Chapter III

Channels of the New Influence

The British conquered Assam in 1826, and 10 years later two remarkable members of the American Baptist Mission, Rev. N. Brown and O.T. Cutter, arrived here with their families. This was in 1836, which, strangely enough, was also the year when Assamese was removed from the schools and law-courts of Assam. This coincidence was significant in more respects than one. The missionaries, who realized that their proselytizing activities would not succeed without a simultaneous development of the language of the people, took up the cause of Assamese and tried to open the Government's eyes to the great mistake done. In this they were helped by a few learned natives.¹ As Bengali continued for long thirty-seven years to be the medium of education and court administration in Assam, it had to be studied, at least out of necessity, by Assamese students and Government servants, and thus the study of Bengali and the struggle for restoration of Assamese went on side by side. This was an important factor in the working of Western influence in Assam, where during the first few decades of the nineteenth century there were not many English-knowing persons. So, it was natural that the impact of the West was first felt through Bengali and "Christian

¹ The outstanding among them was Anandaram Phakeyal Phukan whose A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language appeared in 1855
Assamese”, the kind of Assamese quickly picked up and used by the missionaries in their various writings. With the spread of English education, the number of English-knowing persons increased, although collegiate education was not available to many as it had to be prosecuted in Calcutta. Those having English education drank deep in the new ideas directly through English, while others with little or no such background fell back on Bengali and then on Assamese as books and newspapers in the latter gradually came to be published. Thus, English, Bengali and Assamese worked almost simultaneously as media of conveying Western ideas to the people of Assam. And the channels through which these ideas came were many indeed.

The Impact of Calcutta

Commenting on the impact of Bengal on the rest of modern India, Jadunath Sarkar observes, "In this new Bengal originated every good and great thing of the modern world that passed on to the other provinces of India. From Bengal went forth the English-educated teachers and the Europe-inspired thought that helped to modernize Bihar and Orissa, Hindustan and Deccan." This is as true of Assam as of Bihar and Orissa.

2. Pandit Hemchandra Goswami observed in 1890, "The language which they (the missionaries) wrote in books and newspapers was not natural Assamese. We may call it 'Christian Assamese', no native Assamese spoke or wrote as they did" (Hemchandra Goswami Rachanāvalī, p. 133).

3. Quoted by R.C. Majumdar in History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. V, Part II, p. 1
At least at the initial stages Western influences flowed into Assam from Bengal—or we may very well say—from Calcutta, which was the centre of higher education and all kinds of modern activities not only in Bengal but the whole of India during the nineteenth century. Quite a good number of English-educated persons from Bengal had to be brought to Assam to work as teachers and other Government servants in courts and offices. As these people had already had some contact with Western ideas, they undoubtedly helped in spreading such ideas in Assam, but the direct impact of Calcutta was felt when Assamese students started going there for higher education. Western education definitely began in Assam in 1835 with the establishment of an English School at Gauhati, but Assam did not have a college till the opening year of the present century. So, for a period of over six decades Assamese students had to go to Calcutta for higher education. At the initial stages only a few scholarships not exceeding ten rupees each were awarded to those students who proceeded for collegiate education in Calcutta, but the number and the value of the scholarships were increased in subsequent years. As years passed on, the number of students passing out from high schools increased, and many of them started going to Calcutta even without depending on Government scholarships.

The first great person on whom we find this impact reflected is undoubtedly Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who, after

4. Jubilee, p. 14
5. ibid., p. 11
receiving some English education in the Gauhati School, proceeded to Calcutta as early as 1841 much against the wishes of his mother. He joined the Hindu College where within a few years he mastered English and Bengali, besides acquiring some knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, algebra, and the history of India, England, Greece and Rome. It is there that he came into direct contact with Western ideas which stimulated in him a sense of patriotism and love of the mother tongue. So, after coming back home he took up the cause of Assamese and published his A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language where he showed convincingly how Assamese was an independent language with a rich literature of its own. P.R.T. Gordon admits that Dhekityal Phukan was the first native to fight for the cause of Assamese language. The Hindu College where Anandaram studied "was a nursery for the origin and dissemination of new ideas of change in education, culture, society and politics", generated chiefly by its famous teacher, Derozio. Although Anandaram did not have the opportunity to meet Derozio, he drank deep in these ideas so that during his three-year stay there he deeply realized the bad days in which his own land and language had fallen.

6. Ānandarām Dhekiyāl Phukanar Jivan Caritra, p. 35
7. ibid., p. 43
8. Bhāsanmālā, p. 29
9. Dawn of Renascent India, p. 27
10. For Derozio had been removed from the college in 1831, nearly ten years before Anandaram joined it.
11. Preface to Bhāsanmālā, p. v
back at home he took up the crusade for his mother tongue in which he was backed by Dr Bronson and many others, including Gunabhiram Barua, Hemchandra Barua, and Lakshminath Bezbaroa, all of whom were nurtured at Calcutta.

It is neither possible nor necessary to mention the names of those many young men from Assam who were educated at Calcutta during the nineteenth century; even a look at the life and activities of any of the leading ones among them will show how great was the impact of Calcutta on them. Calcutta was the greatest attraction to any aspiring youth of Assam during those days. Lakshminath Bezbaroa recollects how his father was unwilling to send him there, but "my indomitable desire was to study at Calcutta." Padmanath Gohain Barua, who calls Calcutta "a model of the world", tells us that it is there that he acquired "something of the divine qualities of patriotism and love of the mother tongue." Bengali language and literature also fired the mind of these people with patriotic feelings. This is amply recorded in the biographies and autobiographies of great writers and social workers of Assam like Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Benudhar Rajkhowa and Manikohandra Barua. Another source of inspiration was the great personalities of renascent Bengal. Many of the Assamese students tried to imitate Surendranath Banerji's oratory, and not without success. In

12. Mor Jivan Sowaran, Granthāvalī, I, p. 43
13. Mor Sowaran, p. 27
fact, one Kamalchandra Sarma lectured so well in English that Surendranath Banerji himself praised him saying, "some day you will take my place." The Assamese students staying at No. 14 Pratap Chandra Chatterji Lane were undoubtedly influenced by the great works and personality of Bankim Chandra. Padmanath Gohain Barua informs us how that great man used to wait daily at half past ten in the morning for his horse-drawn carriage at a particular point on the left side of College Street and how "I used to look intensely at that great living form of genius." He further tells us how he took care not to miss any occasion when he could have a look at Rabindranath Tagore and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. And the impact on Bezbaroa of great personalities like Maharshi Devendranath Tagore into whose family he married needs no elaboration as his close contact with that famous family of Bengal is well known.

In fact, it was in and from Calcutta that most of the activities for the growth and development of Assamese language and literature were conducted in the nineteenth century. The students from Assam there formed a body known as A.S.I. Club where the various problems of Assam were discussed. The literary organization called the A.Bhā.U.Sā. Sabha, and the famous journals, Jonāki and Bijuli, the precursors of a chain

14. Mor Jivan Dāpon, p. 87
15. Mor Sowaran, p. 29
16. ibid., pp. 29-30
17. Mor Jivan Sowaran Granthāvali, I, pp. 66-69
of periodicals in subsequent years, were born in Calcutta. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the seeds of all the movements and activities for the growth and development of Assamese language and literature were sown in Calcutta under the auspices of the Assamese students studying there. It is difficult to say what would have been the state of present Assamese language and literature if these young people did not get the chance to stay in Calcutta for higher education.

The fact that Calcutta attracted visitors from Assam even at the beginning of British rule when communication was extremely difficult is another proof of its magic spell cast on Assamese youths. One Prannath Sarma gave a graphic description of it in the Orunodoi of January, 1849. Another Kinaram Sattriya published a long poem about Calcutta giving it almost human qualities, saying that its "greatness cannot be sung even in a month." All this shows how great was the impact of Calcutta on the younger generation of Assam during the nineteenth century.

The Assamese Bible

The establishment of the Baptist Mission at Serampore in 1800 by W. Carey, W. Ward and J. Marshman was a significant event in the cultural history not only of Bengal but of India

18. Arunodoir Dhalphāt, pp. 22-24
19. Orunodoi, March, 1851
as a whole. They took up the arduous task of translating the Bible into different languages of India. The New Testament in Bengali came out in 1801, and by 1837 the Baptists translated the Bible into all the major Indian languages and 27 other languages or dialects. 20 The first Bible in Assamese came out in 1813. It was translated by Carey with the help of one Atmaram Sarma from Kaliabor in Nowgong district. 21

In the absence of documentary evidence it is difficult to say what impact the Bible had on the mind of the Assamese people during those days when Assam was still retaining her independence. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan tells us that a second edition of the Bible appeared in 1833. 22 Although we are not told how many copies were printed in 1813, the fact that a second edition was brought out within twenty years is a good enough proof of its being read by quite a good number of people in Assam. The Baptists' admission that the people of Assam had "great thirst for knowledge", 23 also points to such a conclusion. It might be for this reason that the missionaries were at first very optimistic about "large number of conversions in Assam", although their hopes were subsequently belied. 25 In any case, there is no doubt that the Bible played its rôle in

20. British Baptist Missionaries in India, p. 79
22. ibid., p. 231
23. British Baptist Missionaries in India, p. 31
24. ibid., p. 31
25. Assam Mission Jubilee, 1886, p. 16
bringing Western ideas to Assam, and that it influenced the prose style of Assamese. 26

Christian Missionary Work

Keshabchandra Sen remarked in 1866 that "the many noble deeds of philanthropy and self-denying benevolence which Christian missionaries have performed in India, and the various intellectual, social and moral improvements which they have effected need no flattering comment." 27 This can very well be said about the various works done by the American Baptist missionaries in Assam for the cause of education and social upliftment, and for disseminating modern ideas among a backward people. Besides translating the Bible into Assamese, writing grammars, dictionaries, novels, and publishing the first periodical in Assamese, the Baptists contributed greatly to the spread of English education and Western knowledge in Assam.

The Assamese Bible of 1813 was published from Serampore, and direct activities of the missionaries in Assam began from 1835 when two Baptists, Rev. N. Brown and O.T. Cutter left Calcutta for Assam with their families and a printing press. They were soon followed by others, including Bronson and Barker. The missionaries soon realized that to instil the love of Christ

27. Quoted in British Baptist Missionaries in India, p. 62
in the heart of the people they must approach them through the medium of their mother tongue. So, immediately they set about learning Assamese, and "within three months of their arrival in Assam they produced the first Assamese primer for use in the schools which they had established." W. Robinson had already published from Serampore the first Assamese grammar in 1839, while in 1867 appeared the first published Assamese dictionary by Bronson. Many other works appeared during the years that intervened, and the first Assamese journal, the Orunodoi, was started in 1846 by Brown and Cutter. The foundation of the Orunodoi, which means 'sunrise', was really the sunrise of modern Assamese literature. Regarding the contributions of the missionaries to Assamese literature, P.H. Moore, a missionary and linguist, observed in 1907, "The modern literature in Assamese, whether Christian or non-Christian, may be said to be the product of the last sixty years of the 19th century. Brown, Bronson and Nidhi Levi are the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founders of Assamese Christian literature." Besides Nidhi Levi Farwell, other natives like Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, Hemchandra Barua, Purnananda Barua, Kinaram Sattriya also wrote in the Orunodoi.

That the missionaries contributed greatly to the cause of education and Assamese language and literature is admitted by all, and the mass of writings left by them in book form as well

29. ibid., p. 105
as in the pages of the Orunodoi, stands eloquent testimony to it. The contributions of the missionaries are aptly summed up by Maheswar Neog: "By writing and publishing Assamese grammars, dictionaries, primers, books on elementary scientific knowledge; by conducting that best example of a periodical, the Orunodoi, for thirty-seven years; by taking a leading part in the fight for restoration of Assamese in the schools and law-courts of Assam; by training Assamese writers in the modern technique of writing, and by infusing English vocabularies and even syntactic patterns into Assamese, the missionaries gave a new lease of life to Assamese language and literature and instilled into the people of Assam a sense of self-confidence." 30

This observation speaks eloquently about the effect the Christian missionaries had in modernizing the mind of the Assamese people. Not that the missionaries were able to get many converts in Assam; rather it was quite the opposite; 31 but the "great thirst for knowledge", 32 which the missionaries believed the people of Assam had, must have impelled them to read the new writings with avidity and an open mind. The reading of this new writing as well as personal contact with the missionaries undoubtedly helped in no small degree in modernizing

30. A.S.R., p. 241

31. "Here now we meet a native Christian, the chances are that he is from a hill tribe people, or if formerly a Hindu, that he is from the lower rather than the higher classes" (Assam Mission Jubilee, p. 16).

32. British Baptist Missionaries in India, p. 31
the Assamese mind. "All in all", says Victor Hugo Sword, "they (the missionaries) opened for the inhabitants of Assam the way that leads to a fuller and more complete life." 33

The Impact of Individuals

Some individuals contributed in no small degree, directly or indirectly, towards disseminating Western ideas among the people of Assam. Of the missionaries and British officers there were some who personally influenced some of the Assamese youths of the time. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan went to Calcutta for higher education as early as 1841 when he was only 19 years old at the instance of Methi and Jenkins, who were very good friends of the people of Assam. 34 Gangagovinda Phukan was immensely influenced by one Captain Eden, who loved him so much from childhood that whenever Phukan visited him at his bungalow he was sure to get some presents from the Captain. Phukan's biographer, Benudhar Sarma, says that "it was Eden who sowed the seeds of Western civilization in the mind of Phukan even when he was a boy." 35 Hemchandra Barua, called an "Assamese Johnson", 36 was very intimate with Bronson, who presented a

33. Baptists in Assam (typescript), concluding sentence.
34. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukanar Jivan Carita, p. 30
35. Gangagovinda Phukan, p. 6
36. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 37
copy of his Dictionary of Assamese to him with the words, "Presented to Sjt. Hemchandra Barua with best wishes" written in his own hand. Barua, whose thirst for knowledge knew no bounds, learnt English secretly from Captain Brodie, the then Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, lest his conservative uncle might stop him from doing it as learning English was considered taboo in those days. Padmanath Gohain Barua tells us how he became friends with a missionary couple staying at Sibsagar from whom he learnt as much English as he could, while they in turn learnt Assamese from him. Some of the Bengali teachers and other persons of Bengal also inspired Assamese youths with the love of English education and Western ideas. Manikchandra Barua and some other intelligent students received great incentive for higher education from a Bengali teacher, named Janmejoy Das. Renudhar Rajkhowa, who did his B.A. at Ripon College, was greatly inspired by Surendranath Banerji, who taught English literature. Padmanath Gohain Barua tells us how he was always eager to have a look at Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar when he was at Calcutta. The impact on Bezbaroa of the saintly personality of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, whose grand-daughter he married,

37. Mor Jivan Dapon, p. 198
38. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 370
39. Mor Sowarani, p. 11
40. Manikchandra Barua aru Teor Yug, p. 10
41. Mor Jivan Dapon, pp. 102-103
42. Mor Sowarani, pp. 29-30
can be easily imagined. Bezbaroa tells us how, immediately after the marriage was over, the Maharshi presented him a golden pen with the blessing, "May beautiful writing stream out from this pen."  

Our object here is not to give a full list of names, but those given above are enough to show how individual incentives played a role in fertilizing the Assamese mind with Western ideas and the longing for knowledge. The point to be taken note of is that almost all those young people were later to be leading persons in the spheres of educational, social and cultural rejuvenation of Assam. Besides being influenced by great persons, foreigners as well as Bengalis, these young people also enriched their mind with new ideas by reading voraciously from English and Bengali. That Gunabhiram Barua read even the latest book in Bengali is proved by the fact that he wrote his *Rām-Navami Nāṭak* hardly a year after *Voomesh Chandra Mitra*’s *Vidhavā vivāha Nāṭak* dealing with a similar topic.  

Renudhar Rajkhowa’s father subscribed regularly to the *Sanjivani* of Calcutta which young Renudhar also used to read "whenever father was away from home."  

His profuse reading of Bengali books and newspapers soon enabled him to write and speak Bengali.  

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43. Mor Jivan Sowaran *Granthāvali*, I, p. 67  
44. A.S.R., p. 253; H.R.L., pp. 196-197  
45. Mor Jivan *Dāpon*, p. 43  
46. ibid., p. 44
Ramayana, the Mahābhārata and the Brahmavaivatta Purāṇa in Bengali sowed the seeds of poetry-writing in me", even used to compose verses in Bengali while writing letters to his father. Padmanath Gohain Barua, who acknowledges his indebtedness to Bengali literature, used to write poems in Bengali along with Assamese even when he was at school. Many of the young persons from Assam came into direct contact with the revolutionary ideas expressed in English literature and taught by such eminent teachers as Surendranath Banerji and Charles Tawney. Benudhar informs us that at Ripon College Surendranath Banerji taught them Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution.

Anandaram Barua, a noted scholar of Sanskrit, Latin and Greek, was familiar with Shakespeare, Bacon, Addison and Johnson. Besides these, there were many who had enriched their minds by reading immensely from English and Bengali before they took up the task of modernizing Assam in various ways.

But the greatest testimony is that of Rezbaroa, who was admittedly the "uncrowned king of Assamese literature" for nearly forty years, enriching as he did all branches that a modern literature can possess. He tells us how his father Dinanath Rezbaroa, a devoted Hindu but progressive in outlook, realizing the usefulness of Western education, not only sent

47. ibid., p. 45
48. Mor Sowarañi, p. 9
49. Ānandarām Baruār Jivan Caritra, pp. 77, 79
50. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 414
his sons to English schools but also learnt a little of English himself. During his early youth Bezbaroa himself was almost dazzled by the brilliance of "English civilization" until he was able later to discriminate between the good and the bad. Bezbaroa, who studied at various Calcutta colleges like Ripon College, City College, and the General Assembly College, drank deep in English literature, particularly Shakespeare, Milton and the Romantic poets. The poetry of Byron, Shelley, Keats and Rabindranath fired him so much with imagination that everywhere he found beauty and nothing else: "I slept and dreamt that life was beauty." Milton influenced him so much that he thought of writing an epic poem like Paradise Lost, and even penned a few lines on the model of Michael Madhusudan. About the impact of Shakespeare, he says, "Shakespeare's Hamlet, King John, King Henry and The Midsummer Night's Dream were my text books at college. I myself thought of leaving behind some ageless treasures in Assamese literature by writing a few plays like these." This only shows how great was the impact of individual reading on the mind of these youths who were later to contribute in various ways towards developing Assam and her literature.

51. Granthāvalī, I, pp. 8, 33
52. ibid., pp. 50-51
53. ibid., p. 53
54. ibid., pp. 53-54
Literary and Cultural Organizations

Organizations like the Calcutta Book Society, the Calcutta School Society, the Academic Association, the Vernacular Literature Society, the Tattvabodhini Sabha, which sprang up in Bengal during the early part of the nineteenth century and helped to accelerate the pace of modernizing the province, also gave an impetus to the younger generation of Assam to organize such institutions for the spread of Western ideas in the land. True it is that these were rather the effects of Western influence on those who organized them, but that they acted as channels in spreading Western ideas among the people cannot be denied. The Giyan Sabhā or the Society for Acquisition of knowledge was organized in Sibsagar as early as 1846. Although we do not know what exactly were its activities, its objective was, as the name indicates, the spread of knowledge among the people. Another organization called the Assam Deshahitaishini Sabhā, founded by Priyalal Barua, concerned itself, as the name suggests, with the act of uplifting Assam in different directions. Still another organization of some import was the Assam Gyanapradāyini Sabhā, organized by Mahidhar Sarma, a teacher of Sibsagar High School, and Gangagovinda Phukan the renowned social worker who was its Secretary. Although the Sabhā died out as soon as Phukan left Sibsagar, it had naturally some effect in widening the

55. Orunodoi, Sept, 1846, No. 9
56. Gangagovinda Phukan, p. 27
57. ibid., p. 27
mental horizon of the students and public of Sibsagar. Phukan was also one of the few enthusiasts of Assam in those days, who, realizing the importance of oratory and debates, organized debating clubs on the model of those already in existence in Calcutta schools and colleges. One of the earliest of such clubs was founded at the Sibsagar school where debates were held every Saturday after the school hours. Gradually, such debating clubs became very popular among the students of Assam, who started organizing debates on the many social evils of the time. Benudhar Rajkhowa tells us how the members of the A.S.L. Club were encouraged by Abdul Majid to hold debates on the evil effects of opium, which was eating into the very vitals of the Assamese society of the time. In 1869 was founded the Gauhati School Club with the object of bringing about moral and intellectual development in the younger generation through study, writing and delivery of speeches.

All these organizations were small bodies with great aims and objects before them, and there is little doubt that they contributed greatly towards modernizing the mind of the Assamese youth. But organizations of a major and comprehensive nature were soon to follow. The students of Assam studying at Calcutta organized occasional literary meetings where discussions on the literature and culture of Assam were held. These occasional sittings eventually led to the emergence of

58. ibid., p. 26
59. Mor Jivan Dāpon, pp. 104-105
the A.Bha.U.Sā. Sabha or the Society for the Development of Assamese Language in 1888. Bezbaroa tells us how, like the "coffee-houses of Johnson and Addison", a small "Tea Party" of Assamese students studying at Calcutta, gave birth to this great organization, the chief objective of which was to promote the cause of Assamese language and literature. The activities of this organization soon expanded, and branches of it were opened in almost all the towns of Assam including North Lakhimpur, then a small town on the north bank of the Brahmaputra where Padmanath Gohain Barua and Panindranath Gogoi were the first to organize literary meetings with great difficulties as the people those days could not appreciate the utility of a literary organization on account of the lack of education on their part. The A.Bha.U.Sā. Sabha continued till 1917 when the Asam Sāhitya Sabha came into being on the line of the Vangiya Sāhitya Parishad. It is needless to dwell here on the great rôle played by Asam Sāhitya Sabha in enriching Assamese language and literature, thereby broadening the mind of the people of Assam, as its activities during the years have been great and varied. Suffice it to say that "Asam Sāhitya Sabha is a national organization of ours" having about four hundred branches distributed all over the State. With the establishment of Cotton College at Gauhati in 1901, new channels were opened through which Western influences

60. Granthāvali, I, p. 49
61. Mor Sowarani, p. 50
62. Maheswar Neog, Presidential Address, Asam Sahitya Sabha, 1974, pp. 1, 5
started flowing more quickly to fertilize the literary fields of Assam.

Dramatic Organizations

The dramatic movement in the province greatly helped to spread Western ideas amongst the people of Assam. By the turn of the last century dramatic clubs were organized in almost all the major towns which were so quickly followed by the smaller ones that even a tiny town like Janji had its Nāṭya Samaj or Dramatic Society as early as 1895.63 These dramatic clubs naturally helped to spread the new ideas even among the village folk who thronged the club premisses in order to witness performances of the new dramas. Other literary and cultural organizations also arose along with the dramatic movement as most of the dramatic clubs used to have their own forums for literary and cultural deliberations. The Dibrugarh Alochani Sabha, founded in 1906 as an adjunct to the dramatic club with a library of its own, published three years later the famous monthly, the Alochani. Another organization of similar nature was the Assam Club of Goalpara, which, along with the Amateur Theatre Club, did much for the cause of modern Assamese language and literature.64 Even in a remote town like North Lakhipur, a cultural organization, called the Jonāki Sanmilan, was founded

63. Manchalekhā, p. 383
64. ibid., pp. 554-555
as early as the last decade of the nineteenth century, which, besides pursuing literary activities, initiated the performance of modern plays. The greatest organization, which grew with the dramatic movement, was undoubtedly the Sandhiyā Sanmilan or Evening Society of Gauhati, founded by Padmadhar Chaliha, a leading actor and playwright. This organization not only created a cultural atmosphere at Gauhati but also encouraged the growth of such organizations in other places like the Rāni Sanmilan of Jorhat, the Purnima Sanmilan of Nowzong, and the Jonāki Mel of Sonari. In fact, the wind of change blew so swiftly that even a small and otherwise sleepy town like Mangaldai had a very active literary and cultural organization called the Mangaldai Majlis, which held as many as 59 sittings even during the first year. A look at the list of subjects discussed in those meetings during the year 1906-1907 which Benudhar Rajkhowa, the founder of the Majlis, includes in his autobiography will show how the upsurge of change was felt rather strongly even in small and interior places.

The Rise of Printing and Periodical Literature

The introduction of printing and journalism opened the greatest channel through which Western ideas filtered down into Assam. Although the first printed Bible in Assamese came out

65. ibid., p. 358
66. ibid., pp. 474-475
67. Mor Jivan Dāpon, pp. 138-140
as early as 1813 from Serampore, there was no printing press in Assam until 1835 when the Baptists, Brown and Cutter, accompanied by their families, first landed in Assam with a printing machine. Immediately after their arrival at Sadiya, a remote place on the Brahmaputra, they started their propaganda and printing work at once among the hill-tribes. Like the Serampore missionaries who took up Bengali as a vehicle for their work, the Baptists in Assam also adopted Assamese as their medium, and in order to evolve a kind of workable modern prose as well as to enlighten the people in the new ideas, they decided to start a periodical in Assamese. The result was the publication of the Orunodoi, "a monthly Paper, devoted to Religion, Science and General Intelligence", in 1846 from Sibsagar, a former capital of Assam. Even long before the publication of the Orunodoi, some of the newspapers of Bengal like the Samāchar Darpan, the Dig-Darshan, the Friend of India and the Sanjivani were widely read in Assam. Besides carrying Western ideas and knowledge, these papers undoubtedly created a love in the Assamese readers for newspapers, which at that time were doing so much in renaissance Bengal. The publication of the Orunodoi brought Western ideas and knowledge within easy reach of its readers many of whom, like Anandaram Dhekiyal

68. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 338

69. Orunodoi, Vol. I, 1846, No. 1

70. Benudhar Rajkhowa tells us how his father used to read the Sanjivani, a weekly from Calcutta, regularly, and how he himself took to reading it even when he was a boy. He further informs us that this paper developed in him an interest for reading newspapers and journals (Mor Jivan Dapon, p. 43).
Phukan and Hemchandra Barua, soon started writing in the journal.

i. The Sunrise of the Orunodoi

The Baptists, through the Baptist Mission Press at Sibsagar and the Orunodoi, made invaluable contributions to the spread of Western ideas by publishing books in Assamese and writing on a variety of topics of which the average Assamese reader had hardly any idea till then. The great services done by the Mission Press can be easily appreciated when we learn that "most of the books of the mid-nineteenth century were published from this press." 71

The Orunodoi first came out in January, 1846, edited by O.T. Cutter. Its price was one rupee per annum in advance or one and a half at the end of the year. 72 It continued under different editors, all of whom were Baptist missionaries, till 1883 when the printing machine was sold and the paper discontinued. It was in quarto form, and was profusely illustrated with blocks, cut in wood by Assamese labourers, from pictures of The Illustrated London News. Pictures of native persons and things were also published. In the Orunodoi of 1857, No. 2, there was published a poem called Chapākhānār Vivaran or Description of a Printing Press where the writer wrote:

71. H.A.L., p. 107
72. Orunodoi, Vol. 1, January, 1846, No. 1
It says that the pictures in the Orunodoi are prepared from blocks cut in wood daily by four persons; that the labourers take five to six days to make them; and that the same picture is never published more than once or twice. Although its main objective was dissemination of the teachings of Christianity, yet the Orunodoi had a much wider range as it published notices and articles on a variety of topics like religion, science, history, geography, astrology, biography, autobiography, travelogue, besides news from different parts of the world.

It is difficult to exaggerate the contributions of the Orunodoi towards the growth of modern Assam. Its contributors included, besides the Baptists, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, Hemchandra Barua and Nidhi Levi Farwell, who not only gave a new force and direction to modern Assamese prose but also spread among the people of Assam Western ideas and knowledge which had already revolutionized Bengal. It attracted even otherwise unknown writers like Kinaram Sattriya, Prananath Bora and some others to write in it. In fact, it was so popular among the people that the word 'orunodoi' came to be gradually mispronounced as 'arundai', which became a household word for any newspaper or journal. Being thus acquainted with Western

73. ibid., March, 1851, No. 6
74. A.S.R., p. 242
ideas and knowledge, even the common man became prepared to accept modern thought and ways of life. In short, it is no exaggeration to say that during the 36 years of its existence the Orunodoi did more than any other work of the missionaries in "broadening the mental horizon of the Assamese readers on modern lines."

ii. Other Newspapers

The path shown by the missionaries was soon followed by some of the educated natives who took to journalism as a means of enlightening the people of Assam. The incentive given by the Orunodoi was so strong that even from a place like Majuli, a small island in the Brahmaputra, a newspaper called the Asam Vilāsini was published as early as 1871. Although this was mainly religious in nature, the fact that even Majuli could boast of a newspaper as far back as that year is of no small significance. Another newspaper published in 1885 from Auniati, also in Majuli, was Asam Tarā. Some of the important periodicals published during the second half of the last century were the Asam Mihir (1872), the Asam Darpan (1874), the Goālpārā Hita- sadhī, the Chandrodāya (1886), the Asam Dipak (1876), the Assam News (1882), the Asam Bandhu (1885), the Assam, the Jonāki and the Bijuli. Another paper worthy of note was the Mau (Bee),

75. loc.cit.
76. Arunodair Dhalphāt, Intro., p. 77
published in 1886 from Calcutta, which might have been modelled on Goldsmith's The Bee. The first journal for children appeared in 1888 with Karunabhiram Barua's Lārā Bandhu (the Children's Friend). Besides these, many other papers appeared during the latter half of the nineteenth century, some of which discontinued within few years of their appearance. All this shows how journalism became a favourite pastime with the educated Assamese even during the second half of the last century. There is hardly any doubt that these periodicals acted as effective channels for spreading Western ideas among their readers.

iii. The Jonāki and the Bijuli

Of the many periodicals that came out during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Jonāki (The Glow-worm) and the Bijuli (The Lightning) stand out pre-eminently as their contributions towards the making of modern Assam is almost unique. The Jonāki, the mouthpiece of the A.Bhā.U.Sā. Sabhā, was first published from Calcutta in 1889 under the auspices of three pioneering students, Chandrakumar Agarwala, Hemchandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaroa. After ten years its Calcutta publication was discontinued when it came to be brought out regularly from Guwahati with Satyanath Bara as its editor. It is in the pages of the Jonāki that a new age known as the 'Jonāki Jug' or the Age of the Jonāki was born. By introducing the lyric, the novel proper, the short story, the personal
essay and by translating the plays of Shakespeare, this periodical contributed immensely towards modernizing Assamese literature. Great English writers like Shakespeare and the Romantic poets were the model of the Jonāki writers who for the first time introduced romanticism in Assamese literature. The first Assamese romantic poem, Bankuwarī (the Sylvan Nymph), by Chandrakumar Agarwala, the first Assamese sonnet, Priyatamār Cithi (A Letter to My Beloved) by Hemchandra Goswami, and the first Assamese short story, amālai nepāharibā (Don't forget us) by Lakshminath Bezbaroa appeared in the pages of the Jonāki. "Complete modernization of this (Assamese) literature", says Maheswar Neog, "is the greatest achievement of the Jonāki writers. As the age of Wordsworth was the chief ideal in the act of this modernization, this new literature also was largely romantic in nature."78

Like the Jonāki, the Bijuli was also the work of a few students studying at Calcutta, who, owing to certain differences with the Jonāki stalwarts, broke away from it and founded this paper in 1889. It was in the pages of this paper that the first Assamese novel, Rānumatī by Padmanath Gohain Barua was published. In fact, the contributions of the Jonāki and the Bijuli towards the growth and development of modern Assamese literature was the greatest in so far as they gave birth to a galaxy of writers who completely modernized Assamese literature in all its departments.

77. A.S.R., p. 267
78. A.S.R., p. 267
English Education

The introduction of English education in Assam provided another important vehicle for the spread of Western ideas and knowledge among a people among whom medieval superstitions, age-old conservatism and religious bigotry were still rampant. Not that formal education was absent in pre-British days, but the teaching imparted in the indigenous 'tols' and 'muktabs' was mainly religious, and so, the rationalizing element present in the Western system of education was wanting in it. How the students of the Hindu College of Calcutta drank deep in the revolutionary ideas taught by Derozio, who was a noteworthy vehicle of European thoughts and ideas at the time, is well known, and the Assamese students including Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan who studied in that college, must have acquired their rational and questioning spirit there. The introduction of English education brought the young people of Assam into direct contact with Western ideas and knowledge, which were instrumental in bringing about a social revolution in this province. The agencies which took the lead in initiating and expanding English education in Assam were the Government, the missionaries as well as private individuals.

i. Government Enterprise

At the beginning of British rule, the Government, under the auspices of David Scott, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, took steps to promote the
indigenous system of education by granting land and by placing students, who passed from such schools, in government service. But as these persons as well as the officials recruited from among the officers of the former Ahom regime proved unequal to the new official tasks assigned to them, some "men of business" of inferior ranks had to be brought from outside who formed the new class known as the 'āmolas'. But as these outsiders had no permanent interest in the soil, they felt tempted to exploit the situation to their best advantage with the result that in the early years of British rule a period of administrative anarchy in Assam prevailed. The situation became so serious that Captain Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, being alarmed at the sight of non-Assamese in almost all the Government offices, wrote to the Government of India, asking them to take some active measures to provide instruction for the Assamese youth. In the same despatch, the Commissioner strongly recommended establishment of schools to impart English education at each of the Sadar Stations—Gauhati, Darrang, Nowgong, and Bishnath. Captain Jenkin's recommendations bore fruit, and the first English school was established at Gauhati in 1835, with a European Headmaster, Mr Singer. A beginning was thus made in 'higher' or 'secondary' education in Assam. In the first year, the Gauhati English School had an enrolment of 58, which rose to 150 in 1838 and 340 at the end of 1840.

79. Jubilee, p. 14
80. ibid., p. 7
Towards the close of 1841, a Government school was started at Sibsagar with one D'Souza as headmaster, Ramsagar as assistant master and Urbanhar Sarma as a pandit. Meanwhile the demand for English education had become so high that in a short time branch schools were found springing up entirely at public cost in the neighbourhood of Gauhati, and the enrolment rose to over 600 by the end of 1841. But progress of education at government level was still very slow as by 1864, there were only two Sadar schools - one at Gauhati and the other at Sibsagar, the former being affiliated to Entrance standard of Calcutta University in 1858. A few scholarships were awarded to those students, who, after passing the Entrance Examination, proceeded for collegiate education in Calcutta. But, as these scholarships could not meet the growing demand for higher education, the Gauhati School was raised to a Collegiate school in 1866 with affiliation to the first examination in Arts, and in law in 1870. Thus a beginning was made of collegiate education in Assam, and among the first products of the Collegiate School there were the early champions of higher education like Manikchandra Barua and Jagannath Barua. But on account of the use of a foreign medium, subsequent results of the Collegiate Section of the Gauhati School were not encouraging, which compelled the Government to bring the Gauhati School back to its former position. This shows how great was the harm done to the

81. ibid., p. 8
82. Centenary Report, Collegiate School, Gauhati, 1935, p. 23
cause of education by the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction in Assam schools. This anomaly was noticed by Wills as early as 1854 when he strongly recommended to the Council of Education immediate substitution of Bengali by Assamese with the remarks that "an English youth is not taught Latin until he is well grounded in English, and in the same manner an Assamese should not be taught a foreign language until he knows his own." As a result of such strong recommendations from British officers as well as of growing public demand, Assamese was re-introduced as the medium of instruction in 1874, when Assam was also made a Chief Commissioner's Province with a separate Directorate of Public Instruction. This memorable decision, together with Wood's Despatch of 1854, supplemented by the Indian Education Commission in 1882 emphasizing the need of grants-in-aid to secondary schools bore immediate fruits, and the number of Middle English Schools and High Schools in Assam in 1898-1899 stood at 32 and 13, respectively. Meanwhile the demand for a college in Assam was growing, despite the fact that the number of scholarships for higher education at Calcutta was gradually being increased. This was strongly backed by H.J.S. Cotton, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, who took all necessary measures to establish a college, which finally came into being in 1901. The gradual expansion of secondary education and the foundation of collegiate education in Assam threw open the flood-gates through which Western ideas and knowledge started flowing into the province.

ii. Missionary initiative

Apart from the Government, the missionaries also contributed greatly to the cause of education in Assam. In fact, the missionary efforts to establish schools bore fruits more quickly than governmental efforts, as they had little or no official formalities to follow. As soon as the Baptists landed in Assam, they realized that their mission of spreading the Gospel among the people of Assam could not succeed unless a type of formal education, based on the Western model, was imparted to them. The result was that within few years of their arrival in Assam in 1836, the Baptist missionaries established a number of schools in different places. In fact, two schools, one for boys and the other for girls, were started at Sadiva by Mrs Brown and Mrs Cutter only a month and a half after their arrival. By 1844, the American Baptist missionaries set up not less than 14 schools in Sibsagar. The Welsh missionaries, on the other hand, concentrated their activities on the Khasi-Jayantia Hills, where by 1853, they had to their credit about half a dozen schools, and in the next decade similar institutions were established in Nowgong, Garo Hills and the Kachari Mahals of the district of Darrang. Thus besides opening schools at the Sadar towns, the missionaries strove hard to impart education to the people living in the hills and other interior places in the plains. Another important missionary institution

84. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 338
85. Jubilee, p. 10
was the Nowgong Orphanage, opened by Bronson in 1843, where English, Assamese and Bengali were taught.

An important feature in the programme of education of the missionaries was the use of Assamese, the language of the land, as the medium of instruction, whereas in the Government schools, Bengali was the medium until 1874. They also put more emphasis on female education and training of students in some important arts. They organized an industrial department in the Jorhat School, while Bronson, in 1840, taught the Nocktes of Namohang both the Bible and improved methods of producing tea and salt. Thus, the missionaries—although their chief object was proselytization—did great service for the spread of education through the people of Assam came into contact with Western ideas and knowledge.

iii. Individual Efforts

In addition to the Government and the missionaries, education in Assam owes in no small measure to the efforts of some individuals who tried to enlighten the ignorant people by either establishing or helping to establish schools for them. While the lead in this was naturally taken by some Europeans, quite a few enlightened natives also took initiative for establishing schools for English education. Pinanath Bezbarua,

86. loc. cit.
who was among the earliest native gentleman to realize the urgency of English education, established a school at Lakhimpur at his own cost, and he even provided accommodation at his residence to one Padmanath Sarma, a distant relation of his, who was appointed a teacher at that school. Another great person to devote much of his time to the cause of education was Manikchandra Barua whose contribution to the establishment of Cotton College at Gauhati was great indeed. In a memorial to the Chief Commissioner, he said, "Assam is the only province which has not got a college. Indeed, it has not a high institution worth the name. A college at Gauhati with a European Principal will be better appreciated by the students than similar private institutions in Calcutta (owned by native gentlemen) to which they generally resort." In this he was assisted by Bhubanram Das, who himself did not have much formal education. Manikchandra Barua had also his share of contribution towards the establishment of the Gauhati Law College for which he strongly pleaded before the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, Archdale Erle. Gangagovinda Phukan ventured to open a girls' school at Sibsagar as early as 1870, but as the people belonging to the higher castes were still too conservative to send their girls to school, those who attended

87. Mor Jivan Sowaran Granthavalī, I, p. 8
88. Quoted in Jubilee, p. 27
89. Manikchandra Barua āru Teor Yug, p. 30
90. ibid., p. 43
it were mostly from the lower castes. So, he founded another school for the girls belonging to the higher castes, and in his effort he was greatly helped by one missionary, named Clark and his wife. Phukan tried so much for the spread of English education that he even opened an evening school at Sibsagar for the benefit of office employees. "Even men of 50 studied English in that school, and Mr Campbel, the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, allowed all the 'amolāhs' to attend it."92

iv. Cotton College

Like the Hindu College that almost revolutionized Indian thought by introducing Western literature, science and philosophy, the Cotton College at Gauhati also contributed greatly to the making of modern Assam. That this college, which came into being in 1901, succeeded in creating an intellectual atmosphere from the very beginning, is evident from the fact that by the end of the first quinquennium its library contained about 2000 books on different subjects. Among its earliest teachers were persons like F.W. Sudmersen, Narendranath Roy, Indubhusan Brahmachary, Chunilal De and Maulvi Abu Nasr Mahammad Oheed.93

It was in Cotton College that the students of Assam learnt corporate activities which were directed towards/upliftment

91. Gangāgovinda Phukan, pp. 53-54
92. loc.cit.
93. Jubilee, p. 33
of the province in various ways. Almost from the beginning the college had such organizations as the Cotton College Union Society, the Students' Common Room, the Cotton College Athletic Club, the Social Service League, the Moral and Religious Society, the Assamese Students' Literary Club, besides its magazine, The Cotton College Magazine, later called The Cottonian. The college fostered literary activities from the beginning, and manuscript magazines like Seoti in Assamese, The Morning in English, and Arun in Bengali were brought out.\textsuperscript{94} The contributions of Cotton College to the growth of modern Assam are aptly summarized by one of its Professors.

The history of the Cotton College, is inseparably connected with the progress of the country during this half century and has been in fact almost synonymous with the progress of higher education specially in the Brahmaputra Valley. For the first three decades of the

\textsuperscript{94} ibid., pp. 37-38

In the pages of the College Magazine, a humorous poem called A Common-Room Lament, appeared, from which the first few lines are reproduced:

\begin{quote}
A little chamber ten to ten,  
Provided for six hundred men,  
Where they at leisure may retire  
To study all that Reuters wire;  
To scan the latest information  
To seek some mental recreation.
\end{quote}

(Quoted by Principal Thomson in his Quinquennial Report, 1922-27; op.cit., p. 66)

This shows how even poems in the style of Pope were practised.
present century, the Cotton College was the only institution of higher learning in this Valley. The flow of Assam students to Calcutta colleges had not indeed been stopped. Nevertheless, it will not be wrong to say that modern Assam is largely the product of the Cotton College. In every field of national activity, in literature, fine arts, trade, industry, politics and administration, the alumni of this college have made their mark and helped to shape the destiny of this State.  

Political Awareness

The political awareness that grew in the nineteenth century India largely as a result of the Western impact also helped to spread the new ideas among the people through various organizations and papers. It was Raja Rammohan Roy with whom political awareness and patriotic feelings took a definite shape. As the British India Association had become, in course of time, an organization of the landed aristocracy of Bengal, in 1876 was formed by Surendranath Banerji a new society, called the Indian Association, which did useful work in spreading patriotic ideas among the intelligentsia. This had so great an impact on the educated youths of Assam that under the leadership of Manikchandra Barua and Gangagovinda Phukan, they formed the Assam Association, which was the most important nationalist

organization of Assam prior to the Congress. The contribution of the Assam Association to the growth of public opinion in Assam was very great, and it was through this organization that Assam kept contact with the all India movements until 1921 when the Indian National Congress came to have a definite hold in this province. Another important organization was the Sarvajanik Sabha of Jorhat founded by Jagannath Barua, who said that "the association was established for the purpose of representing the wishes and opinions of the people to the Government, explaining to the people the object and policy of the Government and generally ameliorating the condition of the people."

These organizations and the personalities behind them greatly helped in creating patriotic feelings among the people till 1921 when the Congress came to dominate the political atmosphere of Assam. In this regard Renudhar Sarma writes, "The first rays of the sun of the Indian National Congress fell in Assam in 1921 when the so far dormant mind of even the village folk opened like the petals of a rose." Thus, political awareness and patriotic feelings became wide-spread among the people, who, enthused as they were with new ideas and aspirations, eagerly looked forward towards fulfilment of the ideals put before them.

96. Mānikchandra Baruā āru Teor Yug, p. 51
97. ibid., p. 50
98. Quoted, ibid., p. 48
99. Kangrechar Kāciyali Radat, Gauhati, 1971, Author's preface
The Society

The impact of the West resulted in a social awakening that manifested itself in the various reform movements launched in Bengal and other parts of India, for the eradication of the age-old evils of society. In Assam also, the educated section of the people put in much of their time and energy to make a new society based on rational and scientific outlook. The social movements thus launched were largely the result of the Western impact. It is true that Assam was free from such harrowing evils as 'sati' or infanticide, but other evils like polygamy, child marriage, suppression of women, opium-eating and a lot of superstitions were prevalent among the people. Renudhar Rajkhowa tells us that men of the higher strata of society in those days were not only polygamous, but even social prestige was measured on the basis of the number of wives one possessed.  

How harrowing was the tale of child marriage and forced widowhood is illustrated by Gunabhiram Barua in his Rām-Navamī Nātak, published in 1857 where Iswarchandra Vidyasagar appears as an old man in a dream.  

Gunabhiram, a staunch follower of Vidyasagar, fought hard for the introduction of widow-marriage, and himself set the example by marrying a widow named Bishnupriya Devi. Women in Assam, like in any other part of India, were kept away from Western education, and this perturbed the mind.

100. Mor Jivan Dāpon, p. 3
101. Ram-Navamī Nātak, V, v, pp. 71-72
102. Anandaram Dhekiyāl Phukanar Jivan Caritra, pp. 176-177
of many an educated Assamese, who made great efforts to introduce female education. Mention has already been made of the untiring efforts made by the Christian missionaries as well as native individuals, like Gangagovinda Phukan, for the cause of education of women. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who married in 1845, finding that his wife had had no education at her parental home, himself taught her reading and writing. It is only with the spread of Western ideas and growth of scientific outlook along with it that women came to be gradually allowed to receive English education. Another social canker of the time was the use of opium which ate into the very vitals of the society. According to Gait, "the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley were formerly addicted to the use of opium to a degree unknown anywhere else in India." This was noticed by Robinson and other writers including Mills, who, in 1853, said that "three fourths of the population are opium eaters, and men, women and children alike use the drug." While the government tried to restrict the use of opium by gradually raising its price, individuals with reforming zeal, like Phanidhar Chaliha made prolonged efforts to stop the consumption of this dreadful drug. A few writers tried to focus on this social evil by exposing it through satire, and Hemchandra Barua's drama, Kānyā Kirtan, is a glaring example of such attempts.

103. ibid., p. 54
104. A History of Assam, pp. 381-382
105. Quoted ibid., p. 382
Brahmoism, which was the result of an effort to check Christianity and influence of Western ideas by emphasizing the essential principles of Hinduism, had also some influence on the Assamese society. Gunabhiram Barua himself tells us how he was attracted towards the Brahma faith while he was at Calcutta and formally accepted it in 1869 at Dhubri. Balaram Khargharia Phukan, who was also a patron of Brahmoism, wrote articles on it in the Samachār Chandrika. That Brahmoism was able to create some impact in Assam is also evidenced by such books as The Characteristics of Brahmoism (1873) and What is Brahmoism? (1874), written by Padmāhas Goswami.

The Environment

All this created an environment which in its turn played some part in spreading Western ideas. It has already been mentioned how even persons, who were in the forefront of the struggle for national awakening, appreciated and followed the Western way of life. This was manifest in the dresses, manners, ways of living and talking of many of the leading personalities of Bengal and other parts of the country. In Assam also, the English or Western environment acted as a vehicle for the spread of Western ideas. As early as 1835, there was big demand for English education as a result of which privately

106. History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. V, Part IV, p. 115
107. Anandaram Dhekial Phukanar Jivan Caritra, p. 176
108. Kaminikantar Caritra, Appendix, p. 53
owned schools were found springing up in the neighbourhood of Gauhati. The way the 'amolās' and other government officials led their life lured Assamese youths and their parents to government jobs to which English education was a passport. In fact, it became almost a fashion with many of the parents to send their sons to English schools. Many of the boys of such parents as were still hostile to English education for fear of losing their caste, learnt English secretly. We are told how Hemchandra Barua learnt English in the residence of Captain Brodie, the then Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, "but when his uncle knew it, he stopped it altogether lest his nephew should become an outcaste by learning the language of the Mlecohas or non-Hindus. But even then he did not quite give up his idea of learning English, and approached the Baptist missionaries of Sibsagar for it."  

Such a desire for English education was due as much to a growing love of knowledge as to the possibility of a better life which English education held before the younger generation. It was thought that not only English education, but even British customs and manners were superior to the native ones. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who was the first Assamese to go to Calcutta for higher education in the Hindu College, used to have a separate drawing-room set in the European fashion, where he received his European guests. He was the first native

109. Pāndu, Nilāchal (Kāmākhya), Beltolā, Aurgyong? and North Gauhati (Jubilee, p. 8).

110. New Light on the History of Assamese Literature, p. 370
gentleman of Gauhati to introduce British ways in an Assamese house.  
Parashuram Barua often used to talk affectedly in the English way and walked like an Englishman with the hands in his trouser pockets.  
Govinda Bezbarua, who dressed always like an Englishman, used to talk only in English with those who knew the language.  
About the Western manners of Gangagovinda Phukan, Benudhar Rajkhowa says, "He always put on his hat and coat, and I did not see him wearing a dhoti even at home."  
Western manners filtered into Assam through the Bengali 'amolás' also, and Bezbaroa tells us how in those days "everything Bengali" was the fashion. Bezbaroa admits that he himself was infected with the mania for everything Western in those days.

This environment affected the tastes of the educated generation so much that the change can be noticed even in the matter of sports. Indigenous games and sports gradually came to be abandoned in favour of the European ones, like tennis, billiards and many others. Bezbaroa tells us how he used to play billiards daily in the India Club of Calcutta. In fact, the British ways had so much impact on these early enthusiasts.

111. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukanar Caritra, p. 49
112. ibid., p. 45
113. Mor Jivan Dapon, p. 215
114. loc.cit.
115. Mor Jivan Sowarap, Granthavalī, I, p. 19
116. ibid., p. 86
that many of them even made very hard efforts to speak English exactly like an Englishman. One day while speaking to a group of Assamese students at Calcutta, Gangagovinda Phukan pronounced the word "verbal" exactly like an Englishman, and this made his listeners very happy.\footnote{117, Gangagovinda Phukan, p. 77}

It is true that such imitation of Western ways and manners were at first limited to the government officials and other educated people. But gradually they became so diffused and widespread that even an illiterate villager started taking some delight in blurting out an English word. The evil effects of blind aping of foreign manners and customs were soon realized by some of the writers who started ridiculing it in their writings. Yet it has to be admitted that the new environment thus created made the mind of the people receptive of the Western ideas which gradually found expression in works of literature.