereupon the D. C. ordered the Daroga of the Nowgong Sudder Thana to move to the spot, which he did with one Thana mohurir, one Jamadar, 10 Barkandazes and arrived there in the small hours of 16th.³⁰

It may be mentioned here that in those days great excitement prevailed among the ryots of the district and the raijmels at Paulaguri were marked by the presence of thousands of peasants and their leaders, they came from distant villages from within the district like Roha, Barapujia, Chapori villages, Kampur, Jamunamukh, etc. ³¹ As a matter of fact, the attendance of the ryots at the Phulaguri Raijmels was in between three to four thousands on 16th October as usual and of them at least 500 to 600 remained armed with lathis, while many more were yet to arrive for the five day marathon session.³² Being asked by the Daroga why did they assemble some of them retorted ; "to go to the Cutcherry to complain, and hope to bring their grievances to the ears of the Huzoor, was out of the question, for if they attempted to enter the Court House they were thrust by Peadahs and fined ; consequently they had thus assembled in a body to look after their interests, and would remain consulting for five days till all the people, who had still to arrive from very many villages, had collected also".³³ However, the police party tried to disperse them and even arrested some of the leaders, but soon the party was overpowered and the peasants rescued their comrades from the police custody. ³⁴ "Seeing the temper of the people (who were mostly armed with clubs and bamboos), and that the day was closing", the Daroga "thought it prudent to do nothing more just then", and reported all that happened there to the D. C. at Nowgong.³⁵ The D.C. thereupon sent in mediate reinforcement of a police party to Paulaguri consisting of a police maaarir, two Birkandazes, 4 police

militia men armed as sepoys, which reached there in the evening of 16th.³⁶

On 17th October, when the peasants, numbering 3,000 to 4,000, again gathered in their mel, the police party attempted to disperse them, but the peasants threataened the police party including the Daroga. The latter, however, was able to make a list of the leaders of the movement. He even volunteered to lead some of the leaders and peasants to the D. C. to offer petition on their grievances. But all this had been in vain. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Daroga immediately reported the matter to the D. C. that "the Ryots were mustering in too great force to permit of his making any attempt to arrest the leaders of the movement".³⁷ He Further reported that "he could do no more, and that, unless timely measures were taken to disperse the pæople and capture their leaders, no one could be able to do so without risk of losing his life".³⁸

As a sequel to this development at phulaguri, the D. C. deputed Lieut. G. B. Binger, a Third Class Deputy Commissioner, then serving as Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong under him to Phulaguri on 18th October, supported by police party, consisting of the Jail Daroga (of Nowgong), a police Muhurir, one Police Jamadar, 13 Barhandazes an Chaprasis and 4 Police Militia men armed as ordinary sepoys,³⁹ Thus equipped, Lieut. Singer arrived at Phulaguri in the forenoon. Every police party sent out to Phulaguri since 15th October, used to encamp at the Namghar there—a few hundred yards away from the meeting place of the ryots. Lieut. Singer too encamped at the Namghar 'until their meeting was fully formed', while the Daroga and the Barhandazes were instructed to keep him informed of the number of the pæople arrived from time to time, and by 3 P. M. 3 to 4 thousand peasants gathered at the Mel.⁴⁰ At mid-day, the Sudder Daroga told Lieut. Singer that 'many persons were coming armed with sticks and spears and bows and arrows'.⁴¹ Soon thereafter Lieut. Singer, accompanied by his party started to the spot of the Mel. After arrival on the scene, he approached the crowd and asked them the object of their meeting.⁴² On this they answered, through their spokesman—Jati Kalita—the grounds of their complaints and grievances like the ban on the cultivation of poppy, the imposition of Income and Licence Taxes, adding that while they were very lightly taxed in the past, (under the former regime) were now under heavy taxation, and were going to be placed under new taxation further on garden produce such as pan and betel-nut. In all, these were their grounds of complaints and causes of dissatisfaction, and, "as they

could not get their grievances attended to by the Officer in charge the District, they were consulting as to the means of carrying their complaints before higher Authority".⁴³ Hearing this, Lieut. Singer is stated to have expalined to them that "it was improper for them to assemble in the manner they had done, and told them to petition in the regular way if they had complaints to make'. He then asked the people to put down their lathies and sticks. On their refusal to do so, he ordered his men to take away the same, and he himself had started to do that. The people had long been in excitement and provoked by the action of Lieut. Singer they flew into a rage. Some of the leaders like Damoo, Thoolobh, Asyotananda, and Jati Kalita are said to have instigated the people against Lieut. Singer and the police party by shouting 'mar, dhar' etc. A scuffle ensued. Mora Singh struck a man of the police party with his stick. Soon Lieut. Singer attempted to overpower Mora Singh and take away the lathi. While they were thus engaged in the push and pull for the stick one Baboo Doom, a fisherman by caste and hailing from the Kahighar mauza, struck a deadly blow from behind on the head of Lieut. Singer, and thereby caused him to fall on the ground instantly. Some of his policemen were also beaten and they all took to their heels, leaving Lieut. Singer behind to his fate. Some of the peasants who assulted Lieut. Singer and the men of the police party were Kati Lalung, Baho Doom, Thomba Lalung, Dholarai Lalung, Bhogbar Lalung, Dadhi Lalung, Kola Lalung, Jobo Lalung, Katia Lalung, Moni Koch, Koli Deka, etc. One Kalyan Koch took away a sword from the possession of Anadur policefMuhurir during the skirmishes between the police and ryots.⁴⁴ However, after the tretreat of the police Lieut. Singer was again beaten by the ryots and he was thrown into the Kallunriver, dead or alive, and thus came the end of Lieut. Singer at Phulaguri.⁴⁵

The news of the death of Lieut. Singer and the retreat of the police party from Phulaguri reached the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Sconce towards the evening. There was then great apprehension in the official circle in Nowgong Sudder that the ryots would march upon Nowgong and attack the treasury there. The D. C. therefore, divided the available force, of which there were only twenty-four sepoy of the 2nd Assam Light Infantry into two, one was sent up to Phulaguri under a Havildar, in the night of 18th October, mainly to recover the body of Lieut. Singer, and "he himself took up his position at the Treasury with the remainder".⁴⁶ The party sent to phulaguri under the Havildar could do nothing, the ryots

had successfully resisted their advance, in official version, "they had almost hustled it into the river; the Sepoys had fired on the ryots, and with much difficulty had effected their retreat to Nowgong".⁴⁷ However, the firing resorted to by the sepoy's resulted in the death of several ryots. In the words of Herbert Sconce, the D. C., we read thus; "...they (the sepoy's) were driven back to the river's edge, that one sepoy's musket was seized and one man wounded with an arrow, and it was not until all this was done that they fired. Each man seems to have fired several rounds; and as they were closely pressed, there may be some truth in the statement that a "good many ryots were killed or wounded". Yesterday a man declared to me that he saw six or nine dead "dooms" (for they too are said to be as bad as the Lalongs &c). but that the Lalongs must have carried off their killed".⁴⁸ However, this was another victory scored by the peasantry against the Government and this had earned them new adherents, and actually the people of Jamonamukh and Dantipur had "caught the infection and a few days more might have seen it established in Jynteeah".⁴⁹ But the timely and accidental presence of Henry Hopkinson at Tezpur saved the situation for the British Administration.

To begin with, Major Henry Hopkinson, Agent to Governor General, North East Frontier and Commissioner of Assam, while on board the steamer *Lacknow* on 18th October on way to Dibrugarh was at Tezpur. He was informed by Lieut. Phaire about the worsening situation in Phulaguri and the requisition for assistance by Herbert Sconce immediately after the steamer had anchored at Tezpur by the sunset on the 19th of October. Hopkinson instantly requisitioned the service of the steamer *Lacknow* and then ordered Major Campbell, who was also travelling as a passenger on board the same steamer to get ready for service at Nowgong promptly. Major Campbell marshalled all the available forces, about fifty, of the 2nd Assam Light Infantry stationed at Tezpur for action at Phulaguri. Major Campbell was instructed also to wait at Nowgong until reinforcement reached him from Gauhati, then Hopkinson conducted a quick journey downstream to Gauhati and arrived there in the afternoon of 20th and started for Nowgong again on board the same steamer *Lacknow* with 80 sepoy's of 2nd Assam Light Infantry under the command of Captain Chambers in the next morning. The party under Hopkinson and Captain Chambers arrived at Nowgong in the afternoon of 23rd October. 50 Their arrival was treated as a measure of great relief and satisfaction by the officials at Nowgong, because, in the words of Hopkinson,

"confidence was far from restored, and the movements of the disaffected, who might now be called the insurgents, at Phoolgooree, and who, the previous day only, had turned out to meet Major Campbell, and had discharged flights of arrows at his party, were the subject of much alarm".⁵¹ However, the news of the arrival of the Commissioner with a large force at Nowgong had set in a demoralising effect and had "frightened the malcontents".⁵² and the D. C. had regained his morale to adopt counter offensive measures against the rebellious peasants. On 24th October, Lieut. Sconce proceeded, accompanied by Captain Chambers with fifty sepoy's under his command, towards Phulaguri, and did not meet any opposition from the peasants this time. This all seemed to be to be quiet in and around Phulaguri when Lieut. Sconce arrived there.⁵³ But this was not true at all. The Government attempt at the arrest of the leaders of this tumultuous peasant movement resulted in the killing of several ryots and injury to many more. A total of 39 ryots were killed by the British bullets at Phulaguri, and some 15 others also succumbed to their injuries later.⁵⁴ Temporary jails were erected at Raha and Phulaguri with bamboo piles and hundreds of peasants from Phulaguri and the neighbouring villages were kept confined in these jails without providing sheds against sun and rains for months together under tight security guards and without minimum food and clothing. Camps of the sepoy's were also raised at Raha and at Phulaguri and were garrisoned for about six months and the peasants of these areas, among others, were forced as a punitive measure to give provisions to these troops during their stay there. As a matter of fact, atrocities committed by the British armed forces knew no bounds in those days. It was, as if a reign of terror.⁵⁵ As per official version, however, 41 ryots were arrested in all in connection with the outbreak of this peasant movement and the death of Lieut. Singer.⁵⁶ Altogether nine persons were tried and convicted for the murder of Lieut. Singer by the Calcutta High Court, of whom six were sentenced to transportation for life, two to banishment for 14 years and the last one to rigorous imprisonment for 7 years.⁵⁷ Besides these, some people were condemned to death,⁵⁸ and they were Lakshman Singh Deka, Sangbar Lalung, and Rangbar Deka, and they were hanged to death at Nowgong.⁵⁹ And on the Government side, Lieut. Herbert Sconce, the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, had also suffered a punishment, and he was demoted 'to the rank and pay of an Assistant Commissioner' and was transferred to the district of Kamrup.⁶⁰

Thus this glorious peasant mass movement in Phulaguri in the District of Nowgong passed into the history of India's freedom movement, and it marked an enchanting chapter in the history of the peasant struggle in the Brahmaputra Valley. This peasant movement assumed a serious nature and dimension with the murder of Lieut. Singer and it soon spread to the neighbouring villages and localities of the district and thereby added strength to the leadership. The accidental arrival of Henry Hopkinson at Tezpur on board the steamer *Lacknow* on 19th October, i.e., on the very next day of the occurrence of the outbreak and the murder of Lieut. Singer at Phulaguri, had offered the Administration with the opportunity to mount the counter offensive expeditiously against the struggling peasants, otherwise the news would have taken ten days to reach the Commissioner and by this time the movement would have spread throughout the Valley making it doubly difficult, if not impossible, to suppress by the alien rulers. In the words of Henry Hopkinson himself, "*My arrival in the steamer at Tezpur was therefore most opportune, for, in the ordinary course of communication, ten days would have elapsed before I could have put a man down in Nowgong, and in ten days we might have had a province to reconquer*"⁶¹ Again to put emphasis on the seriousness thus created by the peasants, he quotes some-one else in the following terms; "The beginning of a tumult is like the letting out of water, if not stopped at first it becomes difficult to do so afterwards &; it rises and increases until it overwhelms the fairest and most valuable works of man".⁶²

It is to be mentioned here that the peasant movement at Phulaguri was predominantly organised and led by the Lalung people, a sub-tribe of the Kachari tribe,⁶³ and they had suffered, as has been seen earlier, most in terms of punishment awarded by the Administration. The uprising of the peasants, like the labour strike in the tea plantations during the great rebellion of 1857-58, had, in a way, challenged the defensive capability of the British Administration of the Valley.⁶⁴ To speak the truth, the European Tea Planters had been in great apprehension of fresh trouble at any moment in Assam since the days of the rebellion and therefore they appealed to the Government to keep European force in the Valley. On the fear of the Tea Planters for such an eventuality, Hopkinson writes; "They remain profoundly impressed with the events of 1857, the imminence of the dangers that then threatened them, their lives and their property still weighs upon their memory, and without the presence of some small number of European Troops,

they do not feel that they have any sufficient guarantee against the recurrence of a similar risk".⁶⁵ Now this apprehension spread to the Official Circle in Assam.

In the wake of the outbreak of the peasant movement in Nowgong district, the Assam Administration deemed it necessary to request the Government of India for augmenting the armed forces in the Province by the addition of from 500 to 800 men so as to enable it "to keep in proper check attempts which, in the ordinary course of affairs, may be expected to be made from time to time against the public peace, whether by our own subjects within the Province, or by foreigners without it".⁶⁶ and, therefore, advert- ing to "the late unfortunate occurrence at Phoolagooree", the Lieut. Governor of the Bengal Presidency, realised that "the existing Military Force at the disposal of Major Hopkinson is decidedly too small". He was further of opinion that "Had affairs taken an unfortunate instead of a fortunate turn, after Lieutenant Singer's murder, which there was at first reasons to fear they would, the consequence of the deficiency of available troops in that quarter would have been very serious; and as it was, it was only the fortunate passage of a private steamer at the moment when the news of the Nowgong disturbance reached the Commissioner, that enabled that Officer to prevent a disaster. The prevention of the spread of disturbance of such kind should not, . . . be permitted to depend upon fortuitous circumstances". He, therefore, recommended the increase of the strength of the Military Force in Assam from 500 to 800 men and also to keep the additional force at Tezpur.⁶⁷

It may be observed here that the peasant movement in Nowgong in 1861, did not invite any single act of protest from any section of the indigenous population. This as well as the participation of the men of the fishing community, among others, added strength and widened the mass base of the movement. The lone voice of protest was the one raised by Nidhi Libai Farowel—an Assamese convert to christianity—in an article he had written under the caption of 'Nagaya Drohi Lokar Charitra Barnan'.⁶⁸ In this article he ridiculed and cast aspersions on the leaders and peasants who organised and led the movement against the mighty British Government as fools and self-seekers.⁶⁹

Notes & References

1. The Economic History of India, R. C. Dutt, ii, pp. 159 & 176. It may be mentioned here that for the preservation and extension of British imperial interests, the Indian Army was em-

ployed outside the geographical confines of the Indian sub-continent on several occasions, such as in China and in Afghanistan and for this the English East India Company's Government in India received nothing in terms of payment from the British exchequer, rather the burden was shifted to the shoulders of the Indian people. "But when British troops were sent to India to suppress the Mutiny", commented R. C. Dutt, "England exacted the cost with almost unexampled rigour". (ibid., p. 158.) On the exaction of the Mutiny expenditure from the Indian people he quoted Major Wingate who had written; "... as happened during the late disturbances there, the pay of such troops for six months previous to sailing is charged against the Indian Revenues and recovered as a debt due by the Government of India to the British army pay-office". (ibid.) Major Wingate further said, "in the crisis of the Indian Mutiny, then, and with the Indian finances reduced to an almost desperate condition, Great Britain has not only required India to pay for the whole of the extra regiment sent to that country, from the date of their leaving these shores, but has demanded back the money disbursed on account of these regiments for the last six months' service in this country previous to sailing for India". (ibid., p. 159) John Bright, a member of British Parliament, said in the House of Commons in March 1859 thus; "I think that the 40 millions which the revolt will cost, is a grievous burden to place upon the people of India. It has come from the mismanagement of the Parliament and the people of England".(ibid.)

2. Ibid., p. 160.

3. Ibid., pp. 158-176.

4. Ibid., p. 186.

5. A Documentary Study of British Policy Towards Indian Nationalism, B. L. Grover, p. 7; Bharatar Baiprabik Sangramer Itihas, Soprakash Roy, pp. 31-36; India Today, R. P. Dutt, p. 256; The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India, C. F. Andrews and Girija Mukherjee, pp. 122-29; All an Octavian Hume: Father of Indian National Congress, Sir W. Wedderburn, p. 101-102.

6. Mill's Report, p. 15.

7. Ibid., p. 24.

8. Ibid., p. 323.

9. Planter-Raj to Swaraj, Dr. A. Guha, p. 6.

10. Bengal Under the Lieut-Governors, C. E. BuChland, p. 183 ; Henry Hopkinson to the Govert. of Bengal, no. 88, 30th Nov. 1861, NAI ; Annual Reporton the Administ!ation of the Bengal Presidency, 1861-62, p. 65.
11. Henry Hopkinson, as in source no. 10.
12. Rivers Thompson. Offg. Secy to the Board of Revenue, to the Govt. of Bengal, no. 494, dated 16th July 1861, ASR ; T. B. Lane, Secy to the Board of Revenue, L. P. to the Govt. of Bengal, no. 3219, B. dated 18th June 1867, ASR.
13. Quoted in The American Missionaries and North East India, 1836-1900, Dr. H. K. Barpujari, Delhi/Gauhati, 1986,.p. 94.
14. Henry Hopkinson, source no. 10
15. Ibid
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Herbert Sconce, D. C. Nowgong to Henry Hopkinson, no. .13. dated 25th Nov. 1861, NAI.
19. Henry Hopkinson, no. 10
20. Ibid., Herbert Sconce, no. 18.
21. Phulagurir Dhewa, Benudhar Kalita, pp. 54-56.
22. Herbert Sconce, no. 18.
23. H. Hopkinson. no. 10 ; H. Sconce, no. 18.
24. H. Sconce, no. 18 ; H. Hopkinson, no. 10.
25. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; H. Sconce, no. 18.
26. H. Hopkinson, no. 10.
27. Annual Report of the Bengal Presidency, 1861-62, p. 67.
28. H. Sconce, no. 18 ; Phulagurir Dhewa, B. Kalita, pp. 73-74 ; Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong, Govt. of Assam, 1978, p. 73.
29. H. Hophinson, no. 10 ; E. H. Lushington, Secy to the Govt. of Bengal to Major W. Agnew, Offg. Commissioner of Assam, no. 891, Judicial, 31st May, 1862, NAI.
30. Statement of Sudder Thanna Daroga, 18th October 1861, NAI.
31. B. Kalita, p. 74.
32. Source no. 30 ; E. H. Lushington, no. 27.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Source no.30
36. Ibid. ; H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; Annual Report of Bengal Pre- sidency, 1861-62, pp. 65-66.
37. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; and source no. 27, p. 65.
38. E. H. Lushington, no. 27.
39. Ibid. ; H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; and no. 27.
40. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; and source no. 30.

41. Source no. 30.
42. I bid. ; E. H. Lushington, no. 27.
43. Statement by Anadur Police Muhurir, relative to the death of Lieut. Singer attached with source no. 18 ; E. H. Lushington, no. 27 ; and source no. 27, p. 66.
44. Source no. 30 ; Statement by Anadur Muhurir, no. 43 ; H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; no. 27, p. 66 ; E. H. Lushington, no. 27.
45. B. K. Kalita, p. 77 ; Landmarks of the freedom struggle in Assam, K. N. Dutt p. 27 ; H. Sconce, no. 18.
46. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; source no. 27, p. 66 ; Home Public : Part A Progs. Nos. 77-103, 1st October 1861, NAI.
47. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; Source no. 27, p. 66 ; Home Public : A Progs. nos. 77-103, 1st October 1761, NAI.
48. H. Hopkinson, no. 10. 49. Ibid.
50. Ibid. ; and source no. 27 ; Home Public : Part A Progs., nos. 99-103 ; 1st October, 1861, NAI.
51. H. Hopkinson, no. 10 ; Home Public : Part A Progs., nos. 77-103, 1st October 1861, NAI.
52. H. Hopkinson, no. 10.
53. Ibid., and source no. 2, p 66.
54. B. Kalita p. 77. 55. Ibid., pp. 81-85.
56. H. Sconce, no. 18.
- * They were Rupsing Lalung, Sibsing Lalung, Narsing Lalung, Hebera Lalung, Babu Doom (Kaibarta) and Banamali Kaibarta. B. Kalita, p. 85.
57. B. Kalita, p. 85.
58. E. H. Lushington, no. 27.
60. E. H. Lushington, no. 29.
61. Henry Hopkinson, no. 10 ; Emphasis added
62. Ibid.
63. H. Hopkinson to the Govt. of Bengal, no. 80, dated 20th November 1861, NAI ; Home Public : Part A Progs., Nos 99-103 ; 1st Oct. 1861, NAI.
64. H. Hopkinson, no. 63.
65. H. Hopkinson to Govt. of Bengal, 20th April 1861, ASR.
66. H. Hopkinson, no. 63.
67. J. D. Gordon, Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal to the Govt. of India, Home Deptt. No. 3138 A , 19th December 1861, NAI
68. The Orunodai, 16th Year, no. 11, November, 1861, in Aruunodair Dhalphat, Dr B K Baruah, compiled , Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1765, pp. 140-42.
69. Ibid.