CHAPTER-IV
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THE IMPACT OF URBANISATION ON 19TH CENTURY ASSAMESE LITERATURE: EARLY AND LATE.

The 19th century in Assam is a mixture of hope and despair, both from social and literary point of view. The early part began with the publication of the Orunodoi and the activities of the missionaries and it ended with the birth of the first truly modern literary magazine in Assamese. It carried an advent of a number of luminaries of early modern Assamese literature. It carries a ray of hope as the society started to move towards limited modernisation with the introduction of Pax Britanica on one hand and on the other Assam lost her freedom for the next one and fifty years. The establishment of English schools at different places by the English authority in Assam began with the Gauhati Seminary in 1835. At one time, the school had intermediate classes and with the support of Govt. scholarships some students of Assam went to Calcutta’s Colleges and University too. Manik Chandra Baruah, Jagannath Barua, L.N. Bezbarua etc. received their higher education in Calcutta and this way a nucleus of a modern educated middle class was formed. They adopted many modern and urban values. Later on, many others followed them. Many leading Assamese writers and social workers were influenced by their experience of city life in Calcutta or other places to begin new literature in Assamese. The Orunodoi also helped in this respect in the beginning. As to the political situation, no ray of hope was seen for the recovery of Assam’s freedom except a futile attempt by Moniram Dewan in 1857. The repression and repeated hike in land taxes pauperised the peasant class and they revolted against such anti-people measures in the period 1860-1894 through different peasant’s uprisings. Those were smashed by the British forces in Assam. The Assamese middle class
was not interested at all in rebelling against the British authority in their class interest. In such a situation, the Assamese language was also banished from the schools and courts from 1836 to 1873. It had of great impact on education and literature. In such a hopeless situation, the American Baptist Missionaries rendered tremendous service to the cause of revival of the local language. The Orunodoi started a new chapter in Assamese literature. Both Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Gunabhiram Baruah were contributors of this journal. Hem Chandra Barua also wrote two or three articles on women's education. All of them gave a clarion call to make the province and its literature rich with new ideas. Most of them were educated in Calcutta or in other towns. The new social and political environment influenced them. Their outlook was widened by urban values they experienced in city-life in Calcutta. Hem Chandra Barua had never been to Calcutta, but he had close links with the Calcutta-based writers and students. He hailed the effort of the Derozian 'Young Bengal' group in Calcutta. The contact with the western ideas through education. The creed of Brahmoism, a new urban cult from Calcutta, also helped reform movement against social abuses. The contact with the Western ideas through education inspired them to adopt rational attitudes towards social evils. They also fought for the introduction of Western Education in Assam. Their writings also bear the mark of their changed attitude. They did everything except challenging British authorities. The new group of writers under the Assam Bandhu prove this. It was a prelude to the birth of a total modern literary movement through the 'Jonaki'. Before the birth of Cotton College in 1901, a good number of Assamese students received education in Calcutta. Some others who could not make it, studied up to the matriculation level. So, towards the end of the century many new values, mostly born out of contact with urbanism entered our society and it widened the standpoint of people. So, we have new branches of literature in the form of a handful of short stories and novels in this age. L.N. Bezarua.
Padmanath Gohaibarua, Rajani Kanta Bordoloi recorded the conflict in the Assamese society between the traditional and emerging new values in their novels. Let us now examine those conflict and the new values in their important literary works.

(A) ORUNODOI:

Orunodoi as said earlier, is the first step towards modernisation of Assamese literature. Published in 1846, it performed a life-saving role at a critical juncture of the Assamese language. The magic of printing letters was witnessed through this for the first time in Assam. Its language was not like today’s language, but it helped develop the language through its efforts. It was published regularly up to 1883 under different editors. For long thirty six years it enriched the Assamese language in the field of journalism, history, science-based writings, essay, poetry and novels. The modernisation of the language helped modernise society later on. Benudhar Sarma comments, "Its role was like a weapon to fight the devils." While fighting the enemies of the Assamese language, it was necessary to publish creative writings with the new ideas and values. Its editors were Christians and urban. the contributors like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan or Gunabhiram were also educated in the then capital of British India. Their ideas on social reform which they expressed in their writings, also expressed their new attitudes towards certain social evils. Above all, in the journal, a sense of modern outlook inspired by some new values expressed through different news, poems, articles, novels, narratives etc. became manifest. The Assamese educated people also got inspiration from this literary activities and they acquired a sense of patriotism. So, we have a group of Assamese writers like Anandaram, Gunabhiram, Hem Chandra, Nidhi Farwell, Kinaram etc. who expressed their modern and urban experiences through the Orunoidoi at first and later on through other journals and individual creative works.
It was possible for the inspiration they received from the Missionaries. Hem Chandra Goswami writes, "They taught our language a different music. That music was quite unknown to the Assamese language. It was the property of Western literature." 

Orunodoi can claim the role of a leader in this respect. The description of cities, the new experiences of the Assamese people in their travels outside the provinces, the emphasis on the history of Assam, a continuous fight for Assamese language, modern journalism, the intellectual support for social reformations like widow remarriage or women's education, the beginning of modern forms of literature like novel, personal essay, travellogue etc. are the new and modern things which were brought to Assamese people by Orunodoi. From that point of view it was the harbinger of modernity in Assamese literature.

A beginning in Social reformation: Orunodoi can claim to be the first ever journal or print organ in Assam to publish news and views on issues relating to social reformation. The women's education, widow's remarriage and opium-eating etc. are the major social issues through which it expressed it's concern and tries to make the people aware of these social evils. Orunodoi's effort was appreciated by the educated section of Assam and later Anandaram, Gunabhiram and Hem Chandra Barua added energy and vigour to fight these evils. Hem Chandra baruah made his mission of social service and reformation through the pages of Orunodoi. In 1861, he wrote one article called 'Stree Siksha' in Orunodoi. He realised that the root of some social ills lies with illiteracy. About the psychological problem he writes, "As the mind of the male partner is not devoted to one or two, he after fulfilling his desire turns to another woman and this way in poligamy the rest of the wives are neglected." This happens naturally to all who has more than one wife. She can not remove the sufferings."The God has created both man and woman equally. If the males can marry two or more, why then wives cannot take two or three husbands." Thus logic comes to the aid of reform. Without education and
knowledge, however, such a problem cannot be eliminated. So, Hem Chandra advocates women's education. "The day when our women can be wiser after receiving education and both the husband and wife will share the home's happiness binding each other with love, when will such a day come?" Hemchandra's writings on such a problem was published by the editor in Orunodoi, which reveals its willingness to fight the social evil with the help of printed letters. It was part of its mission for social reform.

Orunodoi's editorial policy never intervened in the writings, which is a part of social reformation. Provided that these satisfied the British authority in Assam. Gunabhiram Barua, who studied in Calcutta, sent one news of widow remarriage in Calcutta to Orunodoi and it was published immediately. Another report was published in 1854, sent by the same person. The report reads, on December 3, the nine-year old widow daughter of Nabin Chandra Mukherjee of Medinipur district of Bengal was married to Bipradas Chakravorty of a nearby village. Both were Brahmins. The report was sent to Assam only to inform the people of Assam about a new thing in Bengal. It says, "How the infertile women will understand the delivery pain of the pregnant women? Similarly, the males hide after listening to the sorrow and suffering of the women, who have lost husbands." In a province of almost total illiteracy and no scope for English education, it created an atmosphere of preliminary protest. This is a brave attempt on the part of the Orunodoi's editorial body to publish such a news of social importance. It expressed its concern for the social evils, which is a progressive outlook. The reports also assert that the introduction of widow remarriage would prevent the secret foeticide by the sex-hungry widows suffering under strict social rules. It is psychologically true and a pragmatic solution. The reporter, appeals to readers to believe that such incidents were happening in Bengal and requested them to practise it in Assam too. Another letter of the same subject written by an
Assamese person living in Calcutta was published in Orunodei. It is learnt from Jnanadabhiram Barua that Gunabhiram Barua was present at the marriage ceremony of Vidyasagar's son, who married a widow and that ancient was reported in the Orunodei. Such a strong view of widow remarriage in a society, which is very backward is enough to establish Orunodei's positive role as a social reformer.

The third issue in the social reformation movement through Orunodei is Opium-eating. It was both a social and political problem. It is no less a smaller problem than the others mentioned above. "Ati manda Bastu Kani. Ji khai bar Agiani,..... bastu hoi Tar hani. Mukhe Koi Katukani. Sakal Loke Thake Jani. Kanikhai Manda Prani; Jio Mohoi Sansarat Giani. Kathai Tar Aprani. In the very first issue of the journal this poem appeared pointing out to the evils of opium-eating. The poem states that those who consume opium are unwise, because the opium-eaters lose many things and they speak bad language. In the next para he writes, how an opium-eater loses his property and becomes a pauper, who is forced to become a thief. This vivid picture of opium-eating, no doubt, would create a sense of fear among some victims. Orunodei's intention was to liberate those people from the clutches of opium, what Hem Chandra Barua did later on through the book 'Kaniyar Kirtan'. They were very much sincere in their intention, but they were silent regarding British Policies on opium plantation, which promoted the habit among the natives creating a good market for the planters. It helped in the creation of a public opinion. The author intended to spread the danger of opium eating through the Orunodei.

Description of experiences of City life by Assamese people: With the help of the Missionaries Assamese people had the opportunity to travel abroad. Of course, only the Christian converts were allowed to take this opportunity so that they became confirmed converts after travelling to the foreign land. The great American
Churches and its religious gathering were shown to the tourists. It is natural that the imperialist ideals were also instilled in the minds of the Assamese Christian tourists. Anyway it was a quite new experience and enthralled the people. In Orunodoi, we find that two students of Mission school of Nagaon, namely Dhaniram and Sibram were selected for such a trip to America. They wrote a comparative note on the two nations in Orunodoi Dhaniram, who was baptised as 'Heydon', wrote that they arrived in America after a very long journey of one year leaving aside the general fear of Assamese people for foreign nations and long journeys. They had seen there a lot of modern things like the steam boat, railways, big buildings, churches, the very busy ports with ships, colleges, markets etc. hitherto not seen by them in Assam. They experienced a very thrilling sensation seeing all these new and wonderful things. They describe, "The people of this land like knowledge and quality, love more for the people and religion. Comparing to this land, our land seems to have no such persons. Assam is comparatively a dark land when compared to America. So, we pray to the Almighty that Assam might one day be like this country." The hope for a modern life is an urban value. Prannath Bora also narrates the same experience of Calcutta in Orunodoi.

Description of Cities: Orunodoi published many news about the physical description of the cities of the world. It had a purpose of informing its readers about the cities of the world as wonderful place, which is a description of physical urbanisation. People also had a different experience of different life styles not seen in Assam at that time. The description of the world cities creates a sensation in the native's mind as many urban things were not to be found in the towns of Assam then. It helped introduce people in Assam the new ideas about town planning. Orunodoi published articles on Calcutta of Bengal and Guwahati and Rangpur of Assam in different issues. One Dharmakanta Gohain tells us about the big buildings constructed by the British in his article 'Guwahatir Bibaran'. The
different court house of different levels including D.C-courts, their office rooms with carpeted floors, chains, ceiling fan, the brick-walled houses etc. were also constructed by the British authority in Assam for the judiciary and administration sections. The Baptist church near the Kachari house is a line example of European architecture. The 30ft house with white-sheet, the approach house with shining doors, the beautifully-cut wooden wall, the big cloth-fan and above all the English music create a European atmosphere there. The Gothic structure also attracted the people. The market at Fancybazar and its Marowari population, the Paltar Bazar, the police station and jail, the hospital, the school etc. are the urban institutions to be found and constructed by British. So Guwahati was gradually turning into a big and modern administrative town. It worked like a modern town in Assam. One writer, Kinaram Satria, gives a full description of Calcutta in Orunodoi—from its history to physical description. It is divided into several parts like the different streets, the Consulate office, Commission office, the play house, Supreme court, the fort etc. All these are situated at different points of the city. The bazars of Calcutta, the money-making machine etc. are also very interesting places of attraction. It is so big that people would lose their way in the crowds. All the modern amenities are there. The police, the courts, the streets, people etc. are parts of a modern city. It is a very long poem, where all the characteristics of a city have been expressed through Calcutta. The writer is mesmerised by the splendours of Calcutta. The city is full of noises of traffic, industries etc. and the poet thinks that Lord Viswamitra himself has constructed it. Though Calcutta is a colonial city, it is quite different from Guwahati. We come to know about the difference also. In different issues, Orunodoi published facts about the population of big cities like New York, London, Calcutta and Mysore. The population is an important factor for a city.
The rational and Scientific Outlook: One of the most important innovations introduced was the description of scientific discoveries in order to promote scientific outlook. To the middle of 19th century, almost everyone of Assam was a die-hard believer in superstitions. As one of the objectives of the missionaries was to enlighten the populations, they planned to publish in Orunodoi, the World-famous inventions of science. It worked on the minds of the people to some extent. Such inventions are the Printing press, Railways, Ships, Thermometer, the underground tunnel of the Thames, the Lunar and Solar eclipses, different medicines, the depth of the seas, Microscopes, plannets, movements of earth and many more. Introduction to such inventions and discoveries is a basis of the formation of a scientific outlook, provided it is supplemented by education. It dispelled many false beliefs regarding disease and superstitions. The mystery of sea-bed also scared people. Now it is clear that the sea has a bed, not bottomless as the common people thought to be. The microscope helped in understanding and diagnosis of some disease. By the end of the century people got some of them in the market also. The inventions and discoveries made the readers aware of science and national belief. Even Orunodoi published articles on the evil spirits. These writings certainly helped a section of the educated people to discard some superstitious beliefs including the influence of evil planets on them. The Planets' description clarified to the people that they are no longer God and Goddess as people used to think them. Orunodoi provided a base to the people for a scientific belief and rational thinking.

The beginning of City-based journalism: Orunodoi had a regular column 'Anek Deshar Sambad' (The news of different countries), through which it provided the readers with a lot of information of the world. Though their main purpose was to preach Christianity, they involved themselves too in the circulation of knowledge and thereby expanded the mental horizon of the Assamese people
towards all. The vigorous news items cover the destructive appearance of disease or epidemics, theft-dacoity, the natural calamities like fire and earthquake, the ship-wreck, railways and many more. Some news for the leading modern papers like the Lahore Chronicle, The Friend of India etc. were collected. The coronation of Queen Victoria and the food-shortage in Scotland and Ireland were also highlighted in the news section. Among the main economic news are the report of discovering Coal’s mine at the upper side of river Dikhou in 1848, the production of the tea etc., were reported. Some sensational news like how a husband killed his wife in 1848 was reported. The accused person was caught by police later on and was sent to lock-up. So, all kinds of news like a modern news paper were supplied to the readers by Orunodoi in order to increase the people's knowledge. From that point of view, it gave birth to modern journalism in Assam and these news-items increased people's knowledge and awareness. So indirectly it helped to grow one or two urban values also.

**Sense of Patriotism : Language and History of Past :** The Orunodoi group wanted to establish Assamese as a separate language different from Bengali. Outside the journal, the missionaries bought out grammar books, dictionaries, phrases and idioms book etc. in order to establish the fact that Assamese language was not a vulgar branch of Bengali language, it is a fullfledged language itself. In Orunodoi they wrote many good articles as to the independent nature of the language. A standard form of the language was selected by them from the different dialects of different places - it was the Sibsagar dialect that was used. One good article, 'Asomiya Bhasa' was published in Orunodoi in 1854, February issue. The text of the article has put forward some good agruments in favour of Assamese language- that Assamese is not a dialect of Bengali language, but originates from Sanskrit ; because of the same roots, the Assamese and the Bengali language have some similarities. For that reason the Oriya language also has some similarity with
Bengali or Assamese. It shows that some native people also expressed their awareness through papers. The other article fighting in favour of Assamese is 'Asomiya aru Bengali Bhasar Kathopakathan', where the writer has histrotically shown the condition of the Assamese language. At the end of the article, the writer has called upon the people to use the Assamese language in Assam. Everybody should learn this language systematically. If people learn other language they can never show their scholarship. If the condition of the country's language is not good, then the condition of the people also can not be well. So if you want to improve your present condition, then try hard to improve the Assamese language. Such an appeal for the use of Assamese language under the colonial situation, that too was out of schools and offices, could be a source of inspiration for a nation in deep slumber. The Orunodoi group did not hesitate at all to give a clarion call to all concerned for the upliftment of the Assamese language. Another field of patriotism, the missionaries exhibited is the publication of the history of Assam. Orunodoi published the Assam's history by Kashinath Tamuly in 1854 volume. From 1850, August to 1852 August, 'Purani Asom Buranji' was serialised in Orunodoi. A small history called 'Chatra Buranji' was also published in Orunodoi. Orunodoi has expressed its patriotism and sense of modern outlook by publishing the important history of the past of Assam.

In addition to these aspects, Orunodoi attempted to satisfy the mental hunger of a new readership by publishing new branches of literature like stories, novels etc. In the field of poetry also the subject matter made a departure from the tradition of religious poetry. Secular themes were introduced. The city of Calcutta, Guwahati, the social evils like opium-eating or pilgrimage etc. also became subject-matters of poems, which express the changed attitude of the editorial policies with new tastes. The studies on Anthropological subjects also indicate this attitude. It created a missionary zeal among the native writers also for the development of
their own language and the native people. In those, it was a very big step. Gunabhiram Barua, Hem Chandra Barua etc. wrote new books and articles even after that. Their hard-work was no fruitless as the late part of the century saw the rise of a flood of creative literature through a host of writers. Dhekial Phukan's works, though some of them were published in Orunodoi, will be discussed in the following pages to be followed by a discussion of the works of Hem Chandra and Gunabhiram Barua, both were harbringers of a new era in Assam. We also touch upon the early phase of Bezbarua.

(B) ANANDARAM DHEKIAL PHUKAN

In the previous section, we have mentioned Dhekial Phukan's writings in respect of social reformation. He was not discussed in detail in Orunodoi section. All the historians of Assamese literature have called Anandaram Dhekial Phukan the harbringer of modernity in Assamese literature and life. He was the Raja Rammohan Roy of Assam. In a short life-span of only thirty years he wrote a few books and articles, despite being busy in administrative job on the basis of new ideas and values that he acquired from English books, Bengali books, both English and Bengali life. His works offered stability to an unstable language facing serious threat from the enemies of Assamese language. Anandaram was born in a gentry family devoted to learning. His father Holiram Dhekial Phukan was also a writer in Bengali. His uncle Jagnaram Khargharia Phukan was an English-educated gentleman. Moreover, his literary taste and general outlook were further enriched in the city of Calcutta, where he studied in Hindu College for four/five years. Young Bengal's hero Derezio and the early phase of the Bengal Renaissance enormously influenced him. Inspite of that exposure, Dhekial Phukan could not see beyond Colonial rule as to the development of Assam. He was a silent spectactor in the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. Like his father, he was a British loyalists. Mathie
and Jenkins, two British Commissioners of the newly acquired territory of Assam were their family friends. Though he received English education he did not revel against caste. He took private Brahmin cook to Calcutta. As to the culture, he had lived a mixed life of tradition and modernity. In some cases, he maintained his tradition very strictly, but in matters of education, agriculture, industrial development, commerce and language, he was a modern man and his city-experience in Calcutta was put into action. Dhekial Phukan's modern or urban outlook should be analysed in this context.

**Urban Outlook**: Whatever, may be the ground reality. Anandaram wished that one day, Assam would, in matters of social development, be like England. Steam-powered transport and modern industries would take Assam to a new era. He could understand the importance of science and technology owing to his Calcutta-based English education. His mind was shaped by his Bengali and English friends in addition to his domestic environment. In those days Assam was deeply immersed in superstitions, idolatry and false feudal pride. Such situation was not at all conducive to any mental growth. The economic backwardness coupled with social underdevelopment pulled everybody back. He deserves praise for the fact that in such a backward situation, he attempted to cultivate a liberal attitude towards English education, wanted to impart education through mother tongue and modern method. He also tried to become rational in a restricted way and to eliminate the social evils and conservatism from society. We may therefore, call him a modern man shaped by urban institutions. Moreover, he understood the importance of hard labour, English education and of the mother language. Anandaram also fought like the missionaries for the restoration of his mother tongue in Assam's Schools and courts. The new vernacular schools were using Bengali text books. Dhekial Phukan came to their rescue and the result was the birth of a fine text book called 'Asomiya Lorar Mitra' in three parts. The new administration of justice introduced
by the British authority was not intelligible to the common people. He wrote books on law also so that people and job-seekers could understand the simple laws. For Printing books, he set up a press in Calcutta and put the young Gunabhirim in charge. Encircled by gloom, they lead the people to light. All these activities prove that the man behind it must be a modernman with urban outlook.

Promotion of education, new knowledge: When Dhekial Phukan was born in 1829, there was no public school in Assam imparting English education. Realising the importance of education, he insisted on the expansion of English education and text books. At the same time, he was also in favour of teaching Urdu and Sanskrit in the schools. In his famous essay, 'Englondor Bibaran' (An Account of England), he finds the apathy of the local people to English Education and knowledge. One of the main reasons for the total backwardness of Assam. "Your previous generations always discussed education and so they were so knowlegable persons; now leaving the simple nature of the past, you neither read Sanskrit nor English and are on the verge of becoming depraved."12 He warned the natives at the right time. "My friend! if you want to be civil, wise and happy, then rise from your deep slumber. And devote yourself with total attention to study overcoming all restrictions and in a spirit of unity. And esteemed parents! you must leave all other things aside. Allow your children to earn knowledge instead of earning money."13 This is a very fervant appeal to one and all for giving proper education to their children. For Dhekial Phukan, education and knowledge are synonymous. He never failed to remind the people that the English people have progressed because of their education. In his report to A.J. Moffat Mills, Dhekial Phukan has again laid emphasis on the medium of instruction in the schools and courts, "In our humble opinion the following arrangements appear to be best calculated to promote the cause of education—viz, the substitution in the schools, of the vernacular language in lieu of Bengali, the publication of a series of popular works
on different branches of Native and European knowledge in the Assamese language, the establishment of a Normal school to train up a body of teachers and creation of a separate department for the study of Sanskrit in the vernacular schools."\textsuperscript{14} He realised the importance of mother language and wanted that traditional subjects like Sanskrit should also be upgraded along with modern subjects. He even did not leave out the question of teachers' training for a sound system of education. In another essay called 'Bidya Sikiboloi Udogowa Katha' (Things to encourage for learning) repeats the same call in a different way. "Some body may ask what might be the profit of earning such an education? I have valuable property, I can live without education happily. Oh, my friends, never allow such thoughts to occur, this way many rich youths have ruined their lives what you will do after this life with the worldly money?"\textsuperscript{15} This is also a moving expression of patriotism. The entire essay is full of such admirations and advice. In his personal life, as he got results from study, he wanted it to be shared by every Assamese. He believed sincerely that the education and knowledge, the two pivots of modern civilisation, were the secrets of prosperity for a nation.

\textit{A Sweet dream for a modern Assam : Sense of Patriotism :} Anandaram's entire short life was devoted to the betterment of Assamese people through social service. The renaissance hero of Assam got many new ideas from the study of English and Bengali books and his presence in Calcutta. He imagined Assam to be among the rich states of India like Bengal. Bengal was a model state for him and their family had very good relations with businessmen of Bengal like the India-famous Jagat Seth. This way his vision of Assam in the late 19th century under the British patronage was formed. In '\textit{Englondar Bibaran}' he has analysed the causes of progress of England. England to him was a model nation. To place Assam in the highest position, one must be critical of its limitations. After studying the drawbacks and limitations of the Assamese people, he has suggested measures. In addition to
education and knowledge, the other important factors for the progress of a country is industry and the modernisation of agriculture, which is again part of urbanisation. He believed that in the age of steam engine, the old system of cottage industry needs to be replaced. The age-old agricultural system should be modernised with the application of mechanical energy. The mechanisation of agriculture is also sign of urbanisation. He insists that, 'If you want to be civil and happy, then try to be experts like the English people in the field of agriculture and industry. You are totally unwise, you never try to acquire that knowledge. Had you been able to construct the steam's carriage, steam engine and steam boat, you would have become much happier. Now there is time to do it, it is not beyond your ability. Some of your rich people should invest some money with the help of English people, and should teach the uses of English machinery to some natives in agriculture......'16 This hope of the uses of technological inventions in agriculture and industry is a dream for Assam. It shows his sense of patriotism and urban outlook. Dhekial Phukan, perhaps, hoped that British capital also would extend full co-operation towards the realisation of this dream. That was an exaggerated hope. The British Govt. was involved in doubling land-taxes, cultivation of opium etc., not in the state's development. On the other hand, the Assamese rich men could hardly compete with the British capital. Dhekial Phukan's vision of Assam was guided by his patriotic idealism, not by reality. But his insistence on education was right though the British authority did not establish a college in Assam till 1901. He had the knowledge of Economics also as he wrote that the chief cause of English civilisation was commerce and so, the people of Assam should engage in commerce. Agriculture must be improved in order to increase the commerce as both are related.17 Trade and Commerce as he insisted, is also a great urbanising force in the world civilisation. His vision of Assam is a reflection of his patriotism and modern mind. His report to A.J. Maffat Mills also proves that he was a man with an urban mind.
In the report, he has envisaged a modern state with all departments. Agriculture, manufacturing, education and schools judicial system, Administration etc. all branches of a modern state and urban institutions are included. He also advocated the modernisation of agriculture, flood control measures by embankment, and advised opening of technical institutions and work for industrial development. In order to prevent the killer epidemics, he urged the Govt. to open medical school and he proposed a curb on the habit of opium smoking. According to him, the judiciary system also required improvement and he criticised the police atrocities and the limited knowledge of the judge despite being a judge himself. The report shows his far-sightedness, deep knowledge about Assam and its economy, moral courage and fearlessness etc. and above all the sweet dream of a future Assam. A modern and urban mind worked behind such a plan. The British Govt. never paid any attention to this plan. But Dhekial Phukan urged the God to bring about such a change immediately.

**Fight for a national language : Political awareness :** We have already said that Dhekial Phukan never gave up the traditional values, though he appreciated very much the Western values. Unlike his father or uncle, he was very much drawn to the national language. He wanted to identify with such a language. He was inspired by the Orunodoi group of writers also. Without a fullfledged native language, the development of one's culture is not possible, as a patriot and a modern man he well understood it. He set up a press in Calcutta with such things in his mind. He could work hardly 8/9 years for his country, but within that period he did a substantial amount of work on Assamese language that paved the way for lifting the ban on Assamese language as medium of instruction in schools and courts. He had a good plan for it. He argued with the authority like an expert linguist. He writes, "For more than ten years after the annexation of the province Assamese was the language of the courts. On what grounds Bengali has now been allowed
to supersede the vernacular we are at a loss to understand. The Assamese being
the vernacular language as well as the people as of the majority of the judges and
ministerial officers. Of the courts, no inconvenience can possibly arise from its
use, and if it be advanced that Bengali bears an affinity with the Assamese, we
would beg to point out that Bengali bears no closer resemblance to the Assamese
than it does to the Oriya language, and if the courts of Orissa be allowed to privilege
of using the language of the country, we are unable to understand why the same
benefit should have been with held to the Assamese". One is surprised to observe
his arguments in favour of Assamese language. He proved rationally the importance
of Assamese language without being prejudiced against the Bengali people. In
another book, 'A few Remarks on the Assamese language,' (1855) he has advanced
a list of words common to Assamese and Bengali language originating from
Sanskrit. It is a scientific discussion on the topic. That he wrote an English-
Assamese dictionary is found in his biography. It is mentioned that Mr. Butler had
collected as many as 93 customers. He discussed the language question with
Mr. Bronson also. Some parts of the dictionary was published in Orunodoi. His
plan was to establish the originality of Assamese language from all sides. Therefore,
being a magistrate and an essayist, he attempted in lexicography also. Through his
activities, he has proved his modern outlook and the patriotism as well. His craving
for a national language is a sign of his sense of patriotism.

Supporter of women's education: It was not so easy to raise one's voice in
favour of women's education at a time when the province was still under the grip
of feudalism. Dhekial Phukan's family was free from many social evils. They were
not so conservative. His uncle Jagnaram happened to strike first at the heart of
conservatism in Assam. Hence Dhekial Phukan mustered courage to raise his
voice in favour of women's education from the background of his family, not from
a backward social environment. It is learnt from his biography that he allowed his
wife Mahindri Devi to study at home. Padmabati Devi Phukanani, the first Assamese writer to write a novel 'Sudharmar Upakhyan', was given education by her father at home. Later, she even talked in Hindi with Mahatma Gandhi while the latter visited Assam in connection with Pandu Congress of AICC in 1926 and stayed at Tarun Phukan's house. It shows that their family was in favour of women's education at home. (At that time there was no girls' school). His writings like 'Asom Desar lokar prati eti upadesh' (An appeal to people of Assam) and his lecture at the meeting of Jnan Pradayini Sabha at Nagaon show that he was a supporter of women's education. In the first article, he supported the issue in unequivocal terms. "The chief activity of parents is that they should give education to both boys and girls equally and take care of them. But, where the boys are only allowed to learn, but not the girls, those girls can not help their parents during childhood or when young they can not discuss important matters with their husbands, nor they can teach their children. Irrespective of boys or girls, they should be allowed to learn and there is rule for it in religious books also. But owing to false values, the Indian people do not allow the girls to study. Now, where this false value is absent, there girls are allowed to study. We also hope that all of us would learn everything dispelling harmful orthodoxy in our society." This declaration of total support for women's education proves that Dhekial Phukan was a progressive man in matters of education. He advised the guardians not to worry about the social restrictions nor to fear loss of reputation for educating their girls. Gunabhiram himself faced a problem for giving education to his daughter Swarnalata. Later on she was admitted to Bethune School of Calcutta. Dhekial Phukan's great call for women's education is a revolutionary step in the state of Assam in mid-19th century. His literary club at Nagaon, 'Jnan Pradayini Sabha' was formed to discuss serious topics among its members. In such a weekly discussion, Dhekial Phukan emphasised on women's education and urged all the
members to support it. So, when he got an audience Dhekial Phukan raised the issue of women's education for the development of the society. Without the education of women, Dhekial Phukan thinks, nobody can bring about change in a society. His support for women's education also prove that he was a modern man with an urban mind.

**Rational outlook in Dhekial Phukan:** Assam has been a land of magic and superstitions since primitive times. The traditional folk used to believe also that man's success or failure in life was dictated by fate. As we have seen, Orunodoi was trying to instill in the people's mind the scientific standpoint to some extent. Dhekial Phukan, though a strong believer in God and traditional religion, preached one of the cardinal doctrines of renaissance that hard labour and perseverance in own aim are the main avenues for attaining knowledge. In one essay 'Parisramor Phol' (The fruit of labour) he has said that labour is the main thing in order to achieve something. With hard labour the most difficult task can be achieved. What appears to be impossible, become possible with hard labour. The writer has supported his view with one example of a Greek Orator, called Demosthenes, became a successful Orator despite his small and feeble voice. The story behind of his success is hard work and practice. In 'Bidya Sikiboloi Udagowa Katha', Dhekial Phukan has proved his rational thought again. Without labour and attention no one can earn knowledge. Some people may think that if he has in his luck he will learn - they are very innocent. If one works hard he is certain to acquire knowledge. This kind of pragmatic advice makes Dhekial Phukan a rational person instead of a superstitious believer in fate.

**The description of Calcutta:** Dhekial Phukan considered Calcutta as a city of learning. He shaped his own personality in Calcutta. It was Calcutta were he got the books to study, a printing machine he installed in Calcutta for printing books
and many more. So, he wanted to inform all boys and girls about this magic city which symbolises for him the dawning new era. Unlike Gunabhiram Barua's description of Rangpur or Guwahati, it is not a historical account. There is only little history. The urban amenities and political aspects get more importance in his treatment. The urban planning also makes an appearance here and there. Charnock, the English officer, who built this modern city has been praised rightly. A little village with a small population was turned into a magnificent city by Charnock. He is still remembered as the architect of Calcutta. Dhekial Phukan feels that Calcutta is the capital of British India and it is more beautiful than any other city in India. The city has two parts. The English people lives at Chauranghee, a beautiful place with big buildings and an open field. The streets are wide and not all dirty. The native quarter is not as beautiful as the Chauranghee. There is one building of rich man surrounded by cottages of poor people. There is a place called Bara bazar of the native people, which is the dirtiest of all places of Calcutta. Dhekial Phukan has distinguished the civil lines and the core city like Jawaharlal Nehru. The British policy of urbanisation in India is evident from the description. The author further informs that the city has many streets and the houses are numbered. There is water-supply and street lights in the city, which are fuelled by gas. How the city is an important place of business and commerce has also been described in the essay. It is a city of educational institutions also. There are Presidency College, Sanskrit College, a Bishop College and many schools and other institutions. The Bengali people are getting education there and becoming civil. For Dhekial Phukan, Calcutta must have been model city for Assam. His early and untimely death left his many projects incompleted. But, he discovered the way through which Assam should step forward. The road ,that he invented was blessed by English rulers. So after him, Gunabhiram Barua, a family relation of Dhekial Phukan found it easy to walk along that road towards modernisation and urbanisation.
Hem Chandra Barua stands between Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Gunabhiram Barua. He along with Gunabhiram created the next phase of Assamese literature, that is from 1870 to 1890 as demarked by noted historian of Assamese literature S.N. Sarma. That age was dominated by the linguistic works. While the Assamese language was still stumbling with a foreign tone, shaped and tuned by the American missionaries, Hem Chandra Barua, following Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's step, refined the language by writing a grammar book and a dictionary. He introduced satire, which served as a model for the next group of writers like Lombodar Bora or L.N. Bezbarua. He pierced through the religious hypocrisy and profligacy with satire and also wrote drama to free the Assamese people from the clutches of opium. A strong supporter of women's right and widow remarriage, his study and experience made him a rebel against the social injustices. Though a Brahmin he took meals prepared by a non-Brahmin cook and took to ploughing with a hoe in those days. His activities earned him the punishment of excommunication from the society. Homen Borgohain has written that he was a man of discipline and was busy from morning to night with work and study. He was out and out an urban man in this respect. Though he is said to be a non-conformist, he never went against the British policies in Assam. To be candid, he was a perfect loyalist. Of course, he is like all other middle class writers of that time. As to the casteism, though he accepted food from a low caste cook, he was not liberal with the ethnic groups. Dr. Hiren Gohain and Indivar Deury allege that Hem Chandra was not modern in this respect. According to Dr. Gohain, Hem Chandra has explained the word 'Moran' (an ethnic group of Assam) in Hemkosh as an uncivil nationality. Conservatism born out of casteism has co-existed with modernity. The socio-economic condition of the 19th century under colonial rule was also responsible for such double standards. The decadent rural values
like hypocrisy of the religious gurus and the false modernity of the lazy Babu, the use of drinks, fight for widow remarriage and education etc. are new values that have been dealt with in his novel-like book *Bahire Rang Sang Bhitarare Kuwabhaturi*. His one or two essays on women’s education have been discussed in the *Orunodoi* section.

**Bahire Rang Sang Bhitarare Kuwabhaturi : The hypocrisy of the religious gurus**

A staunch critic of the decadent feudal values, Hem Chiandra Barua wrote one novel-like book namely 'Bhire Rang Sang Bhitarare Kuwabhaturi', where he has exposed the hypocrisy and exploitation of the Satradhikars or Gosains, who belonged to priest class of his time in Assam. The modern state machinery, an urban institution has also been brought into the story. Let us examine it in detail. Humanism is one of the old conservatism and the other is the praise of the new. These two motifs are so closely related that in the two writings (*Kunbhaturi* & *Kaniyar Kirtan*) both have mixed quite naturally."²⁸ This also explains the self-contradiction of Hem Chandra Barua and other writers of the 19th century. But his *Kuwabhaturi* makes a strong protest for a social reformation in religion like the protestants. There are other modern values in the book also, which are described below.

**Social reformation : The Hypocrisy of the Satradikars :** In 'Kuwabhaturi' Hem Chandra Barua has selected Govardhan deu, the Satradhikar, a broker Brahmin, hypocritical astrologer and toady of Govt. officers etc. to explore the negative values of decadance. The hedonistic culture seems to attack them in a semi-feudal society that is of decadence. In such a society, the religious persons also can’t escape the all-pervading influence of the modern negative values. The other class of people also inspired the religious gurus for acquiring materialistic happiness.
Govardhanadeu, the protagonist of the Kuwabhaturi is also leading such a life marked by sexual immoralities and economic exploitation. At first, he is supposed to know all the important religious scriptures. In the beginning the author has described him as a knowlegeable person. He knew Assamese Vaishnava scriptures like Kirtana, Ratnavali, Gunamala, Bhatima and even rags and Borgeet. In fact, he knew nothing. It was proved when a devotee asked him the meaning of 'Brinda Bipin'. His reply is ridiculous. He promptly replied that 'Brinda' meant the Birina grass and Bipin meant........ To avoid further query he closed the discussion by saying that these were very complex things, not easy to understand. The materialistic life was important for him, not knowledge of scripture. But the simple and illiterate common devotees could not recognise the bogus guru. The author has exposed the sexual immorality of the Satradhikar in kowabhaturi. Govardhanadeu, who is supposed to be a man of character has fallen in love with a lady devotee namely Gabhorudeu, wife of Markateswar Phukan. She was beautiful, but childless. Phukan could not raise any protest against as such goings-on as he was expecting a child from the blessings of Govardhana. Govardhana was a hypocrite as he was outwardly a man of character. But his intensity of passion for Gobharudeu increased so much that he wanted to meet her everyday on lame excuses. The author has made a sarcastic comment. "Gosaindeu uttered the Krishna-leelas (play of Lord Krishna) to the new disciples being satisfied at their devotion in the past; now, those activities from disrobing of Gopis to satisfying their longing are shown completely. His moral degradation was complete when he was taking the name of Gabharudeu at the prayer in place of God's name. This kind of sexual exploitation by religious gurus was quite possible under the guise of religions. It was bound to occur as most of the religious gurus suppressed their sexual urge to maintain the conventional social morality. But whenever they got an opportunity their urge over come everything. The negative portrait of Govardhan
Deu brings out both the rising strength of new secular forces like property and carnal passion and corruption of old values. He also exploits the common people demanding donations from them. Satradhikars never do any physical work and feed on the donations collected from the common people. The author describes an incident in *Kuwabhaturi* how the guru extorts his disciples. Once he went to a village of his disciples. While moving, he saw a cow being milked. He was interested in the cow and he decided not to take a bit of boiled rice till he receives it. The owner, Medhi did not want to offer the Guru and the guru started to take boiled rice as soon as he received the cow from Medhi. In the name of religion the religious gurus exploit the innocent and illiterate masses this way. Hem Chandra Barua could detect well the values relating to the middle class life polluting the religious personalities and he delineated them nicely. All these he did to reform the Satras only.

The character of the astrologer is also a study in hypocrisy like Govardhanadeu. He had no knowledge of astrology. But with fake knowledge he cheated the people. He collects the news beforehand and reveals those as if he were a foreteller. He was earlier a village quack. He cheats the villagers with his wrong calculation and extorts donations from them. His knowledge of astrology reminds us of the '*Sarabjan*', the humorous story told by Bezbarua. This way we see, the good and honest professions and services of the feudal societies have undergone changes due to the impact of the modern civilisation. It was also possible due to the horizontal mobility of people from one place to another with plenty of interaction. The greed, avarice of the modern men have affected those people also, who are otherwise simple and straight.

*The negatives values of the middle class*: Hem Chandra Barua has created some characters in *Kuwabhaturi* through whom a new set of values were entering
the society. The British authority also wanted some natives to be so in order to continue their exploitation. In *Kuwabhaturi*, Bhadreswar Barua, an assistant of the British officer, has become a predecessor of Bhokendra of Lakshminagth Bezbarua. He was a very poor man, somehow became a Khataniar by flattering British officers. He was a master-flatter and after becoming an officer's Khataniar he never looked back. His changed social position made him different. He also started to behave like a Sahib and so he acted like that. His imitation of the officers and hypocrisy were such that "he feels out of sorts as he has just come from the court" etc. was the common with his visitor. Bhadreswar thinks that immoral activities are rights of the greatmen. "There is instruction in the religious books that one should not visit the King's house, quck's house or any greatman's house with empty hands. So, what is wrong if greatman receives bribe. When one should lie is also instructed in the religious books. Why people speak of immoral activities? It is natural that a great man will indulge in a little immoral activities. Indra and other Gods in the heaven do the same, and how can it be a sin? So all the negative qualities of the modern age have affected him. He speaks broken English or Bengali-mixed English in stead of using own mother language. This blind imitation of English people is ridiculed in the book. But he is a strong supporter of women's education, widow's remarriage etc. which are genuine modern values. Yet he is not free from superstitions. At night he will call Rama's name when he goes at night or observe a vow at Janmastami, that is the birthday of Lord Krishna. His half-digested modernism, is, infact, the result of a semi-feudal and semi capitalistic economy under colonial rule. Bhdreswar Barua is only little different from many leading personalities of Assam of 19th century.

Another negative value affecting the society is the use of wines. One distinguished Brahamin Birendra Barua enjoys 'Panchamakar' at night, that is wine, meat, fish, dry rice and sexual activities. But at day time, he never drinks a drop
of water from a Sudra or low-caste people and shows to be an orthodox Brahmin. He has acquired all the bad qualities of a street urchin like betrayal, cheating, freud and liying etc. This is an illustration of the disintegration of family life. It is the result of the influences of the western people or distinguished Assamese people. In a backward society under colonial rule some people must acquire these negative values.

The modern state machinery: An urban institution: We have seen in chapter two that after the introduction of British rule in Assam, the English people started to reorganise the state on the model of a modern state. Hem Chandra Barua, who worked as a Superintendent in district administration, has presented the modern judicial system in his Kuwabhaturi, which is situated in an urban area. It dispels the feudal colour of the story and brings a flavour of modern state. He mentions about court police, a Hindustani constable, the witnesses, the lawyers, Peskers, Cherastadar, the magistrate and judge Mr. Drink Urandy Eat well etc. in order to create an atmosphere of a modern court hitherto unknown in any Assamese fictional writing. The announcement of suits one after another by Cherastadar at Eatwell's order is the next sequence of that court scene. The scene of judgement is a long procedure in the book. Though the author has ridiculed the hollowness of such courts under European judges, yet it brings to the book a sense of modernity. The courts helped growth of urbanisation in Assam during colonial rule.

Widow remarriage, equal rights and his autobiography:

Hem Chandra Barua was a strong supporter of widow remarriage. We have already discussed his role in women's education in the Orunodoi section of this Chapter. In matters of women's rights, he was far ahead of his time and perhaps people could not listen to his voice in the tumult of British rule against the injustice done to the fair sex. The influence of Vidyasagar is visible on his fight for widow
remarriage. Of course, he did it from the opposite side. After the death of his wife in 1865 he decided to remain single till his death as a mark of support to suffering widows. He writes in his autobiography, "what would have been to my wife had I died? She has died, I am at liberty to marry one or three women. But when a widow thinks for remarriage she would have lost her caste, the society would excommunicate her and she would remain all alone like a dead man. What injustice! what absurdity! So I should not marry again." In one sense, he sacrificed his personal happiness for the sake of humanity. What he wrote in black and white in his autobiography, that too in strong language, was a work amounting to rebellion in those days. He also holds the opinion that both man and woman should be endowed with same dignity. All the parts of the body are same, equal beings, yet they are not enjoying the same status. Indirectly, he advocates for the equal right of make and female. Some one hundred years back such a call was like a revolt against the traditional values.

Hem Chandra Barua has also drawn a picture of the opium-eating people in 'Kaniar Kirtan' like those novels of Daiba Chandra Talukdar. He has not gone against the British policies of the trade in opium, but only deals with the problem among the natives.

(D) GUNABHIRAM BARUA AND ASSAM BANDHU:

All the leading historians of Assamese literature have paid a glowing tribute to Hemchandra Barua and Gunabhiram Barua for creating an age in Assamese literature just preceding the Jonaki era with their multi-faceted contributions. What spirit and values we have noticed in the works of Hem Chandra Barua in the previous section, are almost identical in case of Gunabhiram Barua. Like Hemchandra fighting for women's right and education and the reformation in religious matters with an open mind, Gunabhiram also was a great warrior in this
respect. He started his career as a writer from that point where his mentor and predecessor Anandaram Dhekila Phukan had ended. The social situation after Dhekial Phukan or Hem Chandra Barua did not improve a lot. What he did in literature and society was a continuation of the movement started by Dhekial Phukan through Hem Chandra Barua. Unlike his predecessors, he worked with a team of writers from Nagaon. He was also an influential officer. Before that, Gunabhiram was brought up by Anandaram’s family as he lost his father at twelve. So, he came under the influence of an advanced culture right from his boyhood days. He imbibed many urban values there. Moreover, Anandaram sent him to Calcutta for higher studies. He worked as a manager also in the Dhekial Phukan’s Press. This period of Calcutta is very much important as he learnt many new things from city-life. Later on, after completion of studies, he was selected as a magistrate for Nagaon. During his service period he had close contact with many European officers, from whom he learnt both administration and other urban values. He organised a literary circle around Assam Bandhu at Nagaon, all of them belonging to Nagaon town. His association with Brahma society also made him an exceptional man in Assam. Inspite of his western education and regular meeting with non-Assamese friends, Gunabhiram like his mentor Dhekial Phukan, followed a lifestyle that was marked by both tradition and modernity. He had a 'thapana' at his home with Sankardev’s book on it.38 His wife Bisnupriya knew how to work on a handloom, he used to put on dhoti at home and drank tea in Assamese utensils.39 So, his writings also bear both values, the traditional and the modern ones. In fact, following the foot-steps of his mentor, Gunabhiram wrote a modern drama on the issue of widow remarriage and other social issues and his dream-project Assam Bandhu also highlighted some important values like secularism, self-criticism, women’s education and right, practice of servant-keeping and new-dresses, political awareness etc. through different articles. So he has included
more urban and modern values in his writings in *Assam Bandhu* than his predecessors. His fight for social justice is not a political movement, nor an urban value, but his concern for modernity in this respect was one step forward towards an urban culture in the form of equal and democratic rights of all. Let us examine his works under such situation.

*Ram-Nabami: The traditional values Vs modern values:*

*Ram-Nabami* is the first modern play in Assamese literature, which was published in 1857. It brought a change in subject-matter of drama by choosing a serious social issue like widow marriage. The traditional values as to the widows have been challenged here and the values of the Brahmo society are emphasized. He did it in his personal life also when he married the widow of his friend Parasuram Barua in 1860. The play and the marriage both provoked a hue and cry in Assam. Moreover, the corrupt practices of the Hinduism have also been targeted for reformation. The play is a revolutionary one, which rocked the traditional values and exposed them.

*Widow remarriage: A contemporary issue in 19th century social reformation:*

The play is based on the love and marriage of Navami, a widow and Ram. It is true Gunabhiram received inspiration from Bengal's Brahmo movement for such an issue of the society. The Bengal's reformation movement in the 19th century brought a message of liberal humanism and the socially-conscious Gunabhiram was influenced by this radical thought of the reformers. It is not an urban value, but it started from urban bases. Calcutta in Bengal was the centre. Gunabhiram describes himself in the biography of Anandaram. "When he (Gunabhiram) was in Calcutta then he was interested towards the Brahmo-dharma."40 We have already seen in the Orunodoi section of this chapter that Gunabhiram sent a report of widow
marriage to the Orunodoi. Gunabhiram's son Jnanadabhiram confirms that Gunabhiram was present at the first widow marriage arranged by Vidyasagar...

Now, there is no denying the fact that Ramnabami was the fruit of his association with the Bramos of Calcutta. In the play we find that Navami, Sibnath's daughter lost her husband at a tender age. When her husband died, she understood little about married life. Haranath's son, Ramchandra met her at the former's maternal uncle's house, that is, in the same village of Nabami. He was a young romantic. He saw her walking with her friends at the lake garden. He fell in love with her. Nabami also reciprocated his love and as a result of their frequent meeting Nabami became pregnant. It caused a scandal in the family first, then the village Panchayat made an enquiry into it. Navami never pronounced the name of her lover. At last they were excommunicated. Finding no way out Nabami killed herself as Ramchandra had already fled from the scene. He could not defy traditional customs. At the end of the play we see that Ramchandra has followed the Nabami's way of self-killing. It is true, Ram and Navami were not motivated by any social movement, they did it out of natural emotion. Though the play ends in a tragic way, yet there are some discussions on the problem. Moreover, the conflict with the traditional values rocked the village Panchayat. The appearance of Vidyasagar in one dream also reinforces the issue. Nabami's father, Sibkanta and her mother Phuleswari in Act V sci of the drama are discussing the pregnancy problem of Nabami. Her mother is of the opinion that the widows have to indulge in sexual matters secretly as there is no remarriage system. She says, "Some Vidyasagar in Calcutta has found out one system and some people, following them also want to introduce that system here too. If it is done, why it will be like that. Alas! my fate!" Earlier Phuleswari expressed sorrow for being the mother of such a daughter. They do not know the social implications of widow's remarriage system, but they realise the depth of the problem. So, they are trying to get rid of it before the
coming of Gosain, who will look into the matter. Ram and Navami made a beginning of the conflict between the traditional and modern values. Navami turned into a rebel against the social evils in the form of 'Lolita' in 'Bidrohini' by Lakshinath Sarma later in the 1930s.

Rational outlook in religious customs: The 19th century Hindu society was crippled with many religious dogmas and inhuman rituals. The Bengali society, which were much more advanced than the Assamese were also not free from such practices. It was the rule of the day that the religion-prescribed rituals should be observed in toto by one and all belonging to Hinduism. Gunabhiram and other Brahmins continued the same practices even after joining Brahmo dharma. Curiously enough, it was their self-contradiction. Gunabhiram tried to get rid of some false practices after he had become a Brahmo follower. The western values also worked on his mind in this respect. In Ramnabami, most of the characters are Brahmin, but his target of criticism is all, who practised the most dreaded social evils. The ritual that has been aimed to criticise is the practice of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is a way to lose sins and acquire virtue in Hinduism. The more one travels religious places the more he/she approaches to salvation - is the popular saying. But in Ramnabami the author has criticised the result of it severely. In the beginning of the play, the writer has exposed the hollowness of such practice indirectly through the discussion of Narayan and Dharmanath. Narayan reports to Dharmanath that Sibnath's son-in-law died of Cholera on the same day when Sibnath returned from the pilgrimage of the Ganges. He went to visit his son-in-law and that day his son-in-law died at night. This co-incident, as the author uses, proves the infutility of the pilgrimages in Hinduism. The author has criticised this practice as fruitless in case of Sibnath. The author has chosen another practice, the ritual of keeping vow for criticism also in the play. This practice was common to all, rural or urban. Once people attempted to liberate themselves from it, it took them
to a higher stage of culture, who are ready to welcome any new value of modern society. The author himself and some characters have exposed the rituals and shown their rational outlook in this respect. The reality taught them to be critical of such rituals. Another evil practice, we find reflected in the drama is the selection of bride. People of those days used to believe that the daughters of Katakai, Kakati and Mahajan families should not be preferred as brides for their fickle-minded and quarrelsome nature. Harnath believes that those brides from such families are always fickle-minded. But Deva rejects the notion in the play. He says that one person married two girls from a Mahajan’s family. One woman had a very precious and famous boy. Whether person has received ‘Pinda’ from his precious child or not I do not know. If not, he is to be called an unfortunate. “Deva proves that the person was not punished by God for marrying Mahajan’s daughter against the social taboos. He proves to be rational in this respect. Not only in 19th century, even in the 20th century we have such instances of prejudice and hostility. Gunabhiram Barua, had offended the orthodox Hindu society by including such incidents in his play which attacked the traditional evil practices in addition to the burning problem of widow remarriage. It is to be noted that he criticised these practices before he married a widow and thus offended the orthodox. He was brought up in such an environment, perhaps the inhuman religious rituals made him denounce such social evils through the play.

**Opposition to craze for white collar jobs:** Assamese society in the 19th century was an agricultural society as discussed in Chapter two. The new educated few wanted Govt. jobs in stead of taking to traditional cultivation. The landed gentry or rich cultivators were also not interested in hard labour. They did not want to spant their energy in productive work. This type of mentality is visible in *Ram nabami* through the discussion of Devadatta and Harakanta. Harakanta is a well-off cultivator. His son Ramchandra is educated. But Haranath tells Devadatta that
Ramchandra should not hanker after Govt. service, he would be able to do something and earn his livelihood at home. That is, Ramchandra should continue his father's profession. On the otherhand, Devadatta holds the opinion that it was good to have a Govt. job. A person with a job would be better known and respected in society. A service holder would be considered as a man of respect. Devadatta represents the new educated people who are keen after govt. service. His mentality also reflects the growing love for white collar jobs in Assam. Gunabhiram hints at the emerging clan of service holders in Assam. This is a new trend in the traditional agricultural Assamese society with limited other occupations.

**Political awareness:** Like Hem Chandra Barua's 'Kuwabhaturi', Gunabhiram has targeted the exploitation of the religious gurus like Satradhikars on the disciples/raiyats for criticism. The Sattras had Devottar lands. The satradhikars lived on the raiyat's labour and their taxes. They also collected donations by 'Sarana' to them. For the exposition of this exploitation, the dramatist has created two extra characters namely Dotto and Sihuram. The reality of life have made them politically aware that they had been exploited by the religious gurus. Sihuram and Dotto, the two commoners talk about this exploitation of the priest class and feudal lords. The Gosains, who are godly figures in rural society, impose fines on the villagers when they failed to pay any donations to him. Sihu and Dotto, who have been witnessing such exploitations of the gurus over the years are disgusted at this. Sihu tells Dotto that one could not escape the Gosains. By giving application they could have got rid of such problem from the Chaudharis, but with the Gosains there was simply no escape. The Chaudhuris are also exploiting them as landlords. But they spare the raiyats sometimes from the taxes. But the Gosains stick to their demands. They are also critical of the Gosains in the case of the Navami's pregnancy. The Gosains declared that the excommunication on Sibnath's family could be lifted by paying five hundred rupees to the society. Sihu makes a sarcastic comment
that by giving money one could be get rid of sins. It is the rule of money everywhere - they thought. In those days political awareness was quite absent among the peasants, but they were very much aware of the social exploitation, which leads to political awareness, which in its turn gave rise to so many peasant's uprising in the province in the 1860s.

What Gunabhiram wanted to do through his play, he carried his crusade against the social evilsa through his journal, Assam Bandhu. In this magazine, he published a lot of articles that proved that he wanted to wage a war against the age-old inhuman social rituals and to welcome the new set of values to be found in an urban situation.

Assam Bandhu:

Assam Bandhu is an important journal in Assamese after the Orunodoi and before the birth of the Jonaki. From 1846 to 1889, many journals rose and fell, all of them trying to contribute somehow to the Assamese literature. With the help of Assam Bandhu, the Assamese literary tradition and outlook took a definite shape by the end of the century. In fact, it is a prelude to the epoch-making movement in modern Assamese literature, that was presided over by the Jonaki in 1889. Assam Bandhu was the brain child of Gunabhiram Barua and it was edited and published by him at his own expense. It attempted to include all types of writing, like literary, historical and scientific. It was also a preparing ground for the Assamese romantic poems. It offered a wider platform to express the new ideas and values. Considering all these aspects, Lakshinath Bezbarua has placed it among front-ranking Assamese journals. It was seen as the real friend of Assam and Assamese language. The Western tone of the Assamese language as observed by the Hem Chandra Goswami was on the wane through Assam Bandhu's language. The magazine attempted to introduce the study of cultural Anthropology, a debate on the women's right and
education, liberal humanism, realism, book criticism, self-criticism and satire, liberal attitude to the use of language, science-based writings etc.— all are features of a modern culture. Moreover, it created a host of writers including women writers.

**Secular views** : "We do not publish anything on sectarian religion." — was the declaration of the magazine in the beginning. The magazine not only remained away from political polemics, but also it never published any articles on communalistic religion. It published several articles on devotion to God or pure religious feeling like essay on the Vedas, Iswarar Sthan Kot, Biswapati, Jiban Darshak etc. are God-related poems where God is glorified. But it never published any sectarian article on religion. Though the editor and the publisher of the magazine, Gunabhiram Barua was a strong supporter of Brahmo dharma, he tried his level best to refrain from publishing the principles of Brahmoism except the incomplete drama. He showed his devotion to secularism in handling the magazine keeping in view the larger interest of the Assamese language and literature. Not only that, in matters of language-based nationalism also Assam Bandhau held a modern and unprejudiced view. The native people considered all outside people as "Bengali" or "Bengal"; it has a different socio-economic reason, which has been discussed in Chapter II. Assam Bandhu always welcomed the migration of educated Bengali people to Assam. Like the Brahmaputra out of the bosom of the Himalayas flowed down to the great sea along with Meghna and Padma, similarly Assamese people also, giving up narrow feelings should proceed to the sea of progress mixing with outside 'Bengalis'. The article on the topic goes further in recognising the good Bengalis also. "Those who came to Assam in 19th century, many of other established relationships with us. Therefore, we have Gotong Ghosh, Ram Lochan Sen, Bholairam, etc. in many places of Assam. They have entered our clan and are sharing the same kitchen with our kith and kin. It shows clearly the secular and democratic values of the Assam Bandhu and its editorial staff.
Debate on women's right and education: Political awareness: As part of the agenda for social reformation Assam Bandhu takes two important issues of the women their right and education. It gave a limited expression to the idea of women's right compared to the slavery of the 18th country. A forceful writer Ratneswar Mahanta, who wrote exclusively on social topics apart from poetry led the debate. Ratneswar Mahanta, Lombodar Bora etc. belong to the conservative group holding strictly to the traditional values. But they opened a very good debate where many participated. Mahanta in his long article 'Swadhinata Ne Swecchachar' serialised in Assam Bandhu has advocated that "The women should be Grihalakshmi" (goodness of the hearth). Moreover, he holds the opinion that "The reason for woman's education is not money, it is the success of the married life." That is, they should earn education in order to bring up children soundly in all respects. This was the victorious view in the debate. Ratneswar Mahanta countened the views held by Hamchandra Baruah as to the women's education through the series of articles published in Assam Bandhu. It offers a scope for many people to know the things properly in case of selecting a new value against the traditional one. Of course, Gunabhiram, who sent his own daughter to Bethun school, Calcutta for education did not participate in the debate. In case of dresses also, Mahanta and Bora insisted on the use of deshi dress, not saries or skirts. The traditional and modern values had a direct collision in such a platform paving the way for the emergence of rational views.

Self-criticism, a feature of modernity: Many writers of the 19th century Assam were involved in the criticism of their own people and culture. They did it as they loved their motherland. Self-criticism in Assam Bandhu is also an expression of the sense of patriotism. Bholanath Das, a regular writer in the magazine particularly as a poet brought a change in subject-matter and form in poems. Bholanath utilised the mentality of the Assamese people. In one poem called 'Asambasi' published
in the very first issue of the magazine, the poet had made a scathing attack on the Assamese people for their disdain for hard labour and love for lethargic nature. It reads like this - "The Assamese people are life-less and like dead body, they do not try, no hard labour, only worshipping the God of lethargy, so no progress at all, only degradation, hence their sad faces without smiles." Bezbarua, later on did the same job more vigorously. Most Assamese were engaged in cultivation, but that too was not done sincerely. The poet is really annoyed at the cold attitude of the natives towards business. He adds in the same poem that people are ashamed of the following the professions of carpenters, cultivators or petty businessmen. Their argument is very trivial. They say that their forefathers never followed such professions, so why give up their prestige following such professions? Indirectly, he hints that they were interested in Govt. jobs involving less physical labour. Bholanath Das, who was a self-made man, criticised his own nation in order to reform them. In the article 'Bongali' by Aa Ba (perhaps Gunabhiram himself) is critical about the claim to genealogical and purity of the Brahmins, who boast of being the sons of Kanauj or Sriskhetra. They would boast in such a tone as if they have come to Assam from there in order to remove the ignoble darkness of native minds. Here, on the other hand, he has criticised his own community with a view to reforming the society. As to the dresses also some authors criticised the western-minded people for giving up the traditional dresses totally and accepting unsuitable western costume. The English people themselves never think that way.

**Political awareness**: Assam bandhu never indulged in political controversies, but it raised the social problems. At that time, the political consciousness of the people was also not developed. Yet, we find in a poem called "Kararuddha Rajkumar aru Rajani" (The captivated Prince and Rajani) the traces of political awareness. The poem was written by Bholanath Das who was basically a traditional man despite being born and brought up in Guwahati. He felt the sorrow of colonial
rule and expressed earning for liberty. Through an allegory of royal story and image, we find such an attitude of the poet. He composes, " ... ............... without liberty one has nothing, no warm blood circulate through vein. There is no vitality in such a life. The head is down with strong feet.56 Bholanath Das was never a political activist, yet the colonial rule caused despair and anxiety in his mind. It was a longing for political liberty and condemnation for the chained life under colonial rule. The allegory seems to imply an incipient political awareness of the people.

Introduction of Satire and book review: Satire and book reviews - these two forms of modern literature were started by Assam Bandhu. Satire as a literary form came to modern Assamese literature from the West. They also were influenced by Bengali satirists of the 19th century. Voltaire wrote a very penetrating satire on the modern civilisation and men, 'Candid' in the 17th century. Swift and Pope commented on social issues creating the 'Gulliver's travel' and 'The Dunciad' respectively. The Western educated Assamese were impressed by them. Assam Bandhu in Assamese started it through one writer Lambodar Bora, nicknamed as 'Sadanand' or 'S'. It is a modern character, who is aware of all short-comings of the people. He attempted satire on the rising Assamese middle class for their changing values. 'Sadanandar Kalaghumuti', 'Sadanandar Sammilani toka'.

'Sadanandar Samachar', 'Sadanandar natun abhidhan', five pieces of satires were published in different issues of Assam Bandhu. Sadananda is interested in the preservation of the native culture. He used the frame of 'irony', perhaps for the first time, to ridicule the so called new gentlemen, who, forgot their own culture. Like a modern writer, Sadananda makes ironical comments on the issue of women's right and education."Writing letters, not raising their head from drama and novel, forgetting weaving and cooking, weak in body, fickle-minded, dishonest and critical minded, trying to woo grooms, forgetting the right jobs of women, making females
into male making flowers into stone and making lakes into desert...etc."57 Such is
the description of the modern women by Sadanand. It may be a good satire, but
his view's are not different from that of Ratneswar Mahanta. Anyway, Sadananda
claims to be the possessor of a critical spirit.

The modern or urban values, which were propagated through the journal
'Assam Bandhu' percolated to the readers of the journal. It was based in urban
centres like Calcutta and Nagaon. All the writers without a single exception lived
at Nagaon or in other towns. So their views represented the rising modern trends.
They were candid in their comments and opinions. In fact, it carried a new tradition
and scope quite different from the 'Orunodoi' for the launching of the modern
journal the Jonaki in 1889.

(E) THE JONAKI AND THE BIJULI

From the Orunodoi (1846) to the Assam Bandhu (1885) is a critical period
for Assamese language and literature and this period is the history of struggle for
the reestablishment of a language. Of course, some creative literature was also
produced by Gunabhiram and Hem Chandra Barua as said earlier. It was the turn
of the Jonaki in late 19th century to enrich the Assamese literature with literature
on diverse forms. It was a literary upsurge and the literary trio, comprising of
Lakshinath Bezbarua, Chandra Kumar Agarwalla and Hem Chandra Goswami
created history under their leadership through the Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini
Sabha in Calcutta. They made prolific contribution in the field of poetry, personal
essays, short stories, drama and novel. They even translated Shakespare's drama.
It is true that the chief architect of the movement was Lakshminath Bezbarua.
The inspiration came from their sense of patriotism. Dr. Maheswar Neog
commenting on the trend of modernisation of Assamese literature through the
Jonaki remarks, "Complete modernisation of this (Assamese) literature is the
greatest achievement of the Jonaki writers. As the age of Wordsworth was the chief ideal in the act of this modernisation, the new literature also was largely romantic in nature.58 The Bijuli published one year after the Jonaki, also attempted to create new literature. The first Assamese novel was serialised in the Bijuli. The first Assamese short story was printed in the Jonaki. So both these magazines were responsible for the making of modern Assamese literature. It is to be noted that all the activities of the journals centred round Calcutta or Guwahati and other district Head Quarters of Assam.

*Lakshinath Bezbarua early stories and novel:*

Lakshminath Bezbarua has passed his entire life in Calcutta and Sambalpur since his college days. His exposure and education made him a different man which led to his experiments with new themes and forms. Many modern values could be witnessed in his writings including short stories. He broke with tradition when he felt it necessary, one novel was also written by him. Some important short-stories and the novel will be discussed in the following pages.

*Swargarohan: (The ascending of the heaven):*

The story of Swargarohan has a modern setting, with a modern babu residing in Calcutta as its protagonist. The protagonist loves to surround himself with modern articles of use, like a marble table and shoes of velvet. One interesting article is a painting about romantic love, which is hung in his drawingroom. He dreams of an ascend to haven. However, the moral of the story conveyed playfully and subtly, is rather traditional. Those things of wordly worth and value, so cherished by him, have no use in heaven. When he ascends to heaven these cherished objects fall away from him. He is however desperate to retain them. The dream, thus suggests a conflict between love of the world under the influence of modernity
and the message of traditional religion that the next world has no use for worldly values. The protagonist announces that heaven has no PWD to prevent the leakage of goods which gives it a modern touch while reinforcing a traditional understanding of life.

*Pandit Mahasay*: *(Respected Pandit)*:

This was also published in the Calcutta version of the *Jonaki*. It is like a revenge tragedy, where a high school teacher kills his student for insulting the former in the classroom. Bezbarua has dealt with a very fascinating subject with suspense, which was quite a new technical element at that time. On the eve of the Durga pujah, the student, who was a son of a Zamidar, came to call his teacher before proceeding for home on account of Pujah vacation. The teacher, who came from Srihatta district got ready to take revenge of his insulting case. He killed the student and buried the dead body under the plinth of his home. Then, after years one police officer came to the teacher's house as guest as a part of his plan of enquiry. He noticed some words spoken by the teacher and from a psychological point of view, he came to the conclusion that the murderer was none but the teacher himself. He was arrested on the charge of murder and eventually he confessed. The arrival of the police inspector to the scene turns the story to the different direction dramatically. The police investigation in a story is an unknown matter in Assam literature in late 19th century. It reminds us of the emerging modern state under the colonial rule. The story overturns the traditional idea of a filial relation between teacher and student and exposes the hollowness of traditional ideas in the colonial setting. A teacher's basic nature can't be ideal all the time in view of a changed society. In some situations, like the one described in the story, any human being can be a victim of a blind urge for revenge for a public insult. Such a story could hardly have been written in a traditional and rural setting.
**Dactarbabur Sadhu:**

The story 'Dactarbabur Sadhu' appears to be a casual narrative. But in a deceptively simple manner and with depth use of modern techniques it conveys a modern understanding of life, which arose out of an urban setting. An abandoned orphan, without anyone to support him turns into a thief at a very young age in order to support himself. He is often caught stealing goods and given a regular thrashing. The street boy accepts this beatings quite stoically The doctor of the story, once catches a sight of him undergoing such a beating and rescues him. Both the doctor and his wife show him such affection that the boy becomes a devoted and faithfull servant. In the end, however, the street boy falls in love with a girl from a neighbouring family and hangs himself from the roof of the house when crossed in love. The young girl, obviously, is as cruel to him of as his tormentors of the past. But why he accepted the torture of his tormentors stonily he could not tolerate the cruelty of his beloved. It seems that the boy had acquired a modern personality marked by both self-esteem and passionate love for the beloved. It is also evident that the Rly passengers made by the author of this story could not understand the psychology of the boy and the tragedy of the incident. Thus a modern insight is conveyed in the story in a casual manner. The technique is also in far as it puts a distance between the protagonist and the story-teller from the one-hand and the author and the story-teller.

**Amaloi Napahariba:** *(Do not forget us)*

Though this story mainly deals with corruptions of modern commerce, which takes advantage of rural innocence and completely destroys the fabric of traditional society, it has some marginal significance for an urban conciousness. The narrator is a modern Assamese middle class gentleman based in Calcutta. He rescues a young Assamese girl from the clutches traffickers in coolies for foreign plantation
industry. The contrast between the innocent simplicity of the girl, the pathos of her helplessness and the ruthless commercial culture of which the Oria "Panda" is a representative arouses in the mind of the narrator a profound melancholy. The inexorable pushing of the traditional society and the melancholy, nostalgia evoked by it are very much a part of modern urban consciousness. As lad as Saurabh Kr. Chaliha, Assamese writers have expressed these pathoes from time to time.

**Padum Kunwari : A beginning of individuality in romantic love :**

Bezbarua's *Padum Kunwari*, though a product of his younger days shows the rise of modern urbanised consciousness quite forcefully. At one level, the novel is the story of a struggle against injustice and oppression. Haradatta is a patriot, who is fighting a war of resistance against an oppressive and alien enemy. But, at another level, it is a story of a clash between personal values like love and traditional values like loyalty and clan solidarity. The feudal attitude of Haradatta towards love ultimately leads to his ruin in spite of heroism and valour. On the otherhand, both in the family of Borphukan, the Ahom viceroy at Guwahati and in the household Haradatta, the rebel leader the feudal environment is shown totally incompatible with values like romantic personal love. Though the setting is not urban the values depicted are modern and urban. It is also noteworthy that Lakshminath has a tendency to make fun of the other rebel leader Haradatta's brother Bira Datta. Obviously Lakshminath, the novelist has a complex modern sensibility, which makes him reluctant to express one-sided admiration or indulging hero-worship.

This way, we see that Bezbarua in his early stories have attempted to introduce the experience of city life through Calcutta. For the readers in Assam, many subjects were new. Bezbarua could write these stories because of his keen
imagination and rich experience of city life. Though Bezbarua never fought for romantic ideals, he attempted to show it in his stories and the single novel, Padumi.

PADMANATH GOHAINBARUA:

Padmanath Gohainbarua, a contemporary of Bezbarua and father of the monthly journal the Bijuli is best known in Assamese literature as the writer of the first Assamese novel, Bhanumati, which was serialised in the Bijuli during 1890-91 period. Before him the missionaries wrote 'Kuminikanta' and 'Sudharmar Upakhyan', but they are not proper novels for its simple moralising narrative and loaded ideas of Christianity. Padmanath Gohainbarua could write the first novel in Assamese because of his western education in Calcutta and study of both English and Bengali novels. He also served the mother language by writing poetry, drama and essays. To fulfill the demand of textbooks, he took up the responsibility of writing school texts too with Panindra Gogoi. Though he remained loyal to the British authority in Assam and became a nominated member of the legislative council, he worked for Assam and Assamese literature whole-heartedly. He considered it an historical obligation when he took up writing a novel and serialised in the Bijuli. Both 'Bhanumati' and 'Lahori' are the products of literary movement called romantic movement in Assamese literature and have the touch of a very sweet language developed through a continuous experiments with language and creative literature. In this respect Dr. Maheswar Neog remarks. "As art-form both Bhanumati and Lahori of Gohainbarua, in the real sense, are the best work of Gohainbarua. In both the novels the endless inspiration of a young writer has been expressed in simple form." As the fruits of young writer's imagination it is imbued with high romantic language. Yet it bears a lot of things which could be considered as modern and urban values.
As to 'Lahori', we have a very simple love story between Lahori and Kamal, both belonging to former Ahom nobility. The attitude of the Assamese middle class towards romantic love and love-related things had been generated by the influences of new social forces at that time and the story and characters of 'Lahori' and the author's comment make us believe that the age-old attitudes faced opposition from the new attitude in 19th century. Otherwise, the love-story could not go beyond the folk-tale's level with the usual dose of fatalism. There are at least three modern values in the novel. At first, the individual case of love, secondly the qualification of a groom for an aristocratic girl, the decreasing tendency of physical labour, i.e. a general feudal value of disdain for physical labour and the sexual immoralities.

The modern attitude that we get in the novel is the debate on the question of right in selecting a life partner. In a traditional Assamese society, the parents of both sides play a vital role in the decision for the same. Here, in the novel, the conflict between the tradition and modernity is visible through the love of Lahori and Kamal. It started when Kirtichandra, father of Lahori and his wife discovered the love-affair between them. When their daughter attained marriageable age both of them became concerned about it like traditional Assamese parents. In chapter VIII of the novel, 'Biyar Mantra' (Discussion for marriage) the writer presents us a very serious discussion between Kirti and his wife about Lahori's marriage. Lahori is already sixteen and so he has thought over her marriage for the last three nights. As he failed to find a groom for Lahori he asked his wife to take the responsibility. His wife replied in negative saying that she hardly went out, so she had little experience. However, she hinted the name of Kamal as a possible choice. Hearing the Kamal's name Kirti's feudal anger flared up and he scolded his wife. He asserted that Kamal's origin was not known, he did not belong to an aristocratic family like them. Kamal was good and handsome, no doubt, but his origin was a
matter of uncertainty for his adopted father Krishnaram Gohain. So Kirtichandra, the representative of the outgoing Ahom nobility declines him to be his daughter's life partner for the simple established fact that his family history is unknown and he does not belong to a family of Kirti's status. This is the difference of views between the two classes — the one being newly blessed by the British authority and claims to be aristocratic and the other is oppressed and poor but honest and simple. In late 19th century the family status gained importance in matters of setting marriages. This discussion between Kirtichandra and his wife bring home two facts - firstly, the traditional system of marriage could not ignore the family status and secondly, the individual's choice would not be granted by parents and custom. In spite of that restriction, the process of individualism, an urban trait began to grow in Assam in the sphere of matrimony. It bloomed fully as a general matter in 60s of the 20th century as discussed earlier with some modifications in the traditional system. At that time Lahori and Kamal initiated the process only, they could not succeed.

The other values relating to decadent feudal ideas that we have in the novel is the gradual decadent feudal ideas and contempt for physical labour. This problem grew badly in post-independence period. In the traditional society men and women worked together in the field as a community. When the landlord started to sit only, gradually this disease spread to the other classes of middle-level peasants and even the peasants who worked in other's fields. But more or less it remained confined to the well-off people. Kirtichandra, the ex-Ahom official also expresses this newly developed attitude in the novel while discussing the marriage issue with his wife. "How could you bear the scene of your.... daughter, after becoming daughter-in-law in the house of Krishnaram Gohain, planting paddy saplings or uprooting paddy saplings in the field? I know you to be a prudent women, why today have you failed to understand the things?" 61 That is to say, Kirtichandra
apprehends that his daughter will have to do physical labour there, so it's impossible. It was a new trend affecting the well-to-do family first. In towns, all the middle class people tries to avoid physical labour.

Thirdly, the negative urban value of laxity in sexual matter is also seen in the novel. The character of Ratneswar is an example of that value. The novelist delineates him as a young man of 30 years in the beginning, who refuses to marry as he failed to find a girl of his choice. Gradually his nature changed as he came by a lot of money. After seeing Lahori he became mad after her instantly. He tried his level best to get her. He was so fascinated by Lahori's beauty that he hired some Myanmarese marauders to abduct her. In the mean time, he fell in love with another girl called Jayanti, who attracted him more than Lahori. So, the Lahori-chapter was closed. Ultimately the person, willing to be a confirmed bachelor turned into a womaniser, always looking for fresh beauty. Such type of laxity in sexual morality is very much common in the urban areas. He became a debauched character and he could count on support from some people with his wealth. His last choice was a widow whom he used to visit regularly. At last he was charged by the community court and forced to live with her. The character of Ratneswar is not that of a born rake, he was influenced by the growing negative values of the modern society with the corrosive power of money. Though in the matter of individual choice, love and marriage, Padmanath echo contemporary sentiments. He also gives vent to certain outmoded traditional ideas and attitudes. From time to time he expresses utter content for common people characteristic of the feudal trust. He seems unable to distinguish completely the personal worth of characters from social trappings.

Psychologically, more realistic, he gives greater importance to physical and sexual attachment, however it is idealised.
Thus we see that Padmanath has in mind the new emerging values that invaded the rural society also. Lahori offers that platform for the first time in Assamese literature.

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