PREFACE

The thesis is an attempt to make a chronological survey of one hundred years of the history of journalism in Assam. The period is from 1846 when Arundhata, the first Assamese paper was born till the year of the country's independence. Assam was subject to many changes of a political and administrative nature during the period at the instance of the alien rulers. The British East India Company began establishing its Raj in Assam in 1826 and completed the annexation in 1858. From 1839 to 1874 Assam was governed as a part of Bengal. In 1874 a new province was formed under the rule of a Chief Commissioner and the district of Sylhet of Bengal was added to the new State of Assam. In 1905 Assam was amalgamated with fourteen districts of Bengal and a new province Eastern Bengal and Assam was created with Deoga as its capital. But after seven years in 1912 Assam again was reorganised as a separate province. These changes notwithstanding, our study naturally is confined to the geographical frontiers of Assam as it is today with particular reference to the Brahmaputra Valley.

Ours is a modest endeavour to present a systematic account of Assamese press in the pre-independence period. I feel that any kind of study on the press in Assam must begin with a study of the Indian press. So, in the first chapter I have chosen to give an introduction of the Indian press in the background of the press in other countries. In this
respect I have dealt with the establishment of the British power in India; origin of the printing press in our country; background of the birth of both English and the vernacular press and the attitude of the alien rule to it. Side by side consolidation of the British power and advent of Christian missionaries to Assam have been incorporated in the first chapter. Arunoday is the first Assamese newspaper published by the American Baptist Mission in Assam. Hence, the second chapter deals with the contribution of Christian missionaries to Assamese language and literature; aims and objects of Arunoday and in the main its overall impact on the Assamese society. Following the footsteps of Arunoday a number of Assamese journals, periodicals and papers were published in Assam under religious patronage. In third chapter I have chosen to examine the nature and role of such papers for the development of journalism in the State. Development and expansion of western education in Assam helped the rise of a new period in Assamese literature. It was called the Jonaki age, named after Jonaki, an Assamese magazine acquiring name and fame. In fact it paved the way for the consolidation of Assamese literature in the later period. In the fourth chapter I have dealt with Assamese literary magazines and periodicals published on the lines of Jonaki and under the influence of the Jonaki age. However, in this respect a number of magazines and papers published during the life time of Arunoday and before Jonaki have come in for scrutiny in the fourth chapter considering their link with
The Indian press had carried the banner of the freedom movement of the country in an effective manner. Similarly a few newspapers of Assam also played their role in the independence movement of India in the North-Eastern region of the country. So, it has been considered necessary to examine such Assamese newspapers which played significant role. The matter has been dealt with in the fifth chapter. With the progress of journalism in Assam the press was utilised to serve interests of different sections of the people. Chapter six deals with magazines and periodicals meant for children and women and other sections of the society. The present study of the press in Assam is basically a study of the Assamese press in the province. However, it is also necessary to examine the growth and development of the English newspapers in the region. Chapter seven has been devoted to this purpose. Chapter eight deals with the formation of public opinion in early British Assam and before the birth of Arunoday. The role of the Bengal press has also been appropriately dealt with. The last chapter is in the nature of conclusion of our study.

In modern context, the term press is primarily applied to either daily, bi-weekly or weekly newspaper. However, all types of magazines, newspapers and periodicals have been included in our present study. It may be noted that Arunoday, the first product of Assamese press was a monthly magazine and yet it was identified as a newspaper and for a considerable period it functioned in that manner. The idea of making a
survey on the growth of the press in Assam came to my mind when I was connected for a brief period, as a sub-editor of Natun Assamya, now defunct. However, the task was not easy due to non-availability of the old records of newspapers, magazines and periodicals published in Assam in the early period. Inspite of this handicap, I tried my best to use all available sources to make my study authentic as far as possible. Keeping in view the necessity of a comprehensive history of the press in Assam, I hope the present study will offer some useful guidelines.

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