Introduction

Life is priceless. And water is the other name of life. Rivers are the cheapest and the most dependable reservoir of this priceless and life-sustaining water. It is not surprising, therefore, that an intimate relationship shall develop between man and river. As we try to trace the development of the intimate relation between river and man in an effort to study the evolution of human civilization, we find that in every country in every age there was a co-existence between man and river. It may be that tale of this co-existence is not always happy and there are facts of conflicts between man and river, but such conflicts are very temporary. After a short conflict the two forces of nature revert to their former peaceful state of co-existence. River and man lived side by side.

Though we have no enough information about the primitive man, as man began his journey towards civilization and built up his own civilization, we notice with delightful surprise that each civilization had a river in its centre. To set down things more clearly, it seems that human beings built up different civilizations with a particular river at the centre. Egyptian, Chinese, Mesopotemian, Indus Valley- each civilization was sustained by one or the other river. The Nile in Egypt, The Yangsikiang-Howangho in China, the Indus in Mahenjadāro-Harappā worked, as they flowed towards the sea, as the life-blood of each of these civilizations.

Other than the Indus valley civilization (Mahenjadāro and Harappā ) in the western part of India, two other ancient civilizations in the eastern part of the country flourished, the Gangetic civilization centered around the Ganga and the Brahmaputra civilization that thrived with the mighty Brahmaputra at the centre. Historical resources have established that both the two civilizations are old and properous. These civilizations existed even before the appearance of the Aryans on the Indian scene. So there cannot be any conflict of opinion that these two civilizations belong to the tradition of civilizations that has been flowing since very remote times. The Gangetic civilization is now known to use as Bangadesh, and the Brahmaputra civilization is now our familiar Assam.
Bangladesh is a land of rivers. A number of rivers and their tributaries flow through this landmass creating a huge canvas of painting. As most of Bangladesh is plane land so the courses of these rivers are labyrinthine and colourful. The influence of these rivers full inevitably in the folk life, literature, culture, art and craft of the people who inhabit this vast track of land. In this land of rivers, where the people are reared by rivers with motherly affection, the sediment has given them softness. The historian of the Bangalees says-

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Again, as Bangladesh is bound within the soothing embrace of the Ganga-Yamuna, Meghna-Surma, so Assam enjoys secure shelter within two arms- the Brahmaputra and the Barak. It has been said about the geographical existence of Assam-

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And this is fully established by the following comment—

"असम नदीमातृक देश। इয়ার সৌমধজস্তে বৈ বা যা মহাবাহ ব্রহ্মপুত্র আরু দক্ষিণের পূর্ব- পশ্চিমকে বৈ ধকা বরণে সমনিতে অলে জান-জুনি আরু উপজাতী কৃষিজীবি অসমীয়া মানুষ জীবন প্রাঙ্গণ সন্ধান। এই বোধ জীবন নির্বাহ বাবে আমাকে কেবল কৃষি কামতৈ সহায় করা না ই, আমার পরিবারের আরু সামাজিক জীবন আরু আশা-আকাশ্বণ্ড প্রাণ্তীর লজ্জা নিবিড়তায় অজিত হে আছে।" 

So it can be realized how important is the role of river in the life of the people of Bengal and Assam. The illustration of this importance we can see in the art and literature of the two lands. Rivers have found an important space in the literatures of the two lands since the time the peoples of those regions started talking in their own languages and invented their own scripts. This tradition has been flowing since the days of Gharāyapada to the present day. Even today novels, poetry and stories are being written with one or the other river at the centre. In some of the novels which have rivers as the center the distinctive social, cultural, geometrical and human features of these regions have been reflected. There shall be envitable differences in these novels written in two different regions. This statement is applicable to the Bangali and Assamese novels which have rivers at the centre. If these novels are studied and analysed side by side it will be revealed that each of these has distinctive regional features. At the same time some similarities between and among them shall come to the fore. This reminds us of the universal Indian character-unity in diversity. Our endeavor is to search but this note of harmonious unity in the Bengali and Assamese novels. With a view to achieving this goal we have selected a few (exactly eight) novels from Bengali and Assamese literature in each of which there is a river at the central place. We will discuss, wherever reference are found to be necessary and to
the point, a few other novels. Of course, we will mainly have four Bengali and four Assamese novels with rivers at the base or the center for our discussion and hypothesis. We will try by means of comparative study to show that though literature develops in different forms in different places or regions, it is essentially beyond time and space. And, again, what Dr. Radhakrishnan once said about Indian literature that despite diversities and distinctiveness, it is essentially 'one' shall also our guide. Our efforts in this research project will be to establish with arguments this famous 'oneness' of Indian literature.

* The following Eight Novels are under discussion:-

**Bengali**
1. Hansulibanker Upakatha—
   Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, (1947)
2. Ichamt—Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, (1949)
3. Titas Ekti Nadir Nam—Advaito Mallabarman, (1956)

**Assamese**
1. Kapilipariar Sadhu—Nabakanta Barua, (1952)
2. Surumukhir Swapna—Syed Abdul Malik, (1960)

**References:**
1. Niharjan Ray—Bangalir Ithas, (P-72)
2. Sashi Sarma—Asamar Loksahitya, (P-1, 2)
3. Ramcharan Thakuria—'Pradhun Sampadakar Ekashar', (Asamar Nad-Nadi by Jogendranath Sarma) (P-Not Mentioned)