

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRESS IN BARAK VALLEY

The Barak Valley is a region with its distinct geography, history, culture and society in the state of Assam in India. Such a distinction makes a difference to the press and patterns of communication. Therefore, the valley needs to be introduced as the area of the present study.

#### 2.1 PHYSIOGRAPHY

The three districts of southern Assam – Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj-together constitute Barak Valley, which in the pre-Independence period was a part of the erstwhile Surma Valley. The valley is situated between longitudes  $92^{\circ} 15'$  and  $93^{\circ} 15'$  and latitudes  $24^{\circ} 8'$  and  $25^{\circ} 8'$ . It is bounded on the North by the North Cachar Hills of Assam and Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya; on the East by Manipur; on the South by Mizoram and on the West by Tripura and Sylhet district of Bangladesh. The total area of Barak Valley is 6,922 sq. kms, of which Cachar district alone accounts for 57.4% of the total area; the shares of Hailakandi and Karimganj district being 19.2% and 26.1% respectively. Until recently the Barak Valley area was 'Cachar' district in its unified form. In fact, since 1983 when Karimganj sub-division was declared a district, the areas of the old Cachar district (of post-Independence period) came to be known as 'Barak Valley' as a mark of distinction from the Assam Valley proper. At present, the old Cachar district (of post-Independence period) stands trifurcated as Hailakandi sub-division was also declared a district in 1989. It is to be noted here that after Independence, Cachar district had four sub-divisions – Hailakandi, Karimganj, North Cachar Hills and Silchar. But in 1952, North Cachar Hills were separated from Cachar and since then Cachar District meant present Barak Valley area till 1983. In fact, Cachar district of the period (1951-1983) is today's Barak Valley (Ahmed 1998). The area of the present valley and its constituent districts is shown in the following table:

**TABLE 2.1 AREA OF BARAK VALLEY**

<b>District</b>	<b>Area (In Square Kilometers)</b>
CACHAR	3786
KARIMGANJ	1809
HAILAKANDI	1327
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6922</b>

(Source: Govt. of Assam 2011, Statistical Handbook of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam.)

## **2.2 TOPOGRAPHY**

The topography of the valley is composed of high hills, low lands and level plains. Vast tracts in the southern part of the valley are covered with forests. The valley is almost shut in by the hill ranges on the North, East and South which occupy considerable area of the valley's territory. Nearly the whole of the valley is dotted with scattered low- range hills which are locally called 'tillahs'. The river 'Barak' flows through the plains of the valley. High lands of the valley are pre-dominantly planted with tea bushes while lower portions mostly are covered by rice. In fact, tea and rice together constitute 90 percent of the valley's cropped area. Around 70 percent of the working population is engaged in agriculture and other primary sector activities, which shows symptoms of a subsistence and peripheral economy. Minerals and water resources of the Barak Valley have drawn attention of many Government agencies. But the resources are yet to be explored as they require a vast investment of capital before being commercially viable (Mazumdar 1996).

### **2.3 CLIMATE**

The climate of the Barak Valley is favourable for cultivation of variety of crops, of which rice is the most important. Before the Green Revolution, the average yield of rice per hectare of the valley was much above the country's overall average per hectare but by 1970s the same began to fall and present average yield of the valley per hectare has fallen much below the country's average yield level and, as a result, the valley has become a rice-deficit zone. Another important surplus generating sector in Barak Valley's economy is the tea industry. Tea covers about 13.5 percent of the total cropped area and contributes significantly to the valley's Net Domestic Product. Tea is regarded as the most important surplus income generating sector in Barak Valley's economy. However, the average yield of tea per hectare in the valley is far below the states or country's average yield per hectare.

### **2.4 RIVER**

The Barak is the most important river of the valley. The river starts on the escarpment of the Borail ranges from the south of Jupvo Peak to the north of Manipur. Its upper part is marked by steep banks and several falls. It turns west in the Cachar district through which it flows down to a place called Haritikar near Badarpur, where it separates into two branches to re-join at Habitant in Bangladesh. The northern branch is called the Surma and the southern branch is called Kushiyara. The total length of the river is 560 miles before it joins the Brahmaputra. The river has numerous tributaries. The principal tributaries of the river in the Barak Valley are the Jiri, the Chiri, the Madhura, the Ghagra, the Sonai, the Jatinga, the Dhaleswari, the Katakhal, the Longai and the Singal.

The Barak Valley suffers from frequent bouts of floods. Floods inflicted the valley with heavy in 1929,1932,1935,1941,1946,1952,1953, 1959, 1962, 1966, 1972, 1976, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1991 and 2004. The embankments constructed by the Flood Controls Department have failed to rid the valley of the flood menace (Choudhury 1992).

## **2.5 SOIL**

The general feature of the valley's soil is acidity. Some parts of the valley are capped by red loamy soil. There are the parts which are covered by lateritic soil. The Barak Valley has also numerous lakes and marshes rich in the soil with organic matters.

## **2.6 FOREST**

Forests cover more than one-third of the valley's total land area. However, mass scale deforestation in recent years is resulting in the decline of forest products. Besides the forests, substantial portion of the valley's total area is occupied by barren tracts. The percentage of cultivable land in the total land is considerably low as compared to all India level. The inadequacy of cultivable land in view of a rising population has resulted to the heavier pressure on available agricultural lands and disguised unemployment in rural areas of the valley. The density of population of Barak Valley is greater than five states in North- East India (Allen 1990).

## **2.7 FLORA**

The valley's natural vegetation consists of the forests with the large evergreen trees forming a higher canopy and the smaller shrubs and herbs forming lower storey. Large climbers are also present in considerable numbers. The important species are Arjun (*Dipterocarpus turbinated*), Nahor (*Mesua Fkerrea*), Kurta (*Palaquium Polyanthum*), Nagalichi (*Nephelium longana*), Kendu (*Diospyros toposia*), Marhal (*Vetica lanceafolia*), Jinari (*Podocarpus Nerifolium*), Jaman (*Eugenia sp.*), Dhuna (*Canarium sp.*), Chickrassi (*Chikrassia Tabularies*), Sundri, Cham (*Artocarpus Chaplasa*). The species Jinari, which occurs only in the Cachar region and Eastern Assam, is of great botanical interest as it is one of the few conifers having broad leaves. Different species of bamboos are also found in the valley. They are chiefly Muli (*melocanna Bambusoides*), Pecha (*Dendro Calemus Hamiltonil*), and Dolu (*Leinostachyum dullua*) Makal (*B.Palida* (Barkakati 1989)

## **2.8 FAUNA**

- I. Wild life depends directly or indirectly on vegetation for food and habitat. The extensive forests of the valley were the home of different kinds of wild animals like tigers, leopards, bears, elephants, wild dogs, deers, porcupines and foxes. There were also different kinds of reptiles and birds. The valley, which was rich in different forms of wild life, even in the early post-Independence period, has lost most of these because of deforestation and hunting. The only wild animals often come across here, are wild elephants.
- II. Domestic animals of the valley are cows, buffaloes, pigs, goats, sheeps, and dogs. The domestic birds are fowls, ducks and pigeons etc. (Barkakati 1989).

## **2.9 POPULATION**

Linguistically, the Bengali speaking people forms the majority of the valley's population. Besides the Bengalis, there are also other communities inhabiting the valley. They are chiefly the Manipuris, the Kukis, the Nagas, the Khasis, the Barmans, the Tiparas, the Assamese, the Hmars and the Nepalese. There are also the people brought in the valley as the workers in the tea gardens in the valley. They came from different parts of the country like Bengal, Bihar, Eastern U.P. and Orissa. They belong to different caste groups like the Santhals, the Hoes, the Mundus and the Orans. According to the census Report (1991), the total population of the valley was 24, 91,496 (Goswami 1991) and while in 2001 it is 29, 88,797 and in 2011 it is 36, 24,599. The population distribution of the today's valley is shown in the following table:

**TABLE 2.2 POPULATION OF BARAK VALLEY**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
CACHAR	17, 36,617	47.91%
KARIMGANJ	12, 28,686	33.90%
HAILAKANDI	6, 59,296	18.19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36, 24,599</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: Census Report of India, Assam State 2011, Directorate of Census Operation, Assam)

Table No 2.2 shows that Cachar district has almost half of the valley's population, whereas Karimganj has over a one third and Hailakandi has more than one sixth of the population.

### **2.9.1 Distribution of Rural and Urban Population**

Distribution of a population on the rural-urban basis and its patterns has impacts on the development of a press. Therefore, rural-urban distribution of the valley's population is given in the following table:

**TABLE 2.3 RURAL & URBAN POPULATION**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>RURAL POPULATION</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	<b>URBAN POPULATION</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
CACHAR	14, 21,153	45.10%	3, 15,464	66.65%
KARIMGANJ	11, 18,986	35.51%	1, 09,700	23.18%
HAILAKANDI	6, 11,156	19.39%	48,140	10.17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31, 51,295</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4, 73,304</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: Census Report of India, Assam State 2011, Directorate of Census Operation, Assam)

Table No 2.3 shows that in the valley the Cachar district has more than one fourth of the total population staying in urban areas, followed by one tenth of the Karimganj district and Hailakandi district have more than one twelfth of the population which are inhabitant of urban areas.

## 2.9.2 Density of Population

The density of the population in the three districts of the valley is shown in the following table:

**TABLE 2.4 DENSITY OF POPULATION**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>PERSONS PER SQUARE KM.</b>
CACHAR	459
KARIMGANJ	673
HAILAKANDI	497

(Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 2011, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam)

Table No 2.4 reveals that the density of the population of Barak Valley is highest in Karimganj district, followed by Hailakandi and Cachar district.

## 2.10 EDUCATION AND LITERACY

When compared with the neighbouring district of Sylhet, the progress in education in the district will took insignificant during the period preceding Independence. Until very recently, the Cachar consisted of Silchar, Hailakandi and North Cachar Hills Sub-divisions. In 1952, N.C. Hills was taken out from the Cachar district and was made a part of the united Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. In the year 1856-57, there was not a single school in the district. In 1861 there was an unaided school, which had only 13 pupils. In such situation, the area constituting the Cachar was very naturally backward in literacy. Literate and educated people when required had to be brought from outside, besides a very few locals who could read and write. The matter slowly began to improve more than three decades after advent of the British rule. In 1865-66, there were only seven schools in existence. Little progress was made George Campbell's measures of reform began to take effect. In 1900-1901, there were 248 primary schools and four secondary schools in existence. Most of the people acquired literacy from schools or at home .There were no literacy drives before the advent of British rule. A few Kachari kings and members of nobility were fairly educated.

They had some educated employees also. But the literacy rate of common people was very low or almost nil. There were a few big landholders and people of priestly class who were at least literate if not educated. In 1903-04, there were 230 lower primary schools for boys and 238 lower primary schools for girls. There were 11 upper primary schools which were attended by 126 boys and 60 girls (Govt. of Assam 2004).

But even before the government undertook the task of spreading literacy and education, a Welsh Presbyterian Missionary, William Pryse, had devoted himself to it. He reached Cachar in 1851 from Sylhet. In 1856, in accordance with the advice of Captain Verner, the Government Agent for Cachar, a school was opened at Silchar with Pryse's helper Mr Thaison being appointed in charge. In December 1863, Pryse was able to get a grant of Rs. 60/- per month. Pryse paid attention to Cachar district. In his letters to the Directors, he disclosed his plan of travelling of the Hills and Cachar and to locate a youth who was still a student to maintain surveillance until the others were led voluntarily to take up and spread the teachings and the gospel of the mission by October 1886. He wrote that the missionaries were trying to establish a mission school at Barkhala about nine miles from Silchar. An old revered gentleman who was the last of the Chief Ministers of Govinda Chandra, the last king of Cachar, gifted the school. The school, now Higher Secondary School named after King Govinda Chandra still at Barkhala. (Sarkar Partha, 2012)

Thus, the spread of literacy in Cachar began with the missionary efforts to spread formal education. However, the efforts were concentrated in the urban areas. The present literacy status in the valley is shown in the following table:



**TABLE 2.5 LITERACY RATE IN BARAK VALLEY**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	<b>TOTAL NO. OF LITERATE PERSON</b>
CACHAR	6, 52,827	54.54%	5, 44,065	45.46%	11, 96,892
KARIMGANJ	4, 43,047	54.82%	3, 65,118	45.18%	8, 08,165
HAILAKANDI	2, 30,567	55.73%	1, 83,138	44.27%	4, 13,705

(Source: Govt. of India 2011 Census Report of Assam, Directorate of Census Operation, Assam)

The data shows that the male and female literacy rate is almost equal in Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts.

People of this region have had keen desire for education since long past. Consequently one finds many renowned scholars and dignitaries in the past and present. Facilities for education from primary school to University level are available here. Assam University, National Institute of Technology (NIT), Medical College, Polytechnic College, Technical School, Agricultural Training School, L.P, M.V, H.S Schools and Colleges, B.Ed. Colleges and Basic Training Centres and Research Centres serve the purpose of education.

## **2.11 ECONOMY**

Barak Valley is now a full-fledged region having all the avenues of further prosperity. River Barak, Kushiara and Longai with their tributaries and branches facilitate navigation to carry fruits and forest products from interior parts to the markets. Railways and roadways are spread in this region. Hill section of railways and Badarpur-Shillong- Guwahati road are the link lines to connect it with the rest of the country. One airport is also available. The Hindustan Paper Mill located at Panchgram is one of the biggest paper mills in Asia. Its raw materials i.e. bamboos are grown in plenty in the region. Radio and TV centers have been functioning here since long time.

The economic condition of the people is at par with other regions of the country. Business is flourishing day by day. The region maintains a good cultural heritage in folksongs, dances etc. The valley is no doubt resource-rich, but is also one of the country's most thickly populated areas. Its forest products, water resources, fruits and sugarcane yielding potential have to be utilized. Being a land-scarce area it needs appropriate planning and technology to ensure maximum yield. Flanked by five of the seven political units in the region, its central situation has to be recognized by the Union Government for the location of the regional offices. The feeling of neglect and discrimination has to be removed and the linguistic and cultural identities of the people have to be guaranteed since these are essentially linked with the question of development (Statistical Abstracts 1960).

## 2.12 LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Literary and cultural tradition of this valley deserves special attention. From the region of the Kachari rulers, Bengali language and literature started its journey. An article written by Biswatosh Choudhury titled 'Barak Upatyakai Bangla Sahitya' provides some ideas about the new western awakening in the field of literature and the contribution of Ram Kumar Nandy. And then information about awakening and the age of Shikshasebak was found. This was published in the souvenir of the All India Bengali Literary held Conference at Silchar in 1989 (Choudhury 1989).

Among the recent researchers various works by Amalendu Bhattacharjee provide a detailed picture of the evolution of literary and cultural tradition in Barak Valley in the contemporary time. Particular mention needs to be made of the following contributions by Bhattacharjee:

- "*Language and literature of Barak Valley*" paper presented in the National Seminar on 'History and Society of Barak Valley held in Delhi November 11, 1992)
- *Barak Upatyakai Bangla Sahitya Charchar Dharabahik Itihaas'* Aksharbritta, Vol III, 2<sup>nd</sup> special issue, Karimganj, 1993.

Among the Bengali literary figures in Cachar, during the British period, Ram Kumar Nandy Mazumdar (1831-1904) made notable contributions to the valley's literary traditions.

Amalendu Bhattacharjee and Jahar Kanti Sen have discussed in detail the life and literary activities of Ramkumar Nandy Mazumdar in their "Introduction" to the Nandy's book *Birangana Patrattar Kabya* (Mazumdar Nandy 1997).

In another 'Introduction' to the edited volume of Ramkumar Nandy Mazumdar's 'Malinir Upakhyan', Amalendu Bhattacharjee presents some additional information on the particular literary work of Ramkumar Nandy Mazumdar and also on the literary trends in Cachar during the British period (Bhattachajee 1991).

A booklet in Bengali entitled 'Amader Boi Amader Patra Patrika' published by the Barak Upatyaka Banga Sahitya O Sanskriti Sammelan in 1988 provides with a complete list of all the books published from Cachar including those ones published prior to 1947. This list gives the name of novels and other literary works published during the pre-Independence phase of modern literature in Barak Valley.

Bijay Choudhury in his article 'Atit Silcharer Siksha – Sahitya Sankriti' highlights the education, literature and cultural development of Silchar. In this article gives a clear picture of the young generation in the literary and cultural field during the pre-independence period (Choudhury 1994).

With the beginning of the process of urbanization in Cachar cultural activities in and around the Silchar town started gathering momentum. Parimal De in her article "Nagarik Manan O Adunikatar Unmesh: Silchar Saharer Sanskriti Charchai Swadhinata Kayak Dashak" focused on the cultural development of Silchar town during pre-Independence period. It is a fact that written documents on this aspect is very limited. So, she interviewed some senior citizens of this town and she wrote the article. From this one gets a vivid picture of the state of culture in Silchar town during pre-independence period.

For literature and culture, though primary sources are not sufficient, the document successive census reports from 1872 onwards available in National Library, Annexed Calcutta and the records preserved in Cachar District Records Room in Silchar give us a good deal of information regarding various aspects of social history of Barak Valley. Apart from these, various books and articles written by well-known scholars furnish a rich body of information about social scenario of the region.

In sum, the Barak valley is a distinct region not only in India but also in Assam itself. It is the region of biological, geographical and cultural diversities which is very much true to the variegated character of North –Eastern region as a whole. When one looks at demographic, social and cultural character, it appears the distinct one within the North East. A very high growth and destiny of population, in-migration, multi-ethnic groups, multi-lingual and multi-religious population, increasing literacy rate, multiple cultural activities, most peaceful place in the North-Eastern, growing trade activities and literacy and journalistic activities make the region different from the rest.

### **2.13 THE PRINT MEDIA IN BARAK VALLEY**

Alike other part of India, the wheel of journalism started moving in Barak Valley since the losing part of nineteenth Century. The prime language of Barak Valley is Bengali, so the newspapers being from here are published are mostly in Bengali. Till today, Bengali is the key language of Barak valley journalism.

Origin of journalism in Barak Valley was quite different from the rest of the country. Due to typographical and political factors, the valley was undivided in the pre-independence era and was known as ‘Surma Valley’ – covering Cachar and Sylhet districts. The commencement of journalism was from ‘Surma Valley’. While discussing the Origin of Journalism in Barak Valley, it is never complete without ‘Surma Valley’. Sylhet was the heart of Surma Valley. Administration was directed from Sylhet. Sylhet had its own distinctive place for creativity, literature and business. It was also the birth place of some great sons of soil, who contributed towards the freedom movement and in the field of journalism.

Undoubtedly it was the place of newspaper and, indeed, the first vernacular newspapers of Surma Valley saw the light of the day from Sylhet. In the month of January, 1875 “SRIHATTA PRAKASH” made its appearance under the editorship of Payeri Charan Das. Keeping consistence with the vernacular press that started in Calcutta itself, journalism began in Surma Valley with the sole aim to free India from the shackle of colonialism and to reform the Indian society. Due to lack of printing press, ‘Srihatta Prakash’ was printed from Calcutta. The great freedom fighter Bipin Chandra Paul edited ‘PRIYADARSHAK’ which was first newspaper printed from Sylhet. Priyadarshak had attained a distinguished place among the newspaper of Surma Valley for its noble mission. Sylhet was the pioneering place of journalism in Surma Valley and from Sylhet the journalism scattered throughout the Valley and in Silchar too.

As a part of the Surma Valley, journalism started in Barak Valley after the establishment of printing press at Silchar. The growth of printing press facilitated the progress of journalism in this valley. Babu Harakrishna Gupta was the pioneer to present the first printing press ‘SILCHAR PRESS’ to the people of this sub-region in 1885. The first newspaper of Barak Valley was a Bengali weekly – ‘SILCHAR’ printed at Silchar press in 1889. “SILCHAR”, considered as the earliest known newspaper, was edited by Babu Bidhu Bhusan Sen who was a teacher of the Narshing Middle English School. Its publication was initiated by Mahesh Chandra Dutta and Anand Mohan Gupta. There has been a controversy relating to the first publication dates of the earliest newspaper ‘SILCHAR’ among the researchers and the journalists working in the field. But the reliable evidences have not yet revealed.

Babu Bidhu Sen was popularly known as Bidhu Pandit, the editor had a very powerful pen. He used it unsparingly against both officials and non-officials. His writing was full of satire and wit. So fearless was he that though serving in a School aided by the Government, he did not hesitate to attack the Inspector of Schools and the D.P.I. Enraged by his satires, Wilson, the D.P.I., on one occasion, threatened to withdraw the grant from Narshing School if the Pandit continued to be the editor of ‘The Silchar’. As a result, the paper the paper was discontinued for some years, but revived in 1897 when Wilson was no longer in the Office. The editor soon resumed his fiery columns and carried on attacks on the districts authorities and the head master of the Govt. High School.

The Head Master sought permission of the D.P.I. to prosecute the editor for defamation while the Deputy Commissioner refused to recommend the exchange of the Assam Gazette with this paper. Bidhu Babu was a conservative caste Hindu and this conservatism brought him into tussle with the head master. The cook in the Hindu Hostel of the Govt. High School was a non-Brahmin and 'Silchar' raised the demand for a Brahmin cook. In its issue of 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1903, the paper said: "Great inconvenience is felt by the students of the school for want of a Brahmin cook. The head master does not like to take any step in this connection, because he is neither a Brahmin nor a Kayastha. We request the DPI to remove the inconvenience". This episode reflects the contemporary social scene in Cachar. Untouchability was definitely practiced. Even Bidhu Bhusan, though not a Brahmin himself, was serious for a Brahmin cook in the Students' Hostel. Incidentally, the Head Master was Babu Abhaya Charan Das and the charge of the editor that he did not take any step was unwarranted. As a matter of fact, the head master for a long time had been pressing the authorities for a Brahmin Cook. Although Bidhu Bhusan was censored for 'scurrilous writings', it may be said that the Government High School was the actual target of his attack and not the head master.

A society has to be studied in the context of age, background and situation. Bidhu Bhusan was the product of his own age and what appeared in the columns of his paper might not necessarily be his own views. As a journalist, he might have represented the contemporary public opinion. Nevertheless, Bidhur Bhusan Sen was the pioneer of journalism in Cachar. 'Silchar' was the only newspaper in the district in the last century and it played a commendable role in guiding public opinion and focusing attention on social and political problems.

In 1911 'Surma', another Bengali weekly began its publication from the Aryan press which played very important role in freedom movement. The first editor was Pandit Chandraday Vidyavinode and was succeeded by Pandit Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnava. The Aryan Trading Co. at Silchar was the owner and published. The paper was converted into a daily in 1914 and kept the people informed of the developments of World War I and other aspects too. Being discontinued for some years in the twenties, the 'Surma' resumed its publication in the thirties of the century under the editorship of Babu Nagendra Shyam – the eminent lawyer- literature of Cachar. In the forties the paper was edited by Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, later he edited another Bengali weekly

‘Azad’. During in spirit and constructive in criticism, the ‘Surma’ played a great role in guiding the public opinion in Cachar and on occasions forced the Government to note its views.

It also acted as a fillip to the literary pursuits in Cachar by opening columns for young talents. Nagendra Chandra Shyam, Ashok Bijoy Raha, Ramendra Deshmukhya and Sudhir Sen were among the regular contributors.

Like Babu Bhuban Mohan Bidyanarba is a great name in the history of journalism of Barak Valley. Besides his association with ‘Surma’, he edited ‘Janasakti’ and ‘Deshbarta’ from Sylhet. Earlier he was associated with ‘Hitavadi’ & ‘Sadhana’ published from Calcutta and Dacca respectively. Bhuban Mohan was an ardent nationalist without belonging to any political party and wielded his pen forcefully for the nation’s cause. As a journalist he preached the swadeshi spirit and enthused the young men with the culture and heritage of India. He became the editor of Surma in 1912 and continued to edit it when it was converted into a daily in 1974. Bhuban Mohan had thus the unique distinction of editing the first daily newspaper published from Cachar. He was the editor of ‘Samay’ published from Silchar at that time.

Babu Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnaba was also the editor of ‘Brahman Parishad Patrika’ a quarterly Bengali journal of Brahmanical philosophy. It was the organ of the ‘Silchar Brahman Parishad’ and was first published on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1929 printed by Babu Radhakanta Sadhya at the Sandhya press. The Brahman Parishad Patrika was published by Pandit Kalijay Nayapanchanan of Silchar. The object of the journal as stated in the declaration before the Court was the social reform of Brahman Society. The contents of the Patrika were always full of history of Brahmins and their activities and the most important thing is that they opposed the Harijan movement by Gandhiji through their Patrika. It is interesting to note here that the spirit reform of Brahmin Society in and around Silchar led to the formation of an organisation to reform the society, besides self-criticism and reform stories. The Patrika had worked for the society and Babu Bhuban Mohan and his colleagues had responded to the needs of time. The Patrika could not continue after the first three issues.

‘Bhabishyat’, a Bengali monthly, made its appearance in 1926. It was edited by critic and lawyer Nagendra Chandra Shyam of Shillong Patty, Silchar, and printed at the Calcutta Printing Works, Calcutta and published from Ukil Patty Silchar. Notwithstanding so many hindrances, it continued its publication from Ukil Patty Silchar for a few years. At that time another monthly came into being and continued for a period of two years. ‘Navoyug’ published from Silchar in April, 1920 under the editorship of Mohendra Nath Choudhury but discontinued after two years. ‘Shiksha Sevak’, a literary quarterly, was published from Silchar in July 1925.

In the thirtieth decade of twentieth Century a large number of periodicals and literary magazines came into publication. In 1930 ‘Bartaman’ a Bengali weekly started publication from Silchar. Its editor was Bhupendra Kumar Shyam. But ‘Bartaman’ could not last for a long time, discontinued just after three months of its publication. At that time the Guru Charan College Majlis brought its handwritten Magazine ‘Kundakali’ in 1935 and poet Rabindra Nath Tagore sent his blessings for its success. The College Magazine ‘Purbasree’ began to be published from 1940. ‘Krishak’ a monthly newspaper covering agriculture and agriculturists came out in July 1937. Its editor was Hurmat Ali Barlaskar but it could not impress the farmers and ceased publication after two issues. ‘Chamak’, another fortnightly magazine, came out in 1939; its editor was Bhupendra Chandra Shyam. It could bring out nine issues only. Literary magazine ‘Suredoh’ was brought out by Girija Nath Choudhury in 1938. It was a magazine of both in English and Bengali language.

‘Manipuri’ a monthly newspaper in Manipuri language came out at that time. It was published from Silchar in 1939 and the editor was Samarjit Singh. Later on it started its publication in Bengali also. It continued for a long time. ‘Saptak’, a weekly newspaper which contributed to the freedom movement in Barak Valley, was published in 1937. It published from Silchar every Wednesday and printed at Jayanti Press. Kushi Mohan Das was its editor and he was succeeded by Gajendra Chanda Dutta after some issues.



In 1940, the first women edited newspaper came into publication 'Vijoyini' as the organ of Silchar Mohila Samiti. Its editor was the first woman graduate of Cachar, Jotshna Chanda, wife of eminent educationist and leader A.K. Chanda. Later on she became the Member of Parliament. Another literary magazine 'Diganta' came on in 1940 edited by Parimal Purkayastha. It continued with a few issues only.

The organ of nationalist 'Prachyabartya' weekly made its appearance in 1940, edited by Hareesh Ranjan Bhattacharjee. It existed for 3 to 4 months. Edited by Monomohan Mazumdar and Kadarnath Choudhury, the mouth piece of Assam Education Department, 'Janashiksha' were published from Silchar in 1941.

Among the periodicals of Barak Valley in the pre-independence period Karimganj also contributed some weeklies and fortnightlies which also played great role in the freedom struggle. 'Panchajanya' and 'Mukhtinayak' were two noteworthy names. The earlier one was weekly and later one is fortnightly. Another weekly newspaper 'Jagaran' was published from Karimganj with its stress on democratic socialism.

The 'Eastern Chronicle' published from Karimganj played a notable role during the early days of freedom movement in the valley. Bipin Chandra Paul, a patriot close to the region, was sentenced to six months imprisonment and sent to Boxer Jail in October 1907 and was released on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1908. The Eastern Chronicle reacted its own way welcomed his release. Referring to the then crisis in the Congress, the paper wrote, "The citadel of is yet adverse to reconciliation and a constitution for the Congress is being hatched in secret. The expectant eye of our people is not upon the coming here who is to guide us to our destination". Its writing was fearless by which it could mould and guide the public opinion. The 'Surma Valley Magazine', English monthly edited by Rev. W.H.S. Wood was published from Silchar in March, 1927. It carried out the literary works. At that time the Tea Board of India brought out a magazine for the tea planters printed at Calcutta. It is interesting to note here that although printed at Calcutta, its cover page published from Silchar, Assam.

Since 1886 in the development of Journalism in Barak Valley has been blended with unique mission, the freedom. Contributions of journalism were very important. On the one hand, it provided impetus to prose style and, on the other hand, moulded the public opinion in favour of freedom movement. The most beneficial job they did, to carry out the spirit of nationalism and sense of oneness among the people of this sub-region. The newspapers also caused initiated social reform movement and inspired the people to shed off superstitions. But the newspapers of Barak Valley could not impress upon the people deeply accepted the two eminent newspapers 'Silchar' and 'Surma'. Although the newspapers of this valley had served the people but the newspaper published from Sylhet had dominated over the people and the market of Barak Valley. Average number of readers preferred to read these newspapers and some Calcutta based Bengali dailies. Those newspapers had also given the priority to this region and carried out on the spot coverage of the event of this valley. So it wasn't convenient to impinge upon the readers' psychology and holds the market for the newspapers of this valley. Moreover Barak Valley had no proper infrastructure for newspaper publications in the pre-independence period. Due to financial instability also, so many publication started but could not last long. But the 'Silchar' in the early stage, 'Surma' and 'Arunodaya' in the later part were the exception. The contributions had been made by these newspapers towards independence and other developments of the society were immense. Thus without denying the fact, in the pre-independence era of the country, the valley contributed so many aggressive newspapers which carried forward the freedom movement.

Before independence, some other newspapers also started publication from Silchar and Karimganj. But Hailakandi had no contribution in this regard during that era. 'Adhikar' leftist organ appeared in 1943. It was a bi-weekly edited by Achinta Bhatt and Anil Biswas. Mojtital Jagirdar took over the newspaper in later part. It was banned on 1948. 'Samabay', mainly contributing to co-operative movement, started as bi-fortnightly in 1939. Brojendra Kumar Aditya was its editor and it was published from Karimganj.

The first newspaper of Karimganj made its appearance during the British period. The credit for publishing first printed newspaper goes to Kailash Chandra Biswas. He had the distinction of launching 'Sreehatta Surida', a monthly newspaper from Karimganj in April, 1890. Before that some handwritten newspapers were making the round. But with the publication of 'Sreehatta Surida', the real journalism begins. Though the growth of journalism in Karimganj was mainly associated with 'Sreehatta Surida' (1890) and 'Pravat' (1908) yet their impact was not very effective. Former one was mainly a religious paper and later a carrier of reformation campaign. The history of freedom struggle was also found in the pages of 'Pravat'. 'Sreebhumi', another monthly, was published in April 1915. It was edited by Satish Ch. Dev. 'Panchajanya' – a monthly, published in April 1930 was the first political newspaper of Assam, its editor was Subodh Kumar Roy. It was the mouthpiece of 'Bharatiya Juba Andolan' and helped a lot to raise political consciousness among the people. The most remarkable development of journalism of Karimganj during pre-independence era was the publication of 'Pallibani' on May 1936. Its editor was Subodh Kumar Roy. For five years, this fortnightly was published from Karimganj then it shifted to Habiganj (now in Bangladesh). 'Mukti Nayak' another fortnightly started in 1937. Its editor was Akhil Bandhu Chakraborty.

It is found from the study that during the pre-independence period, the number of newspapers were very few in Barak Valley after 1947, this number started rising gradually. This gives a boost to the journalist as well as intellectual property of this valley. After 1947, a new trend was came in the journalism of Barak Valley and the young educated people were inspired to take journalism as profession which led to the beginning of the professional journalism which is quite evident in the post-independence period.

### **2.13.1 The Post Independence Print Media in Barak Valley**

After independence in 1947 the mission of journalism became profession. Young journalists took it as profession, new trends were setup and some other developments occurred in the post-independent era. In a nutshell, the journalism had totally changed during the post-independence period. Newspapers publication got momentum in this period, number of publications increased enormously. Revolutionary off-set machine was setup and used for newspaper publication. Eminent dailies appeared. In fact, Indian journalism started moving forward in Barak Valley with new technologies, new improvement. After 1947 so many periodicals and dailies made their appearance and journalism spread throughout the Valley. Karimganj, Hailakandi also contributed newspapers of substance

When the partition took place intellectual persons along with other general persons came to India. Some eminent journalists of Sylhet at that period also came to India with their press and publication. They resumed their publication of newspapers after setting in Barak Valley. 'Janasakti' and Jugashakti' were among them. Both newspapers were of repute in Sylhet and after partition they shifted to Barak Valley i.e. India.

#### **2.13.1.1 Development of Newspapers in Silchar After 1947**

In Barak Valley journalism, Silchar has always held distinct place. Before independence and after the British period Silchar has been leading in newspaper publications in the Valley. Silchar has the credit for first daily newspaper of the Valley and till today Silchar based daily newspapers dominate the Valley. After 1947 Silchar contributed a lot of periodicals and daily newspapers. Also their contribution was noteworthy.

Just after independence 'Janashakti' started its publication from Silchar. It was an influential newspaper of Sylhet. 'Janashakti' was started in 1921 and its founder editor was Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnava. Later Nistarani Gupta took charge and shifted the newspaper to Silchar. After the publication resumed from Silchar 'Janashakti' could not continue long. Baidyanath Nath from Silchar started 'Muktipradip' a bi-weekly, in 1948. But in 1949, it stopped its publication. Then in 1950 'Arunodaya' – the renowned weekly of the Valley made its appearance.

It was started on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 edited by Sunil Kr. Dutta Roy. Chandan Sengupta took over the newspaper in 1991. It is continuing its publication from Arunodaya press Shillong Patty (now Ullaskar Dutta Sarani), Silchar. The contribution of Arunodaya towards language movement of Barak valley was notable. It was at that time that Prantojyoti, the first daily of Barak Valley, came into existence. Prantojyoti was first started as bi-weekly, by name 'Jyoti' from 12 January, 1956 published from Silchar press. Its founder editor is Jotindra Chandra Dutta. In 1964 it became daily and till today it is continuing its publication. But in 1961-62 'Prantojyoti' introduced a new look daily newspaper to cope up with the situation. At that time the language movement of Barak Valley was going on. The Satyagrahis fought for their lingual language and government tried to impose Assamese language forcefully in place of Bengali. The mother tongue Bengali is the language of the majority of the people of the Valley. Night curfew was imposed in Silchar and people were eager to know about the latest development of the movement. The editor then tried to bring out a daily newspaper to inform the people. At the time of language movement 'Prantojyoti' was brought out in post card size. It contained just headlines. The people of Silchar were waited in the morning for this daily 'telegram', 'Prantojyoti' made remarkable achievement during language movement. Jogendra Choudhury – founder principal of Cachar College later became the M.P. He addressed the Parliament at that time, quoting 'Prantojyoti'. It was a notable achievement of 'Prantojyoti'. At that time another weekly came out in Silchar, which in later part became the leading daily of Valley. 'Jugasankha' published on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1950 from Silchar. It was a weekly, printed in letter press machine, crown size paper. Founder editor was late Baidyanath Nath, who was a teacher and subsequently joined the Freedom Movement and started a newspaper entitled 'Muktipradip'. It was started in 1948. It was a Congress mouth piece. In 1970 on the death of founder editor his son B.K. Nath took over the charge during 1970. It was the highest circulated weekly in Barak Valley. In 1982 it was converted in to daily and associated with some group of youth writer. Talents like Atin Das, Anadi Chakraborty, and Jishu Chanda and so on. In 1983 it was shifted to Guwahati and started publication as the first Bengali daily in Guwahati. Dainik Ahom, Nutan Ahomia were three days existing periodicals. After Dainik Ahom it was the 2nd newspaper published on Sheet page, in 4 to 6 pages. It continued up to 1989 and the publication was suspended because a fire gutted the press and the building including all the machinery was destroyed.

After this setback it was started printing on Off-set in press. Subsequently it suspended its publication because of financial problems. In 9th May, 1995 it resumed publication on Off-set with computerized composing and since then its circulation has been growing up.

‘Gati’ another bi-weekly was started in 1966 and its editor was Dipendra Das. In eighties it became daily and Jotin Deb Roy took the editorship. It was published from letter press and had a good circulation in early eighties; although it is being published till today but its circulation is limited. ‘Barak’ another Bi-weekly started in 1966. Golam Osmani was its founder Editor. Atin Das took the charge in 1933. It mainly contains political articles of different writers. ‘Prantiya Samachar’ a weekly was started in June 1964, edited by Horendra Chandra Sen. It became bi-weekly on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1990 and Ataur Rahman became the editor.

‘Ahuti’ another bi-weekly was published in August 1969. Chandan Sen Gupta was its editor. It was a Lenin- Mao thought based newspaper. Its editor was arrested on 22 April, 1967 and stopped its publication. ‘Sapath’ a daily brought out by Kamalendu Bhattacharjee and Atin Das jointly in 1970-72. But after some time it ceased its publication. In 1972 another monthly newspaper ‘Pathsala’ was published. It used to publish the news items, which were only concerned with the problems of primary teachers.

‘Sonar Cachar’ a notable name in the history of journalism of Barak Valley, made its appearance on May, 75 as bi-weekly (25 Baishak 1382 B/s) its editor was Ranobir Roy. The age of Sonar Cachar can be considered as the Golden Age of Barak journalism. Since Early eighties it became daily. Earlier it was printed in letterpress at Nibedita lane, Rangirkhari which is now popularly called as Sonar Cachar Gali. Then it was shifted to Shyama Prasad Road, Silchar and started publication in Off-set printing with computerized composing. Sonar Cachar was the first standard size newspaper of the Valley, having good circulation. It was the first publication which adopted off-set press in newspaper publication in Barak Valley. Few years later it became the largest circulated newspaper in the North East. Sonar Cachar brings out the account of local events, regional events and to some extent national events also. It also contains articles on political literary matters. Its article was strict against the rampant corruption done by government officials and political leader.

Some factual news have arranged by some interested groups of people. They even attacked on the press and reporters of Sonar Cachar and burnt down huge number of copies of Sonar Cachar in different places. In spite of all these Sonar Cachar was combating against corruption and mal –practices and maintaining its popularity and progress, but unfortunately it has been stopped their publication after two years of the assassination of the editor Ranobir Roy.

“Samayik Prasanga” another weekly edited by Taimur Raja started in 1977-78. Later it became bi-weekly and continued its publication. It is now a daily newspaper publishing in colour offset. ‘Cachar Times’ Bengali weekly started on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. ‘1977 and continued till 1987. First editor was Bhudev Bhattacharjee then Deepan Dewanjee took the charge of editorship and turned it in to Bengali bi-weekly. It continues till today.

In the eighties, so many periodicals came into existence. Some are continued and others stopped their publications but this period was considered as the Golden Age of the newspapers of the Valley. Newspapers publication was continuing in this period. Sajal Kanti Biswas started ‘Anchalik Barta’ on 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1981. ‘Bartalipi’ was started by Sanat Kairi in January, 1985. It was a weekly newspaper. But now it is published by Prasongik press with Partha Bhattacharjee as its present editor. Earlier Sanat Kairi had another weekly ‘Abosan’ but it continued on for six months. ‘Sonar Desh’ a bi-lingual weekly started its publication on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1982 edited by Pran Gopal Roy. Later on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1992 it became bi-weekly and now its publication has been stopped. ‘Barak Darpan’ a Bengali fortnightly started on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1989 and became weekly on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1990, edited by Babli Adhikari, published from Silchar.

‘Silchar Times’ – another Bengali daily of this period came into existence as bi-fortnightly on 1 January, 1991 and became daily on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1994. Editor was Sanant Kairi published in the letterpress at Hospital Road, Silchar. As it was a letterpress, hand composed newspaper it cannot compete with other dailies. But now it is turned to offset. ‘Silchar Times’ often carry out good writing, criticizing the administration, policy of administration. ‘Silchar Times’ protested the Beauty Competition that was held at Silchar in 1996.

‘Turjya’ a weekly, started on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1983 edited by Samir Dey. ‘Maitri Bani’ – a bi-weekly started by Soraj Kumar Das in 16<sup>th</sup> December 1989

Silchar has the distinction of being the place of publication of so many newspapers and journalism. Besides the aforesaid newspapers there are ‘Anjana’ – by Nazrul Islam, ‘Amar Barak’, ‘Barak Darpan’, and ‘Matribhumi’ etc. Some fortnightly are also there, ‘Parak’, ‘Pally Darpan’, and Cachar Lipilka’. One English Daily ‘The Frontier Sun’ was edited by Ranobir Roy. It was a publication of Sonar Cachar Group. ‘Eastern Progress’ and English Monthly edited by Pijush Kanti Das, started in December 1996. It was a progressive newspaper and deals with the problems of North-East especially Southern Assam. The ‘Energy Era’ and the ‘Oil Fields Times’ were being published. Former one was a publication of Sonar Cachar Group edited by Ranobir Roy and the later one is a publication of Jugasankha Group.

#### **2.13.1.2 Development of Newspaper in Hailakandi After 1947**

If we analyse the newspapers contribution in Hailakandi District no newspaper was published before independence. Only in 1947 the first newspaper was started by Dr. Amulya Ratan Sengupta. The name of the newspaper was ‘Janamat’ but the freedom fighter Birendra Kr. Das mainly contributed to the newspaper. A great influence occurred by his one Article ‘Pukur Churi’. It was relating to P.W.D. functioning. Against such writing engineers of that department filed a case in Shillong affecting its publication.

After ‘Janamat’ in 1950 another two weekly ‘Nabayan’ and ‘Cachar’ were published. But after publishing some issues they were stopped. The first editor of the ‘Cachar’ was Santaram Shekhar Bhadra. After his resignation Digendra Nath Kabirangan became the editor incharge of that newspaper. After him Amulya Choudhury took the charge of editorship, for some days it was continued by him. In the year 1972 M.L.A. Santosh Kumar Roy took the charge of editorship. But it was discontinued later on.

Weekly ‘Dhaleswari’ was started in 1967. Nani Gopal Dey was editor of the ‘Dhaleswari’. He was a freedom fighter. In 1947 he became the student Congress General Secretary and was involved in Politics actively. He joined in Forward Block P.S.P, thereafter Janata Das and discontinued the publication of ‘Dhaleswari’.



During 1950, so many newspapers have been published but all are discontinued. 'Prantik' came out from Bharati press; Amulya Choudhury edited this newspaper. Sudhir Dutta started the 'Udayan' but later on it was shifted to Dharmanagar and now, it is in Tripura. Another newspaper started by Shakti Dhar Choudhury and that was 'Swaraj'. Harendra Chandra Paul published the weekly – 'Janakalyan' weekly 'Jagoroni' was opened by Nripen Kr. Choudhury. Krishna Singha opened the 'Ganadut'. In 50s decade another two English weekly newspapers published from Hailakandi Tow 'The Sentinel' and 'The Voice'. The Sentinel was started by Captain Subodh Dutta, and "The Voice" by Amiya Kr. Nandi. The Voice was continued for six months.

During the movement of "Vasha Andolan" another newspaper continued publication. Purna Chandra Purkayastha and Usha Ranjan Chandra edited 'Nabodhara'. In 1972-72 with the assistance of Abdul Latif Laskar, Hari Prasannya Sen edited and published newspaper "Grammya Jiban". In 1974-75 Hari Prassanya Sen started another newspaper "Grammya Adhikar". But after two years it was closed. But in 1980 it continued again for some days. Nazmul Hussain Mazumdar and Matiur Rahman jointly started another newspaper with the name "Asanta". Nazmul Hussain Mazumdar individually started another newspaper weekly- "Uttar Parba". In 1978 weekly "BangaShree" was started. It was edited by Tayabur Rahman Mazumdar. Later on "Banga Shree" was converted into "Dalim". At the end of 80, another weekly 'Dibakar' came out from Lala, edited by Abdul Kalam Mazumdar. In 1981 Ujjal Kr. Deb started another newspaper- "English Weekly", "Cachar Tribune". It was a regular newspaper publishing very actively from the date of its establishment. During 80's Jalanta Sengupta started another newspaper weekly "Mahakal". So many interesting news had been published in this newspaper, but after some months it was closed. "Bajra Kishan" – a weekly started at that time and Debashish Purkayastha edited this newspaper. Only after two months it was closed. Again in June 1993 "Bajra Kishan" started. Then Subhas Ch. Roy became the editor and up to 1994 January it continued. This newspaper started a new trend in journalism, and influenced the readers to some extent. During 80's "Gana Surya" another newspaper came out and Chandan Ghosh was the editor. These newspapers are no longer in existence.

### **2.13.1.3 Development of Newspapers in Karimganj after 1947**

Though the entire pre-independence period was the beginning of journalism in Karimganj, the post-independence period witnessed its subsequent growth. During this period, people were coming to take journalism, as a profession. A new development was growing on commercialization. The importance was given on advertisement. It is to be seen that before the independence newspapers were not commercial minded but after the independence emphasis was on commercial side because of the professional attitude.

“Juga Shakti” was the first successful commercial weekly paper of Karimganj. It was actually started on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec.’36 from Sylhet. Its editor was Bidhu Bhusan Choudhury. After the partition of India, it was shifted to Karimganj (1947). It was the oldest newspaper of Karimganj existing till today. After the death of Bidhu Bhusan Choudhury his son Samarjit Choudhury became the editor. Bidhu Bhusan Choudhury was eminent journalist of this area. The paper is printed from “Juga Shakti” press, Karimganj.

“Ganabani” was the second weekly paper published from Karimganj in 1948. The Editor was J.L. Goswami and was printed from the Sree Press, Karimganj. Though “Ganabani” was conducted with ability, but the paper had to stop its publication in 1952 because of various difficulties.

“Jagaran” a weekly paper was started in 1956. It was edited by Jatindra Ranjan Deb, Ramendra Nath Roy and Mohendra Bhusan Dutta. It was mainly a leftist (C.P.I.) organ. But it is not continuity.

“Purbachal” another Bengali weekly was published on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1950 under the editorship of Subodh Chandra Dhar. But it has ceased its publication due to financial crisis.

“Chabuk” a monthly paper appeared in 1958 its founder editor was Bomkesh Biswas. Nirmal Das, Jyotirmoy Choudhury and Pulen Das took the editorship later part. The paper was initiated by the student leader at that time Ranjan Das. The “Chabuk” protested the corruption and contemporary mal-practices of local administration. It raised an anti-corruption campaign against the Govt. Officer, Public Administrator, influential persons in the society through its writing.

“Karimganj” was another weekly newspaper published from Karimganj press in 1954. It was edited by Nabokumar Bhattacharjee.

“Nabojug” a weekly paper was started by Ramesh Chandra Biswas on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1955. Its recent editor is Rahul Das and it is printed from Nabayug press. It is one of the oldest newspapers of Karimganj existing till today. It’s an urban-based newspaper. Though it still exists, but is not regular in nature.

“Dristipath”, a complete rural based weekly, appeared on April, 1962. It was a bi-lingual newspaper (Bengali & Dimasa) published simultaneously from Karimganj and Halflong. Its Bengali Section was edited by Bhupendra Kumar Singh and Dimasa section was edited by Benani Dampri and Joyraj Singh.

“Danka” was started in 17<sup>th</sup> July 1972 as a bi-weekly and probably it was the first bi-weekly newspaper of Karimganj, edited by Kripeshn Chandra Bhattacharjee. It became weekly in 1975. Kamdev Bhattacharjee took the paper in the later part. It was an investigative newspaper from National Press.

“Kushiara” another weekly appeared in 30<sup>th</sup> November 1976 under the editorship Ramkrishan Banik. The paper is continuing its publication from Paramananda Press, Karimganj.

“Tirtha Bhumi” started by Satu Ray on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1978. It has been printed from Ratan Printing Press. It is existing till today but its publication is irregular.

“Nabobarta Prasanga” a bi-weekly newspaper appeared in April 1986, edited by Habibur Rahman. It is published simultaneously from Karimganj and Diphu and printed from Modern Printer, Karimganj. It is the only newspaper of Karimganj which circulated to Saudi Arabia (a few copies). Now it is converted into a daily newspaper.

“Anandajyoti” another weekly started in 1986 by G.L. Goswami later. G.R. Goswami took the charge and printed from Jyoti Printers.

“Karimganj Sangbad” started weekly in 1993 by H.K. Roy. It was a weekly newspaper from Radha Ramon Press.

“Challenger Barta” was the only English Weekly of Karimganj. It was started on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1994 edited by D.G. Bhattacharjee retired A.C.S. officer printed from Modern Press mainly it deals with the problems of the urban life.

“Gram Kushiara” edited by Protima Sharma has been started on October, 1995, from Barapunji of Karimganj and printed at Jyoti Printers. Some other papers were also in Karimganj. But they were unable to continue publication after a few issues. “Sangbad Davani”, “Samayer Ahban”, “Aganiban”, “Mahanayak”, “Singla Prabaha”, “Ghar Ghar” had stopped their publication.

“Kalikusum” a bi-lingual, bi-monthly magazine type newspaper started on September, 1995 published in Both Assamese and Bengali. Its editor was Atiqur Rahman Choudhury.

“Patha Nirdesh” the first athletic & cultural magazine was published in Karimganj in 1950. It was printed from Union Press. It was a quarterly and edited by Nishith Ranjan Roy.

“Purbaprantik”, a weekly in the year 2001 was published from Karimganj. But it had to cease its publication after some issues.

It has been founded that most of the newspapers published from Karimganj were weekly, fortnightly or monthly along with some dailies. The first daily newspaper in Karimganj was “Dainik Protibedan” started its journey on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1996. It was edited by G.L. Goswami and printed from Jyoti Printers. But unfortunately the paper had to stop its publication just after three months.

“Dainik Protibedan” within a short life of appearance had more notable achievement to the development of Journalism in entire Karimganj District. Its style and way of presentation was fascinating but because of non-utilization of modern technology i.e. offset printing and of course due to financial instability, it could not last long.

## **2.14 CHANGING SCENARIO OF BARAK VALLEY JOURNALISM**

The press in the valley emerged and grew in the environment and consciousness of the Indian freedom movement among the intellectuals. Local problems were consciously brought to the notice of the administration and the masses through a good number of press publications. The valley press originated from indigenous Indian source as the journalists and intellectuals were mostly the Bengali and were inspired by the activities of press in the mainland of Bengal surrounding Kolkata and Dhaka. No doubt, the social, political and administrative climate was not much conducive for the development of press, but the nationalist zeal and cultural enthusiasm constantly inspired the intellectuals to carry on the spirit of journalism. Independence of India infused a strong bout of spirit for nation-building in the press and it started to take strides towards professionalism and expansion among the masses.

The Independence led to a flutter of the press with many more publications of newspapers and magazines in the valley. From all the three towns the publications rolled out frequently along with the circulations of the Calcutta based newspapers. Gradually, newspaper in many respects but not in totality as the diversity of population and local conditions till date offer the conditions for survival of various publications – national, regional and local. Moreover, after Independence the press changed not only in the spirit and objectives of publication but also in the contents and technology. The press gradually brought into its coverage various news, themes and sections of society. But the political news and themes dominated the press. Along with growing print technology, professionalism and political importance the journalism has been coming under the eclipse of yellow journalism. The press in Barak Valley, particularly the newspapers, is continuing to shape and mould the destiny of the valley through information and education. They are an effective and economical medium for creating awareness and advertising image building, opinion moulding and attitudinal changes. Today, the press is of paramount significance to achieve commercial goal and social objectives. In the valley, numerous newspapers and magazines appear and re-appear, yet only a small number of these sustain. But the publication entrepreneurship itself is a symbol of the consciousness among the people of the valley.

## **2.15 PRESENT STATUS OF BARAK VALLEY JOURNALISM**

At present in Barak Valley there are around ten dailies and some other periodicals like weeklies, bi-weeklies, and fortnightlies. In Barak Valley the newspapers have been emerging and published in a good number and from every corner after the publication of the first newspaper 'Silchar' in 1889. But, in reality, most of the newspapers published regularly maintain only a file copy to get advertisements from the government. The rate of appearance of newspapers in the valley is almost equal to the rate of their death from the very early stage to the present. Among the newspapers of this decade, the, 'Jugasankha, Samayik Prasanga and Prantojyoti are leading in the valley. The present circulation of Jugasankha is about 45 (forty five) thousand, Samayek Prasanga is about 24 (twenty four) thousand and Prantojyoti is about 15 (fifteen) thousand.

The newspapers reflect new trends also. The newspapers have started to publish photographs to narrate a story in a better way. Advertisements also appeared in the pages of newspapers. Both, public and government advertisements are now given in the newspapers of the valley, which help the newspapers to maintain the expenditure and to earn money. Off-set press is also used to publish the newspapers. Hand composing is being replaced by computer composing. The newspapers are also brought out in standard size. Using modern technology the papers are undergoing the modernization of their publication. Daily newspapers have started various sections; such as, sports, children, women and so on. Newspapers conduct debates on various current issues and receive responses from large number of the people. The daily newspapers have also built various departments of establishment; viz, advertisement, circulation and editorial.

Newspapers have set up their advertisement offices in different places of India like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Guwahati and so on. There the newspapers reflect new trends also. The newspapers have started to publish photographs to narrate a story in a better way. Advertisements also appeared in the pages of newspapers. Both, public and government advertisements are now given in the newspapers of the valley, which help the newspapers to maintain the expenditure and to earn money. Off-set press is also used to publish the newspapers. Hand composing is being replaced by computer composing. The newspapers are also brought out in standard size.

Using modern technology the papers are undergoing the modernization of their publication. Daily newspapers have started various sections; viz, sports, children, women and so on. Two eminent daily newspapers; namely, Samayik Prasanga and Jugasankha, have recently started to publish extra pages with their Sunday issues. Newspapers conduct debates on various current issues and receive responses from large number of the people.

The daily newspapers have also built various departments of establishment; viz, advertisement, circulation and editorial. They have set up their advertisement offices in different places of India like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Guwahati and so on. Their correspondents are found in some cities in India to give coverage of national events. Recently, the three important dailies of the valley; namely, 'Samayik Prasanga', 'Prantojyoti' and 'Jugasankha' have introduced the Internet edition of their newspapers. They have made the web pages and send the papers on line to make their reach to the millions of people all over the world.

By their standard and contents the newspapers are, by and large, found to adore the influential political figures. Even the regularly published newspapers have only a little influence over the masses as the newspapers are more guided by the ruling class or parties than the sorrows and sufferings of the common people. The number of regular magazines is very few. Small magazines publish the views of young generation, their personal problems and so on. Now-a-days, students of schools and colleges are becoming very much career-oriented and they don't feel to write or expose themselves to the public. Moreover, they don't get the impetus from the teachers which are very much essential in developing their creativity. The news magazines and commercial magazines are generally facing the lack of financial support to bring out the magazines.

## **2.16 TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES**

### **New Technology**

The press in Barak Valley played a leading role in creating a political climate. The papers succeed mainly because of their logical editorial policy and strict adherence to journalistic principles and techniques. The three leading dailies started publishing their copies in colour offset. They have satellite connection, too.

### **Content**

The press in Barak valley is not only concerned with the get-up of the paper but it is also equally concerned with its contents. Earlier, the contents were mostly on political issues but the trend has changed. The press in Barak Valley is now stressing development issues, too

### **Anti-Imperialism**

In international sphere the press in Barak Valley supported national freedom movements everywhere. It condemned repression by the British in Iran and South Africa when the imperialism was in its heyday in Asia and North Africa. It also supported uprisings against Europeans in Morocco, Libya and Sudan.

### **Variety**

Going through all leading papers of Barak Valley one finds a variety of topics discussed almost regularly in the paper. It should be kept in mind that most of the newspapers then confined themselves to articles and write-ups related with religion. The press in Barak valley took a different path. Besides discussing the topics of general issues, it published articles on science, e.g., micro-telescope, wireless telegraphy (teleprinter), sea mines, torpedo, desalination plant, and levitated railway, theory of evolution, radium, geology and astronomy. It had also articles on archeology, especially on the new findings. There were also articles on the use of new technology in crimes, air war and use of dogs in the war.



## **Style**

Almost all newspapers in the Barak Valley have basically a rhetoric style. The words were made to dance according to the editor's tunes and to an appropriate place. The same thing appeared with different ways of reasoning to make a point clear. The whole thing was summarized with an appropriate couplet or quadratic verse.

## **Professionalism**

Though the professionalism in the newspapers had started to appear by the time of Independence, it has yet to come up in the valley in Barak Valley. The journalists have proficiency in language, but not professionalism. Generally, they don't receive proper training. The power of press has not been properly perceived by today's Barak Valley journalists. There is a lack of motivation and incentives for their personnel. In the present scenario, the newspapers are competing with electronic media in other parts of the country, but this competition is totally absent in this region. Interestingly, the study reveals that the women's readership is increasing.

When one looks towards the other valley of Assam, i.e., Brahmaputra Valley, one finds the rapid increasing number of newspapers. As per the RNI record, there were only four Assamese dailies published from Guwahati in 1990s. Today, there are more than sixteen Assamese dailies published from Guwahati. Moreover, the newspapers are coming out with sensational news. It is quite interesting to note that the advertising revenue of the vernacular newspapers of Assam is very low. So, the question is how these newspapers survive without financial support. The question remains enigma. Till date, not a single daily has ceased its publication. The question leads to a supposed nexus of the press with some illegitimate funding agencies, e.g., insurgents, underworld or else. The question indicates a significant problem for investigations.

**In sum**, the press in the valley emerged and grew in the environment and consciousness of the Indian freedom movement among the intellectuals. Local problems were consciously brought to the notice of the administration and the masses through the press. Looking to the region situated far away from the mainland, it generated a good number of publications. The valley press has an indigenous source of motivational source in the sense that the journalists and intellectuals were mostly the Bengali and were inspired by the activities of the press in the mainland of Bengal surrounding Kolkata and Dhaka. No doubt, the social, political and administrative climate was not much conducive for the development of the press but the nationalist zeal and cultural enthusiasm constantly inspired the intellectuals to continue the spirit of journalism. On Independence of India the press took breath in an environment of freedom and progress and this infused in the press a strong bout of spirit for nation building. The press started to take strides towards its professionalism and expansion among the masses.