

# **WESTERN INFLUENCE ON MODERN ASSAMESE DRAMA**

**PONA MAHANTA**



The present work is primarily an investigation into the question of the Western influence on modern Assamese drama and aims at showing how the new drama in Assamese, in spite of the Western influence and like any other drama in modern India, has evolved as a distinct literary genre. With this subject as the focal point, it attempts to study the entire question of the Western impact on Assam's life and letters. It is a fact that the influence of the West on the development of modern Indian thought has been very great and that the vernacular literatures of modern India owe much to such influence. This influence has permeated all the branches of modern Assamese literature and on drama the influence has been so profound that the new drama, which came into being in 1857 with a social play has hardly any link with pre-British Assamese drama having a four-century old history. This work attempts to show how the new ideas coming from the west in the wake of English education not only changed the subject-matter of drama but also gave a new mould to dramatic style, technique and stage-craft.

The work consists of eleven chapters of the first is an introductory one while the other try to examine different aspects of the subject. One chapter deals entirely with old Assamese drama prior to the advent of the British, the 'aṅkiya nāt', in an attempt to show the new drama has evolved. Another chapter is devoted wholly to a discussion of the different channels and media through which the new influence percolated into Assam. One of the chapters, dealing in detail with the Shakespearean influence, attempts to show how the study and preformance of Shakespeare's plays in original and in translation has helped the pre-Independence playwrights develop a kind of style and technique suitable for mythological, historical and romantic plays. Three other Chapters trace the growth and development of modern mythological, historical and social drama in Assamese in the wake of the spread of English education and study of Western literature and thought. The remaining chapters examine such questions as the influence of Ibsen, Shaw, Maeterlinck, the Theatre of the Absurd, the growth of the one-act play and so on. The concluding Chapter gives a summing up of the work.

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As a student and teacher of English literature, he developed interest in comparative studies and in the study of the Western impact on Indian life and letters. So he undertook formal research in this field and wrote his doctoral thesis on the subject, *Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama from 1857 to the Present Time*. He has written articles on literature and culture which have been published in various journals. At present his interest is mainly concentrated in modern and comparative drama, and has contributed articles and papers mostly on subjects relating to this field.

He is co-author of a book entitled AN APPROACH TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR, which is now a prescribed text-book for classes IX and X in the secondary schools of Assam. He has also edited two annual numbers of the research journal, *The Dibrugarh University Journal of English Studies*. His book in Assamese entitled *Natakaru Natyakar* (Drama and Dramatists) is coming out shortly.

(Jacket Design : K. S. Singha)

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1109

# WESTERN INFLUENCE ON MODERN ASSAMESE DRAMA

( *From 1857 to the Present Time* )



Pona Mahanta



**Mittal Publications**  
DELHI-110035 (INDIA)

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891.452  
MAH;1

**First Published in 1985**

© Dr. Pona Mahanta, 1985

*Published by*

**K.M. MITTAL**  
Mittal Publications  
B-2/19-B, Lawrence Road  
DELHI - 110 035 (INDIA)

*Distributed by*

**MITTAL PUBLISHERS' DISTRIBUTORS**  
1856, Tri Nagar,  
DELHI - 110 035

*Printed at*

**J.N. PRINTERS**  
251/8, Padam Nagar  
DELHI - 110 007

LIBRARY  
1985  
891.452  
30/5/88

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr Maheswar Neog, Jawaharlal Nehru Professor and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University, I am deeply indebted, for his guidance and encouragement during the period of research. To work with him has indeed been a pleasure. Despite his heavy schedule, he gave me help and advice whenever I needed them, without which the present work would not have been possible.

I am very grateful to a number of distinguished teachers of English and Assamese at the Universities of Gauhati and Dibrugarh, for the valuable suggestions they offered and the materials they lent. Some of them figure in the foot-notes and the bibliography, and the fact that I have not mentioned others do not mean that I am unaware of them.

I also owe a great deal to many of my friends and relatives for their help and encouragement during the period of research.

PONA MAHANTA

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- A.S.R.** Maheswar Neog, *Asamiyā Sāhityar Ruparekhā*
- A.N.S.** Satyendranath Sarma, *Asamiyā Nātya Sāhitya*
- Granthāvalī** Lakshminath Bezbaroa, *Bezbaruwā-granthāvalī*,  
Vol. I and II
- H.A.L.** Birinchikumar Barua, *History of Assamese*  
*Literature*
- H.B.L.** Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*
- Jubilee** *Golden Jubilee Volume*, Cotton College, Gauhati,  
1952
- Racanāvalī** Padmanath Gohain Barua, *Gohain Baruwā-*  
*racanāvalī*
- S.D.** A. Berriendale Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*

## TRANSLITERATION

अ	अ	a	ट	ट	ṭh
आ	आ	ā	ण	ण	ṇ
इ	इ	i	त	त	t
ई	ई	ī	थ	थ	th
उ	उ	u	द	द	d
ऊ	ऊ	ū	ध	ध	dh
ऋ	ऋ	rī	न	न	n
ए	ए	e	प	प	p
ऐ	ऐ	ai	फ	फ	ph
ओ	ओ	o	ब	ब	b
औ	औ	au	भ	भ	bh
क	क	k	म	म	m
ख	ख	kh	य	य	y
ग	ग	g	र	र	r
घ	घ	gh	ल	ल	l
ङ	ङ	ṅ	व	व	v.
च	च	c	श	श	sh
छ	छ	ch	ष	ष	ṣ
ज	ज	j	स	स	s
ट	ट	ṭ	ह	ह	h
ठ	ठ	ṭh	•	•	m̄
ड	ड	ḍ	क्ष	क्ष	ksh

## INTRODUCTION

THE INFLUENCE of the West on the development of modern Indian thought has been great indeed. It has affected almost all aspects of Indian life—education, art and literature, religion and moral sense, economic conditions and political aspirations. In fact, this influence has been so profound that it “may be said without much exaggeration that during the period of less than a century, India passed from the medieval to modern age”.

This transformation of India from medieval to modern is perhaps the greatest phenomenon in her history, and any student interested in the growth and development of the Indian mind cannot fail to be struck by it. The feelings and emotions, thoughts and aspirations of a people are nowhere better embodied than in literature, and it is an admitted fact that the influence of the west on the vernacular literatures of India has been all-pervading. This influence, which started working from the beginning of the last century, especially in Bengal, gradually attracted thinkers to look at it critically. It was Barada Charan Mitra, who, as early as 1885, published a paper in the *Calcutta Review* on the influence of English literature on Bengali. In 1896, P. N. Bose dwelt on the intellectual condition of the Hindus under British rule in his book, *Hindu Civilization Under British Rule*. In 1932, a systematic and critical study of the subject appeared when Priyaranjan

Sen brought out his work, *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, where the writer has examined the Western impact on different branches of Bengali literature as well as the various channels through which this influence penetrated Bengal. Another work on the subject is Harendramohan Das Gupta's *Studies in Western Influence on 19th Century Bengali Poetry (1859-1887)*, first published in 1935, in which the author examines in detail the historical background of the new influence.<sup>2</sup> Outside Bengali literature, Syyad Abdul Latif's work, *Influence of English on Urdu Literature*, deserves special mention. U. M. Maniar's book, *The Influence of English on Gujarati Poetry* also throws much light on the subject. Another important work on the subject is *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. X, Part II, which deals with the subject of Western influence on Indian thought and culture as well as the Indian people's reaction to it. In fact, this subject has attracted diverse critics and historians in recent years, and it is neither possible nor necessary to mention all the works done so far, not to speak of such publications in the vernacular languages.

Modern Assamese literature, like Bengali or any other literature of modern India, is largely a product of Western influence. This influence has permeated all the branches of this literature, including drama, on which the influence has been so profound that the new drama that came into being in 1857 with Gunabhiram Barua's *Rām Navamī Nātak* has hardly any direct link with pre-British Assamese drama which has a four-century old history.<sup>3</sup> But except a few articles published in journals and periodicals from time to time,<sup>4</sup> no serious and systematic study has so far been done on the subject of Western influence on Assamese drama. Maheswar Neog and Satyendranath Sarma have touched on the subject in a general sort of way in their books, *Asamiyā Sāhityar Ruprekhā* and *Asamiyā Nātya-sāhitya*, respectively, but as the titles indicate, these books are concerned more with the growth and development of Assamese drama than with Western influence. It is for this reason that I have undertaken to examine the Western influence on modern Assamese drama, and I have been undoubtedly inspired to make such an endeavour by the

above-mentioned works, particularly that of Priyaranjan Sen. It should, of course, be added that while Sen concentrated mainly on the historical background and the general characteristics, I have endeavoured to dive into textual details to furnish evidence for my conclusions.

The Western impact was first felt in Bengal, which virtually came under British rule after the battle of Plassey in 1757, although it took some time for the people to realize the change.<sup>5</sup> In fact, for more than half a century, the establishment of the British rule in Bengal "did not cause any appreciable stir in the economic and cultural life of the people except that there was a growing sense of security based on a belief in legal justice".<sup>6</sup> The introduction of printing and the first use of Bengali types in 1778 were no doubt destined to change the course of the contemporary literature, but it was the establishment of the Baptist Mission at Serampore in 1800 by W. Carey, W. Ward and J. Marshman that hastened the process of change. The New Testament in Bengali was published in 1801, preceded by a translation of the Gospel of St. Matthews as a specimen in 1800. In that year, the College of Fort William was founded in Calcutta with the express purpose of teaching Indian languages to the newly recruited British 'writers' of the East India Company. The Asiatic Society had already come into existence earlier in 1784, and the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817 was in reality the opening of "a nursery for the origin and dissemination of new ideas of change in education, culture, society, and politics."<sup>7</sup> In fact, the contributions of these three institutions to the cultural life of the Indian people were indeed very great. English education was gradually spread in the country and received by its people not only with approbation, but often with great enthusiasm. Lord Macaulay's Minute of February, 1835, put a stop to the long-standing controversy between the "Orientalists" and the "Anglicists" with the victory of the latter, and the strong advocacy of personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy for English education was enough to enable it to strengthen its roots in the new soil.

The introduction of English education laid the foundation

of the new literature that sprang first in Bengal and then in other parts of the country. The process was hastened by the zeal of the missionaries, who were also the pioneers of modern journalism in our country, and the first Bengali periodical, the *Dig-darshan*, was published in 1818. All these factors combined to open the flood-gates of Western ideas which gradually started flowing in different directions throughout the country. Anyone attempting to study the working of Western influence on the Assamese mind cannot fail to grasp the significance of this phenomenon in Bengal inasmuch as in many cases it was through Bengal that the new ideas started filtering into Assam. In fact, the process of transformation was more or less the same<sup>8</sup> everywhere in India ; but this is more true of Assam, Bihar, and Orissa because of historical, geographical and political factors. Administratively and educationally, Assam was under the dictates of Calcutta until 1874 when she was made a Chief Commissioner's province with a separate Directorate of Public Instruction. The worst was to happen in 1836 when, through a historic error made by the British rulers, Assamese, the language of the land, was replaced by Bengali which continued as the educational and administrative medium till 1873 when they realized their mistake and reinstated Assamese in its rightful place. Despite the fact that the sudden ousting of Assamese from its own home hampered the growth of the Assamese language and literature, the misfortune was not without a silver lining. Assamese students learnt Bengali out of necessity, and many of them acquired it so nicely that poems and complete books were written in it.<sup>9</sup> Many Assamese youths, who knew little or no English, imbibed Western thoughts and ideas through Bengali books and periodicals.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the nineteenth century that created a renaissance in Bengal also revolutionized the life of the Assamese people in all its spheres, and the changes soon became visible in works of literature. It is true that the impact of the West was felt in Assam much later than in Bengal, as the former did not come under the rule of the Company until 1826, the year that put an end to six hundred years of Ahom rule.<sup>11</sup> The conquest of Assam by the British, which was soon followed

by the introduction of English education, was not a mere transfer of political power ; it meant a total change in the life of a people, who had so long been groping in ignorance, religious fanaticism and medieval superstitions. The period of modern Assamese literature may be said to have begun from that date, although the first Assamese book in print had come out many years earlier when the Christian missionaries published an Assamese Bible from Serampore in 1813.<sup>12</sup> Whatever may be the literary merit of this book, its historical importance can easily be realized when one considers the fact that it was the first book to be published on a purely alien subject and at a time when Assam was still retaining her independence. But modern Assamese literature really dates from 1846 when the first Assamese periodical, *The Orunodoi*, was started by the Baptist Missionaries at Sibsagar, a former capital of Assam. Although proselytization was the chief aim of the missionaries, the *Orunodoi* almost revolutionized the mind of the Assamese youth in so far as it threw open the flood-gates of Western thoughts and ideas. What is more, this paper instilled a sense of self-confidence in the Assamese people, and strengthened the claim of the Assamese language to be the medium of education and administration.<sup>13</sup> By publishing stories, essays on various topics, travel account, diaries, poems, news from abroad, and letters to the editor, the *Orunodoi* laid the foundation of modern Assamese literature. Any cursory look at the catalogue<sup>14</sup> of contents published in some of the issues of the paper will show how, besides publishing biblical stories, it contributed greatly to the growth of social consciousness by exposing the evils of society and suggesting ways for their remedy. And the generation of this awareness of the problems of life and society was a big step in the growth of modern Assamese literature.

The first poem to strike the new note was two quartrains on the evils of opium, "A very bad thing is opium, whoever takes it is extremely ignorant ...", published in the *Orunodoi* of January, 1846.<sup>15</sup> It did not take much time for the Assamese writers to take to the new genre, and by the nineties of the last century they were able to produce works of considerable

merit. In 1889 was founded the monthly *Jonāki* (The Glow-worm) by three Assamese students studying at Calcutta—Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Chandrakumar Agarwala, and Hemchandra Goswami, who, besides being pioneers in different fields of Assamese language and literature, ushered in the age of Romanticism in Assamese poetry. As regards fiction, *Kāminikāntar Caṣitra* by A. K. Garney, *Sudharmār Upākhyān* by Padmavati Devi Phukanani, and *Bāhire Rang chang Bhitare Kowā-bhāturi* (All that glitters is not gold) by Hemchandra Barua—all written and published during the second half of the nineteenth century—may be said to be the earliest attempts. Although they cannot be called novels in the strict sense of the term, they undoubtedly paved the way for the first major novelists like Rajanikanta Bardalai and Padmanath Gohain Barua.

It was during this period that the writing of dramas on the Western model was cultivated. A number of young persons from Assam were receiving higher education at Calcutta where they not only read Shakespeare but also saw performances of his plays, both in the original and Bengali translations. The various reform movements, current in Bengal at the time, also made these youths conscious of their backwardness and the various evils that shrouded their society at home. One of them was Gunabhiram Barua, who wrote and published his *Rām-Navamī Nātak* in 1857. This is the first published drama in Assamese written on the European model. Only a year earlier Woomesh Chandra Mitra published his *Vidhavāvivāha Nātak*, which was inspired by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's treatise on the shastric sanction of widow remarriage. Sukumar Sen thinks that the success of Mitra's play on widow remarriage was responsible for the first modern drama in Assamese, Gunabhiram Barua's *Rām-Navamī Nātak*.<sup>15</sup> It was very likely that Gunabhiram read the Bengali play dealing with a social evil against which he himself was fighting under the inspiration of Vidyasagar. In any case, it is significant that the first modern drama in Assamese was on a burning social problem of the day. Although not without some echo of Sanskrit drama, it was largely modelled on Shakespearean dramatic technique with divisions of acts and scenes. It was followed by two-

farcical plays, Hemchandra Barua's *Kāniya Kirtan* and Rudraram Bardalai's *Bangāl-Bangālānī*, published in 1861 and 1871, respectively. These were soon followed by a host of others in quick succession giving us what we now call modern Assamese drama.

Thus, the question of Western influence on Assamese drama since 1857 can be a subject of very close and careful study. Although not much has been done on the subject, materials for such a study are not lacking. Besides historical and critical studies, biographies and autobiographies, diaries and letters, prefaces and the like, there are the dramas themselves which are the most reliable evidence of such an influence. I have tried to be as close to the texts as possible in my investigations despite the fact that the non-availability of some of the dramas published during the nineteenth century and never reprinted, has at times stood on my way.

But the task of examining the influence of one culture and literature upon another is by no means an easy one, and it becomes more difficult when the two interacting cultures are nearly poles apart. "Influence connotes the quite, insensible, or gradual exertion of power, often arising from strength of intellect, force of character, eminent position, and the like".<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that the English people were able to impress the Indians, whom they ruled, by virtue of their force of character, intellect, industry, rational and scientific outlook, and a decent way of living. Some of the young enthusiasts considered the way of their alien rulers so much superior to theirs [that they [started discarding everything Indian and imitating anything British. Even persons, who were in the vanguard of our national awakening, were no exceptions.<sup>18</sup> It was not unnatural for the ruled to regard the ruler as superior beings in all matters, and it was, in fact, the sense of their own backwardness and inferiority that impelled the educated Indians to strive for their regeneration in order that they could attain to the level of those who ruled them. In short, it was responsible for the great Indian renaissance in the nineteenth century that transformed the country from medieval to modern. Thus, the influence of the West started working on the Indian mind, first in Bengal and then in other parts of

the country, and within a few decades Indian literature changed its face under the new impact.

It is necessary to see in what ways this influence was exercised. "Influence is action insensibly exercised"<sup>19</sup> through a long process, and in literature the action may be performed in two ways. First, the influence may be limited and external as in the case of translations, adaptations, and imitations. It is not difficult to detect this type of influence since it is seen of the surface. Secondly, influence may be assimilated with one's native genius in such a way that it may act as a stimulant to one's thoughts and feelings. This kind of influence is not on the surface ; it goes deeper and hence often defies detection or analysis. And it is interesting to note that in the initial stages of the Western influence on Assamese literature, it was the first type to work, as evidenced by the many translations and adaptations, especially of Shakespeare. The second type of influence started working somewhat later, although it should not be understood that the first type or the work of translating and adapting was abruptly stopped. In fact, the influence started working in both the ways and continued together.

One of the greatest contributions of the West to India is the development of prose based on spoken languages in different regions. The foreign rulers and the missionaries soon realized that for training civil servants and for propagating the Gospel, it was necessary to use the spoken languages of the people. But they found that though these languages had a considerable medieval literature, it was mainly in verse and in a language and style far removed from the work-a-day speech in actual use.<sup>20</sup> But it has to be mentioned that Assamese prose-writing has a very long history. The Assamese *Katha-Gita* was composed by Bhāttadeva as early as the sixteenth century. Even earlier, Sankaradeva employed a kind of prose in his dramas, although it can hardly be called prose in the real sense as he used a sort of artificial dialect.<sup>21</sup> Sir Prafullachandra Roy was all praise for the prose of the *Katha-Gita*,<sup>22</sup> but even this was somewhat artificial and not free from such inflections as were used in the poetry of the time.<sup>23</sup> The best specimens of pre-British Assamese prose are the "buranjis"<sup>24</sup> or a type of chronicle in which Assam is almost unique, and the *Katha*

*Guru Carits* or prose biographies of the Vaisnava saints of Assam.<sup>25</sup>

But it has to be admitted that the Western influence gave a new direction, force and flexibility to Assamese prose. By translating the Bible, stories, parables and the penal codes, and by publishing the first periodical, the foreign rulers and the missionaries laid the foundations of modern Assamese prose which was later to be the vehicle for a mass of literature, both creative and critical. The style of the missionaries was evidently influenced by English as can be seen in the Assamese renderings of the Bible, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and many other stories and parables. Even the prose style of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who fought vehemently to secure the rightful place for the Assamese language in Assam, was often influenced by English as can be found in his *Asamiyā Larār Mitra* (A Companion to Assamese Students) published in 1849.<sup>26</sup> In fact, it was the influence of the West that gave a boost to Assamese prose, which the British rulers and the American missionaries found in a state of torpor.

It is true that Western influences started working in Assam rather late, and much later than in Bengal. This was due to a number of factors almost unparalleled anywhere in India. First, Assam came into direct contact with the West only after 1826, nearly seven decades later than Bengal. Not that she did not have any communion with the West before,<sup>27</sup> but whatever contact then existed, was strictly limited to trade and commerce. Secondly, as Gait observes, "Assam was one of the few countries in India whose inhabitants beat back the tide of Mughal conquest and maintained their independence in the face of repeated attempts to subvert it".<sup>28</sup> So, when she was ultimately conquered by the British, the people could not easily reconcile themselves to the new situation, and so it took quite some time for them to be equal to the changes coming upon them. Thirdly, the social and political conditions of Assam during the first three decades of the nineteenth century were so chaotic on account of the large-scale depredations caused by the Burmese invaders that when the British conquered the land the people had not yet recovered from their previous nightmare. But the greatest hurdle put in the way of the dissemination of Western ideas and consequent growth of the new literature was the

ousting of Assamese from the schools and law-courts of Assam and imposition of a foreign language on her people. So, at a time when her neighbour, Bengal, was drinking deep in the new ideas coming from beyond the seas, and producing a modern literature, considerable both in quality and quantity, Assamese students had to fritter away **their** time in struggling to learn a language to which they were strangers. Consequently, when Assamese was restored to its rightful place in 1873, the leaders and thinkers of Assam found it in disarray, and had to spend much of their time to put it in position which could have been otherwise utilized for productive purposes.

Other factors like the geographical situation of Assam and lack of communication facilities between Assam and Calcutta,<sup>29</sup> the hub of all modern activities in the nineteenth century, were also responsible for the late working of Western influences in the province. The first English school in Assam was established at Gauhati in 1835, but Assam did not have a college of her own until 1901, when Cotton College was founded. So, the students of Assam had to go all the way to Calcutta for higher education, and notwithstanding the hardships of travel during those days, quite a good number of Assamese youths studied at Calcutta where they came into contact with the great renaissance going on there. Gradually, the spread of English education, growth of printing and journalism, increase in the number of Calcutta-educated graduates—all these factors, together with many others, paved the way for the Western influence. And once it had begun, it was made to spread with thoroughness permeating every aspect of Assamese life and culture. This is amply embodied in her literature produced during the last hundred years. Pre-British Assamese literature, whether poetry or drama, was medieval in nature, concerned with the other world and filled with invocations. It is only after the advent of the British that Assamese literature shed its medieval character and started the process of becoming secular by embracing life as it is lived in this world.

The investigation begins with a short chapter on pre-British Assamese drama, the *ankiyā nāt*. It attempts to show how drama and theatre developed in Assam as early as the sixteenth century—over three centuries earlier than the Western

impact was actually felt. It also shows how that drama presents certain features similar to those of medieval European drama, not because of any mutual indebtedness but because of the identical spirit of the times, which was basically religious. A separate section in the chapter tries to show how medieval Assamese drama, despite the fact that it was fundamentally moral, presents certain characteristics which would make a modern play. This introductory chapter, it is hoped, will help us to see in what ways the new drama in Assamese is largely a product of Western influence.

The Third Chapter attempts to show the different channels and media through which the new influence percolated into Assam. Chapter IV considers exclusively how Shakespeare was by far the greatest influence on pre-war Assamese drama. The Fifth Chapter makes an attempt to show how translations and adaptations of plays by great Western writers were the first steps in the exercise of the new influence.

In order to facilitate enquiry, I have adopted the method usually followed by our literary historians—that of dividing the drama into mythological, historical, social and romantic. The four chapters that follow deal with these types of drama separately, putting particular emphasis on playwrights who appear to have absorbed the influence and who either because or in spite of the influence, have contributed something of value to our drama. In dealing with individual plays, attempts have been made to see how Western ideas and techniques have moulded a particular play and how that play, if at all, assimilates the foreign elements successfully in order to achieve an individuality of its own as a work of art. The Chapter on social drama includes serious plays and farces and low comedies, while that on romantic dramas also contains a section on symbolic plays.

The Final Chapter that deals with the one-act play and the drama modelled on the Theatre of the Absurd requires an apology. The section on the one-act play might appear more like a history of its development and a list of names than actual study. The fact is, although there has been quite a rush of one-act plays since the Second World War, very few of them have been printed, so that beyond stating how it has

been largely inspired by Western masters, an objective study of the form based on textual material is not possible. The other section in the chapter shows how at least two plays, which appeared in recent years, have been apparently influenced by the Theatre of the Absurd. Beyond that the chapter remains rather speculative.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. X, Part II, p. 1.
2. Amaresh Datta worked on *English Influence on Modern Bengali Drama* for his doctorate of Lucknow University in 1946. But the thesis still remains unpublished. Ujjvalkumar Majumdar's book in Bengali, *Bānglā Kāvye Pāschatya Prabhāv*, examines in some detail Western impact on Bengali poetry.
3. The first Assamese playwright, Sankaradeva, wrote and produced his plays during the second half of the sixteenth century (see Chap. II).
4. Satyendranath Sarma, 'The Influence of Shakespeare on Assamese Literature', *Sahityar Abhas*, pp. 1-25; Prafulladatta Goswami, 'Western Techniques in Assamese Literature', *Sahitya aru Jivan*, pp. 104-111; Hemantakumar Sarma, 'Western Influence on Modern Assamese Drama', *Asamiya Sahityat Dristipat*, pp. 77-85; Upendranath Sarma, 'Western Influence on Assamese Literature', *Grantha-prakashan*, pp. 54-56. Besides, there are a good number of papers on Western influence on modern Assamese poetry, scattered in journals and periodicals.
5. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. X, Part II, pp. 1-2.
6. *H. B. L.*, p. 163.
7. *Dawn of Renascent India*, p. 27.
8. R. C. Majumdar observes that the process of development followed more or less the same line everywhere as in Bengal, and quotes Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "New literary types, reform of the language, social reconstruction, political aspirations, religious movements and even changes in manners that originated in Bengal, passed like ripples from a central eddy across provincial barriers, to the furthest corner of India" (*History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. X, Part II, p. 1).
9. Haliram Dhekiyal Phukan (1802-32) wrote his *Asam Buranji* in Bengali. Many others wrote tracts and poems in that language.
10. According to J. Long, the Government subscribed for 500 copies of a Bengali monthly, the *Masik Patrika*, for distribution (*Kaminikantar*

*Caritra*, Intro, p. 3). Padmanath Gohain Barua tells us that while at school he used to compose verses in Assamese and Bengali (*Mor Sowaran*, p. 9). Benudhar Rajkhowa also informs us that he used to read the Bengali weekly, *Sanjivani* from his early school days, and write verses in Bengali even in his letters to his father (*Mor Jivan Dapon*, pp. 43, 44).

11. Sukapha founded the Āhom rule in Assam in 1228 (E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 78).
12. It is on record that one Atmaram Sarma from Kaliabar in Nowgong district helped the missionaries in translating the Bible to Assamese. Jatindramohan Bhattacharyya wrote a beautiful note on this Bible in the *Asamiyā*, July, 1968, quoting some lines from it showing the type of prose used. It is to be regretted that no attempt has been made to revive this first Assamese Bible, the historical importance of which cannot be gainsaid.
13. *A. S. R.*, p. 242. As far back as the early fifties of the nineteenth century, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan wrote, "... We cannot but acknowledge with feelings of gratitude, that the expectations which the Assamese had formed of the happy and beneficial results from the Government of England, have, to a great measure, been fulfilled; and the people of Assam have now acquired a degree of confidence in the safety of their lives and property which they never had the happiness of feeling for ages past (*Observations on the Province of Assam* by Baboo Anundaram Dhekiyal Phukan, included in Mills' *Report on the Province of Assam*, Appendix I, p. xxxi).
14. The *Orunodoi* continued from 1846 to 1883. Even painstaking scholars like Birinchikumar Barua and Maheswar Neog have not been able to trace all the issues of the periodical. The latter has prepared a catalogue of the contents of the available ones (see *Arunodoir Dhalphat*, Intro. pp. 60-66).
15. *Arunodoir Dhalphat*, p. 1.
16. *H.B.L.*, p. 180.
17. Webster's *New International Dictionary*, 2nd ed. unabridged.
18. Keshab Chandra Sen observed, "Politically and intellectually, England is our master". Vidyasagar used to say, "Dining or sitting, sleeping or walking, the English are superior beings in all matters". (Quoted in *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, p. 100).
19. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*.
20. *Modern Indian Literature: A Panoramic Glimpse*, p. 36.
21. *A.S.R.*, p. 100; *Asamiyā Sahityar Itivritta*, p. 141.
22. *Presidential Address*, Assam Students' Conference, 1919 (*Bhasanmāla*, p. 63).
23. *A.S.R.*, pp. 100-101.

24. "The Ahom word 'Buranji', a word of Tai or Tibeto-Chinese origin, has been adopted in the Indo-Aryan Assamese as the equivalent of what would be called in Sanskrit, 'Itihasa'"—Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Preface to New Light on History of Assamese Literature* by Dimbeswar Neog, p. vi. According to Dr. Chatterji, the 'buranjis' form "the most distinctive contribution of Assamese to Indian literature" (*loc.cit.*).
25. *A.S.R.*, pp. 100-101.
26. *Kāminikāntar Caritra*, Intro., p. 15.
27. Trade and commerce between Assam and the British traders had been going on long before this date. The foundation of the East India Company's commercial relations with Assam was actually laid in 1771 (*Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 67).
28. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. x.
29. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, who studied at the Hindu College, took not less than 25 days to reach Calcutta in 1841 (*Asamiyā Bhāsā*, Intro., pp. 11-12).

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