

## Chapter : 4

### Burmese Invasion of Assam

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#### HISTORY

#### Short answer type questions:

**Q.1:** Which country was by the Burmese in 1784 during the regime of the Burmese king Bodawpaya ?

Ans: Arakan.

**Q.2:** From when did the enmity between the Burmese and the British began ?

Ans: With the occupation of Arakan in 1784 during the reign of Burmese king Bodawpaya.

**Q.3:** Name the king of Cachar who fled to Srihatta, unable to tolerate the Burmese oppression.

Ans: Govind Chandra.

**Q.4:** Purnananda Buragohain died after hearing the news of the defeat of the Ahoms in which battle ?

Ans: Battle of Ghiladhari 1817.

**Q.5:** What is 'Baishali Hukong' ?

Ans: 'Baishali Hukong' is one of the famous written Burmese chronicles, which speaks about the Burmese military operations in Assam during the reign Chandrakanta as king, and of Badanchandra as Barphukan.

**Q.6:** What is 'Baishali Mung-dun-sun-kham' ?

Ans: Baishali Mung-dun-kham is one of the famous written Burmese chronicles on the military expeditions in Assam during the reign Chandrakanta as king and of Badanchandra as Barphukan.

**Q.7:** Who was the Prime Minister of Assam when the Burmese army came with Badanchandra ?

Ans: Purnananda Buragohain.

**Q.8:** What was the strength of the Burmese army which came to Assam with Badanchandra ?

Ans: The strength of the Burmese army which came to Assam with Badanchandra Barphukan was about 8000 Burmese soldiers. It was sent by the Burmese king Bodawpaya.

**Q.9:** How many additional soldiers did Badanchandra collect on his arrival in Assam ?

Ans: On Badanchandra's arrival in Assam, nearly 8000 soldiers belonging to a few tributary Burmese kings also accompanied him.

**Q.10:** What was the title given by Chandrakanta Singha to Badanchandra on his appointment as the Prime Minister ?

Ans: Badanchandra Barphukan was appointed as the Prime Minister by Chandrakanta Singha with a new title 'Mantri Barphukan'.

**Q.11:** Mention the years in which the Burmese invasions took place.

Ans: The first Burmese invasion took place in 1817, followed by the second Burmese invasion in 1819 and finally the third Burmese invasion in 1921.

**Q.12:** When was Badanchandra killed or assassinated.

Ans: Badanchandra was assassinated in 1818 by a Subedar named Rip Singh in a conspiracy hatched by Numali Rajmao, mother of King Chandrakanta, and a few officials.

### **CHOOSE THE CORRECT ANSWER:**

**Q.1:** In 1816/1817/1819, the Burmese interfered in the internal politics of Assam.

Ans: 1817.

**Q.2:** Jagannath Dhekial phukan/ Badanchadra Barphukan/Chandrakanta Burgohain was the brother of Ruchinath Buragohain.

Ans: Jagannath Dhekial Phukan.

**Q.3:** The murder of Badanchandra took place in August,1816/1817/1818.

Ans: 1818.

**Q.4:** Numali Rajmao was the mother of Chandrakanta Singha/Purnananda Buragohain/Brajanath Gohain.

Ans: Chandrakanta Singha.

**Q.5:** Yandaboo treaty was concluded on 24th February 1818/1826/1828.

Ans: 1826.

### **LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Q.1:** Write in brief about the expansion of the Burmese empire in Manipur and Arakan.

Ans: During the 18th century, the Burmese kings started their territorial expansion on a large- scale. The

Burmese king Alaungpaya invaded Manipur and Cachar, which were close to the border of Burma.

The Burmese king Bodawpaya also followed the policy of territorial expansion and steadily expanded his realm westward. The Burmese wanted to use Assam as their central military base against the Britishers. In

1784, Bodawpaya attacked and annexed the kingdom of Arakan thus extending the Burmese empire in the entire Bay of Bengal region from Margui Island to Chittagong port. Some of the major results of the Arakan conquest were:

(i) The Burmese became a major political power of the North-east region.

(ii) The Burmese came into direct contact with Assam.

(iii) The boundary line of Burma came in a closer proximity to that of the British power, leading to several clashes in the later years.

**Q.2:** Discuss how the despotism of Purnananda Buragohain gave birth to political conspiracies.

**Ans:** Purnananda was the Buragohain or the Prime Minister of the Ahom kingdom during the reign of king Gaurinath Singha. Gaurinath Singha was an incapable ruler. Therefore, all the authority rested with the Buragohain. Taking advantage of the situation, Purnananda took complete control of the administration. He was however despotic and arrogant

in nature. When Gaurinath Singha died,Purnananda declared a minor,Kamaleswar Singha,as the new king,so that he himself would still have all the powers and the king would be a mere puppet in his hands. After the death of Kamaleswar Singha in 1810,Purnananda again made another minor boy,Chandrakanta Singha,the king of the Ahom kingdom.

Due to his autocratic nature and various atrocities meted by him,many people despised Purnananda and organised several rebellions against him. One conspiracy after another was hatched to dispose him from power. One such rebellion was the Panimua rebellion,which however was severely suppressed.

Another major rebellion took place during the reign of Chandrakanta Singha led by the arrogant friend of the king,Satram. Learning of the conspiracy in advance,Purnananda had everyone except Satram,hanged. Because of his despotic nature,the Barphukan,Badanchandra, nurtured a dislike for him and was even suspected of conspiring against Purnananda with Satram,which created discontentment between the two. Kaliabhomora replaced Badanchandra as the new Barphukan. But after Kaliabhomora's death,Badanchandra was appointed as the Barphukan at Gauhati. But Badanchandra committed atrocities on the residents of Gauhati which ignited the rivalry between the Buragohain and Barphukan. Now Purnananda conspired to remove Badanchandra,but being forewarned Barphukan fled to Bengal and pleaded with the British to send in their forces to put an end to the autocratic administration of the Buragohain. Not

getting help from the British government,he then approached the Burmese king,Bodawpaya,who having ulterior motives,willingly agreed. Thus,the despotism of Purnananda Buragohain gave birth to political conspiracies.

**Q.3:** What was the ultimate result of the political conspiracies hatched against Purnananda Buragohain ?

**Ans:** There was wide discontentment among the people against Purnananda Buragohain,the Prime Minister of the Ahom kingdom. This discontentment resulted in several revolts and rebellions against the autocratic administration of the Buragohain. Many of the nobles of the state began to rise up against the royal authority. Frequent internal revolts and conspiracies, though suppressed by the able and despotic hand of Purnananda, weakened the power of the Ahom kingdom and its rulers. However,the matter did not remain within the kingdom. With the rivalry increasing between Purnananda Buragohain and Badanchandra Barphukan,the former decided to remove the latter. Badanchandra then fled for his life,seeking help from the British,and when they denied it,he approached the Burmese King Bodawpaya. Helping Badanchandra was in the interest of Bodawpaya's motives,so he assisted him with a huge army, which fought a battle at Ghiladhari 1817 with Purnananda's forces and defeated them. Purnananda died of grief on losing the battle. The Burmese army again defeated the Ahoms at Kathalbari and occupied Jorhat.This invasion was followed by two

more invasions in 1819 and 1821 by the Burmese, after which they strengthened their hold on Assam and unleashed a period of terror till 1825.

The various rebellions organised against the royal authority weakened the power of the Ahom rulers, which eventually prepared the ground for foreign invasions. Thus it can be said that the Burmese entry into Assam and their occupying it was the ultimate result of the conspiracies hatched against Purnananda.

**Q.4:** Why did the Burmese invade Assam under the leadership of Badanchandra Barphukan ?

**Ans:** When Badanchandra Barphukan, the Prime Minister of Ahom, was prewarned of Purnananda Buragohain's intention of his removal, he fled to the British and sought their help to get rid of Purnananda from power. However, the British refused to help him. Consequently, he had to seek the help of the Burmese king, Bodawpaya. Bodawpaya had several reasons for agreeing to help Badanchandra.

(i) His predecessors, like King Alaungpaya, had made efforts to extend the Burmese kingdom.

(ii) Adopting a policy of westward expansion, the Burmese King extended his territory up to Manipur and Cachar.



(iii) In 1784 the Bodawpaya captured Arakan and the Burmese became a supreme power in the entire Bay of Bengal region.

(iv) The Arakenese took refuge in British Bengal, to escape the atrocities of the Burmese.

(v) Bodawpaya kept putting pressure on the British to send back the refugees but in vain. This led to tension between the two.

(vi) Bodawpaya wanted to use Assam as a military base against the British.

(vii) The Assamese queen of the Burmese king, Rangili Aidew, who was Badanchandra's aunt requested Bodawpaya to help Badanchandra.

Not immediately wanting to invade and take over Assam, yet seeing this as an opportune moment, Bodawpaya decided on giving military aid to Badanchandra and sent an army of 8,000 men to help him. Thus the Burmese did not exactly invade Assam under Badanchandra, but just gave him military assistance.

**Q.5:** Discuss in brief about the Burmese interference in Assam under the leadership of Badanchandra Barphukan.

**Ans:** When Badanchandra Barphukan, the Prime Minister of Ahom, was prewarned of Purnananda

Buragohain's intention of his removal,he fled to the British in Bengal and sought their help to eliminate Purnananda from power. He submitted two letters from the Ahom king,Chandrakanta Singha,in this connection. However,the British refused to help him forcing him to seek the help of the Burmese who saw this as an opportune moment to step into Assam. The Burmese had already conquered Manipur,Arakan and Cachar and wanted to take control of Assam too in their quest for territorial expansion.

When Badanchandra sought the Burmese help,from Bodawpaya the king of Burma. Following a policy of territorial expansion Bodawpaya decided to help Badanchandra. He himself sent an army of 8,000 men with Badanchandra,while another 8,000 soldiers from a few tributary kings of Burma also joined in. Purnananda sent an army under Daman Gogoi and Hau Bora. But these forces were defeated by the Burmese forces under Badanchandra in the battle of Ghiladhari. Hearing of the unexpected defeat of his army,Purnananda died of shock. Thereafter,Ruchinath,his son became the Buragohain of the Ahom kingdom. The advancing Burmese army was met by the Ahom army under Ruchinath at the battle of Kathalbari. The Ahoms were defeated again,and Ruchinath fled to Gawahati. The Burmese occupied Jorhat, reinstated Chandrakanta as King,and Badanchandra was made Prime Minister and given a new title Mantri-Barphukan. The Burmese stayed briefly and returned to Burma. Badanchandra

gave them many gifts of gold and silver, and also presented Themo or Hema Aidew to King Bodawpaya.

**Q.6:** Discuss the causes of the Burmese invasion of Assam.

**Ans:** The Burmese invaded Assam three times successively in 1817, 1819 and in 1821. These invasions are landmark events in the history of Assam. They had far-reaching consequences, which altered the very face of Assam. The causes for this invasion were:

(i) Causes of the 1817 invasion: This was not an invasion in the true sense as the Burmese King Bodawpaya, on the request of Badanchandra, sent in an army of 8000 soldiers to assist him overthrow the despotic Purnananda and to reinstate Chandakanta Singha as King. The Burmese army too returned home after a brief stay.

(ii) Causes of the 1819 invasion: Following the torturous activities of Badanchandra, the Queen mother Numali Rajmao, had him murdered. The Buragohain, Ruchinath, also revolted against the king Chandrakanta, and defeated his army in a war. The king himself was mutilated to make him ineligible for kingship, and Purnandhar Singha reinstated in his place. All this led to an unstable atmosphere in Assam, and the Burmese King Bodawpaya, took advantage of the situation and invaded Assam. This was in interest of his policy of territorial expansion.

(iii) Causes of the 1821 invasion: When the Burmese retreated after the 1819 invasion, they left behind an army under General Mingimaha Tilwa. Though Chandrakanta was king, he was just a puppet who had to silently watch the atrocities the Burmese committed on his people. Thus when Mingimaha returned to Burma, he prepared to build a fort at Jaypur, on the route of Burma and Assam, to prevent Burmese occupation. Meanwhile Bodawpaya was succeeded by his grandson, Bagyidaw, who was very cruel. He learnt of the construction of the fort and sent an army under Mingimaha to once again invade Assam.

**Q.7:** What were the results of the Burmese invasion of Assam.

**Ans:** The main results of the Burmese invasion of Assam are:

(i) Downfall of Ahom empire: The path of the downfall of six hundred years old Ahom rule was set with the Burmese invasion.

(ii) Ahom king became a protected king of Burma: Since the Burmese came to help the Ahom king Chandrakanta Singha, remained under the tutelage of the King of Burma.

(iii) Political upheavals: The invasion of Assam by the Burmese brought about political and administrative instability in Assam. The weakening of the monarchy led

King Chandrakanta Singha to flee to British territory in Bengal. A later king Purandhar Singha also had to follow suit. Thus internal conflicts weakened the military, and the high nobles and officials failed to protect the country.

(iv) Affected economy and social balance: The Burmese occupied Assam for six years from 1819 to 1825. This had adverse effect on the economy as production declined and traders were compelled to wind up their business. Many Assamese customs, ways and beliefs were affected their contact with the foreigners. The Burmese invasion created a group of nobles called Duwaniyas, who started exploiting the masses. This created a lot of social upheavals forcing people to run away from their villages into the hills and valleys, and even into neighbouring countries. All these affected the Assamese society considerably.

(v) Led to the first Anglo-Burmese war: The occupation of Assam by the Burmese forces posed a threat to the British power. The Burmese had already conquered Arakan, Manipur, Cachar and the conquest of Assam made them a major political power that challenged British supremacy. British efforts to stop the Burmese from advancing further led to the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826.

(vi) Resulted in the treaty of Yandaboo: The Anglo-Burmese wars ended with the signing of the famous treaty of Yandaboo, whereby the Burmese were asked to vacate Assam. The treaty allowed the British to

occupy Assam, which in turn resulted in the modernization of Assam.

(vii) End of Ahom independence: The occupation of Assam by the Burmese in 1819 marked the end of Ahom independence. Initially, it was occupied by the Burmese and later by the British. The Assamese never regained the independence. Therefore, the Burmese invasion of 1819 is a turning point in the history of Assam.

**Q.8:** Which rebellion is known as the 'Panimua rebellion'?

**Ans:** The rebellion organised against the atrocities of Purnananda Buragohain, the Prime Minister of Assam during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha, under the leadership of a chief named Panimua came to be known as the rebellion of Panimua. Many leading nobles and officials of the country joined this rebellion. However, the rebellion was very ably suppressed by Purnananda.

**Q.9:** Mention two results of the military intervention of the Burmese in Assam in 1817.

**Ans:** Two major results of the Burmese intervention in Assam in March 1817 were:

(i) The Burmese came to Assam for the first time as a military contingent.

(ii) It resulted in the defeat of Purnananda's forces leading to his death and to an end of his autocracy.

**Q.10:** When did the first Anglo-Burmese war take place ? Where was this war fought ?

**Ans:** The first Anglo-Burmese war took place during 1824 to 1826 between the forces of Burma and British. The war was fought in four areas:

(i) The Brahmaputra valley or the Ahom kingdom.

(ii) Cachar

(iii) Manipur and

(iv) Burma

**Q.11:** Mention the main provisions of the Yandaboo treaty.

**Ans:** The treaty of Yandaboo was signed in 1826 that marked the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war. This treaty was formed in favour of the English and it put an end to the 'Maanar Din' in Assam. The treaty cemented the hold of the East India Company and the expansion of British territory in Assam . The main provisions of the treaty were:

(i) An indemnity of Rupees One Crore would be paid by the Burmese king to the East India Company as war indemnity.

(ii) Akaran and Tenasserim would be taken over by the British.

(iii) The Burmese would stop interference in Assam, Cachar and Jayantia country.

(iv) Gambhir Singh would be recognised as the king of Manipur by the Burmese too.

(v) A British Resident would be established at the court of Ava (Burma), and in turn the king of Ava (Burma) would be allowed to station an officer at Calcutta.

**Q.12:** Write about the importance of the treaty of Yandaboo.

**Ans:** The importance of the treaty of Yandaboo lies in the fact that the treaty changed the course of Assam history. This treaty compelled the Burmese to leave Assam for good, bringing an end to the terror filled 'Maanar Din' or 'days of the Burmese'. Its territory was henceforth occupied by the British paving the way for expansion of the British empire in the region. Moreover, the treaty marked the beginning of the modern era in the history of Assam and the entire North-east region.



## WRITE SHORT NOTES ON:

Q.1: Bodawpaya.

Ans: Bodawpaya was one of the most important rulers of Burma. His reign was noted for the territorial expansion and political supremacy of Burma in the region. In 1817, he sent a military force to assist Badanchandra Barphukan to liberate Assam from the autocracy of Purnananda Buragohain. Later in 1819, when Badanchandra was murdered and King Chandrakanta Singha tortured, he sent a huge force to invade Assam, and to reinstate Chandrakanta Singha as king. He kept control over Assam by leaving General Mingimaha Tilwa and a troop behind, on the pretext of helping the king. Bodawpaya's greatest achievement was the territorial expansion of the Burmese kingdom. He believed in westward expansion and thus attacked and occupied Arakan and Manipur, making the Burmese a supreme power in the entire Bay of Bengal area from Margui Island to Chittagong port. After his death, he was succeeded by his grandson Bagyidaw.

Q.2: Gambhir Singh.

Ans: Gambhir Singh was the king of Manipur. His thirst for more power forced him to attack Cachar. The king of Cachar, Govinda Chandra, unable to face the attack of Gambhir Singh, fled to Srimanta and sought the help of the British. The British took steps to prevent Burmese aggression further into Cachar, as they had already

overpowered Gambhir Singh and captured Manipur. Gambhir Singh too was forced to take refuge in Cachar.

**Q.3:** Gobind Chandra.

**Ans:** Gobind Chandra was the king of Cachar during the nineteenth century. The invasion of Cachar by the Manipuri king Gambhir Singh compelled Gobind Chandra to run away from Cachar. He sought refuge with the English and requested the British to help him. The British took steps to prevent Burmese aggression further into Cachar.

**Q.4:** Daman Gogoi.

**Ans:** Daman Gogoi was a military chief of the royal forces under Purnananda Buragohain of the Ahom kingdom. Unable to bear the cruelties of Purnananda Buragohain, Badanchandra (the Barphukan of Guwahati) had sought British help to fight against the autocracy of Purnananda. When the British refused, he appealed to the Burmese after taking consent of Chandrakanta Singha, the then Ahom king. The Burmese agreed to support him and sent a huge force of 8000 soldiers to help him. On the other hand, Purnananda also sent his forces under two military chiefs, one of whom was Daman Gogoi. He and Hau Bora, the other chief, met Badanchandra and his Burmese army at Ghiladhari, but were badly defeated.

#### Q.5: Hau Bora.

Ans: Hau Bora was a military chief of the royal forces under Purnananda Buragohain of the Ahom Kingdom. Unable to bear the cruelties of Purnananda Buragohain, Badanchandra (the Barphukan of Guwahati) had sought British help to fight against the autocracy of Purnananda. When the British refused, he appealed to the Burmese after taking consent of Chandrakanta Singha, the then Ahom king. The Burmese agreed to support him and sent a huge force of 8000 soldiers to help him. On the other hand, Purnananda also sent his forces under two military chiefs, one of whom was Hau Bora. He and Daman Gogoi, the other chief, met Badanchandra and his Burmese army at Ghiladhari, but were badly defeated.

#### Q.6: Battle of Ghiladhari.

Ans: The battle of Ghiladhari is one of the most significant battles in the history of Assam. The victory of the military force under Badanchandra in this battle marked the end of the autocracy of Purnananda Buragohain. The battle was fought between the Burmese force led by Badanchandra and the forces of Purnananda, who was then the Prime Minister of the Ahom kingdom. His forces were led by two noted military chiefs named Daman Gogoi and Hau Bora. The royal forces were defeated in the battle fought at Ghiladhari in 1817. This defeat caused Purnananda so much grief that he died. The battle of Ghiladhari is

important in Assam History as it marks the first entry of the Burmese into Assam, which led to their final occupation of it in 1921.

**Q.8:** Purandhar Singha.

Ans: Purandhar Singha was the son of Brajanath Singha and great grandson of Swargadeo Rajeshwar Singha. He and his father joined Ruchinath Buragohain, son of Purnananda, in a revolt against the then Ahom king, Chandrakanta. They defeated the Ahom army. Purandhar Singha was installed as the new Ahom king, because his father Brajanath had a mutilation by which he was debarred from becoming king.

**Q.9:** Ala Mingi.

Ans: Ala Mingi was one of the military generals of the Burmese King, Bodawpaya. After the assassination of Badanchandra, instability prevailed in Assam. Taking advantage of the prevailing conditions, the Burmese king Bodawpaya invaded Assam in 1819 under General Ala Mingi. The main cause of the invasion was to avenge the murder of Badanchandra and to reinstate Chandrakanta Singha on the throne. The Burmese army led by Ala Mingi succeeded in defeating the Ahom army. The Ahoms moved back to Jorhat. Ruchinath Buragohain and King Purandhar Singha fled to Gauhati. The Burmese once again restored Chandrakanta to the Ahom throne. After Chandrakanta's succession to the throne, Ala Mingi returned back to Burma leaving

Burmese soldiers under Mingimaha Tilwa to help the reappointed king Chandrakanta.

**Q.10:** Duwaniya.

**Ans:** The Burmese occupation of Assam from 1821 to 1825 was a period of terror for the masses. The Burmese reign was a reign of atrocities and tortures on the common man. The people were forced to give up their homes and live as fugitives or take refuge in neighbouring countries. Some people adopted the guise of Burmese, and taking advantage of the situation exploited the ordinary masses. These people came to be called Duwaniyas. Their atrocities on Assamese people far exceeded those of the Burmese.

**Q.11:** Treaty of Yandaboo.

**Ans:** Refer to Answer of question no 11 and 12( textual questions and answers - Long Answer type questions)