INTRODUCTION

Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) may be considered to be one of the greatest Poet of Bengali Literature of the Post-Rabindranath period. He was a leading poet in the movement of modern poetry which started in 1923 centering around the magazine, "Kallol" when Buddhadeva Basu(1908-74), Sudhindranath Dutta (1901-60), Bishnu Dey (1909-82), Amiya Chakraborty (1901-86) and others turned to the west and the city-life in search of materials for their poetry, then Jibanananda built his poetic world around the nature and life of rural Bengal. Drawn by the beauty and charm of the custom and the traditions of rural Bengal, he enriched Bengali literature by the new and evernew materials culled from them the most ordinary and neglected world of the nature. The trees, plants, birds and flowers found a place in his poems and have enriched Bengali literature with a strange beauty and a distinctive new taste. Though this first anthology of poems is "Jharā pālak" (1927), but he got recognition as a poet when his anthology "Dhūsar Pāndulipi" was published (1936). Through his book he made it known to the world the quality and talent of his poetic genius. In the later period he published several

In Assamese literature modernism made its appearances through poems published in “Jayanti” (1938) after the Second World War (1939-43). In the fourth decade of this century, Hem Baruah (1914-77), Amulya Baruah (1922-46), Maheswar Neog (1918-95) and Bhabananda Dutta (1919-69) etc. and other poets brought new blood in Assamese poetry. Ajit Baruah (b. 1926) and specially Nabakanta Baruah (1926-2002) wrote some beautiful poems in the fifth decade of this century. In their poems there is a beautiful blending of modernism with the old cultures and tradition of the country which give them a strange new flavour. Following these tracks Nilamoni Phukan* (b. 1933) established “Suryya Heno Nāmi Āhe Ei Nadiedi” (1963). In this poems we find a craving to find his own self and the evolution of his poetic career. His second and third anthologies of poems, “Nirjanatār Sabda” (1965) and “Āru Ki Naiśabda” (1968), have opened new horizon for contemporary Assamese poetry. He has used rural customs and traditions and culture of Assam as materials of his poems and in diction he has freely used dialects and we feel a throbbing pulse of life in his poems, like the Poems of Jibanananda Das. He turned a new leaf in his Poetic career through the publication of the anthology of poems, “Phuli Thakā Sūryyamukhī Phultor Phāle” (1972). He became more attracted to the beauty of the form of poetry than its contents. In the field of contemporary Assamese poetry he has shown strange and novel skills. Enriched by the materials, both native and foreign, but turned with his own tune, his poems took him to a great height of

* The Poet however spells his name as Nilmuni Phookan, so in my later pages the spelling of the Poet is written likewise
fame. In the later period he published the anthologies, "Kāint, Golāp Āru Kāint" (1975), "Golapi Jāmur Lagna" (1977), "Kavitā" (1981) and "Nṛtyaratā Prthivī" (1985), which assured a permanent place for him in Assamese Literature. His "Nṛtyaratā Prthivī" is particularly a significant creation. There is little doubt that he is a powerful poet among the present day Assamese poets.

As Jibanananda Das in Bengali literature, so Nilmani Phookan in Assamese literature are the two great names in the poetic world in the post World War II period. Jibanananda Das is considered as a trendsetter poet in Bengali Literature of the post Rabindranath period. He was the first poet who sang in a different tune and melody after Rabindranath. He showed the world that great poems can be composed with the most insignificant, humble and negligible things as their materials. He has used in his poems, rural culture, old legends and history, age old traditions customs as their contents. But above all in rhetoric comparison, he broke new grounds in his poems, and hence he has established himself as a legendary poet in Bengal. Inevitably he cast his influence upon the contemporary Bengali Poetry. Same thing can be said of Nilmani Phookan in Assamese literature, though a city-based person. He used rural culture as themes of his poems. Jibanananda was bewitched by the beauty of rural Bengal, its endless green fields, the land washed by numberless rivers and he painted this beauty and bound it in the golden frame of his poems. In the same way Nilmani Phookan has poured in his poems the green beauty of the hills and forests of Assam, the endless stretch of the tea gardens in the undulating slopes of the hills and plains and the awesome beauty of the mighty Brahmaputra. Like Jibanananda he built the towering edifice of his poems with the most insignificant materials, the trees and plants, animals and birds, flowers and insects etc. The folk-songs, folk-
dances and folk-cultures and folk words of Assam have found a significant place in his poem, painted in their variegated beauties. As Jibanananda Das belongs only to Bengal, close to the heart of the Bengalee people, so Nilmani Phookan is also the poet of Assam, very close and intimate to the life of the people of Assam. Such deep and intimate relationship with the life of the common people is hardly found in the poems of other Assamese poets. So, it can be said that the place that Jibanananda can claim in the history of Bengali poetry after Rabindranath, can also be claimed by Nilmani Phookan in the contemporary Poetic Literature of Assam.

Taking into consideration the change which came in Bengali literature after the First World War, and which came in Assamese literature after the Second World War. I started the research work on these two important modern poets of the sister languages. We find some points of natural similarity and also some differences between Jibanananda Das, an important poet of Bengali literature of the post Rabindranath period and Nilmani Phookan, a significant poet of the present day of Assamese literature. This work is an attempt to mark a comparative assessment of the works of the two poets to find where they stand on the same ground and where they look in different directions.

The poetic awareness of Jibanananda centres around the geographical environment, culture and tradition of Bengal. On the other hand Nilmani Phookan sets the environment of his poems on the geographical condition, culture, tradition and the age-old civilization of Assam. Both the poets have liberally used colloquial dialects, and folk culture in their poems, composed against the background of a rural environments of the poetic world of both the poets and there is enough scope to study the poetic qualities of the two poets. This is the
reason of selection of the subject. Any effort to compare the lives and thoughts of these two poets are an attempt of research on this particular subject which was not made either in Assam or in Bengal beforehand. In this sphere, it is the first ever attempt. Hence the study has been entitled “A Contrastive Study of the Poetical Works of Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) and Nilmani Phookan (b. 1933)".

There are some problems in the matter of a comparative study and assessment of two different languages and literatures. At first a glimpse of the entire history of the language and literature of the two should be given and then we shall be in a position to begin the study properly. The study has been divided into six chapters in the following manners:

1. Chapter I : An Analytical Study of the Post Tagorian Bengali Poetry and Jibanananda Das
   
   Brief History and background of modern Bengali poetry of the post Rabindranath period and contribution of other modern poet as well as Jibanananda Das.

2. Chapter II : An Analytical Study of the Post Second World War Assamese Poetry and Nilmani Phookan
   
   A Brief History and background of modern Assamese poetry after Second world War and contribution of other modern poets as well as Nilmani Phookan.


5. Chapter V : The Similarities and Differences Between the Poetical Works of Jibanananda Das and Nilmani Phookan.
5.1. Prologue

5.2. Love of Nature

5.3. Concept of Love.

5.4. Awareness of Death.

5.5. Sense of History.

5.6. Consciousness of Folk-Culture and its Heritage

6. Chapter VI : Conclusion

In this investigation it has been mentioned many times that Jibanananda Das is also a novelist and short story writer and Nilmani Phookan a prose writer. But in research work, both are evaluated as a poet. This limitation in this present research work is obviously due to the fact that even though they wrote prose but their poetical works is the only basis of my present research work. One more thing is that Nilmani Phookan is still alive. So in my research works, whatever poetical contribution has been made by Nilmani Phookan till “Nyaratā Pṛthivī” (1985) is assessed.

Although the subject is a literary one, but during the discussion a number of important topics of society, culture, economy, politics etc. have been invariably introduced here.

Though this research work is only an attempt to satisfy my own curiosity in the matter and an attempt to answer certain questions which came in my mind, but we can also notice its far reaching influence. This kind of research work develops friendship, understanding and a feeling of brotherhood between two communities speaking two different languages. The Bengali speaking section of
the people of Assam and the indigenous people of Assam will be encouraged and entrusted to work for widening the scope of the exchange of culture and literary ideas of the two sections. My research work in this regard is not the end, rather it is an endless beginning.

Methodology followed in the chapters is in a manner of analysis, evaluation and comparative method. The critical analysis have been substantiated by quotation from original text (Assamese and Bengali) and other sources also with their English renderings. These citations have been given in Roman alphabets.

The study is supported by notes and references at the end of each chapter An extensive Bibliography (Primary and Secondary source) has been incorporated at the end. In addition to these, I have also included a brief biographical sketch on both Jibanananda Das and Nilmani Phookan in the Appendix.

In order to collect materials, I had to depend on various libraries of this State namely, K.K. Handique Library, Gauhati University, Pandu College Library, Pandu, Guwahati, District Library, Guwahati, and National Library, Kolkata, I am grateful to the Librarians of these Libraries for giving me the scope to work in their respective Library. In this dissertation, I have drawn freely from various books and I have duly acknowledge my indebtedness by mentioning the titles of the books with their authors in the Backnotes and references.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the encouragement and kind help that I received from many quarters during the long period of my research work.

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