Chapter-7

Conclusion

In the course of this study an attempt was made to explore the advertisements published in the colonial period in Assam as a source of history of the period. It was observed during the study that the advertisements are till now not explored as source for writing history and can provide much information of different fields of this period, there by adding a lot to the existing knowledge. As so far this source has not been explored, many questions and difficulties were arisen during this study but attempt was made to address the questions and solve the difficulties.

Nearly 100 magazines and newspapers were published in Assam in different languages Assamese, Bengali, English, etc. All of those did not contain advertisement. Moreover all the magazines or newspapers were not of the same life span. Most of the magazines or newspapers had a publication of less than three years. Many had a span of only few months. Advertisements became a regular feature of the print media only in the last decade of the twentieth century. In the all India context, it is seen that the first newspaper of India, Hicky’s Bengal Gazette of 1780 was full of advertisement but in Assam this development was late because of many factors. Before Jonaki 11 newspapers and magazines were published in Assamese or English but none had tried to make advertisement a regular feature of the venture. Among these ventures 8 were published from Assam and it was difficult to get advertisement in Assam as market economy has not been adequately
developed fully in this part of the country. The *Jonaki*, started by some students living in Calcutta needed advertisement to survive and it was not difficult to get few advertisements in Calcutta. Once this Paper became popular it began to get advertisements. It is observed that apart from publications like *Orunudoi* and *Dipti* which were published with a missionary zeal and did not need money from additional source to survive and organs of institutions like the *Cottonian* and *Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika* which were funded by institutions, many magazines and newspapers survived for long period in the colonial period in Assam gave importance to advertisements and got it. After *Jonaki* the newspapers and magazines which survived for a long time in the colonial period like *Times of Assam*, *Asomiya*, *Asom Banti*, *Banhi* and *Awahan* made advertisement a regular feature of their ventures.

As advertisement has a direct connection with the market economy, the developments in the economic field can be understood well from the advertisements. We come to know about the industrial development of the state at that time. This may not be an adequate source to know about the entire industrial development of the period but the advertisements provide us some information about certain products which may be rare otherwise. Tea is the most precious legacy of the British period. It is a well known fact that tea industry was developed from the nineteenth century. The advertisement provides us information about its ancillary industries. We also came to know from the advertisements about the marketing channels of the manufactured tea. The advertisements also provide us information about the changes
brought to the socio-economic life of the people of Assam by the tea industry. The advertisements provide us first hand information regarding the developments of some other nature based industries like coal, lime, etc. The developments of chemical factories, Ayurvedic houses, etc. are some important and otherwise rare information provided by the advertisements. The advertisement has emerged as a very important source regarding the Ayurvedic houses. It is seen in the advertisement that in almost all corners of the state, this particular indigenous method of medical science was developed significantly. The information provided by the advertisements help us to know the history of the particular Ayurvedic house as well as the practice, the areas where this specialization was developed, the diseases which can be cured by the method, the names of the persons who earned fame in this particular segment etc. The advertisements also provide us information on the different entrepreneurial activities that took place in the state during the colonial period. They give an impression that though limited the people of the state entered different field of entrepreneurial activities during the colonial period.

The history of the financial institutions in the state can be traced from the advertisements. Most of the financial organizations working in the field gave their advertisements. As banking, insurance, stock and share, etc., were considered as middle class affair and the subscribers of the printed media belonged mainly to the middle class, all financial institutions tried to use the media for expansion of their business. Analyzing the financial activities of the people in the colonial period, Dr. Rajen Saikia has opined “Whatever saving was possible, the people were
unwilling to deposit” but the list of 15 banks and 32 insurance company functioning in Assam in the colonial period has indicated how through different techniques the financial companies had penetrated the market and advertisement was definitely a tool in this regard. The policies, schemes, rate of interest, dividend, etc., were reflected clearly by the advertisements. It is very difficult probably for someone dealing with this subject to find out a more reliable source with firsthand information than these advertisements.

During the British period with the gradual monetization of the economy, trade and commerce improved considerably. The advertisements give us an idea of such developments. The people were accustomed with many new consumer goods, food, dress, etc. Apart from the British, Bengali amolahs, Marwari banias played important role in introducing these things in the state. To create a taste among the Assamese people for commodities not locally available, “hats” and markets were established by the authorities. The advertisements give us an idea of the new things with which the people were accustomed to in the colonial period and as middle class people were the first target of the manufacturers, advertisement in the printed media, the only advertising media of the period was the most reliable means to get information about the commodities. The advertisements provide information about the new business avenues, jobs and salaries. For different jobs the employer gave advertisements in the newspapers. The people of middle class had special attraction for the jobs as they considered the jobs as the only way to maintain or upgrade their status. For such people advertisement was a special attraction in the papers. For
government establishments probably advertisements were mandatory. In the sectors like Railway, Assamese people did not go for jobs in those days. Apart from the British officials, the system was dominated by the Bengalies and jobs in the Railways were filled up by them but advertisements of vacancies in A& B Railways were published regularly mostly in Deka Asom.

The developments in the transport and communication system are reflected well in the advertisements. Though archival sources provide us information regarding the developments in this field, the advertisements of tenders given by PWD, Railways, etc., are some rare documents which throw light in some new areas. The advertisements of different motor car companies can be considered as some rare pieces. Though documents are available in the archives regarding the implementation of different Tax and Tariffs, the newspaper advertisements published for public intimation can very well supplement our existing knowledge.

Regarding the cultural history of the colonial period normally we get information from the writings of the legendary persons, memoirs of different personalities, interviews with octogenarians etc. The advertisements provide us supportive documents of those statements. Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwalla wrote how in the early twenties of the twentieth century he first composed the tune of a song with a harmonium and how his father sang a song with organ. These statements are supported by the advertisements of the establishments in the print media of Assam dealing with western instruments in that period. Jaimati, a historical story of Laxminath Bezbarua, before being released as a talkie, was directed as a
drama jointly by Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and Bishnuprasad Rabha. This information along with the information of the gramophone records of Sanola company and information of many such records and artists which may not be preserved in physical form after nearly a century, are still there in the advertisements with vivid information as the witness of history. From the advertisements we have discovered the names of some artists about whom till now other sources were silent.

During the colonial period the British government had either established or extended cooperation in establishing schools of various categories. The British intention of creating a group of English educated native people fit for jobs of clerks and interpreters was clearly defined in the words of Macaulay. He said “It is impossible for us with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." The people also emphasized on education as education could provide their wards with jobs and with this attitude the general public came out to establish institutions in different parts of the state. Women education also made progress during the period. The advertisement published on different institutions depicted a picture of the developments in the field of education during that period. The information like the establishment of schools by individual proprietor in those days provided by the advertisements is not found anywhere else.
The advertisements throw light on the changing life style of the people. People imitating the British started using new commodities, food items, etc. The impact of the western culture was clearly visible on the middle class especially on the people who joined different jobs under the British government. The advertisements of different food items and consumer goods which appeared frequently in the newspapers and magazines of Assam in the colonial period indicated their market in the province.

In the colonial period the Assamese people including the educated middle class was in a very distressed condition. The rule of the country was in the hand of the British while administrative jobs were in the hands of the Bengalis who knew English. The native could not enter the administrative structure easily as they did not know language. The minimum business opportunities that the British left were grasped by the Marwaris. All of a sudden the British replaced Assamese with Bengali as the language of administration and the medium of instruction in the province. In such situation the newly educated Assamese youths came out to establish the identity of the Assamese people. They started it with the language issue and with the help of the Christian missionaries they were able to establish their demand. The Assamese nationalism from its nascent stage soon became a movement in the state and its reflection can’t be seen well anywhere than in the advertisements.

The contemporary politics also had a reflection in the advertisements. The advertisements portrayed a clear picture of the freedom movement of India in Assam. Different advertisements were given by different advertisers during different
phases of the movement. The Swadeshi movement which had a direct relation with the consumer economy was reflected well in the advertisements. The leaders of the movement were used as star campaigners by the advertisers. Other political developments of the period which had impact on the socio-economic life of the people like the World War II, etc., were portrayed by the advertisements. The advertisements provide information about the formation of socio-political organizations, administrative changes, etc.

The advertisements of any period had a direct relation with the language and literature. Sometimes the advertisement becomes a good literary piece. Many poem, story, etc., are created as advertising material. During the colonial period we have seen that the impact of Bengali language was seen on the Assamese language. The Bengali language replaced Assamese as the medium of instruction in the schools and language of administration in 1836. The children had to read and write Bengali. On the other hand they spoke Assamese in home. The amolahs use Bengali. The people were confused. The similarity of the scripts of Assamese and Bengali added to the confusion. In fact till the early decades of the twentieth century, there were lot of confusions regarding spelling, grammar, etc., in Assamese which was clearly visible in the advertisements. The advertisements of books and journals were very common in the print media of colonial Assam. As the subscribers or the readers of the newspapers or magazines would be the prospective buyers of the books and journals, therefore, advertisement was a must for the writers or the publishers. Hence advertisements also gave us a clear view of the literary history of the colonial period.
Findings:

The following can be mentioned as the findings of the research in brief:

- In the colonial period, nearly about 100 news papers and magazines were published in the state. Many of these were institutional organs with no advertisements. Most of the papers had a very short span of life. Few could survive for more than 15-20 years. The papers which survived for a longer period either had some motivation like Orunudoi and Dipti or had good commercial network for advertisement and subscription like the Times of Assam, Asomiya, Banhi and Awahan.

- Since the inception of Jonaki, advertisement became a regular feature of the news papers and magazines. Some papers like the Times of Assam, Asomiya, Deka Asom, Banhi, Dainik Batori, Awahan, etc., got a good number of advertisements. Some papers got even more than 100 advertisements for each issue. The advertisers from distant places like Calcutta, Bombay, Kerala, etc., advertised in the papers of Assam.

- The advertisements published in the Print Media of Colonial Assam had impact on the society. Though the subscribers of the papers and magazines were limited, their readers were large in number as the publications were shared between multiple readers. Interviews of the octogenarians have revealed that in the villages persons like teacher,
village headman, etc., were the main subscribers of the newspapers but many people read it. The people who read the papers normally belonged to the elite class. The common people followed them and the products which are used by them were considered good by the common people. Sometimes advertisements were so attractive that it passed from mouth to mouth. Some brands established by advertisements became a synonym of the commodity.

- Tea, Coal, Lime, Oil and many other industries sprang up in Assam during the colonial period. The British took active part in exploiting the natural resources of the country to the fullest extent possible. The British government in the province encouraged the European entrepreneurs to invest in this part of the country. Apart from the production sector the European companies even entered the transportation sector. The development in the production sector led to the development of transport and communication. The advertisements reveal that many Europeans resided in Upper Assam and participated in industrial development. Many ancillary industries of these big industries sprung up in those places at the initiative of the local entrepreneurs.

- Many small industries sprang up in different parts of the state. Most of these industries were household types of industries but observing the advertisement it can be understood that these industries had a market in the province. There were many industries in the states
which prepared ink, hair oil, talcum powder, tooth powder, Rosewater, fruit juice etc.

- There were many Ayurvedic medicine houses in the state which claimed that they had their own technique for preparation of the medicine. Each house claimed that their medicines were the best. From the newspaper advertisements we come across as many as 16 Ayurvedic Houses in the state.

- Another important industry of which we found regular advertisement was the cloth making industry of different types. There were as many as 14 firms that were working in this field. Some of them were big and some were cottage industries. The Assamese silk industry also emerged in an organized form. Advertisements of Assam silk was published even in the newspapers of Calcutta.

- *Swadeshi* factor had influenced the industrial development in the state to a great extent. The use of the term *Swadeshi* by most of the advertisers of the state as well as outside reveals the impact of the *Swadeshi Movement*.

- The Government regulation of the companies is also visible from the advertisements. Implementation of the Factory Act of 1911 is distinctly mentioned in the advertisements.

- Various financial organizations like Bank, Insurance Company, share trading companies of national level had opened their branches in various places of the state. Many such companies of India had their
businesses in different parts of the world. Many such institutions were also started in the state.

- Jobs of different categories were created in different sectors. The Assam Public Service Commission, the Railway Companies, the Tea Gardens, various schools in different parts of the state and the financial institutions had offered various jobs.

- Many new commodities, facilities, services were introduced in the state during the colonial period. Facilities like the use of electricity was introduced by the British. Electricity companies were started in the early decades of the twentieth century at the initiative of the local entrepreneurs. Uses of many consumer goods were started in the province by the British which were adopted gradually by the native people. Business avenues like Hotels, Restaurants, Nursery, Nursing Home, Private Schools, etc., were adopted by the entrepreneurs of Assam in different periods of time during the colonial period.

- Prices of different commodities and services collected during this study reveal that in an interval of 80 to 100 years, the price level of the all commodities and services increased by 200 times.

- Modern transport and communication system was developed in the state in the early decades of the twentieth century. The PWD department had constructed various roads and bridges during this period. These developments were more visible in the areas with economic potential. Along with the development of roads different
car manufacturing companies had appointed distributors in the state. Two Railway companies were functioning in the province. The Assam Bengal Railway Company had a big establishment in the state.

- Tax and Tariffs imposed by the Govt. of India were implemented in the province. The Income Tax department in the state had their establishment for assessment and collection of the Tax. This department used newspaper advertisements to inform the public about the taxes.

- During the colonial period a new phase of Assamese culture was started. People started the use of various musical instruments of North India and Europe. Audio records of Assamese songs, drama, etc., were released. The songs, names of the companies, singers, directors, dramas, etc., could be recovered from the advertisements. Various information about the Assamese cinema industry at its nascent stage have been recovered from the advertisements. Information about the producers, artists, music, story and many other things are provided by the advertisements.

- Information in the field of games and sports are also provided by the advertisements. The games and sports from the west were introduced in Assam by the British and these games became popular.

- Developments in the field of education in colonial Assam can be understood through the advertisements. Schools, colleges and institutions were established in different parts of the state. School by
individual proprietors were established in those days in Assam. The British Government also took steps for development of technical and vocational education in Assam. These developments can be understood through advertisements.

- The advertisements provide information regarding the position of women. The position of women was not so satisfactory. The women did not openly participate in the socio-cultural activities. The widows had to live a miserable life. Efforts were made during the freedom struggle to uplift the position of women. Few educational institutions for the girls were established in different parts of the state. In B & A Railway advertisement for women welfare officer was published which indicate the special care taken by various concerns regarding women. Interestingly in those days women were allowed to cast their vote in the election of the Barpeta Satra.

- The religious scenario of the state can be understood from the advertisement. The Hindu Brahmanical or Vedic system had a strong root in the province. There were many followers of this system. The Neo Vaishnavite faith launched in Assam by Sankardeva, the great Bhakti Reformer became very popular in the state. Many books of these religious faiths were published during the colonial period. The population of Muslim was also considerable in the state.

- The advertisements provide many information regarding the food habit, dress habit and life style.
The advertisements provide information regarding the social ethos of the period. While on one hand people were attracted towards *Swadeshi* on the other hand most of the common people had high esteem for foreign goods (*bilati*). In the advertisements it was observed that a huge number of advertisers tried to highlight the *Swadeshi* term to attract the people. On the other hand some advertisers had tried to highlight that their product or service had been appreciated by the foreigners or their product is manufactured with foreign assistance or ideas. Those opposite ideology ran parallel in the society.

Addiction to opium was a serious socio-economic problem of the period. Different medical companies and Ayurvedic houses gave their advertisement of medicines with which one could easily come out of this problem without any side effect.

Different medical systems like Allopathic, *Ayurvedic* and *Yunani* were in vogue during colonial period. Though Allopathic system was officially adopted by the government and Licensed Medical Practitioners (LMP) were appointed by the government bodies but the regular occurrence of the advertisements of Ayurvedic and Yunani system proved that those were also popular as medical alternative in the province.
• Some diseases like Malaria, Cholera, etc, were very common in those days. Different advertisers of different medical system regularly advertised the medicines of these diseases.

• Reflection of contemporary politics was very much there in the advertisement. In the late 19th and first half of the 20th century, Assamese nationalism was in a very nascent and turbulent stage. Through the advertisements of the period, one could see a clear attempt of exploiting Assamese nationalism.

• From the third decade of the twentieth century the Indian Freedom Movement became very strong in the province of Assam. This swadeshi craze was very distinct in the advertisements of the period. Many advertisers used this swadeshi label in their advertisements. The Indian National Congress owned a corner in the minds of people of the province. The congress volunteers became the hope of light for the people of the villages in different parts of the province. This popularity of the Congress was also seen in the advertisement of the ‘Swadeshi Shilpa Factory’ of Calcutta branded a bangle as ‘Congress Churi.’

• With the freedom movement some personalities or the leaders of the freedom movement earned popularity among the mass. Names of Mahatma Gandhi, Gopinath Bordoloi, etc., were used in the advertisement to attract the people.
• With the growth of socio-political awareness in the province, many associations, organizations were formed on class and caste lines to protect their respective interests. Many organizations were formed on caste and community lines. The names of few organizations are found in the advertisements. Similarly the people of particular professions formed organizations to protect their class interest. The names of such organizations are also found in the advertisements.

• The impact of World War II on the people of the province can be understood to some extent from the advertisement. The panic created by the Second World War among the people of this region is reflected in the advertisements. The war had considerable impact on the market. The prices of the commodities were going higher as the demand was higher in comparison to supply. The large influx of the British Indian army to the region had direct impact on the market economy. The British Government tried to ensure the support of the local mass against the combined force of INA and the Japanese who entered the North East India to rescue it from the British. The government published advertisements in this regard.

• The administrative developments of the period were also reflected well in the advertisements published by different government bodies and departments.

• In the colonial period, especially in the second half of the 20th century, significant developments took place in the field of Assamese
language and literature which influenced the course of history of the province. Interestingly, Assamese print media was the epicenter of such developments and a reflection of those developments can be seen in the advertisements published in the newspapers and magazines of the period or it can be said that the advertisements were the witness of the developments in the field of language and literature.

- The emerging Assamese middle class had participated in the process of national resurgence as publishers, writers, editors, etc., Direct result of this process can be seen in the advertisements published in the newspapers and magazines of Colonial Assam on different books and publications.

- Significant developments took place in the field of religious literature. All the major Indian Sanskrit text like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Madbhagawat Gita were either translated or written in comprehensive form by different writers. The literature of the Vaishnava sect were published in large numbers. In this period, apart from the vaishnava texts, analysis of the philosophy of the vaishnava saints, their biographies etc were published in large scale.

- One of the important dimensions of literature is the translation works. During our period of study, many important works of the world literature were translated to Assamese by different writers.
In different fields of literature like children literature, drama, poetry, novel, autobiography, biography, medical science, history, etc., various books were published by individuals and different publishing houses.

The modern rules of Assamese grammar, spelling, etc., were the developments of the early 20th century. In the print media of nineteenth century and early twentieth century those rules of grammar and spelling were not followed strictly. But the replacement of the Assamese language by Bengali in 1836 brought consciousness among the people of Assam especially the elite class to establish the language on a strong footing and this effort was visible in the advertisements of the books on language.

It is expected that this study will establish the utility of advertisements as a source of history. While looking into the history of colonial Assam it is realized that advertisement can provide many information about the social, political, economic and cultural life of the people of the province in that period. Much so far undiscovered information has been discovered from the advertisements. On the other hand, these advertisements can be used as supportive documents for the statements of the eyewitness which we have seen in this study on the chapter on socio-cultural and political developments of colonial Assam. So far, as advertisements have not been seen as a historical source their preservation perhaps was not done. When compiled volumes of the magazines and newspapers were published by collecting
them from scattered places, advertisements were not included as those were considered as unimportant. It can be expected that in future steps will be taken to preserve the advertisements as valuable source of History throughout the world.

Notes and References


2. Saikia, Dr. Rajen, *Social and Economic History of Assam*, pp 143

3. *ibid.*


5. *ibid.*


