

RECORDING HISTORY: A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF JOURNALISM IN THE ASSAM VALLEY

This note was originally written for E.A.Gait, Esq. I.C.S., Honorary Director of Ethnography in Assam by Babu Hem Chandra Gosain for his Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam, 1897, submitted to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Considering the historical value of the report, the document is reproduced here from Charvak, 2015, Modern Media in North East India, PhD thesis submitted to Calcutta University, Pp. 361-364.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF JOURNALISM IN THE ASSAM VALLEY

The following is a complete list of the various journal and newspapers which have been started from time to time:

(1) *Arunodaya*- This monthly magazine was the pioneer of journalism in the Assam Valley, and was started in 1846 by the American Baptist Missionaries of Sibsagar who following the example of their brethren of Serampore established the first printing press in Assam 1840. From this press the issued not only numerous vernacular publication connected with the Propagation of the Gospel, but also the magazine just mentioned, the *buranji* by Kacinath Tamuli Pukhan, some useful educational works, and only Assamese dictionary which has yet been published. The *Arunodaya* was written in a very popular style, and was devoted to religion science, and general intelligence. Its pages are illustrated with wood-cuts copied from the engravings of the *Illustrated London News*, and among other interesting items, it published an Assamese translation of an Ahom *buranji* and a *buranji* of Chutiyas. In 1867-68, its subscribers numbered no less than 700, and it made such an impression on the people, that any newspaper issued in the province is stilled called *Arunodaya* by the villagers. Having diffused useful knowledge for 36 years, this magazine was discontinued in 1882, when the Mission Press was sold.

(2) *Asambilasini*- This was a monthly vernacular paper issued in, 1871, from the Dharmaprakash Press on the Majuli in Sibsagar. It was an organ of the Auniatiya Gosain. It was mainly a religious paper and contained only a few item of general information. The paper continued for 12 years and ceased to exist in 1883, when the *sattra* was removed to a new site.

(3) *Asam-mihir*- This was the first weekly newspaper in Assam. It was published in 1872, at the Chidananda Press, Guahati, and was at first written in Bengali, but subsequently in Bengali and English. It was discontinued in 1873 for want of sufficient support.

(4) *Asam Darpana*- This was a monthly journal in Assamese, started during the year 1874-75 by a resident of the Darang District. The paper was printed in Calcutta and published in Darrang. It existed only for a short time.

(5) and (6). In the year 1875-76, two papers, one treating of science and literature and the other of a religious nature, were edited by natives of Nowgong. These two papers were also printed in Calcutta.

(7) *Goalpara Hitasadhini*- This was a weekly paper in Bengali, published in 1876, at Golpara. It was continued till 1878, and then failed for want of support.

(8) In 1876 the Dihingiya Gosain, of Nowgong, edited a monthly magazine dealing with religious subjects, which was printed at Guahati. It found only a limited sale among the disciple of the Gosain.

(9) *Asam Dipaka*- This was a monthly journal in Assamese, and was issued from the Dharmaprakash Press in 1876. It lasted only one year.

(10) *Chandrodaya*- This was a monthly vernacular magazine and was issued from the Chidananda Press, Guahati, in 1876, but ceased to exist after a short period.

(11) *Assam News*- This was a bilingual weekly paper started in Guahati, in 1882, and contained articles in Assamese and English. At one time it had as many as 900 subscribers, and its articles often well written. But, owing to difficulties in the matter of editors, etc. it gradually fell off, and was discontinued in July 1885.

(12) *Asam Bandhu*- This was a monthly vernacular magazine started in 1885 by Rai Gunabhiram Barua, Bahadur. It contained articles relating to science, arts and literature and was printed in Calcutta. Only 16 numbers appeared, and the journal was then discontinued for want of support. The editor had commence a valuable series of article entitled *Assam-past and present*, but, owing to the ultimately end of the paper, the series was never completed.

(13) *Mau*- This was a monthly literary journal, in Assam, edited by Babu Har Narayan Bara. The paper was printed in Calcutta. It made its appearance in December 1886, and was discontinued after the fourth issue, as a number of subscribers were very small.

(14) *Asam Tara*- This was a monthly vernacular paper started in 1888 and published at Dharmapraksh Press. It treated religious, historical and literary subjects, but was discontinued in September 1890. It ceased to exist owing, it is said to the proprietor having gone on a pilgrimage.

(15) *Jonaki*- This is a monthly magazine and review established by the Assamese students residing in Calcutta. The paper was started in 1889, and is still in existence. It treats scientific, historical and other useful subjects, and has been conducted with zeal and ability; several well-written original articles have appeared in its pages.

(16) *Bijuli*- This is another monthly Assamese journal, which was started by Assamese students in Calcutta, It appeared in 1890, and was discontinued before the completion of its third year. It published some interesting articles on the Muhammadan invasion of Assam.

(17) *Asam*- This is a weekly newspaper written Assamese, with occasional English articles. It was started at Gauhati in September 1894, and still exists. The paper is conducted with ability, is national in its tone, and reflects the opinion of the orthodox portion of the higher castes.

(18) *The Times of Assam*- This is a weekly newspaper, in English, started in January 1895, and published at the Radhanath Press, Dibrugarh. It still exists, and is conducted with considerable ability. It attempts to reflect the opinion of the planting, as well as the advanced section of the native, community.
