CHAPTER III
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ASSAMESE DRAMA

Though the foundation of Assamese dramaurgy laid by Sankardeva in the last part of the fifteenth century, and accordingly the Bhāvānā tradition has blossomed through the Satras, Namgharas, Temples and other social institutions, nevertheless, due to some social, political and cultural disorders and imbalances this rich and strong tradition was stagnant. The early part of the nineteenth century was a period of crisis and a critical time for Assamese literature and culture. During the last part of the six hundred years old Ahom Kingdom, the quarrel, Civilwar and internal strife for possession of power among the principal royal officers (the Burāgohāin, the Borgohāin, the Barpātra Gohāin, the Barbaruā and the Barphukan) and silence of the royal family severly effected on the social life of the country. The Mowāmarīa Bidroh or Māyā-maryā Rebellion (1769-94) A.D., Danduwā Droha (1810) and the Burmese invasions for three times vehemently spoilt the cultural environment in the society. Under this situation, the current trend of literature stopped in the vortex of social, political and cultural crisis.1 This kind of social crisis tremendously hampered the creative force on the society and individuals.

In the year 1826, on August 28, Assam has fallen under the British control by the Treaty of Yon-dâ-bu made between the Burmese king and the British. The year 1826 is a turning point in the cultural and political history of Assam. According to the Treaty of Yan-dâ-bu, the East India Company got Assam Tenacarim and Arakan. Assam lost her independence. The British, set-up Purandar Singha in 1833 A.D. as a nominal king whose rule terminated in 1838. Purandar Singha paid Rs. 50,000/- to the British for revenue and tax. With the termination of Purandar Singha's rule in 1838, a new rule with a new administrative machinery imported from the far west, set its foot on this land. In the beginning of the British rule, the people thought that they found peace, but ultimately they awaken from the initial peace of dream. As a matter of fact they, took the path of rebellion. In this case, the rebellion of Gomdhar Konwar and people's rebellion is significant. The people were dissatisfied on the role played by the British. The British came to Assam for the protection of people, they thought, but when they show that the British annexed the entire Assam and ruled, they were compelled to stand against the British. Moreover, the Sepoy Mutiny (1858) which is regarded as the first freedom Movement of India, irritated in the minds of the people of Assam for the aspiration of

3. Barua, Gunabhirm: Assam Buranji, p. 219
4. Tamuliphukan, Kasinath: Assom Buranjitrar, p. 63
5. Rajguru, S.: Medieval Assamese Society, p. 78
freedom. Although Maniram Dewan who is called the first martyr of the freedom movement of Assam, in the beginning he was the supporter of the British imperialism, at last he could realize the mature of British rule and he stood against the British. As a result, he got capital punishment by the British. The tragic event of Maniram Dewan helped so much to know the British administration. With the capital punishment of Maniram Dewan, the rebellion of upper middle class or the feudal class were down-fall.

With the down-fall of the rebellion of the upper middle class, then the Peasant Revolution launched. In 1861, on September 17, at Phulguri about seven mile distance from Nowgaong burn firstly the fire of revolution against the rising rate of taxes to the British. The tribal society were the forerunner of this revolution. The fire of this revolution spread over Neli, Rahā etc. Due to the enhancing dissatisfaction of the peasant class, the ruler class of Assam and Calcutta do not compelled the people to collect the new rate of tax. But in 1865, Hopkins has modified his proposal to increase the rate of revenue for all districts of Assam and the Government of Bengal has approved.

According to the revised proposal, the rate of revenue were increased from 25% to 50% for both rupit and a-rupit land.

The peasants of the Pātharughāt in Mongaldoi Sub-division firstly launched revolution in protest against the implementation of the revised new rate of revenue. The spark of this revolution

7. Ibid.
9. Bengal Revenue Consultations, 1869, November, No. 103, Vide Appendix- A.
spread over Lasimā, Rangīā, Gobindapur, Hodirā, Pāti darang, Nalbārī, Baramā, Bajāli, Barbhāg etc. The Peasant Revolution which is launched at North Kāmrup, Mangaldoi area etc. continued from 1869 upto 1894.

The early part of the nineteenth century may be regarded as the Dark Age of Assamese language and literature. The songs, verses, manuscripts, adaptation of Rāmāyana and other glorious literary works enrich the pre-Vaishnava period of Assamese literature. 'Apramādi Kabi' Mādhab Kandali, Harihar Bipra, Hem Sarashwati, Kabiratna Sarashwati, Audra Kandali etc. were the great lumenaries of this period. The great figures like Sankardeva, Mādhavdeva, Baikunthanāth Bhāgawat Bhattācharya, Rāmasaraswati and other artists in the Vaisnavic period made the golden age of the language and literature during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries through their Ankyā Nāts, Bargīts, adaptation of the Bhāgawata, Mahābhārata, creation of unique prose style and their other monumental works. The Neo-Vaishnava Bhakti Movement enriches the literature of this period.

During Post-Sankaradeva period, a large number of literary works came up. The Carit Puthi (biographical literature), historical literature, books on mathematics, Hastibidārnāb, Goharā Nidān etc. were the man output of this period. Moreover, the monument Kathāguru Carita has written in this period and it carries the heritage of the prior age.11

11. Talukdār, Nanda: Sambād Patrar Hod Kācalit Asamiyā Sāhitya, p. 3
While the literature in the different language groups of Northern India was in the child stage, then the Assamese Language and literature was in the stage of maturity. The other states of India was under the British control many years before in the British occupation of Assam. In this manner, the other states of India has produced their language-literature, poetry, dramas, novel, short stories etc. in the light of Modernism and Romanticism by the impact of western education and rational philosophy.

From 1826 in which Assam was under the British control as a result of the Treaty of Yandabu, may be said as the modern age of Assam begins. Because, from this time, Assam came into the contact with the western civilization and culture. Moreover, during this time Assam has enlightened by the Modern notions. The British introduced Assamese language in the court just after their occupation of Assam. The British were strangers to the land and had no knowledge of the local tongue. Thus they wanted to take the help from the local people for the smooth running of their newly established administration. For this purpose they recruited mostly from Bengal. ¹² The British administrators in 1836 introduced Bengali the language of the court and the medium of instruction in the schools of Assam. ¹³ D. Neog pointed out, in 1838 Bengali usurped the place at the instigation of the Bengali clerks who came to Assam for their living.¹⁴ The new administrative authorities were informed by the Bengalees that Assamese was but a mere

¹² Baruā, B.K.: History of Assamese Literature, p. 104
¹³ Goswāmi, J.: Assāmiyā Jāhityar Chamu Burānji, p. 173
patois and a dialect of Bengali. Under the provisions of Act XXIX of 1837 and section 337 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the language of the soil was to be used in Judicial and Revenue Proceedings, it was neglected in the case of Assam. As a result Assamese language was banished in the schools and courts about forty years from 1836 to 1873. Consequently, the loss of Assamese language and literature is not to be repairable. Naturally, the literature became lethargy and to break this lethargy about a half century was necessary.

Under this critical juncture of Assamese language and literature the American Baptist Missionary entered the soil of Assam. In fact, the American Baptist Mission is the torch-bearer of the new literary epoch in our language. H. Barua has pointed out that strictly speaking, the modern period in Assamese literature begins with the publication of the New Testament from the Baptist Mission press at Serampore, Bengal, in 1813. It was an age of struggle for existence of Assamese language and literature.

The Missionaries were not the literary men. The main objective of the Missionaries of Assam was to preach Christianity and western education. However, they produced the first primer for use in schools they established for imparting English education. The Missionaries established a printing press at Sibsagar in 1840. They wrote chiefly Christian literature and text books. These

16. Ibid, p. 336
19. Ibid, p
books covers in general knowledge, stories from history, geography, and the world of science, as well as the lives of Christian saints and apostles. The Missionaries whole heartedly advocated the use of Assamese in place of Bengali in schools and courts for the return of her lost status.

Before the East India Company took the administration of Assam a large number of people were superstitious. The influence of Western ideas and rational philosophy changed the pattern of livelihood. This has done by the Missionaries through literature, newspapers and press. In 1846 on January the Missionaries founded a monthly journal called 'Orunodol' published from Sibsagar Baptist Mission press. The Orunodol (the Sunrise), first newspaper in Assamese made invaluable contributions for the establishment of the foundation in modern Assamese literature. P.H. Moore writes, 'Modern literature whether Christian or non-Christian is the product of the last sixty years of the nineteenth century.'

The Missionaries never stopped with the publication of books or paper. They fought against the language policy of the Government. They fought basically for redemption of the Assamese language. In this regard Ananda Ram Dhekiel Phukan and other educated youths assisted them. In 1853-54, A.J. Moffat Mills, (a Judge of the Calcutta High Court) in his report on the province of Assam quoted the opinion of Ananda Ram Dhekiel Phukan and gave the opinion for

22. Extract from Assamese Literature, by H. Barua, p. 138
24. Ibid, p. 212
the use of Assamese language in place of Bengali. In the long report of Mills has expressed some valuable opinions about Assamese language and literature and this opinion ultimately helped for the redemption of the Assamese language. It says, '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 the fruit of all these earnest efforts, Assamese now secured official recognition as a language of the province by order of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (Sir George Campbell). The Missionaries laid the foundation of modern Assamese literature and on this root bloomed the bud of modern Assamese literature through the writings of Hem Chandra Baruá, Gunabhiram Baruá, Ramakanta Choudhury, Bholanath Dās, Kamalakanta Bhattachāryya etc. Assamese language and literature established by the efforts of these writers, really the new era of Assamese language and literature begins from the Jonaki age. At that time, the Assamese students who were studied at Calcutta founded an association called Assamiyā Bhasar Unnati Jādhini Sabhā in 1888 on August 25 for the allround development of Assamese language. It should be noted that some Assamese students who were in Calcutta founded an association called 'Assamiyā Gātrāt Sāhitya Sabhā' in 1872 by the encouragement of Ganga Gobinda Neog.

Phukan, Jagannāth Baruḥ, Mānik Chandra Baruḥ, Ratnadhar Baruḥ, Saitya Nāth Borā, Devi Charan Baruḥ etc. were the responsible members in this organisation. In 1889, on February 9th the mouth piece of 'Asamiyā Bhāsār Unnati Sādhini Sabhā' called 'Jonāki' was published from Calcutta and Chandra Kumār Āgarwālā was its editor. In the following years it was edited by Hem Chandra Baruā and Lakshmināth Bezbaruā. According to M. Neog, the establishment of Jonāki in 1889 at Calcutta is the birth day of modern Assamese literature.

The Romantic literature of Assam has came into existence through the Jonāki. During the last part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century the Romantic Movement in English Literature waved the flood-tide. Romantic Movement of sixteenth century, the Elizabethan age guided by Shakespeare revived in the eighteenth century in Franch and this Movement spread over Germany, England and other countries. It is generally supposed that the English Romantic Movement began in 1798, with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads. But it is a mistake to assign any definite date to it. Wordsworth and Coleridge jointly collected and published the Lyrical Ballads by the impact of the fundamental contributions of the French Revolution (Frenternity, Equality and Liberty) and the German Idealistic philosophy of Kant, Hegel and Fichte. From the time of the publication of the Lyrical Ballads the Romantic Movement in England wave the flood.

The Assamese students who were studied at Calcutta were so much inspired by the Romantic Movement of English literature. This group of literary minded students decided to enrich the Assamese literature in the light of European thought, particularly, the forms and contents of English literature. 'Jonaki' is the center where from begins the Romantic Movement of Assamese literature. Through the Jonaki a group of literatures creates numerous types of literature like novels, short stories, Dramas, Poetry etc. by the influence of English Romantic Revival and they laid the infrastructure of modern Assamese literature. In addition to Jonaki and Orunodoi, Bijuli (1890), Bāhi (1910-29, 1934-36, 1938-40), Ushā (1907-16), Alocant (1910-17), Chetanā (1919), Asam Bandhu (1885-86), Assam News, Asam Bilāshini (1871-83), Mau (1886), Asam Iraā (1888-90), Lorābandhu (1888), Asam Banti (1899), Times of Assam (1899), Milan (1922-23), Awāhan (1929-42), etc. these journals and periodicals also helps to the development of modern Assamese literature.

Modern Assamese literature has flourished by the impact of Western literature. Bengali literature specially helped to spread and transmit on this impact. Lambodar Borā, Satyanāth Borā, Laksmināth Bezbaruāh etc. took their education in Bengali medium in their childhoods. As a result they were familiar with Bengali literature. When the writers of Jonaki studied at Calcutta, at that time Hem Chandra Banerjee, Nabin Chandra Sen,

30. Sarmā, S.N. : Asamīyā Sāhityar Itibritta, p. 239
Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra, Ramesh Chandra, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dwijendralal and other writers were very popular and they created a sensation. The Assamese writers came in to contact with the Western literature and thoughts and eventually they also came to the close connection with the Bengali literature and taking this ideas they have devoted the writings of Assamese literature.

Modern Drama:

The terms 'Modern', and 'Modernity' is consider to be a dynamic term. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary modern means of the present or recent times which is contemporary. Modernity means being modern. However, the terms 'Modern' and 'Modernity' are confusing in literature. It is right that in literature 'modernity' does not mean present or resent times and contemporary. If it is not right, then Shakespear or Ibsen or Hamingway may not be said as modern. But Shakespear was modern during his time. Like that Sankardeva was modern during his tenure. Hence, Modern and Modernity are relative words. Modernity is an internal process of changes. Sometimes, in narrow sense we use the term modern with Western Civilization. Modernity is a general term. Now-a-days,'Modern Literature' denotes a distinct kind of literary movement of a special Age. It also denote a special kind of literature with special nature. Content, form status, structure, kinds of creation etc. all these are organi-

33. Ibid, p. 798
34. Misra, K.K. : Birinci Kumar Barua Aru Prafulladatta Goswami Upashy, p. 15
cally connected with literature and it has got it perfection.
The concept of 'Modern' flourishes from the tendency of the
comprehensive form of perception of life, Modern literature is
committed for the whole expression of life. If necessary Modern
literature will certainly go against reasons and the living cus-
toms, traditions and discipline.

'Committed to everything in human experience that milita-
tes against custom, abstract order, and even reason itself,
modern literature has elevated individual existence over social
man, unconscious feeling over self-conscious perception, passion
and will over intellect and systematic morals, dynamic vision
over the static image, dense actuality over practical reality.'

The Modernists are very much aware about present situation and
scenereo. Traditional beliefs, ideas, rituals, style, pattern
etc. are not essential according to their views. However, they
try to make the bridge from modern to the past. Modern writers
are more committed with present times from their sense. Stephen
Spender has pointed out some schemes of modern literature.

Among these (a) Realisation of modern experience through new
art; discovery of modern hope for the impact of society;
(b) Creation of a new aesthetic sense of modern symbolic life
through the process of synthesises between past and present and
(c) Revolutionary idea regarding tradition. The modernists seeks
to see the old world with the new beam of light. Hence in this

36. Spender, Stephen : The Struggle of Modern, pp. 81-82
regard they are revolutionist. Self-expressionist, self-exploration and self-establishment - these are the three characteristics of Modernists. According Jacques Barzun, Modernity is a special form of Romantic ideal.  

The word 'Modern' and 'Contemporary' are not synonymous. All Modern writers are contemporaries of an age, but all writers of this age may not be modern. The contemporary writers live in the modern world, write about the modern world and also recognise the values connected with the contemporary history, science, philosophy, religion etc. There is a vast difference between Modern writers and contemporary writers about the outlook of their life, mode of their expression, method of their approaches etc.

Let us clear about the concept of 'Modern Age'. The term 'modern' is used to denote to a particular age having some special characteristics. This age is the history of the ideas of revolution in Europe. Today whole mankind has influenced by the European Civilization and Culture. The Modern Age began in Europe in the fifteenth century. The British philosopher Bacon may be said as the top intelligent man of the Modern Age. The history of Europe may be divided into three Ages - (a) Old Age or Classical Antiquity which comprises from 1000 up to 500 B.C., (b) Middle Age (from 500 B.C. up to 1450 or fifteenth century) and (c) Modern Age (from 1450 till now). Of course, it is very difficult to say that from when and which day Old Age began and end. Similar is the case of Middle Age and Modern Age. In the case of Modern European novel, at the beginning of the twentieth century

37. Barzun, Jacques: Classic, Romantic and Modern, p. 121
there was a great changed. The publication of Marcel Pruste's in 1915 *Remembrance of Things Past*, James Joyce's in 1916 *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and others were the forerunner of this change Virginia Woolf comments about this change, 'On or about December 1910, human character changed.'

History of the trend in Modern Drama is almost abreast with the trends of other modern art forms. European countries are pioneer for dramatic literature and the experiment of dramatic techniques. It is true that almost all new techniques and experiments related to production, presentation of drama has done in the Modern Europe and this new techniques spread all over the world. It is also equally interesting fact that the European theatrical experts established various 'isms' such as Realism, Naturalism, Neo-realism, Symbolism, Theatricalism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Existentialism, Sur-realism, Dadaism etc. They synthesises the ideas of East and West. Throughout Europe, the eighteenth-nineties were a period of literary ferment.

In the history of Modern literature nineteenth century is very significant, because this century is the mother of many cultural and literary movements. The strong impact of this literary movements may be noticed in the field of dramatic literature and in the production of drama. During this century the theatrical experts of England, France, Germany, Russia, Belgium, Norway etc. propounded a new style and technique (both in

38. Krober, Karl: *Styles in Fictional Structure*, p. 217
form and matter) of drama. The dramatists in this period devoted on modern real problems. The Norwegian dramatists Henric Ibsen (1828-1906) may be regarded as the father of Modern Realistic prose drama. Realistic drama flourished against the protest of mythological and Romantic dramas. This new type of drama spread over the different places of Europe. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was a great dramatic and literary giant. He was the supporter and follower of Ibsen. As a competent successor of Ibsen, Shaw gives a new form of Modern drama which is known as the plays of Ideas. Moreover, in England Robertson, N. Pinero, Jones etc. were also the supporters and followers of Ibsenian Realistic drama. Like that in Italy Pirandello (1867-1936) followed Ibsenian idea of drama. Similarly, Gahart Haupmann (the weavers) Sadarman (Germany), Anton Chekhov (Russia) were the followers of Ibsenian drama. After Ibsen Pirandello (1867-1930) was the most significant dramatist. He seems to be regarded as the guide of modern drama. Pirandalo realized that life is changeable, it is not predetermined. Through intellect and reason life can not be understand. But man as a rational being, he try to understand life under certain law and accordingly he discarded the dynamic character of life and he accepts such situation. His successors J. Paul Sattre, Albert Camu, Harold Pinter, Edward Allwai were inspired by L. Pirandello. He may be said as the forerunner of Absurd drama. His famous plays was 'Six characters in

40. Bhattacharyya, T.K. : Ibsenar Nātya Pratīvā, p. 240
Mahanta, L.K. : Biswa Sāhityar Āvās, p. 86
Baruā, P.K. : Sāhitya : Desi Āru Bidesi, p. 134
41. Pāthak, Dayā Nanda : Sāhitya : prācyā prācāyatya, p. 40
Another movement of drama emerges side by side of the realistic drama. This is known as Naturalism. Émile Zola (1840-1902) was the leading figure of this movement. The Swidenian dramatist Strindberg (1849-1912) gives a different idea about naturalism. He was not in favour of Naturalism. He emphasised on Selective Realism. In his 'To Damascus' and 'A Dream Play' he has expressed his inner noise of soul. This are good examples of expressionistic drama. In the field of Psychology Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) irritated in the minds of the thinking world. He has pointed out that mind is not so simple. Conscious, unconscious, sub-conscious these are the stages of mind. It is not very easy to know the mystery of unconscious mind. His novel analysis and interpretation of mind open the new trends of literature. In this way Impressionism, Stream of consciousness flourished. The American dramatist Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) in his 'Strange Interlude' tried to depict the flow of mind and nature of thinking. 42

Marxism and Leninism also inspired the contemporary writers. The practical philosophy of Marx and Lenin not only attracted to the people of Russia, but also attracted to the peoples of the other parts of the world. In Russia it is known as socialistic Realism. Social-Realism wanted to establish a Classless Proli- teriate state. Hence, this group of dramatists believes social commitment of drama is very essential. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) the German dramatist was inspired by the socialistic Realism. 43

42. American drama did not become completely 'American' while about forty years ago, when it attained full maturity in the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Robert Sherwood, Elmer Rice, Sidney Howard and other playwrights of the 1920's'. Downer, Alan. S. (e.): American Theatre, p. 3

43. Ibid.
major figure in European drama this century, the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht has exerted a particularly strong influence upon dramatists and theatre practice in Britain in the Post-war period. Brecht was concerned with the problem of analysing the effect and function of theatrical experience. Brecht as primarily a man of the theatre fascinated by actors and audiences and the complex relationship between the two. His theories are drawn from his experiences of writing plays and direction. Naturalistic mode of presentation, a theatre which Brecht, argued, created an 'illusion of reality' on the stage. Brecht was a committed Marxist and drew such ideas from Marxist and Hegelian views of history. His 'epic' theatre, as he termed it, attempted to avoid the subjective, it broadened the scope of Expressionism in its aesthetic, freed the theatre from the naturalistic traditions of 'bourgeois' theatre. It opened up new possibilities for theatre as a social, political and moral force in contemporary life. His more immediate influences were Buchner, Wedekind, Piscator and Meyerhold.

Another important trend of Modern European drama is Existentialism. The French philosopher and dramatist J.P. Sartre (1905-80) was the chief proponent of this new trend. Existentialist philosophers flourished during and immediately after the Second World War. Sartre and his followers pointed out that Man is Condemn to be free. Man is solitary. His Existence precedes essence. He recognises only particular human existence and

44. Barnes, Philip : *Companion To Post-War British Theatre*, p. 44
45. : Ibid,
refuted the idea of universality. Every man is conscious about his own existence. Man is the conductor and preserver of human values.

One of the most complex trends of modern drama is what we know as Absurd. Martin Esslin used the term 'The Theatre of the Absurd' to describe a group of writers and plays achieving prominence in the 1950s and 1960s but also to describe a particular form of theatre. It could be seen as an extreme reaction to Realism in the theatre and historically has its roots in the work of Alfred Jarry, Strindberg's Expressionist dream plays, Dada and Surrealism, Pirandello's 'Six Characters in Search for an Author' and the works of a number of French Existentialist Philosophers.

In French the major dramatists of the Absurd were Eugène Ionesco, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Arthur Adamov. Albert Camus is known as the Prophet of Absurd. The central figure in Post-War Britain and in France has been Samuel Beckett (1906- ) and the play generally regarded as the most representative of the Theatre of the Absurd is Beckett's Waiting For Godot (Paris, January 1953 and London, August 1955). It is a play which regards Post-War twentieth century man as having lost his bearings spiritually, as living in doubts and uncertainties, yet facing with some dignity, pride, humour and the capacity for endurance, the metaphysical horror that surrounding human existence there may be a vast Cosmic 'Nothingness' with apparently no purpose.

The most important British based dramatist of this group is Harold

46. Esslin, Martin: The Theatre of the Absurd, pp. 23-24
47. Barnes, Philip: A Companion to Post-War British Theatre, p. 9
Another important trend of Modern drama is poetic drama. Poetic drama flourished against the Realistic drama T.S. Elliot, W.B. Yeats, S. Philipas, J.E. Flaker, John Drinwater etc. were the famous playwrights of this group. Besides the above mentioned trends of Modern drama, there are other trends of drama and these trends also help for the enrichment of dramatic literature. No final word can be write about modern drama as it is proceeding through different experiments and observations.

Modern Assamese Drama: (a) its origin:

With the coming of the British to India came their forms of entertainment. Even before the final conquest of India by the British, the English theatre was quite active in Calcutta. The British had settled in Bengal much earlier than in any other part of India. The newly educated class of Indians thus first came into existence in Bengal. M.L. Varad Pānde has pointed out that in the second-half of the eighteenth century regular theatre halls were built, first, in Calcutta and then in Bombay for enacting English plays by the local Britishers.48 The famous Balgācia stage was built in 1857 in Calcutta. In 1872, a public theatre was built in Calcutta and was called the National Theatre. With the establishment of Universities and Colleges and subsequent spread of English education led to the emergence of modern theatre in India. The 7th of November 1795 is a historical day for the modern Indian theatre.49 On that day the two comedies translated from English into Bengali i.e., 'Disguise' (translated by

49. Rangachārya, Adya: The Indian Theatre, p. 94
Mr. Herasim Lebedeff, Russian adventurer) and *Love is the Best Doctor* (translated by Mr. Golok Nath Das, tutor of H.L.) were produced.50

After the British occupation in Assam the newly business class and newly-half-educated service man introduced a new pattern of life. This new pattern of life is called urban life or urban civilization. The newly emerging urban class has been facing a serious problem i.e., either they will depend on Western Culture or on our old tradition. The newly educated class found inspiration and ideological impact from the art and culture of the ruling class. They do not directly influenced from the European countries in the case of dramatic performances and writing of plays. On the other hand, they got the inspiration from Bengalis. The modern theatre of Assam in the urban areas is of recent origin as it is in other parts of India. The modern theatre in Assam, like its Calcutta counter part is an offspring of this tradition.51 At that time for Assam Calcutta was the centre of higher education. In the last part of the nineteenth century, the then students who were studies in Calcutta have seen the dramatic performances of Bengalis and as such, they wanted to write and perform plays. The first stage was established in Guwahati in 1875 (after eighteen years of the establishment of Calcutta stage), Jorhat—1895, Golaghat—1895, Tezpur—1897, Mongaldoi—1904 etc.52

50. : Ibid.
Although the modern theatre has created its own forms in the initial stage of its development it absorbed much from the traditional, i.e., the Vaishnava Bhavana theatre and drama. Some theatrical personalities pointed out that various diverse influences operated upon the Indian theatre. Among these (1) many English plays, particularly of Shakespeare, were translated in various regional languages which led to the tendency among the writers of imitating western modes; (2) with the spirit of the resurgence, the dramatists started translating and staging Sanskrit plays particularly in the educational institutions; (3) the folk and traditional theatrical forms prevalent in the country did not completely lose their hold on the masses and were quite active. As in the case of Assam we observed only the first and the second factor is applicable in the beginning of modern Assamese drama. Of course in recent times, in Assam there is a tendency to create dramas in the light of folk models. H. Baruā has pointed out that the main streams of inspiration of the new theatre and drama may broadly be divided into two -- (1) the tradition of Vaishnava Bhāvanā theatre and drama, and (2) an academic tradition to which attention was directed by Western education and literary influences. However, western influence is very strong on modern Assamese drama. In India, drama is considered as literature (kāvyā). It differs from other forms of literature in being

53. Varde Pānde, K.L.: Invitation to Indian Theatre, pp.6-67
54. __________________: Ibid,
55. Baruā, Hem: Assamese Literature, p. 180
a visual (drishya kavya).

The relation between stage and drama is inseparable. As a visual art, its growth and development is completely dependent upon the growth and development of stage. But it is a very interesting fact that in the case of the origin of modern Assamese drama this was exception. The modern Assamese drama has flourished after thirty years back of British consolidation in Assam. The new era of Assamese drama begins with the social drama Rām Navami (1857) written by Gunābhīrām Baruā (1834-1894) and published in 1858 A.D. In fact, Gunābhīrām Baruā's Rām Navami (1857) and Hem Chandra Baruā's (1835-1896) Kāniyār Kirtan (1861) laid the foundation of modern Assamese drama though the plays of Ankiya type were still kept alive in the Satra or the Vaishnavitic monasteries. Rām Navami may be regarded as the first modern Assamese drama. In the beginning of the modern Assamese drama Gunābhīrām Baruā's Rām Navami, Hem Chandra Baruā's Kāniyār Kirtan or Rudrārām Bardoloi's Bangāl-Baygālani were the effects of individual efforts for the reform of society. Their purpose was to show the evil condition and corruption of society. These plays were not written to keeping in mind in the existence of any stage or for a dramatic movement. Assamese drama has its origin by personal effort not by the inspiration of any dramatic organisation or by any theatrical movement. At the dawn of modern Assamese drama, the dramatists created their plays not for the stage, but they created their plays for criticising the bad and superstitions of contemporary society.

56. जरमा, क.क. : असमिया नात्याय साहित्य, p. 120
We have already observed that modern Assamese drama is said to be an outcome of influence of the two streams of sources i.e., Sanskrit drama and western drama. But it is equally true that the strong tradition of indigenous folk drama has also played a vital role in the development, presentation and enrichment of modern Assamese drama.

(b) Characteristics of Modern Assamese Drama:

Modern drama differs from the Ankiyā Bhāvanā and the classical Sanskrit dramas. Their difference is not only structural but also natural and characteristic. A perceptible change came over not only in form or in the method of constructions, but also in the treatment of the subject matter. Modern drama is not didactic and religious in tone like Ankiyā Nāṭ. Modern drama is concerned more with the modern problems. Real and day-to-day life is the base of modern drama. Realistic approach is one of the salient feature of modern drama. So it is man, their existence and the role of man on society is the central point of modern drama. Even in the story of mythological dramas and in the case of characterisation the super natural qualities have been avoided as far as possible. Apart from the introduction of western technical devices, the new drama was made action-oriented and 'conflict' in character and action. According to Aldryce Nicoll.

57. Bhattacharyya, H.C. : Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and the Stage, p. 73
58. Sarma, S.N. : Assamẏ Nātya Śāhitya, p. 21
Conflict is the soul of drama. Conflict is of two types i.e.,
external and internal. This conflict may occur with the situa-
tion or with the character or with ideology. Modern drama reflects
not only the elite society but also the folk society. Modern
drama is not confined only with the phenomena of Royal Court.
Modern drama comprises all problems of life, and all branches of
human knowledge like mythological, historical, religious, social,
psychological, economical, political etc. may be the subjectmatter
of modern drama. The modern drama is humanised in the social
sense and even when it is historical or mythological in theme, the
human interest is neither distorted nor lost sight of.

As a secular art form modern drama is not devoid of amuse-
ment. It gives immense pleasure to the different section of
people. In other words, Modern theatre merges man in the sea of
pleasures.

(c) Classification of Drama:

The Western critics have divided drama into three categories
on the basis of subjectmatter and ending: (a) Tragedy, (b) Comedy,
and (c) Farce. Moreover, there is another category which is
known as Tragic-Comedy. According to the subjectmatter modern
plays may be broadly divided into four classes - mythological,
Historical, Social and Romantic. Modern Assamese drama has

60. Hudson : Introduction to the Study of Literature,
pp. 230-231.
61. Baruā, B.K. : History of Assamese Literature, p. 147
divided into three categories from another point of view:
(i) serious and light comedies, farce etc., (ii) mythological and Historical and (iii) socio-psychological plays.

This classification can not cover the entire range of modern Assamese drama.

However, we may classify modern Assamese drama in the following way:

---

62. Baruā, Hem: Assamese Literature, p. 182
This division is based on the subject-matter of modern drama. We may also prepare another table to show the trends of modern Assamese drama.

**Trends of Modern Assamese Drama:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May be</th>
<th>May be</th>
<th>May be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>fulfledged</td>
<td>One Act Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegorical</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absurd</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stream of Consciousness</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>(Such type of Assamese drama is yet to be found)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressionistic</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressionism</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epic</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalysis</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social Drama:**

By social drama we mean a type of plays which derives its subject-matter from social life. In a sense, all types of plays are social as it reflects the life of a particular society or a particular age. More or less all dramas from the time of its origin social in nature. Because, the relation between man and society is inseparable. Individuals can not live without society and society can not be form without man. Playwrights are the essential responsible members of society. They represents their
society. Behind their production or creations there must be some characters of a society either it is mythological or historical. Hence, from this point of view all artistic creations are social. There is another implication of social drama. The theme of social drama is derived from the contemporary society. The mythical world is unreal, the historical world is surreal and past, but the social world is totally real. Therefore social drama deals with the problem of contemporary society and individuals it is called social plays. The Modern European social plays are known as problem plays. Present age is the age of problem, for example economic problem, rising of population problem, unemployment problem, communal problem etc. The playwrights raise the problem through dramas and they try to solve it. Their main purpose is to reflect about social awareness for social change and progress. In order to achieve their ends the dramatists gives psychological analysis and interpretation through the characters. So, this kind of drama is essentially realistic. Here technical devices are secondary, but problem is the chief, for this reason it is called Drama of Ideas or Thesis Drama. Ibsen's 'Doll's House', Shaw's 'Man and Superman', Balsworthy 'The Mob', 'Justice' are fall in this category. In Assamese literature few dramas are found in this category. Jyoti Prasād's 'Kārengar Līgiri' (the female attendant of the palace) Satya Prasād's 'Krīnāl Kāhi', Bhaben Saikia's 'Rāmdhenu', Arun Sarma 'Ciyar' etc. may be the example of such category.

Modern Assamese social dramas may be broadly divided into two categories:
(1) Serious social play (may be tragedy or comedy)
(2) Farce or light comedy

(1) **Serious social plays**: The writers of this category depicts the root cause of the downfall of society in an artistic way. They try to point out the psychological problems of society. In this sense these dramatists are realist. In case of this category the term 'social' is used in the broader sense. The dramatist raises the vital problems of society which shock in the life of individuals and society and as such they depicts the tragic or comic consequence through the character of heroes or heroines. Gunabhiram Barua's *Hām Navami*, Lakhidhar Sarma's *Nirmalā*, Atul Chandra Hazarika's *Kalyani*, Prabin Phukan's *Kāl Parinaya*, Phani Sarma's *Kiya*, Arun Sarma's *Nībārena Bhattāchāryya*, Mahendra Barthakur's *Mukhya Mantri*, Jagdish Pātghiri's *Natun Purush* etc. may safely be included in this category.

According to the basis of the influence of society on individuals and its effects in minds of individuals sometimes this type of social plays may be divided into two types --

(i) Socialistic (*sāmāj vādi* or *sūsam sāmājik*) and (ii) anti-social (*sāmāj birodhi* or *Bisam sāmājik*). Socialistic plays are those in which the dramatic characters express and develops their personalities by accepting the social customs and rituals. In this type of social plays dramatic conflict out break from mental conflict and not from the social contrast. The individuals observes the rules and regulations of society and they mingled
with the hopes and aspirations of society. Benudhar Sarmā's 'Seuilalon', Jyoti Prasād Āgarwāla's 'Lavitā', Saradā Bardoloi's 'Aagribar Ājān', Arun Sarmā's 'Nibāran Bhattāchāryya' etc. may be fall in his category.

While in the case of anti-social plays the dramatis personae do not necessarily accept the customs and rituals of society, rather they revolt against the established social systems. Society may stand as the hindrance of the hopes and aspirations, of the individuals. Gunābhīrām Baruā's Rām Navami, Lakhibher Sarmā's 'Nirmalā', Jyoti Prasād Āgarwāla's 'Kārengar Ligiri' goes against the establish social customs.

Analysis of contemporary social and domestic life is a popular motif of our plays. This trend is the outcome of a growing middle class. Their problems are both domestic and social. Sometimes Domestic dramas also try to include in social dramas. Pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, love and affection, jelousy and proud of personal and domestic life are the central problem of such kind of plays. Grahālakshmi of Nābin Chandra Bardoloi, Jhā of S.K. Baruā, Kārengar Ligiri of J.P. Āgarwālā, Mrināl Māhi of J.P. Baruā, Sadhisi of K. Barthākur etc. may be include in this type.
Development of Modern Assamese Social Drama:

It has already been mentioned that Modern Assamese Social drama has originated with Gunabhi Rām Baruā's Rām Navami. The drama was composed in 1857 just after his return from Calcutta. It was first published in the Arunodoy in several issues. The first modern Assamese social drama Rām Navami is a social tragedy which emphasises the necessity of widow remarriage. Navami is a child-widow, a Brāhmin girl falls in love with an educated young man Rāmchandra. Navami becomes pregnant. Due to the social obstruction she could not marry. So they ultimately commit suicide. Although Rām Navami is primarily Western in technique, it is not free from the influence of Sanskrit drama and the Vaisnavite Ankiyā Nāṭ. Baruā wrote another plays namely Bibhā Rahashya which is found incomplete form.

Hem Chandra Baruā's (1835-1896) Kāniyār Kirtan (in praise of the opium-eater) was published in 1861, is the second (but it is first published play) Assamese social comedy written with a view to exposing the evil effects of opium-addiction.

The third social drama of this period is Bangāl-Bangālani (1871 A.D.) (a pair of foreigners' - husband and wife) of Rudra-rām Bardoloi. Bangāl-Bangālani is thematically a vulgar play. The fourth play of this period is Seuti-Kiran (1894) of Benudhar Rājkhowā. There was a long gap between Bangāl Bangālani and

63. Bhattachāryya, H.C. : Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and the Stage, p. 79
64. Baruā, Hem : Assamese Literature, p. 183
Seuti-kiran. After the three plays about forty years later, the fourth social play Seuti kiran has published. The dramatist composed this play in the light of Shakespearian Romantic tragedy. He attempts to depict the tragic consequence of the union of the two lovers Seuti and Kiran. Rājkhowā's another social play is Kuri Satikār Sabhyata (the civilization of the twentyninth century (1908).

Hemprovā of Devanāth Bardoloi was composed in 1898 and published in 1982. It is a imaginary social play based on historical background. This play reflects the tragic picture of medieval Assamese society. During Burmese invasions how people spent their lives - this has been reflected in this drama.

20th Century Social Drama (before independence):

After the composition of Hemprovā of Devanāth Bardoloi about thirteen years no social drama has published during this period. Moreover, although modern Assamese social drama flourished in 1857, one of the most remarkable point is that only a few plays has written in this forgoing century. H.C. Bhattāchārīya remarks that after the publication of three naturalistic dramas, there intervened a period of unproductivity in the field of social dramas for about half of a century. Why and how this has happened? In our previous discussion it has been mentioned that growth and development of drama depends upon the condition of stage and society. Stage movement of Assam has not been started

66. Bhattāchārīya, H.C.: Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and the Stage, p. 82
during the last part of the nineteenth century. Of course, the
effort for the establishment of stage has started in the last
part of the nineteenth century. So, it was the time of prepara-
tion for the establishment stage.

Secondly, the trend of social drama laid by Gunabhiram
Barua did not influenced upon the growth and development of
Assamese social drama. Rather, the popularity of mythological,
historical and farces became enhanced in place of the social dra-
mas.

Thirdly, there was no congenial atmosphere for creating
serious social plays. Most of the audiences of nineteenth and
the early part of twentieth centuries were illiterates, rural
people. Hence it was quite natural that people were attracted
to the episodes of Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and
the themes of light comedy in place of the complex problem of
individuals and society.

Fourthly, at that time the fundamental problem was slavery.
So it was the duty of intellectuals to revive national conscious-
ness through the rich tradition and glorious past history of the
country. Due to this reason the Mythological and Historical
plays has flourished.67

Fifthly, social awareness is the pre-condition of social
plays. Social plays may not be growth and develop without social

67. J.N. Jarmā opines that Ramaṁanta Choudhury’s ‘Sitāhāraṇa’
(abduction of Sītā) written in 1875, is the first mytho-
logical drama of the modern period (Asamīya Nāṭya Sāhitya,
p. 159).

P.N. Gohain Barua’s ‘Joymatí’ (1900) is the first histo-
rical drama of Assamese literature.
awareness. At that time people were not conscious about their problems. This has badly hampared for the growth and development of serious social plays.

Finally, people were not mentally prepared to accept social problems, because the spiritual devotional ideas of the Vaisnavite Ankiya Nats prevails in their minds. Under this circumstances the Mythological and the Historical plays occupied on the place of social dramas.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the contributions of the following playwrights - Srimha Lakshmi (1911) of Nabin Chandra Bardoloi is a pioneer domestic drama of the early part of this century. This drama portrays the tragic picture of a woman whose husband is a dissolute. Similarly, Shanakanta Barua's Uma is a tragic play which depicts the activities between two women. Lakshmichar Sarmā's plays are Nirmalā (1926), Brinkhal (1931), Bisār (1933), Hridayar Kulya (1936), Atmasannān (1936). In his Nirmalā, he depicts the story of a widow who commits suicide due to social obduracy. Jyoti Prasād Agarwallā's Kayengar Līgiri (the Maid of the Court, 1937) is a landmark of modern Assamese social drama. Of the pre-independence social plays in the twenty-eighth century mention may be made of NavaYoug (1925) by Ādhab Ch. Sarmā; Jansār Gitra' written in (1928-29) published in (1936) by Lakshmi Kānta Datta; Biplab (1937), Assam Pratibhā (The genius of Assam, 1924), Chandra Kelā (1937), by Daibā Ch. Talukdār; Parājay (Defeat 1938) by Dayānanda Baruā; Raman Jākti (1935), Kuputra (1938), Abhimānār Prāyascitta (1938), Jāgrata Dēvatā (1938) by Harish Ch. Bhattachāryya; Nāri Jāgaran (1937) by
Bisnuram Mahājan, Kalyāni (1939) by Atul Ch. Hazarikā, Kālparinaya (1939) by Prabin Phukan, Čakoichakūwa (1939) by Satya Prasād Baruā, Kuber by Bisnu Prasād Goswāmī, Avijān (1940) by Dadhi Mahanta etc.

One the one hand, the above noted dramatists in the case of subject-matter and construction were more or less influenced by the Western playwrights i.e., Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, Arther Jones, Arther Pinaro etc. on the other hand they were influenced by the philosophy of Gandhi, Marx and Freud.

Modern Assamese Social Drama After Independence:

From the beginning to the middle of the fifth part of this century, Assamese drama may be regarded as a sterile period. During this period the horrible condition of the World War Second hempered so much on stage and dramas and other aspects of individuals and social life. After the Second World War and the attainment of independence, Assamese literature has penetrated into a new era. In the pre-independence period, the writers and artists were badly victimized under the cruel cycle of the Britishers. After independence the creators got some amount of freedom. The Second World War changed the attitudes of man. Moreover, after Second World War and the attainment of independence some new problems arises in day-to-day life. Hence, the second phase of Modern Assamese drama really begins after the attainment of independence. The playwrights of this period try to adjust with this new changing situation.
We can perceive the following changes of modern Assamese drama after independence -

Firstly, the trend of social dramas was too narrow and fluid before independence. The playwrights of the pre-independence period were mostly concerned with national consciousness and that is why they have selected historical themes. But after independence, although people got political freedom, the economic problem becomes more serious. Democracy has established but capitalism grows rapidly. Exploitation and all sorts of suffering increases in the everyday life of common people. Men compells to take the path of struggle and revolution. As a result social play grows and develops on the basis of this new social awareness.

Secondly, after the attainment of independence due to development of a more rational attitude historical dramas and mythological dramas became declined and the social plays occupies in the place of mythological and historical dramas.

Thirdly, the dramas of this period not only changed in the theme, but also changes in its technical sides.

Fourthly, the pre-independence dramatists were influenced by the Western and Bengali dramas. During this period the impact of Shakespeare was specially noticeable. But after independence, the contemporary modern trends of world drama i.e, Realism, Social Realism, Symbolism, Allegorical, Expressionism, Impressionism, Psycho-analysis, Poetic play, Brechtian Theatre, Stream of Consciousness, Theatre of the Absurd etc. has penetrated in the Assamese drama and stage.
Fifthly, a perceptible changes has happened in this period. In the case of structure the dramatists violated the prior principles of drama. They compose plays within three Acts in place of five Acts of their predecessors. Moreover, sometimes they also composes their plays without divisions of any Acts or Scenes.

Sixthly, the modern dramatists in this period totally avoids the solliloque, aside dialogue and other irrelivant elements. But they gives stage direction in their plays.

Seventhly, light projection has takenavital role in the production of modern Assamese drama.

Eighthly, Background music is an essential part of modern drama. Besides these — a very important changes has taken place in our modern dramas, i.e., folk model. (This will be discuss in proper place). This new change may be notice from the beginning of the eightees in this century.

Among the post-independence social dramas first credit goes to J.P. Agarwāl ā's Lavitā (1948). Lavitā is a powerful socio-political play. According to the dramatist, this play has written on the background of Quite India Movement, 1942 and the true events generated by the last war.68 His another social play is Khanikar (1986). Atul Chandra Hazarikā's Āhutī (1952 has written against the background of the 1942 movement for

68. Agarwālā J.P. Jyoti prasād Raconāvālī (Labhitā), Introduction), p. 188 (ed. J.N.Sarma)
freedom. Other significant dramatists and their plays are —
Daiba Ch. Talukdār’s - Rehu (1950), Lāhangā (1955), Laksmi-
Kānta Dutta’s Nuktār Avijān (1953), Lāndi Kālītā’s Parmāt (1949),
Prabin Phukan’s Satikār Bān (1954), Caturanga, Biswarupa (1961),
Sāradā Bardoloi’s and Krishna Kānta Bhattāchārīya’s Jagrebar
Ājan (1948), Sāradā Bardoloi’s Paḥilā Tārikh (1956), Poharāz
Jilingani (1978), Upahār (1972), Sai Bātēdi (1957), Bārbeswar
Chakravarty’s Avimān (1952), Kankan (1946), Avaya Deke’s
Gārakhanīā (1955), Phenujāli (1958), Amārendra Pāthak’s Interview
(1955), Pratikār (1973), Anil Choudhury’s Prativād
(1953), Minābazar (1958), Girindar (1962), Ārāgāndhar Chaliha’s
Son Rup Neoci (1979), Lākhya ḍhur Choudhury’s Nimilā Anka (1965),
Prafulla Kr. Baruā’s Asār Bālicar (1954), Prem Nārāyan Dutta’s
Satkār (1965), Būrgheswar Barthākūr’s Cāknāyā (1958), Nirudesh,
Jugāl Dās’s Bāliyanar Khol (1982), Medeluā (unpublished), Atya
Prasād Baruā’s Sikha (1957), Joytirekhā (1958), Nāikā Māytakār
(1976), Kābālā (1976), Kriṇāl Māhi (1977), Phani Sarmā’s Kiyya
(1961), Chiraj, Nāgpās, Arun Sarmā’s Jintee (1962), Urukāhā
Pūjā, Purusa (1964), Nībāran Bhattāchārīya (1967), Nāhar
(1971), Chāyyar (1984), Buranjēe Pāth, Kūzm Nēcīa Nēnu,
Ratna Ojā’s Jōnākīr Juit, Prajāp, Gangāpad Choudhury’s
Janmālagna (1980), Basanta Saikī’s Kṛiga Irishnā (1972),
Māṇus (1977), Asur (1977), Phani Talukdār’s Jūjye Pōora Son
(1963), Ogī Parikśhā (19 ), Jironamār Arot (1954), Prafulla
Borā’s Surya Snān (1967), Bāruār Sansār (1969), Pāth Aru
Upapath (1971), Bān, Jamaya (19 ), Tejimalā (1976),
Mahendra Barthākūr’s Janma (1976), Pītāmahār Jāra Jaiyyā,
Farce or Light Comedy:

Farce is an important class of drama. Sometimes it may include the plays of comedy. But ultimately farce is distinguished from comedy. The relation between farce and comedy is very near. Although it is very difficult to draw the line of demarcation between farce and comedy from its subject matter, generally it can be classified on the basis of objectives and techniques of the dramatists. The sole purpose of farce is to excite mirth. B.K. Be opines that comedy means meaningful

laughed. The same plot may be regarded as farce or comedy by the hands of different playwrights. For example, the subject-matter of "The Twin Menaechmi" of Plautus is similar with the theme of "Comedy of Errors" of Shakespeare, the first one is called farce whereas the latter includes in comedy.

In classical Sanskrit literature, a drama called 'Rupakas' is divided into ten classes. Among the ten Rupakas - Prahasana is a distinct genre. It is rightly called farce. It may be defined as a type of degenerated comedy, shorter in form, where there is no scope for broader display of character and plot. In this sense, Prahasana is farce. Farce or Prahasana is the reflection of light aspect of human life through laughter or smile. Hence, Hasya rasa is an essential element of farce. This hasya rasa may be satirical or a visible expression of mirth (laughter). According to the alamkārikas, 'Hasyodipan kābyantu prahasanamiti smritam.' Western critics says it as drama stuffed with low humour, and extravagant wit.

A.C. Nicoll concedes that Farce does not always depend only on farcical elements. Farce has some other characteristics. Like tragedy or comedy, farce has conflicts, but this conflict is not deeper and wider. Moreover, the representation of its subject matter is also disorder and incoherent. Hence, structure of this play is very loose. It emphasises on events more than

70. De, S.K. : Aspects of Sanskrit Literature, p. 275
71. Bhattacharyya, B.K. : Humour and Satire In Assamese Literature, p. 9
72. Ibid.
73. Nicoll, A.C. : Introduction to Dramatic Theory, pp.176-77
characters. Hence, the situation creates its character. It is a short play, having a simple pattern, low characters and short duration of action. Its specific end is to create mirth, and it appeals to an inferior audience. In fact, characters and dialogue in it are heavily depend on the situation, and the situation is usually of the most exaggerated and impossible kind. As B.K. Bhattacharyya points out, it is generally a short humorous play based on coarse and rudest kind of incongruities and with frequent resort to horse play.

The Western critics divided farce into several kinds i.e., satirical or purposive, humorous, Individuals, Serious, Political, Extravaganza farce etc.

We have already mentioned that the second modern Assamese drama was Hem Chandra Baruā's Kāniyār-kirtan, and after the composition of Hem Prorā of Devanāth Bardoloi about thirteen years no social drama has published during this period. The first Assamese farce play begins with Hem Chandra Baruā's Kāniyār Kirtan (1861). H. Baruā was the founder of Assamese farce play. Kāniyār Kirtan is a propaganda play dealing with the evil effects of opium-addiction. The playwright also depicts the social degradation caused by attachment to false religion and meaningless orthodoxy.

After Kāniyār Kirtan mention must be made of one translated play - Bhramaranga. Bhramaranga was a translation work of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors in 1888. The translation of this work has done jointly by four young Assamese students studying in Calcutta. The translators were R.D. Baruā, R.K. Barkakāti, G.

74. Bhattacharyya, B.K. & Humour And Satire In Assamese Literature, p. 194
Barua and G.S. Barua. L.N. Bezbarua was their guide. Bhrama-ranga introduces a new consciousness in literary circles about the possibility of development of a comic literature.

Lakshminath Bezbarua wrote four farces, Litikali (1890), Nomal (1913), Paçanti (1913) and Cikarpati Nikarpati (1913).

Bezbarua derived the theme of his prahasana from folk-stories. In his farces, Bezbarua creates hasya rasa and points out the foibles of human character. Padmanath Gohain Barua was one of pioneer of Assamese farce play. He wrote three farces, Gao bura (written in 1897), Jeton Tamuli (1909) and Bhute Braham (1924).

Gohain Barua in his Gao bura portrays the pathetic condition of Gao bura (the village Headman) and rural life under British rule. No doubt Gao bura is a very significant farce of Assamese literature.

Burga Prasad Mazumdar's (1893, Published 1896) Kahori is a satirical farce based on life in the tea garden where the European manager Mr. Fox lives like a tiny lord. The drama is divided into three acts. The drama presents a powerful snapshot of tea garden life. His another play is Nigra which is unpublished. Benudhar Rajkhowa is one of the significant dramatist of the Jonaki age. He wrote seven farces, these are Barbar (1902), Tini Ghaini (1908), Kurisatikar Saiyata (1908), Toponir Parinam (1932), Jampuri (1931), and Chorar Jristi (1932).

Rajkhowa depicts the light problems of our social life as well as the domestic life through these plays. Rajkhowa and Burga Prasad Dutta jointly composed a play called Kaliyuga (1904) based on mythology. Bhagya Pariks (Fate Decided) (1916) of
Chandradhar Baruā is a notable pure farce in Assamese literature. The story taken originally from an Arabian folk-tale. The play manifests the skillfulness of writer in depicting varied pictures of rural life. Baruā's another farce is Biyā Billol (1929). In this play he depicts the odious-real character in the first part of 20th century. Nimantran (1915) by Padmadhar Chaliha is another notable farce. In his Nimantran we find a humorous picture of four wise-fool man lacking of their common sense. Chaliha's second play is Kene Kajā (1919). The writer himself calls it a lyrical drama. It is a new type of farce.75

Among all the writers of farce drama Mitradeva Mahanta occupies a prominent place. Mahanta has to his credit twelve farces: Biyā-biparjyaya (The marriage Debacle) (1924), Kukuri Kanār Athmangalā (The Reception of the Purblind Son-in-law, 1917) Eta-curat (One cigarette (1935), Tengar-Bhangar (The clever Rogue), Leklau Lām, Cenchājvar (Cold Fever), Acin Kāthar Thorā (The unknown of Caste and Creed), Bomphutukā (The Bluff-Diver), Votor Ragar, Tipcahi, Charan Dhuḷi and Sārā Ne Karta. B.K. Bhattacharyya observes that Mahanta's reputation mainly rests on his highly successful stage dramas, Kukuri Kanār Athmangalā and Biyā-biparjyaya.76 B.K. Baruā also points out that 'in dramatic and literary virtues his earlier farces are definitely much better.'77 Mahanta is famous for his realistic portrayal of

75. Assmiyā (weekly) - 7th March, 1919
76. Bhattacharyya, B.K. : Humour and Satire In Assamese Literature, p. 218
77. Baruā, B.K. : History of Assamese Literature, p. 155
village life and his mastery of the colloquial Assamese.

Other writers of farces are Laksmidhar Sarma's Atma Sansan, Prajapati bhul; Karuna Barua's Madhumatar garu, military Prem; Kumud Barua's Good Night, sir, Ltd. Company, Jeryatri, Savasadar Nasi, Dusa Etaka goal; Suren Saikia's Shokos, Pagdir; Binanda Chandra Barua's Ti Ti Hai, Benga Rashya; Lakhyadhar Choudhury's Javanikar Are Are; Nathuram Jekha's Ar Kaporar Arat; Hakota Pelu, Haire Mor Kapal, etc. In this regard mention must be made of Hari Chandra Bhattacharyya, Durgeswar Barthakur, Bholo Kataki, Tarun Saikia, Ali Gaidar, Birinci Bhattacharyya, Tarun Sarma etc. All these above noted writers more or less try to show the moral degradation and hypocrisy of the contemporary society through mirth. But after the second World War and the attainment of independence the popularity of such kind of farces becomes decrease and the serious realistic plays occupies its place.

From our discussion it reflects that modern Assamese drama begins with social drama in 1857. Now it has been completed one hundred and thirty seven years. In its long history it overcome different stages. Really in the broader sense, the first phase of its development it was reformative, and in the second phase of its development it is problematic.