

Chapter-II

Background

The legacy left by the predecessors to the posterity, the surrounding contemporary cultural, intellectual, political and economic conditions, and the experiences of personal life must have played an important role in the growth of historical perspective of S.K.Bhuyan and thus in molding the character and features of his historical writings. The purpose of this chapter is not to give minute analysis of the background of historical writing of S.K.Bhuyan, but to refer those aspects or issues, which left some impacts in the writings of S.K.Bhuyan.

In **Ancient Kamrup**, prior to the advent of the Ahoms to the Brahmaputra valley, some treaties were written and some of the rulers of Kamrup engraved edicts, which bear traces of conscious effort of their creators to record their own activities, and the social, religious and political conditions of the land. Religious scriptures like KALIKA PURANA (10th. C. A.D.) and YOGINI TANTRA (16th. C. A.D) also contain some historical information. But these writings can neither be termed as historical writings nor were they written with such purposes. They can be utilized as the source materials of Assam history.

Advent of the Ahoms:

But with the advent of the Ahoms there took place an abrupt occurrence in the history of history writing in Assam with the traditional practice of writing chronicles (The Buranjis) by the Ahoms. In fact, history writing, in the true sense of the term, started in Assam in this period. The chronicles or the 'Buranjis', although crude in nature, they were written with the sole purpose of recording the past. Much

has been discussed and many scholars have done research work, on the 'Buranjis' in modern time. S.K.Bhuyan did much to bring into the notice of the readers about the subject matter, salient features, their merits and demerits and their importance as source material for the reconstructions of Assam history. Later on, Dr. Lila Gogoi did his research work on the historical literature of Assam i.e. on the 'Buranjis'.

The process of giving final written shape to the Buranjis was lengthy and painstaking as everything related to it were done manually. This happened to all other writings in those days. Particularly the process of preparing the '*Sanchi-Pat*'¹ (used as folios in most of the ancient and medieval manuscripts) and the 'ink'² were lengthy. With the transition of the polity and culture of the Ahom government, transition took place in the features of the 'Buranjis' also. It was started to write the Buranjis in Assamese language also, (in addition to the original Ahom language) and 'Saka era' of year counting began to be used in place of the original Ahom 'Lakli era'. Both Nature and human factors caused harm and destruction to many of the Buranjis. Generally these Buranjis were looked with religious sanctity like the religious scriptures and they were called '*Puthis*', a term, which is generally used in Assamese to mean the scriptures. However much among them, were preserved and recovered, are abundant and reveal thorough history of the Ahom Period. Description of the events or of the activities of the government in detail is a salient feature of these 'Buranjis'. Buranjis were written in the auspices and patronage of the Ahom monarchs and nobles. Government storehouse of records and documents were utilized in the compilation of the Buranjis. Government supervision was there. Things related to the government only were to be recorded, (as per the instruction of

¹ Gait has given the process of preparing the *Sanchi* leaf the list. Appendix-D, p.375

² Gogoi, Lila-The Buranjis: Historical Literature of Assam, pp.325-326; Bhuyan S.K.-Studies in the Literature of Assam, p.51.

the monarch)³. Many others prepared transcripts from the original ones. The Ahom government was semi-feudal in nature. Education was traditional and non-institutional in general and so literacy was confined among limited few. Knowledge of science (in the modern sense of the term) and so the scientific temperament of the people, naturally lacked to a great degree. All these influenced the nature of the 'Buranjis'. Although the act of writing 'Buranji' was done with sanctity and sincerity to truth, these were not written with systematic observation and arrangements. So, in spite of their feature of discernible objectivity superstitions, myths, miracles, hearsay, exaggeration in descriptions, racial or other biasness and contradiction in information (at least nominally) are not totally absent in these Buranjis.

Study of the 'Buranjis' reveals that, conservative elements worked behind the perspective and tradition of writing 'Buranjis'. Preservation of dynastic and genealogical purity and glory, political training and education of the princes and nobles, record of the diplomatic relations with neighbouring ruling powers were the main purposes behind the practice of 'Buranji'-writing. The writers realized it well that record of true information would serve these purposes. In a nutshell, the perspective in the 'Buranjis' was feudalistic in nature and 'Buranjis' were the handbooks of the ruling class.

The historical writings or the reconstructed histories of Assam, compiled in the British period were written up basically with the help of these ready-made source materials supplied by the Buranjis. New western ideas of historiography obviously penetrated into most of the writings of British period. But, the positive and negative features of the Buranjis' had left some impacts in the later writings, i.e. in the writings of the British Period.

³ ABSM, Introduction, p. xxxvii

Advent of the British:

Some of the inherent weaknesses of the Ahom monarchy finally appeared as the conflict of power hunger among the nobles towards the end of the Ahom rule. This power hunger had brought fatal consequences to the Ahom monarchy. The Moamaria uprising and the invitation to the foreign invader by a section of Ahom nobility resulting at the Burmese invasions in Assam are the culmination of these consequences. Failure of the Ahom government to resist the Burmese invaders brought not only the end of the Ahom rule in 1824 but also, limitless sufferings were caused to the common masses. Invasions of the Burmese in Assam and then their intrusion into the British territory provided a rightful cause, opportunity and pretext to the British power, ruling at that time in the rest part of India, to occupy Assam and thus the British rule was introduced in Assam. All knows this episode.

Introduction of British rule in Assam brought different changes in the **society** (culture, education etc.) **polity** (system and nature of government, administration, paid Servants etc.) **political atmosphere** and **economy** of the land. Advent of the missionaries, advent of the printing machine, newspapers and magazines, advent of the Bengali clerks as the servants of company government, introduction of institutional education for people were the bye-products of the advent of the British rulers. Multifaceted reaction started in various sections of the Assamese population in particular and in the 'national' life of the Assamese people in general, with all these new developments.

Introduction of **foreign rule** in Assam wounded the sentiment of independence-loving Assamese people. But it created great discontentment among the ruling class of the Ahom rule, who lost their power and privileges. This discontentment found reflection in the early anti-British resistance movement of the

1930's. But in general, considering the British new comers as the rescuer from the sufferings caused by the Burmese vandalism and as founder of comparative peace and tranquility, the common people tried to get adapted in the status quo.

The system of **new taxation system**, which was to be paid in cash, and which gradually become harsh caused discontentment among the taxpayers and this dissatisfactions found expression in the peasant's movements, which broke out in different places of Assam after 1860.

Introduction of **institutional education** helped to spread education among common people as well as among the upper class of the Assamese society. Among these educated people, a group of student came out who proved to be apt for higher education, and those, whose family could afford financial support, went to Calcutta (The first college of Assam, Cotton college was founded in 1901 but the first University at Bengal was founded in 1858.) or even to London for higher education. Government services in various departments were avenues and impetus to the learning of western education. Bengal, particularly Calcutta, had already progressed much in western education. England had been the world center of material western education at that time. The Assamese students experienced the both. The experience of the cultural, literary, educational and material changes in Bengal created an urge and sense of responsibility among the newly educated Assamese youth to do for the society, to which they belonged. The personal self-respect, confidence, developments of these learned community were dependent much upon the identity, glory, power and might of the society to which they belonged and vice versa. Progress in the west, - literary and cultural; features of the western civilization, developments in science and technologies created new vision among these newly educated Assamese students. Thus a new intelligentsia emerged out in Assamese

society with widened intellectual horizon, widened vision and expectations. Ideas and zeal in their intellectual activities were new, but the raw materials were indigenous, in which Assam had been rich from long past. The new intelligentsia searched the elements for their creations and glory in the culture and history of the land. Thus the Assamese renaissance started.

Advent of the **Bengali clerks and officials** to Assam as the servants of the British government caused significant consequences and reactions in Assamese society. For their convenience, these Bengali speaking British servants explained it before their foreign masters that Assamese language is not an independent language, but a perverted colloquial form of Bengali Language. The British administrations, without sufficient knowledge about the people to be ruled by them, readily accepted the explanation and probably thought that introduction of Bengali would be great it resulted in the introduction of Bengali as the medium of instruction in the schools and as the official language in the courts and offices in 1936. The horde of Bengali outsiders poured as teachers and as clerks in the schools and offices in Assam. Wherever they got the opportunity, they created noise in the Assamese ears with the eulogies of superiority of the Bengalis and inferiority of the Assamese. This created a feeling of hatred among the Assamese people against the Bengali people and the Bengali language. This embitterment of Assamese-Bengali relation gradually became more extant in later than the time when the Bengali was introduced. Introduction of a language, not known to the students created a set back in learning and education in Assam. There are ample evidences of this hatred in the contemporary and later Assamese literature. Some of the people showed inclination to grow with the obstacles and hazards and to the acceptance of them. But a group of patriotic educated Assamese people vehemently opposed this move of introducing

Bengali as official language in Assam. This anti Bengali reaction left some impacts in taking a sharp chauvinistic turn of the patriotism of the Assamese people in general and intelligentsia in particular. Finally the Assamese language was re-installed in its respectful position in 1973.

Advent of the Missionaries:

Advent of the Missionaries into Assam was another important event for the social and cultural life of the Assamese society. The American Baptist missionaries were invited by the British administration to domicile a few imbecile tribal groups living in the eastern frontier of Assam with the teaching of Christ⁴. The region had strategic importance for the British rulers. Besides they proposed in this way to find out a new route of communication with china through this region. The American Baptist mission arrived at Calcutta from Burma in 25 September of 1835 and took initial steps to inculcate the people of the proposed land. They arrived at Sadiya with a press in 23 March, of 1836. Later they shifted their center to Jaipur (1838) due to Khamti uprising and finally it was shifted to Sibsagar in 1843.

To solve the problem of their ignorance of the language of the people, among whom they wanted to spread Christianity, and to run the other missionary activities, they were compelled to learn the language and so to write up Anglo-Assamese dictionary and Assamese grammar. These attempts and intimacy to the language make them aware of the independent character of the language from the Bengali language. Their attachment with the language and with the people; led them to a position to oppose the action of the government to introduce Bengali as the official language. They realized the problem of Assamese students to learn something with a language, which was not their mother tongue. The mission founded its **printing**

⁴ Barpujari, H.K -American Missionaries and the Nineteenth Century Assam, p.5

machine at Sibsagar in 1843 to carry out their printing activities. They published the monthly magazine ORUNODOI in 1846. Though the magazine was an organ of mission for publishing the teachings of the Christ, news of different interest was also published in this magazine. This magazine became the first window for the Assamese society to look into the rest part of the world. Assamese language took new form in the hand of these new learners and this change was the starting point of the modern Assamese language. Along with the other materials, a few Buranjis were published in series in this magazine. Nathan Brown, the first editor of the magazine engaged in another mission of collecting the manuscripts of the Buranjis. In later, many others continued this mission of collecting manuscript after Nathan Brown.

This magazine inspired and gave opportunity to the people of Assam to read more and created a group of writers among the Assamese people. Thus an intellectual vibration was started among the people with new thinking.

The advent of the printing press in Assam (and also in other parts of India). publication of magazines one after another, not only developed a writing and reading habit among the people, but also produced impact on the habit of Assamese people to preserve the Assamese manuscripts. Gradually the grip of the people to preserve manuscripts hereditarily was weakened and the manuscripts began to come out from the hereditary repositories of the manuscript preserving families.⁵

The seeds of national consciousness sowed in Assamese literature during the Orunodoi phase (1846-1870) of Assamese literature germinated in the Hemchandra-Gunabhiram phase (1870-1890). The attempt for self-defense of the Assamese language in the Orunodoi-Hemchandra-Gunabhiram phase (1845-1870) took shape of a movement for consolidation and flourishing in the phase of Romanticism (1889-

⁵ DHAS bulletin-2, p.5

1940) of Assamese literature. The evolutionary changes of the historical writing of Assam are knitted and entangled with the changes in the Assamese language and literature. The factors responsible for the changes of the Assamese language & literature were equally responsible for the changes in historical writings also.

Tea plantation:

Introduction of tea plantation by the British in Assam was an equally important event in the history of Assam. British merchants acquired huge lands at nominal tax or as a tax-free land in Assam and founded the tea gardens. Large numbers of laborers were imported to Assam from mid and northern India, as the tea laborers, who were low-cost or cost-free. Lands were snatched away from the Assamese owners, new group of people entered into the traditional demographic structure of Assam. But some Assamese people were employed in the offices of the Gardens in clerical or other lower level services. Some capable Assamese enthusiast also started to found tea gardens.⁶ It is noteworthy that Maniram Dewan was the first Assamese and Indian tea gardener. Amalendu Guha has traced the threshold of modern political consciousness with the activities of Manirm Dewan and Anandaram Dhekialphukan.⁷ The nationalism with dichotomy of these two were continued and had remained the dominant tune of Assamese nationalism long after them. The ideas behind, factors responsible for them and nature of the modernism and nationalism, which originated in Anandaram Dhekialphukan exists in the writings of S.K.Bhuyan also.

⁶ 'Even though no concessional land grants were made available to him, he came forward to establish two small proprietary tea gardens of his own, which were confiscated by the state after his execution for treason in 1858. Incidentally, the second notable Assamese tea planter was Rosheswar Barua, who established about half dozen tea gardens in the sixties, but could not survive the tea crisis of 1866-69. In the same crisis, sixteen India tea gardens in Goalpara district alone were literally nipped in their buds'-Guha, Amalendu- Planter-Raj to Swaraj, p.21

⁷ Guha, Amalendu- Planter-Raj to Swaraj, pp. 18-23.

Thus **the widened money economy**, during the British rule in Assam, created a new Assamese gentry. All these gave a new boosting to the literary activities also. Those, who were benefited with the new economy naturally, remained loyal British administration and admirer of it and those who were aggrieved got discontent with it. The British rulers were greatly satisfied with the situation in, and people of Assam. Discovery of tea in Assam, cultivable lands and climate for tea provided them a relief from anxiety caused due to recent uncertainty in commercial relation with china, which had the monopoly of tea trade at that time,⁸ an alternative to what they lost in China⁹ and reduced a great distance of marine route for supplying tea to Europe, Besides they discovered petroleum and other mineral resources in Assam. Timber and other forest products were also lucrative resources for them. The political condition of Assam also was comparatively favorable to them. In the days of Moamaria uprising they were repeatedly requested to intervene in the affairs of Assam and to stay longer in Assam to help the Assamese ruling class. In the time of Burmese invasion also, their advent became a cause of comparative peace in Assam. The anti-British movements proved to be sporadic and unorganized. These economic and political factors made the British administration to some extent, friendly to the land the people.

The British administrators:

It is noteworthy; that the education, language and literature of Assam suffered a temporary setback due to language policy of the British Government and the British administrators did very less for the uplift of the language in comparison to those done by the missionaries. Of course, British administration took some important steps in the historical studies of Assam. Colonial interest obviously had

⁸Griffith, Sir Percival -The History of the Indian Tea Industry, p.37

⁹ Smith V.A.- The Oxford History of India, p.712

compelled them to do so. They were to understand complicated traditional land tenancy system prevalent in Assam and among the tribes of Assam to introduce the new one. They had to know the geography, custom, traditions, population structures, castes and creeds, religions, traditional land-tenure system and sentiments of the people of the land, which they were going to rule. Study of history was a political and administrative requirement for the British. Study and observation on Geography, topography, and natural resources of the land was necessary for and motivated with economic vision of these commercial and colonial enthusiastic adventurers. Skilled mind of this trading community with global trading experience, and modern equipments made it possible to carry out systematic observation in the aforesaid areas. At the same time, the British civil servants in Assam (in other part of India also) were mostly well educated and products of the reputed universities of Great Britain. The scholastic bent of these administrators was also conducive to their activities in the studies in the history of Assam as an academic pursuit. All these introduced new features in the historiography of Assam. Thus the European history writers added in Assam history the new feature of relative study, i.e. the study of polity, economy, geography, anthropology and culture, entangled with each other and enriched it with information collected with more minute observation.

Brief sketch of the historical activities and writings till the time of S.K.Bhuyan:

That, a huge number of Buranjis of different size, period covered, and subject matters were written during the Ahom period, has already been mentioned. A huge number of them were recovered by different agencies during the British period. Many of them edited by Nathan Brown, H.C. Goswami, S.K. Bhuyan, Pratap

Chandra Choudhuri, S.K.Datta, and were published in magazines in series or in independent volumes of Books. A lot of them have not yet been published.

Pre-Orunodoi Period:

In 1929 **Haliram Dhekial Phukan's** 'ASSAM BURANJI' was published. It was composed in Bengali Language and was the first printed books on Assam history written by an Assamese. **Mani Ram Dewan** wrote 'BURANJI VIVEK RATNA' in 1838. (Part-II, Edited by Nagen Saikia, D.U.-March, 2002.) **Bisweswar Bidyadhip** wrote 'BELIMARAR BURANJI' is verse (1833-38). This book is incorporated in 'ASOMAR PADYA BURANJI' (DHAS).

Orunodoi Period (1846-1870):

This period of Assamese literature is very important for the historiography of Assam. The initiative to collect, to preserve and to publish them was first taken by the American Baptist mission. The 'ASOM BURANJI' of **Kashinath Tamuli Phukan** was published from mission's press in 1844 with the financial aid of P. A. Captain Brode. Seven chapters of 'KAMRUPAR BURANJI' (Chapter3-4, 6-9) of anonymous writer were firstly collected by Nathan Brown, the first editor of the magazine during his stay at Sibsagar (and later in 1930 this was published by the DHAS). In 1853 these chapters were published in the ORUNODOI. In this very magazine, the chapters of the chronicle 'PURANI ASSAMESE BURANJI' from 'Khunlung Khunlai to Nariya Raja' were published in 22 installments in ORUNODOI from August 1850 to 1852. Nathan Brown got this chronicle translated from Ahom Language to Assamese¹⁰ The paragraphs, 1- 136 of 'DEODHAI ASAM BURANJI', which was published by DHAS in October 1932, belong to the same chronicle. Articles on 'Death of Purandar Singha' (Oct. 1846), the 'Chutiya Buranji' (Dec. 1850), and 'funeral system' of the Ahoms were published in the same

¹⁰ Barpujari, H.K- American Missionaries and the Nineteenth Century Assam, p. 62

magazine. Apart from the recovering and publishing the manuscripts, the Orunodoi Scholars started, study of numismatics, anthropology in Assam, worked for spread of education, and eradicate social prejudices.¹¹ 'Orunodoi era' was the new dawn of modern life and historiography of Assam.

In addition to this Magazine, the letters and journal of the mission provide valuable information about the land and the people of Assam. This information include population, climate, ethnic structure, natural resources, Agriculture and commerce, food habit, dress, behavior, customs and prejudices, use of Liquor and opium, caste system, nobles, priests, Satras, various religions sects, degradation of the priestly class gradual modernization, and political events etc.

In Orunodoi period **Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan** (1829-1859) wrote a few historical articles viz- 'BHARAT VARSAR SANKHYEP BURANJI', 'ASOM DESHAR SANKHYEP BURANJI', 'ASOM DESH SHATRUE AKRAMAN KARA KATHA'¹². His article 'INGLANDAR BIBARAN'¹³ contains the message of modernism and Assamese 'nationalism'.

In this period, two writers, who were not influenced by the ideas of Orunodoi phase, **Duti Ram Hazarika** and **Harakanta Barua Sadaramin** wrote two chronicles. Dutiram Hazarika wrote the metrical 'KALI BHARAT BURANJI' in 1862, which is also incorporated in the 'ASAMAR PADYA BURANJI'. He wrote this chronicle at the order of Prince Kameswar Singha. Harakanta Sarma Barua Sadaramin enlarged and revised the Kashinath Tamuli Puakan's 'ASOM BURANJI' with the title 'ASSAM BURANJI' (DHAS-March, 1930). This was composed during 1870 to 1880.

Hemchandra- Gunabhiram Period (1870-1890):

¹¹ Neog, Maheswar- Ed. Orunodoi, pp. 96-106

¹² Bharali, Hemanta Kumar- Ahezar Basarar Eksha Garaki Assamiya Vol-I, page-160

¹³ Neog, Maheswar op. cit., pp.128-132)

In this period patriotism and national consciousness found expression with high tune in the Assamese literature. **Gunabhiram Barua** (1834-1894) wrote 'ASSAM BURANJI' (New Arya press, Calcutta-1884) in this very period. His historical articles like, 'ASAMAT BAUDDHA DHARMAR CHIN', 'ASAMAT KAULINYA PRATHA NAI KIYA' and 'ALIKHIT BURANJI'¹⁴ were published in 'JONAKI'. He wrote 'ASAM-ATIT ARU BARTAMAN' in 'ASAM BANDHU'.

Romantic Period 1889 –1940:

This is the flourishing period of historical writings and activities like that of the creative Assamese literature. British Administration British writer and Assamese scholars contributed invaluable historical works in this period.

Role of C.J. Lyle, the then chief commissioner, Sir Edward Gait (in Assam- 1891-1897/b.1863-d.1950) and Cunningham, then D.P.I., Assam (1912-31) did lot for the recovery of manuscripts of Buranjis and other historical records in this very period. The two Government Departments the DEPARTMENT OF ETHNOGRAPHY (1894) and the DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN STUDIES, ASSAM (DHAS-1928) were founded in this very period. Edward Gait composed the "HISTORY OF ASSAM" which was published in 1905. This book was written with systematic, objective and scientific approach. "A HISTORY OF ASSAM" was the first Assam history written in English. This book has proved to be monumental in the historiography of Assam. Some writers and scholars like **Rajani Kanta Bardaloi** (1867-1940) and **Hemchandra Goswami** (1872-1928) were creation of the direct contact and influence of Edward Gait. Rajani Kanta Bardaloi is known as the Scott of Assam for his writings of historical novels. H.C. Goswami played a very important role in the Historiography of Assam. He was a source of inspiration for S.K.Bhuyan. His name is mainly associated with

¹⁴ Bharali, Hemanta Kumar- op. cit. - p.176

the task of collecting huge number of manuscripts on government deputation. He compiled the 'DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF ASSAMESE MANUSCRIPTS'. It was his hard effort, which brought the KAMRUP ANUSANDHAN SAMITI (KAS) into existence in 1912. What S.K. Bhuyan was to the DHAS, H.C. Goswami was, in the same way, to the KAS. This non-government organization worked for collecting, preserving and publishing the ancient *puthis* and other source materials of Assam history. This organization had another agenda to carry out research work and to maintain a library. H.C. Goswami was the founder president of this organization. He presided this organization until his death (except the times when had to stay outside Guwahati on official duty).

H.C. Goswami composed about 250 articles and about 15 books on history of Assam.¹⁵ To carry out the activities of historical studies, he resigned from government service. 'PURANI ASAM BURANJI' was edited by H.C. Goswami and was published by the KAMRUP ANUSANDHAN SAMITI.

The Activities of H.C. Goswami and of the KAS was great importance for the growth of S.K. Bhuyan as a historian. The KAS had already set the ideals for S.K. Bhuyan, what he continued in later period through the DHAS. H.C. Goswami collected ancient manuscripts, prepared catalogues systematically and preserved them. He persuaded the government for such activities, received government grants. The way, in which Dr. Bhuyan edited and published the chronicles, H.C. Goswami & the KAS had already started it. The stage of Serious Historical studies of S.K. Bhuyan started with this organization.

It has been mentioned that the advent of the British rulers and the American Baptist Mission gave a new impetus to the historical studies in Assam, which was

¹⁵ Bharali, Hemanta Kumar- Ahezhar Basarar Eksha Garaki Assamiya, Vol-I, p.271, and Sarma. Benudhar – (Ed.) -Pandit Hemchandra Rachanavali

temporarily got set back in a lost cultural and intellectual enthusiasm and environment caused by political turmoil of Moamaria uprising and Burmese invasions. As modernity came to every sphere of life, it penetrated to the intellectual arena also. As exclusive medieval ecclesiastical touch in literature and conservative touch in historiography was withdrawn, miracles, prejudices, tradition, hearsays, were also gradually started to disappear in the historical writings of the period also. Gradually the Assamese educated person developed self-respect and confidence and became conscious with their identity. They made attempt to establish it and to expand it. It was felt more necessary in the widened all Indian and Global platform. It necessitated vigorous search for the roots of their self-identity, the past glory and so to make vigorous labor in re-constructing the history of the land. New western ideas and methodologies were experimented. Systematic study of demographic pattern, relative study of Geography and History, Economy and History, archeological observation, study of epigraphs, excavations were started in this period.

With the Foundation of the literary organization 'ASOMIA BHASAR UNNATI SADHINI SOBHA' in 1889 and the publication of the magazine 'JONAKI' (1889), the age of Romanticism in Assamese literature was started. Along with the other literary aims, the organization proposed to (i) collect the ancient *puthis* and publish them, (ii) to collect the social and religious traditions of Assam and to (iii) publish the Buranjis. **Lakshminath Bezbaruah** (1868 - 1938), the priest of the Romanticism in Assamese Literature, translated the E. Marsden's 'HISTORY OF INDIA' with the title BHARAT BURANJI in two volumes (1907). H.C. Goswami and **Kanaklal Barua** (1872 -1943) were avowed to discover ancient culture and glory the Assamese people through out their lives. Kanaklal Barua compiled his "EARLY HISTORY OF KAMRUPA" (1933) and several historical

articles, which were later, compiled in one volume in 'THE STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF KAMRUPA'. Kanaklal Barua made hard effort to establish a Museum in Assam and it resulted in the foundation of Assam provincial Museum in 1940. **Rajani Kanta Bordaloï**, wrote his famous historical novels viz., MIRIJIYARI (1894), MANOMATI (1900), DANDUADROH (1929), RANGILI (1925) RAHDOI LIGIRI (1930), RADHA-RUKMINIR RAN' (1925), 'TAMRESWARI MANDIR' AND NIRMAL BHAKAT (1926). **Padmanath Gohain Barua** (1871-1946), the first president of 'ASAM SAHITYA SABHA' wrote) 'ASAMAR BURANJI' (1899) 'BURANJI BODH' and 'HINDU BURANJI'¹⁶ **Benudhar Sarma** (1894-1981) was a contemporary of S.K. Bhuyan. He composed 'SATAWAN SAAL' (1927), 'MANI RAM DEWAN' (1950); 'KANGRESAR KASIYALI RADAT' (1959) and 'DAKHINPAT SATRAR BURANJI' (1868)¹⁷ along with his literary writings. **Hiteswar Barbarua** (1876-1939) started to write 1915 and towards the end of life completed his voluminous work 'AHOMAR DIN'. It was published in 1981.

It has already been mentioned about the birth of 'ORUNODOI' and 'JONAKI'. 'ORUNODOI' gave an impetus to the birth of a galaxy of news papers and magazines in Assam both in English and Assamese.¹⁸ Among them some important magazines were USHA (1906-1916, 1940-41), BANHI (1910-1929, 1934-1936), JONAKI (1889-1893), BIJULI (1890-1892), BONTI (1910-1917), AVAHAN (1929-1962), ASAM BILASHINI (1871-83), ASAM BANDHU (1885). These magazines were edited by renowned Assamese littérateur of that time and created a class of new writers. Some of them in later time contributed invaluable in different intellectual area of Assam. These magazines published articles on history

¹⁶ Bharali, Hemanta Kumar –op. cit., p.263

¹⁷ Sarma, Satyendranath-Asamiya Sahityar Samikhyatmak Itibritta, p.372

¹⁸ Barpujari, H.K.- The CHA, p.231)

of different countries of the world and aroused interest among the new generation to write investigative articles on Assam and neighbouring tribes. For example, in the very first issue of ORUNODOI the article 'Rajar Moidam Khana' was published. Later on almost till the death of the magazine there was regular head with the title 'Nana Deshar Sambad' wherein history of different places was published. Besides, there were independent historical articles in the magazine. **Ratneswar Mahanta(1863-1893), Rajani kumar Padmapati, Sonaram Choudhuri, Khetradhar Bargohain, Sarbananda Rajkumar, Rajmohan Nath** and many others wrote articles on history, archaeology of Assam, and these were published in the magazines like USHA, BANTI, ALOCHANI and others. It has already been mentioned that the first historical articles of S.K.Bhuyan were published in 'USHA' and in later life also his many articles were published in this magazine.

It is note worthy, that the first archaeological excavation in Assam was made in 1926 under the auspices of R.D. Benerji at Dah pravatia and Bamuni Pahar in Tezpur (Sonitpur, Assam) with the initiative taken by **Sarveswar kakati** (1892 - 1946), **Sonaram Choulhuri** (1870-1946) and Assam could draw attention for the archaeological studies of Assam in the field of all Indian archaeological scenario. **Rajmohan Nath** (1900-1964), an engineer by profession who created an archaeological movement in Assam wrote 'KADALI RAJYA', 'MAHABIR CHILARAI' (1940) and many articles, which witness his intense research work. 'GLORIOUS ASSAM', 'A CLUE TO INDUS VALLEY SCRIPT AND CIVILIZATION' (1956); 'GAURABMOY ASOM' (1949), 'PRACHEEN ASAMAT GRAHA BIPRA', 'ASAMAT NRITATTA GAVESHANA', ASAMIYA BAUDDHA SAMPRADAY' are some other examples of his creations¹⁹.

¹⁹ 27 articles of Rajmohan Nath are incorporated in 'PRATNA TATWIK RAJMOHAN NATHAR RACHANAVALI' -Ed.-Nath, Bhabakanta Nath (LBS-2002).

Another contemporary of S.K.Bhuyan was **Bani Kanta Kakati** (1894-1952). His historical writings were 'KALITA JATIR ITIBRITTA' (1943), 'MOTHER GODDESS KAMAKHYA' 'PURANI KAMRUPAR DHARMAR DHARA', and many other historical articles.

The observation on the evolution of historiography of Assam till the time of S.K. Bhuyan reveal how the (i) Customary habit of writing chronicles written (ii) manually by a (iii) limited people who belonged to nobility (iv) with religious sanctity and secrecy (v) On the activities related to monarchy only, gradually evolved to a subject studied by the (i) scholars with western education irrespective of their caste and creed (ii) making it a popularly read subject (iii) with academic pursuit (iv) using modern instruments like printing press and machine-made papers (v) and with new ideas and methodologies. History began to form a subject matter of popular literature. Gradually myths and miraculous description began to disappear. Common people gradually began to be subject of historical observation. Systematic study on archeology, Anthropology, Economy and polity began gradually. Nationalistic idea entered into historiography. Objective and comparative methodology were experimented. It is noteworthy here that the stray examples of the contribution cited above, although are not sufficient and justified to evaluate them and to depict all the features of historiography of Assam till the time of S.K.Bhuyan. they will give the idea about the environment of historical studies in which S.K.Bhuyan was born and brought up, in which he worked and the legacy he inherited. In such an environment he worked in such a way that he became a legendary figure in the historical studies of Assam. The observation made on the intellectual environment although in outline gives clear idea about the impacts from outside on the historical perspectives of S.K. Bhuyan, but the personal factors which must had intermingled with the outward factors and impacts, in shaping his

perspectives and features of his writing. An observation on the personal background will make the picture more vivid.

The Personal Background -Growth of S.K. Bhuyan as an Historian:

Bhuyan was born in a family, in which vicissitudes of his fore fathers -Kaunar Singh, Purnia Buhar; Mangal Singha; Shivasharan; Rabilal Bhuyan were entangled and determined by some important historical events like battle of Plassey, Rule of British East India Co. in Bengal; Moamaria uprising in Assam, Burmese invasions in Assam and British rule in Assam.²⁰ They served as govt. employees in various capacities under various aforesaid governments. Thus there had been a tradition of government service and education in this family. Rabilal Bhuyan, father of S.K. Bhuyan, also secured first division and first position among the Assamese students of Assam valley in the entrance examination in 1889. He studied F.A. in Calcutta (1889 -91- though he could not pass F.A.) in a time when the Romantic movement of Assamese literature was in its full swings. S.K. Bhuyan enjoyed a good educational environment in his family. Rabilal Bhuyan had intimacy with some renowned litterateur of the time and they frequently came to his family. Among them, the prominent were Anandachandra Agarwala and Rajanikanta Bordoloi (Scott of Assam). In his school life at Nagaon Govt. School, S.K. Bhuyan had opportunity to listen the discussions of these personalities with his father. He also had the opportunity to read the Assamese magazine - JONAKI, BIJULI, etc. and the biography of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan in the house of Anandachandra Agarwala. He read 'MIRIJIARI' and 'MANOMOTI' of Rajani Kanta Bordoloi in this very tender age. He also had the opportunity to see a lot of manuscripts (in sanchi leaf) including that of 'PADSHAH BURANJI' at the home of Kalinath Barua, his maternal uncle. The memories of the brutal Burmese atrocities were alive among the

²⁰ Talukdar, Nanda -Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, pp.7-26

Assamese people for long days. S.K.Bhuyan heard stories of these atrocities from eyewitness. All these experiences must have created deep impact in the mild Psychology of S.K.Bhuyan in his tender age.

His school life at Shillong Govt. High School (1904-1909) was another important phase that had produced impact in molding him as a historian in future. Two libraries - the school library and the Shillong public library were attraction for S.K. Bhuyan. He read the contemporary Assamese and English magazines. Copies of ORUNODOI, JOURNAL OF ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL, ORIENTAL JOURNAL, etc and many valuable books were abundant in these two libraries. He read many historical articles in these sources.²¹

In 1905 Gaits 'A HISTORY OF ASSAM' was published. He read this recent publication in this very library. In the journal of 'ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL' (1872) Mr.Henry Blochman published his translation of the report of Shihabuddin Talish on Assam with the title "PERSIAN ACCOUNT OF ASSAM". S.K. Bhuyan translated this article to Assamese In this time of his school life; S.K. Bhuyan came into contact with some notable persons who had much knowledge of Assam History. Rai Bahadur Golapchandra Barua, residing at Haneng Umkhra in Shillong had been the right hand of Sir Edward Gait in writing his "A HISTORY OF ASSAM". He told S.K. Bhuyan many things about Assam History. Like wise, Dilihial Bhattacharya who composed the most popular dictionary 'THE PRONOUNCING ANGLO-ASSAMESE DICTIONARY' and Reverend Reginald Gopalston, who composed 'BUDDHISM, PRIMITIVE AND PRESENT' also taught S.K. Bhuyan many things about History.

The contemporary Assamese literary magazines inspired the newer generation for new creation. S.K. Bhuyan composed some of his poems during this period of

²¹ Bhuyan, S.K.-The Story of My Life, (Type script) p.6

school life and these were published in these magazines. S.K. Bhuyan could realize at that very stage that strong history; historical awareness of the people and national pride is an essential quality of a strong nation. He was aware of this quality of the British. He made an appeal to the British Government in Assam (ASOM BONTI - 1908 June 1) to recover the Assamese manuscripts lying scattered in different places of Assam. S.K.Bhuyan's sense of responsibility, historical awareness, and his particular interest in the manuscript are revealed in this appeal.

After appearing the Entrance examination in 1909, S.K. Bhuyan studied many references in various Assamese and English magazines, books & Journals on Assam History and composed the 'AHOMAR DIN'. It was published serially in 'USHA' (1911) while he had been a student of I.A. in Cotton College.

Here after in his college and University life his interest to publish historical writings was almost dormant. This lasted till his joining as a lecturer in Cotton College. But in pure-literature, he was affluent in this period. It is mention worthy that along with his poetical creations, his interest in writing the less emotional, less imaginary literature- the prose, may it be short stories or biographies is noticed in this period. Of course, in his literary works, may it be poems, short stories or biographies his attraction for past glories, reverences for heroes and great personalities of distant or recent past are noticed.

After being appointed as lecturer in Cotton College, his dormant interest in history, particularly in Assam History got awakened. He was the first Assamese lecturer on permanent basis in Cotton College. Appointment of Assamese lecturer in Cotton College was a public demand. People of Assam expected much from the new Assamese educated generation. He had been intelligent, interested and potent person to carry out these responsibilities bestowed upon him. Appointment in an honorable and desired service, with sound economy, gave him security, certainty and

permanence in his profession and livelihood. His stay at Gauhati gave him another advantageous environment. By this time he got involved with KAMRUP ANUSANDHAN SAMITI in 1918, which had already started and created a well-organized platform for Historical studies. All these created a whirlpool of vigorous historical search and research activity for S.K.Bhuyan. Here after he concentrated his attention and devoted his life for historical studies. He worked out many compilation works, articles, original writings; attended different seminars, societies for historical studies. The process remained continuous till his demise. Obviously, there were Changes and up-gradations of maturity of his works. Among the Historical writings of S.K.Bhuyan, which were written within 1916 and 1930, "EARLY BRITISH RELATION WITH ASSAM" (1928) and "ASSAMESE HISTORICAL LITERATURE" (1928) were more informative. In the period between 1930 and 1940, except the two works, - "ASSAMESE LITERATURE: ANCIENT AND MODERN" (1936) and "ANGLO ASSAMESE RELATION" (his thesis for Ph. D.), his historical works were not original. Most of his compiled and edited Assamese "Buranjis" were published in this period. A few works of this nature were published in later period also. In the period after 1940, most of his original historical works were published. 1950-51 was the culmination of his original writings. The D.Litt. Degree, the most prestigious and highest Degree of a University gave him a kind of satisfaction. He started to collect his articles, speeches, and other writing personal and General scattered in different News Papers, Magazines, journals and so on. He took measures to preserve them. But at the same time, most of his memoirs, Bibliographical works (To keep record and arrange his creations systematically); personal experiences of his life, his philosophical thoughts etc. also published in this very period. Observing the quantity, quality and maturity

of his works and growth of S.K.Bhuyan as a historian, his life time can be grouped as follows ---

Early stage [1892/94 -- 1909 --- Seedtime (for History and Literature).

Early stage [1909 ---- 1916 --- Mostly Literary works.

Growing Stage: [1916 ---- 1930 --- Gradual departure from literary world and entry to serious historical studies and activities using the platforms like KAS, DHAS. and other platforms.

Matured Stage: [1930-1950]

Early- matured stage: [1930 ---- 1940 --- (collection of source materials, manuscripts of Buranjis, and publication of them after editing them. His research work was done by this time.)

Matured Stage: [1940--1950-51---- Most of the original writings

Harvesting Stage: 1950-51 onward ---- Collection, and preservation of his earlier works, Reminiscences and Memoirs etc.

S.K.Bhuyan was very sensitive to the woes and worries of man from his very child hood. He mourned premature demise of his mother in his childhood, which he could not remember, throughout his life. In listening to the teaching of Christ and Buddha, tears rolled down on his cheeks in his child hood. The seed of a soft, spiritualistic and humanistic personality of S.K.Bhuyan was sowed in his very childhood

His family culture was aristocratic and conservative. There was literary and intellectual environment. Although he had respect and awareness for history, he did not have ambition in his early age to be a historian in future. He had to decide it in his matured stage. Most of his writings were written in the period of colonial rule and he was a trusted and responsible servant of British government. In the post independent period also he served in responsible government posts. He gave his advices and opinions to Indian and Assam governments whenever sought, on points, which demanded authoritative historical analysis and interpretation. All these personal background influenced his historical writings.
