4.1 Introduction

Colonialism changed the outlook of the colonies in almost all the spheres of life. It affected folk-life as it tried to change people’s attitude towards their traditions. The affects generally were of two types – first was of a rejection of their own way of life and the second was of acceptance and pride in the heritage. There were also some intellectuals who believed in the process of reform and retain attitude like Raja Rammohan Ray, one of the foremost social reformer of early colonial India (Blackburn: 2003:144). Such attitudes finally lead to a hybrid society which contains values from both of the colonizer and the colonized.

Folklore, an integral part of the pre-colonial society, has an interesting story to tell. It was a practice for the whole society including the intellectuals and masses. But the folk-literature was seldom acknowledged as a pure form of literature. It was generally considered
as too ordinary or a pastime for the common people to accord the prestige of mainstream literature.

When a folk-text gets printed, it becomes fixed and cannot be changed at each performance which is a basic feature of folk-lore. The language also gets fixed at the time of printing. However, a live folk-tradition does not depend on print and the performers relied on the memory. On the other hand, after getting printed, the language of folk-texts brings a rare liveliness into the existing literature. The mainstream literature generally lacks this vibrancy and spontaneity as it is the medium of educated and they try to use a literary language, not the day-to-day language. Printing of folk-lore brings the liveliness of the common man to the modern literature.

One thing is clear that the folk-literature cannot be put in a distinct time-frame as they are orally transmitted from a generation to the next and hence the imprints of more than one time are visible in them. Moreover, several versions may be found with variations in language as well as in text, context and tenor which make it almost impossible to ascertain the exact time of the creation of the text. On the other hand, the language of folk-texts is not stagnant or static as folk-
texts have the liberty to change at the whim of the performer. It had the vibrancy of a live text despite the possible distance from the original time and source.

The nature and capacities of texts are closely tied to the communicative technology employed in their production, circulation, and reception (Bouman: 2008: 32). Before the advent of print and other media, the human voice was the only communicative technology. In pre-print culture, orality was the main feature which separated folk-literature from the so-called mainstream literature. Once printed, an oral text has to lose all these features as it gets fixed.

4.2 Folklore and colonial intervention

The colonial imagination used Indian tradition to strengthen their cultural domination over the people and their minds. It also wanted to control the reading practices of the natives by directing what should be printed in early part of the nineteenth century. In 1818, Mountstuart Elphinstones, who later became the Governor of Bombay submitted a
report that may be a pointer to the colonial attitude on the literate practice of the colony:

...Books are scarce, and the common ones probably ill-chosen; but there exist in the Hindu languages many tales and fables that would be generally read, and that would circulate sound morals. There must be religious books tending more directly to the same end. If many of these are printed and distributed gratuitously, the effect would without doubt, be great and beneficial. It would however be indispensable that they should be purely Hindu. We might silently omit all precepts of questionable morality, but the slightest infusion of religious controversy would secure the failure of the design (Naregal: 2001:151).

This chapter tries to highlight the colonial as well as native project of collecting and printing folklore in the nineteenth century Assam and the implication of this project in the Assamese language and literature. It also examines the role of folklore in the debate on tradition and modernity in the nineteenth century Assam. Moreover, it will try to ascertain the impact of folklore in the Assamese identity formation process as well as nationality building project of the late nineteenth century.
4.3 Print and Folklore in colonial India

The colonial regime wanted to decipher the Indian subcontinent and for that they had made different projects. Apart from the language policy and education policy, they tried to explore the cultural heritage of this vast area by collecting, translating and understanding popular beliefs. Like the language policy that was designed to shape and fit different Indian languages into a single framework, the cultural project was felt necessary to streamline the varied and vast culture of India. In many cases the language used in the folktales was also required for the shaping of a modern language.

British colonial officials started to collect Indian Folklore texts, mainly folktales from local story tellers from the middle of the nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that it happened exactly at the same time when similar projects had taken place in Western countries. But the nature of Indian and Western projects was not similar which is well explained by Heda Jason:

This is the very period during which the collecting of popular antiquities and folklore blossomed in England and on the Continent, borne by the wave of
romantic and nationalistic trends and movements. While, however, the tide of 19th century nationalism brought with it the development of the main social and academic tools and institutions (associations, archives, museums, publishing enterprises, university chairs) for folklore research in Europe, India did not join in. (Jason: 1983: 105).

The Indian folklore study began on a different note as it was a colony and the colonial collectors' perspective was not the national spirit, but the decoding of the colonized. That is why there was a difference between the nature and tone of the collections by colonial and Indian collectors. According to Naithani the main difference was the question of outlook. She believes that the images of India were “usually unromantic” in the colonial collections (Naithani: 2006: 54). On the other hand, their Indian counterparts were aware of the historical and social changes their society was undergoing and hence, their motivation to narrate was “not a vague and romantic loss of tradition but the historical and cultural transition within a colonized society” (ibid: 48).
The study of folklore of the Assamese language was started by the American Baptist missionaries. It did not get much attention from the colonial administrators in the nineteenth century. The first published folk-text by a colonial administrator was *Some Assamese Proverbs* by P.R.T Gurdon, who later on became an eminent authority on Assam, and his book was published in 1896. But not a single colonial collection of Assamese folktales, which was abundant in other major Indian languages, was published. Missionaries also did not take any definite interest in publication of folktales or other folk-texts collection in Assamese or its translation into English. Rather they were more interested in collecting and publishing medieval secular Assamese manuscripts like *buranjis* in *Orunodoi*. There seems to be one possible reason behind this apparent neglect of Assamese folk-tales. The folktales in other Indian languages was the base on which the modern vernacular was structured by the colonial linguists or the missionaries. As discussed in the second chapter most of Indian languages did not have a pre-colonial prose tradition which urgently necessitated the collection and study of folktales in Indian languages. For example,
Paramartta Kuruvin Katai, the first printed book in Tamil prose was a collection of folktale by a missionary (Blackburn: 2003: 45). In pre-colonial Bengali too, prose was not used as a medium for literary purposes (Ray et al: 2002: ix). Unlike this general absence of prose in the Indian languages, a pre-colonial prose was already present in the context of the Assamese language in the forms of buranjis, charit puthis and other literature. Hence, the Assamese folktales hardly became an important tool for the construction of a modern language in Assam.

The Assamese interest in folklore collection had begun towards the last decade of nineteenth century. This endeavour began to see some concrete results only in the first half of the next century. This task of folklore collection and print was undertaken by the same group of young Assamese intellectuals based in Kolkata who were influenced by the contemporary nationalistic spirit in creating a national literature. Many of them were inspired by the initiatives of German folktale collectors Grim brothers and others. The best illustration of such influence may be found in the preface of 1911 folktale collection Burhiair Sadhu or Grandmother's Tales by Laksminath Bezbaroa.
where he acknowledged the works of Grim brothers as well as Herder's *Collection of Popular Songs* (Bezbaroa: 2010: 5).

4.5. The transition

The printing of folklore brings forward folk-text to the attention of the mainstream or written literature. Generally, the stylistics of folklore was not similar with other contemporary literature. Mainstream literary pieces usually try to shift the language from contemporary spoken forms as the presence of spoken form would make it ordinary. The themes of most of the medieval Assamese literature were from epics and mythology and hence the medium should have to be out of ordinary. As discussed in the first chapter, most of the medieval Assamese writers proclaimed to write in vernacular only for the sake of the so-called low-castes and women who were generally illiterate. Still, they used such a medium or language that forced the intrusion of a *pathak* or a professional reader. As most of the target readers were illiterate, a literate middle man was essential to read as well as explain the text to them.
In pre-colonial time, folklore was not considered as a proper literature. They were scattered and in the oral form far from the limelight. Apart from the annual ritual of *husari* and *mukali bihu* in front of the *Rangghar* palace, folk-performance was not meant for elite consumption. Nineteenth century colonialism gradually changed that perspective and towards the end of the century folklore came to the forefront as one of the identity marker of the Assamese nation. The language and style of the Assamese folklore was hailed by the neo-intellectuals as pure and rooted.

Printing of folklore in the nineteenth century was used as a tool for educating people in a familiar way. It was also used as a gateway to the native mind by the missionaries. The missionaries preferred to preach the local people in a localized manner and in that case oral literature and folk-customs and believes were useful. Accommodating local texts into their conversion process was an integral part of the mission (Mason: 1921: 34).
An analysis of the study and use of folklore in the nineteenth century Assam points to the interplay of different agenda by different forums. Colonial institutions like the missionary magazine printed and published local and Western folk-text to either propagate religion in an entertaining package or to increase their readability among common people. On the other hand, in the early colonial Assam, folklore was the point of division between the aristocrats and the common people. In the first half of the nineteenth century, some aspects of folk tradition were acknowledged as a tradition practiced only by the lower class or the ‘itor’s which should be banned as they were vulgar. Haliram Dhekial Phukan (Tamuli: 2005: 80) detested the song and dance part of the Bihu festival as it encouraged free mixing. This attitude was prevailed among the Assamese intellectuals til the Asamiya Bhasar Unnati Sadhini Sabha or the Society for the Development of the Assamese language and their mouthpiece Jonaki considered Assamese folklore as an integral part of Assamese literary and cultural repertoire in 1889. After that Assamese folklore became a marker of national identity. This sudden change in the attitude towards folklore was a reflection of the changing attitude of the Assamese intellectuals toward their nativity.
When the oral tradition had come to be printed, there had been mediators between the very different repositories of the traditional memory based text and literature. In the nineteenth century Assam one motive for publication and printing of oral literature was to preserve traditional knowledge which must have seemed to be challenged and dying with the onslaught of alien culture. But there was also intelligent pleasure in the artistic compositions which were visible in the efforts of later nineteenth century writers and editors like Laksminath Bezbaroa and Chandrakumar Agarwala. Of course it was a much later phenomenon that happened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The earlier collector or compiler of oral literature such as proverbs and idioms seemed to print them for different reasons other than only preservation. The Baptist missionaries urgently required a vocabulary base for the missionaries and their probable students. They needed it to master the language in which they were expected to translate Christian literature. Moreover, they must have language text books for their schools and oral literature in print form also became an integral feature in their curriculum.

The history of publication of Assamese oral traditions, of the narratives, songs, sayings, and genealogies handed down over
generations is, as some historians of literacy might expect, marked by length and quality of experience of literacy. The transition of the oral traditions to print would make a fascinating history. It would be important to an examination of Assamese response to writing and print. Not every folk-literature or folk-customs died with the printing. At least with regard to traditional knowledge, Assamese masses have retained many customs of an oral tradition.

In the 1840s and 1850s the missionaries produced books of sayings in Assamese with English translations. They also published Indian and Western folk-narratives in Orunodoi, the first Assamese journal. In that sense, the missionaries were the first to decide how the oral texts, the form of songs, sayings and genealogies, should be laid out in print. It is quite interesting to note that the way in which oral narratives are printed may alter how they are understood. For instance, in Burhiair Sadhu, the first major printed anthology of Assamese folktales, Lakshminath Bezbaroa who was also the first Assamese short story writer narrated the tales in exactly the same way he wrote some of his short stories. A close comparison between these two could reveal him as an intrusive editor by late twentieth century standards. Perhaps to please readers unfamiliar with oral style, he restructured
folk-tales by changing words, names, grammar, and the order of events. Editing for a reader shifts the emphasis from the ear to the eye, and the isolated reader requires explicitness unusual to the oral texts which were typically oblique and elliptical to regular performer-cum narrator as well as the audience. The public purpose of print pressed changes on that style. Print also brought translation process into the oral traditions as it is rare for the oral literature to be only in one language. The missionaries paved the way by translating non-Assamese folktales into Assamese.

4.6 Response to Folklore in print

It is true that the complexities of the shift to print can be envisaged from other printed material too. But folklore in printed form gives legitimacy to the folk-culture. In pre-print time, the response of the Assamese elite society to folklore was ambiguous to say the least. It did not consider folk-literature as a genre of pure or mainstream literature. But Madhava Kandali, Sankaradeva and other noted Assamese writers used different folk-materials and expressions in their adaptations of Sanskrit epics and puranas. Kandali liberally used folk
expressions and idioms in the fourteenth century Assamese translation of the Ramayana by Valmiki (Lekharu: 1993: 41-47). Same ambiguity may be noted in the reception of folk-cultures too. Ahom kings included Bihu in their cultural calendar and observed the festival at the Ranghar in the capital. In fact, it was also used as a war technique in the later phase of the Ahom monarchy when Ahom troops recaptured their palace from the Moamorias in the disguise of a Bihu performing group. Despite the royal recognition, aristocrat Assamese did not recognize the festival as a major one in their writings. There was not any reference of it in the mainstream medieval Assamese literature too. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this attitude prevailed up to the late nineteenth century.

Publication also saw a shift from a local version to a consolidated Assamese content, and therefore fragmentation of the unified local tradition. They began what was to become a common practice of knitting together local versions of stories into a printed Assamese whole. As the alphabet obscured dialect, so print masked dialectical identity in the oral traditions. And this tradition was continued to the end of the next century.
The production of books had been limited by the Assamese people in the nineteenth century and invariably the work of Assamese scholars, those whose professions—in the church, school and other government jobs—required literate scholarship. This raises some interesting questions about the nature of Assamese literacy. By the end of the century, the Jonaki group made an exceptional contribution to the printing and discussions of oral literature. It was a combination of analytic mind and literary spirit as well as their desire to revive the oral arts that led them to collect hundreds of songs and narratives for publication. Of all the oral traditions the songs and the tales were most visible in writing and print. But it is still not clear about its reception from the common people who were the important informants as well as performer of these traditions.

There is no way of knowing whether, the circumstances being different, Assamese would have printed more or less of their traditional knowledge in the nineteenth century. If the colonial forces had not started the printing of traditional knowledge and oral narratives, Assamese elites might not get interested in those literary forms which were considered as rustic before the missionaries’ enterprises. At that time, there was still adherence to the thinking and ways of an oral
tradition among the community. Few traditionally wise men wanted to part their knowledge to an outsider and sought to publish their knowledge. It was just like their counterparts who did not want to let print the manuscripts of *shastras and buranjis* they had with them as they were afraid of losing the sanctity in the print version.

The most conservative refused the new print technology but others valued it as a means of preservation, a voice to future generations, a way of establishing a literary heritage. The editorials and prefaces of such works may identify the scope and aspirations of publishing the folklore. It may be pointed that the somewhat limited publishing of old oral texts in the nineteenth century as early twentieth century Assam was a consequence of several factors such as a recent history of literacy, colonization, language loss and religious views about the traditional knowledge and the new found sense of pride in nationalism and oral literature.

The collection of *bihu* songs which was translated as Pastoral Poems and Ballads in the introduction in the early twentieth century may be analyzed as a case study about the standard practice of printing folklore in Assam. *Bohagi*, the first anthology of Bihu songs was
compiled by a well known Assamese historian and playwright Nakul Chandra Bhuyan and published by a reputed publishing house Chapala Sahitya Sadan of Shillong. The preface to the collection may point to some interesting features about the print and use of folklore in contemporary Assam. Bhuyan points out that the main objective of the collection was to put folklore in the national literature repertoire and use these songs in other literary writings (Bhuyan: 1923: .11). He also tried to erase the 'slangness' of some Bihu song by replacing these with some 'new' words (ibid: 7).

Different publications published oral literature in that century and all of them did not share same objectives for publishing folklore. The colonial publisher all around the colony published local oral literature for understanding local taste and customs as well as to contribute to the oriental studies which was very popular at that time.

It was almost mandatory for the American Baptist missionaries to print one or more folktales in every issue of the Orunodoi. In the eighth volume of the first year the Aesop's fable of a father, his son and the donkey was printed (Neog: 1983: 58- 59). Local folktales found place in
the missionary project later on. The missionaries never classified the tales according to their source language. Hence, *Orunodoi* printed Western and Indian folktales in the Assamese language.

The more interesting folklore project was taken by the end of that century by the *Jonaki* group. They either printed the folklore material itself or used it as the theme of their modern literary works. Their twofold agenda were very significant for the analysis of social history of Assam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the project was continued up to that point. In the first issue of the journal, Chandrakumar Agarwala penned *Bankunwari*, the first lyric in Assamese which was the amalgamation of Western style with content and flavour of Assamese folk-songs. In the same issue Bezbaroa wrote his first satire *Litiakai*, based on the popular folktale of seven idiots.

Publication based on inter lingual communication pattern between Assamese and other local languages began in the early twentieth century. Kantiram Das wrote and published a Bodo-Assamese wordbook entitled *Kachari Bhasa* in 1907. Interestingly it was published from Borpeta where many Bodo people live nearby. In a
later date of 1917 a similar book on Mising-Assamese wordbook and Mising folklore material such as *bihu* songs. But the book is interesting for two socio-literary facts. In the introduction the author Dharmananda Duara Tamuli expressed that with the knowledge of *Mising* language, Assamese people trading with the *Mising* tribe wouldn't be deceived by the later (1917). The second curious thing is the declaration by the publisher or the proprietor about the buying of the copyright of the book from the author which implies that the book might have a commercial value too.

4.7 The Nationalist Agenda

What might be less well-known, and is certainly less well-documented, is that the manipulation of underlying sources through editorial intrusions and self-censorship to serve specific agendas. This phenomenon also stretches back to the advent of print capitalism in Assam. The fine line between ethnography and fiction was sometimes blurred in that nationalist project. The concepts of distortion by subtraction or distortion by addition as two interrelated, yet distinct processes were considered necessary for creating a cultural heritage
that stands out in the Pan-Indian context. Calling to mind romantic visions of a sometimes quaint, sometimes glorious Assamese past, several writers used folk-traditions like the Kabas kapor in their writings. These objects thus served as symbols of nationalist memory and identity which could help the ongoing national identity formation process. Thus the nationalist themes of subjugation and resistance are keyed by some displays.

The folklore was considered native unlike other literary genres stemmed out of the impact of colonialism or foreign influence. As an expression of indigenous, pre-colonial culture, folktales were used as a medium for nationalism in the nineteenth century India (Blackburn: 2003: 148). In different parts of the country, foreigners as well as Indians collected and printed folktales in various regional languages. This was the second spurt of printed folktales after similar colonial enterprises of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Some basic differences emerged after analyzing and comparing colonial and native enterprises. The colonial printers used folktales either for understanding native psychology or as text for missionaries and new colonial recruits. The process was selective in the case of
missionaries. For example, Orunodoi never published an Assamese mythological tale as they were based on Hindu religion. But later native printers and publishers wanted to use folklore - mainly folktales to stress the nationalist point. However, the idea of linking folklore with nationalism was itself a Western idea. From late eighteenth century, some European nations started folklore revival movement that paved the way for nationalism (Blackburn: 2003: 148). Indian folklore collectors were also influenced by those folklore revivalist movements. Bezbaroa was the in the forefront in the mission of establishing the greatness and varieties of Assamese folklore repertoire. He was not a political nationalist – he never overtly joined the political movements and sometimes criticized their futility in his satirical writings. But, unlike Asam Bandhu, Bezbaroa never treated politics as untouchable. In Kripabar Borbaruar Kakatar Topola, Bezbaroa proved himself to be politically aware( Hazarika: 1988:1275). It was also evident from the choices he made as themes for some of his writings. In his historical plays like Jaymati Kunwari( Hazarika: 1988: 1137-1174) which was later made in to the first Assamese feature film by another nationalist Jyotiprasad Agarwala in 1935, Bezbaroa glorified the recent past and created a national symbol in Jaymati. On the other hand, he blamed
inner intrigues for the fall of the Ahom kingdom and loss of freedom (ibid:1175-1229). But he used popular folktales like Litikai and Chikarpati Nikarpati as themes for his comedies which treatments were greatly influenced by Shakespearean comedies like Comedy of Errors. It was an interesting admixture of local content with colonial style that paved the way for the beginning of the modern period of Assamese literature.

At the same time, he engaged himself either in collecting folklore materials --mainly folktales - for his folktale collections or using these materials as the theme of his modern writings. It is interesting to note that the narrative styles of most of his stories are a curious mixture of traditional folktale and modern short story. He included some traditional folktales in his short-story collections. It is also interesting that he rewrite the folktales of Burhiar Sadhu after collecting them from various informants whom he duly acknowledged in the preface (Hazari: 1988: 855-909). Bezbaroa or for that matter most of the other contemporary collectors of local literary tradition at that time was not very concerned about the authenticity of the collected version. S.K.Bhuyan also edited the buranjis and added, subtracted or
combined two or more texts before publishing those in the early twentieth century. Maheswar Neog describes this style as *singimuri jora* or the carpenter’s trick of joining of one end of one piece with the head of another piece (Neog: 1988:15). Bezbaroa also believed that a folktale must have a distinct structure and style. Otherwise it would become like ‘curd diluted with water’ (Baruani: 2003: 13).

It is clear that Bezbaroa’s *Burhi Air Sadhu* was compiled from repertoire of several story tellers, yet it was the work of Bezbaroa as an individual that was used in the construction of a national identity. Though he acknowledges his eighteen informants in the preface of the book he asserts that he has rewritten the tales again by mixing different versions (Bezbaroa: 2010:7). In a sense, it was an individual voice that was taken into the public sphere. The multiple voices that were contained in the text were hidden from the public view. Yet the fact that they were contained in the text was one of the main reasons why it was seen as representing the people and capturing the national spirit.
In the earlier stages, modern Assamese literature relied heavily on local folklore material for their expressions as well as their themes. Most of the leading litterateur of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century such as Bezbaroa, Gohainborooah, Chandrakumar Aagarwala and Ananadachandra Agarwala and others used various folklore materials as the base for their modern literary pieces. In the first issue of Jonaki, Bezbaroa published his first farce Litikai based on a popular Assamese folktale. Padmanth Gohaiboroah published his farce Teton Tamuli which was also an adaptation of a popular folktale of the same name.

4.8 Creating a homogenous culture

The printing of folklore in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Assam served several other purposes besides giving fixity to the text. They were used as an important vector in the nation making process.

The Assamese magazines published in the late nineteenth century like Asam Bandhu, Mou and Jonaki devoted enough space for
creating awareness about 'Assamese' culture and retaining the good traditions. In Asam Bandhu, Gunabhiram published a series of essay on the customs of the past and present Assam to give them a kind of fixity and a point of reference for later cultural historians. It also documented the rapid change in the society which was a natural fallout of colonialism.

In the Assamese nation building project, the standardization of language and culture took the centre stage which was evident from the agenda of Asomiya Bhasar Unnati Sadhini Sabha. Establishing one written Assamese language throughout Assam and compilation of a comprehensive cultural history of Assam were two of the major aims of the organization (Saikia: 2001: .014). Thus the rapid growth of national culture in Assam was closely connected to an emerging civil society centering on voluntary associations and the press. This connection helped invest the cultural platform with a wide range of political meanings in the next century.

The choice of a dress or the status of a folk-festival might carry some political meaning. Recent cultural history has given priority to
language, symbols, and everyday practices. Scholars have repeatedly demonstrated how varied contexts and behaviours such as ceremonies, parades, or reading allowed men and women to create novel forms of cultural and political participation. The role and status of Bihu festival, its various rituals and the evolution of the festival from one of many to the national one of the entire Assamese community may be analyzed as an interesting case study of semiotic and culture politics in colonial times. Assamese press played an important role in the making of the Bihu festival. The modern Assamese literature of that period also used it as a symbol for liveliness, openness or innocence. Rajanikanta Bordoloi, the first major Assamese novelist used this festival so extensively in his novel Rongili that he has been criticized for giving it more importance than the main love story (Neog: 1986: 297).

Largely overlooked in Assamese historiography yet ripe for semiotic investigation, the Assamese cultural reforms in the nineteenth century provides an invaluable tool for mapping the contours of both an emerging civil society and the political practices of Assamese nationalism. At moments of political agitation and crisis, symbolic
practices can often take on a heightened significance. Nineteenth century Assamese society was too premature to observe all these reaction to the colonial power. Though Indian National Congress was born in 1885, it could not penetrate to the common Assamese people in that century. It is interesting to note the in the same year Indian National Congress was established, *Asam Bandhu*, the literary magazine declared in the first editorial itself that it would not have politics on its agenda (Saikia:1984:3). Meanwhile, Assamese intellectuals in the last two decades of that century tried to reshape Assamese society in such a way where tradition and modernity co-existed. Thus, even as they wavered between advocating modernity and praising nationalist reforms, most writers drew a distinction between masculine consumption of modern or western styles and feminine austerity of refusing it and attachment to native traditions. Yet this dichotomy, like all such polarities, was neither stable nor universal. In the early second half of the nineteenth century, many Assamese intellectuals including Anandaram and Gunabhiram advocated for education for girls. In Ram-Nabami, the first Assamese modern play, Gunabhiram portrayed Assamese young girls having education in 1857-58. But after thirty years, a few intellectuals propagated against
any such moves for Assamese girls as it would go against Indian as well as Assamese tradition. It was ironical that Gunabhiram himself published an article in two parts against ‘foreign’ education for women by Ratneswar Mahanta in *Asam Bandhu* in 1885 (Saikia: 1984:139-142,161-164). Even a foreign-returned Bolinarayan Bora vehemently opposed formal education for women as it would rob away the virtues of the Assamese women (Sarma: 1980: 1-6). Interestingly he did not mind other changes in the lifestyle that had come with colonialism (ibid: 1).

4.9 Conclusion

The most interesting part of the mission of modernizing the nation on the basis of folklore was that the mission was carried only by journals and books. Thus the Assamese language became a major catalyst in that mission. In that process the language also got shaped and reshaped to be fit to express these new concepts. A large repertoire of printed folklore text influenced contemporary Assamese writers who
were in search of an original yet rich and rooted linguistic style for their literary creations.

The publication of various folklore materials had an important effect in the process of Assamese nation building. With its appearance, the status of Assamese language and the Assamese literature was immediately elevated. By demonstrating the richness of the Assamese language, these works gave Assamese literature the much needed rich and vibrant heritage.