

Pandit Hemchandra Goswami (1872-1928) was versatile and catholic in scholarship, undaunted and unflinching in the services of his country's history and literature, an ardent patriot, a true Indian and a true Assamese. He made his countrymen realise the greatness of their past, especially their cultural heritage, for the aesthetic regeneration of the land. This monograph presents a profile of the life and works of Hemchandra Goswami—his research on the descriptive catalogue of Assamese literature, his translation of important Assamese *punthis*, his decipherment of rock inscriptions, etc.

The monograph has been prepared by Dr Satyendranath Sarma, a well-known scholar and critic in Assamese. Formerly Tagore Professor of Modern Indian Languages at the Gauhati University, he was also President of Asom Sahitya Sabha.

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Hemchandra Goswami

Satyendranath Sarma



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HEMCHANDRA GOSWAMI

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.

THE MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

HEMCHANDRA GOSWAMI

Satyendranath Sarma



Sahitya Akademi

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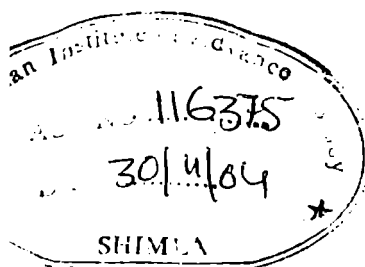
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I

Life and Career

Pandit Hemchandra Goswami is one of the pioneers of modern Assamese literature. He was a poet of no mean merit, a historian who delved into the past of Assam, an antiquarian collecting art treasures of medieval Assam and finally an epigraphist who deciphered a large number of medieval inscriptions of Assam. He was one of the three harbingers of the Romantic movement in Assamese literature in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the other two being Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Chandrakumar Agarwalla. These three pioneers are, therefore, reverentially designated as the triad (*trimūrti*) of the Romantic period of Assamese literature. He died at the comparatively young age of fifty-six, just two years after his retirement from government service. Had he been spared by Destiny a few years more, some of his half-done literary and antiquarian projects could have seen the light of day. But God willed it otherwise, depriving the Assamese people of his valuable services in the above fields of Assamese culture.

Hemchandra was born in 1872 in a traditionally cultured family of the village Dhekiyal in the present Golaghat district of eastern Assam. One of his forefathers, Gaurangadev, established a *satra* (an institution for the propagation of Vaishnavism) at the instance of the famous Vaishnava propagator, Vamsigopaldev, of the early seventeenth century. The *satra* was originally established in the river island of the Brahmaputra but later it was shifted to Dhekiyal in the present Golaghat district of the mainland.

Hemchandra's father, Dambarudhar Goswami, was a wealthy and influential mán of the locality. He was a scholar in traditional learning also. While Hemchandra was only eight years old, he lost his father who died in Baranasi while visiting the holy place. The burden and responsibility of bringing up and educating the two sons fell on the shoulders of his mother, Ghanakanti Goswami. Hemchandra was the elder of the two sons. He learnt a mass of traditional lore from his mother. His younger brother, Jagatchandra Goswami, was also interested in literature and contributed a few literary articles to the local magazines. He had his early education in the local primary school. He acquired a good grounding in Sanskrit by studying in a Sanskrit *catuspāthī* and at the same time learnt the art of reading old manuscripts which considerably differ from the scripts used at present in printed books. He received secondary education in Golaghat and later at Sibsagar High English School. After two/three years he finally shifted to Nowgong wherefrom he passed the Entrance examination in 1888 securing a scholarship.

This period of his stay in Nowgong played an important role in moulding his literary personality and character. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Nowgong had the privilege of sheltering some of the celebrated personalities of the then Assamese society. Here Rev. M. Bronson, the head of the American Baptist Mission, worked for the restoration of Assamese in schools and courts in place of Bengali in collaboration with Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong district. Anandaram, however, died at the young age 29 in 1958. Dr. Bronson published the first Assamese dictionary in 1867 from Nowgong. He left Assam for good in 1883 when Hemchandra was a student of lower secondary school. Other celebrities of Nowgong were the dramatist Rudraram Bardoloi, Padmashash Goswami, Ratneswar Mahanta, an antiquarian and poet, Baladev Mahanta, a poet known for children's literature, Padmavati Phukan, the first modern female writer in Assamese, Bholanath Das, the well-known poet, Balinarayan Bara, Ratnadhar Barua, and above all the doyen of Assamese litterateurs of the period, Gunabhiram

Barua, who edited the monthly literary magazine *Āsām Bandhu* (The Friend of Assam, 1885-1886). Haranarayan Bara, the editor of *Mau* (The Honey, 1886) also published his monthly from Nowgong under the inspiration of the foreign-educated engineer Balinarayan Bara. This elite section of the town frequently met unofficially with a view to finding out ways and means for the improvement of Assamese language and literature. Hemchandra also attended some of the meetings, read essays and received encouragement from the seniors. His constant companion was Ratneswar Mahanta who afterwards became a leading contributor to *Āsām Bandhu* and *Joṇakī*. The inspiration received from Gunabhiram Barua, who served as a magistrate for a few years in Nowgong during the eighties, and encouragement received from senior writers aroused a deep and abiding interest in the mind of the young high school student Hemchandra and accordingly he resolved to dedicate his life to the uplift of Assamese language and literature and to bring to light the past glory of Assam buried in the debris of oblivion.

COLLEGE DAYS

Having passed the Entrance examination of Calcutta University with credit in 1888, he proceeded to Calcutta for higher studies and got himself admitted to Presidency College. Immediately after his arrival in Calcutta, Hemchandra, in close collaboration with Lakshminath Bezbaroa' (1864-1938) and Chandrakumar Agarwalla (1870-1938), set about organising the Assamese students and residents under the umbrella of a new organisation called the Assamese Language Improvement Society with the Assamese name *Asamīyā Bhāṣār Unnati-Sādhinī Sabhā*. The main objectives of this new organisation were, (1) to introduce Assamese at all levels of school education: (2) to collect and publish old manuscripts, (3) to prepare a correct and reliable grammar and standardise the spelling system, (4) to improve Assamese language and literature, (5) to prepare text-books, (6) to compile religious, social and cultural material of the Assamese people and to undertake projects for the regeneration of Assamese society. The young Hemchandra

was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the newly established association. The association felt the urgent necessity of a literary mouthpiece for the propagation of its ideals and objectives as well as the need of encouraging young writers for the development of Assamese literature. At this moment, Chandrakumar Agarwalla, son of Harivilas Agarwalla, a well-known businessman and publisher, came forward to finance the publication of the proposed magazine *Jonākī* (Moonlight) and himself became the first editor. The first issue of the magazine came out in January 1889. Hemchandra not only contributed poems and articles to the magazine but also worked heart and soul for the association and the magazine. Contributions of Lakshminath Bezbarua and Chandrakumar Agarwalla were no less conspicuous, but the pivotal position was held by Hemchandra. The association and the magazine succeeded in changing the literary outlook of the educated section. *Jonākī* ushered in an era of creative regeneration by introducing new *genres* in literature hitherto unknown in the language, like the novel, the short story, drama (after the Shakespearian model) and different forms of poetry, viz., the lyric, the elegy, the sonnet and the literary ballad. Hemchandra Goswami became the editor of *Jonākī* in the third year of its existence. He was the joint editor in the previous year. It may be mentioned here that the first successful sonnet in Assam, a Petrarchan type, was written by Goswami and it was published in the said magazine with the title 'Priyatamār Cithi' (Letter from the Beloved, 1891). He also published serially a critical article on the Assamese language and literature which is still considered one of the most significant contributions of a teen-aged student.

Having duly passed the F. A. examination, he prosecuted his study in the same college for graduation. Unfortunately his heavy preoccupation with the publication of *Jonākī* as the editor and his involvement in the affairs of the Assamese Language Improvement Society left no time for the study of the college courses. The result, as could be expected, was disastrous. He got plucked in the final B. A. examination and was compelled to return home as his family could no longer afford to maintain him

in Calcutta. Although he returned home, his active interest in the publication of *Jonākī* and his association with the Assamese Language Improvement Society did not cease. His passion and zeal for unravelling the past history of Assam continued unabated in spite of the set-back in the university examination; rather it increased ten-fold with the passage of time. The publication of *Jonākī* was discontinued in 1896. It reappeared again for a short period (1903-1905) from Guwahati. Goswami patronised the magazine till its final disappearance.

SERVICE CAREER

After his return to Assam in 1893, he served for nearly one year in a local private school in Guwahati to eke out his living. In fact, he was the founder of the school which is now known as Sonaram Higher Secondary School. In the meantime he married Vamasundari Devi, the attractive daughter of a well-to-do gentleman of Guwahati. Fortunately for him, he could draw the attention of Edward Gait who, as the then Director of the Department of Ethnography, had been showing a keen interest in the history and culture of Assam. Coming to learn of Goswami's deep interest in the history of Assam, Gait asked him to translate an old Assamese chronicle into English which the latter successfully did. Being pleased with his work Gait decided to utilise his acumen in collecting historical data of Assam by appointing him as an Assistant in the Civil Secretariat of the Commissioner of Assam in 1896. Knowing the interest of Goswami in unearthing historical materials he was transferred from the Civil Secretariat to the Department of Ethnography under Edward Gait.

In this connection, we must not ignore the influence of the Bengal renaissance in the second half of the nineteenth century on the impressive minds of the young Assamese college students. The emergence of the Brāhmo religion under the enlightened leadership of Raja Rammohun Roy, his crusade against child marriage and widow burning (*Suttee*), advocacy of widow remarriage by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the popularity of the Young Bengal Society under the

leadership of Derozio among a section of educated Bengali young men, the regeneration of Bengali literature initiated by Madhusudan Dutt, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabinchandra Sen, Girishchandra Ghose and others culminating in the emergence of Rabindranath as a world poet—all these cultural phenomena considerably contributed toward moulding the cultural attitude of Assamese students studying in Calcutta. Gunabhiram married a young Brahmin widow, while Lakshminath Bezbaroa married a girl of the Tagore family. Balinarayan Bara married a daughter of the civilian Ramesh Chandra Dutt. The grand old man Gunabhiram Barua's enlightened son Jnanadabhiram was also married into the Tagore family. Thus there was not only the cultural impact of resurgent Bengal, matrimonial alliance also contributed toward exchanging ideas and values. This impact of Bengal was more pronounced in the field of literature. Hemchandra is said to have visited the Jorasanko house of the Tagore family several times. Hemchandra also had the opportunity of coming in contact with several other cultured families of Calcutta. When he returned from Calcutta in 1893, he was already imbued with the idea of regenerating Assam culturally on the lines of new Bengal.

His close contact with Mr. E. Gait and other high ranking British officers helped him pursue his zeal. Being satisfied with his work and knowing of his antiquarian interest, Goswami was promoted to the post of Sub-Deputy Collector in 1897 in spite of the fact that he was not a graduate. Edward Gait has duly recognised Goswami's services in his *Report on the Progress of the Historical Research in Assam*, published by the government of Assam in 1897. The new post, being a transferrable one, afforded good opportunities to survey and collect materials for the study of the past. Goswami supplied most of the material of Gait's history of Assam (first published in 1905), the first history of Assam written on scientific lines. Edward Gait, no doubt, shifted the material supplied by Goswami to make his work a coherent and chronological one.

In 1905, Goswami was promoted to the post of Extra

Assistant Commissioner for his satisfactory work as a Sub-Deputy Collector as well as for the help rendered to Col. Gurdon and Edward Gait in different fields of extra-governmental activities. He was transferred to Tezpur, a small town full of ancient relics. Here he came in close contact with Raibahadur Padmanath Gohain Barua, an old friend of Calcutta days. Gohain Barua was then editing the literary monthly *Uṣā* (Morning, 1906-1912) and he was much pleased to have the association of Goswami who helped him with literary contributions and did a lot toward establishing a stage and auditorium. It was due to the effort as well as the influence of Goswami on the Commissioner P. R. T. Gurdon that the first literary pension was granted to Padmanath Gohain Barua for his contribution to literature. Some of his revealing historical articles were published in different issues of *Uṣā*.

Goswami repeatedly requested the government of Assam to engage somebody to collect old manuscripts—Sanskrit, Assamese and Tai-Ahom—scattered over the entire Brahmaputra valley including Cooch Behar, for proper preservation and utilisation. As a result the first serious attempt to collect old manuscripts was made in 1912-1913. Archdale Earle, Chief Commissioner of Assam, deputed Goswami for six months for this purpose. Goswami visited all the places of Assam including the royal library of Cooch Behar where Assamese and Sanskrit manuscripts written by Assamese scholars and poets were supposed to be lying uncared for or badly preserved. It may be mentioned that the early Koch kings of Cooch Behar were patrons of Assamese literature. He also visited religious institutions where many old manuscripts were preserved as a religious legacy from the mediaeval period. He collected more than 1300 manuscripts and acquired information of many more which the owners were reluctant to part with. Most of the collected manuscripts were deposited in the library of Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (The Assam Research Society). As the six month period was too short for such a stupendous work, Goswami prayed for a further period of extension, but some jealous Assamese stood against him and no extension was granted in spite of the recommendation of E. Gait and Col. Gurdon.

The next task which occupied him was the compilation of a descriptive catalogue of the collected manuscripts and for this he was placed on special duty in August 1914. Goswami was one of the founder members of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, others being Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Vidyavinod, Mahamahopadhyaya Dhireswar Bhattacharya, Raibahadur Kalicharan Sen, Raibahadur Bhubanram Das, Kanaklal Barua and a few other enthusiastic young men. This historical and antiquarian institution of which Hemchandra Goswami was the president for a number of years, served as the pioneering institution in unearthing the past history and culture of Assam till the establishment of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (1928) and the State Museum (1940). The institution is still working as a living institution, wherefrom several publications have come out and a research journal is being regularly published.

After serving the government of Assam for nearly thirty years to the entire satisfaction of the government and the people and receiving due appreciation from both sides he finally retired in 1925. He was now free to devote his time and energy to the unravelling of the treasures of Assam's history and culture.

II

Literary Contributions

AS A POET

It has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that some of Hemchandra's literary works were written and published while he was a teen-aged student at Nowgong and Calcutta. In his school days, he composed some poems and wrote a few articles, which though juvenile in treatment, were generously published by the editor of *Āsām Bandhu*. Some of these poems were later incorporated in the compilation *Phular Cāki* (A Bouquet of Flowers). It would be doing injustice to him if we fail to appreciate the literary impact of some of his poems which were included in the above compilation. It contains thirty-five poems including those incorporated in the appendix. The poems represent his juvenile imagination as well as his youthful hopes and aspirations in respect of love, patriotism and also humorous expression of social incongruity. Love of nature is another aspect of some of his poems. As the editor of the children's magazine *Akaṇ* (The Tiny Tot), he is credited with a number of poems appealing to the child's imaginative mind. His elegiac poem written on the occasion of the untimely death of the great Sanskrit scholar and the first civilian of Assam, Anundoram Borooah, is one of the notable elegies in Assamese literature. But his two or three outstanding poems which are likely to weather the onslaught of time are 'Priyatamār Ciṭhi' (A Letter from the Beloved), 'Puwā' (Dawn) and 'Dharā Parā' (caught unawares). The first is a Petrarchan sonnet strictly

adhering to the rhyme-scheme of the Italian model. It was first published in *Jonākī* of the Assamese Language Improvement Society of Calcutta, in the first issue of the third volume. From the point of the structural purity and poetic beauty it could never be surpassed by later sonnet writers, although sonnets were composed in galore. The Assamese original is quoted below in Roman script.

Priyatamār Ciṭhi

<i>Saundaryar bukur kācali undaṅgāi</i>	I
<i>Prakṛtir coghar čalo pit pit,</i>	II
<i>Kukurā—thengiyā ei ākharkitit</i>	I
<i>Ji amiyā ghāhā āche kato āru nāi</i>	II
<i>Kavi nikuñjat phuli kata kavitāi</i>	I
<i>Malayāt uti uti phure pṛthivīt,</i>	II
<i>Tomār ciṭhiye kinto jāne jito gīt</i>	I
<i>Kavitār kāvyē tār gondhake nāpāi</i>	II
<i>Phul phule, sari jāi, śukāi vanani</i>	I
<i>Vasantar kuhipāt radat lerele,</i>	II
<i>Tomār ciṭhye priye jāne kī mohinī</i>	I
<i>Nitau nohowā bāhi na na phul mele</i>	II
<i>Jata śuṅgo cumā khāo nālāge āmani</i>	I
<i>Hṛdayat hepāhar bhoṭā tarā jvale</i>	II

An English rendering of the poem is given below :

Having uncovered the breast-cloth of Beauty
 I examined the greenroom of Nature,
 Yet the sweetness laced on your
 Chicken-legged scrawl I could get nowhere.
 Poems beyond count grow in the verse-makers' grove
 And these are kept afloat by the wind everywhere,
 But the music innate in your letter
 Is not even scented
 By the verses of those winged words.
 Flowers bloom, drop dead and meadows wither,
 Tender vernal leaves get sunburnt,
 But what magic spell does your letter hold
 That causes fresh flowers to sprout
 Which keeps them beyond withering,
 As I smell and kiss them more
 The bright star of yearning
 Glows brighter in my heart.

Similarly his 'Puwā' (Dawn) is an admirable harmony of sound, sense and rhyme, and of serenity, hope and natural beauty that conjure up an ethereal atmosphere of the early morning. A few more poems expressing his youthful love and despondency as well as romantic admiration of variegated beauty of nature, bear witness to his poetic talent.

The first few lines from his poem 'Puwā' (Dawn) are quoted with their English rendering. It is a poem containing twenty-two lines:

<i>gahin puwāti niśā, nitāl jagat</i>	
<i>kato nāi jonākar cin</i>	I
<i>nimāt viśwar bāhi, nijam cetanā</i>	
<i>sur bhulā jīvanar vīṇ</i>	II
<i>jīvanar yuj eri, kām-karmī duyo</i>	
<i>śatāiche yujar bhāgar</i>	I
<i>viyāpi asīm viśwa endhār elāh,</i>	
<i>gatihīn sthiti jagatar</i>	II
<i>konobā deśar parā dhīre sōt bali</i>	
<i>āhiche ekhani jur nai,</i>	I
<i>riniki riniki eti nīrav kavītā</i>	
<i>bājiche bukut rai rai</i>	II

Quiet is the breaking dawn, silent the earth,
 nowhere is a ray of the moon,
 the flute of the universe is not sounding,
 asleep is consciousness,
 the lute of life forgets its melody.
 Leaving the battle of life, work and worker
 are resting after their struggle,
 spreading over the world is the pall of dark languor,
 the world having an unmoving being.
 In slow currents from a distant land
 flows a pleasant stream;
 little by little a silent poem
 rings in the heart again and again...

(translated by Praphulladatta Goswami)

The poet was hardly twenty when he composed these poems. But unfortunately he left the field of poetry. Soon after he preferred the life of a researcher in the field of antiquity and history. Thus Assamese literature lost a budding potential poet but gained an historian and antiquarian of rare accomplishment.

AS AN ANTIQUARIAN

His most remarkable achievement in literature as already mentioned in the previous chapter is the survey of old manuscripts—Sanskrit, Assamese and Tāi—lying scattered in the far-flung villages in the possession of private individuals and religious institutions like *satras* and temple precincts. In 1914, he engaged himself to the task of preparing a descriptive catalogue of the Assamese and Sanskrit manuscripts. The catalogue, however, could not cover all the manuscripts discovered in the first deputation as many of them had to be returned to the owners. His descriptive catalogue was later published after his death by Calcutta University in 1929. The catalogue contained the following information :

1) serial no., 2) title of the manuscript, 3) subject-matter or content, 4) name of the writer and of the copyist, if recorded, 5) date of composition or writing, 6) description of the manuscript—its length, breadth, number of folios, lines in each folio, 7) opening and closing lines, 8) original owner of the manuscript and the place of its recovery, 9) colophon of the poet or writer.

The Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts not only served as an eye-opener to the richness of the early Assamese literature but also served as a guide book to the historians of Assamese literature.

AS A COMPILER

Another noteworthy achievement of Goswami is the compilation of the monumental work *Asamīyā Sāhityar Cānki* (Typical Selections from Assamese Literature) in seven

volumes containing nearly two thousand five hundred pages. It was prepared under the grand scheme sponsored by Calcutta University in 1918 for the study and development of Indian languages under the stewardship of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the then Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. When Sir Ashutosh came to Guwahati to visit Cotton College as a member of the Calcutta University Commission, he, at the recommendation of Col. P. R. T. Gurdon, the Commissioner of Assam Valley Division, requested Goswami to undertake the work of compilation, where specimens of writings of all the important poets and writers from the earliest period to the beginning of the twentieth century were to be incorporated. Sir Ashutosh with usual foresight could immediately recognise the capability of Goswami and accordingly assigned the work to him. Having divided the history of Assamese literature into six periods from the oral stage to the twentieth century, he included select specimens of writings of one hundred and twenty poets and writers from the fourteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, including specimens of different types of folk literature. A short introductory note on each writer and his works is prefixed to the specimens. In spite of his failing health due to diabetes he could complete the work before his death in 1928 at the age of fifty-six (1872-1928). But unfortunately he could not write the introduction and other preliminary matters on account of his sudden death. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, the noted litterateur and historian of Assam, completed the work by writing an informative introduction including a biographical sketch of Goswami, his literary contributions and his antiquarian activities. Goswami could, however, see before his death the publication of all the volumes except the first one which came out in 1929.

It may be mentioned here that Goswami developed intimate friendship with great personalities like Ashutosh Mukherjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Maharaja Manindrachandra Nandi, and the great Assamese merchant Bholanath Barua of Calcutta. He was a guest of Maharaja Nandi whenever he visited Calcutta. He also cultivated friendship with the leading scholars and litterateurs of the early twentieth century

Bengal like Cr. D. R. Bhandarkar, Dineshchandra Sen and Satishchandra Vidyabhushan. Goswami successfully persuaded Barua to donate ten thousand rupees for the publication of the *Asamīyā Sāhityar Cāneki* and he immediately released two thousand which was handed over to the Vice-Chancellor. The remaining amount of Rs. 8000.00 was also paid later.

The publication of the seven-volume *Sāhityar Cāneki* firmly established the antiquity and richness of Assamese literature. It also paved the way to the introduction of Assamese in the M. A. courses of Calcutta University. Since its publication in 1929, it has been serving as a reference book to literary historians, The *Cāneki* contains specimens of both poetry and prose including specimens of religious and secular prose of the pre-British period.

AS AN EDITOR

Hemkoś, the most authoritative dictionary in the language by Hemchandra Barua, was practically recovered by Goswami from being destroyed after the death of Barua in 1896. Before the publication of *Hemkoś*, the dictionary compiled by Rev. Miles Bronson, an American Baptist missionary, published in 1867, was the only dictionary in Assamese. It contained only fourteen thousand words of everyday use. It avoided many *tatsama* and *tadbhava* words which are found abundantly in early Assamese literature. Its orthography is also questionable. Hemchandra Barua systematised and standardised the spelling system in his dictionary and increased the number of entries considerably. The great earthquake of 1897 not only damaged the press building but also scattered the hand-written pages of the dictionary and it was practically a herculean task to recover the manuscript from being totally destroyed. In recovering and printing the lifelong hard work of Hemchandra Barua and thereby saving one of the most valuable treasures of Assamese language from destruction, the indefatigable labour of Goswami backed by P. R. T. Gurdon, cannot but be appreciated. It may be incidentally mentioned that

Col. Gurdon acquired a thorough knowledge of the Assamese language. The *Hemkoṣ*, jointly edited by Hemchandra Goswami and Col. P. R. T. Gurdon, was finally published in 1900. Had not Goswami taken the initiative in restoring the dilapidated *Hemkoṣ* and induced Edward Gait and P. R. T. Gurdon to print and publish it for the benefit of the Assamese language, the lexicon, so laboriously and systematically compiled, would have perished. Although a more comprehensive dictionary was later compiled by Assam Sahitya Sabha in the early thirties, *Hemkoṣ* is still considered authoritative. 'This important work,' writes Col. Gurdon, 'occupied us for many months and gave us plenty to do, the revision and editing being undertaken by both of us in addition to our ordinary duties.'

Goswami did not rest content with the recovery of old manuscripts; he made a systematic plan to publish important manuscripts either through the government or through some private agency. Accordingly, he selected a number of old Assamese manuscripts to publish critically. He obtained financial sanction from H. C. Barnes, Commissioner of Assam Valley Division, to publish some important manuscripts. The following titles were selected for publication: 1) *Haṣṭavidyārṇava* (fully illustrated), 2) *Kāmaratna-tantra*, 3) *Vaidya-Kalpataru*, 4) *Dāk-bhanitā*, 5) *Ghorā-nidāna*, 6) *Historical letters*, 7) *Kitabat-mañjari*, and 8) *A few chronicles*. Except the *Kāmaratna-tantra*, the others could not be published due to his sudden death. He edited the following manuscripts:

1. *Gītā-kathā*, a sixteenth century prose rendering of the *Bhagavadgītā* by Baikunthanath Bhagavat Bhattacharya. It was published in 1918 on the basis of three manuscripts with a learned introduction. It was published with the title *Kathā-gītā*.

2. *Puraṇi Asam Burañjī*, a seventeenth century prose chronicle dealing with the political history of Assam from the thirteenth to the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The chronicle ends with the death of Gadadhar Simha in 1694 A.D. The chronicle was published by Kamarupa

Anusandhan Samiti (Assam Research Society) in 1922.

3. *Darrang Rājvaṃśāvalī*, by Surya Khari Daivajna, dealing with the history of the Koch kings of Assam and Cooch Behar of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The manuscript written in Assamese verse was completed in 1798 A.D. It is an illustrated manuscript representing the Koch style of miniature-painting in Assam. Goswami edited the manuscript with a long introduction in English and reproduced some of the coloured miniatures. It was also published by Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti in 1917.

4. *Kāmaratna-tantra*, supposed to have been written by Gorakshanath, was rendered into Assamese prose by an unknown scholar of the seventeenth century. The editor, Goswami, besides his English introduction, reproduced quite a few tantric diagrams of the original manuscript. It was published by the Government of Assam in 1929, one year after his death.

Besides the above published works a few more works of literary and historical importance were made ready for the press, but his sudden death in 1928 did not allow him to complete the publication of these works. He collected, edited and sent to press twelve devotional plays written by the two great Vaishnavite poet-reformers, Shankaradeva and Madhavdeva, of the sixteenth century. These plays written in the Brajabuli language were composed for the propagation of Vaishnavism, but their literary and dramatic value is not marred by the propagandist motive. More than two hundred pages were printed in a Calcutta press but as nobody cared to look after the unfinished press-copy as well as printed files, the work was fated to go into oblivion. The same fate awaited his other edited work, which is considered to be the first real prose work in the Assamese language, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* by the same scholar, viz, Vaikunthanath Bhagavat Bhattacharya, who translated the *Gītā* into Assamese prose. The translation was completed in the last decade of the sixteenth century. From the personal diary of Goswami it is known that this was printed up to page 128, but no trace of this

unfinished work remained after his death. Probably his sons did not pursue the matter or they were ignorant of the pending works in different presses in Calcutta. His diary also informs us that he was preparing to bring to light a few more important early Assamese works including the illustrated *Hastīvidyārṇava*, a treatise on the characteristics of different types of elephants, their diseases and cure. Every folio is illuminated with coloured illustrations. This illustrated manuscript has now been published by the Publication Board, sponsored by the Government of Assam. In his diary of the 25th January 1922, he writes that he went to Calcutta for a medical check-up, to attend the Oriental Conference as a delegate, to complete the work of printing *Aṅkiyā-nāṭa* and *Puraṇi Asam Buraṇji* and to make arrangement for printing of *Bhāgavata-kathā* by Bhattadeva and *Hastīvidyārṇava*. It may be mentioned that he maintained regularly a diary of his daily activities.

AS A PROSE WRITER

Goswami was also a prose writer. His diction is simple and lucid but not devoid of verve and colour. He contributed a large number of articles to different contemporary magazines like *Jonākī* (The Moonlight), *Bijulī* (The Lightning), *Bāñhi* (The Flute) and *Uṣā* (The Morning) on literary, cultural and historical topics. The articles brought to focus many a hidden treasure of early Assamese literature and opened the eyes of Assamese readers to various historical events and characters. Events like King Rudra Simha's glorious reign (1696-1714) and his preparation for the invasion of Bengal, the unalloyed patriotism of General Lachit Barphukan who did not hesitate to slay his maternal uncle for the dereliction of duty at a critical time of the Mughal invasion of Assam (1667)—were unknown or vaguely known events of history before the publication of the revealing articles of Goswami. Goswami's prose is devoid of unnecessary ornamentation, but vivid in detail and lucid in expression.

In addition to a large number of historical articles, he contributed a series of articles to local magazines introducing and reviewing early Assamese manuscripts which he collected

or took note of while on deputation in search of manuscripts. These literary reviews, mostly published in the monthly *Uṣā*, greatly helped the later literary historians in assessing early Assamese literature. He also wrote a few biographical sketches of some illustrious sons of Assam, viz, Manikchandra Barua, Jagannath Barua, Anundoram Borooah and Gunabhiram Barua. After his death, Sarbeswar Kataki, one of his admirers, made a list of his unpublished articles under the auspices of Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti in 1930 and found nearly sixty articles on different aspects of Assam's cultural life. Unfortunately, all of them vanished from his house. Most of them were taken away by responsible persons of Guwahati not to send them back to his sons who were quite innocent of the value of these articles. Thus, some of the valuable contributions were lost forever. A list of publications is given in the appendix. Fortunately, Dr. S. K. Bhuyan (1892-1964), 'the eminent historian of Assam', recovered some records and manuscripts collected by Goswami from his house and saved them.

AS AN EPIGRAPHIST

Goswami deciphered a number of inscriptions of ancient and medieval Assam, especially of the latter period. He deciphered and published the texts as well contents of the inscriptions in contemporary magazines, mostly in the *Ālocani*, a magazine published from Dibrugarh during 1912-1920. Weathering all difficulties he visited almost all important historical places and temples to unearth the past. Eighty or ninety years before, when the communication system in Assam was very bad, he undertook journeys to different sites in search of old ruins or inscriptions in dilapidated temples. Thus he brought to light a corpus of copper-plates and stone inscriptions, numbering twenty, of medieval Assam. Almost all of them excepting an inscription of Indrapala of the twelfth century were granted by the Ahom and Koch kings of the late medieval period (13th-18th centuries). It may be incidentally stated that so far about thirty copper-plates and stone inscriptions from the fifth to twelfth centuries of the Christian era and about one hundred sixty copper-plates and stone inscriptions and royal

grants of the late medieval period have been published. Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Vidyavinod in his pioneering work *Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvalī* (1931) incorporates ten copper-plate grants and two rock inscriptions of the pre-Ahom period. The recent publication entitled *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam* (5th-12th centuries), 1978, reproduces twenty-seven plates of the pre-Ahom period. The *Prācya-Śāsanāvalī* (1974) by Dr. M. Neog incorporates one hundred and fifty-six inscriptions of the Ahom period. It includes all the inscriptions deciphered and published by his predecessors including those read by Goswami. The discovery of a large number of copper-plate grants and rock inscriptions after Goswami's demise does not in any way minimise the importance of Goswami as a pioneer epigraphist who first realised the value of inscriptions and royal grants in reconstructing the political, social and religious history of Assam.

AS A COLLECTOR OF EPISTLES

Allied to the restoration of epigraphical records there is another pioneering effort which has not yet been undertaken by any scholar to complete the half-finished work left by Goswami. He started compiling the royal epistles exchanged between the Ahom kings and kings of frontier kingdoms on different occasions. These political epistles or letters were carried by envoys who visited the Ahom court or carried by Ahom envoys to the frontier independent or feudatory monarchs concerning frontier disputes, trade, matters of mutual interest and sometimes involving war and peace. Assamese chronicles of the late medieval period have incorporated a large number of diplomatic letters exchanged between the successive Ahom kings on the one side and kings of Jayantiya, Cachar, Manipur, Tripura, Cooch Behar and the Nawabs of Bengal on the other side. These epistles, besides exhibiting the style of addressing diplomatic letters, also throw considerable light on the political relation among these powers. Medieval Assam was rich enough in political chronicles mostly written in prose; only a limited number of dynastic chronicles are couched in verse. In the latter type of chronicles no diplomatic letter is noticed. Goswami intended to collect all the diplomatic

letters scattered over a large number of prose chronicles and ultimately publish them in book-form. Accordingly, he started collecting the political letters, but his untimely death did not allow him to complete the work; only about twenty such letters were found copied in a bound exercise book, most of which he had previously published in the Assamese magazines *Bānhi* (1909-1940) and *Ālocanī* (1912-1920). The list of the letters is given in the appendix. His miscellaneous articles include book-reviews and introductions of a few early Assamese poets, historical accounts of some significant episodes, introduction of early Assamese manuscripts and diplomatic epistles, presidential addresses in the All-Assam Literary Conference (1920) and the All-Assam Students' Association (1922), short biographical sketches etc.

III

Patriot, Social Worker, Public Servant and Humanist

PATRIOTISM

Although Hemchandra served the British government as a responsible officer, he did not barter his allegiance to Assam and India for earning the goodwill of the British. He gave the highest premium to honour and dignity of his native place which he never allowed to be insulted or sullied by anybody. One or two instances may be cited here. While he was serving as an Extra-Assistant Commissioner at Guwahati in 1921, a few members of the Indian National Congress of Assam headed by T. R. Phukan and N. C. Bordoloi, two undisputed leaders of Assam, approached him for financial assistance. Goswami directed them to his wife who donated a pair of gold bangles to them. A jealous officer reported the matter to the higher authority implicating Goswami with the infringement of the officers' conduct rules. An explanation from Goswami was immediately called for. In his explanation he admitted the visit of the Congress leaders but informed the authority that his wife donated a part of her *strīdhan*, property over which he did not have any control. The law was on her side. Mahatma Gandhi in a certain issue of the *Young India*, probably in 1918, compared the Assamese people with the Pindaris which very much hurt the feeling of the Assamese. When Gandhi visited Assam in 1921, Goswami sought an interview with him without

the permission of the government. When he met Gandhi he reminded him of the unkind remark against the Assamese and showed him some of the valuable manuscripts of Assam including the profusely illustrated manuscript *Hastividyārṇava* and *Darrang Rājvaṃśavali* and also beautifully embroidered cloths and some other objects of art. Gandhi expressed his regret for the remark in a subsequent issue of the *Young India* under the caption 'Lovely Assam'. When the government came to know of his interview with Gandhi, he was again asked to submit an explanation and he replied in the following way, 'Mahatma Gandhi is a universally respected great person. It is not a crime to pay respects to such a personality. If I accept his political ideology and act according to his chalked-out policy, then of course an explanation from me would be justified.' Receiving this reply the government remained silent.

Goswami lost no opportunity to acquaint the outside scholars, litterateurs and national leaders with the art and literary treasures of Assam whenever they visited the state. He met Rabindranath Tagore, Acharya Prafullachandra Ray and Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee who were shown some old Assamese literary gems concerning art and literature which evoked high appreciation from them. As a specimen of such appreciation the following remark by Rabindranath Tagore may be quoted.

The *Kathā-Gītā* is a very striking book, interesting from many points of view. You may very well be proud of the author of the book who could handle prose in such a remarkably lucid style more than centuries before we had any prose book in Bengali.

Shillong, October 10, 1919.

PUBLIC AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

It has been already mentioned that Goswami was one of the founders of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti. The aims of this institution were the exploration of the past

history of Assam, preservation of the ancient relics and monuments, collection of records and manuscripts and finally the establishment of a museum at Guwahati. Since its inception the institution with its limited resources has been trying to fulfil its aims. Goswami besides being a member of its executive committee was the president of this organisation for two terms (1917-1920).

The next important organisation with which he was intimately connected till his death is Asam Sahitya Sabha, the premier literary organisation established in 1917. At the initial stage the organisation had to face frequent financial stringency and it was Goswami who with his usual resourcefulness could manage to procure funds for the Sabha. He, in collaboration with the founder-secretary Sarat Chandra Goswami (1886-1943), persuaded Radhanath Goswami of Mahara Satra and Naradeva Goswami of Dakshinpat Satra to donate five thousand and eight thousand rupees respectively to create two endowments; one for publishing books for children and the other for publishing old religious manuscripts. While he was serving in Jorhat, he extended his hand of co-operation to the secretary of Asam Sahitya Sabha in all matters. He was elected President of the fourth annual session of the Sabha in 1920 held at Tezpur. His presidential address, unlike other conventional addresses where the history of Assamese literature and its special characteristics are repeated *ad nauseam*, contains constructive suggestions for the improvement and development of the literature. He also highlighted the problems confronting the development of Assamese literature.

He was a patron of the All-Assam Students' Association and presided over its seventh annual session in 1922. Goswami's help in the establishment of P. R. T. Gurdon High School at Nalbari in 1920 cannot be ignored. As he could earn the confidence of P. R. T. Gurdon, he was requested by the public of Nalbari, a very small town in the district of Kamrup, to impress upon Mr. Gurdon the desirability of establishing a high school. As a result of his persuasion Gurdon agreed to obtain the consent of the Chief Commissioner of the province and

he wrote back to Goswami, 'I fought tooth and nail with the C. C. (Chief Commissioner) for the establishment of a high school at Nalbari, the centre of Sanskrit learning.' As a result government help was obtained to start a high school at Nalbari.

When B. E. Allen compiled the *Assam District Gazetteers* in 1902-3, he frequently sought the help of Goswami in collecting data of the religious institutions, temples and old ruins of different districts of the Assam valley. He was also one of the founders of the 'Sanātan Dharma Sabhā', popularly known as 'Hari Sabhā' at Guwahati where religious discussions and religious festivals were regularly held. This 'Hari Sabhā' building still exists and important religious festivals are observed with due solemnity. The other initiators of this institutions were Raibahadur Bhuvanram Das, Raibahadur Kalicharan Sen and Mahamahopadhyay Padmanath Vidyavinod. This Sabha greatly cemented the religious bond of the Assamese and Bengali communities. He also started another organisation to reform the Vaishnavite *satra* institutions scattered over the entire valley so as to make them useful in the modern context by imparting religious and scriptural instruction to the abbots or would be abbots. This project, however, did not materialise. He was also closely associated with the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and attended a few annual meetings of the Prabasi Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan and read a few papers there.

The Bengali language was the medium of courts and schools in the district of Goalpara till 1914. Goalpara has been a part and parcel of Assam since ancient times. Hemchandra with some of the leading Assamese gentlemen like Prasannakumar Ghose tried to impress upon the government the desirability of introducing Assamese in courts and schools for the benefit of the masses and students. In this move, the leading part was taken by Goswami. He had the additional advantage of being the Personal Secretary of Col. P. R. T. Gurdon, the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Division. His persistent efforts that ultimately bore fruit when the government formally announced the introduction of Assamese in February 1914.

He was for some time a member of the Senate of Calcutta University and maintained a very cordial relation with the Vice-Chancellor Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee. It was through his efforts that Assamese language and literature was introduced as a subsidiary subject in the M. A. course in Modern Indian Languages in 1922. Before this, in 1907, in collaboration with Padmanath Gohain Barua he submitted a detailed note in English on Assamese language and literature to F. W. Sudmersen, Principal of Cotton College, who having appreciated it, prepared a monograph which was published by the Assam Government in 1908. Though small in volume it helped in dispelling many of the erroneous notions relating to the identity and independence of the Assamese language. As a result of this informative note, Assamese language and literature was introduced as a compulsory paper in the B. A. course for Assamese students. The note prepared by Goswami and Gohain Barua was later incorporated in Goswami's monumental work *Asamiyā Sāhityar Cāneki* as a part of the long introduction.

RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Goswami served the government of Assam for thirty years. He entered government service as an Assistant in the Civil Secretariat in 1895 and earned so much confidence, by his sincere work and antiquarian jest, of Sir Edward Gait and his successor Col.P.R.T. Gurdon that within three years of his appointment he was appointed Sub-Deputy Collector, a post of Gazetted rank from which he got promotion to the next higher rank of Extra-Assistant Commissioner. Without being unduly subservient he served the government to the satisfaction of the authority as well as the public.

Although he expressed his view against the acceptance of government service, in his diary note of May 1914, he being a government servant, however, discharged his duties honestly and scrupulously. As a Sub-Deputy-Collector, he earned the appreciation of his superior officers for his meticulous work. The following appreciative words of P.R.T.Gurdon testify to his sincere devotion to duties:

I remember how well he supervised the work of subordinates at that time and how he met the difficulty with that determination and sangfroid which always distinguished him, for the work of a Sub-Deputy Collector-cum-Tahsilder provided no bed of roses in those days and revenue and settlement duties were full of difficulties, more especially at a time when the whole settlement system was reorganised by Sir Bampfytde Fuller. It was about this time that the first settlement operations on scientific principles were undertaken in the Assam Valley, when Hem Goswami was easily marked out by the authorities as just the man for settlement work under the new conditions; and I remember how highly the settlement officer Mr. Barnes spoke of Hem Goswami's keenness and driving power.*

Sir Edward Gait and Col. P.R.T.Gurdon highly praised his services to the cause of antiquarian studies in Assam. The following condolence message conveyed by Col.Gurdon will speak to what extent the British higher officers held him in esteem. The letter was addressed to Dr. S.K.Bhuyan, Professor of English, Cotton College, and the Founder Director of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam.

Spring Grove
Modern, Kent
19 June, 1928.

My dear Bhuyan,

Yes, indeed I was sorry to see the death of our late friend Srijut Hemchandra Goswami reported. We would ill afford to lose such a brilliant research scholar and literary man, especially at the present time when his great labour were about to bear fruit. I refer especially to the descriptive catalogue of Assamese literature and his translation of important Assamese *Puthis*. I have written, Hem Gossain was of great assistance in obtaining decipherment.

* Quoted from *Hemcandra Goswami* by B. Sharma, p. 58

of Tezpur rock inscription and I well remember with what great interest the reading of this inscription was received by the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti of which Hem Gossain was undoubtedly the most brilliant ornament. Alas, that cruel fate should have shorn Hem Babu of the present triumph which the publication of his great historical work would have given him, for he died before this took place. Alas, too, for the great sorrow which beset him in the loss of his eldest son, an event which must have greatly saddened his last years. Assam has lost one of the most distinguished of her literary men in Hem Gossain, a doughty champion of the Assamese language. Many friends and admirers will long mourn the loss of not only a brilliant research scholar and linguistic protagonist, but also of a most charming personality, of a disposition both witty and versatile and although an orthodox Brahmin by no means bigoted in his religious beliefs. He was a friend not only to his own people, the Assamese, but to Europeans, to Bengalis and others and was beloved equally by all. Truly, a great and good man has passed away and one whose place it will be extremely difficult to fill.

P.R.T.Gurdon.

A similar condolence message, though brief, was sent by Sir Edward Gait: The Assamese people could not even dream that Goswami would so suddenly depart from them. Indeed, it was a great loss to Assam.

OTHER QUALITIES

Goswami possessed a pleasant voice and could sing and recite traditional Assamese music to the delight of the audience. He could sing devotional songs, *Bargīt*, with melodious voice. According to Benudhar Sharma, one of his biographers, he could play the *Esrāj* also. He regularly recited devotional Sanskrit *stotras* and a few chapters of the *Gītā* after his daily bath. He regularly performed *nitya* and *naimittika* Brahminical rites and rituals. Coming from a Vaishnavite Goswami family he was well-versed in the

Vaishnavite lore. He was a God-fearing man and had great faith in the Hindu religion and philosophy. His long introduction to the *Gītā-Kathā* by Vaikunthanath Bhagavat Bhattacharyya speaks eloquently of his deep acquaintance with Hindu philosophy.

As regards his behaviour and manners he was soft-spoken, persuasive in argument, affable in manners, never losing temper even in the most provocative situation, pleasant-looking in appearance and witty according to circumstances. He had the capacity to disarm his vehement critics by his sweet persuasive tongue. His circle of friends and admirers not only included the elite section of the Assamese community, it covered some of the most distinguished sons of India. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, Maharaj Manindrachandra Nandi, Rabindranath Tagore, Ksitindranath Tagore, Acharya Prafullachandra Ray, K. N. Dixit, Col. Jalnur Ali (father of India's ex-President Fakhruddin Ali), Sir Archdale Earle, Sir Edward Gait, Col. P. R. T. Gurdon, Dr. Hoernle, D. R. Bhandarkar and many other distinguished personalities were known to him personally.

Hemchandra enjoyed good health till the completion of his fifty years. But during the last few years of his life he suffered from diabetes. This was aggravated in the last two years of his life by the death of his mother and the eldest son Kiranchandra Goswami. Before these two bereavements, he received a great shock when his library containing a rare collection of books and records was partially burnt. All these sad incidents adversely affected his deteriorating health. He was attacked by a diabetic carbuncle toward the end of April 1928 and breathed his last in May 1928, leaving a blaze of glory and appreciation of the entire Assamese community.

Hemchandra's life was dominated by an overwhelming zeal for research. He had to create his own facilities and clear the obstacles. The arduous duties of a revenue or a judicial officer could not deter him from the preformance of his life's mission. He will live in the grateful remembrance of the posterity, not as an efficient government officer

or magistrate, but as an earnest and zealous savant whose patriotism was primarily directed toward the revitalisation and revivification of his motherland.

No better tribute could be offered to this worthy son of Assam than the one given by the great historian Dr. S. K. Bhuyan in the biographical introduction incorporated in the volume I of Goswami's *Typical Selections from Assamese Literature*:

Thus lived and worked Hemchandra Goswami, affable and inspiring in personality, versatile and catholic in scholarship, undaunted and unflinching in the services of his country's history and literature, an ardent patriot, a true Indian and a true Assamese. Diverse are the ways of serving one's motherland; and Hemchandra's mission was to make his countrymen realise their past greatness, especially in the cultural aspects, and this he regarded as the stepping stone to the revival of his country's consciousness for its regeneration. Inspired by this noble ideal Hemchandra worked unceasingly for its realisation, devoted all his leisure hours which his heavy official duties could permit, sacrificed all his health and comfort and worked while others slept. He died before his time and before his life's goal was reached. But he wakened his countrymen to a phase of patriotism which his posterity will not let willingly die.

The legacy of antiquarian and historical studies left by Hemchandra is being carried forward by his successors without allowing it to be dimmed or extinguished. Goswami while delivering the presidential address at the seventh annual session of the All-Assam Students' Association concluded his speech by quoting a stanza from an English poet which should serve as a motto to the rising generation. The lines quoted below seem to have guided Hemchandra too:

Higher higher will we climb
Up the mountain of glory,
That our names may live through time
In our country's story
Happy when her welfare calls,
He who conquers, he who falls.
Onward, onward may we press
Through the path of duty;
Virtue is true happiness,
Excellence true beauty
Minds are of celestial birth,
Make we then a heaven of earth.*

* Published in the first issue of the vol. I of *Milan*, the literary mouthpiece of the Assam Students' Association (*Asam Chhatra Sammelan*).

APPENDICES

Extracts from Hemchandra Goswami's writings

Assamese Language

Originally it was a very long essay in Assamese covering nearly 150 pages in print. It was written when Hemchandra was just eighteen years. He read it in the second annual session of the Assamese Language Improvement Society of Calcutta in 1890¹. The first few pages in translation are reproduced below.

The language in which the Assamese people exchange their thought, feeling and ideas is called Assamese. Though the word *Asam* comes from *Aham* or *Āhom*, yet the Assamese language has not evolved from the language once spoken by the Ahom community. The Ahoms occupied our country toward the end of the thirteenth century². The Assamese language has been in existence since many years before the advent of the Ahoms. When, in the beginning of the seventh century, Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim came to visit India, he wrote in the following way: 'There was a common language in Bengal, Bihar and north-western regions, but the languages of Assam (Kamarupa) and Orissa were different'. From the statement of Hiuen Tsang it can be clearly understood that Assamese is not a branch of the Bengali language. After laborious inquiry Nathan Brown has come to know that the Assamese language contains seven percent *Akā*, five percent *Tāi*, one percent *Khāmti*, one percent *Ādi* (Abor), thirty-one percent *Michmi* (Karbi) and sixty-three percent Sanskrit-based words. From this survey it could be clearly known that

1. *Pandit Hemcandra Goswāmīr Racanāvalī*, edited by B. Sarma pp. 95-98

2. *In fact, the Ahoms entered Assam in 1228 A.D.*

the majority of Assamese vocables come from Sanskrit. Taking into consideration the statements of Hiuen Tsang and Dr. Brown, it would not be a wrong conclusion that the Assamese language is nothing but an evolution of the Aryan language of those who came to settle in Kamarupa. Therefore, to determine the age of the origin of the Assamese language, we must first ascertain the approximate time of the Aryan settlement in ancient Kamarupa.

Those who have some acquaintace with the history of India, know that our earliest forefathers having migrated from central Asia to India first settled on the banks of the river Sindhu. From the *Rigveda*, the earliest work of the Aryan settlers, we know that about 1400 B.C., they occupied and settled in the adjoining areas of the Indus. They did not know the areas lying beyond the east of the river Suttlej. After a lapse of a few centuries they extended their settlements beyond the east of the river Suttlej which was called Brahmarṣi-deśa and came toward the east up to Tirhut. At that time, among the Aryan tribes, the Kurus and the Pancalas became most prominent. The great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, was composed concerning the activities of these two Aryan tribes. The European Indologists have determined the 12th century B.C. as the age of the *Mahābhārata*. We first notice the mention of Kamarupa (Prāgyotisha) in that epic. In the *Sabhaparva* it is narrated that the King of Kamarupa, viz., Bhagadatta, accompanied by Kiratas, Chinas and inhabitants of the seashore fought for eight days against Arjuna. In the *Udyogaparva* it is stated that Bhagadatta assisted Duryodhana with one *akṣauhiṇ* soldiers consisting of Kiratas and Chinas having golden coloured skin. From this it could be surmised that Bhagadatta's kingdom extended up to the Himalayas and borders of China in the north. Whatever it might be, Kamarupa at that time was considered as a *mleccha deśa*. In a certain passage of the *Sabhaparva* it is stated:

*Prāgyotiṣādhīpah śūromlecchānāmadhipobalīh
yavanaiḥ sahitōrājā Bhagadattomahārathah*

Maheswara, an early commentator of the *Amarakoṣa*, has also cited Kamarupa as a place of *mlecchas*. Had there been Aryan settlement, Bhagadatta would not have been called the king of the *mlecchas* alone. The European orientalist also suggest that the Aryan settlements did not advance eastward beyond Tirhut at the time of the *Mahābhārata*. According to them, the Aryans began to spread beyond Madhyadeśa only after the tenth century B.C. There are proofs of the Aryan settlements in Bengal and Orissa between the 5th and 2nd centuries B.C. Then, probably at the same time or a little after, it is not improbable that Hinduism spread to Kamarupa also. There is little doubt that the Aryan or Hindu settlements started before the heyday of Buddhism. Buddhism spread like wild fire in India between the period of Aśoka and the fifth century A.D. During this period, many Buddhist temples were erected in different places of India. In the seventh century A.D. Hiuen Tsang while visiting Pragjyotisha noticed a lone Buddhist temple which was constructed at that time and it was probably the Madhava temple of Hajo. He noticed innumerable Hindu temples. Bhaskaravarma of the Varman dynasty ruled Kamarupa at that time. In the *Daśakumāracarita* of Dandi we also find reference to the Varman dynasty of Kamarupa. According to Hiuen Tsang, kings of the Varman dynasty were Brahmins, but that his statement is wrong and the Varmans were Kṣatriyas, has been proved by subsequent writers. From these facts, it could be inferred that Hindu settlements started in Kamarupa long before the visit of Hiuen Tsang. Taking all these facts into account, it would not be a mistake to hold the opinion that the Aryan migration to Kamarupa started at least during the third century A.D. Needless to say, the language of these migrating Aryans was Sanskrit and it was the source of the evolution of our Assamese language.

When the Aryans first came to India and settled within a limited area their language was identical, but when they began to spread over the country and century after century elapsed, their language did not remain the same and underwent changes. The language of the *Mahābhārata* considerably differs from that of the *Rigveda*. Similarly

the language of different schools of philosophy differs from the language of the great epic. Because of the absence of easy communication, the language of the different regions settled by the Aryans in course of time began to differ. In this way the Prakṛit, Pāli, Māgadhi and other languages branched off from the Sanskrit language and in course of time became separate independent languages through the process of evolution. Similar is the way of the growth of the Assamese language. Though Sanskrit was the original language of the Aryans who settled in Kamarupa, their language began to undergo changes through the generations. Over and above the non-Aryan languages of the adjoining regions began to cast influence on their language. For these reasons, their language drifted considerably from the original Sanskrit and ultimately gave rise to Assamese. It should not be supposed that the Aryans of Kamarupa completely forgot their original language. Their religious ceremonies were conducted in Sanskrit, which was also the source of their knowledge and learning. The spoken language which the immigrant Aryans used underwent gradual changes through the course of several centuries and finally became the Assamese language.

The Role of the Chronicles in Early Assam

This extract in English translation is taken from the introduction prefixed to Goswami's *Puraṇi Asam Burañji*, published in 1920*. The Assamese word for a chronicle is *burañji*.

'Burañji' is an Ahom word. In the Ahom language (a branch of the Tāi language), *bu* means ignorant, *raṇ* stands for learning and *ji* denotes a store-house. The combination of them denotes—a store-house of learning for the ignorants or fools. The Ahoms brought with them the practice of writing chronicles when they migrated to Assam in the thirteenth century. The Ahom language belonged to a branch of the great Sino-Tibetan family of languages. The system of writing chronicles was also prevalent among the Chinese and the Japanese. The practice of recording political events became prevalent since the coming of the Ahoms. The date of the earliest ancestor is supposed to be 568 A.D. From that time the practice of writing chronicles had been in vogue among them. When the Ahoms came to this land they used to write chronicles or record political events in their own Tāi language, but later when they accepted Assamese as their mother tongue, they started writing chronicles in the Assamese language. But their priestly classes, viz., Deodhais and Bailungs, continued the old practice of writing in their original Tāi or the Ahom language. There is no doubt that the chronicle literature

* *Pandit Hemcandra Goswāmī Racanāvalī*, ed. by B. Sarma pp. 423 425

in Assamese is undoubtedly the gift of the Ahom kings. In this connection the remark of the President of the Tezpur annual session of the Assam Literary Association (Asam Sahitya Sabha), 1920, may be relevantly cited, 'Our chronicle literature is also an incomparable wealth. No regional language can boast of possessing a systematic chronicle-literature like that of ours. The Ahom reign in our country was established in the thirteenth century. From that time the practice of writing chronicles chronologically has been in existence.'

Since the time of the acceptance of Assamese by the Ahom kings, they did a lot for development of Assamese literature and among the good deeds, the chronicle literature is the foremost one. Before the Ahoms, this country was under the reign of Hindu kings. The practice of writing history or chronicles was not in vogue among the Hindu kings. But it will be a mistake to suppose that the Hindus did not have the historical sense at all. In fact, *itihāsa* formed a part of their educational curriculum and they called it the fifth *Veda*. ...They did not mean by *itihāsa* what we understand by it today. They used the word *itihāsa* in a broader sense. Those ancient narratives which could impart knowledge of the four fundamental concepts, viz., *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, were considered *itihāsa*.

dharmārthakāmamokṣānamupadeśa I
samanvitam
purāvr̥tta kathāyuktamitihāsa pracakṣate II

Itihāsa means the traditional instruction. In ancient times the Aryans did not incorporate anything and everything of the worldly existence in *Itihāsa*, but included those which would impart knowledge on *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The Indians who believed in Fate, in addition to the impact of personal effort in the worldly cycle, could also clearly perceive the unseen working of Fate. Just as they understood the necessity of skill in leading an army by the commander, potentiality of the weapons and the heroism of the army, so also they believed in

the working of the unforeseen powers. Under such a circumstance, it is no wonder that they did not consider it worthwhile or a matter of glory to record the names of kings and description of wars and battles. For these reasons, what we mean to say today by the word 'history', there was no such literature.

In early days, the Assamese people considered the study of history as an indispensable part of their education. It was a matter of shame for gentlemen to be unaware of the history of their forefathers or of their own land. In every noble and well-to-do family chronicles were preserved. They liked history so much that not being content with the writing of their own land, they wrote chronicles of the neighbouring kingdoms including that of Bengal.

Dharāparā

It is a sonnet of the Petrarchan type composed by Goswami. The original Assamese version with its English translation is given below. The poem is complementary to 'Priyatamār Ciṭhi' quoted in the biographical part. It is taken from *Phular Caki*.

*Pelālo nahay dharā, ki dibā etiyā,
rākhilone tāhānir kathā mai kowā?
mane mane bhāl pāi mok phāki diyā,
bujilo, sudhile kiya cakure nocowā
na bowārīye yenc t̃ānote t̃ānote,
ketiyābā mukhar oraṇī khahi pare,
tomāro manar kathā dhākote dhākote
upachi paril āji ciṭhir opare
śārīye śārīya priye manar dhāuti,
ugul-thugul hai biringi pariche,
bhulat olāi parā guput bhāvti
mohārilā, kintu mor dugun chariche
eiti kihar cin ciṭhir bukat,
cuma ne virahe chepā cakulor phot,
ji ki hak āji kintu parilā thekat,
bhāl powā āru priye bhāvibānc mot?*

* Quoted from Pandit Hemcandra Goswāmī Racanāvalī

CAUGHT UNAWARES

*I have caught you unawares
What would you give me?
Have I not kept my word—
given to you in the past?
Loving me silently you feint to deny,
Now I understand, why you do not look up
When I ask you for a reply,
Like a newly wedded daughter-in-law
exposing her face by pulling at her veil too much,
In the like manner your letter
has over-flooded your feeling
Which you have repeatedly tried to conceal.
Your desire oozes in every line
indicating your wistfulness.
The erased secret feeling
which inadvertantly you scribbled
has doubled my longing.
What is this spot on the bosom of the letter?
Is it the fading mark of your kiss?
Or sign of tears pressed out
By the feeling of separation!
Whatever be it, you are in a tight position today,
Would you continue to love me?*

(translated by S. N. Sarma)

Introduction to Surjya Khari Daibajna's Darrang Raj-Vamsavali and Koch Rajahs

Assamese literature is perhaps the richest amongst the vernacular literatures in India in its unique wealth of historical and quasi-historical manuscripts. Not to speak of its numerous *Burañjis*, which are the contemporary accounts of courts written by the court scribes; there are but few families of note in Assam which do not possess a family history of their own. It is true that a large number of Assamese *puthis* were destroyed during the Burmese invasion and the Mowamaria insurrection and a large number again are annually being destroyed by flood and fire and other natural causes, and yet there exist a large number of these *puthis*, which if preserved and published, may afford valuable materials to future historians of Assam.

This book, as its name implies, is the family history of the Darrang Rajas, one of the Eastern branches of Koch Kings of Assam. At one time, the Koch Kings played a very important part in the history of Assam. After the fall of the ancient Hindu kingdom of Kamarupa, the country was divided into numerous petty estates under the Baro-Bhuyans, and it was the Koch power which brought the country again under one rule. This book gives a fairly accurate and elaborate account of the rise of the Koch power in the West, its gradual expansion in the East and the consolidation of a large and powerful kingdom comprising the whole of Assam and a large part of Eastern Bengal. It also describes at length, how this Empire was dismembered by the Ahoms on the one hand and the Muhammadans on the other, after the death of Naranarain and his worthy brother Chilarai, and how the Royal house was divided into two branches, the Eastern and the Western. The book gives a full and vivid account

of the Koch period in Assam. Sir Edward Gait has referred to this book in his *History of Assam* in the following terms :

There are numerous old manuscripts which contain some accounts of the Koch kings but by far the most detailed narrative yet brought to light is that contained in the *bamsabali* of the Darrang Rajas. This manuscript which ends abruptly with the death of Parikshit belonged to the late Raja Lakhinarain Koar, who was the leading representative of the Darrang branch of the Koch Royal family.

The author of this book was one Surjya Khari Daibajna. Sir Edward Gait, in his paper on the Koch Kings of Kamarupa, has remarked regarding the author as follows :

Surjya Hari (?) Ganaka is reported to have been the greatest Sanskrit scholar of his time in Assam. He was the author of numerous Sanskrit and Assamese works and his descendant Manbhal Mandal, holds a deed of gift dated 1720 *Saka* (1808 A.D.) by which the Ahom king made a grant of land to Surjya Hari (?) in recognition of his learning and piety.

The real name of the author is said to have been Balodeva and Surjya Khari, like Rudra Khari and Samudra Khari, was perhaps the title of his family. The author has now no direct descendant in Mangaldai, and the copper plate given to him by the Ahom Raja is reported to be in the possession of one Gunaram Daibajna, a descendant of Surjya Khari's brother. Surjya Khari is known to have written a learned commentary on the famous astronomical work *Raja-Martanda*. The author acknowledges to have written this book under the orders of Raja Samudra Narain of the Darrang family. From the genealogical table of the Darrang branch, it would appear that Samudra Narain was the son of Mahat Narain and grandson of Mod Narain

and was 7th in descent from Raghudeva, who flourished between 1581 and 1593 A.D. If 30 years are allowed for every generation, Samudra Narain's time will be found to be 1803 A.D. which very nearly agrees with the date of the deed of gift, 1720 *Saka*, mentioned by Sir Edward Gait, who has fixed the date of this book to be 1806 A.D.

The original manuscript is written on oblong strips of Sanchi bark (*aquilaria agallocha*) of the size of 5×17 inches. There are 104 folios containing 771 stanzas. The language of the *puthi* is metrical Assamese and there are 10 to 12 lines on a page, but most of the pages contain only a few lines of writing, the rest of the page being occupied by illustrations. The character in which the *puthi* is written is of the *Lahkari* type, a variety of the *Kaithali* character in vogue in Assam. The *puthi*, though more than a century old, is in a very good state of preservation.

The Kshatriya origin of the Koch Kings has been described in this book as follows:

There was a powerful king of the Lunar dynasty called Saharsarjuna who went out hunting one day with a contingent of soldiers and in the evening became the guest of Jamadagni Rishi, the father of Paraśurām. The Rishi with the help of Kāmadhenu, the fabulous cow that could grant any prayer, gave the monarch a Royal reception, befitting his dignity, beyond the expectation of the monarch. Saharsarjuna asked Jamadagni for Kāmadhenu saying that such a cow was more suited for a Royal place than a Rishi's hermitage. Jamadagni having refused to part with the cow, the king took it by force and Paraśurām, who was then away from the hermitage, having learnt the discomfiture of his saintly father, went to Saharsarjuna and fought with him and returned home triumphantly with the cow, after having beheaded the king. The sons of Saharsarjuna, with a view to retaliate their father's death, came

surreptitiously and cut off the head of Jamadagni, when he was absorbed in deep meditation, taking advantage of Paraśurām's absence from home on a pilgrimage. Paraśurām, on his return, heard the death of his father and took a vow to make the world bereft of all Kṣatriyas. He led a crusade against all the Kṣatriyas in general and sons of Saharsarjuna in particular and massacred all the sons of that king except twelve who saved themselves by taking refuge in the jungles of Assam and by concealing their identity by adopting *Mech* manners and customs and by marrying *Mech* girls.

According to this book, these 12 families were the progenitors of the Koches. Hariya Mandal, the father of Biswasinha, who was the founder of the Koch Kingdom, is said to have been the chief of these 12 families.

As the Ahom Raj family is known to have derived its origin from Indra, the Lord of Heaven, the Koch Raj family is known also to have sprung from Siva, the principal deity of the Hindu pantheon. This book furnishes the legendary account, how the Koch Raj family came to be known as *Śiva Baṁṣī* and it runs as follows:

One day Hariya Mandal was working in his cotton field and his wife Hirā carried his food to the field and Śiva saw Hirā on her way and was enamoured of her beauty and had intercourse with her in the guise of her husband, Hariya. Biswasinha was born of this union, who was known as Bisu in his childhood from the fact of his being born, it is said, on a *Bihu* day.

Bisu was a born hero. His superior intelligence and uncommon courage is manifest even in his childish activities; he was recognised as a leader by his youthful comrades almost from his childhood. As he grew up he fought bravely with the neighbouring Bhuyans and brought them all under his sway.

The Bhuyans of Auguri and Luki, Phulguri and Bijni, were subdued one by one till he made himself the master of a dominion extending as far as Karatoya in the West and Barnadi in the East. He installed himself as a king and assumed the name of Biswasinha.

The book mentions that Biswasinha marched at the head of a large army against the Ahoms but had to return unsuccessful owing to shortness of provisions and difficulties in the journey. He is said to have died after a reign of 25 years and was succeeded by his son Mallanarain *alias* Naranarayana, who appointed his brother Sukladvaja *alias* Sangrama Sinha his Prime Minister.

As soon as Naranarain assumed the charge of his father's kingdom, he made preparation to proceed against the Ahom king and ordered his brother Gohain Kamala to construct a great road from Cooch Behar to Parasuram Kunda and dig tanks at a distance of every half a day's journey. Gohain Kamala completed the road within one year's time working day and night and Naranarain marched against the Ahoms at the head of a large army, commanded by his brother Sangrama Sinha *alias* Chilarai. Naranarain entered the Ahom capital at Garhgaon, almost without any opposition on account of his superior force and the Ahom King fled away to Charai Khorong. Sangram Sinha crossed the Bhairabi river on horseback and earned the nick-name of Chilarai from the Ahoms. Naranarain lived at the Ahom capital for about a year and finding that still the Ahom King would not stir out of his hiding place, sent a messenger to him demanding battle or the acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Koch power. The Ahom King then sent presents and acknowledged the Koch supremacy by a letter through Sundar Kumar and the Koch King was much pleased with them and proceeded against Demera to invade the country of Harmeswar. He was accompanied by Kabinda Patra, Rajendra Patra, Damodar Karji, and Megha Mukdum. The King of Heramba, frightened at the approach of Chilarai, made some valuable presents to him and acknowledged his

supremacy. From there, Naranarain proceeded to Manipur and obtained the homage of the Raja of Manipur. Then they entered the Jayanta country. The Raja of Jayanta offered resistance and there was a big battle in which the King of Jayanta was killed and his soldiers were put to flight. Naranarain took pity on the King's son and enthroned him as the King of Jayanta and gave him permission to strike coins in his own name. From there Naranarain sent his brother Chilarai to conquer Tripura, at the head of 40,000 troops. A very sanguinary battle was fought between Chilarai and the Raja of Tripura which ended in the death of the King of Tripura and the total collapse of his army. The brother of the Tripura King, went to Naranarain with some valuable presents and put himself under the suzerainty of the Koch King, who sent him back to his country with permission to rule over his country. The Chief of Khyrim heard of the valour of the Koch king and forthwith went to him and acknowledged his supremacy. The Koch King, then entered the kingdom of Dimarua Raja, who was a descendant of Mriganka Raja and captured the Raja in a battle and made him a prisoner. Then the victorious army proceeded to Sylhet where they fought a fierce battle with the Nawab of that place and, the Nawab fell in the battle and lost his troops. The Nawab's brother Asi Rai was enthroned as the Nawab. From Sylhet they returned to Kamrup and went to Nilachal where they found the relics of an old temple. The king thought of re-building the temple but told his brother first to invade Gaura and Chilarai accordingly marched at the head of a large army and arrived at the kingdom of Gaureswar after some days. A severe battle took place which continued for 10 days without cessation, in which Chilarai lost his troops and was made a prisoner. After some time, the mother of the *Patsa* was bitten by a snake and all the physicians of his country failed to cure her. Chilarai heard of this and cured her by treating her with *Mantras* whereupon he was released and sent back to his home. Naranarain then ordered Megha Mukdum to proceed at once to rebuild the temple of Kamakhya, which was in ruins. They tried their best to rebuild the temple with stones like before

but not being successful, they had to rebuild it with bricks. It is said in the *puthi* that every brick, used in its construction, was baked in *ghee*. It took six months to rebuild the temple and the king and his brother Chilarai came and formally dedicated the temple to the Goddess by offering one lac of sacrifices. They returned home after putting up their stone images in the temple and making suitable rewards to Megha Mukdum under whose supervision the temple was rebuilt. Naranarain constructed many roads and temples, and dug many tanks, and planted many trees, at different places and he established food depots and water depots to provide food and water for weary travellers.

Akbar, the Emperor of Delhi, made friendship with Naranarain, and asked him in a letter to join him in making a combined assault on Gaura. Naranarain agreed to this proposal whereupon Akbar sent Mansingha at the head of a strong army and the Koch King also joined hands with them and the ruler of Gaura fled away to the dominions of the Firinghee and his dominion was divided between Naranarain and Akbar. The Ganges was made the common boundary between the Koch and Muhammadan territories.

Naranarain was a great patron of literature. He assembled a council of pandits and entrusted Purusottam with the preparation of a Sanskrit grammar, and asked Ramsaraswati to translate the *Mahabharat*, *Ramayan* and the 18 *Puranas* and asked Sankar Deva to translate *Bhagawat* and requested Sridhara to prepare *Sadhya Kanda*, a book on astronomy and asked Bakul Kayastha to translate *Lilavati*, a book on mathematics. They made all these books and were fittingly rewarded for their labours.

Chilarai was not only a great warrior but a Sanskrit scholar of no mean repute. He died of small-pox leaving a son called Raghudeva. Naranarain had no sons till then and he brought up Raghudeva just like his own son. After some time a son was born to Naranarain who was called Lakshminarain. Raghudeva expected to succeed

Naranarain but the birth of Lakshminarain took away all his hopes and he wanted to leave the country on some pretext. He went towards the east and established himself at Bijaypur. Naranarain called him back to his capital but Raghudeva refused to go. Raghudeva then attacked Bahirbund whereupon Naranarain went to fight with Raghudeva but Raghudeva with a view to put Naranarain to shame sent his wives on horseback to fight with him. Naranarain enquired who those fair warriors were and when he came to know that they were no other than his own daughters-in-law he was put to great shame and abandoned the battle and bade them go home. He then divided his Kingdom between Raghudeva and Lakshminarain and made the Sonkosh the common boundary of their dominions.

Raghudeva had several sons born to him including Parikshit and Balinarain. He did many pious deeds and his savings amounted to 3 crores of rupees which he had buried under the steps of his palace. Only one Gadadhar Bhandari knew this secret and the king told him to show this treasure to his son only at the time of real danger. Raghudeva had 18 sons and several daughters and he reigned for 32 years. A *sannyasi* came to Radhudeva's court and he won over the tender heart of his son Parikshit. Raghudeva told Parikshit not to keep company with the *sannyasi*, and the *sannyasi* heard of this and got enraged with the king and had him killed by setting a devil on him. At the time of Raghudeva's death Parikshit was living at Kamakhya and as soon as he heard of his father's death, he hastened home and became king and found the treasury quite empty. He asked the treasurer Gadadhar what had become of his father's treasure. The latter however never disclosed the secret of this hidden treasure to him and perhaps this vast wealth is still lying buried under the earth. Parikshit out of disgust removed his capital to North Gauhati near Aswakranta and enthroned himself there as king and struck coins in his name. Like his father, he also attacked Bahirbund, and Lakshminarain was much enraged at this. There was a fight between them in which Lakshminarain met with serious reverses and lost his brother. Lakshminarain went to Delhi and

took the help of the Emperor by marrying his sister to him. The Emperor of Delhi befriended him and sent an army under Paran Subha and Makram Khan, with orders to take Parikshit as a captive to Delhi. They fought and captured Parikshit and took him to Delhi as a prisoner. The Emperor effected a compromise between Lakshminarain and Parikshit and both of them returned home but Parikshit died at Allahabad.

When Parikshit was taken a captive by the Muhammadans his brother Balinarain thought it unsafe to live at Bijaypur and went away to Darrang. He sought the protection of the Ahom King, who received him cordially and made him Raja of Darrang and promised to drive away the Mogals from his country. He was called Dharmanarain by the Ahom king for his religious disposition. Then the Ahom king despatched a strong army to fight with the Musalmans and the Assamese fought them successfully and drove them out of the country and returned to Assam after having fixed their western boundary at Karatoya. The *puthi* ends here rather abruptly.

The abrupt ending and the absence of the usual colophon at the end, would naturally raise suspicion in the mind of the reader about the completeness of this work. Perhaps a number of leaves are missing at the end, perhaps the complete manuscript extended up to a much later period of history. The book, though a quasi-historical poem, gives a fairly full and accurate account of the illustrious Royal House founded by Biswasinha more than 400 years ago.

There are numerous other books in the Assamese language dealing with the history of the Koch Kings, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole of the ancient literature of Assam is full of appreciative references to the benevolent Koch rulers of the past. It is hoped that the publication of this book may awaken an interest in the minds of our educated young men in the historical literature of our country and will serve also to help in restoring the old happy relations that existed between Cooch Behar and Assam.

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- 14) The Prime Minister's (of Cakradhvaj Siṅha) letter to the Jayantiyā King (*Bānhi*, Vol. viii, No. 2.)
- 15) The Jayantiya King's letter to Cakradhvaj Siṅha (*Bānhi*, Vol. viii, No. 3.)
- 16) The Nartāṅgiyā Khāsi King's letter to Cakradhvaj Siṅha (*Bānhi*, Vol. viii, No. 2).
- 17) The Jayantiyā King's letter to the Prime Minister of Cakradhvaj Siṅha (*Bānhi*, Vol. viii, No. 2.)

- 18) The Nartāṅgiyā King's letters to the Āhom King and his Prime Minister and Barbarua.
- 19) The Āhom King's letter to the King of Jayantāpur (*Bānhi*, Vol. viii, No. 3).

(VII) *Posthumous Publications*

- 1) *Ghorānidān*, a work on equestrian diseases and remedies, critically edited by Hemchandra. It was published by the Government of Assam, 1930.
- 2) *Kāmaratna-tantra*, an old Assamese rendering of Gorakṣanāthas work. It came out of the Assam Secretarial Press in 1929.

(VIII) *Unpublished Works and Papers*

It has already been mentioned in the main body of this work that the *Kathā-Bhāgavata* and a collection of twelve devotional plays composed by the two Vaishnavite saints Śankara and Mādhava known as *Bāra Aṅkiyā Nāṭ* were printed while he was alive and considerable progress was made as known from his diary. But after his sudden death, as nobdly persued the matter the printed files along with the press copies disappeared. He left a large number of unpublished literary, historical and miscellaneous articles numbering more than sixty. A list of these articles prepared by S. Katakī was published by the Assam Research Society (Kāmrup Amusandhā Samiti) in 1931. But unfortunately, the entire lot of articles was appropriated by somebody who never brought them to light. Therefore, no useful purpose would be served by merely reproducing the titles.

On Hemchandra Goswami

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