

Literature bears a mirror to the society in specific and the nation in general in the realm of culture. Literature has been a significant propaganda tool for the historical revolution. Since the 19th century, with writers increasingly using it for patriotic purposes in Indian literature. It has highlighted the longing for independence. As we are celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is essential to remember the significant role of Pre-Independence literature in the freedom struggle.

Rabindranath Tagor, Subramanya Bharathi, Johar, and Kazi Nazrul Islam utilized literature, poetry, and discourse as a means of resistance, influencing masses for 'birth rights'. In Assam too, many of the renowned writers ensured the spirit of the Indian independence movement in their works. The Assamese people were inspired to rise up in unison against their colonial overlords by the writings of literary luminaries such as Bishnuprasad Rabha, Hiteswar Barbarua, Rajnikanta Bordoloi, Lakhshminath Bezbaruah, and Jyotiprasad Agarwala. Women literates Chandra Prabha Saikiani, Puspalata Das, and Usha Barthakur spoke out in favor of Indian independence. When the Assamese language was replaced by Bengali as the official language of the state, the members of the Assamese middle class used various tools, such as journals, newspapers, magazines, poetry, and plays, to create a public sphere. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this work to shed light on the development of literature for a patriotic purpose as well as to create nationalist discourse in Assam during the national movement.

ROLE OF LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS :

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of a literary movement that laid the bedrock for the Assamese sense of belonging. In 1837, British colonial rulers declared Bengali as the official language of Assam, leading to opposition from the middle class intelligentsia. In 1852, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan petitioned Moffat Mills against Bengali teaching in school. Anandaram, under the pseudonym 'A Native', defended the Assamese language, refuting government arguments and citing a catalogue of Assamese books to support his argument. American missionaries and Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan initiated a petition to the government, leading to the revision of Assam's official language policy in 1873, and decided to adopt Assamese as the official language of the region. The growing spirit of national consciousness found its expression in contemporary literary associations. One of the earliest associations was the Gyan Pradayini Sabha at Nowgong, with the aim of spreading advanced knowledge among the people in 1857. The Assamese literary society was formed in Calcutta in 1872 under the

leadership of Ganga Govindo Phukan. On behalf of the society, Jagannath Barooah and Manik Chandra Barooah submitted a memorial to Viceroy Lord Northbrook on May 21, 1872, highlighting Assam's potential resources. The Asam Desh Hitaishini Sabha was formed at Sibsagar under the leadership of Priyalal Barua to hold study circles every Saturday as well as issue a circular to represent the grievances of people to the Lt. Governor of Bengal. On August 25, 1888, a group of Assamese students in Calcutta established the Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha (ABUSS), the Assamese Language Improving Society, marking a significant milestone in the history of Assamese language and literature. The Sabha, led by prominent members like Lakshminath Bezbarua, Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Padmanath Gohain Barua, Laksheswar Sarma, Hem Chandra Goswami, and Kamala Kanta Bhattacharyya, established branches in different parts of Assam as well as in Kohima. In 1916, the Assam Chatra Sanmilan, the first student organisation in the valley, was founded, and Lakshminath Bezbarua was elected as its president. Soon after, the Assam Sahitya Sabha was founded in 1917 under the presidency of Padmanath Gohain Barua- which was regarded as the cornerstone of Assamese nationalism. From its beginning, the Sabha has been deeply preoccupied with the long-standing issue of the language and cultural identity of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley people. It ushered in a new phase in the growth of Assamese literature. Thus, with the growth of educated intelligence, a new era emerged in the Assamese literary field.

REASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF PERIODICALS:

New social and political ideas became popular among the masses through the media of periodicals. Earlier newspapers and magazines were not published in Assam. The periodicals- Samachar Darpan, Samachar Chandrika, Sanjivani, Friend of India, etc. were published in Bengal.

The American Baptist missionaries who set up Baptist Mission Press at "Sibasagar introduced Orunodoi, the first Assamese periodical, published in 1846 under the editorship of Nathan Brown. They aimed to spread Christian religion and brought Bengali and Roman fonts due to similar alphabets. Nathan Brown discovered that the Assamese language was distinct from Bengali. To spread Christian ideas, they indirectly created Orunodoi. It was first known as Orunodoi Sambadpatra since its first publication till December 1850. Orunodoi was created with the intention of providing additional reading material for schools as well as addressing the gap in Assamese journalism. It included articles on history,

geography, botany, zoology, and astronomy, apart from poems and stories. Dr. Debabrata Sarma claims that the publication was primarily directed towards British rulers, traders, tea plantations, and locals from the higher social classes after looking through the list of subscribers published in Orunodoi. People saw the combat between Hem Chandra Barua and Nidhi Levi Farewel on the pages of this journal. In the pages of Orunodoi, Hemchandra Baruah gave Assamese prose a constant form. Orunodoi defended modern scientific knowledge against ignorance and superstition, solidifying the tradition of western liberal and secular ideas in Assamese literature. It brought Assamese literature to a dynamic state and to a larger world of literature. Orunodoi significantly influenced the Assamese mindset, leading to the common man referring to any newspaper published in the province as Orunodoi.

Orunodoi initiated the trend in Assam, leading to the emergence and disappearance of over a dozen English and Assamese news papers and journals by the late 19th century.

By this time, print media was not an unknown matter. One such was the publication of Assam Bilashini from the press Dharma Prakash Jantra' in Majuli, established by Satradhikar of the Auniati Satra Sri Sri Dattadev Goswami. The first Assamese newspaper aimed to counter missionary activities by addressing local issues, promoting welfare for peasants and workers, separating executive and judiciary, and praising Mahatma Gandhi. The weekly was always ready to point out the injustices of the government and showcase the various steps and programs of the freedom movement. In the second half of 19th century. In 1882, the Barua-Phookan Brothers launched Assam News, a bilingual newspaper, with Hem Chandra Barua as editor, promoting public opinion on common issues. Assam Bandhu, an Assamese monthly edited by Gunabhiram Barua, strengthened the language's foundation and provided a conducive environment for creative writing. Lakshminath Bezbarua referred to them as the two giants of the Assamese language who laid the foundation for modern Assamese prose and poetry. Mau, a monthly newspaper in 1886, published thought-provoking articles on various issues but faced opposition due to its radical views, ultimately being forced out of circulation. During the eventful days, several periodicals, including Chetana and Dekha Asam, were established as organs of various organizations. Asomiya played a crucial role in raising awareness about the Ryot Sabha to assist the peasants in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. "Awahan," an Assamese periodical, was published in Calcutta in 1929, under the editorship of Dr. Dinanath Sharma, eight years after the non cooperation movement, addressing identity crises, migration, and national

consciousness. It influenced younger Assamese writers and reflected post-Jonaki aspirations. The Assamese national consciousness was symbolized in "Awahan." The four major journals, Jonaki, Bijuli, Banhi, and Usha, were established to promote the Assamese language and literature. They reveal that service towards one's mother tongue is synonymous with service towards one's motherland, as society's aim is its growth and development.

Chandra Kumar Agarwalla was offered the responsibility of editing and publishing a monthly journal, ensuring that all members of the A.B.U.S.S. pledged to contribute regularly. Thus, the Calcutta-based literary journal Jonaki, which began in 1889, played a crucial role in the growth and development of modern Assamese literature. Bezbarua states that the editorial of the first issue of Jonaki focuses on literature, science, and society as the topics of discussion. In the Jonaki era, Assamese literature experienced distinct trends; short stories were published in the first pages of Jonaki. The short story "Seuti" by Bezbarua was published in Volume 4. Novel trends became popular with the journal. Jonaki initiated the romantic poem trend with the publication of Bon Kunwari. Moreover, Hemchandra Goswami's 'Priyatomar Sithi' and Lakshminath Bezbarua's 'Litikai' are prime examples of literary creations in Assamese. It revealed three literary geniuses in Assamese literature, known as the Trimurthy of Assamese literature. Bijuli, a journal published by disassociated young Assamese youths, had no clear editorial policy. The journal featured various articles, novels, poems, and scientific topics, reflecting their commitment to serving their motherland similarly to A.B.U.S.S. Usha, published a year after Bijuli's closure, aims to promote national literature, society development, science, agriculture, and art, excluding politics and religion, to maintain selfless service to literature. Lakshminath Bezbarua was a regular contributor to Usha. Padmanath Gohainbarua apologized for publishing an article 'Angloindian' by Bezbarua in Usha, causing resentment from British rulers. The journal ceased its connection to such articles, leading to Bezbarua's disassociation. Banhi published articles, poems, and stories on the Assamese nation and language. Lakshminath Bezbarua aimed to establish Sri Sri Sankardeva as the father of the Assamese nation and Bihu as the national festival. Lakshminath Bezbaruah's satirical article in 'Bahi' highlights the lack of linguistic awareness as the main goal of language improvement, focusing on the individuality of the Assamese language. Thus, the spirit of the national movement was embraced by newspapers in the Assam and Surma valleys.

CONTRIBUTION OF RUPKONWAR, AMBIKAGIRI RAYCHOUDHURI, AND WOMEN LITTERATEURS:

Rupkonwar is known for his strong commitment to the Indian independence movement. Jyotiprasad Agarwala's political and cultural ideology were shaped by the national movement of Assam. The Non-Cooperation movement inspired his creative writings, leading him to explore traditional music in his plays, as he explains in his preface to *Sonit Konwari* (1925). In his play 'Labhita', the author portrays the August 1942 revolution through Labhita, a female protagonist who fights against colonial power, even with bullets, motivating fellow Assamese soldiers to fight for their freedom. His poems, including *Cheera Bidrohee*, *Volunteeror Dukh*, *Kanaklata*, *Poharar Gan*, *Axomia Sowalir Ukti*, and *Na-Jowan-E-Hind*, are inspiring narratives focusing on Indian independence. His play *Rupalim* focused on the people's protest against monarchy, while *Kanaklata* highlights the bravery of Assamese women in the national movement. He became the first filmmaker of Assam with the film *Joymoti* in the year 1935.

Ambikagiri Raichoudhury, also known as the Lion of Assam, was a significant patron of Assamese literature. He wrote poems promoting freedom struggle in Assamese youths, including 'I am Revolutionary' and 'Geet'. He actively participated in the Indian independence movement but banned his book 'Shatadhara' in 1924. The earliest recorded song in Assam, composed by Ambikagiri Raichoudhury in 1916, was sung as the opening chorus at the Assam Association's annual conference. In 1917, Raichoudhury wrote and sang "Tune of the veena of fire" at the same conference, expressing nationalist aspirations. Chandra Prabha Saikiani, a follower of Gandhiji, documented the freedom struggle in Assam through her *Pitri Vitha* and *Mahatma Gandhir Sesh Kotha*. Puspalata Das, a prolific orator and writer, joined the freedom movement at age 15. Assam's contribution to the freedom movement, 'Women Martyr's of Assam', are some of her works. Moreover, Rajanikanta Bordoloi wrote nine novels in which Binandachandra Barua and Hiteswar Barbarua appealed to youths through their poems.

Thus, Assamese masses, led by regional leaders, fought for independence from colonial rule, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries, including the imprisonment of prominent figures. Assam's freedom movement produced numerous songs, poems, and lyrics, inspiring and electrifying the masses. From 1836 to 1947, Assam experienced significant changes, with periodicals playing a crucial role in nation building. These newspapers and journals not only published news but also served as tools for publishers. The Assamese language's development began with periodicals like *Orunudoj*, *Assam News*, and *Assam Bandhu*, *Jonaki*, *Bijuli*, *Usha*,

and Banhi, as well as others, and promoted linguistic nationalism as well as addressed the damage caused by Bengali language official status. But we find a little information in the mainland literary field regarding Assam's involvement in freedom movement. However, The literature of Assamese writers during the freedom struggle demonstrates a revolutionary zeal, driven by love for the motherland and patriotism. These works emphasize the importance of mass participation and support for Indian independence.