

**THE STORY OF MY LIFE****BY****Dr. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan**

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**INTRODUCTION**

THE ACTIONS and experiences of an individual whether he works in the full blaze of limelight, or in the seclusion of an academic cloister, or amidst the obscure miseries of poverty and starvation, are full of significance to his fellow mortals as they reflect the joys and tribulations of the human soul, besides representing the spirit of the age. Poets and dramatists have mustered all their ingenuity and art in creating life-like pictures of men and women just for the purpose of holding before us mirrors of nature. The life-story of a man living in flesh and blood is therefore bound to interest his contemporaries and posterity, for here they will get actual events, perhaps less picturesque and romantic, but more realistic than all the imaginings of creative artists. It is with these feelings that I intend to unfold my life's story, and present to the world a plain unvarnished tale of my puny efforts to justify my existence which, in spite of the best wishes and blessings of the world, will come to an end one day when it will begin its journey to an undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller ever returns.

I am a believer in the omnipotence of a divine programme, whether in the case of an individual, or of a nation, or of humanity at large. The spectator is sometimes perplexed being unable to understand the motives of the utterances and antics of some characters on the stage in the early scenes of a play, but his doubts and curiosities begin to resolve themselves when he comes to the last scenes. Similarly, the incidents of our lives are properly understood only when we come to the end of our tether. This belief has been confirmed in every moment of my life, and I find every instance, whether of smiles or tears, to be imbued with full significance which has been revealed to me only in later times.

Gauhati

S. K. Bhuyan

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## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

I was born at Fauzdari Patti in the town of Nowgong in the month of January 1894. Our ancestral home, situated at a distance of about two hundred yards from the Kallang river, exists in the very same place till this day, though the buildings have undergone major alterations and improvements in the meantime. My father Srijut Rabibal Bhuyan was noted for his brilliance at school and college, and for his good-natured disposition. My mother Srijukta Bhubaneswari died within three years of her marriage leaving behind a reputation for her intense devotion to her relatives in her husband's family, and her intelligence and foresight. The resources of the family consisted of my father's income as a junior assistant in the office of the Deputy Commissioner, the meager pension of my grandfather, and the yield of the paddy-fields. I had a number of uncles and aunts, but several of them died of Kala-azar which had then been raging in a virulent epidemic form in the district of Nowgong. My mother also died of this disease ; and I have no recollection of her appearance, nor of any word uttered, nor of any act done by her.

I was extremely receptive as a child, and the foundations of morality and knowledge were implanted in me by my two grandmothers Pahita and Labita under whose caresses I was brought up owing to the absence of a mother. My education began at the Nowgong Middle Vernacular School where I had as my teachers Babu Golokchandra Chakravarti and Srijut Dhanairam Bara. The former was a highly religious man, and would never tolerate any violation of manners on the part of his pupils. Srijut Bara is still alive, enjoying his well-earned rest at his village home at Sipajhar near Managaldoi. His teaching methods were very forceful and impressive, and he instilled into me the rudiments of literature through his teaching and interpretation of Srijut Padmanath Gohain-Barua's "Niti-siksha", Part-II. The late Srijut Ananda Chandra Agarwala, the poet, lived in our immediate neighbourhood at Fauzdari Patti in Nowgong. From him I heard stories of the Assamese Language Improvement Society of Calcutta. He had in his library the complete volumes of "Jonaki" and "Bijuli". It was about that time that I read Gunabhiram Barua's life of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, where I first obtained glimpses of the commercial intercourse between Assam and Bengal, and the part played

by the Duaria Baruas in the trade relations. The publications of “Jonaki” from Gauhati under the editorship of the late Srijut Satyanath Bora afforded great inspiration to Juvenile readers like ourlseves. I used to see daily Srijut Chandrahas Bhuyan, the then Secretary of the Assam Text-book Committee, poring over books submitted to the Committee. I also met Srijut Rajanikanta Bardoloi, the author of “Miri-Jiyari” and “Manomati”, whose son the late Srijut Golokanta Bardoloi was my class-mate and to whom I dedicated my first book “Gopal Krishna Gokhale”. I learnt at that time that Srijut Bholanath Das, the author of “Chinta-tarangini”, was my maternal uncle, his mother Pahdoi and my mother’s mother Lahdoi being two uterine sisters. Besides, I heard from my grandmother’s stories of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan who had died at Nowgong, and of Srijut Gunabhiram Barua who had lived in our neighbourhood before he went to Calcutta. I also heard the ballads of Phul Kowanr and Mani Kowanr sung to the accompaniment of grave-looking instruments called “Vinas”. All these factors combined with the pastoral surroundings of our neighbourhood, and the green lawns of the Kalang banks infused into me a kindred feeling with the names just mentioned, a conscious love of the beautiful world, and some interest in our country’s literature and poetry, combined with a longing for self-expression.

At a later stage, and still while I was a student of the Nowgong Government High School, I had an opportunity to see and know Assam’s pioneer dramatist Srijut Debnath Bardoloi whose “Hemaprabha” depicting the Burmese invasions of Assam used to be played in the stage set up n the compound of a leading citizen of Nowgong, the late Srijut Janakinath Sen. I took special delight in seeing Bhawanas performed at Sutargaon Namghar near the residence of Srijut Kalinath Barua, a descendent of Bakhar Bara, a well-known potentate of Nowgong of the reigns of Swargadeos Lakshmi Singha and Gaurinath Singha. He was the maternal uncle of my stepmother, and from my frequent visits to his household I could form an idea of the lingering dignity of a fainéant Assamese noble family. I came across several men and women, whose age ranged from ninety to one hundred and twenty years, and who had seen with their own eyes the horrors of Manar Din, or the rule of Assam by the Burmese.

I had the good fortune to have as my teachers Srijuts Jogeswar Mahanta and Dharmeswar Goswami, of the Kalakata and Jakhlabandha Satras respectively, whose teaching, though somewhat old-fashioned, was very effective and inspiring. My

companion in literary talks and discussions at this time was the poet Srijut Ratnakanta Barkakati with whom I used to meet daily for tuition under the late Srijut Haliram Barua.

The resultant effect of all these forces was the creation of a desire in me to become an author. About the year 1903, I wrote a book entitled “Jnana-Siksha”, modelled on Srijut Rajani Kanta Bardoloi’s “Jnana-sopan”, the manuscript of this my first off-spring was preserved by me till very recently. My name had already appeared in print in the “Answers to the Riddles” column of “Jonaki”, and I still remember the thrill and excitement I felt on these occasions.

In the year 1904, my father proceeded to Shillong to join his duties in the staff of the Assam Secretariat. I still remember the strenuous manner in which he plodded with office files, and the hardship we had all to undergo owing to the limited resources of my father. But, looking at our Shillong experiences from a distance of about fifty years I now realise that our poverty was pre-destined as far as I am concerned. The Government High School at Shillong which I joined in October 1904 was a cosmopolitan institution, its students being recruited from several communities, Khasis, Assamese, Bengalis and Garkhas. Its headmaster was Rev. John Ceredic Evans, a leading pastor of the Welsh Presbyterian Church, and the second master Babu Prafulla Chandra Chatterjee was an M.A. in Physics. The third master Babu Jhanendramohan Gupta used to make our History lessons attractively lucid and simple ; and our mathematics teacher Babu Sasimohan Chaudhury, with his unsparing rod, proved to be an exacting taskmaster. We had as our teacher the great Khasi poet U Soso Tham who afterwards had the courtesy of asking me to write an Introduction to his volume of poems. The Bible lessons imparted weekly in the class by our Headmaster made a deep impression on my mind, and I frequently attended the weekly service at the Police Bazar Presbyterian Church, and constantly visited the Roman Catholic Chapel at Laitumkhrah. My indebtedness to these early religious contacts cannot be adequately expressed in words.

But my greatest good fortune in Shillong was the access which I had to the open shelves of the Shillong Public Library which was then situated in a wing of the Assam Government Press building. I could ramble freely through the books, tasting, chewing and digesting as I liked. The library stocked the old volumes of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and other oriental journals ; and Henry Blochmann’s English translation of Shihabuddin Talish’s Persian account of Assam, published in the J.A.S.B.

of 1872. I began at once to translate the portion into Assamese. I also saw there two volumes of the first Assamese magazine “Oroonodoi”. The text of two Assamese chronicles “Purani Asam Buranji” and “Kamrupar Buranji” were published as serials in that journal. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Edward Gait’s “History of Assam” was published about the year 1906. Scientifically planned and compiled though it was it did not take me long to discover that Gait’s book only represented the skeleton of Assam History which can be easily embellished and enlivened by drawing materials from other sources. The articles in the J.A.S.B. and in the “Oroonodoi” originated this conviction in me ; and it has been at the root of my research activities throughout my life. My first attempt in this direction was the compilation of the book “Ahomar Din” which I began and completed during the interval between the Entrance Examination held in March 1909 and my admission into the Cotton College towards the end of June 1909. This book had long been prescribed for the Intermediate Examination of Calcutta University. During my visits to the Shillong Public Library I had frequently met the great humanist and divine the Right Reverend Reginald Stephen Copstone, Metropolitan of India and author of “Budhism; Primitive and Present”, and also his wife who was a daughter of Archbishop Trench. Most of the Assamese residents at Shillong lived in those days in small hutments at Haneng-umkhrah, each of which cost a rental of two rupees only ; but being all poor, and having to depend mainly on their exertions , this Assamese colony passed their days in an atmosphere of amity and mutual helpfulness, the like of which I have never seen in my life. There lived in our neighbourhood two eminent Assamese scholars who had to earn their livelihood by working as ministerial assistants. They were Srijut Golap Chandra Barua, the Ahom scholar and the right-hand man of Mr. Edward Gait, and Srijut Budhindranath Dilihial Bhattacharyya, the lexicographer. Mr. Barua filled my mind with many a curiosity of Assam History ; and from my talks with Mr. Bhattacharyya I gathered a good deal of information about England which he had visited in 1902 in the company of the noted Assamese publicist and tea-planter Srijut Jagannath Barua B.A.

At the Cotton College where I read for two years, 1909 – 11, there was not much room for literary activities, as we had to face annually six periodicals examinations each of which was conducted with all the solemnity of a University examination. There was however a small literary coterie consisting of Srijut Lakshmi Kanta Barua, Dwarika Nath Das, Debeswar Sharma, Sidheswar Gohai, Padmadhar Chaliha and Joges Chandra

Tamuli. We brought out a manuscript magazine named “Seuti” ; and I now recall with pleasure that the standard of the articles was of a very high order and the interest taken in the journal very extensive. But my literary companion in the Cotton College was my room-mate Srijut Sailadhar Rajkhowa, and I was the first auditor of most of the poems now forming part of his book “Nijara”. The Cottonians of those days regularly celebrated the death anniversary of the great Sanskritist Anandaram Borooh, which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> January ; and on one occasion, I visited through the courtesy of Srijut Iswar Prasad Barua, the ancient home of the Majindar Baruas of North Gauhati. Anandaram Borooh was at that time the beau ideal of Assamese youths. I always regretted that no attempt had been made to write a full story of his life, and the urge to compile a biography of Mr. Borooh dawned upon me during this period.

It was sometime in 1910 that Srijut Padmanath Gohai-Barua visited the Cotton College Hostel. He had known me before through my contributions to the “Usha”, but had never seen me in person. He spoke to me very endearingly and encouragingly ; and I soon discovered the radiating influence of this great litterateur of Assam I submitted to him the manuscript of my “Ahomar Din”, and he took it with him for publication as a serial in “Usha”. I also came in contact with Srijut Hemchandra Goswami, Srijut Mathuramohan Barua and Srijut Satya Nath Bora, but being of a shy disposition I did not feel quite at ease in their elderly and solemn presence, though later in life I had opportunities to know their loving and affable nature. The same feeling of uneasiness overtook me in my contact with my uncle Srijut Bholanath Das.

I had in the meantime paid court to the Muse of Poetry. Being a motherless child and having seen woes and miseries in all their forms I had developed an introspective and sensitive temperament which sought relief in the poetic medium. I submitted my poems to the editorial judgment of Srijut Padmanath Gohai Barua, and my joy knew no bounds when I received a letter one day from Srijut Jogananda Datta, his assistant, that a poem of nine would be published in the next issue of “Usha”. It was followed my several other pieces in verse as well as in prose, and when I came to the Cotton College I found my name to be fairly known to a large majority of the public. Sustained literary activities being out of the question to a student of the Cotton College in those days I embodied my sentiments mostly in verse forms. The one article of note that I wrote in this period was a

sketch of Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha which was published in “Usha”, and subsequently incorporated in Cohain-Barua’s “Jivani-samgrah.”

I remember an interesting episode of those days in which a leading patriotic gentleman of Dibrugarh is concerned. The late Srijut Radhanath Changkakati, founder and editor of “The Times of Assam”, had planned to publish an Assamese periodical to be named “Assam Hitoishi”. I felt so enthusiastic at the news that I wrote a poem welcoming this new venture. Mr. Changkakati repaid the compliment by asking me to join his staff as editor of the proposed paper, evidently not knowing that I was then only a schoolboy.

I passed the I.A. Examination in 1911 and obtained a scholarship. I had heard great things about the Presidency College at Calcutta, and it was my ambition from childhood to join that institution for my B.A. and M.A. studies. Admission was very difficult as seats were limited, and Assam students were expected to go to Dacca, the capital of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. I met Mr. Peake, the then Principal of the College, and explained to him my position, and he at once sanctioned my admission in the College. I resided at the Eden Hindu Hostel the boarders of which represented the flowers of Bengal’s youthful intellectual aristocracy. I am proud to recall the names of my fellow boarders at the Eden Hindu Hostel, - Dr. Meghnad Saha, Dr. Nilratan Dhar, Dr. Jnanendra Nath Mukherjee, Dr. Sir Jnanendra Nath Ghose, Mr. Pramatha Nath Banerjee, Dr. Biraja Sankar Guha, Mr. Joges Chandra Chakravarty, Dr. Hem Chandra Rai Chaudhury, Dr. Khagendra Nath Chakravarti, Mr. Satyandra Nath Modak, and Dr. Mohini Mohan Bhattacharyya. The only other Assamese student there was Srijut Padmadhar Chaliha. We were joined later by Dr. Banikanta Kakati, Srijut Rajendra Nath Barua M.L.A., Srijut Lakshmi Nath Das, M.Sc., and Srijut Krishna Nath Sarma. My friends outside the hostel were Mr. Chandicharan Bhattacharyya who had topped the list in the Entrance Examination of 1909, and the I.A. Examination of 1911, and Dr. Sunitikumar Chatterjee, the renowned philologist, and Prof. Satyendra Nath Bose, the eminent physicist.

In Calcutta, I found ampler scope for the expansion of my intellectual horizon. Our Professors included Mr. Manmohan Ghose, the poet, Mr. Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Mr. Binayendra Nath Sen, Pundit Asutosh Sastri, Mr. J. W. Holme, Mr. T.S. Sterling, Mr. W.C. Wordsworth, Mr. R.N. Gilchrist, and Principal H. R. James ; and generations of students remember these names with gratitude and pride. The library of the Presidency

College and the Imperial Library were more than enough to satisfy my intellectual cravings. I attended meetings addressed by Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pundit Madanmohan Malaviya, Mr. Mahomed Ali, Mrs. Annie Besant, Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Mr. Nnanranjan Banerjee and Mr. Jitendralal Banerjee. I was present at the Town Hall meeting where an address of felicitation was offered to the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. I attended the Congress Session held at Calcutta in December 1911 where I heard for the first time the song “Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka” which has now become the national anthem of India. The song made a deep appeal to me, and I wrote an Assamese song in the same tune addressed to Vinapani, the goddess of learning. In 1916, Mahata Gandhi visited Calcutta, and the procession passed through Barabazar Street, and I remember to have pulled the vehicle in which he and his wife Kasturiba were seated.

The boarders of the Eden Hindu Hostel having a poetical bent of mind found an outlet in the sonnet competition held every year. It was organized by the boarders themselves, and it had as its patrons Sir Gurudas Banerjee and Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Sastri. I submitted a sonnet in Bengali embodying the feeling of a dying mother, and it succeeded in winning a prize. At the prize distribution meeting held at the Calcutta University Institute on November 10, 1911, Babu Sivaprasanna Bhattacharyya, a leading Vakil of the Calcutta High Court, and afterwards Sankaracharyya of Puri Math, bestowed praises on my sonnet, and made complimentary predictions about the poet. The news was published in the “Assam Banti” of Tezpur, and it was read with interest by my countrymen.

The First World War broke out in 1914, and war-poems came out in any number, including one from Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and another from Lord Curzon, Ex-viceroy of India. I had Tennyson’s poem “Locksley Hall” by heart, and its rhythm and melody had deeply entranced me. I at once made up my mind to write a war-poem in the trochaic metre of Tennyson’s lines. The result was my poem “Ye Sons of England”. I showed it to Principal James, and he was pleased to read it. The historian Mr. S. Khuda Buksh, who was our Professor at the University Law College, had it published in the “Century Review”. It was also published in “The Times of Assam” and “The Moslem Journal”. The “Statesman” of Calcutta referred to the poem in its issue of September 14, 1917, and pointed out “ a swing and lilt of its own” and “the case and freedom with which he



handles English verse”. Curiously enough the remarks published in the “The Statesman” are still remembered by my friends and acquaintances.

Two events of great importance took place during the year 1911, the visit of His Majesty King George V and the annulment of the partition of Bengal. I was among the spectators when the imperial procession passed along the Red Road. On the evening when the annulment was announced we all stood in front of the “Bengalee” Office in Bow Bazar Street to have a glimpse of Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee, the Protagonist of the struggle which brought about the unsetting of the settled fact. We heard the patriot shouting to the crowd from the balcony of the building, “Go home, and have illuminations”.

My life in Calcutta was marked by close application to my studies and deepening and extending my intellectual contacts. It was during this period that the ambition to cultivate the pleasures of the mind, over other mundane considerations took a definite shape in me; and my ambition to become a professor at the Cotton College was confirmed and strengthened. After passing the B.A. Examination I made a desperate attempt to proceed to England for higher studies, preferably at Cambridge or Oxford. But I could not do so as the requisite fund did not come forward. I then felt for the first time my limitations for not being born with a silver spoon. This failure to go abroad frustrated my ambitions, and it continued to be a source of intense regret long afterwards till I proceeded to England in 1936 on my own initiative on the strength of the facilities of study leave.

I had also set my heart upon the completion of a biography of Anundoram Barooah. I first collected his writings by ransacking the old bookshops of Calcutta, traced references to Barooah in contemporary periodical literature and books, and approached his friends for reminiscences. What I learnt from Barooah’s teacher Sir Gurudas Banerjee and his intimate friend Sir Tarak Nath Palit was a revelation to me, and it has been incorporated in my biography of Barooah published in 1920.

At the University Law College, where I studied Law from 1913 to 1961, I had the privilege of having as my teachers Professor S. Khuda Buksh, Prof. Jyotibhushan Sarvadhikari, and Prof. Rajendra Prasad, now President of India. The President was pleasantly surprised when I told him of this fact when I met him at Gauhati in October 1950. I left Calcutta in July 1916 after having appeared at the M.A. Examination, in

English, Group A. I proceeded directly to Jorhat where my father was serving as Revenue Shirastadar. My stay at Jorhat was marked by visiting old friends and making new ones, and acquiring a first – hand knowledge of social and economic conditions of the people of Upper Assam.

The results came out in September 1916, and I stood fifth out of total number of about 200 candidates. The Assamese people had long been demanding a member of their own community in the teaching staff of the Cotton College, and they now got an impetus to press their demand owing to the increasing output in those days of qualified men for holding Professorships. There being no vacancy I had to wait for an indefinite period.

I had passed the Preliminary Law Examination, and I could join the bar only if I could pass the Intermediate and Final Law Examinations. But an ennui had set upon me, and I shrank from the idea of concentrated work for the two Law Examinations. I joined the teaching staff of the Bezbarua High School at Jorhat for a few months towards the end of 1916, just to maintain a family tradition, as my father had joined a Bezbarua institution at Golaghat after having left the University in 1891.

I being my father's only child and son, the talks of my marriage had been constantly going on in the family. My father settled my marriage with the third daughter of Srijut Binodchandra Bhuyan of village Garehaga in North Lakhimpur, his principal advisors being Srijut Girischandra Barua and Rai Sahib Bholanath Sarma Hazarika. I had a firm faith in my father's choice, and so I did not repent for thus submitting to my father's discretion. The marriage was celebrated at North Lakhimpur on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1917, which was Saint Valentine's Day.

My father was transferred to Gauhati meanwhile, but I continued to stay at Jorhat, having got an appointment in the Christian High School as Head of the Department of English. My literary activities during this period were mainly in the nature of contacts, there being some unsteadiness on my part owing to the lack of a settled tenure of life, though I knew very well that something or other would crop up soon.

I had an ambition from early childhood to add proficiency in Sanskrit to that in English. I had read Sanskrit grammar and literature with diligence up to the B.A. standard. At Jorhat, I had an opportunity to perfect my knowledge of Sanskrit by constant visits to an erudite scholar Srijut Kirtichandra Vidyabhushan of Mukalimuria Satra at Baligaon on the bank of the Dichoi river. His ancestors had great repute at the Ahom

court as Sakta Priests, and Pundit Vidyabhusan was himself an author of a Sanskrit grammar and a number of Assamese books in verse and prose. Though an orthodox Gosai, he was a catholic in his disposition and interest. After a few months of tutelage he conferred upon me, in his capacity as the head of the Baligram Sanskrit tol, the title of Vidyavinod. Besides being subjected to an oral examination, I had to write a dissertation in Sanskrit on the subject “Mahajanah jena gatah sa pantha” literally, the path trodden by the great is the right path.

While at Jorhat, I attended a session of the Assam Students’ Conference and the Assam Association, both held at Gauhati in December 1916 under the presidency of Srijut Lakshminath Bezbarua and Srijut Gangagovinda Phukan respectively. In December 1917, I attended the first session of the Assam Literary Conference held at Sibsagar with Srijut Padmanath Gohain-Barua as president. I made valuable and interesting contacts and made numerous friends whose remembrance and love is still cherished by me.

My literary friend and companion at Jorhat was my neighbour Srijut Nakulchandra Bhuyan, who afterwards distinguished himself as a dramatist and story-writer. He had a large collection of Bihu songs some of which have been incorporated in his “Bahagi”. It was at Jorhat that I met Srijut Hiteswar Barbarua, the poet. He came to our home very frequently, and looked upon me with the affection of an elder brother. Such a noble and sympathetic soul I have hardly come across. I had also as our neighbour Srijut Jitendrakumar Das, commonly known as Naba Babu, the founder of the Assam Publishing House. He undertook to bring out my “Ahomar Din”, which had already been published as a serial in “Usha”, and also my poems under the title “Nirmali”.

Our constant visitor at that time was Mrs. Narayani Handiqui, wife of Srijut Radhakanta Handiqui. She took an affectionate interest in my wife, both having come from North Lakhimpur, and there being bonds of brotherhood and love amongst their parents and grandsires. Mrs. Handiqui’s second son Sriman Chandrakanta Handiqui, who was then a College student at Gauhati used to meet me very frequently. I was charmed by his affable manners and his spirit of helpfulness.

Life at Jorhat thus passed on smoothly, without any worry or anxiety. But I soon realised that Jorhat was after all a stop-gap, a halting stage, and that the tenure of my life must take a definite shape if I wanted it to mean anything. I therefore decided that in the absence of a Professorship at the Cotton College the best course for me would to become

a Lawyer at Nowgong. I took leave from the Christian High School with the intention of proceeding to Calcutta where I would prepare to appear at the Intermediate and Final Law Examinations at a stretch. I came accordingly to Gauhati where my father was staying and where I planned to leave my wife during the period of my absence in Calcutta. Arrangements were made that I should leave for Calcutta on the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1918.

But as Fate would have it, on that very morning, my friend Srijut Chandranath Sarma of Tezpur, whose patriotic services, specially his efforts to send an Assamese deputation to England to place Assam's case before the Joint Parliamentary Committee won for him the name of "Karma-pran", came to our house and handed over to me a telegram dated March 18, 1918, from Sir Archdale Earle, Chief Commissioner of Assam, addressed to Srijut Tarun Ram Phukan, and running as follows, - " I have decided to appoint Srijut S.K. Bhuyan as Second Professor for English to Gauhati Cotton College".

Now, a veritable crisis came over my life, and I was thrown into the predicaments of Hamlet's soliloquy" to be or not to be". Having waited for a Professorship for eighteen months without success I had managed to tear myself off from the associations and advantage which I had previously pictured in my mind ; and I had in consequence set my heart upon a legal career which would give me independence and enormous opportunities for public service. The leading gentlemen of Gauhati insisted that I should accept the appointment, and thereby pave the way for other Assamese to become members of the teaching staff of the Cotton College. My appointment, they described, was the result of continuous demand made by the Assamese people, and hence my refusal would amount to disinclination on my part to respect public sentiments. They had made an abortive attempt in this direction in 1917, but the University would not approve of the appointment, for reasons which would not be applicable in my case. Besides, the Calcutta University Commission under the presidency of Sir Michael Salder, and with Sir Asutosh Mukherjee as a member being at Gauhati at that time, an assurance was unofficially obtained that no objection would be raised by Calcutta University in my case.

An incident of note took place at that time. I was introduced to Sir Asutosh Mukherjee by his son-in-law Mr. Pramatha Nath Banerjee who had been my class friend at the Presidency College. My book "Ahmor Din" had just been published. Sir Asutosh ran over the pages, and then he asked me if I would like to go to Calcutta University. I

explained to him that I was badly wanted at Gauhati, at which he smiled and did not say anything. Here was a man who could eliminate formalities and give opportunities to merit for its full realisation and expression.

I joined my duties at the Cotton College as Professor of English on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1918. Mr. J. R. Cunningham, Director of Public Instruction, referred to this appointment as follows in the Annual Report of his Department for 1917 – 18; “Before Sir Archdale Earle left the Province he decided in deference to the wishes of the people of the Assam Valley to appoint a qualified Assamese to the staff of the Cotton College. There was no vacancy. A post had to be created. Srijut Surjyya Kumar Bhuyan who had taken a very good degree in English and distinguished himself by original work was selected to fill it. Srijut Surjyya Kumar is the first native of the Assam Valley to be appointed to a permanent post in the divisional College”.

Thus Fate, operating in the rival sphere of necessity and freewill, destined me to done the academic gown throughout my life as my livelihood and my main theatre of activity.

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