While the writings of the poets discussed in the earlier chapter are characterised by a newness of the content and particularly by a progressive outlook for sympathising with the proletariat, the writings of the new community discussed here are characterised by the newness of both content and form and more particularly by the newness of form. The poets of the New Community are found to have made experiments with all the new and queer trends in respect of form and content as obtained in case of symbolism, impressionism, imagism etc. Thus a poet of the New Community might be concerned with the things like the subconscious, the embryo, the libido etc., without bothering about poverty or the capitalist exploitation or revolution, so frequently met with in the poetry of the progressive school.

When the new poetry is considered in its full perspective the real credit of being the precursor of the new modern movement in Assamese poetry goes to Hem Barua.
Hem Barua showed no leaning towards romanticism. He emerged as a progressive poet and developed various trends of modernity in his poetry. He initiated the movement, shaped and fashioned it and had inspired a lot of young poets to follow the modernistic ideal. Really, it is Hem Barua who is the leader of this New Community of Assamese poets.

Hem Barua is yet another genius of Assam. In him we find a very happy and successful blending of poetry and politics. Hem Barua was born at Tezpur in 1915. He passed B.A. examination with Honours in English in 1936 and did M.A. in English from the Calcutta University in 1938. After a brief period of unemployment Hem Barua joined the Handique Girls' College Gauhati as a Lecturer in English and later changed to the J.B. College, Jorhat. By this time he joined in the national struggle for independence and was gaol ed for a year. His stay in the Jail gave him the chance to come into contact with the big leaders of Assam, like Gopinath Bardaloi, Bisnuram Medhi, Amiya Das, Devesvar Sarma and His Holiness the Gadamuriya Satradhikar. Like Jawaharlal Nehru Hem Barua too utilised his prison-days in serious studies. His study of Gandhi matured by this time. On return from Jail Hem Barua found that he had no chance of joining in his
past service at the J.B. College. However, in 1944, under the patronage of the late Gopinath Bardaloi, Hem Barua was offered a Lecturership in English in the newly started Barooah College at Gauhati. He accepted the offer and joined the new college, one year later he became the Principal of the college and continued in that post for long twelve years. On his election to the Indian Parliament in 1957 he left the job. Prior to his election to Indian Parliament from the F.S.P. party Hem Barua was an educationist having occasional flirts with Politics. But from 1957 he became a full-fledged Politician and a noted Parliamentarian. He served as a member of the Indian Parliament for three terms till 1971. Sri Barua is now living at Gauhati. He now edits an English daily from Gauhati: 'The Assam Express'. Hem Barua was a rare personality in Politics. His political understanding was much appreciated by all, including Jawaharlal Nehru.

Hem Barua’s poetic career began in the early forties of this century. By his poem 'Bandar' (The Monkey) the poet declared his deviation from the Romantic tradition. He made mark as a socially conscious poet with his poems 'Pūja' (The Worship), 'Gauhati 1944' (Gauhati in 1944) and 'Daul Pūrṇima' (The Holy Festival). From that time onward he has contributed a large number of poems. Jayantī, Pachowa and
Bamdhenu were the periodicals that served as the avenues for his poetic career. These three magazines boldly introduced to the poetry reading public the new sentiments shaped by Hem Barua. Balicanda (Sand-hopper, 1959) and Man-Mayuri (The mind-a peacock, 1965) are the two collected works of his poems. Hem Barua edited an anthology of Assamese poetry in 1960.

Hem Barua brought new messages for Assamese poetry. He carried new dreams, new hopes and new promises for the people. This newness came in the wake of Progressivism. The neo-humanistic outlook developed by that time aroused a sense of high hope and relief to the suffering humanity. Siding with the people Hem Barua has portrayed a picture of high hope and promise for them.

"The star of hope flashes and extinguishes in our eyes.
In the peacock dance of the sand-bird, seas roll
Into my closed heart.
On the shore, there opens a fair of poison-hyacinths.
The crowds rush in and out.
Your buoyant arms have the strength of so many sheafs of corn:
In our arms the vigour and energy of countless ages.
In your hand the sickle dances.
Spread before us is the vast sheet of golden paddy.
In our brow, the raw balls of sweat.
O love, come, let us husk out the paddy.

Sopāhī, O! Our dreams, we will mould:
Mud and water. Then golden corn.
We shall be the owners on what we cultivate,
Our paddy field that smiles with our sweat.
Hark, there the birth-pangs of a new day,
about to be born. Would not you hear?
(Dream in an wintry night)

In the post-war (II world war) days and just on the
eve of India's independence the Assamese people were surr­
ounded by new social problems, new ideas, and newer circum­
stances. The contemporary economic depression, the capita­
list exploitation, the brutal killing of the innocent huma­
nity at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the atrocities imposed on
the freedom fighters by the ruling foreigners and the like
made the life of the Assamese people sick and nauseating.
The disturbed people sought a relief from all these ills.
The urge for relief made the people dreamy. They dreamt of
an ideal brave new world; they expected the coming of a
new sun. With the gain of independence the hope of a bright future increased further. The people wanted to be free — free from the social ills, oppression, tyranny, poverty and insult. Hem Barua was warmly alive to the desire of the people to be free in all respects and with a sympathetic heart he shaped this consciousness of the people into his poetry.

In the high-fluttering tide of time,
We will also cross the flood waters;
We will swim. Swim and arrive at the other shore.
Or will perish. Not only us. But thousands.

***** (Simoom).

We the human caravan,
have crossed many a narrow bridges
To sing the chorus in our life's desert.
The soft rays of the new-babe sun
rehearse of a bold warm dream
in our minds' fields. ***
Who can prevent life?
We are staging, in the very theatre of life
the death of cruel Kamsa.
0, my ever young old earth
you play on your lips that
ever-known smile.
And with us are smiling
the human caravan. Our bloods
run in a warm temper.
Sun, 0 the new Sun:
Pray you make this barrenearth
a mother, a mother. (Prithivi)

With a warm heart the poet has drawn the pains, sorrows
and hungers of the working class: and more precisely of
the labourers, the farmers, and the soldiers. The capitalist
exploitation has robbed the poor folk of the charm of
living. The poet's sympathy for them is well apparent in
his call to make an end to the blood-sucking lizards:

There is the battle dance of the blood-sucking
Lizard on the harvest heap.
How many days are left
for the lizards to extinguish?
And how many? (Dream in an Wintry night)

The poet's wrath against the capitalist economy may be easily
explained. The man who has fought throughout his political
career to crush capitalism and to establish a socialist society should naturally be very much critical of the blood sucking capitalist lizards. The poet demands a change of the present gait of the society. He means no mere change, but a thorough overhauling, a revolutionary change which might bring emancipation to the "injured and the insulted". In his poem Bihur dinār gān (Song on a Bihuday) the poet has grown restless to see the motherly affection of this barren earth. In Assamese poetry the call for a revolutionary change is not entirely a new thing. Even Chandra Kumar Agarwalla, the high priest of Romanticism advocated a change in the contemporary social structure. But in Chandra Kumar's call boldness lacked; he was sincere no doubt, but not brave. Hem Barua is backed by high courage; he is a poet of courage and confidence. He can turn himself a martyr for the sake of social reconstruction. He has heard 'the song of the blood'; and at times he is courageous enough 'to turn the whole Brahmaputra red with blood'. Devkant Barua, a poet of the last Romantic school too, promised to "turn the white waters of the Brahmaputra red". Such a spirit was the greatest need of the day in the context of the nation's fight for freedom. Hem Barua realised the Deathlessness of the people. The large scale death caused by the atomic bombardment in
Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the death of the cowardice scientists themselves and not of the people.

The deathless souls
Of the people smoked at
Nagasaki and Hiroshima
Come and go. Science is silent.
Voiceless. The busy disillusioned people
now throng at the roads, fields and
the harbour and everywhere.
Man never dies.
Death is ordained only to them,
The cowardice, black-marked scientists;
Only they face death-death
Of their body and soul.
(And mark, the prostitute decor[s] herself
With a vermilion mark and reads
Aloud, the Rāmāyaṇa).13)

(Balicandā)

At the root of the poet's love, sympathy and sincerity lies
his realistic approach to the world around him. He is a con­
scious poet. The post-war poets in general discarded the
imaginative aspects of poetry and declared their allegiance
to realism. Hem Barua can demand a further credit as the
initiator of realism into Assamese poetry. Hem Barua and
Amulya Barua taught the Assamese readers to set aside the
romantic sensibility of heart and to sympathise with the
sorrows and poverty of the masses.

Apart from his poems of Socialistic revival mention may be made of his poems built on the recollection of past, invocation of a future, glories of youth and revolution and hundreds of personal sentiments. Drawn against a spell of Li-Po and Ezra Pound’s intellectual animation his Mamatar Cithi (Letter from Mamata) speaks nicely the pangs of widowhood of a teen-aged girl. Bringing the reminiscence of a seven year old past life of conjugal bliss, the girl Mamata is writing a letter, at the dead of night, under a candle light, to her dead husband. She has sought relief from her pangs of separation in writing a letter to her man who is no more. She has many informations to tell him. Her 'Babul' has by now grown sufficiently big; and a little teeth is coming of his gum.

*** Tomar Babul etiya baroto haiche
Tār opar pārit edhānmāni dālim gutī yen dāt akani gajiche.
Si mok ekebāre erike nidiye Ketiyaβā mor iman kham uθhe
Tumi nai nahay sei kārane.
Si bāru mor baga sājjoralai
Endare tadhā lagi cāi thāke kiya,
Tār opajāre para eijor kāpor cināki sei kārane nahay.14
The sentiment of Karuna is too deep in this poem. Poems drawn from his past sentiments like the Simanta (The Border), Istahar (The Document) and Soniya present the poet's imagist reflections on the things concerned. The white sari-attired little girl from the Indo-Pak border has aroused a sense of liberation of the body and mind to the poet. And the girl whom the poet met in the Santa-Fey city paused like a humble nun of the Christian order. The memory of Sonia of Madanpur tea estate brings back to the poet the loveliness of the labour girls. In another poem Snake the poet has exposed the endless ignorance of man through a symbol. Hem Barua had enriched his poetry with the ideals of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and as such some of his poems are woven with fine filaments of intellectualism. Such poems crave the readers' deep intelligence, vast reading and understanding. Eta Abiskar (A Discovery), January 30 and Simoom are some of such poems.

Hem Barua brought innovations in the technical side of poetry. These innovations were in the field of diction, language and in the form of picturisation. His diction is simpler and drawn from the common speech. He has selected inflated prose as the medium of expression and this he has used with equipose. His art of narration being nearer
to prose, readers have often complained that his poetry is only a disguised prose. It is natural for a poet who initiates a new movement to be the victim of his readers' wrong estimation.

But Hem Barua is a genius. His poetic talent gets exhibited in planning the similes of his poems. His similes have a freshness hitherto unexperienced in Assamese poetry. The rain-drops in the Delhi streets match in their jovial mood with the young girl Aikan of Rangdai tea estate. The pattering rain-drops echo the dancing foot-steps of Aikan nicely.

Eie āhe, eie yay
Eyā Dillir varasun
Eie āhe, eie yay 21
Eyā Raṅgdaī baṅgicar Aikan.

The poet has linked the lovely face of a graceful girl with the music of Svarod played by Ali Akbar Khan.

Mukkhan tāir
Āli Ākbar Khanar sarodar etā
nijam mūrochanāhe yen.22

Barua has made well utilisation of a few epic and Biblical references too. But his greatest excellence lies in his picturesque diction which lead us immediately to the utmost intimacy with the poet. The expressions like:

Eie āhe, eie yay
Eyā Dillir varasun
Eie āhe, eie yay 21
Eyā Raṅgdaī baṅgicar Aikan.

The poet has linked the lovely face of a graceful girl with the music of Svarod played by Ali Akbar Khan.
can evoke the images of things with their subtlest shades.

For sometimes past Hem Barua is preoccupied with journalism travel-literature, and criticism. But his silence as a poet during this period does not affect his past prestige and glory.

Navakanta Barua

Navakanta Barua (b 1926), a younger brother of the celebrated Romantic poet Devkant Barua, joined the new community of poets with the poems of *He aranya he mahanāgar* (0 Forest, 0 Metropolis, 1951) which is a product of anguish caused by the city life. The budding of his poetic genius was seen in his early poems of *Pachowa* and *Jayanti*. Navakanta was born at Nowgong and Nowgong was the seat of his early schooling. He had a brilliant academic career. He studied at the universities of Calcutta, Visva Bharati and Aligarh. From Aligarh University he got his M.A. degree in
English Literature. He served as a lecturer in the A.K. College, Sikohabad; J.B. College, Jorhat and finally in the Cotton College, Gauhati, where he is a Professor of English for about two decades till now. Being a teacher he had sufficient leisure to cultivate poetry. His published works are He aranya, he mahanagar, Eti duti egharati tarā (Counting up eleven stars, 1957), Yati āru Keiṭāmān sketch (Yati and a few sketches, 1961), Rāvan and Samrāt (The Emperor, 1961).

Navakanta's stay at Calcutta though brief was of great moment. Here he could see for himself the hard realities of a city life. The variety and complexity of the Calcutta life appealed to him most. Moreover, the industrial unrest, the economic strain and the corrupt world of bankrupt politicians taking refuge behind the people were also points of interest for him. He deeply sympathised with the oppressed and the exploited. Navakanta's Prāṇ Gaṅgā Vandar (Harbour on the Ganges of life) is a mighty picture of the disquieting city life:

The mid-day moments rest here
as silent as death,
On the harbour of life's Ganges,
O Bhagirath!
The crane wheels of Jagat Seth
reflect the wars at Dumer, Flassey
and Yandabu.
The steel-vessel sails on the sea of sweets
... It now moves met ...
Death is its only merchandise.
The life shudders unsuccessfully.
The blue-sky rests on her death-bed;
Don't make awake, if it is sleepy
This dock at Khidirpur.
The sands of the seas carry the last remains
Of many a sailor,
The kites of Dollar and Sterling hover
Over the sky;
And my vision runs at a snail-pace,
Alas, even the 42 adventures
Could not make history here.
Who is he,
that sleeps on the edges,
Who is he,
Who greases the crane-wheels of
merchant Jagat Seth
With his red-blood.30

The poet's sense of resentment and rejection over the city life assumes the form of a stoic bitterness. In the harbour attached to the city the kites of dollar and sterling hover over and the poor labourers grease the crane wheels of the capitalist exploiter Jagat Seth. The poet is ever alive to
the evils of the mechanical civilisation of the city. The
nauseating wicked city has made the poet sick of himself,
neurotic and morose. The fear of death often haunts him.
Even the sounds of the heavy vehicles bring an anxiety to
him.

The road and the terminus,
The gully (lane) and the avenue
Groan under a dumb darkness;
The slippery death's snake passes under the toe,
(Light, Oh where is light)
The distant tremor,
Caused by the heavy vehicles
Bring an anxiety of life and death
(in the forest the eyes of the tiger and the
wild-cat dazzle).
Life lives ever after.
Still it lives,
And the complex puzzle of life in the gullies
live too.
We are the sons of deathlessness,
Oh, the decaying-city.\(^{31}\)

The vagaries of modern life, its hollowness and the idio-
syncrasies are painted more closely in the poem Sandhyar
Gila (Shillong by evening). In a dejected evening in
Shillong the poet has made a search for love and poetry in
the snobberies of Shillong life.
The morose evening drops,
The tired clerk readies himself
for a call of the libido.
In the eyes of the city painted
the static dullness of a sleepless nurse
in a night hospital.
The sun has gone distant
from the branchless naked Pines;
only the image of the sun lingers.
In the sick-black blue sky
the cloud writes messages, meaningless.
The puzzles of the zig-zag streets of Laban
is closed now under a spell of fog.
With, betel-spits, smokes and whistles
this Shillong banters at itself, in the dusk:

The sharp eyes of a foreign-patient
dazzles in a dazzling corner of the Pine-wood hotel;
Her eyes go dreamy.
The fur-seat of Kashmir-wool
Covers the suggestions of her fragile body;
Mind .... Oh this mind suffers in starvation,
The reminiscences of the valley too suffers,
(The Khasi girls awake the hills,
And in their eyes the strawberries bloom).
This sky has lost its colour,
It lost the love-songs;
The pretty rainbow is quashed by the fog;
The heart-burn of a tigress captivated
in a circus party,
reflects in the evening at Shillong.
The sense of snobbery, boredom and a desolate disillusioned city life get further reflection in his poem *Abelir Mibatar Gan* (The songs in the street in the evening). The poet passes through an over-crowed street and still he finds that a sense of loneliness and dejection overpowers his mind.

Navakanta also produced some successful poems in the impressionistic mood. The following extract from *Trišāṅkur Ātmajivāhī* (Triśāṅku's Autobiography) conveys the poet's cool and silent expeditions to the flowery kingdom of love and beauty.

---

*Could*

This lamp of beauty
awaken, a festival of light, a signal
in my mind.

After deep meditation
of lacs and lacs of years
These lilacs are coming to bloom.
The jinia-petals are soft and warm
like the breast-cloth of an Eskimo girl.
In the light radiated from ice
my eyes close,
In the unbecoming cowardice sleep
my nerves get slippery and
(sleep of dejection),
silent.
Navakanta made experiments in the imagist and symbolic poetry too. His Bodhidrumar Bari (Fire-woods from the tree of knowledge) and Kauri (The crow) are examples of rare symbolic gift. The crow comes as the poet's messenger from the distant unknown. The crow is the symbol of the poet's sojourn between heaven and earth; the black atoms radiated from the wings of the crow stand as the radiated human beings from the Almighty God. The crow makes his flight towards the high blues to discover his missing link with the great universal. An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. And occasionally we have such an emotional and intellectual complex in the lines of Navakanta Barua. His imagist gift is too high. The fine imagist pictures made in the poems like Vasiṣṭha Pīṃk (A picnic in Vasiṣṭha), Kramasah (In Continuation), Edin amī nāvē re (One day we travelled in a boat), Saraniyat Sandhya (Dusk in the Sarani), Eti duti eghārati tara (Counting eleven stars), Eti Premar Padya (A love-song) are of unparalleled beauty and craftsmanship. We quote below a stanza from one of his imagist poems:

Saraniyat Sandhya
(The coming of the Dusk in Saraniya)
Ekapara akāsar son
Khahi pari ray dukarit,
Jonakir duša Ḍhilīl
nimāt āmukā dubharīt.
Inginar tandrālu tālāt
māne māne sahārī janāy,
Sandhya āhi relar ālīre
pāharar sipārre lūkāy.

= A flash of gold from the sky
falls below on the tiny durvā grass,
The glow-worms gleam wearing
Silent ding-dong bells;
Responding, silently to,
The drowsy whisper of the railway engine
Dusk stealthily comes
Through the railway tracks
And hides herself
behind the hills.

The image of the Dusk coming stealthily over the railway-track and hiding herself behind the hills is unique. One who has seen the railway line running parallelly to the Saraniya hills at Gauhati cannot escape the permanent stamp of loneliness of this image.

Navakanta has derived materials for his poetry even from the epic sources. His Rāvan and Samrāt are built on his knowledge of epic narratives. In the light of his own intellectual philosophy, he re-discovers the personalities of these two great epic heroes. He has made Rāvana more of
a pursuer of beauty than a condemned villain. Likewise his estimate of Dhṛtarāṣṭra is based on sympathy. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the poet's symbol for a political cowardice, a sort of diplomatic inertia. Following the Marxian ideal of state he wants to emphasize that the basis of political institutions is the past and whoever has the keenness to view the future, he should be able to see man above political institutions. Navakanta has uniquely interpreted the life and philosophy of the blind-king. He is warmly alive to the defects of the cowardice king, Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Whenever Dhṛtarāṣṭra as the head of the state tried to take certain measures granted by the magnanimity of law and order, the Father in Dhṛtarāṣṭra stood in confrontation with him. And the head of the state submitted to the head of the family. This conflict of ideal is the real tragedy of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's life. Dhṛtarāṣṭra now laments:

"I could not become the Father of the people, But sitting in the royal throne, I became the Father of my own sons. When there was the finest moment for the Emperor, to earn The greatest glory of Father-hood (over the people) At that hour the Emperor has misguided the Father By whispering at his ears, A state has no decorum."
Courtesy is a weakness of the state;  
The state is an eunuch.  
The nakedness of the fields and of women is same.  
The state is the Father; And for the Father  
The nakedness of the daughter is nothing.  
The disgrace of humanity is the eunuch's sole ambition.  
In the name of law, I played with the  
faith of the people;  
Everything ended in a chaos.  
Which is True? The eunuch laws of the state,  
Or the bondage of the heart? "

These reflections of Dhrtarāstra over himself arouse the  
sympathy of the reader for him. These confessions show that  
under the cover of his blind eyes, he had a noble heart,  
with which he could realise his past mistakes.

History, contemporary politics and philosophy: all  
these things have found depiction in Navakanta's poetry and  
his poems are full of intellectual references. From style  
and atmosphere of some of his lines we are led to believe  
that Navakanta is a great admirer of Rabindra Nath Tagore,  
T.S. Eliot, the Russian poet Mayakovasky and the Lebanese  
poet Kahlil Gibran; but over all such impressions his ori-
ginality glitters like pure gold. Navakanta's diction is  
full of variety. Sometimes his words maintain a strong musi-
cality and sometimes they run wild and hard. Sometimes
under the pressure of Indian and foreign allusions, phrases and quotations his poetry turns unintelligible to the common reader. Narakanta found it easy to write his poems in free verse but occasionally they (especially his early poetry) ran on inflated prose sequence too.

MARENTRA BORA

Another professor of English to work for the new modern Assamese poetry is Mahendra Bora. Mahendra Bora was born at Tengchong in the Dibrugrah district, in the year 1929. He did his B.A. from the Calcutta University in 1953 and taught English literature at the Darrang College, the D.H.S.K. College and the Cotton College. He is now serving as the Principal of the Goalpara College. A versatile writer in prose and an expert in translation Mahendra Bora is an authority in Assamese Metrics. In 1971 he has received the Ph.D. degree of the Gauhati University for his dissertation on Assamese Metrics. Bora's works of poetry are the Jatismar (Memoirs of a previous birth) and His Nadiyedi (Along this river). Bora's poetic genius came to light in the late forties of this century. He is less concerned with the socio-political views of the progressive school and at the same time he does not indulge in any
over intellectualisation. Bora may rightly be called an imagist. He had successfully edited a representative anthology of the new modern poetry with the name Națun Kavita (The New Poetry, 1958). This anthology has contributed a lot for popularising modern Assamese poetry of the recent growth.

The Jatiśmar poems are some sketches of experience, collected at different hours of life which betray through vivid peripheral details the immediate impression of experiences derived by the senses without analysis or synthesis, or so to say, the impression as it is seen or felt subjectively in a single fleeting moment. These impressionist sketches are lovely and delightful in all details. Bora speaks of love, friendship, dreams and landscapes. Of his love poems Vidây Ānmanâi (Fare well, my indifferent lady), Madhumâlatîr Cithi (Letter from Madhumalati), Cakhpâni: Ya्‌̄jâtî Chalîhâr (Tears of Yájuṭi Chalîhâ) and Come, my Beloved are important. The apprehension of separation is very beautifully depicted in his poems. The poet assures his lady love against a fear of separation.

"Saṃhare more dhīghal niśar māriv yantraṇār gīti kavīṭâ
Chanda hervār dina nāi sen, manto māthin māje māje
Ereye dekbon cāhārē chāhārē lāge. Madhumâlatîr mancun nāmī
41 Sei kṣanbôr sonekāi gale, bhul buli kabā jâne tumi."

(Madhumâlatîr Cithi)
The beautiful images built in the poem Jātismar work like magic in the minds of the readers. With local colour and sweet reflections the poet has portrayed a sketch of indescribable loveliness. The poet brings memoirs of his past life. He recollects his flights towards the moon with the feathers of the sand-bird and the house-dove. The poet recollects even of a deer descending down to the earth to graze.

"Nilaśīyā eti kapār kushum praśar uṣore umāl kari ākam āhilo mai bālimahi ghar sālikār dewkā pānākhā,
Uri galo kijānība cāṇa pāro ākāsār kapālat sendūrār phoṭ
Um lalo jonar deśāt son-śetelit āui,
Bābācon khub bhākniye manāt pariče mor,
Jonar kolāt thakā saha pahu etā nāmi āhīcil ghāh khādhalai.

(Mātismar)

Mahendra Bora's span of love extends from this life to the life eternal. To him time, life and love flew in the same direction. The harmless impressions made by the poet easily catch the imagination of the readers. Dylan Thomas is Mahendra Bora's favourite poet and like him Bora has written poems, at once physical and metaphysical, about womb and tomb, life and death, or the natural and the supernatural process of creation and destruction. He has written
about the prayers and sermons and the metaphysical existence of God. But Bora is no religious; he preaches not, but simply creates impressions. And astonishingly his poems, like those of Dylan Thomas, have a subsoil flow of the sadness of a man aware of time and death. The fear for hell, Citragupta's balancing of virtue and vice, the coming of the Yama's messenger, the census of life and the likes occur as the frequent reflexes in his poetry.

National and historical myths too, are profusely used in his poems. Tejimala, Matsya kanya, Samurai, the Bhanga-svān and the Faust are some of the myths found in his poetry. To the poet, Tejimala is a free soul who is never more to endure the cruelty of man; the poet has assured her of a sunlit bright place. Samurai stands for heroism and Faust for the inadequacy of human knowledge. The archetype of a river is used in almost all his poems. At least three of his poems have the river in the very title. (Ek Nadiyedi; Aparūp Ek Nadi; Itikathā Nadi āru Mānuhar). The river is the archetypal representation of the course of life against birth and death. The course of human life flows endlessly like a river. The river has no time to reflect upon its origin or source and the end. Human life too flows like a river making less care for birth and death. The poet declares:
This river is beautiful exceedingly,
In its bosom it carries, life's music
and the silent prayer of death.

(Aparūp ei Nādi)

Bora's poems sometimes run suggestive and reflexive. They are characterised by the art of narration. His verses are endowed with a sweet musicality which can easily captivate the mind of the readers. Though modern by tradition yet Bora's poems are not entirely free from romantic sensibility. The following stanzas quoted from his poem — Cañcalatā nicely reveal his musicality blended with this sensibility.

Mor bāgānat phul phula nāi
Èpāh māthon papi,
Umān laote vatāh ahār
Phulto uthil kapi.

Samay nahay kao keneikai
Phāgun āhil buli,
Èi batāhar imān āmej
Manto uthil duli

Manar mājat uthil jali
Madhur hāhir rekha,
Dūr sudūrār sāgar pārat
Èbār māthon dekha.

***
Mor bāgānat phular abhāva
Hpāh māthon papi,
Uman lacte komal khojar
Manto uthil kapi.44

Undoubtedly these lines of rich imagery, music and sensibility declare the glorious influence that romantic tradition exerted upon the new modern poetry. Perhaps the ideas of the romantic symbolism that came in the gush of the new modernistic tradition in continental poetry was not unknown to Bora. Bora has experimented with concrete poetry, the limmericks and a few character sketches; they are specimens of his good craftsmanship.

The greatest poem from Bora's pen is the Faust. This long poem of 268 lines reveals the diffused melancholy, romanticism, self-pity, neurotic diffusion of thoughts and a materialistic interpretation of life and history. The poet has travelled through the roads of restlessness and doubt—the doubt of one's own personal existence in this heartless world. In this poem, the poet has worked on old myths and archetypes. Devoid of a human companion, while treading the life's journey, the poet has called for Lucifer for help and guidance. Science and metaphysics have killed the joys of life of too many. Looking at his heart with a microscope the poet has seen that it is
nothing but a tree with a cluster of herbs. The poet is sick of the vagaries of the present world and he desires to return to the old good days of trust and pursuit of beauty.

II. **HARI BARKAKATI**

The spirit of romantic sensibility was further accentuated by Hari Barkakati (b. 1927). Barkakati was born at Dergaon and received his earlier schooling there. He graduated from the Cotton College in 1949 and passed his M.A. in Philosophy securing first position in the first class in 1951. After a very brief teaching career, he joined the Assam Civil Service. He is a poet of the fifties and his poetic genius budded forth in the *Hemadhenu*. But the only book of his collected poems, *Kanobā śītar Etā Vagā Sambhriyāt* (On a pale wintry evening) has come out as late as in 1970. Barkakati revived the romantic fervour once again with his new modern lyrics. But his method was a bit different from the conventional romantics. Like Mahendra Bera he too showed an expressionist technique. Barkakati was alive to his age, and the delinquencies, snobberies and foppishness of the people around him. In his much quoted love song *Priyār Cithi* (Letter from a Beloved) he has unmasked the vagaries and the pretensions of his beloved. Her letter to the poet is the
seventh carbon copy of her sincere love and humble submission. Sandhi (The Compromise) speaks nicely of the poet’s sincere love and affection for his beloved. The romantic colour is too deep in this poem. The poet gives an unfailing call to his beloved: the apt repetitions make his poem sharp and pointed.

"Please come here, O Sonpahi, my darling please come! (For) this is the time. This is the time, my darling, This is the time. Let the path of the Mahua grass be ever flooded with your love, And the golden moon be an witness to your coming. Please restore me from my dead ashes, O darling! Like the Sphinx, With a gush of love from your brown eyes."

Such call and such expectations are the wealth of the romantic dreamers. Barkakati innovated new images and new phrases befitting the modern times. We give below a few examples of his newness of expression.

(1) tejraṅgā blaṭasār apar samudra (An unbound sea of blood red blouses.)
(ii) vandhyā cahārat sandhyā nāmiche sau (Yonder the dusk drops at the barren Sahara (desert).)

(iii) Eta yen mahar śiṅgar dare jon  
Vṛddhā kono bārabanitār khirikīt arā āche  
Cāri mahalar.  

= As if a moon, similar to the horn of a buffalo  
Dangles from the window of an old prostitute, at the fourth floor.

(iv) Gāmāray āru harinī cakur aparūp kaktel (A beautiful cocktail of the gāma rays and the deer like eyes.)

(v) Mor dhamanir tejat utal duhājār centigrade (The blood of my arteries are boiling at 2000 centigrade.)

(vi) Sphīnex hēhe, abhidhāne kathā kray (The sphinx laughs, the dictionary speaks.)

BIRESVAR BARUA ; DINESH GOSWAMI

Biresvar Barua and Dinesh Goswami, while belonging to the new poetic community earn distinction by writing only in the romantic strain. Both of them are highly educated and serve the Assam government in different capacities. While Dinesh Goswami's poems have not seen any anthological collection, Biresvar Barua had published his collected work Nirjan Nāvik (The Lonely Sailor) as early as in 1953.
Blroswar Barua is an impressionist. He works on the past impressions of love, friendship, nature, travel and beauty. His language is plain and easily intelligible and his art of narration too is simple. Free verse and occasional rhymed sequences are his popular media of expression. The quality of his thought and boldness of expression have added a definite richness to his poetry. Blroswar Barua likes to be amidst nature, the rivers and the hills than to live under a mechanical civilisation of factories and class-struggles. He is a singer of the gracefulness of the hills and dales, of the angel and the spring in an age of busy streets, over-crowded city and atomic warfares. In his poem Pratyāvartanar Gān (Song of Return) the poet goes back to the lovely warmth of Nature.

Etīya covār pāl jīvanar prāntare prāntare
Ghāhar senājī ābhā, dhānār senālī raṁ
Hāladhiyā pakhī yam sariyā phulbor;
Phañganar utalā vāsanā;
Barsār klāttir sur, Dāskīr kalarav, sandhyār āvir
Āru bangelāpar dāle dāle ketekār
Phul hai phulā snehbhor.
Etīya covār pāl dhumahār phāke phāke niyanālōk.
Phul āru pakhillār jāk.
Prithvīr bāte bāte banariyā phular surabhī.

= This is the time to see, in life's different fields
the greenness of the grass,
the golden colour of the paddy,
The mustand seeds resembling the yellow birds,
the burning desire of the month of phagun.
The tune of weariness of the rainy season,
the clatter of the wild dove;
the colour of the dusk,
And the love of the keteki flower.
That blooms as flowers,
In the branches of the wild roses
This is the time to see,
the bright light peeping through the storm
the flowers and the butterflies.
There is the fragrance of the wild flowers,
In every road of the world.

Bireswar Barua's only socially conscious poem is his Janmar
Agar Prâthna (The prayer antenatal). The poet has realised
that the city is the worst specimen of modern civilisation
and he has prayed God to plunge it deep into oblivion.

Dinesh Goswami's Romantic sojourn amidst love, beauty
and nature has given him an uniqueness of vision. He is also
a bit critical of the snobberies of the present-day civilisation.
In his poem Dalil (A Document) the poet has recorded
his hatred against the illusory and rubbish city life.
Poems with highly romantic sentimentality like Purvarag are
his masterpieces.
BIREDNANATH BARKATAKI:

Birendranath Barkataki (b. 1929) secured admission into the corridors of new modern poetry as early as in the forties with his poems published in the Pachowa. Barkataki has written over a long period but his poetical affiliation is still uncertain. He has a greater affinity with the impressionist-imagists but at times he also appears to be a Progressivist or a Symbolist. Sometimes a romantic strain too feebly echoes in his poems. Manvantar (The change of age, 1959) is the book of his collected poems.

Barkataki has a sense of history. In the poem Manvantar the poet records the progress of human civilisation in India in a convincing manner. He has warmly recorded the contributions of the architects of the Indian heritage like Krsna and Buddha.

*** Krsna, fine arts deified took his birth, in the Kurukhsetra of evil: Buddha dreamt of knowledge, for the countless ages. Snowmen heard from the high tops of the Himalayas, the chorus of civilised men, from mother earth.
The New Community

The reward of rivers
is the conquering spirit of men.
And the result was:
The Rigveda issued forth.

In the poem Harbour of Life (Pran Gangar Vandam) the poet has visualised a new earth for himself and for the coming generation. He has seen that certain unknown force is there to make fertile the unfertile premonitory. But his vision for a future, for a brave new world is not as strong as that of the Progressivists. Barkataki's diction is easy and his poems are not laden with unintelligible phrases or recondite idioms.

Homen Bargohain:

Homen Bargohain (b 1931) a forceful writer in prose (a novelist and a journalist of repute) made occasional experiments with poetry. His contribution to poetry is small in quantity but it is very significant in respect of the quality. His poems, and particularly those of the earlier period owe their origin to some queer psychological experiences. His earlier poems like Aranya (The Forest), Ant (The Night), Sap (The Shake) and Mahanagar (The Metropolis) are full of symbolic and extra-s symbolic obscurity. His later
poems like the Mor Aita (My Mother) are however, full of expressionistic simplicity and are more easily appreciated by the readers. The enigmas of birth, death and reproduction and the existence of God are some of his fundamental themes in poetry. The apprehensions of death disturb him at least in three of his poems (Aranya, Bāti, Mahānagar). He is too much in love with life and hence, the thought of death disturbs him. For him life is too real. In the poem Vikalpa (The Alternative) the poet has sought refuge in the women's flesh, flowers and stars.

The warmth of woman's flesh,
flowers, stars, the night sky,
and your soft flesh bought with a heavy purse:
These are all of much necessity
in our life;
they may round up the infinite pangs
of parting from God.56

Bargohain's poems are full of intellectual references and associations. His Ophelia is a new epic of psychological insight. To the poet Ophelia is the representative of the modern neurotic woman. A woman who has seen enough of life, enough of the crisis of civilisation and the sufferings imposed by an unknown cruel destiny. In the modern world of high complexities her life has no value and her prayers
are completely meaningless. Reason's light has failed and she has nothing to console herself. Life appears simply a nightmare to the modern Ophelias. These Ophelias contemplate more but receive less.

There is no time, fair Ophelia,
the blood-red darkness of Elsinore
has spread throughout the world.
There is light, neither inside nor outside:
Say your prayers in the twilight edges of senses.

Reason's light is a failure,
inspiration for action meaningless:
One clear sign from Destiny,
aye, that is the truth.

In this suffocating darkness
for ghosts in Elsinore,
life is but a nightmare.
Death?
Well, that too is a false promise. (Ophelia)

A mild influence of Dylan Thomas' conceptions of life, death and sex is discernible in his poems. Jung's archetypes too, perhaps are not unknown to him. He practises an austere economy of words in his poetry. There is also a conscious attempt at break-away from the old traditions and habits of thought, in BargéHain's poems.
III.

SYED ABDUL MALIK:

Syed Abdul Malik (b. 1919) started writing new modern poetry with the progressive consciousness created by the Jayanti-Pachowa group of poets. Even amongst the progressive poets, Malik has earned distinction by nicely depicting the case also of the middle class. In the poem Madhyabitta (The Middle Class) the poet has exposed the snobberies, pretensions and self-deceits of the middle class of the time. The despair and the dejection of the lower middle class is too vivid in his poem Phul Sayyar Hati as discussed earlier in the chapter VI of the present work. The political patch-workings in the name of democracy had ailed the poet (in the poem Mai Rā Marā Māruh) and like the continental poets Lui Aragone, Spender, Auden and Isherwood, he too, sought refuge in Communism. But communism is his intellectual game and not political gambling. In his poem Mai Rā Marā Māruh (I am a dead man) the poet speaks of the capitalist exploitations that he had undergone. It is the bourgeois oppression that had led him to death; but he is not ready to die. He has immense faith in himself and he declares that a volcanic fire is in him which will ultimately burn all who have arranged for his funeral.
"The red-flame hidden in me
Some day will jump forth;
I shall no longer be a man but fire;
I shall burn all:
Houses, cities, lands.
I am a dead man.
But within me
there is a fire
volcanic, eruptive, unending:
In every fibre of my body
Runs that power to burn." (Btā Marā Māmūh)

Abdul Malik has a great sympathy for the proletariat. Like Pablo Neruda and Nāsim Hikmet he too knows the sorrows and sufferings of the people. Malik had translated some poems of Pablo Neruda into Assamese. But his, field of specialisation is novel and short-story. He has to his credit some forty novels of varied themes and temperaments. Beduin (1965) and Svākṣar (Signature, 1964) are his collected works of poems. His poems are free from the intellectualised obscurity.

BIRENDRA KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA :

The call for an upliftment of the social milieu rings high in the poetry of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya (b1904). He began by writing poems in the Jayanti and the Pashowa where his Progressive ideas got their early manifestation.
Birendra Kumar believes in the ultimate triumph of the suffering humanity. He has a high optimistic vision for them. He boldly declares in one of his songs.

We will set the peoples' parliament
We will set the peoples' government;
We will destroy old poverty
by burning it in new courage;
The hundred nations will unite
to form a great world.
We are the revolutionary heroes
of a free age,
In our lips we carry the message of life,
in our eyes new creation awakes;
In our arms we carry the strength
and hope for construction and destruction.
The labourers in oil, coal and tea industries
will have a better standard of living.
The hill people will have the right
to assert themselves.
The farmers will get the right to land,
woman will shun repression;
We will build the strength of the people.
We will make a great fair
of equality on this earth.
Sing, sing ye all : This Assam our mother land,
is new and golden.

Sing, let victory be for her. (Git)
It is the boldest championing in Assamese poetry for the cause of the labourers, farmers, hill people and the women at the same place. During the late forties and early fifties this song has been very popular among the members of the socialist party in Assam. In his poem Phēcā (The Owl) the poet has declared the doom of the capitalist blood-suckers. Birendra Kumar is a vastly read man; he has immense knowledge of the Marxian approach to emancipation of the masses. The people is his sole friend and their problems and aspirations are most sympathetically delineated in his poetry. In his most acclaimed poem Bisṇu Rabhā Etiyā Kimān Rāti (Bisṇu Rabhā, What hour of the night is now?), the call for a revolution and the hope for a new red future is apparent. In this poem, communist Bisnu Rabha, an imprisoned leader of the masses is the symbol of the masses groaning under capitalist repression. But the poet knows, that the darkness would not linger long; its end is nearing. The light is coming; even the red-walls of prison reflect the dream imbibed in the Das Capital. The red sun is peeping, liberty is throbbing at the door and the faces of the people catch the new light and become red with real emotion. At the dead of night thousands of unrenowned people march in a procession with slogans on light and life towards the prison-house.
Ram Gagoi (b 1930), a communist by political creed and personal belief, has drawn high hopes for the people in his book Matir Svapna (The Dream of the Soil). Gagoi closely follows the revolutionary humanism of the new society as taught by Marxian thinkers and tries to lead the people to the frontiers of a revolution. His sense of history is also backed by Marxian interpretations. In the poem Itihas (History) he interprets history as an open sword of class-struggle (śrenī Cetanāre dhauta mukta tarovāl).
The poet tenders his red salute (lāl calām) to Marx and Angels and waits for the directive of history:

"We welcome Marx and Angels with red salutes, We welcome the revolution. History directs us: We want directive. The faultless direct signal we want. We are ready."

History is a great transformer of circumstances and historical circumstances do not exist outside social practice; so, a directive of history is necessary to launch a struggle for social emancipation.

KESHAV MAHANTA:

The fundamental requirements of a new social order and the need of a revolution are voiced strongly by Keshav Mahanta (b. 1926). A journalist and a poet Mahanta served as an assistant editor of the Soviet Desh for a brief period. He is now the Head of the publication wing of the Gauhati University.

Keshav Mahanta's speciality as a progressive poet lies in his power to see old truths through fresh eyes. His vision of a new world is clearly depicted in the poems of Āmār Prthivi (Our Earth). His restless urge to see new
lights on the earth is admirably portrayed in the poem, Andhar aru Pohar (Darkness and Light). The poet's sympathy goes with the lepers, the prostitutes, the cobbler and the drunken coolies of the tea-garden. Mahanta's progressive ideas run in the line of the neo-humanistic thinking of Amulya Barua. Keshav Mahanta tries to disillusion the people by exposing to them their real worth — their economic depressions and deceits. He very intelligently warns the people against the barriers of caste, creed and nationality. He works on a wide canvas. His sympathy goes not only with his own people but also with the negroes of Africa. The common man suffering under the political intrigues is as small as an insect. The common man has become the victim of political gamblings of a class of exploiters and imperialists. The poet sympathises with the intrigue-sick African people; he reflects nicely the tyrannies suffered by Patrice Lumumba in the hands of the capitalist exploiters and imperialists. The poet has invited a new moon to give solace to the suffering humanity, the insulted and the injured:

And when that fourteen year old Negro boy was burnt alive, throwing him into fire; The moon came out cursing the Eisenhour's palace and printed a kiss on the black boy's cheeks. And said:
your death is but a change to me;
If somebody comes to kill you tomorrow
I will challenge him, my darling:

(Yuge Yuge Jonāk : Moonlight through
ages)

In the poem Poster the poet reads the coming of a new red
sun which promises a new world. Mahanta can draw very close
pictures of the people intimate to him. The sad plight of a
poor Assamese farmer is vividly depicted in the following
lines.

Tingrai taraṇīr tinipurā māti
Bacharato khāti
Yikhinī bhāgat pare, tāre heno
Sāonate tekelī kāti
Bāki cārime heno dhikkar lāge
Imān khātani khāti lābh hał ki
Bēne tekhātkai marāyei bhāl buli
Bhābileo kheti kare ghūri bacharat
Nahaleno bāru
Maro buli nārjjile jile khāba ki?

(Sonjira māhir nādi)

Keshav Mahanta has made experiments with symbolic poetry too.
His Citralekha and Chāi (Ashes) are fine specimens of symbo-
lic imagination working at its height. Chāi is important not
only for its symbolic representation but also for its techni-
cal perfections. It is built on 40 words arranged in the
form of a column, presumably to symbolise a state of emaciation or the lifeless pause of a dry and dead tree. The economy of words symbolises the silence of death and utter dispassionateness. We quote the whole poem in its own shape with an English rendering side by side:

**CHAI**

Edāl
Kadamgachat
etā
śagun
pari āche. Tār
talar
birinābanat
mari āche
ejak
gābharu bovāri. Āru
mor mānuh janīo
mari āche. Tār
kāsedi
ekhan nādi. Tār
bukut
pracanda dhaubore
dabarā-dabari
kari āche. Mai
nair
ānto parat
bahi ācho.
Ākale. Nāi
kandā. Nāi.

**ASHES**

On a Kadam tree
sits a vulture.
Beneath
the tree
on the willows
lie dead,
a bevy of
young house-wives.
and my woman too
lies dead. By it
passes a river,
a river
on its bosom
the great waves
roll over
each other.
On the other
bank of the river
I am sitting.
Alone.
'Am not shading tears.
No.
This poem is to be judged with the background of the Chinese invasion in India in 1962. The vulture is the Chinese invaders, and the Kadam tree symbolises India (where once Krishna used to play). The dead housewives are the Indian territories occupied by the Chinese. Now, instead of the Krishna playing with the Gopis, we find the vulture sitting over the dead bodies of beautiful dames. What a contrast and how pitifully the prestige of India stands molested! The river, which is a replica of the old Yamuna, is the flow of time, now the witness of the whole tragedy is the eternal spirit of India, the age old pious spirit of India, the traditional values for which India stands. The poet's own woman is probably the symbol of Assam, which was about to be polluted by the footsteps of the Chinese invaders. It is significant to note that Mahanta hails from the Darrang district where from people had to be evacuated in the face of unbridled aggression. The poet, who symbolises the common man, is mortified. He is so shocked that he cannot cry even. The intellectual implications of these symbols are great. We are not told in so many words that there is such a thing as the horrors of the Chinese aggression. Instead the poem provides a series of symbolic images in which the horrors of war and death are linked. This is
really a nice poem, a superb work of art, though a bit obscure.

But usually, Keshav Mahanta works on a simpler diction: his words and phrases are within the easy grasp of the readers. His poetry is spontaneous and it is seen that when the thought is most spontaneous and the relation between speaker and hearers most unstudied, the speech is most alive. This is remarkably true in regards to Keshav Mahanta. His intimacy with the people and objects of his description make his poetry lively both in form and content. His poetic speech is simply an extension of the common speech. We illustrate the point with a quotation from his poem —

Sonjira Mahir Nadi.

Karobar jiyekar cadar babale tarâ yi tâtkhani
Sonjira mahijani tarei bovani
Tamolar pik mæri parar mætit
Mohadece cæi lai yi bokakhini
Sonjira mahijani tarei rovani.
Kapæhi mekhelakhani yar ra{n bagâ
Adhæro adhik tær bokarei dhaka
Dheki tæt patharar kæm yar kaliyar bæhi
Sadæy othat yar lægi thake
Tamolar rægi lâga mok-tol mok-tal mic mic hâhi.
Seijani lach-pach Sonjira mahî.
Another aspect of Keshav Mahanta's poems is his great dislike for the city life. The city, full of noise, dust and chimney smokes, is nauseating for the poet. He longs to escape from the barriers of bricks and electric wires and to return to his lovely village on the Luit. To him the light of the clay-lamp is dearer than the effulgent rays of the neon lights. Incidentally it may be observed that the city life has received wide attention in the modern poetry of all countries. Actually, the city has certain drawbacks of its own. Dr. V. K. Gokak rightly observes:

"Another by-product of advance in technology is the inordinate growth of the world's great cities. Great masses of human beings now live in a man-made environment. 'Millions of our children have never seen a cow, a fruit tree or a field of grain.' This results in a narrowing of experience. The natural world is almost lost to the inhabitants of a modern metropolis. Literature seems to reflect now only the city-dwellers' deprivations. The city-dweller feels chronically lonely because of his sense of unrelatedness." (Dr. V. K. Gokak's paper on Kannada Literature incorporated in the book Modernity And Contemporary Indian Literature, Simla, 1968, p 266).
Amalendu Guha is another member of the new community who writes with great sympathy for the vast working class: the farmers, the firemen, the oil drillers, and the woodcutters. The poet welcomes the 'crimson dawn of peace' and advocates a brotherhood of the peace-loving people of the whole world — from Hoângho to Missisipi.

*** Tonight,
On the banks of the Luit,
Come, let us sing:
The season of war is over,
Only cherries shall blossom now;
let our songs echo in the waves,
of many rivers, of many hearts,
— from Hoângho
to the mighty Mississippi;
and let it like a sword of hope,
tear off the veil of night,
and lo!
With a leap arises
the crimson dawn of peace.

(Luit Parar git: Songs on the bank of the Brahmaputra)

The poet is a communist. He gives a call for a direct action. He openly sings of his party, his partyman Comrade Ganguli, and of the soldiers of peace. But his greatest concern is
the people, the injured and the insulted masses, who are marching towards a revolution to welcome a new dawn. He assures them peace and progress and warns the enemies of peace in a bold and thunderous voice.

*** Let the fairies now,
   sprinkle the pollen of peace
   on the brow of sister Tejimala.
   We warn,
   should the serpent of war
   bring fear to the lotus eyes
   Of our dear sisters,
   an angry song shall rise
   from our voices like a roar,
   and the serpent shall howl,
   in terrible pain,
   With its hissing tongue atwisted.
   (Luit Pārār ēt)

HEMANGA BISWAS:

Similar is the pursuit of Hemanga Biswas. A communist poet of the fifties, Hemanga Biswas has already attracted attention of the masses chiefly for whom he writes. He is always with the people and encourages them to work out a revolution. Society is the source of his poems; he has written on Kula Khurā (Uncle Kula) Comrade Ratneswar Rabha, Maghai Ojha, Bisnu Rabha, and others. All these are his
comrades in actual life, in his actual political efforts for a new future. A realist out and out, Biswas has exposed the terrific truths under which lie the life of the common man dejected and disregarded. In the poem Obhatani (The Return), the poet has drawn the picture of a boy shot by the Police while joining a group of demonstrators for food. The boy who went in search of 2 kgs. of rice with a bag in hand now is lying, at the municipal drain: dead.

"The boy did not return.

He came with a hope for 2 kgs. of rice,
Now, his pistol-torn empty bag
is lying on the drain, coloured with mud,
in this mid-day.

Even to-day
the boy has not returned from the ration-line,
The starving mother
waits for his arrival,
with wistful eyes.

A gush of rain
had swept away
the red-blood-stains
over the road;
In the fertile crematorium
his blood bloomed
into red madars.
Now the spring has come.
The red flags are fluttering
The procession is ahead
She came out: 69
'He is now coming'."

This picture of pathos and poverty and cruel police atrocities is not rare in India. The late fifties and early sixties of this century saw the rise of the enormous food-problem. Food-demonstrations, long queuing at the food-grain shops and dire starvation were the scenes of the day. Moreover, the hoarders and the black-marketeers further worsened the situation. The poet's rage is against them all. He thinks that the solution to the poverty of the masses lie in the red-flag and as such he has called the people nearer the flag by his poems. The sad plight of a poor farmer who was evicted from his land by the government officers is forcefully drawn in the poem Comrade Ratneswar Rabha.

In his poem Dibrugaralai (To Dibrugarh) the poet has declared under the impressions of Romain Rolland: "Where order is injustice, disorder is the beginning of justice". The poet believes that only disorder and destruction can start the process of a new creation. The impact of the Vietnam war is great on his poems. He shares the sorrows of
the innocent Vietnamese repressed by the American bullets. Ganga cilanir git (The song of the river-kite), Cirabinidra (Ever awake) and Bardacilair cithi (The letter of the Cyclone) are the most important poems on Vietnam, where he brings new hopes and promises to the Vietcongs in their war against the capitalist war-mongers. Hemanga Biswas draws a very forceful picture of the war-torn Vietnam, with great anguish and anger.

*** Kon visakta vasuki phanai
   Diganta dile dhaki
   Diganta dile dhaki
Pralayankar niivasate dhvaamsa viyape digvidik.
   Anabik si
   Danabik si
   Mrtyu nrtya naici
   Dhvaamsa nrtya naici
   Darun agani porani devani
dagdha bhasmibhuta 70
   Prasanta-duhita.

Hemanga Biswas stands a fine comparison with Louis Aragoue as far as the devastation of the war-torn Vietnam is concerned. Louis Aragoue in his poem — I salute my France — depicts the war-torn France with all the savage humility that she had to endure. The Vietnam, in the writings of Hemanga Biswas too shows the same dimension of feeling.
Aragoue in his poem Paris visualises a new birth for his country. Biswas also, carries the hope of a new birth to Vietnam in his poem Bardaicila.

The diction of Hemanga Biswas is forceful and devoid of any artificiality. He expresses what he feels and in the same language which is used in the common-talk.

IV. THE STRAIN OF IMAGISM : MAHIM BORA AND OTHERS :

Mahim Bora, Prafulla Bhuyan, Nalinidhar Bhattacharyya, Biren Bargohain, Nirmal Prabha Bardaloi and Pareshmalla Barua are accomplished imagists and they are mostly free from the influence of Marxian dialectics. With memorable phrases or exploratory images they stire the hearts of the readers but they rarely convey any message for the masses. They are satisfied with the things as they are but can work out an art with them with their own fine colour and idiom.

Mahim Bora (b1926) began the trade of poetry in the early fifties. He began by writing romantic verse-sketches but along with the progress in years his poetry tended more towards modernism. A college lecturer by profession, Bora is a forceful writer in prose. His popularity as a fiction
writer overrides his fame as a poet. The philosophy of the existentialists may be traced out in some proportion in his poems. The poem Drsti (Vision), records the poet's existentialist interpretation of beauty. The poet admits that he made strong pursuits after beauty but to no avail. Beauty was far off from him; but suddenly on a "loose rainy evening" he discovered her on a sheath of grass.

*** "My thirsty eyes became motionless and vision fixed,  
A moment of dismay, wonder and thrill  
of a wedding night.  
Beauty, for a shred of her  
I higgled from market to market.  
Returned an exhausted buyer,  
Behold! She tiptoed off the sights of all,  
To meet me on the sheath of grass".72 (Drsti)

Symbols and archetypes are often found in the poems of Mahim Bora. In the poem Ubhatl ahar kathl (The song of Return), the poet gives a symbolic interpretation of the great return of the beings from heaven to earth. The earth is too dear to leave it permanently; so the human beings return again and again to this earth to enjoy its loves and sorrows. The poet has the delicacy of eye with which he earns a real sense of rhythm and a feeling for observation and description. Bora in his poems tries to delineate the discomfort of the middle class. He feels that the
middle class is the worst victim of the economic degeneration of the present age. In his poem *Mai bicarā cithikhan* (My desired letter) the poet exposes the pitiable economic plight of the lower middle class people. The poet is in eager expectation of a particular letter; but that letter never comes to him. Only the letters of demand frequent the poet.

*** Letters come,
   in heaps and bundles,
cards, envelopes, inland letters,
book-posts, bearing letters;
the named and unnamed ones;
some costly and some are cheap.
There comes:
A notice on the lapse of premiums;
the electric-bill;
house rent for two-months;
aunti's land-revenue
and the school-fees of the
brothers and cousins.
Each morning comes
with a galaxy of demands
upto the last farthing.
Alas, they bake me in the
red woven of economic hardship.
And by the evening I get to ashes;
the mind starves.
Mahim Bora writes a fine style. His poetry is free from obscurity and borrowed phrases and idioms. He writes a pure Assamese way, in an urbane manner avoiding all studiedness. His diction is humble. Allusions to ancient Indian literature casually find some accommodation in his poetry.

Prafulla Bhuyan's imagist poetry thrives mostly on his past experiences of love, nature and beauty. He has made remarkable inroads to the Freudian psychology in his poems. The unconscious psyche brings lovely remembrances throughout his poems. His unconscious self has led the poet and his mother to the primitive world of myths and legends. Silence has compelled the poet to return to his libido stage where he reflects on his sojourn on this earth. The poet actively feels the presence of his mother everywhere, perhaps, this is his symbolic reflex to return to the womb.

***
I did tell the mid-day sun,
so many things,
when we were living under the sky,
in a thatched and reed-walled hut,
my mother and me.
We travelled a lot,
so many forests, rivers, towns and pilgrimages,
We two — my mother and me,
the beggar child and his mother.
We two barren souls,
travelling far wide
We arrived at this
country of solitude.
The field had forgotten
the sun's loves and desires,
in every night, he decorates himself with darkness,
but distributes the light to the
houses and the sky.
The wind carries the sweet fragrance
of fog;
The time dies,
so dies the earth.
Only we remain,
to feel the loneliness of the earth
my mother and myself.74

(Nirjjanata : Solitude)

The poet tried to accommodate the real world with his experience of the unconscious; but his imagist feelings led him to dive deep into the immost recess of the mind and to remain plunged in the unconscious. He built a psychical fortress around him with the bricks of experience. His mind now returns to the love of a primitive woman or the carvings on the stones and writings on the caves. Prafulla Bhuyan's poetry establishes the missing link between the primitive unconscious and the conscious modern psyche.
Nalinidhar Bhattacharyya (1922) has made enough experiments with the new poetry. He has travelled far and wide from the imagist romanticism to obscure symbolism, but nowhere he has been able to choose the idiom proper for poetry. He had written extensively, he has a large number of poems to his credit. But his poems are often studied and they lack in coherence and unity. Sometimes his poems degrade to the extreme of prosaic doggerels. For his lack of a distinct poetic idiom his poems have, presumably, failed to draw the attention of the contemporary anthologists of Assamese poetry. Only in the recent years he has proved certain improvement. In his recent poems he has leaned towards the Marxian dialectics. He has now welcomed the sun, and is ready to act according to his sermons to free the world from the tyrannies of the dragons.

*** Our friend, the Sun!
we are simply machines,
give us the sermons,
let the dry river over-flood,
the music of total destruction play,
Let us dive deep into the sea,
Which you have reddened with your kiss;
Otherwise the dragons with their tyrannical hands allow us not to rest in comfort.75

(Abhisāp : The Curse)
Another imagist who emerged in the late fifties is Biren Bargohain. His canvas is narrow, the Freudian psycho-pathology commands his pen and he works on the past reflexes of love and friendship. The poet harbours on the happy memory of love, a moment of love becomes an eternity to him. His passionate poetic experience of love transforms the momentary into universal. In his beautiful poem — Nivedita Barua the poet has seen that his love for Nivedita has embraced the whole eternity. Done in a musical diction, the poem is entertaining in every respect. Nivedita Barua unmistakably and unquestionably bears the stamp of his individuality. Though Biren Bargohain speaks of the sensual side of love, yet, he is not unaware of the hard realities of a lover's life. In modern times, the life of woman has become a thing of commerce, of degradation and humiliation. The poet has drawn vividly the picture of insult to the woman's personality.

*** The way-farers roam in the streets
In the dead of night comes the searcher,
The moon-light reflects the smile of the prostitute;
Thousands of embryos face death.
The illegitimate children roam in the streets;
A series of abortion.
Oh, what an insult to the woman's personality.
The collapse of man's integrity and tradition pains the poet. In his Prārthanā: Mṛtyur (Prayer for Death) the poet is ill of the broken pieces of civilisation and he is now ready for death in the hope of a rebirth.

Nirmal Prabha Bardaloi (b 1937) the only powerful woman poet of the time is strongly committed to Imagism. The human mind and the world around are the objects of her poetry, which she expresses through free-verse. The hazards of the life of the middle class people too, have received a sympathetic treatment in her poems, and at the same time her distaste for the city life and its snobberies is well apparent. Her little but neat images boldly entertain the readers. In certain circumstances she has drawn similes and images from the psycho-pathology and biology. A sense of utilising similes from the pre-natal and post natal world is strong in her. In the poem Tomālai (To you) she draws some fine imagist pictures.

You will come to me,
in the blue promontary
Where smoke and ashes impress
in letters of bronze a city's name,
—in a simple shape, familiar to my mind,
With just a scarf around a bare body.
Pictures of equal galore are abundant in the poems *Bihu*, *Barasā Sesar Gān* (Song at the closure of rain), *Aparājit* (The Unvanquished) and *Ajarir Git* (Song of Leisure).

Precision of expression and a romantic temperament distinguish her images. Backed with the utmost intensity of immediate emotion her poems work quick to evoke an aesthetic experience in the mind of the readers. Of her poems on the middle-class people, the poem *Professor* is the most interesting. Herself a professor of repute Nirmal Prabha Bardaloi has nicely exposed the sad plight of the teaching-folk in the colleges of Assam. The professor cannot manage his monthly budget with his meagre income, the much needed protein of milk and fish are a rarity to him. His children go with torn frocks and shirts. Still the professor lives and lives honourably. His only capital is his ideal and the easy slogan for him is "Man does not live by bread alone". The professor is a veritable vessel of knowledge. He is to know so many things: U.N.O., Laos, Bharat-nātyam, Death-ray, Dom Morais, Adulteration, Academy award, Topless, the present fish market, and the name of the Romeo playing with the next-door Juliet. The satirical strain is too strong in the poem. She has also composed some touching poems on the sorrows and sufferings of the widows and the daughters-in-law.
Myths and characters from Indian epics too find adequate accommodation in her poems. She has made newer estimation of the epic women, Draupadi, Gandhari and Sita. To her Draupadi is an eternal thirst for beauty, Gandhari an epitome of religious cowardice and Sita is a silent protest against the oppressions of male human beings.

Nirmal Prabha writes a clear diction. Her words and phrases are not laden with obscurity. Simplicity and sincerity are the greatest virtues of her poetic diction. Her only collected work is Ban Pharingar Rani (The Shade of the Wild Grassopher, 1967).

V.

NILMANI PHUKAN, (Jr.)

Nilmani Phukan, Jr. (b 1933) is perhaps the most outstanding poet of the period, so far as symbolism is concerned. He got initiated into new poetry with his impressionistic poems of romantic sensibility. Suryya heno nami ahe eie nadiyedi (It is said that the Sun comes down through this river) is the first collected work of his poems. The poems of this collection are mainly impressionistic and romantic. He has later changed to symbolic poetry and at present his poems betray a high sense of symbolism with
symbols, myths and archetypes of high excellence. All his three recent collected works, Nirjanatār Šabda (Sounds of Solitude), Āru ki Naisābdā (And, what a Silence!)
and Phulithako Sūryamukhi Phulṭor Phāle (Towards the blooming sun-flower) carry a new idiom into modern Assamese poetry. Phukan has a special capacity of handling words. Great poets increase the resources of language less by coining new words than by revealing the full powers of old ones. Phukan has aptly done the latter. He has successfully extended the meanings of the words beyond their literal meanings. Phukan creates a new atmosphere with his words and the atmosphere in return enhances the power of vision of the words. In the poem Sei rahasya nil dhūtura (That mysterious blue dhutura) the poet has extended the meaning of the words to a wonderful extent. Such powers of presentation is really an act of mastery. All the poems of Nirjanatār Šabda and Āru ki Naisābdā represent the poet's magic with words.

The French Symbolists sought to give a peculiar intensity to their poems through symbolism. Phukan too has used his symbols with the same purpose. His symbols are the product of his delicate concentration of vision. The poet aims at reproducing scenes from the visible world of beauty and pleasure viewed against a background of transcendental experience. His poems, therefore, have the power
to suggest and to evoke, rather than giving informations.

The poem *Tej* (Blood) is a symbolic picture of the poet's life-cycle. The poet feels that his life is linked with the life eternal. Day after day, month after month and year after year, the poet passes his life through consciousness and silence, through experiences and emotions. The truly deep intellectual symbols make a fine appeal to the serious reader who is ready to think and discover.

*** The wintry night
passes
through the cactus-tree;

My blood runs in a vacuum,
A heavy wheel passes
through my blood.

The trees fall down,
Seven big elephants
carry it,

A heavy wheel
passes 78
through my blood.

Undoubtedly, these lines have a large amount of suggestiveness in them. The symbolic representation is equally great in his poem *Dahjan dekā manuhar pratyavartan* (The return of ten young men). In this poem the whole progress of human
civilisation is nicely recorded. A long list of symbols work in this poem: the black stone, the ox, the coffins, the five dead asses, the ocean, the broken temple and a mad woman. He has well co-ordinated all these symbols into an effective balance. But this poem is obscure to certain extent. Phukan is not very much careful in selecting the symbols; his symbols are rather private symbols and as such they create an atmosphere of deep obscurity. If due to the unintelligibility and obscurity of the poem, the reader cannot elevate himself to the poet's intellectual height, the symbols, however rich or artistic, fail to have any impact on the heart of the reader. In the last mentioned poem Phukan exhibits, like W.B.Yeats (in his poem The Double Vision of Michael Robartes), a mind torn between vision and reality. Phukan sometimes gets intoxicated in his visions and such visions carry the hundred images of formless beauty to him. In such images he serialises his spiritualistic experiences and auto-inspired ecstasies. And to the matching of these images comes his fine sense of music. We quote below a few specimens from his imagistic word pictures.

(a) Sāpe dharā beñar mātat
  80
     kātar dupar.
(The mid-day suffering at the sound of a frog caught by a snake.)

(b) Sunyatar hātar parā sari paril dinar hiranmay hrday pātra

(The golden heart-cup of the day has dropped down from the hand of the void.)

(c) Mūrar oparar sūryyalai mukh kari ṭhiya di āche, 82 ejan nisaṅga mānuh.

(A lonely man stands with his face raised towards the sun above his head.)

(d) Prthivit tarāvorar ēkmātra pratidvandi eie butāmkeita. 83

(These buttons are the only earthly rival of the stars.)

(e) Okha okha ejār gachar chāt mūrecha gai pari āche mor āiśāv.

(My adolescence is lying senseless under the shades of the tall ejār trees.)

In certain aspects, Nilmani Phukan matches nicely with the Russian poet Alexander Bloch. Like Bloch Phukan experiences a despair and a numbing gloom around him and the poems of Phukan and of Alexander Bloch are equally personal. C.M. Bowra
writing about Alexander Bloch says that his deep gloom is
the result of disillusionment and we can, perhaps, explain
the deep gloom of this poet Nilmani Phukan also to be due
to his disillusionment with the world around him. Yet
Phukan's poetical achievement is his own. A vastly read
man Phukan has a nice acquaintance with all the modern
poetry of the time; yet he is not swayed away by any direct
influence from any quarter. We should also note with admi-
ration that it is Phukan who has presented most successfully
an enlivened intellectualised sensibility harmoniously blen-
ded with a sense of musicality.

Hirendranath Dutta (b 1940) finds his poetic inspi-
ration in a cosmopolitan aestheticism subdued under a high
strain of melancholy. His pursuit after beauty and his
repentance over the lost desires control his poetry. Hiren
Dutta sometimes essays at symbolism; but the strain is
faint. His Banariya (The Wild) and Ujan (The Tide) are fine
examples of aesthetic observation of the world around him.
Of his more intellectualised verses mention may be made of
the Haspatāl (The Hospital) where the poet's doubts and
despair over his existence looms large. Hiren Dutta likes
to work on better assimilation of words in the line of
images.
Hiren Gohain (b 1942) and Bhaben Barua (b 1942) are the two poets of the period under review, in whom the various trends of modern poetry have found ample experimentation. But their poetic idiom is not yet settled. The traits of aestheticism are great in Bhaben Barua. Hiren Gohain generally works on a more realistic outlook and he is socially conscious, too. A sense of satire is prevalent in some of his poems.

Pareshmalla Barua (b 1935) joined the new community of poets by his expressionistic verses in the Ramdhenu. His poems work on suggestions and recently he has turned to symbolism. Etā Prāgaitihāsik Prāni (A Pre-historic animal), Ejāk Banariyā Rajhān (A host of wild swans) and Keval Etā Sabda (A word alone) are the poems of deep symbolic expression. Pareshmalla's symbols are conventional and not private and hence they find an easy appreciation from the readers.

If we turn up the pages of the contemporary magazines we find a host of young writers practising at modern poetry. But these new comers still lack a definite idiom. Moreover, most of them have not crossed the experimental stage. We have added a note on their poetic performance in the section Poets in Progress (Appendix- A).
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