CHAPTER: I INTRODUCTION

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

History is replete with changes, which are inherent in all types of societies. Assamese society was no exception to this general rule. It is widely believed that the changes it underwent during the British rule were one of its kinds – owing to its uniqueness and in its dynamism. This very change has been ascribed as Assam’s tryst with the so called Modernity, as perceived in the West.

It is necessary to dwell upon Tradition to have a greater grasp of Modernity. Tradition and Modernity are more often taken as binary opposites. Tradition is a set of social practices which seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioral norms and values. It is the transmission of long established customs or beliefs from generation to generation. A traditional society is one that follows these long established customs or beliefs, implying continuity with a real or imagined past, and usually associated with widely accepted rituals or other forms of behavior. Research especially done by Eric Hobsbawm and highlighted in his work, “The Invention of Tradition” (1983), has established that many traditions which are popularly perceived to be of long standing are in fact, relatively recent inventions. Example include the distinct Highland culture (of kilts, tartan, and bagpipes) of Scotland, a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century creation; and the supposedly indigenous political and economic traditions of many African societies (which were in fact invented by colonial authorities in order to make the necessary connections between local and imperial political, social and legal
systems. Put simply, a traditional society refers to "primitive" agrarian societies in all historical periods which, it is assumed, have none of the economic or socio cultural characteristics of modern urban industrial societies. A traditional society is usually contrasted with industrial, urbanized, capitalist modern society. It incorrectly groups together a wide range of non modern societies, as varied as contemporary hunting and gathering groups on one hand and medieval European states on the other. Terms like Individualism, atomism, secularism are often used to oppose modern society to societies of traditional type. Liberty and equality on one hand, interdependence and hierarchy on other are in foreground. Permanence versus mobility, ascription versus achievement allow for a neat contrariety between the two kinds of social system. Like any other traditional society, the Assamese traditional society is also thought of, as having attained its final stage of development with the dawn of modernity, superimposed on it by the erstwhile British rulers.

In order to delve deep in to the tenets of modernity, we need to distinguish the subtle differences between modernism, modernity and the concept of post modernity. Modernism denotes sweeping changes that took place, particularly in arts and literature, between the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the Second World War. There is however no clear demarcation by date, and although the term Post modern is increasingly used to describe changes since the second World War, there are some who argue that Modernism persists, and others who argue that its demise as having occurred much earlier. Modernism is usually depicted as a movement towards sophistication, mannerism, introversion, technical display, internal self skepticism and as a reaction against Victorian realism. It was a broad intellectual movement affecting and affected by technological, political and ideological changes and developments of the time.
Einstein’s theory of relativity, discovery of X rays, beginning of mass production of cars and crucially, shattering new developments in warfare during the First World War, all led to generalized traits of crisis, fragmentation and introversion which can be seen as affecting all realms of culture and society at the time. Modernism was a reaction to the perceived world view of the time and the condition of modern civilization. Some has even argued that modernism was not a direct break from the past. They cite the examples of Jacques Derrida, who believed that modernistic thinking still took place in a linear and rational framework. In other words, people were changing the outer aspects but not the basic precepts and concepts that form the foundations of old thought. Linear thinking is essentially thinking in a cause and effect way – in a straight line. Non-linear thinking, which began to be supported by science and in particular physics, started to gain academic respectability. Theories like curved Space and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, all led to more questioning of the foundations of modern thinking. Scientists began to question their belief in the possibility of pure objectivity and experiments were undertaken that proved that the experimenter had a direct physical effect on the experiment. In other words, there was no way in which subjectivity could be absolutely separated for objectivity.

Postmodernism views the world as a much more complex and uncertain place. Reality is no longer fixed or determined. All truth within a postmodern context is relative to one’s viewpoint or stance. Derrida, one of the chief exponents of post structuralism, coined a term called ‘deconstruction’ which means a philosophical method of looking for weak points in modern thinking and established ways of perception. The general areas of postmodernism include art, architecture, literature and technology. Postmodernism rejects all boundaries including those, which exist between
different forms and genres of art. Postmodernism focuses on a de-structured, de-centered humanity. What this really means is that the idea of disorder and fragmentation, which were previously seen as negative qualities, are seen as an acceptable representation of reality by postmodernists. Modernism considered the fragmented view of human life as bad or tragic, while postmodernists rather celebrate this seemingly meaningless view of the world. It is an acceptance of the chaos that encourages a play with meaning. Postmodernism also accepts the possibility of ambiguity. Things and events can have two different meanings at the same time. A more rigid rational and logo centric or linear approach tries to avoid or reduce ambiguity as much as possible. Postmodern thought sees simultaneous views not as contradictory but as an integral part of the complex patterning of reality.

"Modernity" is a different term from modern times; while the latter refers to political events (Acts of Parliament) or religious (Reformation, Thirty Years’ War), modernity rather refers to the development of concepts like capitalism and individualism. A wide variety of terms are used to describe the society, social life, driving force, symptomatic mentality, or some other defining aspects of modernity. They include bureaucracy, disenchantment of the world, rationalization, secularization, alienation, commodification, decontextualization, individualism, subjectivism, linear progression, objectivism, universalism, reductionism, chaos, mass society, industrial society, democratization, centralization, hierarchical organization, mechanization, totalitarianism, and so on. Modernity is often characterized by comparing modern societies to pre-modern or postmodern ones. Many of the defining events and
characteristics listed above stem from a transition from relatively isolated local communities to a more integrated large-scale society. In general, large scale integration involves:

- Increased movement of goods, capital, people, and information among formerly separate areas, and increased influence that reaches beyond a local area.
- Increased formalization of those mobile elements, development of circuits on which those elements and influences travel, and standardization of many aspects of the society in general that is conducive to the mobility.
- Increased specialization of different segments of society, such as the division of labor, and interdependency among areas.

Seemingly Modernity is a term used to describe the condition of being "modern". The process of becoming modern, i.e. modernization brings a series of seemingly indisputable benefits to people. Lower infant mortality rate, decreased death from starvation, eradication of some of the fatal diseases etc. brought great happiness to humanity. But, on the other hand, it also has it's dark side. Most prominent instances of it are the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, Stalin's Great Purges and the Holocaust.

The dynamics of modernity first appeared in the city of Athens during the first days of democracy. Socrates and the Sophists are the significant actors who embody dynamics in both action and thought. The tradition is called in to question. Convictions that had been held to be true, holy and certain are now queried and tested. Everything is open to query and everything is subject to rational scrutiny and refuted by argument.

Agnes Heller in the work, "A Theory of Modernity", argues that Hegel, Marx and Weber are the three major founding fathers of the theory of Modernity. Hegel
legitimates the modern age by finding a yardstick—freedom of all, to compare different cultures. He tries to deconstruct the pre-modern social arrangement and give legitimacy to the modern world. Marx viewed the modern society as dynamic and rationalized. A modern society is one which is always future oriented and industrialized; and where concepts of right and true are pluralized and the traditional customs are dismantled. Weber's reconstruction of the emergence of modernity is presented as the tentative truth. The better, more reliable, approximation, the more variegated are the perspectives of approximation.

Whether Marx played a role in the study of Modernity, or whether he had a theory of Modernity, should not be viewed from the perspective of whether he initialized or used the concept of Modernity, as it is used today, but should be viewed from the perspective of whether he offered us a special and substantial understanding of the central issues of the theory of Modernity.

The birth of capitalism opens such a new era, that Marx added the word 'Modern' before 'Capitalism' on occasions when he referred to it, or simply abbreviated as 'modern society'. In Marx's vision, modernity is not an issue limited within an area or part of society, but a social issue concerned with the integrity of society. This has something to do with Gidden's view that Modernity is the abbreviation of Modern Society or industrial Society in its simplest form.¹

In the analysis of the progress of economic forms of society, Lenin considered modern production as the mark of modern society. To emphasize the decisive significance of modern production to modernity is not to explain the formation and development of modernity only in terms of economy; it is also not to reject and deny the

role other factors play. Marx only accentuated the 'fundamental' effects that modern production has on modernity; he did not say that only economy would have any effects. From the point of view of the abstruse origination and the initial dynamics of modernity, the coming to stage of modern production did play a decisive role. Yet economy is not the sole factor that drives the process of its gradual development and evolution.²

According to Lyotard, capitalism is necessarily connected with modernity. Modernity developed in the capitalist society is not only a result and outward exhibition of capital logic, but is also a prerequisite and an inner mechanism of it. Without modernity, there would be no normal movement of capital. So, it is safe to say that the factors of modernity lie not outside the logic of capital but are contained in it.

According to Marx, modernity is ultimately the product of the movement of capital that is based on modern production. It rises and progresses alongside the movement of capital. The logic of capital is but the constant pursuing of the greatest profit. Profit stimulates capitalists to transform and renovate without a break. “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society”.³ It is the logic of capital that stimulates the formation and development of Modernity.⁴

Marx maintained that the development of modernity began with the great mental liberation when reason became the criteria of judgments; afterwards modernity developed from rationality and enlightenment into political freedom and democracy; later it developed from political freedom and equality to economic freedom and

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⁴ *Ibid*, p. 256
equality; economic freedom and equality then demanded new fairness, righteousness, justice and all round progress in all areas of social life. This is basically the logic of Modernity. After Capital came into being, the principal question it faced was to get rid of the Bondage of religious domination and to remove the obstacle of feudal despotism to get onto the fast road of development. The prerequisite of this has to be the implementation of reason so that the fetters of mind might be broken up, individuality, subjectivity and self consciousness might stand out. On this basis the political demands and claims of democracy, freedom and human rights might be put forward. Once the bondage of the mind and politics had been removed, it became the objective demand of the logic of capital to implement firmly the market rules that were harmonious with the development of capital. This becomes necessary to achieve economic freedom and equality because the movement and accretion of capital could not go on without market exchanges, and market exchanges have to be free and equal. The emergence of political equality and freedom would accompany this process, because it is the prerequisite of the smooth flowing of capital to establish economic freedom and equality, to adjust all the laws concerned, and to set up new frameworks of the political and social relations. Thus, “as developed in juridical, political, social relation, they are merely this basis to higher power”.  

It was Marx who observed Modernity as well as the development and evolution of modern society from a historical perspective. According to him, although Modern society is by far the most developed form of society, it is by no means a sudden phenomenon without any historical prelude. Modern Society is generated within the traditional society. Modern Civilization is built on the basis of the accumulation of traditional civilization, which no one hand presents itself as the accumulation of material groundwork, and on the other hand as the accumulation of knowledge and technology. “The means of production and exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society”. 7 It is safe to say that modern society is the way by which previous social contradictions get resolved and new social contradictions function, whose coming into being does not demonstrate a pure rupture of society, but is the unification of the continuity and discontinuity of social development. 8

Marx viewed Modern Society as an ‘organic body’. He asserted that “the present society is no solid crystal; but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing”. 9 This organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. The process of becoming this totality forms a moment of its process, of its development. 10 Essentially, three notions about the development of modern society are illuminated here; the first, it is a process to totality; the second, it is a ‘built-

in' process; and the third, it is a 'self organized' process. These processes are both a developmental process of the social organic body and a process of growth and progress of modernity.¹¹

Modernity has different accentuations in different historical periods. Modernity in the period of Renaissance is different from its counterpart in the period of capitalist revolution; the latter is also different from modernity in the period of the industrial revolution; it is the same with modernity in the period of industrial revolution and modernity in the period of later capitalism. The change of accentuation of modernity is caused by the different demands of development in different periods. Different periods have different motives, thus naturally modernity of society during different periods have different emphasis. Secondly, the same factor of modernity has different character, function and quality in different periods. For instance, reason appeared as the opponent religious faith. It was an expression of self consciousness and self awakening of human beings and played a great role in the promotion of social enlightenment, the improvement of technology and the development of the entire society. Yet Reason gradually deviated from its original nature. It drove people’s values and spirituality into crisis while driving social economy and technology in the direction of rational development. Hence Weber exclaimed, “With the expanding of Reason and Rationalization, the ultimate and the most sublime values have retreated from Public life into the transcendental realm of mystic life”.¹² Thirdly, the factors of modernity occupy different positions in the general structure of modernity in different periods. The factors such as discrepancy, pluralism and heterogeneity which were neglected in the past are

attracting more and more attention nowadays and are getting ever more prominent in practice.\textsuperscript{13}

To emphasize the mobility of modernity does not mean to neglect its relative stability. Because history itself is a unification of Continuity and discontinuity, the modernity that is born from such a history must be a unification of mobility and stability. The spirit of science and Reason, the spirit of democracy, freedom and equality as well as the spirit of self liberation and all round progress, which are all advocated and sponsored by modern society, are all fundamental essence and common character of modernity, which enjoy relative stability. There would not be such a thing as Modernity without these essential contents and essential spirits. As the fundamental meaning and essence of modernity tends to be stable and to which the development of modern society must hold fast eternally, the actual presentation of modernity tends to be fluctuating thus needing timely adjustments according to historical conditions. This is indeed the fundamental standpoint of Marx’s historical dialectics.\textsuperscript{14}

Marx adequately affirmed the positive results of modernity and highly appraised the ‘great civilization of Capital’; in the meantime, he relentlessly exposed social fissions and various phenomena of reification resulting from Modernity.\textsuperscript{15} Marx affirmed the fruits of civilization created by modernity but he opposed the form of society specific to modern civilization and the antagonizing social relations it contains. Recognizing this point would be very important for a correct comprehension of Marx’s standpoint about Modernity.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 260
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
If we view modernity from the point of view of globalization, modernity was born with international character. If 'tradition' could at least be handed down through the ages in an isolated environment of a state or a nation, 'modernity' could hardly survive such a condition from the very beginning. As far as its beginning of origin is concerned, modernity was born at a time when national history turned into world history. The great geographical discovery and the growth of world market enabled fast and extensive spreading of modern civilization and thus developed modernity globally. Modernity has also been growing and evolving in an environment in which different countries influence one another. 17 Modernity reflects the common character of modern civilization. Although modernity has obvious national characteristic due to its different features and forms of modernity in different countries and nations, the emphasis on nationality does not imply the negation of its common character. As a symbol of modern civilization, modernity displays distinctive common universality. Its universality comes from the universality of social praxis. With the enhancement of commonness of production and the expansion of intercourse, the previously isolated and dispersed communities unite into larger communities after conflicts; the localized cultures mingle into new cultures through communications and collisions as well. 18

Openness is characteristic of modernity. Barbarism and fatuity are generally linked with isolation, whereas modernity and civilization with openness. It is because of this Marx sometimes called those uncivilized or half civilized nations “barbarous” nations, and those carrying out the capitalist mode of production “Civilized “ nations. As the difference between being open and being closed reflects the difference between being advanced and being backward, such consequences would become inevitable as

Marx stated, “Just as it (the capitalist) has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West”. 19 Because modernity is always closely connected with openness, it is necessary for a country to open its door and walk into the world in order to develop its modernity. “One Nation can and should learn from others”. 20

By adapting the socio structural rather than cultural definition, we can regard modernity as the type of social arrangements that became dominant in Western Europe after the English Industrial and the French Revolutions. These arrangements entailed unprecedented social mobilization that weakened people’s ties with their local, self contained communities and brought them much closer to ‘the centre’, i.e. integrated/incorporated them into the much wider political, economic, social and cultural arenas which, in part at least, constitute what we call the nation state. 21

Modernity first appeared in Western Europe. But, it is also true that

a. Key institutional elements of this process can be found, in less developed form, in several preindustrial, non European civilizations.

b. It is not at all certain that the breakthrough or take off could only have happened in the west. It has been argued equally convincingly that the great transformation could have happened at more or less the same time in other civilizations with preconditions as favourable as those in Europe. McNeil has argued that as early as the eleventh century a variety of inventions in transport and communication in Eurasia led to the development of an international economic network. If China

19 ibid
was more advanced Europe, subsequently its centralized government was less able than the more decentralized, 'disorganized' European political system to promote industrial capitalism. According to McNeil, if the European system was more centralized/organized (and therefore created obstacles to the capitalist breakthrough). 22 If one accepts the above reasoning, one can argue that the explanation why the breakthrough happened in western Europe has less to do with 'unique' cultural elements (such as the Protestant work ethic), and more with the combination/timing of elements that were not unique and could be found in several other complex civilizations during the pre-breakthrough period.

c. Irrespective of what position one takes on the 'uniqueness of the West' issue, it is a fact that not all, but only certain elements of western modernity have a trans-cultural character today. These, regardless of where they were first fully institutionalized, constitute what Parsons has called evolutionary universals. No society can advance or even survive in the present world without acquiring the broad economic, political, cultural and modern social features. If this is seriously taken into account, it becomes quite obvious that late developing countries trying to 'catch up' with the West are not merely imitating western specific institutional features. They are also trying, more or less successfully, to adopt some trans-cultural, universal features that happened to be fully institutionalized for the first time in Western Europe. to be more specific, in the same way as efforts to catch up with English industrialization by European latecomers like France and Germany did not entail the 'Anglicization' of these countries, so today non western 'late-late' comers can industrialize without necessarily

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becoming fully westernized. In other words, if we distinguish western specific (eg. The protestant work ethic) from evolutionary-universal features of modernity (eg. The nation state), then it is possible to see Westernization not as modernity tout court, but as simply one type of modernity. 23

Modernity refers to a type of social organization which, from a social integration point of view, is characterized by an unprecedented level of social mobilization/ incorporation into the centre; and from the point of view of system integration, by an equally unprecedented level of institutional differentiation. This type of mobilization and differentiation leads to the destruction of segmental localism and to the creation of broader, highly differentiated economic, political, social and cultural arenas within which the practices of individuated subjects are constituted / regulated by such institutional complexes as the nation state, national markets and/ or national planning agencies, national systems of welfare and population surveillance/ management, mass literacy and nationalist ideologies. Although these structural features were initially fully institutionalized in Western Europe (after the seventeenth century scientific revolution had led to the creation of powerful economic, political, social and cultural technologies that profoundly transformed Ancient regime European societies), they constitute evolutionary universals: No society can survive today without adopting such institutional forms as the nation state, mass literacy, etc.

The above does not lead to the conclusion that modernity equals Westernization because

- Important elements of modern institutions existed (in less developed form) in several non western civilizations.

- The type of revolutions (scientific, industrial, democratic) that 'modernized Europe' could possibly have happened first in other parts of the 'developed' pre industrial world:

- If modernization or development in the non western world entails a process of 'catching up' with or borrowing from the west, some of the key features borrowed are not western specific but have a trans cultural, evolutionary-universal character.

- One way of dealing in a theoretically coherent manner with the great variety of existing and virtual modernity is to distinguish between formal differentiation (the passage from segments to organs) and substantive differentiation (the problem of the balanced or imbalanced relations between differentiated parts/organs). From the latter perspective, it has been argued that the type of 'balanced' inclusion of the differentiated parts that Parsons saw in western modernization (i.e. an inclusion entailing a situation where the economic logic of productivity, the political logic of democracy, the social logic of solidarity, and the cultural logic of commitment/autonomy coexist without one of them dominating the others) has never been achieved in the West or anything else. What we see today are types of modernity where the logic/values of one (or more) institutional subsystem(s) prevail and 'colonize' the other institutional spheres.  

The one way to gauge the idea of modernity in Assam is by studying the life of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan who was extolled as the first modern person from Assam. The study examined whether the sense of Modernity, however incipient it may be, as exemplified in the persona of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan was indeed a real one or did he simply blend in both tradition and Modernity. The work would also try to focus on the issue of whether or not, the so called Modernity in Assam was the direct pure Modernity as perceived in the West or was it merely a process of Westernization. Westernization denotes anything, which comes under the influence of cultural, economic or political systems of Europe and North America.

Thus, even though we can assume that the Assamese modernity was the real modernity as perceived in the West; was it not superimposed on it? If that be the case, it would not be naïve on our part to consider that the sense of modernity in the Assamese society, or indigenous modernity, so to speak had been hijacked. Thus, Assam’s own indigenous trajectory of acquiring modernity has been hijacked by the process of Westernization. In that scenario, one could come to the conclusion that the Assamese society failed to give a measured response to western modernity. Or was it merely Indianization, which is nothing but westernization to a large extent in externals and reassertion of largely Indian values, mingled with humanitarian values of west in matters of spirit. Did the so called Assamese modernity come from conscious and deliberate effort at technical, organizational and institutional innovations?

M. N. Srinivas, the renowned sociologist, views Westernization as the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over one hundred and fifty years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels... technology, institutions, ideology and values. So, it would be very incorrect on our part
to assume that Westernization was synonymous with the process of achieving Modernity. Or was it mere Indianization, which is nothing but westernization to a large extent in externals and reassertion of largely Indian values, mingled with humanitarian values of west in matters of spirit. Did the so called Assamese modernity come from conscious and deliberate effort at technical, organizational and institutional innovations?

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan is known as the harbinger of Assamese modernity, the nature of modernity as exemplified by him. Therefore, if we carefully make a serious study of his contributions and achievements, we can safely assume to be near to the exact nature of this so called modernity and at the same time, efforts would be made to form convincing appraisal of the perception of that modernity in the minds of the Assamese people.

One serious task of this work would be to recover the greatness of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, which had been subsumed under that of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, as he had been addressed as the Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Assam by the enlightened sections of the Assamese society.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

a. To unravel the nature of Modernity in Assam as exemplified by Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan.

b. To recover the greatness of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, which had been subsumed under that of Raja Ram Mohan Roy?

c. To highlight the resilience of the Assamese society in the midst of two forces- vertical one in the form of British hegemony and horizontal one in the form of Bengali linguistic dominance.
1.3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many works have been devoted to Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan but they deal with his perceptions of Modernity only tangentially. Very scant attention is paid to chart out the perceptions of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan on Modernity. Some of the prominent works by and on Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan are as follows:

*A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language and on vernacular Education in Assam* by Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan portrayed convincingly how Assamese was an independent language with a rich literature of its own.

*Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity, Economy* by Amalendu Guha lays stress on Assamese Renaissance and mentions the great votaries of Assamese modernity. But, little attention is paid to the contributions of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan as a whole, and is just being juxtaposed with Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal.

*Assam in Freedom Movement* by Anuradha Dutta tries to emphasize on the contributions of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan but the nature of the modernity as well as the perception of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan on the same is not treated adequately.

*The Comprehensive History of Assam Vol. IV* by H.K. Barpujari tries to concentrate more on the rise of the Assamese middle class as well as on the contributions of Christian Missionaries in the field of education and society.
Assam in the Days of Company by H.K. Barpujari deals with Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Maniram Dewan. But, the structural framework of Assamese modernity and the initial perception of the Assamese society towards it have not been given adequate space.

Anglo Assamese Relations by S.K. Bhuyan describes Assam’s first contact with British Empire. But, it appears to give inadequate space to social history of Assam compared to that of the political history of the same.

Social and Economic History of Assam (1853-1921) by Rajen Saikia gives adequate space to Anandaram’s Agrarian thinking and the Native Colonial Bureaucracy. He dwells on Anandaram Dhekial Phukan’s administrative skills and his contributions to the development of Assamese Language in conjunction with the efforts of the Christian Missionaries.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukanar Jiban Charitra by Gunaviram Barua deals with the growth and development of the Assamese language and tries to glorify the contributions of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan in the field of growth of Assamese language and in the growth of Assamese Nationalism. In this first modern Assamese biography, the author has brought in quite a few other new elements that make this biography distinct from the earlier hagiographies. The life story has been told with the help of ascertained facts only, though there are no footnotes or references to prove the statements.
Anandaram Dhekial Phukan: Plea for Assam and Assamese by Dr. Maheswar Neog tries to highlight the administrative skills and literary talents in Anandaram Dhekial Phukan. Herein also, we find the dearth of materials relating to the issue of Assamese Modernity and its structural framework.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

The study has tried to see whether the little and the Great Traditions’ approach as upheld by Robert Redfield could be employed in the situation of Assam. Robert Redfield used the aforesaid approach in his studies of the Mexican Communities. Influenced by it, Milton singer and McKim Marriott have conducted some studies on the social changes in India. The basic ideas in this approach are 'civilization' and 'social organization of tradition'. This approach is based on the evolutionary view that civilization or the Structure of tradition (which consists of both cultural and social structures) grows in two stages: first, through orthogenetic or indigenous evolution, and second, through heterogenic encounters or contacts with other cultures or civilizations. The social structure of these civilizations operates at two levels: (a) that of folk or unlettered peasants and second (b) that of elite or "reflective" few. The cultural process in the former comprise the little tradition and those in latter constitute the great Tradition. There is constant interaction between two levels of tradition. In this approach, it is assumed that all civilizations start from a primary or orthogenetic level of cultural organization and in course of time, are diversified not only through internal growth, but more importantly, through contact with other civilizations. The study examined how Assamese society which grew first through orthogenetic or indigenous evolution went through a heterogenic encounter against other two great traditions namely the Western or British as well as the Bengali society.
1.5. Library used for the research

1. Libraries which have already been visited to collect the research data:


   b. Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies. Panbazar, Guwahati.

   c. Indian Council of Historical Research, North East Regional Centre, Gauhati University Campus.

   d. District Library (Reference Section). Dighalipukhuripar, Guwahati.

   e. Department of Archives. Government of Assam, Dispur.


   g. Visvabharati Library, Santiniketan.

   h. National Archives of India, New Delhi.