



Pratidhwani the Echo

A Peer-Reviewed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science

ISSN: 2278-5264 (Online) 2321-9319 (Print)

Impact Factor: 6.28 (Index Copernicus International)

Volume-VI, Issue-IV, April 2018, Page No.242-253

UGC Approved Journal Serial No. 47694/48666

Published by Dept. of Bengali, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, India

Website: <http://www.thecho.in>

Contemporary Social Issues of Assam and Its Reflections in 'Awahan'

Mr. Plavan Bhuyan

Assistant Professor, Sibsagar Girls' College, Sibsagar, Assam

Abstract

The publication of 'Awahan' was considered to be a great milestone in the social life of Assam. Along with the contemporary political sphere of Assam, the role of 'Awahan' was very significant in the field of society. Various social problems were emerged in Assam in the early part of the 20th century but, in such a critical situation 'Awahan' ushered a new light to Assam. It can be claimed that indeed 'Awahan' was the vehicle of new progressive social outlook and thinking. There were many current issues of Assam like – opium debate, promotion of women education, women empowerment, widow remarriage; debate on purdah system, issue of child marriage, untouchability, promotion of higher education etc. received huge importance. These debates and issues were very well projected and reflected before the people in details through numerous essays, articles, editorials, novels, short stories etc. Further the magazine appealed to adopt adequate measures against these contemporary social evils. 'Awahan' left no stone unturned to expose all contemporary social debates and issues of Assam. It argued for an advanced and liberal society by discarding age old unscientific traditions. The magazine well understood the depth of every social problem of Assam in an analytical narrative.

Keywords: Purdah, Untouchability, empowerment, ushered.

Introduction: The publication of 'Awahan' was considered to be a great milestone in the social life of Assam. Along with the contemporary political sphere of Assam, the role of 'Awahan' was very significant in the field of society. Various social problems were emerged in Assam in the early part of the 20th century but in such a critical situation 'Awahan' ushered a new light to Assam. It can be claimed that indeed 'Awahan' was the vehicle of new progressive social outlook and thinking. There were many current issues of Assam in that time like – opium debate, promotion of women education, women empowerment, widow remarriage, debate on purdah system, child marriage, untouchability etc. received huge importance. These debates and issues were well projected and reflected before the people in details through numerous essays, articles, editorials, novels, short stories etc. Further the magazine appealed to adopt adequate measures against these

contemporary social evils. An attempt is made below to analyse these social issues and its reflections in 'Awahan'.

Opium Debate: One of the most debatable and significant issue of the history of colonial Assam was the issue of opium. During the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century the opium debate can be considered as socio-political and economic issue in colonial Assam. Opium was an important commercial crop in the nineteenth century India. ⁽¹⁾ The main aim of the British government was to generate revenue to run their administration. The opium policy of the government was mainly influenced by revenue consideration. In Assam government or what was more appropriately described as excise opium, was introduced in 1852. Right from the very beginning, Assamese newly emerged educated elite had been expressing well informed reactions against opium issue. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan first raised voice or protested against the opium policy of government and submitted a memorandum in 1853 to A.J.M. Mills. Hemchandra Baruah composed 'Kaniyar Kirtan' in 1861, through which he supported government for opium restriction. Gunabhiram Baruah wrote that due to the extension of opium gradually agriculture sector started to decline in Assam. The disappointment of common people was reached in peak after banned opium cultivation and the people of Nagaon raised their grievances before the district commissioner in 1861. *Phulaguri Dhawa* was the final outcome of this and Lt. Singer was assassinated. An anti-opium society was established in London in 1874 for regulate and check the opium trade. The society submitted a petition to the house of Commons in May 1882, demanding reduction of poppy cultivation in India, and of the government dependence on opium revenue. Apart from Hemchandra Baruah, *Jorhat Sarvajanic Sabha* also made sound effort against the opium consumers as well opium cultivation in Assam. The voice against the official patronisation was heard from the second half of the nineteenth century. Though government constituted a royal Commission on opium in 1891; but it had little effect on the opium consumption of the province ⁽²⁾.

Though some significant steps were adopted by the Assam Association to check and regulate opium in Assam, it received success to a certain extent. The provincial branch of All India National congress, known as *Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC)* was established in Assam in 1921. Until the emergence of APCC no significant broad based, organised campaign was witnessed for eradication of opium. The first organised movement against opium traffic came through the initiative of Congress. When famous non-cooperation movement was launched against the British, one important item of the non-cooperation (1921-22) was the prohibition of liquor and opium. Gandhi's visit to Assam in August 1921 strengthened the movement against the opium and subsequently the amount opium consumption was started to decrease ⁽³⁾. An enquiry committee came into existence and it made an in-depth study on issue and published its report in September 1928.

Even these official restrictions and protest opium was smuggled and brought to Assam from areas like Koch Bihar and Calcutta in those days. Smuggler *Abdul Chauvan* smuggled opium to Assam from Chattagaon and was arrested by the government with 19 sers of opium near Gamarighat in the Darrang district. The addiction towards opium was so deep in

Assam that even the devotees of the Satras (*Bhakats*) were also affected by it. A Very interesting evidence found in Assam that a devotee (*Bhakat*) of Barpeta Satra was imprisoned nearly for about three months due to the involvement of illegal opium trade. This opium smuggling was committed through the trains and ships because in those days there was a strong railway and maritime link between Guwahati and Calcutta⁽⁴⁾. There was no evidence that the policy of opium is leading to an increase in the *ganja* habit⁽⁵⁾. The government however regretted that restrictive measures on opium had reduced only the revenue while the quality of consumed amount of opium remained the same because of the smuggling. The governor however addressed to the council in March 1933, remarked that government was moving too fast and this had helped ultimately "*the pockets of swindles and smugglers*"⁽⁶⁾. The statement that the smuggled opium entered Assam was true but the blame must fall on the government. Though the price of opium was much higher than any other part of India but various places of Assam were involved in this evil practice. Marwari people were mostly involved in the process of opium smuggling and smuggled opium from Malwa was detected in Lakhimpur district⁽⁷⁾. By 1931-32, the contraband opium entered the province from many more places like Chittagaon, Patna, Benaras, Koch Bihar, Tripura, Nepal and China. Congress succeeded to a great extent in mobilising mass opinion against the opium in 1930 during the civil disobedience movement. The addiction and influence towards cigarette, in Assam was very limited due to the hard toil of students during the time of non-cooperation movement⁽⁸⁾. There was a mass satyagraha in both the valleys against the excise able items including cigarette and liquor.

Due to the corrupt mindset of officials or due to some unknown reasons opium smuggling was going on in Assam. An appeal had made before the government to regulate the opium smuggling of Assam and should take stern measures and award punishment against those persons who involved in the practice⁽⁹⁾. One premier women organisation of Assam, *Assam Mahila Sanmilani* since very outset stood against the issue of opium consumption and it not only made harsh criticism but also highlighted its drawbacks before the common people of Assam. Narayani Handique, the third president of *Assam Mahila Sanmilani* delivered a thought provoking speech on the issue of opium where she throws a light on the evil effect of opium and cigarette. She stated that opium was the prime obstacle behind the development of Assam and Assamese society and its current socio-economic disorder. Its consumption not only paralysed people physically but also demoralised mentally by ceasing the power of rational thinking⁽¹⁰⁾. Padmadhar Chaliha, one eminent scholar and critic of Assam also very much serious about the opium addiction of the Assamese people. He condemned Assamese people for their addiction towards opium and also lamented for the downfall of the mighty *Ahoms* due to extensive use of opium. Common people of Assam were basically affected by this and they just wasted their savings in the name of opium. He advised to alienate those opium addicted people of Assam socially to stabilise social order⁽¹¹⁾. Though opium enquiry committee was formed in 1925 but a mass effort and movement was said to be required to tackle with the problem⁽¹²⁾. Thus it was noticed that a mass level awareness was started to develop among the people of Assam regarding the issue of opium. During the time of civil disobedience movement

people of Assam including women were involved in the opium campaign which was said to be a moral victory for the people of Assam. The consumption of opium was from now onwards started to decrease because it was recorded 1615 maunds in 1920-21, decreased to 590 maunds in 1929-30⁽¹³⁾.

The Opium enquiry committee of Assam started to take proper evidence from the people throughout Assam on the smuggling of opium in the province. It was asked to take stern measures against the opium consumer in the province and further it was advised to imprison them severely to force them realised about the evil impact of opium in the province. Common people and government should not have showed a bit kindness to them and also asked to recommend to analysis the solution of the problem⁽¹⁴⁾.

Issue of Women Education: In the field of women education in modern Assam, a kind of awareness was developed among the leading educated elite of Assam due the liberal outlook of West. But, at the same time, there were divergent views among the middle class people of Assam during colonial times regarding the emancipation and women education. The first Assamese newspaper cum magazine '*Orunodoi*' published an article on women education as '*Stree Shiksha*'⁽¹⁵⁾. The Christian Missionaries played a very crucial role in the promotion and expansion of women education in Assam. Gunabhiram Baruah expressed his views in '*Orunodoi*' and argued in favour of women education in Assam⁽¹⁶⁾. Another one leading Assamese educated elite Hemchandra Baruah strongly pleaded for the cause of female education in order to eradicate and check the growing superstitions and other social evils from the Assamese society. In India the first school was established in 1849 in Calcutta. Subsequently such schools were also established in Assam for the expansion of women education particularly at Nagaon and Sibsagar districts respectively in 1843 and 1844⁽¹⁷⁾.

Assamese periodicals like '*Mou*' and '*Assam Bandhu*' stood against the women education in the quarter of the 19th century. But during the time of freedom struggle of India Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation inspired the deprived women section to assert their rights. In the annual conference of *Assam Mahila Sanmilani* president Narayani Handique laid stress on women education in Assam. She stressed that without women education social and political emancipation is meaningless. Illiteracy and ignorance of women lead them towards darkness. So it became necessary to educate the women section to face all sorts of problems. Moreover importance was given on virtues like kindness, forgiveness, patience etc which would provide real and practical education to women. Due to the lack of proper education facilities, women of Assam were deprived from their rights and failed to enjoy and perform their duties. Proper education to the women is the one and only alternative to uplift their standard⁽¹⁸⁾. She confessed that proper education is essential for women emancipation. But at the same time they should not ignore or avoid their household activities and responsibilities. It was also argued that in order to cope up with the changing world, one must adopt liberal outlook to take unending inspiration from female figures like *Mula Gabharu*, *Radha-Rukmini* and *Joymoti* to revive a new social order. She also expressed her regret for the gradual deterioration of indigenous handloom and textile

work of Assam. Appeal was made on behalf of the president to the women of Assam to revive their traditional rich work culture among the women. Domestic education makes women very practical and perfect and it was well reflected in the pages of *Awahan*. Emphasis was given on domestic education like cooking and rearing pat and *muga* silk. It was realised that with help of proper female education Assamese society could have reorganised⁽¹⁹⁾.

Chandraprava Saikiani was one of the most influential leading feminist of that era. The address delivered by her in the Kachari Women's conference was a very valuable document. It was full of acute analysis of the Assamese society where she laid stress on women education for the upliftment of the status of women in Assam. She insisted that women should have minimum education in order to read or write. Thus, education was supposed to be the only means of emancipation of women. Proper education would give them courage and knowledgeable to tackle any problem of life.⁽²⁰⁾ Another contemporary feminist writer Swarnalata Saikia published an article regarding female emancipation and patriarchal domination of Assamese society. She also insisted on proper education of women for enjoying their rights and to make them free from the age old grip of Superstitions. She regretted that in Assam patriarchal domination was so strong that even the maximum educated people did not believe in issues like feminist movement, women's participation in politics, female franchise etc. They just believed in the traditional norms of Assamese women such as cooking, bring up children and supervise other household activities⁽²¹⁾.

Meanwhile Guruprasad Das wrote an article '*Narir Utchha Sikha*' where he expressed his traditional viewpoint that higher education is not suitable for women section because nothing innovative ideas and deep thinking are found among them due to the lack of patience. Moreover he expressed that though education facilities were provided to them but the female section would like to keep themselves within the doors. They were basically excelled in various household activities like cooking, cleaning etc. Motherhood is supposed to be the ultimate destiny of the women. Finally he cited references from the '*Manu Samhita*' that sphere of women should be limited within household affairs but not beyond that⁽²²⁾. Thus it has cleared that there was not a proper opinion among the Assamese people regarding female education in Assam.

Regarding the importance of higher education of women, there was a big debate among the middle class people of Assam. Noted scholar Nilomoni Phukan argued that education was the main device to cease the difference between male and female. Education should be uniform one for both boys and girls and they should treat equally in terms of education. Motherhood is not only the ultimate aim of a woman but prior to that she should be well educated to take the responsibility of a family.⁽²³⁾

Widow Remarriage Issue: One very interesting aspect of '*Awahan*' was the issue of widow remarriage. Actually the liberal outlook of the periodical enables contemporary writers to deal with these social evils. The issue of widowhood and widow remarriage remained a

very debateable and controversial issue during the colonial period in India. The tradition of widowhood was observed in India mainly in the Hindu Society. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who was the crusader of widow remarriage in India, experienced the hardships of this customs on women. His old guru left behind a girl widow with nowhere to go and no means of support. Vidyasagar vowed then to devote his life to improving the status of Hindu widows⁽²⁴⁾. The young Bengal movement also played a vital role behind the promotion of widow remarriage in India⁽²⁵⁾. In the context of Assam, the impact of widow remarriage was witnessed and the influence of Vidyasagar's movement was so deep that the widow remarriage issue was reflected in the writings of Gunabhiram Baruah and Hemchandra Baruah. Gunabhiram himself got married to a Brahmin widow according to the Brahmo rites. His play *Ram Navami* marked a great sensation among the people of Assam where he elaborated the issue of widowhood, widow remarriage and contemporary socio-cultural outlook.

Narayani Handique expressed her personal opinion regarding widowhood that the imposition of widowhood was a very big sorrow and humiliation for women. She tried to expose the pathetic mental condition of a girl widow and according to her there is no alternative for such a girl widow except remarriage. Once again she condemned the patriarchal system of Assamese society for this evil and concluded that widow remarriage could have been a way of emancipation of women. Another one extensive and detail analysis was done by Gopika Ballav Goswami in his article '*Bidhaba Vivah*', where he strongly pleaded that the practice of widow remarriage was traditionally observed in India since ancient period. According to him it was not against the roles of sacred scriptures⁽²⁷⁾.

The religious field of Assam also made liberal attitude towards the issue of widow remarriage. Contemporary Satradhikar of Garamura Satra, Sri Sri Pitambar Deva Goswami advocated the widow remarriage. Chndraprava Saikiani was another one eminent and leading feminist writer of pre-independence period. She developed a progressive and reformist outlook towards contemporary condition of Assam. She was a crusader of widow remarriage in Assam because she witnessed the social ostracism of her widowed sister and published a short story '*Daibogyar Duhita*' (the Brahmin daughter) in 1932. In the very short story she portrayed the socio-cultural humiliation to the widows by the people and thus tried to criticise existing conservative social order of Assam. The story revealed social consciousness and the significance of the problem⁽²⁸⁾. Premier thinker of Assam Lakhidhar Sharma also revealed his progressive attitude through his two short stories '*Bidhabar Lora*' and '*Bidruhini*'. Tailukiya Nath Goswami also reflected the same thing in his short story '*Patit ru Patita*'⁽²⁹⁾. In this way, another one social problem of contemporary times was very well reflected in the pages of '*Awahan*' through which a kind of consciousness and awareness was developed or created among the people of Assam.

Debate on Purdah System: *Purdah* debate was another one very crucial social issue during colonial period in the 19th and 20th century. All India Women's Conference commented that in ancient India women had equal access to education, political power and wealth but social customs- particularly child marriage and *purdah* prevented women from receiving

instruction⁽³⁰⁾. The sensitive social issue *purdah* was also received proper attention in during 20th century Assam. Though the position of women was subordinate to men but women of Assam basically enjoyed great freedom in the society due to the availability of tribal element. There was no *purdah* system. According to Shihabuddin Talish, the wives of the Rajas and the peasants alike never veiled their faces before anybody and they moved about in the market places with bare heads. The word *purdah* was brought to Assam by the foreigners during colonial times. Many evidences are found in the *Ahom Buarnji* that some courageous women of medieval times also took part in the battles and showed their efficient skills. Women of royal family could also be travelled on the elephant back without any hesitation. But after the arrival of the British to Assam the system of *purdah* also made its entry. Gradually women of Assam started to keep themselves aloof from the existing system. Though education system was developed a bit but people of Assam failed to make themselves free from the clusters of age old unscientific tradition⁽³¹⁾.

During the early part of 20th century, the women of Assam had to pass their daily life with some strict restrictions and regulations. It was said to be a matter of great shame for women to travel freely. Girls were even not allowed to come out from the houses after ten or eleven years. In this way, from a girl to a woman everyone had to obey and follow the traditional system of *purdah*. Due this social evil all hopes and potentialities of women were nipped in the bud. But Shillong was exception of this and one could easily move here and there without any bar. Even they could go for shopping the markets like men. Though it was very strange, it was a genuine taste of freedom that they could well realise⁽³²⁾.

Chandraprava Saikiani vehemently criticised the existing *purdah* system during the annual session of *Assam Sahitya Sabha* at Nagaon in 1925. She noticed that separate sitting arrangement was made for the women with bamboo cover (*Chik*). She took part in the meeting as women representative. She was totally disappointed with these orthodox manner and bias towards women. She criticised organisers as well as Congress leaders with harsh words and asked them to come out from such barrier to assert their rights against this. It was a great mobilisation for the women of Assam and the women came out to the open space as a protest⁽³³⁾. Narayani Handique emphasised that *purdah* system was not available in Assam in ancient and medieval period. There were various evidences in the Assam history that women played an active role in the sphere of royal administration. Assamese women showed their valour in the battlefield and they also knew how to ride on horse. Higher caste women of Assam could also travel on the back of the elephant. She condemned the British for the introduction of *purdah* system in Assam. She appealed the women section of Assam to overcome such a social evil. She advised people of Assam to follow and adopt a liberal attitude towards the women⁽³⁴⁾. Thus, 'Awahan' tried its level best to give new direction to the women of Assam by developing the sense of women empowerment.

Issue of Child Marriage: Child marriage was also a very serious social evil prevalent in the Indian social system during modern period. This was an unscientific social burden in India which shows patriarchal domination and discrimination toward women. During 19th century campaigns were made against the child marriage under the banner of socio-religious

movement. In the early part of the 20th century strong campaign occurred against this system throughout India. In the context of Assam, a sort of awareness emerged due to expansion of education and mobilisation of Assamese women. The formation of *Assam Mahila Samittee* in 1926, gave a new momentum to this aspect. Child marriage was considered as an obstacle behind the upliftment of women in India. But fortunately Assam remained untouched by the wave of this social evil. It was hoped that the new act (Sarda Act) would regulate and eradicate this social evil from the Indian social order. Credit is definitely given to Haribilash Sarda for this remarkable achievement. Moreover it is said that this child marriage very soon also leads to widowhood for women⁽³⁵⁾.

Chandraprava Saikiani once again firmly announced her strong protest against the system of child marriage through her valuable writings. Saikiani wrote an elaborate essay on child marriage where she tried to expose its irrelevances in contemporary times. In her article '*Vivah aru Vedadi Sastra*' Saikiani made an analytical assessment on child marriage. She pointed out the basic negative aspects of the tradition which was against the Vedic scriptures⁽³⁶⁾. On the topic of child marriage famous feminist writer Narayani Handique expressed her feelings that the newly enacted "Sarda Act" would set a new milestone in the field of social reforms in India. A detail essay was published on the themes and clauses of Sarda Act or child marriage restraint Act. Thus it has cleared that periodical '*Awahan*' reflected all ongoing social issues of contemporary India and Assam for the cause of a better society.

Issue of Anti-Untouchability and Caste Equality: Untouchability was another one area of big concern during the colonial period. It was another major social evil which paralysed entire Indian social order for a long time. During the 19th century under the initiative of social reformer Jyotiba Phule organised protest and grievances were made against this social evil. Jyotiba was the first ever crusader against this social evil who started *Satya-Sodhak Samaj* in 1873. In the early 1920s Non-Brahmin protest emerged in South India as '*Self Respect Movement*'⁽³⁷⁾. Gandhiji also took up the cause of untouchables and deprived class during the time of civil disobedience movement which accelerated a strong campaign against the issue. It was considered as one of the most confronted social evil of India during 1930s. In Assam the problem was not as acute as it was other part of India. Despite efforts of religious preachers like Sankardeva and Madhavdeva to remove the caste distinction but in practical it went in vein because in Assam lower caste persons were debarred from entering temples, Satras and Namghars. Under the banner of Gandhiji serious attempts were made to remove this distinction from the society⁽³⁸⁾. In the writings of '*Awahan*' untouchability was criticised very severely. In an article Gopika Ballav Goswami laid stress that there was not any practical base of the evil practice of untouchability. Except that ancient sacred scriptures were stood against this culture. The editorials of the periodical '*Awahan*' also concentrated its attack on this issue. Meanwhile the news of *Temple Entry Movement* was published in the editorial pages⁽³⁹⁾.

The visit of Gandhiji provided a significant impetus to the untouchables issue in Assam. Amritlal Thakur, the general secretary of the *Harijan Sevak Sngha*, came to Guwahati in

1932 and opened a provincial branch under the presidentship of Sri Sri Pitambar Deva Goswami, the head of the Garamura Satra of Majuli, who was always associated himself with all the movements for reforms in the province. Under the spearheaded of Pitambar Deva Goswami, the *Assam Pradeshik Harijan Sevak Sangha* continued the movement against untouchability and to bring the tea garden and tribal people to the main fold of Hinduism and uplift their social status. Temple entry was however objected to by the religious authority in certain parts of Assam. The priest of Biswanath in Darrang district said that he would not allow the persons of depressed classes to enter the temple but would not put up any resistance to a forcible entry⁽⁴⁰⁾. The periodical '*Awahan*' published various editorials and articles on the issue of Temple Entry Movement in India and made people aware of these facts. It could well realise the prestigious position of *Satradhikars* and the gurus in the Assamese social order. Moreover '*Awahan*' fully praised the selfishness attitude of Sri Sri Pitambar Deva Goswami and his work ethics. Under the initiative of Lakhikanta Baruah a new mission was set up at Sibsagar to remove caste distinction, and untouchability among the people and to promote the sense of harmony and solidarity. It was hoped that the proposed mission would give its best to deal with serious issues⁽⁴¹⁾. Actually '*Awahan*' tried to send a message to the rest of the world about its social responsibility and constructive thoughts.

Issue of Higher Education: One of the most widely discussed issue and topic in the 19th and 20th century India was issue of higher education and its promotion. There were various decade long debates occurred regarding the medium of instruction in the Schools and establishment of colleges and universities. During 1857 three universities were established in India for the promotion higher education but in the context of Assam at the very beginning, David Scott established 11 schools throughout Assam. Assam was recognised as a separate province in 1874 but in the field of higher education nothing special was done. A necessity was felt by the youth and the educated elite of an own college in Assam. But time and again like other issues a debate was occurred among the middle class people of Assam regarding the establishment of a college. But finally, the establishment of Cotton College in 1901, to some extent satisfied Assamese people for a period of time. Till 1930 there was not a single college in the Brahmaputra Valley⁽⁴²⁾. The first graduate and tea planter of Upper Assam, Jaganath Baruah could well realise the value of a college in Upper Assam and subsequently he took some far reaching initiatives. Jaganath Baruah tried to establish a college at Jorhat but due his sudden demise, the entire process was stopped. Organisations like Assam Association occasionally made their demands for establishment of a college in upper Assam. Particularly the name of Manik Chandra Baruah, founder secretary of Assam Association, was worth to mention. He was considered as one of the leading pioneer behind the establishment of a college. Tulsi Naryan Sharma deeply realised the necessity of a college at Jorhat for the benefit of the Assamese students. Later on he consulted with figures like Krishnakanta Handique and Phanidhar Dutta.⁽⁴³⁾

On account of the lack of a college in the Upper Assam, poor students of Assam had to give up their hopes and aspirations after clearing matriculation. A new college would

provide them ample facilities to enrol and to learn new things. Apart from that middle class families of Assam can also enrol their sons in the proposed college. It was hoped that multiple benefit would occur due to establishment of the said college in Upper Assam. In terms of places for establishment of a new college at Jorhat, there was abundance of land. Thus no tension occurred concerning land for a college⁽⁴⁴⁾. Under the initiatives of Tulsi Narayan finally decisions were taken for establishing a college at Jorhat. Formally Jaganath Baruah College was set up at Jorhat in 1930. The college authority proposed to open various subjects such as Sanskrit, History, Logic, Assamese etc. The newly established college at Jorhat could solve many problems. 15 students were enrolled in the college and an application was also placed for the affiliation under Kolkata University. As a result after this petition from the college side, a team visited the college to supervise its facilities for the students. The team members were very happy and satisfied with all available facilities of the college for the teaching and learning. They openly praised the sense of dedication of the teaching staff of the college. At last the Jaganath Baruah College received its affiliation from the Kolkata University in 1931⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The establishment of J.B. College was regarded as a great landmark in the history of higher education in Assam. Time and again, demand arose in Assam particularly in the early part of the 20th century, for establishing a university. First demand was raised in *Milan*, the mouthpiece of *Assam Chatra Sanmilan* in 1928⁽⁴⁶⁾. Though the first university was established in Assam in 1948 but various small initiatives were taken or made since early 20th century. Persons like Satyanath Borah raised the same demand in 1917 during the annual session of *Assam Chatra Sanmilani*. Upendranath Baruah played a very vital role behind the establishing a university in Assam. He appealed the tea planters to contribute their best in terms of kind or cash. Nabin Chandra Boroloi was another one person who deeply involved in the business⁽⁴⁷⁾. Maidul Islam Bora, an educated middle class representative supported the view of establishing a university in Assam but at the same time he argued for vocational education in Assam. He asked to invite distinguished guest faculty to teach in the proposed university for the benefit of the Assamese students and also to maintain its standard with the other universities across India. Further he advised every Assamese to realise the value of education and its objectives⁽⁴⁸⁾. It seemed very difficult to establish and run a university in Assam because a huge amount of money was required. It was not possible for the government to fund or donate such an amount. Appeal was made for the common people of Assam to contribute their best by collecting money from concerning available sources. A university committee was also proposed to deal with the matter and to develop a fund for the university. Need of a trust was also came into the light and asked the energetic youth section of Assam to play a very positive and active role behind the establishment of a university in Assam⁽⁴⁹⁾.

It has noticed that 'Awahan' left no stone unturned to expose all contemporary social debates and issues of Assam. Through these discussions, it emphasised to form a liberal and progressive Assamese society in the early 20th century. The editorials of 'Awahan' were very heart touching and also thought- provoking. 'Awahan' argued for an advanced and

liberal society by discarding age old unscientific traditions. The magazine well understood the depth of every social problem of Assam in an analytical narrative. Thus, it can be said that the social significance of 'Awahan' was indeed very significant.

Notes and References:

1. Saikia, Rajen - Social and economic History of Assam
Monhar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2001.
2. Bhuyan, A.C & Dey,S (ed)- Political History of Assam,Vol II Publication Board
Assam,Guwahati, 1999, pp 200-206
3. . Bhuyan, A.C & Dey,S (ed)- Political History of Assam,Vol II Publication Board
Assam,Guwahati,1999, p, 206
4. P. Majumdar(Comp.) - Awahan, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2016,
Vol. I, p 40.
5. Governors Address ; - ALCP; 6 March 1933, p. 5-6
6. P. Majumdar (Comp) - ibid p. 40.
7. P. Majumdar (Comp) - ibid
8. P. Majumdar (Comp) - ibid p. 170.
9. P. Majumdar (Comp) - ibid, p. 600
10. P. Majumdar (Comp) - Awahan, Publication Board Assam Guwahati 2016, Vol.
VIII. pp. 1122.
11. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid p 170
12. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid. p 600
13. Guha, A - Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle & Electoral
Politics in Assam, Tulika Books, 2006, p. 340.
14. Majumdar,P(Comp) - Awahan,op.cit.P,979.
15. Neog,M (Comp) - "Oorunodoi", Stree Siksha, April, 1861, May, publication
Board Assam, Guwahati, 1983.
16. M. Neog (Comp) - ibid, pp. 949.
17. A. Chakravarty - History of Education in Assam, Guwahati, 1989, p.127.
18. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan, Vol. I, Publication Board, Guwahati, Assam, 2016,
pp 166-168,
19. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid pp. 166-168
20. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan Vol. II .pp.1073-1075
21. P.Majumdar (Comp) - Awahan,Vol. IV, Publication Board, Guwahati,
2016, pp, 1065-1066
22. Majumdar,P(Comp) - Awahan,Vol. V, publication Board, Guwahati
Pp 183-185, 2016
23. Desai,N - Women in Modern India, Bombay,P 69
24. Sapon Bose - Bengali Navachetanar Itihas, pp. 135-37.
25. Binoy Ghose - Vidyasagar O Bengali Samaj, p. 239.
26. Baruah, G - Ram Navami Natak, introduction, p, 6

27. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan, op.cit,Vol.II,p, 855
28. Mahanta, A - Journey of Assamese women (1836-1937), Publication Board, Assam, 2008, p. 6.
29. Majumdar, P (Comp) – Awahan, op.cit.Vol. I, p. 19
30. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid
31. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan, Vol,II, pp 170-71
32. Devi, N - Eri Oha Dinbhur, Lawyer's Book Stall, Panbazar Guwahati, 1994 (II edition) pp, 12-15
33. Devi, N - ibid
34. Majumdar, P - op.cit.pp,170-71
35. ibid
36. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan, op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 169-170.
37. Bhuyan, A.C & Dey, S(ed)- Political History of Assam, Vol. II, Publication Board,Guwahati, 1999, pp, 224-230
38. Majumdar, P(Comp) – Awahan, op.cit. Vol. VII, pp. 124-125.
39. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan,op.cit.Vol.II,672
40. Majumdar, P (Comp) - Awahan,op.cit, Vol,VII,pp, 124-125
41. Majumdar, P(Comp) - ibid
42. Mahanta, P - Asomiya Madhyabito Shrenir Itihas,Guwahati, pp, 426-427
43. Majumdar, P(Comp) - Awahan,op.cit,Vol.VII,p,221
44. Mahanta,P - op.cit 426-27
45. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid,p 221
46. Majumdar, P - op. cit. Vol. VII,pp,1400-06
47. Kalita, H - Asomot Viswabidyalaya,1976,Guwahati,pp 25-27
48. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid,pp,585-587
49. Majumdar, P (Comp) - ibid