A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I am indebted to innumerable friends, well wishers and teachers for their assistance in the preparation of this thesis. For continuous encouragement and guidance, I am grateful to Dr. Harbhajan Singh, Professor, Department of M.I.L. of Delhi University. I have benefitted much from his excellent constructive suggestions.

I am also grateful to Dr. K.B. Tripathy (Retired Professor, Oriya) of Berhampur University for his expert advice. My sincere thanks are due to a number of my Assamese friends who have encouraged me a lot in my study of Assamese Language and literature. My earnest gratitude is to Prof. R.K. Dasgupta who started the study of comparative literature in the M.I.L. Department of Delhi University and initiated me to this discipline through the M.Litt. programme.

Shri Pranab Swarup of Gauhaty and Sri Brajanath Rath of Balasore have helped me to a great extent with regard to certain rare books and materials. The Officers of Assam Information Centre, Delhi, have been equally helpful by lending me the texts of Laksminath Bejbaruwa and some other valuable books from their library. I am grateful to the staff of the Delhi University Library System as well as to the members of the Regional Languages Library (Delhi) for

their kindness and cooperation. I must thank Sh. B.K. Mishra for his ceaseless moral support without which it would have been difficult for me, a housewife, to complete my work. At the end, I must thank Shri K. Chand who has patiently typed the various drafts of the thesis.

(KANAN MISHRA)

FOREWORD

Assam is the State of the mighty Brahmaputra and is situated in the north eastern part of India. It is lush and green; beautiful with its hills, valleys and waistdeep tea bushes. In a sense, its scenic grandeur is unsurpassed as its name suggests.[1]

Orissa is well known as the land of Lord Jagannath. Washed by Bay of Bengal on one side, it is also the land of caves, rock-edicts, temples and sculpture. The suntemple of Konarka, the magnificient poetry in stone, has earned Orissa name not only in India but also abroad.

In spite of the geographical differences between the two states the similarities between Assamese and Oriya are very many - both linguistically and culturally. They are sister languages and have come from the same eastern Magadhi Apabhramsa. Both the literatures have rich prose chronicles. Their ancient texts have drawn inspiration from Sanskrit texts i.e. the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The Vaisnav literature and the Bhakti movement in

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1. "The tradition of the Ahoms themselves is that the present name is derived from 'Asama' in the sense of 'unequalled' or 'peerless'". B.K.Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi, (1964). p.2.

both the states are strikingly similar. Their similarity is even more apparent in the modern period as both modern Oriya and Assamese literatures have been considerably influenced by the Western civilisation. The pan-Indian character of either literature was maintained in a basic sense even under different geographical and political background. This is in keeping with the fact that there is unity among diversity in the different regional literatures of India, both in form as well as content. The main discoveries of the present thesis are pursued against the backdrop of this pan-Indian canvass. It views the panorama of Indian literatures as a gigantic and complex mosaic structure with little slabs of regional literature joining together to create a unique picture of unity among diversity.

Cultural and social relations between Assam and Orissa date back to 16th century. The saint poet Sankaradeva along with his disciples had visited Puri in the year 1550[1] and had stayed there for a few months. Among many devotional songs composed by Sankaradeva, quite a few deal with Lord Jagannath and Orissa. The legend and the cult of Jagannath are described by him beautifully. Surprisingly when

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1. Maheswar Neog, Sankaradeva And his Times, Gauhaty University (1965), p.115.

Sankaradeva visited Orissa Vaisnav literature was at its peak period there also. So religious as well as literary exchanges were possible between scholars and preachers of both the states. Vaisnav poets of the Bhakti movement in Orissa always identified Jagannath with Krsna; in a similar view Sankaradeva was also doing the same thing in the poems of Uresa Barnan.

This literary intercourse took a stronger root in the 19th century when Sri Laksminath Bezbaruwa, the maker of Assamese literature made Orissa his second home. Through his writings, diary and letters, Orissa has got a permanent place in Assamese literature. No Oriya writer will today has exploited the beauty of Sambalpur and its surrounding area to that extent as has been done by Laksminath. His treatment of Orissa is an intriguing study for any student of comparative literature; more so, if the student, like me, happens to be an Oriya.

The reasons for studying Fakirmohan and Laksminath side by side are very many. Both of them tower like giants in their respective literatures. Both were contemporaries and shared the common social and political heritage of India. Both of them wrote extensively and excelled almost in all the branches of literature. Both freed their

respective literature from the domineering influence of Bengali. Standing at the cross roads of medieval and modern phases of literature they broke all traditional fetters and opened new vistas of thought and form. It is difficult to review and to assess their many splendoured lives, careers and literary output in one single thesis. I have compared them as pioneers of modernism and tried to put together their main achievements in that distinguished role.

The thesis does not attempt to give detailed biographical sketches, but as it was felt that some information regarding the lives of the two authors, their surroundings and environment might be helpful for a proper assessment of their work, I have given short biographical accounts in the thesis. I have avoided giving an exhaustive list of dates and years and have only emphasised on these facts and incidents which shaped their lives in general and literature in particular. Laksminath's religious heritage made him a synthesizer of both tradition and modernity. Likewise, Fakirmohan's association with British civil-servants and service as an administrator in different Princely states broadened his vision.

This thesis compares two Indian authors and is allied to the study of comparative Indian Literature. It is a new

discipline and a virgin field. So I thought it relevant to give a short account of the concept, scope and objective of this field of study with specific reference to its relevance of studying Indian literature. This I have included in the Appendix.

Although this study mainly attempts a comparison between Assamese and Oriya literatures, at times I have also brought in references from English literature. This is because all modern Indian literatures have received significant influences from English literature, and a reference in the proper context is revealing.

Lastly I may add that many topics which ordinarily appear of no interest to a student of any particular literature fascinates a student of comparative literature. For example, the study of influence is a stimulating thing for me and I have devoted a full chapter to this. I may conclude by saying that this work is intended as an attempt towards establishing some terms of unity between two literatures of India.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1.	Bejbaruwa Granthavali, Part I (Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1968)	-	B.G.I
2.	Bejbaruwa Granthavali, Part II (Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1968)	-	B.G.II
3.	Fakirmohan Granthabali, Part I (Cuttack Students' Store, 1963)	-	F.G.I
4.	Fakirmohan Granthabali, Part II (Cuttack Students' Store, 1963)	-	F.G.II

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Concept of Modernism

The word 'modern' is relative. Even in the contemporary literature which we term as modern a writer can as well be traditional in thought and writing. Generally it is believed that the word modern is an antonym of the term tradition. But in course of time, what is modern also becomes a part of tradition. Thus, though outwardly the term modern seems to have been connected with time, in reality, modernity doesn't depend upon time but upon one's outlook and attitude. The world is moving and the old order changes yielding place to new; but in course of time the new also becomes old and the process continues on and on. Generally the term modernity connotes belonging to the present and denial of the tradition of the past. Modernity implies that the writer should be fully aware of the mood of the current times and present the same in his writing. The confrontation of the past with the present is the fundamental concept of modernism.

Literature is a continuous process and is dynamic

rather than static. According to W.H. Hudson, 'Literature is a product of evolution and its history is a history of increasing transformation, and thus the quest for permanent criteria in the field of literature is foredoomed to inevitable failure.'[1] Each generation brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation and has its own demands upon art. Thus, the literary tradition of one particular age differs from that of another. If literature is considered to be criticism of life, then the life and society around the poet gets unconsciously expressed in his writing. In this process, literature takes different turns at times moving in a zigzag path rather than in a straight line.

The best definition of modernism is given by Rabīndra Nāth which is based on this theory. According to him a river takes different turns in its course. Literature also does the same sometimes. That turn is modern. Thus, modernism is not according to the time factor but depends upon the mood of the writer.[2]

Some main characteristics of modern Indian literature

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1. W.H. Hudson, An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960), p. 27

2. See Rabindranath, 'Ādhunik Kābya', Sāhityer Pathe, Biswa Bharati (1st Ed.), p.131

may be grouped as follows:-

(1) Theme

(a) Modern literature in India was marked by a revolt against medievalism and the set classical pattern of themes and motifs which had become conventional and stereotyped.

(b) The modern writers chose to portray good and bad alike in their writings. The characters created by them were no more supreme divine beings but common men with their strength as well as weakness.

(c) Literature moved away from the rural background to the field of urban civilisation. The cities and towns sprung under the influence of industrialisation became the new centre of interest and inspiration.

(d) Modern literature was a product of a period of transition. The new writer was often passimistic in his reflections on modern life and advocated a return to tradition. This was what led to a search for a synthesis between tradition and urbanisation in modern Indian literature.

(e) Modern literature was essentially psychological in nature, depicting in turn the moods, ideals and feelings of a writer. Often the society and the environment in which he lived got reflected in his work. This was in contrast to medieval literature which was primarily objective. In ancient literature, the poet was merely a narrator and seldom ventured to express his own feelings, his sorrow or joy, pain or pleasure through his poetry.

(f) Previously, the writer could never venture to go beyond the fringe of his own society and country. But the modern writer was aware of the cultures and traditions of other countries. This gave a broader horizon to literature. There was a growing interest in the affairs of the world rather than in the salvation of the soul.

(g) History did not matter significantly in ancient or medieval literature. The main stimulus for historical writing was nationalism. During the height of British Rule, the safest form of patriotism open to Indians was the celebration of the past glory. The modern writers became more and

more interested in the history and tradition of their country and used themes from history. Some valorous kings, queens and princesses became heroes and heroines of many modern novels and dramas.

(h) Rise of nationalism was another important factor of modern Indian literature. Years of British Rule gave rise to a deep-rooted sense of revolt in the minds of the people and the writers echoed these feelings. That was why the early 19th century writers were mostly patriotic in spirit and sang the glory of the mother-land in their poetry.

(2) Techniques

(a) The set rules of poetic diction were discarded. In its place came colloquial, common speech, as is spoken in day to day life. Language no more was obscure; there was no jugglery of words or far-fetched metaphors. On the other hand the writer chose to write in a direct and unadorned style.

(b) Modern Indian literature was greatly influenced by Western authors. The writers often gave

references from Western Classics to illusterate their points. Many current English words found place in our languages. Our writers became conscious of the cultures and traditions of other countries and as a result literature and more so, literary criticism, tended to be comparative.

(c) Ancient Indian literature laid much emphasis on 'Rasa', the most popular being 'śṛngār' and 'Bhakti'. In the modern literature, these two Rasas were no more that prominent. Rather in their place came the 'Hāsya', and the 'Adbhuta'.

(d) New techniques were used in poetry and prose. Novels and short-stories flourished for the first time. Literary criticism, autobiography, satire, essays and travelogues become more common. The rise of printing press and publication of periodicals paved the path for new experimentation in form. In the field of poetry the earlier 'Rāgas' and 'Rāginīs' were discarded. The modern poetry was not to be sung but was to be recited and read. So lyrics with freer structural patterns came into being. Sonnets, ballads, epigrams, elegies and odes became more common in place of narrative verse.

(e) Medieval themes, which were merely either erotic or didactic, were discarded and so far subject matter was concerned, a greater variety was noticed. Literature tended to become scientific as the modern man felt that he must think, experiment with, discover, and use all available sources of knowledge.

There is no exact date on which the modern literature began. The transition from the medieval literature to the modern was a gradual process. It was through the Western window that we had a glimpse of the outer world. English was the main channel of intellectual intercourse between the East and the West. English education was a new force, a new elixir injected into Indian life. There was an intellectual reawakening that produced countless new ideas and inventions. This revival was felt in all areas of art, literature, religion, education and government. A new efflorescence was visible everywhere and the Indian spirit went forth to meet the new challenge of the values of modern science and the civilisation of the West. Change was perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of this period and this change was visible in all areas of knowledge.

The early modern Indian literature was of a limited

range and touched just the fringe of the outside world through its only contact with Persian and Arabic literatures. The new renaissance, which came to India through the study of the mind the achievements of Europe in English literature from the middle of the 19th Century, accentuated the process of modernisation and Indian literature fell in line, as far as possible, with the advanced literature of modern Europe. Moreover, the middle class became more and more important as feudalism and royality declined with the growth of the ideas of democracy and in the laboratories of art and literature, new discoveries were made as were made in politics.

Before going into details of the rise of modernism in Indian literature, it is necessary to have a close survey of the changing social scene of the whole country. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, India came under the rule of the British Empire. India's first newspaper Hicky's Bengal Gazette was published in the year 1780.[1] Schools were established imparting English education and in 1817[2] the Hindu College at Calcutta was established with the help of Rājā Rām Mohan Roy. On 7th March 1835[3] Lord William Bentick resolved

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1. See K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Indian Writings in English, Asia Publishing House, (1973), p.26

2. Ibid, p.27

3. Ibid.

that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English alone. It was during the British regime that the first railway was opened and the first telegraph line and modern postal system were inaugurated. Distance was being abridged; a common medium of communication was being established. European scientific techniques were used and the transition was from secure and static medievalism to restless, dynamic modernism. The real renaissance in India came through the contact with English literature and Western culture from the early part of the 19th century; and from this time, we had a new orientation and a totally new development of modern Indian literature.

This pan-Indian movement towards enlightenment in the 19th century is easily compared with the 18th century English literature when suddenly life and literature broke away from the old. Dryden expressed the spirit of the age when he said 'he was drawing the outlines of a new art, but had no teacher to instruct him.'[1] Emile Legouis sums up the general

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1. William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A. (1937), p. 240

tendency of 18th century England in the following words:

> "It was very definitely the age of understanding, the age of enlightenment, when a literature which had become clear and pellucid began to diffuse knowledge among a growing public. The suprmacy of reason was scarcely challenged. There reigned a general belief in the advancement of human mind."[1]

The same ideas regarding 18th century English literature are repeated by W.J. Long in the following paragraphs also:

> "In the latter half of the century the political and social progress is almost bewildering. The modern form of Cabinet Government responsible to Parliament and the people had been established under George I. x x x
> Schools were established; clubs and Coffee Houses increased, books and magazines multiplied until the press was the greatest visible power in England; the modern great dailies, the Chronicles, Post and Times, began their career of public education."[2]

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1. Emile Legouis, A Short History of English Literature, Oxford University, (1950), p. 195

2. William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A., (1937), p. 256

What had happened before hundred years in England was happening in India now. The whole political scene was changing, the religious faith of the people was changing rapidly with the teachings of the Christian Missionaries and advent of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj and the whole society was undergoing a metamorphosis. Under foreign rule, national consciousness gave rise to new ideas in society and in literature. The general public was to be approached with ideas, facts and arguments concerning the nation's progress as was the situation in English literature in the 18th Century.

This age of an Indian renaissance is comparable to 18th Century English literature on the following points:

(i) Realism

This is the representation of men exactly as they are, the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance. The common man and the society had a place in the literatures both in the 18th Century England and in modern India. Both the literatures aimed to understand, not to imagine. In English literature of the 18th Century the romanticism of the Elizabethan period had faded and the writers were no more interested in 'Fairy

Queens' or 'Midsummer Nights Dream'. Addison expressed the general feeling when he commented that "the mystic tales of the previous era could no more satisfy an understanding age."[1] Similarly, in modern Indian literature, moonlight, fragrant blossoms and comely romantic heroines were discarded and instead, common men and women with their practical motives were depicted. The court literature, designed for the idle and the pleasure-seeking, was succeeded by a literature reached on a broader basis.

(ii) Directness and Simplicity of Expression

Previously, the tendency of the writer was towards extravagance of thought and language. Sentences were often involved and loaded with classical allusions. English literature had followed the Greek and Latin models as Indian literature literally thrived on Sanskrit. The new writers opposed this vigorously. They emphasised close reasoning rather than romantic fancy and used short clean-cut sentences without an unnecessary word. In English

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1. See Emile Legouis, A short History of English Literature, Oxford University Press (1950), p. 197

literature, this natural way of speech became so common that Dryden chose the heroic couplet in his poetry; because he found that this unpolished rugged verse was nearest to prose and hence fittest for his discourse. In Indian literature, the tradition of ornamental classical style declined as the rising middle class as well as the reading public demanded of writers not only seriousness and decency but also instruction and information. Writers tried to follow the head as well as the heart.

(iii) Rise of Prose

18th Century English literature is marked by the rise of prose literature in the works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Johnson and Burke. Novel and Drama too flourished during this period apart from essays and criticism. Literary magazines like the Tatler and the Spectator by Steele and Addison influenced the serviceable English style so much so that it remained the most popular model for English prose composition of that time. In India, a multitude of practical conditions demanded expression not simply in books but more specially in pamphlates, magazines and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task; hence there was

the development of prose to a great extent. New varities of prose writing such as essays, criticism, biographies, novels and short stories are essentially the products of modern Indian literature.

(iv) Satire

It is obviously the most important point of comparison between 18th Century English literature and 19th Century Indian literature. In England satire was primarily a result of the Union of politics with literature. In the first half of the 18th Century there was a perpetual strife between political parties to satirise their enemies. Dryden outshines all others in this respect. Pope used satire too largely in his poetry. Swift's works were scathing satires on humanity. Addison attacked the same vanities of his time and it was the aim of Steele to expose the false arts of life and to pull off the disguises of cunning vanity through his articles.

If in England satire orginated from politics, in India it was the result of the writer's interest in social reforms and social criticism. The new young-men under Western

influence often discarded traditional Indian ideals and invited criticism. There was love-hate relationship between the two cultures. The writers searched out the faults of men or institution and ridiculed them. Moreover, the ancient literature dealt only with gods and goddesses and it was beyond the imagination of a writer to ridicule such divine persons. Now the common men and women were drawn into the orbit of literature; and, they, being prone to follies and foibles, could be satirised easily.

In order to appreciate the main trends in modern Indian literature, it is relevant to make a comparative study of medieval literature and the new literature. Modern literature differed from medieval literature in the following respects:

(a) Theme

In most early literatures, the subject matter was religious, mostly dealing with Hindu scriptures and mythologies. There are also some of the earliest examples of Buddhist and Jaina literature in India. A number of local cults, stories, legends and folk tales were absorded in these early phases of literature. The culture was very largely shaped

by the Vedanta and the Bhakti schools. The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas formed the background of medieval Indian literature just as the Bible, the legends of saints and later Greco-Roman Myths, served as the foundation of ancient Western literary creation.

But in the modern period, the writers were no longer satisfied with mythical characters and went to the common people for elements of characterisation. Even ordinary men of the street could supply him with ideas for fiction and poetry. Previously, Sītā and Draupadī, Rāma and Arjuna had been portrayed in literature off and on. With the rise of a sense of individuality and dignity of mankind, people refused to look upto and worship these special characters with awe and wonder. The new writers placed great emphasis on personal dignity and worth of man.

(b) Style

Early literature was either lyrical or narrative. The first dealt with love and Bhakti subjectively, the second treated objectively the mythological tales.

The style was ornate and artificial; the imagery was borrowed from Sanskrit and there was minute description of the beauty of a lady or a particular season. The long narrative poems began with the praise of some divinity, either a Hindu god or goddess. Writings were mostly a verbal jugglery of words and one had to struggle hard to get into the core of meaning. Often the lines had more than one meaning conveyed through them. In the modern literature, European methods of literary approach were eagerly adopted. The style became simple, straightforward and logical. There was no extravagance of thought and language and the writings were free from classical allusions. Because of lack of education and printing material, people were not accustomed to reading in ancient times. Hence the poems were either recited or sung for which a certain amount of musicality was a necessary element. But in the modern age, this tradition was discarded to a great extent.

(c) Genre

Ancient Indian literature having developed under the influence of classical literature was mainly epical.

Rules were set for the epic and mahākābyas and there was little scope for individual innovations. Apart from Kābyas, some folk generes were also well-established in India. One was the Cautiśā or a poem of 34 initials consisting of 34 consonants in the Indian alphabet introduced successively. Bāramāsa and other folk genre described, in a series of pictures, the twelve months of the year. There were others given to elaborate portrayal of feminine beauty or events of a battle.

But in the modern Indian literature new forms or literary types were used. Thus drama, novel, short stories and criticism were born; in the field of poetry lyrics flourished. Blank verse, the Italian sonnet, ballads and epigrams were introduced. The writer always searched for innovation in form and content.

Thus, to sum up, we can say that the modern literature has given form and uttrance to the hopes and despairs, the enthusiasm and apathy, the thrill or joy and the state of pain of individual men and women. The awakening of a national consciousness, the new education and the stirring of the

literary renaissance, are at the back of the emergence of this new literature. Without denying the inherited tradition, the new writer was able to grow wings of creative self-expression. The writer needs an audience, the Sahṛdayas, a body of common readers intelligently responsive to new literature. Thus in the emergence of modern literature the role of the public cannot be ignored.

2. Unity in Diversity

With this background, both Fakirmohan and Laksminath are to be approached and their role in pioneering the modern movements in their own regional literatures is to be appreciated. At this stage, it is also relevant to study the undercurrent of unity that exists within the vast panaroma of Indian literatures. Different regional literatures inspite of their diversity, are harmoniously blended into one through certain unifying links. This is more apparent in case of Assamese and Oriya.

India is perhaps a unique country where many languages are spoken and many literatures have flourished simultaneously. According to Grierson's Linguistic survey of India there are 179 languages and 544 dialects in India.[1] The eighth schedule of the Constitution of India mentions

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1. See S.K. Chatterji, Languages and Literatures of Modern India, Calcutta (1963), p.7.

the following as the fifteen languages of India[1]: Assamese, Bengali, Gujrati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Of these languages, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu are spoken in the North West; Oriya, Bengali and Assamese in the East, Marathi, Gujarati and Sindhi in the Central Western regions and Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the south. There are besides these, several other languages as well as dialects which are significant both from the literary and philological point of view. Dialects of different tribes are also worth mentioning as they are very rich in folk literatures. Each language is a treasure house so far as literary merits are concerned. Each literature has a sharp individuality stamped with the characteristics of its own region and its own community.

Yet inspite of this polyglottism and diversity, Indian literature is essentially a single composite structure. Just as Indian culture is one inspite of a vast multiplicity of religion and ideology, similarly there is a thread of unity in all the literatures of this vast peninsula. This is

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1. The Constitution of India, Government of India, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs (as modified upto 18th May) p.220.

what has made us unmindful of the plurality of our languages and at the same time has made us conscious of our pan-Indian culture.

The reason for this parallel development is the political, social and cultural history of the nation. India, geographically, historically and culturally has always formed a single unity. All these languages and literatures have flourished against a common background and hence the similarities in form and content. The real integration of India into one single unity has taken place through the world of the epics and the purāṇas, the Jātakas, the folk-tales and the philosphical literature of Sanskrit. Characters and myths, incidents and motifs have been supplied by these early works abundantly to different regional literatures on which they have thrived. This unity was strengthened during the last one hundred years by the impact of Western learning on the Indian mind through the spreading of English education all over the country. The lines of development in all regional literatures in the modern age are for this reason all the more identical. In this connection, we might as well say that the similarity of forms and style is no less striking. This is because the ancient and medieval literatures of India have borrowed themes

and techniques straight from Sanskrit and in the modern times all literary genres have been borrowed from the West.

Hence, in order to study and appreciate any single Indian literature, it is necessary to go beyond the confines of that particular literature and survey other literatures as well. This method of inter-literary research proves to be immensely useful as it reveals in a most effective manner the essential unity of Indian thought and sentiments. Despite the diversity and unique traditions of each of the regional languages, there is a viable synthesis that can easily be discerned in them. The real unity of Indian literature is to be seen in this uniqueness and in this inter-related context. Any regional literature certainly has its autonomy but it has its filiation with the whole living and growing organism that is Indian literature. Hence a single regional literature prompts comparison with other literatures of other regions also. The impetus of their inter-actions can make comparative Indian literature a fascinating study. Moreover the comparative method makes the study of literature more scientific bringing into focus the similarities and occasionally the dissimilarities of different literatures and it also helps us in finding a

clue to the commonness of literatures in this vast sub-continent of ours.

Of all the regional languages, Bengali, Oriya and Assamese form the easternmost group of languages and hence are put in the same group. Apart from similarities of grammar, pronunciation and vacabulary these languages have certain linguistical links also. Both Oriya and Assamese have been influenced by Bengali literatures, as to start with, the two states were ruled by Bengali officers and Bengali was adopted for some time as the so-called official language in these two states. In the early part of 19th Century, Bengal was the first province to come under the Western influence and its repercussions on Oriya and Assamese literatures are obvious. However, though Assam and Orissa exist separately from each other with Bengal in between, yet it is surprising to find similarities in both the literatures to a great extent. A comparative survey of the histories of both the literatures can lead evidence to this fact.

Early Indian literature lacks in prose writing. The ancient Indian literature is usually modelled on Sanskrit texts and is narrative in nature. But strangely both Oriya and Assamese literatures have beautiful examples of early prose writing. In Oriya, this prose-chronicle is called

'Mādaḷa Pāñji' and in Assamese it is called 'Burañjī'.

They are annals of royal families and intimate portrayals of the contemporary scene, compiled by wise and experienced men imbued with a sense of historical perspective. The 'Burañjī' gives us chronological accounts of court life, the royal routine and the proceedings of the royal court. Likewise, the 'Mādaḷā Pāñji' describes the ruling dynasties and the individual rulers of Orissa who traditionally ruled over the kingdom. However, inspite of this similarity there is one major difference between the two. The 'Burañji' has no association whatsoever with scriptural text or religion. Its pages give an intimate record of the royal court and stop at that. But in the 'Mādaḷā Pāñji', religion and royality go hand in hand. It describes the different ceremonies of Lord Jagannāth and lays emphasis on the fact that Lord Jagannāth was the divine source of spiritual influence on the king and the people of Orissa. Regarding style, it may be said that as these two prose literatures were factual records and were composed as a matter of official routine; they have been put in a language which is ordinarily free from rhetoric. They are simple, easy and unpretentious.

Apart from these two chronicles, there are some other ancient prose literatures in Assam and Orissa with strange

similarities. Another class of historical writing composed in both verse and prose and generally known as 'Bamśāvalī' exists in Assam. These writings, besides recording the geneology of the different families of nobles, give sketches of their lives and careers. Similarly, in Orissa, a sort of family chronicle called 'Coini Cakaḍā' is found. Here also, as in Mādaḷā Pāñji the benevolent protection of Lord Jagannāth is stressed off and on.

Coming to the early verse writings in Oriya and Assamese, we find the same common features between them. The early writings of both these literatures were strictly religious and were derived from Sanskrit Purāṇas and epics. Numerous episodes were borrowed from ancient Sanskrit texts and separate narrative verses were composed in both the literatures copiously. The Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata have influenced both these literatures and both Assamese and Oriya have excellent translations of these two epics in the ancient period.

In Assamese the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata were composed by Mādhava Kandalī and Rāma Saraswatī respectively. In orissa, Sāraḷā Dāsa's Mahābhārata is considered to be his magnum opus whereas Baḷrāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa is widely acclaimed as the first Oriya Rāmāyaṇa. In these books, though

the writers borrowed from classical literature, they never allowed communal or sectarian matters to over-ride artistic considerations. The metre used was mainly the rhymed couplet and the figures of speech were derived from the Sanskrit. The poets were to a certain extent conventional in manner of folk poets. Often they deviated from a given pattern of story and introduced local history and geography. In the hands of the Assamese and Oriya poets, the general frame remains the same but generic transformation is fairly obvious.

The instances of local colour in both the Assamese as well as Oriya versions are too numerous to be recounted. The writers depict and project the numerous radiant landscape and picturesque people of their respective states with a touch of sincerity. The marriage festivities, dress and ornaments, food and drink, feast and revelry, are full of local colour. In Oriya Mahābhārata, Sārāḷa Dāsa goes to the extent of bringing the Pāṇḍabas to visit all the holy places of Orissa and makes them live like common Oriya citizens. Similarly, in the Assamese version of Rāma Saraswatī's Mahābhārata, King Bhagadatta of Assam is made to be present in the marriage ceremony of Draupadī and dies in the battle of Kurukṣetra.[1]

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1. See B.K.Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi (1964), p.56.

These epics were mainly written for simple rural readers and in both the literatures, the poet's attempt was to bring down to the common man the religious truth that was available only to the Brahamins through Sanskrit. The poets were conscious that their writing was meant for the people and admitted the same. Two examples from the writings of early Oriya and Assamese literature may be quoted here. The medieval Oriya poet Jagannāth Dās speaks about his book like this:

> Thus says the Brahman Jagannāth
> In this Bhāgabat Purāṇa,
> In the language of the people.[1]

Like-wise the Assamese poet Mādhava Kandalī speaks about his Rāmāyaṇa in these words:

> Poets write in the idiom of the people,
> Some of the things their own, others derived;
> This is not the voice of God, but a popular story,
> Do not, therefore, be too much fault-finding.[2]

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1. Trans. Mayadhar Mansimha, 'Oriya', In Indian Literature, Ed. Nagendra, Agra (1959) p.475

2. Trans. B.K. Barua & P. Goswami, 'Assamese', In Indian Literature, Ed. Nagendra, Agra (1950) p. 427.

The above is a striking example of identical views, indeed, where both poets aim at using the language and idiom of common people.

The Vaisnavite movements in the fifteenth century in both Oriya and Assamese literatures have ideas in common too. The Visnu cult had been slowly heading towards Orissa during the preceding periods. Rāmānuja had visited Puri in the 12th Century. Then Jayadev in the 13th Century, exercised a tremendous impact among the people of Orissa and introduced the ideas of Kṛṣṇa worship. His Gīta-govinda was recited in the Jagannāth temple and was part of the ritual of Lord Jagannāth. Then came Caitanya who settled at Puri and the Pañcasakhās or the five 'Comrades' of Oriya literature were in most intimate terms with him. The Vaisnavite cult in Orissa had become so strong that King Pratāparudra Deva became a staunch follower of the Vaisnav philosophy.

In Assam, Śaṅkara Deva and his disciple Mādhava Deva were the chief architects of Vaisnavite cult. It is also significant that Śaṅkara Deva had visited Puri in the year 1515 and had come in close contact with the Vaisnavites of Orissa. He wrote many lovely poems taking Lord Jagannāth as the main theme. Śaṅkara's Vaisnavism was a new battle against the moral decadence and blasphemy currently prevalent in Assam.

The Vaisnav literatures in Assam and Orissa have both laid emphasis on Bhakti and on the supreme value of surrender to one God. According to them, Visnu is the only God who manifests himself in various incarnations. Assamese Vaisnav literature deals only with Kṛṣṇa whereas Oriya Pañcasakhā literature identifies Jagannāth with Kṛṣṇa. Both Śaṅkaradeva and Jagannātha Dās, the main poets of Assam and Orissa respectively, drew their inspiration mainly from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and were the followers of the Vendanta Philosophy. As Nāmghars were established in Assam by Śaṅkaradeva where the devotional songs were chanted and sung, Bhāgavat Ghars were established in the villages of Orissa where the sacred Bhāgavat of Jagannātha Dās was worshipped and recited. However, though the Oriya Vaisnava literature consists of only narrative verses, the Assamese Vaisnav Saint Poets introduced a new genre, the 'Aṅkiyā Nāṭ' or the one act dramas, based mainly on the puranic themes and different episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life.

In both the literatures, after the Vaisnav phase, there was a sharp change in the modes of expression which gave rise to ornate and erotic poetry. In Oriya, the whole scene was led by Upendra Bhañja, a scion of the royal house of Ghumusar and was successively followed by others. The poets in this period competed with one another in loading

their verses with puns, conceits, dictional gymnastics and erotic effusions. This tradition was one of pedantry, play on words and voluptuous sex-love.

The same elements were found in Assamese poetry also under the Ahom rulers. The va-isnav lyrics gave rise to love-romances by the court poets who not only modified the ancient episodes to suit their romantic narration and earthly passion but also searched for fresh love-themes in new literary pastures. Prof. B.K. Barua attributes this to the pomposity of the royal Court and writes that this pomposity affected the poet's sensibility. Hence we find a note of artificiality in these writings whereas the dominant features of Vaisnavite era, were sincerety and austerity. He says:

> By advocating the ideal of austerity and poverty the Vaisnavite literature repressed many natural pleasures. Now literature is released from such repression, thanks to the baroque extravagance of and the preference for amatory themes of the Ahom countries. The court was the œntre of love and romance. Kings and queens also preferred love stories to devotional ones. xx xx
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Puranas were a rich store-house of love anecdotes, Ahom monarchs encouraged poets and authors to render them into Assamese.[1]

An important feature of this period is the general preference of love stories to devotional ones, and this characteristic is found in both Oriya and Assamese literatures. The poet searched for fresh love-themes, As Upendra Bhañja invented the romantic love-story of Candrabhānu and Lābanyabatī, the Assamese poet Rāma Dvija, found ample scope for his creative faculty in the imaginary love episode of the prince of Kundilanagar and Mṛgāvatī, the celestial nymph. This is, in a way, a step towards realism, as literature came down from Gods and Goddesses to the level of Princes and Princesses.

Coming to the modern phase, we find that common men and women in the society became more prominent in both Assamese and Oriya literatures. The lines of development are almost identical in all the regional literatures of India in the modern period. The impact of Western civilisation was felt in Bengal a little earlier than in

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1. B.K. Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi (1964) p.80

the central and North-Western regions and its effect was visible in Orissa and Assam, the neighbouring States. Assam came under the East India Company in the beginning of the last century and the British occupied Orissa roughly at the same time.

Christian missionaries who aimed at the propagation of their religion and British Officers who wanted to consolidate their administrative set-up joined hands to reorganise the system of education. Some attempts at propagating modern literature in Assam and Orissa started under the influence of Christian Missionaries. Rev. N. Brown and C.T. Cotter were mainly responsible for publishing books in Assam, and William carry and Edward Marshman did the same thing for the Oriyas. Their first job was to translate the Bible into regional languages. Though they did not have much command over the languages and often their books made rather odd and amusing reading, yet they adopted for the first time, the spoken language of the people. The Baptist Mission Press at Shiv Sagar, and the Mission Press at Cuttack were the first of their kind in the two States. New curricula and courses of reading were introduced and the enlightened youth of India came in contact with English literature, which apart from its wealth of poetry and drama

had a highly developed tradition of novel, short stories and literary criticism. The inherent relation between literature and the life around, which in our country was severed during the later medieval age, was now restored.

During the first hundred years of British occupation the following four clear phases of developments took place in various literatures of India. A cultural renaissance, a national awakening, a romantic revival and a socialistic consciousness. These developments were pioneered by some great men who wrote in different regional languages. So far as eastern languages were concerned, modern Bengali literature became rich and fertile under the impact of literary giants such as Īśwarcandra, Michael Madhusūdan and Baṅkimcandra who brought about a revolution in society and culture. In Assamese and Oriya the developments have been more or less similar. In Assamese literature, Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan was among the foremost pilots who wrote and pleaded for the reinstatement of the Assamese language in his own State. He was followed by stalwarts like Gunābhirām Baruā, Hemacandra Baruā and Kamalākānta Bhattācārya whose diligent literary efforts laid the foundations of modern Assamese prose and poetry. The leader in the second epoch was Laksminath Bejbaruwa who can really be described as the maker of moder Assamese literature.

The sentiments of patriotism and traces of romanticism found fullest expression in the writing of this author. Similarly, in modern Oriya literature, we find an identical pioneer of modern studies in Fakirmohan Senapati who is, in a sense, the father of modern Oriya literature. Though Rādhānāth Ray and Madhusūdan Rāo are equally responsible for bringing in a new phase in modern Oriya literature, it was Fakirmohan who wrote for the real mass of Oriya people and brought literature nearer to the common man of Orissa.

Fakirmohan and Laksminath come before us as a most stimulating pair for comparative study as both of them are makers of their own respective literatures and they distinguished themselves equally well in a number of fields like fiction, poetry, short-stories, essays and autobiography. Both were born roughly at the same time[1] and shared highly interesting and comparable social and literary traditions. Both wrote in their mother tongues chiefly to protect their literary identity from the dominance of Bengali and had keen love for their own languages. Both of them edited journals and broke away from the ornate medieval style of writing and wrote in the

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1. Laksminath - 1864 - 1938
Fakirmohan - 1843 - 1918

simple everyday language. Perhaps the most important common feature in their writings is their sense of satire and humour which resulted from their desire to criticise the aping of Western culture all around them. Both were pioneers and original short-story writers of their languages and became the principal architects of Assamese and Oriya literatures respectively. Last but not the least, is the fact that they introduced the genre of autobiographies in Oriya and Assamese literature. Their autobiographies not only give us vivid glimpses of the changing social scene and of the emergence of the modern sensibility in the early nineteenth century, but also are fine specimens of literary excellence.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCE

The influence of English and Bengali literature accounts mostly for modernism in Fakirmohan and Laksminath. They assimilated all that was good and novel in both these literatures and their writings took a new turn accordingly. The mind of the writer is like a workshop and acts as a catalytic agent joining and assimilating various influences. It is difficult to understand an author properly, if we remain obstinately within the limits of his own personality and work. While reading a writer "we are repeatedly reminded by him of the influence exerted upon his thought and style of other men and to estimate him rightly, we have to take account of such influence, to consider its sources, range and significance and to measure its extent for good or evil".[1]

So in order to appreciate Laksminath and Fakirmohan one has, first of all, to take into consideration the various

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1. W.H. Hudson, Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960) p.49

influences upon them and also the manner in which these influences shaped their thought and style. This study of influence illustrates their modernity and clarifies as to why they discarded the age-old customs in literature and why their writings took a different turn ushering a new era in literary history. Their originality can never be questioned and there is no doubt about the integrity of their ideas and styles. But on examination, we find that apart from the influence of classical Sanskrit, which as Indians they naturally and effortlessly inherited from their predecessors, the influences of Bengali and English literatures have been tremendous on them. This might sound strange but both Bengali and English had the impact on these two writers, born in two different States miles apart from each other.

The reason is simple. The two facts responsible for this identity are the socio-cultural history and ideologies prevalent during that period. Laksminath and Fakirmohan were, roughly, contemporaries. Both Assam and Orissa were then under British rule. Both the writers came in contact with English men, had glimpses of the great tradition of English literature too and came under its spell, as it was introduced for the first time in India. The total administration in both Orissa and Assam were in

the hands of Bengali Officers and the medium of teaching in both the States was Bengali.[1] Bengal, being more advanced at that time, was a better store-house for books and journals which not only influenced the Assamese and Oriya writers but also prompted them to write and bring out such books in their own mother-tongues.

Both the writers never failed in appreciating all that was good and beneficial in foreign literatures. Inspite of their crusade against Bengali dominance, they never condemned Bengali literature. They, in fact, praised Bengali literature profusely throughout their writings. The addresses of Laksminath and Fakirmohan to Assam Sahitya Sabha and Utkal Sahitya Samaj respectively can be cited as examples, wherein they, more than once have spoken highly of Bengali literature and its authors. Like-wise, though politically they were anti-British, they always admitted that they had to learn a lot from English literature also.

INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE ON LAKSMINATH

Laksminath in his dress and manners was a European. He wore suit and tie, played tennis, drank whisky and wrote

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1. Ātma Jībana-Carita, F.G.I, pp. 13,16,58
   Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.8,22

and talked English. He gave very liberal English education to all his daughters and put them in convents. His autobiography tells us that his eldest daughter Surabhi in her early childhood could converse only in Hindi and English and did not know Assamese. It is usual for one to write one's diary and personal letters in one's own mother-tongue as they are intimate record of one's own personal life; but surprisingly Laksminath wrote these documents mostly in English though occasionally we find a few Assamese sentences interspersed here and there.[1] Throughout his writing we find ample quotations and extracts from English literatures to prove and justify his point. His correspondence with his daughters, sons-in-law and friends in English speak well of his love for his foreign tongue.

Laksminath wasahighly qualified youngman when he started writing. He was a graduate. He was a post graduate student in English literature and completed law also, though by sheer misfortune, he could not qualify in either. None the less, he was well versed with Western Classics and his romantic spirit found an ideal channel to express his feelings

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1. Bejbaruwār Dinlekhā (ed), Maheswar Neog, Jorhat (1969) pp.104,111
Patralekhā, (ed),Maheswar Neog,Assam Sahitya Sabha(1969) pp 717-180

in poetry in the tradition of Shelly, Keats and Byron.[1] His love of English literature was implanted in him right from his childhood by his father. His father, though a very conservative Hindu, ultimately had felt that the knowledge of English was essential for the fuller development of a personality.[2] Thiw seed of interest in English literature which was planted in him from his very childhood, germinated afterwards in his youth when he came for higher studies to Calcutta.

While a student, he was so much influenced by Shakespeare that he, in collaboration with his friends, translated Comedy of Errors into Assamese. He even attempted to translate both Hamlet and Mid-summer Nights Dream, though he could never complete them.[3] In his own young aspiring mind, he thought at that time that he would be immortal in Assamese literature by writing a few such books. This shows his tremendous liking and attraction for English literature.

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I., p.96

2. Ibid, p.8

3. Ibid, p.54
   The first scene of Hamlet has been included in the complete work of Laksminath. The translation is simply wonderful and shows his depth of understanding Shakespeare.

His love for drama in which he excelled later, perhaps originated from his aspreciation of English drama. It is interesting to note that he defines one of his plays in English terms and calls it a 'drawing room play'.[1] While defining the aim of a drama also, he is at a loss to find suitable expression in Assamese and writes in English that the main purpose of a play is to "educate and holding the mirror upto nature".[2] Among all his teachers in the college, he remembers only Prof. Charles Tawney who taught him English drama and mentions his name with regard and affection in his autobiography.[3]

So far as poetry was concerned, Laksminath did drink deep of English poetry and he wrote about this in his autobiography. When he was a third year student of General Assembly College, he came across the collection of English Poems - "Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Lyrics" and was enthralled by the poems of Byron, Shelley and Keats.[4] In his own humorous style, he writes that in the praise of his imaginary sweet-heart he filled a whole note book with poems

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1. Gadādhar Rājā, B.G.II, p.1069.
2. Introduction, Belimār, B.G.II, p.1175.
3. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.60.
4. Ibid, p.96.

in English, Bengali and Assamese.[1] He was so much attracted towards Milton that he wanted to compose an epic in the pattern of Paradise Lost and in fact had started such a book in blank verse.[2] Some of his poems are in direct line of English romantic poetry and in a few of them, there is an ample evidence of English influence also.[3] Even occasionally in an Assamese poem, he introduces English sentences in between, though this is mainly done for humorous purpose.[4] He has translated many English hymns into Bengali which is by no means an easy task and shows his thorough knowledge of English religious verses.[5] He has composed individual poems in English also though they are written mostly in a lighter vein.[6] Among his unpublished works, English articles have

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.99.

2. Ibid., p.101.

3. 'Priyatamār Saundr̆-ya' is modelled on George Darley's 'The Loveliness of Love' and 'Cumā' is free renderring of Shelley's poem Loves Philosophy' Andrew Marvell's poem 'on a Dew-drop' seems to have inspired Lāksminath to write his poem 'podum pātar pāni'.

4. 'Bṛndā Candrābalī Sambāda', Kadam Kali, B.G.I, p.962.

5. Patralekhā (ed). Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), pp.149, 150.

6. The Potion Poetic and Fit Poetic, B.G.II, p.1684.

been traced also.[1]

Laksminath's fiction, criticism and satire are full of quotations from English literature. In his novel Padum Kuwari, he begins each chapter with English quotations from Burne, Suckling, Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Drayton, Johnson, Sadley, Lodge, Campbell and Arnold which shows that he was well acquinted with their verses. His satire is mostly in the fashion of eighteenth century English satirists. He writes how, while a student in Calcutta, he was an active member of a club of Assamese youngmen called 'Tea Party' and dreamt that it was on the pattern of the 'Coffee House' of the days of Johnson and Addison.[2] For him Swift, Cervantes and Aristophanes were the only famour satirists in the world[3] and one had to read Jerome K. Jerome & Punch to understand what real satire meant.[4] Even in his Assamese writings, there

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1. See Maheswar Neog (ed). The Religion of Love and Devotion, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) Introduction, p. xvi. "I have just received from Srimati Ratna Barua a skit entitled 'farce' written in English by Bezharua. This gives the action of two rustic friends, Rāmu and Nitāi, meant for drawingroom entertainment at Sambalpur", writes the author.

2. Amār Jīban Smr-ti trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.93

3. 'Nobel Prize', Barbaruār Bhābar Burburani, B.G. II p.1481

4. Hāhi, Barbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.239.

are at times whole paragraphs written in English.[1] His lectures on Vaisnav Philosophy were delivered in English which shows his deep knowledge of that language. He could express highly abstract ideas of religion in lucid English prose.

So far as journalism was concerned, his chief source of inspiration were the English newspapers published in Calcutta.[2] He refers to them in his autobiography. He was a regular subscriber to these newspapers and even memorised the English sentences from them as he liked the style very much.[3] It was his dream to bring out a weekly journal in English "The Assamese" after he passed B.A.[4] Though these references are no more than the childish dream of a young adolescent, they do not fail to tell us his appreciation of English literature and language.

Laksminath's whole theory of literature is summarised in his Essay "Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan"[5], where he quotes

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1. 'Faujdārī Makadamār Baktṛtā, Barbaruār cintār Silguti, B.G.II, p.1582.
2. Amār Jīban Smṛti, trans.Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.102.
3. Ibid, p.102
4. Ibid, p.102
5. Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan, Beṛbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed).Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) pp.10-13.

abundantly from Western writers and admits that a literature can only broaden its horizon by accepting models and ideas from other literatures. In the same essay, he writes about the literary tradition of Europe and how it has been enriched by Roman literature. He argues that literature is a continuous moving process and dynamism and change are very much required to improve and strengthen it.

The above mentioned composition speaks of his thorough knowledge about Western literature as well as Western authors. He is of theopinion that a writer can accept ideas from other literatures, but should recreate them in his own language, befitting his own society and climate. To elaborate his point, he quotes examples from Shakespeare who took ideas and incidents from Italy and Denmark, but made them his own and used them in his plays. He says that even Chaucer borrowed lavishly from French and Italian literatures and Wordsworth got his intellectual nourishment from France. Next, Laksminath comes to the field of Indian literature, where he cites the examples of Sri Rām Mohan Roy, Madusūdan Datta, Baṅkim Candra and Rabīndranāth Tagore in the same context. He feels that all these four writers who gave a new shape to Bengali literature were indebted to Western Classics. So ultimately Laksminath feels that the only solution for the Assamese writers in order to progress and compete with other regional literature was to adopt Western writers as their models.

He had a liberal attitude towards the use of language also. For him the chief characteristic of any literature was freedom and he was against the principle of touch-me-not policy in literature. He did not want literature to be strictly bound down by rules and regulations and hence accepted the use of English words in Assamese language. He was of the opinion that these words would ultimately be absorbed in the vocabulary of Assamese and thus would enrich it. He writes:

> If we try to converse, unless we use an English term it becomes difficult for us to express our feeling. This is not our fault nor is this the fault of English or Western education. This is the result of the environment in which we are living.[1]
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> We have to talk in a progressive language with progressive people. We have developed our ideas by living with developed people. If we give up those ideas and try to go back to our original position, we will not be able

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1. Quoted by Kamaleswar Bhaliha, 'Bejbaruwār Byaktitwa' In Bejbaruwār Sāhitya Pratibhā (ed) Sahitya Sabha Gauhaty (1960) p.64.

to progress any further.[1]

From these statements, we can safely conclude that Laksminath was very much influenced by English literature. What looks like an imitation of Western Culture, brought him in fact, nearer to his own literary tradition. He says:

> Among the Indians, none other than Michael Madusūdan was more European. He discarded his own religion, language and dress and wanted to be a Milton by writing poems in English. But ultimately be realised his mistake and felt that by writing in his mother tongue he could leave him mark in the field of literature.[2]

So it was his realisation that one could flourish by adopting the language in which one is born that prompted him to write in his mother tongue, though occasionally he chose to write in English.

Influence of English Literature On Fakirmohan

Fakirmohan did not receive the so called school or college education. His upbringing was in direct contrast to

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1. Quoted by Kamaleswar Chaliha, 'Bejbaruwār Byaktitwa', In Bejbaruwār Sahitya Pratibhā (ed) Sahitya Sabha Gauhaty (1960), p.64.

2. As-amīyā Bhāṣā Āru Sāhitya, B.G.II, p.1737.

that of Laksminath. Laksminath came of a well-to-do family and had all the facilities of good education whereas Fakirmohan was an orphan right from his infancy and had no opportunity for higher studies. It was through sheer efforts and love of learning that he aquired a fair knowledge of English, Bengali, Arabi, Parsi and Sanskrit. Nevertheless, he was a bright student in childhood. He stood first in his class when he was in primary classes.[1] Later in his life he was appointed a teacher in the local school and was promoted as a Head-master of the Missionary School by Rev.A.Miller, the President. During his teachership, he taught Algebra, Geometry and Geography apart from History and Oriya[2] and wrote a number of text books for schools. Later he spent many years as an administrator in different princely states and proved his merit and ability in solving different problems ably. Throughout his life, he was very much associated with European Indologists like Sir John Beams and Rev.Hallam and earned the confidence of British Civil Servants working in Orissa. His association with different European Scholars definitely broadened his vision and ultimately had its effect on his literature as well as ideas. This association with European Administrators perhaps accounts for the fact that many Western

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.16.
2. Ibid, p.19.

Sahibs appear as characters in his novels and short stories.[1]

In his autobiography he praises Rev. Hallam lavishly and refers that in compiling a book on Oriya-English Grammar he had helped Rev. Hallam.[2] Rev. Hallam was so much pleased with his services and capabilities that he had increased Fakirmohan's salary also. The description of Sir John Beams is given in glowing terms by Fakirmohan. At that time Sir John Beams was writing a book on comparative grammar of Indian languages and had required the assistance of Fakirmohan for this. His affection for Fakirmohan is described by the Oriya poet in the following words:

> That time because of limited educated persons at Balasore, I was considered as a scholar among the Europeans. The Sahib asked me to meet him at least once a week. If at all I came late for a day or two he used to ask me, "Sir why are you late in meeting me?". The usual discussion with Sir John Beams was about

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1. See novels Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, Māmũ and short story Raṇḍipua Ānanta.

2. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, pp. 26-27.

language. Sometimes it was Sanskrit hymns. At other times it was Bengali Poetry, the Oriya classic Rasakollal, or incantations against snake charming and withcraft.[1]

Fakirmohan started his English learning after an interesting incident which he describes with both pain and sorrow in his autobiography. Once he had gone to the local circuit house to meet the Inspector of Schools Mr. R.L.Martin. His Orderly thought Fakirmohan to be well acquinted with English and started talking accordingly. Fakirmohan did not know the language very well and hence had a guilty and painful feeling about it. He decided to learn it at any cost. He says:

I wanted to learn English. I managed to get the first book and started reading it on the river bank with the help of friends. I gave up the study of Sanskrit, epics and dramas and read English only. There was very little time for studies. I did not have any English teacher too. One of my friends was second teacher in the Government School. Only he had taught me for a few days.

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I., p.28.

> With the help of a dictionary I read Arabian Knights, Robinson Crusoe, History of Bengal, Govind Samant by Rev. Lal Behari Dey, the Bible and Tales of Shakespeare by Mary Lamb. That much English knowledge helped me later. Many a times I had to talk to senior officers about law cases. Had I not known a little English, It would have been difficult for me to manage.[1]

The tenacity with which he read English is referred to by Sri Birāj Mohan Senapati in an article. He writes:

> He had to struggle hard to learn English. Once he gave me an old English book to read (Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare). When I opened the first page I found the meaning of each English word written in the margin in Oriya. There was no vacant space in the page. When I asked the old man, he replied that he used to know the meanings of each English words first from the dictionary as he did not know English at all. Then only could he understand the meaning of individual sentences. From this one can understand with how much difficulty he

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.29.

had learnt English.[1]

There is ample evidence that he could converse in English and this was required of him often as he had to come in contact with European Administrators during his tenure as Dewan of different States of Orissa.[2] His translation of the Rāmāyaṇa was dedicated to Sir John Beams and the dedication was written by Fakirmohan in English.[3] In his novels and short stories, the English-men talk in English and their exact conversation is often reproduced by Fakirmohan.[4] His novel Prāyaścitta ends in the fashion of Romeo & Juliet. Inside the novel, there is a reference to

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1. 'Fakīrmohanaṅka Kathā', In Fakīrmohan Parikramā, (ed). J.B. Mohanti, Balasore (1955), p.15.

2. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.33.

   As an example, Fakirmohan writes that, while a Dewan of Keonjhar, he was to discuss the details of a case with the-then European Chief Commissioner. The conversation started in English. A few sentences spoken by Fakirmohan are quoted below:

   "Yes your honour, all the records are with me. I can explain all the matter, but I fear your honour will not understand my broken English. So I pray, please allow me to call a pleader".

   The Sahib was of course pleased with Fakirmohan's English and allowed him to explain the case all by himself.

3. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.106.

4. Māmũ, F.G.II, P.189, Mr.& Mrs.Dawson's conversation with Naṭabar are reproduced in English.

Romeo & Juliet also.[1] At other places while describing a character's greed for money he is compared with Shylock.[2] His poem 'Utkala Bhramaṇa' contains many English words, often half of the line or a single line being written in English. In course of his discussion elsewhere he refers to the Aesops Fables.[3] This shows that he had some knowledge about the Western writers. In all his writings Fakirmohan makes an abundant use of English words and quotations.

It will not be out of context here to mention that his novel Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha bears close resemblance with the novel Gobind Sāmant of Lal Behari Dey.[4] Fakirmohan himself mentions that he had read this book earlier. Gobind Sāmant is the story of a peasant life and tells a good deal about life in a Bengal village, the romance and routine of its every-day life. This book bears a strange resemblance to Fakirmohan's novel with the same rural back-ground. Both the books speak about the tyranny of the land-lords and the characters drawn are recalled with natural ease.

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1. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.396. Sadānanda refers to the story of Romeo & Juliet while taking to Gobinda about his marriage proposal.

2. Story Adharma Bitta, F.G.II, p.510.

3. Śūdra O Bedādhikāra, F.G.II, p.735.

4. See K.R.S.Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, Asia Publishing House (1973) pp.527-28.

The heroes in both the books die of broken heart and there is a gentle spray of humour over the narrative in both the novels. So it might be possible for Fakirmohan to have been influenced by the Indo-Anglian novel as he admits in his autobiography that he had a fair knowledge of this book. Dey, the story-teller is also the commentator and does not hesitate now and then to make a point for the gentle readers edification. This remains the style of Fakirmohan in almost all his novels.

Moreover, his contact with English literature was mostly through Bengali translation also. He writes:

> At times I learnt that a few educated persons had translated English books into Bengali. I used to get those books and felt jealous. I thought, "why does not Government establish a Committee to translate such book into Oriya?"[1]

So it is apparent that though he did not read many English books in original, he was quite aware of the general trends in English literature through translations. His love for English literature is expressed by him again and again in his writings. He says:

> Why speak of Oriya literature? All the

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.42.

> regional Indian literatures are progressing fast only through the help of English literature. Should Oriya literature lag behind in this modern age of 20th Century.[1]

While speaking of journalism, he was of the opinion that the English, French, German and Americans were more educated as they had a love for magazines and journals and we must try to follow their examples.[2] So it was common knowledge that he advocated the supermacy of an alien literature; though at the same time he did feel that it was only through the mother tongue that a nation could progress. In this respect, he had identical views with Laksminath.

Influence Of Bengali Literature On Laksminath

Laksminath got his early education in a Bengali medium school as Bengali was the official language in Assam. The Indian renaissance had its first impact in Bengal and the great writer Bi-dyā Sāgar, Rājā Rām Mohan, Bankim Candra and Rabīndranāth not only influenced Bengali literature but also served as models for the neighbouring writers. Moreover,

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1. Abhibhāṣaṇ, F.G.II, p.750.
2. 'Jnānagachara Phala', Parisiṣṭa Prabandhābalī, F.G.II, p.668.

Laksminath married in the famous Tagore family and it was but natural that he would be influenced by Bengali-speaking in-laws. His children spoke Bengali at home, and his daughter Aruna married a Bengali gentleman. He sang Rabīndranāth's song with his wife[1], participated in dramas written by Rabīndranāth[2] and was always present in Maghotsav every year at Joransanko.[3] Laksminath could write Bengali effortlessly as is apparent from his letters written to his wife and daughters. The whole drama of his family existence has been revealed in astonishingly brilliant, Bengali prose through these correspondences. His life style was so much Bengali-oriented that during his eleven years stay in Orissa he was considered to be a Bengali by the local people.[4] While at Sambalpur, he participated in a Bengali drama 'Bālmīki Pratibhā' written by Rabīndranāth and acted his role convincingly. In fact, Laksminath in his autobiography mentions how he was influenced by Rabīndranāth right from

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1. Ratna Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaruwa and Prajna Sundari Devi' In Laksminath Bezbaruwa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog., Gauhaty University (1972) p.223.

2. Ibid, p.223.

3. Aruna Mukherjee, 'Laksminath Bezbaruwa and the Tagores of Jorasanka' In Laksminath Bezbaruwa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog., Gauhaty University (1972) p.219.

4. Biswanarayan Sastri, Sāhityarathī Laksminath Bezbaruwa Gauhaty (1970) p.333.

his student days. In the same book, he admits that his early attempt at versification was in Bengali, under the pseudonym Raṅga-lāl Chattopādhyāy. The little Bengali influence that he imbibed in Assam assumed greater proportions during his stay in Calcutta. It was in Calcutta that he came in close contact with Bengali literature and society which prompted him to write such articles in Assamese. After his marriage, attempts were made by his wife's relatives to convert him to a cent-per-cent Bengali and to prove that Assamese was just a dialect of Bengali. There was a tussle even between Rabīndranāth and Laksminath on this issue. From his autobiography we come to know how Rabīndranāth wrote an essay in the Bhāratī adversely commenting on the Assamese language, to which Laksminath wrote a rejoinder in Bengali in the same journal. He refers to this in his autobiography:

> Gradually the literary ladies and gentle-men of father-in-law's house discussed with me regarding the supermacy of Bengali language. They used to take the lead in arguing with me. I used to join under compulsion but usually did not want to join in such unpleasant arguments. They wanted me to write in Bengali and not in Assamese. At first they used to think that being their son-in-law, I should be completely moulded into a Bengali. Gradually, they realised

that their ideas of me were wrong. They were disillusioned.[1]

However, this did not detract him from his love of Bengali literature and he often spoke of Bengali writers in very high terms.[2] In his awareness, Bengali found a critic and a admirer combined.

His student life in Calcutta as well as his marriage in an illustrious Bengali family brought him inclose touch with life in Bengal and in many of his short stories he gives a fine picture of Bengal society. The locale is Bengal in many of his compositions.[3] Even the Bengali dialogues and conversations of different Bengali characters have been retained by him in his short stories.[4] His life as a journalist was much influenced by Bengali journals and made him dream of similar magazines in his mother tongue. There is ample evidence that Laksminath in his poetry directly borrowed from and was influenced by Bengali writers like Vidyāpati, Rabīndranāth and Michael. His Devyānī is directly in the fashion of

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1. Amār Jīban Smṛti, Trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975), p.130.
2. 'Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan', Bejbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) p.26.
3. Stories Lāokholā, Ghanṭākarna Sarmā, Bhokendra Baruār Madhyalīlā.
4. Stories Bhurukī Bou, Putrabān Pitā, Dāktar Bābur Sādhu.

dramatic poetry of Rabīndranāth. He parodied Dwijendralāl Roy's patriotic songs[1] and criticised the manner in which Bankim Candra Chattopādhyāy's Vande Mātaram was used in politics.[2] In addition to this he wrote some original letters in verses in Bengali[3], translated English hymns into Bengali[4] and in his original poems assimilated lines from Rabīndranāth.[5] He was attracted towards Rabīndranāth's newly introduced prose rhythm and referred to this in one of his letters.[6] He was closely acquinted with the folk literature of Bengal and ocassionally referred in his writings to Bengali folk songs.[7] While in Calcutta, he was a regular visitor to Bengali theateres and was charmed by Bengali acting.[8] He himself admitted that he was influenced by Dwijendralāl while writing Jayamatī Kũwarī.[9]

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1. 'Amār Janmabhūmi' Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.961.
2. 'Bandemātaram', Kṛpābar Baruār Obhatani, B.G.II, p.1230.
3. Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), Letter Nos.116-117, 174.
4. Ibid, Letter Nos.161, 162.
5. Ibid, Letter Nos.153.
6. Ibid, Letter Nos.164.
7. 'Kṛpābar Baruwār Bhābar Burburani' Bar baruwār Prabandha Bachani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.229.
8. Amār Jīban Smrti, trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.116.
9. Introduction, Jayamatī Kũwarī, B.G.II, p.1137.

In Laksminath, we find a strange synthesis and tussle of two cultures, that of Assam and Bengal simultaneously. As a man, a father, a husband he was Bengali but in literature he was a true son to Assam. His long stay outside Assam broughthim into contact with alien cultures but made him pine for his own motherland also. His great regard for Bengali, notwithstanding, he could never get away from the feeling that this language had been imposed upon him since his early childhood.

Influence Of Bengali Literature On Fakirmohan

Like Laksminath, Fakirmohan started his education in Bengali and grew up in Orissa which was totally engulfed by Bengali influence.[1] Bengali language, songs, dresses and manners had captured and paralysed the native spirit of the contemporary Oriya public. This situation gave rise to a crisis in his mind and in later years much of his literary energy was devoted to establish the identity of his own mother-tongue.

Famirmohan's son, as mentioned earlier, married into a Bengali family and Fakirmohan conversed in Bengali with his

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.53.

grand daughters and his daughter-in-law.[1] It is also known that Fakirmohan's Bengali handwriting was much better than his Oriya writing.[2] In his personal letters also he quoted from Bengali.[3]

In his autobiography, he mentions that his early Bengali education was in the house of a doctor named Prasād Nāyak where he read alongwith the doctor's sons.[4] His knowledge of Bengali literature was thorough. He even taught Bengali to the acting Collector and Joint Magistrate of Balasore, who were Europeans.[5] In his autobiography, he speaks of many a times about different Bengali journals that had influenced him.[6] He refers to the books of Iśwarcandra, Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy and Akṣay Kumār Datta which were read in the schools of Orissa at that time.[7] In this connection, it is worth mentioning that he translated the book 'Jīban Carit' by Īswar-Candra into Oriya.

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1. Sarala Devi, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Pāribārik Jīban', In Fakirmohan Parikramā, (ed) J.B.Mohanti, Balasore (1955), p.31.
2. Surendra Mohanti, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Patrābalī', Fakirmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1927), Footnote letter No.1.
3. Ibid, letter No.1, Fakirmohan quotes from Dwijendralāl Roy.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.11.
5. Ibid, p.26.
6. Ibid, p.41.
7. Ibid, p.40.

Like Laksminath, his early attempt at writing was also in Bengali and he used to send articles to the Bengali magazine Somprakās. He writes:

> At times I used to write in Bengali monthlies and weeklies x x while writing the Rāmāyaṇa my mind changed. I realised that I could never be considered a great poet in Bengal by writing in Bengali. There was no dearth of books in Bengali also. I decided that whether people read or not I would write books in Oriya.[1]

Again, it was his study of Bengali literature that inspired him to write in Oriya. He confesses this in his autobiography and writes:

> Anytime I got a new Bengali book, I used to look at it and wondered when such a book would come out in Oriya. I used to sigh unconsciously.[2] x x At that time, every month, many books used to be published in Bengali. I used

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.108.
2. Ibid, p.41.

> to purchase those books from my own account; I used to borrow a few from the library of Shri Dāmodar Prasād Dās of village Sunhaṭ of Balasore also.[1]

He was the first to write short stories in Oriya. That he could establish short story as a new genre was, in many ways, due to his inspiration from Bengali. He himself admits it in one of his letters:

> I found that the Bengali monthlies were popular because of short stories. That was why I tried my hands at short stories and hoped that others would also try to write stories after me.[2]

During his time, he found that the Oriyas had more liking for Bengali journals and he felt a pang in his heart.[3] He was of the opinion that the advent of novel in Bengali literature had popularised these journals and he admitted that the drama was a powerful medium in Bengali.[4] He also

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.41.
2. See Surendra Mohanṭi, 'Fakirmohananka Patrābalī', Fakirmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1972) letter No.4, p.227.
3. Utkaḷa Bhāṣār Bhuta Bhabiṣyat, F.G.II, p.675.
4. Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.742.

mentioned some famous Bengali writers in one of his essays:

> The progress of Bengali literature is confined to the last fifty years. Although Īswaracandra Vidyāsāgar is mainly responsible for the development of Bengali literature, his books are confined to library and schools alone. The novels of Baṅkimcandra, the dramas of Dīnabandhu and the poems of world famous Rabīndranāth are mainly responsible for the good name and popularity of Bengali literature.[1]

He composed an epic on the life of Buddha on the basis of a few writings in English and Bengali magazines, a fact he admits in his introduction .[2] It is believed that his epic was inspired by the Kābya 'Amitābh' written by Sri Nabīncandra Sen based on Edwin Arnold's Book Light of Asia.[3] In his autobiography, he refers to the book Durgesnandini[4] by Baṅkimcandra which obviously prompted him to write a historical novel in Oriya. His book Chāndogya Upaniṣ-ad was based on the book Upaniṣader Upades by

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1. Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.742.
2. Introduction. Buddhābatāra Kābya, F.G.I, p.1.
3. See Nilakantha Das, Introduction, F.G.I, p.6.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.65.

Sri Kokileswar Bhattāc-ārya. The Original Bengali book was in prose, but Fakirmohan gave it a poetic form in his translation.[1]

His love and appreciation of Bengali literature prompted him to write a critical review of Michael's epic Meghnād Badh in Oriya.[2] The essay shows his keen insight and appreciation of all that is good and modern in Michael. Fakirmohan's judgement of the different characters and the style of the epic shows that he was well acquainted with the original book. He concludes his essay telling us that Michael succeeds in creating a sense of pleasure and enjoyment in the minds of his readers. He also attempted a criticism of the Bengali translation of Meghdūta by Shri Akhilcandra Pālit.[3] In this critical essay, he gives a comparative study of the version of Akhilcandra and Shri Rādhānāth Roy's translation of Meghdūta.

Synthesis

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan were products of new learning and were part of the intellectual movements that

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1. See Birajmohan Senapati, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Kathā', In Fakirmohan Parikramā, (ed) J.B. Mohanti, Belasore, (1955) p.14.
2. Kabi Michael Madhusūdan Datta Ebaṁ Meghnād Badh Kābya, F.G.II, p.706.
3. Meghadūtara Baṅgānubāda, F.G.II, p.720.

ushered in during the first part of the 20th century. They reacted constructively against tradition and broke new paths for their followers. They did not completely break away from classical heritage and in their writings a synthesis between tradition and modernism, between old and new values are found.

The contemporary period in Indian literature is marked by this dualism, the continuity of an old tradition and the rise of modernity. The pioneers in this field like Rājā Rām Mohan, Īswar Candra, Baṅkimcandra and Rabīndranāth were all confronted with this dualism. Rājā Rām Mohan had the mingled feelings of delight and gratitude for the arts and science of modern era and at the same time was a classical scholar. Madhusūdan wrote and dreamt in English, but wrote on an episode borrowed from the Rāmāyaṇa. Bidyāsāgar adopted Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors as well as Kalidāsa's Śakuntalā. Baṅkimcandra wrote Kṛṣṇacarita and was yet much influenced by modern literature. Rabīndranāth has been classed a European poet of the Bengali language, an exaggeration that has a grain of truth in it and was yet a moderniser of many ancient Indian themes and images.

Assamese and Oriya literatures are no exception to this rule and Laksminath and Fakirmohan fit into this general double perspective wonderfully. Indeed in all their writings, we can observe an unfailing influence of classical learning,

that of Sanskrit and ancient epics and the Purāṇas. Throughout their work in poems, dramas, fiction, short stories and literary essays, we have evidence of their vast Sanskrit knowledge and their writings are interspersed with Sanskrit quotations every now and then. A brief glance of their lives will throw light on the background of their classical learning.

Laksminath was a Brah-min and was born in a family of religious orthodoxy in Assam. Right from childhood, his mind was dipped in Sanskrit and ancient Assamese texts. His interest in Sanskrit was nurtured by the careful training he had from his father during his boyhood.[1] His father, a Sanskrit scholar, was well read in different Sanskrit books.[2] He even composed Sanskrit verses and translated Sanskrit compositions.[3]

Because of his love for Sanskrit, his father himself taught this language to his sons. During childhood, Laksminath led a very disciplined life at home. He gives in his autobiography a detailed description of his early life wherein he, alongwith other children of his family, was made to spend much of his time in prayer and worship. He mentions that he and

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1. Amār Jīban Smrti, trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi, (1975), p.10.
2. Dīnanāth Bejbaruwā, B.G.I, p.138.
3. Ibid, p.138.

his brothers had to spend a lot of time in worship and other rituals associated with it and therefore, had very little time to devote to studies.[1] His daily routine started with gathering flowers for the deities in the morning and ended with a night bath at 10 O'clock and final prayers.[2] Throughout the day in the morning, afternoon and evening there were several sessions of recitation of scriptures or listening to religious texts from his father.[3] This rigorous routine during his childhood naturally had its lasting impression on Laksminath and inspite of his Western learning he remained a traditional in spirit. As a child, we find him enacting plays from Hindu mythology alongwith his brothers[4] and participating in different religious festivals. While recapitulating his childhood at Barpeta, Laksminath not only remembers the sweet dish of milk and rice that he had in the monastery but also the temples and the places of Kirtan.[5] He remembers how he listened to the different episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata from one of his

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1. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.40-41.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p.11.
5. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.2-3.

cousins at Tejpur.[1] His house was constantly visited by the Vaisnav preachers who were entertained by his father.[2] When he came to Sibsagar, he saw the historical temples and was much fascinated by the religious surrounding.[3] There are a few examples from his early life which show the influence of ancient classical literature as well as religion on his life.

Fakirmohan's childhood description, however, does not tally with that of Laksminath so far as the strict religious surrounding is concerned. None-the less, the influence of his grand mother, who was a religious and god-fearing lady[4], must have shaped his young mind to some extent. In his autobiography, he mentions that he had both a sense of awe as well as respect for the Gods and Goddesses when he was a child and he used to perform different religious rituals by imitating his elders.[5] He did not get enough chance to learn Sanskrit during his childhood. All his knowledge of Sanskrit texts, literary as well as philosphical, was a result of his own strenuous efforts. He refers to this in

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1. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.3.
2. Ibid, p.10.
3. Ibid, p.18.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.139.
5. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.63.

his autobiography in the following passage:

> In the village of Barabati, there was a Telugu Jamidar. His name was Oṅkāilu Śibaprasad Bhuyā. His only son Raghunāth was my classmate. Raghunāth used to study Amarkoṣ and Mukhabodh grammer by appointing a pundit at his house. I also started learning Sanskrit alongwith him. During this period, I used to study with eagerness and pleasure from morning till evening.[1]
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> x x x
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> After Bidyāsāgar's four volumes of Byākaraṇ Kaumudī and three parts of Ṛjupāth were published, it helped me much in my Sanskrit learning, I concentrated for five to six years and read such Kābyas and dramas as Raghubaṁśa, Kumārsaṁ-bhaba, Meghadūta, Haṁsadūta, Padāṅkadūta, Śakuntalā, Mṛcchakaṭika, Mudrārākṣasa, Uttararāmacarita, and Mālabikāgnimitra. Ultimately, because of lack of good teacher, I gave up reading Kābyas and started reading Purāṇas. As I did not have a good teacher I

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.63.

used to read Sanskrit Kābyas with the help of foot notes. If I did not understand somewhere I used to mark those places. Afterwards when I met some scholar, I would ask him about the difficulties.[1]

The above account shows his love for Sanskrit literature and tells us of the difficulties he experienced in learning it without proper guidance. He kept up this habit of reading Sanskrit throughout his life and refers to this many a times in his autobiography. His sanskrit learning was not confined to literary works only. He tells us that he even read books of medicine by Caraka, Susruta and Bagbhatta.[2] His learning of Sanskrit made him a close associate of Sir John Beams who himself was very much interested in Sanskrit literature. Fakirmohan refers to his Sanskrit discussions of grammar and literature with Sir John Beams.[3] Apart from Sanskrit literature, Fakirmohan was well versed in the traditional literature of Orissa and was an appreciator of medieval Oriya poets.[4]

Laksminath's knowledge of Sanskrit Literature was

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.20.
2. Ibid, p.112
3. Ibid, p.27
4. Sabhāpati Abhibhāsana, F.G.II, p.723. Fakirmohan admits that at times he tried to write poems along the line of medieval Oriya poets.

both deep and varied. In his poems, dramas, satirical writings and literary essays, we have various evidences of his vast Sanskrit learning. He quotes profusely from Sanskrit texts. But the marks of his Sanskrit learning appear in the boldest relief in his essay on Indian Philosophy and the life sketches of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Mādhabadeva. The serious and critical works which speak volumes of his classical learning are: Śrī-Śrī-Śaṅkaradeva, Mahāpuruṣ Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhabadeva, Tatvakathā, Śrīkṛṣṇakathā, Caitan-yadeva and History of Vaisnavism. These are all mainly philosophical works with numerous quotations from the Gītā, the Upaniṣad and other philosphical texts. Simultaneously, we find him interested in the Sanskrit literary texts also. Interestingly, he quotes Kalidās's observations on the utility of hunting.[1] Even in his essay on Īswara Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he quotes from the Sanskrit Gītagovinda of Jayadeva.[2] The extensive use of quotations from the Indian Philosophical texts and the lucidity with which he explains the doctrine, combine to prove that Laksminath's command of Sanskrit was thorough. It was Laksminath who for the first time introduced intricate

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1. Mor Mṛgayā, B.G.I, p.99.
2. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kathā, B.G.I, p.477.

concepts of Indian Philosophy to modern Assamese prose.

The strong foundation of classical learning of Laksminath is indicated from the two lectures he delivered in 1934 in the Baroda Darbar in the presence of the Maharaja along with many other distinguished people. Even in his ripe old days, he did not lose interest in religion and on 10th January, 1934 he accepted invitation by the Gujrat Division of All India Oratorial Association to deliver a lecture on the Cowherd of Brindavan at Allahabad.[1] He delivered an extempore lecture on the Vaisnava faith in February, 1937, when Sambalpur celebrated Ramkṛṣna Centenary and invited learned speakers to speak on different religions of the world.[2] The lecture was given in Bengali and lasted nearly one hour. It is apparent that any time he was asked to deliver a lecture before a distinguished gathering, the subject chosen by him was often religion and not pure literature.

Like Laksminath, Fakirmohan also gives ample evidence of his classical learning. He translated both

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1. See Maheswar Neog (ed), The Religion of love and Devotion, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), Introduction Foot note, p. xvii.

2. Ibid, p.xvii.

the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, no simple task in any way. His translations are fulsome and faithful to the original texts. He would not deviate from the main framework as the earlier Oriya poets both ancient and medieval, had done. He wrote these two epics after the death of his eldest son to give solace to both his wife and to himself.[1] A fact worth mentioning here is that his mental peace and equilibrium was restored by writing these two books. He translated the Upanisad also. In his introduction to the book of Upanisad he declared that the Rigveda was the best religious text of the world and felt unhappy that such books were no more read and no longer respected by the Brahamins. His essay Śūdra O Bedādhikāra not only speaks of his classical learning but also shows his broader vision regarding religion. In this essay, he extensively quotes from the Gītā and the Vedas. His essay on Yoga is highly philosophical and is based strictly on Sanskrit sources.

A thread of Sanskritic learning runs through all his writings. In his novels, he makes beautiful parodies of original Sanskrit hymns by Kalidāsa.[2] His novels bear extensive quotations from Cānakya[3], Śaṅkarācārya,[4], Bhababhūti[5]

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.166.
2. Chamāṇa Āthaguṇtha, F.G.II, p.93.
3. Ibid, p.12
4. Ibid, p.60
5. Ibid, p.129.

Jayadev[1] and Carak[2]. His writings are interspersed with quotations from Kumār Sambhava[3], Sakuntalam[4], Raghubaṁśa[5], and Malabikāgnimitra[6], the Gītā[7], the Vedas[8], the Bhāgavata[9], and the Mahābhārata.[10] Ocassionally the titles of different chapters in his novels are given in Sanskrit.[11] In one of his novels there is a beautiful description as well as discussion about Sanskrit scripture.[12] It was his love of Sanskrit which prompted him to praise Mrtyunjay Kabyatirtha for his translation of Sanskrit texts into Oriya.[13]

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1. Lachamā, F.G.II, p.291.
2. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.448.
3. Māmũ, F.G.II, p.124.
4. Ibid, p.137.
5. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.15.
6. Māmũ, F.G.II, p.231.
7. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.449.
8. Śūdra O Bedādhikāra, F.G.II, p.739.
9. Ibid, p.734.
10. Ibid, p.735.
11. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, Chapters II & III, F.G.II, pp.7,9.
12. Māmũ, F.G.II, pp.173-181.
13. Utkala Bhramaṇa, F.G.I, p.201.

He was at pains to see that the study of Sanskrit has sunk into oblivion and wrote:

> Previously Parsi was a favoured language. The language used in the court was Parsi. The fate of India has already been decided by the Almighty. Yesterday the language was Parsi, today it is English. What will come next, God only knows. But this is certain that the fate of sanskrit is sealed for ever.[1]

This love of sanskrit was perhaps the impetus which prompted him to write an epic even in modern times. His 'Bauddhāvatāra Kāvya' covers the life and noble mission of the Buddha in an epical fashion. The synthesis between his modernity and traditionality comes to the forefront triumphantly in his poem 'Utkala Bhramaṇa'. This narrative poem is an unorthodox and human survey of the contemporary personalities of Orissa and is highly innovative and modern in form as well as content. But Fakirmohan begins it in traditional manner singing the glory of Goddes Sāralā and seeking her blessings. This was no doubt a legacy that he inherited from classical Sanskrit literature.

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1. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.18.

CHAPTER III

NEW VOICES IN POETRY

As pioneers of the modern age in literature, Laksminath and Fakirmohan have applied their extensive talent to various literary forms. These include short stories, novels and essays. Their fame as poets has, to some extent, been over shadowed by their prose writings. However, it is pertinent to note that the title bestowed on Fakirmohan by his people is 'Byāsakabi' which is, obviously, in recognitions of his greatness as a poet. Likewise, a fact worth emphasising is that one of the poems of Laksminath has been accepted as the 'National Song' of Assam. It is somewhat ironical that the two writers honoured by their states for their poems, are rated, by literary critics, higher as story writers than as poets.

It is also worth mentioning that the earliest works of both these writers were pieces of poetry and not prose. Laksminath in his autobiography mentions about his early attempt at versification.[1] We find in these pages a beautiful romantic description of young Laksminath spending many a

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.52.

sleepless nights composing poems in Bengali, Assamese and English. Fakirmohan also, in his autobiography, writes about composing poems to be sung for the Kṛṣṇalīlā of his village.[1] In course of time, they matured into competent prose writers, yet their love of poetry persisted and they produced some fine lyrics in the true modern fashion.

Laksminath did not give much thought to poetry, as he, somehow, was under the impression that poetry was not his only forte. In his foreword to'Kadam-kali', a collection of verse, he remarked rather apologetically that he composed poems for his personal pleasure and that he was indifferent to whether or not they achieved the form and dignity of genuine poetry. Laksminath had so much underestimated his poetic capability that he went to the extent of admitting that he did not know how to compose poems, though he could appreciate them.[2] This is an utterance of sheer modesty but it undoubledly speaks of his conviction about himself. In one of his essays, he says that a poet is born and never made.[3] This quotation seems aptly befitting him. He was a born poet and inspite of his wilful suppression of poetic creativity, he succeeded in producing some remarkably good poems.

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.43.
2. Sāhityar Sādhāran Laksan, Bejbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1968), p.30.
3. Ibid, p.31.

So far as Fakirmohan is concerned, he wrote poems either in painful or lonesome moments of his life. In his autobiography, he says that out of his three collections of verses, two were written after the death of his wife and the last one was composed when he retired from service after his fifty seventh year.[1] These poems were a balm for his sick soul. Fakirmohan of course gives a different and touching reason for his poetic output. He says that he got the inspiration to write primarily from his dear wife. He writes:

> That I have learnt to write poetry is because of my wife. She liked listening to my poems. I used to write to make her happy. After her death, I wrote poetry to lessen my mental anxiety. Most of my poems are written during painful moments or during periods of mental tension.[2]

Before proceeding to a survey of the poems by Laksminath and Fakirmohan it is important to remember the fact that the period in which they wrote was a period of romantic revival in both Assam and Orissa. Candra Kumār

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.195.
2. Ibid, p.180.

Agarwālā and Hemcandra Goswāmī, contemporaries of Laksminath were exponents of the romantic movement in Assamese literature. Similarly, Madhusūdan Rao and Rādhñāth Ray, contemporaries of Fakirmohan, were essentially poets and had ushered in romantic trends in the field of Oriya poetry. It was but natural for both Laksminath and Fakirmohan to come under this spell of the romantic movement.

So far as literary theory is concerned, both these writers, many a times, express their views through either their poems or their critical writings. They have similar views on the general aim of poetry which, they think, should be subjective and encompass diversity of topics and incidents. In this respect, they are truly modern and their thought and style are against medievalism which is more or less a copy of the classical literary tradition.

For a comparative study we can take two poems entitled 'Kavitā' and 'Kabi' by Laksminath and Fakirmohan respectively. Their concepts of poetry are clearly outlined in these two poems. Laksminath is of the opinion that poetic statement should not be loud and bare. Poetic meaning should be such that it could only be compared in beauty to the half-articulated utterance of a baby, and the charm and beauty of a poem should be as delicate and desirable as the looks of an attractive woman. In addition to this, a poem should deal

with both tears and laughter. A poem, like a rose petal, spreads fragrance all around. It is like soft moon beam or ripples on a river-bed and is as beautiful as the pollen of a virgin flower. The two main aspects of a good poem are beauty and imagination. The corresponds wholly to the views held by the 19th Century English romantics.

Fakirmohan too echoes similar feelings in his poem 'Kabi' wherein he describes the poet as an emperor in the Kingdom of imagination. To him a poet seems to be highly romantic in temperament. He is like a painter who can create ripples of delight and beauty by the mere touch of his pen. The poet can create a galaxy of living personalities through his imagination. According to Fakirmohan, the poet is more of a magician and is capable of tremendous creativity. In all these respects, Fakirmohan is in complete agreement with Laksminath. In his definition of poetry he (Fakirmohan) goes a step forward. He is of the opinion that poetry should be didactic and it should teach a moral to the audience.[1]

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1. It is pertinent to note in this connection, that Wordsworth, the Precursor of romantic movement in English literature emphasised upon this didactic element of his nature poetry and admitted that his poems always carried a purpose with them. He wrote,"Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived, but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings that my description of such objects as strongly execute those feelings, will be found to carry alongwith them a purpose. x x x

(Cont. next page)

Not only that, the poet, he observes, can create an atmosphere of peace and solace in a troubled mind. Laksminath too, makes a similar observation:

> Poetry is the best tonic for all ills
> to which human flesh is heir,
> It refreshes the body and ennobles the
> mind, banishing all troubles and care.[1]

Apart from this, Laksminath on many ocassions defines poetry or speaks of the characteristics of poetry. He, like a true modern thinker, is conscious of the vast dimensions of poetry. so if at one place he writes:

> "Who says poetry is poet's property and of the young? Well, I am pestered with poetry of innumerable dimensions as well as with mosquitoes of similar cast. I wrote three pieces of poems this morning. (1) To my beloved, (2) to a mosquite, (3) Ode on the dusts."[2]

(Foot notes from previous page contd.)

If this opinion be erronous, I can have little right to the name of a poet." See William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works (Ed.) Thomost Hutchinson, Oxford University Press(1969) p.735.

1. The Potion Poetic, Krpābar Baruwār Sūmarani, B.G.II p.1684.
2. Patralekhā, (ed)Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) p.7.

at another place he declares:

> There are certain things such as flowers, bowers, the fragrant southern breeze, the doves, the lotus, the lilies and the moon, that are poetic in their own right. But if you are a poet, x x x take up any subject however unpoetic and see if you can create a poem. Those who can create sublimity in simple thought are real poets.[1]

Apparently, Laksminath thought that the world of poetry could embrace all that we see around us. No wonder he declared that not only would he write sonnets on young and old maidens but also epitaphs on carts, horses, monkey and dogs.[2] Obviously, he wanted to break away from the tradition of classical allusions and metaphors and tried to carry out new experiments in both the subject-matter and the diction of poetry. As a result he wrote poems on such commonplace things as the hubble-bubble and the postman. For him, a flute and a lock of grey hair, the stars and a

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1. 'Kavitā' Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.1254.
2. 'Fit Poetic', Krpābar Baruwār Sāmarani, B.G.II, p. 1585.

grain of dust, were of equal importance. Not that his poems on these insignificant themes are always specimens of literary excellance. They, nontheless, bear witness to the modern attitude he brought to bear on the subject matter of poetry.

A similar revolt against accepted rules of poetry is demonstrated in the work of Fakirmohan. In his introduction to 'Abasara Bāsare', a collection of poems, he states that for writing poetry he has never searched hard for topics; whatever he sees around him is a fit subject for poetry. According to him, a poem can be psychological. He hopes to delight even small children through his poems. Fakirmohan says that his poems try to satisfy both the old and the young. His views on the aim and characteristic of poetry are clearly set out in one of his poems,[1] wherein he says that the horizon of the poet ranges from the blue sky to lily flowers, from warfare to politics, from devotion to God to sighs of lovelorn young persons. The poet must describe not only the pleasant spring but also the excessive heat of summer.

In short, he, like Laksminath, was free from inhibitions in choosing the themes of his poems. No topic

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1. 'Kabira Sampatti' Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.439.

was unpoetical to him, be it a co-operative society, a prostitute, a poor farmer of a withered tree. Laksminath's concept of poetry is, of course, broader than that of Fakirmohan. He conceives drama as a part of Kābya[1] and seems to follow the Sanskrit classification of Kābya. To him, rhyming is not the only characteristic of poetry.[2] Fakirmohan too remarks that the reader should not search for excellance of metre and rhyming in his poems because he writes in the simplest possible language.[3] He is emphatic that a poem might be judged by its sincerity of expression and not by its technical fineness. Here, they are in direct contrast to the medieval poetic tradition which puts emphasis on intricate technique, far-fetched similes, elaborate figures of speech and preciosity of diction.

Laksminath wrote quite a small number of poems. His dramas, of course, are full of songs and small lyrics. He was at heart, a poet, and utilised the medium of drama for expressing emotional experiences. This might be due to to the direct influence of Shakespeare whose plays Laksminath

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1. Introduction, Belimār, B.G.II, p.1174.
2. Ibid
3. 'Mo Gītara Bhanitā', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.457.

read and appreciated. He used smaller poems, to good effect in his satirical and humorous writings.[1] Fakirmohan too wrote a small number of satirical poems.[2] Both of them, being committed social writers, could not help being critical even in their poetry. If Laksminath wrote songs for his dramas, Fakirmohan used verses in his novels.[3] In one of his novels, Prāyścitta, the hero receives a letter supposedly written by the heroine and it is in form of a poem. Laksminath even clothed his personal letters with the garb of poetry.[4]

Laksminath, the poet, was very much influenced by western poetry. The poems of Shelley, Keats and Byron, he tells in his autobiography, kindled his adolescent mind. There are striking resemblances between his poems and some of the well-known English poems.[5] He drew his inspiration primarily from English literature but gave a new breadth and

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1. 'Bichheda' and 'Biraha' Barbaruwār Bhāvar Burburani, B.G.II, pp.1455, 145.

2. Yama Rajāṅka Darabār, Mu Hōṭa Bāhuḍa.

3. See Māmū (F.G.II, p.249) and Prāyaścitta (F.G.II, p.402). In both the cases, two songs have been included in the novels. In his short story 'Raṇḍipua Ananta' Debakī sings a lullaby to amuse her son.

4. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1968) Letter Nos. 164, 165.

5. See Bhaben Barua, Laksminath Bezbaroa's contribution To Assamese Poetry in Laksminath Bezbaroa. The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972) pp.113-126.

dimension to it by his deft craftmanship. To quote a few instances, his poem 'Priyatamār Saundarya' is modelled on a poem of George Darley, 'The Loveliness of Love' and Shelley's 'Love's philosophy' has been turned into a humorous or mock-romantic poem named 'Cumā'. Fakirmohan's poetry was not as deeply influenced. Nevertheless, in technique, form, and ideas, he seems to incline towards English romantic poetry. He has written beautiful sonnets, epigrams and elegies which were a contribution of Western learning to Indian literature. His contemporaries, Radhanath and Madhusudan, two highly educated poets, introduced new techniques and forms, and Fakirmohan might have imbibed western influence through them. It is, however, worth mentioning here that Radhanath, inspite of his Western learning, could not go beyond mythological and historical themes and mostly wrote narrative verses. Fakirmohan on the contrary, had a truly modern mind. He experimented with variety of forms and themes.

One striking similarity between Laksminath and Fakirmohan is with regard to their role as pioneers of modern lyric. Lyric poetry in the original meaning of the term, is poetry composed to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre or harp. It is a form of poetry in which, in contrast to an epic or a drama, the poet is principally occupied with

himself. The most important factor about a true lyric is that it is simple in form and subjective in theme. As for other requirements, it embodies a noble feeling and impresses us by its sincerity of utterance. A pure lyric usually deals with the expression of a single mood or feeling. It gains much in emotional power by brevity and condensation.[1]

Laksminath and Fakirmohan, by all standards, are superb lyricists. Their poems display a exquisite sense of rhythm, and some of them are written to be sung. A few of their poems begin with an indication of the ragas and raginis appropriate for their performance.

In this connection, we may do well to remember that both Assam and Orissa have a distinctive tradition of music. It has not only influenced their dance, theatre and literary traditions but has given them an identity of their own. Laksminath's keen sense of appreciation of ancient Assamese poetry for its rhythm, metre as well as intrinsic music is apparent from his essay on Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva.[2] Therein, Laksminath quotes a number of examples from Vaisnav

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1. See W.H. Hudson 'The Study of Poetry', An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960) p.96.

2. Dui Mahāpurusar Chānda Āru Surabodh, B.G.II, p.1766.

poetry to show how they have excelled in creating fine music through songs. Laksminath himself was a good singer. He composed humorous verses in the form of popular songs and, at times, followed the tradition of folk music.[1] As a young child, he had ample opportunity of listening to a number of folk as well as Vaisnav songs. Later, he came to suffessfully utilise this musical tradition. The different classical ragas mentioned by him, e.g. Behāg, Aśāvarī, Jhinjhoti, Bageśrī and Bhairavī, prove his love for traditional Indian music. No wonder, one of his compositions came to be accepted as the Assamese anthem.

The poems of Fakirmohan also occasionally indicate the ragas and raginis as do the poems of Laksminath.[2] He certainly had benefitted from the rich poetic-musical tradition of Orissa. He started his poetic career with the 'Cautiśās'[3] which were sung by the Kṛṣṇalīlā troupes of his village. In his case, music and poetry went hand in hand. If Laksminath appreciated the Vaisnav songs for their lyrical quality,

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1. 'Ākhalal, Khorā Kabitā and 'Kamārar Tini Bhāi Kṛpābar' Baruwār Sāmarani, B.G.II, pp.1685,1686.

2. Some of the 'rāgas' mentioned by Fakirmohan in his book 'Abasara Bāsare' are Cakrakeḷi, Bhupāl, Baṅgalāśrī, Rasakūlyā, Maṅgala, Nalinīgaudā, Rāmakerī, Kalahaṁsa Kedāra, Āśābarī and Maṅgalagujjari.

3. Atmajībana Carita, F.G.I, p.43.

Fakirmohan spoke high of the musicality of Gopalkrsna the medieval Oriya poet, who had composed most of his poems on the love theme of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[1] Fakirmohan compares him with Caṇḍidās and Bidyāpati of Bengal. He also admits that he, at times, has followed the foot steps of Dīnakṛṣṇa and Jagannāth, the medieval Oriya poets, known for their excellent musical quality.[2]

It may be concluded that neither Laksminath nor Fakirmohan was a musician. They did not compose songs with a view to evolving a certain style of musical composition. They composed poems primarily to express certain ideas and thoughts. In the midst of the emerging literary renaissance, they tried to break away from the ancient tradition of narrative poetry. They wrote short lyrics in true modern fashion but kept their links with the past by giving them a breath of music.

Subjectivity is another important factor common to both these poets.[3] The ancient poetic tradition did not

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1. 'Kabi Gopālakṛṣṇa Pattanāyak', F.G.II, p.701.
2. Sabhāpati Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.723.
3. "In a broadway, poetry may be divided into two classes. There is the poetry in which the poet goes down into himself and finds his inspiration and his subjects in his own experiences, thoughts and feelings. There is the poetry in which the poet goes out of himself, mingles with the action and passion of the world and deals with what he discovers these with little reference to his own individuality. The former class we may call

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permit the poet to give expression to personal pleasure or pain. The epics as well as narrative verses dealt mainly with gods and goddesses and the atmosphere was mostly religious. There is hardly an instance in the ancient or medieval poetry where a poet waxes eloquent about his personal sorrow or personal ecstasy. Subjectivity is essentially a modern phenomenon.

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan are subjective writers and are extremely personal in their expression. Most of Laksminath's love poems have a tone of intimate personal relationship and often are the results of the poet's genuine romantic feelings. Laksminath was, in a sense, a dreamer. This aspect of his work is well illustraded in his autobiography. He talks of his being sleepless in moonlit nights and being won over by the exquisite splendour of a rose blossom.[1] Similarly, Fakirmohan, though comparatively restrained in the exercise of pure romantic fancy, confesses

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(Foot Notes from previous page contd.)

personal or subjective poetry of self delineation or self expression. The latter we may call impersonal or objective poetry". W.H.Hudson, 'Study of Poetry', An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London, (1960) p.96.

1. Mor J̄iwan S̃owaran, B.G.II, p.51.

the personal tone and subjectivity of his poems. He writes:

> In this book, most of the poems were written during the later part of my life. One day a tuberose attracted my attention. Some other day it was a rose blossom. I started writing about them. For months together, I was to notice that exactly at 9.00 O'Clock in the morning, a pair of yellow birds would come and play in the garden. I wrote a poem on that also. I saw two doves flying side by side in the sky and I composed a poem on them. In the evening, I was sitting on the stone embankment of river Kathjodi. The feelings, then in my mind, were written down in the form of a poem. I collected these poems and published them in a book form during my retirement.[1]

Another factor common to both these authors is their use of first person singular in a good number of their poems. To quote but two instances, one each from both, we can take

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, pp.94,95.

the poems, 'Sakhīr Prati' of Laksminath and 'Puṇiki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsyabadana' by Fakirmohan. The first poem is an address to the poet's sweetheart where the poet invites his darling to leave this maddening crowd and live with him in an ideal place of picturesque beauty. The poet wishes to run on the sand bank of the river to witness colourful flowers, desires to drink honey from oleanders, wants to cover his body with fragrant pollen grain and aspires to sing melodious songs with the honey-bee. He wants his mistress to accompany him in all these romantic juvenile adventures. The poem is extremely subjective in tone and expresses the poet's intense emotions as well as his personal dreams and aspirations.

Fakirmohan's poem too is written in the first person singular where the poet, in a tragic fashion, mourns the death of his wife. He describes how, anytime he was away from her, her beautiful picture was being reflected in his mind's mirror, how he addressed her with different loving names, how they surrendered to each other like a pair of doves and how with her departure moonlight has gone out of his life and he is engulfed with total darkness on all sides. This lyrical poem, gives vent to the poet's personal devotion and love for his wife. Parading one's personal pleasure or misery was near taboo in ancient literary tradition.

Fakirmohan is perhaps a little more personal than Laksminath is this regard. Be it the death of his son[1], the passing away of his grand-mother[2], his love for his wife[3], his reverence for the poets of Orissa[4] or the nostalgia for his village[5], every thing personal is a fit subject for poetic exercise for him. Compared to Fakirmohan, Laksminath's personality is a little subdued. As Fakirmohan expresses all his diverse feelings as well as his personal ambition, ideas and aspirations in his poetry, Laksminath does not do so. Nonetheless, whatever poems he writes, his composition embodies what is typically human and thus every reader finds in it the expression of experiences and feelings in which he himself is an active participant. The feelings expressed in Laksminath's poem are very much those of ours, be it in regard to the loveliness of the beloved, the beauties of spring or the love for one's motherland. There are poems that speak of his love for his wife[6] or sorrow for his departed mother.[7]

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1. 'Mṛta Śiśuputra Manamohan', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.335.
2. 'Pitāmahī', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.34.
3. 'Abhāba', Ibid, p.340.
4. 'Rādhānāth Ray Bāhādur', Pariśiṣṭa Kabitābalī, F.G.I, p.633.
5. 'Mo Grama Mallikāśapura', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.360.
6. 'Priyatamā', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.951.
7. 'Mātṛśrādha', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.965.

We have already observed that both Laksminath and Fakirmohan present themselves as romanticists in their poems. To develop the point in detail, romanticism, as a movement in literature, is characterised by protest against bondage of rules, return to nature, interest in old sagas and medieval romances, sympathy for the toilers of the world and emphasis upon individual genius.[1] In addition to this, the romantic movement is described as liberalism in literature and is usually understood as the expression of life as seen by imagination rather than by prosaic common sense. It also means that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and man, and should be free to follow the ways of fancy and imagination. If we follow the ideas of Wordsworth, as expressed in the introduction of his 'Lyrical Ballads', the aim of romantic poetry is to give the charm of novelty to things of everday by awakening the mind's attention from lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world.[2]

Considering all these points, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan appear as supreme romanticists. Both of them like

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1. See William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A. (1937) p.305.
2. See william Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works, (ed) Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press (1969).

the English romantic poets expressed a strong protest against the bondage of rules and established literary norms. Like the English romantic poets, they brought back natural wealth, beauty, and plenitude to the realm of literature. The age in which both these poets lived was essentially an age of romantic poetry. This literary epoch did not begin as a crusade against ancient tradition but was a spontaneous response to the changing social scene as well as social consciousness. The poems of this age for the first time with their delight in colour, physical beauty, love and sensuousness opened up new paths to be successfully followed by others. The influence of English education and new social awakening had stirred all India to the depth during this period and every movement in literature as also in politics was characterised by strong emotion.

Laksminath's romanticism was in some important ways an outcome of his study of English literature. He was a keen student and real appreciator of English poetry and he fully absorbed its influence. This influence contributed to the enrichment of his thought and expression. His whole idea about poetry, as expressed in his essay 'Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan' is romantic in spirit. In this essay, he emphasises that creativity should be the main aim of a poet and the poet should express truth through emotion. His stress on emotion

and imagination is to be noted here. His saying that poetic feeling is spontaneous and that ideas originate automatically in the poet's mind tallies with the Wordsworthian view that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of heart.[1] In Laksminath's poetry, we find the spontaneous outburst of feeling everywhere and his imagination embraces all that he saw and sensed around him. To an extent, he seems to escape from the material world in the true Keatsean fashion and wants to live in a world of ideal natural beauty.[2]

To Fakirmohan, aesthetic pleasure seems to be a very important factor which, according to him, the classics do not provide. In the introduction of one of his collections of poems, 'Abasara Bāsare', he writes that in times of stress and strain, both physical and mental, one does not feel like reading classics. At such moments, a light preasurable reading is desired. Fakirmohan hopes that his collection of verses would provide such a reading. In two of his poems entitled 'Kabi' and 'Citrakār', he mentions imagination as an essential requirement for a poet as well as a painter. This imaginative freedom compelled him to break and violate the

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1. See Sāhityar Sādharan Laksan Bejbaruwār, 'Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), pp.29-32.

2. 'Sakhīr Prati', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.953.

classical norms and create poetry fresh both in form and content. The rigidity of pattern so long followed gave way to flexibility of expression.

Romantic poetry not only lays stress on spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings but also emphasises simple straight-forward language.[1] Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan have similar ideas on poetic language. They make ample use of colloquialisms and expressions from every day life. Both of them draw heavily on words and phrases that they themselves have heard people use. Their close familiarity with native tongue is evident in their natural and simple lines. In fact, any other kind of diction would have been thoroughly unsuitable for their poems because most of them deal with the simple day-to-day incidents and feelings.

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1. The aim and object of Wordsworth, the famous English Romantic poet was "to choose incidents throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men". He rejected the use of any specific poetic diction and wrote, "There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction as much pain has been taken to avoid as is ordinarily taken to produce it. This has been done for the reason already alleged to bring my language near to the language of men". William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works, (ed) Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press (1969) pp. 734-736.

Laksminath's compositions, specially his ballads, could not have been perfect as they are, had he choosen the more ornate style. His exploration into folk poetry also stimulated him to choose simple meter and simple language. His preference for simple vocabulary is justified by him in the following words:

> "Every day we express all our feelings of the heart through the spoken language, be it anger affection or love. Then why should we take the help of a formal sophisticated language for literature? If literature aims at expressing various feelings of our mind, why should one take the help of an artificial language, discarding the ordinary spontaneous one.
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> x x x
>
> If literature is to be enjoyed by the common man, it is to be built with the help of language really used by them".[1]

His ideas regarding language and diction are transparently clear from this statement. Almost identical views are expressed by Fakirmohan. In one of his poems he asks the

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1. Asamīyā Bhāṣā Āru Sāhitya, B.G.II, p.1867.

reader not to seek excellance of metre or rhyme, as with the blessings of the almighty, he has written in the simplest possible language.[1]

Poems of Fakirmohan and Laksminath can be grouped roughly under four heads: poems of love, poems of nature, patriotic poems and satirical poems. Fakirmohan shines best in some of his poems addressed to great personalities. This genre is peculiar to Fakirmohan. Laksminath is not attracted to it.

Love serves as the main theme with both the poets. Unlike the medieval poets who write about the love of princes and pricesses, gods and goddesses, the new writers, with a touch of modernism, are more earthy. Talking of love, they are suspicious of violent passions. They celebrate married love alone. There is, of course, a solitary exception. Fakirmohan[2], in one of his poems, professes love for a foreign maiden. Of course there is nothing sensuous or ugly about the feelings expressed therein. The poem strikes a pious note towards the end and wishes the girl happiness and prosperity. But for this exception, Fakirmohan's poetry is informed by tremendous love for his wife. In fact that is a major theme

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1. 'Mo gītara Bhanitā', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.457.
2. 'Bideśinī Bālikāra Chāyācitra', Dhūli, F.G.I, p.560.

with him. Both the poets seek freedom from oppressive restraints and dare not break loose from traditional morality. Laksminath writes:

> They say there are not on earth roses
> without thorns
> I say nothing but intently look on my wife's
> beautiful cheeks.[1]

Fakirmohan sings of the bliss of married life in a similar vein:

> At night, when the world was quiet
> and just we two
> sat on the terrace of our house
> or in the garden,
> And observed the moon and the stars
> Float slowly up above in the sky,
> Shedding heavenly light all around,
> I did feel, darling - didn't I - in
> those quiet moments, that,
> we too, were twin stars,
> Like those up in the sky.[2]

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1. Priyatamā, Trans Dillip Kumar Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, the poet and the Romantic ideal' in Laksminath Bezbaroa, The sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty Univ.(1972)p.103.
2. Dedication, Puspamālā, Trans.Mayadhar Mansimha, Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi (1976).

For further study we may take a couple of more poems. The poem 'Priyatamār Saundarya' is, perhaps, one of the best lyrics of Laksminath and is simultaneously one of the finest sensuous love poems in Assamese literature. The beauty of the poem lies in the succession of images through which the loveliness of the beloved is suggested:

I have yet to see a necklace of pearls,
although I have heard of it very often;
I called my beloved and smiled at her,
She smiled back, and a necklace of pearls
was revealed.[1]

Apart from this the beloved is also compared with a full blown lotus and her lips seem to resemble the petals of a rose blossom. Fakirmohan is also equally rapturous about his wife and speaks about her loveliness as well as kindness in these following lines:

And the loveliness of the full moon
In the blue heavens,
Of the pearls of dew
On full-blown roses and lotuses,

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1. Priyatamār Saundarya, Trans Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbaroa, Sahitya Akademi (1967) p.61.

Pale into banality, against your tears
That flowed from your eyes,
while in communion with the divine.[1]

Both these poets compared their wives with different elements of nature. If Laksminath found identity between a pair of Crimson Corals and his wife's lips[2], Fakirmohan discovered roses turning pale in front of his life partner.[3] A remarkable feature of both these poets is that love as portrayed by them, is not merely a sensuous entity but also a vision of the soul. Laksminath is not concerned with merely the physical enhantment of beauty, but with a love that is eternal in spite of the natural withering of the externals. He says, "Give me the wine of love that inflames eternal fascination".[4] Fakirmohan, likewise, feels that his wife's presence even after her death has become all pervading and he writes, "I feel it is the beauteous peace of your face that is now spread over the whole firmament".[5]

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1. Dedication Puspamālā, Trans Mayadhar Mansinha, Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi (1976) p.51.
2. 'Priyatamā' Kadamkali, B.G. II, p.957.
3. Dedication, Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.223.
4. 'Prityamār Saundarya', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.958.
5. Dedication, Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.223.

Most of Laksminath's love poems are in a lighter vein, mixing ecstacy with frivolity. His is the poetry of fulfilment and joy. He either speaks of the beauty of his beloved or the pain of being away from her. He loves to enjoy the beauty of nature in the company of his beloved. Sometimes he yearns for a letter from her. Away from her, he finds the moonlit nights unbearable. At times, he begs for her kindness and compassion. Fakirmohan's major love-poems, written after the demise of his wife, are drenched with tears of tormented bereavement. The lines:

> Beautiful Krishna Kumari, the queen of my
> poor cottage,
> My eternal sweet-heart, dear as life,
> My constant companion, the apple of my eyes,
> See, how all your excellent virtues have
> intermingled with my
> very blood stream,
> with your departure.
> Haven't known a more virtuous woman in life,
> or a wife, more fully
> dedicated than yourself
> to her husband.[1]

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1. Dedication, Puspamālā, Trans.Dr.Mayadhar Mansimha Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi(1976) p.50.

are a clear reflection of his mental agony. Since the love-poems of Fakirmohan speak of his personal loss they are often philosophical and pessimistic in tone;on the contrary the poems of Laksminath are gay and jovial. The poem 'Hasi Hasi gala Mote Kandāi Kandāi,'Puṇi Ki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', 'Dayābatī Āji Cāligalā' of Fakirmohan are full of emotion, arising out of the depths of a deeply tortured soul. In Laksminath's poem there is occasional glimpse of agony caused by a temporary separation from his wife.[1] Away from his beloved, the poet feels dejected and finds the beauty of nature unbearable, but the reader anticipates a happy re-union and hence the sorrow and the pain expressed by the poet do not seem that sharp.

Laksminath's poems are completely free from morbid reflection. They are, however, marked by a personal analysis of the poet's moods. Some of them throb with intense personal feelings. 'Priyatamā' is a typical case in point. On comparison, we find Fakirmohan's love poems are more personal in experience and treatment. Laksminath is more romantic, gay and happy whereas Fakirmohan is more sorrowful, pining away at the permanent loss of his life-partner.

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1. 'Prabasuwār Cithi', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.959.

Nature, as usual, forms a common background for the poems of Laksminath and Fakirmohan.[1] In this respect, they inherited the rich literary tradition of Indian literature, which right from the time of the Vedas is replete with nature description. Nature has always been a source of delight and inspiration of poets and writers of all languages and of all regions. India did have a robust tradition of nature poetry in the ancient times. It was however, in the romantic period that nature assumed a broader dimension. It was no more just a static backdrop for drama or poetry. Another important aspect of the romantic period or the modern period is that single, individual poems were written on different aspects of nature. In assamese literature, the folk poetry has wonderful sketches of nature. The ancient poet Mādhava Kandalī shows his appreciation of nature significantly in his Rāmāyaṇ. Even Śaṅkaradeva, basically a Saint Poet, shows his love of nature in

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1. Return to nature is the Chief characteristic of romanticism. All the English romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats were attracted by the unroofed school of nature more than the discipline of the classics. Their treatment of nature is both accurate and interesting. There is hardly a sight or sound, from a violet to a mountain, from a bird note to the thunder of the cataract that has not been reflected in some beautiful way in their poetry.

flashes. This is apparent from the picturesque description of the celestial garden in his 'Harmohan'. In Orissa, almost all the ancient and medieval poets excel in nature painting. Upendrabhañja and Dīnakṛṣna Dāsa are pastmasters in describing the seasonal beauty of nature, though their descriptions are often in the line of Sanskrit Kābyas.

Laksminath in his essay 'Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan' advises the up-coming writers to write about the natural wealth of the hills, the valleys, the rivulets and the countryside[1] of Assam which speaks of his tremendous love for nature. His own treatment of nature, is the work of a man gifted with a passion for landscape. The ordinary fruits and flowers assume an unusual dimension through his romantic fancy. Even the smallest and most insignificant thing like a drop of water[2] on a lotus leaf or a grain of dust[3] has its place in his poetry. The last stanza of his poem 'Sakhīrprati' depicts his idea of nature in its fulness. He would love to be away from the so-called settled life and happily roam about amidst the colourful landscape of nature.

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1. Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan, Bɛɹbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.30.

2. 'Padumpātar Pāni', B.G.II, p.999.

3. 'Dhūli', Ibid, p.1002.

He expresses his dislike for urban civilisation and finds solace in nature.[1] The humdrum of the modern world makes him long for the soothing touch of nature. His love of nature has inspired him to write many short poems on the moon, the cuckoo, the stars and the different seasons.

Fakirmohan, too, has addressed most of his poems to different aspects of nature, the singing birds, the desert, the stars, the moon, the rose, a pair of doves, the sky and the river. The smallest bird or the tiniest spring touches the chord of his imagination. The poem about his village is an excellent example of his love of nature.[2] This poem is inspired by his nostalgia for the serene beauty of his native village. The poet, in his advanced years, recapitulates the memories of his childhood and remembers the fragrant evenings, the lilies in the pond, the fresh mango blossoms, the sound of conch-shells, the row of bats in the afternoon sky, the marigold flowers and the cool breeze. This poem is indicative of the poet's keen insight. He catches the tiniest sounds of nature with remarkable accuracy. He recreates an authentic atmosphere of pictureque Oriya village.

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1. 'Sakhīr Prati', B.G.II, p.953.
2. 'Mo grāma Mallikāsapura', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.366.

In their love poems, nature serves as useful background. In Laksminath 'Prabasuwār cithi', the nocturnal beauty of nature makes the poet morose and restless as he is away from his beloved. Similarly, Fakirmohan's poem 'Abhāba' speaks of a void created by his wife's departure and he remembers the moonlit nights he spent with her in the courtyard. This device of making nature serve as a back ground to the human drama examplifies the characteristic subjectivity of romantic art.[1]

In their nature poetry, both the poets usually apply the mode of personification, where nature seems to throb with life. In the poem about the evening[2] Laksminath appears at his best in describing dusk as a modest shy maiden. The stars glistering in semi-darkness are described as flowers in her hair and the moonlight as her glittering dress. The rows of

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1. Relating nature as a background to human drama is described as a modern phenomenon by Western critics. According to W.H.Hudson "Another, and more important, mark of the general change which has come over our attitude towards nature is to be found in the fact that where as the older poets habitually used nature merely as a detatched back-ground, modern poets lend to relate such back-ground to the human drama which is played out against it". (W.H.Hudson, 'on the treatment of Nature in Poetry', An Introduction to the study of Literature, London (1960) p.325.

2. 'Sandhyā', Padumkali, B.G.II, p.996.

glow-worms are like strands of golden chain around her neck and the soft coo-ing sound of the birds is like the sound of her anklet . Similar descriptions are found in Fakirmohan[1] in his poem where he describes the beauty of night. If evening seems to be a coy bride eager to be united with her lover by Laksminath, the dark night with its soothing breeze assumes a mother figure for Fakirmohan. The ever spreading darkness seems to be a part of her garment with which the affectionately covers her children, the human beings and puts them to sleep. Similarly a rose to Fakirmohan, is a queen and the bees are beggars asking for her fragrance. The thorns are her body-guards and when she trembles in the breeze the poet thinks as if she is dancing royally in her soft bed of green leaves.[2] Both the poets weave exquisite similes and metaphors on the medieval pattern. That is why Laksminath discovers stars in his beloved's eyes[3], layers of dark cloud in her hair[4] and finds her arms resembling the stalks of lotus.[5] To Fakirmohan his wife appears like a beautiful flower or a sweet note of music lingering for ever in his mind.[6] She is an innocent

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1. 'Rātra, Dhūli, F.G.I, p.561.
2. 'Golāpa Sundarī', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.372
3. 'Priyatamār Saundarya', Kadamkali, B.G.II.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. 'Puṇiki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', Puṣpamālā, F.G.I, p.209.

bird in a state of total surrender to him.[1] This love of similes and metaphor is a legacy inherited from Sanskritic tradition. Even these eminent path-breakers could not but fall under its pervasive sway.

It is the most intimate and elaborate description of nature that marks the poetry of Fakirmohan. In his poem 'Swabhābara Nababhāba', Fakirmohan describes the vast panorama of nature and feels an overpowering fascination for it. His poem 'Santikānan' describes in minute detail a garden with ripe fruits hanging down the boughs, rows of lemon, cashew and pineapple trees, squares of flower beds and a cottonwool tree. He is not only observant of the fragrant nights and the beautiful creepers, but also the ripe paddy fields. For an identical description of nature in Laksminaths poetry we may refer to the poem 'Sandhyā', known for an elaborate description of evening through a succession of images, both novel and enchanting. The description of the evening breeze playing merrily with the creepers, stars twinkling in the distant sky, sweetscented flowers spreading their fragrance with gay abandon and glow-worms glittering like pieces of jewellery against the semidark background speaks enough of his penchant for details.

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1. 'Puniki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.209.

A comparative study of their poetry would be incomplete without a reference to their local setting. In this respect, both the poets display a marked sense of modernity. In ancient poetry, the description followed a set pattern that excluded local rivers, flowers and birds. Both Fakirmohan and Laksminath are fascinated by the native landscapes of Assam and Orissa. The pulsating rivers, colourful birds and sweet-smelling flowers of their respective lands find authentic expression in their poetry. In this regard, both of them can be considered as cultural poets who foregrounded the fragrance and smell of their native soil. In Laksminath's poetry, the Brahmputra or the Luit is extensively represented. He has gone to the extent of composing a poem exclusively on this river. In his poem 'Āmār Janmabhūmī' he refers to the special kind of rice, sour fruits, the varied vegetables and the bamboo groves of Assam. One of his poems is exclusively devoted to the Bihu festival of Assam. The traditional celebration of this festival, with its dances and diverse local musical instruments, is elaborately described. Similarly, Fakirmohan's poems are suffused with a spirit of Orissa. The Mahahadi and the Kathjodi form the subject of independent poems. Even some of the cities of Orissa hold a special attraction for him. He has composed individual poems on 'Cuttack' and 'Bhubaneshwar'. The life of the tribals of Orissa is portrayed sympathetically in 'Pāṭuā Pāṭoi'. His

poem 'Sandhyābele Bideśīr Cintā' presents a detailed description of an afternoon in an Oriya village. His discription of the sun setting behind the palms and the banyans, the girls carrying pitchers of water on their heads, the quick steps of the farmer returning from his fields, the weaving birds sitting on a palm tree is typically Oriya. This local scenario is complete with a row of bats in the sky and an owl pruning its wings.

Lastly, it might be said that in their poems nature is set in sharp contrast to human life. Thus, they being into focus the pathetic brevity and littleness of human life. Consequently, their nature poetry assumes a broader dimension and in their case nature and philosphy go hand in hand.[1]

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1. "Most of our modern poets have discovered, in nature x x x infinite spiritual significance. As every poet responds to nature according to the peculiar qualities of his own temperament, the poetry of emotional interpretation takes many different forms, as in the poetry of Wordsworth, for whom nature was divine, and who sought communion through nature with nature's indwelling soul; of Shelley, to whom nature was a mystical revolution of that enternal spirit in whom all modes of life are one, of Byron, who found in nature the passionate freedom which the conditions of the human lot denied to man; of Arnold, to whom, on the contrary, nature's calm was a refuge and a solace to the fretful and troubled hear", W.H. Hudson, 'on the Treatment of Nature in Poetry', An Introduction to The Study of Literature, London (1960) p.329.

This may be to an extent, due to the predominance of Bhakti cult in the traditional Indian poetry. No Indian poet can discard it altogether. The deep-rooted spiritualism of Indian life and letters makes them look at life around them as futile. The uncertainty of modern mind is another reason of their lea-ning on philosophic postulates. To Fakirmohan, life is a complete mystery. His poems are full of comments on life that will do credit to a philosopher. A number of poems in his collection 'Pūjāphula' and 'Dhūli' are direct addresses to the Almighty. In the midst of unrelieved sorrow that is life, he finds solace in God alone. In his poem 'Naba-Jīban', he begs of God to enable him to cast off his ego. He finds that life is ephemeral and man a mere puppet in the hands of God. This seems to be the general philosophy of many of his poems. He sees life nothing more than a tiny boat in the vast Ocean of time. Laksminath discovers an eternal spiritual truth even in the most commonplace subject of nature. The distant star in the sky seems to him a source of divine light and he seeks illumination from it.[1] In the whole panorama of nature he discovers an all-pervading[2] image of love. Laksminath finds the whole drama of life depicted

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1. 'Tārā', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.963.
2. 'Cumā', Ibid, p.951.

in a flower that blossoms and fades away in a small span of time.[1]

A strong patriotic fervour is another feature common to both the poets. Patriotism is essentially a modern phenomenon. There is hardly an ancient poem singing of the glory of the native land and calling upon its people to unite and protect it's honour. This sense of patriotism was particularly prominent in the early part of the 19th Century. Almost all the regional literatures can boast of poems expressing patriotic sentiments. This was certainly due to the rise of national consciousness caused by the foreign rule. Years of subservience to the British gave rise to a strong resentment that touched the poet and he sang of the glory of his motherland. Such poems played a useful role in uniting people to fight against foreign domination. Laksminath's poem 'O mor Āpunār Des' speaks of the dream of his land of birth. He sings in a tender tone of the infinite variety of its loveliness:

O my land,
O my dear land,
a land of gentle streams,

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1. 'Abaśes', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.965.

a land of luxuriant fruitfulness,
it is such a darling land.[1]

The mother concept of motherland is essentially Indian and, naturally, is a theme common to both the poets. Some of Laksminath's patriotic songs are irresistibly powerful. In his ministrel's song 'Bīn Barāgī' the patriotic fervour rises to a poignant force. In this poem the familiar symbolism of a historical past comes alive with vividness. Laksminath's long stretches of life outside Assam makes him feel in stronger bond with his native land. He is pround of his heritage and sings:

We are not poor, we can never be poor,
We had everything, we have everything,
We do not think or try to know them.[2]

'Assam Saṅgīt' is a captiviting poem with an energetic form and powerful historical consciousness. Even his parodies take motherland as a theme:

Where could you get such cereals that needs
only water to boil.
Where could you get such acid fruit from which
your teeth recoil.

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1. O Mor Āpunār Des, Trans Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbarua Sahitya Akademi, p.60.
2. Assam Saṅgit, Trans.Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbarua, Sahitya Akademi (1967), p.66.

He is conscious of the drawbacks of his own people, yet he affirms Assam's determination to march ahead and his poem ends with robust optimism:

> Beat this big drum, blow the conchshells,
> play mridanga and khol;
> Assam is moving up again, say, 'Glory to
> her all.[1]

Mother-tongue is but an offshoot of the concept of motherland. In his poem 'Janani Utkala Bhāṣā' Fakirmohan says:

> Oh my Mother; Oh my language;
> I worship you and my heart's
> desire is fulfilled.

His poem 'Janmabhūmi' is eloquently expressive of the beauty of Orissa. He says: Orissa is a place of rare beauty. Its feet are washed by the Ocean and the head adorned by the crown of hills. The man who does not respect such a sacred motherland is not worthy enough to be called her son. 'Utkalbhūmi' is yet another poem wherein he bows at her feet and feels miserable at her insult. Like Laksminath, he sings of the past glory of

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1. Assam Saṅgīt, Padumkali, B.G.II, p.993.

Orissa, of Lord Jagannāth, and of the valour of the ancient Kings. His epigrams about the different personalities of Orissa sum up the highest regard he had for the illustrious sons of his motherland.

Fakirmohan and Laksminath are both pioneers in the field of satirical poetry. Laksminath's essays in the series of Kṛpābar Baruwā are replete with poems either satirical or humourous or comical. Some of his cartoons are captioned with amusing poems that lack the subtle resonance his romantic lyrics are known to possess; but they are meant to serve a totally different purpose. It is alleged that he mounted a personal attack on his critics through a satirical poem, 'Calanī Āru Bejī'. These poems do not contribute much to his fame as a poet. Yet their importance to be the first ever vehicle for fun cannot be denied. They lampooned deficiency in social behaviour and promoted healthy social awareness too. Fakirmohan shines best in his satirical poems. He is a trend-setter in this field. One of his poems 'Mũ hāṭa-Bāhuḍā' continues to be widely read in Orissa to this day. In this poem, he pours sarcasm on various professions and its not-so-worthy practicioners. In his poem 'Utkaḷa-bh-ramaṇ' he not only praises some of the personalities of Orissa, but also criticies a few of them. Another poem'yama Rajāṅka Darabāra' is well-known for its satirical treatment of

writers of obscene literature. The poem makes clever use of Hindi and English words for comic effect.

Now a brief evaluation of their contribution to poetic froms may be attempted. Both these poets excel in short lyrics. They have deviated from the ancient narrative method of using rhyming couplets and have, at times, experimented with innovations in stanza pattern also. Both of them have written fine short poems. Laksminath's mini-poems in his collection 'Kadamkali'[1] and Fakirmohan's mini-poems in his book 'Dhūḷi' are amply indicative of their contribution in this field. Both of them have exploited the rich folk literature of their respective native cultures. Fakirmohan has written a number of simple poems in folk style.[2] He set a trend that was successfully carried out later by Nandakisor Bal. Laksminath has exploited the folk tradition to a greater extent in his ballads. It may be noted that the revival of folk literature is essentially a modern phenomenon. Because of its smooth communicability and cultural evocations, folk vacabulary continues to be treated with respect even by

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1. Poems 'Maran', 'Saṁgrām', 'Sonār Sikali', 'Tomār Kām' 'Sukhabodh', 'Kṛtitwa', 'Renukā'.

2. Poems 'Cāndamanira Aṅgā', 'Bhuā Birādi o Kāliā Kukura', 'Gardabharā Sukṣma Budhi', 'Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, pp. 376, 378, 375.

the ultra-modern poets. No wonder, even the leading English poets in our times, (Spender, Yeats and Auden, to mention only a few) have attempted ballads. Wordsworth and Coleridge who launched the romantic movement in English literature had embarked on their liteeary careers with a publication known as 'Lyrical Ballads'.

The ballad is a short story in verse. Its main themes are commonly furnished by the more elementary aspects of life and it draws inspiration from tales of adventure, deeds of prowess and valour. It has frequently a strong infusion of super-naturalism, love, hatred and pity. The simpler interests of the domestic lot, too, receive a fair share of attention. In method and style, it is characterised by straight-forwardness and rapidity of narration and a certain childlike naivete. In style, the ballad has immense dramatic power and wonderful metrical beauty.

Laksminath does not strictly follow the above definition. His is rather a modern form of ballad with a natural expansion. His is not a laborious imitation of primitive models and he does not strive for formalistic excellence. The fire of romantic inspiration in him is set alight by the rich cycle of peasant songs, the Bongits and the Bihugits. In attempting ballads, he was considerably influenced by the romantic poets of the west. He recreated

the ballad tradition of the countryside. Laksminath, as a literary man, was attuned by temperament more to the rural tradition than to the urban. He belonged to the romantic atmosphere of the rural song. His ballad 'Dhanbar āru Ratanī' can be cited as an example of his craftmanship in ballad writing. This poem has taken the love story of a boy and a girl, as its main theme. The story is presented in the form of two dramatic monologues, one each of the two lovers. The story unfolds itself against the natu-ral backdrop of the river Luit. This is a tender love romance narrated in the folk tradition against an appropriate background of rustic scenery. 'Nimātī Kanyā' is another ballad that narrates the story ofadumb girl.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Laksminath remains well within the cultural and geographical boundaries of his native land. Fakirmohan, by contrast, travels far field. His poems reveal a man of rare complexity. What comes out from his diverse poetic creations is an amazingly cosmopolitan mind, warm with sympathy for whatever is great or sublime. His poet friends Rādhānāth and Madhūsūdan are inspired by topics that are poetic in themselves. Fakirmohan has a wider range of issues to choose from. He is alike at home with Jesus Christ and Tukaram as also the divorced Josephine. He welcomes with open arms the glorious achievements of modern Japan in several of his poems and sets them up as

examples before his countrymen. His open-ended world-view is an authentic mark of his modern sensibility. He is sensitive to the delicate fragrance of Husna Hena flower plant supposed to have been imported from Japan. A long poem on Lucretia, the faithful Roman wife, is yet another example of his ever expanding vision.

CHAPTER IV

EMERGENCE OF FICTION

1. Short Story

The short story is a product of the modern age. Though our ancient literature is full of fables and parables, the short story in the modern sense emerges in Indian literature only in the later half of the nineteenth century. The short story writers of this period touch on problems of day_to-day life and give adequate attention to the concrete social concerns rather than to abstract moralism and didacticism of the past.

A short story is defined as a narrative that can easily be read in a single sitting. Thus, brevity is its most obvious characteristic. The story differs from the novel not only in length but also in motive, plan and structure. The subject of a story is such, as can be adequately developed within the prescribed limit. Clear in outline and with little suggestion of crowding, it is complete within its own frame-work. Singleness of aim and singleness of effect are the two great requisites of a short story as a piece of art. It can either be a story of character or a story of plot or a story of impression.

Listening to a story seems to be one of the primitive instincts of a man. There is an innate love for a story in all world literatures. In the development of any normal child, there certainly comes a time when he lives in the fairy land of giants, elves, witches and magic. The same instinct of listening to a story even follows him through his youth and middle age. That is why in all ancient literatures, we find a rich store-house of folk tales and romances. The modern short story is a deviation from folk literature in the sense that it combines intellect with imagination. It is interested precisely not in romance or adventure but in men and women as they are.

In India, though the classical sanskrit literature did not have a single novel to its credit it was very rich in narrative literature. Pañcatantra, Bṛhatkathā, Jātaka Kathā, Daśa Kumāra Carita and Kathā Sarit Sāgar, to name only a few, are wonderful collections of stories. In these books, the stories run in a sequence like that of Arabian Knights. Though didactic in spirit, they are entertaining in effect. Their chief characteristic is the birds and animals serving as human characters. They talk and behave like humanbeings and are often capable of giving sound advice. Since the story writer's aim is mainly didactic, he chooses the device of a moral towards the end. They provide entertainment in abundance

and the audience suspends its disbelief as to the probability of animals behaving like normal human beings.

In the eighteenth century, Caturbinod by Brajanāth Badajenā is a mile-stone in the development of story literature in Oriya. Its stories mostly follow the traditional pattern of folk tales and are interspersed with profuse amount of verses. The modern short story came into being with Fakirmohan. He is the first short story writer of Orissa who goes beyond mythology, legend and parables and is concerned with contemporary social life. His first short story 'Lachamaniā' is untraceable. The second story 'Rebatī' was published in 1898 in the journal 'Utkal Sāhitya' and was at once acclaimed as a genuinely original piece of writing. Thereafter, he wrote stories fairly continuously. He wrote twenty short stories in all. Being the first short stories of Oriya literature, they are of immense historical importance. It was Fakirmohan who established short story as a modern genre in Oriya literature.

Likewise, Laksminath is the first successful short story writer in Assamese literature. His first collection of short stories under the heading 'Surabhi' was published in 1909. This was followed up with two more volumes - 'Sādhukathār Kuki' in 1910 and 'Jonbiri' in 1913. Another collection of

short stories, 'Kehõkali' was published posthumously. These four volumes make an impressive tally of sixtyseven stories. Assamese literature, like all other regional literatures, has its own tales, myths and fables. But Laksminath was the first short story writer who broke an entirely new ground. He simultaneously appears as a preserver of folk tradition also and has a good collection of folk tales to his credit. He presents a good example of synthesis of tradition and modernity.

Both Fakirmohan and Laksminath are strikingly original in their writings. The influences that they imbibed from Bengali literature served as a shaping force and remained in the background. Laksminath, related as he was to Tagore's family, must have gone through the stories of Rabīndranāth. Fakirmohan too talks about his love for Bengali journals in his autobiography[1] and may be safely assumed to have read Bengali short stories before attempting one in Oriya.[2]

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1. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.41.

2. Fakirmohan refers to Bengali short stories in one of his letters. In his letter to Śrī Biswanāth Kar, he says "I find that the Bengali monthlies are of better standard because of short stories. That is why I have been trying to write stories in Oriya". See Surendra Mohanti, 'Fakīrmohanaṅka Patrābalī', Fakīrmohan Samikṣā, Cuttack (1972) p.277.

Of course, unlike Fakirmohan, Laksminath was deeply influenced by the Assamese folk tradition. The recurrence of folk themes and old motifs is an important factor in modern literature. The modern writers, both eastern and western, have not only collected folk tales, but have also successfully utilised folk characters and episodes as symbols in their own writings. Laksminath is a true pioneer in this field.

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan depict the nature and life of the people around them. Their stories are charged with profound humane sympathy. Both the writers excell in satire and hence the pattern of their stories is mostly comic. The hypocrisy, vanity and prejudice of the society are held to ridicule in their stories. They are mainly concerned with the problems of the middle class family and the peasantry of whom they had intimate experience. We hardly find any description of a sophisticated society in their stories. Laksminath is the more poetic and romantic of the two. He wrote his stories in a comparatively younger age. Fakirmohan's first traceable story 'Rebatī' was published in the year 1898 when he was fifty five years old.[1]

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1. Laksminath's first collection of Stories (Surabhi) was published in 1909 when he was forty five years old.

All his other stories were written thereafter.

Fakirmohan clearly expresses his concept of short stories in one of his letters. He writes "It is not difficult to write a story. The world is full of stories. Only one lacks imagination and physical strength to write them."[1] Clearly, Fakirmohan finds themes for stories scattered all over the social milieu. His story 'Balasore Rāhājānī' he tells us, is based on true facts. His 'Dhūliā Bābā' is also indicative of an actual incident modified a little to form of a narrative design. The major figure of this story is a monk who cheats and exploits the villagers. He is ultimately exposed and punished. This story brings out, beyond doubt, Fakirmohans dependence upon actual incidents and realistic details.

For Fakirmohan, the plot of the story is more important. He would think of the plot first and invent characters and situations thereafter. This is evident from his letter to Śrī Biswanāth kar wherein he says: "When I receive a note from you, I remain awake for an hour or so after dinner and think out the plot. After that I start writing."[2]

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1. See Surendra Mohanti, Fakīrmohanaṅka Patrābalī, Fakīrmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1972), p.226.

2. Ibid.

Fakirmohan's stories are remarkable for their small bodies, but evidently, he is not always satisfied with the size of the story and wants more space for adequate portrayal of character. He says: "Had I written the story 'Sabhya Jamidār' in your previous issue in a little slower vein, the characterisation would have been better."[1] He tells us that he would work over a story for half an hour every day and finish it up within 4-5 days.[2] Since he, because of indifferent health, could not write a story at a stretch, there were digressions and a lack of unity in some of his stories.

One of his short stories, 'Ajānāti Kathā', describes in detail his ideas about the theme and contents of a short story. The story is in the form of a dialogue where a grand-father and his grand-son discuss the merits and demerits of a good story. Through this dialogue, Fakirmohan says that the different activities of real men and women are described by an author through his short stories. This illustrates his concern for realism. For him, the characters in his stories were not alien to the people of real life, but were expressions of his own reading of the minds and working of men and women around him. In the same story, Fakirmohan

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1. See Surendra Mohanti, Fakīrmohanaṅka Patrābalī, Fakīrmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1972) p.233.

2. Ibid, p.224.

speaks of the moral aspect of his short stories also. He makes the grandson say, "Be it a novel or a story, the writer composes it to teach certain lesson to the common man."

If Fakirmohan considers realism, plot and moral as three distinguished features of a short story, Laksminath too holds, more or less, the same view points. He refers to two additional terms i.e. 'art' and 'beauty'. In two of his short stories 'Pātmukhī' and 'Śvān' he has offered a more explicit account of the short story. In both these stories he uses three critical terms-plot, art and beauty, and in both, he defines the short story as a literary form with a moral. He writes:

> 'My dear friend, I have read your story with great attention, still I have not been able to make head or tail of it. If it is to be called a 'story', then, certainly, all the gibberish that passes in your home and my home from morning till evening will pass for stories. But I would like to know where is the plot of the story? It has neither plot nor art nor beauty nor moral, nor principle. Everything is mere froth. (PĀTMUKHĪ)[1]

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1. Trans. Bhaben Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa's Major Achievement: Short Stories' In Laksminath Bezbaroa. The Sāhityarathī of Assam, (ed) Maheswar Neog. Gauhaty University (1972) p.156.

"Excellent. This is what you call a story. 'Plot', 'Art' and 'Beauty' all the three are here. Of morality about society and religion there is enough to boast. On the whole, this is a capital story."(SVĀN).[1]

Interestingly, both these stories do not conform, in the strict sense, to theory of plot. Both of them are rather plotless. Nevertheless, the stories do have art and beauty. It might as well be said here that the idea of 'art' and 'beauty' are very much modern. Contrary to the ancient myths and legends which followed stereotyped pattern with a beginning, a middle and an end, the modern story aims at a more artistic representation. The audience is now to be won over by a story with an artistic presentation. This calls for new techniques and innovations which Laksminath's stories supply. As told earlier, Laksminath himself was an excellent writer of folk tales otherwise called 'Sādhukathā' which aim at imparting a moral. No wonder even his short stories aim at imparting a general truth. Interestingly, he terms one of his collections of short stories as one of 'Sadhukatha' which emphacises his concern for morals.

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1. Trans. Bhaben Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa's Major Achievement: Short Stories' In Laksminath Bezbaroa. The Sāhityarathī of Assam,(ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972), p.156.

A number of his stories are, of course, free from reformative tone and charm us as specimens of narrative skill.

Regarding the choice of characters in his stories, his ideas tally with those of Fakirmohan. Laksminath's characters are the common folk around him. He writes:

> Previously, through the dramas written by me,
> I have described kings, subjects, princesses,
> lawyers, doctors, barristors, townsmen and
> rustic people, even servants and dogs and cats.
> Then why should not I include in my stories
> the two gardeners who have so diligently looked
> after my flower garden? x x x
> So with the permission of my readers, I take
> them as characters of this story. (Baricowā)

In the beginning of another story, 'Bhairā', he tells us how his gardener at Jharsuguda felt let down for not being included in his story while the gardener of Sambalpur was recipient of such an honour. He promised to write a story about him and actually wrote one. These are a few examples to show that his stories did not depend upon mythology or legend but upon the living people around him. A poor Oriya fan puller at Sambalpur[1] was as worthy

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1. 'Dasmantar', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.775.

of accommodation in his short story as an Anglo-Indian doctor in the waiting room of Bilaspur Station.[1]

To sum up, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan are realistic story tellers who choose their characters from contemporary life. They deviate from medieval literary conventions and go in for innovations in theme and technique. They have established a new genre in their respective languages.

A cursory glance at the short stories of Laksminath and Fakirmohan shows that inspite of a number of contrastive features, they share some common ground. Both of them are the pioneers in the art of comic stories. Their stories fall into two major categories - comic and serious. The first category is expressive of social concerns while the second category reflects wider and diverse concern. The comic category may be further bifurcated into two sub-groups. (i) Stories that satirise and (ii) Stories that entertain. The second category of Laksminath's stories has two additional sub-groups, i.e. the stories regarding nature and the stories regarding the human and the animal worlds.[2]

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1. 'Chāimon', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.773.

2. Stories 'Lobh', 'Śvān' and 'Marjārī' take man's relation to the animal world as the subject.

Some of the important satirical stories of Laksminath are 'Malak Guin Guin', 'Bhokendra Baruwā', 'Jātirāmar Jāt', 'Naṅgalucandra', 'Ghanṭākarana Śarmā', 'Rachit' and 'Lambodar Ḍekā' and Fakirmohan's 'Ḍākmunsi', 'Sabhya Jamidār', and 'Patent Medicine'. In these stories, the butt of satire is the blind Westernisation of the society. A number of Laksminath's short stories, 'Jagarā Maṇḍalar Premābhinay', 'Ḍambarudharar Saṁsār', 'Pratham Darśanat Opajā Prem', to name a few, are humourous presentations of social incogruities. They are known mainly for their exuberant sense of humour rather than for significant plots or deep insights into reality. Unlike Laksminath, Fakirmohan was unable to write a story for the sake of pure fun. His story 'Raṇḍipua Ananta', written mainly in a humourous style, rises to the level of tragedy at the end. 'Gāruḍi Mantra' in spite of its fine sense of humour, is indirectly critical of the conservative outlook of the social orthodoxy. In his case, humour and social concern go hand in hand. So far as serious stories are concerned, we may refer to 'Kanyā' 'Nakaŏ', 'Erābarī', 'Nistārinī Ḍevī', 'Lāokholā' by Laksminath and 'Birei Biśāla' 'Bagalā Boguli' and 'Rebatī' by Fakirmohan.

The most important feature ofthese two writers is their strong criticism of the current beliefs and behaviour patterns of the people. Fakirmohan's stories are the finest

documents of the contemporary life and manners. He has foregrounded a variety of contemporary social problems. Women's education occupies a major place in his stories. The common outlook towards education of girls is expressed through Rebatī's grand-mother who is strongly of the opinion that school education, for a girl, is totally useless and that she should better learn cooking and other fine arts. She is so blindly confirmed in her opinions that she attributes the misfortune of her family entirely to the education, her grand-daughter has acquired. 'Gārudimantra' deals with the same problem, though in a lighter vein. The newly married bride in this story, chooses to be a puppet in the hands of a few elders and avoids giving proper companionship to her husband for fear of social criticism. The leading character of another story 'Pāthoi Bahu' makes a fool of herself because of her ignorance and fails to come up to her husband's intellectual level, thus creating a mental barrier between the two. These three stories express his resentment over the prevalent social customs and the illiteracy of women folk. He is also bitterly critical of the anglicised youth of his times. The young men and women, under the impact of western education, imitate false values and invite severe criticism. They are a grist to Fakirmohan's creative mill. Nayantārā, in the story 'Sabhya Jamidār', epitomises the common attitude of such females as consider themselves to be modern and find

villages unhabitable. Nayantara goes to the extent of insulting her mother-in-law and shows scant regard for religious customs and rituals. 'Patent Medicine' revolves around the hero's addiction to liquor. His total disapproval of the behaviour pattern of the modern youth is expressed through Gopal in 'Dāk Munsi' who considers it beneath dignity to introduce his poor rustic father to the sophisticated set and drives him away from his house. 'Dhūliā Bābā' lampoons the hypocritical monks and the religious heads who practise deceit in the name of religion. 'Kālikā Prasād Gorāp' is a fine depiction of the various facets of maritime business at Balasore. The nefarious custom of selling of girls for money proves back-ground for his story 'Mādha Mahantinka Kanyāsunā.'

Like Fakirmohan, Laksminath has weaved a number of stories around the anglicised youth of his times. His story 'Malak Guin Gin', pours ridicule on the poeple who cut themselves away from their social moorings. The hybird Anglo-Assamese culture, oblivious of a serious concern for values, is typified by the protagonist of this story. The story invites comparison with Fakirmohan's 'Dākmunsi'. In both the stories the educated sons feel loss of face in publically owing their illiterate rustic kith and kin. If gopal kicks his father, Malak does not mind having his brother

slapped in the face by his orderly. The leading characters of both these stories have been gobbled up by a false sense of prestige. Laksminath's story 'Bhokendra Baruwā' mocks at the foolish attempt of the educated young men to give their native names an anglicised twist. 'Ḍambarudharar Saṁsār', derides the shallowness of an educated young man who expresses his love to his adolecent young bride in a mock westernised fashion. The contemporary curse of opium forms the subject matter of his story 'Dhõwākhowā'. The exploitation of the innocent Assamese girls by the western establishment of the tea gardens has been vividly depicted in his story 'Mr. Fipson'. The pitiable condition of women in various fields of Assamese life continues to be the focal point of his stories 'Erābarī', 'Seutī' and 'Lalitī Kakatī'. The art of caste system comes under heavy criticism in 'Jātirāmar Jāt' wherein a man comes to be looked down by the society for no better reason than that he happens to eat biscuits. The story 'Putrabān Pitā' criticises grown-up children who neglect the old and the invalid parents. In short, most of Laksminath's stories are born out of a satirical reaction towards various social evils and are inspired by a sense of social reform.

Another factor common to both of them is their main emphasis on the problems of the middle class and the weaker section of society. Their characters are drawn from their

immediate surroundings and they speak of problems of whom they have intimate knowledge. No wonder, they are sympathetic even in their satires. Their ultimate aim is social reform. They love the society whose shortcomings they expose. That is why Sulocanā, the leading female character of Fakirmohan's story 'Patent Medicine', in-spite of her short temper, is an extremely devoted housewife. Her fury is but an expression of her deep love towards her husband. Similarly the leading character in Laksminath's 'Bhadarī', a quarrelsome woman, acts as a protectress to her husband in the event of a dangerous situation.

Fakirmohan draws an authentic picture of Orissa and its people in his short stories. The villages, their peasants, the cowherds, the newly educated youths, the newly-introduced education system as well as the maritime trade of Orissa port have been treated by him with sympathy and precision. Likewise, the people in Laksminath's stories are authentic Assamese. The social customs, the religious beliefs, the festivals, the caste system and the hypocrisy of the higher higher strata of society depicted in his short stories speak like precise facts in a historical document. But one difference is all too apparent between Fakirmohan and Laksminath. Fakirmohan's stories remain well within the geographical and cultural ambit of Orissa. On the other hand, Laksminath's

stories display a broader specturm and are painted on a bigger canvass. We catch a good glimpse of Assamese life in his writing. In addition to that, we get a side-view of Bengal and Orissa also. A good number of Laksminath's stories adopt Calcutta as the centre of their activity. Being very knowledgable about the customs and manners of Bengali society, he draws a convincing picture of Bengali life . His stories, 'Lāokholā', 'Bhurukī Bou', and 'Dāktar Bābur Sādhu' not only describe Bengali Society, but also partray characters from the various cross section of contemporary Bengali life. Sometimes even their conversation is in Bengali. Similarly a number of stories, like 'Bhairā' and 'Baricowā', relate to Orissa. He is a genuine comparatist. If the locale in one of his stories in Kasi[1], it is Madhupur[2] in another. Very few Indian writers have, in their literacy work, dealt with such a wide cross-section of the larger Indian society as has been done by him.

Plot, character and atmosphere may be said to be the three important elements in a short story. Most of the stories written by Laksminath and Fakirmohan lay emphasis on character.

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1. 'Kāśibāsī', Jan Biri, B.G.I, p.913.
2. Mr. Fipson, Surabhi, B.G.I, p.605.

Their characters range from the rural rustics to the urban snobs. Fakirmohan is as good at depicting a teacher as a cowherd. Laksminath's range is even wider. He is as at home with an European as with a tribal Oriya. Both of them prefer a lively character to a well-made plot. Fakirmohan's characters are more or less stereotyped. Most of the times the central characters usually pass through a long spell of suffering leading to a change of heart,[1] or death. Dhūḷiā Bābā burns himself to death in his own sacrificial fire, Mādha Mahanti, the avaricious father in 'Mādha Mahantiṅka Kanyā Sunā' dies as a result of his own greed, Candra Maṇi Pattanāyaka, the drug addict, in 'Patent Medicine' is transformed into a model husband under the blows of his wife's broomstick and Nimā, the arrogant and indolent bride in 'Sunā-Bohu' is disciplined into an ideal housewife by her sister-in-law. In all these cases, the way of life of the central character is initially wrong. He has been not a hero, but an ani-hero; and finally his waywardness brings him suffering

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1. Some of the short stories of Laksminath like 'Jayantī', 'Cor', 'Bhadarī', 'Śivaprasād', Pratham Darsanat opajā Prem, 'Kanyā', Jal Kũwarī', 'Mārjārī', 'Lobh' and Bhurukī Bou' show this element of surprise in terms of a sudden change of heart in one of the characters or a sudden change of the basic situation or a surprise revelation of something hidden or secret.

which transforms him into a hero. This is the most frequent direction of the personality change recorded in Fakirmohan's fiction. There is of course one exception to this rule in one of his short stories. In 'Dāk Munsi' Gopal simha is an instance of change in the opposite direction. At the out set of the story, he is presumably a dutiful son but ultimately is changed into an unsympathetic and arrogant character by driving his father out of the house.

Laksminath on the other hand does not follow any set pattern for his stories and his characters cover a wide range. 'Bhadarī' is a story of an Assamese peasant woman. 'Lāokholā' takes a young Bengali widow as the central character. 'Mālatī' is a macabre story of a girl's suicidal revenge against a King. 'Nistārinī Ḍevī' narrates the story of a Hindu girl who is considered on outcaste for her contact with Muslims. 'Ratan Muṇḍā' takes a tribal Oriya boy as the central figure and a beggar of Orissa features in 'Maganiyār Budhā'. Thus Laksminath's stories present a novel assortment of characters, each one original and interesting in his or her own way.

In a number of Laksminath's stories, nature plays quite an important role. Surprisingly, Fakirmohan's stories have no use for nature. In this respect he is mostly anti-romantic. Curiously, the man whose lyrics are so sensitively alive to the various aspects of nature, chooses to completely

banish it from the realm of his short stories. For him, men and women around him are sufficient enough material for literary creations. This exclusive interest in human destiny is a modern phenomenon. A deep concern for fellow-beings and involvement with contemporary reality is a significant feature of modern writing.

Laksminath, on the other hand, makes a remarkably effective use of nature in some his short stories which were written, perhaps, under the influence of Rabīndranāth Tagore. 'Kanyā', Jalkũwarī', 'Nakaõ', 'Erābarī', 'Bihu' and 'Mukti', are the stories built around relationship between man and nature. They are known for their folktale atmosphere. 'Kanyā' and 'Jalkũwarī' adopt a river as a character. 'Jalkũwarī' is the story of a girl in love with a river. In 'Nakaõ', nature serves as a hiding place for the lovers in elopment. In 'Kanyā', the river stands witness to the love story of a boy and a girl. In 'Erābarī' a group of trees in a forest start a conversation about the sad lot of a young widow who has committed suicide as the only way out of her misery. In 'Mukti', nature means freedom. In 'Bihu', the contrast between the artificial modern world and the pagan spirit of nature is brought to the front. In all these stories, Laksminath uses chosen elements of nature as symbols and thus becomes a pioneer in the field of technique.

Being pioneers in the field, Laksminath and Fakirmohan, had no models to guide them. They developed their own devices and techniques. Laksminath, the author of a larger number of stories, was in a better position to make greater variety of experiments in expression. Some of his stories are descriptive; quite a few of them being autobiographical, are written in first person. Śvān, Mārjārī, Nistarinī Devī and Mr. Fipson are a few of such stories, wherein the narrator himself plays a significant role. No wonder the fictive illusion in such stories looks like a convincing piece of reality.[1] Fakirmohan has no penchant for such stories. He narrates the happenings in third person from an artistic distance.

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1. As an example of this fictitious reality, we can take the story 'Chaimon' by Laksminath. The story begins thus - "Once while out on tour, I had to stay in the waiting room of Bilaspur Station. The waiting room was a double storeyed building with a plenty of sun-shine and air. It was quite neat and tidy also. I decided to occupy a room in the first floor". This reads more like a piece of autobiography than an imaginary tale. This method of narration gives credibility to an otherwise imaginary story. When the writer tells us what happened to himself, we are more likely to belive that he is telling the truth.

In technique, Laksminath is by far the more suphisticated of the two. He makes effective use of psycho-analytical devices as also supernatural elements. In his stories, the plot may begin in a railway compartment.[1] or on board of a ship.[2] "Swargārohaṇ" and 'Mor Saite Mañāir Danda' display innovations in technique in so far as they depict mental state through the device of a dream. In 'Āmār Saṁsār', Laksminath uses dialogue as a narrative device. Compared to him, Fakirmohan's stories follow more or less a simple historical narrative pattern. For once, in 'Ajānātikathā' he deviates from this pattern and uses dialogue for narrative purpose, but lands himself in a miserable failure. As told earlier, his story, generally, begins by introducing the central character who leads a miserable existence. He may, in the end, undergo a change of heart of breath his last. This pattern has been repeated over and over again. The story follows a simple linear-path with few twists and turns, flashbacks or chronological disruptions. There are, of course a few exceptions. 'Patent Medicine' is one such story. It has an abrupt beginning adding a dramatic element to an otherwise flat process of narration. Such exceptions are rare, indeed.

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1. 'Mr. Fipson', Surabhi, B.G.I, p.913.
2. 'Arji', Sādhukathār Kuki, B.G.I, p.683.

Love plays a dominant role in both the story-tellers. Among the love-stories of Fakirmohan, 'Gārudimantra' deserves a special mention, particularly for its superb ending. Rebatī's adolcent love is depicted with commendable restraint. Sulocaña's anger towards her husband is but a sadistic device commensurate with her unbounded love for her husband. 'Bagalā Bagulī' by Fakirmohan is yet another story that gives a convincing expression to ideal conjugal relationship. Fakirmohan speaks of marital love only. Deviations are hard to come by.

If the treatment of love is rather subdued in Fakirmohan, it is bold and daring in Laksminath. Three of his stories 'Kanyā' 'Nakaõ' and 'Mādhaimalatī' may be cited as examples of bold expressions of love. There are, of course, quite a few other stories on the same theme. 'Gītā' 'Pātmukhī', 'Mādhaimālatī' and 'Chāiman' are stories where love strays beyond the bounds approved by tradition. In 'Kanyā', the lovers meet a watery grave. 'Ratan Muṇḍā' is also a story of lovers in elopment. Ratan Muṇḍā is drowned in a river leaving his beloved alone in the forest. 'Mādhaimālatī' is the story of a young girl who, disregarding the wishes of her father, elopes with an impecunious young man. In 'Pātmukhī', a young girl, deserted by her lover, develops an uncanny insight into man's nature and plays an erotic trick on an aged relative of hers.

The stories of both these writers tend to be duscursive and are loose in structure. That is both a flaw as also a distinctive mark of artistic complexity. This is advantageous in the sense that their Dickensian shades of narration with its emphasis on unnecessary details makes their characters lively and true to reality. Devoid of these extra frills, the characters are apt to loose much of their charm. Laksminath's art of narration suffers from verbosity to some extent. His short story bears close resemblance to a longish folk-tale. His is an art of exaggeration in both style and description. Fakirmohan's short story is as episodical as that of Laksminath. Fakirmohan is essentially a specialist in novel which calls forth elaborate description of events and characters. He would not curb his tendency to elaborate and dilate even in his short stories. Never-the-less, the stories of both these writers, though not compact and finely chiselled pieces, weave an interesting yarn and hold the readers attention.

Another flaw, alike in Laksminath and Fakirmohan, is the contrived incidents and coincidences which tend to detract from the naturalness of the narratives. For example, in Laksminath's 'Mādhaimālatī', the presence of Nīlāmbar in the cowshed when Mādhaimālatī slips out to meet her paramour is too obvious a contrivance. In Fakirmohan's story 'Garudimantra'

Mohinī's fright at the sight of a paper snake seems a little too naive. So also is the thrashing, Candramaṇi Bābu receives at the hands of his wife wielding a broomstick. At places such exaggerations and contrivances are too improbable to inspire suspension of disbelief.

Laksminath has a wider range of topics to handle. Fakirmohan is a little too limited in his choice of subject-matter and his plot making is invariably cramped by the requirements of poetic justice. Most of his heroes suffer for their mis-deeds.[1] There are some of the failings that an interim period in a literary development is generally heir to. Laksminath and Fakirmohan were pioneers with no models to guide them. They worked with tools of folk-narrations and produced short stories of a dimension hitherto unthought of.

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1. Presumably, according to Fakirmohan, the law that pursues human action is cold like steel and each person has to pay relentlessly for his misdeeds. This cold bloodedness remains the constant feature in all Fakirmohan's stories as well as novels.

2. Historical Novel

The tradition of story telling, either for entertainment or for instruction has existed since times immemorial. But the Novel, as a distinct form of literature, is comparatively of recent origin. Even in the West, where it originated and developed, it is an 18th Century product. In India, it appeared in the later half of the 19th Century either in translation or as an original work. The fact that the novel is an imported or adopted literary form explains the different names given it in different Indian Languages. It is 'Kādambarī' in Kannada, Marathi and Gujarati, 'Upanyās' in Hindi, Bengali Assamese and Oriya, 'Navīnam' or 'Pudinam' in Tamil and 'Navalamu' in Telugu.

In Sanskrit literature, prose narrative was considered a part of Kāvya and Kāvya was divided into two broad divisions, prose and poetry. The prose or Gadya Mahākāvya was further bifurcated into Kathā and Akṣāyikā. The former included writings like Kādambarī by Bāṇabhaṭṭa and was mainly imaginary in its content. The latter took history as its theme of narration. Harṣacarita may be cited as example of Akṣāyikā. However, these prose narratives cannot be termed as novel. The main aim of a novel is considered to be realism and intellect. W.J. Long, the famous English critic emphasises

these two elements in a novel. According to him:

> The novel is a work of fiction in which the imagination and the intellect combine to express life in the form of a story; and the imagination is always directed and controlled by the intellect. It is interested chiefly, not in romance or adventure, but in men and women as they are; it aims to show the motives and influences which govern human life and the effects of personal choice upon character and destiny. Such is the true novel, and as such it opens a wider and more interesting field than any other type of literature.[1]

It is apparent from this definition that novel is considered as a viable form of literary art, both for realistic delineation of character and for authentic presentation of social situation. It is a form of literature which comes into being with the emergence of realism.

This search for realism started in English literature in the 18th century and it was with Richardson and his publication of Pamela in 1740 that the true novel appeared in

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1. W.J. Long, English literature, U.S.A. (1937) p.341.

English literature. This tradition was followed successfully by Fielding, Smollet and Sterne. During the Romantic period Jane Austin gave a fair enough description of the life of English Country Society in her novels. The stress for realism was later emphasised by Dickens in the Victorian period, who drew an authentic picture of the poor and down trodden.

In the 19th century India, the spread of education and the emergence of newspapers and magazines led to an immense increase in the number of readers. A new type of literature expressing new ideas and values was in demand. The individual came to occupy a prominence in literature hitherto unheard of, and so the novel was born. The novelists were to tell their readers not about knights or kings or imaginary heroes but about themselves in the guise of plain men and women.

The early Indian novels were mostly historical romances[1]

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1. "The Romance is, originally, a work of fiction in which the imagination is given full play, without being limited by facts or probabilities. It deals with extra-ordinary events, with heroes whose powers are exaggerated, and often adds the element of superhuman or supernatural characters. It is impossible to draw the line where romance ends. But this element of excessive imagination and of impossible heroes and incidents is its distinguishing mark in every literature". W.H. Long, English Literature, U.S.A. (1937), p.340.

with a strong patriotic flavour, inspired by the newly awakened sense of Indian nationalism. With the British rule at its zenith, the safest expression of patriotism open to Indians was the celebration of past glory. Nationalist feeling grew more intense in the twenties and the thrities. It was no longer necessary for novelists to distanciate their heroes in time; the scene could now be shiefted to those actively involved in contemporary agitations. Concern for one's motherland grew apace. Heroes of the freedom struggle began to be worshipped and glorified in works of fiction.

Novel emerged at different times in different regions of India, but almost everywhere the earliest works were historical romances.[1] In Bengali, Bhūdeba Candra Mukherjee's 'Angurīya Binimoy'[2] was the best seller by the standard of the day but was soon surpassed in the next decade by the

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1. Tod's 'Annals of Rajasthan' was published in England in 1829 and was avidly read by all educated Indians. This, to some extent, prompted the Indian writers to venture into the realm of historical fiction singing the glory of their own heroes and thus vicariously supplying solace to their wounded vanity. Fakirmohan's novel is remotely connected with an episode of 'Annals of Rajasthan' and he mentions this the last chapters of Lachamā.

2. This books had, as its primary characters, the emperor Aurangjeb, his daughter Rosinārā and Sivāji, the Marahtta Chieftain.

novels of Baṅkim Candra Chatterjee. Baṅkim Candra wrote only one authentie historical novel, Raj Siṁha. The rest of his writings were romances based on history. Baṅkim Candra's influence - and through him that of Sir Walter Scott was only too evident in the early historical novels of Hindi in which Kiśorīlāl Goswāmī led the field for a long time. The first of his long series of historical novels, 'Labaṅgalatā', appeared almost at the same time as Devakī Nandan Kṣatrī's 'Candrakantā', and together they launched a phase of the Hindi novel which continued well into the twentieth century. In Marathi, Hari Nārāyaṇ Āpte was the first to establish himself as a widely read novelist. His first novel, 'Maisorchā Wāgh', was a translation of Meadows Taylor's 'Tipoo Sultan', but later he found his themes in Śivājī's life. Almost contemporary with Goswāmī in Hindi and Āpte in Marathi was Raman Pillāi, the Malayali novelist, whose 'Mārtaṇḍa varmā' and subsequent works were based on Travancore history. In Kannada, translations of Baṅkim's and Āpte's novels continued to be widely read uptill 1913 when the first modern historical novel in Kannada, 'Kumudinī' by Galagnāth, was published.

Indo-Anglian fiction, the first to be born and to grow up among various branches of Indian fiction, also began with its own variety of historical fiction. In such novels as S.K. Ghose's 'The Prince of Destiny' and S.K. Mitra's

'Hindupur', both of which were published in 1809, history serves as a backdrop. The history, as depicted in these novels, is entirely romantic with no basis in actual facts. After a long gap during which practically no Indo-Anglian novels appeared, we find around 1930 a series of historical novels by S.S. Panchapakesa Ayar beginning with 'Baladitya'. Three years later in 1933, Umrao Bahadur's 'The Unveiled Court' emulated the lead given by Mitra's 'Hindupur' in presenting the story of a native Prince's court which may not be historical fiction proper, but exploits like a genuine historical novel the glamour that was. It is a subject to which Indo-Anglian novelists have returned more often than those in the Indian languages.

It may be said without fear of contradiction that Laksminath and Fakirmohan, both historical novelists, were influenced by Bankim Candra. Laksminath moreover, was directly influenced by Walter Scott. This is apparent from the statement he made in connection with Assamese language and Literature:

> I believe that so far as the progress of language is concerned, a good history or a novel is more important than a dry book of science. The language of ten science books is the language of ten or twenty scientists, but the language of a good

novel in the language of one crore people. The language of Herbert Spencer's Biology or Sir Charles Bell's Animal Physiology is the language of Spencer and Bell or a few more scientist like them. But Ivanhoe of Sir Walter Scott belongs to all the English speaking people, be they of the east or of the west, the north or the south. That is why a few good dramas, novels and books of similar category should be published in our language for our benefit. For this reason Bankim has done a lot for the uplift and benefit of Bengali language.[1]

This statement of Laksminath not only emphasises his indebtedness to Bankim as well Scott but also speaks of his partiality for history and novel. It was this bias that prompted him to fuse both history and novel into a single form of art. Fakirmohan also makes pointed reference to Bankim Candra's historical novel in his autobiography.[2] He was himself a good historian and he compiled two volumes of the Indian History. His thorough knowledge of the history of India in general and that of Orissa in particular prompted

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1. Sāmarani Baktr-tā, B.G.II, p.1349.
2. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.65.

him to venture for a historical novel. It might be mentioned that Fakirmohan did not consider novel to be a product of modern era. He was of the opinion that the novel did not come to India as a part of English education. He rather believed that different stories in the Vedas had in them the germs of novel[1], According to him the Mahābhārat is a novel of epical dimensions.[2] Perhaps Fakirmohan considered the plot or story to be of chief element of novel. No wonder he looked upon the stories in ancient Sanskrit literature as rudimentary novels. In the essay 'Abhibhāṣaṇ'[3] his statement that the novelist is capable of exercising great influence on the mind of the people agrees with Laksminath's that the novelist speaks the language of crores of people. According to Fakirmohan, the slogan Bande Mataram of Bankim Candra could help in unifying all the Indians from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari.[4] He also says that the novel Uncle Tom's Cabin brought about a psychological revolution and made people change their deep seated notions about slavery.[5] No doubt he considered the novel as a very powerful mode of expression.

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1. Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.743.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid

If Fakirmohan spoke a number of times about the role novels could play in people's life, Laksminath also felt equally strongly about the pervasive power of novels in modern life. In one of his short stories, 'Jagarāmandalar Premābhinay', he refers to the tremendous impact of the novel on the reading public generally and the young impressionable age group particularly.[1] It was but natural far him to go for novel writing. His love for history is apparent from his dramas. Apart from folk themes, the major source of the subject-matter of his plays is history, especially Assamese History. His bias for romantic ideals found ample fulfilment in the historical episodes of Assam.

Fakirmohan is the first novelist of Orissa seriously inclined towards realistic representation of the various facts of contemporary society. If he adopted the newly established educational institution as background of one novel, he accepted a povery stricken village as locale of another. Even his historical novel shows a commendable sense of realistic detail. There were, of course, a few

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1. Also in his story 'Dāktar Bābur Sādhu', Laksminath speaks about the influence of Bankim Candra's novel on the younger generation of Bengal. Fakirmohan, likewise, in his story 'Garudi Mantra', tells us about the fascination of young Oriya boys for novels.

stray attempts of novel writing by the preceding writers. Padmamāḷī by Umeś Candra Sarkār (1888), Bibasinī by Rām Śankar Rāy (published in Utkaḷa Prabhā between 1892-93) and Bhīmābhuyā by Gopālballabha Dās (1908) are notable works of fiction prior to the advent of Fakirmohan. All the three works are historical romances without reference to actual happenings. Their language is often poetic and, at places, artificial. Plot-structure is loose. Fakirmohan is the first novelist to attempt a true historical novel (Lachamā) based on actual happenings.

Laksminath, though a verastile writer in every field of literature, has only one historical novel (Padum Kuwarī) to his credit. Prior to him, Assamese language could boast of no more than five novels. They are Lāhorī and Bhānumatī by Padmanāth Gohāi Baruā, Kusum Kumārī by Hareśwar Śarmā Baruā and Mirijīarī and Manomatī by Rajanīkānta Bardoloi. Bhānumatī and Lāhorī have history as a very feeble background. Laksminath and Fakirmohan share a common preference for history of their own respective states, yet they can be distinguished from each for their contrasting styles and attitudes. Laksminath wrote his novel while still fresh from the college. Since the novel was composed at a young age, especially at a time

when his mind was invigorated by his study of English poets and novelists, his was lyrical in style and romantic in spirit. He chose a love story. Lachamā, Fakirmohan's second novel, was written when he was mature in years and experience. In contrast to Laksminath, Fakirmohan is a more serious story-teller. Laksminath wrote his novel when he was barely twenty seven years old[1], whereas Fakirmohan wrote his novel during the twilight years of his life.[2] Such a big difference in age speaks for their different attitudes towards life and contrastive treatment of themes. The flaws usually attributed to the weak plot structure and excessively romantic approach of Laksminath may be excused for his young age and the literary times in which he thrived.

Laksminath fails to produce a truly historical novel; his work may be termed at best as historical romance. He is carried away by fancy and his plot constructions is clearly modelled on a medieval romance. He fails to create historical illusion. He presents the conventional love-triangle compounded by an overdose of emotion. Fakirmohan, on the other hand, has a confident grip over the narrative woof and texture and gives a vivid picture of the bygone age. Laksminath, under the

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1. 'Padum Kũwarī' was first published in 'Jonāki' in 1891. It was published as a book in 1905.
2. Lachamā was published as a book in 1914 when Fakirmohan was seventy one.

spell of romantic ideas in the years of his youth, creates a world of dream untouched by realities around him. But Fakirmohan wrote his novel in his mature years and was realistic enough to eschew romantic aberrations.

Laksminath's historical novel is based on the popular Assamese folk tale of Padum Kũwarī and her father. The story is located in Gauhaty and the neighbouring Bhutan Hills. Fakirmohan's novel relates to the middle part of the 19th century, when Orissa was being continuously exploited by the Marathas and the Mughals. A factor common to both these writers, however, is that, they have mixed historical facts with lavish imaginative inventions. The central themes are no doubt historical, but side by side, a number of sub-plots with non-historical characters are introduced with a view to adding colour to otherwise dry facts of history. Laksminath's aim at recreating history through literature is clearly expressed in the preface to his play 'Belimār'. He writes:

> Side by side the historical characters, imaginary characters bearing different hues and serving different purposes may be introduced: otherwise, the play would be a dry presentation of historical facts. These extra characters are like so many

decorative elements that embellish the main characters and incidents and therefore, should not be used as impediments which retard the free movement of the historical personalities.

He follows this recipe in his own historical novel, phul, a non-historical character in his novel, enlivens the narrative process. Similarly the character of Lachamā, as portrayed by Fakirmohan, has no historical significance. Never-the-less, these extra characters in the novels serve a useful literary purpose.

It may be useful to attempt a summary of the story of Padum Kũwarī. During the reign of the Ahom King Kamaleswara Simha, his governor at Gauhati, Kalīyābhomorā Barphukan, let loose a reign of oppression and tyranny. Reacting against his atrocities, the people of Kamrup staged a revolt under the combined leadership of the two brothers, Haradatta and Vīradatta. This revolt in Assam history is named as Danduwā-droh. The Barphukan put down this revolt with a heavy hand and killed both Haradatta and Vīradatta. According to the popular folk ballad, Haradatta's daughter, Padum Kũwarī, was forcibly taken away by a mercenary named Kumedān Bengal. There is, however, another version of the story that says

that Padum Kũwarī committed suicide in the face of an inevitable calamity. Laksminath's novel is primarily based on this historical event.

Fakirmohan's story runs as follows:

During the last quarter of the 18th century some pilgrims were passing through the border area of Bengal and Orissa. They were suddenly attacked by a waiting band of Maratha cavalry riders. Lachamā, a pilgrim, was separated from her husband in the process. She was given shelter by the king of Raibania. The king was murdered, the queen drowned herself, but lachamā escaped in disguise and remained in the Maratha Camp as a young handsome betel-seller. In the meantime, her husband Bādal Simha was working as a military recruit in the camp of Nawab Aliverdi. War broke out in between the Nawab and Bhāskar Pandit, the Maratha Chief. It was through the cunning of Bādal Simha that Bhāskar Pandit was killed and the Nawab declared him as a new Raja in one of the provinces of Bengal. A few days later, on the sands of the holy river at Gaya, Lachamā and Bādal Simha recognised each other and were united and spent the rest of their lives happily.

A comparative study of these two historical novels of

Assam and Orissa reveals the following facts:

Laksminath does not take his plot seriously. His light handling of the events often spoils the beauty of narration. The structure of the plot is loose and illogical and the actions are not co-ordinated properly. Some of the characters, Kumedān for one, appear all of a sudden to serve a momentary function. History is not fully recreated. Fakirmohan, on the other hand, is more serious in his treatment and remains true to history. His narration is cogent and the incidents help in bringing about a logical climax. Both these writers have a tendency towards melodrama and unnecessary exaggeration. Fakirmohan could have concluded the story with the union of the husband and the wife at the scene of Bhāskar Pandit's murder. But he extends it for no particular reason. This, to some extent, spoils the beauty and logic of the story. Lachamā's disguise in the Maratha camp for such a long period seems improbable. She does not meet her mother-in-law though they live in the same village and she hears her voice. This adds to the irony of situation but is a little too improbable. It serves no useful purpose except that it helps to lengthen the plot. Similarly, there are a number of improbabilities in the construction and development of plot by Laksminath. Sūrya's unawareness of the romantic gestures of Phul and the delay in the marriage

of the king of Cooch-Bihar with Padum provide two such examples among many. The suicide of the heroine is not convincing. Her delay in committing suicide, through she carries poison all the while on her person, has no narrative justification. Laksminath seems to borrow motifs from English literature. The last scene reminds us of Shakespeare's Romeo Juliet, where the young adoloscent lovers commit suicide in similar fashion. The description of Padum babbling in her madness is very much an echo of Ophelia in Hamlet. The one note-worthy difference between the two novel is that Laksminath novel ends on a tragic note whereas Fakirmohan's has a happy ending.

Both the novels begin with description of nature. Laksminath's description of mid-night creates a beautiful setting for a tragic story. Fakirmohan begins his novel in a dramatic manner. His is not a linear narration extending from a beginning to an end. The description of the persons and the families of Bādal Simha and Lachamā are given only in the last chapter. Both the writers divide their novels in short chapters and give titles to every chapter. Laksminath in addition to this, provides short English quotations at the beginning of each chapter. Their novels take the names of their heroines. This is, perhaps, a legacy from classical literature or Bankim Candra, a number of whose novels bear the

names of the heroines. Fakirmohan is more vigourous and rapid in action; Laksminath's novel is comparatively fresh, romantic and has a penchant for out-of-door atmosphere.

Laksminath's hero and heroine belong to Assamese society, whereas Fakirmohan imports non-Oriyas as central figures of his novel. Laksminath has a special liking for immature, juvenile love. Sūrya and Padum are modelled on young and immature Romeo and Juliet. They are adolescently sentimental; and unaware of the complex realities of life. Lachamā and Badāl Simha on the other hand are married, mature, and hence comparatively balanced. They are capable of logical thinking and are able to face the trouble-some problems of life with fortitude. Amidst all unforeseen events, Lachamā does not lose courage even for a moment. She even goes to the extent of disguising herself as a male betel-seller and acts as an attendant in the Maratha camp. She is brave and well adept in war-fare. She proves her mettle by killing the Maratha Chief. She is a total contrast to Padum who pines for her lost lover and ultimately commits suicide.

Both the heroines are charming in physique and manners. The novelists have followed the Sanskritic pattern of character-de-lineation. Padum's beauty has been described in the medieval classical fashion. Her waist is like that of a beetle, the hips resemble the trunk of a banana tree. Her feet and toe-

nails bear the imprint of the lotus and the moon respectively. Fakirmohan, in describing the beauty of Lachamā, has followed the same pattern. She is fair with well drawn eye-brows and has a straight nose, her red lips resemble the colour of hibiscus flower and her cheeks are as smooth as the surface of a mirror.

The character of Sūrya, the hero, is sketched rather weakly. He is young and sentimental and allows himself to be carried away by the flow of events. There is hardly any trait in his character attractive enough to arrest the attention of the reader. Bādal Simha, on the other hand, is courageous enough to be a tower to strength to the Nawab. The very fact that being a Hindu he could earn the confidence of a Muslim ruler speaks itself of his cleverness and capability.

Apart from the historical kings and the Queens, there are a number of imaginary characters appearing in both the novels. One such fictitious character of Laksminath is Phul, the daughter of a feudal lord. The girl is as tender as the sapling which she tends with motherly care. By her loyalty, she rises to great esteem though ultimately she commits suicide at the feet of her lover. Laksminath has presented some minor characters like the tribal boy and girl in the Bhutan Hills. The two spies of the Ahom King do not contribute much to the

development of the plot but serve the purpose of bringing about a little comic relief. All these characters put together enrich the human aspect of the fictional world. Fakirmohan's novel is crowded with characters, who come and go almost on each page. The retinue of the king of Raibania, the villagers tortured by the Marathas, the soldiers accompanying the Nawab, the parents of Lachamā and Bādal Simha are only a few to mention. These characters have given an epic dimension to an otherwise simple story.

Regarding style, one major difference between the two invites attention. Laksminath is humourous once too often whereas Fakirmohan, otherwise a humourous writer, refrains from providing the slightest touch of humour to his historical novel. It is surprising that the writer who excells in humour and satire in three of his other novels should studiously eschew humour in this novel. Perhaps he thought that the serious business of warfare would not admit humour at all. Laksminath, on the other hand, is comic to the point of artificiality which, at places, seems to detract from the total effect of an otherwise serious story.[1]

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1. In chapter, IV, the conversational mannerisms of 'Kerpāi' and 'Nāliyā', the two spies, is a little too exaggerated. Similarly, in Chapter III, the comparison of love with 'the laddus of Delhi' is not befitting to the occasion. In Chapter II, while narrating the mutual love of Podum and Sūrya, the novelist digresses to discuss the various manifestations of bashfulness. This is done by him in a light and frivolous way which spoils the seriousness of that narration.

Laksminath confines himself only to the Assamese characters and foregrounds their local characteristics. Fakirmohan presents a wider spectrum taking his characters from the Marathas, the Mughals and the Oriyas. The hero and the heroine of Lachamā are from Utter Pradesh. Though written by a Hindu, Lachamā ends with the final triumph of the Muslim Nawab Aliverdi Khan. Here in, Fakirmohan's creative objectivity appears at its best. The Hindus and the Muslims appear and disappear as characters reacting on one another, and never representing mutually antagonistic faiths and attitudes. The deep sympathy with which the Hindu author has painted the Muslim characters in distress is remarkable indeed. Aiming at the total well-being of India, he chastises both the Hindus and the Muslims for the avoidable problems they create by com-munal compulsions.

The most important feature of these novels is their effortless commitment to history as lived experience. Both of them transcend the stereotype picture of history. History to them, is not a chronological record of dry facts but a stage on which living men and women play their parts. Even the great heroes have their quota of frailties and shortcomings. The Muslim Nawab in Lachamā, a great hero, feels like any other human being nervous at the prospects of war. Phul's father, a chivalrous person, is an affectionate father

who feels exceedingly weak in regards to decisions affecting her daughter.[1]

So far as the setting is concerned, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan have created an atmosphere appropriate to the times. Fakirmohan's detailed descriptions of warfare and the royal fort are authentic. Laksminath, too, at times, succeeds in recreating the past also. The elaborate description of Padum's bedroom is a fine picture of a sophisticated, well-to-do-household.

According to the English critic W.H. Hudson[2], it is the business of the historical novelist to bring creative imagination to bear upon the dry facts of the annalist and the antiquarian, and out of a mass of scattered material gleaned from a variety of sources, to evolve a picture having the fulness and unity of a work of art. It is this power that a makes a particular period of civilisation come alive transcending the dry facts and their pedantic interpretations. It is the lived experience that an ordinary reader values most in a work of historical fiction. It is far more important for a historical novel to faithfully represent the manners, the

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1. Padum Kũwarī, Chapter XII

2. See W.H. Hudson, An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960) p.160.

tone, and the temper of the age than to present a chronology of events. Adopting this as the touch-stone of our evaluation, Fakirmohan seems to emerge as a greater artist. He satisfies the claims of both history and art. Laksminath's achievement in recreating the past is not as deep. But we may not lose sight of the fact that he wrote his historical novel in his early youth.

The historical novel was one of the products of the romantic movement in Indian Literature, and its emergence was associated with the 19th century Indian renaissance. Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan were the path makers as well as the torch-bearers in this field. They blazed a trail which was later followed by a number writers in their respective languages.

CHAPTER V

SATIRE AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

1. Satire

Satire is a modern phenomenon. In Western literature satire emerged as a genre in the 18th Century only. Before this, in the early English literature there was occasional undertone of satire in the writings of Chaucer. Shakespear's dramas had clean fun but he was devoid of any idea of satire. It was only in the 18th Century in the works of Addison, Steele, Swift, Dryden, Pope and that of Congreve and his followers that the existing social order was ridiculed and satire as a genre was established.

In Indian literature, we hardly get any instance of satire in the early literature though certain mythological characters like Bhīma, Hanumān and Nārada supply us with clean fun. The court jesters or Bidūṣakas were mainly employed in Sanskrit drama to give comic relief in an otherwise serious play. In the earliest work of dramaturgy the 'Nāṭyaśāstra' of Bharata, 'Hāsya' or laughter is mentioned as one of the rasas, yet we hardly come across any composition based mainly on 'Hāsya'. The early Indian literature dealt with the gods and godesses and the

two rasas most befitting their eminence were 'śṛṅgāra' or 'Bīra'. Moreover, to laugh at divine or royal characters was beyond the imagination of the writer. In the Sanskrit classification of drama, there are some varieties of drama, like 'Bhāṇa' and 'Prahasana', which take 'Hāsyarasa' as the main theme. Such writings are too few to make a tradition. It was only with the emergence of modern literature that the pathway for satire was made. This was partly due to the writer's consciousness of his surroundings and partly because of his reformistic attitude.

In the fields of Assamese and Oriya literature, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan may be safely said to have established satire as a major form of writing.[1] It is difficult to say whether humour or satire was their forte. In most of their writings the two mingle and it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. A thin film of humour pervades the whole gamut of their writings and whatever they say has a touch of joviality about it. The effect of this exuberance, buoyancy, boisterous gaiety and rollicking conviviality makes their dishes more palatable by adding sauce to it. Both the writers

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1. It is relevant to remember that Laksminath's first piece of writing (Litikāi) happens to be a farce. It was published in the monthly magazine 'Jonāki' in 1889-90.

were concerned with the twin pressures of the old and the new values around them and were faced with the claims of the rural and the urban modes of life. They have satirised religious hypocrisy, antiquated institutionalism, prejudices, pretensions, avarice and lust in the Assamese and Oriya societies of their time.

Before attempting a detailed study of their satirical writings, it would be proper to stress the historical context in both the cases. Both of them belonged to the same period of Indian history, crowded as it was, with the identical symbols of decay and corruption. It was an age lacking in social cohesion. The events of the preceding years of British rule had their indelible mark on Indian society. Besides, there were deeply entrenched faiths and beliefs of the conservative people. Under the impact of British rule new cultural attitudes were fast emerging. Society was slowly drifting away from its traditional moorings. Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan, through their short-stories, novels and essays, participated in this world of transition but not always without a touch of sarcasm. Their art was an art of exaggeration and the characters were, most of the time, caricatures. This sarcasm, however, was not a result of hatred or malice. It was an outcome of their deep sympathy

for people around them who were adopting false values of life, without being slightly aware of their fatal effect.

In order to appreciate the beauty and the genuineness of their satirical writing, it would be proper to understand the nature of satire. While defining satire, C.L. Hendrickson writes that "We have extended the word to designate a certain manner of humorous or ironical criticism of that which appeals to us as false or pretentious or insincere"[1]. Wyndham Lewis says, "the term satire suggests off-hand some resolve on the part of the satirist to pick out disobligingly all that is objectionable and ill-favoured in a given system of persons and things and to make of that a work of art"[2]. Both these terms signify one point i.e. the aim of satire is to focus attention at a common vice or a flaw in some character which is repugnant to the moral standard of a given society. It criticises situations of private life that has implications for the public morality also.

The one comprehensive term which embraces satire in all its forms and nuances, is simple laughter. That all mankind is caught up in the coils of false values

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1. G.L. Hendrickson, 'Satura Tota Nostra Est. In Satire: Modern Essays in criticism (ed) Paulson Ronalt. Prentice Hall, New Jersey (1971) p.37.
2. Wyndham Lewis, 'The greatest satire In Nonmoral. Ibid, p.77.

of wasteful consequences, is more or less the common teaching of all philosophy. There is, hence, nothing new in a satire. But it is the laughter and the raillery that adds a distinctive flavour to satire. It is this flavour that lends colour and charm to the writings of Laksminath and Fakirmohan. Whether it is a newly educated young man expressing his love to a rural damsel in English fashion[1] or a young man being roughed up by his wife for his addiction of liquor[2], satire seeks to convey a human concern in a delightful way. Their satire is broad enough to criticise not only the upstarts but also the age-old customs totally irrelevant to modern life. Suffering and waste caused by the worn-out institutions is a recurring theme for relentless satire in the writings of Fakirmohan and Laksminath. Laksminath criticises the monastery system of Assam in a number of his writings.[3] The so called learned Brahmins of Orissa are a constant grist to Fakirmohan's mill.[4] Satire as a vehicle of personal

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1. 'Āmār Saṁsār', Sādhu Kathār Kuki, B.G.I, p.672.
2. 'Patent Medicine', Galpaswalpa, Part I, B.G.II, p.483.
3. 'Nomal', B.G.II, p.1045-46.
4. Chamāna Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.I, p.29.

attack, was the common trait of English satirical writings. Fakirmohan and Laksminath do not utilise their satirical capabilities to pour venom on the contemporaries personally inimical to them. There is, perhaps, a solitary exception in Laksminath's writings.[1]

Another important feature of the satires of these two authors is that they criticised such follies of which they themselves were victims also. Fakirmohan admits in his autobiography that he was addicted to liquor for quite some period of his life[2] and it is this vice that he lambasts in his story 'Patent medicine'. Laksminath himself has satirised the craze for westernised modes of living in quite a few of his short stories though he gives us abundant clues that he himself practised European manners till almost the very end of his life. They were, in a way, targets of their own satires. Their writings lead to the inevitable conclusions that every satirist

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1. The poem 'Calanī Āru Bejī' is one such example. This poem is supposed to be an answer to various personal attacks on Laksminath, specially on his language and religious views.

2. Ātmajībana Carita, F.G.I, pp. 67, 103.

has in him something of a Jekyll and Hyde; he has both a public image and a private conscience.

Laksminath's liking for satire in particular and humour in general, is expressed by him repeatedly in his lighter essays as well as in his personal letters. He felt that there was a dearth of satire in Assamese literature and wrote in the journal 'Bãhi' "in all the world literatures, from the days of Aristophanes till today, there is a high position reserved for satire. We do not know why no such status is given to satire in Assamese literature."[1] In one of his essay, he writes "truly speaking only three people in this world knew how to laugh. The first one lived in ancient Greece. His name is Aristophanes. The second one lived in Spain. His name is Cervantes. The third one was in London. His name is Jonathan Swift"[2] obviously he was greatly enamoured of the humourous style of writing and he paid his highest regard to the three great humourists of the world in this fashion.

In his essay, entitled 'Hãhi', he gives a detailed account of the modern man who has forgotten how to laugh.

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1. See Sasi Sarma, 'Sāmbādik Laksmināth Bejbaruwā', Rasarāj Bejbaruwā, Nalbari, Assam (1967) p.207.

2. 'Nobel Prize', Barbaruwār Bhāvar Burburani, B.G.II, p.1471.

He advises his generation to laugh and be merry inspite of the cumbersome problems of day-to-day life. He complains against the present-day young men who fight shy of laughing their hearts out. The behaviour pattern of Indian life is prohibitive and looks askance at children who dare to laugh freely in the presence of their parents and elders. Laksminath finds this tradition unacceptable. He is pained to note that three-fourth of the Assamese people cannot differentiate between wit and humour. To Laksminath, the whole world of nature, its flowers, moonlight, trees and breeze, all are symbols of laughter and happiness. God wants us to laugh and be innocently happy. So Laksminath advises the modern generation to read Jerome K. Jerome, the Punch and the parodies of Dwinjedralāl Roy as an autidote to the sorrows of life. To quote one example on his emphasis upon the advantages of a merry life, we can take the following paragraph. He writes:

> Remain busy in some pleasant work. You will find your mind submerged in the waves of pleasure. Have friendship with jovial persons. Coming into contact with them, your mind will be made colourful. Laugh and laugh, all your sorrows will vanish.[1]

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1. 'Bākhar', B.G.I, p.935.

Even in his personal letters, he dilates one the same theme. In his letter to his dear friend Jatīndra, he writes:

> Why is sorrow so cheap in your region? In our side it is very costly. That is why we have given up purchasing it. But the sweetmeats of happiness are cheap here. We get a few of them and become happy by eating those sweets.[1]

He was an ardent practitioner of the art of laughter. His entire work including his diary as well as personal letters, all display a prevasive sense of humour and laughter. He laughs with his servant, his friends and his children. There are ample evidences of his playing practical jokes with his friends and daughters.[2] Till the last moment of his life, he kept up his irresistible zest for laughter.

Fakirmohan, surprisingly is completely silent, both in his autobiography and his essays, regarding the theory of laughter or the reason for his preference for this style.

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1. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat (1968) p.27.
2. Ibid, p.84.

There are, of course, occasional references that provide thin glimpses of his gay and jovial personality. During his young age, when he was a teacher in Balesore his attempt at writing a parody on a girl student may be taken as an example of his light jovial temperament. He was witty enough in practical life and this is apparent from the letter that he wrote in a coded language when he was imprisoned by the rebel tribals during his managership in the royal court of Keonjhar. Both these instances are mentioned in his autobiography.[1] The famous Oriya writer Godābarīś Miśra tells us that Fakirmohan, in his old days, visited the garden school at Satyabadi and spent many a gay evening with the children of the school.[2] His grandson remembers that Fakirmohan in his ripe old age played with them and even invented new games.[3] These are some of stray examples of Fakirmohan's love of laughter and joviality.

Both these writers had gone through many misfortune and unpleasant situations in life. Inspite of that, both

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1. See Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, pp.24,175.
2. Godabaris Misra, "Tharakara Smrti". In Fakīrmohan Parikramā (ed) J.B.Mohanti, Fakirmohan Sahitya Parisad,(1955), p.4.
3. Adhiraj Mohan Senapati,'Smaraṇīya Fakīrmohan' Ibid, p.8.

of them establish a gay rapport with their readers. The loss of Laksminath's first child was too great a shock for him to absorb. His whole life was spent in the forests of Orissa, away from his motherland. Often , he felt bitter about the solitary life he led.[1] Towards the end, his daughter became a Christian nun and deserted him. He had serious Colic trouble. All this was certainly painful but he would not wax eloquent on his personal misery. There are occasional references to his misfortunes but they are too brief to become a recognisable feature of his writing.

Fakirmohan's life was no happy holiday. An orphan right from his infancy, he had to undergo tremendous torture at the hands of his uncle. In his youth, his life was not very happy with his first wife, who died after a few years. After his second marriage, he came a manager of royal estates, but he continued to be tormented by misfortunes. The death of his eldest son was too severe a blow to be endured. We get a fairly vivid account of this happening in his autobiography. He was a sick man all throughout his life, sometimes suffering from a carbuncle or getting his stomach burnt by a dose sulphuric

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1. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.14.

acid taken by mistake. During his last period of life he suffered terrible humiliation as his only son quarrelled with him regarding property matters. His whole life is an endless string of sufferings. Surprisingly, his autobiography is the only work that gives a glimpse of the torturous trail that his life was. His stories, novels and poems are all laced with gentle humour and give no indication of the miserable man who wrote them.

These two writers, for the first time, created a new genre in their respective literatures, that is satire. Usually, satire and humour are considered to belong to a lower strata of literary endeavour. In the poetics, Aristotle declares:

> "The earliest division of poetry occured when the graver spirits imitated noble actions and the actions of good men while the more trivial sort imitated the action of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men. The lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets writers of Tragedy".[1]

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1. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts (ed) S.H. Butcher, 1st Indian Edition, Ludhiana, (1967), p.17.

This statement obviously emphasises the fact that humorous writing, as compared with serious writing, belonged to a lower strata.

The ancient and the medieval Indian literature did not look upon comedy with favour. Poets mainly dealt with love, chivalry and religion and satire had no place therein. It was left for Laksminath and Fakirmohan in the field of Assamese and Oriya literatures respectively to explore the possibility of this genre and to use it as forceful medium of expression. For the first time, they showed that even the humourous style was as important as the serious one and a writer could very well communicate as effectively in a ligher vein as in a serious one; perhaps one could make deeper impact with play of wit and humour. The humourous style, which was till this time considered of an inferior quality, found able composeres in these two writers. They became founders of a new style which remains unsurpassed till today.

In their writings, satire and humour often mingle with each other and it is difficult to differentiate the one from the other. Of course, the distinction between the two is very delicate. We may, however, say that humour is clean fun and satire aims at correction. Most things in

life have their comic as well as serious side. Clean humour takes man and his activities in incongrous circumstances and seems to detract from human dignity. Thus, a mad man is a prime source of humour but the laughter that he evokes is free from malice. The satire on the other hand is an un-kindly weapon.

Laksminath and Fakirmohan are pure humourists when they are without a message. In fact, Fakirmohan shines better in the depiction of clean fun. The description of the gait of Mṛdaṅga Players in 'Māmũ', the physical features of Debakī Gauduṇī in 'Rāṇḍipua Ananta' and the narration of the sight of the tiger by Bhīmāmā in 'Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha' are some of the examples that provide amusement free from instruction. The detailed description of the Dwadasi banquet of Maṅgarāj[1], the feeding of his twelve farmhands with sour gruel and drumstick foliage[2] and the well-anointed, high-basomed campā strutting abroad with thejingling of her anklet bells[3] are examples of pure amusement also.

Laksminath appeals to his readers by mastering every kind of comic effect. For sheer buffoonery we have

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1. See Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.2.
2. Ibid, p.10.
3. Ibid, pp.15-16.

'Barbaruār photograph', 'Ja-garā Maṇḍalar Premābhinaya', 'Ghaṇṭākarna Śarmā', 'Naṅgalucandra', 'Barīcowā' and 'Bhairā', where his gift flowers best in portraying the ridiculous and describing clownish antics. Fun predominates exclusively in such articles like 'Aśwārohan Parva', 'Barbaruār Hāh-Curi Makardamā', 'Khāhatā Ḍimaru Satrādhikār' and 'Lātsāhabar Ocarat Laguwār Oparat Gocar'. The funny character of Kṛpābar as created by him is perhaps the only of its kind in the literary history of India. Kṛpābar, with his seeming naivette and fantastic antics has carved out a permanent place for him in the hearts of all Assamese readers.

These are instances of pure humour. But whenever the writers have a particular target to aim at, this pure humour turns into satire. In this regard, Laksminath seems to be at a better footing than Fakirmohan. His essays make scathing comments on life. He is bitterly critical of the socalled patriots and the Assamese people who ape Bengali culture. He satirises corruption among police,[1] love of titles among the educated people[2], dowry system[3], women's freedom[4], torture of women[5], false

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1. 'Sāmājik', Kākatar Topolā, B.G.II, p.1235.
2. 'Biṣay āru Biṣayā', Ibid p.1236.
3. 'Barbaruār Biyā', Ibid, p.1260.
4. 'Barbaruār Bar Baktṛtā', Kṛpābar Baruār Obhatani, B.G.II, p.1294.
5. 'Ghainī Sakalar Prati', Ibid, p.1304.

sense of research[1], neglect of newspapers[2], narrow-minded nationalism and lack of common sense[3]. There is hardly a topic on earth which has not come in for harsh treatment in his essays. He covers a wide area of social reality. In short, his essays are a critical estimate of the time in which he lived. He thought it advisable to apply a little acidic lemon juice to the injuries of society to arouse awareness of itself.[4]

Fakirmohan is not as severe in his satires. Only occasionally and mildly does the moralist overrides the humourist in him. Fakirmohan is essentially of a reformative temperament. He expressly states that pleasure is only the secondary aim of literary compositions; its primary aim is instruction.[5] This statement of his clarifies his concept of the nature of literature. No wonder he often seeks the help of satire to cure society of its ills. Like Laksminath, he is particularly harsh on the anglicised youth who ape an alien culture and he returns to his theme

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1. 'Cumā Bijnān', Kākatar Topolā, B.G.II, p.1263.
2. 'Bātari Kākatar Jānanī', Ibid, p.1246.
3. 'Bandemātaram', Kṛpābar Baruār Obhatani, B.G.II, p.1280.
4. 'Kabitā', Kākatar Topolā, B.G.II, p.1253.
5. 'Kabi Michael ebaṁ Meghnādbadh Kābya', F.G.II, p.712.

in a number of stories.[1] He is equally bitter about the false tradition and orthodoxy of the Hindu culture. Many a times, the Brahamins of the village become targets of his satiric thrusts.[2] He derides the alcoholics[3], ridicules the village quacks[4] and denounces the oppressive Jamindars of Orissa.[5] He does not spare the British administrators of his fun and satire also. They often emerge as pompous, frivolous and ignorant characters through his pages.[6]

As satirists, both these writers tend to exaggerate the incongruities they wish to bring into focus. The effect, at times, is ludicrous. Thus, Candramani Bābu under the broomstick of his wife and Jagarāmaṇḍala mimicking love to his wife in westernised fashion fail to carry conviction. The oddities of situation invented by them are often too far-fetched to create a realistic illusion. However, their aim of making people have a jovial view of life is pretty

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1. See Ḍāk Munsi, Sabhya Jamidār.
2. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.29.
3. Patent Medicine, Galpaswalpa Part-I, F.G.I, p.483.
4. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, B.G.II, p.93.
5. See chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha.
6. Māmũ, F.G.II, pp.187-189.

thoroughly realised. They amply justify the view that all good satire exhibits an appreciable degree of fictionality. It is in the invention of such fictional images that their satire loses its pungency and gets intermingled with comedy. This, also, adds to their artistic merit. Even when they aim at communicating a message, they impart it in subtle nuances. The satirist is first and foremost a moralist but in the satire of Fakirmohan and Laksminath there is no direct sermonisation. Whatever they say is said through incongruous incidents and characters. Their satire is so laced with humour that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. The moral ideas are there in their writings, but they do not constitute a system of philosophy. They instruct while delighting us.

Satire flourishes in a homogenious society with a common code of morality. The satirist operates within the established framework of society accepting its norms as the standard against which to judge its deviations. Both the writers held identical views on the anglicised youth aping foreign culture, corruption in the judiciary, disregard for parents and false values of education. The hypocrisy of the hybrid Anglo-Assamese and Anglo-Oriya culture is described against a common background. They create similar situations to foreground the currents and cross-currents within the

then Assamese and Oriya societies. Two short stories, 'Dākmunsi' by Fakirmohan and 'Bhokendra Baruwā' by Laksminath can be cited as proof of the identity of views held by them. Both the stories bring into bold relief the false values acquired by the newly educated young men, their disregard for the age old family bonds and the false sense of pride engendered by European manners. The chief characters of both these stories are given to snobbery, the common defect of the-then emerging class. Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan find occasion to snub the snobs in their stories. The common theme, the common object of satire, with both the writers seems to be a person, who, though in possession of moral faculties, transgresses the moral code much beyond the normal limits.

We have already noticed that Fakirmohan and Laksminath's satires, reinforced by comic effects, are inspired by an idea of social weal. Paradoxically, an under current of tragedy runs through their satiric writings. We might recall the Aristotalian view of tragedy wherein the downfall of the hero is caused by a certain flaw in his character. The satire also focuses attention on human deficiencies or moral transgressions. Fakirmohan excells in such tragedy-cum-satire. In one of the short stories, 'Ananta', the spoilt young man, the object of our ridicule right from the beginning,

all of a sudden acquires a great stature by dying a heroic as well as tragic death. In his story 'Rebati' the illiterate grandmother, who is criticised for her orthodoxy, arouses a sense of pity and sympathy in the read-er as she goes mad and dies. Even Ramcandra Mangaraj, the devil of the novel 'Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha', who is ridiculed mercilessly right from the beginning, dies a pitiful death and our sympathy is roused in favour of the quivering humanity of the fallen man. Thus, Fakirmohan has created characters of near-epic grandeur, though he chooses to present them in the humourous style. He performs the credible feat pressing humour and satire in the service of delineation of great characters.

The under-current of tragedy is not that prominent in Laksminath's humourous narratives. There are, of course occasions when the reader feels sympathy for a comic character. A case in point is one, who in his quarrel with his wife, breaks a tooth.[1] Another object of pity is the man who makes romantic approaches to his wife in English fashion and gets drenched with a bucket-ful of water by her.[2] She takes him for a mad or a possessed person. Also some of the

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1. 'Phiriṅgatir Parā Khāṇḍava Dāha', Surabhi, B.G.I, p.581.
2. 'Jagarāmaṇḍalar Premābhinay', Jonbiri', B.G.I, p.705.

stories of Laksminath, inspite of their comic tone, assume a note of pathos in the end. In such stories like 'Dasmantar', 'Baricowā', 'Bhairā', 'Bhrukī Bou', 'Amār Samsār' and 'Daktar Bābar Sādhu'. Laksminath's humour is engaged in the task of revealing the essential humanity of man. Pathos and humour coalesce in 'Maganiyār Buḍhā' and 'Dhõwākhowā'.

As regards the technique, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan almost apply the same method. Their humour is mostly verbal and depends on foolish situations. The literary effect of their writings is entirely due to the spell of the language and the profusion of verbal rapture. A device, which both of them use for creating humourous effect is the combination of many languages in conversation. If Laksminath mixes English with Bengali and Assamese words[1], Fakirmohan makes a hotch-poth of Urdu, Parsi and Oriya vocabulary.[2]

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1. 'Nangalucandra Dās', Jonbiri, B.G.I, p.704.
   'Bhokendra Baruwā' Ibid, p.720.

2. Chamāna Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G. II, pp. 20-21.

Fakirmohan also excells in composing parodies. In his novel 'Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha', he makes witty use of Kālidāsa's hymns to produce double meanings.

Laksminath shows his ingenuity in choosing for his characters funny names with onomptopoeic effect.[1] Sometimes, he changes English names to give them an Assamese twist as also a rustic touch.[2] On rare occasions a physical disability or a habit is also utilised by them to create a sense of fun.[3]

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1. The names Ghaṇṭākarna Sarmā, Malak Guin Guin, Nāṅgalucandra and Jagarāmaṇḍala are a few such examples.

2. 'Bhempuriā Maujādār', Sādhukathār Kuki, B.G.I, p.653.

3. The physical description of Debakī in Rāṇḍipua Ananta (Fakirmohan) and the conversational mannerism of jurman in Jurman Rāidaṅgiyā (Laksminath) can be cited as examples.

2. Social Criticism

Laksminath and Fakirmohan, in their works of fiction, had made the first serious attempt at depicting life around them. Their writings may be summed up as pictures of social criticism of Assamese and Oriya life in its diverse moods. In their case, satire and social criticism go hand in hand and it is difficult to distinguish between the two. They had a keenly observant eye and their experiences, both human and intellectual, were very rich. Their literary lives spanned a period of nearly half a century. The whole literary as well as social history of this period is clearly etched out in their writing. We may do well to remember that social criticism grows with the rise of consciousness about the surroundings in which the author lives. The medieval Indian literature has not much to boast of in terms of social consciousness. The poetic themes were more or less fixed. It was the same story of gods and princes repeated over and over again. The writers would not speak about the common folk among whom they lived.

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan are subjective writers. They are the mouthpieces of their own society and give an authentic description of the manners and behaviour patterns of the contemporary people in all their

writings, especially in their autobiographies. The autobiographies are the documents of the early 19th century Assam and Orissa and surprisingly there is much similarity between both the societies of that period. The poor communication system, lack of educational facilities, the rise of Brahmo samaj, enthusiasm for English education pitted against superstitious resistance against European learning etc. were common to both Assam and Orissa. We have, in their autobiographies, quite a feel of the social customs then current in both the states. According to Fakirmohan, the Oriyas in the early 20th century were conservative. They were averse to send their children to English Schools for fear of losing the caste.[1] They did not know how to read or write books[2], they were deeply religious and were exploited by the jamidars.[3] The women folk of Orissa stayed indoors and were not encouraged to receive education. They were totally subservient to the male domination.[4] The society described by Laksminath runs more or less on identical lines. The lure of cities

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.8.
2. Ibid.
3. See Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha.
4. See Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha.

and western culture[1] depicted by him are as good as the description of Fakirmohan. The dowry system currently introduced in Assamese society is, to him, a matter of serious concern and he blames it on the influence of Bengali way of life.[2] The religious festivals and the gusto with which they are celebrated find fascinating expression in his writings.[3] Because of Laksminath's long stay in Calcutta, the contemporary Bengali life and society often get the pride of place in his writings. He refers to the custom of early marriage, the exploitation of women as well as Bidyāsāgar's crusade for widow-marriage in one of his short stories set against the locale of Calcutta.[4] He is even lured by the life and society of the Oriyas riddled with superstitions. In one of his short stories, he draws a pathetic picture of an old lady tortured by the illiterate villagers of Orissa as they suspect her to be an evil spirit.[5]

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1. 'Bhokendra Baruwā', Jonbiri, B.G.I, p.718.
2. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.64. Laksminath mentions in his autobiography that he was himself offered a dowry of ten thousand rupees for his marriage, which was politely refused by him.
3. 'Bihu', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.743.
4. 'Lāokholā', Surabhi, B.G.I, p.592.
5. 'Dasmantar', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.775.

From the writings of Fakirmohan and Laksminath we get ample evidence of the prestige that accrued to English education in the-then Assamese and Oriya society.[1] There are several occasions where Laksminath refers to this:

> "The old father became extremely unhappy on hearing that Kamallocan has dropped out from school. He explained to his son and ultimately told him, 'My dear, unless one knows English and works in the court, one does not have any prestige now a days."[2]

> "I like the boy very much. He will suit our daughter. The boy is handsome has good qualities too. He comes of a good family. In addition to that, he has passed B.A. Tomorrow he will get a service in the Government. My daughter will be happy."[3]

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1. Fakirmohan writes in the fifteenth chapter of his autobiography that parents used to get annoyed if their children asked for money to purchase oriya books. They would advise their wards to go for English books instead.
2. 'Rachit', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.761.
3. 'Lalitī Kākatī', Ibid, p.763.

The same fascination for English education is expressed by Fakirmohan also.

> "Sir, your son is very handsome and intelligent. You please teach him English at Cuttack. It is true Sir, the time is different these days. You might be very rich, but, unless you know English you will not be considered as somebody in the country."[1]

> "Right from the day Gopāl was born, Simha had a dream in his mind-Gopāl would be a sub Post-Master in a rural Post Office. May be a village Post Master. But unless he knows a little English it would be difficult for him to get such a job. There is no facility in the village. He has to be taught English at Cuttack."[2]

This love for education comes back again and again in the writings of Fakirmohan. His ideal of a happy and

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1. 'Prāyaścitta', F.G.I, p.370.
2. 'Dākmunsi', galpaswalpa I, F.G.I, p.543.

contended married life is one where the husband and wife spend their time together in study. He ends one of his short story 'Patent Medicine' giving an ideal picture of Sri Candramani Babu and his wife reading the literary journals of Orissa together. His other story 'Gāruḍi Mantra' also draws a similar picture of ideal married life wherein the hero and heroine read books together. In this novel 'Prāyaścitta', the hero feels attracted towards the heroine simply because she is educated and supposedly composes poems. His short story 'Rebatī' takes a teacher as its main character and the theme is an adolescent girl's desire to learn reading and writing against the express wish of her grand-mother. Both his novels 'Prāyaścitta' and 'Māmũ' are situated in city. The main characters are the young men who come from villages to receive education at a College, read Darwin and Shakespeare and attend literary circles. It was, obviously, the common trend at that time to favour English education, to which a disproportionate sense of prestige was attached.

However, both Fakirmohan and Laksminath do not fail to focus attention on the adverse effect of the false values attaching to English education. This often leads the young men to discard the traditional heritage and imitate the meaner aspects of western culture. The examples are very

many. If Fakirmohan portrays a newly educated young man kicking his old rustic father out of his bunglow,[1] Laksminath pours ridicule on a nineteen-year old youth who addresses his bride as Juliet and Rosalind, the names that he has learnt from English literature.[2]

In the early part of 20th century, both Assam and Orissa had the same education system. There were no proper schools and colleges as such and the children had to learn their alphabets from rudimentary village schools. Fakirmohan gives a detailed description of the school he attended in the village and the system of teaching then prevalent. The children not only read old books and manuscripts but would run errands for their teacher and help him in domestic chores.

Laksminath, a richman's son, naturally started his education with the religious ceremony then prevalent in the common Hindu household. He practised his alphabets on a plain banana leaf and wrote with the ink that he concocted at home.[3] Regarding the Bengali influence in schools he

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1. 'Ḍāk Munsi', Galpaswalpa, F.G.I, p.543.
2. 'Āmār Saṁsār', Sādhukathār Kuki, B.G.I, p.672.
3. Mor Jīwan Sw̃aran, B.G.I, p.7.

was up against the same odds as was Fakirmohan. The influence of the Bengalis in described in some detail by Laksminath in the fourth chapter of his autobiography. He writes:

> During those days it was a fashion to dress up and to cut one's hair like a Bengali. Even Bengali songs and language were followed. In the Yatra, instead of Assamese Bhaona, there were Bengali performances. The monks in the monasteries used to compose dramas in faulty Bengali language to please the audience and feel proud of it. To sum up, whatever was Bengali was considered to be good. This was the common idea in the mind of every body.[1]

The supremacy of Bengali language in Orissa is also commented upon by Fakirmohan in identical terms in his autobiography:

> During that time, every field in Orissa was occupied by Bengali officers. It was

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.29.

the common opinion of every person to read Bengali language instead of Oriya. Every body tried to introduce Bengali in his own areas...Through my lectures in different gatherings, by explaining to different officials, by passing a resolution in Sambadbahika and having bitter argument with the Bengalis, I became the greatest enemy of the Bengali community. Out of hatred, the Bengalis would not even utter my name. They named me as a ring leader."[1]

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan write about the advent of the Brahmo Samaj and the controversies that it created in the conservative Hindu society. Laksminath, in the sixth chapter of his autobiography, gives a detailed description of the preaching of Brahmo religion in Assam and its impact on the common folk. He writes about Pandit Rām Kumār Bidyāratna who preached the new faith in different districts of Assam. A disputatious argument between the Pandit and the Headmaster of the Sibsagar Normal School was one of the results of his preachings. The conservative

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1. Ātmajībana Carita, F.G.I, p.58.

Hindus feared and detested the new philosophy. The older generation were particularly apprehensive of it's influence. Laksminath mentions how his elder brother was severly thrashed by his father for no other fault than that of listening to a Brahmo lecture."[1]

The scene in Orissa was no different. Fakirmohan refers to the spread of Brahmo influence in 1867-68.[2] The main preacher from Calcutta was Śrī Īśāncandra Basu. The new religion created much resentment among the people who believed that the Brahmos did not believe in God and had no respect for Brahmins. Fakirmohan refers to the king of Mayūrbhañj donating his house to the Brahmo Samaj.[3] The curious individuals would peep through their windows to have a glimpse of the Brahmo Samaj meetings.[4]

It might be well to recall here that the contemporary Indian Society was fermented by new religious ideas at that time. The advent of new learning made the educated people question the relevance of the age-old customs. The Brahmo religion was an outcome of the new fermentation. Fakirmohan and Laksminath write about the common man's contempt towards

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.38.
2. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.65.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

this religion. Yet both of them were, in a sense, its admirers. Laksminath married according to Brahmo rites in a famous Brahmo family. Fakirmohan's son, too, married a Brahmo girl. Fakirmohan himself was a regular visitor to Brahmo Samaj meetings[1] and followed certain Brahmo rituals of prayer and worship at home.[2]

Laksminath and Fakirmohan were particularly concerned with the condition and education of women-folk. Women were not encouraged to receive formal education. Nor were they allowed to come out of the house and mix freely with other members of the society. Laksminath came of an affluent and educated family. Still, as he tells us, his sisters-in-law did not have much education. Even his elder sister-in-law could not openly send a letter to her husband as this was not approved by the society. She had to send it secretly through young Laksminath.[3] The society was very conservative. One of the sisters of Laksminath was married off when she was a child and became a widow much before she came to live in her father-in-laws house.[4] Throughout her

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1. Laksminarayan Sahu, 'Fakīrmohan Senāpati'. In Fakīrmohan Parikramā,(ed) J.B.Mohanti, Fakirmohan Sahitya Parisad,(1955), p.24.
2. Sarala Debi, 'Fakīrmohanaṅka Pāribārika Jīban', Ibid,p.28.
3. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.28.
4. Ibid., p.30.

life she was forced to lead a pious and austere life. His other sisters, who were married, were not allowed to eat in their father's house after their marriage.[1] Laksminath was severely critical of such meaningless traditions. The custom of child marriage is referred to by Laksminath many a time. In his autobiography, he mentions how his brother got married at a very young age and he himself had vehemently opposed this.[2] The exploitation of women in the name of religion is a favourite theme of his short stories.[3] Conditions for women in Assam, changed for the better afterwards. Laksminath visited Dibrugarh in 1920 and was happy to find that the women folk had discard Purdah and had become equal with men.[4] With the advent of the European Sahebs in connection with tea plantation in Assam, the innocent Assamese girl fell easy victims to their amorous advances. Laksminath, in one of his short stories, takes special note of these helpless girls, exploited by the Saheb and ostracised by their society.[5]

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1. Mòr Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.29.
2. Ibid, p.31.
3. 'Gītā', Surabhi, B.G.II, p.579.
4. Mor Mātṛmukh Darśan, B.G.I, p.117.
5. Mr. Fipson, B.G.II, p.505.

In Fakirmohan's autobiography, the picture of Oriya women is no better. Education has no value for them. The common attitude of women towards education is aptly summed up by Rebatī's grandmother when she says that education for a girl is of no importance at all. Fakirmohan wrote an article suggesting a slight modification in the traditional dress of women. The Oriya women in the villages have a one piece dress-a saree. Fakirmohan advocated use of chemise in addition to Saree. This, he thought, would make for both beauty and decency. This innocuous suggestion of his was greeted with a volley of protest from various quarters.[1] In his short story 'Rebatī' when the heroine wants to acquire some skill in reading, the grandmother comes out with the comment that education for a girl is absolutely useless; all that matters for her is to learn how to lookafter the household affairs. This, in fact was the view held by people at large regarding female education. Fakirmohan mentions in his autobiography that no other than the Christian girls attended the school at Balesore where he was a teacher.[2] Society was so conservative that even husband and wife could not meet or converse freely. The restrictions imposed by the conservative

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1. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.66.

2. Ibid, p.24.

society and the strategems adopted by the younger people to get over them, are aptly, albeit humorously, described in 'Gārudi Mantra'. In this story, following the prevalent pattern of social behaviour, a maid servant accompanies Mohinī to her in-law's place to keep watch on her code of conduct and decorum. The story ends on a humorous note, characteristic of Fakirmohan, when Madan, the husband, sends away the maid servant frightening her with a fake snake and sees his wife's face for the first time in day light. The restrictions imposed on Mohinī were no different from those inhering the general custom of the contemporary society. A girl, had no say in the matter of her marriage; whatever was decided by the parents was followed strictly by her. This point is finally elaborated by Laksminath in his short story 'Lalitī Kākatī'. The general feeling of all the women gets reflected in what Loliti says:

> "Marriage, marriage and marriage. As if unless a girl gets married she goes straight to hell. That is why you people offer her to anybody. It does not matter if he is a thief, a drunkerd or lame or dumb. As if the girl is like a cow and has to be got rid of somehow. Shame on you, all men."[1]

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1. 'Lalitī Kākatī', Kehõkali, B.G.I, p.756.

This, it seems, was the cry of the multitude of women against the torture they suffered at the hands of the society, they lived in.

The contemporary attitude towards education was one of awe and wonder in both Assam and Orissa. Fakirmohan tells that Rādhānāth Ray was the first person in Balesore to pass matriculation examination. The event caused great commotion and groups of people visited Balesore to see him.[1] Laksminath, too, in his autobiography tells us that there was great festivity in his family when he passed his B.A.[2] The news brought tears to his father's eyes and prompted all the family members to offer prayers to thank God for this blessing. He says, "At that time to pass B.A. was great thing. Jagannāth Baroa was known as B.A. Jagannāth in Assam."[3]

The change coming over the social and cultural worlds of the Oriyas as a result of their association with the Western people and Bengalis is described by Fakirmohan in the

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1. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.21
   Fakirmohan adds that the very fact that a frail boy like Rādhānāth could pass entrance examination gave the people some assurance that it was not a difficult job after all.
2. Mor jīwan Sōwaran, B.G.I, p.58.
3. Ibid.

following words in his autobiography:

> "In the Oriya community of Balesore, there has been tremendous change due to their association with the foreigners and due to their English education. Previously, everybody from young to old used to have pigtails. The school educated boys were the first to discard this. Gradually the pigtail has started disappearing from all other young people living in the town."[1]

Fakirmohan also describes a variety of changes in the dresses and habits of people in the same chapter.[2] He tells us that previously shoes were never allowed to cross the threshhold of the house. Use of shirts and coats was something unusual. Fakirmohan wonders that those tradition are fast vanishing and people in shirt-sleeves or suits are a common sight. The general attitude of the young boys is also criticised by Fakirmohan. He says that in the past, it was unusual for a son not to obey his father or to speak back to him. But because of the advent of English education, the

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1. Ātma jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.59.
2. Ibid, p.59-60.

sons of the richer section of people have become indisciplined.

A similar change was noticeable in Assam. Laksminath narrates in his autobiography how during the marriage of one of his acquiantances, they were asked to take-off shoes and socks before entering the house of the bride and how consequently a great quarrel ensued.[1] As a child Laksminath, a devout Hindu, would not enter the house of Sri Halirām Barua because somebody had told him that Sri Barua ate chicken.[2] Laksminath refers to the oppressive discipline imposed by the caste system. The disappearance of pig-tails and the appearance of Western dresses were frowned upon by believers in caste morality. Laksminath mentions how his brothers fell into disfavour with the father for cutting their hair in modern fashion.[3] He also tells us that his father would permit him to stay only with a Brahmin family in Calcutta when he first came to study there, because he was afraid that his son might lose caste by eating food cooked by non-Brahamins.[4] His brother, he tells us, earned the displeasure of his father

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1. Mor jīwan Sōwaran, B.G.I, p.29.
2. Ibid, p.8.
3. Ibid, p.12.
4. Ibid, p.43.

as he read medicine in Calcutta. His father considered that the dissection of a dead-body would ultimately lead to the down-fall of a Brahmin.[1] Strong caste-feelings find expression in 'Mor Mātṛmukh Darśan'. A Brahmin boy is obstracised for eating a few biscuits purchased from a shop run by a Muslim.[2]

The advent of Britishers and the missioneries brought about drastic changes in the religious life of the people. The peace and quiet of Hindu religion, which had no rival till then, was disturbed by the spread of Christianity. Both Fakirmohan and Laksminath were victims of this new revolt in India. Fakirmohan speaks at length about the technique devised by the missionaries to spread Christianity.[3] He gives a humourous account of their attempt at translating the Bible into Oriya and also narrates the way they sang Christian hymns at cross roads. Their contempt for Hindu religion and their

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1. Mor jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.55.

2. The caste system in Orissa was equally rigid. In the first chapter of 'Chamāṇa Aṭhaguṇṭha', Fakirmohan writes that Syāma Malla, the cousin of Mangarāj, was in great danger of losing his caste by eating cabbage curry cooked with onions. He, somehow, managed to escape from this calamity through the rituals of prāyaścitta, a process of confession and expiation.

3. Ātmajīban, Carita, F.G.I, p.25.

efforts to lure the people towards Christianity is described in detail by Fakirmohan. Of course, he is all praises for the missionaries who rendered timely help to the poorer sections of societies in time of distress. This kindly gesture, he feels, had a favourable impression on the people and helped facilitate the process of proselytisation. Laksminath's daughter Dīpikā came under their spell while she was a student in convent at Calcutta and Laksminath's persistent pleas could not detract her from her chosen path. Fakirmohan himself was carried away by this movement and even toyed with idea of getting converted to Christianity alongwith his friend Rādhānāth Ray, the modern Oriya poet. Ultimately, when Rādhānāth did not come forward, he also lost courage.[1]

The communication system both in Assam and Orissa was very poor and the journey from one place to another was usually with the help of boats. There was no rail-road. Fakirmohan tells us that he brought his printing press from Calcutta to Belasore in a bullock-cart.[2] The road being infested with dacoits, the journey was perilous. When he joined as manager of Dasapalla he had to travel from Cuttack by boat. He had to spend quite a few days in the boat without

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p. 65.
2. Ibid, p.47.

proper food and shelter and was once caught in a terrible storm in the Mahandi.[1] Even within the princely states of Orissa, communication was very poor and he would generally travel by elephants.[2]

The conditions in Assam were no better. Laksminath in his autobiography, gives a graphic description of a boat-journey in the Brahmputra.[3] It may as well be mentioned that he was born in a boat when his parents were travelling in the river. While a student at Calcutta he would perform journey to his native place by steamer boat.[4]

There are many small episodes narrated by both of them which bring out the social, economic and political situation of India at that time. Their writings give us a comprehensive view of the contemporary society, both in its social as well as religious aspects.

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan had imbibed the humanitarian ideas of the age of reason, and hence, could question, criticise and oppose the inherited social customs.

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1. Ātmajībana Carita, F.G.I, p.131.
2. Ibid, p.157.
3. Mor Jīwan Sōwaran, B.G.I, p.3.
4. Ibid, p.44.

This was an attitude rarely in evidence in ancient and medieval literatures. Their works remain, till today, a faithful mirror of the life and society of Assam and Orissa respectively. The inherent relation between literature and life which had been so completely severed during the later medieval age, was restored by them.

CHAPTER VI

MANY SPLENDOURED LIVES

1. AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

It is natural that after reading an author we shall be curious to see him in the social surroundings in which he lived and to know the chief facts of his ambitions, struggles, successes and failures. We can understand and enjoy the works of a writer so much the better for the information they afford through their biographical literature. Thus alongwith the books of an author a place is surely to be made for a brief but authentic account of his life.[1]

Autobiographies are essentially a product of modern times. They became important as a result of the emphasis put on the common man in the 20th century. Even an ordinary man assumed great importance and his life story could now please

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1. "In our study of the personal life in literature, we shall of course be greatly helped by the judicious use of good biography. Our interest in the writings of any great author being once aroused, the desire will inevitably be stipulated to learn something of the man himself, as a man, beyond that which his work reveals to us."
W.H. Hudson, An Introduction to The Study of Literature, London (1960) p.22.

others. In our ancient literature, there is not a single instance of biographical literature. The lack of biographical literature has often resulted in mis-understandings about the time of a poet or a writer. There has been confusion about the date and time of a famous poet like Kalidasa.

Apart from providing useful information about the writer's personal life, a biography may throw a flood of light on the social history of his times and may provide us with a comprehensive perspective. We may see the social surroundings in which he lived, the way in which he worked and the conditions under which he produced his works. Equipped with the information provided by a writer's autobiography, we are better placed to understand and enjoy his works. A writers' autobiography may be read as a piece of literature as also as a commentary upon his own writings.

The autobiographies of Laksminath and Fakirmohan are indeed fine specimens of creative writing; they are also an important source of the contemporary socio-economic history. No doubt they abound in many trivialities, yet it is through them that we rind ample evidence of the times that shaped their personalities.

Fakirmohan and Laksminath are among the pioneer autobiography writers in Oriya and Assamese literatures.

Fakirmohan was alive to the need of biographies in Oriya. He translated Bidyā Sāgar's 'Jīban Carita' from Bengali into Oriya. Before him there were autobiographies written in Bengali by Bidyā-Sāgar, Rājā Rām Mohan and Debend-ra Nāth. Fakirmohan and Laksminath being well-versed in Bengali might have gone through these before they attempted their own. Fakirmohan's autobiography is complete and gives us a picture of his life till his old age. Laksminath on the other hand did not complete his lifesketch and went only half way through it. Of course the gaps in his autobiography are to some extent filled up by his diary and letters which form a considerable volume.

The contemporary social scene sketched out in both the autobiographies is fairly similar. Both of them were born in a period when India was under the British rule. The advent of the new culture with its good and bad points is depicted pretty extensively in both the books. Secondly, both Assam and Orissa were ruled by Bengali Officers and Bengali was the medium of education. The current controversies on these issues find full expression in both the works. Since English education was introduced for the first time, the love of common people for higher learning is also described casually by both the writers. The religious ferment aroused by the advent of Brahmo Samaj is a theme common to both the autobiographies.

Both the autobiographies give a fairly truthful account of not only the good things of their lives but also about their foibles and short-comings. There is no attempt at self-deification. Rather their faults and foibless make them more human. Fakirmohan openly admits that he was a victim of liquor and he wrote a parody about a student in the girls' school. Laksminath's open admission of his mediocre talents as a student and the frustration of his parents over his marriage are also depicted truthfully. Both the writers appear as devoted husbands and responsible fathers. However, there is one important difference between the two. Fakirmohan, otherwise a humorous writer, seems to be a little serious in his autobiography. Comparatively Laksminath appears to be more romantic and imaginative. The whole dream-world of his childhood and adolesence comes alive in his autobiography. Fakirmohan is overly concerned with the period of life that he spent as an administrator. Naturally there is little scope for imagination. Never-the-less, the autobiographies of both these writers are no dry annals of history containing a pletheora of dates and events. They give the impression of charming works of fiction. No doubt much of the highly romantic and exciting careers of both Laksminath and Fakirmohan would have remained completely unknown to posterity had not they written their life stories for us.

2. LIFE OF LAKSMINATH

Laksminath was born in November 1868. His father Śrī Dīna Nāth Bejbaruwā was a Civil Servant under the Ahom Rule. He spent his whole life as Munsif and Deputy Collector and was quite a renowned person of his time. He was a great Sanskrit scholar, a pious and honest man with a conservative out look. The imprint of his father's religious temperament is obvious on Laksminath. Inspite of high education, Laksminath could never get rid of the Vaisnav influence, mainly because, right from childhood he was brought up in very religious surroundings.

Laksminath's birth took place in a romantic setting. His father, on transfer from Nowgong to Barpeta was travelling in a boat with his family. It was during their river journey that Laksminath was born in a place called Āhatguri on a full moon night. The vast sand banks of river Brahmaputra were flooded with moonlight for miles and miles. Since he was born on the Lakṣmī Purnimā day, he was called Laksminath.

Laksminath wandered throughout Assam alongwith his father. He was in close touch with the lovely scenic beauty and the rich historical heritage of Assam which was to leave a lasting impression in his mind. His autobiography is

resplendent with fascinating details of natural beauty. He was a dreamer from his early childhood. His romantic temperament found expression in various ways. Narrating his experiences as a child at Tejpur he remembers the open terrace of fragrant flowers and the handiwork of the local potters.[1] The same romantic and emotional temperament prompted him to sit near the goldsmith at Laksmipur and to watch him make lovely ornaments with pieces of red, blue and green stones.[2] As a child, he enjoyed idol-making and wondered if the different colours applied to Goddess Durga really came from the various tints of the sky.[3] He was enamoured of the notes of a flute and tried his best to play at it in his young days. It was a great pain for him when his elder brother broke it.[4] The sestray instances, recalled in his autobiography, bear eloquent witness to Laksminath's romantic and sensitive childhood.

Laksminath's early education started with the religious rituals ceremoniously observed in the household. The medium of education was Bengali and he did not like it.

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.3
2. Ibid, p.6
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

His father, though a very conservative Hindu, was open to the new influences at work and set up a school for English education in Laksmipur. Dīna Nāth was a devout Vaisnav and his house used to be constantly visited by the different religious heads. Their daily routine at home also was absolutely religious and young Laksminath had to spend quite a bit of time in plucking flowers for worship, in attending the prayer-room, and in singing hymns with his father and other members of his family.

Laksminath started his schooling at Gauhati. After his father retired, he stayed permanently at Sibsagar with his father. He attended high school there. Laksminath found the school very dull. He was, he tells us, a mediocre student. It was the life in the open that attracted him. He passed his entrance Examination in 1886 and secured a government scholarship.

Laksminath had a very happy childhood surrounded by a number of brothers and sisters. He was pampered by all the members of his family. Coming of a well-to-do family, he was constantly attended by private servants. His father had two wives; Laksminath's mother was the younger one. Laksminath mentions in his autobiography that the relations between his two mothers were very cordial and he got more love and affection from the elder one.

After passing Matriculation, Laksminath came to Calcutta and got admitted to Scottis Church College. He found College studies equally boring, and went back to Assam. But afterwards he changed his mind and come back to Calcutta and passed first Art Examination in 1888 and graduated in 1890. It was during his college days that his young mind was exposed to the very potent influence of English romantic literature. When he was a student of IIIrd year degree he read Byron, Shelley and Keats. He was charmed by Western literature and his first writings were in English. He became a lover of flowers and moon-light and composed innumerable love poems. The whole eighth chapter of his autobiography is devoted to the dream-land of his early youth.

Laksminath afterwards read law and M.A. simultaneously but could not become successful in either of them. It was during this student period, that Laksminath's intellectual life flourished to full extent. He was highly impressed by the different Bengali journals. He tried his hand at bringing out a literary journal 'Jonāki' alongwith his friend Candrakumar Agarwala. He founded a society for the improvement of Assamese language also.

It was about this period that a fundamental change occured in the emotional life of Laksminath. His classmates

Sudhīndranātha and Kṣitīndranāth introduced him to the famous family of the Tagores. This led ultimately to his marriage in 1891 with Prajnā Sundarī, the second daughter of Hemendranāth, the elder brother of Rabīndranāth. This marriage created a great commotion in Assam as the Tagores were Brahmos. The atmosphere was thick with rumours that embarrassed his parents. Laksminath, in his autobiography, refers to some ethereal and mystical happenings about his marriage. He believes that the marriage was preordained by God. However, Laksminath's married into a Bengali family but never adopted a Bengali way o-f life- inspite of the conscious efforts of his brothers-in-law towards this end. Even Rabindranath failed in his endeavour. It is significant to mention here that when Maharsi Debendranath Tagore blessed the young couple after their marriage, he gave a golden pen to Laksminath wishing him to create great literature through his pen. To the bride, he gave lovely roses and wished that her good name might spread like the fragrance of the flower. That was a prophecy which was to be more than fulfilled.

His marriage in the illustrious Tagore family had its great impact on his literary career also. Through the Tagores, he entered into the circle of the elite and the wise among the Bengalis and was initiated to Bengali music, drama and other cultural activities of Bengal. Inspite of this, he had

a vivid sense of pride and affection for his own language, its culture and for the history and institutions of Assam.

Laksminath flourished as business partner of Sri B. Baroa and, for sometime settled in Calcutta after his marriage. But before long, misunderstandings developed and he separated from his partner. Laksminath tried his hands on his own timber business and took an employment under a European business concern, Bird and Co. in 1916. In 1917 he made his Headquarters at Sambalpur in Orissa. He had his own house and settled with his family there for eleven years. He took active interest in the local socio-political affairs and was very popular among the Oriyas. He has written many stories with the back-ground of Orissa and in many of his letters written from Sambalpur we find clear proof of his attachment for the place and its people. His life was more interesting than a fairy tale. He was born in Assam, spent many years in Bengal and retired in Orissa. The mixture of all these cultures made enriched his experience. In 1933, he was invited by the Maharaja of Baroda to deliver lectures on Vais-navism. This was a rare honour. Untill he breathed his last, he took active interest in the literary affairs of Assam. In 1916 he presided over the first Assam Students Conference and was the President of the Sixth Session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha in 1924. In the August 1937 he came to visit his daughter from Sambalpur to

Dibrugarh and fell very ill because of duodenal ulcer. He breathed his last there. It was but natural for him a true son of Assam, to come all the way from Orissa to die in Assam.

Prajnā, his wife was equally talented. She was not only a religious and devoted wife but also a good painter and a [illegible] writer.[1] For a few months she edited a monthly journal called 'Puṇya' and made a successful portrait of her father-in-law. Laksminath was a very devoted husband and throughout his life was blessed with marital bliss. Of his four daughters, the first girl Surabhi died very young. This left a deep scar on the mind of Laksminath. The passage where he narrates the death of his daughter in his autobiography is very poignant. He had three other daughters, Arunā, Ratnā and Dīpikā. He was a very fond father and gave his three daughters high education and encouraged them in music and painting. His innumerable letters to his daughters and sons-in-law bear testimony to his deep affection as a father. His first two daughters were married happily. Laksminath chose a Bengali and an Assamese boy for his sons-in-law. But the third one Dīpikā, became a nun 1932. Laksminath, deeply distressed on hearing of her decision, was later reconciled and even advised her not to give up the path she had chosen. This speaks of Laksminath's liberal outlook and catholicity of mind. This

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1. Her book, "Āmiṣ O Nirāmiṣ Āhār " was the first standardised cookery book in Bengal.

Catholicity of temperament is also apparent from the facts that he married into a Brahmo family, himself remained a true Vaisnav and never interfered in the rituals of Brahmo religion that his wife practised.

As a man, he was very jovial. His innumerable letters bear witness to his joviality. A man of romantic temperament, he loved flowers, trees and animals. From his letters written from Sambalpur, we find references to the different seasonal flowers, his tiny vegetable garden and the mango and leechi trees. The pet cow, cat and dog find references too. In Laksminath's life we find a conglomeration of many cultures. He was absolutely westernised and yet was a true Vaisnav at heart. He wrote in English, but the writing was about the rich Sanskrit literature of India. He married into a Bengali family but fought throughout his life for the uplift of Assamese literature. He married according to Brahmo rites, but celeberated Śrī Śaṅkaradeva's tithi at home. Perhaps his greatness lies in this. The different cultures of Assam, Bengal and Orissa mingled and became one in him. He was equally liked by people of all the three states. This amalagam of culture accounts for the variety and richness both in his life as well as literature.

3. LIFE OF FAKIRMOHAN

Fakirmohan was born in the year 1843 on the auspicious day of Makar Saṁkrānti. His ancestors were originally called Malla but were given the title Senapati meaning a General. Fakirmohan had a very unhappy childhood. During his infancy when he was only one year and five months old, he lost his father. His father, Laksmana Carana had gone to Puri on a pilgrimage and died of cholera on the way back. His mother Tulasīdebī died of sheer grief after fourteen months and the unfortunate baby was looked after by his grandmother, Kucilā Debī. With the loss of their extensive revenue-free land the aristocratic Senapatis had become poor commoners. Fakirmohan's grandmother had much difficulties financially in bringing up her grandson. He was a sickly child and was practically bed-ridden all the time. Besides, he was continuously tortured by his uncle Purus-ottam. It is a contrast with the life of Laksminath who, being one among so many children, had a happy childhood. He was looked after properly and had all the facilities of education. Young Fakirmohan on the otherhand could get neither regular education nor the filial affection so essential for the normal upbringing of a child. His original name was Brajamohan. But once he fell very sick and his grandmother vowed that if at all he recovered, she would surrender him as a Fakir to the two

Muslim Pirs who stayed in Balasore. Ultimately, he got cured and because of the vow of his grandmother, every year during Moharram he would be dressed as a Muslim Fakir and go begging in the town. His grandmother sold the rice that he collected as alms and with that money offered ritual to the Pirs. Thus, he acquired his name Fakirmohan.

He started learning the alphabets when he was of nine years old. At that time the early education system in Orissa was not very developed. There was no printed Oriya book and he had to attend the village school to learn elementary reading and writing. At this time, he was employed by his uncle to work as a labour boy at the seaport of Balasore. After sometime Fakirmohan joined the Barabati school and felt an overwhelming joy at the prospect of study. He turned out to be a bright student, but his uncle refused to pay the school fee which was no more than 25 paise a month. He had to unwillingly drop out of school.

It might sound strange that the boy who had literally no academic education wrote so many books and shaped the course of modern Oriya literature. He had an insatiable hunger for knowledge. Lack of schooling did not dampen his zest for learning. He was a restless seeker of knowledge and acquired a good knowledge of Persian, English, Bengali and Sanskrit.

All these languages he had learnt by personal efforts, without any teacher to guide him.

Forced out of school as a student, he was to be called back to the same school as a teacher. There was an opening for a teacher in his former school and his Headmaster, who had tremendous faith in Fakirmohan's abilities, invited him to the same post at Rs.2.50 paise per month. Fakirmohan's young mind felt rejuvenated at the prospect of teaching. By his own effort, he mastered arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, prepared his own a map for teaching Geography and was remarkably successful with literature and history. Later on, the post of a Headmaster lay vacant at the Christian Mission School. The European Missionary Rev. A. Luther unhesitatingly appointed Fakirmohan there at Rs.10/- per month. The offering of Headmastership to Fakirmohan, a native with no formal education to his credit, that proves that the missionaries had great faith in his knowledge and capability.[1] At this point Fakirmohan's life took a sharp turn. He came into contact with such eminent Europeans as Sir John Beams, Rev.E.C.B. Hallam and T.Ravenshaw. Fakirmohan describes his friendship with Sir John Beams in the

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1. "The Mission school was conducted by one of the best specimens of an Ooriah, I have ever seen, Baboo Fakir Mohan Senapaty." wrote T.Ravenshaw the then collector to Secretary to the Government of Bengal on 23rd July, 1873. See Natabar Samantray, Byāsakabi Fakīrmohan, Bhubaneswar (1972) p.46.

following words in his autobiography:

> Both among the British civilians and the Indian elite, John Beam-s was reputed to be a brilliant scholar. He had mastered no fewer than eleven languages. He was busy while at Balasore, with his comparative grammer of the Indian languages. Rev.Hallam, our secretary, was also a devoted student of literature, and deep friendship had sprung up between the two on that account. For his quinti-lingual grammar, Beams needed a pundit with a fairly good knowledge of Oriya, Bengali and Sanskrit. Rev.E.C.B. Hallam, ever my well-wisher took me along one day and introduced me to Beam-s. During the very first interview, he questioned me about the uses of some affixes and prepositions in Sanskrit. Somehow my replies so convinced him that he immediately noted them down for incorporation in his comparative grammar. And this single event earned me the reputation among the Europeans of Balasore of being a great Indian scholar.[1]

His contact with the Britishers and their high regard

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1. Trans Mayadhar Mansimha, Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi (1976) p.15.

for him gave him enormous official advantage. He established himself as an able teacher and a successful writer. While a teacher in Mission School, he wrote a number of text books in Oriya on Mathematics, Geography and Indian History and won Government awards for this. Later, he turned to Oriya Language and literature in general. He was the first Oriya to establish a printing press in Balasore and brought out two journals.[1] It required tremendous effort to acquire the necessary equipments from Calcutta and to raisethe necessary funds. This could be made possible only with the blessings and good will of the then Commissioner Mr. T. Ravenshaw.

His knowledge and wisdom was thoroughly rewarded by the English Indologists. After being a school teacher for many years, Fakirmohan entered into a new field and joined as Dewan of Nilgiri State in 1871 at the young age of 28, through the initiative of Sir John Beam-s. Hence forth, he went on working as Administrator in different Princely States of Orissa tackling many a knotty problems and retired in 1892 after a varied and successful experience in administrative field.

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1. Fakirmohan writes in his autobiography that on the day his printing press began to operate at Balasore, the entire market closed down and half the government officials took leave to see the miracle. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.48.

It were these jobs that provided him with opportunities to observe men and women in a wider field. These were to later fill his stories and novels making them vibrant with life. He took active interest in all the literary activities of Orissa and was an active contributor to the non-cooperation movements. The last years of his life were very painful. He felt extremely lonesome after the death of his dear wife. His only son had some dispute with him regarding property matters which must have been embarrassing to him. Once he took undiluted sulphuric acid and suffered badly from troubles of varicose vein. He spent the last few years in his house, Śāntikānan, at Balasore where he planted trees and took delight in the beautiful flower garden around his house. He passed away on 14th June, 1918.

So far as his family life was concerned, his first marriage was in the year 1856. This marriage was not a success. His wife Lilāwatī died in 1871 and he married again the same year. His life with his second wife Kṛṣṇā was very happy and was an ideal one. On many occasions he speaks highly of his wife who was of a pious nature. Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan lost their first children, a girl and a boy respectively. After the death of his first son, Fakirmohan translated the Rāmāyaṇa and used to recite it to his wife to give her solace and comfort. Though Kṛṣṇā was not very educated, she had real

appreciation for his books. Fakirmohan tells us in his autobiography that she would be moved to tears while listening to his Rāmāyaṇa. The depth of Fakirmohan's love for his wife is apparent in his descriptions of the mental agony he suffered at her death in 1894.

Like Laksminath, Fakirmohan was very liberal in his religious ideas. During his young age, he was attracted towards Christianity and the Brah-mo religion. Like Laksminath's family, his family too, was a mixture of both Bengali and Oriya culture. His only son Mohinī Mohan, a lecturer, married into a Bengali Brahmo family of Dacca and Fakirmohan accepted Hiranprabhā, the daughter-in-law with affection. He had two daughters, Mohilāmaṇi by his first wife and Sarojinī by his second wife. Both the daughters married in Oriya families.

During his long and chequered career, Fakirmohan comes before us as a novelist, an admin-strator, a social reformer, a journalist, a poet as well as a patriot. Born and brought up in a medival environment, he was remarkably receptive to modern ideas. He was a genius, a towering personality that any literature can be proud of. It was sheer miracle that he, with no formal education to his credit, could rise to such soaring heights in the literary field of Orissa

and could earn the confidence of an Indologist of Sir John Beams' eminence. He could scale such heights in literary and scholarly field while working as a top administrator in different royal states of Orissa. His development work in these states stand as monuments of his farsightedness and administrative capability. His was the single handed effort, which saved and shaped Oriya literature at a critical juncture, when it was threatened by the onslaught of the highly developed modern literature of Bengal. He not only wrote books in Oriya for elementary school children so that Oriya literature came of age in modern times, but also produced a proliferation of poetry, novel, short story, satire and critical essays from a scratch when nothing existed in Oriya literature. His was a rich and multifarious creative capability.

4. ORISSA AND LAKSMINATH

Laksminath stayed at Sambalpur in Orissa for eleven years. He went to Orissa when he was nearing fifty and when he was already established as a writer. Though most of his books were published prior to this, we find ample proof from his letters written from Sambalpur that he used to send articles to different journals from that place.[1] His daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends used to visit him at Sambalpur and in a sense it was his home town. Ṛtendranāth Tagore was there during his daughter Ratnā's marriage in 1918.[2] Rabīndranāth's wife visited Sambalpur in 1922 also.[3]

One hopes to find life in Orissa reflected in his books. But surprisingly we do not find much of it in his writings. The main reasons are two. Firstly, he did not write much during this period. Secondly, we could have got a better glimpse of his Sambalpur days from his autobiography; but he stopped it midway and hence the account of the most valuable portion of his life at Sambalpur has been permanently lost to us. Of course, Orissa is referred to off and on in his

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1. See Patralekhā, Ed. Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969) pp4,5.
2. Maheswar Neog, 'Dinlekhāt Jīwanar Chā', Laksminath, Bina Library (1976), p.86.
3. Ibid.

letters as well as in his diary. Through these documents, we find many references to the climate, the people, the surrounding and the culture of Orissa.

Laksminath went to Sambalpur to stay there permanently in the year 1917. He had been to Sambalpur before this on many occasions and stayed with his friend Shri Jogindra Nath Sen. He had not only a house at Sambalpur but also bunglows in Jharsugda, Meghpal and Barmal. In his letters and diaries we find references to many officers of Orissa like Śrī Nīlomani Senāpati, Mr. Dick Rout, Śrī Durgā Miśra, Dr. Bal and many others. He was very much interested in Oriya culture and had an intimate knowledge of the forests of Orissa. From his diary, we come to know that he attended a party at the L.G's House,[1] that his wife and daughter sang and played Piano at Mrs. J.N. Sen's house,[2] he left for Puri on a pleasure trip,[3] and he came back from Meghpal from his Sikar because of heavy rains.[4] We find minute references to a picnic at Jamra with his oriya

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1. Bejbaruwār Dinlekhā, part II (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1976), Diary dated 3rd August 1912.
2. Ibid, Diary dated 6th August 1912.
3. Ibid, Diary dated 28th October 1918.
4. Ibid, Diary dated 13th June 1919.

friends[1] and to his parrot who died of ant-bite.[2] These descriptions give us a detailed picture of his life at Sambalpur.

His life as a Sikari started in Sambalpur. In his childhood, Laksminath could not tolerate even a fish being killed, but later he became a very good sikari while in Orissa. He admits that since he had to roam about in the forests of Orissa because of his timber business, he had to carry a gun for his own safety. This ultimately resulted in his fondness for hunting. After staying in Sambalpur for a few years, Laksminath had to go to the forests of Assam in connection with his work but it is surprising that the work he enjoyed in Orissa became a torture for him in Assam. That is why in letter to his wife from Gauhaty in the month of January, 1928, he wrote, "I shall be grateful to God if somehow I can spend the months of February and March and fifteen days of April here and can go back to Sambalpur again."[3]

Laksminath not only stayed in Sambalpur but also took active interest in the local people's welfare. He was so much

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1. Bejbaruwār Dinlekhā, Part II (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1976) Diary dated 1st Jan, 1921.
2. Ibid, Diary dated 9th October 1921.
3. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), p.73.

involved with the common people of Orissa that he was elected as a member to the local Municipality. This, in itself, speaks of his popularity among the Oriyas. He was on good terms with different persons and citizens of the town His jovial and gay nature earned him the confidence of many people. Being a worker in the forest, he had ample knowledge of the flora and fauna of Sambalpur. Nīlmaṇi Senāpati, an I.C.S. Officer of Orissa, who was Commissioner of Sambalpur and was quite well acquainted with Laksminath's family speaks of him in very high terms:

> I found Bebaroa's knowledge of the forests of Sambalpur and of its flora and Fauna very useful for my work. On my Shikar trips I often took him with me. His Shikar associates had been Md. Khan, who was a forest contractor; Zahoor, who was a Shikar assistant and Narsing pradhan of Gadgad-bahal, who had intimate knowledge of the ways of tigers. I enlisted them as my Shikar assistants. Even at the age of sixty-four Bezbaroa could walk three miles up-hill in the heat of summer afternoons and bear the discomfort of sand-flies by day and mosquitoes by night while waiting on a tree for the tiger. It was his company which made me love the

jungle.[1]

Laksminath took active part in the cultural life of Sambalpur also. A lover of art and poetry, he took great interest in various cultural activities of the twon.[2] How much interest Laksminath took in the cultural functions of Orissa is apparent from the fact that he staged the opera Balmiki Pratibha in the Townhall of Sambalpur in the year 1918. He himself acted in this drama alongwith his children. Both he and his wife took great interest in the education of the students of Sambalpur also.[3]

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1. Nilamani Senapati, In Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhitya-rathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972), p.248.

2. A local resident of Sambalpur Shri Jyotsnānāth Sen writes lovingly about him in these words: "In 1917 Bezbaroa came to Sambalpur as a representative of Messrs Bird & Co., who had taken some forests on lease in the Sambalpur District. Very soon the family established themselves in the social life of Sambalpur. Not a single day passed when the Bezbaroas and my parents did not meet either at their place or at ours. The Bezbaroas also took keen interest in various cultural activities. There often used to be musical soirees at their place." See Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhitya-rathī of Assam, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972) p.249.

3. "The Bengali school in Sambalpur was Ma's Friend Mrs.J.M. Sen's school, and that was why both papa and Ma used to take great interest in it. Once Ma produced Sat Bhai Champa with the pupils and teachers of the school, and this collected a lot of money for them. I also took part in the show." Sister Dīpikā. 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Man is the Father' In Laksminath Bezbaroa, the Sahityarathi of Assam (ed) Meheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972) p.238.

Laksminath was considered as one of the sophisticated upper class elite among the people of Sambalpur. He was the member of the local club, was friendly with different highly placed officials, but at the same time loved the poor and the needy. He took active interest in construction of the magnificient Municipal building. The love and regard that he earned from the local Oriya people of Orissa is beyond imagination.

His dislike of the white-skined European prompted him to refuse the membership of the Gymkhana Club. On the contrary he became an active member of the local Bengali Club and did a lot to improve it. His variety of interest ranged from gardening to the introduction of a soda water machine.

Sambalpur was no heaven for Laksminath and his family. The weather was hot and sultry. There were flies and mosquitoes and his work was tedious. His loneliness is apparent from his letter to his friend jatīndra, where he mentions about his solitary life away from Assam.[1] Yet, he loved Sambalpur and its people. Inspite of the strenuous work that was his daily routine, he found ample pleasure in working there. His tremendous love and concern for the local as well as tribal

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1. See Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969) p.14.

people of Orissa is described thus by his daughter:

> Sambalpur: Oh, that became another chapter in our lives. Quite often papa would have to go about 40 miles into the interior of the jungle to supervise work. For the first few years he would travel by tonga drawn by bullocks, but later-on he went by a motor van. We would accompany him some times, staying in leaf huts and keeping the kendulog fire burning throughout the night to keep tigers away from the bullocks. Papa, with the hot midday sun over his head, would climb hills to supervise the work and in the evenings, sometimes accompanied by Ma, would go to families in the locality and give medicines to the sick. The people there had more faith in Papa and Ma's medicines than in the doctor's.[1]

His love for the common Oriya people was not confined to distribution of medicines only. He mixed freely with them,

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1. Sister Dipika, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Man and the Father', In Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University, (1972), p.235.

sang and danced with them.[1] When the bullock cart men, after carting the sleepers from the jungles to the railway station, came to him for payment, he bought them bidies and lighted these himself for them.[2] He sang Oriya song with Ādi, the fan puller.[3] Not only did he spend time in playing with his cook's children, but also gave them elementary lessons in music.[4] These are a few stray facts indicative of his love for the common Oriyas.

The river Mahanadi which flowed by the side of his bunglow attracted Laksminath very much. In his writing, 'Mor Mrgaya' he eloquently writes about the beauty of the river. It was but natural for Laksminath who was born in the lap of Brah-maputra to fall in love with Mahanadi. He enjoyed taking bath in the river, took a stroll by the side of it and even taught his children swimming lessons.[5] In his letters

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1. Sister Dipika, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Man and the Father', In Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhityarathi of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972), p.243.

2. Ibid, p.241.

3. Ibid, p.242.

4. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), p.84.

5. Sister Dipika, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, The man and the Father', In Laksminath Bezbaroa. The Sāhityarathi of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972), p.235.

Mahanadi comes in automatically. He writes "I go to the forests every now and then, come back into the lap of the Mahanadi without thinking in the least of disturbing the peace of the denizens of the forests.[1] His friends also while writing to him from Assam teased him about his concern for Orissa and described him as a man counting the waves of river Mahanadi.[2]

Laksminath not only stayed in Sambalpur but also visited other places in Orissa. A follower of Śaṅkaradev, he visited Puri, one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage. His love for Lord Jagannāth is expressed in the following words by his daughter Dipika:

> In 1915, when we went on a visit to Puri for the first time, I was quite small, but I still remember how papa used to lead me by the hand into the Jagannāth temple. Papa would lie down his full length in devotion and teach me do the same. When we received Prasada, he would teach me to be careful not to drop anything on the floor.

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1. Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1969) p.132.

2. Ibid, p.185.

This was the depth of Papa's devotion.[1]

We find glimpses of Orissa many a times through his writings. While writing his short stories, he accepted the lowly and poorer section of Sambalpur and the surrounding areas as the theme. The stories in which we get a glimpse of Orissa are 'Swān', 'Mārjāri', 'Maganiyār Budhā', 'Dasmántar', 'Barīcowā' and 'Bhairā'. In these stories he appears to be more autobiographical. The stories give the impression of truth and realism rather than being creations of imagination. When we read such lines - "I do not know whether for some other reasons or because of these two valuable gardners, my garden is the best in Sambalpur. Let me not talk of the gardens of the local people. Even the gardens of the Europeans cannot be compared with it." - we do not feel like hearing an imaginary story. Rather it seems as if the writer is narrating his true experience.

In his story 'Barīcowā', his gardner is being dealt with by him in a very sympathetic tone. His story 'Bhairā' seems to be a page from his diary and there is absolutely no hint anywhere that he has created it out of his own mind.

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1. Sister Dipika, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Man and Father' In Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhityarathi of Assam, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University, (1972) p.244-45.

The very beginning of this story gives us the impression that this was based on a real character of Orissa. Thus begins the story:

> I do not know how the gardner of my Jharsugda bunglow somehow came to know that I have written about the two gardeners of Sambalpur. This time when I went to Jharsugda, he knelt down before me and told, "sir, I have been working in your bunglow for the last five years. Still then you have written about the two gardners of Sambalpur. What mistake have I committed I fail to understand."

Both the above mentioned stories are character sketches and the different aspects of the personalities of poor common men are brought into focus. Bhairā is described by Laksminath as a simpleton who cannot distinguish between the male and the female specis of ducks and goats and to whom all the Europeans look alike. His story 'Dasmantar' belongs to the same category also and deals with a fan-puller. The story refers to the water-soaked rice eaten by the Oriyas and the different dresses common is Oriya community. Laksminath quotes a number of Oriya songs in this story also. The story ends with a tragic note as the grandmother of Dasmantar is killed by the villagers for the wrong notion that she is a

witch. Laksminath ends the story with the words that he has not met Dasmantar for so many years but if at all he ever hears that he is living happily somewhere he would be delighted. In his story 'Maganiār Budhā', he takes a common beggar as the central character of his story. The different Oriya songs that he sings are quoted. The way the old man was tortured by the richer section of his village has been described in detail. Laksminath was in close contact with the tribal and the rural people of Orissa and had an intimate knowledge of their life. His sensitive and sympathetic mind prompted him to talk to them and understand their problems and difficulties which were later expressed in his writing.

His dramas also have Oriya characters and Oriya songs. In the drama 'Bāremataṛā', he introduces two Oriya characters namely Ānand and Utsav. Of course, both of them speak Assamese, though only once Utsav, the cook speaks an Oriya sentence-'Āsantu Bābu'-which is Oriya equivalent of 'Sir, please come'. In the drama, 'Maṅgalā', Laksminath introduces two Oriya songs. One of them is by the medieval poet Śaṅkaradās and takes Kausalyā's mourning as its theme. She wonders how Rāma will spend the years in the forest during his banishment. The poem is an address to the Cuckoo, a form of poetry, we often come across in medieval Oriya literature. This poem vividly describes the different seasons and different

months which will be spent by Rāma in the forest. Laksminath introduces yet another song by Raghu Araksita. This poem is a short one where Yaśodā asks child Kṛṣṇa to leave the bed and get up in the morning. It is apparent that Laksminath was certainly acquinted with Oriya literature, otherwise he would not have quoted Oriya songs in his drama.

His autobiographical sketch' Mor Mṛgayā ' deals with his life in Sambalpur. He describes the different places like Hirakud, Meghpal, Jamra and the beauty of river Mahanadi in this article. His different hunting expeditions are described in detail. The different families with whom he was familiar appear in these pages, though most of the times Laksminath avoids mentioning their names. The beautiful picnic spots of Sambalpur are described in such minute detail that is the envy of even the local Oriya writers.

In his smaller articles also we find frequent references to Orissa. In 'Manuṣya Purāṇar Ṭokā' he speaks about the excessively juicy mangoes of Sambalpur. He finds them better than those of Assam which are mostly infested with worms. His wife, he tells us jokingly, asked their servant Meghu to take out the juice out of the mangoes and how the servant himself readily helped himself to the fruit. He also speaks of his servant Bhalu coming to his house accompanied by his

wife and his son. Laksminath looks like an extremely sympathetic and loving master towards his Oriya servants. In his article 'Rode Powā Āṅglobhāratī' there is a discussion between himself and an Anglo-Indian regarding the Oriya language and the script. 'Barbaruār Burburani Āru Betāl' is a story of a Sub-Registrar of Puri. We find a reference to the famous Ravenshaw College of Cuttack in this article also. 'Uddhṛta', a small article in Kākatar Ṭopolā, is a conversation between two Oriya servants.

. His letters to friends and relatives also speak of the climate and natural beauty of Sambalpur, its people and its surrounding. Sometimes his letters give intimations of his knowledge and love of Oriya literature also. That he was attracted to Oriya songs and culture is apparent from his letter to Śrī Jyoti Prasād Agarwalā. He does not like the echo of Bengali tunes in Oriya songs and writes:

> Now-a-days the market is flooded with Oriya records. Anytime I listen to an Oriya record, I feel that they are the imitations of Bengali songs. Nothing else is Oriya in them except the

language. Of course the Oriya Campū[1] songs are out of my criticism. The Campu songs, like the Bengali Kirtan, are real Oriya songs and these songs are the real national songs of the Oriyas.[2]

His love of the local Oriya people is apparent in his letters also. He writes:

> The Senāpatis are alright, though for two days Mrs. Senāpati was not well. I don't know what was wrong. The Lady Dr. visited her. Daily Mrs. Senāpati sends cooked food for me. Yesterday she sent pulao, mutton and some vegetables. The other dayshe sent fish curry as she heard that I had stomach trouble. They really look after me.[3]

Laksminath was not merely satisfied with owing a house in Sambalpur, he had a beautiful garden also all around

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1. The Campū songs are written by Kabisūrya Baladeb Rath, the late medieval Oriya poet and are a collection of thirty four lyrics representing the thirty four letters of the Oriya alphabet. The main theme is the emotional drama of the romance between Rādhā and Krsna. It is a masterpiece both lyrically as well as dramatically.

2. Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), p.36.

3. Ibid, p.93.

it. While writing a letter to his daughter he cannot but describe the beauties of his flowers and the vegetables.[1]

Apart from flowers and vegetables he had a lovely fruit garden also and referred to the Lichis and or-anges of his garden to his daughter Arunā. He refers to his hunting expedition in these letters and believes that it was mostly due to the good companions of Sambalpur that he has developed this hobby. He says "Arunā is angry with me because of my hunting but what am I to do? Now-a-days I have so many friends for sikar. So I feel tempted. I am going today also, I don't know if I will get anything.[2] He gives detailed description of his hunting in Orissa through his letters and writes, "I was sitting on the machan and was smoking my cheroot pensively. At this time, three huge beasts appeared in front of me and Hamid. Hamid fired but missed. My cartridge peneterated through the heart of a Bison and the poor animal fell down immediately. I became extremely happy.[3]

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1. He writes, "I am writing this letter and my eyes are directed towards the garden infront of me. What lovely flowers are there thegarden! As if the stars have come down from heaven and are resting on the plants. You love flowers so much and I am sorry that I can not show you these lovely blassoms. This time, there have been plenty of turnips,peas, beetroots and carrots in my kitchen garden; but who is going to eat?" Patralekhā,(ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), p.96.
2. Ibid, p.123.
3. Ibid, p.129.

Whenever he wrote a letter from Sambalpur, he would invariably put in a line or two about its extreme heat of the summer[1] or its torrential rains.[2] References to diverse characters and personalities of Sambalpur are scattered all through his letters. It is through the writings of Laksminath that Orissa occupies a permanent place in the literary history of Assam. Orissa will be immortalised in Assam so long as his letters, diaries and short stories stay. This was the greatest contribution towards the integration of the two cultures of Assam and Orissa. It may as well be said in the conclusion that the fondness with which he has described Sambalpur and its surrounding far surpasses that of any Oriya writer. "Sambalpur thus possesses a great significance, nay even a sacred significance, if looked at from the view point of the literary history of Assam."[3]

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1. Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1969), p.63.

2. Ibid, p.79.

3. Maheswar Neog, 'A Pilgrimage to Sambalpur' In Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam, Gauhaty University (1972), p.253.

CONCLUSION

The most striking feature of Fakirmohan and Laksminath's literary compositions is their liberalism, their ability to absorb and express the liberal thoughts of that period. Their consmopolitan outlook and broad vision enabled them to embrace all that was new and modern in other religions, cultures and communities. This perhaps accounts for the modern attitude that runs through their literatures.

Laksminath, a staunch Vaisnavita Assamese, married into a Bengali family according to Brahmo rites. He gave his children the best education in Missionary School. His youngest daughter became a Christian nun, a fact Laksminath did not initially approve but later accepted. Fakirmohan also, as a youth, was attracted towards both Christianity and the Brahmo religion. In the temple in his house at Santikanan he had quotations from Buddha, Caitanya, Kabīr, Nānak, Christ and Mohammad. His only son married into a Bengali Brahmo family. These are a few striking examples from their lives which explain their liberal attitude and which influenced their literary creativity also. Inspite of their being stubborn followers of the conventional Indian tradition, they accepted all that was good and beautiful in other literatures

and cultures. Fakirmohan even went to the extent of admitting the supermacy of Buddhist religion and was so fascinated by Buddhism that he wrote a whole epic on the life of the Buddha.

The immediate cause and motive of their writing was the desire to protect the identity of their mother-tongues from the overshadowing influence of Bengali. During their young age they had witnessed the pre-dominance of Bengali language in their respective States to which they made repeated references in their autobiographies. Both of them imbibed extensive influence of Bengali culture and literature which had its blessings. Their knowledge of Bengali literature formed a solid background for their literary pursuits in later years. But they resented the supremacy of Bengali in their native lands and bent all their energies towards raising the standard of their own literatures. Surprisingly, while speaking of the dominance of Bengali language in Assam, Laksminath, in one of his essays, refers to similar conditions in Orissa also.[1] He says, as the strenuous and combined attempt made by interested Bengalis to ostracize Oriya language from schools and courts and to introduce Bengali in its place has failed, similarly, their attempt to dominate over the Assamese

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1. As-amīyā Bhāṣā Āru Sāhitya, B.G. II, p. 1774.

will not succeed. The dominance of Bengali gave rise to a strong patriotic flavour to the writings of Laksminath and Fakirmohan. Both of them advocated the knowledge of mother-tongue to be the most important factor for the uplift of literature.[1] Both of them held similar views on this subject:

> But we must learn that real literature belongs to one's own language. So long as our mother-tongue does not develope, we shall always be devoid of enjoying the real essence of literature. Even if we try a hundred times to accept a foreign language it will not be possible for us to adopt it.[2] (Fakirmohan). x x x

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1. Fakirmohan strongly felt that Oriya should be taught to all children at school level. He, while a member of Balasore High School managing committee wrote in the visiting book of the school (in 7th August, 1871) "I am sorry that there is no Oriya teaching in the upper classes and I do not understand how it is possible for an English teacher to give a liberal education in native language to the whole school. If I am to pass my opinion I should say that an Oriya teacher is exclusively and necessarily in need to teach Oriya only", See Natabar Samantray Byāsakabi Fakirmohan, Bhubaneswar (1972) p.71.

2. Sabhāpati Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G. II, p.1744.

We have realised that Assamese is a distinct language. Assamese is our mothertongue; according to our capability, we have to struggle hard for the improvement of our mother-tongue with enthusiasm in our heart. This is our first and foremost duty.[1] (Laksminath).

The amazing similarities in the works of both these writers are due to the fact that both grew up in similar sociopolitical conditions and shared the common literary heritage of India. The race, the milieu and the moment are the three major factors that are said to account for the peculiar feature of a literary movement. Writers living in identical situations and in similar environments are open to common influences. That is why both Fakirmohan and Laksminath, though they never met each other, had striking similarities in their literary output. For them the race was the composite Indian race, the milieu was the variegated Indian sub-continent with a geography and cultural heritage of its own; and the moment was the meeting of the West and India.

The 19th century India was a period of great revival both in its religious as well as social movements. The

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1. 'Asamīyā Bhāṣā', Bejbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968)p.14.

British conquest had a far reaching impact on the Indian society. As a result of this impact and as a reaction to it, the people of India started examining their society in order to reform it and laid the foundations of modernisation. The middle class people who lived in cities and received modern education became more liberal and drew their strength from professional competence rather than hereditary privelege. By reason of their acquiantance with the intellectual currents in other parts of the world they became the leading group in demand for modernisation. It was at this juncture that Fakirmohan and Laksminath were born and became a part of the pan-Indian movement that was shaking the whole of the Indian Sub-continent from one end to another.

While placing Laksminath and Fakirmohan in the modern context, we have to first examine the concept of modernism and judge how far both of them have succeeded in ushering this trend in Indian literature. According to Shri Aurobindo, the characteristics of modern literature are the widening intellectual and imaginatuve curiousity and growing subjectivity. He says:

> From the beginning, this modern movement, in literature as in thought takes the form of an ever widening and deepening intellectual

and imaginatuve curiosity, a passion for knowledge, a passion for finding, an eye of intelligence awakened to all the multiform possibilities of new truth and discovery.[1]

x x x

An equally strong characteristic of the modern mind is its growing subjectivity, an intense consciousness of the I, the soul of the self not in any mystic withdrawal within or inward meditation, but in relation to the whole life and nature.[2]

Shri Aurobindo is also of the opinion that the most characteristic poems of modern mind and literature is the universal interest in the common man, his hopes, his aspirations as well as his frustrations. He writes "The first widening breadth of this universal interest is man, not solely the man of today and our own country and type or of the past tradition of our own culture, but man in himself in all his ever-changing history and variety."[3]

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1. Aurobindo, Future Poetry, Pondicherry (1953) p. 133.
2. Ibid, p.146.
3. Ibid, p.139.

Thus according to him the common man, who was hitherto being ignored and put aside by older classical traditions, becomes pre-eminently the subject matter for modern literature.

Judging from this angle both Laksminath and Fakirmohan appear as real modern writers who had roots in real life and not in an imaginary world. We are amazed to find throughout their work a deep humanistic sympathy for the common man and the simple folks of the lower strata of our society. In their writings we meet all types of people including the knaves and the rogues. For them the common men and women did not stem from a dogmatic socio-economic slogan, but were an integral part of their sublime humanism.

This humanism was discovered by Laksminath where ever he lived - in Assam, in Orissa and in Bengal. Ratan, a muṇḍā boy of Orissa, Fatimā Bibi, an unfortunate woman-labourer of Burdwan and Lalitī, a torutured housewife of Assam - all where dear to his heart. It is this love and concern for the common people around him that made his short stories extremely personal in nature. Fakirmohan like-wise, had great faith in humanity and could never outright degrade a person for his mistakes. He believed:

> Just as men's bodies differ, their minds
> differ also. Some men have strong propensities,

> others weak, whilst the propensities of still others may lie dormant. At some particular time a turn of events may awaken these dormant propensities. Who would have thought that those drunken reprobates, Jagāi and Mādhāi could have become devout Vaisnavas? Or that tyrannical enemy of Christ, Saul, would now be worthy of a saint amongst the most venerable of seers....?[1]

This is perhaps the reason which accounts for the abundance of scoundrels in all Fakirmohan fictions and he treats them all with sympathy,understanding and affection.[2]

In all the literary histories of the world the subtleties of poetic techniques were mastered earlier than

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1. Quoted by J.V. Boulton, Fakirmohan Senapati And His Times, Orissa Sahitya Akademi (1976).

2. As a stray example of this sympathetic treatment we can take the character of, 'Ananta', the hero of his story 'Rāṇḍipua Ananta'. The youngman is a nuisanee to all and sundry in the village. But it is this loafer, who ultimately throws himself into the breach of the river embankment during a devastating flood and buries himself alive under sads of earth in order to save the village.

the simplicities of prose. Assamese and Oriya literatures were no exceptions to this. It was left for Laksminath and Fakirmohan to establish prose as a powerful medium of writing. Both of them published journals and brought literatures to the doors of the common man. The tremendous potential of satire and humour was fully exploited by them for the first time. Their short stories are the first serious attempt in Assamese and Oriya literatures at depicting life naturally with its joys and despairs. They portrayed commoness but with uncommon sensibility.

If Laksminath succeeded in establishing himself as a successful essayist and story writer, it was left to Fakirmohan to give new breath and life to Oriya novels. No Oriya novalist till today has excelled him in this respect. 'Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha' is his master piece of realistic fiction[1] depicting the exploitation of an innocent couple of weavers by the village money-lender. His 'Prāyas-citta' is a picture of the tragedy that came upon a new fangled English educated youth through his defiance of the old order of things of India. 'Māmũ' is yet another picture

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1. The realism depicted in this novel is so graphic that when the novel came out serially in a monthly magazine, people from the country side ran to Cuttack to witness the supposed trial mentioned in the book. See Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.196.

gallery illustrating the battle of good and evil and the ultimate redemption of a fallen soul through repentance. 'Lachamā' brings to life the horrors of Marathā depredations in Bengal and Orissa in the 18th Century.

Fakirmohan excelled in novels; but Laksminath outshone him in dramas. His love of drama was an unconscious result of his love for English plays epecially those of shakespeare.[2] His chronicle plays, 'Belimār', 'Jayamatī Kũwarī' and 'C-akradhwaja simha', succeed in bringing into limelight different epochs of Assamese history with authenticity. His farces, 'Litikāi' 'Nomal Pācani' and 'Cikarpati Nikarpati' are packed full with laughter and humour. The incongruous scen-es, personal peculiarities and laughter provoking dialogues are superb. Laksminath does not forget to add a touch of local colour here qnd there.

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1. "Bezbaroa's plays, serious or comic, do not reveal any influence derived from ancient Indian or more precisely sanskrit plays. The ancient Indian dramaturgy does't seem to have fascinated him. The dramatic technique and devices of Elizabethan dramatists, specially of William Shakespeare appear to have a strong hold upon Bezbaroa's dramatic conception. Development of the plot in five stages use of long soliloquies by characters of sneakish and intriguing type, use of light anticipatory before a tragic or serious incident and comic relief are some of the devices employed by bezbaroa which he naturally imbibed from Shakespearean plays" S.N. Sarma, 'The Historical Plays of Laksminath Bezbaroa in Laksminath Bezbaroa, The Sāhityrathī of Assam, Gauhaty University (1972) p. 138.

In the field of poetry also, these two writers cut new grounds. They did not bother about the established genres of medieval literature which had their special conventions and metres. With them every poem became an independent rendering of an individual experience and the theme and mood dictated the right form and style. It is this subjectivity which prompted them to write their autobiographies and establish it as a genre. Fakirmohan wrote in the preface of his autobiography that he, by narrating his own story, was laying the foundation stone of a new form of writing.[1]

The two native literatures broadened under the patronage of both these writers. Laksminath wrote about Orissa and Fakirmohan introduced the form of travelogue by writing about his visit to waltair in South India. The current nationalistic movement which was gaining pace in India prompted them to inculcate the feeling of patriotism in their writings.

Language became more flexible in their hands. Both of them did remarkable improvement upon their predecessors in enriching the existing Assamese and Oriya vocabulary by

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1. Fakirmohan believed that in order to appreciate the creative works of an author, one has to know about his life also. See F.G.II, p.667.

accepting the common-day speech. This use of colloquialism not only invigorated their style, but also made the language more pliable. Compared to the over-Sanakritised literary style of the middle ages they made effective use of the folk speech of Assam and Orissa. This will always remain a literary miracle which was followed by many others after them.

The life histories of Fakirmohan and Laksminath are indeed the stories of renaissance of Oriya and Assamese national life respectively. Both of them were born patriots and humanitarians and they adopted literature as an experimental means to that great end. Their extra-ordinary creative powers as revealed in their miscellaneous forms of writings brought about a change of values not only in literature but also in the minds of readers and critics. They became the first social writers of modern India, to write about the depressed multitudes and choose genuinely down-trodden character from the society around them. Writing out of medieval environments these two men turned out to be most modern in their outlook, attitude and literary output. Progress for them of-course did not mean cutting themselves off from the past completely. It meant the synthesis of the best that was inherent in the traits of both the past and the present.

APPENDIX I

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: DEFINITION, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

The word comparative literature was first coined by Mathew Arnold in 1848.[1] He was of the opinion that "no single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures".[2] As the phrase implies, comparative literature, in a generalised way, means comparative study of different literatures. While speaking of comparison, the question of contrast also comes in and while speaking about the similarities of two literatures one has to speak about the dissimilarities as well.

The object of comparative literature is essentially the study of diverse literatures in their relations with one another. M.F. Guyard tells, more or less, the same thing when he declares "comparative literature is the history

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1. R.K. Dasgupa, Beginnings of Comparative Literature in India, Key note address delivered at the seminar on Comparative Literature held at Salwan College, Delhi, April, 1977.
2. Mathew Arnold, 'on the Modern element in Literature' Inaugural Lecture delivered as Professor of Poetry at University of Oxford (1857).

of international literary relations."[1] The term comparative literature views literature as universal in its relation to social conditions and its obedience to aesthetic laws. It makes us feel that literature is one as art and humanity are one. It asks for a widening of perspective and a separation of local and provincial sentiments. Thus, it inculcates the lesson of humility as well.

Hennery H.N. Remak accepts the term comparative literature on a broader basis and relates it with other areas of knowledge. He writes:

> Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression.[2]

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1. Van Tieghem, La Literature comparee, 1951, p.7.
2. 'Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function' in Comparative Literature: Method Perspective' (ed) N.P.Stallknecht & Horst Frenz (1961) p.3.

It is described as a systematic study, an independent type of research and as a science by a few critics also. Some other critics, while describing it as a science, bring in the subject of influences and write "Comparative literature is a modern science which centres on research into the problems connected with the influences exercised reciprocally by various literatures."[1] H.M. Posnett views comparative literature as the general theory of literary evolution and harps on the idea that every literature passes through stages 'of inception culmination and decline'.[2]

To sum up we can enlist the objectives of comparative literature under the following heads:

(a) Comparative literature is a universal concept of literature and is identical with literature in general, independent of national and linguistic boundaries.

(b) Its content consists of all that is valuable in human experience, untainted by racial and political prejudices, its medium of expression is composed of universal verbal patterns which are independent

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1. Anna Saitta Ravignas, Problemi ed orienta menti: Notizie Introductive (1948) p.430.

2. Comparative Literature (1886) p.86.

of structural peculiarities of particular languages.

(c) It bypasses externals to concentrate on the essentials of literature.

(d) The concept has emerged from a comparative study of various literatures underlining the elements of unity in diversity.

(e) It pre-supposes a universal theory of literatures which defines the underlining principles of literary creation and experience in general.

The concept of comparative literature has given rise to the idea of world literature also. Literature is considered to be beyond the narrow circle of provincialism and is viewed in a broader perspective. This is what perhaps compelled Goethe to announce that "National Literature is rather an unmeaning term, the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must try to hasten its approach."[1] Tagore more or less meant the same thing when he said that "just as the

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1. Goethe's Conversation with Eckermenn, Eng. tr. John Oxenford, 1850, See J.E. Spingarn (ed) Goethe's Literary Essays (1921) p.81.

world does not mean my land, your land and his land and to think thus of the world is to think in a parochial way, so literature, is not my work, your work and his work. We are in the habit of seeing literature in this fragmented way. We must now free ourselves from narrow parochialism and discover the image of mankind in world literature."[1] This concept of world literature propels us to study literatures from an international perspective. The whole of world literature is conceived as a huge machine constituted by the national literature in their right functional places.

The different aspect of study of comparative literature can be arranged under the following heads:

(a) Themes and motifs (Kṛṣṇa cult in Indian Literature).

(b) Literary genres, types, forms and techniques (Historical novel, its origin and development in Indian literature).

(c) Epoch, currents and movements (The concept of realism in modern Indian novel).

(d) Linguistic study (Participles in Assamese, Oriya and Bengali Language).

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1. Viśvasāhitya, 1906; See Sāhitya, 1907 in Rabīndra Racanāvalī, 1941, p.387.

(e) Translations and other intermediaries (Fitgerald's translation of Omar Khayam).

(f) Individual authors (Kālidāsa and Shakespeare, Fakīrmohan and Lakṣmīnāth).

(g) Individual countries (Influence of English drama on modern Indian dramatic literature).

The last criteria of influence assumes the most important factor in the study of comparative literature. Influence can be in terms of idea, form, theme, technique language, symbol, tone, imagery as well as style. Of course, accidential similarities should not be mistaken for genuine influences. Further, influence can be located individually as well as historically. In other words, a writer's work may influence another writer's work as well as the work of a generation of writers. A study can be made not only in the study of the influence of Walter Scott' on Baṅkim Candra, but also on the historical fiction of India as a whole.

While studying one particular author, it is difficult to understand him properly if we remain obstinately within the limits of his own personality and work. We are repeatedly reminded of the influence exerted upon his thought and style by the thought and style of other men. To estimate him rightly

we have to take account of such influence, to consider its sources, range, and significance. If we turn to the question of his influence upon the thought and style of others, we shall come to see that our study of individual authors involves us everywhere in the study of the power exercised by mind upon mind. So in our reading of the history of any particular literature, we have to consider the various tributary streams, small or great, by which the literature of each country and each generation, has been fed. Even the briefest text-book of the literary history say of India will tell us something of the enormous changes brought during the period of the revival of learning in the 19th century which not only furnished artistic inspiration and set fresh models and standard of taste, but also did much to emancipate the minds of authors from the trammels of dogmatism, and broke up the intellectual and religious fabric of the Middle Ages.

While studying comparative literature, the utility of chronological method within the framework of one particular literature is also important. W.H. Hudson says:

> In following the chronological method we shall find ourselves, it is evident, continually comparing and contrasting a man with himself. Our next step will be to sharpen our impression of his personality by comparing and contrasting him with others - with

men who worked in the same field, took up the same subjects, dealt with the same problems, wrote under similar conditions, or who, for any other reason, naturally associate themselves with him in our minds. The student of Shakespeare almost inevitably turns to Shakespeare's greater contemporaries - to men like Marlowe, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster - and rightly feels that by marking the points at which the master resembled these other dramatists and the points in which he differed from them, he gains immeasurably in his realisation of the essential qualities of Shakespeare's genius and art. We throw a flood of fresh light upon Tennyson and Browning alike when we read them side by side. The fundamental features of the art of Sophacles and Euripides are brought into relief when we pass backward and forward from one to the other. Thackeray furnishes us with an illuminating commentary on Dickens, and Dickens does the same service for Thackeray. We have laid down the principle that in studying literature our first business is to enter into the spirit of our author, to penetrate into the vital forces of his personality.

> We need add no further illustrations to show how the comparative method will help us to do this. The doctrine that all higher knowledge is gained by comparison, and rests on comparison, is as true and important in the study of literature as in the study of science.[1]

Thus, some of the fundamental questions in the theory of literature can never be adequately raised and discussed without a comparative study and a multidimensional approach. We can take for example the nature of drama. It is impossible not to trespass into areas beyond the bounds of any single literature for any meaningful discussion. English literature scholars have to consider in this context the rise and development of European drama, beginning with the Greeks, and Aristotle's Poetics becomes a very important tool or critical apparatus for them, even though Aristotle was not British. To appreciate Shakespeare properly, it is helpful to know Sophocles and Euripides who wrote in Greek, and Seneca who wrote in Latin. Our study of English and Greek drama will remain incomplete without the study of Sanskrit drama. Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, the famous treatise on dramatics of

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1. W.H. Hudson, Some way of Studying Literature, London (1960) p. 21.

India, necessarily invites a comparison with the Poetics of Aristotle. Comparative Literature thrives on this fertile ground.

Literary evolution and historical relativism are important factors of Comparative Literature also and comparisons with the past traditions is essential for any serious comparative study. Similarly, no comparison can be complete without reference to the historical conditions in which the forms or trends in various literatures have developed. For a meaningful comparative study of the evotional songs of Śaṅkaradeva of Assam or of the lyrical element of Gopālakṛṣṇa, the medieval Oriya poet a proper understanding of their milieu is most essential. Thus, history plays an important role in the study of comparative literature; comparative and historical methods though differently motivated are not exclusive of each other.

Regarding the rise of comparative literature in India, we can say that the ancient Indian literature was confined within its own periphery. Sanskrit was considered to be a divine and supreme language and as such all other languages were considered inferior to it. Moreover, due to lack of communication, people of one part of the world could hardly get in touch with the people of another part. Sanskrit

was considered a Debabhāsā and so the scholars never bothered much to learn or borrow from other literatures. Nevertheless, occasionally we find a writer had to be a comparatist, though without his conscious effort. Bharat in his Nāṭyaśāstra unifies dance, drama and music together. Thus a work of literary output becomes associated with performing art. In India a literary scholar in the Sanskrit school would know the six systems of philosophy, philology, history of the purāṇas and many more things although he would not perhaps integrate them all into a synthesis. The Sanskrit ālaṅkārikas knew how to unify their knowledge of grammar, logic and linguistics in their system of poetics.

History of literary scholarship in the West shows that it has been always concerned with some thing wider than a single national literature. The Greeks did not care for a language other than their own and therefore, they did not concern themselves with international literary relations. Still the Greeks were the first comparatists because in his Poetics, Aristotle approaches literature from a very comprehensive point of view bringing into his discourse, for example, the question of the relationship between poetry and history and poetry and philosophy and, what is more, relating poetry to the basic human instincts and impulses. In Sanskrit works on poetics too

there are instances of the use of the comparative method particularly in its consideration of different styles like the Gaudī and Vaidharbhī etc. But on the whole classical European poetics or literary theory shows a larger measure of comparative approach to literary questions than classical Indian Poetics, mostly because the former comprehends two major ancient languages, Greek and Latin while the later is generally concerned only with Sanskrit. That is why Quintillian compared Greek poetry with that of Latin and wrote "We can not be as delicate as the Greeks, then let us be more vigorous, we are beaten in subtelty, then let us prevail by sheer Weight".[1] In Sanskrit poetry there is no scope for such reference to the literature of another country.

Comparative method in literary criticism began seriously in the 19th century in India. The new vernacular literature flourished in different regions and gave us scope to compare and contrast them with our ancient Sanskrit literature. Moreover, the influence of western learning brought English in closer contact with the common Indian reader and he compared his own literature with that of the west. The study of influence also became more prominent as

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1. Institutio Oratoria, Eng. tr. H.E. Butler, (1921-22), p. xii.

the common public admitted the supermacy of western literatures and compared Indian literature with that of the west. This was, at least partly, due to the colonial background of our acquintance with the English language which obliged us to give almost an exclusive attention to that language. Western literature was like a prince from across the seven seas waking up a sleeping pincess with the magic touch of his golden wand. While the common reader thought that our medieval literature produced in our different languages would have the same motifs and themes and would not show any striking regional variation our literary scholars thought that attention to English literature would be intellectually more rewarding.

Our response to English literature extended our literary horizon and prompted us to consider literature from a larger point of view. The creators of our modern literature did not conceal their debt to Western literature. Michael Madhusūdan Datta, for example, contemplated a unified world of letters in which the poets of Europe and India were equally important.

Writers often compared Indian literature with English and found the later to be more refined. Bankimcandra the chief architect of Bengali literature hailed English literature and

wrote "Those who are familiar with the present writers in Bengali, will readily admit that they all, good and bad alike, may be classed under two heads, the Sanskrit and the English schools. The former represents Sanskrit Scholarship and the ancient literature of the country the later is the fruit of western knowledge and ideas. By far the greater number of Bengali writers belong to the Sanskrit school; by far the greater number of good writers belong to the other.[1] Rājā Rām Mohan Roy's heart was filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude with the arts and sciences of modern Europe,[2] and Michael declared "If I should live to write other dramas, you may rest assured, I shall not allow myself to be bound down by the dicta of Mr. Viswanāth of the Sāhitya-Darpan. I shall look to the great dramatists of Europe for models. That would be founding a real National Theatre."[3] Rabindranāth contemplated in the form of world literature which is essentially a contribution of his western learning.

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1. Bengali Literature, The Calcutta Review, 1871.

2. Letter of Lord Amherst, II Dec. 1823; See The English Works of Rājā Rām Mohan Roy (1906), p. 472.

3. Letter to Rajnarain Vasu, 15 May 1860, See Nagendranath Basu, Madhu Smrti, 2nd Ed. (1954) p. 599.

It must, however, be admitted, that the earliest instance of literary criticism in India from a comparative point of view are to be found in the works of European scholars. One of the earliest of such criticisms is the one, Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India who wrote this in his long introduction to an English translation of the Bhagvad Gītā by Charles Wilkins: "I hesitate not to pronounce the Geeta a performance of great originality; of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unqualled; and a single exception among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines."[1] Later, the English translation of Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā by William Jones created in Western literary circles an interest in Indian literature although the Western Indologist was seriously concerned with historical, linguistic and philosophical questions rather than with creative literature. Works on comparative gramar like a Comparative Gramm̂ar of the Dravidian or South-Indian family of languages by Robert Caldwell and A comparative Gramm̂ar of the Modern Aryan languages

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1. Bhagavad Geeta, Eng. trans. by Charles Wilkins, (1785), p.10.

of India by John Beam-s are not matched by any other work on comparative Indian literature.

When attention was turned to literary history, works in the field dealt with one or the other of our literatures with no significant references to the literature of India as a whole. Since Indian literary historiography begins with works on the history of Sanskrit literature by European scholars and since these scholars were trained in Greek and Latin they would sometimes compare our classics with theirs. In an early work in this class, the history of Indian literature by Albrecht Weber there is a paragraph on a possible Greek influence on Sanskrit drama and a comparison of Sanskrit hymns to Siva with 'the best hymns of the Christian Church'. In his History of Ancient Sanskrit literature, Max Muller suggested a comparative study of Sanskrit and Greek literature from the view point of cultural history.

Perhaps foundations of that comparative method applied to Greek and Sanskrit literature were laid by Monier Monier-Williams who said in a course of lectures delivered at Oxford:

> Although the Hindus, like the Greeks, have only two great epic poems, namely the Rāmāyaṇs and

Mahābhārata, yet to compare these with the Iliad and the Odyssey is to compare the Indus and the Ganges, rising in the snow of the world's most colossal ranges, swollen by numerous tributaries, spreading into vast shallows or branching into deap divergent channels, with the streams Attica of the mountain-torrents of Thessaly. There is, in fact an immensity of bulk about this, as about every other department of Sanskrit literature, which to European mind accumstomed to a more limited horizon, is absolutely bewildering, Nevertheless, a sketch, however imperfect, of the two Indian epics can scarcely to interest the admirers of Homer; for all true poetry, whether European or Asian must have features of resemblance and no poems could have done, had they not addressed themselves to feelings and affections belonging alike to Englishmen and Hindus.[1]

This statement gives a universal picture of literature irrespective of the difference of culture and language. It was the emergence of comparative literature which made

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1. Indian Epic Poetry (1863), p.2.

Sanskrit literature popular in the western countries through the works and translations of Indologists. Goethe the famous German poet praised the Śakuntalā in his famous Quartrate. Among the other Germans who studied Indian literature and wrote books, Friedrich Schlegal stands foremost for his book 'The Language and Wisdom of India'. A.W. Schlegal, his younger brother made singificant contribution in the field of dramatic criticism and compared Śakuntalā with German romantic drama. There were other German schools like Francis Bopp who with his book entitled 'On the Conjugation Problem of Sanskrit in Comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic' gave a new direction to literary studies so far as linguistics was concerned. The Western scholars were not un-attentive to the field of religion and philosophy. A fine example of this perception between German and Indian thought is Rudolph Otto's comparative study of Śaṅkarācārya and Meister Eckhart in his book 'Mysticism; East and West'.

These are a few stray examples of the contribution of the Indologists to the field of emergence of comparative literature in India. So far as Indian literature with its varieties of vernacular literatures are concerned it offers us ample scope for comparative study. It is the literature of a country of several religions and many sects and a country which has responded in its own way to the arts and letters of

the West. Again it is a literature linked up with an ancient philosophy which went through a long process of development and later branched off into several schools. The question of relating Indian literature to the plastic and performing arts is another important aspect of comparative Indian literature. Moreover, there is a very large corpus of folk literature in all our languages demanding careful investigation from the point of view of cultural anthropology. Studies in folk literature and migration of folk themes and motifs gains a new dimension and a new significance if its scope can be extended to the tribal languages. The problems of Indian literary theory presents a very wide and complicated field of study when we decide to arrive at a conception of an Indian theory of poetry through an examination of the various schools of Sanskrit poetics. The subject becomes still more complicated when we proceed to examine the relevance of that poetics to our modern criticism which has been influenced by the west.

On the Indian literary scene comparative literary methodology can be extremely useful in developing a concept of Indian literary history as one literature on a single level of organisation. At present, inspite of individual studies of regional literatures on a broad comparative and critical scale, the idea of one Indian Literature is yet to be developed

in its proper perspective. Indian literature is still a mere collection of different literatures having diverse linguistic manifestations. We have yet to accomplish the historical reconstruction of our literary tradition. An effort was made by Western scholars like R.W. Frazer and others to offer a survey of Indian literature, ancient medieval and modern but the Western Indologist was primarily concerned with ancient literature and when he turned his attention to modern languages, his interest in the field was confined to philology, grammar and lexicography. Later a few Indian scholars ventured to develop a concept of 'Indian Literature' in its totality.

Sri Aurobindo in his treatise on 'Indian Literature' made the first attempt to develop this concept by discerning the central spirit, the form and the aesthetic value of Indian writing from Vedic period down to medieval Bhakti Movement and especially its perfection and power as an expression of the cultural mind of the people. In the modern times, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Nagendra, Krsna Kriplani in their maiden efforts as editors or writers of Indian literary History have hinted at this dominant and deeper inner reality.

The basic Indianness is the central point of the literary pattern of Indian Literature which has its base

in the Sanskrit religious texts and Classical literature, the epics, the Purāṇas and the Jātakas and the folk literature. In the modern period the impact of Western thought and literature has been felt very deeply by all of us adding at times new meaning to our vision of life. But the past tradition is not totally lost. The inner spirit is substantiated and its perspective is broadened by the inevitable refractions, and transformations through the impact of Western thought and by the change in our life pattern due to various social, economic and political reasons. This continuity of the inner spirit can be analysed from the comparative view-point in the different themes of regional literatures having a recognizably common core of experience. The Mystic and romantic experience of love in Bhakti-literature of Hindi and Vaisnava literature of Orissa; an experience of new enlightenment in Rājā Rām Mohan Roy, Michael Madhu Sūdan Dutt and Bhāratendu Hariścandra; trans-cendentalism in Tagore, and Aurobindo; nationalism in Kāzi Nazrul Islām and Iqbal, realism in Premcand and Śarat Candra; radicalism in Yaśpāl and Samareś Basu and the experience of disillusionment in the writers of sixties and seventies offer very good material for comparative study while harping on the unity of Indian literature.

While speaking of comparative Indian literature the one thing that comes to mind is that there is an essential unity in the different regional languages and media of expression. In a way, this fundamental unity of Indian literature is in no way less impressive than its enormous variety and vastness. The stages of evolution of all our languages have a striking similarity. The first phase almost in all cases comes up to the 15th century. The earlier half of the Medieval Period in Indian Literature ends with Moghul glory, i.e. about the middle of the 17th century and the later Medieval Period closes with the establishment of British rule which marks the beginning of the Modern Period. Thus the literary histories of most of the modern Indian languages are divided into four epochs which run parallel more or less in each literature.

The reason for this parallel development is quite obvious - namely the political, social and cultural history of the nation. All these languages have flourished against a common background. Inspite of some gaps, India has had for the past several centuries a fairly common political set up. Under the Moghuls, of course, there was a close political and social contact between the north and the south which continued even after the dissolution of the Moghul Empire.

This unity was later on established on firmer grounds by the British, who set up a central form of government. For these and other reasons the political conditions in the various linguistic states of India have been quite similar.

So far as the literary background is concerned we find that although all the languages of India do not belong to the same stock, yet their literary inheritance is common. The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas, the Bhāgvata, Classical Sanskrit literature, i.e., the works of Kālidās, Bhababhūti, Bāṇa, Śrī Harṣa, Amarūka and Jaideva etc., the Budhist and Jain literature in Pali, Prakrita and Apabhramsa - all this wealth has been inherited by all our languages alike. In philosophy, the Upanishads, the six schools of philosophy, the Smritis and in poetics many a classics such as the Nāṭyaśāstra and the Dhvanyāloka etc., have directly or indirectly influenced the thought-content of the Indian writer in every language. These have been really the perennial sources of inspiration for all the Indian literatures and their influence has gone a long way in bringing the Indian literatures together.

Thus, it is not difficult to believe that Indian Literature is, one though written in many languages. Unfortunately, till we regained our independence greater

emphasis had been laid on the elements of diversity. Its essential unity is yet to be revealed in its fullness. This requires, in the first instance, an objective and systematic investigation into the elements of unity in variety and for that a basic change in our methods of study and research will be necessary. An enquiry into any trend of Indian literature cannot be confined to one language only as such an enquiry will always be very incomplete. For example, if a researcher in Bhakti Kābya confines his studies to Hindi or Bengali alone, he will not discover the whole reality; he will have to explore the literatures of Gujarati, Oriya, Assamese, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam as well, wherein this current flows with almost the same force. There will be obviously many gaps in our study if it is limited to one language only. The origins and the earlier traditions or the vast treasure of devotional songs in Hindi, can be easily traced in the Southern languages and in Bengali. The treatment of childhood by Sūrdās was not a mere accident in Hindi literature; the Gujarati poet Bhalanā in his descriptive lyrics, and the Assamese poet Mādhava Deva in his 'Bargīts' have dealt with this subject with keen interest and with great success. A comparative study of the poets based on Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata in different languages solves so many problems easily. Studies in Rāmkābya in any Indian language-especially

of the North, will be incomplete without a proper appreciation of the conception of Rāma in 'Tulsī's Rāmacaritmānas'. Similarly, the countless designs in the plot structures of our medieval romances cannot be properly understood without a close comparative study of these forms in various Indian literatures. This method of inter-literary research will prove immensely useful in finding out many a missing link in every literature in resolving various knots and will reveal in a most effective manner the essential unity of Indian thought and sentiment.

Apart from this unity of thought and content the unity in style and form while studying Indian literature as a whole is most note worthy and striking. The absence of prose literature of information is noticed in all the early Indian literatures. Sometimes in the medieval period when rare attempts were made for writing prose, it was interspersed with poetry in between. The Caturabinoda of Oriya literature can be cited as an example. To all the literatures of India, the poetic forms of Sanskrit like the Mahākābya and Khaṇḍakābya have come down as a common legacy. In the modern times the literary forms of the West with its sub-divisions mainly the ode, the elegy, the sonnet and the free verse has infiltrated into all our languages alike.

The modern Indian prose is directly modelled on English prose. Consequently there is a fundamental unity in the literary medium of our country which is restrengthen by the unity of theme. The different forms of folk drama have a strain of commonness. The aṅkiyā nāṭ of Assam, yātrā of Bengal and Orissa. Tāmś-ā of Maharastra and Rāsa of Gujarat are more or less presented in the same form and manner. In these dramas it is not the similarity of theme but the similarity of form and style that is really amazing. In all the forms of Indian folk drama we come across the same luxuriance of lyrical element, and the same religious or psuedo religious motifs.

The lines of development in the modern age in the Indian literatures are all the more identical. In almost all Indian languages the modern age begins with the first struggle for India's freedom. The trends and phases like renaissance, national culturalawakening, romantic revival, and socialistic conciousness under the influence of Marxist philosophy can be easily found in the various literature of modern India.

In the modern literature, Assamese, Bengali and Oriya, the Eastern languages form a closely knit group and have influenced each other to a great extent. The contact of

Bengal with Europe was more intimate and direct and it has obviously influenced both Oriya and Assamese cultures and literatures. It might sound strange that all the pioneer writers in different fields in Oriya literature were Bengalis. Rām Śaṅkar Roy, the first renowned dramatist, Gaurī Śaṅkar Roy the first famous journalist and Rādha Nāth Roy the first modern poet of Orissa were all Bengalis. The influence of Bengali literature on Oriya literature became evident when Annadā Śaṅkar Roy led a new group of writers under the banner of the Sabuja group. He was a Bengali and brought the romantic style of Rabīndranāth as well as the rhyme pattern of romantic Bengali poetry into Oriya literature. Oriya literature on the other hand has influenced Bengali literature also and many Oriya themes have been accepted by Bengali poets and writers. The famous romance of King Puruṣottama of Puri and Padmābatī, the beautiful princess of South India has been accepted by Śrī Raṅgalāl Bannerji as the central theme of his 'Kāñci Kāberī' kābya.

The cultural as well as literary bondage of Orissa and Assam dates back to 16th century, when the famous Assamese saint poet Śrī Śaṅkara Deva visited Orissa along with his disciples. His book Uressa Barnan contains beautiful lyrical pieces about lord Jagannāth. The story

of King Indra Dyumna is narrated in detail by him. It is surprising that Śaṅkara Deva the famous Vaisnav poet visited Orissa when Vaisnav literature in Orissa was at its peak under the 'Pañca-Sakhās' or five comrades of Bhakti movement of Orissa. No doubt the poets of both the states who came into contact with each other might have influenced each others ideas and thoughts. In the nineteenth century Sri Laksminath Bej Baruwa, the maker of moder Assamese literature made Orissa his second home and was settled there for many long years. For a comparatist, it is extremely beneficial as well as delightful to judge the influence of Oriya literature in his writing.

A Brief Chronology of Laksminath Bejbaruwa's Life:

1864: November 16, Born in a boat on the Brahmaputra river in Assam, near the village of Ahatguri in Nowgong District.

1886: Passed Entrance Examination from Sibsagar Government High School, Went to Calcutta for higher study.

1888: Passed First Arts Examination from City College, Calcutta. Founded the Assamiya Bhasar Unnati-Sadhini Sabha in Calcutta.

1889: Brought out the monthly Journal JONĀKĪ.

1890: Passed B.A. Examination from General Assembly's College.

1891: March 11, Married Prajnāsundarī Devī.

1893: Started tiber business with Shri B. Baruwā.

1895: May 27, Death of Sri Dīnanath Bejbaruwā, Birth of eldest daughter Surabhi on 26th June.

1900: Purchased house at Dobson Road, Calcutta. Birth of second daughter Arunā in November, Surabhi died.

1901: Published Litikāi, his first piece of writing in the form of book.

1903: Birth of third daughter Ratnā in November, differences with Sri B. Baruwa.

1904: Purchased house (Laurels) at Rosmary Lane, Calcutta.

1908: Birth of fourth daughter Dīpikā in November.

1916: Presided over the Assam Students Conference at Gauhaty.

1917: Left Calcutta for Sambalpur.

1918: Sold 'Laurels' at Calcutta, Purchased House at Jharsuguda.

1920: Marriage of Arunā, constructed new house at Jharsuguda.

1924: Presided over Assam Sahitya Sabha in Gauhaty.

1928: Resigned from Bird & Co, started his own timber business at Sambalpur, Ratna got married.

1932: Dīpikā embraced Christianity.

1933: At the invitation of the Maharaja Gaekwad Sir Sayaji Rao, went to Baroda and gave a course of Lectures on Vaisnavism.

1937: August: Returned to Assam.

1938: March 26: Passed away at Dibrugarh.

A Brief Chronology of Fakirmohan Senapati's Life:

1843: January Makara Saṁkrānti - Birth.

1844: Lost his parents.

1856: First marriage with Līlābatī.

1858-61: Worked as a labour boy in the shipyard of Balesore.

1862-64: Read in Barabati school, Joined there as a teacher.

1864-71: Teacher in Balesore Mission School. Close acquintance with Sir John Beams.

1867: Death of grand-mother Kucilā Debī.

1868: Established first printing press in Balesore.

1871: Death of Līlābatī, Married Kṛ-ṣṇā Kumārī.

1871-75: Worked as Dewan of Nilagiri.

1876-77: Worked as Dewan at Dampada.

1877-83: Worked as Assistant Manager in Dhenkanal.

1878: Losi his first son Manamohan, translated Ramayana.

1881: Birth of second son Mohinīmohan, started translating Mahabharata.

1884-86: Worked as Dewan in Dasapalla.

1886-87: Worked as Dewan in Pallahada.

1887-92: Worked as Manager in Keonjhar.

1891-92: Faced riot at Keonjhar, Published Utkala Bhramana.

1894: Death of Krsna Kumari.

1894-96: Worked as Dewan at Dampada for the second time. Published Puspamala, Upahara.

1896-1905: Stayed at Cuttack, wrote Lachama, published Chamana Athaguntha, wrote many short stories, Finished translating Mahabharata.

1905-18: Settled at Balesore.

1915: Wrote and published Prayascitta.

1916: Got the title of Saraswati by Bamanda Surataranginí.

1917: Presided over utkala Sammilani.

1918: June 14th; death at Balesore.

Important Publications of Laksminath Bejbaruwa

(a) **Poems:**

Kadam-kali (1st edition 1913)

(b) **Dramas:**

(1) Litikai (Humorous Play) 1889
(2) Belimar (Historical Play) 1915
(3) Cakradhwaj Simha (Historical Play) 1915
(4) Cikarpati-Nikarpati (Humorous Play) 1913
(5) Nomal (Humorous Play) 1913
(6) Jayamati Kuwari (Historical Play) 1915
(7) Pacani (Humorous Play) 1913
(8) Gadadharasimha (Humorous Play)

(c) **Fiction:**

(1) Padum Kuwari (Historical Novel) 1905
(2) Jonbiri (Short Stories) 1913
(3) Surabhi (Short Stories) 1909
(4) Sadhukathar Kuki (Short Stories) 1912

(d) **Collection of Folk-tales:**

(1) Budhi Air Sadhu (1911)
(2) Kakadeuta aru Natilara (1912)
(3) Junuka (1910)

(e) Humorous sketches:

(1) Kripabar Baruwar Kakatar Topola (1904)

(2) Kripabar Baruwar Obhatani (1909)

(3) Barbaruwar Bhabar Burburani

(4) Bararuwar Bulani.

(f) Briographical Works:

(1) Mahapurus Sri-Sankara-deva aru Sri-Madhava-deva (1914)

(2) Shankara-deva (1911)

(3) Dangariya Dinanath Bejbaruwar Sanksipta Jiwancarit (1909)

(4) Mor Jiwan-Sowaran, in 2 parts

(5) Bejbaruwar Vamsawali

(g) Literary and Philosphical and other writings:

(1) Bakhar (1914)

(2) Tattwa-katha

(3) Sri-Bhagwata-Katha (1915)

(4) Kamat Krititwa Labhibar Sanket (1903)

(5) Hahi-dhemali

(6) Presidential Address

(7) Sri-Krisna-Katha

(8) Bharatavarsar Buranji (1910)

(9) Asmiya Bhasa aru Sahitya.

(h) English Books:

(1) History of Vaishnavism in India, and Raslila of Sri Krishna, the Baroda Lectures (1934);

(2) The Religion of love and Devotion (1968) (Including the Baroda lectures and two more essays).

Important Publications of Fakirmohan Senapati

1.	Jibana Carita (Translation)	1866
2.	Bharatabarsara Itihasa	1869
3.	Ramayana (Translation) Balakanda Ayodhyakanda	1884 to 1895
	Aranyakanda	
	Kiskindhyakanda	
	Sundarakanda	
	Lankakanda	
	Uttarakanda	
4.	Mahabharata (Translation)	1887-1905
	Adiparba	
	Sabhaparba	
	Banaparba	
	Birataparba	
5.	Srimadbhagabat gita (Trans)	1887
6.	Utkala Bhramana (Long narrative Poem)	1892
7.	Puspamala (Poems)	1894
8.	Upahara (Poems)	1895
9.	Chamana Athaguntha (Novel)	1902
10.	Khila Haribamsa (Trans)	1902
11.	Upanisad Samgraha (Trans)	1905
12.	Abasara Basare (Poems)	1908

13.	Buddhabatara Kabya (Kabya)	1909
14.	Pujaphula (Poems)	1912
15.	Dhuli (Poems)	1912
16.	Mamu (Novel)	1913
17.	Lachama (Novel)	1914
18.	Brahmananka Sandhya Paddhati (collection of Sanskrit Hyms of worship)	1914
19.	Prayscitta (Novel)	1915
20.	Samabaya Rna Samiti Prasanga (Poem)	1916
21.	Chandogya Upanisad (Trans)	1916
22.	Galpaswalpa (Collection of stories)	1917
23.	Atmajibana Carita (Autobiography)	1927

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I am indebted to innumerable friends, well wishers and teachers for their assistance in the preparation of this thesis. For continuous encouragement and guidance, I am grateful to Dr. Harbhajan Singh, Professor, Department of M.I.L. of Delhi University. I have benefitted much from his excellent constructive suggestions.

I am also grateful to Dr. K.B. Tripathy (Retired Professor, Oriya) of Berhampur University for his expert advice. My sincere thanks are due to a number of my Assamese friends who have encouraged me a lot in my study of Assamese Language and literature. My earnest gratitude is to Prof. R.K. Dasgupta who started the study of comparative literature in the M.I.L. Department of Delhi University and initiated me to this discipline through the M.Litt. programme.

Shri Pranab Swarup of Gauhaty and Sri Brajanath Rath of Balasore have helped me to a great extent with regard to certain rare books and materials. The Officers of Assam Information Centre, Delhi, have been equally helpful by lending me the texts of Laksminath Bejbaruwa and some other valuable books from their library. I am grateful to the staff of the Delhi University Library System as well as to the members of the Regional Languages Library (Delhi) for

their kindness and cooperation. I must thank Sh. B.K. Mishra for his ceaseless moral support without which it would have been difficult for me, a housewife, to complete my work. At the end, I must thank Shri K. Chand who has patiently typed the various drafts of the thesis.

(KANAN MISHRA)

FOREWORD

Assam is the State of the mighty Brahmaputra and is situated in the north eastern part of India. It is lush and green; beautiful with its hills, valleys and waistdeep tea bushes. In a sense, its scenic grandeur is unsurpassed as its name suggests.[1]

Orissa is well known as the land of Lord Jagannath. Washed by Bay of Bengal on one side, it is also the land of caves, rock-edicts, temples and sculpture. The suntemple of Konarka, the magnificient poetry in stone, has earned Orissa name not only in India but also abroad.

In spite of the geographical differences between the two states the similarities between Assamese and Oriya are very many - both linguistically and culturally. They are sister languages and have come from the same eastern Magadhi Apabhramsa. Both the literatures have rich prose chronicles. Their ancient texts have drawn inspiration from Sanskrit texts i.e. the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The Vaisnav literature and the Bhakti movement in

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1. "The tradition of the Ahoms themselves is that the present name is derived from 'Asama' in the sense of 'unequalled' or 'peerless'". B.K.Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi, (1964). p.2.

both the states are strikingly similar. Their similarity is even more apparent in the modern period as both modern Oriya and Assamese literatures have been considerably influenced by the Western civilisation. The pan-Indian character of either literature was maintained in a basic sense even under different geographical and political background. This is in keeping with the fact that there is unity among diversity in the different regional literatures of India, both in form as well as content. The main discoveries of the present thesis are pursued against the backdrop of this pan-Indian canvass. It views the panorama of Indian literatures as a gigantic and complex mosaic structure with little slabs of regional literature joining together to create a unique picture of unity among diversity.

Cultural and social relations between Assam and Orissa date back to 16th century. The saint poet Sankaradeva along with his disciples had visited Puri in the year 1550[1] and had stayed there for a few months. Among many devotional songs composed by Sankaradeva, quite a few deal with Lord Jagannath and Orissa. The legend and the cult of Jagannath are described by him beautifully. Surprisingly when

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1. Maheswar Neog, Sankaradeva And his Times, Gauhaty University (1965), p.115.

Sankaradeva visited Orissa Vaisnav literature was at its peak period there also. So religious as well as literary exchanges were possible between scholars and preachers of both the states. Vaisnav poets of the Bhakti movement in Orissa always identified Jagannath with Krsna; in a similar view Sankaradeva was also doing the same thing in the poems of Uresa Barnan.

This literary intercourse took a stronger root in the 19th century when Sri Laksminath Bezbaruwa, the maker of Assamese literature made Orissa his second home. Through his writings, diary and letters, Orissa has got a permanent place in Assamese literature. No Oriya writer will today has exploited the beauty of Sambalpur and its surrounding area to that extent as has been done by Laksminath. His treatment of Orissa is an intriguing study for any student of comparative literature; more so, if the student, like me, happens to be an Oriya.

The reasons for studying Fakirmohan and Laksminath side by side are very many. Both of them tower like giants in their respective literatures. Both were contemporaries and shared the common social and political heritage of India. Both of them wrote extensively and excelled almost in all the branches of literature. Both freed their

respective literature from the domineering influence of Bengali. Standing at the cross roads of medieval and modern phases of literature they broke all traditional fetters and opened new vistas of thought and form. It is difficult to review and to assess their many splendoured lives, careers and literary output in one single thesis. I have compared them as pioneers of modernism and tried to put together their main achievements in that distinguished role.

The thesis does not attempt to give detailed biographical sketches, but as it was felt that some information regarding the lives of the two authors, their surroundings and environment might be helpful for a proper assessment of their work, I have given short biographical accounts in the thesis. I have avoided giving an exhaustive list of dates and years and have only emphasised on these facts and incidents which shaped their lives in general and literature in particular. Laksminath's religious heritage made him a synthesizer of both tradition and modernity. Likewise, Fakirmohan's association with British civil-servants and service as an administrator in different Princely states broadened his vision.

This thesis compares two Indian authors and is allied to the study of comparative Indian Literature. It is a new

discipline and a virgin field. So I thought it relevant to give a short account of the concept, scope and objective of this field of study with specific reference to its relevance of studying Indian literature. This I have included in the Appendix.

Although this study mainly attempts a comparison between Assamese and Oriya literatures, at times I have also brought in references from English literature. This is because all modern Indian literatures have received significant influences from English literature, and a reference in the proper context is revealing.

Lastly I may add that many topics which ordinarily appear of no interest to a student of any particular literature fascinates a student of comparative literature. For example, the study of influence is a stimulating thing for me and I have devoted a full chapter to this. I may conclude by saying that this work is intended as an attempt towards establishing some terms of unity between two literatures of India.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1.	Bejbaruwa Granthavali, Part I (Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1968)	-	B.G.I
2.	Bejbaruwa Granthavali, Part II (Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1968)	-	B.G.II
3.	Fakirmohan Granthabali, Part I (Cuttack Students' Store, 1963)	-	F.G.I
4.	Fakirmohan Granthabali, Part II (Cuttack Students' Store, 1963)	-	F.G.II

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Concept of Modernism

The word 'modern' is relative. Even in the contemporary literature which we term as modern a writer can as well be traditional in thought and writing. Generally it is believed that the word modern is an antonym of the term tradition. But in course of time, what is modern also becomes a part of tradition. Thus, though outwardly the term modern seems to have been connected with time, in reality, modernity doesn't depend upon time but upon one's outlook and attitude. The world is moving and the old order changes yielding place to new; but in course of time the new also becomes old and the process continues on and on. Generally the term modernity connotes belonging to the present and denial of the tradition of the past. Modernity implies that the writer should be fully aware of the mood of the current times and present the same in his writing. The confrontation of the past with the present is the fundamental concept of modernism.

Literature is a continuous process and is dynamic

rather than static. According to W.H. Hudson, 'Literature is a product of evolution and its history is a history of increasing transformation, and thus the quest for permanent criteria in the field of literature is foredoomed to inevitable failure.'[1] Each generation brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation and has its own demands upon art. Thus, the literary tradition of one particular age differs from that of another. If literature is considered to be criticism of life, then the life and society around the poet gets unconsciously expressed in his writing. In this process, literature takes different turns at times moving in a zigzag path rather than in a straight line.

The best definition of modernism is given by Rabīndra Nāth which is based on this theory. According to him a river takes different turns in its course. Literature also does the same sometimes. That turn is modern. Thus, modernism is not according to the time factor but depends upon the mood of the writer.[2]

Some main characteristics of modern Indian literature

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1. W.H. Hudson, An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960), p. 27

2. See Rabindranath, 'Ādhunik Kābya', Sāhityer Pathe, Biswa Bharati (1st Ed.), p.131

may be grouped as follows:-

(1) Theme

(a) Modern literature in India was marked by a revolt against medievalism and the set classical pattern of themes and motifs which had become conventional and stereotyped.

(b) The modern writers chose to portray good and bad alike in their writings. The characters created by them were no more supreme divine beings but common men with their strength as well as weakness.

(c) Literature moved away from the rural background to the field of urban civilisation. The cities and towns sprung under the influence of industrialisation became the new centre of interest and inspiration.

(d) Modern literature was a product of a period of transition. The new writer was often passimistic in his reflections on modern life and advocated a return to tradition. This was what led to a search for a synthesis between tradition and urbanisation in modern Indian literature.

(e) Modern literature was essentially psychological in nature, depicting in turn the moods, ideals and feelings of a writer. Often the society and the environment in which he lived got reflected in his work. This was in contrast to medieval literature which was primarily objective. In ancient literature, the poet was merely a narrator and seldom ventured to express his own feelings, his sorrow or joy, pain or pleasure through his poetry.

(f) Previously, the writer could never venture to go beyond the fringe of his own society and country. But the modern writer was aware of the cultures and traditions of other countries. This gave a broader horizon to literature. There was a growing interest in the affairs of the world rather than in the salvation of the soul.

(g) History did not matter significantly in ancient or medieval literature. The main stimulus for historical writing was nationalism. During the height of British Rule, the safest form of patriotism open to Indians was the celebration of the past glory. The modern writers became more and

more interested in the history and tradition of their country and used themes from history. Some valorous kings, queens and princesses became heroes and heroines of many modern novels and dramas.

(h) Rise of nationalism was another important factor of modern Indian literature. Years of British Rule gave rise to a deep-rooted sense of revolt in the minds of the people and the writers echoed these feelings. That was why the early 19th century writers were mostly patriotic in spirit and sang the glory of the mother-land in their poetry.

(2) Techniques

(a) The set rules of poetic diction were discarded. In its place came colloquial, common speech, as is spoken in day to day life. Language no more was obscure; there was no jugglery of words or far-fetched metaphors. On the other hand the writer chose to write in a direct and unadorned style.

(b) Modern Indian literature was greatly influenced by Western authors. The writers often gave

references from Western Classics to illusterate their points. Many current English words found place in our languages. Our writers became conscious of the cultures and traditions of other countries and as a result literature and more so, literary criticism, tended to be comparative.

(c) Ancient Indian literature laid much emphasis on 'Rasa', the most popular being 'śṛngār' and 'Bhakti'. In the modern literature, these two Rasas were no more that prominent. Rather in their place came the 'Hāsya', and the 'Adbhuta'.

(d) New techniques were used in poetry and prose. Novels and short-stories flourished for the first time. Literary criticism, autobiography, satire, essays and travelogues become more common. The rise of printing press and publication of periodicals paved the path for new experimentation in form. In the field of poetry the earlier 'Rāgas' and 'Rāginīs' were discarded. The modern poetry was not to be sung but was to be recited and read. So lyrics with freer structural patterns came into being. Sonnets, ballads, epigrams, elegies and odes became more common in place of narrative verse.

(e) Medieval themes, which were merely either erotic or didactic, were discarded and so far subject matter was concerned, a greater variety was noticed. Literature tended to become scientific as the modern man felt that he must think, experiment with, discover, and use all available sources of knowledge.

There is no exact date on which the modern literature began. The transition from the medieval literature to the modern was a gradual process. It was through the Western window that we had a glimpse of the outer world. English was the main channel of intellectual intercourse between the East and the West. English education was a new force, a new elixir injected into Indian life. There was an intellectual reawakening that produced countless new ideas and inventions. This revival was felt in all areas of art, literature, religion, education and government. A new efflorescence was visible everywhere and the Indian spirit went forth to meet the new challenge of the values of modern science and the civilisation of the West. Change was perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of this period and this change was visible in all areas of knowledge.

The early modern Indian literature was of a limited

range and touched just the fringe of the outside world through its only contact with Persian and Arabic literatures. The new renaissance, which came to India through the study of the mind the achievements of Europe in English literature from the middle of the 19th Century, accentuated the process of modernisation and Indian literature fell in line, as far as possible, with the advanced literature of modern Europe. Moreover, the middle class became more and more important as feudalism and royality declined with the growth of the ideas of democracy and in the laboratories of art and literature, new discoveries were made as were made in politics.

Before going into details of the rise of modernism in Indian literature, it is necessary to have a close survey of the changing social scene of the whole country. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, India came under the rule of the British Empire. India's first newspaper Hicky's Bengal Gazette was published in the year 1780.[1] Schools were established imparting English education and in 1817[2] the Hindu College at Calcutta was established with the help of Rājā Rām Mohan Roy. On 7th March 1835[3] Lord William Bentick resolved

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1. See K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Indian Writings in English, Asia Publishing House, (1973), p.26

2. Ibid, p.27

3. Ibid.

that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English alone. It was during the British regime that the first railway was opened and the first telegraph line and modern postal system were inaugurated. Distance was being abridged; a common medium of communication was being established. European scientific techniques were used and the transition was from secure and static medievalism to restless, dynamic modernism. The real renaissance in India came through the contact with English literature and Western culture from the early part of the 19th century; and from this time, we had a new orientation and a totally new development of modern Indian literature.

This pan-Indian movement towards enlightenment in the 19th century is easily compared with the 18th century English literature when suddenly life and literature broke away from the old. Dryden expressed the spirit of the age when he said 'he was drawing the outlines of a new art, but had no teacher to instruct him.'[1] Emile Legouis sums up the general

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1. William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A. (1937), p. 240

tendency of 18th century England in the following words:

> "It was very definitely the age of understanding, the age of enlightenment, when a literature which had become clear and pellucid began to diffuse knowledge among a growing public. The suprmacy of reason was scarcely challenged. There reigned a general belief in the advancement of human mind."[1]

The same ideas regarding 18th century English literature are repeated by W.J. Long in the following paragraphs also:

> "In the latter half of the century the political and social progress is almost bewildering. The modern form of Cabinet Government responsible to Parliament and the people had been established under George I. x x x
> Schools were established; clubs and Coffee Houses increased, books and magazines multiplied until the press was the greatest visible power in England; the modern great dailies, the Chronicles, Post and Times, began their career of public education."[2]

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1. Emile Legouis, A Short History of English Literature, Oxford University, (1950), p. 195

2. William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A., (1937), p. 256

What had happened before hundred years in England was happening in India now. The whole political scene was changing, the religious faith of the people was changing rapidly with the teachings of the Christian Missionaries and advent of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj and the whole society was undergoing a metamorphosis. Under foreign rule, national consciousness gave rise to new ideas in society and in literature. The general public was to be approached with ideas, facts and arguments concerning the nation's progress as was the situation in English literature in the 18th Century.

This age of an Indian renaissance is comparable to 18th Century English literature on the following points:

(i) Realism

This is the representation of men exactly as they are, the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance. The common man and the society had a place in the literatures both in the 18th Century England and in modern India. Both the literatures aimed to understand, not to imagine. In English literature of the 18th Century the romanticism of the Elizabethan period had faded and the writers were no more interested in 'Fairy

Queens' or 'Midsummer Nights Dream'. Addison expressed the general feeling when he commented that "the mystic tales of the previous era could no more satisfy an understanding age."[1] Similarly, in modern Indian literature, moonlight, fragrant blossoms and comely romantic heroines were discarded and instead, common men and women with their practical motives were depicted. The court literature, designed for the idle and the pleasure-seeking, was succeeded by a literature reached on a broader basis.

(ii) Directness and Simplicity of Expression

Previously, the tendency of the writer was towards extravagance of thought and language. Sentences were often involved and loaded with classical allusions. English literature had followed the Greek and Latin models as Indian literature literally thrived on Sanskrit. The new writers opposed this vigorously. They emphasised close reasoning rather than romantic fancy and used short clean-cut sentences without an unnecessary word. In English

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1. See Emile Legouis, A short History of English Literature, Oxford University Press (1950), p. 197

literature, this natural way of speech became so common that Dryden chose the heroic couplet in his poetry; because he found that this unpolished rugged verse was nearest to prose and hence fittest for his discourse. In Indian literature, the tradition of ornamental classical style declined as the rising middle class as well as the reading public demanded of writers not only seriousness and decency but also instruction and information. Writers tried to follow the head as well as the heart.

(iii) Rise of Prose

18th Century English literature is marked by the rise of prose literature in the works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Johnson and Burke. Novel and Drama too flourished during this period apart from essays and criticism. Literary magazines like the Tatler and the Spectator by Steele and Addison influenced the serviceable English style so much so that it remained the most popular model for English prose composition of that time. In India, a multitude of practical conditions demanded expression not simply in books but more specially in pamphlates, magazines and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task; hence there was

the development of prose to a great extent. New varities of prose writing such as essays, criticism, biographies, novels and short stories are essentially the products of modern Indian literature.

(iv) Satire

It is obviously the most important point of comparison between 18th Century English literature and 19th Century Indian literature. In England satire was primarily a result of the Union of politics with literature. In the first half of the 18th Century there was a perpetual strife between political parties to satirise their enemies. Dryden outshines all others in this respect. Pope used satire too largely in his poetry. Swift's works were scathing satires on humanity. Addison attacked the same vanities of his time and it was the aim of Steele to expose the false arts of life and to pull off the disguises of cunning vanity through his articles.

If in England satire orginated from politics, in India it was the result of the writer's interest in social reforms and social criticism. The new young-men under Western

influence often discarded traditional Indian ideals and invited criticism. There was love-hate relationship between the two cultures. The writers searched out the faults of men or institution and ridiculed them. Moreover, the ancient literature dealt only with gods and goddesses and it was beyond the imagination of a writer to ridicule such divine persons. Now the common men and women were drawn into the orbit of literature; and, they, being prone to follies and foibles, could be satirised easily.

In order to appreciate the main trends in modern Indian literature, it is relevant to make a comparative study of medieval literature and the new literature. Modern literature differed from medieval literature in the following respects:

(a) Theme

In most early literatures, the subject matter was religious, mostly dealing with Hindu scriptures and mythologies. There are also some of the earliest examples of Buddhist and Jaina literature in India. A number of local cults, stories, legends and folk tales were absorded in these early phases of literature. The culture was very largely shaped

by the Vedanta and the Bhakti schools. The Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas formed the background of medieval Indian literature just as the Bible, the legends of saints and later Greco-Roman Myths, served as the foundation of ancient Western literary creation.

But in the modern period, the writers were no longer satisfied with mythical characters and went to the common people for elements of characterisation. Even ordinary men of the street could supply him with ideas for fiction and poetry. Previously, Sītā and Draupadī, Rāma and Arjuna had been portrayed in literature off and on. With the rise of a sense of individuality and dignity of mankind, people refused to look upto and worship these special characters with awe and wonder. The new writers placed great emphasis on personal dignity and worth of man.

(b) Style

Early literature was either lyrical or narrative. The first dealt with love and Bhakti subjectively, the second treated objectively the mythological tales.

The style was ornate and artificial; the imagery was borrowed from Sanskrit and there was minute description of the beauty of a lady or a particular season. The long narrative poems began with the praise of some divinity, either a Hindu god or goddess. Writings were mostly a verbal jugglery of words and one had to struggle hard to get into the core of meaning. Often the lines had more than one meaning conveyed through them. In the modern literature, European methods of literary approach were eagerly adopted. The style became simple, straightforward and logical. There was no extravagance of thought and language and the writings were free from classical allusions. Because of lack of education and printing material, people were not accustomed to reading in ancient times. Hence the poems were either recited or sung for which a certain amount of musicality was a necessary element. But in the modern age, this tradition was discarded to a great extent.

(c) Genre

Ancient Indian literature having developed under the influence of classical literature was mainly epical.

Rules were set for the epic and mahākābyas and there was little scope for individual innovations. Apart from Kābyas, some folk generes were also well-established in India. One was the Cautiśā or a poem of 34 initials consisting of 34 consonants in the Indian alphabet introduced successively. Bāramāsa and other folk genre described, in a series of pictures, the twelve months of the year. There were others given to elaborate portrayal of feminine beauty or events of a battle.

But in the modern Indian literature new forms or literary types were used. Thus drama, novel, short stories and criticism were born; in the field of poetry lyrics flourished. Blank verse, the Italian sonnet, ballads and epigrams were introduced. The writer always searched for innovation in form and content.

Thus, to sum up, we can say that the modern literature has given form and uttrance to the hopes and despairs, the enthusiasm and apathy, the thrill or joy and the state of pain of individual men and women. The awakening of a national consciousness, the new education and the stirring of the

literary renaissance, are at the back of the emergence of this new literature. Without denying the inherited tradition, the new writer was able to grow wings of creative self-expression. The writer needs an audience, the Sahṛdayas, a body of common readers intelligently responsive to new literature. Thus in the emergence of modern literature the role of the public cannot be ignored.

2. Unity in Diversity

With this background, both Fakirmohan and Laksminath are to be approached and their role in pioneering the modern movements in their own regional literatures is to be appreciated. At this stage, it is also relevant to study the undercurrent of unity that exists within the vast panaroma of Indian literatures. Different regional literatures inspite of their diversity, are harmoniously blended into one through certain unifying links. This is more apparent in case of Assamese and Oriya.

India is perhaps a unique country where many languages are spoken and many literatures have flourished simultaneously. According to Grierson's Linguistic survey of India there are 179 languages and 544 dialects in India.[1] The eighth schedule of the Constitution of India mentions

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1. See S.K. Chatterji, Languages and Literatures of Modern India, Calcutta (1963), p.7.

the following as the fifteen languages of India[1]: Assamese, Bengali, Gujrati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Of these languages, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu are spoken in the North West; Oriya, Bengali and Assamese in the East, Marathi, Gujarati and Sindhi in the Central Western regions and Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the south. There are besides these, several other languages as well as dialects which are significant both from the literary and philological point of view. Dialects of different tribes are also worth mentioning as they are very rich in folk literatures. Each language is a treasure house so far as literary merits are concerned. Each literature has a sharp individuality stamped with the characteristics of its own region and its own community.

Yet inspite of this polyglottism and diversity, Indian literature is essentially a single composite structure. Just as Indian culture is one inspite of a vast multiplicity of religion and ideology, similarly there is a thread of unity in all the literatures of this vast peninsula. This is

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1. The Constitution of India, Government of India, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs (as modified upto 18th May) p.220.

what has made us unmindful of the plurality of our languages and at the same time has made us conscious of our pan-Indian culture.

The reason for this parallel development is the political, social and cultural history of the nation. India, geographically, historically and culturally has always formed a single unity. All these languages and literatures have flourished against a common background and hence the similarities in form and content. The real integration of India into one single unity has taken place through the world of the epics and the purāṇas, the Jātakas, the folk-tales and the philosphical literature of Sanskrit. Characters and myths, incidents and motifs have been supplied by these early works abundantly to different regional literatures on which they have thrived. This unity was strengthened during the last one hundred years by the impact of Western learning on the Indian mind through the spreading of English education all over the country. The lines of development in all regional literatures in the modern age are for this reason all the more identical. In this connection, we might as well say that the similarity of forms and style is no less striking. This is because the ancient and medieval literatures of India have borrowed themes

and techniques straight from Sanskrit and in the modern times all literary genres have been borrowed from the West.

Hence, in order to study and appreciate any single Indian literature, it is necessary to go beyond the confines of that particular literature and survey other literatures as well. This method of inter-literary research proves to be immensely useful as it reveals in a most effective manner the essential unity of Indian thought and sentiments. Despite the diversity and unique traditions of each of the regional languages, there is a viable synthesis that can easily be discerned in them. The real unity of Indian literature is to be seen in this uniqueness and in this inter-related context. Any regional literature certainly has its autonomy but it has its filiation with the whole living and growing organism that is Indian literature. Hence a single regional literature prompts comparison with other literatures of other regions also. The impetus of their inter-actions can make comparative Indian literature a fascinating study. Moreover the comparative method makes the study of literature more scientific bringing into focus the similarities and occasionally the dissimilarities of different literatures and it also helps us in finding a

clue to the commonness of literatures in this vast sub-continent of ours.

Of all the regional languages, Bengali, Oriya and Assamese form the easternmost group of languages and hence are put in the same group. Apart from similarities of grammar, pronunciation and vacabulary these languages have certain linguistical links also. Both Oriya and Assamese have been influenced by Bengali literatures, as to start with, the two states were ruled by Bengali officers and Bengali was adopted for some time as the so-called official language in these two states. In the early part of 19th Century, Bengal was the first province to come under the Western influence and its repercussions on Oriya and Assamese literatures are obvious. However, though Assam and Orissa exist separately from each other with Bengal in between, yet it is surprising to find similarities in both the literatures to a great extent. A comparative survey of the histories of both the literatures can lead evidence to this fact.

Early Indian literature lacks in prose writing. The ancient Indian literature is usually modelled on Sanskrit texts and is narrative in nature. But strangely both Oriya and Assamese literatures have beautiful examples of early prose writing. In Oriya, this prose-chronicle is called

'Mādaḷa Pāñji' and in Assamese it is called 'Burañjī'.

They are annals of royal families and intimate portrayals of the contemporary scene, compiled by wise and experienced men imbued with a sense of historical perspective. The 'Burañjī' gives us chronological accounts of court life, the royal routine and the proceedings of the royal court. Likewise, the 'Mādaḷā Pāñji' describes the ruling dynasties and the individual rulers of Orissa who traditionally ruled over the kingdom. However, inspite of this similarity there is one major difference between the two. The 'Burañji' has no association whatsoever with scriptural text or religion. Its pages give an intimate record of the royal court and stop at that. But in the 'Mādaḷā Pāñji', religion and royality go hand in hand. It describes the different ceremonies of Lord Jagannāth and lays emphasis on the fact that Lord Jagannāth was the divine source of spiritual influence on the king and the people of Orissa. Regarding style, it may be said that as these two prose literatures were factual records and were composed as a matter of official routine; they have been put in a language which is ordinarily free from rhetoric. They are simple, easy and unpretentious.

Apart from these two chronicles, there are some other ancient prose literatures in Assam and Orissa with strange

similarities. Another class of historical writing composed in both verse and prose and generally known as 'Bamśāvalī' exists in Assam. These writings, besides recording the geneology of the different families of nobles, give sketches of their lives and careers. Similarly, in Orissa, a sort of family chronicle called 'Coini Cakaḍā' is found. Here also, as in Mādaḷā Pāñji the benevolent protection of Lord Jagannāth is stressed off and on.

Coming to the early verse writings in Oriya and Assamese, we find the same common features between them. The early writings of both these literatures were strictly religious and were derived from Sanskrit Purāṇas and epics. Numerous episodes were borrowed from ancient Sanskrit texts and separate narrative verses were composed in both the literatures copiously. The Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata have influenced both these literatures and both Assamese and Oriya have excellent translations of these two epics in the ancient period.

In Assamese the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata were composed by Mādhava Kandalī and Rāma Saraswatī respectively. In orissa, Sāraḷā Dāsa's Mahābhārata is considered to be his magnum opus whereas Baḷrāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa is widely acclaimed as the first Oriya Rāmāyaṇa. In these books, though

the writers borrowed from classical literature, they never allowed communal or sectarian matters to over-ride artistic considerations. The metre used was mainly the rhymed couplet and the figures of speech were derived from the Sanskrit. The poets were to a certain extent conventional in manner of folk poets. Often they deviated from a given pattern of story and introduced local history and geography. In the hands of the Assamese and Oriya poets, the general frame remains the same but generic transformation is fairly obvious.

The instances of local colour in both the Assamese as well as Oriya versions are too numerous to be recounted. The writers depict and project the numerous radiant landscape and picturesque people of their respective states with a touch of sincerity. The marriage festivities, dress and ornaments, food and drink, feast and revelry, are full of local colour. In Oriya Mahābhārata, Sārāḷa Dāsa goes to the extent of bringing the Pāṇḍabas to visit all the holy places of Orissa and makes them live like common Oriya citizens. Similarly, in the Assamese version of Rāma Saraswatī's Mahābhārata, King Bhagadatta of Assam is made to be present in the marriage ceremony of Draupadī and dies in the battle of Kurukṣetra.[1]

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1. See B.K.Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi (1964), p.56.

These epics were mainly written for simple rural readers and in both the literatures, the poet's attempt was to bring down to the common man the religious truth that was available only to the Brahamins through Sanskrit. The poets were conscious that their writing was meant for the people and admitted the same. Two examples from the writings of early Oriya and Assamese literature may be quoted here. The medieval Oriya poet Jagannāth Dās speaks about his book like this:

> Thus says the Brahman Jagannāth
> In this Bhāgabat Purāṇa,
> In the language of the people.[1]

Like-wise the Assamese poet Mādhava Kandalī speaks about his Rāmāyaṇa in these words:

> Poets write in the idiom of the people,
> Some of the things their own, others derived;
> This is not the voice of God, but a popular story,
> Do not, therefore, be too much fault-finding.[2]

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1. Trans. Mayadhar Mansimha, 'Oriya', In Indian Literature, Ed. Nagendra, Agra (1959) p.475

2. Trans. B.K. Barua & P. Goswami, 'Assamese', In Indian Literature, Ed. Nagendra, Agra (1950) p. 427.

The above is a striking example of identical views, indeed, where both poets aim at using the language and idiom of common people.

The Vaisnavite movements in the fifteenth century in both Oriya and Assamese literatures have ideas in common too. The Visnu cult had been slowly heading towards Orissa during the preceding periods. Rāmānuja had visited Puri in the 12th Century. Then Jayadev in the 13th Century, exercised a tremendous impact among the people of Orissa and introduced the ideas of Kṛṣṇa worship. His Gīta-govinda was recited in the Jagannāth temple and was part of the ritual of Lord Jagannāth. Then came Caitanya who settled at Puri and the Pañcasakhās or the five 'Comrades' of Oriya literature were in most intimate terms with him. The Vaisnavite cult in Orissa had become so strong that King Pratāparudra Deva became a staunch follower of the Vaisnav philosophy.

In Assam, Śaṅkara Deva and his disciple Mādhava Deva were the chief architects of Vaisnavite cult. It is also significant that Śaṅkara Deva had visited Puri in the year 1515 and had come in close contact with the Vaisnavites of Orissa. He wrote many lovely poems taking Lord Jagannāth as the main theme. Śaṅkara's Vaisnavism was a new battle against the moral decadence and blasphemy currently prevalent in Assam.

The Vaisnav literatures in Assam and Orissa have both laid emphasis on Bhakti and on the supreme value of surrender to one God. According to them, Visnu is the only God who manifests himself in various incarnations. Assamese Vaisnav literature deals only with Kṛṣṇa whereas Oriya Pañcasakhā literature identifies Jagannāth with Kṛṣṇa. Both Śaṅkaradeva and Jagannātha Dās, the main poets of Assam and Orissa respectively, drew their inspiration mainly from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and were the followers of the Vendanta Philosophy. As Nāmghars were established in Assam by Śaṅkaradeva where the devotional songs were chanted and sung, Bhāgavat Ghars were established in the villages of Orissa where the sacred Bhāgavat of Jagannātha Dās was worshipped and recited. However, though the Oriya Vaisnava literature consists of only narrative verses, the Assamese Vaisnav Saint Poets introduced a new genre, the 'Aṅkiyā Nāṭ' or the one act dramas, based mainly on the puranic themes and different episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life.

In both the literatures, after the Vaisnav phase, there was a sharp change in the modes of expression which gave rise to ornate and erotic poetry. In Oriya, the whole scene was led by Upendra Bhañja, a scion of the royal house of Ghumusar and was successively followed by others. The poets in this period competed with one another in loading

their verses with puns, conceits, dictional gymnastics and erotic effusions. This tradition was one of pedantry, play on words and voluptuous sex-love.

The same elements were found in Assamese poetry also under the Ahom rulers. The va-isnav lyrics gave rise to love-romances by the court poets who not only modified the ancient episodes to suit their romantic narration and earthly passion but also searched for fresh love-themes in new literary pastures. Prof. B.K. Barua attributes this to the pomposity of the royal Court and writes that this pomposity affected the poet's sensibility. Hence we find a note of artificiality in these writings whereas the dominant features of Vaisnavite era, were sincerety and austerity. He says:

> By advocating the ideal of austerity and poverty the Vaisnavite literature repressed many natural pleasures. Now literature is released from such repression, thanks to the baroque extravagance of and the preference for amatory themes of the Ahom countries. The court was the œntre of love and romance. Kings and queens also preferred love stories to devotional ones. xx xx
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Puranas were a rich store-house of love anecdotes, Ahom monarchs encouraged poets and authors to render them into Assamese.[1]

An important feature of this period is the general preference of love stories to devotional ones, and this characteristic is found in both Oriya and Assamese literatures. The poet searched for fresh love-themes, As Upendra Bhañja invented the romantic love-story of Candrabhānu and Lābanyabatī, the Assamese poet Rāma Dvija, found ample scope for his creative faculty in the imaginary love episode of the prince of Kundilanagar and Mṛgāvatī, the celestial nymph. This is, in a way, a step towards realism, as literature came down from Gods and Goddesses to the level of Princes and Princesses.

Coming to the modern phase, we find that common men and women in the society became more prominent in both Assamese and Oriya literatures. The lines of development are almost identical in all the regional literatures of India in the modern period. The impact of Western civilisation was felt in Bengal a little earlier than in

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1. B.K. Barua, History of Assamese Literature, Sahitya Akademi (1964) p.80

the central and North-Western regions and its effect was visible in Orissa and Assam, the neighbouring States. Assam came under the East India Company in the beginning of the last century and the British occupied Orissa roughly at the same time.

Christian missionaries who aimed at the propagation of their religion and British Officers who wanted to consolidate their administrative set-up joined hands to reorganise the system of education. Some attempts at propagating modern literature in Assam and Orissa started under the influence of Christian Missionaries. Rev. N. Brown and C.T. Cotter were mainly responsible for publishing books in Assam, and William carry and Edward Marshman did the same thing for the Oriyas. Their first job was to translate the Bible into regional languages. Though they did not have much command over the languages and often their books made rather odd and amusing reading, yet they adopted for the first time, the spoken language of the people. The Baptist Mission Press at Shiv Sagar, and the Mission Press at Cuttack were the first of their kind in the two States. New curricula and courses of reading were introduced and the enlightened youth of India came in contact with English literature, which apart from its wealth of poetry and drama

had a highly developed tradition of novel, short stories and literary criticism. The inherent relation between literature and the life around, which in our country was severed during the later medieval age, was now restored.

During the first hundred years of British occupation the following four clear phases of developments took place in various literatures of India. A cultural renaissance, a national awakening, a romantic revival and a socialistic consciousness. These developments were pioneered by some great men who wrote in different regional languages. So far as eastern languages were concerned, modern Bengali literature became rich and fertile under the impact of literary giants such as Īśwarcandra, Michael Madhusūdan and Baṅkimcandra who brought about a revolution in society and culture. In Assamese and Oriya the developments have been more or less similar. In Assamese literature, Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan was among the foremost pilots who wrote and pleaded for the reinstatement of the Assamese language in his own State. He was followed by stalwarts like Gunābhirām Baruā, Hemacandra Baruā and Kamalākānta Bhattācārya whose diligent literary efforts laid the foundations of modern Assamese prose and poetry. The leader in the second epoch was Laksminath Bejbaruwa who can really be described as the maker of moder Assamese literature.

The sentiments of patriotism and traces of romanticism found fullest expression in the writing of this author. Similarly, in modern Oriya literature, we find an identical pioneer of modern studies in Fakirmohan Senapati who is, in a sense, the father of modern Oriya literature. Though Rādhānāth Ray and Madhusūdan Rāo are equally responsible for bringing in a new phase in modern Oriya literature, it was Fakirmohan who wrote for the real mass of Oriya people and brought literature nearer to the common man of Orissa.

Fakirmohan and Laksminath come before us as a most stimulating pair for comparative study as both of them are makers of their own respective literatures and they distinguished themselves equally well in a number of fields like fiction, poetry, short-stories, essays and autobiography. Both were born roughly at the same time[1] and shared highly interesting and comparable social and literary traditions. Both wrote in their mother tongues chiefly to protect their literary identity from the dominance of Bengali and had keen love for their own languages. Both of them edited journals and broke away from the ornate medieval style of writing and wrote in the

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1. Laksminath - 1864 - 1938
Fakirmohan - 1843 - 1918

simple everyday language. Perhaps the most important common feature in their writings is their sense of satire and humour which resulted from their desire to criticise the aping of Western culture all around them. Both were pioneers and original short-story writers of their languages and became the principal architects of Assamese and Oriya literatures respectively. Last but not the least, is the fact that they introduced the genre of autobiographies in Oriya and Assamese literature. Their autobiographies not only give us vivid glimpses of the changing social scene and of the emergence of the modern sensibility in the early nineteenth century, but also are fine specimens of literary excellence.

CHAPTER II

INFLUENCE

The influence of English and Bengali literature accounts mostly for modernism in Fakirmohan and Laksminath. They assimilated all that was good and novel in both these literatures and their writings took a new turn accordingly. The mind of the writer is like a workshop and acts as a catalytic agent joining and assimilating various influences. It is difficult to understand an author properly, if we remain obstinately within the limits of his own personality and work. While reading a writer "we are repeatedly reminded by him of the influence exerted upon his thought and style of other men and to estimate him rightly, we have to take account of such influence, to consider its sources, range and significance and to measure its extent for good or evil".[1]

So in order to appreciate Laksminath and Fakirmohan one has, first of all, to take into consideration the various

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1. W.H. Hudson, Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960) p.49

influences upon them and also the manner in which these influences shaped their thought and style. This study of influence illustrates their modernity and clarifies as to why they discarded the age-old customs in literature and why their writings took a different turn ushering a new era in literary history. Their originality can never be questioned and there is no doubt about the integrity of their ideas and styles. But on examination, we find that apart from the influence of classical Sanskrit, which as Indians they naturally and effortlessly inherited from their predecessors, the influences of Bengali and English literatures have been tremendous on them. This might sound strange but both Bengali and English had the impact on these two writers, born in two different States miles apart from each other.

The reason is simple. The two facts responsible for this identity are the socio-cultural history and ideologies prevalent during that period. Laksminath and Fakirmohan were, roughly, contemporaries. Both Assam and Orissa were then under British rule. Both the writers came in contact with English men, had glimpses of the great tradition of English literature too and came under its spell, as it was introduced for the first time in India. The total administration in both Orissa and Assam were in

the hands of Bengali Officers and the medium of teaching in both the States was Bengali.[1] Bengal, being more advanced at that time, was a better store-house for books and journals which not only influenced the Assamese and Oriya writers but also prompted them to write and bring out such books in their own mother-tongues.

Both the writers never failed in appreciating all that was good and beneficial in foreign literatures. Inspite of their crusade against Bengali dominance, they never condemned Bengali literature. They, in fact, praised Bengali literature profusely throughout their writings. The addresses of Laksminath and Fakirmohan to Assam Sahitya Sabha and Utkal Sahitya Samaj respectively can be cited as examples, wherein they, more than once have spoken highly of Bengali literature and its authors. Like-wise, though politically they were anti-British, they always admitted that they had to learn a lot from English literature also.

INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE ON LAKSMINATH

Laksminath in his dress and manners was a European. He wore suit and tie, played tennis, drank whisky and wrote

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1. Ātma Jībana-Carita, F.G.I, pp. 13,16,58
   Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.8,22

and talked English. He gave very liberal English education to all his daughters and put them in convents. His autobiography tells us that his eldest daughter Surabhi in her early childhood could converse only in Hindi and English and did not know Assamese. It is usual for one to write one's diary and personal letters in one's own mother-tongue as they are intimate record of one's own personal life; but surprisingly Laksminath wrote these documents mostly in English though occasionally we find a few Assamese sentences interspersed here and there.[1] Throughout his writing we find ample quotations and extracts from English literatures to prove and justify his point. His correspondence with his daughters, sons-in-law and friends in English speak well of his love for his foreign tongue.

Laksminath wasahighly qualified youngman when he started writing. He was a graduate. He was a post graduate student in English literature and completed law also, though by sheer misfortune, he could not qualify in either. None the less, he was well versed with Western Classics and his romantic spirit found an ideal channel to express his feelings

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1. Bejbaruwār Dinlekhā (ed), Maheswar Neog, Jorhat (1969) pp.104,111
Patralekhā, (ed),Maheswar Neog,Assam Sahitya Sabha(1969) pp 717-180

in poetry in the tradition of Shelly, Keats and Byron.[1] His love of English literature was implanted in him right from his childhood by his father. His father, though a very conservative Hindu, ultimately had felt that the knowledge of English was essential for the fuller development of a personality.[2] Thiw seed of interest in English literature which was planted in him from his very childhood, germinated afterwards in his youth when he came for higher studies to Calcutta.

While a student, he was so much influenced by Shakespeare that he, in collaboration with his friends, translated Comedy of Errors into Assamese. He even attempted to translate both Hamlet and Mid-summer Nights Dream, though he could never complete them.[3] In his own young aspiring mind, he thought at that time that he would be immortal in Assamese literature by writing a few such books. This shows his tremendous liking and attraction for English literature.

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I., p.96

2. Ibid, p.8

3. Ibid, p.54
   The first scene of Hamlet has been included in the complete work of Laksminath. The translation is simply wonderful and shows his depth of understanding Shakespeare.

His love for drama in which he excelled later, perhaps originated from his aspreciation of English drama. It is interesting to note that he defines one of his plays in English terms and calls it a 'drawing room play'.[1] While defining the aim of a drama also, he is at a loss to find suitable expression in Assamese and writes in English that the main purpose of a play is to "educate and holding the mirror upto nature".[2] Among all his teachers in the college, he remembers only Prof. Charles Tawney who taught him English drama and mentions his name with regard and affection in his autobiography.[3]

So far as poetry was concerned, Laksminath did drink deep of English poetry and he wrote about this in his autobiography. When he was a third year student of General Assembly College, he came across the collection of English Poems - "Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Lyrics" and was enthralled by the poems of Byron, Shelley and Keats.[4] In his own humorous style, he writes that in the praise of his imaginary sweet-heart he filled a whole note book with poems

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1. Gadādhar Rājā, B.G.II, p.1069.
2. Introduction, Belimār, B.G.II, p.1175.
3. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.60.
4. Ibid, p.96.

in English, Bengali and Assamese.[1] He was so much attracted towards Milton that he wanted to compose an epic in the pattern of Paradise Lost and in fact had started such a book in blank verse.[2] Some of his poems are in direct line of English romantic poetry and in a few of them, there is an ample evidence of English influence also.[3] Even occasionally in an Assamese poem, he introduces English sentences in between, though this is mainly done for humorous purpose.[4] He has translated many English hymns into Bengali which is by no means an easy task and shows his thorough knowledge of English religious verses.[5] He has composed individual poems in English also though they are written mostly in a lighter vein.[6] Among his unpublished works, English articles have

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.99.

2. Ibid., p.101.

3. 'Priyatamār Saundr̆-ya' is modelled on George Darley's 'The Loveliness of Love' and 'Cumā' is free renderring of Shelley's poem Loves Philosophy' Andrew Marvell's poem 'on a Dew-drop' seems to have inspired Lāksminath to write his poem 'podum pātar pāni'.

4. 'Bṛndā Candrābalī Sambāda', Kadam Kali, B.G.I, p.962.

5. Patralekhā (ed). Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1969), pp.149, 150.

6. The Potion Poetic and Fit Poetic, B.G.II, p.1684.

been traced also.[1]

Laksminath's fiction, criticism and satire are full of quotations from English literature. In his novel Padum Kuwari, he begins each chapter with English quotations from Burne, Suckling, Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Drayton, Johnson, Sadley, Lodge, Campbell and Arnold which shows that he was well acquinted with their verses. His satire is mostly in the fashion of eighteenth century English satirists. He writes how, while a student in Calcutta, he was an active member of a club of Assamese youngmen called 'Tea Party' and dreamt that it was on the pattern of the 'Coffee House' of the days of Johnson and Addison.[2] For him Swift, Cervantes and Aristophanes were the only famour satirists in the world[3] and one had to read Jerome K. Jerome & Punch to understand what real satire meant.[4] Even in his Assamese writings, there

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1. See Maheswar Neog (ed). The Religion of Love and Devotion, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) Introduction, p. xvi. "I have just received from Srimati Ratna Barua a skit entitled 'farce' written in English by Bezharua. This gives the action of two rustic friends, Rāmu and Nitāi, meant for drawingroom entertainment at Sambalpur", writes the author.

2. Amār Jīban Smr-ti trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.93

3. 'Nobel Prize', Barbaruār Bhābar Burburani, B.G. II p.1481

4. Hāhi, Barbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.239.

are at times whole paragraphs written in English.[1] His lectures on Vaisnav Philosophy were delivered in English which shows his deep knowledge of that language. He could express highly abstract ideas of religion in lucid English prose.

So far as journalism was concerned, his chief source of inspiration were the English newspapers published in Calcutta.[2] He refers to them in his autobiography. He was a regular subscriber to these newspapers and even memorised the English sentences from them as he liked the style very much.[3] It was his dream to bring out a weekly journal in English "The Assamese" after he passed B.A.[4] Though these references are no more than the childish dream of a young adolescent, they do not fail to tell us his appreciation of English literature and language.

Laksminath's whole theory of literature is summarised in his Essay "Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan"[5], where he quotes

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1. 'Faujdārī Makadamār Baktṛtā, Barbaruār cintār Silguti, B.G.II, p.1582.
2. Amār Jīban Smṛti, trans.Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.102.
3. Ibid, p.102
4. Ibid, p.102
5. Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan, Beṛbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed).Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) pp.10-13.

abundantly from Western writers and admits that a literature can only broaden its horizon by accepting models and ideas from other literatures. In the same essay, he writes about the literary tradition of Europe and how it has been enriched by Roman literature. He argues that literature is a continuous moving process and dynamism and change are very much required to improve and strengthen it.

The above mentioned composition speaks of his thorough knowledge about Western literature as well as Western authors. He is of theopinion that a writer can accept ideas from other literatures, but should recreate them in his own language, befitting his own society and climate. To elaborate his point, he quotes examples from Shakespeare who took ideas and incidents from Italy and Denmark, but made them his own and used them in his plays. He says that even Chaucer borrowed lavishly from French and Italian literatures and Wordsworth got his intellectual nourishment from France. Next, Laksminath comes to the field of Indian literature, where he cites the examples of Sri Rām Mohan Roy, Madusūdan Datta, Baṅkim Candra and Rabīndranāth Tagore in the same context. He feels that all these four writers who gave a new shape to Bengali literature were indebted to Western Classics. So ultimately Laksminath feels that the only solution for the Assamese writers in order to progress and compete with other regional literature was to adopt Western writers as their models.

He had a liberal attitude towards the use of language also. For him the chief characteristic of any literature was freedom and he was against the principle of touch-me-not policy in literature. He did not want literature to be strictly bound down by rules and regulations and hence accepted the use of English words in Assamese language. He was of the opinion that these words would ultimately be absorbed in the vocabulary of Assamese and thus would enrich it. He writes:

> If we try to converse, unless we use an English term it becomes difficult for us to express our feeling. This is not our fault nor is this the fault of English or Western education. This is the result of the environment in which we are living.[1]
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> x x x
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> We have to talk in a progressive language with progressive people. We have developed our ideas by living with developed people. If we give up those ideas and try to go back to our original position, we will not be able

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1. Quoted by Kamaleswar Bhaliha, 'Bejbaruwār Byaktitwa' In Bejbaruwār Sāhitya Pratibhā (ed) Sahitya Sabha Gauhaty (1960) p.64.

to progress any further.[1]

From these statements, we can safely conclude that Laksminath was very much influenced by English literature. What looks like an imitation of Western Culture, brought him in fact, nearer to his own literary tradition. He says:

> Among the Indians, none other than Michael Madusūdan was more European. He discarded his own religion, language and dress and wanted to be a Milton by writing poems in English. But ultimately be realised his mistake and felt that by writing in his mother tongue he could leave him mark in the field of literature.[2]

So it was his realisation that one could flourish by adopting the language in which one is born that prompted him to write in his mother tongue, though occasionally he chose to write in English.

Influence of English Literature On Fakirmohan

Fakirmohan did not receive the so called school or college education. His upbringing was in direct contrast to

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1. Quoted by Kamaleswar Chaliha, 'Bejbaruwār Byaktitwa', In Bejbaruwār Sahitya Pratibhā (ed) Sahitya Sabha Gauhaty (1960), p.64.

2. As-amīyā Bhāṣā Āru Sāhitya, B.G.II, p.1737.

that of Laksminath. Laksminath came of a well-to-do family and had all the facilities of good education whereas Fakirmohan was an orphan right from his infancy and had no opportunity for higher studies. It was through sheer efforts and love of learning that he aquired a fair knowledge of English, Bengali, Arabi, Parsi and Sanskrit. Nevertheless, he was a bright student in childhood. He stood first in his class when he was in primary classes.[1] Later in his life he was appointed a teacher in the local school and was promoted as a Head-master of the Missionary School by Rev.A.Miller, the President. During his teachership, he taught Algebra, Geometry and Geography apart from History and Oriya[2] and wrote a number of text books for schools. Later he spent many years as an administrator in different princely states and proved his merit and ability in solving different problems ably. Throughout his life, he was very much associated with European Indologists like Sir John Beams and Rev.Hallam and earned the confidence of British Civil Servants working in Orissa. His association with different European Scholars definitely broadened his vision and ultimately had its effect on his literature as well as ideas. This association with European Administrators perhaps accounts for the fact that many Western

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.16.
2. Ibid, p.19.

Sahibs appear as characters in his novels and short stories.[1]

In his autobiography he praises Rev. Hallam lavishly and refers that in compiling a book on Oriya-English Grammar he had helped Rev. Hallam.[2] Rev. Hallam was so much pleased with his services and capabilities that he had increased Fakirmohan's salary also. The description of Sir John Beams is given in glowing terms by Fakirmohan. At that time Sir John Beams was writing a book on comparative grammar of Indian languages and had required the assistance of Fakirmohan for this. His affection for Fakirmohan is described by the Oriya poet in the following words:

> That time because of limited educated persons at Balasore, I was considered as a scholar among the Europeans. The Sahib asked me to meet him at least once a week. If at all I came late for a day or two he used to ask me, "Sir why are you late in meeting me?". The usual discussion with Sir John Beams was about

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1. See novels Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, Māmũ and short story Raṇḍipua Ānanta.

2. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, pp. 26-27.

language. Sometimes it was Sanskrit hymns. At other times it was Bengali Poetry, the Oriya classic Rasakollal, or incantations against snake charming and withcraft.[1]

Fakirmohan started his English learning after an interesting incident which he describes with both pain and sorrow in his autobiography. Once he had gone to the local circuit house to meet the Inspector of Schools Mr. R.L.Martin. His Orderly thought Fakirmohan to be well acquinted with English and started talking accordingly. Fakirmohan did not know the language very well and hence had a guilty and painful feeling about it. He decided to learn it at any cost. He says:

I wanted to learn English. I managed to get the first book and started reading it on the river bank with the help of friends. I gave up the study of Sanskrit, epics and dramas and read English only. There was very little time for studies. I did not have any English teacher too. One of my friends was second teacher in the Government School. Only he had taught me for a few days.

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I., p.28.

> With the help of a dictionary I read Arabian Knights, Robinson Crusoe, History of Bengal, Govind Samant by Rev. Lal Behari Dey, the Bible and Tales of Shakespeare by Mary Lamb. That much English knowledge helped me later. Many a times I had to talk to senior officers about law cases. Had I not known a little English, It would have been difficult for me to manage.[1]

The tenacity with which he read English is referred to by Sri Birāj Mohan Senapati in an article. He writes:

> He had to struggle hard to learn English. Once he gave me an old English book to read (Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare). When I opened the first page I found the meaning of each English word written in the margin in Oriya. There was no vacant space in the page. When I asked the old man, he replied that he used to know the meanings of each English words first from the dictionary as he did not know English at all. Then only could he understand the meaning of individual sentences. From this one can understand with how much difficulty he

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1. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.29.

had learnt English.[1]

There is ample evidence that he could converse in English and this was required of him often as he had to come in contact with European Administrators during his tenure as Dewan of different States of Orissa.[2] His translation of the Rāmāyaṇa was dedicated to Sir John Beams and the dedication was written by Fakirmohan in English.[3] In his novels and short stories, the English-men talk in English and their exact conversation is often reproduced by Fakirmohan.[4] His novel Prāyaścitta ends in the fashion of Romeo & Juliet. Inside the novel, there is a reference to

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1. 'Fakīrmohanaṅka Kathā', In Fakīrmohan Parikramā, (ed). J.B. Mohanti, Balasore (1955), p.15.

2. Ātma Jībana Carita, F.G.I, p.33.

   As an example, Fakirmohan writes that, while a Dewan of Keonjhar, he was to discuss the details of a case with the-then European Chief Commissioner. The conversation started in English. A few sentences spoken by Fakirmohan are quoted below:

   "Yes your honour, all the records are with me. I can explain all the matter, but I fear your honour will not understand my broken English. So I pray, please allow me to call a pleader".

   The Sahib was of course pleased with Fakirmohan's English and allowed him to explain the case all by himself.

3. Ātma Jīban Carita, F.G.I, p.106.

4. Māmũ, F.G.II, P.189, Mr.& Mrs.Dawson's conversation with Naṭabar are reproduced in English.

Romeo & Juliet also.[1] At other places while describing a character's greed for money he is compared with Shylock.[2] His poem 'Utkala Bhramaṇa' contains many English words, often half of the line or a single line being written in English. In course of his discussion elsewhere he refers to the Aesops Fables.[3] This shows that he had some knowledge about the Western writers. In all his writings Fakirmohan makes an abundant use of English words and quotations.

It will not be out of context here to mention that his novel Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha bears close resemblance with the novel Gobind Sāmant of Lal Behari Dey.[4] Fakirmohan himself mentions that he had read this book earlier. Gobind Sāmant is the story of a peasant life and tells a good deal about life in a Bengal village, the romance and routine of its every-day life. This book bears a strange resemblance to Fakirmohan's novel with the same rural back-ground. Both the books speak about the tyranny of the land-lords and the characters drawn are recalled with natural ease.

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1. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.396. Sadānanda refers to the story of Romeo & Juliet while taking to Gobinda about his marriage proposal.

2. Story Adharma Bitta, F.G.II, p.510.

3. Śūdra O Bedādhikāra, F.G.II, p.735.

4. See K.R.S.Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, Asia Publishing House (1973) pp.527-28.

The heroes in both the books die of broken heart and there is a gentle spray of humour over the narrative in both the novels. So it might be possible for Fakirmohan to have been influenced by the Indo-Anglian novel as he admits in his autobiography that he had a fair knowledge of this book. Dey, the story-teller is also the commentator and does not hesitate now and then to make a point for the gentle readers edification. This remains the style of Fakirmohan in almost all his novels.

Moreover, his contact with English literature was mostly through Bengali translation also. He writes:

> At times I learnt that a few educated persons had translated English books into Bengali. I used to get those books and felt jealous. I thought, "why does not Government establish a Committee to translate such book into Oriya?"[1]

So it is apparent that though he did not read many English books in original, he was quite aware of the general trends in English literature through translations. His love for English literature is expressed by him again and again in his writings. He says:

> Why speak of Oriya literature? All the

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.42.

> regional Indian literatures are progressing fast only through the help of English literature. Should Oriya literature lag behind in this modern age of 20th Century.[1]

While speaking of journalism, he was of the opinion that the English, French, German and Americans were more educated as they had a love for magazines and journals and we must try to follow their examples.[2] So it was common knowledge that he advocated the supermacy of an alien literature; though at the same time he did feel that it was only through the mother tongue that a nation could progress. In this respect, he had identical views with Laksminath.

Influence Of Bengali Literature On Laksminath

Laksminath got his early education in a Bengali medium school as Bengali was the official language in Assam. The Indian renaissance had its first impact in Bengal and the great writer Bi-dyā Sāgar, Rājā Rām Mohan, Bankim Candra and Rabīndranāth not only influenced Bengali literature but also served as models for the neighbouring writers. Moreover,

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1. Abhibhāṣaṇ, F.G.II, p.750.
2. 'Jnānagachara Phala', Parisiṣṭa Prabandhābalī, F.G.II, p.668.

Laksminath married in the famous Tagore family and it was but natural that he would be influenced by Bengali-speaking in-laws. His children spoke Bengali at home, and his daughter Aruna married a Bengali gentleman. He sang Rabīndranāth's song with his wife[1], participated in dramas written by Rabīndranāth[2] and was always present in Maghotsav every year at Joransanko.[3] Laksminath could write Bengali effortlessly as is apparent from his letters written to his wife and daughters. The whole drama of his family existence has been revealed in astonishingly brilliant, Bengali prose through these correspondences. His life style was so much Bengali-oriented that during his eleven years stay in Orissa he was considered to be a Bengali by the local people.[4] While at Sambalpur, he participated in a Bengali drama 'Bālmīki Pratibhā' written by Rabīndranāth and acted his role convincingly. In fact, Laksminath in his autobiography mentions how he was influenced by Rabīndranāth right from

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1. Ratna Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaruwa and Prajna Sundari Devi' In Laksminath Bezbaruwa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog., Gauhaty University (1972) p.223.

2. Ibid, p.223.

3. Aruna Mukherjee, 'Laksminath Bezbaruwa and the Tagores of Jorasanka' In Laksminath Bezbaruwa, The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog., Gauhaty University (1972) p.219.

4. Biswanarayan Sastri, Sāhityarathī Laksminath Bezbaruwa Gauhaty (1970) p.333.

his student days. In the same book, he admits that his early attempt at versification was in Bengali, under the pseudonym Raṅga-lāl Chattopādhyāy. The little Bengali influence that he imbibed in Assam assumed greater proportions during his stay in Calcutta. It was in Calcutta that he came in close contact with Bengali literature and society which prompted him to write such articles in Assamese. After his marriage, attempts were made by his wife's relatives to convert him to a cent-per-cent Bengali and to prove that Assamese was just a dialect of Bengali. There was a tussle even between Rabīndranāth and Laksminath on this issue. From his autobiography we come to know how Rabīndranāth wrote an essay in the Bhāratī adversely commenting on the Assamese language, to which Laksminath wrote a rejoinder in Bengali in the same journal. He refers to this in his autobiography:

> Gradually the literary ladies and gentle-men of father-in-law's house discussed with me regarding the supermacy of Bengali language. They used to take the lead in arguing with me. I used to join under compulsion but usually did not want to join in such unpleasant arguments. They wanted me to write in Bengali and not in Assamese. At first they used to think that being their son-in-law, I should be completely moulded into a Bengali. Gradually, they realised

that their ideas of me were wrong. They were disillusioned.[1]

However, this did not detract him from his love of Bengali literature and he often spoke of Bengali writers in very high terms.[2] In his awareness, Bengali found a critic and a admirer combined.

His student life in Calcutta as well as his marriage in an illustrious Bengali family brought him inclose touch with life in Bengal and in many of his short stories he gives a fine picture of Bengal society. The locale is Bengal in many of his compositions.[3] Even the Bengali dialogues and conversations of different Bengali characters have been retained by him in his short stories.[4] His life as a journalist was much influenced by Bengali journals and made him dream of similar magazines in his mother tongue. There is ample evidence that Laksminath in his poetry directly borrowed from and was influenced by Bengali writers like Vidyāpati, Rabīndranāth and Michael. His Devyānī is directly in the fashion of

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1. Amār Jīban Smṛti, Trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975), p.130.
2. 'Sāhityar Sādhāran Lakṣan', Bejbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) p.26.
3. Stories Lāokholā, Ghanṭākarna Sarmā, Bhokendra Baruār Madhyalīlā.
4. Stories Bhurukī Bou, Putrabān Pitā, Dāktar Bābur Sādhu.

dramatic poetry of Rabīndranāth. He parodied Dwijendralāl Roy's patriotic songs[1] and criticised the manner in which Bankim Candra Chattopādhyāy's Vande Mātaram was used in politics.[2] In addition to this he wrote some original letters in verses in Bengali[3], translated English hymns into Bengali[4] and in his original poems assimilated lines from Rabīndranāth.[5] He was attracted towards Rabīndranāth's newly introduced prose rhythm and referred to this in one of his letters.[6] He was closely acquinted with the folk literature of Bengal and ocassionally referred in his writings to Bengali folk songs.[7] While in Calcutta, he was a regular visitor to Bengali theateres and was charmed by Bengali acting.[8] He himself admitted that he was influenced by Dwijendralāl while writing Jayamatī Kũwarī.[9]

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1. 'Amār Janmabhūmi' Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.961.
2. 'Bandemātaram', Kṛpābar Baruār Obhatani, B.G.II, p.1230.
3. Patralekhā (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), Letter Nos.116-117, 174.
4. Ibid, Letter Nos.161, 162.
5. Ibid, Letter Nos.153.
6. Ibid, Letter Nos.164.
7. 'Kṛpābar Baruwār Bhābar Burburani' Bar baruwār Prabandha Bachani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.229.
8. Amār Jīban Smrti, trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi (1975) p.116.
9. Introduction, Jayamatī Kũwarī, B.G.II, p.1137.

In Laksminath, we find a strange synthesis and tussle of two cultures, that of Assam and Bengal simultaneously. As a man, a father, a husband he was Bengali but in literature he was a true son to Assam. His long stay outside Assam broughthim into contact with alien cultures but made him pine for his own motherland also. His great regard for Bengali, notwithstanding, he could never get away from the feeling that this language had been imposed upon him since his early childhood.

Influence Of Bengali Literature On Fakirmohan

Like Laksminath, Fakirmohan started his education in Bengali and grew up in Orissa which was totally engulfed by Bengali influence.[1] Bengali language, songs, dresses and manners had captured and paralysed the native spirit of the contemporary Oriya public. This situation gave rise to a crisis in his mind and in later years much of his literary energy was devoted to establish the identity of his own mother-tongue.

Famirmohan's son, as mentioned earlier, married into a Bengali family and Fakirmohan conversed in Bengali with his

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.53.

grand daughters and his daughter-in-law.[1] It is also known that Fakirmohan's Bengali handwriting was much better than his Oriya writing.[2] In his personal letters also he quoted from Bengali.[3]

In his autobiography, he mentions that his early Bengali education was in the house of a doctor named Prasād Nāyak where he read alongwith the doctor's sons.[4] His knowledge of Bengali literature was thorough. He even taught Bengali to the acting Collector and Joint Magistrate of Balasore, who were Europeans.[5] In his autobiography, he speaks of many a times about different Bengali journals that had influenced him.[6] He refers to the books of Iśwarcandra, Bhudeb Mukhopādhyāy and Akṣay Kumār Datta which were read in the schools of Orissa at that time.[7] In this connection, it is worth mentioning that he translated the book 'Jīban Carit' by Īswar-Candra into Oriya.

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1. Sarala Devi, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Pāribārik Jīban', In Fakirmohan Parikramā, (ed) J.B.Mohanti, Balasore (1955), p.31.
2. Surendra Mohanti, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Patrābalī', Fakirmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1927), Footnote letter No.1.
3. Ibid, letter No.1, Fakirmohan quotes from Dwijendralāl Roy.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.11.
5. Ibid, p.26.
6. Ibid, p.41.
7. Ibid, p.40.

Like Laksminath, his early attempt at writing was also in Bengali and he used to send articles to the Bengali magazine Somprakās. He writes:

> At times I used to write in Bengali monthlies and weeklies x x while writing the Rāmāyaṇa my mind changed. I realised that I could never be considered a great poet in Bengal by writing in Bengali. There was no dearth of books in Bengali also. I decided that whether people read or not I would write books in Oriya.[1]

Again, it was his study of Bengali literature that inspired him to write in Oriya. He confesses this in his autobiography and writes:

> Anytime I got a new Bengali book, I used to look at it and wondered when such a book would come out in Oriya. I used to sigh unconsciously.[2] x x At that time, every month, many books used to be published in Bengali. I used

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1. Ātmajiban Carita, F.G.I, p.108.
2. Ibid, p.41.

> to purchase those books from my own account; I used to borrow a few from the library of Shri Dāmodar Prasād Dās of village Sunhaṭ of Balasore also.[1]

He was the first to write short stories in Oriya. That he could establish short story as a new genre was, in many ways, due to his inspiration from Bengali. He himself admits it in one of his letters:

> I found that the Bengali monthlies were popular because of short stories. That was why I tried my hands at short stories and hoped that others would also try to write stories after me.[2]

During his time, he found that the Oriyas had more liking for Bengali journals and he felt a pang in his heart.[3] He was of the opinion that the advent of novel in Bengali literature had popularised these journals and he admitted that the drama was a powerful medium in Bengali.[4] He also

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.41.
2. See Surendra Mohanṭi, 'Fakirmohananka Patrābalī', Fakirmohan Samīkṣā, Cuttack (1972) letter No.4, p.227.
3. Utkaḷa Bhāṣār Bhuta Bhabiṣyat, F.G.II, p.675.
4. Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.742.

mentioned some famous Bengali writers in one of his essays:

> The progress of Bengali literature is confined to the last fifty years. Although Īswaracandra Vidyāsāgar is mainly responsible for the development of Bengali literature, his books are confined to library and schools alone. The novels of Baṅkimcandra, the dramas of Dīnabandhu and the poems of world famous Rabīndranāth are mainly responsible for the good name and popularity of Bengali literature.[1]

He composed an epic on the life of Buddha on the basis of a few writings in English and Bengali magazines, a fact he admits in his introduction .[2] It is believed that his epic was inspired by the Kābya 'Amitābh' written by Sri Nabīncandra Sen based on Edwin Arnold's Book Light of Asia.[3] In his autobiography, he refers to the book Durgesnandini[4] by Baṅkimcandra which obviously prompted him to write a historical novel in Oriya. His book Chāndogya Upaniṣ-ad was based on the book Upaniṣader Upades by

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1. Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.742.
2. Introduction. Buddhābatāra Kābya, F.G.I, p.1.
3. See Nilakantha Das, Introduction, F.G.I, p.6.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.65.

Sri Kokileswar Bhattāc-ārya. The Original Bengali book was in prose, but Fakirmohan gave it a poetic form in his translation.[1]

His love and appreciation of Bengali literature prompted him to write a critical review of Michael's epic Meghnād Badh in Oriya.[2] The essay shows his keen insight and appreciation of all that is good and modern in Michael. Fakirmohan's judgement of the different characters and the style of the epic shows that he was well acquainted with the original book. He concludes his essay telling us that Michael succeeds in creating a sense of pleasure and enjoyment in the minds of his readers. He also attempted a criticism of the Bengali translation of Meghdūta by Shri Akhilcandra Pālit.[3] In this critical essay, he gives a comparative study of the version of Akhilcandra and Shri Rādhānāth Roy's translation of Meghdūta.

Synthesis

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan were products of new learning and were part of the intellectual movements that

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1. See Birajmohan Senapati, 'Fakirmohanaṅka Kathā', In Fakirmohan Parikramā, (ed) J.B. Mohanti, Belasore, (1955) p.14.
2. Kabi Michael Madhusūdan Datta Ebaṁ Meghnād Badh Kābya, F.G.II, p.706.
3. Meghadūtara Baṅgānubāda, F.G.II, p.720.

ushered in during the first part of the 20th century. They reacted constructively against tradition and broke new paths for their followers. They did not completely break away from classical heritage and in their writings a synthesis between tradition and modernism, between old and new values are found.

The contemporary period in Indian literature is marked by this dualism, the continuity of an old tradition and the rise of modernity. The pioneers in this field like Rājā Rām Mohan, Īswar Candra, Baṅkimcandra and Rabīndranāth were all confronted with this dualism. Rājā Rām Mohan had the mingled feelings of delight and gratitude for the arts and science of modern era and at the same time was a classical scholar. Madhusūdan wrote and dreamt in English, but wrote on an episode borrowed from the Rāmāyaṇa. Bidyāsāgar adopted Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors as well as Kalidāsa's Śakuntalā. Baṅkimcandra wrote Kṛṣṇacarita and was yet much influenced by modern literature. Rabīndranāth has been classed a European poet of the Bengali language, an exaggeration that has a grain of truth in it and was yet a moderniser of many ancient Indian themes and images.

Assamese and Oriya literatures are no exception to this rule and Laksminath and Fakirmohan fit into this general double perspective wonderfully. Indeed in all their writings, we can observe an unfailing influence of classical learning,

that of Sanskrit and ancient epics and the Purāṇas. Throughout their work in poems, dramas, fiction, short stories and literary essays, we have evidence of their vast Sanskrit knowledge and their writings are interspersed with Sanskrit quotations every now and then. A brief glance of their lives will throw light on the background of their classical learning.

Laksminath was a Brah-min and was born in a family of religious orthodoxy in Assam. Right from childhood, his mind was dipped in Sanskrit and ancient Assamese texts. His interest in Sanskrit was nurtured by the careful training he had from his father during his boyhood.[1] His father, a Sanskrit scholar, was well read in different Sanskrit books.[2] He even composed Sanskrit verses and translated Sanskrit compositions.[3]

Because of his love for Sanskrit, his father himself taught this language to his sons. During childhood, Laksminath led a very disciplined life at home. He gives in his autobiography a detailed description of his early life wherein he, alongwith other children of his family, was made to spend much of his time in prayer and worship. He mentions that he and

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1. Amār Jīban Smrti, trans. Arati Thakur, Sahitya Akademi, (1975), p.10.
2. Dīnanāth Bejbaruwā, B.G.I, p.138.
3. Ibid, p.138.

his brothers had to spend a lot of time in worship and other rituals associated with it and therefore, had very little time to devote to studies.[1] His daily routine started with gathering flowers for the deities in the morning and ended with a night bath at 10 O'clock and final prayers.[2] Throughout the day in the morning, afternoon and evening there were several sessions of recitation of scriptures or listening to religious texts from his father.[3] This rigorous routine during his childhood naturally had its lasting impression on Laksminath and inspite of his Western learning he remained a traditional in spirit. As a child, we find him enacting plays from Hindu mythology alongwith his brothers[4] and participating in different religious festivals. While recapitulating his childhood at Barpeta, Laksminath not only remembers the sweet dish of milk and rice that he had in the monastery but also the temples and the places of Kirtan.[5] He remembers how he listened to the different episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata from one of his

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1. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.40-41.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p.11.
5. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, pp.2-3.

cousins at Tejpur.[1] His house was constantly visited by the Vaisnav preachers who were entertained by his father.[2] When he came to Sibsagar, he saw the historical temples and was much fascinated by the religious surrounding.[3] There are a few examples from his early life which show the influence of ancient classical literature as well as religion on his life.

Fakirmohan's childhood description, however, does not tally with that of Laksminath so far as the strict religious surrounding is concerned. None-the less, the influence of his grand mother, who was a religious and god-fearing lady[4], must have shaped his young mind to some extent. In his autobiography, he mentions that he had both a sense of awe as well as respect for the Gods and Goddesses when he was a child and he used to perform different religious rituals by imitating his elders.[5] He did not get enough chance to learn Sanskrit during his childhood. All his knowledge of Sanskrit texts, literary as well as philosphical, was a result of his own strenuous efforts. He refers to this in

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1. Refer Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.3.
2. Ibid, p.10.
3. Ibid, p.18.
4. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.139.
5. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.63.

his autobiography in the following passage:

> In the village of Barabati, there was a Telugu Jamidar. His name was Oṅkāilu Śibaprasad Bhuyā. His only son Raghunāth was my classmate. Raghunāth used to study Amarkoṣ and Mukhabodh grammer by appointing a pundit at his house. I also started learning Sanskrit alongwith him. During this period, I used to study with eagerness and pleasure from morning till evening.[1]
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> x x x
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> After Bidyāsāgar's four volumes of Byākaraṇ Kaumudī and three parts of Ṛjupāth were published, it helped me much in my Sanskrit learning, I concentrated for five to six years and read such Kābyas and dramas as Raghubaṁśa, Kumārsaṁ-bhaba, Meghadūta, Haṁsadūta, Padāṅkadūta, Śakuntalā, Mṛcchakaṭika, Mudrārākṣasa, Uttararāmacarita, and Mālabikāgnimitra. Ultimately, because of lack of good teacher, I gave up reading Kābyas and started reading Purāṇas. As I did not have a good teacher I

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.63.

used to read Sanskrit Kābyas with the help of foot notes. If I did not understand somewhere I used to mark those places. Afterwards when I met some scholar, I would ask him about the difficulties.[1]

The above account shows his love for Sanskrit literature and tells us of the difficulties he experienced in learning it without proper guidance. He kept up this habit of reading Sanskrit throughout his life and refers to this many a times in his autobiography. His sanskrit learning was not confined to literary works only. He tells us that he even read books of medicine by Caraka, Susruta and Bagbhatta.[2] His learning of Sanskrit made him a close associate of Sir John Beams who himself was very much interested in Sanskrit literature. Fakirmohan refers to his Sanskrit discussions of grammar and literature with Sir John Beams.[3] Apart from Sanskrit literature, Fakirmohan was well versed in the traditional literature of Orissa and was an appreciator of medieval Oriya poets.[4]

Laksminath's knowledge of Sanskrit Literature was

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.20.
2. Ibid, p.112
3. Ibid, p.27
4. Sabhāpati Abhibhāsana, F.G.II, p.723. Fakirmohan admits that at times he tried to write poems along the line of medieval Oriya poets.

both deep and varied. In his poems, dramas, satirical writings and literary essays, we have various evidences of his vast Sanskrit learning. He quotes profusely from Sanskrit texts. But the marks of his Sanskrit learning appear in the boldest relief in his essay on Indian Philosophy and the life sketches of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Śrī Mādhabadeva. The serious and critical works which speak volumes of his classical learning are: Śrī-Śrī-Śaṅkaradeva, Mahāpuruṣ Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhabadeva, Tatvakathā, Śrīkṛṣṇakathā, Caitan-yadeva and History of Vaisnavism. These are all mainly philosophical works with numerous quotations from the Gītā, the Upaniṣad and other philosphical texts. Simultaneously, we find him interested in the Sanskrit literary texts also. Interestingly, he quotes Kalidās's observations on the utility of hunting.[1] Even in his essay on Īswara Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he quotes from the Sanskrit Gītagovinda of Jayadeva.[2] The extensive use of quotations from the Indian Philosophical texts and the lucidity with which he explains the doctrine, combine to prove that Laksminath's command of Sanskrit was thorough. It was Laksminath who for the first time introduced intricate

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1. Mor Mṛgayā, B.G.I, p.99.
2. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kathā, B.G.I, p.477.

concepts of Indian Philosophy to modern Assamese prose.

The strong foundation of classical learning of Laksminath is indicated from the two lectures he delivered in 1934 in the Baroda Darbar in the presence of the Maharaja along with many other distinguished people. Even in his ripe old days, he did not lose interest in religion and on 10th January, 1934 he accepted invitation by the Gujrat Division of All India Oratorial Association to deliver a lecture on the Cowherd of Brindavan at Allahabad.[1] He delivered an extempore lecture on the Vaisnava faith in February, 1937, when Sambalpur celebrated Ramkṛṣna Centenary and invited learned speakers to speak on different religions of the world.[2] The lecture was given in Bengali and lasted nearly one hour. It is apparent that any time he was asked to deliver a lecture before a distinguished gathering, the subject chosen by him was often religion and not pure literature.

Like Laksminath, Fakirmohan also gives ample evidence of his classical learning. He translated both

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1. See Maheswar Neog (ed), The Religion of love and Devotion, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), Introduction Foot note, p. xvii.

2. Ibid, p.xvii.

the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, no simple task in any way. His translations are fulsome and faithful to the original texts. He would not deviate from the main framework as the earlier Oriya poets both ancient and medieval, had done. He wrote these two epics after the death of his eldest son to give solace to both his wife and to himself.[1] A fact worth mentioning here is that his mental peace and equilibrium was restored by writing these two books. He translated the Upanisad also. In his introduction to the book of Upanisad he declared that the Rigveda was the best religious text of the world and felt unhappy that such books were no more read and no longer respected by the Brahamins. His essay Śūdra O Bedādhikāra not only speaks of his classical learning but also shows his broader vision regarding religion. In this essay, he extensively quotes from the Gītā and the Vedas. His essay on Yoga is highly philosophical and is based strictly on Sanskrit sources.

A thread of Sanskritic learning runs through all his writings. In his novels, he makes beautiful parodies of original Sanskrit hymns by Kalidāsa.[2] His novels bear extensive quotations from Cānakya[3], Śaṅkarācārya,[4], Bhababhūti[5]

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.166.
2. Chamāṇa Āthaguṇtha, F.G.II, p.93.
3. Ibid, p.12
4. Ibid, p.60
5. Ibid, p.129.

Jayadev[1] and Carak[2]. His writings are interspersed with quotations from Kumār Sambhava[3], Sakuntalam[4], Raghubaṁśa[5], and Malabikāgnimitra[6], the Gītā[7], the Vedas[8], the Bhāgavata[9], and the Mahābhārata.[10] Ocassionally the titles of different chapters in his novels are given in Sanskrit.[11] In one of his novels there is a beautiful description as well as discussion about Sanskrit scripture.[12] It was his love of Sanskrit which prompted him to praise Mrtyunjay Kabyatirtha for his translation of Sanskrit texts into Oriya.[13]

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1. Lachamā, F.G.II, p.291.
2. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.448.
3. Māmũ, F.G.II, p.124.
4. Ibid, p.137.
5. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.15.
6. Māmũ, F.G.II, p.231.
7. Prāyaścitta, F.G.II, p.449.
8. Śūdra O Bedādhikāra, F.G.II, p.739.
9. Ibid, p.734.
10. Ibid, p.735.
11. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, Chapters II & III, F.G.II, pp.7,9.
12. Māmũ, F.G.II, pp.173-181.
13. Utkala Bhramaṇa, F.G.I, p.201.

He was at pains to see that the study of Sanskrit has sunk into oblivion and wrote:

> Previously Parsi was a favoured language. The language used in the court was Parsi. The fate of India has already been decided by the Almighty. Yesterday the language was Parsi, today it is English. What will come next, God only knows. But this is certain that the fate of sanskrit is sealed for ever.[1]

This love of sanskrit was perhaps the impetus which prompted him to write an epic even in modern times. His 'Bauddhāvatāra Kāvya' covers the life and noble mission of the Buddha in an epical fashion. The synthesis between his modernity and traditionality comes to the forefront triumphantly in his poem 'Utkala Bhramaṇa'. This narrative poem is an unorthodox and human survey of the contemporary personalities of Orissa and is highly innovative and modern in form as well as content. But Fakirmohan begins it in traditional manner singing the glory of Goddes Sāralā and seeking her blessings. This was no doubt a legacy that he inherited from classical Sanskrit literature.

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1. Chamāṇa Āṭhaguṇṭha, F.G.II, p.18.

CHAPTER III

NEW VOICES IN POETRY

As pioneers of the modern age in literature, Laksminath and Fakirmohan have applied their extensive talent to various literary forms. These include short stories, novels and essays. Their fame as poets has, to some extent, been over shadowed by their prose writings. However, it is pertinent to note that the title bestowed on Fakirmohan by his people is 'Byāsakabi' which is, obviously, in recognitions of his greatness as a poet. Likewise, a fact worth emphasising is that one of the poems of Laksminath has been accepted as the 'National Song' of Assam. It is somewhat ironical that the two writers honoured by their states for their poems, are rated, by literary critics, higher as story writers than as poets.

It is also worth mentioning that the earliest works of both these writers were pieces of poetry and not prose. Laksminath in his autobiography mentions about his early attempt at versification.[1] We find in these pages a beautiful romantic description of young Laksminath spending many a

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1. Mor Jīwan Sõwaran, B.G.I, p.52.

sleepless nights composing poems in Bengali, Assamese and English. Fakirmohan also, in his autobiography, writes about composing poems to be sung for the Kṛṣṇalīlā of his village.[1] In course of time, they matured into competent prose writers, yet their love of poetry persisted and they produced some fine lyrics in the true modern fashion.

Laksminath did not give much thought to poetry, as he, somehow, was under the impression that poetry was not his only forte. In his foreword to'Kadam-kali', a collection of verse, he remarked rather apologetically that he composed poems for his personal pleasure and that he was indifferent to whether or not they achieved the form and dignity of genuine poetry. Laksminath had so much underestimated his poetic capability that he went to the extent of admitting that he did not know how to compose poems, though he could appreciate them.[2] This is an utterance of sheer modesty but it undoubledly speaks of his conviction about himself. In one of his essays, he says that a poet is born and never made.[3] This quotation seems aptly befitting him. He was a born poet and inspite of his wilful suppression of poetic creativity, he succeeded in producing some remarkably good poems.

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.43.
2. Sāhityar Sādhāran Laksan, Bejbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1968), p.30.
3. Ibid, p.31.

So far as Fakirmohan is concerned, he wrote poems either in painful or lonesome moments of his life. In his autobiography, he says that out of his three collections of verses, two were written after the death of his wife and the last one was composed when he retired from service after his fifty seventh year.[1] These poems were a balm for his sick soul. Fakirmohan of course gives a different and touching reason for his poetic output. He says that he got the inspiration to write primarily from his dear wife. He writes:

> That I have learnt to write poetry is because of my wife. She liked listening to my poems. I used to write to make her happy. After her death, I wrote poetry to lessen my mental anxiety. Most of my poems are written during painful moments or during periods of mental tension.[2]

Before proceeding to a survey of the poems by Laksminath and Fakirmohan it is important to remember the fact that the period in which they wrote was a period of romantic revival in both Assam and Orissa. Candra Kumār

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, p.195.
2. Ibid, p.180.

Agarwālā and Hemcandra Goswāmī, contemporaries of Laksminath were exponents of the romantic movement in Assamese literature. Similarly, Madhusūdan Rao and Rādhñāth Ray, contemporaries of Fakirmohan, were essentially poets and had ushered in romantic trends in the field of Oriya poetry. It was but natural for both Laksminath and Fakirmohan to come under this spell of the romantic movement.

So far as literary theory is concerned, both these writers, many a times, express their views through either their poems or their critical writings. They have similar views on the general aim of poetry which, they think, should be subjective and encompass diversity of topics and incidents. In this respect, they are truly modern and their thought and style are against medievalism which is more or less a copy of the classical literary tradition.

For a comparative study we can take two poems entitled 'Kavitā' and 'Kabi' by Laksminath and Fakirmohan respectively. Their concepts of poetry are clearly outlined in these two poems. Laksminath is of the opinion that poetic statement should not be loud and bare. Poetic meaning should be such that it could only be compared in beauty to the half-articulated utterance of a baby, and the charm and beauty of a poem should be as delicate and desirable as the looks of an attractive woman. In addition to this, a poem should deal

with both tears and laughter. A poem, like a rose petal, spreads fragrance all around. It is like soft moon beam or ripples on a river-bed and is as beautiful as the pollen of a virgin flower. The two main aspects of a good poem are beauty and imagination. The corresponds wholly to the views held by the 19th Century English romantics.

Fakirmohan too echoes similar feelings in his poem 'Kabi' wherein he describes the poet as an emperor in the Kingdom of imagination. To him a poet seems to be highly romantic in temperament. He is like a painter who can create ripples of delight and beauty by the mere touch of his pen. The poet can create a galaxy of living personalities through his imagination. According to Fakirmohan, the poet is more of a magician and is capable of tremendous creativity. In all these respects, Fakirmohan is in complete agreement with Laksminath. In his definition of poetry he (Fakirmohan) goes a step forward. He is of the opinion that poetry should be didactic and it should teach a moral to the audience.[1]

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1. It is pertinent to note in this connection, that Wordsworth, the Precursor of romantic movement in English literature emphasised upon this didactic element of his nature poetry and admitted that his poems always carried a purpose with them. He wrote,"Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived, but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings that my description of such objects as strongly execute those feelings, will be found to carry alongwith them a purpose. x x x

(Cont. next page)

Not only that, the poet, he observes, can create an atmosphere of peace and solace in a troubled mind. Laksminath too, makes a similar observation:

> Poetry is the best tonic for all ills
> to which human flesh is heir,
> It refreshes the body and ennobles the
> mind, banishing all troubles and care.[1]

Apart from this, Laksminath on many ocassions defines poetry or speaks of the characteristics of poetry. He, like a true modern thinker, is conscious of the vast dimensions of poetry. so if at one place he writes:

> "Who says poetry is poet's property and of the young? Well, I am pestered with poetry of innumerable dimensions as well as with mosquitoes of similar cast. I wrote three pieces of poems this morning. (1) To my beloved, (2) to a mosquite, (3) Ode on the dusts."[2]

(Foot notes from previous page contd.)

If this opinion be erronous, I can have little right to the name of a poet." See William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works (Ed.) Thomost Hutchinson, Oxford University Press(1969) p.735.

1. The Potion Poetic, Krpābar Baruwār Sūmarani, B.G.II p.1684.
2. Patralekhā, (ed)Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha(1968) p.7.

at another place he declares:

> There are certain things such as flowers, bowers, the fragrant southern breeze, the doves, the lotus, the lilies and the moon, that are poetic in their own right. But if you are a poet, x x x take up any subject however unpoetic and see if you can create a poem. Those who can create sublimity in simple thought are real poets.[1]

Apparently, Laksminath thought that the world of poetry could embrace all that we see around us. No wonder he declared that not only would he write sonnets on young and old maidens but also epitaphs on carts, horses, monkey and dogs.[2] Obviously, he wanted to break away from the tradition of classical allusions and metaphors and tried to carry out new experiments in both the subject-matter and the diction of poetry. As a result he wrote poems on such commonplace things as the hubble-bubble and the postman. For him, a flute and a lock of grey hair, the stars and a

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1. 'Kavitā' Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.1254.
2. 'Fit Poetic', Krpābar Baruwār Sāmarani, B.G.II, p. 1585.

grain of dust, were of equal importance. Not that his poems on these insignificant themes are always specimens of literary excellance. They, nontheless, bear witness to the modern attitude he brought to bear on the subject matter of poetry.

A similar revolt against accepted rules of poetry is demonstrated in the work of Fakirmohan. In his introduction to 'Abasara Bāsare', a collection of poems, he states that for writing poetry he has never searched hard for topics; whatever he sees around him is a fit subject for poetry. According to him, a poem can be psychological. He hopes to delight even small children through his poems. Fakirmohan says that his poems try to satisfy both the old and the young. His views on the aim and characteristic of poetry are clearly set out in one of his poems,[1] wherein he says that the horizon of the poet ranges from the blue sky to lily flowers, from warfare to politics, from devotion to God to sighs of lovelorn young persons. The poet must describe not only the pleasant spring but also the excessive heat of summer.

In short, he, like Laksminath, was free from inhibitions in choosing the themes of his poems. No topic

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1. 'Kabira Sampatti' Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.439.

was unpoetical to him, be it a co-operative society, a prostitute, a poor farmer of a withered tree. Laksminath's concept of poetry is, of course, broader than that of Fakirmohan. He conceives drama as a part of Kābya[1] and seems to follow the Sanskrit classification of Kābya. To him, rhyming is not the only characteristic of poetry.[2] Fakirmohan too remarks that the reader should not search for excellance of metre and rhyming in his poems because he writes in the simplest possible language.[3] He is emphatic that a poem might be judged by its sincerity of expression and not by its technical fineness. Here, they are in direct contrast to the medieval poetic tradition which puts emphasis on intricate technique, far-fetched similes, elaborate figures of speech and preciosity of diction.

Laksminath wrote quite a small number of poems. His dramas, of course, are full of songs and small lyrics. He was at heart, a poet, and utilised the medium of drama for expressing emotional experiences. This might be due to to the direct influence of Shakespeare whose plays Laksminath

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1. Introduction, Belimār, B.G.II, p.1174.
2. Ibid
3. 'Mo Gītara Bhanitā', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.457.

read and appreciated. He used smaller poems, to good effect in his satirical and humorous writings.[1] Fakirmohan too wrote a small number of satirical poems.[2] Both of them, being committed social writers, could not help being critical even in their poetry. If Laksminath wrote songs for his dramas, Fakirmohan used verses in his novels.[3] In one of his novels, Prāyścitta, the hero receives a letter supposedly written by the heroine and it is in form of a poem. Laksminath even clothed his personal letters with the garb of poetry.[4]

Laksminath, the poet, was very much influenced by western poetry. The poems of Shelley, Keats and Byron, he tells in his autobiography, kindled his adolescent mind. There are striking resemblances between his poems and some of the well-known English poems.[5] He drew his inspiration primarily from English literature but gave a new breadth and

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1. 'Bichheda' and 'Biraha' Barbaruwār Bhāvar Burburani, B.G.II, pp.1455, 145.

2. Yama Rajāṅka Darabār, Mu Hōṭa Bāhuḍa.

3. See Māmū (F.G.II, p.249) and Prāyaścitta (F.G.II, p.402). In both the cases, two songs have been included in the novels. In his short story 'Raṇḍipua Ananta' Debakī sings a lullaby to amuse her son.

4. Patralekhā, (ed) Maheswar Neog, Assam Sahitya Sabha, (1968) Letter Nos. 164, 165.

5. See Bhaben Barua, Laksminath Bezbaroa's contribution To Assamese Poetry in Laksminath Bezbaroa. The Sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty University (1972) pp.113-126.

dimension to it by his deft craftmanship. To quote a few instances, his poem 'Priyatamār Saundarya' is modelled on a poem of George Darley, 'The Loveliness of Love' and Shelley's 'Love's philosophy' has been turned into a humorous or mock-romantic poem named 'Cumā'. Fakirmohan's poetry was not as deeply influenced. Nevertheless, in technique, form, and ideas, he seems to incline towards English romantic poetry. He has written beautiful sonnets, epigrams and elegies which were a contribution of Western learning to Indian literature. His contemporaries, Radhanath and Madhusudan, two highly educated poets, introduced new techniques and forms, and Fakirmohan might have imbibed western influence through them. It is, however, worth mentioning here that Radhanath, inspite of his Western learning, could not go beyond mythological and historical themes and mostly wrote narrative verses. Fakirmohan on the contrary, had a truly modern mind. He experimented with variety of forms and themes.

One striking similarity between Laksminath and Fakirmohan is with regard to their role as pioneers of modern lyric. Lyric poetry in the original meaning of the term, is poetry composed to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre or harp. It is a form of poetry in which, in contrast to an epic or a drama, the poet is principally occupied with

himself. The most important factor about a true lyric is that it is simple in form and subjective in theme. As for other requirements, it embodies a noble feeling and impresses us by its sincerity of utterance. A pure lyric usually deals with the expression of a single mood or feeling. It gains much in emotional power by brevity and condensation.[1]

Laksminath and Fakirmohan, by all standards, are superb lyricists. Their poems display a exquisite sense of rhythm, and some of them are written to be sung. A few of their poems begin with an indication of the ragas and raginis appropriate for their performance.

In this connection, we may do well to remember that both Assam and Orissa have a distinctive tradition of music. It has not only influenced their dance, theatre and literary traditions but has given them an identity of their own. Laksminath's keen sense of appreciation of ancient Assamese poetry for its rhythm, metre as well as intrinsic music is apparent from his essay on Śrī Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva.[2] Therein, Laksminath quotes a number of examples from Vaisnav

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1. See W.H. Hudson 'The Study of Poetry', An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London (1960) p.96.

2. Dui Mahāpurusar Chānda Āru Surabodh, B.G.II, p.1766.

poetry to show how they have excelled in creating fine music through songs. Laksminath himself was a good singer. He composed humorous verses in the form of popular songs and, at times, followed the tradition of folk music.[1] As a young child, he had ample opportunity of listening to a number of folk as well as Vaisnav songs. Later, he came to suffessfully utilise this musical tradition. The different classical ragas mentioned by him, e.g. Behāg, Aśāvarī, Jhinjhoti, Bageśrī and Bhairavī, prove his love for traditional Indian music. No wonder, one of his compositions came to be accepted as the Assamese anthem.

The poems of Fakirmohan also occasionally indicate the ragas and raginis as do the poems of Laksminath.[2] He certainly had benefitted from the rich poetic-musical tradition of Orissa. He started his poetic career with the 'Cautiśās'[3] which were sung by the Kṛṣṇalīlā troupes of his village. In his case, music and poetry went hand in hand. If Laksminath appreciated the Vaisnav songs for their lyrical quality,

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1. 'Ākhalal, Khorā Kabitā and 'Kamārar Tini Bhāi Kṛpābar' Baruwār Sāmarani, B.G.II, pp.1685,1686.

2. Some of the 'rāgas' mentioned by Fakirmohan in his book 'Abasara Bāsare' are Cakrakeḷi, Bhupāl, Baṅgalāśrī, Rasakūlyā, Maṅgala, Nalinīgaudā, Rāmakerī, Kalahaṁsa Kedāra, Āśābarī and Maṅgalagujjari.

3. Atmajībana Carita, F.G.I, p.43.

Fakirmohan spoke high of the musicality of Gopalkrsna the medieval Oriya poet, who had composed most of his poems on the love theme of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[1] Fakirmohan compares him with Caṇḍidās and Bidyāpati of Bengal. He also admits that he, at times, has followed the foot steps of Dīnakṛṣṇa and Jagannāth, the medieval Oriya poets, known for their excellent musical quality.[2]

It may be concluded that neither Laksminath nor Fakirmohan was a musician. They did not compose songs with a view to evolving a certain style of musical composition. They composed poems primarily to express certain ideas and thoughts. In the midst of the emerging literary renaissance, they tried to break away from the ancient tradition of narrative poetry. They wrote short lyrics in true modern fashion but kept their links with the past by giving them a breath of music.

Subjectivity is another important factor common to both these poets.[3] The ancient poetic tradition did not

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1. 'Kabi Gopālakṛṣṇa Pattanāyak', F.G.II, p.701.
2. Sabhāpati Abhibhāṣaṇa, F.G.II, p.723.
3. "In a broadway, poetry may be divided into two classes. There is the poetry in which the poet goes down into himself and finds his inspiration and his subjects in his own experiences, thoughts and feelings. There is the poetry in which the poet goes out of himself, mingles with the action and passion of the world and deals with what he discovers these with little reference to his own individuality. The former class we may call

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permit the poet to give expression to personal pleasure or pain. The epics as well as narrative verses dealt mainly with gods and goddesses and the atmosphere was mostly religious. There is hardly an instance in the ancient or medieval poetry where a poet waxes eloquent about his personal sorrow or personal ecstasy. Subjectivity is essentially a modern phenomenon.

Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan are subjective writers and are extremely personal in their expression. Most of Laksminath's love poems have a tone of intimate personal relationship and often are the results of the poet's genuine romantic feelings. Laksminath was, in a sense, a dreamer. This aspect of his work is well illustraded in his autobiography. He talks of his being sleepless in moonlit nights and being won over by the exquisite splendour of a rose blossom.[1] Similarly, Fakirmohan, though comparatively restrained in the exercise of pure romantic fancy, confesses

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(Foot Notes from previous page contd.)

personal or subjective poetry of self delineation or self expression. The latter we may call impersonal or objective poetry". W.H.Hudson, 'Study of Poetry', An Introduction to the Study of Literature, London, (1960) p.96.

1. Mor J̄iwan S̃owaran, B.G.II, p.51.

the personal tone and subjectivity of his poems. He writes:

> In this book, most of the poems were written during the later part of my life. One day a tuberose attracted my attention. Some other day it was a rose blossom. I started writing about them. For months together, I was to notice that exactly at 9.00 O'Clock in the morning, a pair of yellow birds would come and play in the garden. I wrote a poem on that also. I saw two doves flying side by side in the sky and I composed a poem on them. In the evening, I was sitting on the stone embankment of river Kathjodi. The feelings, then in my mind, were written down in the form of a poem. I collected these poems and published them in a book form during my retirement.[1]

Another factor common to both these authors is their use of first person singular in a good number of their poems. To quote but two instances, one each from both, we can take

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1. Ātmajīban Carita, F.G.I, pp.94,95.

the poems, 'Sakhīr Prati' of Laksminath and 'Puṇiki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsyabadana' by Fakirmohan. The first poem is an address to the poet's sweetheart where the poet invites his darling to leave this maddening crowd and live with him in an ideal place of picturesque beauty. The poet wishes to run on the sand bank of the river to witness colourful flowers, desires to drink honey from oleanders, wants to cover his body with fragrant pollen grain and aspires to sing melodious songs with the honey-bee. He wants his mistress to accompany him in all these romantic juvenile adventures. The poem is extremely subjective in tone and expresses the poet's intense emotions as well as his personal dreams and aspirations.

Fakirmohan's poem too is written in the first person singular where the poet, in a tragic fashion, mourns the death of his wife. He describes how, anytime he was away from her, her beautiful picture was being reflected in his mind's mirror, how he addressed her with different loving names, how they surrendered to each other like a pair of doves and how with her departure moonlight has gone out of his life and he is engulfed with total darkness on all sides. This lyrical poem, gives vent to the poet's personal devotion and love for his wife. Parading one's personal pleasure or misery was near taboo in ancient literary tradition.

Fakirmohan is perhaps a little more personal than Laksminath is this regard. Be it the death of his son[1], the passing away of his grand-mother[2], his love for his wife[3], his reverence for the poets of Orissa[4] or the nostalgia for his village[5], every thing personal is a fit subject for poetic exercise for him. Compared to Fakirmohan, Laksminath's personality is a little subdued. As Fakirmohan expresses all his diverse feelings as well as his personal ambition, ideas and aspirations in his poetry, Laksminath does not do so. Nonetheless, whatever poems he writes, his composition embodies what is typically human and thus every reader finds in it the expression of experiences and feelings in which he himself is an active participant. The feelings expressed in Laksminath's poem are very much those of ours, be it in regard to the loveliness of the beloved, the beauties of spring or the love for one's motherland. There are poems that speak of his love for his wife[6] or sorrow for his departed mother.[7]

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1. 'Mṛta Śiśuputra Manamohan', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.335.
2. 'Pitāmahī', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.34.
3. 'Abhāba', Ibid, p.340.
4. 'Rādhānāth Ray Bāhādur', Pariśiṣṭa Kabitābalī, F.G.I, p.633.
5. 'Mo Grama Mallikāśapura', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.360.
6. 'Priyatamā', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.951.
7. 'Mātṛśrādha', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.965.

We have already observed that both Laksminath and Fakirmohan present themselves as romanticists in their poems. To develop the point in detail, romanticism, as a movement in literature, is characterised by protest against bondage of rules, return to nature, interest in old sagas and medieval romances, sympathy for the toilers of the world and emphasis upon individual genius.[1] In addition to this, the romantic movement is described as liberalism in literature and is usually understood as the expression of life as seen by imagination rather than by prosaic common sense. It also means that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and man, and should be free to follow the ways of fancy and imagination. If we follow the ideas of Wordsworth, as expressed in the introduction of his 'Lyrical Ballads', the aim of romantic poetry is to give the charm of novelty to things of everday by awakening the mind's attention from lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world.[2]

Considering all these points, both Laksminath and Fakirmohan appear as supreme romanticists. Both of them like

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1. See William J. Long, English Literature, U.S.A. (1937) p.305.
2. See william Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works, (ed) Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press (1969).

the English romantic poets expressed a strong protest against the bondage of rules and established literary norms. Like the English romantic poets, they brought back natural wealth, beauty, and plenitude to the realm of literature. The age in which both these poets lived was essentially an age of romantic poetry. This literary epoch did not begin as a crusade against ancient tradition but was a spontaneous response to the changing social scene as well as social consciousness. The poems of this age for the first time with their delight in colour, physical beauty, love and sensuousness opened up new paths to be successfully followed by others. The influence of English education and new social awakening had stirred all India to the depth during this period and every movement in literature as also in politics was characterised by strong emotion.

Laksminath's romanticism was in some important ways an outcome of his study of English literature. He was a keen student and real appreciator of English poetry and he fully absorbed its influence. This influence contributed to the enrichment of his thought and expression. His whole idea about poetry, as expressed in his essay 'Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan' is romantic in spirit. In this essay, he emphasises that creativity should be the main aim of a poet and the poet should express truth through emotion. His stress on emotion

and imagination is to be noted here. His saying that poetic feeling is spontaneous and that ideas originate automatically in the poet's mind tallies with the Wordsworthian view that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of heart.[1] In Laksminath's poetry, we find the spontaneous outburst of feeling everywhere and his imagination embraces all that he saw and sensed around him. To an extent, he seems to escape from the material world in the true Keatsean fashion and wants to live in a world of ideal natural beauty.[2]

To Fakirmohan, aesthetic pleasure seems to be a very important factor which, according to him, the classics do not provide. In the introduction of one of his collections of poems, 'Abasara Bāsare', he writes that in times of stress and strain, both physical and mental, one does not feel like reading classics. At such moments, a light preasurable reading is desired. Fakirmohan hopes that his collection of verses would provide such a reading. In two of his poems entitled 'Kabi' and 'Citrakār', he mentions imagination as an essential requirement for a poet as well as a painter. This imaginative freedom compelled him to break and violate the

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1. See Sāhityar Sādharan Laksan Bejbaruwār, 'Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968), pp.29-32.

2. 'Sakhīr Prati', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.953.

classical norms and create poetry fresh both in form and content. The rigidity of pattern so long followed gave way to flexibility of expression.

Romantic poetry not only lays stress on spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings but also emphasises simple straight-forward language.[1] Both Laksminath and Fakirmohan have similar ideas on poetic language. They make ample use of colloquialisms and expressions from every day life. Both of them draw heavily on words and phrases that they themselves have heard people use. Their close familiarity with native tongue is evident in their natural and simple lines. In fact, any other kind of diction would have been thoroughly unsuitable for their poems because most of them deal with the simple day-to-day incidents and feelings.

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1. The aim and object of Wordsworth, the famous English Romantic poet was "to choose incidents throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men". He rejected the use of any specific poetic diction and wrote, "There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction as much pain has been taken to avoid as is ordinarily taken to produce it. This has been done for the reason already alleged to bring my language near to the language of men". William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth Poetical Works, (ed) Thomas Hutchinson, Oxford University Press (1969) pp. 734-736.

Laksminath's compositions, specially his ballads, could not have been perfect as they are, had he choosen the more ornate style. His exploration into folk poetry also stimulated him to choose simple meter and simple language. His preference for simple vocabulary is justified by him in the following words:

> "Every day we express all our feelings of the heart through the spoken language, be it anger affection or love. Then why should we take the help of a formal sophisticated language for literature? If literature aims at expressing various feelings of our mind, why should one take the help of an artificial language, discarding the ordinary spontaneous one.
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> x x x
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> If literature is to be enjoyed by the common man, it is to be built with the help of language really used by them".[1]

His ideas regarding language and diction are transparently clear from this statement. Almost identical views are expressed by Fakirmohan. In one of his poems he asks the

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1. Asamīyā Bhāṣā Āru Sāhitya, B.G.II, p.1867.

reader not to seek excellance of metre or rhyme, as with the blessings of the almighty, he has written in the simplest possible language.[1]

Poems of Fakirmohan and Laksminath can be grouped roughly under four heads: poems of love, poems of nature, patriotic poems and satirical poems. Fakirmohan shines best in some of his poems addressed to great personalities. This genre is peculiar to Fakirmohan. Laksminath is not attracted to it.

Love serves as the main theme with both the poets. Unlike the medieval poets who write about the love of princes and pricesses, gods and goddesses, the new writers, with a touch of modernism, are more earthy. Talking of love, they are suspicious of violent passions. They celebrate married love alone. There is, of course, a solitary exception. Fakirmohan[2], in one of his poems, professes love for a foreign maiden. Of course there is nothing sensuous or ugly about the feelings expressed therein. The poem strikes a pious note towards the end and wishes the girl happiness and prosperity. But for this exception, Fakirmohan's poetry is informed by tremendous love for his wife. In fact that is a major theme

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1. 'Mo gītara Bhanitā', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.457.
2. 'Bideśinī Bālikāra Chāyācitra', Dhūli, F.G.I, p.560.

with him. Both the poets seek freedom from oppressive restraints and dare not break loose from traditional morality. Laksminath writes:

> They say there are not on earth roses
> without thorns
> I say nothing but intently look on my wife's
> beautiful cheeks.[1]

Fakirmohan sings of the bliss of married life in a similar vein:

> At night, when the world was quiet
> and just we two
> sat on the terrace of our house
> or in the garden,
> And observed the moon and the stars
> Float slowly up above in the sky,
> Shedding heavenly light all around,
> I did feel, darling - didn't I - in
> those quiet moments, that,
> we too, were twin stars,
> Like those up in the sky.[2]

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1. Priyatamā, Trans Dillip Kumar Barua, 'Laksminath Bezbaroa, the poet and the Romantic ideal' in Laksminath Bezbaroa, The sāhityarathī of Assam (ed) Maheswar Neog, Gauhaty Univ.(1972)p.103.
2. Dedication, Puspamālā, Trans.Mayadhar Mansimha, Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi (1976).

For further study we may take a couple of more poems. The poem 'Priyatamār Saundarya' is, perhaps, one of the best lyrics of Laksminath and is simultaneously one of the finest sensuous love poems in Assamese literature. The beauty of the poem lies in the succession of images through which the loveliness of the beloved is suggested:

I have yet to see a necklace of pearls,
although I have heard of it very often;
I called my beloved and smiled at her,
She smiled back, and a necklace of pearls
was revealed.[1]

Apart from this the beloved is also compared with a full blown lotus and her lips seem to resemble the petals of a rose blossom. Fakirmohan is also equally rapturous about his wife and speaks about her loveliness as well as kindness in these following lines:

And the loveliness of the full moon
In the blue heavens,
Of the pearls of dew
On full-blown roses and lotuses,

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1. Priyatamār Saundarya, Trans Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbaroa, Sahitya Akademi (1967) p.61.

Pale into banality, against your tears
That flowed from your eyes,
while in communion with the divine.[1]

Both these poets compared their wives with different elements of nature. If Laksminath found identity between a pair of Crimson Corals and his wife's lips[2], Fakirmohan discovered roses turning pale in front of his life partner.[3] A remarkable feature of both these poets is that love as portrayed by them, is not merely a sensuous entity but also a vision of the soul. Laksminath is not concerned with merely the physical enhantment of beauty, but with a love that is eternal in spite of the natural withering of the externals. He says, "Give me the wine of love that inflames eternal fascination".[4] Fakirmohan, likewise, feels that his wife's presence even after her death has become all pervading and he writes, "I feel it is the beauteous peace of your face that is now spread over the whole firmament".[5]

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1. Dedication Puspamālā, Trans Mayadhar Mansinha, Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi (1976) p.51.
2. 'Priyatamā' Kadamkali, B.G. II, p.957.
3. Dedication, Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.223.
4. 'Prityamār Saundarya', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.958.
5. Dedication, Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.223.

Most of Laksminath's love poems are in a lighter vein, mixing ecstacy with frivolity. His is the poetry of fulfilment and joy. He either speaks of the beauty of his beloved or the pain of being away from her. He loves to enjoy the beauty of nature in the company of his beloved. Sometimes he yearns for a letter from her. Away from her, he finds the moonlit nights unbearable. At times, he begs for her kindness and compassion. Fakirmohan's major love-poems, written after the demise of his wife, are drenched with tears of tormented bereavement. The lines:

> Beautiful Krishna Kumari, the queen of my
> poor cottage,
> My eternal sweet-heart, dear as life,
> My constant companion, the apple of my eyes,
> See, how all your excellent virtues have
> intermingled with my
> very blood stream,
> with your departure.
> Haven't known a more virtuous woman in life,
> or a wife, more fully
> dedicated than yourself
> to her husband.[1]

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1. Dedication, Puspamālā, Trans.Dr.Mayadhar Mansimha Fakirmohan Senapati, Sahitya Akademi(1976) p.50.

are a clear reflection of his mental agony. Since the love-poems of Fakirmohan speak of his personal loss they are often philosophical and pessimistic in tone;on the contrary the poems of Laksminath are gay and jovial. The poem 'Hasi Hasi gala Mote Kandāi Kandāi,'Puṇi Ki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', 'Dayābatī Āji Cāligalā' of Fakirmohan are full of emotion, arising out of the depths of a deeply tortured soul. In Laksminath's poem there is occasional glimpse of agony caused by a temporary separation from his wife.[1] Away from his beloved, the poet feels dejected and finds the beauty of nature unbearable, but the reader anticipates a happy re-union and hence the sorrow and the pain expressed by the poet do not seem that sharp.

Laksminath's poems are completely free from morbid reflection. They are, however, marked by a personal analysis of the poet's moods. Some of them throb with intense personal feelings. 'Priyatamā' is a typical case in point. On comparison, we find Fakirmohan's love poems are more personal in experience and treatment. Laksminath is more romantic, gay and happy whereas Fakirmohan is more sorrowful, pining away at the permanent loss of his life-partner.

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1. 'Prabasuwār Cithi', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.959.

Nature, as usual, forms a common background for the poems of Laksminath and Fakirmohan.[1] In this respect, they inherited the rich literary tradition of Indian literature, which right from the time of the Vedas is replete with nature description. Nature has always been a source of delight and inspiration of poets and writers of all languages and of all regions. India did have a robust tradition of nature poetry in the ancient times. It was however, in the romantic period that nature assumed a broader dimension. It was no more just a static backdrop for drama or poetry. Another important aspect of the romantic period or the modern period is that single, individual poems were written on different aspects of nature. In assamese literature, the folk poetry has wonderful sketches of nature. The ancient poet Mādhava Kandalī shows his appreciation of nature significantly in his Rāmāyaṇ. Even Śaṅkaradeva, basically a Saint Poet, shows his love of nature in

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1. Return to nature is the Chief characteristic of romanticism. All the English romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats were attracted by the unroofed school of nature more than the discipline of the classics. Their treatment of nature is both accurate and interesting. There is hardly a sight or sound, from a violet to a mountain, from a bird note to the thunder of the cataract that has not been reflected in some beautiful way in their poetry.

flashes. This is apparent from the picturesque description of the celestial garden in his 'Harmohan'. In Orissa, almost all the ancient and medieval poets excel in nature painting. Upendrabhañja and Dīnakṛṣna Dāsa are pastmasters in describing the seasonal beauty of nature, though their descriptions are often in the line of Sanskrit Kābyas.

Laksminath in his essay 'Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan' advises the up-coming writers to write about the natural wealth of the hills, the valleys, the rivulets and the countryside[1] of Assam which speaks of his tremendous love for nature. His own treatment of nature, is the work of a man gifted with a passion for landscape. The ordinary fruits and flowers assume an unusual dimension through his romantic fancy. Even the smallest and most insignificant thing like a drop of water[2] on a lotus leaf or a grain of dust[3] has its place in his poetry. The last stanza of his poem 'Sakhīrprati' depicts his idea of nature in its fulness. He would love to be away from the so-called settled life and happily roam about amidst the colourful landscape of nature.

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1. Sāhityar Sādharan Lakṣan, Bɛɹbaruwār Prabandha Bāchani, (ed) Yatindranath Goswami, Assam Sahitya Sabha (1968) p.30.

2. 'Padumpātar Pāni', B.G.II, p.999.

3. 'Dhūli', Ibid, p.1002.

He expresses his dislike for urban civilisation and finds solace in nature.[1] The humdrum of the modern world makes him long for the soothing touch of nature. His love of nature has inspired him to write many short poems on the moon, the cuckoo, the stars and the different seasons.

Fakirmohan, too, has addressed most of his poems to different aspects of nature, the singing birds, the desert, the stars, the moon, the rose, a pair of doves, the sky and the river. The smallest bird or the tiniest spring touches the chord of his imagination. The poem about his village is an excellent example of his love of nature.[2] This poem is inspired by his nostalgia for the serene beauty of his native village. The poet, in his advanced years, recapitulates the memories of his childhood and remembers the fragrant evenings, the lilies in the pond, the fresh mango blossoms, the sound of conch-shells, the row of bats in the afternoon sky, the marigold flowers and the cool breeze. This poem is indicative of the poet's keen insight. He catches the tiniest sounds of nature with remarkable accuracy. He recreates an authentic atmosphere of pictureque Oriya village.

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1. 'Sakhīr Prati', B.G.II, p.953.
2. 'Mo grāma Mallikāsapura', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.366.

In their love poems, nature serves as useful background. In Laksminath 'Prabasuwār cithi', the nocturnal beauty of nature makes the poet morose and restless as he is away from his beloved. Similarly, Fakirmohan's poem 'Abhāba' speaks of a void created by his wife's departure and he remembers the moonlit nights he spent with her in the courtyard. This device of making nature serve as a back ground to the human drama examplifies the characteristic subjectivity of romantic art.[1]

In their nature poetry, both the poets usually apply the mode of personification, where nature seems to throb with life. In the poem about the evening[2] Laksminath appears at his best in describing dusk as a modest shy maiden. The stars glistering in semi-darkness are described as flowers in her hair and the moonlight as her glittering dress. The rows of

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1. Relating nature as a background to human drama is described as a modern phenomenon by Western critics. According to W.H.Hudson "Another, and more important, mark of the general change which has come over our attitude towards nature is to be found in the fact that where as the older poets habitually used nature merely as a detatched back-ground, modern poets lend to relate such back-ground to the human drama which is played out against it". (W.H.Hudson, 'on the treatment of Nature in Poetry', An Introduction to the study of Literature, London (1960) p.325.

2. 'Sandhyā', Padumkali, B.G.II, p.996.

glow-worms are like strands of golden chain around her neck and the soft coo-ing sound of the birds is like the sound of her anklet . Similar descriptions are found in Fakirmohan[1] in his poem where he describes the beauty of night. If evening seems to be a coy bride eager to be united with her lover by Laksminath, the dark night with its soothing breeze assumes a mother figure for Fakirmohan. The ever spreading darkness seems to be a part of her garment with which the affectionately covers her children, the human beings and puts them to sleep. Similarly a rose to Fakirmohan, is a queen and the bees are beggars asking for her fragrance. The thorns are her body-guards and when she trembles in the breeze the poet thinks as if she is dancing royally in her soft bed of green leaves.[2] Both the poets weave exquisite similes and metaphors on the medieval pattern. That is why Laksminath discovers stars in his beloved's eyes[3], layers of dark cloud in her hair[4] and finds her arms resembling the stalks of lotus.[5] To Fakirmohan his wife appears like a beautiful flower or a sweet note of music lingering for ever in his mind.[6] She is an innocent

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1. 'Rātra, Dhūli, F.G.I, p.561.
2. 'Golāpa Sundarī', Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, p.372
3. 'Priyatamār Saundarya', Kadamkali, B.G.II.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. 'Puṇiki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', Puṣpamālā, F.G.I, p.209.

bird in a state of total surrender to him.[1] This love of similes and metaphor is a legacy inherited from Sanskritic tradition. Even these eminent path-breakers could not but fall under its pervasive sway.

It is the most intimate and elaborate description of nature that marks the poetry of Fakirmohan. In his poem 'Swabhābara Nababhāba', Fakirmohan describes the vast panorama of nature and feels an overpowering fascination for it. His poem 'Santikānan' describes in minute detail a garden with ripe fruits hanging down the boughs, rows of lemon, cashew and pineapple trees, squares of flower beds and a cottonwool tree. He is not only observant of the fragrant nights and the beautiful creepers, but also the ripe paddy fields. For an identical description of nature in Laksminaths poetry we may refer to the poem 'Sandhyā', known for an elaborate description of evening through a succession of images, both novel and enchanting. The description of the evening breeze playing merrily with the creepers, stars twinkling in the distant sky, sweetscented flowers spreading their fragrance with gay abandon and glow-worms glittering like pieces of jewellery against the semidark background speaks enough of his penchant for details.

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1. 'Puniki Dekhibi Sehi Sahāsya Badana', Puspamālā, F.G.I, p.209.

A comparative study of their poetry would be incomplete without a reference to their local setting. In this respect, both the poets display a marked sense of modernity. In ancient poetry, the description followed a set pattern that excluded local rivers, flowers and birds. Both Fakirmohan and Laksminath are fascinated by the native landscapes of Assam and Orissa. The pulsating rivers, colourful birds and sweet-smelling flowers of their respective lands find authentic expression in their poetry. In this regard, both of them can be considered as cultural poets who foregrounded the fragrance and smell of their native soil. In Laksminath's poetry, the Brahmputra or the Luit is extensively represented. He has gone to the extent of composing a poem exclusively on this river. In his poem 'Āmār Janmabhūmī' he refers to the special kind of rice, sour fruits, the varied vegetables and the bamboo groves of Assam. One of his poems is exclusively devoted to the Bihu festival of Assam. The traditional celebration of this festival, with its dances and diverse local musical instruments, is elaborately described. Similarly, Fakirmohan's poems are suffused with a spirit of Orissa. The Mahahadi and the Kathjodi form the subject of independent poems. Even some of the cities of Orissa hold a special attraction for him. He has composed individual poems on 'Cuttack' and 'Bhubaneshwar'. The life of the tribals of Orissa is portrayed sympathetically in 'Pāṭuā Pāṭoi'. His

poem 'Sandhyābele Bideśīr Cintā' presents a detailed description of an afternoon in an Oriya village. His discription of the sun setting behind the palms and the banyans, the girls carrying pitchers of water on their heads, the quick steps of the farmer returning from his fields, the weaving birds sitting on a palm tree is typically Oriya. This local scenario is complete with a row of bats in the sky and an owl pruning its wings.

Lastly, it might be said that in their poems nature is set in sharp contrast to human life. Thus, they being into focus the pathetic brevity and littleness of human life. Consequently, their nature poetry assumes a broader dimension and in their case nature and philosphy go hand in hand.[1]

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1. "Most of our modern poets have discovered, in nature x x x infinite spiritual significance. As every poet responds to nature according to the peculiar qualities of his own temperament, the poetry of emotional interpretation takes many different forms, as in the poetry of Wordsworth, for whom nature was divine, and who sought communion through nature with nature's indwelling soul; of Shelley, to whom nature was a mystical revolution of that enternal spirit in whom all modes of life are one, of Byron, who found in nature the passionate freedom which the conditions of the human lot denied to man; of Arnold, to whom, on the contrary, nature's calm was a refuge and a solace to the fretful and troubled hear", W.H. Hudson, 'on the Treatment of Nature in Poetry', An Introduction to The Study of Literature, London (1960) p.329.

This may be to an extent, due to the predominance of Bhakti cult in the traditional Indian poetry. No Indian poet can discard it altogether. The deep-rooted spiritualism of Indian life and letters makes them look at life around them as futile. The uncertainty of modern mind is another reason of their lea-ning on philosophic postulates. To Fakirmohan, life is a complete mystery. His poems are full of comments on life that will do credit to a philosopher. A number of poems in his collection 'Pūjāphula' and 'Dhūli' are direct addresses to the Almighty. In the midst of unrelieved sorrow that is life, he finds solace in God alone. In his poem 'Naba-Jīban', he begs of God to enable him to cast off his ego. He finds that life is ephemeral and man a mere puppet in the hands of God. This seems to be the general philosophy of many of his poems. He sees life nothing more than a tiny boat in the vast Ocean of time. Laksminath discovers an eternal spiritual truth even in the most commonplace subject of nature. The distant star in the sky seems to him a source of divine light and he seeks illumination from it.[1] In the whole panorama of nature he discovers an all-pervading[2] image of love. Laksminath finds the whole drama of life depicted

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1. 'Tārā', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.963.
2. 'Cumā', Ibid, p.951.

in a flower that blossoms and fades away in a small span of time.[1]

A strong patriotic fervour is another feature common to both the poets. Patriotism is essentially a modern phenomenon. There is hardly an ancient poem singing of the glory of the native land and calling upon its people to unite and protect it's honour. This sense of patriotism was particularly prominent in the early part of the 19th Century. Almost all the regional literatures can boast of poems expressing patriotic sentiments. This was certainly due to the rise of national consciousness caused by the foreign rule. Years of subservience to the British gave rise to a strong resentment that touched the poet and he sang of the glory of his motherland. Such poems played a useful role in uniting people to fight against foreign domination. Laksminath's poem 'O mor Āpunār Des' speaks of the dream of his land of birth. He sings in a tender tone of the infinite variety of its loveliness:

O my land,
O my dear land,
a land of gentle streams,

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1. 'Abaśes', Kadamkali, B.G.II, p.965.

a land of luxuriant fruitfulness,
it is such a darling land.[1]

The mother concept of motherland is essentially Indian and, naturally, is a theme common to both the poets. Some of Laksminath's patriotic songs are irresistibly powerful. In his ministrel's song 'Bīn Barāgī' the patriotic fervour rises to a poignant force. In this poem the familiar symbolism of a historical past comes alive with vividness. Laksminath's long stretches of life outside Assam makes him feel in stronger bond with his native land. He is pround of his heritage and sings:

We are not poor, we can never be poor,
We had everything, we have everything,
We do not think or try to know them.[2]

'Assam Saṅgīt' is a captiviting poem with an energetic form and powerful historical consciousness. Even his parodies take motherland as a theme:

Where could you get such cereals that needs
only water to boil.
Where could you get such acid fruit from which
your teeth recoil.

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1. O Mor Āpunār Des, Trans Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbarua Sahitya Akademi, p.60.
2. Assam Saṅgit, Trans.Hem Barua, Laksminath Bezbarua, Sahitya Akademi (1967), p.66.

He is conscious of the drawbacks of his own people, yet he affirms Assam's determination to march ahead and his poem ends with robust optimism:

> Beat this big drum, blow the conchshells,
> play mridanga and khol;
> Assam is moving up again, say, 'Glory to
> her all.[1]

Mother-tongue is but an offshoot of the concept of motherland. In his poem 'Janani Utkala Bhāṣā' Fakirmohan says:

> Oh my Mother; Oh my language;
> I worship you and my heart's
> desire is fulfilled.

His poem 'Janmabhūmi' is eloquently expressive of the beauty of Orissa. He says: Orissa is a place of rare beauty. Its feet are washed by the Ocean and the head adorned by the crown of hills. The man who does not respect such a sacred motherland is not worthy enough to be called her son. 'Utkalbhūmi' is yet another poem wherein he bows at her feet and feels miserable at her insult. Like Laksminath, he sings of the past glory of

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1. Assam Saṅgīt, Padumkali, B.G.II, p.993.

Orissa, of Lord Jagannāth, and of the valour of the ancient Kings. His epigrams about the different personalities of Orissa sum up the highest regard he had for the illustrious sons of his motherland.

Fakirmohan and Laksminath are both pioneers in the field of satirical poetry. Laksminath's essays in the series of Kṛpābar Baruwā are replete with poems either satirical or humourous or comical. Some of his cartoons are captioned with amusing poems that lack the subtle resonance his romantic lyrics are known to possess; but they are meant to serve a totally different purpose. It is alleged that he mounted a personal attack on his critics through a satirical poem, 'Calanī Āru Bejī'. These poems do not contribute much to his fame as a poet. Yet their importance to be the first ever vehicle for fun cannot be denied. They lampooned deficiency in social behaviour and promoted healthy social awareness too. Fakirmohan shines best in his satirical poems. He is a trend-setter in this field. One of his poems 'Mũ hāṭa-Bāhuḍā' continues to be widely read in Orissa to this day. In this poem, he pours sarcasm on various professions and its not-so-worthy practicioners. In his poem 'Utkaḷa-bh-ramaṇ' he not only praises some of the personalities of Orissa, but also criticies a few of them. Another poem'yama Rajāṅka Darabāra' is well-known for its satirical treatment of

writers of obscene literature. The poem makes clever use of Hindi and English words for comic effect.

Now a brief evaluation of their contribution to poetic froms may be attempted. Both these poets excel in short lyrics. They have deviated from the ancient narrative method of using rhyming couplets and have, at times, experimented with innovations in stanza pattern also. Both of them have written fine short poems. Laksminath's mini-poems in his collection 'Kadamkali'[1] and Fakirmohan's mini-poems in his book 'Dhūḷi' are amply indicative of their contribution in this field. Both of them have exploited the rich folk literature of their respective native cultures. Fakirmohan has written a number of simple poems in folk style.[2] He set a trend that was successfully carried out later by Nandakisor Bal. Laksminath has exploited the folk tradition to a greater extent in his ballads. It may be noted that the revival of folk literature is essentially a modern phenomenon. Because of its smooth communicability and cultural evocations, folk vacabulary continues to be treated with respect even by

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1. Poems 'Maran', 'Saṁgrām', 'Sonār Sikali', 'Tomār Kām' 'Sukhabodh', 'Kṛtitwa', 'Renukā'.

2. Poems 'Cāndamanira Aṅgā', 'Bhuā Birādi o Kāliā Kukura', 'Gardabharā Sukṣma Budhi', 'Abasara Bāsare, F.G.I, pp. 376, 378, 375.

the ultra-modern poets. No wonder, even the leading English poets in our times, (Spender, Yeats and Auden, to mention only a few) have attempted ballads. Wordsworth and Coleridge who launched the romantic movement in English literature had embarked on their liteeary careers with a publication known as 'Lyrical Ballads'.

The ballad is a short story in verse. Its main themes are commonly furnished by the more elementary aspects of life and it draws inspiration from tales of adventure, deeds of prowess and valour. It has frequently a strong infusion of super-naturalism, love, hatred and pity. The simpler interests of the domestic lot, too, receive a fair share of attention. In method and style, it is characterised by straight-forwardness and rapidity of narration and a certain childlike naivete. In style, the ballad has immense dramatic power and wonderful metrical beauty.

Laksminath does not strictly follow the above definition. His is rather a modern form of ballad with a natural expansion. His is not a laborious imitation of primitive models and he does not strive for formalistic excellence. The fire of romantic inspiration in him is set alight by the rich cycle of peasant songs, the Bongits and the Bihugits. In attempting ballads, he was considerably influenced by the romantic poets of the west. He recreated

the ballad tradition of the countryside. Laksminath, as a literary man, was attuned by temperament more to the rural tradition than to the urban. He belonged to the romantic atmosphere of the rural song. His ballad 'Dhanbar āru Ratanī' can be cited as an example of his craftmanship in ballad writing. This poem has taken the love story of a boy and a girl, as its main theme. The story is presented in the form of two dramatic monologues, one each of the two lovers. The story unfolds itself against the natu-ral backdrop of the river Luit. This is a tender love romance narrated in the folk tradition against an appropriate background of rustic scenery. 'Nimātī Kanyā' is another ballad that narrates the story ofadumb girl.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Laksminath remains well within the cultural and geographical boundaries of his native land. Fakirmohan, by contrast, travels far field. His poems reveal a man of rare complexity. What comes out from his diverse poetic creations is an amazingly cosmopolitan mind, warm with sympathy for whatever is great or sublime. His poet friends Rādhānāth and Madhūsūdan are inspired by topics that are poetic in themselves. Fakirmohan has a wider range of issues to choose from. He is alike at home with Jesus Christ and Tukaram as also the divorced Josephine. He welcomes with open arms the glorious achievements of modern Japan in several of his poems and sets them up as

examples before his countrymen. His open-ended world-view is an authentic mark of his modern sensibility. He is sensitive to the delicate fragrance of Husna Hena flower plant supposed to have been imported from Japan. A long poem on Lucretia, the faithful Roman wife, is yet another example of his ever expanding vision.