CHAPTER III

THE EARLY PERIOD OF ROMANTIC POETRY IN ASSAMESE

As has already been noted, Calcutta, by the nineteenth century, had become the microcosm of Renaissance in India. Bengal had already experienced seven decades of British rule by the time Assam came under the British. Thus naturally the new education had influenced Assam much later than Bengal. Situation in Assam was very different from that of Bengal; and it was only gradually that a conscious middle class came forward to share the enlightenment that Bengal had already started enjoying through the cultivation of English. The Western literature came to influence Assamese literature rather quietly, shaking off much of its "storm and stress" in Bengal. Bengal was first to encounter the Western thoughts and assimilate them into the Indian fabric of thought and ideas in all the spheres of life. Rabindranath Tagore and Bankimchandra Chatterjee are the most prominent of the personalities who came through this process; and modern Indian culture is the product of their intellectual search. The re-birth that Assamese had experienced in the later decades of the nineteenth century, was possible only because of the larger and deeper transformations that had occurred in the general cultural sphere of India. Talents, however gifted, isolated from their social setting, could not have attained such
miraculous achievements either individually or collectively.

The nineteenth century may be called one of the most prolific periods in the literary history of Assam. Considering the very different stage of cultural and historical progress in which the litterateurs of Assam had to work during the later part of that century, it is necessary to study them in the light of a culture more expansive than the regional one. The urgency pressed by an unprecedented historical situation forced upon them a rather conscious approach which may account for the similarity of their outlook. But still there is no denying their individual accomplishments and the difference in their mode of thinking and feeling. The nineteenth century culture in India was based basically on humanistic ideas. The new-found feeling of liberalism and humanism was too strong a source of creative enthusiasm to sanction perfect isolation.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938):

Though transition of Assamese Romantic literature has been said to be complete by 1889 with the appearance of Jonaki, its crucial effect was still to be felt; and naturally the literary talents in Assam felt themselves committed to some aims and ideals for the fructification of which they probed into almost all the branches of literature. Lakshminath Bezbaroa was one among them who had achieved great success in whatever form he had tried his hand.
Through Jonaki Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Chandrakumar Agarwala and Hemchandra Goswami began to exert their utmost effort to introduce the Renaissance spirit into Assam with the collaboration of other enthusiastic intellectuals. Jonaki and Banhi, the two journals edited by Lakshminath Bezbaroa served most successfully for the development of Assamese literature to modernity through the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Pointing to his prolific and versatile genius, S.K. Chatterji has quoted Dr. Johnson's line about Oliver Goldsmith, "there was no branch of literature which he did not touch, and there was nothing he touched which he did not adorn."^1

Bezbaroa's personality shines bright against the cultural resurgence of Assam. Having a very sensitive mind and also a very artistic soul, he could penetrate into things to which common educated men showed indifference. He, from his very birth, had breathed the tradition of religion and devotion; and his faith and ideal in later life was no other than the intellectual development of the same.

Bezbaroa excelled both in humour and satire, the two qualities, both unromantic, that seldom combine in one personality. His satire was directed towards the then

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^1 Suniti Kumar Chatterji : 'The Nineteenth Century Renaissance in India and Lakshminath Bezbaruwa of Assam' in Lakshminath Bezbaroa, the Sahityarath of Assam, ed. Maheswar Neog, Gauhati University, 1972, p. 9.
prevalent thoughtless Anglicized ways of the society and also the social life as a whole that was suffering from retarded progress. His great sympathy for humanity in general was made more appealing, being depicted with good natured humour. He came to be known as Charles Dickens of Assam through his unique creation of the character of 'Kripabar Barua' taking Dickens's Pickwick as model. The depth of his insight into the social facts is evident from the character of Kripabar Barua, who has become a living type for the Assamese mind by now. This vitality of Bezbaroa's character-sketch reminds one of Shakespeare in Henry IV as of Dickens in Pickwick Papers.

Besides Kripabar Barua Charit, which is rather in the Classical trend, Bezbaroa's prose writings consist of seven dramatical works, two collections of Assamese folk-tales and some biographical and reflective studies on Shankardev and Madhavdev, the two religious saint preachers and writers of Assam. His autobiography along with his different serious essays on political, cultural, social, literary and religious themes, lent him the prominence and popularity never enjoyed by any Assamese before him except Shankardev and Madhavdev. His works are getting more and more recognition and respect with the passage of time.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa initiated a new kind of realism into Assamese literature through the introduction of
the short stories. This realism is essentially romantic in nature, and it was because of this distinct character that he could command the new light while cherishing deep veneration for his predecessors.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa is recognized unanimously as the greatest of the prose writers of modern Assamese literature. But in spite of this credit along with the credit of being the herald of the true Romantic ideals into Assamese poetry, there seems to be a controversy as to the nature and merit of his poetry. A cursory view of his poetry can certainly give one the impression that his poetry suffers from many limitations. But this feeling of limitation in his poetry comes mostly from the varied nature of his prose. Also the few words that he had annexed to his first collection of poems, Kadamkali (The Bud of Kadamba, 1913) as a preface, express his apparent indifference to the poetic quality of his own poetry. It also makes clear that he did not intend to be concerned at all with the impression it would create about the quality of his poetry in the minds of the readers. But he was his excellent self in satirical prose. His practice of the Romantic ideal through the medium of poetry betrays the limitation of being derived mostly from Palgrave's Golden Treasury. It was Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics prescribed in the college curriculum that had for him, like many other young men of his time, opened the window of the magic castle
of European literature. This text was the handbook of European literature for him and his peers.

But Bezbaroa and the galaxy of poets accompanying him and following him had started at the same time with a very definite social commitment. However much Bezbaroa might have swayed by the Renaissance spirit, or however he might have intended to convey the English Romantic ideals into Assamese literature, poetry does not seem to be his main forte. In this light, his early poems seem to remain in a theoretical base. But the later phase of his poetry tells quite a different tale. His earliest poems can be traced in the pages of Assam Bandhu, but his first prominent writing was Līlīkalī, a farce in prose order which had little to do with Romanticism.

While theoretically accepting the Romantic liberation of poetry from all social and ideological bondage, the Assamese poets of Bezbaroa's time still had the awareness of the tremendous task they had to accomplish in bringing the Assamese society to the new light of modernism. When the English Romanticists were striving for a new ideal, they were not aware of the true nature of the trend they were going to shape. But the Assamese poets knew for certain that Romantic ideal was the voice of the time, and they consciously tried to adapt it for whatever they took to create. They knew that linguistic development depended on the capacity for expressing subtle thought and fine feelings. If they did not doubt the wealth of the Vaishnav
literature, they did not dare to go back challenging a new world imbued with unforeseen enthusiasm. But, as has already been said, Romanticism has a mixed character; and this is manifest evidently in Assamese Romantic poetry as well. This was true of Indian Romantic literature in common. "And the health and vitality of the modern Indian literature depended mostly on a creative synthesis of the old native tradition and the new European example." Bezbaroa, a votary no less of the past literary tradition than the nascent ideal, based his national hope as well as spiritual craving on Vaishnav literature which also served him as an ample source of word and imagery. Unity and purpose must be there behind all great achievements; and he derived them from the writings of Shankardev and Madhavdev. His success in fulfilling his mission was due to his ability to found the modern literature on the firm ground of the Vaishnav literature. He, in fact, accomplished the splendid amalgamation of the past and the present in Assam as Rabindranath Tagore had done in Bengal. Yet he was fully aware of the crisis of facing a different world with a different background, and was cautious not to neglect the spoken language in the treatment of secular themes.

Though it was Hemchandra Barua who had given a standardized form to Assamese language, it was Lakshminath Bezbaroa in the later period who made manifest its potency

of expressing subtle thoughts and feelings. He stressed the proper use of language; and at the same time he said that language should be spontaneous and free. And this he put to practice in his creations.

Like the English Romantic poets, Bezbaroa believed that the poets are seers who make the truth manifest by exerting the power of their creative imagination, and can look into things beyond the external phenomena. Like Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, he also had a clear vision of what poetry should aim at; and his notion of poetic language resembled that of Wordsworth when he asserted that language should come to the poet spontaneously from his intimate absorption in his experience. He also believed that language of poetry is as important and independent as that of other branches of human thought.

If the Assamese Romantic poets had to create new values and new patterns of life like their English counterparts, it was only in the external world which is universally subject to change. Spiritually they were still standing on a firm base of the established order which had come through the ordeals of time. Moreover, due to the absence of any industrial development in their surrounding, the spiritual order here was still undisturbed. In this

4. Ibid., p. 1865.
5. Ibid., p. 1868
respect, Bengal had more similarity with English Romanticism in comparison to Assam. "Assamese poetry of this period lacks the truly romantic 'intensity' because individual feeling had come to be governed by a controlling sense of spiritual values and a basic certainty inhering in a more secure sense of collective life."6 The Assamese Romanticists could not be the exponents of free-love because of the deep-rooted tradition of the age-old Indian morality that had little cause to slacken. Thus, they had reason to be content with homely and married love protecting their love-lorn hearts against the upsurge of violent passion. Bezbaroa was content, also, with finding his beloved at home:

Premar putala cheneh pratima
Kon khanikare kare,
Jeyeba karak seity pratima
Ei choa more ghare.
'Priyatama'

(Who is that sculptor that carved the idol of passion, the image of love? Whoever be he, look, that image adorns my house).

In this respect the Assamese poets of that time were more akin to the sixteenth century poets than to the nineteenth century Romanticists.

As has already been noted, the spirit of nationalism was one of the outstanding features of the nineteenth century Renaissance in India. Whatever characteristics this Renaissance might borrow from the West, this was a native element rooted too deep in its own soil to be uprooted by any possible calamity it could have to face. But in the literature prior to the nineteenth century, nationalism did not mean what it means today; it was nearer to patriotism and had less of political consciousness. This was true of Bezbaroa's poetry as well; but then his nationalism was based on his love of the past and longing for a better future characteristic also of the Romantic ideal. Like in Bengal, in Assam also, in this period, most of the literary men kept themselves aloof from the freedom struggle. In both the states, a feeling rather of gratitude towards the British rule pervaded the cultural atmosphere. Bezbaroa also wrote a poem in praise of the contribution of the British in the fifth issue of Banhl in its eighth year entitled 'Ahban' (Invocation). Hemchandra Banerjee was his Bengali counterpart in this respect. Both of them cherished deep love of their own land, and at the same time, did not hesitate to express their feeling of gratitude towards the British for helping the resurrection of the same.

It has been said in the first chapter that nationalism of the English Romantic poets was a cultural nationalism. Bezbaroa's nationalism was also mostly
concerned with the cultural sphere bringing about a revived interest in the folk elements of Assam. In the early twenties, the joint effort of Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Chandrakumar Agarwala succeeded in giving Assamese poetry a new character with a new treatment of folk materials in the Western form of lyrics and ballads; and thus romantic height in Assamese poetry was achieved. Bezbaroa's 'Dhanbar aru Ratani' and Agarwala's 'Tezimala' are two unique examples of this new achievement of Assamese poetry.

Despite his passionate advocacy of folk-materials of Assam, Bezbaroa was beyond all parochialism; and this is evident in his selection of characters for his creations from the pan-Indian context. In fact, his life and work showed that liberalism and traditionalism, if carried on in their true perspectives, did not clash.

Bezbaroa's poetry does not suffer from pessimism. The vitality of his optimism seems to draw from the two sensibilities he felt in him - patriotic and spiritual. The use of the minstrel's song to express and propagate patriotic feelings is common to almost all literature and both Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Chandrakumar Agarwala let out their patriotic feelings most successfully through this medium. The troubadour poets who flourished in Provence, during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, can be regarded as the counterparts of the minstrels. As a result
of the use of minstrels in literature, Assamese poetry had the valuable gift of the two exquisite poems with the same title, 'Bin-Boragi' — one by Bezbaroa and the other by Agarwala.

Nostalgia has been raised to strong optimism in Bezbaroa's 'Bin Baragi':

Natun pranar  
Na chakujuri  
Dipiti dhali de tat,  
Purani prithivi  
Na-koi chai lao,  
He Bin! Eshari mat.

(Pour brightness into the new eyes of our new hearts so that we see the old world anew; for that oh lyre, sing).

In another poem entitled 'Asam Sangit.' (A Song of Assam), Bezbaroa has implored the beating and blowing of the traditional musical instruments and also a call for victory of Assam:

Bajak daba   bajak shankha  
Bajak mridang khol,  
Asam akou   unnati pathat  
'Jai Ai Asom' bol.

(Let the drum beat, the conchshell blow, mridanga and khol play. Assam is on her upward move; sing victory to the motherland Assam).
Unlike Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya Bezbaroa did not look to the past as a source of sadness; it was rather a source of hope and vitality for him. He "could take pride in the glories of the past and could urge the people of his province to emulate the heroes and heroines of the past, to learn from all that was best in the past for the improvement of the state of the time." He emphasized the revival of the nation in cultural and spiritual spheres more than its political freedom.

Bezbaroa had to confront and harmonize in himself the two contradictory environments: one, the religious atmosphere in which he was brought up at Sibsagar — his hometown; and the other, the intellectual milieu in which he spent his youth. Due to a clear vision of his purpose, he could analyse the past and the present in their correct perspectives with an objective view. This is evident from his own evaluation of Vaishnav literature. He occupies that place in helping people recognize the worth of the Vaishnav literature as Coleridge, de Quincey and Charles Lamb did in reintroducing the first Romantic period at the time of the neo-Romantic revival. In fact, Bezbaroa is the creator, and at the same time, the creation of the Renaissance spirit in India.

While leading the way to the ideal and inspiration of the English Romantic poets, Bezbaroa also rejuvenated his own country's past. But he discovered the past not only for its own richness from which to derive myths and symbols but also to have a firm base where to make a weakened nation stand. He may very well be said to be the epitome of the Renaissance movement in Assam. The Renaissance directed the vision of the people towards the external world in contrast to the Indian tradition and Bezbaroa had the command over the delicacy demanded by the changed situation.

Though Chandrakumar Agarwala and Hemchandra Goswami were the exponents of Romantic poetry to the exactness of the term, it was Lakshminath Bezbaroa who shaped the perfect lyric form of poetry in Assamese literature through his unique translations of some of the English poets. His translations cannot be called translations in the true sense of the term. They are rather transcreations or recreations from varied sources.

For instance, his poem which bears the title

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9. Ibid., p. 253
"Priyatama" is a synthesis of three particular sources: Herrick's "The Rock of Rubies and the Quarelets of Pearls" Campion's "Cherry Ripe" and Assamese folk-songs. This process of synthesis is characteristic of most of these lyrics, which in consequences are to be considered as new creations in which the original sources have undergone a sea of change.11

While borrowing from English literature, Bezbaroa did not confine his search within the two Romantic periods, but extended it to the metaphysical literature as well. His 'Bishrinkhal' (Disorder) is an adaptation of Herrick's 'The Poetry of Dress'. The latter is a Metaphysical poem which Bezbaroa has transformed into a Romantic one by adding to it the vivacity of imagination and touching the theme with love of freedom indigenous to Romantic poetry. Bezbaroa's 'Kavita' (The Poem) with the first line "Ga dhui ut hi choa priyatamai" is another adaptation of Herrick's 'Poetry of Dress' the first line of which reads as "Whenas in silks my Julia goes". The purely metaphysical theme of Andrew Marvell's (1921-78) poem 'On a Dew-drop' came to be adorned with romantic spirit with a familiar tune of Assamese folk-songs in Bezbaroa's 'Padum Patar Pani' (A Drop of Water on a Lotus Leaf). "But while Marvell's poem is a metaphysical exposition of the fact that heaven is the

ultimate home of the human soul, Bezbaroa's poem shows a typical romantic consciousness and evokes the pathos of the intranscience of life." Bezbaroa also studied and received matters from poets who had not achieved as great a reputation as to attract the attention of all the readers. George Darley (1775-1846), the Irish poet, is one such and Bezbaroa's 'Priyattamar Saundarya' (Beauty of the Beloved) is an adaptation of his 'The Loveliness of Love'. Thus he could synthesize the matters derived from different sources and made them into a unique whole. The poem 'Malati' is a good specimen of his excellent power of synthesis. The first impression that the reading of this poem leaves is that of a folk-song. A probe into the meaning of the few lines like:

Luitar kunwari Nahay oi Malati
Nahay teon phulare rani

(Malati is neither the princess of the river Brahmaputra nor the queen of the flowers) and

Nusunga phultir nuphula kalitir
Malatit tulana pai

(Malati can be compared with the unsmelt flower and the bud not yet in bloom) —

brings to the reader's mind the image of Wordsworth's Lucy. The first few lines, though not as distinctly, echoes

12. Ibid., p. 120.
Burns's 'Jean' and the idea of the last few lines can be traced in Vidyapati and Rabindranath Tagore. Thus he could and did take materials and ideas from very different places and very different times and transformed them into something of the status of a unique original. The Vaishnav poets Joydev and Jnandas and the master products of Kalidas were the other sources of his inspiration. To avoid the influence of Rabindranath was an absurdity.

Shelley's influence can be traced on Bezbaroa's two poems, 'Avashesh' (The Residue) and 'Chuma' (The Kiss). The former poem, in spite of the moralizing of the last two lines which are in quite a different mood from that of Shelley's, are same in essence with his 'Music, when soft voices die'. The latter is an adaptation of Shelley's 'Love's philosophy' which, but for the last two lines again, could have retained the spirit of his poem. The last two incongruous lines betray the sense of Bezbaroa's naive humour.

"Unlike his predecessors and his contemporaries, Bezbaroa specialized in English as a subject of study and gave evidence of being directly influenced by the English poets to a great extent."\(^{13}\) As such his perfect infusion of Western elements into native ones requires very keen historical alertness to make the distinction possible. His

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 117.
lyrics like 'Priyatamar Saundarya', 'Bhram' (Illusion), 'Bin-Boragi', the ballad 'Dhanbar aru Ratani' and the poems after the sonnet form, 'Kavita' and 'Avashesh' are a landmark in the modernization and romantic regeneration of Assamese poetry. A sense of being "essentially Assamese" about him is the root of his great popularity.

In Bezbaroa's poems there is very little treatment of nature separated from the world of man. For him, man and nature are complementary to each other. He felt with Wordsworth the light of human soul being reflected from the bosom of nature. He was also confident that there must be some deeper significance behind all appearance, in the manner of Blake:

Batar dubari ban gasakat para
Taro eti pate diye swargar batara.

(Even the eternally trodden leaf of "dubari" grass conveys the message of heaven).

Blake also said:

To see a world in a grain of sand
A heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

'Auguries of Innocence'

Bezbaroa was also inspired by mystic feelings no less, though not in the same way as Wordsworth and Blake.
Yet his mystic aspiration could not achieve the status that was evident in Nalinibala Devi and Ambikagiri Roychoudhury in a later period. His mystic poems nearing perfection are 'Iswar aru Bhakat' (God and the Devotees), 'Banhi' (The Flute), and 'Mahaprayanar Jatri' (The Traveller to the Eternity). But at the same time, 'Prakrita Jiwan' (Real Life), 'Sukhbodh' (The Feeling of Happiness), 'Man-Apaman' (Honour and Humiliation) etc. are didactic poems with a moral in each, thus resembling eighteenth century poetry. They are bereft of the delicate romantic sensibilities.

Bezbaroa's greatness as a versatile writer is evident from the fact that it was he who wrote the first real farce in Assamese; and yet in the other extreme, it was he again who wrote the first intensely romantic poems. Though lacking in the intensity felt in Chandrakumar Agarwala's poems, Bezbaroa's 'Sandhya' (The Evening) and 'Mrityuchaya' (The Shadow of Death) published in Assam Bandhu are given the credit of being the earliest Assamese Romantic poems in the exact sense. The fact that one cannot miss the Vaishnav diction and language in 'Sandhya' would not reduce his talent to a lesser order when the social and the temporal setting is taken into account.
Chandrakumar Agarwala (1867-1937) :

The modern Assamese literature at its initial stage, had as its background the agricultural society yet unravaged by industrial forces, and that it was not reason-oriented, has proved to be both a blessing and a curse at the same time. It left the spiritual basis intact; but it deprived Assamese poetry of the acuteness and intensity characteristic of English Romantic poetry. Yet a revolutionary earnestness in Chandrakumar Agarwala almost equalled the English Romanticists.

Chandrakumar Agarwala is the "high priest of Romanticism"14 in Assamese poetry, through whose poems the potential of Assamese poetry to express subtle sensibilities, was fully realized. It was in the poems of Chandrakumar that modern Assamese poetry had acquired its typical characteristic and also achieved the dignity of thought peculiar to it.15

Lakshminath Bezbaroa had mentioned two significant events in the history of Assamese Romantic poetry in his autobiography — the publication of two poems that had signified the unforeseen possibilities of Assamese poetry.


These two poems were 'Bankunwari' (The Woodnymph) of Chandrakumar Agarwala and 'Kako Aru Hiya Nibilaon' (No More of My Heart to Anybody). The preoccupation of the Jonaki poets with their social commitment has already been mentioned. This was responsible for limitation in poets like Bezbaroa. But in Chandrakumar was felt a beautiful fusion of the moral obligation and Romantic imagination. Trailokyanath Goswami has refuted the opinion that a litterateur with a definite mission before him cannot produce great literature by pointing to Shakespeare who wrote for a touring company.\(^{16}\) In the same way the works of the Assamese Romantics were no less artistic though they produced literature with an extra literary urge too.

It has already been said that poetry was the most suitable medium for the Romantics. In Assamese, the master-mind in this branch of literature was that of Chandrakumar Agarwala. A sense of magnificence as true as that of English Romantic poetry pervades his poems in spite of the conscious objective process. The political as well as economical set-up did not encourage the persuasion of pure aestheticism. Yet 'Bankunwari' aroused the sense of wonder among the readers not so much for its theme as for its success in unveiling the possibility of conveying delicate sensibilities in modern Assamese which was still in an early

\(^{16}\) Trailokyanath Goswami : 'Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Assamese Literature in the Fourth Decade of the Twentieth Century' in Lakshminath Bezbaroa, the Sahityarathi of Assam, ed. Maheswar Neog, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 1972, p. 94.
During the Renaissance in India, the transcendental values imposed by religion began to lose their effectiveness with the progress of commercial civilization. Sense perception received the upperhand, and the immediate values of human beings as well as of the objects of nature, came to be considered more important. Yet a parallel revival of national religious tradition seems a paradox. But then, in Romanticism, the presence of heterogenous elements is only natural. It was the sameness of motive rather than any innate characteristic that bound the Assamese Romanticists together.

The most conspicuous characteristic of Bezbaroa's poetry was nationalism whereas it has been humanism in Chandrakumar Agarwala. "In recognizing the dignity of man as man everywhere, he was influenced by the French philosopher August Comte". Comte's (1798-1857) philosophy, in the form of positivism, asserted the conception of the cult of Humanity "conceived as a Great Being composed of those men and women, past and present, and to come, whose lives had been, were, or would be devoted to human progress or well-being." "Live for others" is the motto of Comtean

morality. Chandrakumar felt the existence of God within the universal man after Comte. In the conflict of the old tradition and the new trend of thought, the nineteenth century intellectuals saw the possibility of a new constructive humanistic philosophy. Life, in the nineteenth century, with its manifold activities, demanded a completely new approach.

Poetry, like all other arts, is the expression of the self. It is the projection of the poet's soul. In his endeavour to express himself, he also reveals his age. The poetry of Chandrakumar Agarwala, besides revealing his age, reveals the universal man, the all pervading nature and the eternal power creating and controlling all existence.

Tennyson believed man to be the "roof and crown of all things"; and so did Chandrakumar:

Manuhei deva, manuhei seva,
Manuh bine naï keva,
Kara, kara puja padya-arghya loi
Jai jai manav deva!

'Manav-Bandana' (Glorification of Man)

(Man is the worshipped and also the worshipper. There is none as great as man. Worship him with all perfection. Victory be to God in man).

So had Wordsworth declared in his The Prelude —

My theme
No other than the very heart of man.

Humanism in Chandrakumar often transcends the barriers of
time and space reaching the level of altruism. He cherished deep faith in the idea of the elevation of human thought and the possibility of the realization of human potentials. Man possesses endless possibilities and as such is the object of worship. Even death loses all significance before the greatness of human love. This idea has been beautifully expressed in 'Shanti' (Peace).

Love is not different from religion; and man can derive celestial happiness from love. The poet's view is realistic; accepting the reality of the world and of life, he could feel the existence of the all-pervading Reality to whom he appeals with humble supplication. Man has been blessed with a portion of the Omniscient power, but has made himself subject to suffering because he does not act for the elevation of the same. His lamentation, seeing how man has inflicted suffering upon himself, is very like Wordsworth's "What man has made of man?" Chandrakumar also said:

Manuhe manuhe paratkoi par,
Epheri maramo nai.

'Bin-Boragi' (Man to man is the most alien of all without a trace of love).

Unlike the English Romantic poets, their Assamese counterparts had not to fight against any evil of an industrial society. Yet Chandrakumar was ready to confront,
with equal earnestness, the social and religious evils that afflicted man in his own society. He fought against the evils of class and caste prevalent in the society of his time. He had also fought against the exploitation of the weak:

Manuhar tez shuhi shuhi khai
Manuh rakshase choa

'Bin-Boragi'

(Like a vampire man is sucking the blood of his fellow-creatures).

Such kind of realization has been revealed in Burns's poem also:

Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.

'Man was Made to Mourn'

Besides Burns, influence of Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron can be traced in 'Bin-Boragi'. In this poem, Chandrakumar is unhappy with the inequity and cruelty rampant in the world. The newly awakened sense of nationalist idealism had generated a sense of sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden of the country, and in Chandrakumar, we see a vigorous exponent of this feeling. But this dark aspect of the social condition cannot make him lose hope. He rather wants to shoot through it transcending all probable limitations. In his hatred of oppression, he is very like Shelley. Like Shelley in his
'Ode to the West Wind', Chandrakumar also wants to destroy whatever evil is there in the universe in his urge to create a new world. Shelley had implored the West Wind to drive the "dead thoughts over the universe... to quicken a new birth". Chandrakumar also wants to immerse the sky-kissing peaks of the great Himalayas under the dark water of the ocean:

Anguli bulaba janahale aji
Pelaloheten tani,
Himalay chura buraloheten
Uchali kalia pani.

'Bin Boragi'

so that a new earth would emerge in its place:

Natun shristir arun kirane
Karok sakalo shuchi

'Bin Boragi'

(Let the reddening rays of the new creation sanctify all).

His imagination has also achieved a rare height of glorification almost equalling Shelley. Byron was also a revolutionary. But in his longing for freedom for all, he was more passionate than contemplative. Though contemplation gets the upper hand in 'Bin-Boragi', parts of the poem, including the above mentioned idea, betray the poet's Byronic passion too.

In his realization of the transience of evil and the ultimate victory of good brought about by the latent but
invincible power of the human mind, Chandrakumar Agarwala resembles Wordsworth also. Wordsworth said,

...reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonourable melancholy, had I not: a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success. 19

Chandrakumar Agarwala is an exponent of true human egalitarianism. Like Shelley's Prometheus, Agarwala's minstrel is also looking for a society in which man will enjoy perfect freedom; he will be regarded as invaluable; and universal fraternity will prevail. Like Shelley in 'Adonais', the minstrel also has been possessed with the vision of the Omniscient power working through the mystery of Creation. In Chandrakumar also we see a poet-prophet, as we see in Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley—"...the assumption by Blake, Wordsworth, and Shelley of the persona of a poet-prophet who writes a visionary mode of poetry". 20

In 'Bin-Boragi', the poet has conferred upon man the honour of extreme possibility. He believes in "... man's ability to live in the phenomenal world and yet remain in harmony and contact with the absolute." 21 Man is able

At will to murmur in the flowers small as the honey bee,
At will to stress across the heavens and step from star to star.

William Blake: 'The Four Zoas', (Book II)

The poet, conscious of the latent power in his own self, possesses a strong faith and this faith lends an optimistic vigour to his creation. He is also an exponent of the creative vitality of the nineteenth century English Romanticists. Idleness robs people of the power of activity. The poet is determined to overcome all weaknesses.

Shaktir santan mai noho aru keo

'Karmadev' — (The God of Action)

(I am no other than the child of strength and vitality), reminds one of Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty'. Thus even after a very true realization of the evils at work everywhere, Chandrakumar has been able to cherish a deep faith in the goodness of human heart and a destination of human life poignant with the hope of being conceivable.

Personal despair is not rare in the Romantic poetry. Chandrakumar has also experienced moments of dejection. He has known Shelley's melancholy and felt the "heartless mood" of Coleridge. He has longed to establish a deep kinship with the object of his love:

Sundarar aradhana tomate arpin
Pranar akankhya mor haba ekmukhi,
Manabi janam haba soubhayere pur
Anandar nijaran tumi pran mor.

'Jivanar Lagariya' (Companion for Life)

(I shall dedicate to you all the fruits of my devotion to beauty; all my longings will be centred round you, my life in this earth will be blessed with fulfillment and all my pleasure will settle down in the form of you, my life).

But failing, the poet feels like a bird fluttering his wings in wilderness:

Pran pakhi uti jai shunya rahasyat
'AKalshariya' (The Solitary)

(The bird of life floats in the air of empty nothingness).

But soon the poet overcomes this feeling:

Shaktir mantrere aradhilo Istadev
Shaktir santan maI naho aru keo.

'Karmadev'

(I have worshipped the God of my devotion by chanting the incantations of strength; I am no other than the child of strength itself).
Chandrakumar Agarwala has a deep faith in human love and devotion. 'Shanti' is a poem of glorification of love. The poet is a lover of life and his heaven can be achieved through the ways of life in this world. The Romanticists' vindication of life in the phenomenal world is completed in Chandrakumar. Like a honey-bee, he collects and stores the honey of happiness only to share with his fellow creatures; and in doing it, he feels heavenly bliss ('Hriday Sarag' — The Heaven of the Heart). A healthy sense of optimism runs through most of his poems:

Man apaman dhouai jaok
prithivir para guchi,
Natun shristir arun kirane
Karok sakalo shuchi.

'Bin-Boragi'

(Let all the unwelcome feelings be washed away from the world and let everything be sanctified by the new light of a new creation).

The poetic spirit in Chandrakumar Agarwala has strengthened him with such spiritual power that he can dare to stand against all evils. He shared Shelley's Platonic faith in his longing for creating a new world bereft of all evils. He has not always been able to establish peace and love in the human world; yet he has not yielded. He has, instead, craved for a revolutionary change in the society.
Through this change will emerge the new world of his dream. The last lines of 'Bin-Boragi' may well serve as a clarion call to all the faith and hope latent in the universal heart:

Morei mukhedi manab pranar
phutak akul mat,
Mor chintatei guhra rahasyar
Satya hok pratibhat.

(Let all the feelings of the universal heart be articulated through me, and let my thoughts bring to light the profound mystery of Creation).

Vacillation is quite alien in Chandrakumar. The profundity of faith in his poems has saved them from being polemic.

"Chandrakumar Agarwala is another votary in the shrine of Beauty. His poetry breathes a love of beauty, a joy in living and a spirit of optimism, issuing forth from a warm, sympathetic and tender heart." 22 Like Shelley and Keats, beauty is the eternal truth for him. The world is full of supreme beauty which only waits for our acceptance. 'Madhuri' (Grace) can be distinguished for its description of beauty. The sense of the "half-hidden" beauty in Wordsworth's 'Lucy' is present in Chandrakumar's 'Madhuri' and 'Kishori' (The Teenaged girl). The reminiscence of childhood and love of beauty in 'Phula Sariyah Dara' (A Field, Full of Mustard Plants in Bloom) brings to mind Wordsworth's 'The

Daffodils'.

The Romantics assigned a double habitat to reality—the supernatural being one of it along with the natural. Chandrakumar Agarwala is the Coleridge of Assamese poetry in introducing the supernatural into it. 'Jal-Kunwari' (The Waternymph), 'Bankunwari' (The Woodnymph), and 'Tezimala' are specimens of his poetry where we see his superb treatment of the mythical and the supernatural. These three poems combine in themselves Wordsworth's imagination and Coleridge's fancy. They are also poignant with the "witchery" of Coleridge's poems, though arranged and established against a local setting. Coleridge had asserted the validity of fancy describing it as

... the power
That first unsensualises the dark mind
Giving it new delights; and bids it swell
Wild with activity; and peopling air,
By obscure fears of Beings invisible,
Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
Of the present impulse, teaching self-control,
Till Superstition with unconscious hand
Seat Reason on her throne.

'The Destiny of Nations'

And this applies to these three poems as well.

Chandrakumar Agarwala is endowed with the English Romantics' power of vivid description of things, both natural and supernatural. Nature description in 'Bankunwari' is picturesque and compact with the beauty of supernatural haziness. The thirteenth stanza of 'Jalkunwari' reminds us of W.B. Yeats's 'The Wild Swans at Coole'. In these three poems there "is a 'Celtic' touch with which old popular beliefs have been made to yield poems of matchless craftsmanship and charm."24 The supernatural elements of Coleridge's 'Christabel' and Keats's 'Lamia' and 'The Eve of St. Agnes' can be traced in 'Tezimala'. Like Wordsworth's Lucy, Chandrakumar's Tezimala is also a foster child of nature. Both are the victims of human indifference and cruelty. The world of 'Tezimala' is the world of the supernatural; and yet at the same time, it is this world of ours. The poem reveals the poet's grasp of the functioning of the human mind. There is the superb delineation of the sequence of emotions, e.g. from anticipation and hope to the realization of the continuing sad plight and then the resulting indifference. This culminates in a longing for freedom which ends in the ultimate revolt. This revolt is nothing but the poet's idea of the victory of the human mind in the midst of all baseness and cruelty rampant in man's society. Despite the evils rampant among human beings, life remains livable and lovable. A reformer as well, Chandrakumar's urge is to

dash through all injustice and emerge into a world of fraternity and equality. He is confident of his victory in spite of all sufferings as is seen in 'Ajeya' (The Invincible).

For a better realization of life, its study in a really wide perspective is needed. Diversity of existence and experience lends to the charm of life, and diversity is best displayed in the world of nature. Chandrakumar shared Wordsworth's belief that nature is sympathetic towards human feeling. Nature being very sensitive, its different objects react to the wailings of the suffering heart:

Tomar binani shuni thar hai
Pashu-pakhi gash-lata,
Luit uzai, jon tadha lage
Manuhar kiba katha?

'Bin-Boragi'

(Hearing your wailings the beasts and birds, the trees and creepers—all become stuck motionless; the river Luit changes his currents, the moon becomes fixed in a gaze—what to say of human beings?)

But unlike Wordsworth, he was also aware of the melancholy aspects of nature:

Niyar kalire shobhe phulpahi
Chaicho bhabate bhahi,
Hai ki bisham pelale bayuye
Jokari phular pahi.

'Niyar'
(I am looking thoughtfully at the flower beautified with dew drops, but alas! the wind shook the petals till they dropped).

A melancholy note runs through his poems as in 'Sandhiya' (The Evening), 'Bimukh' (The Indifferent), and 'Jugamiya Shok' (Eternal Sorrow). 'Sapon' (The Dream) and 'Akalshariya' (The Solitary) betray his sense of being solitary which is common in the English Romantic poetry and which culminates in Swinburne's poetry.

Janapurna nirjanat kota lagariya?
Viswa sansarat hai akalshariya.

'Akalshariya'

(Left alone in the vast universe, where is my companion in the crowded solitude?)

Poems like 'Prakriti' (Nature) and 'Jiwanar Dali' (The Target of Life) show that he also suffered from the romantic discontent of the English poets. The source of his discontent, like theirs, is the limitation of the ability to exert against the vastness of intention and imagination. He saw and believed in contradictory forms and appearances of nature. He had realized nature's relentless course, indifferent to the effects it produces upon humanity though he also cherished Wordsworth's belief that nature is kind and gentle (Anantar Sot - The Course of Eternity). In this respect his view is more like Tennyson than Wordsworth. He
also believed in the permanence of nature against the transitoriiness of earthly creatures:

Kor kon kiba hol
Chirasmiti pami gol
Prakriti je tenekaiye rol.

'Prakriti'

For Chandrakumar Agarwala, as for the English Romantics, manifestation of nature is not objective, but subjective. He can see into the illusory aspects of nature. His world is not a projection of nature, but he perceives his actions being projected in nature:

Mor duarate mai rahan baki diu
Maye batahchati hai uruai niu.

'Bin-Boragi'

(It is I that tinge the clouds with colours and carry them away taking the form of the wind).

Sensual beauty has been raised to the level of intellectual beauty in the poems of Pratima (The Image, 1914).

Chandrakumar Agarwala believes in the eternal flow of life. Behind all apparent variations, the world secrets the ever-flowing and ever-progressing course without which the never-ending process of life will become a nonentity:
Phute ki nuphute phool, sare ki nasare
Tale sot abiram chaliche sarbatikal.
'Anantar sot'

(Whether flowers bloom or not, whether they drop down their petals or not, the hidden undercurrent is flowing from time eternal).

In 'Bin-Boragi, the dual relationship between man and man and between man and the Creator has been depicted. In this poem, the poet is aware of the eternal yearning of human heart after happiness. It is also a poem of his deep self-realization. In Chandrakumar, Assamese poetry has experienced the projection of the most delicate feelings. His intensity of feeling and simplicity of expression is still unequalled in Assamese poetry. As against the lavishness of most of the English Romantics, "the beauty of Agarwala's poems springs from adroit concentration and economy of words and choice of epithets and images." Expression of thought and feeling in such compressed form is rare in Assamese poetry as well. Only a few poems of Durgeswar Sarma in a later period seem to inherit this quality of Chandrakumar. One of the beautiful examples of this excellence of the latter is his 'Niyar'. This poem was inspired by Andrew Marvell's 'On a Dew-drop'.


Though a follower of a borrowed creed, and his attitude towards life and the human world is much influenced by the English poets, the philosophy of the Upanishads lies at the core of Chandrakumar Agarwala's poetry. He may very well be called the most romantic of all Assamese Romantic poets; yet his poems are very different from English Romantic poetry in comparison to Lakshminath Bezbaroa's. His poems reveal the intensity of thought, curiosity about life and a longing to be one with the universe. At a higher stage of realization, the poet has felt that the universe is nothing but a projection of his own self:

Tumi bhalo viswa bhal, sabato sundar,  
Bikatate mukh kintu bikat badan.  

'Viswa-Bhaoria' (The Universal Actor)  
(The world is full of goodness and beauty if you treat it so, but with a distorted face you will only confront ugliness).

These lines in Chandrakumar sound very much like Coleridge's lines in 'Dejection: an Ode'—

... we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live:
The Upanishads (viz. Katha Upanishad) have conceived of the self as "the subtlest, the smallest of the small and yet the greatest of the great." A sublime fusion of the Upanishadic conception of the self and the glorification of the self through extreme individualism sanctioned by Western Romanticism, is felt in Chandrakumar's poems.

We meet a mystic in Chandrakumar Agarwala in 'Bin-Boragi'. The revolutionary consciousness of the minstrel has, through deep contemplation, experienced gradual serenity and has at last cooled down to the spiritual realization of a mystic. Firm in the Indian philosophical base, the minstrel has experienced the spiritual ascent when man feels only one need wanting fulfilment; and that need is the realization of the Supreme God in one's own self. In Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', there is reference to the existence of the all pervading consciousness that runs through and guides the universe:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused...
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

So has Chandrakumar felt. Realization of the beautiful has led him to his mystic experiences. Treatment of humanism has achieved the sublimity of spirituality in his poems. His conception of the beautiful remains same as Keats's. Keats believed that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." For Chandrakumar also

Sundarar aradhana jiwanar khel
'Saundarya' (Beauty)

(Devotion to beauty is the essence of life).

There are moments of elevation when he becomes deeply engrossed in the thought of the mystery of Creation and when the Creator and the creation become merged in one another.

Sansar morei purna dekho
Acho matho niranjan mai
'Mai' (Myself)

(I see myself in everything of this world and feel myself the only "Niranjan").

Chandrakumar Agarwala's love of the impalpable is peculiar to his love of the Upanishadic philosophy. In spite of the Western influence, his poems have retained the typical Assamese flavour in their expression. English Romantic poetry has influenced him in the choice of subject-matter, way of looking at things, use of simile and the way of expression. His poems in the sonnet form are
'Sandhiya', 'Akalsharia', 'Chiralagaria' (The Eternal Companion), 'Atripti' (Unsatiety) etc. Besides the form, the poet, in these poems, has been influenced by English Romantic poetry in the choice of subject-matter and thought. In both the collections of his poems, 'Pratima' (The Image, 1914) and 'Bin-Boragi' (1923), he also has, like the English Romantic poets, emphasized introspection:

Sushupta atmar sukhma shakati
Jagai mathon tola,
Atmar balere balian hai
Bijulee sanchare dola.

'Bin-Boragi'

(Awaken the latent and very subtle power of the soul, and being endowed with its power, move about at the speed of the electricity).

Except for his 'Asom-Bandana' (Glorification of Assam), his feeling of patriotism has merged itself with humanism.

Hemchandra Goswami (1872-1928):

Each of the three associates ushering in the Romantic ideal into Assamese, had brought perfection to one of the forms of poetry. The achievement of Lakshminath Bezbaroa in ballad, of Chandrakumar Agarwala in lyric, and of Hemchandra Goswami in sonnet, may very well be regarded as hallmarks in each sphere. Hemchandra Goswami also edited Jonaki in the second year of its publication. Besides Phular
Chaki (The Wreath of Flowers, 1907), a collection of poems, Asamiya Sahityar Chanekl (A Specimen of Assamese Literature), the magnificent anthology of Assamese literary specimens, is the monumental contribution of Goswami to Assamese literature.

Hemchandra Goswami's 'Puwa' (Dawn) as if inaugurated the Romantic sensibility in Assamese literature. It is a symbolic poem in the sense that in greeting the light of the dawn, the poet is really greeting the enlightenment that had accompanied the Assamese Renaissance. Invocation to light is frequently discernible in English Romantic poetry calling immediately to mind Milton's famous invocation. 'Puwa', though not in the form of invocation, reveals the soothing effect of light on life along with the eternal longing of life for it. A link between the depth of human feeling and the quiet of nature has been established in this poem. The calm of nature, with its beauty realized in serenity, inspires mystical feeling. The very first lines convey a sense of the far that is yet near, of the impalpable yet that is absorbed in the whole consciousness:

Gahin puwati nisha, nital jagat,
Koto nai jonakar chin,
Nimat viswar banhi, nijam chetana,
Sur bhula jiwanar bin.

'Puwa'
(Quiet is the breaking dawn, silent the earth, nowhere is a ray of the moon, asleep is consciousness, the lute of life is self-absorbed in melody).

The poem also expresses life's repulsion of darkness. Through this poem, the poet has welcomed the new light of knowledge and poetry in the form of imploration to the goddess of learning. The natural setting behind the mood of the poem is most effective.

Though not tumultuous, nature in Hemchandra Goswami's poems is not inert either. Nature is the source of all creation and also the root of the universe. He also believed in the contradictory manifestation of nature:

Khane dhara mridu bhav
Khanba bhairab rav.

'Prakriti' (Nature)

(If in one moment you (Nature) show a calm and quiet appearance, the very next moment you burst forth in a tumultuous roar).

'Prakriti' is also a poem in which the poet is looking back to his childhood. Glorification and reminiscence of childhood are common in English Romantic poetry and best manifest in Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimation of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' and also Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. 'Epahi Padum' (A Lotus) is
another nature poem. 'Mon' (The Mind) expresses the supreme power possessed by the mind over man's life. This poem also echoes Blake's idea of seeing "a world in a grain of sand" in asserting the mind's power of projecting the vast universe in a tiny form:

Samasta jagat dekha chakamaka kari
'Mon'

(You show the vast world in the form of a tiny patch).

The English Romantic poets' glorification of the mind's imaginative capability has been reflected in this poem.

'Jahaj' (The Ship) is a poem in which different aspects of the poet's feeling have been expressed with equal earnestness. He has welcomed the technical progress of the new age and also deplored and protested against casteism. In the taunting last lines, he has deplored the narrow range of life; and they are also an indirect call to rise above the same. Such views are characteristic of the Renaissance. It is also a patriotic poem with the lamentation for the state of the poet's own country in comparison to the glorious progress of the other countries of the world:

Sakalo deshate madhyahna alok
Choa Asamat ajio nisha,
Sakalo deshate basanta hanhiche
Choa Asamat ghor barisha.

'Jahaj'
(All the lands are washed with the brilliant rays of the midday sun, but look, here in Assam it is still night; spring has cheered up all the lands, but look, here in Assam the rainy days have not still come to an end).

'Meghdoot' (The Messenger of the Cloud) is another patriotic poem. This poem expresses the poet's lamentation at the degenerate condition of the once heroic Indian nation. Like many true Romantics, the poet also cherishes here a sense of pride remembering the glorious past. The poem is also an invocation to the cloud to awaken and infuse spirit into the degraded people.

Though his love poems are few in number, the theme of love in his poems is as recurring as the theme of patriotism. As has already been mentioned, Chandrakumar Agarwala's 'Niyar' heralded the poetry of sentiment while Hemchandra Goswami's 'Kako aru Hiya Nibilao' published in the second issue of Jonaki heralded the poetry of love; and like the other, is a landmark in Assamese poetry. With the publication of this love poem, "the pattern of new poetry with its emphasis on the expression of individual sensibilities was soon established."

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.
'Ode to a Nightingale'

Like that of Keats's poem, the burden of Goswami's poem is also the transience of love. 'Kakuti' (Imploration) is another love poem expressing the poet's solitary mood through the symbol of a lonely mango plant.

Like most of the Romantic poets, Goswami also feels at times, the absence of happiness in this world. ('Sansarat Sukh Nai' — There Is No Happiness in This World). But he is not overwhelmed by this feeling and can overcome it by a quick realization of the all pervasive influence of faith on human life. But his emphasis on the importance of faith could not have been acquired by utilization and experience as the manifestation of his glorification of faith is evident in the very first poem ('Biswas' — Faith) of Phular Chaki, and he has acknowledged in the preface of the first edition that the poems are arranged in order of the dates of composition. Thus he seems to accept this mode of feeling as a trait of the nascent Romantic ideal. He does not seem to be as faithful to other modes of this new ideal as he is to love.

As one of the founders of Jonaki, Hemchandra Goswami occupies the same rank with Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Chandrakumar Agarwala in the history of the development of
modern Assamese language and literature. His contribution to it is primarily in the form of sonnet. Sonnet is a superb gift of Italy to the realm of world literature. Its name is said to be derived from the Italian word "Sonetto" meaning sound. Sonnet is a lyric with fourteen lines composed mostly in rhyme. Though a product of the thirteenth century, sonnet attained its grandeur and perfection during the later century in the hand of Petrarch (1304-74). Petrarch is regarded as the first humanist and also the most popular Italian poet of the English Renaissance. Shakespeare excelled in this form of poetry in English. Hemchandra Goswami followed the Italian pattern of sonnet. Other sonneteers in Assamese have been generally the followers of the pattern of English sonnets.

Hemchandra Goswami's 'Priyatamar Chithi' (A Letter of the Beloved) is the first sonnet in Assamese. In this love poem has been depicted the absorption of a young lover in the thought of his lady-love aroused by her letter. This poem is also one of the best specimens of Romantic exaggeration of emotion and imagination:

Saundaryar bukur kachali udangai,
Prakritir cho-ghar chalo pitpit;
Kukurathengia ei akharkitit
Ji amiya ghaha ache kato aru nai.

'Priyatamar Chithi'
Having raised the cover on the breast of beauty, I thoroughly examined the greenroom of Nature. Nowhere did I find the sweetness that is smeared on these fowl-footed letters.

Hemchandra Goswami's other sonnets are 'Haha-kanda' (Weal and Woe), 'Ratneswar Mahanta' and 'Manikchandra Barua'. The intensity of the last two lines in 'Priyatamar Chithti' and the last tercet of 'Haha-kanda' have taken both the poems to the level of perfection. 'Ratneswar Mahanta' and 'Manikchandra Barua' are elegies in the form of sonnet. Goswami used the rhyme form used by Milton and Keats. 'Dharapara' (The Exposed), with its extra two lines, may be called a tailed sonnet which is also unique for its passionate nature.

Hemchandra Goswami shared Shelley's belief that the poet is a seer and is endowed with the power of vision so that he can see and feel the presence of the Omnipotent Spirit in all objects of creation and even in a tree:

Sakaloke mate kavi madhur namere,  
Taruto Iswar dekhe viswar bhitare.  

'Kavi aru Bigyan' (The Poet and Science)

(The poet addresses all with sweet names and feels the Omnipresent even in a tree).

He also believed in the poet's power of arousing the people to causes of his own choice:
Sudhamay kavi bani swargar amiya ani,
Karay akul kako rupar mohat,
Premat matali kako, kako ba ranat.

'Kavi aru Bigyan'

(The words of the poet, smeared with nectar of heaven, fascinated some with beauty, make some mad in love, and rouse others in battle).

Like Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Hemchandra Goswami also had a satirical leaning and his was a good hand in satirical poems as well, though it seems rare in a poet of his romantic intensity. Hem Barua observes, "The usual technique of Romantic poets is to idealise the beloved and to be eaten up with remorse. Dignified and restrained, although his remorse could not be as intense as that of Jatin Duara of the subsequent generation, it is as poignant." 29

On Hemchandra Goswami the influence of the English Romantic poets is less direct and less vivid in comparison to the other two of the trio though his consciousness of the Renaissance and the Romantic ideal is no less overt. He seems to be more attached to his own soil and even his imageries are not borrowed.

Hemchandra Goswami is also well-known as a historian and an antiquarian and he will for ever occupy a

prominent place in Assam history for his versatile contribution to its literature. One of the heralds of Romantic poetry in Assam, his poems, though few in number, will always inspire the successive generations.

**Padmanath Gohain Barua (1871-1946):**

Padmanath Gohain Barua's contribution to Assamese literature is regarded invaluable in the field of drama and prose-writing. Yet his contribution to Assamese poetry, though small, cannot be overlooked considering its dearth at the early period of Assamese Romantic awakening. His *Lila Kavya* (1899) is a long narrative poem on domestic life in the form of elegy which has not experienced any impersonal elevation characteristic of great poetry. *Jurani* (Repose, 1900) consists of some sonnets after Rabindranath. The intensity and yearning characteristic of successful lyrics are not to be found in Gohain Barua's poems, but he had a command over compactness of imagination suited for sonnets. No conspicuous influence of any particular English poet can be traced in his poems which sometimes, as in *Lila Kavya* show the presence of medieval diction. But he was influenced by the English Romantic poets in the choice of form, thought, and subject matter. Romantic ideal in him has been best revealed in the poem 'Orani' (The Veil). It is poignant with Romantic sentiment in the choice of subject.

matter, treatment, and also in form. This poem is also rich with the intensity of imagination not very common in his poetry.

Anandachandra Agarwala (1874-1940):

Anandachandra Agarwala is one of the poets whose contribution to Assamese poetry is small but significant. He has enriched Assamese poetry by translating into it some beautiful poems from English which have come to be treated as unique because they read almost as original. Among other poems, he has rendered Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem 'A Psalm of Life' into Assamese very successfully, and the uniqueness of this translation has left little trace of an alien source. He excelled in the ballad form of poetry of which the two best known are 'Paneshoi' (Pinnace) and 'Phulkonwar' (The Flower Prince). 'Balam' (A river by this name), one of Agarwala's best poems, is a poem of romantic reminiscence in which the poet has expressed his view of the objects of nature as benevolent agents from which there are many things to learn. This view of nature is most conspicuous in Wordsworth's poetry. The idea and the language also of this poem, can be compared with Wordsworth's 'Yarrow Revisited', 'Nature and the Poet', and 'Tintern Abbey'.

Jilingani (Radiance, 1920) is the only collection of poems published in Agarwala's life-time. Though his

excellent translations are not after the Romantic ideal, his original poems like 'Phulkonwar' reveal "Agarwala's gifts at their finest, his lyrical sweep, lucid verse-music and above all the power of transport into an atmosphere of faery grace." This poem and 'Paneshoi' also reveal the poet's love of and interest in folk-song characteristic of Romantic ideal.

**Hiteswar Barbarua (1876-1939):**

A contemporary of Hemchandra Goswami, the first sonneteer in Assamese, Hiteswar Barbarua also had achieved remarkable success in the sonnet form of poetry; and as such his name has come to be inevitably associated with it. Another form of poetry that he had handled successfully is the literary epic. Whereas the primary or traditional epic generally involves a process of evolution and consolidation, literary epic is the artistic creation of one man. As the conscious creation of one single artist, it sanctions individual human feelings like chivalry, romance and love. The literary epics in Assamese, composed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had the Bengali literary epics for their model which, in turn, were influenced by their English counterparts. On Hiteswar Barbarua also influence of the English form of literary epics can be discerned.

Though deprived of college or university education, as a voracious and sincere reader of English literature, Barbarua was one among the Assamese poets of the time to be influenced directly by the English Romantic poets. His poetical works include (1) Kamatapur Dhvansa Kavya (1912), (2) Tirotar Atmadan Kavya (1913), (3) Yuddha-Kshetra: Ahom Ramani Kavya (1915), (4) Abhas Kavya (1914), (5) Birahini Bilap Kavya (1913), (6) Desdimona Kavya (1917), (7) Angila Kavya (1917), (8) Dhopakali (1902), (9) Malach (1918) and (10) Chakulo (1922) along with two unpublished works Talsara Phular Ajali and Asom Kusum. Among these the first three are literary epics based on three heroic events of Assam history. The choice of subject matter in his epics points to his love of his own country along with a deep national consciousness. Like Bholanath Das's Sita-haran Kavya and Ramakanta Choudhury's Abhimanyu-badh Kavya, Barbarua's literary epics are also modelled on Michael Madhusudan Dutt's epics Meghnad Badh, Brajangana and Birangana which have also influenced his poetic inspiration and style. After Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Birangana, Barbarua's Abhas Kavya is a collection of the poetic pictures of twenty one great women in the form of lyrics. Ovid's Heroides was the source of Madhusudan Dutt's Birangana. Despite the exuberance and enthusiasm on the poet's part in depicting the characters, the treatment of the same cannot be said to have achieved Romantic perfection in the sense that they lack the idea of
Romantic revolt: and exertion of individual power. While Madhusudan Dutt's characters have proved radically Romantic, in Barbarua's poems only glimpses of Romantic ideals can be felt with the characters ultimately being merged in religious tradition.33

_Birahini Bilap Kavya_ may be called a collection of Odes after Madhusudan Dutt's _Brajangana_. In this poem also the Romantic's struggle to rise above the destined lot is absent giving way to religious passivity. But the Romantic in the poet is at work in describing the yearning of the human heart and the reaction of the human mind in the changes of nature. The poet has also, like the English Romantics, made use of different agents of nature like the sun, the stars, the bird, the cloud and the river to express intense emotion. The poem is rich in Romantic introspection.

Hiteswar Barbarua's two other longer narrative poems _Desdemona kavya_ and _Angila kavya_ are based on Shakespeare's _Othello_ and Oliver Goldsmith's _Vicar of Wakefield_ respectively.

_Dhopakali_ (The Bud) is a collection of fifty one sonnets and fourteen lyrics of which the sonnets were later annexed to _Malach_ (The Garden), another sonnet collection.

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Influence of almost all the prominent English Romantic poets can be traced in his poems. His lines from 'Joa, Mai Najao Taloi' (Go, I shall not go there) —

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Tat matho nite kanda,} \\
&\text{Nitou hriday phata,} \\
&\text{Hahir namere tat:} \\
&\text{Lekh matho nai.}
\end{align*}
\]

(There is only eternal wailing and the breaking of the hearts with no trace of laughter).

echo lines from Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale':

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;} \\
&\text{Where but to think is to be full of sorrow.}
\end{align*}
\]

and

Also, a line from 'Golapat Kait:' (Thorn on the Rose) —

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Kaitat: phuti phuti halo jwalakala}
\end{align*}
\]

(I am suffering torments falling on the thorns)

makes one recall Shelley's lines from 'Ode to the West Wind':

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{I fall upon the thorns of life!} \\
&\text{I bleed!}
\end{align*}
\]

'Janambhumir Cheneh' (Love of the Motherland) is a translation of Walter Scott's 'Patriotism'. 'Eti Bacharekiya Lorar Mrityut:' (On the Death of a One Year Child) makes one
immediately conscious of Charles Lamb's poem 'On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born'. Barbarua added five elegiac poems to his Birahini Bilap Kavya in which personal sorrow has been transformed into spiritual speculation as in Tennyson's In Memoriam.

To Hiteswar Barbarua goes the credit of the first sonnet sequence in Assamese — Malach, followed by Chakulo (Tears), another of its kind. Due to his intensive study of Shakespeare, Shakespearean influence can be traced on him both in his literary epics and sonnets. Thus his sonnets are modelled after Shakespearean sonnets.

In his choice of subject matter, Hiteswar Barbarua was like Wordsworth, treating with same seriousness all possible things from the "meanest flower" to the abstract and sublime. This is evident in the poems of Malach. Reminiscence of childhood in poems like 'Mahabhram' (The Great Illusion) is a common characteristic of English Romantic poetry. The poems of Malach also reveal the humanist in the poet. Like the English Romantic poets, Barbarua also has given the poet the status of a seer in 'Kavi' (The Poet):

Sakaloke dekha tumi, sakalote phuri
Aka chabi sakalore, —

34. Ibid., p. 165.
The poem No. 23 in Chakulo conveys a thought similar to that of Browning in 'The Last Ride Together' in its belief that everything in human life does not come to an end with death.

Admitting the role of destiny in human life and also the eternal human tragedy, Hiteswar Barbarua, like a true Romantic poet, has, in his literary epics, granted man a scope for heroic action, love of his own land, sacrifice, hopes and desires. As in English Romantic poetry, Barbarua's characters are great even in their failure. The reading of his literary epics does not generate any sense of emptiness or indifference; it rather fills the mind with a possibility of the brighter aspects, the faith and hope characteristic of the Romantic Movement. Love of retrospection, another Romantic feature, is so strong in him that history for him is not a dead but a living past. He is a true Romantic in treating the female characters with reverence, love and whole-hearted sympathy. He is also a true Romantic in the diversity of themes and manner of expression. In spite of these positive traits, his language suffers from the lack of fluidity and delicacy characteristic of the language of English Romantic poetry. It also smacks of medieval diction. Thus his poems, though intense in feelings, want in spontaneity.

35. Ibid., p. 25.