PART-I

INTRODUCTION

1.0. History of Assamese and Oriya.

1.1. Assamese is one of the major Indian Languages, recognised in the Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India and is spoken as a mother tongue by 89,26,406 persons within the state of Assam and by 30,571 persons in the other parts of the country. Oriya is another constitutionally recognised major Indian language and is spoken as the mother tongue by 1,84,60,961 persons in the state of Orissa and by 13,95,399 persons in the other parts of the country. (According to 1971 census.)

1.2. Assamese belongs to the Magadhan speech of the Indo-Aryan family. The Magadhan speech coming from the region of Videha-Magadha through North Bengal entered into Kamrupa or Western
Asm where it was first characterized as Assamese as evident from the remarks of Hsien Tsang who visited the kingdom of Kamarupa in the first half of the seventh century A.D. He remarked that the language of the men of Kamarupa differed 'a little from that of Hind-India'. In Hsien Tsang's remarks the earliest reference about the Assamese language is found. The copper-plate inscriptions of the Hindu kings of Kamarupa ranging from the sixth-seventh to the twelfth century A.D. for the first time give some idea about the language and its forms in their formative stages.

In these inscriptions, though written in Sanskrit, specimens of Assamese are found in place names, proper names and other formations in their almost present forms and meaning. But these inscriptions cannot furnish the grammatical structure of Assamese for which we are to turn our attention to the songs of the Buddhist siddha-caryas known as Carya, composed in between 8th to 12th centuries A.D.

1.3. After the Caryas specimens of the Assamese language are found in early Assamese literature. The copper-plate inscriptions mentioned above furnish the earliest literary records in Assam. The earliest stone inscription in Assam is the Umanal inscription (c. 5th century A.D.) and this rock inscription may be regarded as the earliest specimen of writing in Assam. As to the production of literature in Assamese we must first of all mention the Carya songs.
Some of the composers of these songs are believed to the son of Kamrupa. We have also in Assam a large mass of popular songs coming from generation to generation, composed by unlettered rustic bardes. The earliest Assamese poets on record, Noma Sarasvati and Haribar Bipra, enjoyed the patronage of Durjakanarayan of Kamatapura who is said to have ruled in the latter part of the 13th century. The most considerable poet of the pre-Vaishnavite period of Assamese literature is Madhava Kendali who rendered the entire Ramayana into Assamese verse under the patronage of king Mahamani-kya in the fourteenth century.

1.4. Early Assamese literature is mainly written in poetry. But prose also developed side by side, the earliest specimens of which may be found in the works produced during the sixteenth century. The Ankiya Nato of Sankardeva (1449-1568 A.D.) and Madhava-deva (1489-1596 A.D.) present specimens of early Assamese prose literature. But it was Bhattachar (1596-1638 A.D.) who gave a distinct shape to Assamese prose in his two famous works namely Katha Gita and Kethe Bhagavata. The decipher of the Ambari stone inscription has furnished the earliest specimen of Assamese prose in the thirteenth century. The other prose works of the middle period of Assamese literature are the Caritpathia or biographies of the Vaishnavite saints of Assam of the sixteenth century and the historical chronicles known as Duranjie, composed at different times.
during the Ahom rule.

1.5. Assamese as a NIA Language enters into its Modern Era in the beginning of 19th century A.D., with the publication of the Bible in Assamese prose in 1813 A.D. by the American Missionaries. The Missionaries contributed a lot towards the development of the modern Assamese by writing and publishing grammars, dictionaries, and fictions as well as the monthly periodical Arunoday (Sunrise) from 1846 A.D. Assamese gave up the early style by that time and acquired a new one, which was the current tongue of the people of the region. However, the spelling and the syntactic style of the Modern Assamese had to wait for standardisation and stabilisation till 1873 A.D., when this language was re-established as the court language and the language of the schools and was followed by the subsequent publication of some text books, grammars and dictionaries and creative works.

1.6. Oriya also belongs to the same Magadhan speech of IA family. As mentioned by Grierson¹, this Magadhan speech while spreading towards South developed into Oriya². The emergence of Oriya

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2. Pattanaek, D.P. in his “Controlled Historical Reconstruction of Oriya, Assamese, Bengali and Hindi” p-64 holds: “Oriya branched off from its parent language before Bengali was separated from what was known as Eastern Group”.
as an independent tongue differing from its parent stock is
evident from the remarks of Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim.
He observed that "the words and language of this region (the
land of Odessa) differ from the speech of Central India". From
this the scholars are inclined to believe that the speech of
this region started to acquire distinct individuality in the
7th century A.D.

In the Dehakoshka and Charyagities, supposed to be com-
passed in between the 8th to 12th century A.D., scholars find a
number of Early Oriya Vocabulary and some grammatical peculia-
rities of Early Oriya too which have later been confirmed in
the subsequent Oriya works of Panchakoshas.

1.7. The rock inscriptions and copper plates issued dur-
ing the period c. 1051 A.D. to c. 1346 A.D. bear further specim-
ens of Oriya acquiring distinct individuality. Ananta Varna
Deva's inscription (c. 1051 A.D.) is considered to be the ear-
liest Oriya inscription. A sanskrit copper plate of Narsinha Deva
II (c. 1296 A.D.) contains a number of Oriya words. The inscrip-
tion of Ganga king Narasinha Deva (1346 A.D.) is the most signi-
ficant Oriya inscription. Some of its peculiarities exhibit the

3. As quoted by Ranasinh, Rayadhar in "History of Oriya
Literature" p-20.
5. "do-" "do-" pp-72-80
close relationship between the Early Oriya and Magadhi Prt. Some words also reflect localised pronunciation. There seems to be no difference between short i and long I. According to Chatterjee S.K., its "language is genuine Oriya which is already quite developed speech and undoubtedly takes its stand on some centuries of Oriya literature."

1.0. The earliest datable literary work in Oriya is the Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa who was contemporary of Kapileswara (1438-1467 A.D.). The lyrical ballad Kassava Kali by Markanda Dasa is also supposed to be composed in the 15th century A.D. The Bhagabata by Jagannatha Dasa and Ramayana by Balarama Dasa are all subsequent to the middle of the 15th century A.D.7. Naladu Panji, a historical work in Prsasa is also considered as a later work than Mahabharata by Sarala Dasa. But the Siva Veda and its prsasa commentary, and the 'Septanga', another prsasa-work are supposed to be the works of Pra-Sarala Era. The prsas of both the works is known to be based on common people's speech. Andraanadh-nidhi by Avadhuta Narayanguami is considered to be another remarkable Oriya prsasa work of supposedly 13th century A.D. Scholars

opine that the prose of this period is surprisingly more polished than the verse of the time of Karle Rasa.

1.9. In the middle of the 17th century A.D. the literary trend in Oriya took a significant turn, when the old prasuna-style of writing was replaced by the Alankarik style of the renouned poet. In this era, called Pitijuga, poetry was considered to be the fine art, and the poets were much concerned about the aesthetic sense. But with the imposition of British Rule in 1803 A.D. the literary trend in Oriya took another turn. The American Missionaries starting a Press at Broora started publishing several Christian literature in Oriya in between 1804-1812 A.D. Gradually they published dictionaries and grammars of Oriya, text books for schools including history, ethics, Geography etc. in Oriya and creative writings too. Since 1849 A.D. a Missionary periodical known as Jyotara has been published which inspired the natives to publish another monthly periodical Uthkal Despata. With the publication of this periodical the Modern Era of Oriya literature begins; Kabibose Rachanatha, Bhaktakabi Madhavadana, Phakiramahan Banapati, Sambhabakabi Sengadhar etc. contributed a lot towards the standardisation and stabilisation of Modern Oriya language and literature.