A Study On Educational Environment During The Era Of Orunodoi In Assamese Literature

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Abstract: A magazine not only contributes to the literature and language of a society but also at the same time plays an important role in portraying social, political, cultural, intellectual pictures of that society. Magazines, published in different time periods maintain their own characteristics of literature and their traditional uniqueness along with socio-intellectual background. “Orunodoi”, the first magazine-cum-newspaper was not an exception. This magazine has very important place in Assamese language and literature. Orunodoi for the first time has tried to change the Assamese people’s mind through literature by showing them the positive role of education and literature in a society. In this research article an analysis is done on the articles published in Orunodoi related to the education environment of Assam at that time period.

Index Terms: Education, Orunodoi, Assamese Literature, Language

0.1 INTRODUCTION

The era of 19th century is very significant in the social and intellectual history of Assam. Assam was occupied by British in 1826 according to the Yandaboo treaty and after that many significant changes had been taken place in Assamese language, literature and society as well. The education history of Assam showed that modern education system was not prevalent in Assam before British governance. The teaching process was conducted at teacher or guru’s home, and at ‘Tul’s or at ‘Satra’s. The students who learned education at teacher’s home mainly achieve religious education. But in the subsequent period, when Assam was dominated by British rule, the period of modern education started in Assam. British established English medium schools in Assam only to serve their economic interests or to expand colonialism. Therefore, under the British rule, no significant expansion of education was seen. Their motive was not to educate everyone else, but to make a few people educated who could maintain their administrative works. At that time Mr. James Ray arrived at Guwahati, Assam only at the request of David Scott in 1829 and established a school in Guwahati in 1830. The second school in Assam was established in 1834, the time period when General Jenkins was promoted to Commissioner. But the school established by James Ray and his mission was become weak and therefore Christian missionaries who were lived in Calcutta at that time invited to Assam in order to introduce and spread Christian religion among the Khamtis of Assam. Consequently, Nathan Brown, Oliver T. Cutter etc (enormous names of Christian Missionaries) reached at Sadiya, Assam. After arrival at Assam, they felt the importance and necessity of Assamese language to spread Christian religion in Assam. Therefore, they gave importance in the introduction and development of institutional education in Assam where Assamese would be the learning language. At that time Bangla language was prevalent in the educational and administrative institutions in Assam from 1837. This prevented the development of institutional education in native language in Assam and also created hindrances in the overall development of the concurrent society. However, Assamese language was re-established in Assam in 1873 and got own pride only because of the immense hard work of American Missionaries.

0.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Another important reason that had created hindrances in the development of modern education in Assam was superstition, blind religious traditional belief and low mindset of people. Christian missionaries tried hard to change the people’s this kind of worst attitude by establishing schools and writing literature in Assamese language. Because they knew that only proper education can change their mind in the positive direction. In this context, the role of first magazine cum newspaper in Assamese language namely “Orunodoi” was very significant. Orunodoi had created a new road for Assamese literature which was followed by many journals in the consequent period. In this research article an analysis is done on the articles published in Orunodoi related to the education environment of Assam at that time period. Through this discussion an attempt has been made to study the role of Orunodoi in changing the education system in Assam at that time.

0.3 OBJECTIVES

• To study the educational environment of Assam in the Orunodoi era of Assamese literature.
• To know the perception of Assamese people on education during the period of Orunodoi era.
0.4 METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on analytical and explanatory method in explaining the facts. The study uses secondary data from magazines, books etc. in order to fulfill the objectives. Moreover, this research paper is limited only to the articles related to education system of Assam that are published in Orunodoi.

0.5 ANALYSIS

0.5.1 Articles Published in Orunodoi on Education System of Assam

The era of the first Assamese magazine-cum-newspaper, Orunodoi starts from 1846 – 1880. At the starting period Orunodoi has no editor till 1850. The name of Oliver T. Cutter was there as the printer and publisher of the magazine cum newspaper. From March 1850, the name of Nathan Brown was published as the editor of this newspaper. As the editor the name of Nathan Brown and as the printer and publisher the name of Oliver T. Cutter were published from August, 1850. The features of the newspaper is clearly mentioned in the first edition of Orunodoi where it is explained as below – “THE ORUNODOI, a monthly paper, devoted to Religion, Science and General Intelligence, is printed and published at the Sibsagar Mission Press, by O. T. Cutter, for the American Baptist Mission in Assam, Price, One Rupee per annum, in advance, or one and a half at the end of the year.

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The paper which was devoted to the development of religion, science and general knowledge published many articles related to Assam’s concurrent education which had also created concerns about this topic in the people’s mind. The following table shows some articles published in Orunodoi. The article with the title “Gyan Sabha aru Schoolor Biboron” published in September, 1846 gives importance on the establishment of schools-colleges as well as institutions for knowledge practice. In this context, the writer gives the example of Calcutta and Bangle (also known as Banga Desh), since these two places are at that time going forward in the establishment of those institutions. The writer mentions that without education or without knowledge all the wealth including Gold and Silver has no meaning. The author gives incentive to Assamese boys in order to achieve higher education from England by giving the example of Bengali boys since they already started their journey to England to achieve higher education. The author writes, “Amar Asom deshor manuhibilakeu lorabilakor eferiman bonok bor lav jen ishaa na kori, bidya shikhiboloi diya, tehe amar deshot gyani aru hokolu prokare hukhi hbo.” The article “Byovishar Bikhyoyok” was published in the month of April, 1848 where the author calls every parent to encourage their childs to get educated. All anti-social activities will be removed only when people become properly educated. “Bidyawanta hoboloi Ejon Asomiar Nibedon” (October, 1855) – in this article the author mentions that many parents prevent their child to go schools. According to the author parents should encourage their child to go school instead of preventing them. Therefore the author requests every parent to be careful for their Childs, be responsive to make their Childs educated. It is seen that Orunodoi gives importance on female education and on its expansion as far as possible. In Assamese society, female education was ignored heavily at the time of 19th century. In reality ignorance of female education was accepted as a tradition in Assamese society. In such a society where people blindly follow their traditions, American Baptist Missionaries for the first time take important role responsibility of expansion of female education by establishing boarding school in Assam. Missionary’s perception on female education was very clearly expressed in Orunodoi. In an editorial note of Orunodoi published in October, 1860 with the title “Stree Siksha”, the editor wrote – if in a nation all girls will start to study well, if they properly get the required books for study, then good things will start to happened in the nation. If the nations have increasing knowledge, then that nation’s every girl and women can study, will get incentive to send their child to schools. Those who have no education will not become efficient mother for their child. They will not have at least some quality to discuss proper religious thinking. Therefore, by understanding all these things, developed nations always give proper education to the females. American Missionaries also tried very hard to establish schools in Assam and their attempt was successful. They know that if they would not able to do this, then Christian peoples will not live well. Many articles were published in Orunodoi on the subject of co-education of males and females. Among them some important are– “Asom Deshor Luk Hokolor Proti Nibedon Potra” (May, 1853), “Stree Siksha” (May, 1861), “Sri Jut Orunodoi Sampadok Sahaboloi” (January, 1867), “Stree Hokolor korthoby karma”(October, 1867), “Varjya Swamir Korthoby Korom” (January, 1867) etc. In “Asom Deshor Luk Hokolor Proti Nibedon Patra” (a letter), the author gives importance on the improvement of education system in Assam alongwith
providing facility to all boys and girls to achieve their education. According to the author giving equal opportunities to both male and female child as well as to develop them with proper education is the very important responsibility of parents. A woman can manage her family works and make everyone happy only if she gets education. This is really a good thinking which was mentioned in the article with title “Stree Hokolor Kortoby Karma” (October, 1867) written by P. Devi. Another article “Varjya Swamir Kortoby Karma” (January, 1867) was written by B. Devi. The article gives importance on providing equal education to both male and female. The author by giving her own perception wrote that it is actually more important to provide education to girls than boys. In her words, “Hokolu Kathar aru Unnatire mul karon hol bidya hika aru gyani hua. Etete ha mohakhoyhokol, apunalue apunar lora aru suali duiku homane hikaun. Mur ibesbonai loratkoi sualiburok hikuwa aru abosyok.” By supporting female education Hemchandra Boruah wrote an article “Stree Siksha” with the help of a pen name “Ho-So”. The article was published in May, 1862. According to him, in his concurrent period people are under the very bad influence of superstition. Therefore, it was necessary to spread education in the mind of people. He gave importance on making women stronger by providing proper education to them and makes them prepare to give up old-age bad tradition and superstition. In his words, “Tumaluke tumalukor tiruter ahite ji kusanksar erosion, ato eri probol hotru manuhor eku so ron na kore. Kuru kuru kuru ujai kebol bor luku lorakhe astikko porhai, hamanya manuhor lorate mon nidie. Kuru ujai bor elahot thake chator etar dwaraihe lorabukor porhai, aru porhabashiloi polokokoi ahe, jaute hunkale jai, Jodi kuru satrok hajir napai ter karonu nisises.”

The author requests teachers and peoples of Assam to improve the worst teaching environment and to follow the proper encouraging environment so that Assam can move forward equally with India in this context. One important article was “Bidya Rup Brikhyo” published in October, 1853. The author of this article showed that education not only provides knowledge but also helps everyone to remain morally good in their life. In the words of the author, “Bidyar ki ki fol kou huna; duhahidya eti probol hotru manuhok parajoy kora, jugya-ajugya gyan, jokh, kirti, artho, dhormo, hovya hua, hukh vug, mongol, joy, raja adik pujyota manyota kora, hosa-misa ibesbonar totwa, porom hukh, porom iswarok sintu, homya, dom, doya, khema, hanto, indriyo domon adi kori ehiokol bidya bikhyor fol hoi.” Another significant article that was related to the role of education in maintaining moral value of people was “Manuh Ejonok Fasi Diyar Katha”, published in September, 1847 in Orunodoi. The author talks about a young boy in Sibsagar and at the end talks about the role of education by saying that – if you teach your child to do good work, send them to school to learn; then only they will give up bad thinking and habits and will start to do good work. To change a society in the positive direction, to change the new generation’s mind in the direction of knowledge world, it is very necessary to give them incentive to become educated. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan wrote an article where he mentioned all this things. The article was “Englandor Biboron” published in April, 1847. According to his words, “Lorahokol, tumulake atai eke bakyot hoi karru baak nuhnui bidyat atai cit aru hokti diya.” He encourages the young generation to give their hearts and energy to their education. At that time learning education was not a cup of tea. Because more than half of the society was against the education system. Those people were becoming hindrances in the path of education. Therefore, the author requests young boys not to hear those negative people and concentrate on their work of learning. Superstition, old tradition, low mentality of people etc. are responsible for preventing people to get educated.
0.6 DECISIONS AND CONCLUSION
From the above discussions following decisions are made:

a. The necessity and importance of English language are reflected in the writings that are published in Orunodoi.

b. The need for education was felt. People thought that learning English is very harmful for the Assamese community. Proper education and knowledge was necessary to remove this kind of illogical thinking. Orunodoi gave many articles on this topic and beautifully presents the need for education.

c. Orunodoi, in its writings strongly give focus on the importance of female education. Education is necessary for a woman to make her child educated and beautifully maintain her home simultaneously.

d. Need for moral education was felt along with institutional education.

REFERENCES