CHAPTER FOUR

THE LONELY TRAVELLERS

In the annals of poetry, it is seen, that no age is an age of a single poetic doctrine. In the Orunodai age also, a number of poets flourished outside the campus of the Orunodai. The nineteenth century was a century of transition for Assamese poetry. The ancient fervour of Vaisnavite lyrics was by this time declining and the exploration in the field of Romantic poetry was not yet complete. Experiments were there. Poets were busy. But their approach to poetry was almost individual. They neither collected under the banner of Orunodai nor made an united approach to poetry. Thus they were the lonely travellers in the field of poetry. The subject matters of their poetry, too, varied from individual to individual. Some of them wrote chronicler poetry, some wrote on Vaisnavite themes, some were busy in writing simple verses for youngsters and some others fed their poetry with epic materials under influence of Michael Madhusudan Dutta and others of Bengal. Their isolated efforts between two diverse worlds of Vaisnavite and Christian poetry helped much the growth of
Assamese poetry in the nineteenth century. Not only that, their efforts in time helped the poets to quest for a new formula which resulted in the growth of Romantic poetry in the concluding decades of nineteenth century. These lonely travellers exhibited a greater sureness in handling material, greater individuality of approach and feeling. The poets under review provide a large amount of interesting, important and often delightful works. The general features are somewhat difficult to be given in a brief out line; and hence emphasis will be placed only on individual works of outstanding importance.

Visveswar Vaidyadhíp (Bikrám Besbarā), a descendant of the royal physician family, composed the historical metrical chronicle Belimârâr Sunâji (History of Sun-set) under instructions from king Purandar Singh. The date of composition of this book is believed to be sometime during 1833-1846. The book deals with the last phase of the Ahom rule in Assam. Belimâr or Sun-set obviously means the sun-set of the Ahom empire. The historical events narrated here cover the period from 1786 to 1819; in other words the book begins with the reign of Gaurînâth Singh and ends with the reign of Chandrakânta Singh. The last phase of Ahom rule was full of civil wars, foreign invasions and atrocities. The poet vividly depicts the tragic end of the
mighty Ahoms in Assam. "The author has used the medium of verse in un-folding the history of this momentous period of his country's annals, and his mastery of treatment and felicity of expression have raised this metrical chronicle to the rank of a literary masterpiece". The principal wars and personalities as narrated in the Belimārar Duraṅgi are summarised below:

(a) War between Marān and the Britishers,
(b) the battle of Sulpānicīgā
(c) the war between the Assamese and the Burmese.

Of the personalities, Mohanmālā Gehāin, Pūrmānanda Barā Gehāin, Badan Chandra Borphukan, Chandrakāhta Singha, and Monāi Barua are worth mentioning. The author has nicely narrated the force of circumstances that led to the downfall of the Ahom kingdom and the part played by Badan Chandra in hastening the downfall by according an invitation to the Burmese.

Vīvesvāvara faithfully followed the Vaisnavite tradition in making his poetical chronicle. A fine craftsman in metrics, he often used the Vaisnavite metres of pada, duinādi, chabi and lechāri, and casually also muktāvalī and viḍgḍha lechāri. The last two metres are used in the context of lamentation. The poet was working on a tragic theme; yet,
the chronicle is not solely a work of tragic sentiments. It is often interspersed with the heroic sentiment (Virarasa). The following is a fair example of heroic sentiment. The Marāṇs preparing for war were uttering these haughty words:

Maṭake bolay beṭā    sūna durāchārsaba
   Alpa senā māri pāili lāi,
Bāsukī sarpak jena    lāṭhi māri jōṅkāvasa
   Māri jamaPURE pāibī ṭhāī.
Kato bole śulahāni    hṛdayak vidāriyā
   Uparaka tulī nacuāibo,
Kato bole khandā hāni    khandā khandā karibaho
   Kato bole jīyāi dhari nibō.
Pralaya aganika beṭā    āṅcale vāndhiba khoja
   Yamar āgata ghelā gāo,
Yena mahavraja śīlā    khandā karibāka cāha
   Virinā pātara māri ghāo.
Ehi buli caturdiśe    maṭake garjibe lailā
   Svargīdeve tāka dekhitānta,
Rāṅghare vasi āce    thara thari kāme gāve
   Sokākula huya kāndilanta.
The Națaks roared, hear ye, O the naughty people, you are gaining ground by killing small number of soldiers. Now, you are inviting the Basuki snake to battle by goring him with feet. Death is near at hand for you. You will soon visit hell.

Some say, we will pierce them through hearts and will make them dance in the air. Others say, we will cut them to pieces with our swords and some others say we will catch them a-living.

You are tying the great fire into your cloths and loitering on the face of king Yama; you are trying to cut the hard stones with the blades of birina leaves.

Thus the Națaks roared in all directions; the king heard it. He was sitting in the auditorium and hearing these words he began to tremble and wept bitterly in sorrow.

The book is rich in similes. The poet aptly illustrates the death of Badan Chandra Bopemukan with a rich simile: "The Mantris could not tolerate the growing influence of Badan".
Chandra Borphukan. At their instance Rāṣiṅg Bangāl once surrounded him and beheaded the Phukan. Just as a creature, in order to ally his heat and thirst looks wistfully at the clouds longing for a down-pour of rain, but is killed by a thunder belt dropped from the same clouds instead of his heat alleviated, this plight also accrued to the Phukan. Viśveśvar was not free from the Vaisnāvite conventionalism in regards to figures of speech (though he was writing historical poetry). Thus he compares an angry man with the Sun (Belimārār Buraṇji, p 275) the canen-sounds with thunder (p 254), the Burmese soldiers with a mass of black clouds (p 253) and king Chandrakanta with king Purandar (Indra) of Amarāvati (p 232). Epic allusions too, are used in abundance throughout the book. Śrīkṛṣṇa is present everywhere in the book. He is sometimes the God-incarnate and the giver of salvation and sometimes a hero. Other epic heroes referred to, are the Pāṇḍavas, Rāma, Candra, Bakāsura, Sumantra etc.. Though, Belimārār Buraṇji had nothing to do with Vaisnāvite teachings yet, it often took recourse to preach, wherever a little chance appeared. The poet had deliberately and frequently hinted at the transitoriness of life, and the futility of the worldly possessions.
Dekhā sabhāsāda kene Kālara mahatta,
Aiśvaryya bibhāti eketile hove hatta.
Micā bhārīyyā putragāna dhanajana yata,
Marile mātrakē keho nājāya lagata.

= Lo, you the audience, how powerful Kāla
is! It destroys all wealth, all treasures.
Your all wealths, wife and children are
meaningless, since in your death nobody
accompanies you (to the other land).

Thus Viśveśvara combined the teachings of history and the
 teachings of Vaisnavite preachers into a cordial blending.
Viśveśvara was really a great poet of the early nineteenth
century.

Dutīrām Hāsarikā (1806-1901) was a goldsmith by
profession and he was a great favourite of the Ahom royal
family. At the instance of prince Kamaleśvara Singha he
composed the metrical chronicle Kali-Bhārat Purāṇī (The
epic of Kali age). The most eventful period of the History
of Assam (1679-1858) is narrated here. Beginning with the
reign of king Chulikphā Lārārajā, the book deals exten-
sively with Gadēpāni's accession to the throne, Mādra
Singha's reign of peace and affluence, the intrigues and
civil wars during the reigns of Siva Singha, Lakshmi Singha and Rājesvar Singha, the atrocious days of Burmese invasion, loss of Assam's freedom and finally with the freedom struggle of 1857 led by Manirām Devān. The treatment of the theme is exhaustive and realistic and the vocabulary is uncommonly rich. He uses even words of English and Arabic origin like, Dabāl (Eng. Double), Dhicolic (Eng. Dismiss), Istāmb (Eng. Stamp), Ghāman (Eng. Summon), Ārji (Eng. Application), Maharī (Eng. Clerk), Piśāda (Eng. Peon) etc. Written in a simple and racy style, the book abounds in homely and entertaining similes. The description of Larārajā's hanging to death are narrated in the following lines:

Lagāyā ṁaṅgāli gale dujāne tānaya,
Jena kono giri ṭekelita dugdha bhari,
Dūṅgit lagāyā vandhe tanālara jari.

The composition of a roped head with a pot tied with strings is really entertaining. Like Belimārār Buraṇṭi, Kalibhārata Buraṇṭi too maintains a Vaisnavite devotional tone. In every chapter, the poet advocates necessity of chanting Maninā and of soliciting salvation in the lotus-feet of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Apart from its literary beauties the Kalibhārata Buraṇṭi
shows genuine knowledge of historical facts and personalities. "Dutirām's book", says Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, "is a chronicle in the true sense of the term. The reign of each sovereign has been dealt with in all aspects. The names of officers, internal disturbances, the suppression of rebellions, the creation of roads and temples and all other noteworthy events have been incorporated into his account". The historical sense is so strong in him, that he has allowed nowhere poetic fancy to dominate historical eventualities. He is faithful to history, so much so, that facts ignored by the prose chroniclers, have not been ignored by him. He is free from the habit of indulging in legendary and mythical narrations whereas even Kalhana, the author of Mājarājangini, is not free from this general weakness of ancient chroniclers. But despite of the absence of the flavour of myths and legends, Dutirām like Viśveśvar Vaidyādhip, could adequately delight his contemporary audience.

Mīnanāth Benbaruā (1813-95), a munsiff under the East India Company's administration wrote Benbarnār Vamsāvāli (1844) along with his son Srināth Benbaruā. The book is divided into two parts, the second part is the work of
the son and is a later day adaptation. This small chronicle in verse records the family history of the illustrious Bezbaruṣás. It will perhaps be not out of place to mention that Dīnanāth was the proud father of the late Lakṣmīnāth Bezbarua, Sāhityarathī of Assam. Being a family history, the book manifests poetic excellence only in lesser degrees. The metre is based on Vaisnavite models. The merit of the book lies in its record of historical and geographical facts and in occasional glimpses of the contemporary society. The book was first published in 1926 from Sambalpur by his son Lakṣmīnāth Bezbarua. The other works ascribed to the name of Dīnanāth Bezbaruwa are a biography of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva (Guru Carit) and translations from the Skanda Purāṇa and the Rūdra Yāmaṇa.

Lalit Chandra Goswami (1845-1900) and Gopināth Chakravartī wrote love oriented romances with classical themes. There were numerous love romances connected closely or loosely with Śrīkrṣna, the God-incarnate, one of them being the Krṣna-Rādhā romance. Both these poets worked on the same theme. Lalit Chandra wrote Keli Rahasya (Mysteries of Love) and Gopināth wrote Kalamka Bhañjan (Removal of the Scar). Both the poets have described the love and amours of Krṣna and Rādhā in detail, in Vaisnavite
metres. The poetic diction and constructional loveliness of Kālāṃka Bhaṅjan is poorer in comparison to Kāli Māhasya. Moreover, Gopinath had often utilised the lower Assamese colloquial in his work. In handling metres, Lalit Chandra displays greater technical ability, and there is a greater keenness of perception and a distinct stretch of originality. Reality and a passionate intensity underlie his descriptions. The enticement of Bādhā to bring Kṛṣṇa to the boat is entertaining:

Naukā āsi uṭhā tumī, asta gailā dinamani
Meghara garjani atiśaya,
Dāsa diśā bhailā nālān, karā kṛṣṇa avadhān
Chikimiki kare tamamaya.
Āru dekhā neghe garje, nūrar upare tarje
Sūrya ove pāl āsta bhailā,
Naukākhan āche tīre, prasmanda bātāse tare
Āśfalate bhūgā yena bhailā.

(Kāli Māhasya)

= Please ye, come to the boat. The sun is going down. Clouds are roaring highly. There is darkness on every side, O Kṛṣṇa please mark, there is frequent flash of lightning.
And see again, the clouds are roaring high upon heads. The sun is about to set; the boat is just near the bank. Strong winds are disturbing it and with frequent blows from the wind, it is like breaking down.

Though developed on Krama elements, Kali Bahasya is more erotic than devotional. Nāhā's inclusion into Assamese Vaisnavite poetry by this time was complete.

Another writer working on classical themes was Pūrṇa Kānta Deva Sharma, who rendered the Kala–Dumayantī episode into metrical Assamese in the title Kala–Caritra. The composition seldom manifests any notable poetical talent.

Among other poetic creations of the period, mention may be made of the didactic poetry and verses for the school children. The growth of the didactic poetry, in this age calls for some attention and analysis. The late eighteenth and nineteenth century Assam saw serious debacles in the political and social spheres. The protracted civil wars, atrocious foreign invasions and loss of freedom partially changed, if not degraded, the national, social and individual morals. Moreover, with the East India Company's rule and close contact with the westerners, newer and changed values crept in. To regain the morals in every sphere of life, the poets made deliberate attempts at
didactic poetry, to preach the good, the beautiful and the beneficial for the personal and social life. Simultaneously, a big number of schools were opened under the new set-up, where the moral instructions constituted a major part of teaching to the tiny tots. The same reason gave impetus for writing verses for school children.

Baghmudav Goswami produced a close, clear and pointed translation of the Hitopadesa from Sanskrit. The Hitopadesa "owing to its intrinsic merit, is one of the best known and most popular works of Sanskrit literature in India, and which because of its suitability for teaching purposes, is read by nearly all beginners of Sanskrit in England". We, therefore, cannot but appreciate the poet's choice of this didactic classic for rendering into Assamese verse. His versification is regular and free from artificiality.

Balador Mahanta (1850-96) himself a teacher, wrote didactic verses for children. His Uju Path (Easy Lessons) a collection of his personal poems, was published in 1884. His style is pleasant and the expression bold and entertaining. His mighty pen imbued a new life to the popular marchan of the crow and the Jackal (Kauri Ṇu Siyāl). The number of his poetical contributions is small, but he was a prolific writer in prose.
Ratneswar Mahanta's (1864-93) poetic fame rests chiefly on his book *Kavita Har* (Garland of poems). Written in an easy and lucid way, his poems could impress well the readers. His poem *Gāvaliyā-Bovāri* (The village daughter-in-law) is marked by beautiful description, imagery and colour. The poem moves quickly against the family background of a village woman, whose life is shaped by health, love and labour. Apart from his poetry, Ratneswar wrote a number of historical articles throwing newer lights on Assam's historical scene.

Durgāprasad Majinder Baruwa (1870-1928) wrote poems for tiny tots — sometimes didactic, sometimes narrative verses on common things and objects, but wholly on a simple and entertaining manner. *Uju Kavita* (Easy poems, 1895), *Lārā Kavita* (Poems for boys, 1899) and *Phul* (The flower, 1899) are his poetical works.

children, and it passed as a school text-book. The then Secretary of the Text Book Committee opined on it — "The book contains short poems inculcating moral instructions. The style is easy and chaste". We have little to add to the above opinion. He was an expert in rhyme-making. The following lines from Kavita Candrikā, illustrates, the elegance of his rhyme:

**VIDYA DHAN MAHA DHAN**

Jāna, lara, ki kāraṇ, Vidyādhāna mahādhān?
Anyadhan core pay, Aganit purī yāy.
Bhai āru bhaginiye, Āmsa kari āmsa niye.

=Do you know boys, why learning is called the greatest wealth? Other wealths are stolen by thieves, or burnt by fire. The brothers and sisters claim their shares (but learning is free from these things).

Pramod Chandra Borthakur published his Kavita Kusum (The flower of poetry) in the last decade of the nineteenth century. This collection of his sweet little verses ran on popular themes like, Vidya (Learning), Mātr-Bhakti (Devotion to mother), Chāgalī-powali (A kid), Beli (Sun),
Jonbāi (Moon), Padumful (Lotus), Vasantakāl (The spring season), Baraṣun (Rain), Relgādi (The Train), Gadmūli (The dusk), and other similar subjects. While most of the poems are narrative some are reflexive and hint at moral lessons. It may be mentioned here that Dhanāi Borā and other poets also advocated the necessity of Vidyā (learning); it proves how strongly the Assamese poets felt the necessity of learning at that time. The popularity of themes like Vidyā, Māṭr-Bhakti etc. show the sanskritic influence through the Nīti Sataka of Bhartrihari, the Cāṇakya Slokas, the Mahā-bhārata and the Rāmāyana which are the inexhaustible sources of didactic teachings. For the themes like Bēli, Jonbāi, Padumful, Baraṣun, Relgādi, the poets perhaps drew models from English school text books. As a matter of fact the Relgādi was a new thing for this province and it naturally claimed some importance as a theme for poetry and easily attracted the poets.

Mohammad Suleimān Khan distinguished himself as a writer of simple and pleasant verses, meant chiefly for children. His poems are based on natural and environmental themes. Kavita Puthi (The book of poems), which ran up to 4th edition by 1905, includes his poems like, Lārakāl (Boyhood) Elāh (Lethargy), Vinay (Humbleness), Bēng (The frog),
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Mithā māt (Sweet words), Mātrr māran (Mother's love), Kanā Manonīya (The blind beggar) Dukh (Sorrow) Kṣemā (Mercy) and others. Words chosen by him are homely and his style is marked by a sweet and unforced simplicity. Beautifully arranged and carefully punctuated, his poems may be relished as a lyrical luxury. We put a specimen, below which in many ways represents Sulaiman's poetical achievements.

JUNĀK NISA
(The moon-lit night)

Kenena janāk rāti cea aji bhai;
Dekhleli déha, man jur pari jay.
Jontyae akāsat jak mak kali;
Coṣcon jali aco kene sobha dhari.

Nai, bil, ghar, bāri sakalote āmi,
Bapāli jeuti pari ache yen bāhi.
Tarābore keo kāse tir bir kali;
Hāhe āru nāche cea kata ceo dhari.

 Asi akāi juri sobhe bitsepai,
Jāk dekhi anandat nāchī uṭhe man.
Sakalo sobha girī sei Viśvapati;
Mānane-ei janāk karo mai nati.
Lo, you brother, how beautifully moon-lit night this is. On its very sight one's body and mind get relief and pleasure. See, how beautifully the moon is glittering in the sky.

On the rivers, lakes, homes, home-steads everywhere the silvery moon-beams are spreading their smiling glow. The twinkling stars are gathering all around and they smile and dance in different postures.

Throughout the vast sky the charming moon lights are reigning, viewing which everybody is sure to feel greatly exalted.

The master of all beauty is that great Lord of the Universe, to him I pay homage with sincere devotion.

The line Sakala sōbhār girl sei Viśvapati (the master of all beauty is that great Lord of the universe) deserves attention. This sort of concluding remark in these poems were very common. The poets generally tried to conclude with a reference to the Almighty; this might perhaps be the result of Vaishnavite influence or of the impetus received from the school curricula. The then educationists advocated
instructions about God, as a part of school curriculum.
Even to-day school boys in Assam get acquaintance with God in the very beginning of their school career with such verses as:

(1) Nidino tomak kai ace Prabhu

ami ati saru lara,
Ghani dinari sattile tomak
nemata durair para.

— We donot know 0 God, where You are;
because we are simply youngsters.
When we utter loudly Your name,
calling You nearby;
You do not respond to our words,
since You are living in a distant place.

(ii) (in English text-books)

Thou art 0 God, the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see,
Its glow by day its smile by night
Are but reflections caught from Thee.

Similarly, Salidman Khan's poem on the blind beggar (Kham maganiya) deserves special attention. The idea of writing a
poem on a beggar is a novel one. In old Assamese poetry as well as in classical Sanskrit poetry, a blind beggar is not a person to be frequently met with. Suleimān Khān probably had some acquaintance with the English Romantic poets who had bestowed their love upon the beggars, widows, poors and the down-trodden. The pada (compound) metre, was very popular with Suleimān Khān. Most of his poems are written in the pada metre, the distribution of letters being 8+6; 8+6.

The distinctive contribution of the didactic poets and writers of simple verses for children, is seen in the simplification of the language of poetry. With the Vaisnavite ideal, many Sanskrit words too, came to our poetry. Many technical words of religious and Philosophical origin thus found room in Assamese poetry. The lonely travellers freed poetry from strict formality of Vaisnavite conventionalism. Moreover, the poets, whose chief concern were the children, had to work on a simpler and handy diction. Whatever be the merit of these poets, their compositions exerted great influence over the contemporary and later verse makers.

Gumākhān Baruwa (1837-94), who was educated at Calcutta and brought up under the able guidance of the
illustrious Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan, developed a keen literary sense from his early youth. But Gunabhiram is more celebrated as a writer of chronicles than as a poet. His poetic products are scanty. His only distinction in the field of poetry lies in writing the first elegy of his time and in compiling for the first time an anthology of Assamese poetry. Iśvar Chandra Vidyasagarar Valmikītha prayānat Bhārat bilāp (Lamentations of mother Indiā on the death of Iśvar Chandra Vidyasagar) is a deeply emotional outburst of the poet's sorrow at the demise of Iśvar Chandra Vidyasagar, the illustrious son of India. Kāvyakasāna (Flowers of Poetry) published from Calcutta in 1854, was the first anthology of Assamese poetry. Kāvyakasāna was followed by Padmāhas Goswami's Padyamālā, an anthology meant primarily to be used as a school text-book. Padyamālā bore a few poems of Gunabhiram too. Gunabhiram's Adya Sakti Sotra (published in the Bijuli, 1890, vol. 1, issue 1) is an experiment in Sakti poetry. As a biographer, Gunabhiram was, as Mebesvar Neog remarks, "a fitting parallel of Boswell". Like Boswell's Life of Johnson, Gunabhiram's Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukanar Avan Caritra, (A biography of Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan) penetrated deep into the life and personality of late Phukan and recorded with accuracy
the temper of the then society. As a patron of Assamese literature Gunabhira had done much. He edited the Assam Bandhu from Calcutta beginning with the year 1886. The magazine was short-lived, still then, Assam Bandhu served as the budding ground of many later-day poetic geniuses including Hem Chandra Goswami. Gunabhira's own daughter Swarnalata Devi too, wrote poems and published in her father's magazine. Though her contribution is scanty, she is the only woman poet of the period, under review. Gunabhira was an ardent social reformer. A convert to Brahma Samaj, Gunabhira like Nai Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal, bore a liberal reform attitude to the existing evils of the then society. The religious tenets of the Brahma Samaj were very liberal. Gunabhira advocated widow-remarriage, not only in his drama Ram-Havami but he himself married a widow, and gave his widowed daughter Swarnalata to a second-wedding. He was gifted in writing witty-sketches, too. He tried to inspire a patriotic zeal through his prose writings. History will record with warm affection Gunabhira's invocation of newer values and impulses to art, culture and poetry of Assam.

Balimapayan Bora, an engineer by profession, devotedly engaged himself to the cause of Assamese literature. He patronised the magazine Nau (1886) and tried his best
to awaken a new social standard. Balinārāyana wrote a few satirical poems and earned high reputation for that. He was, in fact, the pioneer of Assamese satirical poetry. With a studied bluntness and often a provocative coarseness, he satirised the foppishness and pride of the then Dāngariyās (gentlemen) and the Bābus (officers).

Ramākanta Chaudhuri (1846-89) earned the distinction of writing the first kāvya (Adbhāmyu Vadhā, 1878) of the period under review. Michel Madhusudan Dutta of Bengal freed Bengali poetry from the cliches of conventional metres and took recourse to blank verse, in his Kāvya. Ramakanta introduced the Michelian experiment in his Adbhāmyu Vadhā Kāvya and earned thereby the coveted honour of introducing blank verse (Amitrākyari Chanda) into Assamese poetry.

Kamalākanta Bhattāchāryya (1883-1936) who hailed from Tempur sub-division in Darrang district was a patriot out and out. A great prose writer, Kamalākanta was greater still as a poet. The patriotic fervour of his poems are too strong. His poems are collected in book form in Cintānāl and Cinta Taranga.

Bholānāth Dass, (1858-1929) a descendant of the famous Bakhar Bora, family of Howling was educated at
Calcutta. He served in the Subordinate Civil Service from 1888 to 1912. His poetic fame rests on his *Sitā Harana Kavya* (1888) and his colourful poems of lyrical strain. *Kavitā Māla* (pt. 1, 1882; pt. 11, 1883) and *Cintā-Tarangini* (1, 11, 1884) are collections of his shorter poems. He was deeply influenced by Michael Madhusudan Datta of Bengal.

Like Ramākṛta, he too constructed his *Sitā Harana Kavya* on blank-verse in imitation of Michael. Bholānāth was in a sense a harbinger of new forms and feelings in poetry of the time. It was he, who successfully handled the shorter lyrical poems, against the convention of long narrative poems of his predecessors. In *Kavitā Māla* (Garland of poems) such short poems as *Nidrā* (sleep), *Bhānakh kom* (who is religious?), *Vāsanta* (spring) and *Yama* (King of hell) and in *Cintā-Tarangini* — *Kerāni Babu* (the clerk), *Svāpna* (dream) *Bīḍhabā* (widow), *Janarbhūmi* (mother land), *Alexander O Dasyu* (Alexander the Great and a robber) appeared. These poems though could not feed the carnivorous appetite of the reviewers, yet, served as a forerunner of the shorter lyrical poetry of the subsequent romantic age. They also marked the diversion from the traditional long narrative poems of the Vaisnavite school. The most note-worthy of his shorter poems are *Magh* (the cloud), *Alexander O Dasyu* (Alexander the Great and a
robbor) and Kiyano Nājāge Āmar man (Why don't our minds awake?). Constructed in beautiful metres, full of similes and backed by close observation his Megh stands unparalleled.

KESH (The Clouds)

Ki bhābi he Megh, aji sveta kulevar;
Svetayen tula rāsi kimba barafar rāsi
Ati krutra añatane sudār ambare,
Hailā uday koa ki bhābi antare?
Komalata purṇa deh dhavāl baran;
Kincite nāhike dāg, keval susveta rāga,
Nāhi pāp leś deha rupabitra man;
Ākāṣat ok nane dīśā darīsan.

Krṣṇa bakṣe jvale yen sphatikar maṇi;
Kimba shyam durbādala jathā jala vinā jale,
Chara byta jale yen sobha kumālānī;
Vistīma samadrā kimba dhavāl tarpānī.

Sirupa tumio sei vistīma gagan,
Rajatere deh sājī sobhīsā he megh ājī
dekhote juraś ca ku krutra añatane;
Udeśa natun bhābā sukōmaś nāne.
Furva di'e di're di're bahe samiran;
Tahak bahan kari saharsa skandhat cari
Di're di're bhaisi jaa gajendra gaman;
Di're di're jahasrote yan batisagan.
Santamurti santabhav karica dharam;
Amtere dek dhuhi ahica pabitra bhi,
Saral komal mane di'e darisan;
He darasan aji nayanramaian.

= O Ghunds! with what intentions you are
appearing in the white colour? White like
a heap of cotton or like the snows, you
are spreading your little body in the
distant sky. Prey, tell me, with what inten-
tions in heart you are appearing?

Your body is soft and white in glow, free
of any spot, only white and white. Your
body and mind are free from sins. You are
appearing in one corner of the sky.

Like a garland of crystals on a
black sheet, or like water drops on the
leaves of the shyama coloured sarbha grass;
or like the lotuses on the shaded waters,
or like a white boat on a vast ocean,
you are appearing in the wide sky.

Being dressed in silvery colours, you are
adorning the sky. The eyes get ample relief
in your sight. With new thoughts and a soft
heart you are appearing in the sky.

Slowly and slowly the Samirana (breeze) blows
in the eastern sky. With delight you ride on its
back and pass off smoothly like the elephant-
in-walk, or like the white ducks smoothly
passing on the rivers.

With mild pause and noble mind you are
appearing; you have gained purity by bathing
in the nectar. With simple and soft but
delighting posture you are coming to our
vision. Oh, the dear cloud, this vision
to-day is the most entertaining to the eyes.

The above lines well-illustrate Shalânâth's excellence of
description, and the swift and vigorous rhythm. The play
of the N sound deserves special attention on the above
stanzas. One defect Bholānath had, and that is the artificiality of his diction. To bestow classical grandeur upon his poems he often borrowed words from Sanskrit, though apparently, there was no need of doing so. Perhaps, it was the Michaelian influence that misguided him. Michael too, as pointed out by Dr. Sukumar Sen, had largely requisitioned lexical words, "for the grandeur of style in the heroic poems? Bholānath's artificiality of diction was sharply criticised by his contemporaries, and even Lakshmanath Besbarua, a junior contemporary of Bholānath, did not spare his artificiality.

The range of the poetic activities of these poets covered more than a century (1808-1910). Out of the spell of Christian and Romantic poetry, these poets worked with all nobility of their hearts for the growth and restoration of Assamese poetry. They succeeded in their attempts, as a result of which Assamese poetry soared to a noble height, in the wake of the Romantic upheaval in the Jomārī age.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The name Bollinarar Durañj, however, was given to Visveswar's MS. by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, the then Asst. Director of D.H.A.S., Assam, while editing it.
2. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan’s Introduction to Asamara Padya Burañji,
   D.H.A.S., 1964 p xvi
3. Asamara Padya Burañji, Belimar Section, p 224
4. Ibid., pp. 262-257
5. Ibid., p 275
6. Ibid., pp. 220-221
7. Ibid., p 228
8. Ibid., pp. 238-40
9. Ibid., pp. 243-48
10. Ibid., p 268
11. Ibid., p 224
12. Ibid., p 240 Dr. S.K. Bhuyan’s translation. Vide his
    introduction to the Asamara Padya Burañji, p xix
13. Ibid., p 238
14. Though we have little reason to believe that the poet
    Visvēsvara Vaidyādhip was at any time influenced by
    Sāṅkarāchāryya, yet, the above lines stand in keen
    parallel with Sāṅkarāchāryya’s Dwādaśa Padjarikā
    dictates:
(a) Mā kuru dhanajana-yuvana-garvan,
    Harati nineśa kālah sarvan.
(b) Kā tava kāntā kaste putrah,
    Saṁsāro’yan ativa vicitrah.
16. The D.H.A.S., Assam brought-out the two metrical chronicles, under the name Asamar Padya Buraņji (Metrical History of Assam) under the editorship of Dr. S.K.Bhuyan. The first part of the book is Dutiram Hāsarikā's Kalibhārat Buraņji, the second is Visveswār Vaidyādhipa's Delimār Buraņji.

16. Asamar Padya Buraņji, p 31

17. Ibid., p xiii

18. The Rājatarangini, (or 'River of Kings') is "a chronicle of the kings of Kashmir, begun by its author Kalhana, in A.D. 1148. It contains nearly 8000 slokas. The early part of the work is legendary in character. The poet does not become historical till he approaches his own times." A.A. Macdonell, — A History of Sanskrit Literature, Motilal Banarasi Das, 1962; p 366.

19. "there is a good deal of local variations in the spoken language of western (lower) Assam spoken in different parts of the Kāmrupa and Ādārā districts of which five local variations are to be found in the Kāmrupa district alone". Dr. B.K.Kakātī: Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, Gauhati University, 1953, p 7. These local variations of the language in the lower Assam districts go by the name "lower Assam colloquial". For a detailed description of the "lower Assam
These lines remind us of the Assamese boat-song, Kēnāi par kārā he belir dimi chāvā, depicting Rādhā's request to Kṛṣṇa, to lead her to the other shore. Vide, the chapter, Origin, Nature and Extent of Assamese poetry.

Since in Kali Rahasya Rādhā has been portrayed as the heroine, she may be said to have been elevated to a more secure position.

The train was first introduced in Assam, in the year 1884, when the Jorhat Light Railways (narrow gauge) were opened. Bijnān Prabeshikā, part II, O.U.P., Calcutta, 1980, p. 62

26. The train was first introduced in Assam, in the year 1884, when the Jorhat Light Railways (narrow gauge) were opened. Bijnān Prabeshikā, part II, O.U.P., Calcutta, 1980, p. 62


30. Cf.

"Man is there (Wordsworth's work) a domain which the creative power of Nature flows in upon. At the lowest end of the scale is the Old Cumberland Beggar, in whom the last glimmer of humanity is hallowed by the tranquil decay which blends him with the quiet processes of natural life."


32. For details see chapter xiii

34. Dr. K.P. Karunakaran analysing the merits of Brahma-Samaj observes:

'It was the first important intellectual movement, which spread the ideas of rationalism and enlightenment in modern India. By taking a cosmopolitan and universal approach towards religious questions, it facilitated the introduction of Western political doctrines into the country. By rejecting dogmas it promoted the spirit of toleration. Its attack on hereditary priesthood, and Raja Rammohan Ray's translation of the sacred books from Sanskrit into a popular language bridged the gulf between the "learned" few and the rest of the people. This indirectly helped the growth of the democratic spirit. The organisations Ram Mohan founded and the discussions they organised introduced into the Indian public life the practice of forming associations and holding debates. In the political field, where they found their most concrete expression, this was a healthy development. It is not an accident that many of the early leaders of the Congress were members of the Brahma Samaj.' Religion and Political Awakening in India, 1965; pp. 50-51

35. Ram-Navami (Calcutta, 1857) is the first social drama in Assamese. Also, as the first propaganda play of
the modern times, Rām-Navami deserves attention. It depicts the evils of early-marriage of girls and advocates strongly, the necessity of widow-re-marriage. In this drama, the techniques of Western and Sanskrit drama are combined.


37. See, chapter xi of the present work.

38. Ibid.,

39. For Kamalākanta's poetic genius see, chapter viii of the present work.

40. Sītāharana Kāvya, Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati, 1967. See, chapter xi of the present work.

41. Bholanath Das secured rewards from the government for his poetry books, as follows:

For Kavitāmālā, pt. 1 (1882) ........... ₹. 50/-
     pt.11 (1883) ........... ₹. 50/-
Gintā-Taraṅgini, pt. 1 (1884) ........... ₹.100/-
     pt.11 (1884) ........... ₹.125/-

All these books were selected text-books for high schools.
in Assam. (The above informations are collected from the ancient records of the Text-Book Committee, Assam; Shillong).

42. The gradual percolation of romantic ideal into Assamese poetry can be viewed through this poem.

43. Dr. S. Sen : History of Bengali Literature, 1960; p224

44. See also chapter xi (The Assamese Kavyas) of the present work.