CHAPTER III
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MODERNIZATION OF ASSAMESE POETRY

Modernity in Assamese literature is a post-world war phenomenon. The period of the Second World War may be called an age of silence in the history of Assamese literature. The enlightened people, as a rule were more interested in material benefits than in the pursuit of cultural or literary careers. Modern poet seems to undertake realistic subjects use diction of mixed type and reject rhymed verse. In most of the poems there is the revolt against God, society, amorous love and day dreaming. In modern poems two trends are apparent. One is the pro-marxist and other is non-marxist. Bhabananda Dutta, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Hem Baruah, Keshab Mahanta and many other belonged to the first line of thought. The non-marxist are a group that seems to criticized the modern capitalist society with a humanitarian and middle class outlook. They are Navakanta Barua, Mohim Borah, Homen Borgohain and others. The modern Assamese poets, as a rule, discard romanticism but it is not that they have been able totally avoid romantic vehemence and have not confounded in the poll of idyllic luxury.¹

¹ Bhattacharya, B.K.: Humour & Satire in Assamese Literature, Sterling Publishers, p. 165
Modern age in Assamese literature may be said to have begun from the contact with English literature in the middle of nineteenth century. This literature was in a very rudimentary form until ‘Jonaki’, an Assamese literary monthly which came to be published from Calcutta in the year 1889. Assamese literature of ‘Jonaki’ period up to the fourth decade of the twentieth century was essentially a literature created under the influence of English romantic writers. The national atmosphere changed in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the impact of Western thoughts and ideas was felt in life and literature. The socio-economic changes created the basis for the emergence of a middle class that soon became, by virtue of its advanced outlook and skills, the leading social class. Among the human agencies that were instrumental in promoting the changes were government of the day, educationists, liberal thinkers and evangelicals. The educational institutions and printed journals or books became immediate media through which new literary ideas were imparted. The old aristocratic classes that had patronized literature lost their status, and the old style of literature died at a natural death. The ancient literature became a part of cultural heritage and was reassessed in light of new critical consciousness. It could no longer cater to the taste of the middle class, whose outlook was secular and human. The English educated writers found in European Science and arts a new and vigorous source of

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2 Ibid p. 90
creative class generally followed the lead given by Ram Mohan Roy in synthesizing the best elements of both the worlds, the religious conservatives responded to the Western challenge by rejecting innovation. Western ideas began to spread along with the progress of English education in the land. The influence of Western ideas began to be keenly felt in the domain of literature, which now enters a period of varied creative activity. To this spread of new idea, the widening of horizons and enrichment of literature, the press and the newspaper made an invaluable contributions, particularly the Baptist Mission Press of Sibsagar and its periodical, The Arunoday (The Sun rising). Most Assamese books of the mid-nineteenth century were published from this press. The printed books and newspapers brought literature within the reach of the average man, and not only helped in its advancement but also enabled the growth of a standard language understood by all.

In this connection mention must be made of the major Assamese writer who tried to advance Assamese language and literature was Gunabhiram Baruah (1837-95). Like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram was also educated at Calcutta. The two principal works of Baruah are ‘Biography of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1880) and the ‘Assam Buranji’ (1884), both models of the modern scientific spirit in

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3 Oxford Indian History, Book – VIII, Chapter – VII.
biography and history respectively. Gunabhiram had skill in sifting and re-arranging details to bring out the soul of the man he wrote about and the spirit of the time he touched on. His history is also the first comprehensive modern history of Assam covering not only the political but also the religious, the social and the cultural aspects. His descriptions are charming, his language, devoid of rhetorical flowers, is elegantly, simple and appealing. In 1885, Gunabhiram edited a monthly journal, the 'Asom – Bandhu' (the friend of Assam) from Calcutta and sixteenth edition has already been published to which he himself contributed a number of valuable articles on Assam’s History. In Gunabhirams Barua’s hand Assamese prose attained a perfection not reached before. While his predecessors had made Assamese prose flexible enough to express all kinds of ideas and Christian missionaries had employed it not only for Christian theology but also for seculars knowledge including science, it was Gunabhiram who made it a full-fledged literary and artistic medium. He fostered literary culture amongst his friends by encouraging them to write, and was thus the central figures of much fruitful literary work. His dominating literary personality and his long literary career made his contemporaries regard him as the literary dictator of the time.

Another literary stalwart of the nineteenth century was Hemchandra Barua (1835-96), who has rightly been called the father of modern Assamese languages and literature. He brought great devotion to his work coupled with organization, assiduity and diligence. His grammar, of the Assamese language (1856) and Hemokos (Dictionary), the first standard works on lexicography, laid a sure foundation for the future development of the language. The Hemkos, became a standard lexicon giving the etymology of words and their English equivalents and clearly settings forth what each word in the Assamese language really meant. His grammar and dictionary remain even today standard texts. He was a gifted contributor to the Arunoday. He began his literary career as a writer of school texts, of which the Adipath and the Pathmala remain even today two of the best specimens of Assamese prose style of his other works. The Bahire Rang Cang Bhitare Kova Bhaturi (All that glitters is not Gold) is a Novelette, where the Satiric or critical spirit was for the first time introduced in Assamese literature. His Bahire Ran Cang Bhitare Kova Bhaturi which mounts a severe attack on religious hypocrisy and blind faith leading to the degeneration of Assamese social life is the semblance of fiction in Assamese. The real development of modern Assamese literature, however, commences with the publication of the monthly journal Jonaki (moonlight), by a few youngsters. This

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journal launched the Romantic Movement in Assamese literature and announced the dawn of a new creative era full of vibrant and brilliant literary output. The inspiration for the movement was drawn from English Romanticism and the literature of the age reveals all the features of Western romantic literature. Exaltation of imagination worship of nature, adoration of beauty and expression of personal love, revival of interest in folk literature, recreation of medieval lores and legends, profound love of the motherland, experimentation with new verse forms and use of the language of daily lie are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the literature of the period. Several news forms like the lyric, the sonnet, the ballad, the novel, the short story, and the essay were introduced in Assamese and a new type of writing stimulated by the impact of Western thought and feeling flourished. In fact, Jonaki was responsible for giving birth to a new age fostered by a liberal humanistic outlook.7

The real history of Assamese literature, however begins from the fourteenth century when king Durlabh Naryana was reigning over Kamata kingdom. From time till the advent of Sankardev, the great poet, musician and social reformer of the fifteenth – sixteenth century (1449-1568), Assam literature made a very promising start with translation and

adaptations from the two great epic; the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Harivara Vipra and Hem Sarasvati, the two earliest poets, received patronage from *Durlabh Narayan*, who has been glorified in the panegyric verses of their works *Lava – Kusar Yuddha* and *Vabruvahanar Yuddha*. The two full length *Kavyas* of Harivara Vipra amply bear testimony to his scholarship, poetic ability and through acquaintance with Assam life and manner. The next phase of the development of Assamese literature begins with the dawn of the sixteenth century and continuous till the end of the seventeenth century. This period being the period of the *Vaishnavite* revival, is characterized by an all – round florescence of literature in its different branches. The *Vaishnavite* movement was initiated by the versatile genius Sankardev. He was a scholar, a poet and an expert propagator. The vast mass of literature produced during the period of *Vaishnava* renaissance may be classified into the following categories.

1. * Translation from epics and Puranas
   * Devotional romance
   * Drama
   * Songs of sublime nature set to classical melodies
   * Devotional compendiums in verse.

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2. * Prose translation and summaries from Puranas.
   * Prose Biographies.

The third phase of Assamese literary history begins with the rise of the Ahom as the dominant political power in Assam. This phase comes to an end with the conquest of Assam by the British in the third decade of the nineteenth century. The modern phase of Assamese literature commenced with the occupation of Assam by the British in 1826. With the establishment of the British regime, the Western influences began to penetrate Assamese literature. The contact with the British and liberal education through the medium of the English language brought about a remarkable social and intellectual awakening which led to the emergence of a new literary era. But in the early years of British rule, Assamese literature, which had seen an extraordinary development during the Vaishnavite Movement in the early sixteenth century suffered a great setback. The literary and cultural development had taken place during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The closing years of the eighteenth century and the first quarters of the nineteenth century were marked by civil strife and foreign invasions. Repeated Burmese invasions reduced Assam Virtually to a Wasteland. The atmosphere was not conducive to the cultivation of art and literature. With the advent of British rule people

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9 Ibid. p. XV
10 Ibid. p. XVI
entertained new hopes which were soon shattered because of the wrong educational policy of the new rulers. The British had little knowledge of the local language and the local situation and hence they made Bengali the medium of administration and instruction. Assamese students were thus denied the normal facility for learning through their mother tongue. This provoked strong protest on the part of Assamese who had to fight a long battle for recognition of their cultural and linguistic identity. The mistake, however, was corrected in 1873, when Assamese was restored to its rightful place. In the restoration of the language, American Baptist missionaries played a very significant role. They took up the cause of the language with the assistance of such local talents as Ananda Ram Dhekiyal Phukan, a young civil assistant under the British Government and many-sided personality, who earnestly endeavoured to strengthen Assamese Social life by encouraging a significant outlook and who, in his "A few Remarks on the Assamese language and on Vernaculars Education in Assam (1855) made a forceful plea for the rehabilitation of the Assamese language. After the untimely death of Phukan the missionaries acted as a torch-bearers in the struggle for the introduction of Assamese. They not only argued for the recognition of the Assamese but also wrote and published informative books and other elementary works on various subjects in Assamese. They translated the Bible and few classics, including Bunyan's 'the Pilgrim's progress', into Assamese and
published a number of books which paved the way for the growth of the Assamese Novel. *Orunodoi* (1846) the first Assamese monthly journal was published under the auspices of the Baptist society. A stream of new ideas relating to important aspects of social life circulated through *Orunodoi*. The missionaries thus prepared the ground for a new phase of life and a news era in literature.\(^{11}\)

It was felt and realized through the influence of Bengali, and it was through this alien contact that the magnetic charge of familiarizing the people with Western literature was conducted; naturally the influence was chequered, with the ultimate restoration of Assamese and publication of "Jonaki" from Calcutta played an important role for bringing the new literary trend. The latter part of the nineteenth century was an era of unequalled enthusiasm for Assam; it was a period of great interest and inspiration. The influx of new ideas due to contact with the Western literature gave our literature of this period a new evolutionary Stamina and Standard.\(^{12}\) Modern age in Assamese literature is essentially an age of poetry; no other avenue of literature has stimulated as much interest and study as this. Both from the point of technique and subject matter, Western impact on it is the deepest. The history of modern Assamese

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literature like that of other Indian literature is not an experiment in evolution, an indigenous process, but an accelerated drift from one extreme to another made possible by Western education and its aesthetic impact. The most tangible result of it is the growth of the lyric as a class by itself. It is said that the lyric is a general term for all poetry susceptible of being sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. The modern age of Assamese poetry is an era that synchronises with an all-round development of the lyric.

The principal characteristics of the Romantic Movement are: return to nature, personal love, interest in the supernatural and medieval legends, sympathetic treatment of the commonplace, revolt against conventions, experimentation with new metres etc. Under romantic inspiration the personal theme in poetry grew. Modern lyric compositions are in a sense lyric confessions. With the advent of the personal role in poetry there has been a rapid growth of love-poems in literature. Romantic love under Western literary inspiration, particularly that of shelley, has come to be treated as an ideal subject for poetry in our modern literature. The other aspect of love which, according to Alexis Carrel, stimulates the mind when it does not attain its object also finds an
exhilarating expression particularly in the songs of Jatin Duara and Ganesh Gogol.\textsuperscript{13}

The history of Assamese literature is not an experiment in evolution an indigenous process but an accelerated drift made possible by Western creation and aesthetic impact. Westernization was the medium through which modernization process reached within each of the literature of India and the rest of literature as well.\textsuperscript{14} As a result of the spread of the Western system of education and the consequent impact of Western ideas on the minds of the people, Assamese poetry underwent radical changes in birth form and content. This change began to be noticed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Assamese literature was influenced by the Romantic Revival in England and the result was a new and unprecedented florescence of Assamese literature, rich and varied, vital and vigorous. The old and narrow outlook yielded place to catholicity, formalism to a variety of attractive and new patterns. There were innovations in declines, rhythm and imagery, potent instrument of poetic consciousness, and what emerged from these innovations was something novel invigorating, powerful and brilliant. Assamese poetry entered into a romantic period of large and lofty dreams of Utopias and El Doradas, daring hopes and Sky-scraping aspirations. The new poetry

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid p. 153
\textsuperscript{14} Aiyar, S.P.: Modernization of traditional society and other essays, p.15.
sang of freedom for all from political dependence, social injustice, religious bigotry, of the dignity of the individual and of the unity of the nation.  

Modern Assamese poetry cannot be studied without studying modern English poetry as well as modern Bengali poetry perhaps this is the with all the modern Assamese poets of generation. Hem Barua, one of the forerunners of modern poetry in Assamese. He is basically a poet of two decades the forties and fifties. Though modern Assamese poetry had its birth in the page of “Jayanti” edited by Ramatharnayan Dev and Chakreswar Bhattacharya, real modern Assamese poetry is said to have begun through the page of “Ramdhenu”. Hem Barua, was in a sun the leader and founder of modern Assamese poetry. He showed no learning towards romanticism. He emerged as a progressive poet and developed various trends of modernity in his poetry. He initiated the movement, shaped and fashioned it and had inspired a lot of young poets to follow the modernistic ideal. He started his poetic career in the early forties of the nineteenth century. By his poem “Bandar” (the Monkey) the poet declared his deviation from the Romantic tradition. He made mark as a

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15 Barua, Birinchi Kr.: History of Assamese literature Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, p.110.
16 Ibid.
17 Avahan, March, 1940
socially conscious poet with his name “Puja” (the worship)\textsuperscript{18} Gauhati 1944\textsuperscript{19} and \textit{Daul Purnima}\textsuperscript{20} (the holy festival). \textit{“Jayanti”}, \textit{“Pachowa”} and \textit{“Ramdhenu”} were the periodicals that served as the avenues for his poetic career. These three magazines boldly introduced to the poetry reading public. The new sentiments shaped by Hem Barua. \textit{‘Balichanda’} (sand hopper, 1959) and \textit{‘Manmayuri’} (the mind – a peacock, 1965) are the two collected works of his poems. Hem Barua edited an anthology of Assamese poetry in 1960. He brought new message for Assamese poetry. He carried new dreams new hopes and new promises for the people. This newness came in the wake of progressivism. The neo-humanistic outlook developed by that time aroused a sense of high hope and relief to the suffering humanity. He was warmly alive to the desire of the people to be free in all respects and with a sympathetic heart he shaped this consciousness of the people into his poetry.

\textit{In the high – fluttering tide of time,}

\textit{We will also cross the flood waters,}

\textit{We will swim, swim and arrive at the other shore}

\textit{Or will perish, not only us, but thousand}\textsuperscript{21}

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\textsuperscript{18} Sarma, J.N.: \textit{Aadhunik Asomia Kabita}, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p. 119.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Jayanti}, August, 1944.
\textsuperscript{21} Barua, Hem: \textit{Balichanda}, p. 18.
\end{flushleft}
With a warm heart the poet has drawn the pains, sorrows and hungers of the working class and more precisely of the labourers the farmers and the soldiers. The capitalist exploitation has robbed the poor folk of the charm of living. The poet’s sympathy for them is well apparent in his call to make an end to the blood - sucking lizards.

*There is the battle dance of the blood – sucking*

*Lizard on the harvest heap*

*How many days are left*

*For the lizards to extinguish?*

*And how many.*

Apart from his poems of socialistic revival mention may be made of his poems built on the recollection of past, invocation of a future, glories of youth and revolution and hundreds of personal sentiments. Hem Barua brought innovations in the technical side of poetry. These innovation were in the field of diction, language and in the form of picturisation. His diction is simpler and drawn from common speech. He has selected inflated prose as the medium of expression and this he has used with equipoise.

As it is stated that poetry was the earliest medium of expression as in other languages. No wander that the new spirit of romanticism also

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Kamalakanta Bhattacharya, of course, had a faith in a bright future and in the poem “Himalayar Prati Sambodhan” (1919, An address to the Himalays) ends up an optimistic note:

A new earth will now be slowly born
And envy and hatred with yield to lore
And peace will possess the world.23

It is true that Bezbarua was not an outstanding poet. But he, with his friend Chandra Kumar Agarwala, gave Assamese poetry a new turn by blending the forms of Assamese folk songs with the lyricism of Western romantic poetry, and composed some beautiful lyrics including “Dhankar Aru Rataini,” the first literary ballad in Assamese. The Ballads sometimes starts with question and sometime answers. There is no identity with one another. As for example:

O where have you been, my long lost love
This long seven years and more?
O I come again to seek you love
And the lows that you did swear.24

He published two collection of poems – Pratima (image, 1914) and Bin Baragi (The Roving Minstrel, 1923). Several of his poems like

found its earliest articulation in verse. As one modern poet remarks
“Burdened with the complexity of lives we lead, fretting over
appearances, netted in with anxieties and apprehension, half smothered in
drift to tepid thoughts and tepid feelings, we may refuse what poetry has
to give; but under this influence serenity returns to the troubled mind, the
world crumbles, loveliness, shines like flowers after rain and the further
reality is once more charged with mystery.” Love of the beauty
developed in the Assamese poets a fuller appreciation of the scenic
grandeur of their country. Similarly, its interest in antiquity imbued the
Assamese poets with a deeper understanding and a more intense love of
the national heritage. A leading poet of this new movement was Kamala
Kanta Bhattacharya. For the first time in Assamese literature, he sounded
the clarion call of liberal patriotism. His patriotism, however, consisted
not only in rousing a forgetful, sleeping but puissant nation to the glories
of their ancient culture, but also in urging it to march with the times and
follow the methods of Western nations. He was inspired by the examples
of Garibaldi and Mazzini:

*Then will be born hundreds of Mazzinis*

*Out of neglect stones,*

*And hundreds of Garibaldis too*

*To shed lustre on the soil of India.*
“Bankunvari” (The Sylva Fairy) *Tejimala* (Cindrella), *Niyar* (The Dew Drops) not only show a sustained romantic imagination at work but also reveal his deeply mystical vision of life. Hemchandra Goswami, who attempted different literary forms, published only a single volume of poems, “*Phular Chaki*” (the Bunch of flowers, 1907), which contain the first Sonnet in Assamese – *Priyatmar Cithi* (A letter from the beloved). A find specimen of the Petrarchan Sonnet, “*Priyatamar Cithi*” shows Goswami’s mastery over formal metre. After him the only poet to write successful Sonnets was Hiteswar Barbarua, (1876-1939) who published two collection of Sonnets – *Malac* (The Garden, 1918) and *Cakulo* (Tears 1922). Barua is, however better based on glorious historical episodes from Assamese history.

Among the major poets of the Jonaki age the most notable are Raghunath Choudhury (1879-1966), Ambikagiri Raichoudhury (1885-1967), Nalinibala Devi (1898-1978), and Jatindra Nath Dowerah (1892-1964). Although all of them represented a broadly romantic consciousness, each had his or her original approach to literature. Raghu Nath Choudhury’s, popularly known as Bihagi Kavi (the bird poet), wrote a series of beautiful poems on birds and flowers. “*Golap*” (The Rose), “*Phulsajya*” and “*Keteki*” (the nightingale), a long poem are some of his

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25 Pujari, Dr. Archana: *Asomia Kabitar Bisar Bisleshan*, p. 100.
lies not only in its innovation in using the dramatic monologue but also in
the way the language of daily use is charged with force.26

Now let’s turn to a quick look to the characteristics of modern
Assamese poetry. Assamese poetry of the forties of twentieth century
showed a marked deviation from the Romantic tradition. In place of
Romantic treatment of the ideas and emotions of the earlier period a
realistic approach in poetry grew up. New trends both in from and content
came on and the horizon of Assamese poetry widened to a considerable
extent. New ideas, new experiences and newer outlook on man and
society inspired a completely new strain in Assamese poetry, which
obviously goes by the same of new poetry. This new poetry received a
direct Western influences and imbibed the modern tendencies of poetry
prevalent in America and England by that time. The major poets who
initiated this modern movement was Amulya Barua, Hem Kanta Barua
and Navakanta Barua. “Jayanti”, “Pachowa”, “Ramdhenu” were the
magazines to which the credit of introducing the new movement of poetry
goes. The trends and accomplishments of the continental moderns poets
like T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Anden, Dylan Thomas, Mayakovasky
Bandelaire and Mallarme found a marked reflection in the poetry of the

best. Ambika Giri Raichoudhury, a born rebel, combines two major elements of Romantic poetry – mysticism and patriotism. His *Tumi* (The 1913) a long poem of seven cantos, opens with a sensuous description of the physical beauty of his beloved and then rises to mystical heights. He was an apostle of patriotism and an uncompromising nationalist. He actively participated in the freedom movement, for which he had to undergo rigorous imprisonment. Most of the patriotic poems included in his songs of the cell (1942) were composed while he was in prison. An important later collection of such poems is *Bedenar Ulka* (A meteor of pain 1964). The only other poet comparable to him in the expression of burning patriotism is Prasannalal Choudhury (1902-79). Other significant poets who wrote patriotic poetry are Jyotiprasad Agarwala (1903-51), Binanda Chanda Barua, Dimbeswar Neog (1900-66) and Sailadhar Rajkhowa (1892-1968). Although Nalinibala Devi wrote a series of fine patriotic poems, she is essentially a poet of mysticism. Submissive faith in the divine spirit is a favourite and constant them of her poetry. In a number of soul-stirring poems included in the collections *Sandhiyar Sur* (The melodies of the evening 1928). *Saponar Sur* (The Melodies of Dream) and *Parasmani* (Touchstone 1954). She expresses the pining of the soul for the infinite through striking images. Under the impact of the romantic upsurge, a number of younger poets emerged in the thirties of these one poet who deserves notice is Devakanta Barooh whose poetry
new Assamese poets. The chief characteristics of the new poetry both in form and content are as follows.

(i) A Neo-Humanistic Outlook:

The most important aspect of the new poetry was the rise of a new humanistic outlook. The new modern poets discovered the identity of man as man and tried to share their joys and sorrow. The new humanitarian outlook gave them the vision to outlook upon the whole mankind with equal eye. Thus the poet extended their love and sympathy to the oppressed labourers of the coal mines, the rickshaw pullers, the windows and the Vagrants. Amongst the new poets Amulya Barua focused his attention specially on the suffering humanity. While Ram Gogoi, Keshav Mahanta and Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya followed his ideal to a much greater degree. The down trodden and the suffering humanity, not only of the country but of the whole worlds got due representation in this type of new poetry.

(ii) The influence of Marxian Philosophy:

The teaching of the German Philosopher Karl Marx influenced the new poets considerably. His dialectical materialism brought new gospels

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27 Barua, Amulya: Achina, p. 69.
28 Narayan, Jyoti Sarma (Ed.): Aadhunik Asomia Kabita
29 In the poems of Bhava Prasad Raj Khowa.
30 Narayan, Jyoti Sarma (Ed.): Aadhunik Asomia Kabita
for the young poets. Karl Marx maintained that the doctrine of surplus value or the unequal distribution of wealth gave rise to all sorts of social discomfort. The capitalist forces of production compelled the working class to groan under poverty and other various sufferings. Marx therefore projected a newer social and political engineering. “He pointed out that by organizing and directing the struggle of the working class against the capitalists and their associates, and by interlinking with this struggle in certain quite possible ways the struggle of the poor peasants and tenant farmers against the land-lord, and carrying it forward to a veritable ‘dictatorship’ of these exploited classes, it would be possible to take possession of the instruments of production and change the system. It would be possible to change it in those days necessary in order to make reasonable the effort to create a classless society in which men will receive according to needs and work according to ability.” The new poets had developed easily a softer sentiments for Marx and appreciated his gospels by inserting them in their own poetry. As a result their poetry to became commensurate with the slogan of the working class and enemical to the capitalists. Amulya Barua, Hem Barua, Kesav Mahanta, Amalenda Guha, Ram Gogoi and few other portrayed the Marxian feelings in their poetry. It may be identically observed here that by the forties of this century the Marxian spirit in poetry echoed and re-echoed through the world.
(iii) **The Guidance of the Psychologists:**

Like Marx, Freud too had an abounding influence on the modern mind. The explorations of this Austrian professor in the domain of psychology brought a veritable revolution. The theory of the organization of the Id, the ego and the super-ego for the development of a healthy personality captured the imagination of all men. Likewise, his interpretation of dream and allied psychological phenomena have been received with great admiration all over the world. In the new Assamese poetry also the Freudian concepts came to occupy a very important place. The subtle psychological treatment of the myths and symbols as we have them in the new Assamese poetry, is accountable to an appreciation of the concepts of Freud and the Teachings of another celebrated psychologist, Jung.\(^31\)

(iv) **Contribution of the Physicist:** The new poets learned a lot from the modern physicist also. The twentieth century has been the enormous development of the natural sciences, which has ultimately found a reflection also in the contemporary literature and arts. The new poetry too, duly exhibit the impacts of the work of the physicists. The physicists have widened the scope of human understanding. Maxplank, Bohre and Einstien have changed the very concept of the running of the universe. Einstein’s theory of relativity has brought new hopes for mankind as far \(^31\) Kataki, Dr. Chandra: *Aadhunik Asomia Kabita*, p.4.
as man’s conquest of time and space is concerned. The innovations in other sciences like that of Fraser in Anthropology have changed enormously.\textsuperscript{32} All these things received due attention of the news poets. And in the sphere of biology concepts like that of the secretion of the glands, the functioning of the Neurs and the genetic basis of inheritances led the new poets to evince a good deal of interest in them.

(v) \textbf{Growth of an Industrial Climate:}

The growth of the industries in Assam is a thing of recent origin; it began only in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} decade of the twentieth century and a complete industrialization of the state is yet to take place. The industrialization of the state brought its own peculiar problems to the people. These problems of the industrial environment were hitherto unknown to the people. The only industry of repute from a long period was the tea industry; but the industrial climate of the tea garden did not find proper representation in poetry. The tea – garden labour folk had to wait for these new poets to see their life portrayed in poetry with sympathy. The growth of oil – fields in Assam was a thing of maximum importance, people looked at mechanism of oil exploration with awe, admiration and jealousy. The grabbing of the fertile, green fields by the giant structured derricks for drillings operation pained the peasants much. The plight of cities like Guwahati and Calcutta

\footnote{Tripathi, Dipty: \textit{Aadhunik Bangla Kavya Paricay}, p. 13.}
mattered much to the new poets. Most of these new poets came in direct contact with Calcutta for various reasons and they were led to note with concern the restlessness of the city life.

(vi) **Discredit to the old tradition:**

The new poets not only rebelled against the nineteenth century values (of life, love, religion, society, etc.) but they also declared a total discredit to the old tradition. The traditional values of religion, love, social and moral ethics were questioned and the poets advocated to make man free from his traditional bindings. One poet ventured so much that he openly declared God to be only an Algebrian, *(He Isvar tumi hoba alegbrar X)*.\(^{33}\) Disillusionment and doubt played a vital role in the growth of the poetic personality and consequently the poems of the new poets came to communicate a sense of rootlessness and a sense of negation. The loss of faith in the existing order of things and the sense of negation often led these poets to a *Nihihism*\(^{34}\) or *Nihilistic* climate of modernity. The revolt against the capitalistic foundations of society was another aspect of the voice of the new young poets.\(^{35}\) Most of the young poets, Nay all Suffered from the conflict and clamour that was brought forth by their negative approach to the life and the world.

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33 Sarmah, Jyoti Narayan (Ed.): *Aadhunik Asomia Kabita*, Baruah Navakanta.
34 David, Perkins: *A History of Modern Poetry* (from the 1890’s to the high modernist mode, p.31.
35 Like Baruah, Hem Vide his Balicanda Poems, p.2.
(vii) **Discredit to the Romantic Love:**

The romantic poets voiced relentlessly the glories of love. The new poets totally discarded the romantic sensibility of love and approached love with more realism and a better understanding. The new poets exposed that behind the high pitched love of the romantic poets, there existed the working of the libido and the secretion of the glands. Love came to be recognized as a biological affair and its success as dependent on economic security. Syed Abdul Malik was the first poet to decry the romantic sentimentality of love.

(viii) **Neo-intellectual growth:**

The changes in the field of arts and letters and science and psychology gave rise to new intellectual atmosphere. The neo-intellectual trend landed the new poetry in almost an alien atmosphere. Geoffrey Bullough while describing the trends of modern English poetry has remarked, “Biology, Anthropology, Psychology, Economic and Social struggle have weakened our faith in the instruments of body and mind. We are organisms ill-adapted to an alien world, unsure of heaven and of our own nature, yet faced with the problems of survival and growth as intelligent civilized beings in an age when our vast new knowledge is used for purely material and even bestial ends, and when the social order
is being transformed by economic pressure and inward desire.\textsuperscript{36} The remarks of this enlightened critic about the English poetry may be equally applied to the new Assamese poetry. Most of the modern Assamese poets of this new school were highly educated young men and as such they gave voice to an intellectual reaction against the conflicts and tyrannies of the modern world.

(ix) \textbf{Western Influence:}

The forties of this century was the heyday for the modern English and American poetry. The great prophets of modern poetry like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Louis Macniece, W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas, Sitwells and Mallarme received wide patronage throughout the world by this time. The influence and the reputation of the French Symbolists Baudelaire, Mallarme and Paul Vallery were very high in all the poetry loving countries of the world. The new Assamese poets were alive to the poetic movements of the different countries and they read deep into the poetry of the great masters of the age, and naturally their poetry too, could not resist the rich influences of these great masters. Moreover, modern poetry in the West had to face the existentialist philosophy of jean paul satre, the surrealist philosophy of Louis Aragone and the imagist philosophy of Ezra Pound and others. Modern poetry in the West learnt a lot from these

\textsuperscript{36} Bullough, Geoffrey: \textit{The trend of Modern Poetry}, p.2.
contacts and transmitted the same to the Indian poetry and hence to Assamese. All these things shaped and fashioned the new modern poetry in Assam. Assamese poets had warm acquaintance with the modern Russian poets like Mayakovasky and Spanish poets like Pablo Neruda. And the close intimacy of the new Assamese poetry with Japanese poetry as far as the structural patterns is concerned makes a delightful study. With reference to the new Assamese poetry Dr. B.K. Barua observes: “In the poetry of Hem Kanta and Navakanta Barua notices the adoption of images, symbols and music such as ones meet’s with, in the poetry of Baudelaire, Paul Vallary, Stephen Mallarme and Rainer Maria Rilke...Navakanta has been influenced more deeply by T.S. Eliot than by others. Like Eliot he also believes that poetry requires a language rich in suggestions both to senses and intellect.”

Miscellaneous Trend of Modern Assamese Poetry:

The new poets showed a special love for the common man. The life and activities of the common people became object of poetry. The poets could not be silent over the suffering humanity. These view poems had certain sense of involvement in respect of the social problems and such the life of the oppressed could not evade their attention. The new poets tried to free modern poetry from the rigorous discipline prescribed by the

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37 Barua, Dr. B.K.: History of Assamese Literature, p. 146.
earlier masters and as such novel experiments both in form and content
grew up and also lashed a violent attract on the middle class people and
their cheap intellectual pursuits. Poetry by this time had become more
intellectual than emotional. The new generation had the dream for a new
brave world where man’s existence as man would be established once for
all. Assamese poetry by this time had to come to a closer touch of
Bengali poetry. The Assamese college youths at Calcutta had the chance
of coming into contact with the new movement of Bengali poetry
initiated by Buddhadev Bose, Jivanana Das, Bishnu Dey and Amiya
Chakravarty. These celebrated poets of Bengal had an obvious impact on
the new Assamese poets and their political productions.

Modern Assamese poetry is somewhat intellectual although
emotion has not been totally divorced. Surrealism, symbolism and
imagism and other techniques of modern continental poetry and also
sprung verse or verse – libre and rhythmic prose have been successfully
employed to express the new poetic sensibility. It is not possible to name
all the writers of the post – independence period, yet some names deserve
mention on account of their rich contribution. Hem Barua, Navakanta
Barua, Nilamoni Phookon, Mahendra Bora, Hari Barkakoti, Bireshwar
Barua, Hiren Bhattacharya in the field of poetry. The stream of
consciousness, the Marxian philosophy, existentialism, Freudian
psychology, the absurd technique and Brechtian epic style of dramatic presentation are some of the phenomena noticed in the current literature.\(^{38}\)

Mention has already been made that modern Assamese poetry is a post-war affair. The Second World War shook the very soul of British India. The impacts of this war great. India was dragged to the war and Assam had to witness the war from very close quarters and battles were actually fought well within the geographical jurisdiction of the then Assam at Kohima and Dimapur. The heavy troop-mobilization, the soaring – prices, the social and moral delinquencies changed the very structure of the social life. The dropping of Atom bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed the evils of the deadly weapons. Science and Industry came to Assam at a rapt speed by this time but the people’s plight grew pitiable. Moreover, there were the repressions of the Britishers over the innocent volunteers of the freedom movement of 1942. Modernity came to the life and society in this chaotic hour. This modernity obviously gave rise to the modernity or newness in poetry. It is needless to say that all the trends did not happen singularly in one poet or within a short time. These trends got manifestation in the works of different poets and at different times. The new poetry grew up in all its trends and accomplishments over a long span of time.

Whatsoever, the new modern poetry has attempted to depict as well as to reflect upon the conditions and predicaments of man, revealing the areas of darkness and tension in modern life and modern consciousness and the underlying spring of a purpose, affirmation and a possible assurance of harmony. Its quality of inward search and its intense exploratory nature have enabled modern Assamese poetry to step out of its confining romantic barriers and to engage itself with the open realities of life.39

39 Ibid