INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century is a very important period for India from the political, social, economic and cultural point of view. At that time India had very little importance in political and economic matters. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the East India Company established a firm foothold in India from out of the ruins of the erstwhile Moghul Empire. This transference of the administrative powers brought about a widespread change in the social, political and economic life of the Indian people. To enable the new administration to take a firm root in the Indian soil the English introduced western education in India. Since the Bengalees first came in contact with English education, Bengal and the Bengalees, had to go through many changes in political and social matters at different stages, of their progress. It is at this time when Bengal experienced a renaissance which gradually and in due time spread all over India. This is the famous Bengal Renaissance of the 19th century. The educated young generation of Bengal, having first come in contact with the literature and scientific studies of Europe, made the fruition of this Renaissance possible in India, particularly in Bengal. The educated section of the Bengalee society got acquainted with the current literature and the new inventions and discoveries in
science in Europe through English literature. In 1800 the Fort William College was established in Calcutta. Coming in contact with the English literature the Bengalees became conscious of the shortcomings of their own literature and put their minds to its betterment. William Cary became the principal of Fort William College. With the assistance of Ram Ram Basu, Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar, and Rajib Lochan Mukhopadhyay, William Cary wrote a few books in prose and published them at different times for the spread and development of the Bengali language. The few books in prose which Ram Ram Basu wrote with the assistance of his friends are worthy to be mentioned. That was the beginning of the onward march of the Bengali literature. From the very beginning we observe two distinct styles of prose writing. Ram Ram Basu wrote in easy and lucid language, almost colloquial, whereas that of Mrityunjay was quite difficult, not colloquial at all, rather hard, being stiffened with compound words and words borrowed from Sanskrit. In one of his books, dealing with social and the material side of life, Cary used a near-colloquial language to make it lucid and easily intelligible. Though Mrityunjay wrote in a language smelling strongly of Sanskrit, yet his style of prose composition was artistic. He was the first Bengali writer in prose who was quite conscious of what he was doing. After this, in 1817, the Hindus established the Hindu College in Calcutta to fulfil their hopes and aspirations. The first
half of the 19th century, from 1800 to 1850, may be called the period of apprenticeship of Bengali literature. It was at this time when we find the coming of some great intellectuals of the time. It was at this time when Raja Ran Mohan Roy made his appearance. He lifted the Bengali prose to a much higher level by using it as the medium of expression in intellectual compositions and gave it a distinctive character. His thoughts and activities, his energy and intellect and enthusiasm, opened the door of the Modern Age for India. He was the pioneer of the new generation educated in English. For this reason he is considered as the Father of Modern India by many Bengalis. After this we get the famous scholar Raja Radha Kanta Deb and the great educationist and social reformer Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Akshay Kumar Dutta, Rajendra Lal Mitra, Bhudeb Mukherjee, Dinabandhu Mitra, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and others. The Hindu College had played a great role in the intellectual history of India. This college earned the distinction of producing a group of bright intellectuals who, in later life, achieved great name and fame in their own fields of endeavour. English education and culture had a great influence on Bankim Chandra. He realised the importance of English literature and culture. He welcomed the English education which opened the door for the more developed Western literature and culture and the new inventions and discoveries in science, for India. But it i

to be remembered that at the same time he was also a great patriot. He has shown his love for his country in many of his books. His lifelong endeavour was to arouse the people, lying in a state of coma, as it were, and make them conscious of their responsibilities to their country, through his works. In this way, through the efforts of such men with a patriotic fervour, the Bengal Renaissance started as a great intellectual movement.

Assam became a part of the British domination by the Treaty of Iandabu of 1826. For this reason the people of Assam came in contact with English education much later in comparison with the Bengalis and the people of other parts of India. In those days the youths of Assam had to go to Calcutta for higher education because there was no opportunity for this in Assam. In Calcutta the Assamese youths came in contact with English education and culture and also with the new wave of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was particularly possible in Bengal as a new intellectual movement because the soil for it was already prepared in the Bengali mind. The study of Sanskrit and Persian for generations had done the preparation. The Assamese youths were much influenced by English education and Bengali literature and culture when they went to Calcutta for higher education. Though the first fifty years of the 19th century did not see any significant development of Assamese language
and literature, yet it was at this time when these men of
great intellectual capability, who belonged to the social
elite, were born in Assam. They were - Anandaram Dhekial
Phukan (1829-59); Hemchandra Barua (1835-96); and Gunaviram
Barua (1937-96). These three men, turned as "The Trinity", really laid the foundation of the modern Assamese literature.
The Christian missionary Mr. Bronson and his assistants
started to work for the development of Assamese language and
literature in Assam as William Cary did in Bengal. The
American Baptist Mission started the first printing press in
Assam at Jaipur near Naharkatia and published the first
Assamese monthly magazine "Arunodoi" from there. The
establishment of this press to print and publish Assamese
literature and the publication of the magazine "Arunodoi" was
an epoch making event. "The Trinity" published many
important essays on history, literature, grammar and other
topics in "Arunodoi". Besides these it published "Asamiyā
Bhāṣār Byākaran" (1859), and "Hemkosh", an Assamese
dictionary by Hemchandra Barua. Gunaviram Barua published a
play "Rām Nabami" and a monthly magazine named "Asom Bandhu".
In fact, the literary pursuits of Hemchandra and Gunaviram
causd the break of dawn for the eventual progress and
development of Assamese literature and language, and it may
be said to be the renaissance of the same. Apart from writing

2 The essay of Satyendra Narayan Goswami, "Asamiyā Bhāṣār Byākaran" 1st Part may be referred to. It was published in the special issue of "Arunodoi" - "Prakāsh" Ed - Chandr Prasad Saikia.
the grammar of the language and the new Assamese dictionary, they also wrote school texts and systematized Assamese spelling. 

In the last part of the 19th century a group of Assamese young men who went to Calcutta for higher studies established an organisation for the development of Assamese language and literature. The organisation was given the name "Asamiā Bhāśā Unnati Sādhini Sabhā". With a few cherished ideals before them the organisation started its work. Keeping the ideals of this organisation before them Lakshminath Bezbarua, Hemchandra Goswami and Chandra Kumar Agarwala together published a monthly magazine, "Jonāki" with their joint efforts. The editor of this magazine was Chandra Kumar Agarwala. They published many original and thought-provoking articles in this magazine. The first romantic poem "Bonquonri", and the first sonnet in Assamese literature, "Priyatamār Chithi" were published in "Jonāki". The publication of "Jonāki" was an epoch-making event in Assamese literature.

In this period great development was achieved in Assamese literature. Their sole aim was to achieve an all-round development of the country, the society and the people.

4 Satyendra Nath Sarma: "Asamiya Sāhityar Samikshatma-Itibritta".
This new educated generation deeply loved the country and its language and literature. They began to publish in the pages of "Jonäki" many articles and essays to make the people conscious of their past history, religion, the superstitions prevalent in the society, the blind beliefs etc. Among the writers the most prominent persons were, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Hemchandra Goswami, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Satyanath Bora, and Kanaklal Barua. The labour, the intellect, the patriotic fervour of this group of writers who contributed in the "Jonäki", gave a tremendous momentum to the new renaissance in Assamese language and literature.

Lakshminath Bezbaruah lived in Calcutta. He was a disciple of the Kamalabari Satra and a son-in-law of the Tagore family of Jorasanko. He was the central figure of this group of writers and the leader of the Assamese Renaissance.

For a comparative study of the literary works of the Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay of Bengal and Lakshminath Bezbaruah of Assam, a systematic analysis and assessment of their contribution to language and literature and culture, the true role they played in the literary renaissance and the influence they had upon the coming
generation, is of paramount importance. The aim of this research work is to discuss in detail the points mentioned above in all its aspects.