For Assamese poetry, Romanticism was not an indigenous and spontaneous poetic movement; Romanticism was grafted into Assamese poetry in the nineties of the nineteenth century. The grafting was made from Continental poetry, especially English, at the instance of the magazine *Jonaki* (1889).

Assam had to learn many things from the West. She was ready to learn everything beneficial from the West even at any cost. But a direct contact with Western countries was not possible for Assamese people. The contact, therefore, grew up through Bengal, and particularly through Calcutta. Calcutta, at that time was the meeting ground of the East and the West. The Assamese students, studying at that time in Calcutta colleges, were greatly struck by the richness of Western civilisation. They discovered many things, worthy of acceptance from the West, and one such thing was poetry. The English education, cultivated at that time in the colleges of Calcutta, consisted of a huge
syllabus of poetical works of the English Romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelly, Keats and Byron. The young student-poets could not but be influenced by the English Romantics. The enthusiasm of the students from Assam knew no bounds. They were already forming a literary society in Calcutta. It was the Assāiyā Bhaṣār Unnati Sādhini Sabhā, (Association for development of the Assamese language). Since its inception in 1888, this association was the source of inspiration for the literary workers from Assam. The publication of the literary journal Jonākī, in 1889, was made under the auspices of this very association. The pioneer workers of the time, who shaped and fashioned the literary trend of the time were:

Chandra Kumar Agarwalla
Hem Chandra Goswami
Lakshminath Bezbarua
Padma Nath Gohain Barua
Satya Nath Bora
Kanaklal Baruva
Bajani Kanta Bardaloi
Lambodar Bora
and
Ananda Chandra Agarwalla.
All of them were imbued with the genuine spirit of doing something substantial for the literature and the country. Jonghī, under the able editorship of Chandra Kumar Agarwalla, could nurse their aspirations and mould their literary genius to a great extent. Himself a poet of high excellence, it was Chandra Kumar Agarwalla who pioneered Romanticism into Assamese poetry. He formed a "trio" with Lakshminath and Ram Chandra and the sole credit of starting the movement goes to them. Jonghī built a school of poetry; a good number of poets emerged out under its auspices and made innovations both in form and content of poetry. What happened in the English poetry in the early nineteenth century now took place in Assamese poetry. The characteristics were the same, only the field differed. As 'extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility' was the basic import of English Romantic poetry; it was so with the Assamese Romantic poetry also. In the English way, the quest for and return to nature began. The old ideal of Vaishnavite faith, 'seeing God in everything and everything in God' was now gone. "Old and narrow outlook yielded place to catholicity, formalism to a variety of attractive new patterns. There were innovations in diction, rhyme and imagery, potential instruments of poetic consciousness, and what emerged out of these innovations, was something novel, invigorating, powerful and brilliant. Assamese poetry
entered into a romantic period of large and lofty dreams, of Utopias, daring hopes and Eldorados, and sky-scrapping aspirations and ambitions. The new poetry sang of freedom—freedom from an old stereo-typed diction, freedom from political dependance, social injustices, religious bigotry and freedom for all—assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation." Lyricality became abundant and the pursuit of beauty became a popular sport for the poets. Assamese poetry beforehand was poetry either of Gods or kings. There was less attention to the lives of the common man. But with Romanticism things changed. For the English Romanticism, Rousseau had a great contribution; it was his tenet of equality of all men. The worth and dignity of man as man was established in English Romantic poetry; so was the case with Assamese Romantic poetry. The vision of a full man free from religious, social and economic bindings, emerged gradually. It was Chandrakumar who for the first time glorified the identity of man as man in his 'Mahanv Vandana' (Salutation to Men):

Man alone is the friend and guide;
None else is anywhere but he
And this earth of ours,
— More covetable than heaven
Is man's appointed home.
Man himself is the worshipper
and the worshipped,
None else, but he,
Worship him, then, with flowers
and offerings,
And sing his glory.

The traits that Assamese Romanticism bore may be summarised
as follows:

(i) Extraordinary development of imaginative
sensibility, especially with regard to love
and beauty.

(ii) Return to Nature; a bright focus on the
glories of lakes, mountains and rivers.

(iii) Love and respect for the common man.
Recognition of the dignity of the untaught
peasants, simple village - folk and poor
people.

(iv) Grace of childhood admired.

(v) Wonder of the fairies.

(vi) Melodies of bird-songs.

(vii) Approach to the Super-natural.

(viii) A patriotic outlook.

(ix) Remembrance of the nation's heroic past.
(x) A mystic interpretation of life and the Universe.

(xi) Experiment with long narrative poems of epic type.

(xii) Escape from the reality.

(xiii) Display of folk-motifs and folk-elements in poetry.

(xiv) Introduction of satires and humour.

The span of Romantic age in Assamese poetry is short. It is only a half-century (1880-1943). Beginning with the Jomār (1889) it saw its termination in the birth of the Jayantī (1943), when more progressive ideas sprang forth. But, in fact the age under review, is the richest period of Assamese poetry, excluding the Vaishnavita. Modernity came to Assamese poetry along with Romanticism. Formerly Gods and kings dominated the spheres of poetry. Romanticism made poetry liberal; it admitted men and nature and proceeded to place them in their proper locus. We can, therefore, mark the year 1880 as the proper beginning of modern poetry, as far as Assamese poetry is concerned. In the Granodai era poetry was forced, sectarian, stereotyped and as best an experiment. The efforts of the lonely travellers were hardly guided by any specific poetic ideal and
their genius was never channelised through any institution or literary magazine. Their compositions present a sincere but queer conglomeration of Vaishnavite, Christian, secular and romantic elements. The sincere efforts of all the poets between 1846 and 1880 had their fruits in the form of the Jonaki, the first form for a formally modern Assamese poetry. As such the period of the Gymnopedal poets and the Lonely Travellers appear as a proper prelude to the actual drama of modern Assamese poetry which began with the appearance of the maiden Jonaki on the stage. Jonaki was followed by a host of other magazines, which deepened the impetus and made the ground clear for Romanticism. Bijuli, Ushā, Bāghā, Alocani, Cetana, Milan and Āvahan are some of those magazines. The post-Jonaki Romantic poetry manifested an indigenous stamp and colour. Moreover, the Romantic spirit was further developed with elements derived from Sanskrit poetry. Due discussions on these are made in proper places. We are making thematic analysis of Romantic poetry in the next eight chapters.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

4. At its very beginning the English education and culture attracted the Indian young men very strongly. It was a
proud privilege, they considered, to be educated and trained in the English way as warranted by the following lines of Raja Rammohan Roy: "While we looked forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge thus promised to the young generation, our hearts were filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude; we already offered up thanks to providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened of the nations of the West with the glorious ambitions of planting in Asia, the arts and sciences of modern Europe". From, 'Demand For English Education', an essay by Raja Rammohan Roy, incorporated in the book Religion and Political Awakening in India, p 124.

2. Dr. B.K. Barua: Modern Assamese Literature, Lawoyer's Book Stall, Gauhati, 1957; p 9

3. Tr. adapted from Dr. B.K. Barua's book Modern Assamese literature, p 15

Dr. Barua believes, that Chandra Kumar was greatly influenced by August Compte in evolving a policy of wider humanity, op. cit., p 15.