**Study material**

**B A 4th Semester (General Course)**

**Subject-History**

**Paper-4.4 (History of Assam) 1228-1826 AD)**

**Unit-I Rise of Territorial States**

**Topic- Emergence of the Koch power**

**Name of the teacher-Dr Anjali Patowary.**

The Muslim rule established in Kamarupa-Kamata in the close of the 15th century was short-lived. The Bengal Governor Hussain Shah invaded and occupied Kamatapur and established his son Daniel. But Daniel was killed by some soldiers of Kamrup and they divided Kamata among themselves.They were known as Bhuyans. Amongst them one Haria Mandal became most powerful and later on established the Koches on the ruin of Kamatapur.

Haria Mandal, the founder of the Koches in Kamatapur was a resident of Chikangram, in Khuntaghat pargana of Goalpara district. He was the recognised head of twelve leading families of Meches (Koches) living in the Pargana. Haria Mandal married two sisters Hira and Jira by whom he had two sons namely Bisu and Sisu.

**Biswa Singha**

Bisu was a man of unusual enterprise and courage. Bisu’s rise to power may be placed in about 1515. He took 12 years to subjugate the Bhuyans. After which he declared himself king in 1527. His kingdom was Kochbehar and its capital was Kamatapur. Bisu assumed the name Biswa Singha and his brother Sisu took the name Siva Singha and became the Jubraj.

After defeating the Bhuyans Biswa Singha established his empire which was extended from Barnadi in the east and Kartoya in the west. He shifted his capital from Chikangram Kamatapur where he established a fine city. Biswa Singha became a great patron of Hinduism. He was a great devotee of Goddess Kamakhya and rebuilt the Kamakhya temple. He brought Brahmins from Mithila, Navadip, Gauda and Benaras.

Biswa Singha was an efficient administrator. He made his brother Siva Singha the heir apparent and appointed 12 ministers from 12 Koch/Mech families of which his father was the leader once. He made a census of his kingdom and estimated his military strength. He appointed gradation of military cum administrative officers Thakuria over 20 men, Saikia over 100 men, Hazari over 1000 men, Omra over 3000 men and Nawab over 66,000 men.

Biswa Singha’s contemporary Ahom king was Suhungmung or Dihingia Raja (1497-1539). The territorial expansion of the Koches towards the east that of the Ahoms towards the west was sure to lead a direct confrontation of the two powers. But since the meanwhile the Muslims launched their expedition to the Ahom kingdom so both he Koches and the Ahoms had to be alert against the advancing Muslims. The Muslim army made the Ahom kingdom their first target. So under Chankham Bargohain the Ahom army defeated the Muslims under Turbak and pursued them right upto Kortoya which marked the western boundary of Biswa Singha’s kingdom. On his way back to Assam the Ahom General defeated the Koch king and made him his tributary

Biswa Singha brought under his control the vassal chiefs of Dimarua, Beltola, Rani, Luki, Darrang, Karaibari, Kamalabari, Chaigaon ect. He also made treaty with the king of Bhutan and brought southern Bhutan under control. Biswa Singha died on 1540. He had the skill, intelligence and power which enabled him to lay the foundation of a strong kingdom on the ruins of Kamrup-Kamata kingdom.

**Naranarayan**

Biswa Singha was succeeded by his son Malladeva who assumed the name Naranarayan after becoming king. He made his brother Sukladhvaj his commander-in-chief who was so skilled and swift in military operations that he was nicked named as Chilarai or Kite-king by which name he was generally known in history.

With the help of his brother Chilarai, Naranaran led his expansions and could defeat the Ahoms and other north-eastern powers. They also came in contact with the Nawab of Gauda (Bengal) and Mughal emperor Akbar. The reign of Naranarayan was also famous for the Koch patronisation of Neo-Vaishnavite Movement initiated by Mahapurush Sankardeva.

**Koch- Ahom Conflict**

Soon after his accession to the throne, Naranarayan came into conflict with the Ahoms. The conflict was started in 1543 when the Ahom king Suklenmug Garhgaya Raja (1539-1552) drove away the Koch soldiers stationed at the fort at Sola, guarding the eastern frontier of the Koch kingdom on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Three brothers of Naranarayan along with 3000 Koch soldiers reached Sola and defeated the Ahom and compelled them to retreat. In 1546 there was renewal hostilities which cost the lives of all the three Koch princes. This compelled Naranarayan to lead expedition against the Ahom. Though the Koches gained some initial victory, they were ultimately overturned by the Ahoms.

During these operations against the Ahoms, the Koches constructed a road covering a distance 350 miles from their capital Koch-Behar to Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district. As it was done under the supervision of Gosai Kamal, king’s brother so it was known as Gosai kamal Ali.

Another war between the two rivals Ahoms and Koches started in 1547 when the Koches made an attack on the Ahoms on the fort at the Pichala river but suffered a disastrous defeat with heavy losses of men and materials. The victorious Ahoms stored up 5000 heads of Koch soldiers killed in this battle at a place in Sibsagar district, which came to be known as Mathadang.

The Koches renewed their attack against the Ahom in 1562 when Naranarayan on his way of invasion of Kachari kingdom devasted some villages inside the Ahom territory. Here the Koches secured the collaboration of the Bhutanese and Daflas. At the approach of the Koch army the Ahoms resorted a trick. Knowing that the Koches were orthodox Hindus the Ahom king sent his solders dressed as Brahman with sacred thread and caste mark on their forehead and being seated on cow’s back. Afraid to attack cows and Brahman the Koch general Chilarai returned without striking.

But when Chilarai came to know the truth, he made a crushing defeat upon the Ahoms in 1563. But some months later on the initiative of the Ahom king peace was concluded with the Koches where the Ahoms acknowledged Koch suzerainty on the payment of huge indemnity.

After subjugating the Ahom kingdom Narnarayan sent forces against the Kacharis and were easily subjugated by receiving huge indemnity. After that the Rajas of Manipur, Jayantia, Tripura, Sylhet, Khairam and Dimarua were defeated one by one and were acknowledged his authority by paying tribute. The Koch army thus conquered the whole of north-east India within 4 years . The Koches did not annex these conquered territories , but were satisfied to secured their allegiance and tribute.

**War against the Padshah of Gauda**

Elated with the repeated success in the east , the Koches turned towards the west, to the kingdom of Gauda, ruled by Suleiman Kararani.The Persian source like Akbarnama and Riyaj-us-Salatin make the Bengal Sultan as aggressor. In their fight against Gauda the Koch army under Chilarai was defeated and was taken as prisoner. The victorious general Kalapahar then proceeded up-to Brahmaputra as far as Tezpur devastating the Koch kingdom then returned back to Gauda after demolishing Kamakhya temple.

On his captivity Chilarai obtained favour of Suleiman Kararani by curing his mother from snake-bite. The Padshah released Chilarai from his captivity, even gave his daughter in marriage to Chilarai with dowry of 5 parganas.

**Relation with the Mughal Emperor**

The local Bansabali told that Naranarayan assisted Mughal Emperor Akbar in his attack on the Padshah of Gauda, while Chilarai would attack Gauda from the east, the imperial army would attack from the west. According to Ain-i-Akbari, in 1578 Naranarayan renewed his obedience to the Imperial throne by sending 54 elephants and valuable presents which increased his power and prestige.

On his second expedition against the Muhammadans Chilarai was died on the bank of the river Ganges sometimes between 1572-75. On the death of Chilarai the glorious expedition of Naranarayan came to an end.

**Development of Culture and literature during Naranarayan**

Naranarayan was not only the greatest among the Koch kings but also one of the remarkable ruler of the north-east India. He was primarily a man of peace and more interested in literary and cultural pursuits. Particularly after the death of Chilarai he devoted to welfare activities. Naranarayan rebuilt the Kamakhya temple with bricks in 1565. An inscription in the temple bear evidence of the fact which eulogises the manifold qualities of Naranarayn and Chilarai.

**Patronage of Neo-Vaishnavite Movement**

Naranarayan’s name ever been celebrated in the cultural history of Assam as a patron of Neo- Vaishanavite Movement. Sankardeva, the preacher of Neo Vaishanavism in Assam failed to get support from Ahom Government and moved to Koch kingdom for shelter and support. Under the patronage of Koch king Sankardeva founded the Satra institution to propagate his teachings.

Naranarayan has been styled as Assam’s Vikramaditya. His court was adorned with scholars of varied branches of learning. Apart from Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavdeva there were Purushottam Vidyabagish, compiller of a grammar, Ram Sarasawati, who transalated Mahabharata, Ananta Kandali, the translator of Bhagavata, Sridhar and Bakul Kayastha, who had contributed to astrological works and Lilawati, writer of arithmetic in poetic form , all were adorned the court of Naranarayan.

**Welfare activities**

Welfare activities also received attention from Narnarayan. A number of roads were built amongst Gosai Kamal Ali was important. Trees were planted on road sides and numerous tanks were dug. Ralf Fitch, a Portuguese traveller visited the Koch kingdom during his reign and left accounts of the reign of Naranarayan.