CHAPTER TWELVE

POETRY OF THE DRAMAS

Our study of modern Assamese poetry will remain incomplete, if we fail to make a survey of the poetry of the dramas of the period under review. In this period a big number of dramas were written and most of them exhibited a high sense of poetry. Most of the dramatists were more interested in poetry, and as such they employed poetry not only in the verse-dramas but also in the prose-dramas, they invented some scope to insert a number of poetical speeches. Thus we have long poetic passages in the prose-dramas also.

"All poetry tends towards drama, and all drama towards poetry" said T.S. Eliot. This is equally true with Assamese drama and poetry. Under emotional spells the dramatic personalities take recourse to poetry and thereby widen the province of poetry.

We give below the possible causes that inspired the growth of poetic drama and as well as the addition of poetic passages in prose-dramas, in Assamese.
(1) The Influence of Sanskrit and Ańkiyā dramas:

The Sanskrit dramas were very rich in poetry. The very word Drṣya-Kāvyā for a drama indicates with what closeness drama and poetry were bound in Sanskrit literature. The growth of the proverbial sayings like "Kāvyesu nāṭakam ramyam tatra ramyam Śakuntalā" indicate the affinity of drama with poetry proper. In the Indian literary tradition poetry had become a part and parcel of drama and the Assamese dramatists were highly influenced by this Sanskrit tradition. Moreover, the Assamese dramatists had an ideal of the Ańkiyā nāts before them. The Ańkiyā nāts (especially those of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva) are mainly poetical in tone. Whenever, there is an out-burst of sentiment, in the Ańkiyā nāt, the medium of expression is changed from prose to verse. Moreover, the Sūtradhāra of the Ańkiyā nāt, who remains present on the stage all throughout, often describes the situations in elegantly ornamented verses, capable of giving the relish of relevant rasas. Thus we have very fine pieces of pure poetry in the Ańkiyā nāts. The Assamese dramatists of the modern period too, were presumably influenced by the poetry of the Ańkiyā nāts.
(ii) Enhancement of emotional intensity:

Poetry is a good media of expression for emotional intensity. The greater the emotional appeal, the greater is the need for a poetic expression. "The human soul, in intense emotion", says T.S. Eliot, "strives to express itself in verse. It is not for me, but for the neurologists, to discover why this is so, and why and how feeling and rhythm are related. The tendency, at any rate, of prose drama is to emphasise the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse".

(iii) Giving artificial elevation in the Puranic and legendary dramas:

The business of the prose is with reality and of verse with imagination. In some of the dramas (with Puranic and legendary background) often it becomes necessary to create an artificial supernatural circumstance. In such circumstances, the dramatists take recourse to poetry.

(iv) Necessity of a rhetorical dialogue:

The rhetorical dialogue has a great advantage over the common speech and as such to enrich the dialogues, the dramatists deliberately create some dialogues in verse, rich
in figures which may be recognised as richly embellished poetry as well.

(v) Poetry gives relief to monotony and adds variety:

The ordinary speech is monotonous but the poetical speech has the power to soothe the soul and to offer certain relief. Poetry, when employed with care and earnestness in a drama, relieves monotony and adds variety.

(vi) Poetical speech is more dramatic than the common speech:

A poetical speech is more dramatic than the common speech and hence the poets preferred to insert some poetical dialogues even in the prose-dramas. "Poetry" says Coleridge "after all is the best words in the best order". A good dialogue generally demands the best order and arrangement of words to express itself fully, and hence the necessity of a poetical speech.

(vii) Intoxication of the Audience:

Lascelles Abercrombie says that poetry in drama helps the readers to get intoxicated with the subject matter of the play. Poetry makes drama more lively and more enjoyable and thus the audience get easily absorbed in the dramatic plot and situation.
Some dramatists create poetry in the dramas because they must. Shakespeare and Kalidasa fall into this category. They are also great poets while they are great dramatists. Inevitably, poetry occupies a conspicuous place in their dramas as well. In the Assamese context, such dramatists were Parvati Prasad Barua and Jyoti Prasad Agarwala whose poetic and dramatic selves never knew separation. As a result their dramas were poetic and their poetry dramatic.

The tragic sentiment is much better delineated in the drama through the media of poetry. Poetry helps in creating the tragic situation. "As a means of raising the events of a drama above the level of real life and as the natural expression for emotion, verse claims the close attention of every tragic dramatist." In most of the Assamese tragic dramas, of the period under review, a tendency to verify the tragic happenings is widely prevalent.

II. CHANDRADHAR BARUA

The first attempt towards a poetical drama was made by Chandradhar Barua. Barua wrote his first, drama Meghmād Vadha (The Killing of Meghmād) in blank-verse, with
occasional deviations to prose dialogue. It is he who for the first time introduced blank-verse or *amitrāksarī chanda* in a drama. Barua in his prefatory note to the *Meghnād Vadha* has admitted his indebtedness to Madhusudan. Madhusudan also wrote a *kavya* on the same theme using the blank-verse.

Chandradhar has built his drama with a fine poetic craftsmanship. The world of the *Meghnād Vadha* is a world of mythology where gods and men equally reside. Poetry has helped the writer in creating an atmosphere of mythological grandeur. In the second act (scene third) Lakshmama meets Lord Siva in an ideal forest-path which is rich in natural beauty. The poet has also used poetry to bring forth the subtle loveliness and heroism of the characters. Pramīlā, the heroine of the drama, in her firm resolution to see her husband in the battle field was ready to push-off all obstacles and to appear at the battle-field to meet Meghnād. When Basanti pointed out to her the possible difficulties of entering the battle-ground Pramīlā replied with heroic determination that she was the daughter of a hero, the wife of a hero, the heroic blood was running through her whole self and as such she had no fear for Sam Chandra who was only a beggar. Chandradhar Barua has described Pramīla's dauntless courage with very fine rhetorical devices.
*** Ki koā Vāsantī,
Sāgarat paro buli
Olāi yetiyā nadi parvat vidāri,
Kār sādhya rodhe tār gati?
Rakṣar bovāri mai dānav jīyāri.
Meghnād svāmī mor Rāvaṇa sahur
Maino karone bhay bhikṣuk Rāmak.
Bīrar duhitā mai bīrar grhini
Bīra rakta pravāhita prati śīre mor;
Prakāsī bīrar tej bīrar bhāvere
Sāhur balere āji pasim purīt,
Cāo bāru kirūpe nivāre mok Rāme?

Rāvaṇa, whose misdeed of abducting Sītā from the Daṇḍaka forest, invited all troubles to Laṅka, is also equally firm in his determination. Like a real hero he was ready to face any eventuality demanded by the circumstances. His prime-minister counselled him to return Sītā peacefully; but he replied that by so-doing his fame would be castigated.

Ranṣ eri samarpile Rāmak Ĉanakī,
Curna hava kītirāśī
Bīrar āvan mor,
Paraśib bhīrutār grīnīt chaīāi;
Nije āji karim samkar
Janam labhile haya mahan edin,
Yāy yāva ranat jīvan.

- If I leave the war and submit Jānaki
to Rāma Candra,
My fame will be destroyed,
My heroic life, will be overshadowed
with the cowardice darkness;
I shall personally go to war (to-day).
Death is certain for him, who has
obtained a birth;
Let me too pass away in the battle-field,
If it is to be so.

Meghnād's dialogues are also specimen of good poetry. In
their height of emotions every character has taken resource
to poetic utterances.

Chandrādhar Barua was a master craftsman. He had a
powerful diction, as observed in the earlier chapters. Puns,
similes and alliterations are some of his popular rhetorical
methods. In the matter of diction, he could collect the
best words and could place them in the best order. The lovely
personality of Pramila is nicely conveyed to the reader:
'Pramāyī latā eī Pramīlā vijāli' (p 26) : (This Pramīlā of slender body and rich beauty is but a creeper of love.) Rāma's grief at the loss of Sītā is thus conveyed to us:

Heruvālo rājyadhan
Heruvālo atmiya svajan
Āchil akal mātho
Andhar gharat mor Jānaki Pradīp,
Numāle adreṭe tāko
Asār saṁsār mor
Kon aĉhe tumār vihanā?

= I lost my kingdom,
My friends, my kith and kin,
The only thing remained, was Jānaki,
She shone like a candle-stick in a dark-house,
But God had put-off that candle too,
For me this world is a nuisance,
To me only you matter much.

Meghnād at the time of his battle with Laksāhman saw the illusory presence of gods and goddesses around him, who came there for the purpose of his destruction. The presence of Mahādeva and Rāmaśandhi is described forcefully. This description is a fine example of the delineation of the
Bhayānaka rasa. The words themselves tend to infuse fear in the hearts of the audience, as it were.

Iki ! Iki ! caupāse amar dale
astra dhari ākrāmiche mok !
Tamomay Mahādev-Bhim sulapāni
Bhīṣan mūrati bhayaṅkara;
Ghor璞ā, ranomattā, kaṅkāl mālinī
Lolā-jihvā, Baṅacandi, sonit-lulupā.

Chandradhar Barua shows a charming felicity of phrase, a sure ear for the latent music in words and command over the various Alamkāras in the poetry of his dramas.

III. LAKHSMINATH BEZBARUA : PADMANATH GOHAİN BARUA

Lakhsminath Bezbarua and Padmanath Gohain Barua, the two major dramatists of the period, however, did not make any serious attempt at making poetry in their plays. Their occasional driftings into poetry in their dramas served only very minor purposes. Bezbarua has thus used poetry to create a comic situation, in the drama Belimār. The clown Bhumuk Bahuā has made certain suggestions to the audience, by his comic verses in the very first act of the drama.
Bhumuk humorously says:

Baikunthar Krama āthi kailās ārī Siva,  
Lāhe lāhe deśkhan marībalai thiya,  
Nijar bhitarat himā-himā ānāk atyāchār  
Rāje rajar kāsalai āhi nepāy suvicār,  
Dukhīyāk dukh di rāh pāy, prajāk kare śhin,  
Seighar raja-seikhān desār āyuś kei din?

The utility of this verse in the lips of a comic character is to introduce the climate and the consequence of the play. A great social and political chaos in Assam weakened the country as a whole by that time and as such the country fell an easy victim to the Burmese invasion. This fact is hinted at the stanza quoted above.

Padmanath Gohain Bardia drifted to poetry occasionally with the purpose of describing the grandeur of natural panarama in which the situation was set. In his historical drama Sadhani, we find such a description of the natural beauty of a mountain:

"Śvarga jakhālā āre punya girībar  
Nirmile ki sukausale viśva khanikare,  
Saundaryyar rūprāśi karunār prabhā;  
Premar āveg rāg sambhogar sukh,"
IV. ATUL CHANDRA HAZARIKA

Atul Chandra Hazarika has twenty-three dramas to his credit. Poetry is nicely woven into most of them. Particularly his mythological dramas exhibit a rare poetical grandeur. Hazarika is a poet of no mean order. He has to his credit a large number of poems and it is thus natural that he could utilise his poetic gift also in his dramas. Some poetic passages of his dramas stand unparalleled in their loveliness. In the drama Narakasur we have a number of poetic dialogues which represent the emotional spontaneity of the characters.

Naraka’s birth was the result of an union between Lord Visnu in his varaha (The Divine Boar) incarnation and mother Earth (Basumatī). Naraka’s birth and heredity were viewed with contempt by the Gods. Basumatī herself suffered from some inferiority complex because of this affair. But Naraka had a firm devotion to his mother. He did not view with concern his mother’s past adventures with the Divine
Boar, rather, he was proud of his mother. In the very first scene of the drama Narakan boldly asserts his devotion to his mother in a poetical passage surcharged with emotions.

*** Kayo yadi konobai pūpa-kānta tuli
Māṭy māṭy māṭy māṭy kālaṅkīni buli,
Tathāpito, tathāpito, tumi mere māṭy
Cirakāl, yuge yuge, janne janne
Narakar ārāhyā gosani.

= If even somebody utters
with his sinful throat,
that, my mother,
my mother is a kālaṅkīni
Still then, still then you are none else
But my mother;
my mother forever, for all ages,
for all births;
you are the veritable goddess of worship
for this Naraka.

Here the spirit of devotion to the mother is very nicely blended with the spirit of heroism of Naraka. Naraka’s devotion to the mother later on led him to revenge the disgraceful remarks of the High-Gods. Naraka’s dialogues with Maya,
the princess of Vidarbha too are full of rhetorico-poetical loveliness. Naraka was a bit slow to accept the love lorn princess Māyā as he had some hesitation on the score of his low-birth. He directly speaks his heart to Māyā:

"Nejāna ne rājabāla tumī,
Yimānei māyāmay hak citta mor
Bicārak aṅga saṅga premājā tava
Tathāpito, he martyā apsari,
Vidarbhā rājkanyā bhāvi rājendrāni,
Novāre saṅgini hava Narakāsurār,
Daitya maî — Sraṭīr ghrṇīt
Dīna maî, Hīnaimai, kūla gaurmyat,
Mīndanīya, ghrṇanīya deva samājar
Rakta pāt kāri maî duranta asur,
Kon sate kon yukti mate
Kūndilkanyāi āji
Sījanāk kariva varan.

To these words Māyā replied:

He sundar !
Punyamayī vasudhār putra mahāprān !!
Nakarivā nijakei nije asanmān.
Bīrabar, bantigach yihare nahak,
Dīpsīkha anindya sadāy.
Nij gauravat samajāval tumi
Uddhāsita bākṣa vasudhār.
Maĩ kṣudra jonākī māthen,
Ākāsita tomāre guṇat,
He mohan,
Vairī bhāv āche buli devatār sate,
Hārayāputra tumi asur samrāt
Pranayāturār prān karivā ne vadh ?

There can be no doubt about the poetical qualities of the verses quoted above and of the fact that the poet is conversant with all the conventions of love poetry. The lover tries to invoke the kind feelings of the beloved by addressing her with sweet phrases and by giving an expression to his own intense longings for a union with her. "Yimāmēi prāne mār bicārak aṅga saṅga prem-pūjā tava" are clearly sensuous and intense enough. It is poetry like this which can arouse the aesthetic propriety with artistic economy. "Maĩ kṣudra jonākī māthōn-ākāsita tomāre guṇat" — this very dialogue has the power to convince the hero as well as the audience regarding Nāya’s deep love for Hāraka. The lines cited above have the power to evoke dramatic intensity.
as well as the romantic sentimentality befitting the persons in love.

In his drama Kurukṣetra also Hazarika has shown some rare poetic excellence. Gandhāri's speech in the last scene of the drama is unique. Gandhāri did not see Lord Kṛṣṇa earlier, but at the close of the great Kurukṣetra war, she had a chance to see and to talk to him. Picking up a chance, she even accused Kṛṣṇa for championing the Kurukṣetra war. The full-text of Gandhāri's speech, a rare gem of Assamese literature, is given below:

Sundar prthivi i ye sundar ākāś
Dasodise sundarar apūrba vikāś
tumi kintu sundararo atike sundar
Sārthak karilā mor jyoti nayanar.
tumiyene sei kṛṣṇa daivakīnandana
Gopinār bastracor madamsohan ?
tumiyene sei kṛṣṇa nanar dulāl
tumiyene syām kāmu vrajār gopāl ?
tumiyene sei kṛṣṇa kāmsa dhvāsa-kārī
tumiyene vrajanāth govardhandhāri ?
tumiyene sei kṛṣṇa devanārāyan;
None would deny the poetic embellishment of the above verses, built on a happy combination of Sandeha, Rupaka and Atisayo-kti Alankāras. Gandhāri's tragic sentiments as well as Krsna's Godliness and loveliness are nicely reflected in them. Gandhāri, though annoyed at Krsna's (supposed) killing
of her hundred sons, makes only reverential reference to him. The sentiments of Karuna and Bhakti have combined in this speech. And, as for the diction, Hazarika's performance is unique. He writes a masterly style. The expressions like, 'narakar ārādhya gosāni'; 'martya aparā'; 'raktapātkāri mai duranta asur'; 'punyamayi vasudhāpatra mahāprān'; 'ma kṣudra jñānāk māthon' and 'unmādinī yamunāk bevālā ujjā' suggest much more than they mean and at the same time heighten the effect of the contextual sentiments.

V. DANDINATH, KALITA

Dandinath Kalita in his drama Satīr Tej (Jaymati) has adopted poetry to delineate the tragic sentiment. Satīr Tej is purely a prose drama, the tragic utterances of Jaymati and Gadāpāni being the only exceptions. Jaymati has told her sorrows before her death in verse. Gadāpāni too has revealed his heart's pain in a tragic but beautiful verse:

Jayāhīn Gadāpāni nai mālya tār
Saṁśārār māya-mah sakalo cigīl,
Senar saṁśār mor ha'l ārkār,
Bhāra māe chuki ga'l atal jalat.
Akātare diva pāre ātma-visarjjan;
Kintu, Jayār ādēs mai novāro pelāb
Novāro kariba vyartha sādhana satir,
Bhāgi yovā buku mor sīlere bandhāi
śata yātanār sahi śata saktīsēl,
Rākhīb lāgība prān; pratihīmā, pratīṣodh
Badha mor visālya karāni. prāṇāro prānad
Yaʿt komal korak, āchil Jayār sthān,
Tat āji nava vedī śmaśān bhasmar
Aḍhīsthāṭrī, pratihīmā lelajihvā mei.
Antarhit dayā, kramā, pranay vandhan
Antardhan kalpanār citra atitar.
Samukhat ati gārha andha andhakār
Pratihīmā sādhanar suvarma suyog.
Nāci uṭh śire śire dānava pravṛtti
Jvalī uṭh dāp sinkā mahā pralayar,
Tumul tarāṅga tuli ghūrṇa prabhāṇjan
Val yā mohārī viśva atīt urāi.

= Īddāpāti, devoid of Jaymatī is useless,
I have left all bonds of this world;
My golden-world had become shattered.
My nicely laden boat had sunk deep into the sea;
I can sacrifice myself with the least hesitation,
But I cannot ignore the commands of my beloved Jaya;
I cannot frustrate the sacrifice of that chaste lady.
Mending my broken heart with stones,
Undergoing hundreds of pains and tortures,
I will have to save myself to secure revenge.
Revenge, yes revenge will be my sole anodyne;
In my heart's heart there was
A soft cosy nook for Jaya;
There I have erected the crematorium;
The Goddess of revenge with her tongue
Spreading out is now with me.
And from my heart kindness, forgiveness and
Love had fled away;
And all the rosy hues of the past.
What I have before me is only,
A blinding darkness.
Yes, it is the golden chance for taking revenge:
Rise, Rise, O the devil in me,
Burn, Burn, the fire of havoc,
And you the wind, come with the swirling currents,
Swirl, Swirl and destroy the whole universe.
His pains has made Gadāpāni resolute in seeking revenge. This particular speech displays a strong reflection of the Raudra Rasa. Had not the words been written in verse, the flow and the grace, the dialogue demanded, could not be brought forth. So sure and faithful is the tone that there cannot be any mistake about the firm resolution of Gadāpāni, to secure a revenge for the tortureful killing of his wife. The keen desire to revenge makes Gadapani willing to destroy the whole universe like a cyclone. So far as the diction is concerned, attention may be paid to phrases like the following: 'adhiṣṭhātri pratihimsā lolajihvā meli'; 'nāci uth śire śire dānāv pravṛtti'; 'tumul taraṅga tuli ghūrṇa prabhāṇjan', all being admirably instrumental for the delineation of the contextual Raudra Rasa.

VI. SAILADHAR RAJKHOWA

In his historical drama Svargadeo Pratāpsimha, Sailadhar Rajkhowa has employed ample poetry to delineate aptly the rich sentiments of love and patriotism. Most of the high characters in this particular drama speak in verse, whenever they are in the elevated state of feelings. The patriotic sentiments of Ākhek Gohain, the exiled prince, is very
effectively expressed in the first act (sc. 6) of the drama:

'Ayogya santān mai, tomar
sevat nāi adhikār mor,
Nirvāsit santānar cakulo etupi
Āche mātho ās āji pūja divalai.

= I am an worthless son of thee
0 mother,
I have no right to serve you more;
This exiled prince, 0 mother has
only a drop of tear to offer you
as the last worship.

But in his conscious attempt to portray poetry Sailadhar often times made artificial verses without the rhetorical fineness and artistic sublimity.

VII. ANANDA CHANDRA BARUA

Ananda Chandra Barua had carefully woven into his dramas some fine poetic pieces. Moreover, he had written two verse-dramas for children — Kapau Kūvari (the dove princess) and Panchami. Himself a poet of high excellence, Ananda Barua knew well the necessity of poetic dialogue in
drama. Barua himself was a good actor, and as such he could recognise the poetic situations in a drama and accordingly adopted poetry into his own dramas, Vijayā and Nal-Damayanti when such occasions arose. In the two dramas Panchamī and Kapau Kūvari the poet has made poetry the vehicle of expression and in the latter Kavitā (or Poetry) herself is described as a dramatic character. The dramas of imagination flourish nicely on poetic dialogues and Kapau-Kūvari and Panchamī have nicely blended poetry and imagination to the best delight of the child audiences.

VIII. KAMALANANDA BHATTACHARYYA

Chitrāngadā by Kamalananda Bhattacharyya is another fine example of poetic richness blended happily with dramatic excellence. The theme of the play is the well-known Mahabharatīc story of Babruvāhana's fight, killing and subsequent reviving to life of his dear father Arjuna. Babruvāhana was a prince from Manipur; his father was one of the celebrated Pāndavas: Arjuna. But since his birth Babruvahana had no chance to meet his father, as Arjuna was away from Manipur for long years. In the time of Asvamedha sacrifice, it so happened that there ensued a great fight between Babruvahana and Arjuna. Arjuna was killed in the battle but later on
through the meditation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and at the touch of a life-giving jewel, Arjuna was restored to life. The poet has chanced ample opportunity to represent this very story in a very poetic manner. The scene of Babrūvāhana's floral offering at the stone statue of Arjuna is very much touching. Babrūvāhana's words at this hour make a masterpiece, embodying delicacy, sympathy and suggestion. The rapt and noble admiration of the son for his father is nicely reflected here.

Puvāte butāli āni
Abhāgini āye mor bānar kusum
Doṭopāl asrūre tiyāi
Phiri gal anjali pradāni
Tomārei
Eie duṭi pāsān padmat !
Pitā ! Pitā !
Dekhā nāi kimān sundar !
Labhā nāi sparśa sukh kimān madhur !
Povā nāi vaṅcit lalāte mor
Sau duṭi adharar āśiś cumban.
Tathāpito kata sandhyā
Kaisorar kata mor jonāk yāminī.
Mugdha hai suni suni
Tomar garima rasi
Viratvar apuraba kahini
Parote apuni dhalı
Nidrār kolāt,
Saponat tumı āhi
Adarere tuli dichā tomār gāndiva
Hāt thai śirat snehere
Āsirvād karichā kimān.

= My unfortunate mother
Collecting the wild-flowers
early in the morning,
and offering them bedewed with her tears,
to your stone feet,
has just returned.
Father, father,
I have not seen thee
How lovely you are?
I have not felt your pleasant touch.
I have not received from your lips
on my forehead, the much desired kiss,
mixed with your blessings.
But yet, I have spent,
Many an evening, many a moon-lit night
hearing your heroic deeds and
glorious fame.
At the moment of sweet embrace from sleep,
in the dreams you come to me
to decorate me with your Gandiva
placing your hand on my head to bless me,
and to caress me with love.

Naturally Babrūvahana's intense longing to see his father
is nicely exhibited in the above verse. Here the poet felt
deeply, wanted to convey something very sincerely, and the
verse is just a vehicle for the inner excitement of the
poet and the dramatist. The words like 'dekhā nāi kimān
sundār', 'labhā nāi sparśa sukh kimān madhur', effectively
suggest the intense longing of the son to see his father,
whose name has become a mere myth to him. Kamalananda had
a commendable diction and his mastery over language is
remarkable. Kamalananda had employed a large number of
Alamkāras. He was so rich in Upamā that in the drama Upamā
enters into the prose as well, and gives it a poetical
quality. Citrāṅgada deals with the sentiments of Śṛṅgāra,
Vīra and Karuṇa; and these rasas nicely flourish on the
fertile field of poetry. The metrical skill maintained in this drama is that of the blank-verse or the amitrāksarī chanda.

IX. JYOTI PRASAD AGARWALLA

Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla, the renowned poet and dramatist, draws the cool refreshment of poetry into his prose-dramas Sonāt Kūvārī and Kārengar Ligīrī with exclusive perfection. Sonāt Kūvārī is a mythological play and Kārengar Ligīrī is a romantic drama with an imaginary background of love and disappointment. In both of the dramas he has utilised poetry to create atmosphere, to exhibit emotional height and to portray tragic circumstances. Moreover, through their poetic dialogues, the characters reveal as it were, their personal selves. In the drama Sonāt Kūvārī, the lovely dialogues of Uṣā and Anirūḍha are fine specimen of high aesthetic propriety and artistic economy. Both are in the happy union of love and their admiration for each other knew no bound. Anirūḍha submits to Uṣā with the words: 'Mai halo pranayār dīna upāsak vandha ralo ācalat cira kālalalai', in deep admiration of her love, beauty and personality. The frankness of expression, the intensity of love and even above the association of evocative words make these dialogues
shine with splendour and spontaneity. In his drama Karengar Lişirî (The maid of the royal palace) Jyotiprasad draws a fine picture of nature with a powerful diction. Ananga, the hero of the drama, like a feeble angel takes rest on the nature's lap and at that moment the grace and beauty of nature vividly comes to him. He conceives nature as a mother.

*** Air dare sānta snigdha,
Hai tumi prakṛti sundari
Dichā suvimal sneh vāki,
Priyār saundaryya lai pūrṇa yauvanar
Lājuki hānīti mārī
Pranay vātari ka'ba khojāhe sundari.

Here the divine grace of the mother combines with the youthful loveliness of the bride in the personality of nature.

William C. Bryant in his Thanatopsis says:

"To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language".

The same thing is true of Jyoti Prasad also. In his deep communion with nature, he has been able to hear the language of the mother and the beloved alike. This projection of the
mother and the bride on nature's personality is indeed very clever and artistic. Jyoti Prasad could write a very ornate style and his power of diction too, is commendable. Jyoti-prasad excels in handling tadbhava and tatsama words. The expressions like,

(i) Nandan vijayī vīr kusum kōvar, (p 96)
(ii) Kavi kalpanār indu nindi parakāsi, (p 96)
(iii) Tapasyār mantra vāki karna kuharat, (p 96)
(iv) Jāgi uth pranāyar sundarī pratimā, (p 97)
(v) Nichuki thākile bahi bhar lai vyarthā pranāyar,(p97)

are full of exquisite beauty, delicacy and suggestions. The sentences are best suited to the drama form: they are short, neat, poetic and significant. In both the dramas Šonit Kūvari and Kāreṅgar Ligiri the poet has used the blank verse along with prose and has used it with equipoise and mastery.

X. AMBIKAGIRI RAYCHOWDHURY

Jayadrath Vadh (The killing of Jayadrath) a poetic drama by Ambikagiri Raychowdhury is the only example of a full-length drama (of five acts) composed thoroughly in verse. The Mahabharatic story of Jayadratha's killing in the hands of Arjuna is the subject matter of the drama. The principal
sentiment is Vīra, followed by Śṛṅgāra and Karuṇa. The poet has aptly taken to poetry for the delineation of such sentiments. But his poetic embellishments sometimes lack in the necessary balance and sometimes his poetry turns insipid, studied and artificial.

But in the delineation of the tragic his poetic perfection matches adequately with the circumstances. Thus, we see the trembling Jayadratha uttering the tragic dialogue on the tragic apprehension of a possible killing from Arjuna.

*** Hay !
Akalate Jīvanar sukha śānti eri
Sapīb lāgīb prān Pārthar hātat.
Prānar Duḥśalā mor,
Vidāy kālar sei
Aśru bharā chaku duṭi āru
Nedekhim eie jīvanat.
Āhā !
Padumī cakut tor
Ki madhur ras sānī
cāi cāi mor phāle dichili vidāy —
Nedekhim āru
Sudhā sānā seikhani mukh;
Pranaputra Manibhadra mor,
Ananda amrt bharā toro mukhkhanī
Nāi āru dekhibar āsa. ***

= Alas !
Leaving away life's joys and happiness
I will have to sacrifice my life prematurely
in the hands of Arjuna.
My beloved Duhsalā! my heart of hearts,
I shall see no more,
Your tearful parting eyes;
Alas !
In this life, I shall see thee no more,
With what lovely grace of eyes,
you bade me farewell,
gazing constantly at me;
I shall never see, that lovely face again !
And my son, Manibhadra,
my life's soul,
I have no hope of seeing again
your pleasant joyful face.

These lines have the power to evoke the karuna sentiment in
the heart of any father and any husband at any time.
The diction in these lines is simple, and simplicity in diction is really very much befitting to the sentiment of Karuna. His words are less figurative and the diction easily attracts the audience out of their plain simplicity and touching sentiment. Ānandvardhana in and under II. 18 (of his Dhvanyāloka) opines that when there is an intensity of the sentiment it is undesirable to have a preponderance over Alamkāras, and as such we can very happily excuse Ambikagiri for writing a non-figurative style. In this drama we have also a large number of songs which are very rich in musical cadence and poetical loveliness.

XI. BADAN CHANDRA SARMA

Badan Chandra Sarma's two poetic dramas Kavitār Janma and Kavitār Svayambar are full of poetic grace and rhymed musicality. Kavitār Janma (The birth of Poetry) as the name suggests is the story of Valmiki's composing the first metrical lines 'ma nisada' etc. Kavitār Svayamvar (The Selection of Bridegroom for Poetry) gives almost a new story. It says how Miss Poetry accepted poet Kalidāsa as her bridegroom. This imaginary story is much on the model of Rājaśekhara's description of Kāvyapurusa (Kāvyapurusotpatti) given
in the very beginning of his Kavyamāmasa. But in these two dramas sometimes the felicity of expression is curtailed by the forced expressions of studied artificiality.

XII. KIRTINATH BARDALOI (AND) MUKTINATH BARDALOI

Kirtinath Bardaloi and Muktinath Bardaloi jointly wrote four lyrical plays — Bāṣantī Abhisēk, Luit Kōvar, Suravijāy and Meghāvalī. These dramas have imaginary themes and they exhibit a fine sense of poetry all throughout. These dramas are meant chiefly for children and as such they involve a high degree of fancy and some occasional allegory. The imaginative and arresting descriptions of the nature kingdom is well reflected in Meghāvalī's song in the drama Meghāvalī.

Āmi sapon dekho padum banat bhomorār sate,
Malay āhi āmār lagat gopan kathā pāte, bhomorār sate.
Vanar chāyai māyā āne kuhi pātāt rāhan sāne
Thupitarāi vilar pānt hāhi māri māte, bhomorār sate.
Sei nijahāt jonākīye, rūpar reṇu sici diye
Nayan bhāri sapon dekho, rūpar piyāhate, bhomorār sate.
We dream in the lotus-lake with the black-bee,
The breeze whispers secrets at our ears,
Oh, we dream with the black bee.
The forest shadows bring illusions and put hues
to the new-born leaves,
The cluster of stars reflect smiles on the lake-water,
and invite us, oh, we dream with the black-bee.
In that solitude the glow-worm spreads
its pollens of beauty,
And we dream eyesful of dreams, our thirst for beauty
Leads us to dream with the black-bee.

Such descriptions of rare poetic excellence surely have the power to capture the imagination of the young readers. The style and music of this diction are undoubtedly capable of carrying the young readers to a dreamland of beauty and bliss.

XIII. Parvati Prasad Barua

But by far the most successful writer of poetic drama is Parvati Prasad Barua. Barua wrote two allegorical poetic dramas, the Sonar Solei (The Golden Fruit or, The Philosopher's Stone) and Lakhimi. In both of the dramas the dramatic
characters comprise of the personalities of the nature kingdom, like the Swan, the Clouds, the Stream and the Seasons. The poet has presented a very lovely scene of the flowers waiting for Lakshmi. Lakshmi will come and make their buds bloom. The Sevālis invite Lakshmi with this lyric appeal:

Sesar kaliti mor
etiyāo phulā nāi
K añāo áche rai
tomālāke vāt chāy;
Āhāne Lakshmi mor
bulevā saran jor,
Phulak kaliti mor 23
caranar bhar pāy.

= My last bud is not opening as yet
It is still waiting for your kind grace;
Come, come my dear Lakshmi
Please give a touch of your feet;
And let the bud come to bloom as it comes under your pace.
This request for a touch of the feet to make the buds open remind us of the convention of the Sanskrit poets, where it is said that the Asoka blooms only when it reaches the touch of a woman's feet (pādāgḥatād asokam). The musicality of the above verse is beyond question; it stealthily leads us to a flowery land where affection and innocence reign supreme.

XIV.

This long range of dramatists from Chandradhar Barua to Parvati Prasad Barua making conscious and successful attempts at dramatic poetry testifies the fact that poetry made the dramas more popular. In the stage the characters who could speak poetry were presumably better admired than all others. Moreover, till the coming of the One-act plays, the full length plays of 5 acts (and with an average number of 25 scenes) dominated the Assamese stages. Such long dramas lasted from the dusk to dawn. To relieve the monotony of the audience, poetry of the dramas must have been helping a lot. It was therefore natural that the poets tried to versify the dramas and to bestow some poetic liveliness to them. Drama as an artistic form requires economy, and poetry seems to have helped the dramatists profoundly to exercise economy.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Selected Essays, Faber, 1963; p 51
2. Ibid., p 46
4. A. Nicol: Theory of Drama, p 143
6. Ibid., p 8
7. Ibid., p 57
8. Ibid., p 78
12. A woman having illicit relations.
13. Narakāsūr, p 35
14. Ibid., pp. 35-36
17. S.D. Rajkhowa: Svargadeo Pratāpsiṇha, 1968; p 26
18. See (a) Vijayā, 1963; pp. 8-9
   (b) Nal-Damayantī, 1956; pp. 25-26, 96-97
   p 108
22. Meghāvalī, 1st edition, p 16
23. Parvati Prasad Barua : Lakhimī, 1st edition, p 10
24. Cf. S.D. VII. 24
25. Lascelles Abercrombie too accepts that a character
   speaking poetry in a drama has a greater influence.
   Vide, his article 'The Function of Poetry in the Drama'
   incorporated in the vol. English critical Essays,
   XX Century.