Each period with a definite intellectual programme is beset with problems that defy solution. All periods with such programmes are alike in this. All of them have their own aims and objectives and their own approaches. Approaches in the same period may again differ from person to person and from phase to phase. So it was in the Age of Romanticism in Assamese literature. With Lakshminath Bezbaroa, Chandrakumar Agarwala and Hemchandra Goswami a definite programme for Assamese literature was set: and they tried to execute it in their own ideal. The next phase experienced the appearance of a galaxy of poets with different approaches. The conscious adaptation of Romantic ideal in the former phase had become ubiquitous and began to be felt as familiar as anything indigenous. Moreover, the justification for a borrowed trend being ascertained long before, they naturally felt quite at home with it; and in their synthesis of the old and new, of the alien and the native, the difference of elements became more and more indiscernible.

By the time of the emergence of the poets of this phase of Assamese Romantic poetry situation had changed both in the political and social fields. The wave of the Indian Renaissance did not touch the Calcutta educated section alone; it reached the recesses of the privacy of homes in
Assam. As a result of this, Assamese poetry now witnessed unique gifts of two women poets, Dharmeswari Devi Baruani and Nalinibala Devi. No particular literary circle or college textbook was needed to stimulate the creative urge of the literary minds any more; and this period, which may be called the heyday of Romanticism in Assamese poetry, experienced the exuberance of the creative impulses of a group of poets not bound to any declared literary commitment in the same way that their predecessors were. Popularity of education spread far and wide now; but this period produced three distinguished poets who did not have much formal education. They are Raghunath Choudhary, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and Nalinibala Devi. Another major Romantic poet of this period, Jatindranath Dowerah, however, had his college education in Calcutta and produced much of his best poetry there.

Raghunath Choudhary (1879-1968):

If nostalgia is only a characteristic of Romantic poetry, it is the essence of Raghunath Choudhary. The past, far and near, with all its varied colours of hope and despair, faith and doubt, has been treated in his poetry as no less than a living entity. The natural phenomena with their delicate response to the seasonal changes, the objects of nature, living and non-living, all inspire in him a yearning for the far away. He is the "priest poet of nature" in Assamese through whose whole being pulsates the love of
the beauty of nature in its different forms and phases. In his view about and love of nature, Choudhary is the Wordsworth of Assam, and in his equally deep absorption in nature, he is the Keats of Assam. Like Shelley's 'Adonais', Choudhury "is made one with Nature". No Assamese poet is as much in love with the sylvan world as Choudhary.

Like in the poetry of the English Romantic poets, in the poetry of almost all the Assamese Romantic poets nature has found its place with difference of importance according to each poet's mood; but only Raghunath Choudhary's poems can convey the sense of Wordsworth's lines:

... Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; it is her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy.

'Tintern Abbey'

It is difficult to single out Raghunath Choudhary's nature poems, because whatever the theme may be, Nature always plays her role in each poem. Yet, seeing the prominence of birds and flowers, Choudhary's nature poems may be shown in three categories — the bird poems, the flower poems and other descriptive and contemplative poems on nature.

According to Birinchi Kumar Barua, Raghunath Choudhary's nature poems "fall into two categories — those that give objective descriptions of Nature and her objects,
and those in which Nature is an ornamental filigree for the human fabric. In the former Nature luxuriates in her abundance and ecstasy, while in the latter she generates enthusiasm in man. In spite of his similarity with Wordsworth in many respects in his view of nature, Choudhary seems to regard nature more as a mind-generating spirit than as the essence of his "whole moral being."

One of the bright examples of the latter category of the above two, and a poem outside the circle of bird poems and flower poems, is 'Bohagir Biya' (Marriage of Bohagi or April). Nature, in this poem, is not only a living force, but is ascribed with all human qualities. Nature is not the inert beauty that adorns the trees and meadows. The poet has conceived its spring-time beauty as of a living young maiden the preparation of whose marriage has made the whole atmosphere jubilant. This poem also bears evidence that Choudhary shared Wordsworth's faith in the unity and reciprocation among the objects of nature and also between nature and man. The sense of Wordsworth's 'Written in Early Spring' is conspicuous throughout 'Bohagir Biya' "A thousand blended notes" tuned by the birds and insects, overwhelmed with joy, provides the music in the happy occasion of the marriage. Every stir in nature seems "a thrill of pleasure". The prospect of the union of this bride with her bridegroom Spring, has filled the universe with resplendent beauty.

creating a happy consciousness in all animate and inanimate objects:

Jara jagat: jiva jagat:
Pao sakalote dekha,
Mahaviswa juri biringiche jen
Anandar purna rekha.

'Bohagir Biya'

(In the whole universe, including both the animate and the inanimate worlds, a feeling of perfect joy has prevailed).

In the poem, the poet's imagination has achieved the romantic height that can equal the English Romantic poets.

Lines from this poem —

Malay samir gandha banikar
Gat: tat naikiya,
Phular sughran bokochat loi
Haichehi bilaniya.

'Bohagir Biya'

(The breeze, like an officious trader in perfume, is distributing the fragrance of flower that he carries with him).

remind us of and equal in imaginative power, Shelley's lines:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves.

'To a Skylark'
Some of Raghunath Choudhary's other poems of this category are 'Awahan' (Invocation), 'Madhuri' (Grace) 'Upama' (Comparison), 'Barsha' (The Rainy Season), and 'Bashisthashram' (The Hermitage of the Sage Bashistha). 'Madhuri', with its use of alliteration rare in modern poetry and also its sanskritized diction, is nearer to Classical poetry. Its wealth of imagination and clarity of description have marked it as Romantic. 'Girimallika' (A flower) is another poem with Classical element.

Like love and description of nature, exercise of excessive imagination was not a rare thing in ancient Indian literature. With them Classical literature was full to the brim as is evident from the works of Kalidas. The distinction, as has already been noted, is in treatment caused by the difference of interpretation and evaluation of the moral values prevalent in the respective periods. Though, in many places, Choudhary's imagination is equal to the most imaginative of English poets, yet in some poems he shows limitations. Occasionally he even falls back upon Classical restraints. He ascribes, more than often, heavenly qualities to the objects of his fascination so that they appear more heavenly than earthly objects. Thus the flower Girimallika, because it is beautiful enough to excite an upsurge of emotion even in the trees and grasses,
... Ji hahit bane bane,  
Harit kshetrat taru trin latikaro  
Bhangil chamak.  

'Girimallika'

(The smile that has awakened the trees and grasses and creepers of the green woodland)  
must have some celestial existence. Again, the humble water-lily (Bhetkali) which, like Wordsworth's Lucy, has "none to praise and very few to love" is no less than a goddess of some watery region.

Raghunath Choudhary is endowed with the power of minute observation and love of the insignificant like the English Romantic poets. Like them also, he is used to appreciating and utilising both sense and spirit with equal earnestness. Like his wise skylark, Wordsworth had accomplished within himself, a rare unification of the two faculties, thus granting a very vast range of potentiality to humanity characteristic of true romantic nature.

In its deeper significance, nature meant for him a world soul that includes humanity. It is a mistake to sever it from the language of the sense because it is one spirit embracing all things and appearing both within and outside man. The inner characteristics of nature can be known through ecstasy, just as its outer characteristics can be known through perception.²

Thus Choudhary's poems reveal the two parallel moods represented by sense and spirit respectively, debonair and melancholy. Besides the festal mood in 'Bohagir Biya', his joviality is expressed in poems like 'Hepah' (Yearning), the second wave of 'Keteki' (The Brain-fever Bird) and in 'Dahikatara' (The Magpie Robin), though this mood in this poem is ultimately merged in melancholy.

Like Wordsworth again, Raghunath Choudhary could transform each observation into a living fact for imagination. In the realm of nature, the commonplace and the otherwise unnoticed birds and flowers have attracted his sympathy (like 'Girimallika' 'Bhetphul' and 'Dahikatara') thus stimulating in him a yearning for beautiful creations. As Wordsworth's poems reveal the poet's kinship with the English countryside, so Choudhary's poems reveal his acute love and understanding of the countryside of Assam. However keen and delicate his sensibilities may be, Raghunath Choudhary's poems, like those of Wordsworth, inspire a feeling of homeliness.

Choudhary is a poet of joy who more often than not calls upon nature, birds and flowers to share human delight and contribute to it. But this must be remembered that his is not the old "return to nature" extolled by Rousseau, nor is it that fine vein of the purely descriptive expressed by Scott. Like Swinburne, a splendid pagan, Chaudhary has found in the "reading of the earth" a solace from
the battle of life.  

Many of his nature poems, including 'Golap' (The Rose), 'Bhetkali', 'Upama', 'Phalgu' (The Underground Stream), 'Girimallika' and 'Puwati Tara' (A Star), end either with an invocation to the essence of the respective objects to impart to him a portion of their blessedness so that he can soothe his sorrow-stricken heart or a yearning for the joy born of beauty in nature. That nature offered Choudhary a beautiful vision anywhere and in any situation is evident from the natural description of Karbala (1924).

Though Nature, with all her beautiful objects, is a never-ending source of joy for Raghunath Choudhary, he was attracted most by the mysterious bird-life. Birds were his primary inspiration as a poet. As such he has come to be called the bird-poet of Assam. In his bird-poems may be viewed the different phases of development of his poetic consciousness. 'Maramar Pakhi' (The Darling Bird), one of the three bird-poems included in his first poetic collection, Sadari (The Darling, 1910), is, in fact, a metaphor and seems to make up the first stage in this series of poems. Moreover, this poem seems to determine the main trend of many of his later poems. It is here for the first time that he envisages the intensity of his love of the inexplicable wonders of the birds' world. Wordsworth, Shelley

and Keats too were attracted by this mystery of the bird-life.

In 'Maramar Pakhi', the poet has captured the bird and provided it with choicest of fruits and purest of water in expectation of its sweet music. But the bird has ultimately betrayed him by slipping away into the far away woodland, leaving the poet in agony of separation. The broken hearted poet has lost all hope of happiness that he had experienced in the bird's company. This strain of melancholy seems to echo and reecho in many of his poems, though he is a zealous participant in nature's seasonal festivity. His detachment from the worldly pleasure and longing to be away with the birds in 'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini' (Sing for Once, My Darling Bird), 'Keteki' and 'Keteki Charai' (The Brain-fever Bird) may well be linked to that melancholy. 'Bishad' (Melancholy), 'Birahir Ukti' (Words of a Love-lorn Soul), 'Santap' (Sorrow), 'eti Manar Bhav' (A Thought) and 'Ban-Biharini' (The Rover of the Woodland), also seem to be a continuation of the same feeling.

The bird in 'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini' is the bird of the poet's imagination. This bird is not a common bird, but an angel that has come into this world to fulfil its mission of inspiring human hearts with love and repose. The music of the bird revives the reminiscences of childhood in the poet's heart; and he feels so much moved
that he even senses the thrill which the bird's music might have aroused in the minds of the maidens of Braja on the bank of the river Yamuna:

Parene manat pakhi Yamuna tātini,
Kadam gashat pari,
Panchamat sur dhari,
Karichila Brajangana prem unmadini;
'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini'

(Do you remember, Bird, how sweetly you sang sitting on the branch of the "Kadamba" tree and thrilled the maidens of Braja to the point of intoxication?)

Though not in the same note, Keats's Nightingale is also an agent of rejuvenating the past. The cuckoo made Wordsworth "look a thousand ways in bush, and tree, and sky" (To the Cuckoo). The song of the darling bird also almost intoxicates the poet and makes him run mad after it. The mystery of the bird's song still remains beyond the poet's comprehension:

Nubujo ganar teo bhav udagani
'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini'

(I still cannot comprehend what inspires your song).

Shelley was equally confused looking for the source of his Skylark's music:
What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
'To a Skylark'

The charm of the bird's song transcends its mortal nature and hence the poet shares Shelley's confusion as to the nature of the bird:

Bird thou never wert.
'To a Skylark'

Choudhary also asks:

Bihagi nohoa tumi kar premadhini?
'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini'

(You are not a bird, but someone's sweetheart).

It was not an easy task for the Assamese poet to obliterate all the barriers between heaven and earth like the Western Romantics. Thus the streak of Indian sensibility in the poet keeps him back from imagining the bird, an inhabitant of heaven, as his beloved. Yet the poet in Raghunath Choudhary has acquired that airy lightness with which Keats could "fade away into the forest dim" and "dissolve and quite forget" "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" allotted to man here in this world:

Tomar lagate uri jao Bihangini!
Saday boishe jot prem- Mandakini!
'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini'
If the confusion of the poet regarding the nature of the bird does not extend itself to its ornithological existence, it still continues to be equally great: in 'Keteki Charai' regarding the nature of its music. Shelley's curiosity (What objects are the fountains of thy happy strain?) is no less passionate in Raghunath Choudhary:

Premgit gabaloi kotno shikila?

'Keteki Charai'

(Where have you learnt: to sing your love-song?)

Like Shelley's Skylark, the bird Keteki is also a "scorer of the ground":

Kihetu nochoa pakhi manuhar mukh?

'Keteki Charai'

(Why do you not: look into human face?)

Pangs of unrequited love have taught the poet: not to seek love among men. In the bird, he has found a suitable companion and longs for a union with her. This bird is also no less than a heavenly messenger of love. Raghunath Choudhary is as earnest: in his persuasion of love as any English Romantic poet.

Raghunath Choudhary's 'Keteki' (1923) is a long bird poem. "In language which is simple and repetitive as in
the folk-song of the countryside, the Poet describes the reactions produced by the bird's music in his mind and in the life of Nature\textsuperscript{4}. "The central theme of the poem is the attainment of youth in animate and inanimate nature at the advent of the bird, the Keteki"\textsuperscript{5}. Like Wordsworth's Cuckoo, Keteki is also a "Wandering voice", "a mystery". The very opening lines bring about a note of wonder and mystery. The poet feels himself in a labyrinth of thought thinking wherefrom the bird has come, which way it is bound to fly and what is the reason behind its wandering all alone in far away places. Such wonder and mystification of the bird's world is common in English Romantic poetry. The Creator has sent the Keteki to this world as a messenger of His love. The Keteki has successfully fulfilled her mission by imparting unique joy through her incomparable music and the door to an unknown world has been opened to humanity.

In this poem is a synthesis of a Western way of looking at Nature with an Indian way of expression. It is undeniable that modern Indian poets have been deeply influenced by the mystical attitude to Nature of the English Romantic Poets.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5} Banikanta Kakati : Preface to Keteki by Raghunath Choudhary, translated by Tarini Kanta Bhattacharyya, Published by Shantaram Choudhary, Guwahati, 1961, p. iv.
\textsuperscript{6} Praphulladatta Goswami : op.cit., p. 170.
In the extraordinary power of imagination and also in similarity of thought, 'Keteki' may be treated as the Assamese counterpart of Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale'. In the first of the five sections (the poet has called them waves) of this long poem, the poet has shown the difference between the celestial happiness conveyed by the bird's song and this unhappy world full of cruelty and treachery.

The second wave is a beautiful description of the world of nature, changed and adorned by Spring. The world is, as if, rejuvenated; and a youthful vitality overcomes every loving heart. The hills and valleys, birds and insects, trees with leaves and flowers, the widespread water of the lake, all cannot help reacting to the magic charm of the Keteki's music. Even the very ancient banyan tree and the river Luit (The Brahmaputra) cannot resist a surge of youthful vigour in them:

Purani kalia

Bat jupieo

Shuni tor mou mat,

Malin dehato panire malachi

Salaiche jirna pat.

'Keteki'

(Even the very ancient banyan tree, hearing your sweet voice, has sponged its rugged trunk and changed into new leaves)
(Hearing that love song, the ancient river Luit feels itself swelled up with a youthful passion).

"This imagery of the lean Brahmaputra swelling up is definitely an original imagery. To connect the Brahmaputra of swirling summer waves with the rest of the cosmos through the song of the Keteki is not the work of an ordinary poet." Romantic imagination seems to reach its climax here.

In the third wave, the poet ascertains the fact that the voice of the Keteki possessed the same rejuvenating power even in the mythic past, and had affected union of many hearts by awakening acute passions in them:

Pranay purito Kanchukir dare
Gati tor anibar,
Tor ingitate nayak nayika
Labhe sukh abhisar.

'Keteki'

(Like that of a messenger, your presence is unrestrained in the realm of love as well, and it is your music that aspires the young lovers to be united in love).

7. Banikanta Kakati : op.cit., p. VII.
Like Keats, Raghunath Choudhary was a lover more of the remote past than of the near one rejoicing in the references to mythology. In this wave of 'Keheki' his imagination is as expansive and sympathetic as that of Keats. Listening to the sweet music of the Nightingale, the delighted Keats's imagination also retreated to the remote past from where the bird's music has been a solace to sad hearts:

   Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
   Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
       She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
   The same that oft times hath
   Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
       Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

   'Ode to a Nightingale'

In fact, the past had the same fascination for Raghunath Choudhary as it had for Keats.

The fourth wave is the poet's realization that the bird's music has a magic charm not only on the immediate environment and the memory-evoking past, but also on the stream of universal life:

   Mahaviswa juri  uthiche gitar
       Premar suadi tan.

   'Keheki'

(The whole universe is being reverberated with the symphony of love).
So was it with the song of Shelley's Skylark:

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud

Like a flower in the bloom in all its petals, the poet's doubts and suspicions have given way, wave after wave, into a fuller realization of the truth. He is able to penetrate into the illusory appearance of this world; and acquiring the faith of a sage, prepares himself to fly away with the bird to the world where eternal love prevails.

In spite of the "Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth", the disappearance of the nightingale had left Keats with a sense of desolation. So has Choudhary felt with the bird's disappearance in the fifth wave. With the passing of spring and coming of autumn, the bird left this place; and before the poet was fully aware, darkness veiled the beautiful bosom of nature.

There is striking resemblance between "Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Keteki' in other respects as well. Both Keats and Choudhary were as if induced to sleep with the music of their respective birds and both the poems conjure up atmospheres of dream. Both the poets are made aware of their earthly existence through the disappearance of their birds. 'Keteki', like 'Ode to a Nightingale' also completes "a full cycle returning finally to the bosom of Nature whence it first emanated." Assamese Romantic poetry has the

8. Birinchi Kumar Barua: op.cit., p. 120.
simplicity and spontaneity characteristic of English Romantic poetry; and they are the distinctive property of Raghunath Choudhary's poetry. Like Keats, "he relies directly and wholly on nature. He marries poesy to genuine simplicity."

The note of wonder and mystery present in 'Keteki' has been replaced by a deeper sense of realization of the nature and purpose of creation in 'Dahikatara'. 'Dahikatara' seems to be a complementary to 'Keteki'. The emptiness of nature that had been created by the migration of the Keteki at the end of the spring, has been filled by the trilling note of the Dahikatara. The beauty of the autumnal nature is no less attractive to Raghunath Choudhary than it was to Keats. Like Wordsworth's Lucy Choudhary's Dahikatara is also neglected by other poets. The same bird of 'Goahe Ebar Mor Priya Bihangini' seems to be incarnate in the form of the Dahikatara to infuse hope and faith and beauty into the world left forlorn by the Keteki whose voice is only "faithful to the spring" (To the Cuckoo: Wordsworth). The love of the bird pervades the poet's heart with a feeling of nostalgia:

Udishe manat: mor
Shaihabar chitrabor
'Dahikatara'

(The recollections of my childhood are appearing before my mind's eye).

The "Cry" of the cuckoo generated such a feeling in Wordsworth too:

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; the cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

'To the Cuckoo'

The poet in 'Dahikatara' feels his whole being immersed in a delicate and pure grace imparted by the bird's song. A peculiar detachment of the poet alongside his deep absorption in the bird's music can be felt in this poem too as in his many other poems. To gauge the exact mood of the poet in 'Dahikatara', B.K. Kakati has quoted Byron's lines:

He heard it, but he heeded not — his eyes
Were with his heart — and that was far away.

'Child Harold', Canto IV

In this poem, the poet's acute sense of sympathy has been stretched to other insignificant objects like "sonaru" flower, "Kahua" flower and the flowers of the mustard plants and the like. Glorification and observation of ordinary objects is inherent in English Romanticism.

Choudhary's 'Dahikatara' ends in a mood similar to that of Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale':

Fled is that music — do I wake or sleep?

This confusion is equally active in 'Dahikatara':

Dhire dhire mili gol gitar madhuri
Bimorat pari rol maya — swapnapuri.

(The sweetness of the music has faded into the distance leaving this illusory dreamland in confusion).

The Dahikatara is also, like Wordsworth's "Bird of heaven" a "resplendent wanderer".

Among other affinities with Wordsworth, like finding mystery and message in birds, Raghunath Choudhary has affinity with him in recollecting in tranquil moments what he had experienced earlier. He does not write in hot haste and is careful of his expression.¹¹ Like Wordsworth, Choudhary could store the

... gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,

and relish the experience that:

The picture of the mind revives again:
... not only with the sense

Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years.

'Tintern Abbey'

Collins also thought of "the pensive pleasures sweet". (To Evening).

Like most of the English Romantic poets, Raghunath Choudhary also cherished faith and hope in the goodness behind the purpose of creation. His detachment to the worldly pleasures only expresses his faith in the Indian tradition of renunciation. It, by no means, signifies any advocacy of inertia or pessimistic view of life. Like Keats, he was also a victim of extreme suffering. Life had inflicted upon him afflictions which need extraordinary fortitude to bear. Still he never felt his "genial spirits fail" like Coleridge did; nor did he entertain any doubt about the beauty of the spirit like Shelley:

Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?

'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'

A note of dejection can certainly be felt in his poems like 'Bhiksha' (Alms), 'Matridevi' (Mother), 'Bishad' 'Birahir Ukti', 'Santap' 'Maran' (Death), 'Harina Poali' (The fawn), 'Ban-Biharini', 'Antim Jyoti' (The Last Light), 'Phula Shajya' (The Bridal Bed) and the like. But then, the Indian tradition, based on spirituality, had taught the poet to
ascribe little value to worldly ties and material pleasures. The hope of an ultimate emancipation saved him from being engrossed in any real feeling of loss. Instead, a great lover of life, he has learnt to relish the joy of nature to the brim. 'Argha' (Offerings) is a poem of faith and hope. The poet is confident and hopeful of the benedictory purpose of life. His love of the bright side of life dispels any idea of darkness and night; and it is thus that excepting one or two poems like 'Harina Poali', no nocturnal setting or description is seen in his poems. If there is darkness, it is the darkness of the spirit which can be overcome by keeping in conformity with "Nature's holy plan" (Written in Early Spring' : Wordsworth).

Raghunath Choudhary has very few poems on love in the conventional sense. 'Sakhilai' (To My Friend) may be called a love lyric; but then, here also he ends up in the reminiscence of childhood rather than the exaltation of youthful emotion. He lived in the past; and, in fact, throughout his whole life, he was haunted by the eternal child in him. All the beauty of nature and the benevolence of the Creation only incite in him a longing for his childhood:

Birat: viswar charu chitra dekhi
Atit manat pare,
Chirakal jen umali phurim
Ajan shishur dare.

'Upama'
(Seeing the grandeur of this vast universe, I am reminded of my past: and feel a longing for playing around like a child for ever).

Patriotism is a feature present, more or less, in the creations of almost all the English Romantic poets. Raghunath Choudhary is also fully aware of the degenerate state of his motherland; but that does not make him sit idle in dejection. On the contrary, he has vowed to confront any difficulty in the way of the upliftment of his country. He was also caught in the whirlpool of the country's freedom struggle and had to suffer for his active participation in it. But his feeling of patriotism has found expression in his poetry only in a very subtle form. He lacks Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's verve in expressing patriotic feelings. Alluding to some of the images in 'Keteki' — like the bashful bride stopping midway in her loom — the shuttle held idle in her hand, and the village maiden forgetting herself while spinning, the yarn-ball getting stuck to the spinning wheel and the like, B.K. Kakati has shown the nature of Raghunath Choudhary's patriotism:

This is patriotism in literature. This is the small mirror that yet reflects wider things. The little pool of water contained in a hoof-hole may reflect the boundless sky. Through the pictures of Assamese country life, the poet throws some light on universal life. This is no mean originality. It seizes on appropriate local pictures to convey
universal feelings. 12

'Ulah Sangeet' (A Song of Joy), 'Jonakir Mrityu Upalakshye' (On the occasion of the Death of Jonaki) and 'Argha' are his poems based on national themes. Reminiscence of the past glory of Assam as well as of India has been expressed in these poems and also in 'Bashisthashram'.

Love of freedom is an unmistakable aspect of Romanticism. Raghunath Choudhary's love of freedom has been beautifully expressed in his poem 'Jon aru Jonaki' (The Moon and the Fire-fly) asserting the greatness of a free soul of the otherwise insignificant being. A free soul is great even in suffering while one, bereft of freedom, can have only a vile life:

Kshudra hoio chirakal swadhin jijan
Dukhatei thake pran dhari,
Bhabi choa seijan kiman mahat:
Paradhin jiwanat kari.

'Jon aru Jonaki'

(A life of freedom, even if very humble and subject to affliction, is far better than a life of slavery).

Like Nalinibala Devi and Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, Raghunath Choudhary's study of Western literature was very limited and derived chiefly from indirect sources. As of Nalinibala Devi, his study was chiefly in sanskrit.

literature. Yet he had imbibed the Romantic spirit to the full as his poems like 'Ulah Sangeet' and 'Argha' show. "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", this slogan of the French Revolution is echoed and reechoed in Shelley's poems. The same sentiment is evident in Choudhary's 'Argha' and 'Manav-devata' (The God in Man).

Wordsworth did not mourn his past joys. Serenity of his nature had taught him to welcome the "abundant recompense" nature had offered. Raghunath Choudhary had also learnt to solace himself by reminiscing his childhood experiences amongst nature. 'Chayachitra' (The Shadowy Picture) is such a poem which is also permeated with the melancholy of Wordsworth's 'Lucy'. Like Wordsworth again, the poet is overwhelmed with a feeling of wonder on seeing the superb skill of the Creator in creating even a tiny leaf:

Apurba kaushal shriiti dekhi Iswarar
Prem rase mugdha hai man.

'Gachar Pat' (A Leaf)

(The mind becomes full of devotion seeing the superb Creation of God).

To Wordsworth also, "the meanest flower" could bring "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears".

There is a current saying that every Indian is a philosopher. It can also be said, with little fear of
dispute, that every Indian poet is a mystic. Behind Raghunath Choudhary's absorption in the external beauty of nature, runs the feeling of a mystic. 'Noir Bukut' (On the Bosom of the River) is an excellent example of his spiritual longing. Yet with all these spiritual qualities and with all the affinities with Wordsworth, Choudhary's poetry could not offer any consistent philosophy as the poetry of the other did. Though Choudhary's belief in the immanence of God is beyond doubt, and though he more than often ascribes heavenly qualities to his objects, his poetry does not reveal the firm pantheistic faith of Wordsworth. For Wordsworth sense was the medium of attaining the soul. Thus there is a constant process of elevation in him. But Choudhary, unlike him, seems to pour out his soul into his sense. In his enjoyment of the beauty of nature, he is more like Keats than Wordsworth.

It may be questioned whether Raghunath Choudhary could elevate his love of nature to that state in which Wordsworth felt himself transformed into "a living soul" (Tintern Abbey) forgetting "the dreary intercourse of daily life" (Tintern Abbey); but nature was certainly, for him, "the guide, the guardian" (Tintern Abbey) of the heart.

Unlike Wordsworth, Raghunath Choudhary was not privileged to wander about the parts of the world adorned with the bounteous gift of nature; still like Wordsworth, he owed to nature, besides the feeling of remembered and
"unremembered pleasure" (Tintern Abbey),

...another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened...

'Tintern Abbey'

Nilamani Phukan (1880-1977):

Out of his ten published collections of poems, Nilamani Phukan had only two collections, Jyotikana (Sparks of Light, 1939) and Manasi (Intellectual Beauty, 1942) published before the second world war. He had taken to poetry rather late in life when the imaginative faculty tends to lose its vitality, and emotion is overpowered by experience. This fact accounts for the lack of "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in his poems, though they are rich in powerful experiences. A portion of his poems reveals the search of a mystic behind them; yet they lack in a deep yearning of the heart of a successful mystic. They seem to sacrifice intensity of passion for lofty ideas.

If poetry is to be regarded as application of ideas to life, undoubtedly Phukan's poetry is unique. But unfortunately, when they predominate in poetry, become an obsession, and in such cases the poetic flame is not steady but adventitious, though intensely incandescent at times. 13

Manasi comprises some of Nilamani Phukan's best poems including the widely read 'Sundar Tumi Kot;' (Where are You, O Beautiful) which is a beautiful specimen of the poet's mystical yearning.

Love of his own country is a significant characteristic of Nilamani Phukan's poetry. The poems of Jinjiri (The Shackles, 1951), besides revealing this trait in him, establishes him as an optimist with a powerful mind. A section of his poetry also reveals his heart-felt sympathy for the socially downtrodden as is shown by the poems of Gutimali (The Jasmine, 1951).

Despite lofty aspirations and genuine love of beauty, Nilamani Phukan's poems suffer from the lack of the "powerful concentration of Nalinibala Devi"\(^{14}\) or the masculine faith of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury. Still, the bulk of his poetry, with its occasional flares, is something one cannot ignore.

**Durgeswar Sarma (1882-1961):**

The contribution of Durgeswar Sarma to Assamese poetry should better be counted not on the volume of his poetical works but on the merit of a few poems of quality. Looking at the time of the development of his creative output.

personality, it is only natural that he should be influenced by the English Romantic poets. And so he was; and influence of the major English Romantic poets can be traced in his poetry.

Wordsworth's poetry had influenced Durgeswar Sarma deeply in the early part of his life and that is evident from the poems of Anjali (The Flower Offering, 1910), his first collection of poems published when he was only twenty five. Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems seem to mould the concept of the ideal lady-love for him. 'Sadari' (The Beloved) is a unique translation of the 'Lucy' poems which has acquired the status of an original because of the purely Assamese setting. 'Kavipriya' (The Beloved of the Poet), though not an exact translation, conjures up immediately a distinct picture of Lucy in conformity with the poem 'Three years She Grew in Sun and Shower'. 'Tumi Deva Parijat' (You are the Parijat Flower Belonging to the Gods) also conveys the idea of the 'Lucy' poems with similar suggestion of the poem with the first line 'She dwell among untrodden ways'. 'Girikumari' (The Maiden of the Mountains) and 'Lajuki' (The Coy One) also reverberate with the sense of the same poem. This only points to the depth of the influence that Wordsworth, and particularly his 'Lucy' poems had on Durgeswar Sarma. The first few lines of 'Amil' (The Difference) —
Ahlcho sakalo ami swargabas eri,
Bayasar lage lage ahicho akari,
Laraabasthat thake chaya swaragar
Seibabe saralata nejai manar.

(We all are retreating farther and farther from heaven as we are growing up in age. A child is blessed with simplicity because he can still feel the shadow of heaven on him).

seem to be the Assamese rendering of few lines of Wordsworth's widely read 'Ode on Immortality':

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of prison-house begin to close
Upon the grown boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;

Durgeswar Sarma's poems show Wordsworthian simplicity of style, but he also shares Keats's originality in coining words that prove effective in conveying intensity of emotion; like —

... Bidyutar dare
Kiba eti chiringe hiyat.

'Ashar Sapon' (A Dream of Hope)

(Something sparkles in my heart like an electric touch).

The enchanted mood and dreamy atmosphere of Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' seem to peep through 'Uraniya
Despite being very Wordsworthian in his approach, Durgeswar Sarma holds a different concept of nature. Though nature is the agent of all human actions, she has been denied the power of creation, the vitality, the potentiality to be the "essence of the whole moral being" as is evident in 'Pratidhvani' (The Echo). Yet, like Wordsworth, he felt the existence of the spirit of the universe in nature. External nature is not less influential in his poetry. Though a poet of "strong moral and religious feeling and elevated thoughts" 15

Many of his poems are sensuous and contain idyllic descriptions of sylvan youths and maids and of external nature. Picturesque in content and musical in phrase, symphonies of colour and sound weaving themselves into strange and rich melodies, Durgeswar Sarma's poetry reminds one of the English Lake poets whose influence is discernible in it. 16

"Nurtured in the Romantic spirit of the West", Sarma, like romantic poets in general, sees the image of the beloved everywhere,... and her absence in the true romantic vein gives to the landscape a feeling of strange loneliness". 17 As in Arnold, there is a sense of melancholy

16. Ibid., p. 118.
conveyed through many of his poems as 'Youvan' (Youth), 'Kiba Yen Nai Nai' (The Unknown Want) and 'Sheh Nisha' (The Late Night). The Romantic sensibility in Sarma seems to achieve its culmination in 'Kiba Yen Nai Nai'. In very few words, this poem expresses the grandeur of nature in which man can grasp momentarily the essence of the Infinite; but it gets lost in the next moment leaving him in despair. This "divine despair" and the resultant melancholy have their source in the Romantics' realization of the diversity and vastness of this Creation as against their own inability and limitedness.

Durgeswar Sarma's poems also radiate the charm of remoteness and the dim atmosphere of the world of imagination as is seen in 'Bhitar' (The Interior) and 'Tara' (The Star). He is as sincere in his glorification of imagination as the English Romantic poets. In 'Kavita' (Poetry), he has expressed his belief in the universal appeal of poetry and also the enjoyment that can be derived from the exertion of the imaginative vision and insight. Such beliefs were cherished by most of the English Romantic poets.

Though not as conspicuous as that of Wordsworth, Browning's influence also can be traced in Durgeswar Sarma's poetry. The last stanza of 'Sambal' (The Belongings) —

Mari lei milo jadi ananta gyanat,
Nai jot ekoke natun shikibar,—
(If we are merged in eternal wisdom in our death, if nothing is left to learn, why should we strive in this world, why should we have any scruple?)

echoes Browning's lines in 'The Last Ride Together':

This fool: once planted on the goal,  
This glory garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such?

But: Browning's faith has been replaced by doubt in Sarma's poem. The painter in one of Browning's poems has expressed:

We are made so that we love  
First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
'Fra lippo lippi'

and the burden of these lines makes up the theme of 'Geet aru Chabi' (A Song and a Picture), another successful poem of Sarma. Mahendra Bora, in his critical estimate annexed to the complete works of Durgeswar Sarma, has pointed out the deftness with which he has expressed, in very few words, the idea of Browning's lavish outburst. 18 There are very few Assamese poems indicative of such compressed thought as this.

and Sarma seems to be more than equal even to
Chandrakumar Agarwala in this skill. But whereas
Chandrakumar Agarwala achieved perfection in conveying the
world of the supernatural as in 'Jalkunwari' and
'Bankunwari', Sarma's 'Jalkunwari' and 'Buhra Dangaria' (The
Supernatural Being), the poems with the transcendental
themes, lack the intensity of imagination essential for
creating the airy atmosphere against which to project the
supernatural world.

'Prakritiloi' (To Nature) is a translation of
Shelley's 'Love's philosophy'. The poem 'Maran' (Death)
reveals the poet's belief in the theory of conservation of
matter as 'The Cloud' had revealed Shelley's —"I change
but I cannot die".19

Going through 'Bibhol' (The Self-absorbed), one
cannot help remembering Byron's lines:

He heard it, but he heeded not — his eyes
Were with his heart— and that was far away.

'Child Harold', Canto IV.

Like most of the Assamese poets, the philosophy of
Durgeswar Sarma's spiritual poems is based on the Upanishads.
But in his spiritual quest, he does not seem to have
attained the subtlety of a mystic. His poems rather seem

19. Maheswar Neog : 'Kavita Kunja' in Adhunik Asamiya Sahitya,
akin to metaphysical poetry the conceit of which has been replaced by self-negation peculiar to Indian tradition. 'Prayan' (Death) echoes Henry Vaughan's 'The Retreat'.

Of Durgeswar Sarma's four dramatical works, two are translations from Shakespeare. Padmavati is the Assamese rendering of Cymbeline and Chandravali is a translation of As You Like It. Whether translation or borrowing or influence— all bear evidence of the depth of his study of English literature. Mahendra Bora has referred to the poet's extraordinary memory in the preface to his complete works. Keeping these facts in mind, the influence of English Romantic poets on him cannot be said to be casual. His poetical works comprise Anjali, Nivedan (Oblation, 1920) and Upasana (Prayer).

Ambikagiri Roychoudhury (1885-1967):

In the nineteenth century, when the Assamese mind began to imbibe the Renaissance spirit and got aroused by an earnest longing for freedom in all spheres, the thinking minds were found adopting two ways in the main. A group of them, with a new outlook on life and the world, emphasized on cultural freedom and began to strive accordingly. But medieval ways, with their superstitious beliefs, were still exerting too deep an influence on people's consciousness to make it ready to follow such a way. Hence an urgent

necessity for reform was felt. Simultaneously with this urge of reformation, an equally strong reverence for the philosophy and tradition of ancient India, revived and re-established by Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati and others, began to pervade the people's minds. Thus a love for this world, respect for humanity and other ideals borrowed from Western Romanticism began to go hand in hand with the love of Indian spiritual tradition. Another formidable difficulty in realizing the spirit of freedom was faced in the form of foreign exploitation. The other group of the Asamese people began to seek freedom in the political sphere believing that political freedom was the only way to enable ourselves to derive benefit from all that was good in our past.

The Romantic endeavour of the Jonaki group mostly confined itself to the cultural sphere. Indeed, the declared motto of Jonaki was to keep away from politics. The first strong voice of protest against the foreign exploitation as well as an urge for the affirmation of the Assamese identity was that of Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya. A pre-Jonaki age writer, Bhattacharya had a very extensive literary career. His mantle fell on Ambikagiri Roychoudhury in the later period. But in Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, we find the mystic trait or the spiritual trait too. He is the only Assamese mystic who could, with a strength equal to his spiritual faith and an equally strong patriotism, sing the song of fire.
The poetical works of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury reveal the poet's split personality. The whole gamut of his poetry can be divided into two clear-cut categories: (a) mystic or spiritual and (b) patriotic, nationalistic and regionalistic.

It is noteworthy that Ambikagiri Roychoudhury was a mystic in the prime of his youth and a vigorous man of struggle while advanced in age. His poetical works comprise the long poems entitled Tumi (Thou, 1915), Sthapan Kar, Sthapan Kar (Establish, O Establish, 1908), Ei Mor Anupam Sonar Asom (This is My Incomparable Golden Assam) and the collections of shorter poems entitled Bina (The Lyre, 1916), Anubhuti (Feelings, 1954), Bedanar Ulka (The Meteor of Sorrow, 1964), Deshei Bhagavan (My Country is My God, 1965), Bando ki Chandere (With What Metrical Verse Would I Adore You), and Gitar Sharal (The Vase of Songs).

Tumi is a unique masterpiece in Assamese and has immortalized Ambikagiri Roychoudhury as a mystic poet. This poem has a background similar to Dante's Divine Comedy. Like Dante, Roychoudhury, in his youth, was also inspired by the love of a teenager who was beyond his reach. This frustration led him to hanker after spiritual union and his love got transcended into the love of God. Mysticism is a phase of thought, or rather perhaps of feeling, which from its very nature is hardly susceptible of exact definition. It appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the
divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest. 21

At the earliest step of his quest in *Tumi*, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury seems to be at a loss in his effort to know the nature of his own love as well as the nature of God, the object of his love. Hence he has started with an appreciation of his lover's physical beauty with all its sensual significance. The beauty of a young girl is also a projection of the divine beauty; and through the beauty of his beloved, he is hopeful of attaining his Supreme Love. This conception of the spiritual beauty being projected in terrestrial objects is a common trait of English Romanticism, the culmination of which was achieved in Blake and Wordsworth. For Blake, the symmetry behind the creation even of a ferocious tiger, suggested the grandeur of God. The period of this elevation from mortal love to immortal love is a period of extreme restlessness, of unsatiatable eagerness and of heart-breaking yearning. Like most of the English Romantic poets, Roychoudhury also suffers from a "divine discontent" which has inspired him to explore the mystery of Creation and the nature of God.

Through *Tumi*, the poet has tried to establish the nature of God and has also established God's immanence. In the process of the poet's search of the universe for beauty and God, his heart has been filled with a sense of universal love. This universe is a field of the divine sport; and this realization fills the poet's mind with peace. In a dark solitary night, the poet's heart is filled with agony caused by the separation from God; and this pain pervades both his senses and spirit. The poet is eager to know the nature of this love with which his heart has been surged. Ultimately he comes to know the transcendental nature of love and feels pacified. This love cannot be confined in one individual self, for it has coloured the whole universe:

Asimar birat anchal
Ranjita premat

*Tumi*

(The vast region of the Infinite is coloured with love)

In this Roychoudhury shares Shelley's belief that —

For love, and beauty, and delight
There is no death nor change, their might
Exceeds our organs...

'The Sensitive Plant'

Then the poet in *Tumi* begins to feel the presence of the Eternal about him; a most welcome sorrow caused by the longing for and separation from God overcomes him. By
and by, he begins to feel the throb of existence in the non-existent. Like all mystics, the poet has come to realize that his quest for God in the external world is futile. The true abode of God is the poet's own heart. The individual can understand the nature of beauty only if he can reflect and unite in his own heart, the beauty that is diffused in the external world and the beauty that radiates the interior of the human mind. This conception of the great potentiality and excellence of the human mind is a prominent feature of English Romanticism as well.

_Tumi_ also reveals Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's belief that nothing in this Creation is meaningless. Even the tiniest object of nature as well as human life fulfils a predetermined purpose by striving to achieve God. Even the smallest particle has some meaning and purpose behind its creation and it is conscious of this. Blake's world was projected in a grain of sand. Roychoudhury also sees the exact image of the vast universe in a drop of dew.

_Viswar hubahu chabi phule niyarat._

_Tumi_ (The exact picture of the universe is reflected in a dew-drop).

Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's mind is filled with wonder, thinking about the mystery of the purpose behind the creation of this vast, endless and great blue void.
Greatness of God can be realized only through a realization of the greatness of His creation. It has already been said in the first chapter that religion for the English Romanticists was an intellectual necessity. The feeling of wonder, another Romantic feature, aroused by the grandeur of the Creation, led them to the deduction of the presence of a creator whom they conceived as God. Roychoudhury's basis of spiritual yearning is no less intellectual than theirs. He is also as much conscious of the greatness of his individual self as the English Romanticists were. His existence in and love of the world declares the glory of the great Creator:

Mai nahaleno koa
Kidare prakashi pare
Gourav tomar

Tumi

(How can your glory be revealed without me!)

There is an interrelation between the individual self and the universal self. To know the self, resignation of the same is necessary. But Roychoudhury's concept of resignation does not accompany the Vedantic idea of renunciation that abnegates the world as illusory. For him, resignation is rather total absorption like that of the English Romanticists. It is also the soul's acquisition of the power of containing the limitless infinite within the limits of the finite.
The poet in Ambikagiri Roychoudhury is immersed in the mystery of God. He wonders how a burning desert is transformed into a fertile land with the wink of God, and how He Himself operates as a pair of innocent birds flying across the sky. But at the same time, the cruel hunter's poisonous arrow burns them to death. Here Roychoudhury's thought resembles that of Blake who also wondered at the mystery of the creation of God who created both the ferocious tiger and the innocent lamb ('The Tiger'). But all these contemplations are only phases of elevation towards perfection; and perfection can be achieved only through sincere performance of duty. Among all the diversities of nature, the different forces are actively aiming at the achievement of their purpose. The sun is also performing his duty by diffusing heat and light. Amid all diversity there is a bond of duty that "preserves the stars from wrong" and sets free humanity" from vain temptations" (Wordsworth- 'Ode to Duty'). An optimist and a believer in a world-order like Wordsworth, Roychoudhury believes that everything in this universe is trying to perform its duty to achieve a greater purpose. Tumi is a unique example of the gradual elevation of the poet's thought from a sensual to a spiritual level with the ultimate realization of the fulfilment of his desire. This poem also reveals the poet's great love of beauty characteristic of all true Romantics.
The mystic quest of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, "disturbed, delighted, raised, refined" (William Collins: 'The Passions') through Tumi and Bina has come to rest in the poems of Anubhuti through the realization of the way to God. The restless love of the young poet, being purged and harnessed through sympathy and intensity of feeling has been elevated to the love of God in the form of eternal beauty. His approach to and experience of the divine love have come through different stages of feelings through which two human lovers usually come. Apparently Tumi and Bina are expressions of human passions. Glorification of the human heart with its passion for all the benedictory and beautiful forms abounds in English Romantic poetry. Tumi, Bina and a part of Anubhuti reveal passion with the variety of its mood like feeling of curiosity, absorption in the beloved's beauty, pang of separation, yearning for union, anxiety, perplexity, challenge, wonder, self-resignation, a sense of greatness of the beloved and love as it is. All these human passions have served as the medium of attaining divine love.

As a Romantic poet, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury is aware of and enchanted with the diversity of creation and of life. In no other Assamese poet love of diversity is so prominent as in him. Diversity of beauty in eternal life—

Anantar pranbhara bichitra madhuri

Tumi
(The variegated beauty filling the life of eternity)
fills his heart with wonder. In such a state, he often obliterates the distinction between the external world and the world he conceives. God, the creator, Himself sports in and enjoys the diversity inherent in the beauty of nature.

The seeming contradiction of reason and imagination or reason and emotional feeling had dissolved in poets like Wordsworth. With Roychoudhury also, reason and emotion seem to go hand in hand. Even in his extremely passionate poems, he has maintained a peculiar rationality. Being charmed by the extreme beauty of this universe, he has inferred that this beauty must have a source which is nothing less than God. This beauty, even after being attributed to his lover of flesh and blood, continues to be impalpable. For a perfect conception of his lover's beauty, he has approached different manifestations of nature, as if he has caught a glimpse of the forms of beauty in the natural phenomena. Thus his craving for physical beauty as well as satisfaction of carnal desire is far from Epicurianism. Only, instead of adopting the vague spiritual way to reach God, he has adopted the way of a rationalist. The mystery of this vast universe reveals the mysterious nature of God. The only way to explore this mystery is love on which the English Romantics also based their realizations.

After 1920, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's active participation in nationalist politics led to a complete
change in the mode of his poetry. His poems, from this time onwards, became a clarion call to the people of his country to rise and be free. He is no less enthusiastic than Shelley in the advocacy of "truth, liberty and love" (Prometheus Unbound). On the one hand, he is a strong believer in the glorious Indian tradition and Indian nationality; and on the other, he is the uncompromising supporter of a separate tradition and identity of the Assamese. Most of his poems after 1920 are patriotic. His poems, in this phase, have undergone change in style, expression, use of words, and also in rhythm and subject. "Ambikagiri as an Assamese regionalist was another dismal prophet like his predecessor Kamalakanta, passing his jeremiads against his fellow men".

That Ambikagiri Roychoudhury was unyielding whenever the question of any right arose or probability of any kind of welfare of Assam was felt, does not signify any disintegrating intention in him. His emphasis on the resurgence of Assamese nationalism and culture evokes the idea of the Irish Revival of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact, he emphasized the prosperity and preservation of different cultures and traditions of each state of India. He pleaded that there should be no conflict among the regional nationalities with the greater Indian nationality. Regionalism had experienced a peculiar blending of immanence and transcendence in him. The humanist:

in him could not rest; satisfied with fighting for a regional self but had extended his aspirations to as vast a range as the universe. Like Thomas Moore's *Utopia* and Plato's *Republic*, Roychoudhury had also dreamed of a universal state based on humanism and spiritualism. His poems like 'Manavayatan' (Humanity at Large) and 'Nikar Natun Shrishti Gajak' (Let a World of All Purity Sprout Anew) reveal such ideas. Though a dreamer about the future progress and possibility of man and the world indolence was totally exiled from the purview of his thought. Both in spiritualism and patriotism, his view was progressive and pragmatic. Such non-conflicting existence of conflicting modes in one personality is rare even in English Romantic poetry.

Roychoudhury advocated a life sacrificed for the welfare of its society, its nation, and its country. Leading himself an active life all through, he pleaded for a life full of struggle. In poems like 'Jiwanar Uddeshya' (The Purpose of Life), 'Jiwanar Rup' (The Mode of Life), and 'E Je Agnibinar Tan' (This is the Strain of the Fiery Lyre), the poet has expressed his idea of the ideal and the reality of life. From about the time of these poems (the last of the above mentioned three poems was composed in 1917), he began to feel that his motherland was a more worthy object of devotion and also began to feel God's presence in it, thus

effecting his change from spiritualism to patriotism.

Landing on hard reality from the vagueness of the spiritual world, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's poems acquired a vigorous and youthful vitality along with a strength and spontaneity. Directly or indirectly, patriotism is the main theme of his poems composed after Tumi, Bina and Anubhuti. In 'Birjya Heruali Kot' (Where Have You Lost Your Vigour), included in Anubhuti, he has tried to raise the youths of his country from a shameful degradation by reminding them of their past glory. A Romantic in his love of the past, Roychoudhury cherished a realist's view about its revival. Though a great lover of tradition, he had a deep faith in human progress and evolution. In the revival of the Assamese, he anticipated a parallel awakening of the universal humanity. He also realized that the great ideal of fraternity cannot be achieved without the self establishment of different nations.24

Whether a mystic or a patriot, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury is a humanist first. Despite all his spiritual yearnings, man was his prime occupation. Though not really antagonistic or averse, the English Romantic poets were indifferent to science and its progress. Unlike them, Roychoudhury, a progressive self, welcomed every step of the advancement of science. But he also acted like a poet-

prophet, whose idea was conceived by the English Romantic poets:

Tehe dharar manav-jiwan
Birat bishal hoi
Shrishti byapi manav jati
Haba chirasthayi.

'Manavayatan'

(Only then human life will undergo expansion and experience permanence throughout the Creation).

Another Romantic feature in Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's poetry is his love and glorification of the individual. The so-called sentimental Romantic poets set the example of the utmost exercise of the mental faculties of each individual. Roychoudhury ascribed as much potentiality to the individual as the English Romantics did. Even in the most exalting moments of his spiritual realizations in his mystic poems, the individual in him did not lose his particular identity:

Mor bhitaredi dekho
Phuti uthe taju nam
Brahmanda bidari.

Tumi

(Your name has its gestation in me and then, sprouting over the universe, blooms like a flower).
Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's poetic curiosity in the earlier part of his life reminds us of Shelley's words in *Alastor*:

> I have watched  
> Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,  
> And my heart ever gazes on the depth  
> Of thy deep mysteries.

This curiosity, "exulting, trembling, raging, fainting" (Collins—'The Passions'), has at last calmed itself and transformed into vigour and faith; because he has, in his own way, been able to see into this mystery. Hiren Gohain has pointed out to his 'Poar Abhas' (A Glimpse of Attainment) as a beautiful example of the excellence of his imaginative power and density of thought.25 'Tandrabhanga' (The Awakening from a Drowsiness) is another such poem.

Intensity of feeling and clarity of expression are the two distinctive marks of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury's poems. His poems do not demand any symbolical interpretation and thus are appealing to all readers. Like Nalinibala Devi, he was also not directly influenced by the English Romantic poets. As such, the presence of Romantic qualities in his poetry must be ascribed to his intuitive consciousness of the spirit of the time.

Sinhadatta Deva Adhikari (1889-1925):

A contemporary of Jatindranath Dowerah and Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, Sinhadatta Deva Adhikari had also made some contribution to Assamese literature. He has three collections of poems, Kavita-Lahari (Waves of Poems, 1918), Renu (Pollens, 1922) and Manimala (Garland of Beads, 1922) and a collection of songs Giti-Malika (Garland of Songs, 1919) to his credit. His poems reveal direct influence of English Romantic poets. Like many of the Assamese poets of the period, he was enchanted by Shelley's 'Love's Philosophy'; and his 'Milan' (Union) is a successful translation of the same. 'Shesh Samayat' (At the Last Moment) is reminiscent of Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar':

Chapahi ochar hera dhire dhire, ati dhire dhire,
Kono shabadei jen napashe kanat ahi tar;

'Shesh Samayat'

(Approach him softly, so that he may not feel disturbed by any sound).

Tennyson said:

And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

'Crossing the Bar'

The Romantic poets' love of nature is present in his poems also, though nature has not been given any discr-
minating treatment. 'Sandhiya' (The Evening), 'Tumi' (Thou), 'Priyatamaloi' (To the Beloved), 'Biday Kalat' (At the Time of Parting) and 'Jiwan-Yatra' (The Journey of Life) are a few of his beautiful poems the last of which bear evidence of the poet's optimistic attitude to life. To him goes the credit of composing the second successful ballad in Assamese, 'Thunuki', the first being Lakshminath Bezbaroa's 'Dhanbar aru Ratani'. 'Malati' and 'Basanti' are two other ballads of Sinhadatta Deva Adhikari. His ballads show that he had a concrete acquaintance with the life of common people and their problems and bore a sympathy for them.

Shailadhar Rajkhowa (1890-1968):

_Nizara_ (The Brook, 1935), the only collection of poems comprises the total volume of the poetical works of Shailadhar Rajkhowa. A poet of considerable potentiality, he fulfilled his promises only to a limited extent. Being a government servant in civil service, he could afford little time to concentrate on literature. Yet: poetry was his second self; and he had sanctified his scanty moments with fruitful exertions.

Variety of theme is a special feature of Shailadhar Rajkhowa's poems. Yet the most predominant of the Romantic characteristics in his poetry are love and retrospection. Like Raghunath Choudhary, he was also haunted by nostalgia. His poems reveal him as a man looking back to
the past of his own country and glorifying the same with the nostalgic zeal of a patriot. He had little to do with the active politics of his time and his love of his own country emerged in the form of cultural nationalism. Of 'Barpeta', 'Bishandoi Ali' (The Bishandoi Road) and 'Pashan Pratima' (The Stone Image), the three mostly read patriotic poems, the last two are reminiscences of a glorious past of Assam. In fact, these three poems form the cream of his poetical works while minor poems abound. No poem in Nizara conveys a sense of the poet's conciousness of contemporary crises of any kind in his own land or anywhere else. He shares Keats's mental seclusion wherever the present is concerned. His avid interest is engaged in places of historical interest; and in his poems, they are transformed into enchanted regions of myth. In his love of myth-making, he is almost as prompt as Keats. He may be said to have achieved perfection in form in his poem 'Pashan Pratima'. The conjuring up of the two beautiful maids, Phulara and Chatala, from the two hillocks of the same names, and the weaving up of a legend on the background of an historical fact along with the manner in which it has been accomplished in this poem, bear testimony to a powerful imaginative faculty.

Shailadhar Rajkhowa's spiritual poems include 'Vishwarup' (The Universal Form) and 'Awahan' (Invocation). They communicate simple faith and spontaneous supplication. This simplicity of a Romantic nature is an asset of his
poems. Like the English Romantic poets, he also used familiar words which resulted in the spontaneity of expression. A mystic's quest is not to be found there. His conscious evasion of a spiritual quest is evident in 'Samarani Geet' (The Swan Song). A true Romantic in his deep love of life, and of this world, Rajkhowa even does not believe in the superiority of heaven:

Ei swarga eri thoi konoba swargat:
    Man mor nabahe nischay;
Dhulate miliba ei dhular sharir;
    Ulatim nabadeha loi.
'Biday Parat' (At the Time of Farewell)
(Leaving this heaven in earth, I shall not be happy in another heaven; though my body will turn into dust after death, I shall be back to this world in a new form).

In spite of all his attachment to this world, some of Shailadhar Rajkhowa's poems present the dim shadow of a solitary man like Jatindranath Dowerah's poetry in Assamese and also like many others' in English poetry. The best examples of this are 'Tatini Parat' (On the Bank of the River) and 'Premik Sannyasi' (The Lover Hermit). Such similarity may only be casual. Yet, lines from 'Swapnabhanga' (Breaking of the Dream)—

Janapranihin danavpuri
    Viswar bibhuti bhara,
Apekhsise tat manasi sakhi
Konoba kalare para.

(Love of my imagination is awaiting from time immemorial in the deserted land of the demon, full of the riches of the world).

leave behind a vibration of Keats's—

... magic casement, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

'Ode to a Nightingale'

'Kusum' (The Flower) conveys the sense of Byron's—

What I can never express
Yet cannot all conceal.

'Child Harold's Pilgrimage'
Canto IV.

Shailadhar Rajkhowa "did not discover anything 'far more deeply interfused' in nature nor did he propound any philosophy about her. He is enchanted with the objective beauties of Nature". 26 Yet love of and relation with nature is as inevitable for him as life itself. His poems breathe the countryside life of Assam the nature of which conjures up a dreamy and airy atmosphere, though not with the same subtlety experienced in the poems of W.B. Yeats. They lack Yeats's mystic intensity and the intellectual quality.

Though the poems of Shailadhar Rajkhowa more than vouch for his love of this world, the absorption of Ratnakanta Barkakati is not to be found in him. In spite of being endowed with great felicity of imagination, his role is rather that of an indifferent onlooker. Even in his love poems, one misses strong passion and deep involvement as in 'Atithi' (The Guest) and 'Milan Madhuri' (The Sweetness of Union). He is, unlike the English Romantic poets, but in conformity with the Assamese Romantic poets, content with married love. Yet 'Homar Kashat:' (By the Side of the Sacred Fire) conveys no less Romantic intensity in its faith and "resolution to beauty in pious reverence". 27 Another poem of considerable success is 'Niyati' (Fate) in the form of an elegy.

Though Shailadhar Rajkhowa's poems bear the traits of English Romanticism, its influence on him does not seem to be direct and clear as was on the poets of the early period and to some extent on some of his contemporaries. Like most of his contemporaries, his Romantic inspiration seems to draw from the general cultural atmosphere.

Jatindranath Dowerah (1892-1964):

In the second phase of the post-Jonaki era, a very intense and deeply personal note came to be echoed through Assamese poetry. Through Jatindranath Dowerah, it:

experienced an expansion in the contour lines of the source of borrowings. The pre-Romantic poet Gray, the great Romantic Shelly, the neo-Romantic Tennyson, Heinrich Heine, the Russian poet Turgenev, the Persian poets Omar Khayam and Hafiz—all these contributed to the blooming of his poetic talent; and the united pressure of all these influences caused the aeolian harp of his sensibilities wail in intense emotion.  

Jatindranath Dowerah had entered the arena of Assamese poetry through Omar-Tirtha, a verse translation of the Rubayat of Omar Khayam, with whose philosophy he had merged his own to a great extent. He is believed to be the most well-read of all the Assamese Romantic poets; and with a sensitive mind like his, it is only natural that he should be influenced by the poets who had conformed to his own feelings.

The basis of Omar Khayam's poetry is the dilemma of the eternal questions of the source and the ultimate destiny of human life. The endeavour to have an answer to these questions is the essence of all religions and all philosophy.  

human soul met with failure is the source of man's tragedy.  

The atmosphere of sadness in Dowerah's poems is the fruit of this frustration; and through this sadness all the sweet and melancholy aspects of life have been revealed.

Sufism is a branch of mysticism. The Persian mystics are known as Sufists. Love and wine have a very distinct place in Sufism. The spiritual yearning of a Sufi mystic is symbolically expressed as the intoxication caused by drinking wine, wine being love, human being the lover, and God the Loved. The idea of Sufism has been very beautifully expressed in the last stanza of Dowerah's Milanar Sur (The Music of Union):

Mahagayakar bahir surat  
Kavir pranat kapile sur

(Music throbs in the heart of the poet reacting to the flute played by the Great Singer).

The poems of Omar and Hafiz create for the reader a transcendental world imbued with the mystery of wine, love and beauty — the atmosphere of which is quite different from the world of the Indian mystics based on Upanishadic philosophy. It does not seem quite natural that an Assamese poet should be so drawn to the philosophy of the Persian mystics giving a hedonistic impression at the surface.

30. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
Dowerah's *Omar Tirtha* has been successful in grasping the "still sad music of humanity" natural in Khayam. Hiren Gohain has referred to the "elan" present in it which also hints at the transcendental liberation of the poet's consciousness.\(^{31}\)

A reading of Jatindranath Dowerah's poems conjures up the picture of a solitary man. The idea of this solitariness is present throughout English Romantic poetry either in explicit or in implicit form.

"...Whether the romantic subject was the poet himself or someone else, he was no longer part of an organized society but, typically, a solitary figure engaged in a long—and sometimes infinitely elusive—quest; often he was a social nonconformist or outcast."\(^{32}\)

The knight in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', the ancient mariner of Coleridge and the shepherd Michael of Wordsworth are the typical representatives of this lone man. This sense is conveyed beautifully in Matthew Arnold's poems as well:

This truth — to prove, and make thine own:
Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.

'Isolation— To Marguerite'

Sorrow played an important role in the European

---


Renaissance. It was Petrarch who had heralded the treatment of sorrow in poetry. The "profound sadness" that has immortalized Leonardo de Vinci's Monalisa has also immortalized poets like Shelley and Matthew Arnold. In Jatindranath Dowera's poems, one feels the presence of this sorrow in profusion. The ways of the world has made the poet look at life with a pessimistic view. He prefers a solitary corner where he can meditate on beauty. The sun, the moon, the stars and flowers combine to form his garden of life. The poet is aware of the futility of his life. He is no more than a wild flower. At times the indifferent touches of the passers-by inspire the illusory hope of affection in him. But he comes out of that illusory dream very soon. He has a longing for life and light; yet the passive man in him does not stir to grasp them. And he, sitting idle, watches them fleeing away. Thus he falls an easy prey to gloom and experiences the unexpected darkness of the moonless night before time (Saptamite Aunsi).

It has been already stated in the first chapter that sentimentalism does not signify just the display or possession of feeling either moderate or excessive; it is a mental state when one cultivates feelings but cannot transform them into action. In this light, Shelley, in spite of his display of excessive sentiment, cannot be called a sentimentalist whereas this suits Jatindranath Dowerah well.
English Romantic poets are often charged as pessimists; but most of them had overcome their pessimism with the extraordinary exercise of their mental faculty. But in Jatindranath Dowerah, inertia had led the way to despair and lethargy. His pessimistic view in poems like 'Tente' (Then), 'Sonali Balir Emuthi' (A Handful of the Golden Sands) and 'Shunya Parichay' (The Negative Identity) may be influenced by the tragic events that he had experienced successively in his personal life. His fear of the "thorns of life" and longing to keep aloof from them inspire many to brand him an escapist. Charge of escapism against the Romantic poets is very common; and Keats is one of the prominent victims of this accusation. A submissive nature like Dowerah's had little reason to try to escape. A fatalist like Khayam, he also believed that man's life is dominated by destiny; and resignation to this power is an inevitability. Yet his pessimism cannot be said strictly to be that of an ascetic. It lacks that rigidity and shows flickers of hope now and then like in the poem 'Premar Pohar' (The Light of Love). Still, contrary to Raghunath Choudhary, Dowerah loves to describe the setting sun in a scarlet sky rather than the hopeful, potent rays of Aurora. He is only too conscious of the transitoriness of things. He is a poet of the evening.

Like Shelley, Jatindranath Dowerah is also in search of a land where there is no "strife, deceit and
fear". Like Shelley again, he is also a lover of liberty:

Phakiphuka jot nai aru nai jot
Samajor kathom shasan

'Nawariya I' (The Boatman I)

(Where there is no treachery and no cruel imposition of the society).

But in both the cases, he lacks Shelley's vigour. Dowerah has chosen the quiet of the night even in his voyage to the golden land. He is aware of the inability of the human heart to grasp the vastness of love. It is one of the sources of man's innate feeling of frustration. Shelley had complained:

O Love! who bewailèst:
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest:
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

'The Flight of Love'

Dowerah wants to be away from this world because he has full faith on a far better life in the world beyond. More than that, he believes in the "Universal flux", the continuity of the stream of life. 'Pakhila' (The Butterfly) is one of the best examples of his view of the cycle of life. He has revealed himself as a mystic in 'Milan' (The Union) in which poem he has expressed his idea of death as a blessing of God in which the finite soul is united with the Infinite:
Mrityu kino? — eeo ek tomare karuna,
Atmar prakrita milan.

'Milan'

(What is death? — It is but your blessing, the real union of the soul).

Some of Jatindranath Dowerah's critics have tried to show his exultation of forgetfulness as a distinct aspect of his poetry which has led them to dub it "philosophy of forgetfulness". Keats also tried to forget the miserable world sinking "Lethwards", but was disillusioned. Dowerah also ultimately comes to realize that like Keats's fancy, forgetfulness also "cannot cheat so well as she is famed to do" (Ode to a Nightingale).

The past is the source of solace and inspiration for the Romantic poets, and so it is with Jatindranath Dowerah. It is his lot to be treated with indifference; but it is too much for him to get rid of the memories, whether of happiness or of sorrow. Even if painful, the past memories are a solace for him. The note of reminiscence of the past in 'Pahara Sur' (The Forgotten Music) strikes the note of Thomas Moore's 'The Light of Other Days'. He feels his sorrow relieved when he recalls the sweet memories of his past days of love as if reflected in a mirror. "The sadness of Dowerah is the effect of the conflict in him between dream and reality."33 His continued sense of despair

has emerged from his realization of the illusory nature of
the world and of life. He does not luxuriate in sorrow.

Shelley wailed under the thorns of life —

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

Dowerah also had experienced the same:

Ee je mor kapalat Bidhir nithur lekha
Eiye mor jiwanar kaitiya ban
'Shunya Parichay'

(This is the cruel writing of destiny on my forehead, this
is the thorny grass of my life).

But this sense has not aroused in him any revolutionary
feeling as it did in Shelley. He rather accepts his lot.
Dowerah's philosophy is very different from that of Shelley
in 'Ode to the West Wind'.

Notwithstanding the remarkable influence Shelley's
poems had exerted on Jatindranath Dowerah, Dowerah's own
style and themes have given uniqueness and originality to
his poems. All of his translations have acquired the status
of the original by virtue of their quality. 'Tomaloi' (To
You), 'Sukhar Sapon' (The Dream of Happiness), 'Soponar Sur'
(The Music of the Dream), are exquisite translations from
Shelley's 'The Indian Serenade', 'Song' (Rarely rarely
comet: thou), and 'Mutability' respectively. The last line
in Dowerah's 'Heroa Sur' (The Lost Music) reminds Shelley's line:

Smiling they live, and call life pleasure,
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

'A Joy Has Taken Flight'

These lines have got the Assamese form in Dowerah's hands:

Sakaloe pai sakalotì
Karo eko neherai
Matho mor sur
Jiwanat nebaje dunai.

'Heròa Sur'

Jatindranath Dowerah is like Shelley's Adonais, the "One frail Form, a phantom among men; companionless..."

He is also"the companionless Sensitive Plant" in the garden of Assamese Romantic poetry—

The feeblest and yet the favourite
Cradled within the embrace of night.

'The Sensitive Plant,'

The philosophy of 'Adonais' seems to influence Dowerah's 'Nawariya II' (The Boatman II). Like Shelley, Jatindranath Dowerah has also established the eternal existence and permanence of Divine love as against the transience of earthly existence:

Anadi premar sot ekerihe boi ache
Chirakal ekedare chaliye thakiba.

'Nawariya II'
The scream of eternal love is flowing from time eternal and will go on like this for ever).

For Shelley:

The one remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;

'Adonais'

Though an idealist like Shelley, Dowerah has not been able to overcome his sentimentalism when Shelley could establish his faith and hope above all his awareness of the sorry plight of this world. In spite of many similarities with Shelley, Dowerah cannot be said to be a poet of his school. His range of realization of the ways of human destiny and human nature is limited in comparison to Shelley. He also lacks the depth of Shelley's faith in the possibility of a better world. While the dreary winter brought for Shelley the hope of a beautiful spring, Dowerah rests consoled with the inevitability of a negative identity ('Shunya Parichay'). He cannot conceive a Prometheus to revolt against the state of things; he rather chooses the life of a renouncer seeking a solitary abode. In Assamese Romantic poetry, Dowerah "records the emotional despair of life as Bezbarua records its ecstasy". 34

Of the English Romantic poets, Tennyson, next to Shelley, had cast remarkable influence on Jatindranath

Dowerah. His 'Nawariya III' (The Boatman III) is a beautiful translation from Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar'. He is like Tennyson in his creation of a dreamy atmosphere, exaltation of emotion, expression of the feeling of languish and reminiscence of the past. Like Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears', Dowerah's 'Chakulo' (Tears) reveals the pathos of life in its journey:

Kon sudurar sapon purir
Birah batari loi,
Chakulo dudhari pariche bagari
Bujiba noarakoi.

(Tears are flowing incomprehensibly surged with the sorrow of some distant and unknown dream land).

Tennyson also said:

Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes.

'Tears, Idle Tears'

'Milan' echoes Tennyson's philosophy in *In Memoriam*. 'Atitak Najaba Pahari' (Do Not Forget the Past) also seems to be influenced by Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar'.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!

these lines are clearly echoed in Dowerah's lines in this poem —
Sandhiyar akashar saru taratir
Sadarar shesh abahan
(The endearing last call of the tiny star in the evening sky).

Jatindranath Dowerah's 'Ekhan Marishalir Ocharat'
(Near a Graveyard) is an Assamese rendering of Gray's 'Elegy
Written in a Country Churchyard' in which the latter's idea
of the ultimate destiny of human life and also his view of
death as the leveller have been beautifully expressed
against a local setting. A distinct note of Keats's 'La Belle
Dame Sans Merci' can be felt in Dowerah's 'Heroa Sapon'.

As has already been said, the range of
Jatindranath Dowerah's borrowing is very extensive. Reading
of Thompson, Edgar Allan Poe and even Browning seems to have
influenced him; but a genuine artist, he has turned all his
borrowed ideas into his own with the magic touch of his own
talent. No influence has made him swerve from his absorp-
tion in his own solitary mood.

Dowerah resembles Keats in his love of beauty and
a detachment to external events. Realization of beauty is
his life-long ideal. He has dedicated his life to the quiet
meditation of beauty. Indifferent to the influence of time,
the poet has imprinted the lively verdant feelings of his
heart in his poems. He is indifferent to all, as if he has
conquered time.35

35. Jatindranath Dowerah : 'Shilpi' in Katha Kavita,
published by Basanttalal Dowerah, Sibsagar, 1982,
pp. 60-61.
There is little variety in Jatindranath Dowerah's poetry. Even if he deviates from the usual theme, the note remains the same. When he writes about the Bihu festival, it comes out to be a charming picture of nature, and also the expression of the emotions that nature inspires in his feeling heart. The picture of vigour and merry-making associated with the festival is nowhere to be found. In poems of national feeling like 'SriShankardev' and 'Mahasati Joymati' also, he has expressed feeling rather than fact. The external world can exert little influence on him. Neither common day to day experiences, nor the passion-exciting events like the freedom struggle, the partition-time riot, the world war and the achievement of freedom, could attract him. Yet the romantic in him loves the thundering cloud that brings rain (‘Sukhar Sapon’ — The Dream of Happiness).

Treatment of love is another prominent Romantic feature in Jatindranath Dowerah's poetry. For him the different experiences in the course of love are like the different colours of the rainbow lending charm to life. His love is not born of any sensual feeling. The yearning for love and the expectation of union are more desirable for him than the real union of two loving hearts. Most of the English Romantic poets had propounded such feelings of whom the most prominent is Shelley. In fact, Dowerah is an
inhabitant of the dreamland; and when he expresses his love of this world, his idea does not always seem substantial. Even of the abstract things like infinitude and happiness, he longs for glimpses only. His poetry conveys the sense of a hazy and shadowy atmosphere ideal of a Romantic poet.

Human emotion is the primary concern of Jatindranath Dowerah; and love of nature, though frequently referred to, is included in that. Love of nature has not developed into a separate creed in him. Nature lends intensity to human feeling. He does not seem to be partial to any particular period of natural change believing that each of the seasons contributes to make up the full cycle of nature. Yet it cannot detract him from his absorption in a feeling of nothingness. He can feel intensely the vernal as well as the autumnal beauty of nature; yet behind all his feelings, he keeps aware of the futile sigh ('Shunya Humuniya') that dissolves into the infinitude. His choicest scene of nature is the evening sky coloured by the setting sun in its waiting to be enveloped in darkness. In some poems incidents of nature are symbolic of the poet's own experience. The flight of the swan ('Eti Uri Joa Rajhahaloi' - To a Flying Swan) to meet his mate, its nest on the soft green grass, warm with the prospect of sheltering it, has served as a contrast to the poet's own solitary life full of constant sadness. In 'Shiltiro Sapon Bhagil' ('The Rock Is Also
Disillusioned), the disillusionment of the rock is an analogy of the poet's own frustrated feeling. His nature description, even the description of spring, lacks joyfulness. The liveliness that is present in Raghunath Choudhary's description of nature is dimmed in Dowerah by the mist of sighs. Dowerah does not look at nature as a separate entity; yet, in moments of despair, the wayfarer in him feels soothed by the beauty of nature.  

Jatindranath Dowerah's love of solitude does not involve any sense of isolation or misanthropy. His solitary abode is only a part of the universe and reacts to and sympathizes with the universal feeling; only he keeps drifted along the unbroken stream of life that flows through the universe.

It is said that running water like music has the power to change misery into melancholy; nothing is more Rousseaute than the desire, Arnold attributes, to be "borne on forever down an enchanted stream." In Duara's nawaria group of poems, the desire to drift with the stream like a forlorn soul is emotionally vivid.  

Jatindranath Dowerah was so much overwhelmed with his own personal sorrow that other feelings seem to be pushed back to the background. Yet he has given vent to his


national feelings in a few poems. Poems like 'Mahamanavar Mahaprayanat' (On the Eternal Departure of the Great Man), 'Asomat Aji Lakshminath Nai' (Lakshminath Is No More in Assam), 'Sri Shankardev', 'Mahasati Joymati', in the form of hero-worship, reveal his true nationalistic and patriotic feelings. They also bear evidence of a Romantic's pride in the past glory of his country.

Jatindranath Dowerah is "Shelley in melancholy and Keats in music". He may also be said to be the most lyrical of all Assamese Romantic poets; even his prose has a lyrical quality. The source of the appeal of his poems is the spontaneous flow of rhythmic feeling and the use of felt words which makes his lines touching. Simplicity and tenderness is characteristic of his poems. His style has many followers in and after his life time.

It is not that Dowerah's symbols can claim novelty; but the so-called common symbols of the river, the boat, and the boatman have been treated in a unique way. He seems to be influenced by Shelley in his use of symbols also. Shelley also believed in the immortality of the soul and accepted the symbol of a voyage for the soul's journey to eternity:

38. Ibid., pp. 165-166.
My spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Where sails were never to the tempest given.

Tennyson is another poet adopting the same symbol. Turgeniev, who had exerted great influence on Dowerah, also adopted the symbols of the boat and the boatman.


A final analysis tends to show that Jatindranath Dowerah's poetry, barring *Omar Tirtha*, comes out as mere expression of personal feeling and emotion. Munin Barkataki has referred to the question often raised about the relevance of his poetry in today's context. But diversity

and variety cannot always be the standard of merit for a poet. Intensity, simplicity and spontaneity are the basic aspects of Romantic poetry, and with them Dowerah's poems are full to the brim. It may be hard to deny that his pessimistic outlook failed to confirm a profound philosophical value, yet the wealth of intensity in the poems is such that no one can dismiss them as irresponsible or without any substance. One cannot forget that his feeling is always fine and subtle, and his expression elegant and appealing. And it is here that he is a pure Romantic.

Dharmeswari Devi Baruani (1892-1960):

Dharmeswari Devi Baruani's name is often associated with that of Nalinibala Devi because of their similarity in many respects. The most significant characteristic in which they are similar is that of their powerful focus on the subject-matter resulting in the absorption of the total spirit. They are also similar in their love of nature.

A true mystic, Devi Baruani's mysticism is also, like that of Nalinibala Devi, based on the Upanishads. Though subject to life-long suffering, like the other, she also cherishes strong pantheistic beliefs; but in her faith, there is no touch of Nalinibala's melancholy. A strong sense of optimism runs through her poems; and the basis of her optimism is her strong faith in the soul's ultimate union with God.
Dharmeswari Devi Baruani shows little direct influence of any English Romantic poet. As for any indirect influence, it has already been said that the very environment of her time breathed Romanticism. "There is in her poems a deep sympathy and reverence for life and worldly things."\(^{40}\) "... though usually exalted and devotional in theme, Devi's poems are not as rich and variegated in expression as those of Nalini Devi'(s)"(sic).\(^{41}\) Phular Sharai (The Vase of Flowers, 1929) and Pranar Parash (The Soul's Touch, 1952) are her two collections of poems.

Suryya Kumar Bhuyan (1894-1964):

In comparison to his contribution in the field of prose and historiography, Suryya Kumar Bhuyan's contribution to poetry is meagre in size. All his poems are bound only in one volume — Nirmali (The Sacred Flower, 1918), and that too is a small volume. Yet his poetic talent is evident from a number of truly good poems. Antiquarian research being his chief vocation, his poems are also soaked in love and reminiscence of the past history of Assam that smell of strong romantic patriotism. 'Asom Gaurav' (Glory of Assam), 'Jaymati Kunwari' and 'Tipam Deka' are few of his patriotic poems. Even his elegies are not elegies in the true sense; they are the outbursts of the poet's love for his

\(^{40}\) Birinchi Kumar Barua : op.cit., p. 128.
\(^{41}\) Hem Baruah : op.cit., p. 169.
motherland. Social consciousness is almost absent in his poetry.

Like all Romantic poets, Suryya Kumar Bhuyan is a lover of nature. This love has not revealed itself in any elaborate description; but the poet has ascribed a deep significance to nature:

Arthahin prakritit koto eko nai
'Sukh-Dukh' (Weal and Woe)

(There is nothing meaningless in nature)

'Prakritir Santan' (The Child of Nature) is a myth-poem after Wordsworth's poem, 'Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower' in the cluster of 'Lucy' poems. But in Bhuyan's poem, one misses the sense of deep attachment between man and nature that runs through Wordsworth's poem. Yet, like Wordsworth, he also believes that everything in nature has some meaning. 'Kavi-pran' (The Poetic Soul) reveals clear influence of Wordsworth's 'A Poet's Epitaph'. Though 'Kavi-pran' is not a translation, the burden of the poem is the same with Wordsworth's poem.

A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All in all!
Shut close the door; press down the latch;
Sleep in thy intellectual crust.

'A Poet's Epitaph'

— these lines remind Bhuyan's lines in 'Kavi-pran' —
(O proud orator, do not come near the poet with that your high sounding argumentations).

Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, a student and also a teacher of English literature, cannot be expected to elude the influence of the English Romantic poets. However, this influence on him is not as pervasive as one can expect it to be.

Ratnakanta Barkakati (1897-1963):

It has already been said that Assamese poetry had imbibed, in the early period, the spirit of Western Romanticism through Bengali literature. During the post-Jonaki period Rabindranath Tagore, of all Bengali poets, began to influence the Assamese poets most. Without any disparagement to the achievement of these poets, it may be said that very few of them could resist the upsurge that the poetry of Rabindranath had created at the time. Yet it was in the poems of Ratnakanta Barkakati that this influence seemed most conspicuous. He believed that just as all living creatures cannot help being influenced by the atmosphere they live in, so also the poets and litterateurs cannot escape being influenced by the intellectual atmosphere
around them. True literature transcends the barrier of time and place and makes its place in the hearts of men. Demarcations in literature are only geographical and temperamental.

As has already been said, influence of English Romanticism had lent a new outlook to the treatment of themes that had already existed in Classical Indian literature. This influence spread into a section of Assamese poetry and brought about the sublimity of emotion which only set it closer to Indian mysticism.

The object of the mystic's quest is "a totality of partless, simple and undifferentiated experience which is the root of all our ordinary knowledge and experience and which is at once the ultimate essence of our self and the highest principle of the universe, the Brahman or the Atman." Barkakati's poems, like those of Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and Nalinibala Devi, reveal the poet's quest of this essence, this highest principle. Blake's poetry is saturated with glimpses of divine presence. In Wordsworth, the commonplace, man, and the objects of nature undergo a process of sublimation and acquire mystic quality. Poets like Wordsworth seem to achieve the culmination of their

romantic pursuit in mysticism. Though in a different way, Barkakati's poems tell us the same tale. Through the conspicuousness of the sensual aspect of love in his poetry, there runs the flow of mystic longing.

The essence of Barkakati's poems is love. This love cannot be said to be the love of man in the broader sense as it is in Wordsworth's or Shelley's. Apparently it is the love of two young hearts experiencing and exulting in sensual delight which at a phase of its intensity succeeds in attaining all-pervasiveness which is characteristic of mysticism. His love at first sight, as is expressed in 'Tetiya' (Then), has experienced gradual elevation and achieved that height of emotion in which his human lover has acquired the qualities of the divine lover as is revealed in 'Sarbarupat' (Omnipresence):

Etiya nai akar tomar
Sarba biyapi gola

(You have got no form now and have spread yourself everywhere).

At a stage in this process of elevation, the poet feels that his lover's beauty and accomplishments surpass those of nature:
Pulak bhara / Charair gan / Nalage mor / Siman bhal / Sakalo charair / Ganar gan / Tomar matat / Pao ji tal.
'Tomar Parash' (Your Touch)

(I am enchanted by the songs of the birds not as much as I am by your music which exceeds them in sweetness).

Such exaggeration of feelings abounds in English Romantic poetry too. Tennyson's mistress is the "Queen lily and rose in one" who can be the Sun to the flowers ('Come into the Garden, Maud'). In one stage the poet seems to feel that human love is sufficient to attain fulfilment of his longing, but his spirit is disturbed with an ineffable yearning as his love tends to raise and extend itself. There are moments when supreme bliss eludes him the moment he seems to grasp it. Barkakati has expressed this feeling beautifully in 'Abhav' (Want):

Dhara di nidile dhara
Matho hahakar

(Bliss of love eluded me leaving me in distress).

These lines remind one of Browning's —

Infinite passion and pain of
Finite hearts that yearn.

'Two in the Campagna'
Of course, one misses in Barkakati's lines the strain of eternal human tragedy expressed in Browning's lines. The distressed poet in Barkakati tries to console his soul by giving himself to homely love and glorifies married love as in 'Ghar Jeuti' (The Light in the House). This poem calls to memory C. Patmore's *The Angel in the House*, a sequence of love poems celebrating married love. Yet the romantic longing in Barkakati does not allow him to rest. The mystic in him does not feel gratified by such trivial attainment. The elusive nature of the fulfilment of human longing stimulates his eternal thirst seeking communion with the ever-Beautiful:

Sundar kot / Hridayar mor / Eye je binani / Jiwan dhari
'Sundar' (The Beautiful)

(My entire life has been an agonising search after the Beautiful).

But his Beautiful has ever remained concealed in mystery. This idea of the inconceivable, of the unknown, is expressed in many of his poems, like 'Rahasyar Chiraprasna' (The Eternal Question of Mystery), and 'Chayamaya' (Shadowy). This is typical of Romantic poetry. This knowledge of unattainability, like in Browning, does not generate any sense of dejection; it rather adds to the charm. The mystic in Barkakati has been beautifully revealed in poems like 'Sarbarupat', 'Lukai Lukai' (Secretely), and 'Birahar Gaurav'
(Glory of the Pang of Separation). 'Pukhurir Prati Panipiya' (The Swallow's Address to the Pond) is another example of a mystic's longing. Ignorance of "love's sad satiety" was the source of the joyous song of Shelley's Skylark. The same seems to work behind Barkakati's endless yearning ('Sundar').

In spite of the elevation from sense to spirit, Barkakati's feelings do not always respond to the perfect order and lack in the sense of sublimity and strength diffused by Wordsworth's and Shelley's poetry. Ascribing the virtue of omnipresence to the human lover, as is seen in poems like 'Viswa Haran' (The Universal Pervasion), tends to yield more to the interpretation as an exaggeration of a lover's emotion than the mystic's realization. He has experienced the state of mystic meditation when the difference between the formless and the beautiful form has disappeared for him. But in him this spiritual experience lacks constancy as is evident from poems like 'Murti Puja' (Worship of the Idol); and thus his poems have failed to reach the mystic height of Nalinibala Devi and Ambikagiri Roychoudhury.

As a poet in the Indian tradition, Barkakati is also an optimist. The Indian mind is always conscious of permanence of existence because of its faith in the immortality of the soul and the cycle of heavenly existence and earthly existence. Concept of the self in the Indian tradition is the fruit of the intellectual and spiritual
searches of generations of wise and inquisitive minds. But in the West, it has emerged as a result of social conflict and democratic consciousness. As such, the former is introspective while the latter is based on extrinsic values. The sense of permanence attached to the former, generally accompanies a sense of hope while the latter, being prone to modulation with social changes, is indifferent to hope or despair. Thus in Indian tradition, very little scope for individual exertion is left while in Western thought supreme power has been entrusted to the individual. Though influenced by Western ideals as a Romantic poet, the individual in Shelley, striving with all his potentiality, is absent in Barkakati. The impression of the individual that his poems give is of an idealist absorbed in musing and of a mystic in anticipation. Whether founded on abstract precondition or not, Barkakati's poems lack the firm faith in strong possibility as is implicit in Shelley's lines like "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Thus though Barkakati is a Romantic in adopting an optimistic view of life and the world, his type of optimism cannot be called an import from the West. The romantic ego revealed in his poems cannot confirm any of Wordsworth's repose, Shelley's vigour, Byron's masculine pride and Keats's total absorption. Yet there are moments of brilliance as is revealed in the poem 'Kijani Nahay Bhul'.
(Fallibility Is Perhaps a Virtue). This poem shows his kinship with the English Romantic poets in expressing deep faith in man's freedom and superiority to other living beings. Human life is not restricted as theirs is. Fallibility is but the other name of man's greatness. He can exert his intelligence, impose his emotion and infuse meaning into his life despite all weaknesses. In this idea of man, Barkakati is a true follower of English Romanticism. As has already been said, the English Romantic poets glorified Man with all his weaknesses. The above mentioned poem "is a tribute to the creative powers of man, for whose imperfections the poet has the most generous sympathies". Social consciousness, associated with almost all the English Romantic poets, is very rare in Barkakati. 'Kshudrar Adhikar' (The Right of the Low) apparently expresses his consciousness of social discrimination; but this consciousness is more of spiritual discrimination than social.

Like Shelley, Barkakati also enjoys the unity among the diverse objects of this world. Human love is only a part of the universal love.

44. Birinchi Kumar Barua: op.cit., p. 125.
Bhabicho si phul aru
Tarar lagate, acheneki
Purna eta korobat
Artha mar goi

'Artha' (Meaning)

(I am thinking if there is a sense of perfection infused into those flowers and stars).

Shelley also believed:

All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle

Barkakati's 'Premtattva' (Philosophy of Love) is a beautiful translation of Shelley's 'Love's Philosophy'.

Though like other Romantic poets, Barkakati also is a lover of nature, he has no poem exclusively on nature. Even 'Shewali' (The Night Jasmine) and 'Saraphul' (The Fallen Flower), as is expected from the titles, are not nature poems in the true sense. Yet the living presence of the essence of nature is quite evident in his poems. The harmony essential for all life is only possible in the kinship of nature. The whole essence of his poetry centres round the moon. Like Barkakati's use of the moon, Jatindranath Dowerah had made excellent use of the symbols of the boat and the boatman. So did Raghunath Choudhary with his bird and Ambikagiri Roychoudhury with 'Tumi'. Barkakati is moved by the beautiful objects of nature like the poet in Wordsworth's
'A Poet's Epitaph'. Both the poets in 'A Poet's Epitaph' and Barkakati's 'Kavir Sthan' (The Place of the Poet) feel the "impulses of deeper birth" (A Poet's Epitaph).

For Barkakati -

Si asim tatta va
Anadi kalar
Abhed madhur
Rahasyadwar
Mokolai dhare
Mukali kaviye
Mukali hiyar
Bajai tar.

'Kavir Sthan'

(The poet, with a free heart, opens the door of the mystery that leads to the eternal truth of time eternal).

Shelley's Skylark and West Wind serve as agents of propagating his philosophy. In Barkakati's poems, nature serves as the source of inspiration either to intensify his emotion or to enhance the beauty of his lover. Poems like 'Yadi' (If) and 'Teo' (Even Then) express his belief in the mutual relation among the objects of nature. His treatment of nature is, to some extent, similar to Shelley in the sense that nature is, for both of them, a means to an end. Yet he is more akin to Wordsworth in his view about nature in the sense that he also shares the deep faith in the
living essence of nature as the source of all beauty of the universe.

Besides Wordsworth and Shelley, Matthew Arnold and Swinburne have also influenced Barkakati. His 'Atmar Milan' (Union of the Souls) echoes Arnold's line "Oh! might our merges meet again!" (To Marguerite).

Barkakati has expressed his yearning as:

Atmai miliba khoje mor
Tomar atmare

'Atmar Milan'

(My soul yearns to be united with your soul)

'Dudandar Kusum Labanya' (The Moment's Beauty of a Flower) is a translation of Swinburne's 'Before Sunset'.

In Barkakati's poems, the beautiful use of the symbol of the moon in quick rhythmical stanzas with profuse alliteration, relieves the reader of the seriousness of the content to a great extent and at the same time it provides a very delightful reading. Though a mystic poet, there is nothing misty about his poems and also little impalpability.

Ratnakanta Barkakati, a poet of serene vision, never fumbled with dusky fancies or vague imageries. His 'Shewali' collection of poems exhibits the glow of a poetic gift for mystical effects that reveal a temperament which conceals
the feverish questioning of a philosopher beneath a balanced style.46

"The haunting melody, the resonant rhythm and the spontaneity of his utterance make him the most musical of our poets."47 Yet his poetry is not free from limitations. What his poetry lacks is not intensity, but the variety and immensity of feeling that characterize the poetical works of his contemporaries like Raghunath Choudhary, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury and Nalinibala Devi. It also suffers from a poverty of a sublimity expected of a mystic poet. Jatindranath Dowerah's poetry also suffers more or less from the same weaknesses. Yet he was saved by the complete self-absorption and the resultant intensity of feeling. As has been mentioned above, Barkakati's poems also reveal intensity; but, again, as has been hinted already, they do not give the impression of being always constant. In the same manner, "although he fuses deftly the musical into the logical at times, Barkakati's music, broadly speaking, is not of the ethereal type. This is why some of his poems appear as emotionally decadent."48 In Chandrakumar Agarwala an ideal balance gave rise to a glowing vitality of imagination; but in Barkakati's poems like 'Santwana'

47. Birinchi Kumar Barua: op.cit., p. 125.
(Consolation) and 'Kijani Nahay Bhul', balance, in places, seems to reduce emotional intensity.

Like all English Romantic poets, Barkakati believed that poetry is originally subjective. His poetical works comprise three collections Shewali (1932), Chandrahara (The Garland of the Moonlight) and Tarpan (Oblation, 1951).

Nalinibala Devi (1898-1977):

One of the top-ranking Assamese Romantic poets, Nalinibala Devi is a direct heiress to the Indian spiritual tradition. A confirmed mystic, she also composed a few poems with other themes of which a salient one is patriotism. Behind all passionate and subjective creations, there is a specific source. The successive personal losses which could have thrown an ordinary man into the abyss of dark pessimism, served Nalinibala as this specific source. She could transform the pang of her earthly loss into sublime sorrow. The source of her joy in the external world was the deep recess of melancholy.

Mysticism is based on the concept of a spiritual and transcendental world. So subtle is the difference between spiritualism and transcendentalism that they are often taken for carrying the same significance. While transcendentalism in its perfect sense was first manifest in Assamese Romantic poetry in Chandrakumar Agarwala, spiritualism reached its culmination in Nalinibala Devi. Though Ambikagiri Roychoudhury had heralded spiritualism in the form of mysticism, the attraction of the external world proved stronger in him causing in his ultimate break from that sphere.

The connotation of the word "mysticism" is more inclusive in its Indian context than the European. It may be said about European mysticism that "in spite of the variety of its types, it may roughly be described to refer to the belief that God is realised through ecstatic communion with Him". But in its Indian context mysticism means —

a spiritual grasp of the aims and problems of life in a much more real and ultimate manner than is possible to mere reason. A developing life of mysticism means a gradual ascent in the scale of spiritual values, experience, and spiritual ideals. As such, it is many-sided in its development, and as rich and complete as life itself.

51. S.N. Dasgupta: op.cit., p. VIII.
52. Ibid., p. IX.
It is also the consciousness of the existence of the all-kind Spirit in one's own self. Thus it transcends the contours of religion and extends itself to the vast expanse of human thought and action.

Despite the pervasiveness of the concept of mysticism, Indian mystics are attached to the anticipation of a life beyond this earth which often results in the rejection of the sensuous world. On the other hand, poets like Wordsworth experienced the sublime feeling of a mystic in total absorption into this world. The inquisitive nature of the Western Romanticists made them resort to mystical imagination or intuition, ultimately leading to mystic feeling. It is thus that mysticism became a prominent feature of Romanticism. Though Nalinibala's mysticism is based on the Upanishads, her poems reveal her love of this life and this world no less than the English Romantic poets.'

Sandhiyar Sur (Music of the Sunset, 1928), the first published collection of her poems, is a unique gift of Nalinibala Devi to Assamese literature. The wailing of a heart full of afflictions and its elevation through the faith in God is the essence of this collection of poems. It reveals her effort to emerge from the deep sea of her personal sorrows and also the unquenchable spiritual thirst that was burning within her, seeking the bliss of peace. Sandhiyar Sur is, as if, the spiritual journey of a mystic
inspired by a devotional heart. It is also the assurance of the attainment of her destination, and as such, may be said to determine her philosophy of life.

Despite the deep devotional tone of her poetry, the inquisitiveness of a Romantic poet works throughout Nalinibala Devi's poems and her mystic sensibility reveals a relation between the Omnipotent God and the mind of man. This relation is established not through any external media such as an historical revelation, oracles, answers to prayer, and the like, but by a species of transfusion or identification, in which the individual becomes in very truth "part-taker of the divine nature". God ceases to be an object to him and becomes an experience. 53

Nalinibala Devi has also tried to express the nature of the world beyond this world and to show its relation to the human mind. 'Param Trishna' (Supreme Thirst) in Sandhiyar Sur may be said, with little risk of exaggeration, to be the epitome of her philosophy. In this poem, she has asserted the universally insatiable hunger (Viswagrasi atriptir kshudha) of the human soul and also has established the solution of all questions of insatiety. The poet does not bemoan her terrestrial loss; instead, by trying to relieve herself by taking refuge in God, aspires to solve

the dilemmas concerning the questions of human desire, its fulfilment, birth and rebirth, and so on. She has come to believe that nothing is meaningless in this great creation. Browning believed that human desires are fulfilled here in this world only partially and awaits the completion in a life beyond. Nalinibala also believed that if full satisfaction were possible, the human soul would be free from all desire and the state of being free from all desires (Samadhi) would result in the cessation of a new birth of the soul. Though a victim of extreme suffering, this is not what the poet seeks. She is a great lover of life and is undaunted by the strife attending the pursuit of her Ever-Beautiful (Chira-Sundar). Like Wordsworth, she also owned the ear to listen to the "sad music of humanity" and believed in its power to "chasten and subdue". This love of life and this world, indifferent of what they offer, is characteristic of Romanticism. She also possesses the Romantic seer's vision to see into the purpose behind the apparent existence and occurrence of things.

Mysticism, as an individual experience, demands whole hearted subjective exertion. Like other mystic poets, Nalinibala also yearns for God, to feel His presence within herself. The mystic's devotion can experience the impersonal God as personal. Nalinibala has also resigned all her experiences to God, and through a process of sublimation, has elevated them from the mundane to spiritual. Like all
mystics, she has asserted a symbolical meaning to her earthly sorrows caused by separation from her dear ones. Sorrows and sufferings led her to —

The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity.

'The Prelude': Wordsworth

A craving for the Divine Spirit and the struggle to proceed to Him purify the human heart. One of the fundamental conditions of attaining the truth "is the complete elevation of the moral life, including the absolute control of all passions and desires, the abandonment of worldly ambitions and hopes, and the attainment of an unruffled peace of mind". The "dreary intercourse of daily life" cannot penetrate into the mystic's soul which, at all times, keeps itself absorbed in the thought of the Omnipotent God and the world beyond this world which does not experience any change. Nalinibala also alludes everything to the all-pervading power that creates and controls all events of nature and human life and is present in everything. Though based on Upanishadic philosophy, this is very like Wordsworth. The poet forgets everything in her pursuit of the Supreme and experiences a divine restlessness in this process. This restlessness has its own charm. Wordsworth had expressed a similar experience —

I have felt:
A presence that disturbs me with joy
Of elevated thoughts.

'Tintern Abbey'

Feeling of unity in diversity, experiencing the thrill of supernatural feelings, feeling the object of devotion in many symbols, the experience of all-absorbing love and agonizing sense of separation, total self-resignation and ultimately attaining peace and bliss are the symptoms of mysticism. Indifferent to the suffering associated with the pursuit of the fountain of beauty, Nalinibala has continued her endless quest from which even the knowledge of its unattainability cannot persuade her back:

Bichari Bichari phure yugar pathik
Chira trishatur prane
Marubhut: phula maruphul.

'Maruphul' (The Flower of the Desert)

(The eternal traveller, with his endless thirst, continues on his fruitless pursuit of the flower that blooms in the desert).

This quest after the impalpable and unattainable is common in Romantic poetry.

Man, by nature, is possessed with a kind of endless thirst; and it is this all-pervasive thirst that gives sap to man's spiritual and intellectual life which would otherwise be as lifeless as a desert. Romantic inquisitiveness is based on this. The poet in Nalinibala Devi is eager to know Him who inspires this thirst. This curiosity in one hand, and the strong belief in God's immanence on the other, remind one of the Bradleyan view of God's transcendence and immanence at the same time. In her Upanishadic aspiration to experience the self's elevation into the Brahman, she also has undergone the Romanticist's realization of the vast reflected in the tiny and the limitless projected within limit like William Blake:

Mor sattva viswabiyap a
Prati anu rupe ei dharanit...

'Viswasur' (The Music of the Universe)

(My essence is spread all over this world in the form of atoms).

In her belief that each atom of this earth is potent with the possibility of the all-pervading one, Nalinibala reveals her Romantic leaning of glorifying the individual, though her individualism has remained at an abstract level.

The English Romantic poets like Blake and Wordsworth, and also Browning and Tennyson believed that the earthly life is only a continuation of a life lived in
heaven which will return to heaven after death:

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting.

'Intimation of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood': Wordsworth

and

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven,
a perfect round.

'Andrea del Sarto': Browning

and also

...that which drew from out the boundless deep
turns again home.

'Crossing The Bar': Tennyson

Nalinibala has also conceived of death as the merging of an atom of the blue into the blue vastness from which it had separated:

Nil bindu mar jai nilar majat.

'Nilar Swapna' (The Dream of the Blue)

(The atom of the blue merges itself in the vastness of Blue).

Her attitude towards death reminds the cloud's answer in Blake's Book of Thel

When I pass away,

It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, to raptures holy.
She has a deep faith in the rotation of the life-cycle.

The contemplation of man as both the creator and the creation is common in Romanticism. In an elevated state of feeling or meditation, the poet feels himself to be

Creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.

'The Prelude': Wordsworth

and then feels

...the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still.

'The Prelude': Wordsworth

"The experience of the one life within us and abroad cancels the division between animate and inanimate, between subject and object—ultimately, even between object and object, in that climatic ALL IS ONE of the mystical trance-state. In such a trance-state the poet feels herself eternally one with the object of her desire:

Kono kale tumi mai
Kono rupe hoa nai bhin.

'Samadhi' (Trance)

(Never was I separated from you).

Nalinibala Devi also suffers from the "divine discontent" which inspires in all Romantic poets their curiosity, inquisitiveness, their restlessness and their extreme individual exertion. Yet, among all these, quietude is her asset as of Wordsworth.

Every beautiful object reminded Wordsworth of the beauty of God. For Nalinibala also, all the beautiful objects of nature are the projection of the Eternal Beauty. Her love and adoration of beauty reminds Keats's "Beauty is truth, truth beauty". Keats was haunted by the principle of beauty which was a passion with him. Nalinibala is equally haunted by it; and as passionately; but while Keats's concept of beauty was based on sense, hers is based on the spirit. Being a true follower of the Indian philosophical tradition, her impassioned persuasion of the Beautiful is haloed with a kind of restraint. She also resembles Keats in her gift of coining beautiful phrase-images which have come to be adopted by the later poets eagerly and unquestioningly. Her "Niyar kachali pindha shuani puwa" (The beautiful morning clad in dew), "Palash banar hengul" (The scarlet of the palash-grove), "Puwati nishar stimita pohar sikha" (The faint flame of the early dawn), "Akashi bihanga" (The bird of the sky) "Surabhi baliya nishar batah" (The night wind intoxicated with fragrance) are as effective as Keats's "cowslip'd lawns", "full-flowering weed", "full-throated ease", "dove-footed" and so on; and they express her very
subtle sensibility about the world of nature. The mystics feel the endless and all-pervasive beauty of the Supreme Deity reflected in the objects of nature. As has already been said, love of nature, though in varying degree, is common in all Romantic poets. Sometimes a beautiful panorama of natural scenery shows a glimpse of the source of all beauty; and the poet, in an exalted mood, even hears Him, inhales His fragrance and feels His touch. She feels herself to be the sweet endless murmuring of the eternal course of nature. Poems like 'Kon Tumi' (Who Art Thou), 'Puwa' (The Dawn), and 'Sarathi' (The Guide) express her deep love of the serene and silent beauty of nature. Nature is no less mysterious than human life. Human mind and nature are sympathetic to each other. 'Banar pakhi' (The Bird of the Wood) and 'Manar pakhi' (The Bird of the Mind) react simultaneously to the mysterious enchanting flute. A Wordsworthian echo can be felt in her conception of the relation between nature and the human mind.

Though a great lover of nature, Nalinibala Devi, unlike the Western nature-lovers, does not regard nature as a separate entity excercising utmost power on the human mind. Her view of nature is much nearer to that of the Classical Indian poets. Nature mostly acts in her poems as the setting of the revelation of or guide to or projection of the Supreme Being. "The seasons and the ever-changing loveliness of external Nature are but manifestation of that:
universal spirit, between whom and the poet: Nature herself acts as the point of contact and the medium of union.  

Though inflicted with personal griefs, Nalinibala Devi could raise herself above all worldly sorrows and sufferings by conjuring up the spiritual world which can exercise far more lasting and reassuring influence upon one's being. And because she attained an assuring grasp of this world, she could always be full of hope and faith. Like Shelley, she also had learnt to find "sweet benedictions in the eternal curse". Of course, this similarity with Shelley may not be methodical; because however much her mode of thinking might be influenced by direct or indirect contact of English Romantic poetry, as a mystic she was Indian to the core. She had a deep faith in the continuity and permanence of life and time as revealed in poems like 'Jiwanak Karo Manorama' (I Make My Life Graceful). Yet in her view of life and the world, she did not adopt the doctrine of illusion (Mayabad) propounded by the Upanishads. In her deep faith in the benevolent nature of the creation, she was influenced by the Romantic outlook. 'Viswasur' is a philosophy of faith. Despite the typically Indian tune flowing through the poem, a distant music of Shelley and Keats can be heard in the process of the active participation of the poet in the universal circle:

---

Jiwan mathon eti abaha sangit:
Mai gitikar.

'Viswasur'

(Life is only a background music composed by myself).

In her spiritualism, nothing of an ascetic is to be found; it is rather a reflection on how to lead a life of content being absorbed in all the worldly duties. Like Wordsworth's skylark, she is "true to the kindred points of heaven and home". She is hopeful of all bliss in the life to come while being a great lover of this life and this world.

Nalinibala Devi's humanism is similar to that of Shelley and Rabindranath Tagore in conceiving of humanity as potent with limitless possibilities. Just like Shelley, she is a dreamer, a confirmed optimist.

Glorification and reminiscence of childhood as a Romantic trait, is best manifest in the poetry of Wordsworth. For him, a child is "haunted for ever by the eternal mind". Nalinibala Devi also heard the sacred music of heaven (Tridibar pabitra sangit— 'Mahashishu' — The Eternal Child) in the crying of a child.

Nalinibala Devi's poetry shows two trends, spiritual and patriotic. She cherishes deep love and affection towards her motherland as a part of the habitation of humanity as a whole. In her is never felt any sense of
conflict between nationalism and patriotism; both are, in a sense, merged in universalism. In her is going on a natural process of elevation from nationalism to patriotism, from patriotism to universalism and from universalism to transcendentalism in the form of spiritualism. The love of her motherland is flowing in her vein as naturally as the flow of blood; and hence she does not have to plead for any upsurge of patriotic emotion executing itself in physical sacrifice. No external stimulation is needed to arouse this sensibility in her. For her love of her motherland is as natural as her love of God. There is neither temporal nor spacial demarcation in her patriotic feelings. As the imperfect individual, self-confined in the physical body, is ultimately merged in the perfect heavenly Self, the small land she was born in, is merged in the vast Indian spirit. Her "patriotic poems are without any political overtone, and may mean Assam as well as India" and a spiritual note vibrates through most of them. Besides the poems of _Jagriti_ (Awakening, 1963), some other significant poems on this theme are 'Ati Maramar Mor Eikhani Desh' (Very Dear is This Land of Mine), 'Janambhumi' (Motherland) 'Amar Opaja Thai' (The Land of Our Birth) and the like.

Hero-worship, a feature common in English Romantic literature, can be sensed in Nalinibala Devi's poems like

---

'Bharat Ratna Jawahar' (Jawahar, the Jewel of India), 'Lakshminath', 'Banikanta' and so on. Romanticists draw national inspiration from hero-worship. In the romantic vein natural to her, she also reminisces the past glory of Assam in poems like 'Mahanadar Atmakahini' (The Soliloquy of the Great River). No clear echo of political consciousness can be heard in her poems. In this aspect she has similarity more with William Blake than with Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth. "Blake's patriotism is a mystical and spiritual patriotism" and so is Nalinibala Devi's.

There is nothing strained in Nalinibala Devi. Going through her poems, one really senses the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling". This spontaneity was the key to her grasp of the spiritual world. Her passion, chastened by constant sorrow, vibrates through the poems in an exquisitely melodious form. Most of the poems in Sandhiyar Sur bear evidence to this. Sandhiyar Sur, Saponar Sur (Music of the Dreams, 1948), Parashmani (The Touchstone, 1957), Yugadevata (The God of the Age, 1958), Jagrity, Alakananda (1964), and Antim Sur (The Last Music, 1977) comprise the gamut of her poetry.

Nalinibala Devi was brought up in a religious atmosphere, though quite free from orthodoxy; and her

education comprised the reading of the Upanishads and other philosophical and literary works in Sanskrit. Brought up in the liberal and enlightened home of one of the top-ranking nationalist leaders of Assam, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, she also absorbed the Indian Renaissance spirit through the works of Rabindranath Tagore and other Bengali writers. Though she was familiar with English literature in translations, its direct influence on her was very little in comparison to those of Sanskrit and Bengali. Thus the fact of her being one of the confirmed Romantics must be ascribed more to her intuitive susceptibility to the spirit of the time than to a direct and positive study of English Romantic literature. Whatever the fact may be, this ascetic in the ways of personal life was as passionate a lover of life and the world as the English Romantics. Through her consistency to life in all situations she has come to be blessed with love, respect and renown with which very few Indian women have been blessed.

Other poets of the period:

Other poets of this period on whom influence of Romanticism can be traced are Padmadhar Chaliha (1895-1969), Lakshminath Phukan (1897-1975) and Prasannalal Choudhury (1898-1985).
Patriotism is the most salient feature in Padmadhar Chaliha's poems. Other Romantic features in his poems are reminiscence and glorification of the past and devotion to nature. Love also has a significant place in his poems.

Love and longing for beauty, a common Romantic trait, present in the poems of almost all the English Romantic poets, is the soul of Lakshminath Phukan's poetry. "A restless desire for beauty is the key-note of all his poems!" Patriotism is another Romantic characteristic present in his poems. His 'Brahmaputrar Prati' (To the River Brahmaputra) reveals the poet's patriotic feelings in a true Romantic mood of nostalgia.

The essence of Prasannalal Choudhury's poems is also patriotism. With his militant ideal "he enlivens the dying embers of A.G. Rai-Choudhury with a passion". The poems of his Agnimantra (Fire-Chant, 1952) also reveal the humanitarian in him fighting for the freedom of the spirit of the universal man.

60. Birinchi Kumar Barua : op.cit., p. 130.