II.1 Assam formed one of the twelve principal civil divisions into which East India Company's territory was divided for the convenience of administration. It occupied the tenth position in territorial extent and eleventh in point of population in British India. Its location on the north-eastern corner of India bordering the Tibet region and western China invested it with strategic importance. The American Baptist Mission entered Assam in 1856 with a view to facilitating its entry into China from the west. Incidentally, it was around this time that Assamese as medium of instruction in schools and language of the court was replaced by Bengali.

In the preceding chapter it was discussed how the local British administration in Assam invited the American Baptist Mission to open centres of the Mission in Assam. Accordingly on 25 March 1856 Dr. Nathan Brown and Oliver T. Cutter had arrived at Sadiya with their families and started work for the frontier tribes like the Khamtis and Shans. They reached Sadiya with a printing machine, a hundred reams of paper and other materials and established a printing press for the first time in the region. In the next four years Dr. Milbrandon, Rev. Jacob Thomas, Mr. & Mrs. Cyrus Barker, Miss Rhoda Bronson, all Baptist missionaries arrived in Assam. However, on his way to Sadiya through the river Brahmaputra in July 1857,
Jacob Thomas died in a tragic accident. Dr. Bronson commenced work for the Singphows at Jaipur, but within two years he had to leave Jaipur and started work for the Nagas at Namsang. On 19 January 1839 the Khautlas revolted against the company's rule and the Singphows killed Major Adam White, the political Agent of Sadiya and his subordinate officials in a sudden attack. As a result of this insurrection of the Khautlas in the district of Sadiya, Messrs Brown and Cutter abandoned the Sadiya mission and on 12 May 1839 they were driven to Jaipur. From that time Sadiya had lost its importance as the centre of early missionary activities in Assam. In 1835 Rev. Whiting, a missionary visited Sadiya and observed that "the houses have mostly disappeared and the streets and walls have sunk to a level with the land and have overgrown with jungle."^2

In 1840 Miss Rhoda Bronson had joined her brother in his mission at Namsang. However, within a few months both Dr. Bronson and his sister had to return to Jaipur because of continued illness and Miss Bronson died by the end of the year. So far the missionaries had started their work mostly for the hill tribes of North-Eastern India, bordering Western China. But it soon became evident to the Jaipur missionaries that their work will be more effective in the plains among the immense Assamese population than in the scattered hill tribes around Jaipur. So, in 1841 the American Baptist Missionaries had moved to upper, lower and central Assam.^3 Rev. Burker and Mrs. Burker had already started work at Sibsagar from the year 1841. Soon Dr. Brown and Mr. Cutter moved to Sibsagar. The
Missionary Magazine Report for September 1845 had described Sibsagar as one of the most central and important positions for missionary labour in Assam. On 30 October 1831 the Assam Baptist Mission was formed with Sibsagar, Nowgong and Gauhati churches. Since 1836 to almost the end of the 19th century they established various missions in places like Sadiya (1836), Jaipur (1838), Sibsagar (1841), Nowgong (1841), Gauhati (1843), Tura (1864), Melung (1876), Dibrugarh (1878), Kohima (1879) and Wokha (1885). Midhi Levi Farwell was the first Assamese convert, baptized by Dr. Bronson at Jaipur in 1841. The statistics of the Assam Mission recorded the number of persons baptized in Assam up to 1883; out of 2881 persons baptized, only 1775 remained in the field at the close of the year. Altogether twenty missionaries were engaged in the field, nine male and eleven female. The record of the Mission shows that the missionaries were not successful in their primary task of baptism, particularly in the proper Assam valley. In fact the missionaries could not change by and large the traditional religious outlook of the Assamese people in the Brahmaputra valley and so from 1867 they again had changed their direction towards the hills.

As noted earlier the year the Assamese language had lost its official position by the time the American Baptist Missionaries reached Assam. During that time the newly developed residential towns were full of mostly Bengali educated men, who came to the province to assist the Company's government in the local administration. In the urban areas
Bengali was introduced as the medium of instruction for the convenience of the Bengali officials and thus Bengali became the language of education and administration. This position continued from 1836 to 1872. In fact, the situation became critical when the right of Assamese to be ranked as a separate language was seriously questioned by a section of influential people having vested interest. At this critical juncture a group of patriotic Assamese like Anandaram Dhekialphukan (1829-1899) upheld the cause of Assamese language and started a campaign to restore it to its former position. In this movement for the restoration of the Assamese to its rightful place, the American Baptist Mission made a valuable contribution. This movement for survival of Assamese language and culture occupied an important chapter in the history of modern Assam. Eventually on 19 April 1873 Sir George Campbell, the Lt. Governor of Bengal ordered the restoration of the Assamese language in the courts and schools in Assam.

The American Baptist Mission supported the cause of the Assamese language even on the face of both annoyance and opposition from some of the officials of the Company's administration. Naturally, it is of interest to know as what led the missionaries to stand for the restoration of the Assamese language to its rightful position. The missionaries could realize that to instil the love of Christianity in the minds of the people, they must be approached through the medium of their mother tongue. In the report of the Assam Mission in 1831 it was observed that "the people must hear in their own
tongue, the wonderful works of God. Missionaries to the Burmese must use the Burman language, to the Bengalis the Bengali language and to the people of Assam the Assamese language.\(^6\) So, under the direction of this policy of the Mission the American Baptist missionaries tried to learn the local language and within three months of their arrival they produced the first Assamese primer for use in the newly established schools. The missionaries came to Assam with a view to spreading Christianity and planting the roots of liberal western education among the indigenous people. They produced, in the main Christian literature and text books, dealing with general knowledge, history, geography, science and stories particularly on the lives of the Christian saints and apostles. Besides this, in order to provide a scientific approach to the study of the Assamese language, the missionaries also compiled dictionaries and published text books on Assamese grammar. In this context, Dr. Nathan Brown's *Grammatical Notice of the Assamese Language*; Mrs. Cutter's *Assamese Vocabulary and Phrases*; Dr. Nile Brease's *A Dictionary Assamese and English*; Mr. G.F. Michel's *Assamese Grammar* may be mentioned. Earlier in 1839 Mr. W. Robinsen published *A Grammar of the Assamese Language* from the Serampore Mission. These books were intended for foreigners who wanted to make a scientific study of the Assamese language. Dr. Brown translated the *New Testament* into Assamese. Earlier in 1815 the first Assamese translation of the Bible was published by the Serampore Mission. Rev. A.K. Gurney also translated the
entire Bible into Assamese and this was published in 1903. Although, the primary motive of the Missionaries was to proselytise the people to the Christian faith, they rendered great service to the cause of the Assamese language and culture. Dr. Nathan Brown (1807–1886) made valuable contributions to the development of Assamese literature in the middle of the 19th century. He came to Assam in 1836. Dr. Brown "admired the Assamese language, its open agreeable vocalization, its picturesque Sanskrit characters, its quaint inflections and idioms became almost native to him. Above all, he delighted in its marked family likeness to the European tongues. He vindicated its independence of Bengali and maintained its legitimate descent from the ancient Sanskrit." He returned to America in 1855. Dr. Miles Bronson (1812–1883) was another benefactor of Assamese literature and language. He came to Assam in 1837 and was connected with the Assam Mission for nearly forty years. In the words of Rev. P.H. Moore "the modern literature in Assamese whether Christian or non-Christian may be said to be the product of the last sixty years of the 19th century. Brown, Bronson and Midhi Levi are the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founders of Assamese Christian literature." The truth behind this statement cannot be ignored in the light of the involvement and contributions of these three persons to modern Assamese literature.
II.11  The American Baptist Missionaries had established a printing press at their Sedlýa Mission in 1836, but within three years they had to shift the complete establishment of the mission of Jaipur due to the Bhauti insurrections. Meanwhile, Sibsagar was converted into a central place of the missionary activities and in 1834 the printing press was again shifted to that place. The decision to shift the press from Jaipur to Sibsagar was taken after due deliberations. Dr. Brown insisted the retention of the press in upper Assam as he apprehended the predominance of the Bengali language in future in the lower provinces. So, in 1842 he strongly urged to retain the press in Upper Assam because its removal would lead to the relinquishment of the Mission in Assam.9 The press consisted of two printing machines with provision for printing in Assamese, Bengali, English and Shyams. The Baptist Mission press at Sibsagar functioned for about forty years and most of the Assamese books of the mid-nineteenth century were published from there. In January 1846 "ORUMODOI" (Down of the Day), the first Assamese newspaper was published from the Sibsagar mission press under the joint efforts of Mr. O.T. Cutter and Dr. Nathan Brown. The Orumodei had a special claim to be the first newspaper to have been ever published. In fact Orumodei did not possess all the qualities of a newspaper as we understood it today. Even the publishers did not care for the nature of Orumodei; sometimes it was described as a magazine and at other times as a paper. It was a combination of both a magazine and newspaper. In Assamese Orumodei was introduced as "Orumdei
Sembadpatra. However, the word "Paper" was replaced by "Magazine" from October 1850. It did not maintain uniformity regarding the number of pages of each issue. In the first year of publication it contained nearly seven to eight pages and from the sixth year most of the issues were published as a sixteen pager. The cover page was published simply with name of the paper. However, with effect from January 1856, the thirteenth year of publication, it came to be adorned regularly with a beautiful photograph of the Sibsagar tank and with three temples on its bank. The missionaries in their writings adopted the spoken language of the people. In the initial stages they did not possess extensive knowledge of the local language. So, in most respects their writings were both superficial and amusing failing to create interest. However, they tried to make the mode of spellings simple as far as possible and this subject was discussed in an article published in the magazine, entitled as "Style and Mode of Spelling". The mode of spelling and style of Orunodoi at first was based on the first Assamese dictionary written by Jaduram Deka Baruah (1801-1869). He prepared the first Assamese dictionary and in 1835 presented the book to Capt. Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam. Capt. Jenkins in return presented the dictionary to the Baptist Mission of Sibsagar. However, at a later period Orunodoi had to alter the style and spelling of the paper due mainly to the criticism of Hem Chandra Baruah (1833-1896), the dean of modern Assamese literature. From January 1861 Rev. William Ward, the new editor of Orunodoi changed the old
practice of spelling and followed the new style of Hem Chandra Baruah as a model and accordingly the spelling of (Orumodei) was replaced byJArunoday (Arumoday).12

It deserves to be noted that Arumoday was published by the American Baptist Mission basically to fulfil its religious mission in Assam. The management of the paper wanted to acquaint the Assamese people with the fundamental principles of christianity through the medium of the local language. Arumoday brought Christian hymns, translation of Psalms, chapters of Pilgrim progress and brief history of the Apostles to Assamese homes irrespective of religious faith. However, inspite of its religious goal Arumoday also adopted a secular view to focus attention on socio-economic problems of the society. Arumoday was a monthly paper and in the words of the publishers, it was devoted to religion, science and general intelligence etc. The Annual Report of the American Baptist Mission also expressed similar views. It said "at the annual meeting of the Mission in December 1945, the subject of a vernacular newspaper was taken into consideration, giving to the people articles on religious and scientific subjects, with more important news of the day from all parts of the world. Many who felt interested in diffusion of general knowledge among the people expressed their opinion that it would be adapted to enlighten and interest the native mind and tend to break up the indifference to truth and error, that pervades every class of the native society. It would tend to create a desire for knowledge, a love for reading and thus inform and
elevate the masses. It was an experiment which we felt it our duty to make." Thus with a definite purpose the paper continued to publish materials having educational, cultural, literary interest and knowledge of everyday life. The current news from both home and abroad helped the people to judge their own environment in the wide perspective. It published news items under various headings such as "Anek Desor Sambad" (News from many countries), "Ingra Desor Sambad" (News from England), "Nana Desor Sambad" (News from different countries), and "Asem Desor Sambad" (News from Assam). The most interesting feature of Arunoday was "Anek Desor Sambad" which started to provide news from its second issue of February 1946. It covered almost all corners of the world from Philadelphia to Kowarpur of the Sibsagar district of Assam. Later on, this column was introduced as "Journal of events". Besides information on topics of general interest, the readers obtained some new ideas in an attractive form through this column. Due to lack of geographical knowledge most of the indigenous people of that time could not possess correct assessment of the people living in different parts of the world. Thus through the columns of Arunoday people obtained news on countries like U.S.A., U.K., France, Japan, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Ireland, Australia and Africa. The names of the various countries of Europe, Asia and Africa with the names of their capitals, population and Heads of the States were very often published in the paper. Arunoday published current political, social and commercial news of such important places of India like Calcutta, Bombay
Madras and Lahore and in this respect it reproduced the news items of foreign and Indian newspapers.

J Araaeday provides some good materials for the study of political and social history of modern Assam, particularly of the second half of the 19th century. For instance in the issue of May 1846 the paper published an account of suits at Kalugeon of Sibsager district on 26 April 1846. It shows that the system was in operation in Assam at the initial period of the British administration. King Puroadar Singh, the last independent Ahom ruler of upper Assam died on 3 October 1846 and the news was elaborately published in the October 1846 issue of the paper. In the issue of September 1847 Araaeday published a report on how for the first time the steam communication between Calcutta and Gauhati was established.

In the wake of the Rebellion of 1857 and its failure, the alien ruler executed Maniram Dewan and Peeli Barnab, two Assamese patriots on 26 February 1858 and Araaeday published a news item on it in its February issue. Kondorpeswar Singh, the Ahom prince who tried to recover his lost kingdom from the British had to live in exile in Bengal since September 1857. When he returned from Bengal Araaeday in its June number of 1861 carried a news item on it. Thus the paper tried to cover almost all important events of the period of the region.

J Araaeday indirectly served the purpose of the communication between the government and the people as it frequently published government orders. In 1849 the British
had annexed the Punjab to British India and the text of the order found place in the paper under the headline "Annexation of the Punjab; the Governor General's proclamation". Besides this, the paper used to publish facts of local history in serial issues. *Punjab Apollo Baryaji* (Ancient history of Assam) was published in twenty-two serial issues from August 1850 to August 1852. It introduced the publication of *Kamarup Baryaji* (History of Kamarup) from January 1853 and continued up to October 1855. *Hindustan Baryaji* (History of Hindustan), which was reproduced from "Digerson" also find place in *Arunoday* from the issue of March 1850. It published *Bengal deger Baryaji* in serial order from February 1857. Similarly the brief history of various foreign countries like China, Greece, Ceylon, Persia, Egypt and Great Britain reached the indigenous homes through the pages of this paper. Another important contribution of *Arunoday* was the publication of social and cultural history of frontier tribes such as the Nagas, Garos, Khasis, Chingphous, Abars, Miris, Akes and Dafals with illustrations. Further, the published articles covered almost all important branches of human knowledge including Botany, Zoology, Physics and Astronomy. These served to disseminate practical knowledge of the subjects among the people of the region. In fact the management of the paper tried to cater to the needs of all sections of the society. Thus, from July 1847 *Arunoday* introduced a monthly calendar of Christian era with full details and it also included the Hindu system. The first book review on "Asamiya Leyer Nitra" (The
friend of Assamese boys) written by Amarendra Dhekialphukan in
the issue of October 1849 introduced a new feature to the
readers of Arunoday. With a view to increasing the attraction
of the young people the paper started to publish a new column
on "Riddles" from February 1849. The paper drew attention to
the evil practices such as use of opium prevailing in the
contemporary society and wanted to mould public opinion on
such issues. Thus, "Evils of Opium" was one of the five
features of the first issue of the paper which described the
harmful effects of opium. A news item under the headline of
"Death of an opium eater" was published in the issue of May
1846, with a note in which an appeal was made not to use opium.
Similarly, in the issue of June 1846 the paper discussed the
evil effects of the alcohol on the human body and mind in an
article entitled to "Evils of Ardent Spirit" and in the issue
of May 1847 the injurious effects of tobacco were also discussed.

Arunoday adopted an editing style which differed from
current journalistic practices. While editorials or editorial
comments form an essential part of current publications,
Arunoday did not follow this practice. Thus, unlike the
current form of giving the name of author in signed articles,
Arunoday did not generally publish authors' names. Sometimes,
at the end of the published article special identification
marks such as II, *, or were used. Assamese alphabets
representing the names of the writers in abbreviation sometimes
found place at the end of the articles. One of the important
writers of Arunoday was or , who contributed the
highest number of articles. The letter was identified as Nidhi Levi Darrel, the first Assamese converted to the Christian faith by the American Baptist Mission. This shows that Nidhi was the key man in the management of Arunoday from the beginning. He was one of the stalwarts of the Assamese Christian literature. The title of the articles was printed both in Assamese and English. Sometimes, the names of the writers were represented by English alphabets in abbreviation. Some writers chose to remain anonymous and used pen names like Sree Senaparchand, Sree Sree Malam Kopiraj Chakrevery, Lorer Mitra, etc.

The Missionaries serving in the Sibsagar mission were connected with the publication of Arunoday. The first printer, publisher and editor was Oliver T. Cutter (1811-1881). From January 1846 to February 1850 he was the editor of the paper. However, in March 1850 he gave up the editorship and was responsible for printing and publishing only. Dr. Nathan Brown was editor of the paper from March 1850. He left Sibsagar Mission in 1855 for reasons of health and returned to America. Rev. Appleton Howe Denforth (1811-1864) joined the Sibsagar mission in 1855 and took the charge of Arunoday from January 1856. Rev. Denforth continued his service almost for one year and in 1857 he was transferred from the Sibsagar mission. Since 1850 Rev. Samuel Moller Whiting (1825-1878) lived at Sibsagar and from February 1857 he served as the editor of Arunoday. In 1860 Rev. William Ward and Mrs. Ward came to Sibsagar. Rev. William Ward (1821-1873) joined as the editor of Arunoday in 1861. He was succeeded by Mrs. Susan B. Ward (1822-1884).
Rev. Ward and Mrs. Ward were connected with editing and publication of *Arunoday* from 1861 to 1869. Edward W. Clark took the care of the Sibsagar mission and the press in 1869. Mr. Clark became the editor in the same year. Rev. A.K. Gurney came to Sibsagar mission in 1875. In 1876 Mr. Clark turned over the Assamese work and the press to Rev. Gurney and went to the hills. Rev. Gurney was the editor of *Arunoday* in its last period.

In 1882 the Sibsagar mission press was purchased by the Assam Company of Nazire and *Arunoday* also ceased its publication with the sale of the press. In fact the publication of the paper became irregular about two years before the sale of the mission press. The Administrative Report of Assam for 1880-81 recorded that "the Arunoday a paper formerly published at Sibsagar has discontinued from January 1880." With the sale of the press, the Assamese department of the mission lost its importance. It also scattered the church members of the Sibsagar mission. Some of the church members went to Nazire as workmen of the press. Thus the sale of the Sibsagar mission press and closure of *Arunoday* was connected with the policy of the American Baptist Mission in Assam. It should be noted that since the close of the sixties of the last century the missionaries had changed their direction and for the second time moved towards the hills of the region. *Arunoday* was started as a monthly paper run by the American Baptist Mission basically to spread the message of Christianity in Assam. It also championed popular causes. The paper from its very
inception ran on a deficit budget and there was a wide gap between income and expenditure. Rev. S.M. Whiting as editor of *Arunoday* stated that the annual expenditure for the paper was Rs. six hundred, whereas the management received Rs. four hundred only from the subscribers.\(^{18}\) The annual subscription of the paper if paid in advance was Rupees one, and Rs. one and half at the end of the year. In 1846 about 576 people subscribed to *Arunoday*, out of which 249 were indigenous, 213 foreigners, 74 missionary and 40 copies were distributed freely. The statistics of the circulation from 1846 to 1854 shows that the percentage of the local subscribers gradually decreased and the overall circulation was also not satisfactory. Gambati commanded the highest sale among the foreigners and Sibsagar among the local people.\(^{19}\) The circulation of the paper increased up to seven hundred the publication year of 1867-1868. In comparison to the poor circulation of the Assamese journals and papers of the later period *Arunoday*’s circulation was quite satisfactory.

\[\text{II,III} \quad \text{*Arunoday* had profound influence on the Assamese people in the last half of the 19th century. Noted personalities of the contemporary Assamese society were specially aware of the necessity of the paper and wanted its continuation for the welfare of the people of the State. Some local people made financial contributions to the missionaries for carrying on with the publication of the paper. Maniram Devan (1806-1858), a martyr to the attempted Rebellion of 1857 in Assam contributed} \]
It is to be noted that the religious differences of Maniram Dewan with the Baptist mission did not prevent him from making the liberal donation to the paper published by an alien organisation. Besides this the common people regarded the paper as something indispensable and more than an ordinary monthly journal. In 1890 Pandit Hem Chandra Goswamy (1872-1928), one of the stalwarts of Assamese literature observed that even today an illiterate person would recognise any newspaper as nothing but Arunoday. It showed how the paper made an impact on the people of Assam in the last half of the 19th century. In the eyes of a foreign observer "it has attained a wide circulation among the native population and has been found in many respects to be more efficient than ordinary tracts in breaking down their prejudices and enlightening their ignorance." This observation was very appropriate. Because under the influence of it, a movement started in course of time for the removal of certain social evils. In the issue of August 1861 a letter written by a student of the Sibsagar Government school was published. In this letter he expressed his appreciation of western culture and urged the people to accept it through the contemporary Bengal renaissance. He prayed to God to liberate poor Assam from all types of superstitions that prevailed in the society. Perhaps it was the best example of contemporary thought of the young generation in Assam. Social problems of that time, such as polygamy and the plight of the Hindu widows were frequently discussed in Arunoday. The editor of the
paper acknowledged the feelings of the local people on such subjects and placed them in the paper irrespective of the religious beliefs of the publishing authority.

**Arunoday** being the first Assamese paper may claim credit for infusing new ideas in the minds of the people. Most of the articles and news items were published with illustrations. *Arunoday* generally had to rely on photographs from the *Illustrated London News*. The wooden block was prepared as required with the help of Assamese craftsmen. Thus the Assamese craftsmen engaged themselves in a new trade and proved their professional skill and earned praise from the authority concerned. Besides this, with the gradual increase of interest in the paper it brought about a sense of involvement of the local people with the paper. On this subject Dr. Nathan Brown, an editor of the paper commented that "it (*Arunoday*) was copiously illustrated by native engravers, whose work was pronounced in Calcutta superior to anything that had then been produced by Bengali workmen." The printed pages of *Arunoday* brought items of literature within the easy reach of the people and thus started the process of formation of the basis of the modern Assamese literature with western style and ideas.

Dr. B.K. Barua (1910-1964), an authority of modern Assamese literature observed that "it is in the pages of *Arunoday* the first florescence of modern Assamese literature can be found. In both poetry and prose the magazine provided literary status and dignity to the spoken language of the people. In fact the language thus evolved continues to be standard language of
Assamese literature.\textsuperscript{24} It may be mentioned that till the middle of the 19th century Assamese literature was basically an oral literature confined to rural life and the Ahom court. With the establishment of printing press in Assam and the publication of \textit{Arunoday} Assamese language found a new impetus in its march towards assertion and progress. \textit{Arunoday} continued to be published nearly for four decades. However, it is not the duration but the performance which is important in the life of a newspaper. It is natural that the conservative section of the Assamese society could not accept \textit{Arunoday} with an open mind as it was run by a foreign missionary organisation. But it was not a major hurdle for \textit{Arunoday} in changing the mental outlook of the people of Assam. \textit{Arunoday} indirectly contributed to bringing about a sort of consciousness among the people of Assam. The foremost contribution of \textit{Arunoday} was that it caused a revolution in realms of ideas which helped the people of Assam to accept a realistic approach towards life.
NOTES ON CHAPTER II

1. Mrs. Gurney, A.K., History of the Sibsagar field, Assam Mission, Newgea Jubilee publication (1887), p. 20

2. Ibid., p. 21

3. Ibid., p. 23

4. Ibid., p. 22

5. op.cit., Assam Mission, p. 290


9. The Whole World Kin, op.cit., p. 417


11. Orunodei, Vol. IX, No. 4


14. Orunodei, Vol. IV, No. 3

15. Mrs. Gurney, op.cit., p. 26

17. Mrs. Gurney, op.cit., p. 29

18. Orunodei, Vol. XII, No. 6

19. Orunodei, Vol. IX, No. 6


23. The Whole World Kin, op.cit., p. 416

24. Barua, Dr. B.K., History of Assamese Literature, (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1964), p. 195