CHAPTER – II
THE HISTORY OF LITERACY:
INDIA AND ASSAM
2.1. Literacy in Ancient India

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2.3 Literacy in Pre-independence India

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The History of Literacy: India and Assam

India is a very ancient country. Its literacy history is therefore very long. We can demarcate this history into some periods like—

(i) Literacy in Ancient India, (ii) Literacy in European Missionaries in India, (iii) Literacy in Pre-independence India, and (iv) Literacy in Post-independence India.

2.1 Literacy in Ancient India:

During the Vedic period (upto c. 1000 B.C.) every Aryan received at least rudimentary knowledge of literacy and religious education. But this was oral. Generation after generation received this by memorizing Vedic hymns and a few heroic ballads. The system of education was Gurukula system under which pupils had to leave and enter the preceptor’s or guru’s Ashramas for education. The beginning of education was marked by a ritual called Upanayana. As the art of writing was unknown during this period primary education consisted of training the ear of the students in distinguishing between short and long vowels, and the different kinds of accents and to master the rules about the conjunction and coalescence for reciting the vedic hymns accurately and with correct pronunciation.
In the Upanishad-Sutra period (c.1, 200 B.C. to 200 B.C.) Upanayana was made obligatory for all the Aryans. The art of writing is believed to have acquired by them at least from c.1000 B.C. But its use to preserve the sacred literature like Vedas was not allowed by the custodians of the Vedic literature. However, the new sciences that developed during this period like grammar, prosody, philosophy etc. had no prejudice against it.

As a matter of fact, a proper grounding in these subjects, which were taught to all Vedic students necessitated the knowledge of reading and writing. Elementary arithmetic and grammar, phonology and metrics also formed part of the primary education in this period. As Sanskrit was the spoken language, this education was therefore mainly confined to the preliminary system of Sanskrit education. This education was imparted by the professional teacher, who was usually of the priestly class, as was the case in most early societies. The students usually lived and learnt in his house as separate school buildings were rare. The teacher was to charge no fees but to be content with the gifts as may be given to him at the end of the education course.
by his students or their families. This system helped the poorest in
the society to receive the benefit of education.

Literacy was very widespread at this time though female education
began to receive a gradual setback during the later half of this period
owing to the factors like lowering the marriage of girls and so on.

Then comes the Dharmasastra period (c. 200 B.C. to 500 A.D.).
During this period---------

the Vedic literature became so extensive that it became beyond
the capacity of an average Vedic student to memorise and to
interpret the same rather than to recite it; only a few expert
could interpret it. Non-Vedic studies like the study of
philosophy, law, epic literature, mathematics etc. became fairly
popular in this period. During this period, the primary education in
the sense of a knowledge of the 3 R's came into existence. It
included a knowledge of Sanskrit phonetics and elementary
grammar also. A new ritual was evolved, Vidyarambha to mark
the beginning of education at about the age of five or six. The
boys used to learn about alphabets, elementary arithmetic, study
the sutras of Panini and some other simple grammatical works during this period. The services of the art of writing still could not be utilized by average teacher and student for non-availability of printing books. Teachers in different branches of studies were both the Brahmanas and the Non-Brahmanas.

During the Pauranic period (c.500 A. D. to 1200 A. D.), the Sanskrit language developed into such a level that it was not intelligible to the ordinary people of the society. Primary education did not receive proper attention and development as the Indian scholars mainly concentrated and made efforts only on the cultivation of Sanskrit. No efforts was made to develop different vernaculars suitable for primary education. Professional education became more and more divorced from literary and cultural education as the latter was imparted through Sanskrit which was no longer understood by the masses. Upanayana which gave automatic initiation into 3R's gradually ceased to be performed in the case of kshatriya and vaishya from about the beginning of the Christian era. Gradually they were reduced to the position of the Sudras and completely debarred from the Vedic education by about 1000 A.D. This gave a set-back to the spread of literacy during this period.
At about c 1200 A.D. Sanskrit gradually became a dead language as far as the masses were concerned; vernacular education came into existence with the object of making them efficient in their day today activities of life. The same continued to be the case during the subsequent centuries as well. (Altekar 1965)

2.2 Literacy in European Missionaries in India:
Towards the end of the 15th century various European Trading Companies started coming to India for trade and commerce. Along with them Christian Missionaries also came for propagation of Christianity. The Missionaries that came to our country were the Portuguese, the French, the Danish and the English. Among them, the Portuguese came earlier to this country, after the first Portuguese voyager, Vasco de Gama landed at this land in the year 1498; then came the Danish, the French and the English. After coming to this country, they had realized that to disseminate Christianity properly, the Indian masses must be literate first. With this view in mind they started literacy activities like opening up schools, themselves studying vernacular languages to be able to communicate with the local people, printing of books, translating
the Bible into local languages and so on. They started these activities mainly in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, the Danish Missionaries under the leadership of Ziegenbalg established primary schools, called Charity schools at different places of Madras to give free education to children. At the same period another organization, namely, Society for the promotion of Christian Knowledge also started same types of schools in Madras. The first Charity school in Madras was established by Reverend Stevenson, a religious priest in the year 1715. Gradually, there had been rapid increase in the number of Charity schools and the school going children throughout the Madras state. Some other societies like the Society for propagation of Gospel, the London Missionary Society, also opened up schools in different parts of Madras. Dr. Andrew Bell a missionary had introduced a system of teaching known as ‘Monitorial System’ in Madras in which the senior students were engaged in teaching the junior students. This system helped to make primary education available to a large number of children with reduced time and cost. Then the missionaries started printing of primary books, Grammar and
Dictionary in Tamil. Thereafter the Bible in Tamil language was also printed for the local people. Thus, the activities of the Christian missionaries in the province of Madras to make people literate were enormous.

In Calcutta, the English missionaries had opened up a number of Charity schools like Calcutta Charitable School etc. ‘Calcutta Free School Society’ also established a number of schools in different parts of Calcutta. Another efforts towards developing literacy movement among the local people of Serampore near Calcutta was done by three missionaries, namely, William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, who were popularly known as Serampore Trio. They opened up a number of schools in and around Calcutta, wrote text-books and translated them into Bengali and established press for printing these books. All these works of the missionaries contributed a great deal towards spreading of literacy among the masses. Gradually the people became interested in learning the local as well as the English language; then the missionaries started some English schools also. As women were found interested to have knowledge in literacy, some schools meant for girl were also established. Among the ladies
who showed interest in education at that time the names of Lady Pitt, Mrs. Lawson and Lady Copeland are to be mentioned.

Portuguese merchants arrived in Bombay during 16th and 17th centuries; some missionaries also came with them. They started educational activities there. The renowned missionary St. Xavier had established a printing press at Cochin; as a result, the literacy activities of the people increased much. Later on, several missionaries like American Missionary, Church Missionary Society, Scottish and French Missionary Society had established schools for the spread of education.

In course of time the Mission people extended their activities of spreading literacy and education from big cities to lesser known places and to backward and hilly regions. They established schools in their localities along with their religious activities.

The missionaries introduced a regular system of education with clear-cut class system and regular school hours. In this way, most of the development in the history of literacy in modern India
may be attributed to the efforts of the European Christian Missionaries.

2.3 Literacy in Pre-independence India :-

The British East India Company had gradually assumed political power in India. Initially it did not take much interest in education of the people of this country; but it was after the Charter Act of 1813, that education of the people of India became an official responsibility of the Company.

During the British rule, a number of educational plans and policies were taken up by the British rulers; some local educated people also took initiatives for literacy and educational development of the country.

As a result of these efforts there had been some progress in the spread of literacy among the masses besides other educational improvement for the people as a whole.

During the period between 1854 to 1902, there was a rapid expansion of westernization of the education system and
indigenous education got a set-back. However, a large number of primary schools that were established in this period, were qualitatively superior to the existing indigenous schools. The number of school going children increased. There was slow but steady growth of women education. But in spite of this, literacy level of the country was not up to the mark.

As an outcome of Lord Curzon’s educational policy (1904) primary education made considerable progress in the country; but still only 6% of the people in the country were literate, a very low average indeed; out of all the children of school-going age, only 23.8% male children and 2.7% female children attended school (Rawat, 1981). Considering the importance of mass literacy in the development of the country, the Indian Nationalist leaders therefore began to press the Government under the leadership of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council for the introduction of compulsory and free primary education in the country. Gokhale moved a resolution in 1910, and introduced a Bill in 1911 in the Council for this purpose. His Bill was rejected. But by the time, George the V, the king of England visited India and got the idea about
educational development of the mass people. He was not satisfied with the educational efforts taken by his Government. Through his intervention his government had to declare a resolution, called Government of India Resolution, 1913.

This Resolution had created an ideal environment for qualitative and quantitative development of primary education except making it compulsory. The numbers of existing primary schools were doubled. Moreover, the extension of primary education on voluntary basis had also been encouraged. But due to the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918) the progress had been affected.

In 1921 the Department of Education was transferred to the control of elected Indian Ministers according to the Government of India Act, 1919 (Diarchy). Under this Diarchal rule (1921 to 1937) these Indian Ministers tried to introduce compulsory primary education in the country. They introduced Compulsory Primary Education Acts in all the provinces during the period 1919 to 1930. This period is also marked by increased of primary schools and increased number of school-going children along with the improve of quality of education. A few efforts were
also made to spread literacy among the adults. During this period, women education also made progress. It is to be noted that in this period in the initiative of persons like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, literacy efforts were expanded to the Horijon people. But this accelerated growth of primary education did not continue for long. This was due to economic depression and due to the Hartog committee Report of 1929, which insisted on quality rather than quantity of education and recommended for curtailment of the expansion of primary education (shown in the following Table - 2.1)

**Table – 2.1: Growth of Primary Schools in India during 1921-37**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIA</th>
<th>1921-22</th>
<th>1926-27</th>
<th>1931-32</th>
<th>1936-37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Recognised Primary Schools</td>
<td>1,55,017</td>
<td>1,84,829</td>
<td>1,96,708</td>
<td>1,92,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of pupils</td>
<td>61,09,752</td>
<td>80,17,923</td>
<td>91,62,450</td>
<td>1,02,24,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>4,94,69,080</td>
<td>6,75,14,802</td>
<td>7,87,95,236</td>
<td>8,13,38,015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Saikia, S. 2002)

With the introduction of Provincial Autonomy, popular governments were formed by the Congress in seven out of eleven
provinces in 1937 with the commitment of spread of mass literacy by making primary education free and compulsory. But the provincial government did not have the requisite sum of money to work out the plan. At this critical juncture Mahatma Gandhi came forward with his proposed plan of mass education which was self-supporting, free and compulsory at the same time. This education system was accepted as a national scheme of education which had been popularly known as ‘Basic Education’. In 1939, Hindusthani Talimi Sangha, a non-government organization, was formed and its workers had taken steps for effective implementation of the scheme known as ‘Nai Talim’ or ‘New Education’. In the first two years the Hindusthani Talimi Sangha had worked out the scheme satisfactorily in the states like Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bombay, Madras and even in Kashmir. Basic schools and basic training centers were established. The progress had got set-back between 1940-45 due to the second world war when this Provincial Autonomous Government resigned. After the end of war Congress again came to power to the states in 1946. Consequently, Basic education was re-introduced and extended to all the states. Basic Education Acts were passed in the states and primary schools were converted to
the Basic schools. But the next two years were dominated by an intensive political agitation due to partition of the country which provided little scope for further literacy efforts. With the withdrawal of the British from India on 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1947, British period in Indian literacy history came to an end and a new era for literacy efforts in Independent India begins.

2.4. Literacy in Post independence India:

India got independence in the year 1947. At that time, the literacy rate of India was very poor; it was only about 14%. Elimination of illiteracy and to gain mass literacy has been one of the major concerns of our Government since Independence. Accordingly, primary education received high priority in the Constitution of India which was adopted in 1950. In Article 45 of the Constitution it had been stated that the state would provide free and compulsory primary education to all children up to 14 years of age within ten years of the commencement of the Constitution. If this could have been effectively implemented by 1960, as visualized, the problem would have been considerably simplified. However, it has not yet been possible to implement the programme; the objective of universal primary education still
remains on the agenda, and it is far from being fulfilled. Moreover, it had been realized that there was a link between adult and primary education. The programme of primary education is handicapped without a corresponding adult education programme. While emphasis was given on rapid expansion of the formal school system at the primary level as a long term solution to the problem of mass literacy, there was also a conscious move to emphasize development of adult education. Before independence adult education was confined to learning of 3R’s only; and with the attainment of independence its concept had been widened. In 1948, a committee was set up by Central Advisory Board of Education; according to the report of this committee besides learning of 3R’s, adult education had also to include health and hygiene, improvement in economic, citizenship training and recreation. Considering this new concept, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of India coined the word ‘social education’ in place of adult education. The classes for the adults were held in the evening or night. There were 51,736 such centers or schools or night classes in 1959-60 throughout the country. Reading materials, lamps and other equipments were supplied by the Department of Social Education.
to the adult learning centers. Vans fitted with microphones, cinema, gramophones, radio etc. were used for making the adult learning interesting. Film shows on family planning, agriculture, nutrition, maternity, cleanliness and some other matters were organized by the Department. A mobile library was also provided for the neo-literates.

During the first three five year plan period, Plan-I (1951-56), Plan-II (1956-61), Plan-III (1961-66), several measures were taken up by the Government and few voluntary bodies.

Some of these measures were –

(i) giving financial assistance to states for adult education,

(ii) training of social education organizers,

(iii) production of materials for social education,

(iv) community centers were established for the promotion of social education and cultural activities in that area,

(v) Janata colleges were started for training of teachers and social education workers,

(vi) Integrated Library Service was started,

(vii) Producing literacy and audio-visual material,
(viii) Starting of youth clubs like Gram Raksha Dal, Farmer's Club,
(ix) Running of Mahila Samities in different states,
(x) programme of functional literacy,
(xi) assistance to voluntary agency by Government,
(xii) Rural Radio Forum and audio-visual demonstration and so on.

In the second Five year Plan, a workers' Social Education Institute was set up at Indore with the Central aid. A National Book Trust was established at Delhi.

Financial assistance was given to the production of literature for neo-literates and organizing literary workshop pertaining to adult education literature. The Institute of Library Science was established in Delhi University in 1959.

The Education Commission of 1964-66, also known as Kothari Commission which had been appointed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari to give suggestion regarding educational development of the country, drew attention to the urgent need to tackle the problem of adult
illiteracy. This Commission aimed to eradicate illiteracy from the country within twenty years, i.e., 100 percent literacy by 1986. Accordingly it suggested for expansion of universal schooling of five years duration to the 6-11 age group children; provision of part-time education for non-enrolled and drop-out children; provision of part-time and correspondence course for the adults. Department of Adult education to be opened in the Universities for the education of adults. Regarding approaches this commission recommended a two-fold strategy for combating illiteracy - the selective approach and the mass approach. The selective approach can be made in all such specified groups of illiterates which work at one place (say a factory, industry, office etc.). Under the mass approach, on the other hand, all available educated men and women in the country should mobilize for raising a force to combat illiteracy through a well planned literacy campaign.

In order to implement the recommendations of the Kothari Commission a parliamentary committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Triguna Sen, the then Minister of Education, drafted a Statement of National Policy on Education. On this Statement
the Government of India prepared the National Policy on Education in 1968 which emphasized for liquidation of mass illiteracy for quickening the tempo of national development in general. But these recommendations had not been properly implemented.

During Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), the main programme developed was that of functional literacy among farmers, to be integrated with plan of increased agricultural production. The following were some Centrally sponsored schemes in this plan period—

(i) Assistance to voluntary organizations.

(ii) Production of literature for neo-literates.

(iii) Farmer’s Functional Literacy Programmes.

(iv) Worker’s Social Education Institutes.

In the Fifth Five Year Plan Period (1974-79), programmes as agricultural improvement, employment schemes in rural and urban areas, scheme as Book Production Programmes, scheme as strengthening of the Central and State libraries were decided to organize.
Despite taking many literacy drives and programmes in the country during this period, there had been sharp rise in the number of illiterates from 356 million in 1951 to 445 million in 1961 and further to 548 million in 1971. In spite the percentage of literacy had risen from 19.74 percent in 1951 to 30.11 percent in 1961 and 36.49 percent in 1971, and 43.56 percent in 1981, India lagged far behind in its attempts to reach universal literacy. A faster growth of adult population had been an important factor for this slow literacy growth. In addition, right through the First Five Plan periods, expenditure on adult education as a percentage of total plan expenditure on education was quite meager (presented on Table – 2.2).
### Table: Expenditure on Adult Education in Different Plan Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Period</th>
<th>Total Plan Expenditure (Rs. Million)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Education (Rs. Million)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Adult Education (Rs. Million)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Education as Share of Total Plan Expenditure (%)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Adult Education as Share of Total Expenditure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Plan, 1951-56</td>
<td>19600</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Plan, 1956-61</td>
<td>46720</td>
<td>2730</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Plan, 1961-66</td>
<td>85770</td>
<td>5890</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Holiday, 1966-69</td>
<td>66250</td>
<td>3230</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Plan, 1969-74</td>
<td>157790</td>
<td>7860</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Plan, 1974-79</td>
<td>394260</td>
<td>9120</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Plan, 1980-85</td>
<td>1092920</td>
<td>25300</td>
<td>2240</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>8.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Plan, 1985-90</td>
<td>2187292</td>
<td>76330</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Plan outlay, 1990-92</td>
<td>1231205</td>
<td>47270</td>
<td>4160</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII Plan outlay, 1992-97</td>
<td>4341000</td>
<td>196000</td>
<td>18480</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(SOURCES: V. B. Athreya, 1996)

Even as the literacy efforts in the first three decades after independence were not much effective, two remarkable initiatives were undertaken to spread literacy among the illiterates. One was
the Gram Shikshan Muhim in Maharashtra (1959) and the other was the Farmer's Functional Literacy Project (FFLP), 1967-1968.

The Gram Shikshan Mohim (GSM):

The Gram Shikshan Mohim (Village Literacy Movement) as a mass approach to eradication of illiteracy among the villagers had a deep impact on the country. It anticipated by nearly three decades many elements of the mass literacy campaigns of the 1990s. This movement was initiated in Maharashtra in 1959, first on an experimental basis in the rural district of Satara, and later extended to all the districts of the state by 1963. The entire government structure and the various departments at different levels—district, block and village were involved in the movement. In this campaign, the village served as the Unit for eradication of illiteracy and the motivation was based on the mass appeal to the villagers to accept it as a challenge. Mass meetings were held in village after village. This movement had made significant positive changes in the outlook and habits of neo-literates in several areas like cleanliness, use of nutritious food, attitude towards children's education and so on. Primary school enrolment had increased in areas where the campaign had been
successful. Nearly 10 million people had become literate by the end of the campaign. The National Board of Adult Education recommended in May, 1970 that the Gram Shikshan Mohim pattern may be adopted by the other state governments for the purpose of eradication of adult illiteracy continued for three to four months. The emphasis was on reading, but writing skills and arithmetic at an elementary level were also taught. Topics with functionality and awareness content were prepared and distributed to neo literates through a circulating literacy scheme.

The Government supplied literature for adult literacy. This campaign had increased the number of literate persons in the village. Until 1959, the annual average number of persons becoming literate in Satara district had been 3000, it rose to 11,000 in 1959 and 109,000 in 1960-61. The movement covered 25 districts and made 1,109 villages fully literate. (Athreya, 1996).

The Farmers' (Training and ) Functional Literacy Project (FFLP) :-

The Farmers’ Training and Functional Literacy Programme started in 1967-68 as an inter-ministerial project implemented jointly by the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Information and
Broadcasting was an attempt to link literacy with agriculture. This project was designed in the context of the ‘Green Revolution’. It had three components -

(i) Farmer’s training in new agricultural technology,

(ii) farm broadcasting to provide additional support for training efforts, and

(iii) farmer’s functional literacy, aimed at imparting functional literacy to farmers, which would also reinforce training efforts and help to spread new technology.

The role of the literacy component of this project was to provide functional literacy to the non-literate farmers engaged in High Yielding Varieties’ Programme, which (the literacy skills) they could utilize in their function, namely agriculture.

In the year 1978-79, the functional literacy component was expanded to 146 districts out of 400 in the country. In mid 1977, there were, under the functional literacy programme, 34,868 classes in which nearly nine lakh farmers participated as learners (Athreya, 1996).
This project helped the illiterate learners in many ways; they gained literacy skills and acquired increased agricultural knowledge; this helped them to adopt improved agricultural practice. Increased knowledge and skills contributed to their positive attitudinal change.

It is to be noted that these two programmes - the Gram Shikshan Mohim and the Farmers' Functional Literacy Project provided rich lessons for initiating subsequent literacy efforts.

The experiences of the GSM reveals the need for mass mobilization for the success of literacy drives. The FFLP signifies the integration of functional development and literacy in a literacy effort. These two programmes contributed significantly to the formation of the NAEP (discussed later on in the chapter).

As an initiative to remove illiteracy, another programme was 'Non-formal Education' scheme launched in the country in 1975-76 for the 15-25 age group. This was to cater particularly to young people from the 'weaker sections' who had been denied formal schooling. By 1977-78, the scheme was in operation in 60 districts.
In the meantime a new government formed at the center in 1977. The new government accorded high priority to universalisation of elementary education and adult literacy. This government launched a massive programme in 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1978 known as National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) after reviewing and evaluating earlier and current adult education programmes.

NAEP was the first attempt to address illiteracy nation wide. It aimed at educating 100 million adult illiterates in the group 15-35 by 1988 out of whom 65 million would be educated by 1983. An allocation of Rs. 2000 million was made to adult education in the Draft Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83), a more than ten-fold increase over the Fifth Plan outlay of Rs. 180 million.

The NAEP defined literacy to include three aspects—

(a) Literacy and numeracy, at a level which would enable learners to continue to learn in a self-reliant manner.

(b) Functional development, functionality being viewed as the role of an individual as a producer and worker, as a
member of the family and as a citizen in the civic and political system.

(c) Social awareness, including an awareness of the existing laws and government policies, and the need for the poor and non-literate to organize themselves in pursuing their legitimate interests and for group action.

Such a programme of functional literacy would be able to promote self-reliance and self-confidence and also provide incentives for continuous learning as a life-long process. The NAEP followed the project approach with the adult education center (AEC) as the operational unit; projects were implemented by a variety of agencies like voluntary agencies working at the grass roots levels, educational institutions such as universities and colleges, local bodies like panchayats and municipalities, and government as a last resort. The learners were taught by an instructor for which he received an honorarium. For providing need-based curricula and teaching-learning materials, etc. evaluation was emphasized at all stages on a continuous basis.
Unfortunately, the promise of the NAEP could not be fulfilled. In the meantime, there had been a political change in the country; a new government came to the power. The Draft Sixth Plan 1978-1983 was abandoned and the new government's Sixth Plan (1980-85) had been started. In this plan, the fund allocated for adult education was Rs.1,280 million as against Rs.2000 million in the Draft 1978-83 plan. Whereas adult education had been allocated Rs.2000 million out of a total educational outlay of Rs.19,860 million in the Draft Sixth Plan 1978-83, it was to receive Rs.1,280 million out of a larger outlay for education of Rs.25,240 million in the new plan. The new Plan envisaged the goal of complete removal of illiteracy in the 15-25 age group by 1990 by mobilizing all sources.

The adult literacy programme during the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) was implemented by the agencies like State Government Departments of Education / Adult Education; Voluntary Organisations; University Departments of Adult and Continuing Education including NSS and Nehru Yuvak Kendras.
These agencies were organizing variety of programmes like Rural Functional Literacy (RFLP), State Adult Education Programme (SAEP), Literacy with assured follow-up etc.

As there was a change of government at the Union level in 1980, the programme NAEP was not continued and a similar type of programme was launched in 1982 under the title of ‘Adult Education Programme (AEP). This programme got an important place in the programme of action (1986) based on the new government’s National Policy on Education (NPE) which was later came to be known as ‘the National Programme of Adult Education’ (NPAE). The NPAE was a phased, time-bound programme aimed at providing literacy to about 100 million illiterate people in the age group of 15-25, covering approximately 40 million by 1990 and another 60 million by 1995.

So far, the programmes like the NAEP, the APE and the NPAE could not make significant achievement in reducing illiteracy from the country as is evident from the literacy rate of India which is 51.63 per cent in 1991 and 65.38 per cent in 2001 (Census 2001). One important factor of slow progress of these
programmes was meager financial outlays that had been allocated for them. Besides, an equally important factor for the slow growth was the limitation of the centre-based approach common to the NAEP, the AEP and the NPAE; lack of mass involvement in the centre-based approach make it difficult to motivate the learners. By remaining largely a government programme the NAEP and its successors failed to emerge as successful mass campaign.

It is to be noted that the NPAE document put forward the idea of a technology mission for the eradication of illiteracy. Accordingly, the National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched on 5 May 1988. The NLM is partly a by-product of the NPE 1986, and was largely the outcome of an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the NAEP by the Institute of Social Research and Management (Mishra 1992). The main objective of the Mission was to impart functional literacy to 80 million people in the age group of 15-35 in two phases: 30 million by 1990 and 50 million by 1995. It also emphasized for making efforts to secure people’s participation, involve voluntary agencies, improve on going programmes like the RFLP and the SAEP,
expand the mass programme of functional literacy and institutionalize post-literacy and continuing education. The literacy campaign has been divided into three phases. The first phase covers 18 months known as Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), the second phase covers 12 months known as Post Literacy Campaign (PLC) and the third phase is called Continuing Education (CE) covering 5 years.

The national level management structure for the NLM provided for an autonomous body, called the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) in the department of education of the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development. The NLMA has a two-tier structure: the Council, headed by the Union Minister for Human Resource Development and other ministers, leaders of major political parties, Members of Parliament and educationists; the Executive Committee headed by the Union Education Secretary. Being an autonomous authority the NLMA was vested with full financial and executive powers.

Initially, the NLM appeared to emphasize technological innovation (through quality improvement of the existing programmes by better supervision, suitable training, pedagogical innovations etc.) rather than such social innovations as voluntarism or securing people’s
participation (Shah 1989). However, within a few months of its launching, two new development took place which had transformed totally the character and future course of development of the NLM and of the literacy scenario in the country. These development came in the form of two initiatives one proposed and implemented by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), the most experienced and leading contingent of India's growing "People's Movement" and the other by the "Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti".

By the early mid-1980s twenty-six science organizations had emerged in different parts of the country. In 1987, twenty-six such organizations and the KSSP had jointly undertaken a cultural programme the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ) to promote scientific awareness and temper among the people which gained a very positive response all over the country. It also led to all the science societies to form the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN). By observing the effectiveness of the BJVJ, two senior officials of the NLMA—Sam Pitroda, then Advisor on Technology Missions (including the NLM) to the Prime Minister and Anil Bordia, then Education Secretary, Government of India, proposed to Dr. Parameswaran (who was the convenor of the
AIPSN and also a member of the Executive Committee and the General Council of the National Literacy Mission) to organize a similar but far larger jatha for literacy. This led to the concept of the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha (BGVJ) in 1990 to motivate the literate and non-literate alike on the issue of literacy, thus generating a grass-roots demand for literacy. The registered society formed to carry out this jatha was the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS). It had developed into a premier national organization and rendering its helping hand to the NLM by providing technical and human resource and volunteer support for the literacy efforts that became necessary wherever BGVJ had generated a demand for literacy.

The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) had been associated with voluntary literacy work for a long period. The experience it had gained through such literacy work and also from the people's science movement, the KSSP took the initiative to propose a project for total literacy in Ernakulam district soon after the establishment of NLM. The proposal was sanctioned by the NLM and the state government and a campaign for total literacy in Ernakulam was launched on 26 January 1989. Implemented
by the KSSP, this campaign was a collaborative effort of the District Administration and Non-governmental organizations which attained its goal within a very short span of about a year; on 4 February 1990 Ernakulam was declared as the first fully literate district in the country. The rate of literacy of Ernakulam raised from 77 to 98 percent (V.B.Athreya, 1996).

It is to be mentioned that at the time of its formation, the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti had only a single point agenda. This was as stated earlier to organize a nation-wide mobilization programme, called the BGVJ with the objective of preparing ground for a People’s Movement for literacy. The successful implementation of the Ernakulam Total Literacy Campaign was an added morale booster for this programme. The BGVJ was conducted using the medium of kalajatha, a unique street theatre technique which was perfected by the KSSP and other People’s Science Movements through a series of campaigns. The BGVJ succeeded in motivating a large number of non-literate people, volunteers, and administrators all over the country. When the jatha concluded, a number of districts came forward with the idea of taking up total literacy programmes.
The success of the Ernakulam Campaign and the initiative of the BGVS led the NLM to change its strategy to a people’s movement mode. The NLM had decided to adopt the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) or the Mass Literacy Campaign (MLC) for achieving total literacy goal.

After the success of the BGVI, the NLM requested the BGVS to continue its support to the Mission in providing field level support to districts in various aspects of TLC implementation. From 1991 onwards, the BGVS provided its support to the NLM and the Zilla Saksharata Samitis (ZSS), the implementing agency for the TLC programme at the district level, regarding environment building, training, material preparation etc. Once the TLC model was found successful in a number of districts, more and more districts from different states coming forward to take up the campaign. By 1992, the Central Advisory Board for Education and other policy making bodies of the Government of India had accepted TLC as the principal strategy for implementation of literacy programmes in the country. As a result, a larger amount of money was made available to the NLM for the extension of TLC programmes in different parts
of the country. The National Educational Policy, 1986 as modified in 1992, also has recognized the NLM as one of the three instruments to eradicate illiteracy from the country, the other two being Universalisation of Elementary Education and Non-formal Education.

At this point BGVS made efforts to develop its own capabilities to provide effective field and academic support to the districts. BGVS state units were established. It was also involved directly and indirectly in the implementation of TLCs in several districts.

India received successive UNESCO awards for its outstanding performance in the field of literacy during 1989-92. During that period, some districts and states like Burdwan and Pondicherry were declared totally literate. For its initiation of the total literacy campaigns, the NLM received international recognition and was awarded the UNESCO's NOMA literacy Prize for 1999. The NLM in the meantime had been revitalized with the approval of the Union Cabinet on 30th September, 1999. The Mission's goal is to attain full literacy i.e. a sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75% by 2005. It seeks to achieve it by imparting functional literacy to non-literate non-literates in the 15-35 age group. The total literacy campaign
offers them a second chance, in case they missed the opportunity to access to mainstream formal education. For making available the benefits of TLC to out-of-school children in areas not covered by the non-formal education, the scope of the programme has been enlarged to include people in the age group 9-14 years. Emphasis is given to bring disadvantaged groups like women, schedule castes and tribes and backward classes into the programme.

The TLC approach is area-specific, time-bound, volunteer-based, cost-effective and outcome-oriented. It has a compact, geographical-administrative area. This is usually a district, but sometimes a block or a municipality. It has a clearly specified target population of non-literates, usually all non-literates in the chosen area in a specified age-group such as 10-60 years, 9-45 years, often 15-35 years. The period of the entire campaign is between 12-18 months. The motivation and mobilization is an important phase to create a literacy-friendly environment through print and audio-visual media, particularly, through powerful street plays and other folk art forms (known as kalajatha) highlighting the importance of literacy, at the beginning of the campaign. On the average, every learner is expected to acquire the specified level of competency in reading,
writing and arithmetic over a period of six months using the three-
graded 'Improved Pace and Content of Learning' (IPCL) as the
text. They are taught by the local educated youth on voluntary basis.
Monitoring and evaluation are important components of the entire
strategy. At the close of the campaign, on the basis of the results
of the evaluation a Total Literacy Declaration ceremony is to be
held. An area is to be declared as fully literate if it has been fully
covered in a particular age group like 9-35 or 9-45 years, and if 90
percent of the learners are found to have acquired complete self-
sufficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic.

The TLC campaign was followed up with a Post Literacy Programme
with an intention to prevent relapse into illiteracy, to enroll dropouts
and enable non-achievers to upgrade their literacy skills. It was also
intended to enable learners to acquire skills for economic self-
reliance and use of literacy skills in day to day life. Projects were
formulated and neo-literates identified and enrolled for this year long
programme. The final evaluation in this case was done by an external
agency nominated by the National Literacy Mission Authority.
Following the Post literacy programme, the National Literacy Mission considered the essentiality of life long learning to people. For this purposes continuing education centers were set up with facilities like Library, Reading Room, Learning Center, Training Center, Discussion Forums and Cultural Sports Center. The effort was to make learning relevant to the actual life situation by providing mechanical and vocational skills, encourage creative thinking through participative group activities and establish active linkages with other developmental department at the grass root level.

It is worth mentioning here that for universalization of primary education the government of India has taken two major initiatives, namely - District Primary Education Programme (DPEP, 1993) and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2000).

As the government’s constitutional commitment for universal Elementary Education under ‘Article 45’ could not achieve, the Government of India made another promise of “Education For All” (EFA) by the year 2000 at the Education For All Summit in Delhi in December, 1993.
An initiative, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), was started in 1993 in the area of elementary education in selected district of some states of the country to replicate what the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) have been accomplished in the field of adult literacy. It is based upon the national experience of UEE as well as the experience gained in the implementation of various projects like Mahila Samakhya, a programme of women's empowerment (Funded by Netherland Govt.), the Bihar Education Project (BEP) and the Lok Jumbish (People's Movement for Education project in Rajasthan, financed by SIDA) and UP Basic Education project.

Like several externally aided projects, DPEP is one of the most important ones in terms of money involved in it. It involved several multilateral and bilateral funding agencies. The European Community committed approximately Rs.585 crores as programme support for DPEP. Credit agreement made with the World Bank \ IDA for funding DPEP programme. The plan for Universal Primary Education by 2000 could not achieve the target; Universal Literacy by 2005, too, is bound to end in a fiasco. It seems that the number of illiterates in the country continued to increase steadily with the rapid rise in population.
As a latest policy to fulfill the goal of universal elementary education, the Govt. of India has launched a comprehensive programme called 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' (SSA) in November, 2000 in partnership with States. The SSA has covered the entire population with a special focus on the educational needs of the girls, schedule castes and schedule tribes. The major thrust of the SSA is to ensure that all children between the ages of 6 and 14 are in school in Education Guarantee Scheme Centers (EGSC) and bridge courses by 2003. The aim is to enable them to complete their five year primary education by 2007 and facilitating their completion of eight year schooling by 2010. The SSA is community based effort by effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the School management committees, the village and slum level education committees, the parent’s – teacher’s associations and the tribal autonomous council. It subsumes all existing programmes, including externally aided programmes within its overall framework with the district as unit of implementation. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) has been launched for education of girls at elementary level under SSA.
2.5 Literacy in Assam:

Assam is an ancient land with a glorious past. Although the dated history starts from the 4th century A.D., its pre-historic period can be traced back to antiquity. The relics like caves, stone Celts, pots etc. cover this period of antiquity.

So far as the education system and the literacy of the people of ancient Assam is concerned, there is no evidence to show whether the non-Aryan indigenous people had a formal system of education before the arrival of the Aryans. It is, therefore possible that formal education was introduced by the Aryans who reached the north-eastern region about 2000 years ago. Consequently, ancient Assam turned into an Indo-Aryan language speaking zone and adopted the Vedic system of education based on the Gurukula concept and offering study of philosophy, aryurveda, astrology, arts, crafts, dancing etc. (Biswas, 2000).

The historians have established that Kumar Bhaskar Barman (Kamrup) reigned during 7th century; King of Harapeswar (Tezpur) reigned in 9th century; Ratnapal reigned in Kamrupa in 11th-12th century; Govindadev of Surama Valley reigned in 13th century; some
literature in copper plates (Tamraphali) were found in different places mention some facts covering their ruling time.

Further, historians have established that the sayings of Dak, Khana (names of some ancient wise men who preached wisdom in poetical language) were made during 6th century onwards. These facts established that literacy was in existence in Assam definitely from 6th century onwards. It may be mentioned that the Assamese literature was in full bloom even before the great Sankardeva, who was a writer of great number of religious book, reformer of society etc. This is proved by the fact that the poet Hemasaraswati wrote ‘Prahlad Charitra’, Harihar Bipra wrote ‘Babrubahan Juddha’, the ‘Purana’ by Kabiratna Saraswati, ‘Behula-Lakhaindar Kota’ by Kabi mankar and the great work ‘Kalika Puran’, before Srimanta Sankardeva’s time, i.e. before 15th century (Rajkumar, 1980).

During the medieval period, in the 15th-16th century, the Satras initiated by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, which were the educational and cultural centers of Assam and based on religions and spiritual sentiments, contributed considerably to the spread of education among the mass people.
Sankardeva had designed Namghar as the social education center or community Development Center for the people of Assam. In the Namghar instead of idol worshipping, books like Bhagwat Kirtan, Namghosa etc. are placed and worshipped. The illiterate men and women could learn here by listening to recitation, discussion and interpretation of the great epics ‘Kirtan’ and ‘Bhagawat’.

Assam came under the British rule from 1826 after the treaty of Yandabu. Before that the Christian Missionaries from America, England, and Holland etc. came to this land with the purpose of spreading Christianity among the people. They also established elementary schools in different parts of Assam with the aim of eradicating illiteracy. The Missionary activities began in Assam in March 1839 when the American Baptist Missionaries arrived at Sadiya under the leadership of Dr. Nathan Brown, Oliver Carter and Miles Bronson had started primary schools there for boys and girls. Bronson took printing press with him and published text books for school children. These Missionaries were doing their pioneering work for the spread of English education in the Brahmaputra valley. They did their work in Sibsagar, Nowgong, Tezpur and Guwahati.
The Missionaries extended their work in hill areas also by covering the Garo, Naga and Mikir Hills and in the interior parts of the hill areas. In 1841, the Welsh Presbiterian Mission came to Assam and opened up schools in the Khasia and Jayantia hills; and also extended their activities in the Surama Valley, the Lushai hills and Nagaland. It is due to their educational efforts that hill districts had attained higher percentage of literacy in Assam.

The Church Missionary Society, the Lutheran Mission, the Roman Catholic Mission, German Education Mission were some worth mentioning Missions that had undertaken literacy activities in this land.

The female wing of the Missionary had taken the initiative in opening 'Zanana School' for education of women at Guwahati, Golaghat, Sibsagar, North Lakhimpur, Tura, Shillong and other places; but due to conservative nature of the people there was poor response for which the system had to be closed.

It is to be mentioned here that besides founding schools, the Missionaries paid great attention to the improvement of Assamese literature.
The British administrators introduced Bengali as the medium in offices, courts and schools of Assam from 1836 to 1873. It adversely affected the spread of mass literacy in the State. It was the result of hard struggle of the American Missionaries like Reverend Bronson and Miles in co-operation with the Assamese patriots like Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan etc. that Assamese language was re-introduced as the Medium of instruction. It is a rebirth for Assamese language. At this crucial moment the American Missionaries had done commendable service for survival and development of Assamese literature. Earlier in 1813, the Serampore Trio, in collaboration with an Assamese scholar Atmaram Sarma had translated and published the Bible in Assamese language; this was the first Assamese book in print. The first Grammar of the Assamese language was published by William Robinson in 1839. 'Assam Buranjee' written by Kashi Ram Tamuli Phukan was published at Mission Press in 1844. Dr. Nathan Brown had published the first Assamese News Paper 'Aronodoi' from Sibsagar in 1846. Miles Bronson laboured years together to publish the first Anglo-Assamese Dictionary of 14,000 words in 1867. The first Assamese novel in Assamese named 'Kaminikanta' was published by G. S. Gurney in 1877. Farwell
published a numbers of books dealing with Arithmetic, language and in different subjects.

The Christian Missionaries did excellent work in spreading mass literacy and education among the people of Assam. Even today the Western Missionaries are working for spreading of literacy in backward and hilly areas in the North East Region.

When Assam came under the British rules, like the other parts of the country, at that time Assam had also the indigenous educational institutions like the Pathsalas for Hindus, the Maktabs for the Muslims and Tools for the higher-cast Hindus. Religious education was imparted through classical languages by the Pandits and Maulabis. Sanskrit was the medium of teaching in the Pathsalas and Arabic and Persian were in the Maktab and Madrassas.

David Scott, the first agent of the East India Company came to Assam (1826) and took interest for the education of the people of Assam. He tried to improve the indigenous schools and also opened a number of schools.
During the British rule a number of educational plans and policies were taken up for literacy and educational development of the state. A numbers of schools were established. Grants were given to educational Institutions. They systematized the education system. The Assam Primary Education Act of 1926 was passed with the provision of making primary education free and compulsory in the state with an aim for enforcing compulsion for removal of illiteracy. But this act could not be implemented successfully immediately; after independence in 1947 the state government renewed the attempt with the passing of the ‘Assam Primary Education Act of 1947.

The Government of Assam accepted Basic Education as the future pattern of education in Assam and passed the ‘Assam Basic Education Act in 1954’ and converted many traditional primary schools into Junior and Senior Basic pattern. But this scheme was not very successful and, therefore, another attempt was made in 1962 to introduce Universal compulsory and Free primary education in the state by passing the ‘Elementary Education Act of Assam, 1962’. But the progress made so far as a result of this Act is not very encouraging. Even today we are not able to enforce compulsion on a universal basis.
Since Independence, there is, of course, rapid expansion in the field of primary education and Adult Education in Assam. In 1948, the number of primary schools in Assam was 7374 which was raised to 13510 by the end of the First Five Year Plan. In 1961, the number increased to 16370. In 1977-78 the number of primary schools went upto 21350. In 1989-90 this number raised to 26,670. The Panchayat Acts (Act of 1959, 1962, 1972 and 1986) were passed with the motive to remove mass illiteracy and backwardness through mass involvement. (Saikia, S. 2002).

Social Education in Assam, which was originated as Mass literacy campaign in 1940 was formerly meant Adult Education. The Government of Assam resolved in 1939 to launch a Mass Literacy Programme and the then Prime Minister Gopinath Bordoloi who also held the education port-folio took special initiative in this work. After that mass literacy became an important feature of the Department of education. But due to, the outbreak of Second World War Assam passed through a period of economic distress from 1941-43 and naturally the progress of literacy campaign was not satisfactory. During the period from 1944-47 the number of literates turned out every year. The next few years up to 1950 also recorded considerable
progress of literacy work in Assam. During these years Pathchakras and Rural Libraries were organized.

In 1950, according to the new direction of the central ministry of the Government of India, the Mass Literacy wing of the Education Department was renamed as Social Education Department. The Government of India sanctioned an amount of rupees four lakhs to Assam for implementing the Social Education Scheme in the state. The main areas of social education are villages. Besides Government Education Department, community development, co-operation, village panchayat, janata college and social education centers were involved with the promotion of social education. Literacy continued to be a major programme of the Department of Social Education, which was intensified from 1964 onwards. A monthly magazine 'Jana sikhsha' primarily for the neo-literates was published.

In spite of efforts both of the Government and Voluntary Organisation, the social education programme could not make satisfactory progress.
On 2nd October, 1978 like other states NAEP was taken up in Assam under the central assistance with share. State Resource Center (SRC), Assam was established for the preparation of teaching-reading materials, training of key level personnel and undertaking of programmes for the promotion of adult education.

After the establishment of NLM (1988) and its adoption of Ernakulam TLC model as principal strategy for literacy effort, gradually the literacy campaign was started in many states of India. In Assam, Assam Science Society formed Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam (GVSA) in 1990, which in collaboration with NLM has started literacy activities in the state. It has already completed TLC and PLC phases in six districts and is now at the continuing education phase.

Another government initiative for universalization of primary education was DPEP (1993). After DPEP, the latest policy adopted to make the dream of Education for All a reality, is Sarva Siksha Aviyan(SSA), which has been working in the state since 2000.
2.6 The Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam (GVSA) and Literacy Campaign:

The Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam (GVSA) is a leading Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has been involving in literacy activities in Assam since 1993 in the line of NLM. Inspired by the successful implementation of the Ernakulam Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Kerala, The Assam Science Society, one of the premier NGO’s of India (established in 1953), formed this organization on July 18, 1990 at Guwahati to formulate and conduct the Total Literacy Campaign in seven Development Blocks of Six districts in the State.

Noted educationists late Dandeswar Gogoi was the founder president and Dr. Debadatta Barkataki was the founder Secretary of the Samiti.

Aims and Objectives of GVSA:

Keeping in mind that literacy can be made into a people’s movement by making people of all walks of life involved in literacy activities and thereby helping their personal upliftment, this organization has formulated some aims and objectives for its activities which may be outlined as follows -
(i) To link up the Government and Non-Government Organisations working for literacy and work together in unison.

(ii) To provide a platform for a quicker exchange of ideas amongst the activities.

(iii) To work for the achievement of total literacy and for building of mass awareness amongst the people for attainment of self-reliance.

(iv) To imbue in the mind of the people the spirit of patriotism and brotherhood.

(v) To work for building linkages between literacy and other development processes.

(vi) To work for the welfare of children, universal elementary education and emancipation of women etc.

(vii) To work in such a way that the spirit of peoples movement is preserved and strengthened.

(viii) To take all such other steps and measures as may be necessary for the fulfillment of the aims and objectives of the Samiti.

Organisational Structure of GVSA:

The organization has a multilayered structure. At every level, there is the General Council with its Executive Committee —
The General Council Meeting is held every year on fourth Saturday and Sunday of March. The new Executive Committee is formed in this meeting.

After the success of Ernakulam TLC there was a great response all over the country towards this campaign. A training workshop was organized at Ernakulam in February 1991, where representatives from all over India trained themselves regarding submission of
literacy projects and other related matters. GVS activists of Assam also took part in that workshop.

GVSA activists also participated in the following workshops for orientation in the literacy campaign:


5. Workshop on Universalisation of Elementary Education at Delhi, 27 January to 5 February 1992.

Besides, Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam had organized some workshops on preparation of teaching / learning materials. The first workshop on Assamese primer preparation was conducted by the Assam Science
Society on 12-15 June 1991 and prepared the rough sketch of the three primers "Likha Paddha Siko" according to the guidelines given by the NLM known as the Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL). After holding some more workshops GVSA prepared these primers; then it published some handbooks for Volunteer Instructors in the year.

The Gyan Vigyan Samiti Assam, with the help of the Assam Science Society submitted a project proposal to NLM to conduct Total Literacy Campaign in 7 blocks of 6 districts of Assam which was approved by the National Literacy Mission on 30th January, 1992.

About the Literacy Campaign:
The GVSA has initiated literacy activities in the state into three phases: The Total Literacy phase, the Post Literacy phase and the Continuing Education. It has already completed TLC and PLC phases and is now at the continuing education phase.

The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC):
The GVSA conducted the Total Literacy Programme in seven blocks viz., Dhemaji, Lahoal, Sipajhar, Raha Lahorighat, Moirabari and
Chandrapur of six districts, viz., Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Darrang, Nagaon, Marigaon and Kamrup of Assam from January 1993 to 30th December 1994. The main objective behind this campaign was to provide literacy to the illiterates between the age group 9-45 of years.

Before conducting the campaign, GVSA undertook literacy survey in October, 1992 for identifying illiterates and potential volunteers. Survey was conducted in all the 1,235 villages or wards covering 115 panchayats in seven blocks of six districts (GVSA 1994). The survey revealed that there were a total of 2,23,925 illiterates persons in the 9-45 age groups. (gvsassam.org/gvsa.htm)

One of the significant features of the literacy campaign is environment building through a series of creative and innovative campaigns. To create a congenial environment the GVSA undertook many awareness programmes through ‘Kalajatra’ started from 1992-93. The Kalajatras were performed by the Kalajatra artists. Through ‘Kalajatra’ the GVSA tried to bring mass awareness in remote villages about the importance of literacy.
Academic structure of the persons involved in the campaign is as follows –

**ACADEMIC STRUCTURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100 Key persons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 Resource persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1 per 20 Master Trainers)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>2000 Master Trainers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1 per 30 volunteerInstructors)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>22,000 Vol. Instructors</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1 per 10 Learners)</td>
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<td>2,23,000 Learners</td>
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Key Resource persons are academic core group. It includes persons with past experience in adult education and training experts from State Resource Center etc. Resource persons are identified from among qualified teachers and experienced social workers received training from the Key Resource Persons (KRP). Master Trainers (mostly from among the teacher community) received training from the Resource persons. Any literate person reading up to class VIII who is conversant with the language can be a Volunteer Instructors received training from Master trainers.

Regarding teaching and learning, it was tried to make interesting and closely linked with the learners life so that it could evoke a desire on
the part of the learner. As per norms of NLM, it takes about 200 hours to complete 3 primers.

The TLC was evaluated through Internal and external evaluation. The final internal evaluation was conducted through an examination campaign during July 1994. The Examination Committees were organized at block level. The External Evaluation of the programme was done by an External Agency, the center for Adult, Continuing Education and Extension Center (ACEEC), Gauhati University.

The evaluation report of Gauhati University reveals that -

(i) 64% of the sample learners achieved the NLM norms.

(ii) Among the blocks, Sipajhar block showed the highest result (74.08%) and Lahorighat block showed the lowest result (50.69%).

(iii) Women participation in the campaign was very much encouraging (72.4%). Among the blocks Raha showed the highest participation (80.08%), where even the block secretary is a lady teacher.
The Zilla Saksharata Samiti (ZSS) sponsored by the NLMA also took up the responsibility of literacy campaign in Assam. The first step was taken by Jorhat Zilla Saksharata Samiti.

The Post Literacy Campaign (PLC):

After the successful completion of TLC, it was observed that there had been uneven levels of achievement among the learners. Some learners could not achieve adequate levels of literacy, some had shortcomings in their learning and some had even dropped out of the campaign. Without a meaningful post-literacy programme, many of these persons may relapse into the old world of illiteracy. The NLM has visualized the importance of evolving and developing systematic post literacy programmes as part of continuing education efforts.

The GVSA Post Literacy Project was approved by the NLMA in January 1995. Since April, 1995 GVSA started its PLC in the seven blocks which continued till 1997. A month long PL Kalajatras were organized in each block during March, 1996. A Primer for post literates was also prepared.
The PLC intended to ingrain reading habit in the neo-literate, to upgrade their literacy skills, to enable them to use literacy skills in day-to-day life and acquire skills for economic self-reliance. Through proper linkages with other development departments and schemes like Health, Rural development and Environment, PLC expected the learners to participate in the development process.

Village libraries were established through the Gana Chetana Kendras. These libraries contain GVSA books and books collected from local people. Thus a Village Library Movement was started in all the PLC blocks.

Evaluation of the PLC was done by Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development Guwahati, Assam.

Continuing Education (CE):

To conduct Continuing Education a pilot project for seven panchayats of seven blocks was sanctioned in 1999, 28th July. Later on, NLMA sanctioned the CE project for 115 Panchayats in 2000. NLMA also sanctioned for 450 Gana Chetana Kendras. But GVSA established 718 Gana Chetana Kendras. Unfortunately due to discontinuation of fund
the project could not proceed as planned. Now under SDTT project (2004-2007), GVSA has established 10 model Gana Chetana Kendras in GVSA Gaon Panchayats to continue the programme.

**State Resource Centre, Assam (ASIBIKA):**

According to approval of National Literacy Mission, the Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam set up State Resource Centre, Assam on 1995. It is known as Assam Siksha Bigyan Aru Kalar Sampad Kendra i.e. ASIBIKA. The aims and objectives of SRC, Assam are:

1. To prepare teaching and learning materials for literacy.
2. To create reading materials for Teaching Learning Process.
3. To strengthen the Literacy Campaign down to the grassroot level.
4. To impart awareness on population education, health, preservence of ecological balance etc.
5. To develop skill building among women so that they can become self-reliant.
6. To help universalization of primary education.
7. To involve the people in development activities.
8. To assist the ZSS academically in the Literacy Programme.
9. To provide academic support to Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur in the Literacy Campaign.

The Gyan Vigyan Barta:

The Gyan Vigyan Barta, a fortnightly in Assam was first published on 3rd September, 1990 as a newspaper of GVSA. Since 1994 this newspaper has been published specially for neo-literates.

This is a very popular newspaper amongst the neo-literates, which primarily satisfies their reading needs and also provides knowledge and information around the world. It also encourages neo-literates' efforts in creative writing.

Jan Sikshan Sansthan Kamrup:

GVSA sets up Jan Sikshan Santhan Kamrup (JSSK) which is performing its activities since April, 2003. JSSK provides training to neo-literates for improving their occupational skill and technical knowledge. It provides technical and academic Resource support to ZSS in taking up vocational programmes for both urban and rural neo-literates. It also serves as nodal Continuing Education Centres and co-
ordinate, supervise and monitor 10-15 Continuing Education Centers/nodal Continuing Education Centers.

**Other Activities of GVSA:**

**Samata:** It is a women platform of GVSA to fight for women's issues in the society and to bring about equality between men and women. In 1996 a programme called Samata Vigyan Mela have been initiated throughout the country as part of awareness training for women. The main topics of discussion of the Mela were - health, education, environment, women and violence, personality development and the like.

**Prochesta:** With the initiative of GVSA, saving groups or self help groups for women are formed known as Prochesta. Prochesta provides savings and credit facilities to its members as traditional banking system does not cover these people. Prochesta groups are also involved in various activities for upliftment of socio-economic condition of women.

**Universalization of elementary education:** GVSA is involved in the activities like survey of primary schools in Assam, survey of venture
schools in Assam, conducting training for teachers of lower and upper primary schools for quality education, environment building for DPEP, conducted Sarba Siksha Abhijan in Guwahati city area, conducting Children Festivals in every year etc.

Sanitary Mart: GVSA has set up two Sanitary Marts for the production and sale of low cost sanitary latrines at Moirabari and Chandrapur to popularize sanitary practices.

Environment: To create awareness on Environment and preservation, GVSA takes part in National Environment Awareness Campaign every year.

Amar Asom Amar Kam: Through organizing workshop GVSA has made people aware about the involvement in the development and planning of their Panchayat. The Samiti has helped people to prepare and print Panchayat Development Report.

Publication: GVSA has published more than 200 books on Teaching-Learning materials on literacy, Training Manual, Science, Law, Health, History, Biographies and also Neo-literate books.
As a pioneer organization GVSA has been incessantly involved in the literacy and various development activities for socio-economic upliftment of people of the state, particularly, the down trodden section. Long years of working experience and voluntary zeal have helped it to occupy a unique place among other organizations in the state working in this field.