ACHIEVEMENTS OF ASSAMESE POETRY

The survey and evaluation of the Assamese poetry made in the last seventeen chapters should give and unmistakable impression that the Assamese poetry is fairly rich both in forms and content and it can very well stand comparison with the All Indian and continental poetry. In recent times a big number of Assamese poetry has been translated into the Indian and foreign languages. When the first English anthology of Assamese poems—Modern Assamese Poetry—came out in 1960 it received high patronage not only from Indian readers and critics but even also from the readers of England and America. A work like Dr. Maheswar Neog's Under One Sky (Gauhati, 1970) though it falls outside the period of our investigation and though it contains only original English poems by an Assamese poet, must be recognised a legacy of the rich tradition of Assamese poetry detailed in the previous chapters. The poems in this collection have a very special significance, as they voice profusely the international understanding and unity of the
different peoples living at different corners of this wide world. The popularity of the Assamese communist poets like, Amalendu Guha, Keshav Mahanta in the continent should not escape our attention.

Assamese poetry is rich in another aspect also, and that is the poetry for children of which we could not present a detailed account due to limitation of space. Our poets have produced a lot of poetry for our tiny tots: these poems are rich in high imagination and simplicity of narration. In course of our investigation, we have gathered so much of material that we are led to believe that Poetry for Children should itself make an adequate subject for an independent research project. Equally important is the poetry by children. Our child-poets have shown distinct achievement in giving expression to their feelings. From our child poets we cannot expect the finish and maturity which come with age and experience but their writings are marked by a sincerity which is not to be found usually in the writings of adults. Fact and fancy indiscriminately mingle up in their poems and they are not biased by national, regional or religious prejudices. The bondage of time and distance cannot rule them.
The admiration for poetry in Assam is increasing, though there was a slump of interest just at the beginning of the intellectualised poetry in the 1940s and 50s. Poetry has found newer avenues to flourish. Apart from the poetry books, the All India Radio, the All India Conference of Poets now help the readers to listen to poetry. The literary organisations in our colleges and universities too, recite and discuss poems.

The Assamese poets are receiving wider appreciation from the Government now a days. Jatindra Nath Duara, Ambika Giri Roychowdhury, Nalinibala Devi, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Atul Chandra Hazarika and Syed Abdul Malik have received Sahitya Academy awards for their literary distinctions. Nalinibala Devi and Ananda Chandra Barua have received the national distinction of Padmasri. And most recently the following poets have secured patronage from the Government of Assam in the form of literary pensions: Nilmani Phookan, Hem Barua, Atul Chandra Hazarika, Ananda Chandra Barua, Binanda Chandra Barua, Sri Mitradev Mahanta and Srimati Nalini Bala Devi. The following poets have earned social recognition by being chosen as the President of the Asam Sahitya Sabha:

1. Padma Nath Gohain Barua (1917, Sibsagar)
2. Chandradhar Barua (1918, Goalpara)
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3. Hem Chandra Goswami (1920, Tezpur)
4. Lakshminath Bezbarua (1924, Gauhati)
5. Kamalakanta Bhattacharyya (1929, Jorhat)
6. Mofizuddin Ahmed Hazarika (1929, Golaghat)
7. Ananda Chandra Agarwalla (1934, Mangaldoi)
8. Raghunath Chowdhury (1936, Tezpur)
9. Nil Mani Phookan (1944, 1947, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh)
10. Ambikagiri Roychowdhury (1950, Margherita)
11. Suryya Kumar Shuyan (1953, Shillong)
12. Nalini Bala Devi (1954, Jorhat)
14. Padmadhar Chaliha (1958, Tinsukia)
15. Atul Chandra Hazarika (1959, Nowgong)
16. Ratna Kanta Barkakati (1963, Nazira)
17. Mitradev Mahanta (1964, Digboi)
18. Dineswar Neog (1965, Nalbari)

II.

Poetry is about life; it cannot evade the representation of human life and society in it. In Assamese poetry, as we have seen, Assamese life and society have been nicely accommodated. The new modern poetry has attempted to depict as well as to reflect upon the conditions and predicaments of man, revealing the areas of darkness and tension in modern life and modern consciousness, and the underlying spring of a purpose, affirmation, and a possible assurance.
of harmony. Its quality of inward search and its intense exploratory nature have enabled modern Assamese poetry to step out of its confining romantic barriers and to engage itself with the open realities of life.

We should also record with pleasure the name of the critics who had endeavoured to teach the people in reading poetry, and especially the new modern poetry. The most notable amongst these critics are Dr. Maheswar Neog (Ādhunik Asamiya Sahitya), the late Bhabananda Dutta (Asamiya Kavitār Kāhinī), Hem Barua (Ādhunik Sahitya, Sahitya āru Sahitya, Assamese Literature), Navakanta Barua (Chanda Silpar Bhūmīkā), Mahendra Bora (Phul tārā Gān, Asamiya Kavitār Chanda) and Jnanananda Sharma Pathak. Dr. Neog had pointed out that sensibility changes from age to age and a new age is sure to seek for a new idiom in poetry. Bhavananda Dutta upheld the importance of individual talent and he for the first time introduced the study of poetry against the back-drop of a bigger social context. He was a great advocate of new modern poetry and the functions of the Marxian poets delighted him much. Hem Barua spoke with affirmation the bearing of the Assamese romantic poetry at the same time he showed the necessity of an intellectualised poetry. Navakanta gave a comprehensive idea of prosody. Mahendra Bora introduced the
poetry of the continent to the Assamese public by his book, Phul Tara Gan (1954). Detailed discussions were made in the different magazines on the new modern poetry of other countries like America, England, Japan, France and Russia. These discussions were helpful in creating a congenial climate for poetry. Moreover, these discussions helped in the assimilation of foreign ideas, images, symbols, visions, contents and techniques etc., into Assamese poetry.

Writing of poetry in Assam to-day is, however, not monopolised by the new moderners only. Poets of the older generation like Atul Chandra Hazarika, Binanda Barua, Ananda Barua, Nilmani Phookan (Sr.), Nalini Saha Devi and Prasannalal Chowdhury are writing with equal felicity. But their poetry too, is not very much affluent with old ideas; they too have changed towards modernity, at least in the selection of themes for their poetry.

III. 1966 AND AFTER:

The period from 1966 to 1972 does not offer any remarkable achievement in Assamese poetry. Only the ideas and emotions seem now to be more unsettled than they were upto 1966; literary forms and fashions are looser and experimentation in life and literature (though not too strong) seems
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rampant. Under the patronage of the Nilachal (a weekly) a group of new poets are taking to poetry; most of them are the youths from the universities and colleges of Assam. The young poets are in search of new norms and values for Assamese poetry but a newer idiom is yet to come.