Chapter VI
PRESS, VEHICLE OF NEW IDEAS

VI.1 The word "Magazine" is derived from the Arabic "Makhasin" meaning warehouse and "Khasane" meaning to store up. The 16th century's travellers brought the term to England and gradually it came to mean a storehouse and treasury of information. It was first used in a literary sense only in 1731, when it appeared in the title of "Gentleman's Magazine". Since then magazine has been a current coin for periodicals other than newspapers. Magazines published in Assamese had contributed both to the growth of literature and the press in Assam.

Children's literature is an important part of any kind of developed literature in the world. Similarly, books separately written for the children had received special attention even at the time of the Vaishnava period of Assamese literature. Books like Shyamanta Barom, Kanakhowa, Lilamala and Gunamala represented the rich heritage of children's literature of the Vaishnava period. However, the need for children's literature was given a new emphasis with the advent of western education in the State. Meanwhile, with the progress of the press in Assam classification of papers and magazines was required to cater to the needs of different sections of the society. Already, to attract the children and to increase the sale, special children's corners were introduced in the
published journals and papers. Later the idea of magazines or journals entirely devoted to children sprang up in the minds of publishers and patrons of the Assamese press. Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami, one of the architects of modern Assamese literature realised the need for patronising a children's magazine. On 14 January 1916, in the day of Assamese Bhogali Bibh, Akon, the first Assamese children's magazine appeared from Calcutta. In the first editorial, Hem Chandra Goswami, the editor of Akon analysed the need for publishing a children's magazine to form the basis of a rich children's literature in the Assamese language. The special features of the magazine like Janane (Do you know?), Sather (Riddles), Re-Betori (News) had attraction not only for the young-folk but also for the mature mind as well. It published articles like All India Jamboree, Napoleon Bonaparte, Indian Science Congress, Sir J.C. Bose, Bell of China, Test Match of England and Australia, Edward VIII and successfully fulfilled its obligations by introducing the Assamese children to rest of the world through the columns of the magazine. The publisher of Akon took special care to increase its circulation. In this respect the magazine offered one prize for collecting six subscribers. Inspite of casual breaks in publication the magazine enjoyed a long lease of life. Thus under the able guidance of Pandit H.C. Goswami, Akon with its interesting articles on diverse topics and with beautiful coloured blocks could claim the honour of being the best Assamese children's magazine published in the State even in the later period. It could justify its
claim to be the forerunner in the direction of modern Assamese children's literature. However, in discussing the origin of the children's magazine in Assam, some reference is to be made to the attempts that had been made in this field long before the actual birth of Assam. The attempt was in form of Loker Bandhu (Friend of children) that appeared from Calcutta in 1886. It was edited by Karunsvaran Barua, the son of Gunabhiran Barua, the editor and publisher of Assam Bandhu, a monthly magazine in Assamese appeared from Calcutta. But Loker Bandhu ceased publication after publishing only two issues.

Raghu Nath Choudhury is a popular name in the field of Assamese literature. His literary activities connected in the main with Assamese poetry. However, he was also connected with the growth of children's literature and magazine in Assam. In September 1923, Meina, a children's magazine appeared from Gauhati under his direct patronage and editorship. With published articles and poems like Ishwar, Kawal, Ghora Nabi, Nigani sabha and Pandit mashi, Meina acted as the story teller to the children of Assam. Reference had already been made to the fact that Calcutta is the birth place of a large number of Assamese magazines and papers. Similarly, in 1926 Arun appeared from Calcutta as the fourth children's magazine in Assamese. Mahadev Barua edited the magazine and its publication continued till 1932. Sisua Sabitya series, an Assamese quarterly entirely devoted to the cause of children was published from Jorhat in 1929. Bipin Chandra Baruah of Jorhat published and edited the magazine. Two Assamese children's magazines Pakhila
and *Parijat* appeared from Calcutta with attractive photographs and composition of varied taste. *Pakhila* first appeared in 1936 and Harendra Nath Sarma was the editor of the magazine. Dr. Dina Nath Sarma, the editor of *Amahan*, a popular Assamese magazine edited *Parijat* and it appeared first in 1941.

Like children's corners Assamese papers and magazines also introduced special women's forum to draw the attention of women readers and to collect new subscribers for the publications. However, at the close of the third decade of the century an independent attempt was made to publish a magazine specially connected with the interest of the women of Assam. Sibsagar was the birth place of the first Assamese paper *Arunodaya* and Sibsagar could claim this honour for the second time in another direction. Accordingly *Char Jeouti* (Beauty of the House), the first Assamese women's magazine was published in 1938 from Melachakar, Sibsagar. It was published under the patronage of Tara Prasad Chaliha, a leading citizen of the town and was jointly edited by Kamaklata Chaliha and Kamalalaya Kakati. *Char Jeouti* published articles on the welfare of women from both male and female writers. Contemporary Assamese papers and journals hailed the publication of *Char Jeouti* and wished it prosperity for the upliftment of women education in Assam. Within five years of the birth of the first Assamese women's magazine another magazine of the type appeared for a brief period. *Kunwari* (Princess) was published in 1933 and under the editorship of Renu Devi it appeared from Calcutta, as the
second Assamese women's magazine. It is interesting to note that one enthusiastic reader of an Assamese weekly expressed his unhappiness over the name of Kamwari for the new magazine. He requested the editor of Awahon, the publisher of the magazine to change the name to Lakhimi (Ideal woman) because society needs a Lakhimi instead of a Kamwari. However, later an Assamese women's magazine was published from Nowgong under the title of Lakhimi. It appeared in 1937 and continued for a brief period. Devajani Devi edited the magazine. In fact, most of the women's magazines published in Assamese were short-lived and hence, failed to have any lasting impact on Assamese literature or journalism.

VI.II The people of the North-Eastern India were habituated to an exclusive life without much contact with the outside world. But with the beginning of the British rule the people had to give up their old habits and started to adopt a new outlook towards life. Naturally, its impact fell on the economic structure and with the expansion of the western education a mini-commercial and industrial revolution had started in the region. Side by side, with this a number of Assamese journals were published with special reference to trade and commerce. In this context it should be noted that in the western world the newspaper first appeared in the form of a trade bulletin and later on it was transformed into a newspaper.
The economy of Assam is basically connected with agriculture. So, in spite of having the urge to set up new industries in the State, none could ignore the need for the development of agriculture. Emphasis was laid on the need to introduce new scientific methods in this field. Raisahib Narayan Baruah of Nakaohari, under Jorhat sub-division realized the need for publishing a paper devoted entirely to the development of agriculture in Assam. In December 1921, Assam Krish, a professional monthly magazine in Assamese appeared from Nakaohari under the patronage of Narayan Baruah. Since all professions like trade and commerce were also parts of agriculture, Narayan Baruah, the editor of Assam Krish tried to add a spiritual colour to the subject and made an appeal to all concerned for co-operation for continued publication of the paper. However, after publishing a number of issues the editor had changed the name of the magazine from Assam Krish to Khetick (Agriculturist) and besides agriculture, from now onwards it gave space to industry, trade and commerce. Some leading citizens of Jorhat like Krishna Kanta Bhattacharya, the editor of Assam Bilasini, and Chandra Kamal Beaberuah, a well-known tea planter of Assam had appreciated the birth of Khetick and offered moral and material help for publication of the magazine. Contemporary Assamese journals and papers hailed it as a noble effort to prevent the problem of unemployment which was unknown in Assam till that time. Khetick continued its publication for about five years with casual breaks.
journals in Assamese. Like Khetiok, Asam Rayot was also connected with the interest of people involved in cultivation and it concentrated mainly on topics relating to agriculture and the agriculturists. It was a monthly magazine and appeared in January 1910 from Dibrugarh. Monuram Baruah of Dibrugarh was the publisher of the magazine and it was edited by Bhola Nath Gohain. It generally contained 32 pages and with three hundred copies the first issue was printed at Ahom press, Dibrugarh. So, Asam Rayot may be regarded as the forerunner in the field of professional journalism in Assam. Fifteen years later another monthly magazine of this kind appeared from Dibrugarh. The name of the magazine was Pasupalas and it was edited by Dr. Kanak Chandra Sarma. Pasupalas declared that it was a magazine for the welfare of animals and development of agriculture and it wanted to focus attention on duties and obligations to household animals. It could claim the position of being the first Assamese journal on the subject of Animal husbandry. It first appeared in 1925 and continued publication till 1945. Karbar Aru Karbari (Business and Businessman) was a monthly magazine, published in 1926. It took special interest for the business community of Assam. It was edited by Mehdendra Nath Bhattacharya. In 1928 Satyabadi, an Assamese fortnightly magazine was published from Dibrugarh. It was edited by Tosheswar Dhekial Phukon. However, it lasted only for a brief period. Satyabadi sought to promote the interest of trade and commerce in the State. Although the number of professional journals published in Assamese in the
pre-independence era were not numerous, yet the position in this field was not altogether disappointing.

VI. III The growth and development of western education in Assam encouraged the educated youth to organise themselves, with a view to uplifting and infusing progressive ideas in the Assamese society in consonance with the needs of the times. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century various organisations sprang up in the State. Generally the student community of those days took a leading part in setting up literary, cultural and allied organisations.

Assam Chatra Sammilan was a leading student organisation of Assam and since its formation in 1917 it was successful in keeping the majority of the student community of the State under one banner. The seventh annual session of Chatra Sammilan was held at Gauhati in December 1922, under the presidetnship of Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami. In this conference several resolutions were adopted and the third resolution proposed to publish a quarterly as the organ of the association. However, in 1922 Janamkhumi, a quarterly was already published in the name of Assam Chatra Sammilan and it was jointly edited by Daiba Chandra Talukdar, Dimbawar Neog and Sukdev Goswami. The fourth resolution of the seventh session of Assam Chatra Sammilan, however, stated that it had no relations with Janamkhumi. It then proposed to spend Rupees two hundred for a new journal from its annual budget of
Rupees eight hundred. On the basis of this resolution, in April 1923 the first issue of *Milon* appeared as the official organ of *Assam Chatra Sanmilan*. Meanwhile, a publication committee consisting of Garga Narayan Chowdhury, Durga Prasad Bujorborouh, Binanda Chandra Baruah, Iswar Chandra Medhi, Parboti Prasad Baruah, Poresh Nath Baruah and Ramaswar Sarma was formed and Garga Narayan Chowdhury was appointed as the first editor of *Milon*. During the editorship of Dinbeswar Neog, Binanda Chandra Baruah, Atul Chandra Hazarika and Madhob Chandra Bensborouh *Milon* made quite an impact on the minds of the students in particular and literary circles of Assam in general. A large number of writers were nursed by *Milon* and it could claim a distinct place in the history of Assamese literature. In April 1923, *Sadhana* another quarterly appeared from Gauhati as organ of *Assam Muslim Chatra Sanmilan* (Assam Muslim Student Conference). The publication date of both *Sadhana* and *Milon* coincided. In 1919 the inaugural session of Assam Muslim Student Conference was held at Gauhati and it proposed to publish a journal of the association. However, *Sadhana* was published in 1923 in accordance with the resolution adopted in the third annual session of Assam Muslim Student Conference at Gauhati. The object of the journal was to discuss religion, culture and other allied subjects of the Muslim community of Assam. *Sadhana* sought to create a group of Muslim writers in Assamese literature. Moulovi Muhammed Tofijjul Hussain Hazarika, the president of the first session of the conference donated Rupees two hundred for publication
Islami Akhbar appeared in 1919 as a purely religious paper in Assamese. However, Sadhana was the first paper which covered almost all aspects of the life of the Assamese Muslim community of the State. Md. Salih, the first editor of Sadhana stated in his secretarial report in the fourth annual session of the conference that out of 476 subscribers only 171 had paid their subscriptions to the journal. So, about 300 new subscribers were required to meet the expenditure of the publication of the fourth issue. In fact it reflected the general financial position of the Assamese papers and journals of that period. However, in spite of its bad financial position Sadhana completed the sixth year of its publication and continued till 1931. In 1923 another student organ was published from Dhuburi. The name of this Assamese journal was Him, and it served as the mouthpiece of the Bodo Chatur Samuh.

Assom Sahitya Sabha, the leading literary organisation of Assam had played an important role in the life of the Assamese people since 1917 to till today. The eight annual session of the sabha was held in Nowgong in December 1925 and it decided to publish a quarterly organ of this literary organisation. Accordingly, in October 1926 the Assom Sahitya Sabha Patrika appeared under the editorship of Chandradhar Baruah (1874-1961), a leading Assamese poet of that time. However, it covered other relevant subjects like history, culture and economic condition of the State.
As the organ of the backward communities of Assam Seva, a monthly magazine appeared in 1926 from Guwahati. In the first issue the magazine expressed deep respect to the British ruling power which supposedly provided a sense of self-confidence to the oppressed classes of the country. Seva was edited by Sukleswar Bora and it managed to receive the patronage of spiritual leaders of the State like Sri Nilamul Satredhikar of Darrang district and Sri Nayanara Satredhikar of Purnaimiti Setra of Jorhat. In 1925 Prsvati, an Assamese monthly magazine devoted to the cause of peasants and other backward sections of the society appeared from Dangari of the present Dibrugarh district. It was the organ of the Kshehari Zubuk Sarwilon and edited by Kirti Nath Bhaklari. Prsvati was pledged to work for the development of the backward communities of the villages and it tried to provide informed knowledge about improvement of the economic conditions through united and hard labour. It declared that the history of peasants is the history of civilisation and stood for all-round development of the cultivators and introduced them with the latest thinking and life style of the people, living outside the country. Assam Mandal Kanangu Sarwilon stood for the welfare of the subordinate officials like mandals and kanangus of the department of Land-Records in the State. This association proposed to bring out a journal, with a view to removing the prejudices from the minds of the people towards the profession and to make every mandal and kanangu an ideal villager in respect of health, religion and society. With this object in
wind Gaolla (Villager), an Assamese quarterly appeared in 1933 as the organ of the association. It was first edited by Dimbeswar Bora. A monthly Assamese magazine started as Rajj (People), as the mouthpiece of Assamiya Lechari Sammilan was published in 1933 from Bagrijan of Dibrugarh district. Unlike other journals representing their respective organisations, Rajj tried to represent the contemporary thoughts and published important articles of leading writers of the time. Janaasikhye (People's education), an organ of the Social Education Department of Assam appeared in 1938 as a monthly magazine with the dictum that no wealth is greater than knowledge. This magazine with interesting and varied topics in simple language and expression could create an impact on the minds of the rural people. It is one of the few Assamese magazines which continued for a long time.

The ruling authority of the State used the media of the press to inform the people of their activities from time to time. Such journals and papers helped the growth of vernacular press in the State. Thus Bhabishyet Assam (Future Assam) was published by the Assam Government Press in 1943. It was edited by Krishna Nath Bhuyan and it informed the people about news of the battle fronts of Second World War. It also published news from both inside and outside of the country. This news bulletin was issued on behalf of the National War Front, Assam. Similar monthly news bulletins were published in Assam during the period of the First World War. Under the title of Roper Batori (News of War), it appeared in 1914 and
provided news and views to make the war efforts of the British government popular in the country.

Like the associations of various kinds, individuals or groups of people having interest in a particular branch of Assamese literature sought to launch new ventures in the field of Assamese journalism. **Kabita-Lata** (Poetry creep), a quarterly literary magazine devoted to poetry was published from North Lakhimpur. The first issue was published in 1911 and it was edited by Nilekanta Gogoi and contained 32 pages with seventeen poems and also two articles on education and health. Similarly, in 1929 a new experiment was made in this field and an Assamese magazine containing only short stories was published from Jorhat. The name of the magazine was **Golpa Series** and it was edited by Bipin Chandra Baruah of Jorhat.

A large number of schools and college magazines had contributed to the steady growth of Assamese literature as well as journalism in Assam. Like house journals these publications also helped in creating a group of future writers in the pre-independence period. In this respect, **Prohet** (Morning) (1919), an organ of Teacher's Training Institute of Jorhat, **the Cotton College Magazine** (1922), a college journal first published in English from Cotton College union society, Gauhati, **Joami** (1926), the journal of Jorhat Government School, and the **Cotton Collegiate School magazine** (1928) of Cotton Collegiate School, may be regarded as forerunners of numerous school and college magazines published in the State during the period of our review.
NOTES ON CHAPTER VI

1. Malhan, D.N., What makes a magazine sell (article), The Illustrated Weekly of India, 5 August 1973


4. Letters to the editor; Sadiniya Bareri, 25 November 1933

5. Assom Krishi, Vol. I, No. 1, December 1921


7. Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference, Assom Chakra Sammilan, Gauhati, 31 December, 1922

8. Sadhona, Vol. I, April 1923
