IMAGERY: ITS APPLICATION IN ASSAMESE POETRY (1900-1940)

INTRODUCTION

Aim and objectives:

It is said that the poet is the creator of the wonderful wide world of poetry (apare kavya-samsaresha kavi-reva-praja-patih). He creates his own world of imagination according to the sweet will that wanders freely like the moths and butterflies from flower to flower. His mind is so flowery that we cannot imagine it. It is an humble attempt to look into such wonderful regions of the poet's mind. So it is the humblest approach to collect a few of the most flowery moods and attitudes depicted well in beautiful pictures embodied in their poems. To an ordinary eye and ear the power to create wonderful objects (apurva vastu nirmana kshama prajna pratibha) is not so intelligible. Yet we shall try honestly in all possible ways to unveil the inner beauty as far as practicable and enter into it or enjoy it. In short, it will cover the wide sphere of thousand different colourfull minds of different poets of the period under review.

Method and procedure:

We have no particular poetics of our own to consider the imagery and such other relevant matters. Western criticism is rich in this field of reviewing it as the imagery is a new
topic though our ancient poetics and aesthetics had the particular methods and schools of evaluating a poem. What the moderns call an image, the Indians called अर्थचित्र or figures of sense according to the nature of a poetic image.

So we shall try to follow all the important methods of the western critics on imagery in order to find its importance, nature and function etc. in poetry first and what moderns look for in imagery and its application will come next. It will not be out of place to follow the touch-stones of our Sanskrit poetry as and when necessary in our discussion here.

And there is no royal road for that.

Imagery: Its application in Assamese poetry 1300-1940

Every philosophy requires a starting point, a premise and it is a nature of these premises to be beyond verification.

This is not a philosophical topic, but it seems as old as the philosophy is. A man is a born philosopher. And most of his expressions have got some philosophy inherent in them. Poetry is the oldest, the foremost expression of human being whatever be his or her mode. The first word he or she uttered or tried to utter was in a symbol or sign like those of the aborigines of our day. So we or our ancestors began to talk and then write in symbols, no doubt. Symbols are thus the first creations of the inquisitive beings. Primitive nature

of man changed as their soul force acted in them. That was embodied in expression, the spirit thus found body — the mind got expressed in words. Words formed language that has the eternal fruit-literature.

Aesthetic pleasure is at the root of all the creations of literature, and its different ramifications like poetry, drama, novel, short-story etc. 'Poetry' along with its beauty — ornaments like metaphor, simile, symbol and all other most mentionable characteristics — the form and content, figures of speech as rhetoric and prosody have laid, is of various categories. Moods and attitudes of poets are innumerable as our propensities are. So we get various types of poetry. Our topic here is the imagery in poetry as the modern critics now consider its value in poetry.

Importance of Imagery in literature:

Every human being, is, as he perceives anything, a creator and idealizing agent. The secondary imagination as defined by Coleridge is the higher plastic power to make the primary imagination concrete in form. Imagination is a conferring, abstracting, modifying and endowing power. It unites and coalesces. It shapes and creates. According to Charles Lamb it draws all things to one. Wordsworth also stressed on its power to aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine. Actually the primary imagination is the basic and universal
power of knowing while the secondary is a special power of artistic knowing. None can excel what Coleridge propounded first in his words that imagination reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and of freshness, with old familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. It blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial. Imagination subordinates our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. There lies the importance of the imagery in literature. It is the most enthusiastic and expansive account of the aesthetic reconciliation. Miss Alice D. Snyder termed this view of Coleridge as a constitutional malady. The doctrine of reconciliation is of wide and varied sanction for poetic moods, and genres. It may make the internal external, the external internal. This is a mystery of genius.

Images become poetic when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit. It shoots its being through earth, sea and air. Poetic imagination sees the heart and inner nature, makes them felt but fancy sets the outside, and is able to give a portrait of the outside, clear, brilliant and full of detail. C.D. Lewis strengthened the view Coleridge propounded as he says that what moderns look for in imagery is the freshness and the evocative power,
freshness and potentiality of an image through the novelty of its diction, its material, or both to reveal something we had not realized before. If there is any essential in imagery, it is not boldness, or intensity, but congruity— that the image should be congruous with the passionate arguments and also with the form of poem. In the same spirit I.A. Richards also said in his Principles that too much importance had been attached to the sensory qualities of images. What gives an image efficacy is less its vividness as an image than its character as a mental event peculiarly connected with sensation. Its efficacy comes from its being a reflect and a representation of sensation. And behind the visible world to our senses has got an invisible mysterious supernatural one. Through imaginative faculty that world is visible to the poet. He depicts that vision of mystery in poetry. The unseen, unattainable world was the quest for the romantic poets with all the sincerity and emotional faith. To see the mysterious sign of that in the visible world and its beauty he comes closer to the mysticism. As they saw the external world in their inner vision so the world turned to their individual. Individual imagination, principle and taste made that world of vision human and mental but it was particular for a particular mind. Wordsworth has his own, Shelley, Keats or our poets like Agarwala, Duara, Raichoudhuri etc. have their own world. That has particular meaning too. Keats believed that imagination can help him reach the ultimate goal, the truth.
So he uttered, 'beauty is truth, truth beauty.'

Semantically the terms image, metaphor, symbol and myth overlap. And they clearly point to the same area of interest. Most probably the sequence — image, metaphor, symbol and myth may be said to represent the convergence of two lines, both important for the theory of poetry. One is sensuous particularity, or the sensuous and aesthetic continuum, which connects poetry with music and painting, and disconnects it from philosophy and science; the other is the figuration or tropology, the oblique discourse which speaks of metonyms and metaphors partially comparing worlds, precis­ing its themes by giving them translations into the other idioms. With the change of the philosophical values the trend of criticism or the approach to the world by writers like the poet, novelist or the dramatist also changes. The change is seen in methods. So we see in the new approaches the new structure, a distinctive shape impregnated with a paradox, ambiguity, metaphor, tension and the like. It is felt that the ultimate appeal of metaphor has lain in giving imaginative configuration to the average human beings sense and thus the image brought together in one perspective man's present suffer­ing and his faith. It has its commonest linguistic formula­tions (concors discordia rerum) and the commonest analogies ('the world as picture, play, poem, building etc.) all suggested, like the parent image. This parent image grew out to make the reader understand, grasp the thesis and antithesis of experience.
Man's deepest orientation is personal. Man is the individual and at the particular vanishing point of time and space for the rapid change, he becomes the measure of all things. It is certain for a seer like the poet, philosopher. So the impressions of the impressionists are not tenable, are no longer pure impressions, but an admixture of interpretation, translation of impressions into images, metaphors, etc. and analysis. The precision of language, the nakedness of vision, the concentration of thought which the imagists love to fuse in a dominant image can be seen after the symbolists. So poetry is a matter of images and metaphors and images in verse are not mere decorations, but the very essence of an emotive and intuitive language. Yet poetry is not a turning loose of emotion. In qualitative progression the transition from image to image is governed by mood and the principle of coherence is that of feeling.

It is a long history now as we know from Plutarch that poetry is a speaking picture and painting a mute poetry. Horace also said in his most persuasive of all the three words—Ut pictura poesis, that is some pictures are murals, and some miniatures and so with poems. The relation or parallelism, a visually centred sensationalist aesthetic could promote the discussion of poetry, in terms of sculpture or painting and in Aristotle's Poetics music, dancing and painting are forms of mimesis. Poetry is not. A plot of a poem is like a line drawing or sketch for a painting. The fiction and
imagery are like the colours, the outline to advantage, filled.

In our land ancient poetics dwelt upon Upama (simile) and Rupaka (metaphor). The touchstone of Sanskrit poetry was the application of simile and metaphor being the glory of the poets. Greeks and Romans distinguished simile and metaphor very neatly. But modern critics could not be satisfied with the old view that imagery is nothing but the figures of speech or meaning only which the ancients believed. But figures of speech or meaning may not be the core of the heart of a poem because of the fact that some of the greatest or noblest works are free from such figures. There lies the original difference between a figure of speech and the imagery. And image, symbol and myths were not known to the ancients as they are new words in the field of literature. But a modern critic has the parallel literary trend, contemporary to him, as his centre around which the aesthetic beauty or process is considered now.

**Purpose of imagery:**

Not only in a realistic sense but also in philosophy or science the words used or applied, indirectly denote the common sense only. In use the words mean what is intended but in philosophy and science they may help to think more. Through poetry the poet wants to impress the audience with what he feels of the truth in imagination, or genius and also tries to influence them. But that needs the most pleasing and attractive side
or point. That depends on the capability of the susceptor and the representation of the creator. That representation or reproduction is the knowledge of the knowing one, the familiar thing. And for an image there must be some will, desire, and passions. For the English romantic poets the imagination is fundamental, because they think that without it poetry is impossible. It helps to beautify or influence the spirit of the poet through his poems. It can invigorate the intensity, fastness and also revitalise the old memories. So many experiences, thoughts and feelings, the full free and wide range of emotions and passions have been moving like the waves in the sensibility of a poet since the very day of his birth and so many experiences and thoughts are dead in the sub-conscious or, unconscious state. But the unanalysable creative power can revive the lost emotions or thoughts in new images. So images serve the purpose of reaching easily the inmost world of the poet's mind. They may turn the material and mortal world into the eternal one. An eternal cry, a loud laughter, soul wringing agonies have no external sphere or glory, nor a physical existence. But that laughter, cry, agonies can't be heard in the usual way by our ears, nor it can be visible to our mortal eyes, can't be touched, can't be felt physically. It can be touched, seen, smelt or heard in the innermost soul of our vision. That is the visionary world. To turn an ordinary into the extra-ordinary, to attain the most unattainable, to realise
the Absolute Reality is the aim of an image. Microcosm and macrocosm can be attributed to imagery. Poetry comes into existence for this purpose and fulfills itself when it achieves that end. It is through imagery we can achieve it. It is the suggestion of creation or creative faculty and the inspiration to it, the Emergeia.

Sources of Imagery:

Art Improves on nature. It can't compete with nature. Artistic imitation is more pleasant when it has a touch of emotion - just as we see a fine face gloomy for some shock. But imitation of a pleasing object is more pleasing. No cudgelling of the brain is needed to respond to a fine picture of a flower or of a beautiful flower girl, or a fine sketch in the cloud forming a man or animal or a tree. The pleasures of fancy are more conducive to health, than those of understanding, that requires thinking, brain-labour. The contrast, though it is not overtly developed — the metaphoric, intellectual, difficult, metaphysical and literally pictorial, easy imaginative-nature shaping a tree and the artist making a portrait of a loving girl is there. Wordsworth said that the mind's internal heaven should shed her dews of inspiration on the humblest lay. That inspiration is the unsought grace of life, the supervenient perfection. This is inspiration, the fugitive thing that enables a man to write one day, the
mysterious source of beauty. And only for that beauty, ideal or visual, one goes on writing. There is a similar inspiration in all human activities. So we have the Nightingale, the Tajmahal etc. to be referred to as immortalised in literature or architecture. All bespeak of the wave-drench creativity, or Pratibha. It is said to be of many types according to the number of causes responsible for its rise e.g., the inborn tendency, practice of art, study of literature, yoga, adriata. Metaphysically it is identified with the Absolute. Its main source lies there. But the poet always tries to draw the large proportion of his images from the objects he knows best or thinks most about, to which he is sensitive, and which therefore remain within his knowledge. Our memory is not a store-house; it is a selecting machine—a sieve—and the fact that our instrument of memory selects certain things or aspects, shows that they have a certain attraction for us, a certain suitability to our temperaments. Or we may remember things because they are repugnant to us as Bergson pointed out. So the sense-organs are responsible for all the images and they may be a gestalt too. The images whatever their sources may be, are transformed by a vision and an accent which belong to a plane above the mind. They are based on a vision of life which synthesises the Para and Asara; Jidva and Avidya; Higher and the Lower.
Difference of the modern imagery from that of the classical Indian Literature:

In the past, ancient poetics dwelt upon Upama (simile) and Rupaka (metaphor) profusely used in poetry, as we know from the very Sloka on Kalidasa, Bharavi etc. "Upama Kalidasasya pharaverarthgauravam/Naishadhe padalalityam Maghe santi tryo gunah (Upama or simile) is the speciality of Kalidasa, Bharavi is famous for the meaning, in Sriharsha we have the lucidity of words and the poet Magha has all the three qualities.). The three qualities are the Madhuryya, Ojas and Prasada or lucidity, depth or gravity and gaiety respectively. In Indian poetics imagination is the power to create something excellent, Amurvavastunirmanakshama prajna pratibha. In the craftsmanship of composing a poem, the creative faculty for the truth realised and the expression or exposition require form and content or meaning. The poet is essentially the outcome of a particular cultural matrix. This cultural matrix involves the knowledge of the tradition, the potentialities of the language or the spirit of the contemporary public. The Alamkaras or figures of a speech are the essence of poetry according to Bhamaha, Udbhata and Rudrata. According to Kuntaka it is not the ornamentation or the strikingness of Alamkaras alone that is the cause of poetic embellishment, but the strikingness of the whole expression is the essential
factor in poetry. According to Vaman Riti, style is the soul of poetry but Anandavardhana stressed Dhvani, suggestion while Rasa or sentiment is another important factor as propounded by Bharata and expounded by Viswanatha. It may be noted that it is high time that the modern Indian poetician gave up harping on the same tune of his predecessors. A new light on the existing theories is to be shed, and a new vista to the concepts appear to be more rational in their make-up. So to find out images by modern critics is a modern method of criticism but it was not unknown to the ancients too. The western criticism is based on semantics, psychology, anthropology, the traditional imagination, of the mythical form in human society, etc. The world of imagination may be simple, small or wide, long, sublime, complex, many-coloured, full of many objects. All the objective external world is the base of sensuous images, experiences. In some poems we may have excellent image without its localisation, locale. For the social trend modern images may be by an abnormal psychology, neurosis, dread, doubt, repugnance etc. — the cave of a hell out of which it may step out not like a snake in a fast motion. We must raise to the same plane of the poet to see and understand the images he creates, with a sympathising heart, though we have no such myriad mind like that of Shakespeare. We should know that the only power to create an image is the full force of a fine language like the Chinese and its ideograms. But the
creator or the poet is capable of other faculties also. Therefore image may mean the expansion of the imaginative faculty, feelings and its complexity. In our language we have synonyms of the word image or imagery like the Chitrakalpa, Pratima, Pratim, Manas Pratima, Vak-Pratima, Kalpachitra, Rupkalpa etc. The Latin word imaginem means that, and imageri is Old French form. All these tell us that image is more than what Unama or Rupaka meant in ancient literature in India. Some of the poets nowadays are frustrated by opposite conflicts or adverse elements in life that is cut off and upturned in heart and therefore images in their poems like that of R.M. Rilke or Hart Crane show that but in some like R.N. Tagore we have the least information of his individual soul. It is so impersonal and appropriate. In the shape of Sabdachitra and Arthachitra, the verbal juggleries and intellectual riddles as the words con-note, the Sanskrit literature amuses vast shades of people, even today. Arthachitra is the imagist poetry. Even old Sanskrit rhetoricians like Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Jagannatha had a flush of its imagist appeal, Chitrakavya or figurative poetry in classical view, consists of the figures of speech and in the western-oriented present view taken, it is pictorial, or imagist. But the poetic figures cannot be identified with images; they only generate the latter. They are the means to an end, not an end in themselves. Yet the importance of figures cannot be gainsaid. Rhetoricians have
compared them with the ornaments like bracelets but they are not always so. As a matter of fact, even where there is no figure, there is an image, and in the highest sense it may be poetic or emotive.

Importance of Imagery in our literature:

New bearings in Assamese poetry were due to the writer's response to his age. And the age of the Jonaki or the romantic period was possible for the indigenous blossoming of human intellect as the old and traditional values changed and new bonds or conventions came up. Such a change was seen in the German literature when Goethe was writing. Our age of Bezbarua of the age of the Jonaki was flowering like that, though it was not a crusade against the old tradition. Forerunners Bezbarua, Agarwala and Goswami were the true followers of the romanticists as their proper organ of poetry was imagination and its aim, the creation of beauty. They gave a redeeming flavour to the poetry of the era, both in technique and diction. They thus freed their literature from the earlier conventions and ideals. The striking feature is a new contact with the western literature in all its characteristics like the sensuousness, adoration of natural and physical beauty, delight in colour, life and love etc. We have our own Wordsworths, Shelles and Keats for our literature. This modern literature has become more human and less divine and religio-ethical in
inspiration. And it must be said that the modern age in Assamese literature is essentially an age of poetry; no other avenue of this literature has stimulated so much interest and study as this. That is why we see the most tangible result of it. Our lyrics grew as a class by itself, though Bargits or noble numbers were of such type in the Vaisnavite literature. Another very important contribution is mysticism, as the mystic poets like Raichoudhuri, N. Devi and some others wrote like Wordsworth, the frustrated mental attitude in them helped to divert the whole soul towards the eternal being the Supreme in conception. That is an act of self-losing indeed. In other field we see the elegiac notes in Duara and Barkakati, crying for their self lost for some quest of beauty in this mortal world. But the true worshipper of natural beauty in R.N. Choudhuri excelled all of them, though the poets of love like D.K. Barua, G. Gogoi along with Raichoudhuri showed the triviality of human attitude for a sweet-heart in this transitory world, though the very feeling of love or being loved is an eternal affair in the human emotion and passions. In this way we have the live images in those poets of the period along with their imagery in various poems. The very image of Bezbarua is his age that is our concern here. They had their influence in the next generation of poets though the new images are offing in contact with the modern poetry of the world in various literatures. During the sixties of this
century we get the matured stage in imagery though there was
some touch of symbolism too. Upto this decade our new poetry
is richer in new and complex images like the foreign litera-
tures.

The period under consideration (1900-1940) in Assamese
literature (Poetry) corresponds to the same of English Romanti-
cism in literature (1798-1830) as the very trend came four
via media of spreading English literature taught in the univers-
sities of India then under the foreign yoke. It is a second-
phase of renaissance in our literature as we had the first of
its kind during the XVIth century with the revival of the neo-
Vaisnavite movement all over India. And we had saints Jankprasad
and Madhavdev as the torch bearers to that front of renaissance
and reformation.

And renaissance is the joie de vivre. Its other name is
enthusiasm, vigour native, sparkling lights. It has not differ-
ent phases too. Courtesy and poetry, curiosity and adventure
and life full of drama — all go together. It may be the great
age of learning and imagination like that of Thomas Moore's
Utopia. The prologue to the first creative testament in literary
renaissance followed as if modelled on Plato's Republic and
reformation of the society could be done as the saints wanted
in the same spirit of neo-Vaisnavite movement all over India
then. The saints as the heralds of the revivalism of Vai
vism felt the social norm and achieved whatever they wanted
for the people of Assam and their literature. Thus we see the
Vaisnavite literature of the XVIth century flourishing in all
branches especially in poetry and drama.

But there is the decadence just after a century follow-

ing the demise of the saints. Satras and the literature lost
the stand—the stand of religion and culture. And by the end
of the XIXth Century we have another strong and new type of
renaissance. Evidently humanism hadrenched the very being of
the renaissance body through every possible pore. Indeed this
renaissance was the period of youth, and reformation that of
age. Bezbarua and his contemporaries were all young learners.
They had to revive and revitalize spirit.

The decadence for a period of nearly a hundred years set
in the early part of the XVIIIth Century in our literature and
continued till 1836. From 1836 to 1873 the Assamese language
had to struggle for its very existence and therefore no crea-
tive work was produced.

The Transition:

In the XVIIIth Century imagination was not a cardinal
point in poetic theory. For Pope and Johnson as for Dryden
before them, it has little importance, and when they mention
it, it has a limited significance. They approve fancy provided
that it is controlled by what they call judgement, and they
admire the apt use of images, by which they mean little more
than the visual impressions and also metaphors. That speaks about what the English Romantic poets saw beforehand to begin with their romantic imagination. In our land, the turning point began just after the occupation of the land by the British, a blessing in disguise. In the medieval period we see the link language Vrajabuli or Vrajawali, as Sankardeva could introduce after his long and painstaking pilgrimages to the northern India. In fact, the longfelt need of the peaceful and normal atmosphere for the culture and life in the land, returned in 1830 after the rebels in the land failed to regain the old regime. But it was a struggle for existence as Assamese people and its literature were in danger of its stronghold only for the wrong impressions created in the minds of the foreigners by those helping hands in their offices. Those Bengali clerks knew nothing of the origin and development of Assamese language and literature. The same fate of the English language in its own place during the days of the duke of Normandy was seen. But the Baptist Missions in this region could see the life and spirit of the people and they helped by way of propagating religion and language at the same time for a medium like their journal, the Arunodoi. It left a distinct mark on the modern Assamese literature. The very language they mastered on was taught a new tone which is purely English in character.

Vaisnavite literary trends remained in a lifeless effigy, losing its very soul and spirit. Moreover there was
the Chaitanya-cult of Bengal side by side with that of Sankardev's neo-Vaisnavism. This rivalry was hit by the new propaganda for Christianity. It was quite new to this part of the land, the old faith let loose and there were so many facts of Hinduism to be avoided under the pressures of social distances. Some embraced Christianity, learned English language and literature in the same spirit of a Christian. So a section of the people were also favoured by the ruling power. Some of the Christians, like Nidhi Levi Farwell, wrote in the Arunodai that replaced the significant social scene in the works of their effective measures of religious propaganda and the world of Christ and his legendary myths had been imported through their media like the New Testament translated into the regional language for our people.

So there was a question of choice to the devotees of the old order. The austerity, caste-bar, untouchability etc. had been destroyed by Vaisnavism and Christianity too. Along with the social changes the literary trend also changed. The poets of the period had been influenced by Anglo-Bengali trend and images. The Vaisnava classical spirit like that of the Augustan Age of English literature, a phase of seudo-classicism can be seen in our own. So they used similes, mytho-poetic creations in their finished arts. We know the Kirtana of Sankardeva and its wonderful exquisite beauty and also of the Bargits, great songs or noble numbers like those
of Herrick's for their spiritual ideas and the rich store of various scriptures in a condensed form, their richer or unique imagination specially of the best tradition of Indian poetry then with an introspection or lyrical sense, the transcendental sentiment, the lure of the heaven as depicted by his artistic hands for the Chhna-vatra, the scenes in the manner of modern celluloid woven up of handloom cloth named the Vrindavan Kapor exquisitely painted. The Vaikuntha or heaven painted by him was the live image of the very literary scene for the drama. It speaks of his imaginative faculty in the field of art and literature as well. His art unites strength with great beauty, depth of spiritual understanding technique, philosophy and the Bhakti-cult.

In the Arunodol era the reaction against the classical tradition is evident. Yet the classical note was not wholly changed or absent. The striking feature is that the poets of the period borrowed no episode or simile from the Vaisnava poets. There is a clear-cut endeavour to do away with the Sastras or scriptures by materialistic view. In other words a marked departure from the Vaisnavite image can be seen. Their thought and imagery were neatly trimmed. So they lost the influence of the preceding era and imageries were free from the old order of devotional faith and spirit.

Then the second phase of the Anglo-Bengali imagination can be seen in the Jonaki era. The journal Jonaki gave the
real momentum to the renaissance in literature and every phase of life. Youths reading at Calcutta, that capital of the British India, was the nerve-centre of learning and it was so great a chance to meet different cultures of India and the Western nations. We had the spell of darkness in the post-Ahom transition period, and suffered much for the introduction of Bengali in schools and offices in 1836. It created some interest in that language and their literature as well. That caused set-backs in our literature.

In ideology the transition from the Vaisnavism or spiritualism to materialism followed. Religion and gods usually deep-rooted in the minds of people yielded place to the humanity and humanism. On the other hand monarchy to democracy is another upheaval during the second phase of the renaissance.

So the nature of imagery in poetry changed from classical type to that of the new order. Sankardeva drew images using old myths in order to create faiths and spiritual appeal in the minds of the followers. So some of them were images of impression. But we have the dissociation of sensibility in the next period of decadence and then in the age of the Jonaki. We have no longer the same nature of imagery, poetic myths were also dead. The poetic image which is the myth of the individual poets proceeded along with the society changing so rapidly. Archetypes yielded to artifice as there was no living image of the Vedic gods and goddesses nor the mythological
character had the same urge to the literary scene. Moreover milieu, mind and matter influence the thought and feeling of the writer. A poet is also a social being. He cannot do without the society in which he lives or being brought up. On the other hand poetry is the criticism of life as Matthew Arnold opined.

Therefore, it is seen that the period under review has the spirit of renaissance of different types. To some it is a renaissance of wonder, liberalism in literature, extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility, addition of strangeness to beauty, or the adoration of the past. In our literature all these characteristics of the neo-romanticism and renaissance could be seen in the prominent poets writing in the same true spirit of the neo-romantic attitude and aptitude.

Thus the social changes up to 1940 embracing the new ideals and mode of life and at the best the intellectual curiosity and the change of value in life with all its bright and colourful dreams can be seen. With the life all the activities also changed and with the true spirit of the romanticism our poets worked for all the decades up to forties. And we see the striking features in their poetry impregnated with the true colour of the Romantic Image they had borrowed from the Western literature and also the original ones in some. Broadly speaking, the medium of expression of the transition period was a compound
of mannerisms, archaisms, and conceits save a few exceptions and that was an era of positive triviality. In some we see the Chaucerian manner in order to lay the foundation of the new epoch that manifested itself in the language of pictures and music. The tone of the age was poetical and so even the men like the essayists, novelists or historians also flirted with the Muses. The greatest contribution is the innovation of the lyric as a distinct class of poetry. And the striking change of the form can be seen in the blank verse inspired either by Milton or M.M. Dutt of Bengal. Thus the new ideas due to the contact of the foreigners in our land, forgetting all what an Ahom or Mughal rulers could impose upon the dynamic epoch, began. The literature of the age thus paved the path for a free style, free thought and form.

the Mysticism and sense of mystery, deification of beauty and love, special attention to nature and its Supreme beauty, worship of beauty in the beloved, to see the cosmic beauty in what is so dear - whether it be the beauty of the beloved or that of the visible nature around us. Actually the most wonderful thing was, for anyone, Assam so full of natural beauties, but it was quite unseen, forgetting that wonder as none praised her blue hills and red rivers. Not only in poetry but also in every branch of literature the same spirit was working.

Form and content of the poetry could be easily discerned though the structure of poems could not be of the order of an
epic, Lyrics had their most prominent exhibits from all the new poets. And the contents had changed and the overall change in this region made this branch of literary work so rich in foreign air though not outlandish at all. We find some characteristics listed below:

(a) In this field the old order of prosody was followed as symbols, metaphor, simile and such other figures of speech were profusely used in poems. But there was the influence of English verse and metre. Mixed form of metre is practised.

(b) Use of imagery was thus not so new as in our modern poetry.

(c) The usual metrical forms like rhyme and its rules, complets, triplet etc. were not so strictly followed. The most mentionable product is the sonnet in the hands of some of the stalwarts. It is the influence of English poetry.

The Vaisnavite age in our literature was also the golden age in the field of metres in their varieties. That was an age in which the innumerable forms of metres had been borrowed from the old classical Sanskrit poetry. It was due to the well-versed poets of the period as they learned the very technique of Sanskrit metres first. Sankardeva and his true disciple Madhavdeva composed their Ankiya Nats first by using Nandi and Mangalacharan, the different types of couplets. The Yaugic Riti or the compound style in metres had its beginning in the Vaisnavite age. The dark age in the field
of metres was seen at the end of the Vaisnavite literature. None could follow that style of the metres in the later period. Decadence is seen then. Yet the influence of the Vaisnavite metres came down to the age of the *Arunodoi*. The next age of the *Jonaki* once again tried to study the technique of metres anew. First of all the folk-songs and ballads got their forms in written metres. Agarwala and Bezbura did that for our literature of this age of the *Jonaki*. Their *Tejimala* and *Dhanbar-Ratani* etc. are the fine examples of that practice of *Svaravritta* and *Yaugik* metres. In this field we can see the poems of R.K. Barkakati, A.G. Raichoudhuri. Then there is the influence of the English metres too. C.K. Agarwala, J.N. Duara, Barkakati, D.K. Barua followed that path the English poetry could then show. Sonnets and the blank verse were the most mentionable forms in this regard. H.C. Goswami wrote the first beautiful sonnet *Prayatmar Chithi* and the blank verse got its finished form in many of the poets like Gohainbarua. Then the lyrics by many had been written in the unmeasured or inequally measured metres. Duara and G. Gogoi practised that. Thus the restraint and the hard and fast rules of the metrical sequences let loose to free the new works of the poets of the period under consideration. To-day our poetry so prosaic that a distinct mark between a prose and poetry is of little importance. D.K. Barua showed this path with his new attempt in this field of the new type of metre that is *verselibre*. This was due to the very attraction of the form of the English
poetry of the modern period and poets like T.S. Eliot appealed most to write the new, modern poems during the post independence era we live in.

Thus we can classify the metres in our poetry as the Matravritta, Yauvnik and Svaravritta. The first is of the higher or aristocratic family, in consideration of the language. There is the profusely used Sanskrit word, while the other has in it the use of words of our own language. The Yauvnik is the complex form of metre. The different types of metrical forms are used for the different types of feelings and thus the poems also differ, along with the subject-matter.

Varieties of subject matter ranging from the material life to the eternal, social scene, social problem, politics, fleshy lusts culminating in mysticism or service to humanity or philanthropy, didacticism, so on and so forth, can be found in the poetry of the period. It is better to classify some of the poetical works of the period and in a heroic search such things should find place. But we have no variorum edition of any poetry for that. We may classify the writings of the period according to the aesthetic series of tragic comic, sublime, pathetic, moving, sad, ridiculous, melancholy, tragicomedy, humorous, majestic, dignified, serious, grave, imposing noble, decorous, graceful, attractive, piquant, coquettish, idyllic, elegiac, cheerful, violent, ingenuous, cruel, base, horrible, disgusting, dreadful, nauseating etc. In other terms
they are lyrics of love, elegies, dirges, Nature, politics, history and myths as described.

And they may be grouped artistically as realistic and symbolic, objective and subjective, classical and romantic, simple and ornate, proper and metaphorical etc., Romantic turned to mystic.

But here in our discourse we may classify the poems as decorous, idyllic, elegiac, cheerful, melancholy, realistic and symbolic, objective and subjective, romantic, ornate and metaphorical.

And they may be classified according to the different types of imagery e.g., archetypal, myth, symbolical, metaphorical. We can easily classify the images in the poems of the period as conventional or traditional, sensuous (e.g., olfactory, gustatory), spatial, conceptual etc.

It is not a heroic search to understand the magic of the language and the language of magic of poets. We have every doubt in estimating any poet and his or her poetry in the like manner of Coleridge, Pater, Arnold, L.A. Richards, Pound, Eliot, Dandi, Vamana, Bhamaha, etc. Sorry, we have no Coleridge, no Pater or Pound in our history of literary criticism. So how is it possible to explain a 'Grecian Urn'? Once there could be seen only classicism and Romanticism. But now? All the new trends led the contemporary minds to be floating with the stronger currents. None could resist
that. Modern trend to-day is sweeping away all the past though not uprooted at all.

The secret life of work - as if it is a dream, the Romantic magic, concept or imagination as we may call it, is a picture, a symbol, the Image. It is the dialect of a poet. It is like a magic. A riddle. And the language too. The mighty language. The primitive life indicates that. Primitive man speaks in symbols, expresses in picture or in image. The dialect is so unintelligible. When there is verbal expression there must be rhetoric. So poets create images - a true creation.

**Poetry as a Picture:**

Most of the expressions by poets are therefore, hieroglyphic. Herbert Read said, "Words, their sound and even their very appearance, are, of course, everything, to the poet, the sense of words' is the sense of poetry. But words have associations carrying the mind beyond sound to visual image and abstract idea ......... 1.

And J.M. Murry says in his essay on Metaphor that what we primarily demand (of image) is that the similarity should be a true similarity and that it should have lain hitherto unperceived for but rarely perceived by us, so that it comes to us with an effect of revelation. Images can reveal a picture that attracts and pleases us most. And in the opening lines of

1. H. Read: Collected Essays in Literary Criticism, p. 45, Faber and Faber 1950-1.
a popular poetical treatise (paralleling Horace's 'Ars Poetica' and Boileau's 'Art Poetique') the De Arte Graphica by the French painter Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy wrote:

Ut pietura poesit erit; similesque Poesi
Sita Pictura; .........................
................................. muta Poesis
Mictur haec, Pictura loquens solet
illa vocari.

(A poem is like a picture, so a picture ought to try to be like a poem. .............. a picture is often called silent poetry; and poetry a speaking picture).

Through it (poetry) is revealed the closest possible union of music and meaning of thought and image, of sense and suggestion, of imagination and intuition, of emotion and passion. So it pleases our senses. A poetic image is a figurative illusion. It is a representation of a particular thing with faithful and evocative detail.

The faculty of imagination in a poet helps him to create some unique description so beautiful and distinct as may arouse the same picture in the mind of a reader. It is imagery, created by a poet and a poetic image is a word-picture charged with emotion or passion. An image is word which arouses ideas of sensory perception. Truly one can not think logically without forming images.

"In its simplest term the poetic image is a picture made out of words. An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an

image or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of external reality" said Cecil Day Lewis.¹

Again, the images in a poem are like a series of mirrors set at different angles so that as the theme moves on, it is reflected in a number of different aspects.² Thus the pictorial quality in a poem is evident. Wonderful wonder of wonders is the mind. The most wonderful things in this world are the starry heaven and the mind of a man no doubt. But there are certain passions common to all men and the ordinary men like us are so conscious only of emotion. Life is encompassed with passions and emotions. And the terms life and literature are used to mean separate experiences. The one is real, the other artificial. If the mind of man is capable of grasping finite things yet his destiny is infinite. Indefinite. We want to know the world which is real and more substantial than the imaginary or perceptible one. The world of vision is so unsubstantial yet so divine, so beautiful as Wordsworth wrote in this Prelude:

"............ how the mind of men becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things....

In beauty exalted as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine."

2. Ibid., p. 81.
To such a territory goes this search — the realm of poetic image. That is so obscure. Words are the analysis of a mental state, and there is ambiguity.

The Greek 'Logos' means 'word' and 'thought' or 'idea' at the same time. To some it is 'Archanarishwa'a an androgy­ nous god. To some 'Brahma' as in 'Sabda Brahma'.

OUR POETS:

Now, about the poets of the period concerned it can be said that there are two prominent groups like the English Romantics - the Lake poets and then the later group. We have in first the Triumvirs of the 'Jonaki' i.e, C.K. Agarwala, L.N. Bezbarua and H.C. Goswami and the other group includes all the contemporaries and some juniors. Padmanath Gehain Barua, Raghunath Choudhuri, Jatindranath Duara, A.G. Rai­ choudhuri, Nalinibala Devi, Ratnakanta Barkakati, Devakanta Barua had in their poetry the same fervour. Lyrics by many of the period had in them the Indian philosophy and its pantheism, spiritualism, immortality of the soul, metem­psychosis and the belief in the effects of the past deeds. As an Indian one had to look into the heritage we had in the field of culture and life. Those significantly contributed to such a trend were C.K. Agarwala, Nalinibala Devi, Ratnakanta Barkakati. On the other hand the frustrated lovers or the frustration in the worldly life made Raichoudhuri, Nalini
Devi, mystics, yet Raichoudhuri like J.N. Duara and R. Barkakati, is a writer of poems that speak of the pure love. In the very opinion of T.E. Hulme and many others, Romanticism is a revolution against classicism. It is a split religion. And some abused the romantic poets being the least conscious or interested in realism. According to Abu Syeed Ayub the sole objective of the Romantic poetry is to pine for what is not as Shelley said:

'.............. We look before and after and pine for what is not. Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught.'

Out J.N. Duara is sure to be blamed for this self-centred life as his lyrics tell mostly of love and frustration. Elegiac note in most of his poems made him an escapist. Others like R. Choudhuri had the influence of Sanskrit literature no doubt as the glossary in his poetry can prove. He is the only poet of Nature and so he was called the Bihari Kavi. He is our Wordsworth as some attribute J.N. Duara as the Assamese Shelley. The direct influence of R.N. Tagore and music in R. Barkakati and that of M.M. Dutta in Chandradhar Barua, H. Barbarua can be seen.

Now regarding the main objective – the Imagery, we can unhesitatingly say that the forte of Duara was symbolism, the un-forgettable imagery while he used in his three poems the symbols of Boat (Nao), Boatman (Naoriya) ...." Bezbarua and Agarwala with their sensuousness, delight and colour,
physical beauty, love and poetry exhibit what traditions romantic poets generally follow as Hem Barua wrote.

The beauty of the poem 'Privatamar Saundarya' lies in succession of images through which the loveliness of the beloved is suggested. ¹

In C.K. Agarwala we have the sense of renaissance and humanism but we cannot forget the beautiful picture he depicted in his 'Nivar' (dew), 'Madhuri' etc. In his poetry we have more for thinking mind than for music lover or painter. In Hemchandra Goswami we see the image of pastoral beauty in his 'Puwa' (morning). But his sole contribution is the sonnet. 'Privatamar Chithi' is a quite new thing to the Assamese literature. Raichoudhuri, Duara, Barkakati had so well depicted the pathos and their personification of the beloved like R.N. Tagore's 'Manasi', 'Manas Sundari', 'Jivan Devata' and we find the words 'Tumi', 'Rani', etc.

Ballads like 'Tejimala', 'Dhanbar aru Ratani' etc. are the significant contributions of Agarwala and Bezbarua like 'Border Minstrelsy' collected by Sir Walter Scott, and we see in them the pastoral imagery.

Immediate and responsive images are also vivid in most of the poems. Thought and feeling in poetry can be divided into inner and outer meaning. Inner meaning expresses mood,

attitude and vision by the aid of imagery and rhythm. Outer meaning dominates poetry when it is didactic. And Mallarme said that poetry is the expression of mysterious feeling of the aspects of existence. Most of the poets of the period, especially Raichoudhuri, Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya, Binanda Barua and to some extent Bezbarua and Agarbala were conscious of the very status of the people of Assam and Assamese. So they wrote such poems only to invigorate the people of Assam and their literature in all its aspects. We see such approaches and to some extent positive approaches in that direction in their poetry. So Bhattacharya was called the 'Agnikavi' and Raichoudhuri 'Asom Kesari' etc. for the poems in Anubhuti.

The commonest type of image is visual and it is not sensuous. We have in our poetry such visual images. In some we have the sense of sight, the sense of touch, the sense of smell or hearing. And they are sensuous. Broken images can be seen in some of poets like R. Choudhuri as he could enjoy colour and sound for their own sake or only for the sense of beauty he sang all about nature. But the living image in all our poetry is the same as in classical poetry. Metaphor, simile, symbol and other figures of speech which they termed them as Alamkar-as (ornaments) were the common or usual technique.
Now in a review of the past 50 years up to 1940 of Assamese literature specially poetry and romanticism at its maturity or last stage we see some striking characteristics, viz.:

(a) Subjectivity and its seriousness or richness since 1889 or 1890 with the birth of 'Jonaki'. In C.K. Agarwala's poem the subjectivity was dealt with the hopes and ambitions of mankind and his 'Veenbaragi' (lyrist) represents all humanists and aestheticians.

(b) But in Duara or some later poets like Ganesh Gogol we see a different tendency and tone. None can so well identify with the poet though they sympathise with or feel for the writer for their cry in wilderness. And that is only for the fleshy desire that was not fulfilled as it appears to us from the very tone in the poems.

(c) Poets around the 'Jonaki' were optimists and had not been suffering from the neurosis or such mental diseases like some of the modern poets now. But the later group exhibited such symptoms and escapist tendency. Some of them were pessimists and frustrated e.g., R. Choudhuri, J. Duara, G. Gogoi etc.
(d) The first group of the period was conscious of the renaissance and the very spirit and life of English Romanticism was adopted only to enrich the contemporary literature. There was no individual aptitude but in the later group some of them were more self-centered and in their poetry we see the objectivity in distinct colour.

(e) During the period 1890-1920 we see no particular region or attempt in the poets. But since the World War I had ended, the political scene in the country compelled the writers to be involved with the National movement for independence. Subject of poetry no longer remained for the ivory tower. Everything changed. Democracy in our literature was begun. And so the metrical forms had changed. We see new metrical sequences. For the poetic image we have some new methods of creative feet, pause, stanza etc. to show varieties with new symbols and metaphors.

(f) They had seen the Solitary Reaper (Wordsworth), and all her alluring beauty but not the very mind and heart of the Reaper. Whatever may be the short-comings on the part of the romantic poets flying in the land of fairies so freely, they had, in their poetry, the future of modern poetry we see to-day. And that is what we may call the influence of the Romantic poets.
on the next generation of poets. And Devakanta Barua is one of the forerunners of the moderns in our poetry of this decade up to 1979.

By the end of the period under review we see the World War II and its horrible scene in our own land. Some of us as eye-witnesses to the very strategic points in the State, could have written poems in a different spirit and attitude but the great turmoil in the land made life so insecure that all the aesthetic feelings could hardly be felt though modern poets take the complexities of life and the 'negative capability' of Keats as the impulse for their creations.

The striking characteristics for the period (1900-40) are:

1. Not a single one is a poet of the city as no city grew in Assam then.

2. No sign of complex life of the modern age.

3. No obscurity as in modern poetry as the Romantic poets had the same tradition like those of English etc. Obscurity is natural in all original and new trends or creations. It is not a new thing that J.N. Duara thought the modern poetry as State while Navakanta Barua and others had established that in this Century. New trend in Bengal with Buddhadev Basu, Jivananda Das, Vishnu De, S.N. Dutta, Amiya Chakravorti etc. was also spreading here.
(4) No antimony between the Zeitgeist and the individual feeling.

But there is no royal road to poetry as G.M. Hopkins thought. In 1879 he had to defend himself and his poetry like Bhavabhuti and Navakanta Barua for their poetry as they were unintelligible to the old generation of poets. We should know that whatever an artist creates is the truth. For him the natural forces can be sometimes unusual. There is also beauty in darkness. The deafening silence is true.

**MODERN POETS:**

We have in our literature of the period under review such poets like Devakanta Barua, Amulya Barua and their young followers now. Their technique, angle of vision and the language as well are rich. There is a new view of life no doubt. So the literary critic Tyndall says that contemporary literature excites us, not only because it is important, wonderful, expansive and degrading perhaps, but because it is our expression. Here 'degrading' may mean the very view of the old generation of the writers as they felt it not so pleasing at all to admit and value the new type of poetry. In their own opinion the new poetry or moderns are degraded. And again some say that modern writers mix too much water in their ink. This fatal blow is always faced by French writers as many new trends are originated there all the years. Even a single
creation by a certain writer can create such bitter criticisms which become ultimately some valuable treasures in the field of critical literature or history of criticism. It will be worthless drudgery to search for such a genius in the very period we are concerned with. Even the Age of Jonaki or Bezbarua was not so complex as ours is to-day. And T.S. Eliot said, "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to desolate if necessary, language into his meaning."  

But we are chiefly concerned with the poets at the end of the XIXth Century and those in the period of transition augmenting the new view of life in the next century that was not so rich in variety and complexities. So our task is not so strenuous to dismember the clock in order to see what makes it go. We have mainly in our view the literary conventions to which the creations of the poets during the period (1900-1940) have been conditioned, its sensibility, the sense of rhetorical tricks, The history of poetry of that period is the evolution of the excellent nature, characteristics with peculiarities and change in the brighter light of the Western

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influences just after the dark age. It was so live and forceful as if the myriad was won. And we forgot the dark days for the joy of the very resurrection.

And inspired by an ecstatic pre-science of the glories beyond imagination, we struggle, in multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of loveliness our poetry has. That is imaginary beauty - the province of the poem. And poets create a new style of a new bearing in a new reality as we see to-day.