

Working Paper/2018/05

# Management Relevance of Maniram Dewan

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## *Preface*

The publication of this series of working papers is a reflection of the endeavour of the University's commitment towards promoting research excellence among the faculty members of the University. Through this series, the University seeks to broaden the horizon of liberal thought, expression and ideas among the faculty members working in this University which is based on a liberal approach towards taking up fruitful discussions across fields and disciplines of socio-cultural relevance. Moreover, it also encompasses the conventional academic disciplines.

With the philosophy of encouraging free flow of ideas in view, the University has adopted an approach to do away with the process of peer review of the working papers. However, to provide an overall guidance, the University has made presentation of the working paper at an Academic Presentation mandatory, before its publication. We believe that this series of working papers would enable the faculty members to publish their advanced research works by bringing them into the public domain which would help them receive further constructive criticisms, feedback and suggestions from the readers across different space. Such working papers would also help the aspiring research scholars of the Universities in the region and beyond.

The broad areas of discussion in this year's working papers stems from the academic disciplines of Philosophy, Political Science, Education, English, Management and Technological Sciences. The working paper entitled *Management Relevance of Maniram Dewan*, authored by Professor Nripendra Narayan Sama has argued that not only in Assam, rather in the national context, Maniram Dewan was the pioneer entrepreneur-manager to practise Indianisation. This took place two and half centuries back much before the advent of Tatas and other early entrepreneurs. Thus, the author has argued that Maniram deserves to be regarded as the first CEO of India. According to the author, as an administrator Maniram had to look towards tapping new sources of revenue, remove fraudulent, corrupt practices and minimise expenditure. He procured the services of Chinese experts and labourers. Not only the backward integration, he also undertook adequate care for forward integration as well resulting in development of market for tea and other items. With the discussion of the management practices of Maniram Dewan, the paper concludes saying that the lesson from the life of Maniram Dewan that ensured effectiveness in 'management', despite the constraints of limited resources and hostilities in surroundings, is still highly relevant in today's present context.

January 01, 2018.

Arupjyoti Choudhury, Chairperson.  
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# Management Relevance of Maniram Dewan

## Abstract

This paper asserts that not only in Assam, rather in the national context, Maniram Dewan was the pioneer entrepreneur-manager to practise Indianisation. This took place two centuries back much before the advent of Tatas and other early entrepreneurs. Maniram deserves to be regarded as the first CEO of India. He stands as a unique example of a 19th century administrator/manager/business leader/CEO who applied contextual intelligence to a variety of complex decision making situations. This paper endeavours to probe into the management relevance of Maniram Dewan concluding on the note that as a leader-manager Maniram Dewan was a visionary and a great integrator as well. As an administrator Maniram had to look towards tapping new sources of revenue, remove fraudulent, corrupt practices and minimise expenditure. He procured the services of Chinese experts and labourers. Not only the backward integration, he took adequate care for forward integration as well resulting in development of market for tea and other items. After discussing his management practices, the paper concludes that the lesson from Maniram Dewan on ensuring effectiveness in 'management', despite the constraints of limited resources and hostilities in surroundings, is still highly relevant in today's present context.

*Key words: British planters, British rule, Indianisation, tea industry*

## 1.0 Introduction

[I feel very sincerely that the future of this industry (steel) including the peace in the labour world, depends largely on Indianisation. This is a point which foreigners- however good they otherwise may be, cannot sufficiently appreciate. I have no doubt that if you go ahead with your policy of Indianisation, you will be able to ingratiate yourself with your Indian employees, your countrymen as well as with public leaders of all shades of opinion.]

....Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, The Labour Association, Jamshedpur 12-11-1928  
(Excerpt of the letter written to Mr. Saklatvala of Tata Industries, Tata Steel Archives, Jamshedpur)

Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Barua Dewan, better known as Maniram Dewan (April

27, 1806 - February 26, 1858) worked for Indianisation long before Jamsetji Tata. Jamsetji Tata was an entrepreneurial giant. He was one of the most successful businessmen of his generation. He built capital and created wealth for generations. He had the self-assumed moral responsibility of developing enterprises to improve the lives of others. At the time of his death in 1904, at the age of 65, he laid the core foundation of Tata groups of companies. On his deathbed he told his two sons, 'If you cannot make it greater, at least preserve it.' The sons embodied Jamshetji Tata's philanthropic vision of doing good for the society by capitalist enterprises. Accordingly, a charitable trust was created, which holds some of the equity capital of Tata Sons (Bhat, 2017; Casey, 2016).

Compared to Jamsetji Tata, we may not have any tangible and perceivable legacy of Maniram Dewan as such. But, he worked in an altogether different business environment. Maniram Dewan practised management and leadership decades before Jamsetji Tata. Neither did he have a role model, nor did he have access to any kind of processes which he could have benchmarked. He experimented everything on his own. Maniram Dewan played a highly significant role in building Assam's/India's economic prospect of tea. With 800 big tea estates and 3000 odd small tea gardens distributed all over the state, Assam today has the largest tea industry in the world. Assam produced 631.2 million kgs and 642.2 million kgs in 2015 and 2016 respectively. This constitutes nearly 55 per cent of India's total tea production. The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre sold 1,76,311 tonnes of tea while the Kolkata Tea Auction centre sold 1,49,288 tonnes of tea in 2015. Guwahati is the largest Tea Auction Centre in India. For CTC it is the largest in the world. (Das, 2017; Patowary, 2017). We can attribute a lot to Maniram Dewan for this status of tea industry in Assam as if the current status is a measure of the foresight of Maniram Dewan. His work was instrumental in enabling India's leap into the modern industrial age, a fact many Indians are not aware of.

Maniram Dewan tried to develop his administrative skills and to navigate his business interest through the tumultuous political climate of Assam and India. His paternal forbearers had consistently held high offices in the courts of the Ahom kings. But he lived in a different time. The career of Maniram Dewan presents somewhat a dual personality. At the beginning he extended his full support and offered his intimate knowledge of the country for the foundation of the British rule in Assam after the Burmese aggression and wished for its continuance for 'kalpa' years. But later, he turned into a strong critic of the British raj and attempted to overthrow their rule. He is remembered more as a great patriot who sacrificed his life for the restoration of the old order by driving out the British.

Maniram Dewan was the pioneer entrepreneur-manager to practise Indianisation two and half centuries back. The managerial lessons from Maniram Dewan's principles and practices are still relevant in the LPG era. He deserves to be regarded as the first CEO of India and stands as a unique example of a 19th century administrator/manager/business leader/CEO who applied contextual intelligence to a variety of complex decision making situations. He had a clear objective of dramatically changing the business landscape of Assam in the colonial India. The objective and the dream remained unfulfilled for the emergence of other issues in politics.

This paper endeavours to probe into the management relevance of Maniram Dewan.

## 2.0 The Pre-industrial Era

India became pioneer to some other industries much later than tea. India was the first country in Asia to have a modern textile industry. It preceded Japan by twenty years and China by forty years. Cotton mills were started in Bombay in 1851. Modern jute manufacturing also started about the same time as cotton textiles. The first jute mill was built in 1854 and the industry expanded rapidly around Calcutta. The industry was largely in the hands of foreigners. In 1911, the first Indian steel mill was built by the Tata Company at Jamshedpur in Bihar. However, production did not take place on a significant scale before the First World War. The Indian steel industry started fifteen years later than in China, where the first steel mill was built at Hangyang in 1896. The first Japanese mill was built in 1898. It may be noted that in both China and Japan, the first steel mills (and the first textile mills as well) were government enterprises. (Madisson, 2017)

From this perspective, tea industry was the first private organised industry in India pioneered by Maniram Dewan and others. As it is commonly held, the pioneer in Assam's tea discovery was Robert Bruce, a trader. In 1823, he came in contact with a local Singpho chief in Assam, the Beesa Gaum. Bruce observed that tea plants were growing in a state of nature. He made a written contract with Beesa Gaum to furnish some tea plants. Unfortunately, Robert Bruce died in the next year. Charles Bruce, a naval officer who had earlier exposure of serving in the Isle of France and Java, followed his brother Robert into Assam. He was also paid respect by the Beesa Gaum, and supplied him with samples of tea and tea plants. It is widely acknowledged that Maniram Dewan introduced Robert Bruce and Charles Bruce to the Beesa Gaum. Hannangan in the *Assam Review and Tea News* 76(2) 34, 1987 stated thus, 'Maniram Dewan introduced Bruce to the indigenous tea plant and he was acquainted with the plant for many years before 1823 and he should be regarded as the true discoverer of 'Thea Assamica' (Baruah, 2008).

In 1826, the Treaty of Yandabo marked the end of the Anglo-Burmese War and Assam, which had been briefly under Burmese control, went into British hands. However, it was only in 1827 that Assam was officially taken over by the East India Company's administration. And much later, Bruce's 'native plant' received due consideration in the East India Company. In 1834, the British desire for tea had taken a new, urgent dimension because of an impairment in trade relations with China. The Indian Tea Committee, constituted at British initiative, proclaimed a 'discovery ... by far the most important and valuable that has ever been made on matters connected with the agricultural or commercial resources of this empire'. (Sharma, 2006).

When the East India Company commissioned Purandar Singha as the tributary ruler of Upper Assam, Maniram became his minister. However, with the resumption of power by the British on the charge of misgovernment, Purandar lost his throne and Maniram his job. In 1839, with his ministerial post redundant, Maniram joined the Assam Company, the newly-established tea firm at private initiatives with its headquarters at London and Calcutta. Maniram Dewan was appointed as Dewan or land agent of Assam Company. The company opened tea gardens in different places near Nazira viz. Ligiri Pukhuri, Gabharu Parbat, Hati Pati,

Satsaiya, Geleki, Kachari Pukhuri, Thaora and Deopani. When the cultivation of tea first commenced in Assam, not much was known of the habits of the tea bush. Many years later, the planters learnt about the suitability of soil conditions, congenialities of climate etc. The best ways of planting tea, spacing of tea bushes, pruning, plucking, withering, rolling, firing the leaf were not known. (Kalita, 2016; Gait, 2013; Barpujari, 1999).

### **3.0 Emergence and fall of Maniram Dewan**

The Annual Reports of Assam Company for the initial years provided glowing testimony to the services of Maniram Dewan. An important visitor from Calcutta, William Prinsep, praised him in the following words, 'I find the Native Department of the office in the most beneficial state under the excellent direction of Munceram, whose intelligence and activity is of the greatest value to our Establishment' (Dutta, 1990; Sharma, 2006). Maniram was a very useful mediator between the Company and indigenous power structures, as he was able to use his local knowledge to promote the tea industry. However, in the inevitable power struggle with the British managers, Maniram had to part ways with the Assam Company. The ostensible reason for Maniram's dismissal was his establishment of two private tea gardens. He was suspended on charges of diverting the Company's seed and labour in his own gardens. Maniram formally left the Assam Company in 1845. That Assam Company employees had been liberally pilfering their employer's resources for years, and that almost all the new private plantations in Assam were established on that basis was a serious allegation. The main point at issue is not whether Maniram was guilty of the accusations, but the fact that not a single white entrepreneur faced similar retribution. (Sharma, Jayeeta 2006). His subsequent participation in a conspiracy to overthrow British rule in 1857 brought an abrupt end to Maniram Dewan's life.

The trial which British conducted made a mockery of all accepted legal principles and codes of conduct and they left no time for any appeal. The hanging took place first- the trial came afterwards. And thus ended the eventful life of Maniram Dewan, who had the distinction of being the first in many respects: the first martyr for India's freedom from the north eastern region, the first Indian tea planter, the first Indian CEO to mention a few (Saikia, Ajit, 2008).

His tea estates were confiscated, and acquired at a throwaway price by Captain Williamson, the founder of the managing agency house of Williamson and Magor. In this regard, it is interesting to consider that a vernacular tradition still lives in Assam, enshrining Maniram's memory in ballads, Bihu songs and stories not just as a patriotic martyr, but also as the indigenous pioneer who introduced tea cultivation to the British.

The rebellion of 1857 and the name of Maniram Dewan are synonymous in Assam. There is a debate on whether Maniram Dewan was a martyr or a traitor. For judging this magnanimous personality, the traitor/ martyr discourse will not just be enough. It may be noted that Maniram was born and brought up in an age of transition. He saw the breakup of the old order and emergence of new one and worked as a bridge between the two (Guha, 1977).



#### 4.0 Maniram Dewan as an Administrator and a 'Lost' Game

The British realized that unless the Burmese were expelled from Assam, the eastern frontier could never be secure and their interest in trade and commerce in Calcutta and the North East, would continue to suffer. In April 1824, Maniram accompanied David Scott and Captain Horshburgh in their march to Gauhati to fight the Burmese invaders. Maniram acted as an escort. The war was won. After the annexation of Assam by the British through the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, they were in search for a wise and intelligent local nobleman who could guide them in strengthening their administration. Maniram was the inevitable and indispensable choice as he was intelligent, young, exposed to the functioning of British system. Maniram was well versed in Assamese, Sanskrit, Bengali and Persian. He started his career as a loyal servant and advisor to the British.

Maniram's good office were further employed by the company in negotiating treaties with the Bar Senapati, the Commander-in-Chief of the Matak and also with the Khamti Chief who had been usurping the office of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain since the Mowamariya disturbance. Maniram helped in negotiating two separate Kabulyats on May 13 and 15, 1826 by which the Bar Senapati and the Sadiya Khowa Gohain agreed on the following terms:

- (a) to 'do justice to the people' under them,
- (b) to refer the important and difficult cases to the company government and
- (c) to supply the latter with ration and payment of cost etc.

Maniram became the most useful native hand in consolidating the British power in Assam. He helped the Government in reorganising administration, collecting revenue, subduing the hill tribes.

David Scott wanted to construct a road linking the Brahmaputra valley with that of the Surma (Barak valley) via the Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya). It was a daunting task. To get the work done, one should know how to tackle the militant Jaintias. Moreover, one should have managerial acumen and the ability to examine the techno-economic viability of the project. Once again Maniram was the inevitable choice for leading the project. Scott called upon Maniram to get this work done with Mohabat Ka Paltan (Army of Love) consisting of five companies under the first Assam Light Infantry. They started building the road from Gauhati to Jaintia in 1827. But after working there for one and half years, he had to leave the job to join the new assignment of revenue Shirastadar cum Tehsildar under Capt. Neufville in 1828. The ability, intelligence and resourcefulness of Maniram had attracted the attention of Captain Neufville, the Political Agent, Upper Assam, who made him the Shirastadar-Tehsildar of the division.

While joining the British services, Maniram had a strong expectation that after restoring peace and harmony in Assam, severely devastated by atrocities of Burmese invaders, the British would reinstate the Ahom kingdom and leave. But that was not destined to be (Phukan, 2016; Dutta, 1990; Mills, 1997), Maniram joined as a Tehsildar at a young age of 22 years. In 1833, he rose to become the Barbhandar Barua and acted as the bridge between the British and Ahom Rulers. The dream of reinstating the Ahom kingdom did not come into reality. Maniram had to respond to the call of the situation. He brought in sweeping administrative reforms and it was during this period that collection of revenue touched an all-time high. He

befriended the British and remained as an adviser and close confidante of King Purandar Singha by virtue of which he enjoyed considerable financial concessions and virtually unlimited powers. (Dutta, 1990).

At a subsequent stage, the resumption of Upper Assam by the British brought an end to the Ahom rule. As a consequence, Maniram was deprived of all the royal benefits with the exception of three mouzas. To aggravate the situation, in 1851 the remaining mouzas which his family held for a generation were transferred to an individual who was hitherto subordinate to him. Without rank, without honour and even without the very means of livelihood, Maniram found it extremely difficult to sustain himself. Maniram felt that there was no future for him and his countrymen without the restoration of the former government. Kandarpeswar Singha, the young prince and the successor of Ahom tributary leadership was helpless. He realised that the authorities in Calcutta would not reopen the question of restoration in his favour when they had turned down the representations which were repeatedly made by his predecessors. Kandarpeswar accepted the guardianship of Maniram Dewan with 'sanguinary hopes of getting the country to his management'.

This was when an unexpected opportunity presented itself. In 1853, AJM Mills, the judge Sadar Dewani Adawlat, paid a visit to Assam. Maniram presented an account of the administration of the East India Company for over a quarter of century emphasising therein the grievances of the people, the higher classes in particular. Maniram mentioned about the maladies and provided suggestions. But to Mills, Maniram was an 'untrustworthy and intriguing person' whose real motive was 'to get the country restored to Rajah Poorandar Singha's descendant'. The object of the Sadar Judge was not the withdrawal but consolidation of the British rule in Assam. He suggested not to entertain any hope of restoration in future. The people in general had not the least desire to be placed under their former Rajas, Mills believed.

Disappointed in his attempt to convince Mills, Maniram determined to plead personally before the authorities in Calcutta on behalf of prince Kandarpeswar Singha. He arrived there in early 1857 and made through his friends several futile attempts to represent the case before the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. During this time, there occurred the the Sepoy Mutinee in places of North India viz. Meerut, Lucknow and Kanpur; and Bahadur Shah, the last of the Moghuls, was proclaimed by the rebels as the Emperor of Hindustan in Delhi. Inspired by the development, Maniram drew up plans for organizing a similar uprising against the British with the ultimate object of restoring Ahom rule in Assam. Through his letters, Maniram appealed Kandarpeswar Singha for the revolt with the aid of local sepoy and with the help of his friend Madhu Mallick, a Bengalee muktear, he prepared the ground for insurrection. The task before Maniram was not an easy one. Until August 1857, the sepoy of the Assam Light Infantry Battalions remained strictly loyal to the British. Moreover, they were from different heterogeneous groups like the Nepalese, the Manipuris, the Rabhas etc. They were enjoying a settled and peaceful life. So, they were rather indifferent to the occurrences of the Northern India. Maniram's efforts could not sustain for long.

On September 9, 1857, Captain Holroyd, the Principal Assistant, Sibsagar, arrested Kandarpeswar Singha, who was immediately despatched to Calcutta and kept confined as a state prisoner at Alipur. This was followed by the arrest of Maniram in Calcutta and his

collaborators. The trial of Maniram and his associates were subjected to severe criticisms. Captain Holroyd and Haranath Parbatia Baruah, the daroga of Sibsagar were accused of going to extremes in their vendetta against all probable sympathisers of the plot. Captain Holroyd who was not in good terms with Maniram had acted as 'both Prosecutor and Judge'. When these high handed and irregular proceedings reached the Government of Bengal, the special Commission given to Holroyd was withdrawn in August 1958. Maniram fell victim to circumstances.

Thus, ended the endeavours made by Maniram to overthrow the British Government in Assam. This was partly due to his inability to organise a united front of the nobility against the common enemy namely the British. Not the daroga Haranath alone, but a substantial section of the men of rank who continued to be indifferent aided the local authorities in bringing the rebels to book out of fear or from hopes of personal gain to be obtained in the hands of the British. Maniram also had failed to realise that his was a 'lost cause'- that the masses in general were losing faith in a monarchy that had discredited itself by its oppression, misrule and betrayal at the hour of distress. And the British had provided the common man all that he wanted- the security of life and property. The question still remains - was it a lost game?

## **5.0 Management Relevance**

What Maniram Dewan achieved in a short span of eight years, depending entirely on personal initiative, on individual capital, and on local Assamese labour aided by a few skilled Chinese bands, took almost 25 years for the British to achieve in the business of tea. When Maniram Dewan started the first private tea gardens in Assam, he displayed extraordinary skill, enterprise and business acumen which overshadowed the achievements of the Assam Tea Company formed initially with 10,000 shares of Rs. 500 each. The land that he acquired for the two gardens at Cinnamora and Safari was not granted the usual revenue concessions under the Waste Land Rules. Rather, his plantation land was assessed as ordinary rice -land, resulting in Maniram's having to pay very high rates of land revenue. The cost of production increased substantially. Since tea cultivation involved capital expenditure, so certain 'exceptional privileges were granted to the cultivators. But, these privileges were meant primarily for the British planters. Aspiring Assamese planters were discriminated against and discouraged from entering into competition with the British planters. The case of Maniram Dewan was a typical example of the extent to which the British colonialists could go to prevent native enterprises in the tea business. It is interesting that the main charges, of inciting rebellion against the British government, that were brought against Maniram Dewan were framed on the basis of several letters written to the government by the Assam Company, the Margherita Company, and Nakchari Company. These letters alleged that Maniram and his followers were inciting the whole country against the British and that consequently the 'native contractors' were refusing to work in the British gardens. (Misra, 2016; Dutta, 1990).

What were Maniram's big ideas that we can learn from?

(1) First, he believed in pioneering new enterprises essential for the nation (read Indianisation in today's context). Much of his life was devoted to path breaking ventures like

market development, which he considered were fundamental to the country's economic progress. His tea ventures became commercially and qualitatively so successful that the tea produced in his Cinnamora estate fetched better price in London tea auction market than the tea produced in the British managed gardens

(2) A second lesson for our times is encapsulated in the dream of Maniram that Assamese planters will excel in tea manufacturing and Assam would occupy a unique place. Because of his inspiration, Raseshwar Barua established Naginijan and Madhabpur Tea estates. Hemadhar Barua, Jagannath Barua BA, Krishnakanta Barua, Shivaram Bora, Sarbananda Kakati, Shivaprasad Barua, Devicharan Barua, Malbhog Barua, Maulavi Chahnur Hazarika, Kali Prasad chaliha, Radhakanta Handiqui, Someswar Sharma, Nilambar Datta, Mihiram Saikia etc. were the Assamese people who could dominate the tea business, because of the pioneering influence of Maniram. Tea was practically the only outlet for economic entrepreneurship at that time and Maniram was the trend setter. (Gogoi, 2017; Gait, 2013).

(3) Maniram's leadership traits and toughness in decision making are some other aspects of managerial learning in terms of organizational power and politics. Maniram's monthly salary was Rs. 600 that was higher than the salary of the British officers posted in Assam. His higher status and influence caused a great deal of jealousy and resentment amongst the European officers working under him and they were in the look out for any opportunity to get even. The first of the collapses came in 1840 with Alexander Hart, an assistant of the company who had been deputed to collect Chinese labourers from Singapore to work in the plantations. Hart had recruited about 250 labourers but because of the length of the journey and the ill treatment meted out to them while they were on boat, they became rebellious and troublesome and ultimately Hart had to dismiss the entire gang before even reaching Assam. Hart submitted a bill for Rs. 29,365.00 for his efforts, but as head of native Department Maniram refused to pay the amount. This was followed by a clash with Mr. P Alexander, the Superintendent of the Dikhowmukh nursery. Later, a crunch came when Maniram had a difference of opinion with CA Bruce, the government's representative in the company. The European management appointed another Dewan alongside Maniram and reduced his salary by a substantial margin. He had lost his offices under the Ahom Monarchy, his Mouzas and Sirastadarship under the British rule and his Dewanship under The Assam Company. Still he was not defeated. An urge to achieve is a dominant characteristic of entrepreneurship. Maniram did not despair and started his own gardens and other businesses. He was quoted as 'last of the old aristocrats and first of the Assamese bourgeois (Guha, 1977).

(4) As an administrator Maniram had to look for tapping new sources of revenue, remove fraudulent, corrupt practices and minimise expenditure. At the instance of Maniram, the Miris were brought under assessment. Following the practices in the neighbouring districts of Bengal, haats, ghats and beels were auctioned. To check corruption, those found guilty of embezzlement or those delinquent with duty, were dismissed. In terms of appointment, 'ability' was considered the main criterion irrespective of one's caste or family heritage. Accordingly, qualified Nagas and Mishings were also considered for Government services. As a result of steps undertaken by Maniram, the revenue increased within a single year after his becoming Tahsildar from Rs. 38,836 in 1827-28 to Rs. 78,453 in 1828-29 and Rs. 1,00,000

in 1829-30. However, this was at the cost of miseries of poor ryots. Maniram was the Raja's Chief Adviser. The most serious problem for the Raja was the payment of the tribute of Rs. 50,000 per annum extracting from the helpless ryots at the time when the country was yet to recover from the perils of internal disturbances and Burmese invasions. Mairam's concern as the in-charge of the royal treasury, as well as, the head accountant was the regular payment of the tribute disregardful of the miseries of the poor peasants and restoration of the rights and privileges of the aristocracy. (Dutta, 1990). This implies the ethical dilemma, more or less all managers face in today's contexts also.

(5) Maniram was a great integrator. He procured the services of Chinese experts and labourers. Tea being a perishable product should be disposed of as quickly as possible. Packaging was quite rudimentary in those days. The economic viability depends on this. Maniram's tea was sold in the marts at Jaipur and Barhat where the Nagas were the main customers, at Sisi on the north bank where Bhutias were the main customers, at Garohaat in Kamrup where the Garos were the main customers. Teas from Maniram's gardens became popular in Assam because unlike the British planters, he did not dispatch the best teas to foreign markets. Along with tea plantation, market development was a grand strategy that Maniram adopted. The domestic market developed as a consequence. Maniram started business in timber, elephant and excise mahals, trading in iron and salt. He manufactured tools such as mitda, hoes, cutlery etc. Maniram took contract to supply rations to Assam Light Infantry including the Mahabat Ka Paltan. He also served the Engineering Department by supplying labours and building the army quarters and officers' bungalows. Maniram earned sufficient profits from these engagements (Dutta, 1990). Maniram fully exploited his family tradition, his ancestral and own resources and his intellect and ability to make himself a typical feudal aristocrat. He inherited from his father a huge amount of immovable properties and added his own.

(6) Maniram was one of the patrons of Orunodai, the first Assamese paper devoted to religion, science, general intelligence. He also wrote in the Bengali Newspapers. In the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in July 1938, he published an article "Native Account of Washing for Gold in Assam". He wrote Buranji Vivek Ratna, Bara Bhuyan Charitra and Bhakti Pradeep. The rebellion of 1857 and the first war of Indian independence and the name of Maniram Dewan go together in Assam. While paying tribute to Maniram Dewan, Sri D. N. Chakravarty, president of the Maniram Dewan Trust, opined that Maniram Dewan was a great visionary, economist, industrialist, administrator, scholar and historian- all rolled into one. (Chakravarty, 2016).

## **6.0 Conclusions**

Maniram's career and management relevance have been presented in the context of the developments that took place in the history of Assam during the period beginning with his early contact with David Scott in 1824 till his execution in 1858 for attempting to expel the British from Assam in the wake of the Rebellion of 1857. It is an irony of fate that Maniram, who in his height of power ordered capital punishment for Piyoli Phukan and Jewram Dulia Barua and had suggested that "they be hanged to death after being subjected

to various tortures and humiliation" (Dutta, 1990; Sharma, 2006); he had found himself at the hangman's noose, under similar circumstances twenty-eight years later. Nothing much remains of him today, but the debate surrounding the aristocrat/entrepreneur manager continues. It would be unfair to pronounce any judgement on him but his name will always be linked with the discovery of tea, Maniram Dewan being a part of professionalising the tea industry, being an entrepreneur in ancillary activities, and a tough administrator as well.

Maniram Dewan was 32 years senior to Jamsetji Tata who is commonly held as the pioneer industrialist of India. But, as the narratives in this paper indicates, Maniram Dewan's place in the Indian industrial history needs to be rationalized.

The great success stories of his multidimensional enterprises within a short span of time that too in a colonial business environment is a matter of pride and source of encouragement. Maniram lived at a time when the society or the environment around was in abrupt transition from age old feudal economy to western colonial economy. It is amazing that how a single man in a hostile colonial environment with all the hurdles of communication, market, capital and so on could achieve so much in a short span of time.

His motivation to entrepreneurship and profit was the result of his contact with Indian and European traders in Bengal. In spite of his feudal attitude to social problems, Maniram could well make use of his accumulated wealth as capital to start multifarious businesses like contracts on coal, ration supply, elephant trade, excise mahals, construction of buildings for the military quarters, manufacture of modern iron implements and above all the risky and pioneering business of tea.

Credit goes to Maniram that he was more practical than his contemporary educated Assamese elites in the sense that he was no more under the illusion that propriety to his country would come under the British rule. Freedom fighters in Assam were inspired and considered Maniram as their pioneer. It is with this tradition that Maniram is still living in the Assamese society commanding respect from all who have love for freedom and those who want to imbibe the values and spirit of management and entrepreneurship. In Assam, where the commercial mindedness and entrepreneurship zeal was almost entirely absent, Maniram Dewan gave a new direction to entrepreneurship in Assam. The imperatives of tea business ultimately reordered the natural environment and social demographics of Assam. The lesson from Maniram Dewan on ensuring effectiveness in management despite the constraints of limited resources and hostilities in surroundings, is still highly relevant.

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