CHAPTER - 3

LITERARY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS

Literary consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris can be studied dividing on the basis of period – (1) Folk Literature, (2) Literary trends before the independence or the Pre – modern Literature and (3) Modern Literature after the independence.

3.1 FOLK LITERATURE:

The period of the folk or ancient literature begins from the vedic age to the 19th century. The Bishnupriya Manipuris like their Aryan ancestors believed in oral traditions. Arthur McDonnell observed in his book “A History of Sanskrit Literature” said “the native learning of the modern India is still based on oral traditions. The sacred scriptures as well as the sciences can only be acquired from the lips of a teacher, not from a manuscript and the total lack of the historical sense is so characteristic that the whole course of Sanskrit literature is darkened by the shadow of this defect or suffering as it does from an entire absence of exact chronology”.

Many Bishnupriya Manipuri people being conversant with Sanskrit language made little attempt to translate the Sanskrit literature into their own mother-tongue. They feel proud of the great deeds of their Aryan ancestors and are moved with their sorrows and joys as narrated in the epics particularly in the Mahabharata. They possess a rich variety of folk literature – folklores and folksongs in oral forms which are their own. Men, who composed folk lores and folk songs, remained unknown. Out of the folk songs we may mention Baran Dahanir Ela (Rain invoking song) Madoi Sararelor Ela (songs of Madoi and Sararel). Panir Ela (song of Pani) songs related to agriculture and songs related to please the children. The rain invoking song was composed on the background that there was severe draught
in Manipur (Khumal). The God of all rivers and clouds, the almighty Indra (Sararel) was prayed and worshiped by a group of naked women in the paddy field in late night hours for his mercy and rainfall. This custom still prevails in the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. Rain invoking songs are –

*Soralette rajaro leipak Khumol koil*

*Leipake maroi makhange khoimure jangdaldilo*

*Khumolor mati hukeilo boron diyade douraja*

*Lukong mahei lukulil boron diyade douraja.*

The meaning of this song is that women prayed to Sorarel, (Indra) King of Gods to have a mercy on them by giving a rain because Khumol Kingdom has become a desert due to draught.

In another rain invoking song, the names of the Rama, Lakshmana, Ravana and Birbahu are mentioned.

*Horio Ramo leimelte kungoi pit kore*

*Leimal mana nungshipa dhanlo loya benur atedilo*

*Ravonor putok birbahu, birbahu yukar dhiyan koilo*

*Kukor diya karbenail Losmone phulor leirang dilo*

*Lirkeiro kaloro dayiyon dhei kadiyon kheinar.*

By this song people pray to Rama to have pity in the draught season. People also devoted all their joys, sorrows properly to the God, Benur i.e. Pahangpa, King of fishes who is prayed to give the rain. This prayer has been compared with the prayer of Birbahu, the son of Ravana of Lanka. Birbahu was praised by his enemy Lakshmana for his meditation. They also appealed to their neighbour Kala to pray to God for having rain. So all should jointly pray for having rain.
By the above two mentioned songs, the picture of the draught condition was reflected. Similarly the merriment picture after having rain was also reflected by the following songs –

*Choha jura bado senarei pidiya nacho*

*Choha jura bado ho mairange leirir tole homeil*

*Hiliri bilar pahan chaka uda kena alo jarga*

*Barbilar dola touthare nalade lusu boheila.*

The meaning of these lines is that after getting rain, women braid hair sharply and dance by using flower. They also braid hair sharply and protect themselves taking shelter in the shadow of the hill. Beehive is shaken and friend is returning due to rain. Sugar plum containing cardamom seal are floating and people placed an instrument of picking up fishes in the small rivers.

*Nalade lusu baheila garbage salutbareila*

*Kala chingkhei borone kamane tala nallauga*

*Udai dilo tingatala pahuri ghore bela dilu.*

*Bahiya ali korere maje khongneme*

*Muthi muku cheibuta sena changninge.*

The meaning of the above mentioned lines is that people placed an instrument of picking up fishes in the small rivers and picked up a huge amount of fishes into the bucket. There was rain early morning and he had not taken umbrella which his friend lent him. Balli, another fellow, picked up seeds of crops. The two women, Maje Khangneme and Sena Changninge sowed the branches of paddy crops.

Madoi Sararel song is based on the tragedy of separation of Madoi, (Queen) Khamanu from her husband, Sararel, (Indra) the king of Heaven. King Sararel did not let his queen to attend his ailing father on the earth on the plea that she would drink wine if she went there.
But queen went there with the promise that she would not drink anything and take meat of pigs. But as a prevailing practice, she was forced to drink and eat pigs. The king closed the way to Heaven for queen who was forsaken on the earth. She remained there with incessant lamentation. This song depicts a social conflict of two social systems when drinking wine was prohibited in one society where as it was permitted in another society. Madoi Sararel songs are:

*Madoi gidei saloili*

*Bakeha badiya salkoila*

*Kotiya durei oilita*

*Tengara sinchang laloili.*

*Babaro matia na dekhlo*

*Kotio durei oilita.*

*Pampol tingdhiya kadiri*

*Ima bulia dahiri*

*Kotio durei oilita.*

The meaning of these lines is that after the marriage, Madoi has proceeded towards the home of Sararel raising her hands and crossing hills and valleys. She had gone far away from her own home. The other song is that

*Hunorta Raja hunorta*

*Babaro ghorgo purer ko*

*Jeinga Raja Jeinga*

*Najiga Madoi najiga*

*Tor babaro gorgo napurer.*

*Jeinga Raja jeinga*

*Hunar keirak lama diyade*
The meaning of these lines is that Modoi (queen) prays to her husband Sararel (the King) to go her father's home as her father's house is burnt. But the king forbade Madoi to go to her father's home as her father's house is not burnt. She again appeals to her husband to go and requests him to give the ladder of gold. Ultimately the king allows the queen to go to her father's house on the condition that she would not sit on the chair, would not drink wine and would not take meat of pigs.

The song of Pani represents a primitive society where the relation of men and women is not clear. The song bears a pathetic note of sexual abuse and women are used by men as per their will.

Khomba Thoibi songs related to the story of heavenly love between Khamba, a poor young man and Thoibi, a moirang princess. These songs are the sources of immense pleasure of tears and joy and aesthetic beauty for thousand of years to the people of Manipur specially among the Moirangs.

T.C. Hudson in his book “The Meitheis” has drawn a sketch on this story. It is the tragedy of love like Romeo and Juliet and Laila and Majnu. Present day Bishnupriya Manipuri romantic literature often makes references of ‘Thoibi Khamba Story’.

Another folk song of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is “Trinathar ela” which is sung at the shiva temple established at every village. Some
types of song are composed in Bengali and some are composed in Bishnupriya Manipuri. Trinather ela composed in Bishnupriya Manipuri language is mentioned below.

Oh mai oh mai oh mai
Nikulia chatacha.
Tor heyokgo lengtago
Onthokpahan osego.
Twarakore jaga
Jhapigotte chaga
Futihan diya chhamalaga.
Gaorapeye dekhle
Pagalago bulia
Sarakar hill ureitai.
Oh mai oh mai oh mai
Nikulia chatacha
Tor heyakgo lengtago
Onthokpahan osego.
Atte doshhan Jotor pachhan
Katle phuti abhove.
Neyoibo torangte
Jegoi ningkorleu dabdeuri
Mangkole mangkole buluri
Torangte kisade futi thaitaigo.

This song is addressed to the Debi Durga. By this song it is prayed to the goddess Durga to see her naked husband, Mahadeb (Shiva). She is also requested to go quickly in order to see clothes
from the almirah. If youth see him, they think him as mad and they will throw the stones of the road. She has ten hands and spins five charkas at the same time. She moves at the prayer of anybody and take her seat at the varandha. For this she cannot have any cloth. Naku Singha of Patiala, Shalia Singha and Fuleswar Sinha of Nurkha have composed song in the name of Shiva.

Folk literature also prevails at the time of the Ratha Jatra which is continued for nine days. There is a folk song sung by youth and women by clapping the hands with jumping. The song is that

Baba Jogonnath morme lagao premor dhuli
Morme lagao premor dhuli baba Jogonnath.
Kheipong khoura Jogonnath
Kehem khoura Jogonnath
Honga khoura Jogonnath
Baba Jogonnath morme lagao premor dhuli
Morme lagao premor dhuli baba Jogonnath.
Larou khoura Jogonnath
Chira khoura Jogonnath
Heinou khoura Jogonnath
Baba Jogonnath morme lagao premor dhuli
Morme lagao premor dhuli baba Jogonnath.

The meaning of this folk song is that people pray to Lord Jagannath to use his dust in their body. People addressed Lord Jagannath as pine apple eater, laddu eater, chira eater and mango eater.

Another Bishnupriya Manipuri folk song was prevailed during the great battle between Lord Rama and Ravana, the great of Lanka. In
this battle when Indrajit, son of Ravana was killed in the battle field
then Ravana by anger invited Rama to fight. This was expressed in the
dance drama known as 'Ramayana'. Ravana has invited Rama in a
neglected way to fight which is expressed by the following lines:

Moril Indrojit

Dhou habi farangchit

Uhan dhehiya badhor Habi

Boilaga berenchit.

Dhor dhor dhonukhan

Cheitou tor pangkalhan

Aji tore Jomrajaran

Ditougata chapalhan.

The meaning of this folk poem is that Indrajit, the great son of
Ravana, was killed in the battle field and seeing the death of Indrajit all
gods became very happy. Seeing this death of Indrajit, monkey
soldiers of Rama also became cheerful and out of joy they took their
seats in the benches. Ravana, the great could not tolerate the death of
his mighty son and out of anger he invited lord Rama to use bow and
said to Rama to show his mighty power. He also said that with Ram's
death he will give a feast to Jamraja.

Folk tale - Out of the popular folk tales "Apangar Yari" or the
tales related to the foolish activities of a person called Apang(fool)
numbering more than a hundred, invokes much pleasure and interest
to men of all ages. "Babeir Yari" or tales of Babei are also popular like
Sanskrit fables. A sense of superstition is there in these stories. The
great writer and politician of Tripura, Bimal Sinha made a collection of
these stories.
Tales of Sararel or Pahangpa are also very popular. Tales of Sararel and his seven children are supposed to have a relation with the rain invoking song. The stories indicate unique characteristics and antiquity of the Bishnupriya Manipuris in Manipur. But after the expansion of vaishnavism in Manipur the importance of Sararel had begun to lose significance and at present he is degraded almost to the position of an evil spirit. Now he does not rule in the heaven but is forced to settle down in a little flow of water on a riverbed creating skin diseases.

There are number of songs related to agricultural activities. Groups of women in the paddy field prefer to work singing the songs. One of these songs in short form is given below.

Hunaro ahiya ruparo ahiya
Panapata guachila patalo gucha dei
Sunu tukta yamkore khei
Huchika gusha dei.

The meaning of this folk song is that branches of paddies are like Silver or Gold. There is a piece of betal nut, betal leaf with a drop of lime. The paddy will be planted with care maintaining a distance.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women at the time of husking grains and weaving clothes also sang some folk songs in order to forget pressure of the work.

A number of rhymes are there serving the purpose of the children games -

Chinchiki minchiki tole
Kodomshopar tole.
Biyanto aile puramash ago
Bhat akamor kheisga.
Alodilu beradilu
Duaror kune lukeishga.

The meaning of the rhyme is as follows

Children will hide and seek down to a kadamba tree. They will come back again tomorrow morning eating a dry fish and a handful of rice. Children are asked to hide in a corner of the door.

Rhymes for pacifying the children or to make them asleep are very popular in all communities of the world. In Bishnupriya Manipuri too, there are a number of such types of rhymes and songs.

Ghoror baradhe mekurgo
Bahar tole tokpago
Mekoorgo keng, tokpago keng.

The meaning of this rhyme is that the cat is outside the home, the fox is below the bamboo tree. The cat bites and fox bites too. So let the children be slept.

The last but the most important part of the literature is the existence of the proverbs popularly known as ‘pouris’. Hundreds of proverbs are stored by heart which represents the unique socio-cultural, political and historical background of the community.

Pouris are -

“Dhorai lam loya, Chakalai bone homeila”. The invaders captured the land; the originals entered the deep forest.

“Emari Barton, Bhulone Kirtan”. Invite people this year; perform the ceremony in the next year.
3.2 LITERARY TRENDS BEFORE THE INDEPENDENCE:

In the third decade of the 20th century the ‘Jagaran’ the first magazine and mouth piece of the society was published in 1925 from the town of Sylhet sponsored by Mohendra Kumar Sinha and edited by Arjun Sinha in collaboration with Haridas Sinha, Babuchand Sinha, Nabadwip Sinha and Nilmani Sinha who were the social workers and students of the Murarichand College, Sylhet. With the publication of this magazine a wave of social consciousness and nationalism sparked among them.

The next literary journal ‘Manipuri’ published from Silchar in 1933 was sponsored by Krishna Kumar Singha edited jointly by Samarjit Sinha and Dr. Lairen Singha under the general managership of Rajbabu Singha who served the cause of the language for more than a decade.

The ‘Mekhalee’ edited by Falguni Sinha in 1938 shared the noble cause side by side with the ‘Manipuri’ for more than eight years. Then another literary magazine known as ‘Kshatriojyoti’ was published in 1994 giving platform for the culture of literary activities.

During this period the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature developed with the immortal writings of Gokulananda Geetiswami, the harbinger of awakening and new thoughts of enlightenment. His prophetic sayings, powerful poetic feelings and artistic expressions enchanted the people to rise to the occasions. Owing to his great and powerful influence on the literature, culture and social life, this age can easily be summarised and marked as the “Geetiswami age”.

Gokulananda writings can be grouped as –

(1) Songs of social consciousness, (2) Padabali, (3) Kirtana, (4) Dramas and others. His famous drama in which his songs of social consciousness included, is “Matrimongal Gitabhinoy”. His padabalis
“Man Mathur”, ‘Besh’, ‘Basak’ etc. are highly praised. He did active verses on social reform and consciousness in Couplets and Tripadi chandas are still in memory in their hearts and in the lips of men and women which are referred very frequently and used as proverbs.

_Aghyan adharama gumitai kati_

_Utha aji habihan jwaleya chei ghyanar bati._

The meaning of this proverb is that “oh, Bishnupriya Manipuri people, how long would you be there in darkness, wake up you all and light the candles of knowledge.”

Another verse of social consciousness is given below –

_Ruhibrithi moutup karia dharia thoile nachal toi_

_Satya treta ruhi hanou kaliyuge nacholtoi_

_Kale kale kalar katha nahoonani nakorer_

_Jwigoi banhan puria anle kachai mojai nadharer._

The meaning of these above lines-is that Obstinacy in culture leads to regress. Fashions of your days crumble tasteless and it is not applicable in the modern age. Everybody must hear the voice of the time and everything will be occurred due to the call of the time.

His poetry and other works rest on every walk of life i.e. social consciousness, nationalism, patriotism, integrity, fellow feeling, economy, education, communism and vaishnab philosophy. He was the forerunner in popularising his mother tongue as the medium of expression of deep philosophical and other serious thoughts and poetic motions. His writings, dramatic and artistic presentation in front of a large audience at different places covering from Manipur to Bangladesh, invoked land approbation because of his mastery over the language and melody in singing and enchanting artistic expression of his noble ideas and serious thoughts. People ornamented him with
the title “Geetiswami” for paying tribute to his quality and talent. During the age of Geetiswami, a group of other writers enriched literature such as Babago Sinha of West Krishnanagar, Dullovcherra, who wrote Ramayana based songs – Shaktishel, Sita Banabas, Tarini Sen Badh, Labkush etc. Lekhomsena Sinha of Singari, the author of two dramas ‘Babrubahan’ and “Manipur Bijoy” wrote many songs which were very popular.

Amusena Sinha of Chipar Sangan (Hailakandi) was famous of his Ramayana based plays ‘Nagpas’, “Mahiraban badh” and ‘Shaktishel’ etc. Here it can be mentioned that the writers of this age did not merely choose the stories from sanskrit but reconstructed them in their own way. Another remarkable writer of this period was the historian Mohendra Kumar Sinha who wrote many articles on history which are called as “Manipurer Prachin Itihas” in Bengali language. He was the editor of the literary journal “The Bishnupriya”, the mouth piece of the Mahasabha. The other renowned historian of the Bishnupriya Manupuris is Sena Sinha of Narsingpur who compiled a history on Bishnupriya Manipuri known as “Prachinadhunik Sangkhipta Manipurer Itihas”.

In the meantime a number of other young writers appeared in the literary field. Lalit Sinha and Monbabu Sinha jointly wrote two dramas ‘Harischandra’ and “Subal Milan” in 1936. The lyrics of these two dramas are excellent in language and themes. Lalit Sinha was a great actor and he made an attempt in compiling first dictionary in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language a part of which was published in Fagu (1961). Naku Oja, Fanei Pandit wrote many songs of Shiva Puja. Durgacharan Sinha of Patharkandi was the author of the drama ‘Babrubahan’, Krishnadhan Sinha of Japirbond, the author of “Kabitar Jhapiguli”, wrote poems continuously. Gandhara Sinha of Changkap, Rohini Rajkumar of Katakhal and Golap Sinha of Singari are worthy of reference. Sudhanya Sinha, Krishnaprasad Sinha, Naradhwaj Sinha,
Kamala Kanta Sinha, Haridas Sinha and Krishna Kumar Sinha authored many poems on society, language and history. At a later period Ashwini Kumar Sinha of Narsingpur wrote two dramas ‘Harischandra’ and “Sabitri Satyaban” based on epics.

**Vaishnava literature:** - Many writers attempted to write poetry on Radha Krishna Leela based on Shri Bhagabat Gita– Gobinda and imitating the model vaishnab padakartas like Bidyapati in Brajabali and Chandidas and Balaram Das in Bengali language. Gokulananda Geetiswami started the movement which is still in the process as the community is agrarian by economy and conservative in religion. Geetiswami was followed by Oja Babusai of Patharkandi, Gostobehari Sinha of Sridarpur and Guru Hanjaba Bipin Sinha of Singari. Their use of language and meter were of high standard. Oja Bijoy Sinha of Dollovcherra also wrote a few didactive verse and Vaishnab padas.

However writings of vaishnab padas gained popularity in the late sixties of the last century when people were eager to hear only vaishnab padas in their language due to the language movement started in 1961. Moreover a number of popular and talented singer performer padakartas appeared in the field led by Braja Kumar Sinha, Manisena Rajkumar, Mohan Chand Sinha, Senarup Sinha and Nabakumar Sinha, (Godoi) the author of “Rasakirtan Manjuri”.

Brajakumar Sinha authored all the padas required for Manipuri Kirtan from Adhibas to Mahakirtana. The language and technique used by these padakartas are of high standard. The songs of Basak Sajya by all these writers are very popular. Among the modern writers Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Dr. Kaliprasad Sinha and Chandra Kanta Sinha also made an attempt to write such poetry with greater maturity.
3.3 MODERN LITERATURE AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE:

Modern literature started with the regular publication of the journal Fagu (1960-75) under the editorship of Madon Mohan Rajbongshi, which published short stories, poems, essays and stories for children. This is hailed as the front runner in the advent of modern trends in literature. This trend in literature is also noticeable in translation works. The modern writers, Jagat Mahan Sinha, Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Kali Prasad Sinha, Gopinath Sinha, Mahendra Kumar Sinha, Barun Kumar Sinha, Chandra Kanta Sinha, Birendra Kumar Sinha, Indra Kumar Sinha, Mangal Babu Sinha, Lakshmindra Sinha, Jyoti Prakash Sinha, Mathura Sinha, Manashi Sinha and Smriti Kumar Sinha and all of them have wide knowledge of literature in other languages and they have used that knowledge in their works. All these modern writers achieved fair amount of success in their professional careers and are conscious of their obligations to the society. The literary efforts in the contemporary period attained its maturity with the “Panchajanya Arjuni” (1970) and ‘Pratishruti’ (1974). The entry of the new crop of writers has given the literature a shape and commitment. The small community in search of their identity in the greater milieu of cultural horizons of the region found literature a vehicle of expression.

A number of little magazines published during this period viz. Malaya, Numius, Bhagirath, Uttara, Chino Ego Kungo etc. contributed a lot in the development of language and literature. A few writers of this period are still writing with full enthusiasm. After seventies of the last century there began a new trend in the literature with the publication of Ebaka (1980), Nuwa Ela (1982), Panchashree (1977), Loktak (1999), Arjuni Manipuri (2000), Nuwadristi (1990), Sararel (2000), Hridir Pou (2003), Chetana, (2003), Houpan (2004) and Pratapgarh (2004) etc. Modernism has its manifold effects giving rise to a complete shape of the literature in prose viz. dramas, stories,
novels, travelogues, essays, biographies etc. and in poetry viz. lyrical and modern.

**Prose** – The stories of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature attracted the readers. Many prominent writers compiled remarkable stories. Among the good story writers, we may mention the name of Birendra Kumar Sinha, Kalasena Sinha, Smriti Kumar Sinha, Jyoti Prakash Sinha, Indrajit Rajkumar, Pratim Sinha, Moloy Sinha, Debojyoti Sinha and Gita Mukherjee etc. Besides them there are many short story writers among which the name of Jyotiprakash Sinha, Smriti Kumar Sinha etc. is remarkable.

**Novels** – Novels are also gradually occupying its place in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Number of novels are few in number and the trend of writing Bishnupriya Manipuri novels is also increasing. The remarkable novels are “Thambaleir prem” of Indra Kumar Sinha, “Arower Panit Jowar” of Manilal Sarma, “Karbidha Hridi”, “Choudhury Manikchand” and “Oja Nabolo Kishore” of Prabhas Kanti Sinha, ‘Joya’ of Smriti Kumar Sinha, ‘Dwoipayan’, ‘Shikari’ of Banabir Sinha, “Kumpei Peitou Tare” of Jyotiprakash Sinha, and ‘Purnima’ of Lalit Babu Sinha etc. are also remarkable.

Travelogue and Biography - The remarkable Travelogues of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature are “Soviet Deshe Mi” of Kumkum Sinha, “Mor Tindinor Bangladesh Bhraman” of Kaliprasad Sinha and “Singapur Bhraman Kahini” of Nishi Ranjan Sinha etc.

Among the distinguished prose writers, essayists, who contributed a lot in developing prose language are Jagat Mohan Sinha, author of “Dhalan Ipur Karpek”. Brojendra Kumar Sinha, author of the “Bishnupriya Manipuri Chhanda Parichay”, Kaliprasad Sinha, writer of “Prabhanda Mala”, “Bishnupriya Manipuri Dui Shatabdi”, “Bishnupriya Manipuri Dikpal” and Chandrakanta Sinha, author of “Prabanda Katogo”. Besides them, Mohideb Sinha, Barun Sinha, Uday Sinha, Birendra Sinha, Kalasena Sinha, Dils Lakshmindra Sinha, Debala Mukherjee, Dils Debojyoti Sinha, Brojendra Kumar Sinha (Junior), Ashwini Kumar Sinha and Rasamoy Sinha etc. are remarkable prose writers of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature.

Brojendra Kumar Sinha is acknowledged as the best representative among the modern writers writing in the language. He is a poet, an essayist, a story writer and a translator. He translated Kalidasa’s Meghadutam in his mother tongue, Bishnupriya Manipuri. As he has already earned a name in the Bengali literary circle as a poet and his poems are regularly published in the well known literary magazine ‘Sahitya’ published from Hailakandi and at least in Barak Valley, he is mentioned with due recognition. He published “Bishnupriya Manipuri Chhanda O Alankar” (Bishnupriya Manipuri Language), a pioneering work on the grammar and literature. He is at work always, and is equally fluent in Bengali, English and Bishnupriya Manipuri and only recently he retired as the Principal of the Srikrisan Sarada college, Hailakandi. He translated from Spanish, English, Italian and Bengali poems into his mother tongue. He contributes poems and articles in the literary magazines. There is a good concentration of the Bishnupriya Manipuris in Bangladesh and they
have a literary Association called ‘Pouri’ which felicitated Brojendra Kumar Sinha in 2002 and 2007. He always represents in the literary gatherings in the Barak Valley. Mongal Babu Sinha is also an indepth writer and wrote four volumes regarding linguistic history of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature known as “Bishnupriya Manipuri Bhasta Tatwar Samikkha”.

Manashi Sinha of Silchar is also a literary critic in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. She has done critical appreciation on the Bishnupriya Manipuri novels “Kar Bidha Hridhi” of Prabhash Kanti Sinha, ‘Dwoipayan’ of Banabir Sinha, short stories such as “Malayar Yari”, “Haru Yarir Lapuke” of Jyotipraksh Sinha and earned an unchallengeable position in the literary atmosphere of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature.

Poetry – Lyrical and Modern: The central idea of a lyrical poem is poet’s intense personal emotions. Jagatmohan Sinha authored a number of lyrical poetry of intense emotions which had great appeal to the common man. A note of sentiment with romantic longing for Manipur and Loktak overpowered his audience. His famous lines are –

Janam janame more

Dhiya petheis hunar Manipure

Janam nalaitou manur ure

Dhuligo karedish more

Ti Loktakar pare.

By these poetic lines, the author appealed to the Almighty God to send him to the golden Manipur. If God does not give him birth of a human being, he prays to God to make him a dust in the bank of Loktak.
Some of his didactive verses are collected in his volume of poetry 'Rasamanjuri' which are worthy of reference.

Madon Mohon Mukherjee, another great master writer is famous for only two of his lyrical poetry which has a magical effect on the audience because of his choice of common but lucid words and his intense personal feeling which are common for all men.

\textit{Mor thoigo ti}

\textit{Mor elahan ti}

\textit{Torka buliya janam ehan}

\textit{Mang kareshu mi.}

He was very emotional to his mother tongue. By these lines he described the mother tongue "Bishnupriya Manipuri" as his soul and song. He has sacrificed his life for the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

\textit{Basantohan jarga}

\textit{Jarga thoigo ti}

\textit{Morome shatashe Gokul}

\textit{Boubarane ureya.}

By these lines the poet describes that the spring goes with thee, oh my soul. The west wind withers Gokul that blossomed with tender love.

Three books of poem compiled by Modan Mohan Mukherjee are 'Thoigo', "Tenna Kokak" and "Rong pirok".

Brojendra Kumar Sinha, a prolific writer of this period is credited with many volumes of lyrical poetry such as 'Dhrubapath', "Elar Khuttal" and "Ahir Panir Pathgo". For the simplicity of the language, use of the meter with rhyme and intense feeling, his poetry reached to a high level.
Writings of modern poetry began with Madon Mohan Mukherjee. He was very popular for his noble ideas, powerful technique, choice of simple words, common idioms, use of metre, seriousness in approach and nourishing a progressive outlook on life.

Dhananjoy Rajkumar is another powerful writer who is popularly known as the “Father of the modern Bishnupriya Manipuri poetry” who added new language and ideas in different ways leading modern poetry to a different direction. His famous poems are collected in “Digol Atahanlo More”, “Hapanar Babuani”, “Kime Oya Asat Ikaitapi” & “Bhikksha Dene Ere Ahigotou”.

Senarup Sinha of Bhubaneswar Nagar of Kalain, apart from being a vaishnab Padhakirtania is famous for two volumes of romantic poetry – “Satanit Khourang” and ‘Anoupi’ and many poems are uncompiled and un-published. Some of the literary critics highly praised him as a true poet.


It should be proudly mentioned that Kamala Kanta Yadab of Dullovcherra born in a non – Bishnupriya Manipuri family, has adopted this language as a medium to write poetry.

**Translated Works** - Translation of a number of classical works from Sanskrit literature has done with sincerity and successfully by many Bishnupriya Manipuri writers. Among them Dhananjoy Rajkumar, translator of “Rubaite Omar Khayam” Japanese haiku poems “Mikupar

Translation of dictionary of Assamese language into Bishnupriya Manipuri language is taken with the initiative of Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in the workshop organised by the Central Institute of Language, N. E. Region in Gauhati. Dils Debojyoti Sinha, Bidhan Sinha, Simu Sinha and Lakshmindra Sinha participated in this workshop.

3.4 LITERARY CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI WOMEN:

In the world of literature woman occupies a significant position with man. There are many world famous women poets, novelists like Amily Shally Bronte, French writer Barayar, who have become immortal by their writings. In the Indian literature, the famous female writers are reputed Hindi poet Mahadevi Verma, Assamese poets Nirmal Prava Bordoloi, Nirupama Bargohai and famous prose writers like Mamon Roysom Goswami, Ashapurna Debi, Moheshwata Debi and Nabonita Deb Sen etc. Another much discussed and debated female writer is Taslima Nasrin of Bangladesh who has composed many realistic literary works in this world.

It is universal truth that in comparison to the women population, number of females devoted in the field of literature is less. Yet there are many reputed female writers in this world. Elizabeth Beret Browning is a famous woman poet of English literature though she composed less. In the 19th century the sonnets and poems composed
by this English lady writer appeased the readers of English literature. It is also seen that literature of any country and any linguistic group reaches at its highest peak when women writers contributed in their literature by their writings. This is clearly visible in case of Bengali and Assamese literature.

In case of the literature of a microscopic and backward community like Bishnupriya Manipuri community, women contributed a lot in the development of their literature. In the folk literature many unnamed women writers contributed a lot.

At that time many women writers composed many poems in the magazines such as Jagaran, Manipuri and Mekhali. The first Bishnupriya Manipuri female poet is Indira Sinha of Mashughat who had first composed a poem in the Bengali language in the title “Brata”, published in the 5th issue of the journal “Manipur”.

The first four lines of this poem are –

*Purush hridoyete kamini mora*
*Kamana jagaye dibo*
*Bhoger bastu nahi ye aamara*
*Vishwa jagote dehabo.*

The meaning of these lines are –

*Women are flowering shrub in the heart of man*
*Desire will be awakened*
*Women are not the commodities of consumption*
*We will show it in the global world.*

Thus the thinking of the Bishnupriya Manipuri women was expressed in the above mentioned lines.
Lalita Sundari Debi of Bhanugash, Sylhet, thought of the necessity of women education without which no community can develop. Realising this significance she wrote the article ‘Strishiksha’ (Women Education) in the 2nd issue of the journal ‘Manipuri’ and gave a new direction to the society for thinking. In the Bishnupriya Manipuri language, the first woman poet Radha Rani Singha of Lakshipur, had composed a poem in the name of ‘Gan’ in the 2nd issue of the magazine ‘Manipuri’ inspiring Bishnupriya Manipuri women to love their society and language. So the present generation should acknowledge her contribution in the field of the literature.

Chandana Singha of Silchar had also composed a poem titled as “Nahedilo Bhuban Baba” in the magazine ‘Bishnupriya’.

After 1960 Bishnupriya Manipuri women also composed many poems in the various journals such as ‘Numius’, ‘Malaya’ and ‘Fagu’ when the community is in the spirit of social consciousness and linguistic movement. At that time young girls were inspired to contribute in the field of literature. The poems composed by women reflected the spirit of social consciousness. They became fully dedicated to come forward for the cause of the society and inspired the spirit of social consciousness through their patriotic and revolutionary poems.

Among the Bishnupriya Manipuri women poets in the period, the name of Gita Sinha of Singari, Silchar is remarkable. She composed romantic poems including stories. Her composed story “Anar Pathe” was published in the magazine ‘Fagu’.

Another female poet of Singari is Monorama Sinha who was another revolutionary of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement. She had composed poems reflecting the ideas of communism and realism. Few lines of one poem composed by her are –
Hunahe krishak hunahe mazdoor beibuni mor

Hin nei aar hin nei

Oure sudhin chei.

The meaning of these lines is –

Oh peasant, oh peasant, my brothers and sisters

There are no sufferings more.

See those good days.

At that time our female poets, through their poems, raised the voice against exploiters due to the impact of the communist movement in the eastern part of the country. She also composed a poem ‘Ngakarlou’ in the magazine ‘Fagu’.

In the contemporary period Pratima Sinha of Kalinjar, Silchar, another agitationist of the linguistic movement, composed many romantic poems. She also composed another good story entitled as “Ningalpi Shiksha” (Women Education). Renuka Sinha of Tikarbasti, Silchar had composed a patriotic poem known as “Kati Nungei Imar Urhan” with proper rhythm. Another remarkable famous poet is Gita Mukherjee of Chencooree, Silchar. She has contributed a lot in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature writing poems, stories and essays. She composed short story in the world of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature on behalf of women. First composed poem of this writer is “Sainei Peitei” which was published in the ‘Fagu’ magazine.

In the ‘Falal’ magazine Enu Singha, Surabala Singha of Khunou, Madhabi Sinha and Nandita Mukherjee also contributed in the field of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Satyabati Singha also composed poems in the magazine named as ‘Kaifat’.

1980 decade is the glorious decade for the Bishnupriya Manipuri women writers in the field of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Many
sincere women writers contributed their writings in the various magazines, such as “Nuwa Ela”, “Tripura Che”, ‘Purnima’ and ‘Malaya’. Among them the name of Sandhya Singha, Sabita Singha and Mina Rani Singha of Singla (Dullovcherra) are remarkable. Sandhya Sinha has composed a book of poems namely “Rangila Houpanar Fulgore” which has occupied remarkable position in the field of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Another book of poem composed by Sandhya Sinha is “Kanaksour Kabita”. She also occasionally composed stories and poems in the spirit of communism.

Mina Rani Sinha also composed a book of poems known as “Jiban Ehan” which was published by the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Singla Anchalik Committee. Some poems of this book were published in the style of P. B. Shelley’s “Psalm of Life” and Hemchandra Goswami’s “Jeeban Sangeet”.

Kumkum Sinha of Mashughat also contributed a lot in the world of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. She has composed a travelling story “Soviet Deshe Mi ” in which her gravity of language was focussed. This is the first travelling story in the field of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Moreover she is writing articles which awoke the new readers.

Ranjita Sinha of Silchar composed her first poem known as “Khanar Kuri” in the ‘Panchashree’ magazine in 1997. She also composed poems, stories in the magazine such as “Nuwa Ela”, ‘Numius’ and ‘Malaya’.

Arati Sinha of Silchar also composed poems but now she is out of this habit of writing poems. Dipti Sinha of Shantipur, Kabuganj is an influential agitationist of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement. Padmaja Sinha of Silchar also published her first book of the Bishnupriya Manipuri poems “Ningshing Ume” in which spirit of romanticism and social service is clearly reflected.
Another women writer is Manashi Sinha. During her school and college days, she contributed many literary articles in the Assamese language. Due to her excellent writing at the time of studying B. A. 2nd Year in Handique Girls College, Guwahati, she was rewarded by second prize in the state level short story competition organised by Sodou Asom Lekhika Samarooho for her Assamese short story “Aranya Rodan”. She also composed many poems and songs in Assamese. By virtue of marriage she came to Silchar and began to write articles and poems in Bengali language. She also composed a book of poems in two languages (Assamese and Bengali) and the name of the book is “Maje Maje Mone Hoi”. She has attracted the attention of the Bengali and Assamese writers because of her excellent poems, specially of the poem “Matri bhasha”. She always represents the Bishnupriya Manipuri Community in the Multi Linguistic Kabi Sammelan (poets conference) organised at Silchar by different organisations.

She is a critic of the literature. Her critical appreciation of any novel, short story are highly welcomed by the lovers of literature. Her critical appreciation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri novels “Kar Bidha Hridi” of Prabhash Kanti Sinha and ‘Dwoipayan’ of Banabir Sinha and short stories composed by Jyoti Prakash Sinha is highly appreciated by the readers. Bishnupriya Manipuri society expects many literary contribution from her. For this reason she is selected as the Asstt. General Secretary of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Central Committee. She also actively participated in the seminar on spelling in the words of Bishnupriya Manipuri language organised by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Silchar in 2004. She contributed articles in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literary magazines “Nuwa Ela”, ‘Panchashree’. She contributed articles in Assamese language in many newspapers and souvenirs of the Assamese language. She also contributed literary articles in Bengali language in the various daily newspapers of Silchar.
She is the editor of literary magazine of the “Hridir Pou” published annually by Amogh Monjooree, a Bishnupriya Manipuri women organisation. She is the main architect of this magazine which is published mainly to give platform to the women writers and other new writers. As a result of the publication of this magazine, many women writers improved their writings. She in the capacity of the secretary, Amogh Monjooree organised various literary competitions in the field of story writing and poetry writing. As a result new writers joining in this competition are trying to improve their talent in the literary field.

Among the new women writers Sumita Rajkumari, Ruplekha Rajkumari, Rasabati Sinha & Niti Sinha of Silchar are trying their best to gear up their literary writings. It is a good sign for the literary development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community because women became very much conscious about the development of the society.

3.5 BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI LITERATURE IN BANGLADESH:

Bishnupriya Manipuri people are original residents of Bangladesh. Their fate remained in East Pakistan now Bangladesh after the historical “Sylhet Referendum”. During the rule of Pakistan, people of East Pakistan could not enjoy real democratic status for which Bishnupriya Manipuri people could not avail the opportunity to culture their literature. So after attaining independence by the East Pakistan in the name of Bangladesh on December 16, 1972, Bishnupriya Manipuri people got the actual opportunity to culture their literature as nationalistic sentiment was developed among them due to their active participation in the freedom movement of Bangladesh. So they were inspired to culture their literature in Independent Bangladesh. Here it must be mentioned that during the colonial rule over undivided India by the British Government, Bishnupriya Manipuri
students of the Murarichand College of Sylhet, published a literary magazine known as ‘Jagaran’ in 1925.

After independence, Bishnupriya Manipuri youth of Bangladesh published a Bishnupriya Manipuri quarterly literary magazine known as ‘Khongchel’ on April 2, 1975 by “Pankal Marup”, an organisation of the educated youth of Bhanugash and Sylhet. This literary magazine consisted of seven poems, one story, two rhymes / songs and it was published only for three years. Among the remarkable writers of this magazine are Radha Kanta Sinha, Ranjit Sinha, Debabrata Sinha in the field of poem and Dinanath Sinha, Rajkanta Sinha, Surendra Kumar Sinha and Pratap Sinha in the field of essays.15

Tampha Sinha, teacher by profession composed a sensitive poem known as “Vaishnavimar Thar” in 1976 which is explained below-

Ela puran bhakta mela hunte matte khaithar bangla
Na homili baishnabimar thar
Hari sabhat na homili ghararkune
Thaily pushak sajel
Neily aasha aar.

Hari bhaktir tatwagyane baishanavimar thar nange
Bhita ago loya thadik ami
Nijar bhita ago thale kamai kartoi kale kale
Partoi ante jhanardhan janani.

By this poem the poet lamented that most of the languages like Bengali and Meitei Manipuri etc are recognised by the government but his mother tongue i.e. the Bishnupriya Manipuri language is not yet recognised by any government in the world. He also regarded Bishnupriya Manipuri language as vaishnabite language and lamented that his language is still now neglected. So he appealed to all
Bishnupriya Manipuri people to struggle for the recognition of this language by the government and assured that if it is recognised by the government, then it will be flourished in future.

In 1980 Bishnupriya Manipuri literary magazine known as “Imar Thar” was published with editing of Rajkanta Sinha in which Rajendra Sinha, Dinanath Sinha, Brajagopal Sinha, Sujit Kumar Sinha, Nandeshwar Sinha, Ranjit Sinha and the editor himself had contributed articles.

Another remarkable step of Bishnupriya Manipuri Literature in Bangladesh that songs, stories, poems etc. composed in Bishnupriya Manipuri language were presented weekly in the Manipuri programme of Bangladesh Radio, Sylhet centre.

In 1981 some lovers of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature formed Bangladesh Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in order to develop Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. President and General Secretary of this Parishad were Shri Nandeshwar Singha and Ranjit Singha respectively. In the same year a literary magazine in the name of ‘Mingal’ was published with the editing of Nandeshwar Singha. In this magazine rural poet Gopichand Singha has contributed poem relating to folk literature. His poem is

*Khetuale aal dhortara lopuke
Mou ningale rahitara aakpake
Aush kapiya hin kokoil dhanchane.*

The content of this folk poem is that the cultivators cultivate in the plough field. Ladies and young girls are crying in the paddy field. The labour was fruitful after harvesting ashu paddy.

In 1986 ‘Satyam’ the mouthpiece of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad was published with the editing of Ranjit Sinha. The
first book of poem in Bishnupriya Manipuri language in Bangladesh known as ‘Thampal’ was composed by Ranjit Sinha in 1987. One of the poems of this book is named as ‘Swadhinota’ which is composed in commemorating the days of the freedom movement of Bangladesh.

\[
\begin{align*}
Swadhinata\ ahehat\ aji\ amar\ hadit \\
Dhigal\ yug\ ahanar\ hin\ kakkaranit \\
Garimur\ mathiya\ dhite \\
Amare\ banapeya\ kolkor\ aaitoi \\
Tulede\ habir\ moor. \\
\end{align*}
\]

The theme of this poem is that the Independence removed the exploitation over the people of Bangladesh which was continued for a long time. It has a mercy on us because it will enhance the prestige of the people of Bangladesh. The book ‘Thampal’ has created awareness among the Bishnupriya Manipuri people of Bangladesh to culture their own literature.

In 1986 Uttam Kumar Sinha, the renowned young writer edited Bishnupriya Manipuri literary magazine known as “Manipuri Sahitya” the publication of which was stopped after the publication of the 4th issue. In 1988 Radha Kanta Sinha published a book of poem known as “Jhwir Merik” in which a poem known as “Amar Jubak” was composed to create social consciousness among the people. Few lines of this poem are:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ami\ jubak\ lalphami\ narayani\ sibei \\
Jatar\ maha\ praloy\ kalor\ dhumketu \\
Lalphamar\ rag\ moibong\ rahil \\
Kumbhakarna\ ghumetwa\ hajak\ ok\ oya\ ekata. \\
\end{align*}
\]

The meaning of this poem is that youth are the soldiers of the battle field. Great danger has come upon the society and war is
declared. In this great danger of the society the powerful men like Kumbhakarna, the mighty warrior should be awakened maintaining unity.

In the meantime Bishnupriya Manipuris developed translation literature i.e. Anubadh Sahitya in Bengali language for which Bishnupriya Manipuri literature began to be discussed by the littérateurs of Bengali literature. There is already a good concentration of Bengalis in London and there is always cultural as well as literary links with people at Sylhet. It was the Sylhet migrants in London who published articles on the Bishnupriya Manipuris and the world at large came to know about this small community.

In 2001 in the 1st volume of Roudrajaler Panktimala, Shovashish Sinha translated some Chakma poems and Bishnupriya Manipuri poems into Bengali language. In the next year i.e. 2002 in the second volume of Roudrajaler Panktimala, he translated Sandi and Bishnupriya Manipuri poems into Bengali language. In the 3rd volume of Roudrajaler Panktimala, he translated the Bishnupriya Manipuri poems of some selected Bishnupriya Manipuri poets of India and Bangladesh into Bengali language.

In 1989 due to the initiative and editing of Uttam Kumar Sinha, Pouri, a Bishnupriya Manipuri bulletin was published and this is still published as a monthly journal with the editing of Sushil Kumar Sinha. In 1990 Ranjit Sinha published an essay book “Kathika Metek” which consisted of ten stories and some portraits. In the mean time Radha Kanta Sinha published a book known as ‘Rasamanjuri’.

Drama literature was started with the publication of the theatre books such as “Ekangkika Natika” “Khomba Thoibi” “Uchit Bichar” and ‘Chandrahas’ and all these theatre books were composed by Ranjit Sinha.


Shovashish Singha organised a theatre party at Goramara known as “Manipuri Theatre” which dramatized many theatres such as “Taraleimar Pala”, “Biyas Mestorir Moran”, “Shrikrishnar Kirtan” in the national theatre stage in Dacca and earned reputation for the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

On the occasion of Raspurnima, many literary magazines were published the names of which are given below chronologically:

1. Raspurnima - editor, Nipendra Kumar Singha in 1990
4. Teipang – editor, Shyam Sundar Singha in 2000

The Juvenile literature in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language published from Bangladesh is picking up. In 1996, a book of poems for children “Kanak Kethok” (Childhood bouncing) by name was composed by Ranjit Sinha. It was followed by another book of poems

On March 30, 2000 Bangladesh Manipuri Samaj Kalyan Samiti organised a seminar at Goler Hour (Shripur) to discuss about the problems of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature in Bangladesh and their solutions. After thorough discussion in the seminar, the following resolutions were taken:

(1) Bishnupriya Manipuri language should be the medium of teaching in the primary schools of Sylhet where Bishnupriya Manipuri students are reading.

(2) In the syllabus of the text books of Assam and Tripura of India, Bishnupriya Manipuri literature of Bangladesh should be included.

In 2000 at Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh “International Bhasa Mel” was organised in the national museum and Bishnupriya Manipuri people participated in this Mel the result of which books of Bishnupriya Manipuri literature were preserved in the national museum.

It is to be mentioned that Gokulananda Geetiswami was the harbinger of national consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris of India and Bangladesh and composed songs of social consciousness. To commemorate this man and to inspire the people socially in 1998, Ranjit Singha with his editing published a book known as “Gokulananda Geetiswamir ela” to preserve the songs of national consciousness.

It may be mentioned that all these literary books are mainly available on the day of Raspurnima at Joramandop of Bhanugach in which all people irrespective of caste, religion, and language assemble there by tradition.

Pouri organised a seminar at Tilakpur in 2002 for the development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature in which many renowned writers of Bangladesh and India such as Kaliprasad Sinha and Brojendra Kumar Sinha had participated in the discussion.

Manipuri theatre organised a seminar at Goramara on January 1, 2002 and the theme of the discussion was language and culture of linguistic minority communities of Bangladesh and the role of the state. The chief guest of this seminar was Aminuddin, reputed professor, Dacca University and besides the Bengali intellectuals, people of other linguistic minority communities such as Chakma, Marma, Tripuri, Garo. Saotal, Khasi, Bishnupriya Manipuri and Meitei Manipuri were present making it a good gathering. All speakers emphasised on the study of the children through their mother tongue at the primary level.

Bengali being the national language in Bangladesh, its study is universal and many Bishnupriya Manipuri writers excelled in writing and eloquence. Many books are published in Bengali where the writers were the Bishnupriya Manipuris. A list of published books in Bengali language by the Bishnupriya Manipuri writers are given below –

(2) Bangabandhu and Bangladesh (Geetikabya) - Gopichand Sinha.
(4) Nritya Sarathi – Kartik Sinha.
(5) Dashti Dhirgoshowash – Sobhashish Singha.
3.6 ORIGIN OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI BHASHAGYAN PARIKSHA PARISHAD:

To promote Bishnupriya Manipuri literature and language, Bishnupriya Manipuri Bhashagyan Pariksha Parishad was formed on the model of Assamiya Bhashagyan Parishad, Assam Sanskrit Board, Hindi Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti in the 26th conference of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad at Gopinath Junior Mandir, Bhakatpur held on November 26, 1989. Prof. Birendra Sinha and Amulya Kumar Sinha were chosen as the President and the Secretary of the Parishad respectively. To foster this wing of the Sahitya Parishad, Dils Lakshmindra Sinha was appointed as the Asstt. General Secretary of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad.

The main objectives of the formation of the Pariksha Parishad are –

(a) To promote Bishnupriya Manipuri language and literature.

(b) To form the mental and moral character of the future generations of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society.

(c) To confer degrees on Bishnupriya Manipuri language and literature through examinations.
The Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad instructed the secretary of the Bhashagyan Parishad to arrange the following examinations:

1. Prathamik Examination.
2. Prabeshika.
3. Madhyamik.
4. Shastri (Part - I)
5. Shastri (Part - II)

At the very beginning of the formation of this Parishad it has conducted examinations up to Madhyamik examination and the only examination centre was the Silchar Centre.

After 1991 the Parishad decided to introduce Shastri (Degree) examination in two phases in two years. The course of these examinations was framed by Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad and Bhashagyan Parishad.


The examination centre of Silchar was Niranjan Paul Institute, Silchar. The school authority gave full cooperation to the Secretary of the Bhashagyan Parishad. Jogendra Kr. Sinha was the chief patron of this Bhashagyan Parishad. Examiners and Invigilators were appointed according to the rules.

In 1993 demand was given for decentralisation of examination centres the result of which Patharkandi centre was created and the Lowairpoa centre was created as the sub-centre of the Silchar centre.
In 1994 another centre was opened at Dullovcherra. Still then all centres except Silchar were allowed to conduct Prabeshika and Madhyamik examinations. But Shastri examinations were allowed only at Silchar centre. In 1995 Shastri examination was allowed to all centres and in the same year Lowairpoa centre was upgraded. In 2000 Dharmanagar Sub – centre was created under the centre of Lowairpoa. In 2004 a centre was opened at Bikrampur. From the year of inception, this Parishad is conducting examinations regularly. Now Jogendra Kumar Sinha is the President of this Parishad.

In the month of October, 2005 this Parishad arranged a refresher course in Gurucharan College, Silchar for providing training to the candidates who applied for the post of Sub – Inspector of schools (Bishnupriya Manipuri) under elementary education.

3.7 BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI JUVENILE LITERATURE:

Literature of any society can not be full-fledged without child literature by which children will be directed in the right path. Due to the influence of the Western literature the text book of the student was published for making a perfect child. Short stories, poems were composed for proper education of the children. In this way juvenile literature is developed in our country.

With the passage of time, social reformer of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society, Gokulananda Geetiswami roamed in the different inhabitant areas of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society to make people conscious socially. With the social awakening, child literature began to develop stage by stage.

There are rhymes consoling children, foolish story, good story which were parts of folk literature. This folk literature began to emerge as child literature which has got reality in the second part of the
twentieth century. Though child literature of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is not full fledged yet it has own distinct characteristics.

Discussion of the child literature can not be completed without the writings of Chandra Badan Singha which is boundless. The main feature of his child literature is to make the children perfect human beings. He had encouraged the children to become responsible through his poems. Poet Chandra Badan Singha had seen a bright future of the children which was expressed in the following lines of the poem “Kanak Janam”.

*Kanakar saksaka jnamor bhitore*

*Bhabishyator habbi pou, aashe sa sa kare.*

In the bright path of a child, all messages of the future exist openly. Seeing the glimpse of new awakening in our society, he made the children conscious in the following lines of the poem “Mingal Ahil”.

*Paranmanu paranmanu na gumjine aar*

*Mingal ahil oure chane rathion fonar.*

By these lines the poet addresses the children not to sleep more. He also said that morning came because the sunlight had come.

Another remarkable poetry book of Chandra Badan Singha is ‘Manupi’. His poems of child literature were published in the various journals such as ‘Fagu’, ‘Pratishruti’ etc.

In 1947 revolutionary poet of Dullovcherra, Chandrababu Singha composed a poem known as ‘Saloi’ which encouraged children to advance. The remarkable lines of the poem are –

*Saloi saloi biyankar belir mingale*

*Apath bipath dar napuyo buk bujeshe pankale.*
The meaning of the above mentioned lines is to advance the children in the light of the morning sun. He also said to the children not to be afraid because heart was filled with strength without any fear or danger.

Like children motivating rhymes of Bengali literature, many children poems are available in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Among these poems, the remarkable poem is “Ningsing Auri”, composed by Senarup Sinha.

*Tang tang tang dangor kangor jang*

*Nang naya pang saya tolang talang chang.*

He has composed many children poems among them “Sour Ramayan” is very much remarkable.

Another contemporary remarkable poet Madon Mohan Mukherjee had composed a poem known as “Khaloparor Kang” connecting with children.

*Khaloparor kang,*

*Jitegate aakta oya*

*Aloite thang thang.*

The meaning of these lines is that children will go to Rathajatra of Khalapar unitedly but they will be scattered at the time of returning.

Brojendra Kumar Sinha also contributed in the treasury of juvenile literature. His two books of poems are “Merak Serak” and ‘Jingiri’ are remarkable. Gopinath Sinha of Patiala may be called a successful writer of juvenile literature. One of his famous rhymes are –

*Amar oma chouoche*

*Bhat pani belashe*
The meaning of this rhyme is that my affectionate child becomes angry and has forgotten to take his meal. His forehead has been folded and water of the eyes is just coming out. This rhyme has reflected the psychology of the child. Another rhyme composed by Gopinath Sinha is –

*Bipin girok kurangto aya chalkarle*

*Amar ela amar nacha habi satkarle.*

The content of this rhyme is that Guru Bipin has given light coming from anywhere. He has enriched song and dance of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Kalasena Sinha of Dullovcherra has composed a book of children rhymes known as “Kanak Pahiya”.

From 1973 quarterly children magazine called ‘Falal’ has been edited by Mathura Sinha in order to encourage the children in the literary activities of the society. In this magazine reputed Bishnupriya Manipuri poets such as Gourmohan Sinha, Kaliprasad Sinha, Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Gopinath Sinha, Nani Gopal Sinha and Gita Mukherjee have contributed many articles on juvenile literature. Mathura Sinha has organised a competition on juvenile literature in which many young poets Sabita Singha, Bina Singha and Kamlakanta Sinha have participated. But it is a matter of regret that publication of this magazine has been stopped. Mathura Sinha has also composed two books on children which are known as “Amar Mani” and “Khatal Pakak”.

Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Dils Lakshmindra Sinha and Sudhanya Sinha have also successfully dealt with the rhymes of children.
Many children poems, rhymes and short stories were published in the different journals such as ‘Fagu’, “Chino Ego Kungo”, ‘Malaya’, ‘Chitrangadha’, ‘Pratishruti’, ‘Panchajanya’, “Nuwa Ela” and ‘Panchashree’ etc. Among these journals contribution of monthly magazine ‘Fagu’ edited by Kunjababu Sinha Rajbangshi of Dullovcherra was very much remarkable. This magazine opened the platform for publication of valuable rhymes, poems and stories and encouraged many juvenile litterateurs such as Chandra Badan Singha, Senarup Singha, Gopi Mohan Singha, Gourmohan Singha and Gandharaj Singha etc.

Chandra Badan Sinha opened a new chapter on juvenile literature by publishing various children poems such as “Sougar Kadani”, “Michange Manna Aya”, “Akale Na Mori” etc. in the magazine ‘Fagu’. Gopimohan Sinha also published various children poems such as ‘Kalpana’, “Amar Futi”, ‘Prarthana’, “Kanak Chour Hanna”, “Dinor Ningshing Saradhe” etc. Senarup Sinha has published “Sour Ghumar Ela”, “Sour Kabita” and Mohendra Ch. Singha composed “Sour Ghumor Ela”.

From 1984 Nuwa Ela magazine like ‘Fagu’ magazine has created a new era in the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. In this magazine many new poets such as Dils Lakshmindra Sinha, Sudhanya Sinha, Shantilal Singha, Nitu Singha, Sandhya Sinha, Mina Singha, Bina Sinha, Shantababu Sinha and Shrikanta Singha etc. contributed many articles. Among these “Lupta Swargo Mamghore” of Kukilsena Sinha “Pali Thina Boa Kadhese”, ‘Inchangar’ of Shantababu Sinha and “Janam Jivan” of Nani Gopal Sinha etc. are remarkable.

In the mean time many poets have published books of rhymes on juvenile literature. The remarkable books are “Kanak Sour Kabita” of Sandhya Sinha, “Kanakar Kholi” of Dils Lakshmindra Sinha, “Kanakar Mel” and “Kanak Sour Kabita” of Bina Sinha, ‘Ithei’ of
Brajendra Sinha of Lowairpoa, “Jina Sinnapi” of Gopi Mohan Sinha, “Haroupa Methel” of Radha Mohan Sinha and “Ahis Itau” of Rabikanta Sinha. These books have enriched the juvenile literature of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Moreover poems, stories and dramas have contributed in the juvenile literature of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. In the field of stories Jagat Mohan Sinha composed a book known as “Kanak Sour Yari” comprising of sixteen stories. In the field of dramas ‘Manihar’ of Indra Kumar Sinha, ‘Bangshi’, “Ghumar Adhar Bagia”, ‘Suryakumar’ of Kalasena Sinha are remarkable. Nani Gopal Sarma has compiled dance drama in the field of juvenile literature.

To develop the juvenile literature, discussion was taken in the 9th Annual Conference of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha, Assam State Committee held on Jan 8 & 9, 05 at Dharam, Meherpur where reputed poets and littérateurs Kalasena Sinha, Jogendra Kumar Sinha, Manashi Sinha and Sudhanya Sinha participated through their valuable discussions.

Now juvenile literature is in the path of development because Bishnupriya Manipuri literature began to ponder over juvenile literature.

3.8 FORMATION OF THE NIKHIL BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI SAHITYA PARISHAD:

Fourteenth General Adhibeshan of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha held at Andurgang of Anipur of the Karimganj district on February 15&16, 1955 was a historical one because Mahasabha came to realise that without the recognition of the language a linguistic community can not survive properly. Moreover the Indian constitution guaranteed the right of every linguistic minority community to get education by their own mother tongue. So the
Mahasabha by passing resolution at that Adhibeshan placed the demand before the Assam government to introduce the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary level of education as the medium of instruction. In this context it must be mentioned that before the formation of this body, few educated people of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community such as Mohendra Kumar Sinha, Tanubabu Sinha, Babuchand Sinha, Haridas Singha, Nilmani Singha and Falguni Singha published literary journals such as Jagaran (1925), Mekhalee (1936), Kshatriyojyoti (1941) which paved the way to think for the development of the literature and language of this community. So intellectual people gathered at the Andurgang Adhibeshan formed “Bhasha Committee” under the Presidentship of Mahendra Kumar Sinha and Secretaryship of Gopi Mohan Mukherjee.23

The primary aims and objectives of the Bhasha Committee are –

(1) To get the recognition of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language by the government.

(2) To get education from the primary level by the mother tongue i.e. Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

(3) To write letters in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

(4) To sing Vaishnabite songs in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

But the Bhasha Committee could not function properly the result of which Mahasabha became compelled to form a new body in the name of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1963 under the Presidentship of Jagatmohan Sinha and Secretaryship of Sri Gopinath Sinha.24
The primary objectives of this Sahitya Parishad are –

(1) To compose stories, poems and novels in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

(2) To get the financial assistance from the government for developing literature.

(3) To publish the monthly literary magazine in the name of Bishnupriya.

Now this Parishad has its own constitution for its proper working.

After the formation of the Sahitya Parishad, intelligent people of the society such as Mohendra Kumar Sinha, Gopimohan Mukherjee, Jagat Mohan Sinha, Madon Mohan Mukherjee and Gopinath Sinha etc. devoted full attention to develop Bishnupriya Manipuri literature.

From that time onwards, the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad organised different types of conference in different areas of the society. It organised a meeting at Mashughat on September 28, 1975 to discuss about the spelling process and educationists and linguistic experts assembled there. In this conference a decision on the subject was unanimously taken which was approved in the conference held on January 1& 2, 1977 in the presence of Dhwajaraj Sahitya Shastri, Jagatmohan Sinha, Gulapbabu Sinha, Gourmohan Sinha and Manikanta Sinha, Singari etc. After then in 1985 and 1997 meetings of the Sahitya Parishad were held in the Singari High School. Kaliprasad Sinha, Kartik Chandra Shandilya, Kukil Sena Singha, Kumkum Singha, Mangalbabu Singha attended and differences arose among them regarding the use of ‘Chha’. This difference of opinion regarding the spelling of ‘Chha’ is responsible for creating division in the society.

On August 24, 2003, a seminar was organised in the temporary office of the Mahasabha at New Bhakatpur under the Presidentship of Kartik Ch. Shandilya to find out a solution on spelling problem. In this
seminar reputed dramatist Indra Kumar Sinha, Manikanta Sinha, President of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Sabha, Chandra Kanta Sinha, Dr. Binoy Kumar Sinha, Debojyoti Sinha, Dils Lakshmindra Sinha and Manashi Sinha participated.

The Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, after getting recognition of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language by the government of Assam and the government of Tripura, is maintaining liaison with the governments for the proper introduction of the language in the primary levels and also for publishing text books of the different classes.

Names of the Presidents and General Secretaries of the Sahitya Parishad chronologically are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>General Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963 – 85</td>
<td>Jagat Mohan Sinha</td>
<td>Gopinath Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harekrishna Mukherjee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaliprasad Sinha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jogendra Kumar Sinha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>KrishnaBallov Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Temporary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Barun Kumar Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985 – 2002</td>
<td>Barun Kumar Sinha</td>
<td>Kushadhwaj Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dils Lakshmindra Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalasena Sinha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 05</td>
<td>Birendra Sinha</td>
<td>Sri Mathura Sinha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dils Lakshmindra Sinha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dils Lakshmindra Sinha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This body is a decentralised one because it has state committee for Assam and Tripura which has again different Anchalik(regional) Committees.
3.9 LINGUISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS:

The right to receive primary education through mother tongue is a constitutional provision for the linguistic minorities in India as guaranteed in Article 350 A of the constitution of India. The year 1951 met with a strong slogan raised in the Mahasabha for immediate formal recognition of the language. With this mission a resolution was passed in the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha in 1955 urging upon the government of Assam and the government of Tripura to provide facilities to the Bishnupriya Manipuri children to receive primary education through mother tongue as the medium of instruction.^^

In this context it may be mentioned that Rajbabu Sinha of Mashughat, a prominent social worker, was devoted to the cause of the mother tongue. He became the editor of the ‘Manipuri’ magazine which focussed many historical sources and facts for which he was killed by unidentified anti – social elements. This society paid tribute to this fellow by the following song composed by Kamlakanta Singha, Asstt. Editor of the Manipuri magazine.

“Samajor mangal karanir kaje
Ahil Rajbabu e bhave
Buddhi kaushallo ania etare
Jageya tuleshil singha bikrame.”^^

The meaning of these lines is that Rajbabu came to the world for the welfare of the society. He, by virtue of intelligence, inspired vigorously the Bishnupriya Manipuri people in the field of social service. The Andurgang Adhibeshan formed Sahitya Parishad, Bhasha Committee and Radha Madhab SebaPuja Committee. The Bhasha Committee with the Presidentship of Mahendra Kumar Sinha and
Secretaryship of Gopi Mohan Mukherjee submitted various prayers, petitions to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language as the medium of instruction in the primary stage of education. The Chief Minister gave his assurance that their demand based on constitutional line would be taken up by the government as the language problem (Bengali language movement) would be over. But the government of Assam did not take any initiative in this mission for which necessity of linguistic movement arose and the Bhasha Committee was remodelled in the name of the Bhasha Parishad with the presidency of Jagat Mohan Sinha and secretaryship of Gopinath Sinha which began to think for the starting of linguistic movement.

Here reference of the linguistic movement of the Bengalee people of the Barak Valley against the circular of the Assam government to declare Assamese as the only state language is given because linguistic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people in Barak Valley for the recognition of their language as the medium of instruction in the Bishnupriya Manipuri densely populated areas is inspired by the linguistic movement of the Bengalee people.

On April 21&22, 1960 the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, inspite of strong opposition from the M. L. A.s of the Barak valley of Assam including Nanda Kishore Sinha, passed the proposal to declare Assamese as the only state language of Assam and the Congress led Assam government formulated the linguistic policy in this direction which created social unrest in the state followed by the torture over the Bengalee people of the Brahmaputra valley in the naked term “Bangal Khedha”. So the Bengalee people of the Barak valley felt the necessity of the linguistic movement to safeguard their language. In this mission on May 7, 1960, District Congress Committee of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi assembled in a meeting in the premise of Silchar Municipality Hall with the Presidentship of Abdul Matlif Mazumdar and opposing the decision of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee a
resolution was taken to organise “Nikhil Assam Banga Bhasha Sammelan” (Conference of the Bengali language speaking people of Assam) at Silchar. The said sammelan came to an end on July 3, passing resolution drawing the attention of the Assam government and the Central government. From the next day communal riots started all over Brahmaputra Valley torturing Bengalee people in many ways such as killing, burning the house and looting the property. In this critical situation, a delegation consisting of all M. Ps and M. L. A.s of the Barak Valley met the President of India, Prime Minister of India, Home Minister, Congress President, several other union ministers and convinced them to save the burning issue of Assam. Responding to this delegation the Home Minister of India visited Assam on Oct 5&6, 1960 and met the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee leaders and Congress M. L. A.s He proposed that Assamese Language for Brahmaputra Valley, Hindi in lieu of English in the secretariat and Bengali language should be in execution which invited reaction of the Assamese leaders demanding Assamese language as the only state language of Assam.

On Oct 10, 1960 the state language bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly of Assam by the Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha declaring Assamese as only the state language of Assam denying the mother tongue spirit of the Bengali people of the Barak Valley.27 Inspite of so much resistance from Congress M. L. A.s of Barak Valley namely Nanda Kishore Singha, Ranendra Mohan Das, Hem Chakraborty, Gourishankar Roy, Tazammul Ali Barlaskar, Ramaprasad Choube and Jyotsna Chanda, the state language bill was passed in the Assam Legislative Assembly for which the above mentioned M. L. A.s submitted their resignation from the Assam Assembly and due to the passing of this bill a social reaction was created in different parts of the state and movement was started.
This linguistic policy of Assam did not take away only the linguistic rights of the Bengalee people but also an obstacle in the development of all linguistic minorities of Assam. So all linguistic minority groups of the Barak Valley including Bishnupriya Manipuri people came forward to participate in the linguistic movement organised by the Bengalee people.

As a phase of this linguistic movement Cachar Zilla Jana Sammelan was organised at the field of Karimganj town bank with the Presidentship of Abdul Rahaman Choudhury ex – chairman of the Local Board of Hailakandi. This sammelan decided to form Gana Sangram Parishad for the Barak Valley with Abdul Rahman Choudhury as President and Nalini Kanta Das as General Secretary and Gana Sangram Parishads for three districts. – Cachar Gana Sangram Parishad – Sri Jitendra Nath Choudhury as President and Paritosh Paul Choudhury as Secretary, Hailakandi Gana Sangram Parishad – Keshabananda Chakraborty as President and Haridas Deb as Secretary and Karimganj Gana Sangram Parishad – Byomkesh Das, President and Nripoti Ranjan Choudhury, Secretary.

The Gana Sangram Parishad of the respective districts organised meetings, processions and street walking from April 1961 in order to make people conscious about the linguistic movement. On the other hand, government tried to suppress the movement and formed pro – government body known as Shanti Parishad in which people irrespective of caste, creed and community, having vested interest were members. On May 18, Gana Sangram Parishad appealed to all people of the Cachar district to make the success of the movement called on May 19, 1961 in non – violent way. On May 19, people all over district observed bandh, hartal and picketers observed picketing in the Silchar Railway Station. Suddenly at 2.30 P.M. police firing took place and claimed the lives of 11 persons such as Kumari Kamala Bhattacharjee, Kanailal Niyogi, Hitesh Biswas, Chandicharan.
Due to this merciless killing, people of Barak Valley came into the open place showing their commitment to the movement. This news of massacre was spread all over the country and the world. People of West Bengal and Tripura strongly protested against this massacre and observed Hartals in different parts of the states. Students of Barak Valley boycotted their examinations. Hartals were observed in different parts of the Cachar district from May 21 to May 29, according to the programme, fixed by Cachar Zilla Gana Sangram Parishad.

Gana Sangram Parishad of all districts continued their phases of movement in different parts of the Barak Valley.

On June 15, Home Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri invited leaders of Gana Sangram Parishad in Delhi to find out a solution of the linguistic problem of the people of the Barak Valley. Gana Sangram Parishad formed a delegation consisting of all linguistic groups consisting of Abidur Rahaman Choudhury, Nalinikanta Das, Hurmat Ali Baralaskar, Keshab Chandra Chakraborty, Biswanath Upadhyay, Anil Kumar Barman, Bhupendra Kumar Sinha, Jitendra Nath Choudhury, Sarat Ch. Nath, Sanat Kumar Chakraborty, Bidhubhusan Choudhury and Gautam Chhabir Khan, because the linguistic movement launched by Gana Sangram Parishad was not only the movement launched by Bengalee people but also the movement of the linguistic minority communities of Assam for safeguarding their mother tongue. This delegation discussed with the Home Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri on July 2&3, and an outcome was developed on the point that on the question of the state language Bengali language can be used in the Cachar district. The linguistic movement came to an end after this historical discussion.
The Bishnupriya Manipuri people came forward to participate actively in the linguistic movement started by the Bengalee people of the Barak Valley due to the following reasons—

1. The Bengali language is the medium language for every Bishnupriya Manipuri student in the educational institutions of the Barak Valley.

2. All cultural songs of the Bishnupriya Manipuris were sung in Bengali language by all Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

3. The constitution of India guarantees of getting education through their mother tongue for every linguistic group. So Bengali people of the Barak Valley should get education through their mother tongue. So imposition of a language over any linguistic group is unconstitutional.

4. Bishnupriya Manipuri people are always against "Bhasha Samrajyabad".

The forefront Bishnupriya Manipuri leader to oppose the Assam State Language bill was Nanda Kishore Sinha, M. L. A. who delivered a long speech in the Bidhan Sabha on Oct 18, 1960 and supported the proposal of Golap Barbora to accept Assamese, Bengali and Hindi as the three state languages of Assam. He resigned from the membership of the Assam Legislative Assembly opposing this Act.

On April 18, at Patharkandi a meeting of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha was arranged under the Chairmanship of Samarjit Sinha and a resolution was passed in the meeting strongly supporting the linguistic movement led by Gana Sangram Parishad. Members present in the meeting said that culture of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people is related with the culture of the Bengalees and warned those who are against this movement due to their narrow selfish interest.
On April 19, a procession of the eminent people of the Karimganj district was arranged in the roads of Karimganj town by the slogan "Bande Mataram". Narendra Sinha, a prominent Bishnupriya Manipuri personality also participated in this procession along with his supporters.

On April 21, in early morning a mass procession was started from Kaisthagram to Patharkandi and after reaching Patharkandi a meeting of huge gathering was arranged under the Presidentship of Narendra Sinha in which Mani Singha (Bhupendra), Jamini Das and Gopesh Namasudra M. L. A. delivered their revolutionary speeches. In the next day that mass procession arrived at Kazir Bazar, Ratabari where Muslim and Bishnupriya Manipuri people welcome the processionists. In the same day a public meeting was arranged at Anipur under the Presidentship of Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmin personality, Bharat Mukherjee.

On April 22, this procession of Satyagrahis reached Dullovcherra where they were welcomed by the prominent personalities of Dullovcherra, such as Braja Mohan Goswami, Bagindra Chatterjee, Drunacharya Sinha, Nishikanta Sinha, Bagirathi Chaube and Satyendra Kumar Das. A meeting was arranged in the field of the Tea Garden Club at Dullovcherra, under the Presidentship of Sri Nishikanta Sinha in which leaders of the movement explained the objectives and methods of the movement.

In a meeting arranged on April 24 at Ramkrishnanagar, Bhupendra Sinha in his speech said that the interest of the Bishnupriya Manipuris and other linguistic groups are related with the interest of the Bengalees and appealed to all people irrespective of caste, creed, religion to gear up this movement. At the same time he warned to all people to be cautious of the vested interest of the people.
He also said that it is not the movement of the Bengalees only but also the movement of the people of all linguistic groups in Barak Valley.

On May 19, 1961 bandh was observed in the different parts of the Barak Valley. At Patharkandi Bishnupriya Manipuri people actively participated in this bandh and observed picketing in various offices for which Narendra Kumar Sinha, Mandal Congress President, Kushadhwaj Sinha, Bhimsen Sinha and Tamphasena Sinha were arrested. At Dullovcherra, bandh with picketing was observed and many Bishnupriya Manipuri people actively participated. Among them Gopi Mohan Mukherjee, Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Gopinath Sinha, Kalasena Sinha and Haripada Sinha of Patiala are remarkable. 29

After the martyrdom of the 11 martyrs on May 19, 1961 Bishnupriya Manipuri people also vigorously participated in this movement.

It is also mentioned that in the formation of the executive body of the Cachar Bachao Sangram Parishad, progressive minded Bishnupriya Manipuri people, such as Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Gopinath Sinha and Harekrishna Mukherjee were included. Gopinath Sinha was selected as one of the two convenors of this Sangram Parishad with Paritosh Paul Choundhury.

Due to the active involvement of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people in the linguistic movement of the Bengalee people, the Cachar Bachao Sangram Parishad demanded before the Assam government to recognise the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as the medium of instruction in the primary level of education in the Barak Valley.

This spirit of the linguistic movement inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to take the path of the movement for recognising their language by the government for which the Bhasha Parishad of the Mahasabha chalked out a programme in this regard and observed July
2, 1961 as the “Bhasha Davi Divas” and a deputation of the Bhasha Parishad submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam for peaceful negotiation to this end. 30

In response to the memorandum submitted by the General Secretary, Bishnupriya Manipuri Bhasha Davi Parishad dated 2.7.63, the principal private secretary to the Chief Minister, Assam, apprised the General Secretary of the Parishad vide Letter No CMS 1865 dated Shillong, July 25, 1963 that the matter was communicated to the Education Department, government of Assam for favour of action in the matter. From July 2, 1961 of every year is observed as the “Bhasha Davi Divas”. The Principal Private Secretary to the Chief Minister, Assam in his letter no CMS 1865 dated Shillong, July 25, 1963 forwarded the case of introduction of language to the Secretary, Education Department.

A joint deputation of the Sahitya Parishad and the Bhasha Parishad called on Shree D. N. Bajpei, Asstt. Commissioner, for linguistic minorities, government of India at the Silchar Circuit House in 1963 and placed the demand for implementation of the introduction of the language at the primary stage of education. The deputation consisted of Jagat Mohan Sinha, President, Sahitya Parishad, Kaliprasad Sinha, Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Nritya Gopal Rajkumar, Gopinath Sinha and Manikanta Sinha who were advised by the Asstt. Commissioner to submit consent of the guardians to educate their children at the Lower Primary School stage through mother tongue to the Education department, Assam. Positive consent of the guardians throughout Cachar was submitted to the Education department in printed form through each of the Lower Primary Schools. But time rolled on without any response from the government in this regard.

In this letter addressed to the President, Bhasha Parishad in response to the resolutions moved in a meeting held on the occasion
of the third annual "Bhasha Davi Divas" in 1963, Shree D.N. Bajpei, Asstt Commissioner for linguistic minorities, government of India informed that the subject of the introduction of the language is under the consideration of the state government and that he had referred to the Director of Public Instruction, Assam on the subject of financial assistance of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad. In response to the Bhasha Parishad’s letter dated 7.7.64, the Principal Private Secretary to the Chief Minister, Assam in his letter no CMS16264 dated July 28, 1964 informed the Secretary, Bishnupriya Manipuri Bhasa Dabi Parishad, Cachar that the matter was forwarded for consideration of the Political department of the government of Assam. In response to the Bhasha Davi Saptaha (Demand Week) commencing from July 2, 1965 Sri J.N. Chakraborty, Section Officer, Linguistic Minority Commission, government of India communicated in his letter no 17/1/65/150 dated 12.7.65 addressed to one petitioner on the issue, Kalachand Sinha of Dullovcherra, Assam that ‘the subject was taken up with the government of Assam.’

Shree D.N. Bajpei, Asstt Commissioner for linguistic minorities, invited a joint deputation of the Sahitya Parishad and the Bhasha Parishad on Oct 11, 1966 at the Silchar Circuit House. Shri Bishwanath Upadhyay, M.L.A. who was a member of the Board of Elementary Education, Assam joined this deputation. The Asstt Commissioner, Bajpei highly appreciated the constitutional approach of the Mahasabha organs towards the problem with the government and assured his whole hearted co-operation in the matter of implementation of introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Language at the primary stage of education. He further appreciated Shri Upadhyay's co-operation in the matter and advised the leaders of the Bhasha Parishad to send a deputation to Shillong at an early date so that he might have a face to face talk with the Secretary, Board of Secondary Education, Assam to fulfill the demands of this linguistic
minority community. A deputation of the Bhasha Parishad under the leadership of Gopinath Sinha was accordingly sent to Shillong in May 1966 and met Shri K.K. Sharma, Secretary, State Board of Elementary Education who gave his firm assurance of introducing the language in at least 65 Lower Primary Schools of Cachar from the session 1967. A press report was flashed in the Assam Tribune dated Shillong, May 23, 1966. The delegation also met Shri D.N. Bajpei, Asstt Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities, government of India at the Circuit House, Shillong. In response to the demand for inclusion of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic and cultural items in the daily part programme of the Akash Bani, Gauhati at least at par with other linguistic minorities of Assam, Mr Bajpei told the deputationists that for the meager population of fifteen thousand two hundred and five of this linguistic minority in Cachar as per the linguistic census of 1961 the demand carried little weight. The deputations were much pained to know of such a massacre done by the census of 1961.

The matter was at once taken up by the Mahasabha with Prime Minister, India, the Home Minister of India, the Commissioner for Linguistic Minority in India, Census Commissioner, Chief Minister, Assam, Education Minister, Assam and Shri Sarat Chandra Sinha, President, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Gauhati. In response to this communication, D.N. Bajpei informed the president of the Mahasabha vide his memo No 17/17/66 1949 dated 17.11.66 and wrote that 'I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram and to say that the same is being forwarded to the Registrar General of India, New Delhi'.

The Bhasha Davi Saptaha commencing from July 2, 1967 was extended to 12 days through observation and mass meeting on large scales throughout the district of Cachar. During this period, the Mahasabha expressed strong resentment over the census conspiracy and the Assam government's silence in regard to the long pending
demands of this linguistic minority community in Assam. But no communication was received by Mahasabha from the government to solve this problem. At last the Mahasabha directed the Bhasha Parishad to start a self operated census for this linguistic minority of Cachar in the proforma given below:-

**Bishnupriya Manipuri Census 1967**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the village</th>
<th>Name of the Anchalik Panchayat</th>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Houses</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Signature of A.P. &amp; G.P. President</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Census operation was thus started in 1967 in every area of the district. Some patriotic ladies came forward to help the workers with the sale proceeds of their ornaments considering the extreme poverty of the society. The government’s silence to respond the demand of the Mahasabha reacted the whole society. The general session of the Mahasabha held at Singari in 1965 in Cachar and at Mussauli (Tripura) in 1966 expressed deep resentment over the government’s indifference to the decade long appeals and memorandum submitted through resolutions and series of deputations. The growing generation specially students of schools and colleges who have a separate organisation i.e. the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union, came forward to challenge the unsympathetic attitude of the government and organised their general session at Patharkandi in Feb, 1968 inviting the attention of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha to the fact that they are now ready to launch movement on the event of the government’s further silence. The emergent meeting of the executive committee of the Mahasabha held at Patharkandi, resolved to send a joint deputation of the Bhasha Parishad and the Sahitya Parishad to
the Chief Minister, Assam and requested to the students and youth to wait for the result of the proposed deputation to the government.

The following statistical figures were made ready out of the self operated census throughout the district of Cachar conducted only in the rural areas leaving aside the urban population which would not be completed. 31

Census of the Bishnupriya Manipuri population of Cachar 1967:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Div</th>
<th>Name of the Anchalik Panchayet</th>
<th>No.of Villages</th>
<th>No.of Houses</th>
<th>Population Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Silchar</td>
<td>Sonai</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>4766</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narsingpur</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>4419</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Udarbond</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1395</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kabuganj</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5802</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salchapra</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>3332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hailakandi, Hailakandi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Karimganj</td>
<td>Patharkandi</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2429</td>
<td>20,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramkrishnanagar</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3120</td>
<td>25, 117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>8183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The joint deputation of the Sahitya Parishad and the Andolan Parishad submitted their memorandum to Sri Joy Bhadra Hagzer, Education Minister, Assam on 27.2.68. Gouri Shankar Roy, Ex-Congress M.L.A and Jatindra Mohan Barbhuiya, M.L.A of Silchar accompanied the deputation on the request of the spokes man of the delegation. The memorandum submitted to the minister dealt with the following points:-

(1) An account of the previous correspondence with the government.

(2) The government census of 1961 revealed entirely farcial with respect to this linguistic minority.
(3) The self operated census and its collaborations.

(4) Demand for immediate implementation of the language at Lower Primary School stage.

(5) Demand for broadcasting facilities of the cultural items of this linguistic minority community in its own language as a daily part programme of the Akash Bani, Gauhati.

(6) Demand for financial assistance to the Sahitya Parishad considering the extreme economic depression of the community and the bulk of the literature unprinted.

(7) Complete silence of the Secretary, Board of Elementary Education, Assam in respect of calling for the text book.

The Education minister expressed to the deputationists the government’s inability to implement the introduction of the language of the community thinly scattered in the district of Cachar and considered this language having affinity with Bengali and Assamese. Reacting to the ministers view, the President of the Sahitya Parishad showed to the Education minister a volume of literary works and explained to him the character of the language and categorically declared that the language was far from the affinity as the minister supposes. The operated census figures exhibited by Shri Gopinath Sinha, Secretary, Bhasha Parishad, the relevant certificate from the Anchalik Panchayet and testimonials of the two accompanying public leaders of the subject and the population concentration in the district challenged the minister's wrong view. The Education minister in conclusion assured the deputationists that he had been well conceived and would change his previous decision. But the deputationists could not rely on this changed attitude of the minister.

In the meantime the general session of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union was held at Patharkandi and resolutions
were adopted to start movement in the society in the event of the government’s failure to fulfill the demands at this stage.

Time rolled on without any response from the government of Assam and the central government which compelled the students and youth of this community to take the path of agitation. This is the background of the launching of the democratic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to recognise their language.

By this time Andolan Sangathan Committee was formed by the youth to propagate the necessity of launching the movement in different areas. The Andolan Sangathan Committee was formed with seven members. The President and the Secretary of this committee were Monorama Sinha and Krishnaballav Sinha. The other five members of this committee were Badan Sinha, Mani Sinha, Ram Mohan Sinha, Krishnadas Sinha, and Fulasena Sinha. Advisors of this committee were Sri Gopinath Sinha and Gopimohan Mukherjee. This committee convened a conference at Singari at which Andolan Parishad was formed with the presidentship of Sri Sona Singha (Popularly known as Hongachara) of Singari. But the main liability of this Andolan Parishad was bestowed in the hands of the youth such as Gopinath Sinha, Monoranjan Sinha, Jogendra Kumar Sinha, Hemkanti Sinha, Kushadhwaj Sinha, Harekrishna Mukherjee and Krishnaballov Singha etc. Later on Monoranjan Sinha and Hemkanti Sinha became the president and the general secretary of the Andolan Parishad respectively.

The Parishad submitted ultimatum to the government for observing a token strike on 31.5.68 in the event of the government’s failure to give satisfactory reply to the demands by 30.5.68 and forwarded a copy of the resolution to the Mahasabha praying for immediate formal recognition of the Andolan Parishad. The Mahasabha informed the government of the growing agitation of the
youth and appealed for taking early action to fulfill the demands. The token strike was duly observed by the Andolan Parishad on 31.5.68 in which youth, old men and women participated in thousands raising the slogans “Amar Dabi Dena Lagtoi” “Ima Thare Lerik Tamkarani Dena Lagtoi”. Processions and public meetings were organised throughout the district in which public leaders irrespective of caste and creed participated and delivered speeches in support of the humble demands of this linguistic minority. The public in general promised their wholehearted co-operation with the Andolan Parishad to continue the movement. The pattern of primary education through mother tongue as medium of instruction was discussed by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad through a series of mass meetings in the district.

At the conclusion of the first phase of the movement the Andolan Parishad gave second ultimatum to the government to the extent of launching the second phase of the movement with effect from July 1, 1968. The Assam government’s silence in giving any response resulted in the launching of the second phase of the movement by the Andolan Parishad. The tremendous havoc caused by the floods weeping over the district could not stand in the way of the commotion raised by the Andolan Parishad. The processionists both the old and young generation moved from rural to urban areas raising relevant slogan specially condemning the government policy of remaining indifferent to the humble cause. They held public meetings all over the district attended by distinguished political leaders, associations and democratic organisations of the Cachar district. Each meeting was concluded by the burning of the tokens of the 1961 census report as a bitter resentment against figures recorded in it specially in regard to this linguistic minority.

Due to the pressure of the movement Joy Bhadra Hagzer, the education minister, government of Assam informed that the
introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as the medium of instruction at the primary stage of education in Cachar district has been taken up for consideration by the government of Assam. He also disclosed that Bishnupriya Manipuri community had already been recognised as one of the communities entered as the other backward class. He appealed to the Andolan Parishad to repose truth on the sincerity of the government of Assam towards their general progress and educational advancement.

But the government of Assam instead of its assurance did not take necessary action. Hence the Mahasabha felt it necessary to continue their peaceful negotiation against the government. A deputation was sent to Shillong from the end of the Mahasabha on 25.8.68. The deputation called on the Chief Minister and the Education Minister of Assam and submitted memorandum to them for the immediate fulfillment of the demands. The education minister assured that their demands were under the active consideration of the government.

On the support of the demands of this linguistic minority, a memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister, Assam on 30.8.68 by the leading citizens of Cachar. The signatories of the memorandum are –

President, Cachar Krishak Union, Silchar, Biresh Mishra, Secretary, Cachar Zilla Krishak Committee, Nikhil Bharat Krishak Sabha, Satu Roy, Secretary, Karimganj District Youth Congress Committee, Paritush Paul Choudhury, Sujit Kumar Dutta, President, Bharatiya Jana Sangha, Silchar, Jamini Mohan Das, President, Patharkandi A.P., Golam Zillani Choudhury, President, North Karimganj A.P., Abdul Haque Laskar, President, Hailakandi A.P., Namar Ali Barbhuiya, Advocate, Kamalendu Bhattacharjee, journalist, Gour Singha, President, Manipuri Samajik Mahasabha, Jatindra Ranjan Dey, Professor, G.C. College and Mrinal Kanti Das Gupta, member, Patharkandi A.P. etc.

It is specially mentioned that Merachouba Singha, M.L.A. and Gour Singha, President, Manipuri Samajik Mahasabha, who belong to Meitei Manipuri Community, were signatories in this memorandum to fulfill the genuine demand of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Community.

In the wake of the steps taken up by the Mahasabha on their usual line of peaceful negotiation, the executive committee requested the Andolan Parishad to defer their third phase of movement till some final decision could be arrived at by ensuring 25th general session of the Mahasabha to be commenced from January 23, 1969 at Tinokhal, Patharkandi.

Due to these phases of the movement, the Central Government sent G.N. Dike, I.A.S. Deputy Commissioner for linguistic minorities, Government of India to discuss the problems concerning linguistic safeguard. Mr. Dike heard patiently from the spokesman of the Mahasabha regarding the grievances of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic community on 14.12.68 and welcomed a special meet with them at 1 p.m. in the same date in the premise of the Silchar Circuit House. The President of the Sahitya Parishad submitted a memorandum to Dike on the genuine demands of the Bishnupriya
Manipuri community. According to the tour programme chalked out by the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, Sri G.N. Dike attended the first public meeting held at Singari on 15.12.68 under the presidency of Pulakeshi Sinha, Ex – Congress M.L.A. and this meeting was attended by 3000 members and distinguished personalities like Gulam Osmani, Bar – at – law, Sri Tarapada Bhattacharjee, Ex – M.L.A., Kamalendu Bhattacharjee, journalist and Chairman, Silchar Municipal Board. Shri Dike after hearing the speeches of the distinguished guests, received one memorandum submitted by Gopinath Sinha, Secretary, Bhasha Parishad, Hemkanti Sinha, General Secretary, Andolan Parishad and Chandana Devi of Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahila Samiti. The Deputy Commissioner assured that each linguistic minority group in India had the privilege to survive and he would endeavour to his best capacity to uphold the cause of this linguistic minority to proper authority. Shri Dike visited Bishnupriya Manipuri people living areas such as Bikrampur, Kalain, Narsingpur, Japirband, (Hailakandi) Karimganj, Dullovcherra and Patharkandi and received memorandums submitted by the people of these areas. At the end he assured his help towards this linguistic minority.

The general session of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha held from January 23 to 25, 1969 at Tinokhal, Patharkandi, passed a resolution that in the event of the government’s further failure to fulfill the demands of this linguistic minority community, they would observe a “Gana Sova Jatra” a last measure of the peaceful negotiations with the Government. By this peaceful procession memorandum will be submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam and Tripura through Deputy Commissioners and Sub – Divisional officers.

On January 29, 1969 Sri G. N. Dike intimated to the President, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Parishad through a letter intimated that the matter was taken up with the government and was
referred to the state government. So the proposal “Gana Sova Jatra” was sensibly deferred from the scheduled time to June 20, 1969 relying on the sincerity and generosity of the linguistic commission. But failing to get any positive response, the central executive committee of the Mahasabha assembled in a meeting held on 29.5.69 in a state of deep frustration and sent resolutions of this meeting to the Chief Ministers of Assam and Tripura.

Leaflets were largely distributed on 16.6.69 to the public of all caste and creed by the Mahasabha calling their attention and cooperation with the mass procession fixed on 20.6.69. The June 20,, 1969 is a significant day because thousands of men, women, youth of this community are in the street procession with a spirit of self determination. Such processions were demonstrated on this day in all parts of Cachar and Tripura including the offices of S.D.Cs, S.D.Os and DCs. Memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister of Assam and Tripura was submitted and copies of memorandum were sent to the Education Ministers of Assam and Tripura, Home Minister, government of India and Linguistic Commissioner, government of India.33

The government still remained unmoved and the Mahasabha fully realised that the third phase of the movement of the Andolan Parishad could not be averted in spite of the peaceful efforts of the Mahasabha. In the meantime the student organisations of Assam specially of Cachar joined hands with the Andolan Parishad to fight for the constitutional linguistic demands of this linguistic minority community. The Mahasabha apprehended unhappy consequences and felt extremely helpless in this disappointing situation created by the unsympathetic attitude of the government

The Mahasabha sent a deputation consisting of Kamini Sinha, Vice-President of the Mahasabha, Hemkanti Sinha and Taraleima Debi to submit a memorandum to Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of
India on 22.6.69 when she was in the tour to Agartala. The Prime Minister in the discussion assured to the deputationists that she would refer the matter to the Home Department, government of India and take proper steps in this regard.

In the meantime D. N. Bajpai, Asstt. Commissioner, Linguistic Minorities Commission of India, informed to the General Secretary, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha that with reference to your representation dated June 14, 1969 on the demand for broadcasting cultural programme in Bishnupriya Manipuri language from All India Radio Station, Guwahati, All India Radio is already broadcasting folk songs in Bishnupriya Manipuri on an average once a month and an increase in the frequency in this item does not appear to be feasible at this stage. Regarding introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in primary schools in Cachar district, the issue is under the active consideration of the government of Assam. So the Mahasabha was fed up with the terms "under active consideration of the government of Assam" regarding introduction of the language.

On the other hand the Andolan Parishad was preparing to launch third phase of the movement on 17.10.69. The Mahasabha intimated the Bhasha Parishad regarding the launching of the third phase of the movement. So the Bhasha Parishad in its emergent meeting held at Singari, Silchar on 21.10.69 with Sri Tarakanta Sinha on the chair resolved to request the Andolan Parishad to defer the movement in view of the correspondence made by Sri D. N. Bajpai, Asstt. Commissioner for linguistic minorities, government of India on 29.6.99 as referred to above and a copy of the resolution was sent to the General Secretary, Mahasabha for information.

But the Andolan Parishad refuted the request of the Bhasha Parishad and was firm to continue the third phase of the movement.
The programme of the third phase of the movement of the Andolan Parishad was started with the “Rakta Swakshar Abhijan” by youth for a period of 8 days from Oct 15 to 22, 1969. But it was strongly opposed by the Mahasabha and a tangle was ensured between the Mahasabha and the Andolan Parishad.

It is noteworthy that the third phase of the movement gained its momentum from 23.10.69 when bandhs in specified areas as per programme began to be observed by the youth of the society by the picketings of government offices. A strike (bandh) was observed at Katigarah on 23.10.69, at Narshingpur on 25.10.69 followed by the arrest of 7 people at Ratabari, on 27.10.69 at Patharkandi, on 28.10.69, at Salchapra, on 29.10.69, at Japirband, on 30.10.69 followed by the arrest of 26 persons at Meherpur on 31.10.69 followed by the arrest of 13 persons including five girls. On Nov. 1, 1969 picketing was observed at the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Silchar with the occupation of the chair of Deputy Commissioner and Additional Deputy Commissioner and 29 people were arrested. Picketing was observed on 3.11.69 at the office of the Deputy Inspector of Schools and 385 were arrested on 4.11.69. Picketing was observed at the Narsingpur Block Office followed by the arrest of 11 persons on 5.11.69. Picketing was observed at all government offices of the Silchar town and 100 people were arrested. The whole district was stirred. Men, women, young and old came out in batches with their children raising slogans.

“Amar dabi dena lagtoi
Ima thar jingta ok”

The people staged satyagraha in all sub divisions of the district of Cachar and stayed till 7 pm in the night and willingly courted arrest. They were taken to jails and later on released. The police tried to put obstructions on the processions on the roads of the town but the
processionists went on raising slogans. The elderly people in the community were emotionally surcharged when the picketers were picked up and taken to the van for sending them to jails. It is noteworthy that one lady picketer, Jaldupi Sinha, hailed from a village Bhakatpur, was over eighty years when she courted arrest and she said it was her love for the mother tongue that brought her there. Gulam Osmani, an eminent leader, Mohitosh Purkayastha, M.P, Tarapada Bhattacharjee, Ex – M.L.A. and many other distinguished leaders came forward supporting the demands of the Andolan Parishad.

In the middle course of the movement, the President of the Mahasabha sent a memorandum to the government pleading for the fulfillment of the demands of this linguistic minority community. The underlying tone of the letter addressed to the Government was that they would go for further movement on the issue. The Andolon Parishad is their forum for agitation to achieve their mission. The movement took a turn and the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, M Raptaph invited the leaders of the Andolan Parishad to discuss the matter and appealed to them for withdrawal of the movement. The discussion was held at Silchar in front of the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, Sri Gana Shyam Barua on 7.11.69 and the D.C. Cachar conveyed the details of the meeting to the Minister of Education, J B Hagjer and requested him to solve the problem for the sake of peace in the district. The Minister gave his consent to meet the leaders of the movement in Shillong. The leaders of the Andolon Parishad went to Shillong, then the capital of Assam, to discuss the issue with the minister. But he gave no assurance to them on the fulfillment of the demand on the introduction of the language at the lower primary school level. Being frustrated, they returned to Silchar and decided to continue agitation afresh. The Andolan Parishad resorted to picketing at Patharkandi, Hailakandi, Ratabari, Narsingpur
and Silchar before the government offices which was followed by procession at Silchar town. As a result, the D C, Cachar promulgated 144 throughout the whole district. The Satyagrahis broke 144 in all areas and welcomed arrest and imprisonment in thousands. 238 picketers were arrested on 13.11.69.

On 17.11.69 Silchar bandh was observed by Satyagrahis and 263 were arrested. The bandh is a form of protest by which the agitationists seek to paralyse normal business and office activities by preventing people to perform. It was also an acid test for a small linguistic community to make this form of protest a success. The call of Karimganj bandh on 19.11.69 by the Andolan Parishad was not observed due to appeals to the leaders of the Andolan Parishad by the citizens of Karimganj town in view of the firing there. On 21.11.69 the Andolan Parishad observed Hailakandi bandh and 150 Satyagrahis were arrested. On 23.11.69 government arrested more than 500 picketers from different places of the district and later on they were released. On that day a public meeting was held at Gandhibagh, Silchar and the third phase of the movement came to an end.

The Government of India was not willing to remain involved in the issue and directed the General Secretary, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha, Silchar to correspond with the ‘Linguistic Minorities Commission', 40, Hamilton Road, Allahabad, UP vide its letter no 15/80/69 - OL dated November 29,1969. The Linguistic Minorities Commission is now looking into their demands which are cultural in nature like the programming in the Government controlled media, Doordarshan and All India Radio. The Bishnupriya Manipuris generally prefer to be called a resident of a pargana which is a small territorial area. Some names of participants in the linguistic movement are mentioned below.


Pargana Narshingpur -- Nabadwip Singha, Harikumar Singha, Khelendra Sinha, Mukul Sinha, Ajit Singha, Kalasena Sinha,
Shyamananda Misra, Tarakanta Rajkumar, Birendra Sinha, Mohendra Singha, Golap Babu Sinha, Harendra Singha, Shekhar Singha and Hembabu Singha etc.

**Pargana Japirband** -- Harendra Kr. Sinha, Dhirendra Kumar Singha, Barendra Singha, Badal Kumar Sinha, Sushil Sinha, Moloy Sinha, Indra Kumar Singha, Akshyay Sinha, Shyamdas Singha and Lakshmikanta Sinha etc.

**Silchar town** -- Kshirodh Singha, Jagatmohan Sinha, Radhaballav Sinha, Sagar Sinha, Jiten Singha, Gournitai Singha and Nitai Ballav Sinha etc.


The General Secretary of the Mahasabha appealed to the Registrar General, government of India for conducting a faithful census of this linguistic minority in the census of 1971 and elaborated all previous anomalies in the 1961 census which went against its interests. This letter was sent under the memo no 1/69/208 dated Silchar, 6.11.69. A reply from the R.G came on 3.1.70 which only indicated the receipt of the letter.

The Central Government was silent and no decision came from them. In the mean time, the executive body of the Mahasabha sat on 30.11.69 in an emergent meeting jointly with the Central General
Assembly to find out ways and means as how to approach the government next time. The Mahasabha wrote to the Government for immediate fulfillment of the seven points demand. It also stated that if the demands were not fulfilled with immediate effect by the Government, they would go for general fasting on January 8, 1970 from 6 A.M. to 6 p.m. in Cachar and Tripura before all principal government offices.

But the Government did not pay any serious attention to fulfill the demands of the community. In this situation, it has to be mentioned that till 1970, the Mahasabha did not support the movement led by Andolan Parishad and preferred to appeal to the Government for consideration. As no positive response came from the Government, the Mahasabha from 1970 decided to organise agitations.

The launching of a token general fasting on January 8, 1970 was however contested by members from many quarters as this affair must have been sanctioned by the general session of the Mahasabha. Accordingly, the date was deferred awaiting the resolution of the general session. The question of mass fasting or Gana Anashan was discussed at length in the Betubari Session of the Mahasabha and the resolution was adopted to launch the same on March 13, 1970. But the proposed mass fasting was postponed by the Mahasabha due to the visit of L.B. Thanga, Deputy Commissioner, Linguistic Minorities Commission on March 19, 1970 and he met the members of the Mahasabha, Cachar Zilla Gana Sangram Parishad and the District Congress Committees of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi.

The President of the Mahasabha, Chandra Kanta Singha convened a conference on that date i.e. March 13, 1970 to take mass support of all concerning parties for the cause. The Karimganj District Congress Committee supported the cause of this minority community and Bishwanath Upadhyay, the Congress M.L.A presided over that
meeting. A memorandum was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner for linguistic minorities at Karimganj by the Karimganj District Congress Committee and at Silchar by the Cachar Zilla Gana Sangram Parishad.

A joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee and the Central General Assembly of the Mahasabha was held on April 5, 1970 and the resolution was unanimously adopted to launch the Gana Anashan on April 29, 1970 in Cachar, Tripura and Shillong.

The Mahasabha observed 48 hrs general fasting from 10 a.m. of 13.12.72 to 10 a.m. of 15.12.72 which is confined to Cachar district only. At that time, Atal Behari Bajpai, the then president of Jana Sangha, came to Silchar and met the fasting agitationists on December 15, 1972.

The Mahasabha also observed mass fasting from 10 a.m. of 6.3.74 to 10 a.m. of 9.3.74 which was also confined to Cachar. In spite of several phases of the mass fasting, the State & Central governments remained unconcerned towards the cause of this linguistic minority community. Considering the Governments’ ambiguous attitude towards the community, they decided to organise a more concerted movement and the Bishnupriya Manipuri Seven Point Demand Action Committee was formed.

Moreover, Government of Assam issued notification vide order No. TDC/OBC/260/135/37 date 27.11.75 declaring Bishnupriya Manipuri community as an Other Backward Class Caste in the state. In the meantime the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting sent a letter to the General Secretary, Mahasabha vide memo No. NBM/1/74-75/201:-203 dated March 19, 1975 providing broadcasting facility in the Manipuri language (both Bishnupriya and Meitei) in All India Radio Station at Silchar.
Due to the various phases of the movement government of Assam, issued notification vide letter No. EML/169/74/137/ dated 29.1.1977 declaring “Bishnupriya” as a subject. But the notification was rejected by the Mahasabha on the ground to declare as “Bishnupriya Manipuri” not simply as the ‘Bishnupriya’ as they alleged that the Government willfully omitted the word ‘Manipuri’ under the pressure from some quarters. It may be mentioned that L. Chandramani Singha, the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, wrote to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Sarat Chandra Sinha through a D O letter no 1/1/7- L A(A) dated July 5, 1972 in which he said ‘it may, however, be noted and I am sure, you know better that there is no language as claimed by the Bishnupriyas as ‘Bishnupriya Manipuri’ language in Manipur and perhaps in Cachar district. The Manipuri language is one and only language that has been accepted as the state language of Manipur from the time of Maharajas of Manipur. And therefore there can be a language spoken by the Bishnupriyas as ‘Bishnupriya’ language but there never be a ‘Bishnupriya Manipuri’ language on the same footing as there can be no Bodo Assamese language in Assam.’ But the Bishnupriya Manipuri community remained in the struggle and the movement went on without interruption to press for the fulfillment of their legitimate demand.

A national convention was held at Bhakatpur in 1978 with the initiative of the Mahasabha and full power was given to the Seven Point Demand Action Committee whose President and Secretary were Gopinath Sinha and Krishna Ballov Sinha respectively. This committee observed “Sankhya Loghu Bachao Divas” (minority protection day) on Dec 2, 1978 all over Cachar and “Abasthan Dharmaghat” (stay in strike) in three districts of Barak Valley from Feb 21 to 23, 1979. Gopi Mohan Mukherjee was given charge of the Karimganj unit. Monoranjan Sinha and Krishna Ballov Sinha were in charge of Silchar and Barun
Sinha, Badal Sinha and Barendra Kumar Sinha were in charge of Hailakandi. In response, the Government has taken three months time to fulfill the demands of the community. The name of Bishnupriya Manipuri was corrected in 1981 census and this was intimated to the General Secretary of the Seven Point Demand Action Committee by the Deputy Registrar General C & T. Ministry of Home Affairs vide government letter No. 9/27/78 – CD (CEN) dated August 17, 1980. In 1981 census code structure was corrected in Tripura. But in Assam, the code structure was not corrected because the AASU (All Assam Students Union) launched a movement against the foreigners and this important work was shelved for the time being. The Government was pressurised by the Seven Point Demand Action Committee, Mahasabha and Students Union to correct the nomenclature and to introduce this language as the medium of education in the primary schools.

As no effect was seen, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union launched a relay hunger strike for an indefinite period from January 7, 1982 at the Court of Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, Silchar. A group of hunger strikers courted arrests when they were in hunger strike and were put into jail custody. The strike gained more and more momentum day by day due to the co-operation of various student organisations of the district. But this strike was however called off on January 25, 1982 at midnight when Jagannath Sinha, Minister of Industries, Government of Assam, entered into an agreement with the executive body of the Students Union, Mahasabha and Sahitya Parishad.

In an important meeting held on 25.1.82 where Jagannath Sinha, Minister of Industries, government of Assam, Anil Sinha, President, Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union (NBMSU) Central Committee, Pachugopal Sinha, General Secretary NBMSU Central Committee, Kripamoy Sinha, General Secretary NBMSU,
Assam State Committee, Gautam Sinha, President NBMSU, Silchar Town Committee, Monaranjan Sinha, General Secretary, Mahasabha and Kushadhwaj Sinha, General Secretary, Sahitya Parishad, participated. After a prolonged discussion, the leaders of the movement accepted the government’s assurance on the introduction of the language and decided to withdraw the movement. However, there were two conditions,

(a) The Government would invite Students Union at a higher level meeting.

(b) All students arrested for joining the agitation during the movement would be released.

The agitation was able to gain support from various organisations like the Cachar Siksha Sangrakshan Samiti, the Academic Council (C.D.C.), Silchar Banga Sahitya Oh Sanskriti Sammelan, Cachar Branch etc. which adopted resolutions strongly supporting the demands of the nomenclature and introduction of the language.

After two decades of the peaceful movement, the Registrar General of India at last came into a decision and provided Bishnupriya Manipuris their code structure for 1981 census vide Memo No. 9/27/78 CD (CEN) government of India. With this decision of the Registrar General of India, the Commissioner of linguistic minorities in India strongly recommended early introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. But a significant break through in the recognition of the language came from the Assistant Commissioner, Linguistic Minorities Commission, Allahabad who wrote on May 2, 1981 in response to the Government of Assam letter no EMI/74/266 dated March 3, 1981 that

“According to the R.G.I. at the 1961 census the enumerators were instructed to record the mother tongue exactly as returned by the
respondent. The data were tabulated on the basis of the returns received. Therefore the question of changing a particular return of a past census at that stage did not arise.

However for the 1981 census their code structure provides for Bishnupriya Manipuri as a separate mother tongue. All those persons who will return Bishnupriya Manipuri as their mother tongue will be recorded as such. Therefore the union need not have any misgivings about recording of the mother tongue of persons who return Bishnupriya Manipuri as their tongue.

It would be clear that from the report of the R.G.I that the Bishnupriya Manipuri is a separate language and therefore, they have provided the same in their code structure for 1981 census. It may be that this decision of the R.G.I. is based on authentic sources and records, like the famed Linguistic Survey of India by Sir Grierson who had recognised the existence of the speakers as ‘Bishnupriya Manipuri’

Thus it would be clear that the demand of the speakers of the Bishnupriya Manipuris regarding nomenclature of their language as ‘Bishnupriya Manipuri ‘ appears reasonable and justified. In view of this position, the Government of Assam may reconsider their decision and take necessary action to meet the demand of speakers of Bishnupriya Manipuri.

In spite of such recommendations of the Commissioner for linguistic minorities in India and frequent agitations of the Students Union, the government remained silent to redress the grievances of this community. So on August 5, 1983, the representatives of the Mahasabha and Students Union submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister, Assam at Silchar and in course of the discussion the deputationists were advised to meet him at Dispur for further discussion. Accordingly the Mahasabha in its meeting held on August
21, 1983 at Bhakatpur, Silchar authorised Bhimsen Sinha, the Vice President of the Seven Point Demand Action Committee to do needful on behalf of the Mahasabha and to motivate the government in favour of the genuine demand of this linguistic minority community.

Fortunately the government of Assam issued notification vide letter No. EMI-169/74 pt III/310 dated 14.11.83 modifying the earlier notification letter No. EMI-169/74/137 dated 29.2.77 to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language at the primary stage of education as a medium of instruction in the district of Cachar and Karimganj. This historic decision of the Assam government under the leadership of the Hiteswar Saikia was welcomed by this linguistic minority community and other democracy loving people of Assam. Bhimsen Sinha’s role to motivate Hiteswar Saikia to issue this notification was greatly appreciated.

In the meantime Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India visited Assam and Manipur Chief Minister and many other people approached the Prime minister to revoke the order. She instructed the Assam government to stay this order under the pressure of some groups opposed to the interests of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

Within the short period, Students Union, Seven Point Demand Action Committee and Mahasabha started agitation in a phased manner utilising all forms of protests applied in other agitations like office picketing, dharna, rail roko and procession etc.

On March 2, 1987 36 hours hunger strike was observed before the Janata Bhawan, Guwahati by the Guwahati Branch of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union. On Feb 6, 1987 Students Union observed 12 hrs Rail Roko movement in Barak Valley under the leadership of Nirmal Sinha, Kripamoy Sinha. Hartal (stay in strike) was arranged at Dispur jointly by the Students Union and Seven Point Demand Action Committee on Nov 30, 1989.
From 1989 to 1992, the movement was not in full swing due to the internal conflicts among the organisers of the movement. In 1991 Anil Rajkumar and Surachandra Sinha became the President and the General Secretary of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union, Assam State Committee. This newly elected Students Union began to mobilise the society in every pargana and formed Anchalik Committees and Unit Committees. From 1992 on the advice of the Mahasabha the Students Union, Assam State Committee under the leadership of Anil Rajkumar started the movement. This movement gained support from the people.

In the month of August 1992, 24hr hunger strike was observed in the offices of the Deputy Inspector of Schools of three districts of the Barak Valley. On Sep 21, 1992, the Students Union submitted an ultimatum to the Assam government through the Deputy Commissioners of the three districts - Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of the Barak Valley giving 15 days time to fulfill their prime demands organising long processions which was supported by the Students Union of the State, such as ACKHSA (All Cachar Karimganj Hailakandi Students Association), AASU etc. and also some other sister associations of the society.

But crisis arose when the conflict between the Central Committee and the State Committee arose. The State Committee did not follow up the constitution of the organisation and the movement was conducted by Anil Rajkumar who did not agree on all issues with the Central Committee. As a result, the Central Committee of the Students Union and the Mahasabha did not support this movement led by Anil Rajkumar. The Government of Assam, in this context, became reticent and allowed the situation to drift which went against the course of the movement. Moreover the Students Union led by Anil Rajkumar got the support from some prominent persons of this community who have different opinions with Mahasabha. On the other hand, a youth
organisation known as Gana Sangram Parishad was formed on Sept 27, 92 under the leadership of Rabi Shankar Sinha. This organisation collaborated with the Students Union led by Anil Rajkumar in the linguistic movement.

Both the organisations jointly called a 24 hr Road Blockade Programme on Oct 21, 1992 at different places of the Barak Valley, such as Narsingpur, Katakhal, Bikrampur, Kalain, Patharkandi and Dullovcherra where the Bishnupriya Manipuris have concentration of population. Due to the pressure of these series of movements, the Chief Minister of Assam, Hiteswar Saikia, convened a meeting with the leaders of the Students Union such as Anil Rajkumar, Surachandra Sinha, Rabi Shankar Sinha, Gopidas Sinha, Sushil Sinha, Dipti Sinha and Sandhya Sinha. The Chief Minister requested the student leaders to give time to consider their issue and to call off the movement. The student leaders agreed on the request of the Chief Minister and called off the strike.

Due to the non – fulfillment of the assurance given by the Chief Minister, 48 hr Road Blockade was organised on Feb 8, 1993 at Narsingpur, Katakhal, Kalain, Patharkandi and Dullovcherra. The Students Union observed 36 hr Hunger Strike on March 22, 1993 during the session of the Assam Legislative Assembly in order to draw the attention of all MLAs of Assam. The government responded and arranged the second round of talk with the agitation leaders. The student leaders attended with their Chief Adviser, Birendra Sinha. As a result of this meeting the Assam government appointed a commission under the Chairmanship of H.R. Haque Choudhury, retired Chief Justice of the Guwahati High Court to enquire about the inclusion of the Bishnupriya Manipuri as other backward class community. Mahasabha, Students Union and Samaj Sangstha produced evidences in support of their view for which the commission
recommended in favour of the inclusion of the Bishnupriya Manipuri as an other backward class community.

After getting the recommendation, the Students Union again met the Chief Minister who again sought time of 14 days. But within this period government did not fulfill this assurance.

On May 10, 1993 12 hr Hunger Strike was observed by the Students Union in front of the offices of the Deputy Inspector of Schools of Hailakandi, Karimganj and Cachar.

On December 20, 72 hr road blockade was announced at different places of Barak Valley.

On June 21, 1994 101 hr road blockade programme was announced. The long term bandh calls simply worked as threats and these were never carried to the end, far from it, it ended within a day or two. The Chief Minister of Assam invited the N.B.M. Students Union on July 17 for a talk. The Students Union attended the talk and the movement call was temporarily withdrawn.

The Students Union again announced a programme for road blockade on January 27, 1995 for 101 hrs. In the mean time, the fresh talk with the Government took place on March 7, 1995. In this talk, a decision was taken for a tripartite talk involving the Central government, Assam government and the Students Union. It was also decided to submit documents by the Students Union for inclusion of the Bishnupriya Manipuri as Other Backward Classes.

The tripartite talk in the month of October was not held as the Home Ministry could not announce a date. The agitationists announced 301 hrs rail blockade at Patharkandi from Nov 21. One result came and the tripartite talk was held on Nov 26 in New Delhi where the N.B.M. Students Union, Assam government and the Central government participated. The Students Union was represented by
Anil Krishna Rajkumar, Rabi Shankar Sinha, Nirmal Sinha, Surachandra Sinha, and Gopidas Sinha. In this talk the Central Government sought two months time from the Students Union to give clarification to the Assam government regarding the implementation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

On the other hand, the Pro – Mahasabha Students Union led by Salil Sinha continued the student movement in various manners such as Rasta Roko, Rail Roko, office picketing etc. Youth of the society came to support this movement. Moreover, people of other communities of this region supported the process of the movement. In the Rasta Roko movement organised at Patharkandi, Salil Sinha, President of the Students Union, Central Committee was mercilessly beaten by police and he succumbed to his injury on December 31 after two days. The movements thus claimed a martyr for itself.

In spite of these, the Government did not fulfill its assurance for which the Students Union led by Anil Rajkumar with the co – operation of the Gana Sangram Parishad led by Rabi Shankar Sinha, began to mobilise youth to step up further the course of action of the movement. The Students Union called Rail Roko movement for 501 hours from March 16, 1996 which affected movement of trains in Kalkalighat of Patharkandi and road traffic at Mohanpur of Kalain. In the observation of this blockade on March 16, in Kakalighat Railway Station the police fired on the picketers the result of which one young girl, Sudheshna Sinha of Kachubari Village was killed on the spot and 9 picketers namely Pradip Sinha, Arun Sinha, Shymal Sinha, Dipankar Sinha, Kamalakanta Sinha, Bikash Sinha, Promodini Sinha, Ratna Sinha and Namita Sinha were severely injured. They were immediately shifted to the Silchar Medical College & Guwahati Medical College. 150 picketers were lathicharged and the student leaders Anil Krishna Rajkumar, Rabi Shankar Sinha, Samir Sinha, Gopidas Sinha and Subal Sinha were arrested at Katigarah and were taken to the Silchar
Jail. But they were released after the effective intervention of the Mahasabha, Sahitya Sabha and the elite of the society in the Barak and the Brahmaputra valley.

Sudheshna Sinha's death had an effect and the Government of Assam was hurried to issue a notification on March 18, 1996 to include Bishnupriya Manipuri as other backward class community in a separate code structure. But this decision of the government was challenged by K. Kumardhan Singha of Lakshipur in the High Court of Guwahati. The honourable High Court of Guwahati, after hearing the counsel of both sides, gave the verdict in favour of the decision of the Assam government on 9.4.99. But K. Kumardhan Singha being dissatisfied with the judgement of the Guwahati High Court, filed a case in the Supreme Court of India against the verdict of the Guwahati High Court.

On the other hand in Tripura, Bishnupriya Manipuri community is included in the central list of other backward class vide Gazette of India's Notification issued on Dec 6, 1999.

In the meantime the Tripura government under the leadership of the Chief Minister Dasharath Debbarma issued notification to introduce the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary schools of Tripura vide order No. F19 (G-25) LISE/88 L-H/51-91/ government of Tripura dated 23.5.1995. Accordingly, the Directorate of School Education, Tripura (Tribal Language Cell) ordered the introduction of teaching of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Language in following schools vide its order F 19(8-25)-DSE /88(I-II)S dated February 13, 1996 from the academic year 1995-96.

Name of Institutions:
Inspector of Schools, Kailashahar
2. Tilakpur Girls J.B. School.
5. Singirbil Sr.B. School.
7. Dolugaon J.B. School.
8. Bhagyapur J.B. School.
10. East Kanchanbari J.B. School.
12. Masouli High (Morning) School.

Inspector of Schools, Dharmanagar

17. Deochera High (Morning) School.
20. Sanicherra J.B. School.

Inspector of Schools, Kamalpur

22. Baralutma High (Morning) School.
23. Debicherra High (Morning) School.
24. Mohanpur J.B. School.
25. Halhali J.B. School.
27. Ramkeshab J.B.School.

Inspector of Schools, Bishalgarh

29. Kalkalia Sr B.School.

But the Assam government took the opportunity of the differences between Students Union led by Anil Rajkumar and the Mahasabha, became complacent and no action was taken from their end. It must be mentioned that there are other associations in the society such as the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Sabha, the Bishnupriya Manipuri Samaj Sangstha which are also active in demanding the recognition of their language by the government. It is natural that in any society there may be many organisations which may have different methods but a common object. This was also reflected in the freedom movement of India. So it is not a matter of shame for the Bishnupriya Manipuri community.

During the chief ministership of Asom Gana Parishad Supremo, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the Students Union gave a call for 1001hr rail road blockade from December 1, 1996 though it was beyond their means to achieve it and it fizzled out soon at the start but one effect of such a call was the invitation by the Government for talk on January 2, 1997. As a result of the meeting the government decided to make a statistics of the primary schools of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited area in which 50% of the students are Bishnupriya Manipuri students.

But due to the silence of the government, they went for another call of the 1001hr Rail Road blockade in Barak Valley from April 21, 1997. The Bishnupriya Manipuris are a small community and form a small part of the population in Barak valley and their movement largely
depended on the goodwill of other groups of people in the valley. Many among the larger groups in the valley had sympathy for their demands but the frequent calls of strikes of different forms alienated many people from them and there were protests from many quarters. The students had talks with the Government but that effort failed.

3rd phase of the 1001hr Rail Road Blockade from April 30, 97 without any planning and it had hardly had any effects. Another call for the 1001hr Rail Road Blockade was given on May 21 1998 in Burunga of Kalain and Kalkalighat of Patharkandi in which one thousand picketers were arrested and it continued for seven days. Due to this phase of this movement, talk between the Assam government and Students Union was arranged on Dec 7, 1998 by the government. The Education Minister Thaneswar Boro represented the Government and the Students Union was represented by Anil Rajkumar, Rabishankar Sinha and Surachandra Sinha. The Minister appealed to the agitationists to withdraw the movement. But the Students Union rejecting this appeal of the minister started 5th phase of the 1001 hrs Rail Road Blockade from February 21, 1999 in which many satyagrahis were arrested. These calls not only antagonized the people of the valley as these caused great inconveniences to the people at large. As a result the support for this demand of a small linguistic group in the valley began to wane.

The Students Union led by Anil Rajkumar resorted to such pressure tactics to bend the stand of the government but the people of the valley were not consulted at all. These decisions were totally injudicious and it ultimately hurt the interests of the community. The agitationists were, in all cases, forced to withdraw the movement without assigning reasons.

Earlier, when the agitation for the recognition of the language was initiated by the Bhasha Parishad, Andolan Parishad, Seven Point
Demand Action Committee and the Students Union, before calling for any movement these agitating organisations discussed that vital matter with other organisations of the Barak Valley. As the earlier movements took note of the sentiments of the people at large, they could draw sympathy from the majority people and were successful.

The recognition to the language was not implemented in practice. The Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha continued its movement and it conducted several phases of meeting at Dispur at the ministerial and the secretariat levels. As a result of the pressure created by them, the Assam Government under the then chief ministership of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, issued notification vide memo no A (1) E154/95/182 dated 25/5/99 to introduce the language as a subject in the Primary Schools of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. But the Mahasabha’s demand was to introduce this language as a medium of instruction in the primary schools. But the government rejected this demand of the Mahasabha on the ground that every language is introduced in Assam first as a language teaching only and later on other subjects are also taught through the language and it is a gradual process.

Still then the Assam government remained silent for which Pro-Mahasabha Students Union led by Gautam Sinha, President, Central Committee and Ashim Kumar Sinha, President, Assam State Committee continued their agitation. Student leaders Dilip Sinha, Gautam Sinha, Gibinda Rajkumar, Purnendu Sinha and Manash Sinha played the role to mobilise the youth in the spirit of the movement. They always followed the path of the movement discussing with the apex body of the society i.e. the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha. Now the central committee and the state committee of the Pro-Mahasabha Students Union led by Gobinda Rajkumar and Ashim Kumar Sinha respectively played a vital role for the proper development of the society maintaining close liaison with the
Mahasabha. The Mahasabha gave pressure to the government to introduce their language immediately.

Being burdened with the demands from Mahasabha, the Sahitya Sabha, Samaj Sangstha and the Students Union (both group), the Government of Assam was forced to ponder seriously over the introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary schools of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited area of the Barak Valley. As a result of such pondering, a joint meeting among the Education Minister, government of Assam, Education Commissioner and Secretary, Director, SCERT, Assam, Director of Elementary Education, Assam, Managing Director, Assam Text Book Production Committee was held on April 5, 2000. As a result of such meeting the government of Assam has taken the historical decision to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language vide letter no (1)E- 154/95/Pt-V/ Dt Dispur the July 4, 2000 and vested upon the Mahasabha to publish the book as the Assam government at that time was in great financial crisis.

On July 10, 2000, a meeting was held in secretariat conference room of the Assam government between the Assam government and different organisations of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community such as the Mahasabha, the Sahitya Sabha, Samaj Sangstha and Students Union. Thaneswar Boro, Education Minister, Sumit Joirath, Education Secretary, Hemanta Kumar Sarma, Director of Elementary Education and Harendra Kumar Das, Director SCERT represented the meeting and decided to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a subject from 2001, to finalise the text book from class-1, to rationalize Bishnupriya Manipuri teachers of the Barak Valley and to facilitate the teaching of this language from class-1. As a consequence of this meeting, the Assam government issued the order vide letter no A(1) E 154/95/Pt v/47 dated 19th July 2000.
As a consequence of this decision, Director SCERT, Assam has organised a workshop on Sept 22, 2000 to select the book of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. In this workshop Birendra Kumar Sinha, Uday Sinha, Namadeb Sinha, Mangalbabu Sinha and Bidhan Sinha attended and the book in the name of ‘Kanak Path’ was selected by the government to introduce in ten L.P. Schools of the Silchar Sub-Division of the Cachar district in the first phase vide order no EIM/ 10/89/156 dt Feb 7, 2001. Bishnupriya Manipuri language was formally introduced as a subject on Feb 12, 2001 with the introduction of the book ‘Kanakpath’ in East Singari Lower Primary School by Bipul Sarma, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Silchar. So this date February 12, is observed annually as “Bhasa Chalu Divas” by the society. In the process of the publication of the book, role of Dils Debojyoti Sinha and Biresh Ranjan Sinha must be admitted. The other nine L.P. Schools of the Silchar Sub-Division are

1. 424 No Kalinjar L.P. School
2. 88 No Singari L.P. School.
3. 20 No Bhubaneswarnagar L.P. School.
4. 363 No Bihara L.P. School.
5. 52. No Algapur L.P. School.
6. Chandramukhi L.P. School
7. 145 No Bekirpar L.P. School.

On the other hand the Mahasabha and the Sahitya Sabha are applying their full energy intelligently and financially to move the case in the Supreme Court of India filed by K. Kumardhan Singha challenging the nomenclature “Bishnupriya Manipuri”. But the Honourable Supreme Court of India rejected the appeal of K.
Kumardhan Singha vide order no. CANOS 4799/2000 4800/2000 & CA NO 4801/2000 dated New Delhi, March 8, 2006 and reinstated the judgement of the High Court of Guwahati. Thus the verdict of the Supreme Court of India fulfilled the longstanding demand of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people specially the ambition of Gopinath Sinha who was the pioneer of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement.

But it is matter of regret that introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language is not perfect because the language is not introducing in the higher classes due to the government policy. Moreover linguistic teachers are not appointed to teach this language. But in 2005 government of Assam has advertised to appoint linguistic teachers and interview was conducted by appointing linguistic experts i.e. Gopinath Sinha for Karimganj, Monoranjan Sinha for Hailakandi and Jogendra Kumar Sinha for Silchar vide order no. EAA/92/2005/45 dated Kahilipara, January 17, 2006.

Therefore the Mahasabha is giving pressure to the government by prayers, applications to introduce this language in the higher classes of the primary school and also for appointment of the linguistic teachers immediately, otherwise the Andolan Parishad, an wing of the Mahasabha, will launch the vigorous movement in near future.
3.10 ROLE OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI WOMEN IN THE LINGUISTIC MOVEMENT:

In any social crisis like linguistic movement, women are playing active role in every community. In Barak Valley in the linguistic movement of Bengali, Bengalee women played very important role with men for safeguarding the prestige of their language. To commemorate this fact, we shall proudly mention the name of the martyr Kumari Kamala Bhattacharjee, who sacrificed her life in the police firing upon agitationists at the Silchar Railway Station on May 19, 1961.

Similarly Bishnupriya Manipuri women also participated in the linguistic movement for the recognition of their language as a medium of instruction in the primary level of education. They participated in the various phases of the movement launched by the Andolan Parishad for which we shall narrate Bishnupriya Manipuri womens participation in the linguistic movement in the following.

First we can highlight the role of Jhini Singha of Bhakatpur who led the women in the various phases of the movement including “Sankhya Laghu Bachao Divas” in recognition of which Mahasabha entitled her as ‘Birangana’. Another two leading women from Meherpur area in this linguistic movement are Monoroma Sinha and Gita Sinha of Singari. They came in the frontline to organise this movement instead of so many conservative constraints of the society. Regarding the active role of Monoroma, one point is highlighted. Monoroma at the time of studying class – VIII read G.B. Shaws book “Saint Jawan” and derived inspiration to participate in this movement. It is to be noted that Monoroma Sinha was the President of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union, Meherpur branch which continued its agitation against the government to fulfill its basic demands. Besides them other active women participants of this movement are Sabita, Anila, Sumita, Usha,
Binita of Bhakatpur, Gita Mukherjee, Nandita Mukherjee, Kamala Sinha, Padmakala Sinha, Manju Sinha, Kulabati Mukherjee, Promodini, Madhabi, Radha Rani of Chencooree, Rasabati of Shankar lam, Pratima of Kalinjar, Jayanti Sinha and Lakshmi Tombi of Kachu Dharam etc. Besides them other women also participated in this movement. In this connection we may proudly mention the role of 80 years old Jaldubi Sinha of Bhakatpur who participated in the movement at that age & was imprisoned in the jail.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women of Silchar town also actively participated in the various phases of the movement launched during the period 1960-70. Among them the name of Chandana Sinha, Pravabati Sinha etc. are remarkable.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women of the Pratapgarh pargana (Patharkandi) also actively participated in the linguistic movement and Taraleima Debi and Malini Debi led the movement on behalf of the women. Gomoti Singha, Gopika Singha, Reba Singha, Ambika Singha etc. observed picketing at the office of the Sub – Registrar, Patharkandi in 1968 and imprisoned in the jail for participation in this movement. Ingelei, Sarala, Rina, Bhadra, Archana, Gedeigo, Lakshmi Rani, Suradhani etc. from South Pratapgarh were commendable for participation in this linguistic movement.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women of Singla (Dullocherra) area also made a history participating in the linguistic movement of the society. Among them Padmarenu (Thoibi) Lakshmirani, Mina of Chamtilla, Muktabala, Satyabati, Bidhumukhi of West Krishnanagar, Binodini, Subala, Sabita, Sandhya etc are remarkable. We must appreciate the role of Chitralekha Sinha of Rupagram who occupied the chair of the Sub Deputy Collector of Ramkrishnanagar Circle in the office chair picketing in order to make the movement successful. Bishnupriya Manipuri Community must appreciate the role of Bidhumukhi Sinha of
West Krishnanagar, Dullovcherra who during the Rail Roko Movement called by Bishnupriya Manipuri Andolan Parishad, had compelled a local running train to retreat to the Dullovcherra railway station, i.e. the starting point, from the backside of the Chargola Valley Public Higher Secondary School, Dullovcherra due to her laying down on the railway track.

In the Kalain pargana also many Bishnupriya Manipuri women participated in the linguistic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. Prabhabati, Fularani of Tikor Burunga, Sukhojyoti, Purnima, Jyotsna, Santi of Mohanpur, Bina, Indubati, Dejani of Baropoa, Kalyani of Burunga, Namita, Punyabati, Bhanumati of Kalain etc. played important role in this movement. ⁴³

In 1968 they observed picketing in the Sub–Deputy Collector Office, Block Development Office, Sub–Registrar Office Katigorah and were imprisoned in the Silchar jail for 11 days. They also participated in the Gana Anashan programme launched by the Andolan Parishad. In the 12 hr Rail Roko bandh called by the Students Union at Silchar, Jharna, Shanti and Jyotsna Sinha were arrested.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women of the Japirbond pargana have made a history participating in the linguistic movement. In 1968 some Bishnupriya Manipuri women were imprisoned for 11 days for participating in the strike at the Treasury Office, Hailakandi. The imprisoned agitationists were Debala, Kamlabati, Lehaunu, Bhabani, Satyabati, Sachi Rani, Banalata, Taraleima, Tambi, Suniti and Anjali Sinha of Chipar Sangan.⁴⁴

Bishnupriya Manipuri women of the Jatrapur area are not lagging behind in this aspect. Some women namely Rajkishori, Gita, Phuleswari, Hema, Lili etc. were imprisoned for the cause of the linguistic movement. Bishnupriya Manipuri women of Narsingpur area
were very active and among them the role of Shanti, Sachirani Mishra and Renu Singha etc. are remarkable.

In the post 1990 movement led by the student leader Anil Rajkumar, many Bishnupriya Manipuri young women participated in the Rail Roko movement at Kalkalighat Railway Station, Sudheshna Sinha became a martyr by police firing and enlisted her as the 13th martyr in the soil of the Barak Valley. Moreover Ratna Sinha, Namita Sinha and Promodini Sinha were injured due to the police firing. Besides them Rama Singha of Kachubari, Sandhya Singha of Khalibari, Rekha Singha, Sukhojyoti Sinha of Rajargaon, Sarala Singha of Burunga of Patharkandi pargana, Sumita Singha, Bina Rajkumari of Betubari, Namita Singha of Awalala, Lakshmi Rani Singha of Baskaltilla, Kunja Rani Singha of Patiala, Maharani Singha, Purabi Singha, Dipti Mukherjee of Bikrampur area, Dipti Singha, Rita Singha, Anjali Singha, Suchitra Singha, Dipali Singha of Narsingpur, and Bijoy Lakshmi Sinha of Rangpur etc. also actively participated in the linguistic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

This brief history of the participation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri women inspires the future women agitationists to be active in the future movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

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