

Purandar 'was unfit to rule' and called him a 'rapacious miser'. Jenkins recommended annexation of the entirety of Upper Assam and so it happened on 16th of October, 1838.

Maniram was now completely hostile to the British. He relinquished all British official posts and joined the Assam Tea Company in 1839 as the *Dewan (Chief Executive)*. He was again however dissatisfied at the overbearing attitude of the British junior officers and resigned.

Maniram now decided to start his own commercial tea gardens and established them at *Cinnamora* and *Singlo (Sibsagar)*. This was the first commercial tea garden by an Assamese tea planter. Dewan's efforts were however put down by the British administration who preferred European tea planters for getting wastelands at concessional rates. Also in 1851, an officer seized all the facilities provided to him due to a tea garden dispute. Maniram, whose family consisted of 185 people, had to face economic hardship. This was the final nail in the coffin and Maniram now decided to teach the colonists a lesson.

Maniram decided to back *Kandarpeswar Singha (grandson of Purandar Singha)* and *Ghanakanta Singha (son of Chandrakanta Singha)* claim to restore Ahom monarchy. He was inclined more towards the claims of Ghanakanta since Purandar Singha was

deposed by the British and the claims of his grandson would not be heeded. He also decided to appeal against the British misrule in the state. In 1853, before the judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalat, A.J.M. Mills, Maniram presented two memorandums one backing Ghanakanta and restoration of the Ahom monarchy and another one detailing an account of the misrule of the Company administration in Assam where he complained against the neglect of the study of Satras, discontinuance of the worship of Goddess Kamakhya, deputation of Marwaris and Bengalis as mouzadars, unjust taxation and introduction of Akbari opium etc. Mills completely ignored Maniram's appeals and went on to call him "untrustworthy and intriguing person. He abuses the old system, insinuating more than he dares to express and exaggerating facts, and sets forth in detail the grievances under which the upper classes are said to labour."

Maniram now decided to present his case before the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal in April, 1856 but was constantly rejected an appointment with him. In the meantime, the *Sepoy Mutiny* (চিপাহী বিদ্রোহ) broke out and the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar's proclamation as the Emperor of India reached Maniram. Maniram realised that there were around 500 soldiers belonging to the army of the King Purandar Singha disbanded by the British who could help him in his

Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Barua Dewan was born on the 17th of April, 1806. He was a once British loyalist who turned against them later and was subsequently hanged along with *Piyoli Barua* on the 26th of February, 1858 when he was accused of conspiring against the Company administration.

Maniram started out at the young age of 22, as the *Tehsildar* of Upper Assam after the demise of Janardan Barbarua. It was during this stint, that Dewan informed British cultivators Robert Bruce and C.A. Bruce about the tea cultivation of the Singphos in Assam. Maniram was later made the *Barbhandar* (*Treasury Officer*) under *Purandar Singha's* (1833–38) feudatory rule. Maniram was greatly displeased at the misrule of the British administration and the huge financial hurdles faced by the King due to exorbitant tributes to be paid to the Company.

Purandar Singha had defied all odds and paid full sum of tribute for the first two years. But outbreak of the cholera epidemic and a famine dipped his revenue greatly. He was left with but no choice of defaulting on his payments to the Company.

The British were however ready to pounce on the entire territory and thrash any hopes of the revival of Ahom monarchy once and for all. Capt. Francis Jenkins, newly appointed Commissioner and agent to the Governor-General for Assam proposed that Purandar 'was unfit to rule' and called him a

objective of driving the colonists out of the state.

Maniram persuaded the nobles and Satradhikars of Satras like Kamalbari etc to take up arms. He was also helped in his mission by messengers dressed as Fakirs who spread the message throughout Assam and to the British regiment sepoy. The sepoy were promised double the pay if all of them joined the revolt for restoration of Kandarpeswar as the Ahom monarch. Maniram was also greatly supported in executing such clandestine meetings by Piyoli Barua and *Nirmal Hazari*.

The British however smelled that something fishy was going on when Charles Holroyd, Principal Assistant of Sivasagar informed the Commissioner of Assam about the Sepoy and Raja(Kandarpeswar) meeting. Jenkins the Commissioner dispatched a force of 104 men to contain the revolt.

Maniram and his horde decided upon attacking the British headquarters and official houses before they could flee. Maniram was meanwhile in Calcutta to procure arms and ammunition to make an all out attack. One of Maniram's letters to the Raja was intercepted by Holroyd courtesy a Daroga (police inspector) of Sibsagar Haranath Parvati Barua and the ploy was identified beforehand. Kandarpeswar's royal palace was raided and he was arrested and placed under detention. Maniram was arrested in Calcutta and brought to Assam for trial. *Piyoli Barua,*

Madhu Mallick, Dutiram Barua and everyone else was arrested. The sepoy's were mostly court martialed while some of them were transported for life.

Sources:

1. The History of Assam: Yandaboo to Partition - Priyam Goswami
2. Assam in the days of the Company - H.K.Barpujari
3. [Maniram Dewan - Wikipedia](#) 