



FORMATION OF CONGRESS COMMITTEES IN CACHAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

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Abstract

With the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885, the anti-colonial movement in India entered into a new phase of nationalist and democratic movement. The beginning session was attended by many dignitaries including D. Naoroji, Badar Uddin Tayeebji, U.C. Banarjee and others. In the initial years, it was led by moderate leaders with liberal aims and objectives. They tried to solve their issues through prayers and petitions to the British Govt. of India. But the partition of Bengal in 1905 led to the split of Congress into Moderate and Extremist groups. With the joining of M.K. Gandhi, the policies of Congress began to change and it was turning to more public related and grassroot level organization. But with the launching of non-co-operation movement in 1920-22 by Congress under the leadership of Gandhi, the Congress organization had reached to the mass people of India. As a result, the branches of Indian National Congress were set up in the different provinces and districts of India. It was during the non-co-operation movement, Assam Provincial Congress Committee was formed in Assam. Similarly, the Cachar District Congress Committee was also formed in 1920. The purpose of writing this paper is to find out the history of formation of congress committees in Cachar along with its different branches in rural areas. The study of this untouched topic is important, as because many national congress presidents like Jawharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose had visited Cachar during their tenure of their presidentship. Even M. K. Gandhi and Mohammad Ali of Ali Brothers toured the district of Cachar in 1921 during the non-co-operation movement. Cachar is adjacent to the province of Bengal and thus, it is historically and politically in a very sensitive position. Cachar Congress had a dominant role in the entire freedom struggle and also it played a significant part in the Sylhet Referendum to retain the district in the Indian union.

Keywords: *Cachar, Congress, Colonial period J. Nehru, Subhash Bose, Sylhet Referendum*

Introduction

Cachar is situated in the southern part of Assam. At present, it is one of the districts of Assam. It was having the test of colonial rule like other parts of India. In pre-colonial time, it was having an autonomous kingdom, known as Cachari kingdom and many rulers had ruled the territory and maintained relationship with neighbouring countries like Ahoms, Manipuri, Tripuris etc. But the entry of the English rulers in this region through the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, the autonomy of the states in this region began to decline and one after another state came under the English colonial rulers. The English colonial rule was, in fact, started in India with the occupation of Bengal by the English East India Company after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. But the resistance movement against the English was begun as soon as their rule was started in India. On the completion of the first hundred years of the British rule in India, the great revolt of 1857 took place in India. After the revolt of the mutiny of the sepoys in 1857, a kind of socio-political consciousness and intellectual awakening had been emerged and an idea of democratic way of fighting against the English colonial administration had been sought out by the leading intelligentsia, which led to the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885 in Bombay, headed by A.O. Hume, a retired English ICS.

Cachar had also its participation in the Indian National Congress from the inception of this historic political organization. Though Cachar came under the administrative system of Assam in 1874. Cachar, a Bengali dominated speaking, adjacent to Bengal from the eastern part of it. So, any political development that appeared in the Bengal province, had its direct impact on the socio-political life of the people of Cachar. Obviously, it was after one year only, a representative from Cachar district had participated in the 2nd session of Indian National Congress in 1886 in Calcutta. Sir Din Nath Datta, Manager of Cachar Native Joint Stock Company, had joined the 2nd session of Indian National Congress as a representative of the company.¹ This was the beginning of association of Cachar with the Congress almost from the foundation year of the Congress. Later on, Ramani Mohan Das, had participated in 5th session of Congress held in Lucknow in 1889.² Ramani Mohan Das also joined the 16th session of Indian

National Congress held in Lahore.³ In 1901, Kamini Kumar Chanda (Silchar), Ramani Mohan Das (Karimganj) and Sachindra Chandra Singh had participated in the 17th session of Indian National Congress held in Calcutta.⁴ Sri Kamini Kumar Chanda, Mahesh Chandra Datta, Kali Mohan Dev attended the Calcutta session of Indian National Congress held in December, 1906 as the representative of Cachar.⁵

It was thus, the educated leaders of Cachar had maintained their connection with the Congress programmes and activities by attending the different sessions of Indian National Congress. Apart from specific congress leaders, many congress followers and activists had organized and mobilized the masses in the swadeshi movement, which was started after the partition of Bengal in 1905. The participation of Congress workers either in organizational work or in the national movement was carried out in scattered way due to the absence of any provincial or district level Congress committee. It was during the non-co-operation movement in 1920-22, the participation of largescale people and also as per the instruction of Indian National Congress, finally led to the formation of Cachar Congress Committee to carry out the movement in right direction. So, the Cachar Congress Committee was formed in 1920, with Kamini Kumar Chanda and Satindra Mohan Dev as president and secretary respectively.⁶ With the formation of Cachar Congress Committee in 1920, the movement of the people of Cachar had entered into a new phase of anti-colonial struggle. The Congress activities were expanding more and many educated leaders were coming under the shade of Congress. Many prominent leaders like Sanat Kumar Das, Jatindra Mohan Dev Laskar stood in the Assam Legislative Council election in 1923 onwards as Congress nominees. In the election, Jatindra Mohan Dev Laskar (Borkhola) in 1926 and Sanat Kumar (Udarbhond) in 1929 were elected as MLC to Assam Legislative Council. In 1937, A.K Chanda was elected as MLA to Legislative Assembly. Earlier, in 1935, AK Chanda was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly.⁷ The Cachar Congress Committee was also involved in the social services like helping the distress people in times of flood particularly in 1929, which is called “36 Banglar Pani” among the people of Cachar.

After the civil disobedience movement in 1930-32, the Congress organization began to be strong in rural areas and many people started to form congress organization at village level. The anti-colonial movement under the shade of Congress had its impact in rural areas also. A good number of Congress leaders like Paramananda Dev Nath, Joint Secy, Silchar sub-division Congress Committee, Subudh Kumar Nath (Narsinghpur) and other Congress leaders formed South Cachar Congress Committee in 1932 with Subudh Kumar Nath as president and Paramananda Devnath as Secy, which was considered as first of its kind in rural areas of Cachar.⁸ In 1933, Cachar Congress was affiliated to Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Later on, many primary congress committees were formed in Salgangarpar, Narsinghpur, Bakrapar, Dholai etc. In 1934, Silchar sub-divisional congress committee was also formed.⁹

Earlier in May, 1932, Jaggeshwar Chalkrabarty (Robi Chalkrabarti) from Silchar went to Narsinghpur in the house of Atul Chandra Kar for signing the congress membership. In Dholai, congress membership campaign was also started and Sajid Raja Mazumder, (Saptagram), Krishna Jiban Purkaasta, (Mahadevpur), Ramchandra Datta, Aswini Kumar Datta took the Congress membership. Sri Pushkar Nath, who was the father of Paramananda Dev Nath, was a religious person and took active part in the campaign. He had a good number of disciples spread in Bengal, UP, Tripura etc. He composed a song in Bengali, which is inspiring for the freedom fighters.¹⁰

With the efforts of Kamini Kumar Sarma (Narsinghpur), Rajani kanta Dev (Natun Bajar), Bipin Chandra Sarma (Bakrapar), Pran Krishna Nath Mazumder, Probod Chandra Sarma, Rasraj Nath Choudhury (Salgangarpar) ; Basudev Nath Laskar, Dayal Mani Nath, Hare Krishna Sarma; Lalmohan Nath, Ramendra Sarma (Salgangarpar); Basudev Nath (Kanakpur); Sarada Nath Choudhury (Meherpur); Sarat Chandra Nath (Panibora student’s organization); Jagannath Kairi (Atartilla); Indraswar Sarma (Palanghat), the South Cachar Congress Committee became very active and the following Congress committees were formed.¹¹

Narsinghpur Primary Congress Committee.

1. Kamini Kumar Sarma-president
2. Subudh Kumar Nath, Secy.

Salgangarpar Primary Congress Committee.

1. Pran Krishna Nath Mazumder, President.
2. Paramananda Devnath, Secy.

Bakrapar Primary Congress Committee.

Bipin Chandra Sarma-secy.

It was with a view to spread the Congress activities in other areas, a Congress office was needed to be built in the areas at Narsinghpur (For Narsinghpur, Bakrapar, Salgangarpar). Sri Satindra Mohan Dev discussed the matter with Deputy Commissioner, Cachar and managed to send four Bangle Tin for the purpose of Congress office. Sri Satindra Kumar Sarma Choudhury had donated 5 katas of land in Narsinghpur for congress office. Sri Jibon Krishna Mohajan, Tulapatta, Silchar, had given Rs 150/- for the purpose.¹²

Many congress leaders also worked for the involvement of the women in the Congress organization. Sri Puskar Nath took active part in this setup. Due to their efforts, many women including Mukkada Devi, Head teacher, Narsinghpur Girl’s M.V. School; Swarna Mayee Sheel, Head Teacher, Panibora M.V. School; Sunuka Devi, Basanti Devi, Jamini Devi, Subashini Devi, Surbala Devi and many others of Salgangarpar came under the shade of Congress organization and formed Women Congress Cell.¹³ In 1934, Silchar Sub-division Congress Committee was formed with following office bearers in Silchar press, Central Road, Silchar.¹⁴

1. Satindra Mohan Dev, President.

2. Birendra Chandra Purkayasta, Vice-president.
3. Achinta Kumar Bhattacharjee- Secy.
4. Parama Nanda Devnath, Salgangarpar, Asstt, Secy.
5. Paresh Chandra Dev, Barjalenga- Asstt. Secy.
6. Haran Chandra Bakshi, Cashier.

The office of Silchar Sub-division Congress Committee was in G B S first floor Buiding. Dr. Shyam Charan Dev, Direndra Mohan Gupta, Gulam Sabir Khan, Manindra Mallik, Upendra Sankar Datta, Paresh Chandra Choudhury, Dr. Brajendra Bhattacharjee, Rajendra Bhattacharjee, Rajendra Bhattacharjee, Direndra Mohan Dev, Rabindra Sen, Birendra Chandra Purkayasta, Priya Nath Dev, Sushil Chalkrabarti, Sunil Chalkrabarti, Mahendra Chndra Sarma, Dijendra Lal Sengupta, Mohitosh Purkayasta, Tarapad Bhattacharjee, Rajendra Deas, Satya Das Roy, Nanda Kumar Das, Kushi Mohan Das and others were prominent Congress leaders and activists of Silchar Congress Committee.¹⁵ There were many Congress workers in rural areas. They are Jatindra Mohan Dev Laskar, Sanat Kumar Das, Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, Subudh Kumar Nath, Sajid Raja Mazumder, Jibon Banarjee, Bipin Chandra Sarma, Mahendra Nath (Sattawala), Kamini Sarma, Krishna Jibon Purkyasta, Biswanath Rajbonsi, Akshay Kumar Dev. The house of Birendra Kumar Purkayasta was the centre of political discussion and fooding and lodging was also given for rural Congress activists. It was behind the house of Dr. Brajendra Kumar Bhattacharjee, Central Road, Silchar. Biren Babu was running Eastern Banking and Trading Company and he bears the expense of the amount for the Congress workers. Many times, the Congress leaders from other districts stayed here and took part in Congress activities. For example, Sri Purnendu Kishore Sengupta, a Congress leader and running Kulaura Rangirkhul Bidyasram, Sylhet; Direndra Nath Dasgupta, Organizing Secy stayed in Congress Office. They usually carried their discussion at long night also and there was very cordial relation among the Congress workers and leaders. It was observed when one night while discussion was going on in the office, suddenly came the news of illness of Abdul Hamid Barlaskar, father of Hurmat Ai Barlaskar. Immediately, Sri Nikunja Bihari Goswami, Mahendra Chandra Sarma, Paramananda Devnath went to the house of Hurmat Ali Barlaskar at Buribail (almost 15 kilometres distance from Silchar town) at 10.00 pm.¹⁶ They assured Hurmat Ali Barlaskar to provide any help if it was required.

During the time, many Ashrams were also set up for the training of the Congress workers for different purposes. One such Training Centre was at Rangirkhal, Kulaura, in Sylhet, a Bidyasram, was set up, by the Congress leaders for the training of Congress workers and activists under the supervision of Direndra Nath Dasgupta and Promode Kisore Sengupta. In 1935, Direndra Nath Sengupta had visited Salgangarpar on the request of Salgangarpar Primary Congress Committee. He had delivered lecture in the gathering assembled at the house of Abay Charan Nath Biswas. Some Congress workers including Lal Mohan Nath, Kirthi Mohan Nath, Ramendra Chandra Sarma from Salgangarpar Primary Congress Committee and Sri Subudh Kumar Nath from Narsinghpur Primary Congress Committee were sent to the Kulaura Bidyasram, Sylhet for advance training.¹⁷ Apart from this, in 1936, there was a campaign in rural areas of Cachar for the abolition of untouchability system. The people of Cachar took part whole heartedly in the campaign. The Charaka Sanghas were also formed in the different parts of the district for the use of Khadi cloth. Lal Mohan Nath, a trainee from Kulaura Bidyasram Sylhet had taken a dominant role for the campaign of Charka and use of Khadi cloth.¹⁸ In 1937, Sarala Bala Dev, Congress women leader from Sylhet had visited Narsinghpur, Silchar, at the invitation of Narsinghpur and Salgangarpar Primary Congress Committee. She had addressed a big gathering of women and urged the women to participate in the Srihatta Mahila (women) Congress Conference to be held in Sylhet.¹⁹ On the invitation of Sarala Bala, a delegate consisting of two women from Silchar town and Smti Subashini Devi from Salgangarpar and Smti Mukkada Devi from Narsinghpur Primary Congress Committee and Smti Swarna Mayee Sheel (Panibora), had participated in the conference of Sylhet. Paramananda Devnath (Silchar) took part in the conference.²⁰ In 1937, Meherpur Primary Congress Committee was also formed with Sarda Nath Choudhury and Jitendra Nath Choudhury as president and secy, respectively, Sishir Ranjan Goswami and others were as members.²¹ Sri Jagendra Nath Saikia, Gen Secy, APCC, had also visited Narsinghpur for strengthening the Congress at rural level.²²

In 1939, after the end of Tripuri Congress session in 1938, at Tripura, another One Week session of Indian National Congress was held at Malikanda, Dacca under the supervision of Dr Prafulla Ghosh. Many national leaders including M K Gndhi, Sardar Patel had participated the meeting. Subash Chandra Bose did not participate in the meeting as he had left the Congress after the Tripuri session of Congress. Sri Birendra Chandra Purkayasta, Vice-President, Silchar sub-division Congress Committee, Paramananda Devnath, Joint Secretary of Silchar Congress and Ram Chandra Purkayasta, Narendra Chandra Nath and others from Lala Primary Congress Committee had attended the Congress session at Dacca.²³

The Congress activity in Cachar was further spearheaded with the launching of Mass Contact Programme of Indian National Congress. As per the decision of Faizpur session of Indian National Congress in 1936, the Congress tried to reach to the rural people ie "Gaon me Congress". Many congress leaders like Arun Kumar Chanda, President, Cachar District Congress Committee, Achinta Kumar Bhattacharjee, Secy, Cachar Congress Committee, Subudh Kumar Nath, Asstt. Secy, CCC, and others toured the rural areas of Cachar and formed the primary Congress Committees in the different parts of Cachar, which are given below.²⁴

Narsinghpur Primary Congress Committee.

- Subudh Kumar Nath. Pres.
- Paramananda Devnath, Secy.
- Rakesh Ranjan Nath, Members.
- Kamini Kumar Sarma.

- Sayeedpur Primary Congress Committee.
- Lalit Kumar Sarkar, presi.
- Sildupi Congress Committee.
- Kashiram Namosudra, President.

Dholai Bazar primary Congress Committee.

- Farzan Ali- first president.
- Sajid Raja Mazumder, president later on.
- Maulvi Farzan Ali Barbhuiya, President; Buddheswar Sarma, President; Bipin Bihari Das, secy. The Members were Masad Ali, Hiralal Datta, Krishna Jibon Purkayasta, Bipin Bihari Laskar, Babu Chand Barman, Nikunj Bihari Mohanta, Gaur Mani Nath, Katu Mani Nath, Hiren Singh, Brojmani Singh, Raj Mohan Barbhuiya,

Ganganagar Congress Committee under Upendra Barman.

Atortilla Congress Committee under Sitaram Baroi.

Barjalenga Congress Committee under Srish Chandra Purkayasta.

Jagia Basti Congress Committee under Krishna Charan Nunia.

Barkhola Congress Committee under Jagat Charan Dev Laskar, president.

Manish Charan Barman, secy.

Jarailtala Congress Committee

- Jagat Chandra Nath, president.
- Chaitanya Charan Nath, secy.

Bithar Gangpar Congress Committee

Gaur Nitai Singh, President.

Kunja Singh, secy. He was earlier working in Dibrugarh in oil refinery. Due to his participation in strike in 1939 at oil refinery, he was dismissed from the job. He joined the congress activities later on.

Kalain Congress Committee under Dinesh Chandra Deshmukh.

Baskandi Congress Committee with Maulavi Ilias Ali, president and Akshay Kumar Dev, Secy.

Lakhipur Congress Committee under Qazi Rahman Baksh, president and Kamakhya Chalkrabarti secy.

Udharbond Congress Committee with Sanat Kumar Das, president and Uma Kanta Dev, Secy and Sachin Malakar as member.

Japirbond Congress Committee under Biswas Ranjan.

Jaipur Razar Bazar Congress Committee under Joy Narayan.

Arun Kumar Chanda after coming from Singapur joined the Congress activities in 1934. . And the meeting of the Cachar congress was taken place in the house of A K Chanda. Gulam Sabir Khan was nominated to Indian National Congress as representative of Cachar Congress Committee. In 1935, the Silver Jubilee celebration of Indian National Congress was observed throughout the country. In Silchar, a committee was consisted with Kamini Kumar Chanda as President, Direndra Kumar Gupta, Vice President; Manindra Lal Mallik, Exhibition Secy, Satindra Mohan Dev, Satya Das Roy, Haran Chandra Bakshi and others as members to celebrate the occasion.²⁵When Kamini Kumar Chanda failed to serve the work as congress president, due to his severe illness, Shyan Charan Dev was elected as president of Cachar Congress. Direndra Mohan Dev as Vice President and Sri Manindra Lal Mallik as secy. Later on, Direndra Kumar Purkayasta, Achinta Kumar Bhattacharjee, Mamohan Bhattacharjee, Nikonj Bihari Goswami, served as the secy of Cachar Congress.²⁶ Arun Kumar Chanda was elected as president of Cachar Cong Committee after Shyama Charan Dev. In 1938, Arun Kumar Chanda became president of Cachar Congress Committee. The Cong activities were further spearheaded by the campaign of congress leaders like Sunil Mohan Endow, Mohitosh Purkayasta, Satya Das Roy, Achinta Bhattacharjee in Silchar areas. In rural areas of Cachar, Sri Parama Nanda Devnath, Sajid Raja Mazumder (Baga), Rajendra Chandra Purkayasta (Joypur), Qaji Rahman Baksh (Lakhipur), Rajendra Chandra Deshmukh (Bihara), Sanat Kumar Das (Udarbond), Ilias Ali (Baskandi) Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, Gulam Sabir Khan.²⁷In addition to the vigorous campaign of the Cachar Congress leaders, the Congress popularity was further enhanced with the visit of Jawharlal Nehru and Netaji Subash Chandra Bose in Silchar. Jawharlal Nehru as Congress president visited Cachar in 1937 and in 1945. His tour had in fact left a tremendous impact among the people of Cachar. Similarly, the visit of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in Cachar in 1938 also fostered the spirit of freedom among the youth section of the society.

Hailakandi Mahkuma Congress Committee

Though Hailakandi at present a district of Assam, but it was a sub-division of Cachar before the independence of India. So, with a view to expand the Congress activities in rural areas of Hailakandi, many Congress leaders like Nikunj Goswami, Manmohan Bhattacharjee, Dijen Sengupta, Mohitosh Purkayasta, Tarapad Bhattacharjee, Motilal Jagirdar, Achinta Kumar Bhattacharjee from Silchar went to Hailakandi and made several meetings and delivered lectures urging people to join congress and stand against the colonial rulers. In 1934, Lala Primary Congress committee in Hailakandi was also formed. Narendra Chandra Nath, president, Raman Chandra Purkayasta, Secy and Jadumani Nath, Sachindra Kumar Nath as members.²⁸ In 1939, on the occasion of local Board election, Congress leaders went to Hailakandi for the campaign of Congress candidates. A meeting of the Congress leaders was held in Hailakandi, in which it was resolved to go to the house of Hirendra Chalkrabarti, with a view to invite him to join the Congress. It can be mentioned here that Hirendra Chalkrabarti was related to Sir Saadullah's party. The congress delegation was led by Dijen Sengupta, Narendra Nath Laskar, Subudh Datta, Rajendra Kumar Bhattacharjee and Dr Brojendra Bhattacharjee Motilal Jaigirdar from Silchar, Rabindra Nath Aditya, (M.L.A), Suresh Chandra Dev (Later M.P) Girija Prasanna

Chalkrabarty from Karimganj went to the house of Hirendra Chandra Chalkrabarti. When the procession reached at the gate of Hirendra Chalkrabarti, a group of lathial force had attacked the Congress delegates, under the instruction of Rai Shaheb Harkishore Chalkrabarti, who was the father of Hirendra Chalkrabarti. In the incident, Dr. Bhattacharjee was severely injured.²⁹ In 1938, Hailakandi sub-divisional Congress Committee was formed with Abdul Matlib Mazumder and Subudh Chandra Datta as president and secretary respectively and Nagendra Nath Dev Choudhury, Vice president, Saday Gobinda Das Purkatata-joint secy.³⁰ After its formation, the Hailakandi Congress had taken a number of activities to strengthen the Congress. In 1939, the tea labourers of Lalachara Tea Estate went for strikes under the shade of Sylhet-Cachar Mazdur Union, which continued one month and the labourers finally achieved success.³¹

The Congress activity was further spearheaded when Jawharlal Nehru and Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, Presidents of Indian National Congress visited Hailakandi and delivered lectures against the colonial rule. It was stated that J Nehru stayed one night in the house of Nagendra Choudhury in Hailakandi. Ganga Charan Biswas undertook a lot of programmes during his tenure as the president of Hailakandi Congress committee. The Congress meeting was held in the house of Soda Gobinda Das. At that time, Nagendra Choudhury, Upendra Paul, Suresh Chanda Paul, Promod Ranjan Bhattacharjee, Atul Biswas, Ganesh Kanu, Debendra Data, Harendra Paul were the active congress committee members. In 1944, many congress leaders went to the rural areas in Hailakandi for the membership campaign of the congress. After a few days of hard campaign, a number of primary congress committees were set up in different rural areas of Hailakandi sub-division.³² In 1944, Hailakandi sub-division congress committee was formed with Dr Sarat Chandra Nath, president, Subudh Chandra Paul, Secy and Soda Gobind Das, Joint Secy and Narendra Chandra Nath Laskar, Kokil Chandra Nath, Darani Choudhury, Brojbashi Lal Nath, Pankaz Kumar Dey, Basanta Misra, Raman Chandra Roy worked as Congress members. Many rural Congress committees in Hailakandi were formed at that time.

Katlichera Primary Congress committee under Basanta Misra, president and Kailash Chandra Nath, Secy.

Lala Primary Congress Committee with Narendra Chandra Nath Laskar- President and Kokil Chandra Nath -secy.

Manachera Primary Congress Committee with Gogan Das, president and Prasanna Das Purkayasta, secy.

Algapur Primary Congress Committee with Rupnath Nath, president and Raman Roy, secy.

Mohanpur Primary Congress Committee with Rajmohan Mohant -president and Brojbasi Lal Nath, secy.

Katakall Primary Congress Committee with Rakesh Dey, president and Pankaj Dey, secy.

Ujankufa Primary Congress Committee with Eresh Dey as Secy.

The Congress workers of Hailakandi played a significant role in the election of 1946. In 1946, Sri Bidyapai Singh, an educationist and Head Master, Sonai High School was nominated for Assembly election as Congress candidate. Abdul Matlib Mazumder was a Congress-Jamiat leader. He was also nominated from Muslim seat. Many Congress workers of Hailakandi like Suresh Chandra Paul, Soda Gobin Das, Sunil Chalkrabarti, Devendra Nath, worked for him. Around 15000 students from Sylhet and Cachar had campaigned for Bidyapati Singh.³³ In 1946, Nagendra Kumar Choudhury was president of Hailakandi sub-division Cong committee. Congress workers like Oditya Nath (Lala), Raman Nath Purkayasta; Rajmohan Mohanta and Brojlal Nath from Mohanpur; Kamakhya Nath (Manachera); Kailash Chandra Nath, Katlichera worked a lot under his presidentship.³⁴

The Congress workers and activists had also organized numerous meetings and processions during the entire freedom struggle. Many Congress activists were also arrested in different parts of Cachar. The Cachar Congress leaders had also dominant role to oppose the partition of India. Many Congress meetings were found to protest the division of India into two dominions viz India and Pakistan. Prominent Cachar Congress stalwarts like Satindra Mohan Dev, Hurmat Ali Barlaskar had played significant role in Sylhet referendum to retain the district within the Indian union.

However, India had finally achieved its lost independence from the colonial rulers in 1947. The Cachar Congress Committee right from its inception had been carrying the plans and programmes of Indian National Congress both at expanding the Congress organization among the masses and in the participation of national movement of India. Thousands and thousands of Congress workers and leaders were arrested and imprisoned by the British government of India. Finally, the flag of independent India was hoisted everywhere in India. Likewise, on 15th August, 1947, at 8 am, Upendra Sankar Datta, President, Cachar Congress had hoisted the independence flag in Silchar.³⁵ The following were the presidents of the Congress committee of Cachar and Silchar.

³⁶

President of Cachar Congress Committee

1. Kamini Kumar Chanda- 1920-26.
2. Shyama Charan Dev- 1926-34.
3. Direndra Kumar Gupta- 1934-36.
4. Direndra Mohan Dev- 1936-1938.
5. Arun Kumar Chanda- 1938-1947.
6. Upendra Sankar Datta- 1947-1949.

President of Silchar District Congress Committee

1. Hemchandra Chalkrabarti- 1949-59.
2. Nanda Kishore Singh-1959-61.
3. Sanat Kumar Das- 1961-63.
4. Mohitosh Purkayasta- 1963-67.

5. A. K. Nurul Haque- 1967-74.
6. Nurul Haque Choudhury- 1974-1978.
7. A.K.Nurul Haque – for few months.
8. Jagadish Choudhury-1978-1983.
9. Karnendu Bhattacharjee- 1983-

Conclusion

Cachar, though situated in a remote part of India, but it had a history of its own in the pre-colonial and colonial period of India. The people of Cachar had resisted the English rule soon after the annexation of their territory by the English East India Company in 1826. The resistant movement entered into a new chapter with the formation of Cachar Congress Committee in 1920. The people of Cachar had been associated with the Indian National Congress right from its inception. Cachar Congress had participated in the struggle for India's independence under their leaders like Kamini Kumar Chanda, Ashok Kumar Chanda, Arun Kumar Chanda, Kali Mohan Dev, Satindra Mohan Dev, Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, Gulam Sabir Khan, Mohitosh Purkayasta and others. It was under their brilliant leadership, Cachar Congress was able to attract the attention of many national leaders like M.K. Gandhi, Mohammad Ali, J Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and others. Thus, Cachar Congress played a significant role in the national politics of India.

A brief biographies of some rural Congress Leaders are given below.³⁷

- Sri Pushkar Nath: Born at Salgangarpar under Narsingpur Anchalik Panchayat. He was an educated and religious man. He was having numerous followers in Assam, Tripura, Bengal and UP. In 1932, he joined the Congress and played an important role for the formation of South Cachar Congress Committee. He had also set up a Women Congress Cell.
- Parama Nanda Devnath: Born in Salgangarpar. His father was Puskar Nath. He had joined the civil disobedience movement in 1930 and picketed at liquor shop at Barbajar. In 1932, he was one of the founder members of South Cachar Cong Committee and became its secy. He was Asstt. Secy of Silchar sub-division congress committee in 1934. He was also involved in the campaign of Congress against untouchability and expansion of Khadi cloth and organizing Congress works. In 1937, he also attended the women conference of Sylhet women Cong cell in Sylhet. In 1938, he was one of the delegates, who were sent from Silchar congress to the house of Hirendra Chalkrabarti, Hailakandi. He also attended the session of All India Congress Committee, held at Mallikanda, Dacca, Bengal as representative of Silchar Cong Committee.
- Subudh Kumar Nath: Born in Narsingpur. In 1930, he took part in liquor shops picketing at Barbajar. He was president of South Cachar Cong Committee in 1932. In 1933, he was involved in the formation of Narsingpur Primary Cong Committee and became its secy. In 1934, he was one of the members of Silchar Cong organizing Committee and was sent to Kulaura, Sylhet, for training. In 1934, he became the member of Cachar District Cong Committee. He also involved in the campaign against untouchability launched by congress. He was also involved in the Quit India movement.
- Sajid Raja Mzumder: Born in Saptagram, Baga, joined non-co-operation movement in 1920-22. He also took part civil disobedience movement in 1932. He was also an active member in South Cachar Congress Committee.
- Krishna Jibon Purkayasta: Born in Mohadevpur, Sonai, joined congress in 1932. Became member of Silchar sub-division congress Committee.
- Sarat Chandra Nath: Born at Panibora, South Silchar, joined in Gaja picketing in 1930. Joined in South Cachar Congress Committee as a student representative. He went to Calcutta for higher studies. He also worked as Volunteer Crops of Congress during his student life in Calcutta. He had delivered lectures in rural areas against the colonial rule. Later on, he had served as lecturer in Hailakandi college.
- Mukkada Sundari Devi: She was Head Teacher of Narsnigpur M.V Girls School. She joined congress in 1933 and became president of Women Cong Cell. She represented in the Sylhet from Silchar Congress cell.
- Swarnamayee Sheel: She was a teacher of Panibora M V Girls School. She had joined congress in 1933. She took part in Women Cong Conference, Sylhet from Silchar congress women.
- Subashini Devi: She was wife of Paramananda Devnath, Asstt. Secy, Silchar sub-division congress committee. In 1933, she joined congress. She was a member of Salgangarpar Women Cong Cell. In 1936, she joined women Charaka Sangha and spread khadi campaign among the women of Narsingpur. She also went to participate in Sylhet women Congress Conference in Sylhet from Silchar.
- Sumuka Devi: Born in Salgangarpar. In 1933, joined congress and worked for the spread of congress ideology.
- Surido Nath Barbhuiya: He was born in 1917, Narsingpur, Boaljurgram. He was the son of Golak Chandra Nath Barbhuiya. Under his father's inspiration, joined congress in 1932. He was made volunteer in 1937, when Subash Chandra Bose had visited Silchar. He also worked as Volunteer Force during the election campaign in 1946 and also referendum in Sylhet. He with a group of 75 volunteer force toured Latu, Akbarpur, Barkhola, Kulaura etc in favour of Sylhet retention in Assam. He later on continued his politics under the shade of Congress leader Mainul Haque Choudhury.

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35. *Cachar Congresser Sankipto Ithihas*, Opcit. It was up to 1949, Cachar Congress Committee was affiliated to Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. In 1949, it came under the Assam Provincial Congress Committee. In Assam Congress Committee, all the sub-divisional congress committees were treated as District Congress Committee.
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