CHAPTER III

HITESWAN BOR BOJUAH'S LITERARY EPICS:
BASED ON THE SOURCES OF THE ASSAMESE CHRONICLE

(i) Kamatāpur Dhvānsa Kāvya
(ii) Tirotar Ātmadān Kāvya
(iii) Yuddhaksetrat Āhom Kamanī bā Mūlā Gabhāru Kāvya
Following the tradition of the Secondary or Literary Epic Hiteswar Bor Boruah has engaged his poetic pen for the creation of a series of kavyas in Assamese literature. Virgil's Aeneid may be called the source from which this epic tradition has sprung up, and it has gained momentum in English through the poetic genius of Milton. Milton's Paradise Lost has got profound impact on the Indian Literature, particularly in ushering in the epic tradition. Madhusudan Datta's Meghnādbhād Kāvya may be called the first child of this tradition; and following it many a kāvya or literary epic is born into Bengali and, later on, into Assamese. Commenting on the growth and development of the Secondary Epic tradition C.S. Lewis observes: "The real question is whether any epic development beyond Virgil is possible. But one thing is certain. If we are to have another epic it must go on from Virgil. Any return to the merely heroic, any lay, however, good, that tells merely of brave men fighting to save their lives or to get home or to avenge their kinsmen, will now be an anachronism. You cannot be young twice. The explicitly religious subject for any future epic has been dictated by Virgil; it is the only further development left."

citly religious subject' has come to us through the kāvyas like the Meghnādbadha of Madhusudan Datta, the Bṛttresāṁbar Kāvya of Hemchandra Bandopadhyya, and the Kurukshetra of Nabin Chandra Sen in the Bengali literature. But while carried by the stream of this literary tradition Nabin Chandra has had a completely different dive with his kāvan Palāśir Yuddha, violating thereby the canon of having 'explicitly religious subject' for the literary epic. Although the process has been started with the publication of the Padmini Kāvya of Hangalal, Nabin Chandra's Palāśir Yuddha marks a difference. The theme of the former kāvya has been taken from the pages of the Mus­lim period of Indian History, while the theme of the latter has been taken from the recent history of Bengal to which the people of Bengal and their destiny are intricately woven. Nabin Chandra has been subject to severe criticisms for the thematic and artistic aspects of this kāvya, but the bold adventure he has made on this line of the epic tradition with its publica­tion in 1875 continues to have profound impact on the Assamese literature.

In conformity with this line of secondary epic, taking Meghnādbadh kāvya as their literary model the Assamese epic-poets have come forward to enrich this branch of literature with their bold and successful experimentations. Bholānāth Das and Samā Kanta Choudhury have dealt with 'explicitly religious subject' in their literary epics - Sītā Haran Kāvya and Abhimanyubadha kāvya respectively. But, Hiteswar Bor Boruah, like Nabin Chandra Sen, has his sweeping on the historical
events of Assam and has chosen for his secondary epics purely historical subjects with a patriotic zeal. Unlike Nabin Chandra, Hiteswar has completely thrown away the mantle of religion in the choice of his subjects for epics; and adding flesh and blood to the dry bones of history Hiteswar has given shape to three lively literary epics in Assamese: Kamatāpur Dhvānasa Kāvya (1899), Tirotār Ātmadān Kāvya (1913), and Yuddha-kṣetrat Āhom Hāmānī bā Mūlā Gābharu Kāvya (1915). It is said of Nabin Chandra that with his first historical kāvya in Bengali: Paḷāṣir Yuddha he has been able to touch the hearts of the patriotic Bengalis in respect of their national life and sentiments. Similarly, in Assamese, Hiteswar Bor Boruah has helped awakening the national feelings and sentiments of the Assamese people by singing to them the glories of their past history and thereby making them conscious of themselves. But Bor Boruah has tried to maintain the art-form of epic in his kāvyas as far as practicable, in respect of which even Nabin Chandra fails in his Paḷāṣir Yuddha. Besides this art-form, there has been deep influence of the Indian philosophy, ideals and beliefs on the epic narratives of Bor Boruah. Bor Boruah's epic heroes and heroines move and act and have their beings, as if, within the circle of this broad Indian tradition of thought. Broadly speaking, there have, therefore, been the fine workmanship of weaving together into his kāvyas these two branches: (I) the Indian philosophic tradition, and (II) the sentiment of nationalistic patriotism. If these two aspects of his epic poetry are clearly present in our mind,
we can very well appreciate other thematic aspects in our appreciation of his historical as well as other literary epics. Dr. S.N. Sarma has the key words to say on this aspect of our approach to Bor Boruah's kāvyas: "Although the Western thought and customs have some influences on the poet, the internal image of the kāvyas is Indian. The Indian philosophy, ideal and belief have chiefly coloured the perspective of the poet. The impact of the Indian outlook is noticed in all his kāvyas, sonnets and lyrics. The will of Destiny, faith in God, the feeling of self-sacrifice as well as the belief in fruits, of one's own works and in Destiny - the use of all these matters or ideas have been observed in his kāvyas. At times these have peepings of questionings and doubts as to the righteousness of God's justice, but the faith in God has submerged all these."  

(1) **KAMATĀPUR DHVAMSA KĀVYA**:  
(A historical Epic on the Ruination of the Kingdom of Kamatāpur)  

In the branch of the modern Assamese epics Hiteswar Bor Boruah's **Kamatapur Dhvamsa Kavya** published jointly with his **Birahimi Bilān Kāvya** in 1912 occupies the third place after Bholānāth Das's **Sītā Haran Kāvya** and Ramā Kānta Choudhury's **Abhinavabhadra Kāvya**; but it is definitely the first in two respects: it is the first historical epic in Assamese and it is also Bor Boruah's first poetic venture in literary epic.

2. Dr. Satyendranath Sarma: *Asamīvā Kāhini Kāvvar Prabāh*; pp. 223-224.
From the dedicatory sonnet called 'Samarpan' (Dedication) that appears at the beginning of the kāvyā it is clear that the kāvyā was written in 1899; but from the 'Preface' we know that the kāvyā was published in 1912. From the words of the Preface itself we know why for all these years between 1899 and 1912 this epoch-making kāvyā in Assamese did not see the light of the day. "The writer has not yet been in a position to decide whether such a book (the 'Kamatāpur Dhvāmsa kāvyā') has any special usefulness in the Assamese literature. That is why, he (the writer) has not come forward for so long a time to publish his 'Tal Sarā Phul'. Presently he has published two of his 'Tal Sarā Phul' (Fallen Flowers), seeing the special eagerness of some of his school friends."  

The Preface of the kāvyā not only shows its uniqueness as mentioned above, but it also points to some of its characteristics. While going through the kāvyā we feel certain weakness in the plot construction as well as in the personal intervention of the poet in midst of epic narratives. But if we bear in mind that this epic is a product of the poet's youth; it is the first of its kind in Assamese; the poet could not collect it in print; and a second edition was never published in the poet's life-time, we feel that the points of looseness are not at all the major defects of his poetic art, but they are more accidental than real. Prominent writers like Bankim Chandra have revised the subsequent editions of their

3. Preface to the Kamatāpur Dhvāmsa Kāvyā.
masterpieces, removing many of the incongruities of the earlier editions. But Hiteswar Bor Boruah has failed to do so, and we get his epics only in their first editions. Let us quote a few words from his 'Preface' in support of our contention: "At present the writer is a servant, and his time is very short; and has not had time to revise the book, and for this he is finally sorry. The writer is a novice in the literary circle, and this kāvya is perhaps the first of its kind in the modern Assamese literature. Over and above, as the book was printed outside (Assam), he himself could not see the proof; and as the writer's wife died during its printing, his mental peace was disturbed; and as a result, many errors crept into these books ('Kamatāpur Dhvamsa' and 'Birahini Bilāp')."

The kāvya, which has been dedicated to the poet's mother is replete with varieties of quotations from the master poets of the world i.e., Homer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Cowper, Goldsmith, Montgomery and Lord Byron. All the quotations, several ones from Shakespeare, are placed at the top of each Canto of the kāvya; and they serve as the keys to open the door of his poetry. Some of the lines from the quotations, sometimes, merge into the poet's own creative lines permanently. From the lines quoted in the kāvya, we know the philosophy of these great poets who have profound impact on the philosophy of Hiteswar Bor Boruah. We shall see in our analysis how the thoughts of great poets like Shakespeare and Madhusudan have been echoing and reechoing in the
pages of the kāvya. Moreover, the quotations from the great masters, so appropriately quoted into his own poetic contexts, aptly prove the mastery of Bor Boruah in the world literatures like English and Bengali, and that too at a considerably early stage. It is a fact that without a huge range of study one does not dare to create an epic. And that fact is evident from the ranges of study of the poets like Milton, Madhusudan Datta and Hiteswar Bor Boruah.

That Hiteswar Bor Boruah was a popular poet can be known from the words of appreciation that came from many a critic and reader of his time. J. Borooah, the then Principal, Karl Law College, Gauhati opines: "It ('Kamatāpur Dvārakā Kāvya') is an excellent book and I have not the slightest doubt that this beautiful production of your literary efforts will enrich our literature. I have read some of the poems, and I find them very very sweet, indeed. ... ... ... ...

... ... ... ...

May I hope that you will bring out some more books, so that our language may be indebted to you all the more?"  

Another comment from Pandit H.C. Gossain (Hem Chandra Goswami), who was at that time an E.A.C. of Nowgong, is of high literary value.  

Besides many such individual eulogies, the comments from the press were also highly encouraging: "Every chapter is

4. As appended to the Abhā Kāvya of Hiteswar Bor Boruah.
5. We have already referred to it in the Introduction of this work: p. 2.
prepared by appropriate quotations from English poets. We greatly appreciate the book for its language, which is decidedly Assamese, its metrical construction and beautiful style. Such publications are, no doubt, an invaluable addition to the literature of the country.\textsuperscript{6}

Coming to the 'Introduction' given as a guide to the epic tale we have from the poet himself the version of the history upon which the epic narrative has been formulated. "King Niladwaj established the kingdom of Kamatāpura towards the west of Kamrup in 1250-60 Saka (it is supposed) and founded the Khen dynasty. After Niladwaj, came in succession King Chakradwaj and King Nilāmbar. The Minister of the last King Nilāmbar was a Brahmin. This king Nilāmbar is taken to be the main hero of the kāvya.

King Nilāmbar was suspicions of an intrigue between his Queen and the son of his Minister whom he caused to be killed and entertained the Minister with the flesh of his son. After that he invited the Minister and showed him the (severed) head of his son, and explained to him what had been given to him, and also the crime his son had committed. After that the Minister in sorrow and agonies underwent expiation and went away to the banks of the Ganges for getting rid of sin.

This pilgrimage was nothing but a trickery. The Minister went to Hussain Shah, the Nawāb of Gour and informed him wrongly of the weakness of the country and brought with him

\textsuperscript{6} The Times of Assam, 29th March, 1913.
many Muslim Soldiers in order to take revenge upon Nilāmbar, the murderer of his son. King Nilāmbar had tough fightings with those soldiers. The fightings continued for twelve years, and yet the Muslims failed to defeat the Kamatā soldiers.

But at last the Muslims placed many armed soldiers inside some palanquines and sent a message to King Nilāmbar as follows: 'Now, leaving the battle, we are going towards the west, but before departure our women want to be acquainted with your Queen.'

Nilāmbar agreed to it and the palanquines were ordered to go inside the city. But, when all the palanquines came in, the armed soldiers got down from them, occupied the city and arrested the king. Along with the King Kamatāpur was ruined. In 1420 Saka the Muslim flag of victory fluttered in Kamatāpur. As Lankā and the Rākshasa clan were ruined for the fault of Bibhiṣana, so also Kamatāpur 'Khen' or 'Kamateswar' clan were ruined for the fault of the Minister. In the same way, about 1738-39 Saka (1816-17 A.D.) the Ahom Kingdom was ruined for the fault of Badan Chandra Barphukan.

Following this historically real event the Kamatāpur Dhvānīsa or Sādari Kavya has been composed. The name of the Queen of King Nilāmbar is Sādari. In the course of the narratives many matters have been newly created." (The Preface).

In relation to the historical episode mentioned above as given by Bor Boruah in the Introduction, it is interesting to quote Maibahadur Kanak Lal Barua: "According to Buchanan
Hamilton a young Brahmin, the son of a councillor named Sachi Patra, had intrigues with Nilambar's wife. He was caught and secretly put to death. Nilambar then had a part of the body cooked and invited Sachi Patra to dinner. The Brahman came on invitation and unwittingly ate of his son's flesh. After the repast the king related the whole story. The Brahman said that his son no doubt deserved punishment for his sin, but he had been made to eat human flesh, he must retire from the world and become a religious mendicant in order to expiate his sin. The king allowed him to depart from his kingdom. Sachi Patra went straight to Hussein Shah, the Sultan of Gaur, and invited him to attack Nilambar in 1498 A.D. and invested Kamatapur which was strongly fortified. Nilambar held out for a long time and at length Hussein Shah reduced the capital by resorting to a stratagem. Nilambar escaped and fled towards the hills.  

Sir Edward Gait also confirming the tradition of this historical tale writes: "The only Kama dynasty of which we have any connected account is that of the Khyan, or Khen, Kings, whose last representative, Nilambar was overthrown by Hussain Shah in 1498 A.D." 

APPRECIATION:

To the dry bones of this historical event Hiteswar Bor Boruah has added the flesh and blood of poetry and created his kavya. The historical event, as it comes to us is, indeed, flat
and does not leave any room for dramatic complicacies to be resolved with the progress of the event. So Bor Boruah has made some definite changes in the event and has arranged it for his epic. The intrigue between Nilambar's Queen and the son of his Minister has been thrown in between Golapi, a mate of the Queen and Nanda, the son of the Minister. This is a real poetic improvement upon the dull historical version of the tale for the creation of initial complicacies in the episode. In the kavya King Nilambar orders his men to behead Nanda while he comes back from the outside pilgrimage to his country. He procures the head of Nanda and keeps it in secret until he presents it to Golapi, Nanda's lady-love, and Golapi gets herself united, as if, with the skull of her lover in this life, commits suicide to go to heaven in order to have an eternal union of her soul with that of Nanda. King Nilambar, however, entertains the Minister with the flesh of his son, but this too inhuman incident is not shown in action.

Bor Boruah does not name the Minister whom we know as Sachi Patra in history. The patriotic poet, to make his imaginary tale more real than history, has painted the character of Sadari, the Queen of Nilambar with colours at once womanly and heroic. Sadari takes sword in hand and leads the army of Kamatapur against the deceitful Muslim General Jamal, who with a stratagem has occupied Kamatapur and has taken King Nilambar a prisoner. Sadari succeeds in rescuing the king when it is too late, as king Nilambar has already been mortally wounded. But in the historical version King Nilambar is said
to have escaped. The creation of Sādari’s character in the line of his Mīlā Gābharu or Jaymati is a sure poetic success on the part of Hiteswar Bor Boruah. The poet even names his kāvyā as Kamatāpur Dhyāna or Sādari Kāvyā in the Introduction, although he calls it Kamatāpur Dhyāna in the title page of the epic. The creation of the parallel episode of Golāpi and Nanda in the line of Romeo and Juliet of Shakespeare is befitting the youth in which the poet created this kāvyā. He has also added to the historical event several other characters like Pamili, Jāmāl and Sujā. And of these the character of Pamili is significant.

Thus, in the changed epic version of the story two tales are intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative epic. The first tale is the tale of romantic love of Golāpi, a close mate of Queen Sādari and Nanda, the son of the Minister of the country. The second tale is the heroic defence of the motherland, Kamatāpur and the rescue of the imprisoned king Nilāmbar by Queen Sādari. The complicacies that originate from the first tale result into tragic situations to which the innocent men and women fall victims. And even if the complicacies are resolved, the wheel of fire cannot be stopped, and it runs full circle, resulting into the second tale of heroism. The main thread that connects these two tales is king Nilāmbar, to whose character the Destiny of Kamatāpur is tagged.
Nilāmbar may be called the villain in the occurrence who eclipses the pure and the innocent love of Golāpi and Nanda. Though Nilāmbar is charmed by the outwardly fascinating beauty of his young wife Sādari, he has in his heart the seat for jealousy and suspicion, which know no reasoning and justice and fair play. Nilāmbar finds in the possession of Sādari a fateful letter written by her on behalf of her dear friend, Golāpi addressed to her beloved Nanda. Accidentally, no name of the writer is there in the letter. And Nilāmbar's suspicion gains momentum on this point and he takes up the letter written in the handwriting of Sādari as the sure proof of the imagined intrigue of Sādari with Nanda. When Othello sees the fateful handkerchief given by him to Desdemona in the pocket of Cassio, his lieutenant, he does not reason to confirm how it may be in the possession of Cassio. Similarly, Nilāmbar also confirms the probable intrigue comes upon hasty decisions. Encircled by jealousy and suspicion Nilāmbar first orders his swordsmen to put Nanda to death:

"Mantrir putek Nanda, Bisvās ghātak, 
Nārādham pāpma ti goiche tirthat'i
Olastiche jāno, jāco bicāri tāhate
Jate pāva kāti tāk pelābi bātāt ii
Dekhibi navare jāte homāb rājyat
Jiyāi thākote dusta; pāp mukh tār
Medekho oake jen; jene tene kari
Badhibail lāge tāk, kular engār ii9"
(5th Canto)

(The Minister's son Nanda is faithless. The sinfully worst man is going on a pilgrimage; and perhaps he is returning. You (Swordsmen) go in search of him. Kill him wherever you find
him on the way. See that he cannot enter into the Kingdom. I do not like to see his sinful face when he is alive. Kill him anyhow, who is the black-sheep of his clan).

Nilambar, after sending his men for the assassination of Nanda, rushes upon his Queen Sādari, reproaches her with all bad names; accuses like Hamlet the entire women folk, and finally issues orders for her exile outside Kamatāpur:

'Biśvāsghātini toi, kalankini tiri,
Ānili kalanka toi pabitra kula t l
Pāścīnī toī dustā ! tirotā jāt ir
Novāra thākib āru itāj purat l l
Dākinī sāpinī toi michātei, hāi
Gākhir khuvāi tek pālile jatnāt l
Eriba novāri kintu jātiya svabhāb,
Birale dankhili mok hīyār mājat l l
Kalankini toi hāi! nakarībī āru
Kalankita rājpuri pabitra nirmal l
Aru nāsānibi māli erāj bānsat
(Cira gourabere bharā, ujjal, bimal) l l'
(Canto 5: V)

(You are a faithless and bad-charactered woman. You have brought slur on my pure clan. You are wicked and devilish among women and you cannot live in this palace. You are a witch, you are a serpent, and I have reared you up with milk. Being true to your own nature you have bitten me in the heart. Ah! you are black-spotted, and don't make this pure court impure any more. And don't throw dirt to this kingly clan (which is for ever glorious and pure)).

Nilambar orders immediate exile of the Queen at that very moment during the night.
(Canto i V)

Take away, Men, this sinful woman beyond the kingdom and leave her there. Take her on land and let her walk, I don't like to see the face of the sinful woman with my eyes. Let her go even at this moment, even during this night. The fire of anger Is burning in my heart,*)

And at this fire of anger Sadari burns herself like an insect, To the devil in Nllmbar she has no protest, no explanation. She simply trembles like a victim at bay.

(Canto s 7)

Husband, why do you have such changed thoughts? To what folly am I subjected? Why are you reproaching me suddenly, calling me a devilish and serpentine woman? Why have you called me a

...
spotted woman and struck me in the heart? So long you have not told me any such words, 0 Husband. To what black spot am I subjected to? For what fault you have abandoned me so suddenly! To the best of my knowledge dear Husband, I have not committed any fault, nor have I committed any sin or foul act. Why have you become so heartless to-day? Tell me, dear Husband, my heart is burning).

But the mystery of the letter continues. If Nilambar tells of it, the mystery will disappear and the dramatic action will be cut short. So Bor Boruah takes Nilambar away cautiously from Sadari, leaving the mystery as it is. Pamili, the old maid of the king’s court counsels prudence and asks Sadari not to go. But Sadari, wholly and solely devoted to her husband, tells her that she will go for the pleasure of her husband as an ideal Hindu woman. This philosophy propounded by Bor Boruah colours the character and action of Sadari.

Sadari speaks:

'Svami mör guru bai! Svami devtā,
Tirotār svāmi dhan svāmi alankār,
Jāno moi sakaloṭi, svāmir kāraṇe
Tiyāgim āgi moi svārtha āponār
Yadi moi thāke hāi! teo pāba dukh
Dukhdi teok moi nāthāke svargat
Atarile moi yadi teo sukh pāi
Thākī ki karim āru irāj purat?
Tiyāgile sāj pār, moni alankār,
Lo tuchha kathā, bai! pāre tiyāgiba
Parānake āponār, yadi pāi sukh
Svāmiya mör, — pāre ātmabali diba ll
Samsārar sukh bhog nicei asār
[Husband is my 'guru' and he is my 'devta' (God). The husband is the wealth and ornament of a woman — all I know. I will sacrifice all my interests for the sake of my husband. If I stay (here), he will be hurt. Giving him pain I do not live in Heaven. If he becomes happy at my departure, why should I stay in this court? I have given up royal dress and ornaments. It is a low thing; Sister! I can sacrifice even my life if my husband becomes happy. The happiness in life is meaningless! For such pleasures why should I create troubles in my husband's mind, Sister? I am not like that, and this is not the religion of an ideal woman. In the guise of a nun I shall leave the city, and for that I have no sorrow, Sister.].

Accompanied by Pamili, Sādāri leaves the king's court, and on her way to the forest beyond the kingdom, she meets her mate Golāpi and tells her of her lot. Golāpi blames the king for his rash action, but Sādāri protects the action of the king, blaming her own destiny. Golāpi joins the party of Sādāri and Pamili. But the mystery remains a mystery to all of them.

In accordance with the orders from the king the swordsmen go out in search of Nanda who is forced to be on a
pilgrimage to the Ganges by his father for a change of mind. Nanda stays out for one year, but he cannot forget the face of his dear lady-love Golapi. Nanda at last returns from the pilgrimage and sits on the bank of a pond brooding over his lot. He does not care a fig for his caste, creed and honour for the sake of his love's fulfilment. Nanda disobeys his father's commands and wishes, and wants to enjoy a life of pure love in a far-off forest unknown to anyone. This is indeed the true longing of a romantic lover.

"Gucj jæm goi dur desaloi
(Janam bhûmir bahut útar晋升)
Nirjan banat katam jiban
Hiyar majat bharâi paran;
Koneo nājâne, konee nusune
Āmâ duyotir prem bharâ gân!"
(Canto VII)

[I shall go away to a country, far away from my motherland. I shall spend my life in a serene forest, taking the heart (of my beloved) within my heart. Nobody shall know, nobody shall hear the love-lorn music of us both.]

But the king's swordsmen come and arrest Nanda, uttering him many insulting words for having an illicit love-affair with a lower caste woman ('SudiranI) although he is a Brahmin. The swordsmen fail to appreciate the idealised yearnings of a romantic lover. They, being true to the king's command, commit the brutal assassination of Nanda. They take the flesh and the severed head of Nanda to the king. The king keeps the head concealed and sends the flesh to the father of Nanda as the flesh of deer. These acts of butchery and inhumanity
perpetrated by King Nilāmbar make one breathless and lead the action of the epic to a climax. The poet narrates the incident in sufficiently strong poetic language:

"...... āru rajāk kotāle
Dekhuvāle uliyāi mūrti Nandar,
Māmsar topolā thale rajār āgat!

Māmsa dile khābeloi mantrīr gharat
Harinār māmsa bulī!
Mūrti somāi thale lukāi rajāi,
Aḥāhā! ākās!!
Brajahin āji toi! natubā bajrat
Nāī Sei tej āji, ji tejere hate
Trilok kapāichil tāhani kālat."

(Canto VII)

(The swordsmen showed the king the head of Nanda and placed the packet of (Hand's) flesh before him. The flesh was sent to the Minister's house as the flesh of deer for cooking. The king kept the head in concealment. Ah! O Sky!! You are without any thunderbolt to-day! Or there is not that power in thunderbolt which cause the Trilok (The Heaven, the Earth and the Hell) a-trembling.)

Pamili, the old maid, has been deputed to bring the message of Nanda, and her inordinate delay causes deep anxiety in the heart of Golāpi. The wheels of the Sun-God's Chariot seem to be highly slow-moving to Golāpi. Pamili at last comes back only to inform her that Nanda is no more. Golāpi comes to know from King Nilāmbar why Nanda has been assassinated. She is shocked to know the cause of Nilāmbar's suspicion and presents before the king the letter written to Nanda by Sadari.
on her behalf. And this letter is the sole cause of all the troubles. Nīlāmbar finds that his Sadari is innocent like a flower. And all the dark clouds of suspicion and misunderstanding are thus removed. The king then produces the severed head of Nanda before Golāpi, and it is for her 'too deep for tears.' Shakespeare's Cleopatra, when her Antony is dead, does not moan; rather she speaks:

"I have immortal longings in me.", and

"As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle ——
O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too."

This romantic yearning for a union in another world finds expression in the words of Golāpi. Golāpi wishes to go to the Heaven for their external union which is not possible on the earthly plane due to various hindrances like caste, creed and wealth. Shedding her saddest tears on the severed head of Nanda, Golāpi says:

"Bālā nāth! balā jāo duyu ekelage,
Numāe duyuṛ āji hrdayar jui l'
Bisāndy āsāṣār eṛi balā nāth,
Nītyadhamoloi jāo, sei svargapur l
Prthivīr bhālpovā dudiniyā māthe
Na-hāy cirakalī" prem āsāṣār l
Kintu nāth! ache tāt sipāre meghar
Svarga nāme āsā ek aṇanta sūkhar l"

(Canto VIII)

(Let us go, 0 Husband, together and quench the fire burning in our hearts. Let us go to the Eternal Heaven. The love on earth is short-lived, and it is not everlasting. But, 0 Husband, beyond the clouds there is the Heaven, which is full

VV 309-310.
of eternal bliss.)

With this hope in heart Golāpi puts an end to her earthly life like Shakespeare's Juliet with three cuts by a knife on her neck.

After the resolution of the initial complicacies and the nipping in the bud of the love between Nanda and Golāpi, the other strand of the story takes its own course. King Nilāmbar, being repentant, meets his Queen Sadari in her exile, begs her forgiveness for his misdeeds and asks her to go home. Sadari consoles the weeping king and puts the burden of blame not upon the king, but upon her own destiny:

"Kiya kāndā, prānanāth ! nakaribā 'sok,
Nowāre bādhib keve prabhur icchāk
Īsvarar icchā nāth ! dukh pāba lāge,
Dukh pālo dukhuniye, — ki dokh tomar ?"
(Canto : IX)

(Why are you weeping, my dear Husband? Donot be sorrowful.
None can prevent the will of God. God willed that I should suffer, and so I suffered. And you have no fault in it.)

Here the Kāvya could have come to a close but for the poetic justice to be meted out to Nilāmbar. Bor Boruah cannot allow Nilāmbar to go scot-free and he must also face the hellish punishments. From the first Canto to the ninth Canto we are concerned with the resolution of the complicacies in the love-intrigue and its accompanying tragedy. From the tenth Canto to the fifteenth Canto, the story has a patriotic version, besides making room for poetic justice.
Nilambar's Minister goes to the kingdom of Gour and prays the Nawab to invade the kingdom of Kamatapur, dethroning its atrocious king Nilambar who has caused the assassination of his son. The Minister succeeds in focusing his personal grievance as the grievance of the people of Kamatapur. The Nawab of Gour, being convinced, sends an army under Jami against Nilambar. Bor Boruah condemns this action of the Minister and compares it with those of Bibhison of Lankā and Badan Chandra Bor Pukon of the Ahom kingdom. And these actions are instrumental in ruining their respective countries. Commenting on this point of action the poet expresses his strong sense of patriotism. The following lines quoted from the kavya present before us the poet's patriotic self:

"Bibhison dharma heno, kai sakalove,
Jyati himsa keke dharma bujo kenekoi ?
Yadioba dharma hai ; Kibā āche kam ?
Naral gyātiye yadi, dharmano kelei ?
Tenekuva lākh dharma pāri tiyāgiba,
Jyātir nimitte, yadi jyāti bhāle rōy ;
Lakh dharma tenekuva pari eri diba,
Desar maṅgal yadi ghate kibāko l
Nālāge tenuvā dharma ji dharma karile
Jyāti bandhu pāi nās des āponar l

...     ...     ...     ...
...     ...     ...

Pratihingsā! Pratihingsā! Pratihingsā Aetu
Ānicīl māti 'mān' Āhom baṅśar
Korodhat andha Borpukhane tāhāni,
Kibā lābh kintu hai ? ki hal desār ?
Pare mātho buji lalē bhitaruva bal ;
Saturuve mātho ḍē pāle Āhomar l
Bāre bāre āhi 'Māne' luti nile desā
Nile jata dhan ratna aiscarya desār !
Eyes sūtrapāt! sesa dhvamsa Asamar;
Gal Āhomar rājya svādhinatā dhan!
Si dare nisoi Mantri! ei sūtratol
Kamatār dhvamsa pāba aisārya ratan"
(Canto: X)

(Bibbison is called religious by all. How can I understand it as religion when there is a revenge against the people of one's own country? Even if it is a religion — Ah! what is its utility? Of what avail is the religion if the nation is not saved? Lakhs of such religious can be sacrificed for the sake of the nation. We do not require a religion that destroys our country and our people.

... ... ... ... ...
... ... ... ... ...

Being angry for a dire revenge (Badan) Bor Phukon of the Ahom tribe invited the Māns (the Burmese) in the days of yore. What profit did he make? What happened to his country? The foreigners only knew the internal strength, and the enemies gained strength over the Ahoms. The Māns came several times and looted the country of its treasure and beauty. This was the beginning of the end of Assam. The Ahoms lost their kingdom and freedom. Similarly, for the action of the Minister Kamatā's wealth would be ruined.)

The lines quoted from the kāvya, even out of the context, serve the poet's purpose behind choosing the incidents of the Assam History. It cannot but be the strongest expression of the poet's patriotism in the hey day of the British rule, appealing indirectly to his people to rise up and fight against the colonial rule.
Nilambar and Sadari cannot live happily ever after. The messenger brings the news of the enemies’ arrival at the door of the country. The king takes a heroic farewell from his Queen to fight the enemies out for the preservation of the country’s independence. Queen Sadari also gives him a heroic send-off. Nilambar leads the army of Kamatapur against the Muslim army of Gaur led by Jamin. Seeing his own Minister amidst the enemies the king becomes surprised and accuses him for becoming a traitor to the country. The Minister in reply accuses the king for becoming an assassin of the Brahmin. Nilambar, while admitting the charge of the Minister and willing to undergo any punishment for his crime, tells the traitor Minister that his action in destroying the country, instead of destroying the king, cannot go unpunished. One crime thus defeats another, and the king’s lucid explanation appears in the following lines:

"Nubicari saca Mantri! mari-lo Brahman,
Si pāpar pratiphal āpuni bhugim,
Kintu ki Mārane tumī ānīla bidesī?
Kamatapurat hāi! kirūpe sahim?
Moi pāpi Brahmadhi, mōk rajā bhāngi
Ān ejanak rajā kiya nāpātīla?
Eṭār dokhat lāgi, kiya janambhumi?
Satrur hātāt āji dvāsība khujilā?
Mor pāpate kiya jāba Kamatār
Śvādhinatā mahadhan, — amulya ratan?

(Canto XI)

(It is true, O Minister, that I killed the Brahmin without any trial. I will surely suffer from the consequence of this crime. But why have you brought the foreigners to Kamatapur? Ah! how
can I bear it? I am a sinful Brahmin-assassin, and why have you not de-throned me and encrowned another? Why, for one's fault, have you brought ruination to your motherland? Why for my sin should the freedom of Kamatāpur, which is precious jam, be in peril?

Whatever the force in of argument presented by the poet, Kamatāpur faces its ruination for the suspicious nature and the thoughtless action of king Nilāmbar himself.

Nilāmbar fights several battles with the enemies, and in all he carries the day. The Muslim soldīers spend the time haplessly without any support from the people of Kamatāpur. Twelve years thus pass by. The enemy soldīers can now realise the selfish motive of the Minister. The Muslim general Jamāl asks the Minister to bring about a compromise with King Nilāmbar. But the Minister does not agree to the proposal. Jamāl loses his temper and orders Sujā to inflict hellish punishments upon the Minister for his faithlessness and high treason. And, accordingly, the Minister is brutally murdered. Then Jamāl deputes Sujā to King Nilāmbar with the message that his army is now ready to go back to Gaur. But before leaving Kamatāpur their women want to see the Queen and bid her farewell. Sujā succeeds to secure the consent of King Nilāmbar. Accordingly, many palanquines of the Gaur army are permitted by the king to enter Kamatāpur. But instead of women, some armed soldiers jump out of the palanquines and occupy the city. They take the king a prisoner.
Seeing the fate of her husband and the ruination of Kamatapur, Queen Sādari like Mūlā Gābhāru takes her stand as a heroine. Like Boadeaea, Queen of the Britons, Sādari takes up the sword in hand, and mobilising a strong army jumps upon the enemies with an iron determination. And Sādari and her army attain victory, — over the enemies. But Nīlāmbar cannot be rescued before he has been mortally wounded by the enemies. King Nīlāmbar suffers the punishment for the crime of his killing a Brahmin and succumbs to it.

Queen Sādari decides to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. There cannot be anything more precious to a devoted wife than the life of her husband. So, true to the poet’s philosophy, the heroine of his kāvya prefers to be with her husband in heaven than to be alone to rule in Kamatapur without him. Mūlā Gābhāru falls a victim to the sword of her enemies, while Sādari falls a victim to the sword of her Destiny. Addressing the people of Kamatapur the Queen says:

"Bhāoloi rājmantri nahāy nirbodh ।
Bhāololcine ki hāi ’desar manuhe
Bidesāk māti āne āpon desat ।
Corāk dekhāi āni āponār dhan,
Śunicā ki ene kathā konobā rājyat ।
Bidhātār icchā hās । Ache je bhāgyat
Bahut keleś jāno, janamabhūmīr ।
Yabanar padānat haba jānamabhūmi ।
Kone pāre bādhā dibā icchāt bidhir ।"

(Canto XIV)
(It is not for any good that a Minister becomes fool. Ah! is it for any good that a countryman invites the foreigners to his country? Have you heard in any country that a thief is brought to show one's own treasure? Ah! it is the will of God and the role of Destiny that the motherland should undergo many a suffering. The motherland will come under the Muslims; and who can check the will of Destiny?)

Sādari goes a Sati, and with her Kamatāpur's ruin is complete. In the last Canto (XV) Bor Boruah depicts the ruination of Kamatāpur through the words of Pamili who like the Chorus of a Greek drama stays in the kāvya from the beginning to the end. Pamili, being unable to bear the brunt of the ruin of Kamatāpur goes to the forest in search of heavenly solace far away from the burial ground of earthly life. The forest to which Pamili enters at once reminds us of Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden' as depicted in the play As You Like it. When life hangs heavy upon their heads the characters of the play: Duke Senior, Rosalind, Celia, Touchstone and Jacques go to the Forest of Arden where they have the attainment of perfection and solace in life.

While conceiving the plan of the epic Hiteswar Bor Boruah has been greatly influenced by the dramatic scenes and characters of Shakespeare, and the poetries of Milton and Madhusudan. The echoes of the writings of these master-poets can be heard while going through the narratives of Bor Boruah. In the creation of the love intrigue of the kāvya Bor Boruah takes the
supports of Shakespeare's plays like Othello, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and As You Like it. Keeping the originality of his characters intact, Bor Boruah paints his men and women with varieties of colours taken from Shakespeare's men and women. For example, Sādari, the heroine of the Kāvya, blooms innocently like Desdemona. Nilāmbar, the hero, is near Othello. The missing of the letter written by Sādari is a poetic metamorphosis of the missing of the fateful handkerchief from the possession of Desdemona. Golāpi is almost Emilia, the wife of Iago, although unlike Emilia is primarily concerned with the intrigue. The complication arising out of the intrigue is resolved only after the killing of the young lover Nanda as the same is revealed only after the smothering of Desdemona by Othello. Again, Sādari and Golāpi, the two close friends decide to dwell in their exile in a forest beyond Kamatāpur, as Rosalind and Celia of Shakespeare's As You Like it in the Forest of Arden during their exile. Sādari gets real solace in her forest life:

"Ei bankhani nath! sundar nagar
Eyār saite jen tulanā nahāy j
Suvalā surerē pakhi kata gān gāi;
Apesvarī gābanekī pāre tene geet?
Pareneki sei geete mohiba parān,
Pakhir geetat kare jidare mohit?
Ku-o o ku-o o kari kuli nithā geet gāi,
Kuer surat Sur milāi milāi; ...
... ... ... ...
... ... ... ...
Cir cir cir kari bāy saru jān,
Sītal batāh bale rib rib kārī;
(Canto IX)

(0 Husband, this forest cannot be compared with a beautiful town. The melodious music of the birds cannot be heard even from the angels. The music of the angels cannot enchant our hearts as the music of the birds. The cuckoo sings 'Ku-oo Ku-oo' in rhythm. ... ... ... The spring flows through the forest with gurgling sounds and the breeze blows pleasantly. The red-white violets bloom on the edges of the spring, and many a charming flower blooms on the branches of trees. The bushes of trees give shade like that of houses. Peace, we have here, 0 Husband, cannot be had in the palace of the a town. ... ... ... While I muse on the beauty of the forest, I do not feel like going home. The sages dwell in the forest as here there are no sorrows and sufferings of the earthly life.)

From the mouth of the banished Duke Senior in Shakespeare's As You Like it, We have similar appreciation of the life in the Forest of Arden :
"Sweet are the uses of adversity; 
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, 
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head; 
And this our life, exempt from public haunt, 
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, 
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. 
I would not change it." 10

Bor Boruah's Golāpi is at once Shakespeare's Emilia, 
Juliet, Ophelia and Cleopatra. Golāpi is in the same predicament after the killing of her lover — Wanda as Ophelia is after the killing of her father Polonius. She is Emilia in the creation of the complicacy in the intrigue, and takes to the course of self-killing in hot-haste like Juliet. But she is an ideal lover like Cleopatra and dies like Cleopatra, being separated to be united again in the other world which is free from the earthly barriers of love.

Bor Boruah paints his characters with colours taken from other great poets like Madhusudan. His Sādari is a heroine like Pramilā, the wife of Meghnād, who has iron will and determination. Sādari's husband - Milanbar is killed in a helpless situation when he is unarmed. But when properly armed Milanbar is an unconquerable hero like Meghnād, and he continues to defend Kamatāpur for twelve years. Similarly, in the battle field Meghnād is always unconquerable, and so he is killed mercilessly when he is in prayer at the 'Nikumbhila Yajna.' When Meghnād dies, Pramilā immolates herself. Similarly, when Milanbar dies, Sādari immolates herself. The chorė character

of the Kāvya —— Pamili — plays the role of the mother of Sādari, and she weeps bitter tears at the cremation of Nilāmbar and Sādari as Rāvana does at the cremation of Meghnād and Pramīlā. And we have the echoes of parallel lines from the Meghnādbadh kāvya in the Karmātāpur Dhyānsa kāvya. Pamili, the old maid, speaks:

"Achil manat āsā, antim kālat
Nudim ducaku, cāi tomāk āgat 1
Kintu nidārun bidhi' ki kari bujim
Tār lilā ? Si sukhat karile banchana !
Achile manat hāi ! rajāre tomāre
Sukh dekhi pāharim saṃsār jātanā l
Kintu hāi l brithā āsā ā purba janmaphale,
Jitu bhabichilo site gal dūraloi
Bhabā nāi jite hāi ! svapnate edin,
Sīto je āhile cāpi āji kāselei

... ... ... ... ...
... ... ... ...
(Canto: XIV)
(K.D. Kāvya)

(I had hopes in mind that I would shut my eyes at the end of my life, seeing you in front of me. But the heartless Destiny! how can I know his play? It has deceived me in that peace. Ah! I had also hopes, that I would be able to forget the tortures of life by seeing your peace with the king. Ah! all hopes are in vain! What I thought was pushed away by the effects of actions of the previous life. What I did not dream has now come to fulfil.)
It is interesting to quote the parallel lines from Madhusudan's 'Meghnādbadh Kavya' by way of comparison. At the death of Meghnād and Pramili, old Havand repents:

"Chila ēsā, Meghnād, mudība antime
Enayan dvādy ēmi tumār samākhā; —
Sapi rājyabhār, putra, tomāi, kariba
Mahāyātra! kintu, bidhi — bujhiba kemade
Tār lila? bharāilā se sukh ēmāre!
Chila ēsā, rakṣa kula-rāj-simhasane
Juraiba ākhi, batsa, dekhiyā toṁāre,
Bāme rakṣa KulaLakṣmī rakṣhoranirūpe
Putrabhedhū! bṛthā ēsā! purba janmaphale
Heri toma dohe Ēji e kāl-āsane?"¹¹

[I had hopes, Meghnad, I would shut these two eyes of mine in front of you. After conferring the Kingship on you, my son, (I thought) I would set out on the eternal journey. But the Destiny — how can I know its play? (It has) ridden me of that peace! I had hopes that my eyes would be pleased to see you, my son, on the throne of the Rāksha dynasty, and (also by seeing) my daughter-in-law, who is the Rakshakula Lakṣmī as the Queen of the Rākshas. Vain Hope! I have seen you both on this throne of Death as the fruits of actions of my past life.]

Madhusudan concludes his famous epic with the following lines:

"Kari shān sindhumīre rakṣhodal ebe
Phirilā Lankār pāne, ādra asrunīme
Bisarjī pratimā jen daśami dibase!
Sapta dibāniśi Lakmā kādilā bisāde 11" ¹²

The Baksha people, taking bath in the river, returned to Lanka with eyes rolled in tears as if they returned after the immersion of the Image (of the Goddess Durga) on the Saptami day. For seven days and nights Lanka wept in agony. Similarly, after the cremation of Nilambar and Sadari, the people of Kamatapur also return home with agony and frustration in heart:

"Sei rūpe ējī rānī tyajile parāṇ;  
Sok-bejārat sabe hoi mriyāmān  
Gharaloi gal prajā, — dasāmir dinā  
Jāi gene rūpe grīf utāi pratimā l"

(Canto : 14)

(In that way the Queen has to-day breathed her last. The subjects go home in deep agony as the people go home on the Dasami day after the immersion of the Image.)

Besides maintaining the poetic excellences as discussed above, Hiteswar Bor Boruah tries to maintain the dignity of the art-form of epic in his 'Kamatapur Dhvanisa Kāvya. There are 16 Cantos in the epic, and it starts with the prayer to the Muse in Canto I. There are beautiful descriptions of Garden, (Canto II), morning (Canto IV), evening (Canto V) and night (Canto III). There is a fine picture of the beauty of a young woman in sleep (Sadari) in Canto IV. The breadth of time and space is shown by taking an episode covering twelve years and connecting two armies of two distant lands in the battle field. The main hero and the heroine of the epic are a King and a Queen and their fall is sung in the poem. The tragic here is endowed with 'tragic flows' in character. The
impact of the actions done by the tragic hero and heroine are having 'high seriousness' as they envelop the fates of the people of Kamatāpur. When they fall, Kamatāpur also falls. The popular beliefs and superstitions are also pleasantly presented in the epic. People say that the morning dreams are fulfilled, and so it is shown in Canto IX. People say that the assassination of a Brahmin is a great sin, and for such a sin committed by the king, Kamatāpur is ruined.

There are also heroic descriptions of the marching of armies, the battle-scenes and the invasion of the fort around Kamatāpur. There is demonstration of heroic feats by Queen Sādari. Though there is no physical presence of Gods and Goddesses as we have in Aeneid, or Meghnādbadh, we feel the massive role of Destiny which plays in and through the deeds of the men and women in the Kāvya. All dance to the pulls of strings by the Destiny (Canto XIV). That the life is a stage and all the men and women are its players, and the Destiny is the Director, is symbolically shown at the very outset of the Kāvya (Canto II) through the doll-play of Sādari and Golāpi in the royal garden. The doll-play of a human-marriage, so dear to children, is indeed significant of transitoriness of human happiness. Bor Boruah's due emphasis on this scene reveals how he is going to justify the ways of Destiny to Man. There are also uses of enough similes and metaphors in the Kāvya, and these are appropriately used by the poet:

(1) Tumi ākāsar jon mojē cākoi
Cākōik jone bāhāl pak bā napak,
Cīrakāl cākayeto antare saite
Bhālpāba teokei (ākāsī jonak). (Canto III).
(You are the moon of the sky and I am the cakoi bird. The moon may or may not love the cakoi bird, but for all times the cakoi will go on loving the moon of the sky).

(ii) "Aksat thāke suryya, — chandra manohar, Padum bhetar phul thāke maratat; Kintu nāth! Sei buli, Kamiche ki kāro Bhalpovā kihabāt kāro antarat" (Canto III)

(The Sun is in the sky, and also the charming Moon is there. The lotus and the Violet flowers are on the earth. But, Husband, is there any diminishing of their love in their hearts for that reason?)

(iii) "Nāgini rākhī boloi lāge sar jāthi Nāgāk — nāgini yadyā nāiki tār Ki kariba sar-jāthi? Lāgiche kelei Sāh-jāthi akathāt, michā-michī bhār." (Canto V)

[To protect the Nagini (Naga-woman) the Naga requires the spear. Of what avail is his spear if his Nagini is not there? If there is no use, it becomes a useless burden.]

(iv) "'Astamīr dinā' Kāte jenakoi chāg, kātile Brāhman!" (Canto VII)

(As the goat is butchered on the Astami day, so also the Brahmin is butchered)

(v) "Anurāg suke hāi! mādhai Latāi Bhum-phāne tamālak jirupe merāi Birah byākulā hoi! dukhuni Golāpi Nandakei meriyāi si dare palāi" (Canto VIII)

(The peace of Union! The manner in which the 'madhabi' creeping plant encircles the tamāl (a kind of bamboo), so also sorrow-ridden Golapi, creeping Nanda (her lover) flees away.)
(vi) "Bijuliya jenekoi khantek pohari
Dakā-damā kari punu badāi āndhārī
dhkantek lagāi rang, sapone sidare
Bechi kare mānuhar santāpar bhār." 
(Canto IX).

(As the lightning flash, appearing momentarily, deepens darkness (of night), the dream also pleasing men for a while deepens the sorrows of their heart).

There are also changes in the verse in certain Cantos befitting the situations of the narratives. The ordinary 14 syllabled blank verse of the Kāvya turns into shorter and quicker pace at the beginning of Canto X, when the Minister is going to Gaur for the hatching of the conspiracy. Again, in Cante XIII when Queen Sādari leads the army against the enemy, the lines turn into twelve syllabled blank verse as if in the war footing:

"Karilo pratigya kamatā nagar
Satrur tejere rāngali kari,
Binā'ī javan melecar senā
Apon svāmi ānim kāñhī kī
Rajār jīyāī rājar konvarī
Svāmir snehar tirotā moī
Dekhāṁ biratwa dekhāṁ kāhyamatā
Javan senāk binās koi kī." (Canto XIII)

[I promise to redden the Kamatā city with the blood of the enemies; and killing the enemy-soldiers I will snatch my own husband—(from them). I am the daughter of a king; I am the wife of a king; and I am the dear wife of my husband. I shall show my heroism and power by destroying the enemy-soldiers.]
There is also the description of the Svarasvati Puja festival in Canto XIII. While presenting the innocent Queen Sādārī in sleep, the poet delves deep into the fascinating beauty of the young woman with a minute description of the indigenous ornaments and clothes put on by an Assamese woman. This beauteous scene in Canto XIV presents itself as a fine contrast to the impending trap of the Devil in Nilāmbar who will cause her separation from him:

"Ahā ! ki madhur rūp ! labanya atul !
Martyar saundarya jen eke thāl hoi
Pari āche sukomal sundar āyāt,
Labanye bharāi kothā manohar koi l
Phularā Sundarī jen tiyāgi phulani
Śuiche bibhor hoi nirab nimāt l"

(Oh! how charming and pleasing is the beauty! As if the totality of all the charms of the world is lying on the soft and beautiful bed, filling the chamber with beauty. As if the Queen of the garden of flowers is sleeping a sound sleep silently, leaving her garden.)

If we scan the lines quoted above we come to know how alliterative and fluid are the blank verse, how spontaneous and indigenous is the diction used by Hiteswar Bor Boruah for the first time in Assamese through his Kamaratpur Dhvamsa Kavya. So there were high acclamations among the press and the public when Hiteswar's Kavyas were published. This Kavya may, therefore, be called the high water-mark of Hiteswar Bor Boruah's epic genius, and its publication has established his position in the Assamese literature.
Among the drawbacks that we come across while going through this Kavya are the looseness in plot-construction, absence of sub-plots and the poet's personal intervention in the course of the epic-narratives. The poet fails to drive home the episode of the letter written by Sadari convincingly to us, and in the creation of the initial complicacy he sacrifices common sense; instead of creating a whirlpool of sub-tales to make the epic a pleasant reading the poet presents before us long passages on philosophic discourses as in Canto I XIV. Again, instead of bridging the big gap of twelve years through some sub-tales, the poet simply mentions it as if by keeping the epic-action pending for all the time. Dr. S. N. Sarma while dwelling on some of these defects of Bor Boruah as an epic-writer, comments:

"The beauty of a narrative epic mostly depends upon the spread of an event and its variety. The tale of an epic gains momentum along with the addition of more new and various episodes. The tale of Kamatapuhr Bhava is flat without the variety of events. The epic-tale would have been thrilling and lively, had there been the spreading of a net of sub-tales and events in the period of almost twelve years in which the flow of the tale seems dead."¹³

And without the varieties of actions the characters cannot develop and they become flat. If the characters are not painted in light and shade, they do not appear to be human. This happens mostly in the characters of Hiteswar Bor Boruah.

¹³. Dr. S.N. Sarma: Asamir Kohini Kavyar Prabah: Page, 243 (Translated from Assamese)
Another defect that we come across is the poet's personal intervention in the midst of the epic narratives. The poet generally plays the role of the chorus in his narratives, making impersonal comments here and there. Behind the actions of the hero or the heroine we feel the presence of the poet only indirectly, and for this 'feeling' also we require some knowledge about the poet's personality and his personal actions. When we read the passage on Samson's blindness in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, we only indirectly feel that it is Milton who is speaking through Samson. Complete negative capability in a sense is impossible.

But in case of Bor Boruah it is a direct personal intervention which mars the pure poetic excellence of the narrative. While discussing the effects of dreams in *Canto IX* the poet mentions that he also lost one of his nephews long ago, and he wants to see his beautiful face in dreams. But this desire of his is never fulfilled:

"Hal āji bahudin : heruvāle eti
Parānar ratna mor (bhatija snehar)
Kata tāhe bhābi thāko katano dhīse
Dekhim dekhim buli mukhani sundar!
Edino nedeke kintu hāi ! saponato,
Hei mukh khani mor lāhari sonar."

(I have lost a dear jem of my heart, a nephew of mine long ago. I think so much about it and hope to see his beautiful face. But for a single day I do not dream that beautiful face of my dear nephew.)

... ... ...
In the addendum to the Kāvyā we do not find any trace of the epic narrative. It may be called an autobiographical note. The poet laments that he has not received any blessings from Goddess Bhārati in his life, and prays to her for the success of his poetic vocation.

If the poet could have published a second edition of the Kāvyā in his lifetime, deleting some of the lines here and there that disturb its pure poetic excellence, and also by dropping the addendum which seems purely unnecessary, the Kāvyā would have come to us to-day in its perfect form.

(ii) Tīrotār Ātmadān Kāvyā:
(A Historical Epic on the Self-sacrifice of Jaymati)

Background:

The second epic venture of Hiteswar Bor Boruah is his Tīrotār Ātmadān Kāvyā, a literary epic on a heroic woman's self-immolation, published in 1913, one year after the publication of Kamatāpur Dhvajā Kāvyā. We have said in the Introduction, the writers of the Jonākī Age of the modern Assamese literature, after a long recess of inactivity, became conscious of themselves through their learnings of Western thoughts and culture, and after a thorough searching of hearts, they came to express themselves through different forms of literature. In order to awaken a nation who was in slumber after the loss of their Independence, the writers took shelter in their national history and utilised any patriotic event for the purpose.

One of the most thrilling episodes of the national history of Assam is the self-immolation of an Ahom Konwarī named
Jaymati, and this episode has been the theme of two dramas and a literary epic in Assamese published between 1900 and 1915. Padmanath Gohain Barua published his drama *Jaymati*, written in fine Assamese blank verse in 1900. Hiteswar Bor Boruah published his *Tirotār Ātmadān or Jaymati Kāvyā* in 1913. And Lakshminath Bezbarua published his drama *Jaymati Konwarē*, written in pure Assamese prose in 1915. The purpose of the writers behind these creations is crystal clear: they want to make their people conscious of their national heritage and to inculcate in them the message of the fruits of freedom and the pains of slavery.

Before delving deep into the poetic excellence of the Kāvyā let us have some idea about the situations in which it was written and published. This Kāvyā bears the testimony of the poet’s grim personal tragedies: the death of his dear son Jiten in 1910 and the death of his beloved wife in 1912; and these two events combined together have made the poet mad in grief, and as a consequence the Kāvyā has come down from the peak of a pure literary epic to the level of a long lyric poem shaped in the mould of an epic. In course of our discussion we shall find how at times the poet tries to lift the poem to epic heights. And it would have been an epic of thought par excellence, had there been no personal bereavements at the time of writing it. The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings disturbed the poet and turned the Kāvyā into a lyrical epic. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua, commenting on the lyrical charm of the Kāvyā says: "Another historical narrative poem is his (Hiteswar’s) *Tirotār Ātmadān* (Woman’s
Self-sacrifice) in which the poet describes how the illustrious Ahom Princess, Jayamati, held as ransom by a tyrannical despot, the Lara Raja, willingly embraced death through torture for the cause of her husband and the country. The poet, while maintaining fidelity to facts, pours out all the wealth of his imagination whenever there is opportunity to do so.

He often stops and indulges in impassioned apostrophes to such things as Imagination, Tears, Dewdrops, Sleep, etc., — apostrophes which almost become independent lyrics of rare charm and beauty. But our concern is not to have a series of "independent lyrics", but to have an epic of art with coherent thoughts centring round a prime tale. In the 'Preface' to the *Tirotar Àtmadôn Kâvya* Bor Boruah himself speaks of the predicament in which the book was written and published. "To write a Kâvya is not a matter of joke. Thinking that it is a hope against hope to become successful as an epic-writer in the modern Assamese language for a man like me, I left the book several times after writing some lines of a few Cantoes...

At present the mind of the writer is full of deep distress. Due to distress if he fails to maintain at times the poetic excellence of the book, the readers should forgive him." By the 'deep distress' the poet means his personal tragedies as mentioned above.

On the historical authenticity of the episode on Jayamati Konwaree there are several versions in the history of Assam,

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15. Translated into English from the 'Preface' of the Kâvya written in Assamese.
in which there are certain basic differences. The mention can be made of the versions of Mr. Foster, Dutiram Hazarika, Hara Kanta Barua, Ratneswar Mahanta and Kripakath Phukan. The popular version of the event centres round the version of Ratneswar Mahanta, and there is no substantial difference between this version and that of Dutiram Hazarika. Dr. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan writes: "Ratneswar Mahanta's version agrees substantially with that of Dutiram Hazarika, though Mahanta does not make any mention of the daughter. Jaimati was taken to the presence of Lera Baja, and on her refusal to say anything about her husband she was made over to the Chandangs with orders to extract the required information from her, and punish her if she proved incorrigible. The princess remained adamant, and she bore with fortitude the tortures inflicted upon her in consequence. Gadapani had heard of his wife's plight during his wanderings in the Naga Hills, and he visited the place of torture disguised as a Naga tribesman. His indirect hint to Jaimati to speak out met with a polite rebuff from her, accompanied by a request that he should immediately leave the spot infested as it was with his cruel and unrelenting foes. Jaimati died in the midst of tortures which had continued for fifteen or sixteen days. The 'Naga' or wooden pillar in the centre of the Jaisagar tank marks the place where Jaimati breathed her last. The tank and the temple were constructed by Rudra Singh to perpetuate the memory of his mother. The boy-king Lera Baja alone is held responsible for Jaimati's summons to the court, her punishment and her death. Mahanta also uses the name Jaimati, and it has now been accepted universally. There is a
great deal of similarity between the versions of Mahanta and Fester."

On the popular version of Jaymati Konwarsee mentioned above Padmanath Gohain Barua’s Jaymati (1900) and Lakshminath Bosbarua’s Jaymati Konwarsee (1915) are based. But Hiteswar Ber Boruah, being a historian himself with his monumental work on the history of Assam entitled Āhomar Din (still unpublished), has followed a different version of the tale in his Kāvya. He has closely taken to the version of Hara Kanta Barua and has some of his own information to add as we gather from his ‘Introduction’ to the Kāvya. Let us narrate this version in the words of Dr. S.K. Bhuyan: "In Hara Kanta Barua's version which was compiled with the help of old chronicles and the oral reports of reliable Ahom nobles, the basic fact of Jai- mati's death in the midst of fortunes inflicted on her for refusing to mention the whereabouts of her husband remains the same, though the attendant circumstances are different from the other versions. Lora Raja killed or multitated all the rival princes. Godapani, out of fear, fled from his residence with his wife and took shelter in the forest where they built a hut with leaves and twigs. Once at midnight the princess heard the voice of a group of persons whom she suspected to be the emissaries of Lora Raja. She persuaded her husband to leave the hut in disguise, and she waited alone to face the royal agents. When questioned about Gadapani she pretended complete ignorance. She was then subjected to various tortures. Gadapani visited the place of torture and for this dare-devil act he was indirectly and politely reprimanded by his dying

wife. After Jaimati's death Gadapani resumed his wandering life. This version gives an impression that the punishment of Jaimati was the action of the emissaries, and the king or any noble had neither ordered, nor authorised the brutalities. \(^{27}\)

Hiteswar Bor Boruah has closely followed this version and he narrates the tale of his Kāvya in the 'Introduction':

"Gadāpāṇi enjoyed kingship first time for only seven days. Due to conspiracies of the Ministers he along with Jaymati Konwaree fled away to forest after seven days of his assumption of the kingship. This Gadapani is the hero of our Kāvya and his Konwaree Jaymati is our heroine. Jaymati Konwaree had two sons named Lāi and Lecāi, but our Kavya has got connection only with one of them; and that is Barjanē Konwar or Lāi Gohain. At the time of absconding to the forest the king and the Queen left the two princes in the house of their grandmother.\(^\text{28}\)

At this, Prince Sulikfa of Samaguria clan ascended the throne in 1679, and as he was lean and thin, and also childish in nature Sulikfa was known as 'Lara Raja'. Through his machinations many Ahom princes had to lose their lives. Lara Raja was particularly concerned with Gadāpāṇi who was well known for his physical prowess. The king had gone into conspiracies with two Chandangs named Mihi and Latha against the life of Gadāpāṇi. When they failed to arrest Gadāpāṇi,

\(^{27}\) Ibid. pp. 194-195.

\(^{28}\) Translated into English from the 'Introduction' of the Kāvya.
they arrested Jaymati, the devoted wife of Gadāpāni, and inflicted tortures on her till death.

This is the main historical tale on which the Tiroṭār Ātmādān Kāvya is based. The Kāvya contains 12 Cantos with an Addendum in the end. The very first line indicates the gloom that pervades the whole poem:

"Mar āesīr nisā; ākāśo dāvare bharā,
Etio olovā nāi āji tarā ākāsat"

(It is the night of the new moon. The sky is covered with clouds. Not a single star can be seen in the sky to-day).

The poet then sings of the blessings of the silent night. It reminds us of P.B. Shelley's poem 'To the Night' where the English romantic poet craves for the coming of the night for a free flow of his creative activities. Bor Boruah recalls how the great epics like the Rāmāvāna, the Paradise Lost etc. were composed by the master-poets in the stillness of night. The poet dwells on the role of Imagination in the creation of the great poetry of the world. The poet then sings his prayers to the Muse (Goddess Bagdevi) and laments that he has not been blessed by her to make immortal verses like that of Shakespeare, Virgil, Homer, Milton, Vyasa, Valmiki etc. (Canto I).

The story begins with a forest in which a young and beautiful woman is seen weeping. A young man comes near the weeping woman and sheds bitter tears. The young man, who is no other than Gadāpāni, tells the young woman, who is his beloved wife Jaymati:
"Hāi ! Priye ! tumi mor hiyā phulanir phul
Dhopākali hayeneki thākibā sadāi ?
Nuphuli nāhāhi, Priye ? hāi ! akālat
Dhopākali lereli sukāi !!
Banar golāp Priye ! nīje phule nīje sare,
Āpon gondhat thāke nīje moh goi,
Nirjan banat jahe — banar mājat
Ji karaṇe mamātā nahay "'
Kintu tumi, Prāneswal ! mor phulanir phul,
Ādar-sādar kari tolā jatanere,
Tomār .Util kasta moj kirupe sahim ?
Hāi ! Priye ! hṛday bidare "' (Canto II).

(Ah ! Beloved wife ! you are the flower in the garden of my
heart. Should you remain a Bud always without a bloom and
without the fall of petals ? Ah : the bud withers untimely !!
The rose in forest blooms and falls automatically, and it is
charmed by its own smell. It withers alone in the forest, and
for that we have sympathy. But Oh ! my Beloved ! you are the
flower of my heart's garden, reared up in gentle care. How can
I tolerate all tortures on you ? Ah : my Beloved ! my heart
is broken !)

This is indeed an embodiment of fine lyric poetry in
Assamese.

Gādāpāni wants his devoted wife to go home. But Jaymati
shows her heroic devotion to her husband, saying thus :

"Tumi mor dukhunir sketi ratan,
Tumi mor prānapati tumi mor dhyan,
Tumi mor jīvar jīvan 11
Prān eri, hāi ! nāth ! thakenā gharat kone !
Ji thāke thākok, kintu nāthāke kadāpi
Prāp eri Jaymati, yadi prān jāi,
Pati sanga neriba tathāpi" (Canto II)
(You are the gem of me, the poor woman. You are dearer than my life; you are my worship and you are the soul of my heart. Who can live away from the soul, Oh Lord? Let anyone do so, but Jaymati cannot live apart from her soul. Even if she dies, she will not forsake the company of her husband.)

Gadāpāni and Jaymati continue to live in a cottage in the forest secretly. Gadāpāni begs rice from the nearby villages and Jaymati cooks food. On the tears shed by Jaymati the poet writes a fine lyric wherein he mentions the tears of his own personal tragedies like the loss of his beloved wife. (Canto II)

We have fine lyrics on 'Dew-drops' of the morning, and on the eternal role of Time. (Canto III)

Lara Raja expresses his deep concern at his court that Gadāpāni has not been under arrest and for three months there is no trace of him. But Mihi Chaudang informs that he has collected the whereabouts of Gadāpāni and Jaymati who are absconding themselves in a forest. Mihi pleases the king by saying that he will immediately arrest them. The king promises many rewards to Mihi for his adventure. But the courtiers of the king have a dissentient voice, and all of them ask the king why he should punish Gadāpāni who is innocent. But Lara Raja is adamant and he wants to steer clear of his bitterest enemy — Gadāpāni — for a peaceful reign. But all the Ministers caution the king of his gloomy future:

"Kulakane lale lag ' nadharibā doṣ,  
Maharāj ! dharma kathā novāri nakay  
Nasahe ḫvare ene mot atyācār  
Adosat, Rājā! tumī jānibā niscay." (Canto IV)
(Oh! King, don't take amiss. You are profoundly misguided. The truth must be spoken. O King! God will never tolerate such hardened tortures. You must know it.) (Canto IV)

Gadāpānī and Jaymati are fast asleep at night in their forest-dwelling. All of a sudden, Gadā gets up from sleep and hears the noise of the searching party led by Mihi. Gadāpānī informs his wife of their impending danger. Jaymati sends her husband away immediately to the Naga Hills and appeals to him to keep himself absconded among the backward Naga people who can never be as heartless as Lara Raja. But Gadāpānī laments to leave his dear wife all by herself in the forest and hesitates to go, when Jaymati makes her heroic prediction as follows:

"Hākhā Prān āponār, thākile ḛyāi
Betīr nicinā betī pābā laksyajānī lil
Belī tumī uthi ahā Tunkhungia faidar
(Indra-Bangsī Rajbaṅgśa) jātir gourab,
Tomār mṛtyut nāth hānī āponār
(Ahom-rāyjar) kone damāb biplāb?
Palovā palevā, nāth! akālat hāi! tumī
Jivanar rangābeli ninyābā mār l
Golāp gachar, hāi! golāp kaliti
Nau phulutei, thāri nicingbā tār līl (Canto V).

(Protect your own life! If you are alive, you will get lakhs of servants like me. You are the rising sun of the Tunkhun-gia clan, which is an Indra-Bangsī royal clan. You are the glory of the nation and at your death there will be loss of the Ahom Kingdom. And who will be there to set naught the resurrections? Escape, escape, 0 Husband! don't allow the sun of Life to set untimely. The rose-bud is on the tree, and
It is not yet in bloom; don't pluck it.)

So Jayaati wants to preserve the life of her husband for the sake of the country and Gadāpāṇi submits to her will and goes away. (Canto V)

Mihi Chaudang and his party arrive at the forest dwelling of Jaymati. Mihi catches hold of Jaymati's hand, demanding the whereabouts of her escaping husband - Gadāpāṇi. Jaymati laments before Mihi how she has been suffering in life and shedding bitter tears in life. She entreats in vain to the heartless Mihi for her safety, and the words of lamentation uttered by Jaymati may be called the words of every tragic heroine of the world. The helplessness of Jaymati is the helplessness of Sita at the clutch of Hāvana and the helplessness of Draupadi at the snatching of her clothes by Dāmasasana in the court of the Kaurabas. Jaymati's lamentations are:

"Rājbhog kintu, hāi! nahal bhāgyat;
Tathāpi nakari dukh, doṣī kāpālak;
Svāmiye saite āhi somālo banat 11
Kintu, hāi! abhāgīr adpāta doṣate jāne)
Pati Sanga Sukh tāko nāpālo nahal!
Palāi lokāle nāth ēri durbhāgīk
Damayanti ēri jene Satya juge Nāl 11
Kābāu karicho Mihi ēri de abhāgīk;
Juricheśāne, ēru dukh kīya diyā?" (Canto VI).

(Being the wife of a King and a Princess (Kunwāree) I have no enjoyment of royal life due to bad luck. Yet without any repentance I have come to the forest with my husband. But, due to Destiny, I have not been able to enjoy the conjugal life with
my husband. My husband has gone underground, leaving me, the unfortunate behind as Damayanti was left in the Satya Yuga.

I implore you, Mihi; spare this wretched woman. This is sufficient misfortune for me, why should you add any more?) But the stony heart of Mihi does not melt in the tears of Jaymati. Mihi demands from her the whereabouts of Gadapani, and without revealing that, she cannot hope to be alive. Mihi and his men carry Jaymati ultimately to the court of Laran Rajah.

(Canto VI)

Laran Rajah, having failed to elicit any information on Gadapani's hideouts from Jaymati, sends her to face hellish tortures in the hands of Mihi and other torturers. Jaymati is not to be cowed by any threats as she knows her mission as a heroic woman. Jaymati's iron will and unfaltering determination are beautifully expressed in the following words of the Kavya:

"Jane bhālkoī rāṇi tiroṭār dhan
Nohe dhan alankār subarna ratan;
Nohe dhan rāṇī keru bākharuvā khāru,
Sovānit bāje dhan kato nāi āru li
Jane rāṇī bhālkoī svāmi hemahār
Herāle nāpāi āru ghuri jīvanāt;
Tenuvā dhanakmeki dibahi corek
Thākote parāṅ-bāyu dehār mājat?
Prānjāba Konwarār, tathāpito teō
Ādarar hemahār nidiye corek,
Parāṅ thākote rāṇi ketiyāo teō
Nidiye āpon dhan harib ānak li" (Canto VII)

(The Queen knows well that money and gold ornaments like necklace, bangles and anklets are not the treasures of a woman...
except the life of her husband. The Queen knows very well that if her husband (who is dearer than any earthly treasure and ornaments) is lost, she will not get it back again in her life. Such a treasure will never be handed over to the thieves till there is breath in her body. She will allow none to steal the priceless treasure of her life.

In the cross-examination at the court Lara Raja reminds Jaymati of the dire consequences that will follow her adamant attitude. The king shows his iron determination that he will search for Gadapahi in every house of every village and capture him. Even if Jaymati does not give any clue to Gada's hideouts, the king says, he will succeed in killing him. The King's resolution is expressed in the following lines quoted from the Kavya:

"Nakava Gadar kath, paribi ki toi
Rakhbha Gadar pran nakai nemel?
Paribi tetiyi toi rakhbha Gadak
Jetiyi paschim phale olahahi beli" (Canto VII)

(You do not say the whereabouts of Gadâ. But can you protect his life by not saying anything? You can protect the life of Gadâ only when the Sun will rise in the West.)

Lara Raja tells Jaymati that all sorts of possible tortures including the removal of knees and eyes will be inflicted on her person till the information of her husband is not elicited from her. But Jaymati gives her heroic reply to the King in the following words which constitute the sum and substance of her character:
"Kiya, Rājā! bhoi
Dekhuvā michāte tumi! preyāśī Gadār
Tenuvā sāstir bhoi nakre niścay 11
Caku kādā, ghilā kādā, diya mok jereṃgāt
Ji ji sāstī āche māne diye thākā mok 1
Tathāpi nakao moi kathā svāmīr;
Nalao nālēge mok svarga sukh bhog 11
Nau dekhotei jen svāmīr durgati moi,
Svāmīr bhāl dekhi jak mor prāp;
Moito rajār rānī, svāmīr tirotā,
Nakau svāmīr kathā thākote parān 11" (Canto VII)

[Why should you try, 0 King, to create fears, in vain, in
the heart of Gadā’s beloved, who is not afraid of such sorts
of tortures. Pull out (my) eyes, (my) knees, and torture me
in the field of Gerenga, and inflict on my person all other
tortures. Yet I will not speak out anything of my husband.
I can ever forsake any heavenly pleasures. Before I see my
husband’s miseries I want to die. I am also a King's Queen,
and a husband’s wife; and I shall never speak anything about
my husband till I am breathing life.]

It is not a protest of Jaymati against Lārā Rājā, but
it appears to be a universal protest of the woman-folk agai­
nst the tyranny and misrule, against injustice and inhumanity
prevailing in the world. It is the voice of the Human Soul
that we happen to hear in the world of poetry throughout the
ages. (Canto VII)

Though Gadāpāṇi spends his days in the Tablung hill in
the midst of the Nature’s beauty and its accompanying plea-
sures, he cannot be happy. Trees and creepers laugh in joy,
but Gadā’s heart is heavy; he alone is shedding tears. The
The epic narrative reminds us of the famous lines of William Wordsworth:

"If this belief from Heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament,  
What Man has made of Man?"  

Hearing the tales of untold tortures inflicted on Jaymati, 
Gadapani blames the heartless Destiny that has shattered his house of peace:

"Cārioti thāi thāi karili, Bidhātā!  
Niṣṭhur nicinā tor nāi triksat il  
Lārā duti le pu syā ki-bāeki āmi  
Ekelage kata sukhe karichile bās!  
Toi kintu cārioti kari thān thān il  
Bhāṅgili sukha ghar! karili nirāś il" (Canto VIII)

(O Destiny! you have separated the four members of the family one from the other. There is not anyone more heartless than you in the three Worlds. We, the father and the mother, were living peacefully with our two sons. But you have separated them, smashing the house of peace! You have made me despondent!!)

Gadapani is not free from danger in the Tablung hill. All of a sudden, he has been surrounded there by the party of the Chaudang led by Mihi and Latha. Gadapani, demonstrating his heroic feats and prowess, stands alone against fifteen or sixteen of his enemies. And it was how Abhimanyu was surrounded by the seven big heroes in the battle of Kuruksetra. By chance, Gadapani snatches a sword from the hand of an enemy.

**Taken from 'Lines Written in Early Spring' by William Wordsworth.**
soldier and cuts down Latha into two pieces. At this, Mahi and others immediately escape to safety. Seeing that the Tablung hill is not safe, Gadapani goes towards the Namchang hill. But the role of Destiny cannot be checked; the tragic wheel of fire cannot be stopped.

"Kì khandìba pāre Gadāpāni Bidhātār icchā,
Novārile jāk, hāi! dvāpar yugat
Pandu putra pancha bhāi deva-avatār,
Apuni Śrī Kṛṣṇa jār sahāi lagat?
Tetrā juge Rāma Chandra nige Viṣṇu avatār
Novārile bādhā dibā Bidhir icchāt!
Harile Viśvāme Śītā, parānar prān,
Nānā kaśta, nā nā dukh bhugile Lankāt 11
Kon kūṭā Gadāpāṇi ki kari khandāba, hāi!
Bidhātār icchā āji?" (Canto VIII)

(How can Gadapani undo the will of Destiny, which could not be done by the Pandavas who were born with godly virtues and who were backed by God Kṛṣṇa Himself? In the Tetrā Age, Rāma Chandra, being the Incarnation of Viṣṇu himself could not check the will of Destiny. Ṛavana kidnapped Śītā who had to undergo various sufferings in Lanka. Compared with them, Gadapani is totally insignificant. And how can he undo the will of Destiny ?)

This tragic pull of Destiny is strongly felt in the Kāvyā from the beginning to the end, and the tragic hero and the heroine, despite their iron will and determination and other virtues, fall prey to it.

Gadāpāṇi finds no meaning in life if his beloved wife is killed amidst hellish tortures. So he decides to surrender voluntarily before the enemies. (Canto VIII).
Gadāpāṇi waits and sees from under the cover of bushes the inhuman tortures to which his beloved wife Jaymati is subjected. In the dead of night when darkness has enveloped the earth and the hellish agents are asleep, Gadāpāṇi comes out of the bush and comes near his wife who is nearing death. Gadāpāṇi gives some water in the mouth of his wife who then regains her senses. Jaymati expresses her profound sorrow as Gadāpāṇi is coming to surrender at the last phase of her successful mission of sacrifice. Jaymati is glad that she is able to touch the feet of her husband at the end of her life. She gets a life in death by dedicating her life for the cause of her husband. She is a woman and her life consists in her devotion to her husband's cause and happiness. Jaymati prays to Gadāpāṇi to go back to the Naga Hills again. She explains the ideals of a Hindu woman to her husband; and it constitutes the basic peg of philosophy on which the epic narrative is hung by the poet:

"Sākalo svāmīr arthe, tīrīja janamat
Tīrīra niṣaṃa buli eko nāī strīr;
Tīrotār rūp-gun saundarya amiyā
Sākalo svāmīr arthe sakalo svāmīr II

... ... ...

Tīrotār dharma svāmī svāmī-śarma strīr
Bhakti mukti tīrotār sakoloṭi pati;
Mahā pīthr maḥā tirtha svāmī tīrotār
Dharma artha kāmā mokṣa antimar gati II
Patibrat pati-sevā dharma tīrotār
Tomār konvari sei dhane dhanavati
Śi dhanar para mok nakara bincita;
Dharicho pāvat, nāthā! Karicho minati II" (Canto IX)
[All things are meant for the husband. The wife has nothing
to boast of anything as her own in her life. Wife's beauty
and her virtues are meant for her husband. A wife's religion,
her action (karma) and her Salvation lie in her devotion to
her husband. The blessings of great pilgrimages can be had
from the services rendered to the husband. The husband is
the 'dharma' (Religion), 'artha' (wealth), 'kāma' (worldly
action) and 'moksa' (salvation) — the four basic Hindu
ideals of a woman.]

Gadāpāni, being unable to depart from his wife and
failing to see the inhuman tortures inflicted on his wife,
comes out for the second time in the guise of a Naga to con­
sole his wife and to ask her to reveal the whereabouts of her
husband. But Jaymati remains unmoved in her iron will and
determination. Gadāpāni comes to her for the third time as
a disguised Naga only to be refused in his appeal to her.
Gadāpāni at last leaves the scene of tortures and goes away
towards the Naga Hills. Tortures on tortures are heaped on
Jaymati, who at last breathes her last, leaving behind the
immortal ideals of noblest of human sacrifice on earth.

The poet justifies the will of God to man — through the
death of Jaymati Konwari. In Jaymati there is the queer
combination of chastity and patriotism, and she has set an
example before the women of the world. The poet places her
on the highest peak of human ideals and ranks her with Pārvatī
who once sacrificed her life for the sake of her husband —
Mahādeva. The poet sings:
You have demonstrated to the women of the world the great virtue of a woman's devotion to her husband. The love towards the husband is great and charming, and you have glorified the earth with your noble sacrifice for your husband. Your motherland will be glorified and your songs will be sung till the Sun and the moon continue to exist. You have left a learning to the earth that the Love of a Sati (a chaste woman) is the eternal abode of Peace. Had there been no such Love, the earth would have turned into a burial ground.) (Canto IX)

Gadāpāṇi gets the message of his wife's death through a dream. Gadāpāṇi dreams that a chariot has come down from the Heaven and the Mother of the Earth (Lakṣmī) wants her to ascend the chariot in order to go to the Heaven. Jaymātī has been beautifully dressed up like a bride with the best of ornaments and clothes. Seeing Jaymātī willing to go, Gadāpāṇi appeals to her to take him also with her. But Jaymātī has already been lifted to the sky, by the angels of Heaven, and
she cannot come down. An angel tells Gadāpāṇi that Jaymati has left this world of tears and tortures and is going to enjoy eternal peace in Heaven. Jaymati receives all heavenly consolations and takes her heavenly seat beside the immortal women like Savitri, Janaki, Soiba and Damayanti. Having dreamt such a meaningful dream Gadāpāṇi awakes all of a sudden. He decides to leave the Nāmoā Hill again and to go back to see his beloved wife; (Canto X).

Musing on the meaning of the dream Gadāpāṇi comes to the forest and finds, to his great horror and amazement, the lifeless body of Jaymati lying in a pool of blood. Gadāpāṇi falls upon the body of his wife, and embracing the dead wife the living husband begins to shed the bitterest of tears and to cry in lamentations. Gadāpāṇi, addressing and endearing his dead wife, asks her to rise up and speak her sweetest words. But all are in vain! There is none beside Gadāpāṇi except the Nature (Bandevi) to console him. Bandevi is personified and she appears to have taken the human form and offers her words of consolation to the wretched hero of the epic. Bandevi, which may be called the true self of Gadapani, says that Jaymati has attained immortality in Assam for all time to come, and also predicts that he will be the king of Assam again, and the fate and future of the country will be in his hands. Giving an idea of the blissful Heaven Bandevi disappears. (Canto XI).

Gadāpāṇi takes his dead wife to the burial ground. The poet sings all praises of the Burial Ground which ultimately
cements all earthly differences between man and man, and restores man to eternal peace and tranquillity. Centring the tragedy of Gadāpāṇi, Bor Boruah puts forth a philosophic discourse of human life and human tragedy which ultimately have its assimilation through death in the burial ground. Bearing the strokes of family tragedies—the death of his wife and sons—the poet Bor Boruah dives deep into the tragedy of human life and finds ultimate solace in the burial ground which puts an end to the miserable life on earth. The Canto XII appears to be a separate lyric poem, having the slighest connection with the main epic-theme. Only in the sub-section 10 of the Canto the theme establishes its relationship with the original story. It is indeed a poetry of high human emotions. Gadāpāṇi laments how poorly and unceremoniously a Queen of the Ahom Kingdom is going to be buried by him. The poet concludes the Canto by expressing his will to sing more in Kāvyā about the heroic tales of Assam. (Canto XII).

In the Addendum, the poet sings in brief what happens to Gadāpāṇi afterwards; how he becomes King and rules in the land of Assam for fifteen years till his death in 1696. Lakshminath Bezbarua shows this through the ghost-voice of Jaymati at the end of his drama Jaymati Konwarī while Padmanath Gohain Barua shows it realistically in his drama Jaymati through the words of a messenger who carries the message of Gadā's future kingship. (Upasāthnār)
CRITICAL REMARKS:

We have discussed above in details the story of the historical epic Tirotār Ātmadān. And we shall now discuss the epic and lyric qualities that are present in the Kāvya. In that context we shall examine the elements of patriotism and the poet's personal tragedies that are present in the poem, which, however good in themselves, mar the growth and development of a fine epic narrative ever written in the Assamese literature.

Hiteswar Bor Boruah, willing to arrange the episode of Jaymati's self-immolation on the epic-plane, has to employ his inventive genius. For this specific purpose he has chosen the version of Jaymati's episode by Hara-Kanta Barua, which is distinctly different from another version by Hatteswar Mahanta. According to the popular and generally accepted version of Hatteswar Mahanta, Gadāpāni leaves for the Naga Hills from home, and from home Jaymati, the wife of Gadāpāni, is brought to the court of Larā Rajā for trial. From the court she has been sent to Jerenga for her adamant attitude in disobeying the king's command. But in Harakanta Barua's version Gadāpāni leaves home with his wife, goes to a forest for self protection and builds a hut there with leaves and twigs. This version immediately arrests the epic vision of Hiteswar Bor Boruah.

Depending upon the skeleton of this historical episode Bor Boruah has drawn the plan of his epic with the magic touch of his imagination. In Bor Boruah's kāvya Gadāpāni and
Jaymati are the deposed King and Queen, and they are leaving not merely their home, but a throne and all royal comforts, while they flee to the forest for self-protection. Jaymati goes along with her husband to share the sufferings of the forest-life with her husband. In the hut they build in the forest Gadāpāṇi and Jaymati seem to live a life of renunciation. Jaymati cooks, and Gadāpāṇi goes on begging for alms.

With this episode Bor Boruah brings up Jaymati's stature to the level of Sīta, Savitri and Damayanti, who, also by giving up their royal comforts, go away to forests along with their husbands to share their sufferings. Again, Jaymati, like Sīta, takes her forest dwelling as a heavenly abode as because she is with her husband, and she and her husband want to live happily far from the madding crowd and bloody royal affairs. But the Destiny is harsh with them, and the poet shows distinctly the rôle of Destiny in the epic

Gadāpāṇi speaks to Jaymati:

"Hāi! mor prānesvarī! priye Jaymātī! Kīya tumī ālīchīla ei ghorabān? Kīya bhog karā duragati? Mōi durbhaigā, priye! dukh-kāśta aranyar Āche adrasat mor, kāngāle saite Arnyat āhi tumī, hōi kāngālinī Bhungā kles kihar nimitte?" (Canto II, Sc. IV)

[Ah! my beloved wife Jaymati! Why have you come to this dense forest and why are you suffering all these troubles? I am an unfortunate man, and my sufferings in the forest are due to my Destiny. Why should you suffer with the wretched (like me) in the forest like a wretched woman?]
(What pains Oh ! my Lord! do I get in the forest? There lies for me the pleasure of Heaven where you stay. You are the tree, and I am the creeper, and we are together. Is there any room for pain, Oh, my Lord? You are the body and I am the shadow. Where there is the body, there is the shadow: it is not something new! What pain can be there? There is my pleasure here. A husband is the adoration of a wife and you are the best of my ornaments. As you are alive, there is the red 'tilak' on my forehead, and I am not subject to any tortures of a widow, my Lord! You are such a gem; and how can I stay at home by forsaking you, my Lord? Can a woman live peacefully at home without her husband?)
This ideal of a woman's devotion to her husband is not only a Hindu ideal, but it is an ideal eternally present since the time of the creation of Man. In the words of Eve, the first woman, spoken to Adam, the first man we get the beginning of this ideal, and how beautifully, they appear before us in Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Te whom thus Eve replied:— "O thou for whom
And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,
And without whom am to no end, my guide
And head! what thou hast said is just and right,
For we to him, indeed, all praises owe,
And daily thanks — I chiefly, who enjoy
So far the happier lot, enjoying thee
Pre-eminent by so much odds, while thou
Like consort to thyself canst nowhere find."

(Book IV: vv. 440-448)

Commenting on the lives of pleasures in pain of the forest that Gadāpāni and Jaymati live, Bor Beruah sings:

"Khi bui Gadāpāni cakur cakule ṭuki,
Dile khujī anā, hā!: gaol ṭupali;
Rāndhi bādi Jaymati khuwāle svāmik,
Khāle bhāṭ cakule mihali ll" (Canto II: Sc. vii)

(Saying so Gadāpāni sheds tears, and offers the bag of begged rice. Jaymati cooks it and feeds her husband. They take their food with tears in their eyes.)

"Khai boi Jaymatī suvāle āpon svāmī
Apunio sūle tate aranya-majat
Dvapar jugat jene sati patibrata
Damayanti Nalar kaṣat ll"
Mātrār kolāt jene lara 'sok dukh bhūle
Bhūle sirūpe kles nīdrār kolāt
Duyutlye, nāi aru kono 'sok dukh,
Pāharile sakalo nīdrāt 11° (Canto II : Sc. viii)

(After taking meals Jaymati lulls her husband to sleep, and
she also sleeps there in the midst of the forest as in the
Dvāpar Age Sati Damayanti slept beside her husband-Nala. As
a child forgets all pains in the lap of a mother, so also
they forget their pains in their company with each other in
sleep.)

The scenes remind us not only of the Hindu epic episodes
like Nala and Damayanti but also of Adam and Eve, the first
father and the first mother of mankind. Eve is created out
of Adam, and their relationship is the ideal relationship of
any husband and wife.

This relationship between the husband and the wife is very
lucidly described in the following words of the Bible:

21. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep
to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and
he took one of his ribs, and closed up
the flesh instead thereof;

22. And the rib, which the Lord God had
taken from man, made he a woman,
and brought her unto the man.

23. And Adam said, This is now bone
of my bones, and flesh of my flesh ;
She shall be called Woman, because
she was taken out of Man."

31 The Bible : Genesis : Chapter 2
As such, since the time of creation the Woman has been making the noblest of sacrifices for the Man, and this 'sacrifice' (Atmadān) is the theme of the great Indian Epics of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata; and Bor Boruah has taken this theme as the theme of his epic.

Again, in all the great epics of the world like Iliad, Odyssey, Rāmāyana, and Mahābhārata the Woman is subjected to inhuman tortures and kidnap, which act like the prime mover in the epics. And, the 'nemesis' has been shown by restoring the Woman to her original position. In Iliad the kidnapping of Helen from Greece to Troy results into the Battle of Troy and ultimately Helen is rescued on the ruins of Troy. In the Rāmāyana the kidnapping of Sītā to Lanka brings down the golden glory of Lanka, and Sītā is rescued on the ruins of Lanka and the fall of Rāvana. In Mahābhārata the tortures on Draupadi at the court of Duryodhana heap slurs on the conscience of all men, and as its 'nemesis' (retributive justice) comes the fall of the Kauravas. Draupadi and Damayanti, two other women of the Mahābhārata have been subjected to many inhuman tortures and in the fire of tortures the gold of their 'womanhood' has been tested. In the Taṣṭaṭa Atmadān Kāvya also this universal episode of the Woman's torture and sacrifice has been beautifully presented with epic touches on the historical episode of Jaymati's tortures. The Devil Incarnate is Lārā Rājā himself who sends his Satanic agent Mihi to kidnap Gadāpāni. But when Gadāpāni escapes, the universal woman in Jaymati falls a prey to the Satanic grip of Mihi. The implorings of Jaymati to Mihi remind us of the implorings of Sītā.
to Havana in a similar predicament. Addressing Mihī, Jaymati says:

"Abalā tireta moī kāro kato eko hāni
Nīī kārā kono kīle jnān biśvāsat,
Kiya michā dhara mok ? karicho minati,
Katā ghāt cengā tel nidibi prānat. 11 (Canto VI : Sc. 1)

(I am an innocent woman; and I have not done any injustice to any body to the best of my knowledge. Why have you then caught me? I implore you not to add any insult to the injury.)

Jaymati has been arrested and put to inhuman tortures which lead to the nemesis. On the death of Jaymati, Lara Rājā's downfall has come and Gadarānī has got back his throne.

Bor Boruah adds high seriousness to the epic with the help of some more elementary devices. In a modern epic the presence of the gods and the goddesses cannot be shown; the lands of the Heaven and the Hell cannot be depicted. But Bor Boruah introduces a 'Dream-Scene' in Canto X (11) where Gadarānī dreams of Jaymati's departure to the Heavenly Abode. The angels appear before Jaymati and carry her to the Heaven. Lakṣna, welcoming Jaymati to her Heavenly, consoles Jaymati with the following words:

"Sadari Lakshmiye cai bulile rāpik;
'Samsārat bhunji bahu jātanē kles' 
Āhichā svaragā āi ! nakaribā 'šok,
Sukhar svaragā ei sukhāmoi des 11
Āhā āi ! sukhe thākā svargar mājat
Śāvitrī, Jānāki, Soibā Satīr kāsat,
Ache jat Damayanti Daurpadi sukhat
Aha, āi ! thaka sukhe tumi śi thanat'll"

(Canto X. Sec. 8).
Welcoming (her), Lakshmi looks at the Queen and speaks: 'Having suffered from many tortures in the human world (Samsār), you have come to the Heaven. Don't be sorrowful. This Heaven is full of peace. Come, my Daughter, and live peacefully in Heaven near the immortal Chaste women (Sati) — Sāvitrī, Jānaki, Scībā, Damayantī and Daupadī.

Again, in Canto XII, Section 10, Bor Boruah presents Gadāpāni before us with his dead wife on shoulders. Gadāpāni comes towards the burial ground for the cremation of Jaymatī. Bor Boruah gives epic touches to the scene:

"...... Ca'o kon sei jan
Marās kānāt loi, ai maha nīśā
Ahe smāśānar phāle, biyākul man?
Svāmir nindā bole sahib novāri
Satyajige prāntyāg karichile Sati;
Sati dehā tuli āpon kānāt
Bhrāmi phurichile bole Śiva Sati-pati?
Bhārī Tīrūliśełī? Sati dehā loi
Āpon kānāt tuli bhrāmiche smāśān
Bīṣād manat hē! biyākul hoi?
Nahay, Nahay, so nahay Tīrūli
Ko Lāngi Gadāpani, dukh bejārat,
Preyasīr mṛtā-dehā śkovāli loi
Biyākul prāne covē Ahe smāśānat ili"

(Canto XII; Section 10).

Let us see who is that man that comes with a dead body on the shoulder at the dead of night towards us with a deeply distressed mind? It is said that in the Satya Yuga, being unable to tolerate the insults shown against her husband, the Sati (Parvati) breathed her last. Śiva, the husband of the Sati, took her dead body on the shoulder and roamed about
Is it that Trisuli (Siva)? Is it he who is thus roaming about with the dead Satl on the shoulder and coming towards the burial ground with sorrows in mind? Oh! it is not the Trisuli! It is Lângi Gadâpâni, who, being sorrow-ridden, is embracing the dead body of his beloved and coming towards this burial ground with a heavy heart.

Bor Boruah also takes the help of some supernatural beliefs prevalent among the Assamese in connection with the historical episode of Jaymati, and using it successfully he gives an epic elevation to the story. In Canto X. Section 10. Bandevi (Goddess of the Forest) appears before Gadâpâni who falls fainted, being unable to bear the pain of separation from his beloved Jaymati who is dead. In this state of senselessness, Bandevi consoles Gadâpâni and makes a prediction of his future. This may be ascribed as the voice of the true self of Gadâpâni expressed through the soul of Nature:

Bandevi speaks to Gadâpâni:

"Uthâ, Son! erë sok, dukh anta hal,
Punu rajâ habâ tumâ Ahom râjyat,
Bhâgya Lâkshmi suprasanna ëkso tomâr,
Nopovâ rânik muthe el janamat 11"

(Canto XI: Section 14)

(My dear Gold, get up, give up sorrow, and your suffering has come to an end. You will be a king again in the Ahom Kingdom. The Goddess of Fortune has been pleased with you again. But you will never get back your Queen in this life.)

In this epic, Bor Boruah is giving us some fine lyric poetry on the 'Night' - (Canto I), the 'Imagination' (Canto I & II), the 'Tears' (Canto II); the 'Dew drops' (Canto III)
the 'Burial Ground' (Canto X), Each of these lyrics can be taken in isolation as a specimen of fine Assamese Odes. But the poet includes all of them as a part and parcel of the Kāvya. The lyric on the Night can be compared with the 'Ode to the Night' by P.B. Shelley. To Hiteswar Bor Boruah as to P.B. Shelley, the Night is the peaceful fountain of all creative activities:

"Ei nisā bāhi Kavi-guru Vālmiki
Biracile 'Sapta Kānda Kāvya Rāmāyan';
Eye sei eke nisā Bharatar Kalidāse
Biraci Kavitā-kunja mānas-mohan
Labhile amar kīrti; eye sei eke rāti
Hacile ji rāti Sukhe Vatti Kāvya Kabi Vartr ll
Eye sei eke nisā, jeve kavi Shakespeare
Ārjile aksay kīrti; andhak Milton
Likhile natun chanda amitra aksar rūpi
Sei rāti eye jiṭe kābir jīvan ll
Jei nisā bāhi bāhi Sankar Mādhavdev
Bhangile 'Kirtan' āru 'Ghosā' (Vaishnavar priya),
Ei rāti sei rāti eke duyu rāti
Ji rāti ārādхи Kavi Kalpanā Sundari
Ike nānābīdh chahi nānā baransā kari
Gāthe manohar mālā prān manhāri ll
Eye sei eke rāti, āhā ji rātir phal
Kāvya Kavitār Kunje kare Sahitya ujjal ll'"
blank-verses in such a night. Sitting in such a night Sankardeva and Madhavdeva wrote the Kirtan and the Ghoṣa respectively which are the dear Śāstras of the Vaishnavas. The poet, by worshipping the Goddess of Imagination, draws various pictures and weaves the garlands of poetry. The products of the night are the epics and the poetries which glorify literatures.)

On 'Imagination' the poet writes:

'He Kalpanā! jār bhāgye tomār kari
Lābh hay, seye, Devi! atā bhāgyabān,
Tāre ḫādayat boi aṁṭar nai
Tomār prasāde tār amar paran 11
Akābio hay Kabi, mario amar,
Jeve tumī kṛpa karā bhāgyabān nar 11
Tomār kṛpāte Devi! birah-byākul
Jaksa banabāse thāki prayasār thāi
Pathāle mehak dūṭ; tomār māyāte;
Moh gal Sakuntalā Dusmanta pakāl 1

(Canto I : Sec. V)

(Oh! Imagination! he who gets your blessings is really very fortunate, and the fountain of nectar flows into his heart, and he becomes immortal with your blessings. When you bless, even a man without genius becomes a poet, and man who is mortal becomes immortal. Goddess! at your blessings Jakṣāya, who suffered from the pangs of separation from him beloved, could send the Cloud as the Messenger; and in your enchantment (māyā) Sakuntala was endeared with Dusmanta.)

On 'Tears' Bor Boruah writes a beautiful lyric. The English poet Alfred Tennyson also writes a lyric on tears entitled 'Tears, Idle Tears'. The poet Bor Boruah writes: 


"Cakule ! kenuvā tei ? kenuvāne fer, hāi !
Nirdei hrdoi ? tei kiyaneclāva ?
Ki sundar caku duṭi ! nāi kate bindhā,
Ulābar keni bāt pāva ?
Nirdey, cakule ! tei jave Abhimanyu bīr
Bidāi māgib gal Uttārār thāi
Hāi ! yudha yātra kāle, durbhāgī Uttārā
dekhile endhār tek pāi ll
Tāiyene cakule aie ? ji dharile dhāki, hāi !
Uttrār dui caku jave dekhā ḫay
Se dekhā svāmī sati ? nede khile Sati
Pati mukh ? seye nekī tei ?
Kata āśā kari devi Subhadra āśā bharī
Kućińchil cāi laba Ahimanyudhan;
Tei kintu, nirdey ! adhākili ducaku !
Nede khil prāṇar nāncan ll
(Cante II : Sec. 8)

(Tears ! what are you? Why so hard is your heart? Why do you come out? How beautiful are the two eyes! and there is no hole in it. How do you get an outlet to come out? Tears, you are heartless! When the hero Abhimanyu has gone to Uttara just before his setting out for the battle, Uttara sees darkness for you. Are you the tears that cover up the eyes of Uttara? Even at the time of the last farewell Uttara has not seen the face of her husband because of you. Are you the tears which have covered the eyes of Subhadra at the time of having the last look on her son Abhimanyu?)

Similarly, in 'Dev-drops' we get some superb poetry from Hiteswar Ber Beruah. The poet imagines that the dew-drops are nothing but the drops of tears shed by somebody in the Heaven. And we get some of his fine lines of poetry:
"Nājāne nirbodh ! toi enuvā śmasān bhūmi
Mahāyogi Trisūlir ati priya than?
Prakṛtir līlābhūmi tiyāgi Kailāś giri
Ei smasānat āhi karehi bisrām ?" (Cante XII: Sec. ii)
Fool, you do not know! Such a Burial ground is the dear abode of Great Sage Trisull (Siva). He gives up the natural abode of the Kailas mountain and comes to take rest at the Burial Ground.

To the poet Death is pleasing and peaceful. It is not the horrible punishment inflicted by Yama:

"Maran nahay mṛtyu, nahay ūṣāman,
Yamar bhisan mūrti nahay maran,
Maran Svargar dūt, Sāntir ādār,
(Samsārar Susital Sānti pārābār) 11"

(Canto XII (iii)

[Death is not the horrible end (mṛtyu). It is not the hellish messenger (saman). It is also not the horrible appearance of Yama. Death is the messenger of Heaven; it is the abode of peace. It is the pure sea of peace in the world.]

Thus, Hiteswar Bor Boruah succeeds in maintaining the art-form of an epic with its accompanying high seriousness in his Tiretār Ātmadān Kāvya. Moreover, his patriotism has its profundity of expression all throughout the Kāvya. This Kāvya, therefore, serves both the poetic and the patriotic purposes of the poet. A few lines from the Kāvya testify to the patriotic heart of the poet. The poet laments at the loss of Assam’s Independence and hopes to sing it in his Kāvya:
"‘Piyalike NumaLike Pijou Janmike,
Abhayak ñru sei Borphukanak
Raj kanyä Tulasike jär kucakrat
Assamat akalat lægil sandhiyä
Ahomar Jivanar; Svadhinats beli
Mar gal duparate cira kalañab
Dekhumvabä jen, nath ! he karunamay !
Si sabäke l Gaba kabi, bhagna präne yadi,
Jadiebä bhagnetsäh, jadiebä tär
Nai ñru sei sukh santi hrdyañ,
Antarhit jadiebä sukh jivanar
Tär, nath ! kara krya, Bagdevi padat.)

(Canto XII : Sec. 17)

[Oh ! Lord, give me strength to sing in poetry of Piyali,
Numali, Pijou, Janmi and Abhaya and also that Borphukan
(Badan) including the princess Tulasî whose machinations
have brought the evening (the end) of the Aha's royal life;
the Sun of Independence has set at one middy for ever. Though
the poet is broken-hearted and despondent, though he has no
peace and happiness in his heart, 0 Lord ! shower your bless-
ings on him so that he may touch the feet of Bagdevi, the
Goddess of Learning.]

In spite of the spontaneous overflow of powerful lyrical
emotions and the epic grandeur of the Kavya it suffers from
certain major defects. First, the main theme of the poem gets
drowned in the lyric emotions of the poem. The lyrics, apart
from the main theme, are excellent, but in relation to the
main theme they appear to be mostly superficial. The portions in which the main theme occurs are indeed the specimens of high epic poetry. Secondly, the poet’s personal intervention in the epic narratives may be important from the autobiographical point of view. But when he does it parallelly with the epic narratives, we feel bored and the theme loses its impartial epic grandeur. The poet himself has confessed that his mental condition was not at all good at the time of publishing the poem in 1913 as his beloved wife passed away in 1912 and his dear son Jiten died in 1910. These two personal tragedies of the poet, instead of working as the prime source of tragic ideas, enter into the impersonal theme of the epic. But if the lines relating to the poet’s personal tragedies are isolated, they would constitute some of the excellent lyrics ever created in our literature. Seeing Gadāpāni on the Burial ground with the dead body of his wife Jaymati, the poet sings of his own personal tragedy, the death of his beloved wife:

"Āmē tomār dare jīvanar prārambhate
Parāpar priyāsakhi thale smaśānat l
Heruvāi ardhaṅgini (Prāṇādhikā priyā patni)
Dekhiche endhār āji saṁsār mājat 11
Āmēre tomār dare āji rajā sūnya ghar,
Sāntimayī priyābine sānti nākiyā !
Bhai bandhu putra kanyā yadie sakale āche
Saṁsārat āji jen akalśariā !!
Mahārāj ! Śvargadee !
(Canto XII : Sec. 12)

(I have also placed, as you, my beloved wife in the burial ground at the beginning of my life. Losing my beloved better-half, I now see darkness in my earthly life. 0 King! my house is also now empty like yours, and there is not peace without the peace-giving wife! Although there are - brothers, friends, sons and daughters - all, I am, as if, alone in the world. Oh! Mahāraja! Oh! Svargaśeśa! as you are to-day sorrow-ridden, embracing your two orphan-sons, I am also alone in the world with my sons - Nalin and Bipin, daughters Hiran and Kiran. You are weeping at the death of your Queen, and Hiteswar is also weeping at the death of his wife.)

Such personal interventions have marred the epic structure and Charm of the poem to a great extent. Apart from this poetical error, the death of his wife carries a deeper explanation as to the tragic under-current of the poet's personal life. As we have hinted in the 'Introduction', this incident of the poet's life perhaps makes the poet consistent in narrating the tragic ends of woman-characters in all his kāvyas and longer-narrative poems.
The third literary epic of Hiteswar Bor Boruah based on the chronicle of Assam is *Yuddha Ksetra Ahom Ramanî*, which saw the light of the day in 1915. This is the name of the Kavya as it appears on the cover page and the title page of the book, but at the top of the First Canto it is named: *Yuddha Ksetra Ahom Ramanî bā Mūlā Gābharu* (An Ahom woman in the Battle-field or Mūlā Gābharu). In the title page the poet quotes eight lines, beginning with the line 'I perch upon an humble promontory' from Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, Canto XV. Immediately after it the poet quotes the following lines from Canto VIII of this kavya to sing the immortal glory of Mūlā Gābharu, who along with her mate Muhilā, sacrificed her life for the cause of the Mother Country:

"Samīrane sate mili taju hirtī gīt
Ākāšā mārgat uthi kaba digantak,
Dhanya sei jātī, jār kulat janam
Mūlā bīr ramanīt, Muhilā sakhīt,
Ranonmatā anganār, — svadesar hetu,
Karile ji prāntyag yavan-yuddhat."

(Your glory will be mingled with air and it will go up to the heaven to proclaim to the horizons that that nation is worthy of praise in which the heroine Mūlā, and her friend Muhilā were born to sacrifice their lives in the battle with the Muslims (Yavana) for the sake of the country.)
The poet also offers the book as an humble tribute, not of his own person, but of his own community, which once ruled the realm, to P.R.T. Gurdon, the then Commissioner of the Assam Valley Division, a Representative of the British who snatched away the administration of the country from the Ahom King through the machination of the Burmese invaders. As we have mentioned in the 'Introduction' the dedication of the book appears to be a reward of a royal sword of the vanquished ruler to the usurper, and this observation of ours is amply proved by the heroic deeds and words of the heroine Mūlā and the remarks of the poet Hiteswar Ber Boruah. The submissive tone of the dedicating note is nothing but a silent challenge to the usurping British ruler who was profoundly hoodwinked as to the impact that the book might produce on the patriotic public. Let us then have a look at the significant dedication: "This Little Poetical Volume Containing 'The Romantic Story of the Heroic Deeds' of an Ahom Lady is MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED to the Hon'ble Lt. Col., P.R.T. Gurdon, C.S.I.; I.A., Formerly Officiating Chief Commissioner of Assam, And now, the Commissioner, Assam Valley Division As An HUMBLE TRIBUTE OF LOVE AND GRATITUDE from the members of the Ahom Community For His Love and Sympathy And Never-Failing Interest in their welfare." If we compare these two; the poet's comments on Mūlā's heroism and his dedicating note to the British ruler, the purpose of the poet becomes at once clear. In the 'Preface' of the kāyā Ber Boruah, instead of confining his Mūlā to the Ahom Community alone,
upholds her as a "national asset of the Assamese race." Ber Beruah expresses his purpose very clearly in the following lines quoted from the 'Preface'. "Like the ever memorable incident of the self-sacrifice of the well-known Queen Jaymotee, of Rajash Godadhar Singh of Assam, the story of the heroic widow of Chao Fracheng Meong Ber Gehain, is also another national asset of the Assamese race, and this little work is an attempt to present before the reading public, a description of the heroic deeds of that Assamese lady, known as Moola Qabharoo."

Endowed with a patriotic soul Hiteswar Ber Beruah wants to dig out the bones of the chronicle of Assam from the abyss of time and also wants the younger generations to follow his path. Ber Beruah pins his faith to the fact that a nation that loses its freedom and suffers from the bondage of slavery, can only be inspired by the lessons of their past history. This was indeed the most appropriate time — the time of lost glory — for our epic poet to produce a series of literary epics. The opinion of C.M. Bowra on the appropriateness of this time factor is worth quoting: "Literary epic, if we judge by its best examples, flourishes not in the heyday of a nation, or of a cause, but in its last days or in its aftermath ....... Periclean Athens, Elizabethan England: France under Louis XIV, had their superb literature, but not literary epic."22

22. C.M. Bowra: From Virgil to Milton; p. 28.
Ber Beruah makes therefore, his purpose crystal clear in the following words quoted from the 'Preface' to the Kavyas:

“Our mother country, although very poor, is yet rich with many historical episodes of this nature, of which the whole Assamese race, - can justly take pride. The Author will deem his labour amply rewarded, if this little book of his be successful in inducing our young and able writers to take up these subjects and bring them to light from the womb of obscurity.”

Let us now discuss about the authenticity of the historical episode on Mūlā Gābharu who is the heroine of Ber Beruah’s literary epic. In two of the chronicles incorporated in Satārā Assam Buranij edited by Dr. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan we have the skeleton of the historical episode. In the Third Chronicle it is said: Fracheng Moong Gehain was killed, his younger brother was killed and his wife, the king’s daughter was also killed.23 In the Fourth Chronicle it is said that in the battle with Turbaka Fracheng Moong was killed and his wife was also killed.24 Being a historian himself Hiteswar Ber Beruah gives his own version of the episode “During the Áhom Supremacy in Assam, in April 1532 A.D., Turbak, a Mahamadan Commander invaded the country, and treacherously put to death the Áhom Commander, Chaó-Fracheng Moong Ber Gehain.

Mūlā Gābharu, the devoted wife of Chaó Fracheng Moong Ber Gehain went out to the battle field to revenge the death of her beloved husband and to defend freedom of her country.

23. Dr. S.K.Bhuyan : 'Satārā Assam Buranij : p. 69
24. Ibid. p. 135.
She fought bravely in the battle-field, near Duimeonisila, and killed with her own hand two Muhammadan Commanders, Bāngal and Tūnju, together with a large number of common soldiers. Although, however, in a subsequent engagement, she was slain by the Muhammadans, the latter were not yet the victorious. Subsequently, the Āhoms, under the command of Kencheng Bor-patre Gehain, defeated the Muhammadans near the Bherolee river. Mr. Gait says, 'that a number of elephants and horses on the Musalman side got beggad in a morass, and their line of battle was thus thrown into confusion. Turbak tried to save the day by leading a cavalry charge in person, but in vain.' Koucheng Bor Patra Gehain severed his head with his own sword, though there are conflicts of opinions as to the manner of his death, e.g. Mr. Gait says that he was transfixed by a spear, while, according to another version, he was treacherously stabbed by an assassin, - sent by the Āhom king. The death of Turbak, however, turned the tide of the battle, and threw the Muhammadan soldiers into disorder; and the Āhoms followed hard on them as far as the Kerotuya river, where (the history says) Koucheng Bor Patra Gehain had a temple erected and a tank excavated as a sign of the victory in the battle and also to commemorate the name of that illustrious lady."

The version given by Bor Boruah does not exactly tally with that given by Mr. Gait regarding the killing of Bāngal

26* From the Preface to this Kāvya.
and Tangu in the battle by Mūlā Gābharu. Mr. Gait says:

"In March 1633 a naval engagement near Duimunisila resulted in a great victory for the Thoms. Two Muhammadan commanders, Bangal and Taju were slain, together with a large number of common soldiers." 26

There cannot be any deviation in historical truths. Different versions on the same historical matter leave enough room for doubt. And this is so in the case of the details of the episode relating to Mūlā Gābharu's fight with Bangal and Taju. But deviations from the historical episode in a literary epic are tolerated as they enter into an altogether different domain in art. On deviations in the literary text of the epic Bor Beruah has the following words to say: "Although the subject matter of this poem is purely a historical fact, slight deviations have been made at some points, in order that it may suit the convenience of the author who, on his part, prays that the generous readers will excuse him for such deviations." 27

In the deviations may, therefore, be included the killing of Bangal and Taju by Mūlā Gābharu and the creation of some imaginary characters such as Muhilā, 28 the friend of Mūlā Gābharu. Though not a historical character, Muhilā is shown as a heroine in the battle with the Muhammadans, and it was she who commanded the women-army to fight enemies. The poet even has an eulogy to make on Muhilā along with Mūlā Gābharu.


27. From the Preface to the Kāvyā.

Another marked improvement in *Yuddhakshetra* Ṛṣm Ramanī upon Tīrōtār Ātmādān is that it is free from the poet's occasional outbursts of powerful emotions due to personal tragedy; and the poet's personal intervention is the least. Being free from lyrical interference *Yuddhakshetra* Ṛṣm Ramanī has achieved success in its architectonic. The poet has also achieved full mastery on the play of the blank verse in this kāvya. This improvement in his poetic art is due to the fact the poet has regained his mental strength in 1915, which was lost after the deaths of his son in 1910 and his wife in 1912. In his 'Address' to the readers of his kāvya the poet brings out this fact:

"Bhāngi sūmrār hovā
Hīyakhani pūnu dhari,
Parbatār sil āni
Gāthilo punar 1
Natun gāṭhānī gāthī
Bhāngā hīyā pūnu gadi
Gāthīlō ḫ mālādhārī
 Ati ādarār, 11
...
...
...
...
Durbhagā Hītesh, hāī !
Sambāl cakmrle tār,
Cakmrle bhīn kintu
 Dekhi i gāṭhānī, -
Nakaribā abīsvās
Lobā kari samādar,
Hītese bāṅdhiche āji
 Lo-re hīyakhani 11
Hitesar hiyā āji
Nahay phulere gada,
Hitesar hiyā āji
Nahay phular 1
Hitesar hiyā āji
Kathim silere bandhā,
Silāmay hiyā āji
Abheda brajar 11

(I have repaired my broken heart with the stones of the mountain. And I have made this new garland which is very dear to me. ......... Hitesh is indeed unfortunate, and his only wealth is his tears. But don't disbelieve him for not seeing tears in this creation. Hitesh has remade his heart with iron. The heart of Hitesh is not now made of flowers. It is made of hard stone, and it is as impenetrable as the lightning.)

This literary epic of Bor Boruah is divided into eight Cantos, and all the Cantos are sewn as close beds on the thread of the epic tale. In his prayer to the Muse (Mother Goddess Bharati) the poet begs her blessings to sing the heroism of a woman. As Madhusudan sings, "Gēība, mā, bīrrase bhāsi Mahāgit." (I shall sing, O Mother, a heroic song)

So also Hiteswar sings:

"Ākānśā manat kintu he Māṭr Bhārati!
Ran-beśe saine sate prabesi yuddhat
Cām āji ran-ranga vīr ramaṇīr
Yavan senāre sate," (Cante I)
(O Mother Bharati, my desire is to put on a soldier's dress and to enter into the battle-field along with soldiers to see to-day the game of battle to be played by the heroic woman against the Muhammadan soldiers.)

The narrative of the epic starts closely after the prayer to the Muse. Chāo Fracheng Mung Bor Gohain, a Minister of the king has returned from the king's court to his own house with a mind full of anxieties. His devoted wife Mūlā Gābharu wants to know from her husband the cause of his anxiety. Chāo tells Mūlā of the invasion of the country by the Muhammadan soldiers and his iron determination to fight them out. Chāo also informs his inquisitive wife that the Āhom general Khunlung has been killed in the battle by the Muhammadan soldiers, and in his place Chāo has been appointed the General of the Āhom army, and he is going to the battle the next day. Chāo thus speaks:

"Rāj ēdesat
Senāpati rūpe, Priye! mayo kāloī
Yuddha dibaloī jām yavan-yuddhat l
Yadi bhāgya thāke, Priye! punu haba dekhā
Tomāre sahite; - natu ei jivanat
Eye sei ṣeṣ dekā Iha jivanar!" (Cant I)

(O Beloved! at the orders of the king I am going to the battle against the Muhammadans tomorrow as the General (of the Āhom army). If luck favours, O Beloved, I will see you again; — or this is our last meeting in life.)

Mūlā sabdues the pang of Separation with her lofty heroism and gives a heroic send-off to her husband Chāo the Āhom
general, to fight the battle against the Muhammadans:

"Desarī dūrdinat, Assamātā
Ghor meghāsanna aji 1 Satru dūvārat
Bhīmarūpf Yavanar aganita senā, -
Bhuva kālat aji bīrrūpe sāyi
Jovā, Nāth ! samarat bipaksak khedi
Rākhā Assamar dhan, svādhinatā moni 1
Ache ki, he Nāth! prān e sē ghranīya
Kāro ei jagatat, ji musarge sukhe
Sei prān svadesar svādhinatā hetu ?
Jovā, Nāth! Randevi Mr.-Mundamālinī
Kariba tomāk raksā yavan yuddhat,
Senānik dibā bal, sāhas hiyāt

Bijoy patākā, kīrti Āhom bhāgyat ī" (Canto I)

(It is a dismal time for the country. The sky of Assam has
been thickened with the clouds of danger to-day. The enemies
are at the door. The mighty Muhammadan Army is countless in
number. O my Lord! go as a hero at such a time, and driving
away the enemy, protect the jemlike Freedom, the national
treasure of Assam. O Lord, is there in the world any such
life of hatred that is not dedicated pleasurably for the sake
of the country's freedom? Go, my Lord, Mr.-Mundamālini, the
Celestial Queen of War will protect you in the battle, give
strength to the soldiers and put courage in their hearts, and
present the Flag of Victory to the fortune of the Āhoms.)

Mūlā's heroism has been redoubled at the heroic words of
his beloved Mūlā. But Mūlā has a request to make: She also
wants to accompany her heroic husband to the battle-field. Chāe, while praising the wisdom of his wife, comments that the woman is meant for the hearth and not for the battle. Chāe argues as a romantic lover that if he sees the charming face of Mūlā in the battle-field, he may suffer from human weakness; he may regain the fears of life and death, and fail ultimately in his mission:

"Sācā, tumī, Priyatamā! utsāh dāyini,
Sataguna utsāhit kariche Chāok.
Tomār Utsāhe āji; kintu samarat
Dekhile tomar ei lābanya 'sundar
Mukh-chabi bhay hay āne, - hay Chāo
Nirotsāh samarat, - jāne, - priyatamā!
Yuddhat nīpīma janme, mamātā prānat,
(Jaume maranar bhay) tente, he, Priyasi!
Thākiba durjas bar, māhiba jagate
Bhīru Kāpurūs buli Chāok tomar L"  
(Canto I)

(True, my Beloved! you are the fountain of inspiration! which has encouraged me hundred times to-day. If I see your charming face in the battle-field, I am afraid, I may feel discouraged and I may be disinterested in the affairs of the battle. The desire to live may arouse the fear of death in my heart. And in that case, 0 Beloved, there will be great disgrace and the world will laugh at your Chāe as a coward).

But Mūlā quotes the heroic performance of Subhadrā, the sister of Sri Kṛṣṇa in her elopement with Arjuna. When the charioteer of Sri Kṛṣṇa's chariot which carried them expressed
his unwillingness to drive the chariot, Arjuna was in imminent danger. And at that time it was Subhadrā who, with her superb skill in driving chariot, saved the life of Arjuna and made him win the battle with the Jadava soldiers. The heroine in Mūlā, therefore, argues that she will never be a hurdle on the part of her husband in the battle-field. Mūlā's arguments convince her husband; yet her husband Chāo leaves her at home. The two dear but heroic husband and wife spend the night, which may be the last night of their lives, in perfect peace and pleasure as Rohinī spends her time with Candra. (Canto I)

Seven days have passed, but Mūlā has no information from her husband. She is anxiously waiting for any message from her husband. Her mate Muhilā asks her about the cause of her anxiety. Mūlā tells Muhilā of her premonition of the impending danger:

'Nājēno, kiya je, sakhi dekho aharah
Amanagal nañabidh; hāi ! ji kālāt
Soumitrīr Yuddha hay Meghnād Šate
Nikumbhīlā jajāa ghare Lankā nagarat
Kalanemi doitya kanyā rakṣakula Lakṣmī
dekhichile Pramilāi jene amangal
Antahpur māje thāki kankk Lankan
Akasmēte; - āji hāi ! Mūlāio tomār
Dekhe tene amangal akasmēte sakhi !'

(Canto II)

[I do not know, O Mate, why I am seeing omens at all the time. Such omens were seen by Pramilā, the daughter of Kālanemi and the Lakṣmī of the Rakṣa clan, when her husband Meghnād was
having a fight with Soumitri at the Temple where the 'Nikumbhila Jajna' (A Great Prayer to the Gods) was performed.]

With this premonition of Mūlā the poet serves his poetic purpose successfully. In the 'Nikumbhila Jajna' Meghnād was killed by Lakṣmana without any justice and fair play. The heart-rending news of Meghnād's death came to Pramila like a bolt from the blue. This epic simile predicts the manner in which Chāṇa is also going to be killed and the saddest news Mūlā is expecting to have. While Mūlā is visualising on the role of her Destiny which she cannot escape, a messenger from the battle-field comes to break the saddest news of Chāṇa's killing in an unjust fight when Chāṇa was unarmed and was walking on the bank of the river. Mūlā confirms her premonition of the danger and begins to shed the bitterest of tears.

(Canto II).

Mūlā at last stops her weeping and gets up with an iron determination for revenge upon Turbaka, the Muhammadan General, who has assassinated her husband in the most unjust manner. She asks her mate Muhilā to accompany her to the battle-field with an army of Assamese women. Muhilā tries to prevent her dear Mūlā from taking such a revengeful course, saying that a woman is meant for the hearth, not for the battle. But Mūlā wins over Muhilā's womanly weakness by making a declaration of her heroic will and determination. Mūlā does not know how to live without the other half,—her husband who has been killed. She now promises to go to the battle-field and to kill the enemies of her husband;
"Ahom ramanî, Sakhi! birpatni âmi
Hata svâmi samarat, anyây yuddhat
Akâlat, hâî! Sakhi! thâkim ki kari
Si dukh hiyât sahi? ki kari gharat
Thâkim, he prânasakhi! nibicâri târ
Pratihimsâ? Mûlâ, Sakhi! ardhangi svâmir ll"
(Canto III)

(We, the Ahom women are heroes' wives. My husband is dead untimely in an unjust battle. How can I tolerate that pain in my heart, O my Friend? How shall I dwell in my house without taking its revenge? O Friend, Mûlâ is the better-half of her husband!)

Mûlâ at last forms an army of women and goes to the field of battle. (Canto III). Mûlâ, accompanied by Muhila and other women of her army, arrives at the camp of the Ahom soldiers and finds that all including the generals have become disheartened. Mûlâ becomes harsh with all the Ahom generals — Cuklen, Cukhareng, Cuteng and Cureng for their cowardice and bid them to be up and doing and to fight out the enemies of the country. She speaks:

"Ki kâj prânat, yadi habâ kâpurûs?
Nedêkhâbâ yadi bûrya bipaksa paksak
Samar kṣetrat goî? svadeśar hetu
Deśar mangal arthe musargibâ prân?
Janâile maran âche, — bûr purusar
Kbûr maran, — kintu el jagatat
Satabûr mare bhûru prati muhurtat ll"
(Canto IV)
(Of what avail your life if you are a coward, if you do not demonstrate your prowess before the enemies in the battle-field, and if you do not sacrifice your life for the sake of the country? Where there is life, there is death. But a hero dies only once in life. But there are in this world many cowards who happen to die hundred times at every moment.)

At these heroic words of Mūla all the Ahom generals gather up strength and with renewed vigour they march forward to the battle-field. The poet then narrates a horrible scene of the battle-field befitting the heroic tale of the Kāvya:

'Kī bhīṣaṇ! bhayānkar!! drṣya bhayānkar!!!
Bhayānaka! Kī bhīṣaṇ saṃvar prāṇaṇa!
Nāī snēh, dayā, māyā, jene marubhūṭ
Nāī nai jalavātī, susītal pāṇī!
Kī bhīṣaṇ! cāru phāle birāg birodh
Lalasā gighāmsā hiṃsā sabāre hiyāt
Biragiche abirām! arṭyu! arṭyu māthe!
Gārphāle arṭyu chabi! ki bhīṣaṇ aitra il
Plābita dharaṇī ājī ajasra sonite
Mānabar, — ghūre duṇe 'siyāl kākur
Naraṃṇiśalobhī, — ure āpare 'sagunī
tKari talalai thot,— āche thāye thāye
Pari kata arṭa hastī, asva, kata nar
(Kata yoddha Ahomar, kata Yavanar!!)

(Canto IV)
What a horrible sight it is! How horrible is the battlefield! There is no love, no kindness, no charm in the battlefield as there is not a river of pure water in a desert. On all sides prevail only the revengeful thoughts and actions at all times. There is death everywhere! How horrible is the picture of death on all sides. The earth is drenched with the endless flow of human blood, and at distance are roaming foxes and dogs to take human flesh. Vultures are hovering above with their beaks downward. At different places there are lying countless number of dead elephants, horses and men! (There are lying so many of dead soldiers of the Ahoms and the Muhammadans.)

Mūlā finds that the lifeless body of her husband is getting mixed up with dust. The dead body is lying side by side with many other dead bodies of the enemy as if it is enjoying eternal peace and taking eternal rest, leaving aside all earthly feelings of enmity. Mūlā faints and dreams a dream in which the spirit of her Chão appears before her, explaining the meaning of 'Death' that takes place for the sake of the Mother land:

"Svadesar svādhīnatā, tār arthe jiṭe
Jīvan Utsarga kari mare samarat,
Mrtyu tār hay sānti, maha nīdrā tār
Ananta bīrām mātho, bīva jananīr
Kolāt (śāntire bharā), agni tār kāse
Sudhānśur rāmī jen, bhūmi śāyyā tār
Phular kōmal śāyyā, 'sel sul gāt
Mātho puspa barīśan .........." (Canto IV)
(If any one dies for the sake of the country's freedom, one's death turns into a peaceful and eternally restful sleep on the lap of the Mother Earth. The fire turns into the rays of the Moon and the bed of the earth turns into a bed of flowers, and the arrows and the spears on one's body turn into showers of flowers.)

At this Mūlā regains her senses and with renewed vigour and determination, she leads her army against the enemy.

(Canto IV)

Ṭāju and Bangal, the two lieutenants of the Muhammadan army, inform their general Turbak of the witchcraft used by the Šenom woman — Mūlā Gābharu in the battle-field, and propose to depart to their own country immediately. But Turbak makes them understand that the witchcraft is nothing but the inherent heroism of the woman. He further explains to them the evil consequences of leaving the battle as cowards.

(Canto V)

Mūlā continues to fight against the enemies for three days; Guklen appeals to her for rest. But Mūlā engages herself in a relentless fighting, in course of which she happens to come across Ṭāju and kills him. Thereafter she kills Bangal, the other lieutenant of Turbak, in the battle of swords after having a long battle of words. (Canto VI).

The Muhammadan soldiers have lost the ground and their morale has been shattered. General Turbak somehow keeps on counseling his men and giving them courage to fight to the finish of their lives.
Mūlā Gābhāru jumps into a severe fighting against General Turbak. And in the course of it she has been slain secretly by a Muhammadan soldier. And thus Mūlā falls down in a unjust battle with the Muhammadans. Muhilā weeps over Mūlā who is profusely bleeding. Mūlā explains to Muhilā the futility of human life. Human beings come to the earth as the actors come to the stage, and they disappear as soon as their parts are played.

Mūlā breathes her last in the battle-field, and Muhilā retains the heroic spirit of her friend to continue the fight against the Muhammadans. (Canto VII)

Having performed the cremation of Mūlā Gābhāru in a solemn atmosphere, Kancheng Borpatra Gehain, the General of the Ahom army and his lieutenants - Cuklen, Cureng, Cukhreng and Cuteng march forward to the battle and assail the camp of the Muhammadans. There takes place a sharp exchange of words between Kancheng and Turbak. Then in a severe fight that takes place between them, Kancheng cuts Turbak to pieces. After killing him Kancheng kills another Muhammadan lieutenant named Hussain (Canto VIII).

**Critical Remarks:**

In conceiving the plan of the epic Hiteswar Bor Boruah seems to have been profoundly influenced by the epic-plan of Madhusudan’s Meghnāđadā Ḍāvyā. Following this master-poet of Bengal, Bor Boruah wants to sing of heroism in his kāvyā, and prepares the character-sketches in the line of those in the Meghnāđadā Ḍāvyā, although in a different epic situation.
Chão is the simplified version of Meghnād. He, like Meghnād, takes farewell from his wife Mūlā and gets killed in an unjust battle. Mūlā is a heroine like Pramila, the wife of Meghnad. The role of the two mates Mūlā and Muhilā of this kāvya is just like that of Pramila and Basanti of the Meghnādbadh. The following lines quoted from the kāvya prove how deep is the impact of the Meghnādbadh kāvya upon it:

(1) "........ dharile kandiba
Cakur cakule tuki, rakhyā-kula dūte
Kanak Lankāt jene Rāvanar āge
Tukichile cakupāni, nibedi sekare
Virabāhu artuyukathā!" (Cante II)

(The messenger begins to weep, shedding tears, as the Rāksa messenger shed tears before Rāvana at the time of giving the death-news of Virabahu.)

(11) Bulile Mūlā -
"Jānil, kātaki! moj bujile sakale;
Nirastra kālat, hai! badhile svānīk
Nikumbhīlā yajñaghare, Soumitriye jene
Badhile Lankār rabi bir Indrajit, ..."
(Cante II)

(Mula says: I have come to know, O Messenger, how my husband was killed when he was unarmed as Indrajit, the Sun of Lankā, was killed by Soumitra in the 'Nikumbhīlā Yajñā').

(iii) "Antyesti samāpta kari āpon putrar
Āne nirāñanda mane jene Raksarāj
Rāghbari Dāsānan tuki cakupāni
Baksakula bifre sate, - ēhile sirūpe
Kancheng Borpātra ......." (Cante VIII)

[As Dasānān, the King of Rāksas returned with other heroes with tears in eyes after completing the cremation of his own son, so also returned Kancheng Borpātra (after completing the cremation of Mūlā Čābhāru)]

We have already observed in our discussion of the Kāvatāpur Dhvānsa Kāvya that Hiteswar Bor Boruah has been greatly influenced by the philosophy of Shakespeare in fixing the ultimate goals of the characters of his epics. Even with an apparent religious tone prevailing in and through the Kāvyas, all the men and women of Bor Boruah submit themselves to the Destiny which reigns supreme in human life. As in Shakespeare so in Madhusudan the Destiny plays with the human beings who are extremely helpless in her hands. We cannot explain the why and wherefore of the role of Destiny. In some characters of Shakespeare and Madhusudan the foils and foibles of human nature help intensify the play of Destiny. But some other characters, even without any flaws, go down and fall preys to the Satanic role of Destiny and all such innocent men and women die with the consolation that either they are reaping the fruits of their past lives or they are being deemed by their Destiny. Even with these two alternatives some of the characters retain a dying satisfaction that they have died for a noble cause i.e. the fulfilment of love or a noble duty. As in Shakespeare so in Bor Boruah we have the conception of the world as a 'stage', its men and women as 'players' and the Destiny as the Stage-Director. Mūlā Čābhāru consoles her friend Muhilā just before
her death with the follow words:

"Kiya michā ke ↝ sok ? i ranga-bhumit
(Bhāṃonār che-gharat) nāna bes dhari
Kare nā nā kṛīḍa nar, kṛīḍa ses hale
Pare ahi 'jabanikā' paṅcaphūṭī dehā
Hay paṅcabhūte lin, bāyur putalī
Mirale jirūpe hēy adṛīya bāyut ll
Nahēy mānab mātho goṭei jagat

(Bibhur srijan jata) anītya sabei l" (Canto VII)

(Why should you be sorrowful unnecessarily? On the stage of the world human beings appear in various shapes to play, and they disappear when their play is ended. And they are dissolved into the Five Elements of which their bodies are constituted, like dolls of air they vanish into airy nothing. It is true not only in the case of man, but also in the case of all the creations of God in the world.)

This at once reminds us of the following lines of Shakespeare:

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exists and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages." 29

There are also echoes of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines in the mouths of Bor Boruah's men and women. Mūlā, while

29. William Shakespeare: As You Like it: Act 3, Sec.-I,
VV 140-144.
encouraging the despondent Ahom generals after the fall of Chão in the battle, speaks like Julius Caesar:

"Janmilo maraś äche, bīr purusar
Hār maraś, — hintu ei jagatat
'Satabar mare bhīrū prati muhurtat' II"
(Canto IV)

(Where there is life, there is death; a hero dies only once. But in this world a coward dies hundred times at every moment.)

Let us compare it with what Shakespeare's Julius Caesar says to his beloved Calphula before leaving for the Capital where he is going to be assassinated:

"Caes: Cowards die many times before their deaths:
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end, Will come when it will come."30

(Besides these we see the impacts of the great epics of the world: the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata in creating epic similes in justifying the situations in which Bor Boruah's men and women are placed. While describing the grim battle between Mūlā and her army on the one hand, and

30. William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar: Act 2, Sec. 11
VV 33-40.
Turbaka and his army on the other, the poet refers to the battles of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, and the Greeks and the Trojans. And with the help of such use of epic similes Ber Boruah tries to raise the tale to an epic plane. Here is a picture of Mūlā's battle with Turbaka:

"I buli Mūlā Gābharu olāle yuddhat, —
Olāle Āhom senā, — lāle sabe khoj
Samar kṣetrar phāle l Pāṭhānaro senā
Āhil si phāle sāji, — hal dupaksar
Sammutkā-sammutkhi punu — lāgil samar
Dupaksar ghoratar, Kuru samarat
Jene Kuru-Pandavar, — natubā tāhāni
Gricia yeddhāre sate Troja senār
Troy samarat jene; — nāi kintu kāro
Jay, kibā parājay bahu paralake li" (Canto VII)

(By saying so Mūlā Gābharu set out for battle, — and along with her the Āhom army marched. The Pathan soldiers also came that way for battle. Both the armies came face to face, and there took place a grim battle between the two, and it was like the Battle of the Kauravas and the Pandavas or like the Battle of the Greeks and the Trojans. There was no victory or defeat of the either party for a long time.)

There is also a deep impact of the Gītā on this kāvya. Because of this impact the heroes and heroines of Bor Boruah, while admitting the supreme role of the Destiny, jump into the battle of life with confidence and also accept the end of their lives, — the Death, — with a salace. And this
marks the difference between the Destiny in Bor Boruah and
the Destiny in Madhusudan. In Madhusudan the hero and the
heroine submit themselves to the role of Destiny with resent-
ment, and nothing remains except enveloping darkness before
them. The philosophy of 'Karma' preached by Bhagavan Krsna
to the epic hero Arjuna is really significant. Bhagavan
Krsna says:

"Karmayebadhikaraeste mā phaleṣu kacaca 1
Mā karmaphalaheturbhuzān te sangotastvakarmaṇi 11"

(47. Thou hast a right to action, but only to
action, never to its fruits; let not the
fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither
let there be in thee any attachment to
inactivity.) 31

And this philosophy of 'karma' is preached in Yuddha-
kṣetrat by the spirit of Gīśa to the dejected
Mūlā:

"....... Kiya karā 'sok

Tomār svāmīr arthe? Ki hoiche tār?
I nasvar jivanar nirdīṣṭa dinat
Ādīstya kartabya sādhi, loiche bisrām
Jiva, — kiya mātā tāk? Kiya mīchā kāndā?
Kāndi kiya kanduvābā? Bisrāmar pāche
Uthība ākou labhī natun jīvan
Saṁdīvī natun kām; bīsāl bīsvat
Karma mātho mul-mantra, - karma kṣetra bīva,

31. From the Gītā s edited by Sri Anilbaran Roy; 3rd Impression p. 36
Karmoi jivan-sār, — bīr-patni tumi
Karma karā" (Canto IV)

(Why should you be grieved for your (lost) husband? What has happened to him? Ah the end of the perishable human life, after completing its allotted task, the soul is taking rest. Why should you invite him? What are you weeping for? Why should you weep to make others weep? After rest the soul will again rise up with a new life to perform new works. In the vast Universe only 'to work' is the Cardinal principle. The Universe is the field of work; and 'work' is the substance of life. You are a hero's wife, and so (you) work.)

Though there is a great improvement on the part of Hiteswar Bor Boruah in maintaining epic discipline in this kāvyā over his previous one Tirotār Ātmadān, yet at times the poet becomes a lyricist and a preacher. While presenting the heroic sacrifices of Chāo, Mīlā and Muhilā, the poet preaches patriotism, and he starts the process even from the beginning of the kāvyā. The poet cannot but be unhappy with the tragic fall of the Assamese of whom Mīlā is a representative. The Assamese people which could withstand all foreign invasions, have lost all their former heroic qualities and have become lazy, opium-eaters and good-for-nothing. The poet has direct invectives to throw against his people, and it clarifies the motive of the poet behind narrating a heroic episode from the national history. However purposeful these invectives seem to be, they mar the epic coherence and the charm of an objective narrative. The poet does not seem to be careful to this aspect
of an epic. It should have been better if he would have put his preachings in the mouths of his heroes and heroines. The poet has failed apparently to do so as his heroes and heroines, unlike those of Nabin Chandra Sen’s *Palāṣir Yuddha*, belong to the heary past. It is interesting to note how the same purpose has been fulfilled by Nabin Chandra in his historical epic by putting his own preachings in the mouths of his characters, and thereby maintaining the epic symmetry.

Jagat Seth tells the Minister:

"Mantri'bar!

Sādhe ki Bāngālí morā cira parāthān ?
Sādhe ki bidesi āsi dali padabhare
Kede lei siṁhāsan ? kare pratidin
Apamān sata sata cakṣer opare ?
Svarga martya kare yadi sthān binimay
Tathāpi Bāngālī nāhi habe eka-mat;
Pratignāi kalpataru, sāhas durjay !
Kārjaṃe khoje sabe nij nij path 1" 32

(Canto I Sec. 22)

(= Minister! are not the Bengalis under subjugation for nothing? Do the foreigners come with mighty feet to snatch the throne without any reason? How can hundreds of insults be perpetrated before our eyes? Even if the Heaven and the Earth change places, the Bengalis will not be of one mind. They have highly noble promises, and they have also indomitable courage! But in action they take to individual courses.)

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But the same patriotic note presents itself before us in the words of the poet himself in *Yuddhakṣetraṭ Abha Ramanī*:

'Kibā sādhyā Hītesvar? Ki mantra balat

Uthāb jagai, Devi! nidrita jātik?

Athābā ji jāti āji ālasya sābatī

NISCINTA MANERE ĀCHE, GHOR TOPANIT,

Sunāi si bīr-kīrti tāhāni bālār, —

Bajāī i bhagā bīṇā (akālat jār

Chigile hathāte tār l) bhagā-bhagā sure

Si bhagā bīnār, Devi! pārib jāgāb

Punu ki si Āhomak? Assam basīk?

... ... ... ... ...

... ... ... ... ...

Jovā, Mātr! he Bhārati! dhariche pāvat, —

Govā bīr kīrtīgit, — bajevā bīṇāt

Bīra-ras l Bālā, Devi! kabā kāne kāne

Assāmar prati jāne, — 'Sobheki toṃāk

Pānār khoḷāt āji? caku duṭi mūdi

Ālasya sābatī thākā? nāśādi nijār

Jātiya vannatā, jār jātīt edin

Jujiçhile birānganā, tyāgichile prān

Desar mangal hetu, rākhība desār

Svādhinatā, — kīrti jāś, — ? (Canto VI)

(0 Bharati! is there any power or incantation with Hiteswar to awaken the nation in sleep? Can he awaken the nation from its torpor by narrating the heroic tales of the past in the
music of his broken lyre. Can he awaken the Ahoms and the Assamese? ...

Go, O Mother, Bharati, I am touching your feet. (You) sing heroic songs on your lyre, and tell every Assamese in ears: 'Are you befitting yourself near the pan of opium to-day? Why should you be in the stupor? Should you spend your time like this without working for the progress of the nation which once produced heroes and heroines to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country's welfare and freedom .......... ?"

This patriotic tone pervades in and through all the historical epics of Hiteswar Bor Boruah. The ardent patriotism of the poet has not only brought to life some dry bones of historical episodes of Assam, but it has also acted as a poetic incantation to awaken a lethargic and moraleless nation after the loss of their age-old freedom as well as to make the people morally and mentally prepared to regain it.

In this kavya as in the other two Bor Boruah shows no skill in the formation of a plot with a main episode supported by some sub-episodes. Again, his characters are plain and free from any complications. It so appears that it is not the situations that are shaping the characters, but it is the characters that are giving shape to the situations. In the kavya as the poet wants to sing the glory and heroism of Mula, he makes all other characters appear as her shadows without their individualities. Even the character of Mulā is not drawn
in all the colours of strength and weakness of a human being. There is no tragic flaw in both the characters of Mula and Chão; yet they are victims of the Destiny. There is no other character, for whose fault they happen to be victims. But a superficial similarity is shown between the unjust killing of Meghnād and the unjust killing of Chão. But Meghnād is killed not for his own fault, but for the fault of his father-Śrīvana. Laksmana gives his arguments to Ramachandra for the killing of Meghnād:

"Adharma acāri ei Rakṣa kulapati;
Tārpāpe hata-bal habe rana-bhume
Meghnād; mare putra janaker pāpe 1" 33
(Canto III)

[This head of the Rakhyas is not virtuous. For his sin, (his son) Meghnād will be powerless in the field of battle. And son dies for the sin of his father.]

But in Bör Beruah's Kāvyas the heroes and heroines, inspite of their virtues and for nobody's flaw, die, and their death may be ascribed to the sheer will of Destiny.

Another marked peculiarity of this historical epic is that it is not replete with descriptions of nature — morning, evening, night, garden etc. as we have them in the other two historical epics. What we think to be lyrical excess in the Tirātār Atmadān Kāvyā is totally absent from the Vṛddhakṣetraṭ Āna Ramani.

Hiteswar Bor Boruah has something to say in the 'Preface' of this kāvyā on the use of simple diction in poetry. He writes in a crucial time when the epics were not written in simple vernacular idiom. The great English romantics like William Wordsworth and Coleridge sponsored simplicity of the poetic diction in their 'Preface' to the Lyrical Ballads. Bor Boruah along with others also sponsor simplicity of diction in the writing of poetry. But he does so with some reservations. Bor Boruah says: "Most writers of the present age hold that the use of the simplest words of our language is of Universal acceptance. The author also holds the same view, but, in some cases, especially in writing poems in epic form and having regard also to the nature of the plot, neglect of such a strict observance of the rule becomes necessary. Moreover, in the opinion of the same author, our mother language will be poorer in time if we leave out of use, in places where it seems fit to use, the words of Sanskrit derivation. Under the impression, the author has used in this present work of his, some such words of Sanskrit origin, although, however, he is not quite confident, as to how far his view is correct." 34

The following lines quoted from Canto I of the kāvyā prove the point:

Mūlā speaks to Chāo:
"Yadio jagate nāth! tirotā jātik
Komal parān bhābe, - kintu tiri jāti"

34. From the Preface to this Kāvyā.
Here we have a fine mixture of the simple Assamese words with the words of Sanskrit origin. The opinion expressed by Bor Boruah seems to have been supported by T.S. Eliot in his following words on the simplicity of poetic diction: "We cannot, in literature, any more than in the rest of life, live in a perpetual state of revolution. If every generation of poets made it their task to bring poetic diction up to date with the spoken language, poetry would fail in one of its most important obligations. For poetry should help, not only to refine the language of the time, but to prevent it from changing too rapidly; a development of language at too great a speed would be a development in the sense of progressive deterioration, and that is our danger to-day." 35

Hiteswar Bor Boruah's language is, therefore, a dignified Assamese: the charm of its dignity lies in appropriate use of Sanskrit words amidst simple Assamese vocabulary. And with the help of it he can keep up the seriousness of his narrative epics.