(a) Names of the books and characters of the fictions are written in Roman Script.

(b) Names of places and objects are retained in the original Indian pronunciations, e.g. Ganga.

(c) To avoid clumsy apostrophes for names of books are sometimes dropped.

(d) Notwithstanding their subtle difference the words 'fiction' and 'novel' have been used in this writing to mean the same thing, i.e. novels in general.

(e) To avoid circumlocution, (i) The term 'regional novel' has sometime been used in a liberal sense to mean a novel based on a region, i.e. Radh in case of Tarasankar. (ii) Certain words and expressions have been put in their Bengali forms, which can be easily followed, i.e. asram. For this purpose a glossary is given at the end.

(f) For economic utilisation of space a few abbreviations have been used for some names of books, authors etc. in our foot-notes. These are the followings -

A.B. - Aranya Banhij Ashutosh Bhattacharya.
A.E. - Árogya Niketan.
A.S.B. - Asiatic Society of Bengal.
B.P.H. - Bhubanpurer Hát.
B.G. - Binay Ghosh.
B.S.P. - Bangiya Sáhitya Parisat.
B.S.S.P. - " " Patrikā.
D.D. - Dhātṛdebatā.
G.D. - Ganadebata.
P.B.S. - Pascim Banger Samskṛti.
P.B.L.S. - " " Lok Samskṛti.
P.C. - Padacinha.
P.G. - Pancagrám.
R.K. - Rāikamal.
R.S.O.D.T. - Rañgher Samskṛti O Dharma Tāmkur.
S.P. - Sandipan Pāthsālā.
S.M. - Svarga Marta.
T.S.B. - Tarasankar Bandopadhyay.
W.B.G. - West Bengal Government.

**** - More than three asterisks closely at a place indicate that, some part within a quotation has been dropped out.
Novel is described by Ifor Evans "as a narrative in press, based on a story, in which the author may portray character, and the life of an age, and analyse sentiments and passions, and the reactions of men and women to their environment" with a setting of writers' own times, or of the past. 1.

So the novel takes its origin from life and as such it has real social roots. Even in psychological novels, not to speak of other varieties, where the temperaments, moods, fantasies, memories, observations etc. of the leading persons in the novel assume greater importance, there also a fragment of civilisation and society stands in the background. Because, after all, no man belongs to a hollow and personal consciousness is surely the result of relation between individual with his surroundings.

Every writer grows up as a member of a particular society, and the structure of his personality, his view of life and his emotional conflicts and communications are conditioned by social factors. For this reason the content of his work, including its deeper emotional quality as far as its subject-matter, can not be explained without reference to his social background.

If, for clear instance, we place the works of Pope and Tennyson side by side, we shall be struck by the glaring contrast between the two poets. This contrast can be explained with the help of following considerations - differences in their time and ancestral tradition, surroundings and experiences, economic and cultural heritage etc. Some reasons can largely be attributed to the great differences among Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Aldous Huxley or Ravindranath, Saratchandra and Manik Bandopadh- yay in their theme, outlook and style.

So, while reflecting the zeitgeist a novel bears a sensitive synthesis of various perceptible forces like the writer's inheritance, personal experiences on the social and political plane etc. which colour his outlook on life, an essential feature of a novel.

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Obviously, then, the distinctiveness or the very success of a novelist is to be seized through an appreciation of his novels by an understanding of the environment in which he lived and the salient trend of his time.

An intimate knowledge of all these is inescapable while one examines the novels of Tarasankar Bandopadhyay. The ambience of Râdh-Bengal-life with the spirit of his time can not be ever-looked here. Moreover these include the autobiographical elements to a great degree, which is also admitted by the author himself. A great love for his own village and home-district has inspired him to write about them. As such the scenarios of this region with the rural life of his time is painted in depth in his works in no small measure.

He wonders, then, that, a regional novelist in Tarasankar emerges and its full significance will be clear from the analysis that follows in the next chapters. And the second chapter may, at the same time justify the title as well as the purpose of this paper. For the present, however, this is prefaced by a short life-sketch of Tarasankar Bandopadhyay till the time of his earning distinction as a novelist.

Tarasankar Bandopadhyay was born on the 23rd July, 1896 in the village named Labhpur of the district of Birbhum in West Bengal. He described his father Haridas Bandopadhyay as a "Symbol of the bygone days" (2) and his mother Prabhakar Devi as a "very extraordinary and talented Lady" 3.

Tarasankar lost his father in 1313 B.E., when he was only eight. In his childhood, he was greatly influenced by his mother and a paternal aunt. His mother imbued him with the spirit of patriotism. But his aunt, with her high sense of self-respect, strong personality and knowledge of practical matters, inspired and influenced him to become active and efficient son of a real zamindar. His creative mind was moulded to a great extent by both of these women. This perceptively influenced him in depicting the Characters of Pismā (Aunt) and Mā (mother) in the "Dhardevatā." Tarasankar had deep respect for his mother - incarnation of softness, kindness, sacrificial and benevolent spirits. All these qualities naturally left their marks on her son's character. She had profound knowledge of ancient literature.

* Ref: Amar Kaler Katha; Amar Sahitya Jiban; (2 Vols.) etc.
3. ibid - P.24
Her mode of story-telling, fluent and artistic as it was, moulded his taste and temperament so greatly that he felt a kinship with such literary kinds as stories and fictions in particular.

Labhpur, Tarasankar's birth-place, had all along been an attraction for him and his sense of pride has revealed itself through his writings. Talks about his own village, his own district, his experiences, folk elements drawn from rural sources, introduction of different types of characters as seen by him and varied stories woven into the texture of his novels are an eloquent testimony to this.

Different groups of men and women such as the Bedes, the Patuas, the Sanyasis, the Tantriks, The Baul-singers, the Vaisnav-Women, the Muslim Bakers, the village poets and varieties of nomads used to come to his village from time to time. These were the sources of his literary inspiration. Tarasankar developed a keen interest for having an idea about them right from his boyhood days.

It was Tarasankar's great gain that forces of pre-modern society of Labhpur had prepared the bed for interesting conflicts between different classes of people. This Society had its dominating importance so much that it may represent the whole of Radh.

Labhpur was a little in advance than many other Bengal-villages. It was fleeted with the tide of Patriotism even as early as 1905. Tarasankar had witnessed the Rakhibanan with the chanting of patriotic couplets in his own home. A library and a theatre were established both named Bande Mataram. Through the local - dramatic performances Labhpur maintained a contact with many other dramatic organisations of Bengal. Even well-known playwrights like Kshiredprasad Vidyavind, Mamatha Mohan Basu and Aparekh Mukhopadhyay visited Labhpur.

In the feudal atmosphere of Labhpur during his early days the Zamindars and the rich, the capitalists and the businessmen had been in constant competition and rivalry on such matters as covering their lives with glory, gorgeousness, aristocracy, fame and influence in the village society. Tarasankar says - "I have watched minutely the conflict between the feudal landlords and the traders. We had to bear the consequences of this conflict as we belonged to a small samindar-family and had our due share in it." 4. "My in-laws were coalmine owners and they were rather in trouble with me, their half-educated son-in-law, with the decayed tradition of a samindar at my back. But to make me efficient - along business line, they sent me sometimes to their Calcutta office and sometimes to their coalfield. But I could not stick to this work for more than six months and hence gave it up. So,

though I did not become useful to them in their business, yet the experiences thus gathered were of immense value to me in my literary career."

In his schooldays Tagore's "Katha-O-Kahinee" and "Kanika" touched deeply the young imaginative mind of Tarasankar.

After Matriculation, in 1915, Tarasankar finally became a student of Arts stream in St.X'avier's College in Calcutta.

Then, at the age of seventeen, Tarasankar married Uma Devi, daughter of a rich businessman. But soon his personal life became unhappy as a result of misunderstanding between his wife and in-laws on the one side, and his aunt, the head of the family, on the other. In spite of this unhappiness, as his marriage meant an involvement in the family affairs, he could not devote himself to political activities. Had it not been so, Tarasankar could not have become a man of literature, and this fact he himself has stressed again and again.

In Calcutta, as a college student, he was inspired by the freedom movement of the country. He participated in it and was rewarded with an internment order.

In 1921, like many others, Tarasankar was attracted by the Non-Co-operation Movement and started active politics. But during the days when the political fervour was at a low ebb, he found his leisure and engaged himself in literary writing.

His first published writing - a poem named "Theu" (The Tide) came out in the journal "Sacitra Śīir" in its Jyaistha, 1333 issue.

In 1925, in connection with the Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan held in Birbhum, Tarasankar read the self-composed welcome-address in verse. At the end of the conference, in the company of other guests, he visited Nannur, the birth-place of Chandidas, and composed "Nannur Patha", a lyric published in Bharatvarsa in Asadh, 1333.

In those days Tarasankar was connected with local theatrical clubs and became interested in becoming a dramatist, but could not succeed as he was left out in the cold by the stage-owners.

His activities for Congress Party and various social services coming to an end Tarasankar started looking after their small estate.

In 1333 B.B. Pūrṇimā, a Bengaly monthly was published from Labhpur under the editorship of Nirmalshib Bandopadhay,

5. T.S.B. - P.49.A.S.J.(I)
a local playwright. Tarasankar started writing with fresh ardour but was not fully satisfied with a local journal only.


One day, he had a chance to read an issue of "Kali Kalam" and was much amused. In reading two short stories in it viz. "Ponaghat Prerit" by Premendra Mitra and "Jani O Tani" by Sailajananda Mukhopadhyaya.

Sailajananda’s story developed an urge in him to depict Birbhum in Bengali literature, and within a few days he composed "Rasakali" - a short story on the life of Vaisnava of Birbhum. He sent it to "Pravasi" only to be rejected after a long time. This incident created a sense of frustration in him and with the intention of giving up literary practice he started working in his village and soon became the President of the local Union Board. A short sketch of his social services at that time is drawn in his novel "Dhātṛdevata".

But one day he saw a copy of "Kallol", a journal with modern trends, and was so pleased with its get-up that he could not resist temptation of sending "Rasakali" to "Kallol". "Rasakali" was much praised when it was printed in "Kallol" in Falgun, 1334. "Harano Sur", his another short story, was published in "Kallol" in its Vaisakha, 1335 issue. In a short time, Tarasankar Bandopadhyay became a popular name in Bengali literary world with his stories and fictions regularly appearing in such different periodicals as "Kāli Kalam", "Upāsena" and "Dhupachāyā". But till then Tarasankar was inclined to politics at heart. Actually, he had some hesitation in choosing between the career of a politician and a litterateur.

In 1930 he joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was imprisoned. In the jail he had seen the meanness and crookedness of the politicians and was disappointed to know their "real-self". Hence, he shook off politics from his mind and wholeheartedly devoted himself to writing.

In 1931, Tarasankar had a chance of meeting Subash Chandra Basu in connection with a dispute in the Congress Party and dedicated "Caitali Ghārni", his first published novel, to him.

Again, once he had met Ravindranath who said to have asked Tarasankar to try his hand at reforming and improving the conditions of the villages. But Tarasankar had to go to Calcutta for the purpose of earning his livelihood. Though his fame was established with the publication of "Caitali Ghārni", it was difficult for him, like many others, in those days, to live on the professional income of writing only.

At one time, during his prolonged stay at Labhpur he felt himself a stranger because he could not adjust himself to the prevailing social and political conditions of the village.
Moreover, his heart was heavy with pang for Balu, his second daughter, who had died earlier. To have solace at times he would go to the Bengal-villages rather aimlessly. He visited the fairs, temples, shrines and historical places. But he continued writing and occasionally visited Calcutta to contact different periodicals, viz. Bharatvarsa, Bangashri, Sanibarer cithi etc.

Then, artist Jamini Roy advised him to permanently settle at Calcutta which would help him in his profession. But considering his financial position Tarasankar was a little hesitant at that time. Just then he came to know that the police were seeking a chance to arrest him on allegation of anti-government activities. So, considering it unsafe to stay on at Labhpur, or even at Birbhum, Tarasankar finally came over to Calcutta. Thus the second phase of his literary career started with his settling down in the city in 1933. Then he passed his days amidst acute poverty with writing as his sole aim and occupation. For some time he served "Sanibarer Cithi" as its sub-editor but did not hesitate to turn down the offer which came his way from Dinesh Chandra Sen, the well-paid job of a story writer of Bombay Talkies.

Thus Tarasankar steadily clung to his ambition amidst poverty, adversities and temptations and earned fame in due time. But the details of his struggle and endeavour along the long path of literary pursuits will not be much relevant in the present context.

His time : Social, Political and Economic conditions.

Though Tarasankar appeared in the field of literature in his matured age, he had opportunities to gather experiences from much earlier days. His days of boyhood and early youth was an age of transition all over the world. Though many great changes took place in our country in the sphere of economic and social conditions, still political events were the main points of attraction of the countrymen. Tarasankar in his autobiography has ruminated over the excitement and enthusiasm prevailing throughout the country and specially in Bengal during the agitation against the partition of Bengal — in the days of his boyhood. As a result of the agitation the partition was withdrawn in 1911.

During those days the main trend of our national life was the widespread anger and discontentment with the British rule and a craving for total freedom.

Sporadic activities of the Anarchists were reported from different parts of India. Earlier Prafulla Chaki and Keshudiram Das were punished to death for their anti-British subversive plan. Revolutionaries like Barindra Nath Ghosh were arrested in connection with the Maniktala Bomb case. Leftist ideals were being spread at that time in the journals like "Sandhya" and "Bande Mataram" and our young class was inspired by the revolutionary spirit reflected in the articles in "Yugantar" and "Nabasakti".
Then came down the catastrophe of the break out of First World War (1914-19). People all over the globe had an expectation at the starting that, the war would place democracy in a better and safer position. Even in India leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi expressed opinion for India's support to Britain in this war. But peace-loving men, everywhere, were very much horrified at the inhuman barbarism and naturally, in a dis-illusioned state of mind, were moved with compassion towards mankind. Our discontent over the Montague Chelmsford Reforms (1919), imposition of infamous Rowlatt Act (1919) and the continued British oppression, the martial law in the Punjab and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (13th April, 1919) and Raviindramath's refusal of his Knighthood are some of the important incidents of this period.

Then at Gandhi ji's appeal, shaking of all hesitations the whole country rose to the occasion and a spontaneous outburst of patriotism overflooded every mind. People, irrespective of age, sex, religion and seat joined the non-violent Non-Co-operation Movement. Tarasankar himself, then a young college-student took part in this movement.

With the failure of N.C.O. many of our leaders and the young men again turned in favour of applying force in our freedom struggle and at heart supported the terrorists. Tarasankar himself had a regard for the revolutionaries * and indomitable Subhaschandra **, at the same time, to Gandhi ji's leadership. Hence he did not hesitate to join Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31) which brought a new thrill with aspirations to the Nation. Particularly, at that time, the middle-class people were overwhelmed with a romantic feeling mixed with wonder and a Patriotic zeal and wished to shake off all fetters of their self-centred life.

In short, the notable tendencies in this country during the first three decades of this Century - which was the time of Tarasankar's preparation for a literary career - were world-wide restlessness and our vacillations and uncertainty in the matter of ways and means of national life. But through all obstacles and difficulties, the country marched forward towards a definite goal with high hope.

* Tarasankar says - "At the advent of my youth I had a conversation at Rampurhat with Nalini Bagchi - the great revolutionary. It is he who infused the spark of patriotism in my mind"
PP.33 A.S.J.(I)

** Tarasankar had narrated that, he was very much impressed by Subhaschandra's great but charming personality when he first met him very closely. So, he dedicated him "Gaitali Ghurni," his first novel. Later, in Netaji's advice he closed down his press. Ref. PP.47-51-53. A.S.J.(I).
In social matters new outlook with certain changes of ideals were visible. A prominent scholar of Bengali literature has listed them in the following:

1. Cultivation in a limited degree of a feeling of mutual intimacy between the middle-class and the poorer people.
2. Abatement of disregard on the part of educated people towards the so-called uneducated, at least for the sake of ideals.
3. A sense of dignity of physical labour.
4. A desire for mass-contact through the religious festivals.
5. A considerable zeal for removing untouchability.
6. Efforts for prohibition of drinks.
7. Innumerable examples of mixing between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal, in spite of their differences in communal interests.

Then came Second World War and India had to bear the brunt of it. Our economic plans and progress were disturbed. The lower-income and poorer people suffered great hardship for food and cloth. The great famine in Bengal during the War and communal riots in Bengal and Bihar in 1946 touched Tarasankar's mind and induced him to write the novels "Manvantar" and "Uttarāyana". At last

At last we achieved our long-cherished independence along with the curse of partition of India resulting in exodus of refugees from the Punjab and East Bengal, which created a gigantic problem of their rehabilitation. Particularly, West Bengal had to bear the disproportionate stress and strain on her land and resources.

The improvement in our transport and communication during the Second War helped in movement from one part to another. And expansion of trade and industries with our independence led to the growth of many towns and cities. The scope of employments also increased to a great extent. But in spite of developments in irrigation and agriculture, for a long time, the outcome of our plans were not visible due to heavy pressure of population on our economy. The zamindari system was finally abolished but the lot of cultivators did not improve much for a long time. Tarasankar witnessed our National Government taking up Socialistic aims and divisions of his once-favourite All India Congress, birth of Marxist group in the Communist Party of India, formation of United Front Government in West Bengal and its fall.

and lastly, Naxalite activities which resulted in a sense of insecurity of life in West Bengal and Calcutta in particular.

Trends in his contemporary Bengali Novels.

Tarasankar himself counted his literary life from Baisakh, 1335, the time of publication of his story "Harano Sur" in Kallol although his famous story "Rasakali" was published in 'Kallol' a little earlier. In Bengali stories and fictions, at that time, Saratchandra was at the peak of his popularity. And Ravindranath had been still writing books one after another.

An important trend in Bengali literature during the post-First War years was a controversy between Ravindriste and the opponents which started a little earlier through the journals like 'Sabujpatra' and 'Narayan'.

During those days of Saratchandra's great popularity some younger novelists with artistic minds chanced upon certain flaws in his novels. Very soon, as a reaction against Saratchandra's novels, indications of change in subject and form of Bengali fiction became prominent in the pages of journals like "Bharati", 'Sabujpatra' and 'Kallol'. Much in the same way, we may say, modern Bengali poems came out, when a band of younger poets made a bid to shake off the all-pervasive influence of Ravindranath.

The following can be ascertained, in short, to be the main theme and contents of Bengali fictions just before Tarasankar's appearance in the arena of Bengali literature.

(a) The subtle philosophical and psychological treatment of social or individual problems combined with refined wits of Ravindranath.
(b) Softer feelings of love and affection in the Bengalee families mixed with romance in Saratchandra's novels.
(c) The romance in the sophisticated drawing-room-culture of educated upper-middle class Bengalee Society in the novels of Buddhadev Basu, Manindralal Basu, Sourendramohan Mukhopadhyay and others.
(d) Problems pertaining to psychology and sex dealt by Charuchandra Bandopadhyay, Nareshchandra Sen Gupta and others.

The interest of a vast mass of readers of Bengali fiction flagged itself due to repetition of wit and mysticism in Ravindranath's works and romantic-love as depicted in Ravindranath, Sarat-Chandra, Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, and an artificial as well as circumscribed parlour-life of the sophisticated urban people in others' works.

* Ref P-9. A.S.J.(I)
Bengali Novelists of late-nineteen twenties had the responsibility of explaining the dim realities in order to unknott the complications of life during their days. The intricacies were largely due to -

(a) The consciousness of transition and revolution going in different parts of the world.
(b) The frequent but fruitless tumult of our national movements.
(c) Freud's exploration into the subconscious mind and
(d) The new ideas of materialism from Engels and Marx

The novelists of 'Kallol-group' * who started writing a little before, and many of whom were pretty successful in short stories, could not untie the intricacies of contemporary life fully in their fictions. As they were not so much intimate with the life in our country as much acquainted they were with continental literature and international matters, their literary works were more anchored to the western thought and ideologies than to the traditional tenets of life in Bengal. Even keeping in mind the success of Gokul Nag's 'Pathik', Premendra Mitra's 'Path', 'Upayan', 'Michil', Achintya Kumar Sen Gupta's 'Beda', 'Yubanaswa's (Manish Ghatak)' 'Patal Dangar Pachali', we can say that novelists of this time could not harmonise the two worlds - the world of their novels and the actual world of their living.

Some novelists at that time realised the limitation of Saratchandra and Kallolians from that point and tried to make good of those shortcomings. The most important of these writers, who appeared at the end of nineteen twenties is Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, others being - Dhurjati Prasad Mukhopadhyay, Annadasankar Ray, Gopal Halder, Manik Bandopadhyay and Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay.

The striking features in Sailajananda Mukhopadhyay's short story in an old issue of Kallol had attracted and inspired Tarasankar greatly. This seems to be very clear when he made the following exclamatory remark - 'Strange! how could one draw such a throbbing picture of Birbhum!' (It was at the tip of his pen.) 7.
He then started writing with this aim in view. Tarasankar had a store of vast experience which any writer could be envious of. As a result, we get the most successful regional novelist in him.

* For certain common characteristics of their writing the contemporary writers of Kallol, Kalikalam, Pragati, Uttara, Atmasakti, Dhupchaya were named so after 'Kallol', their leading journal.

7.T.S.B. - P.19 A.S.J.(I)
The tendency of Bengalee writers to depict regional life is in fact a reaction directly born of Ravindranath - Sarat and other prominent contemporaries. This fact may be explained in the following way.

From the first decade of this century the middle class Bengalee experienced much upheaval in its mind. The agitation against the partition of Bengal, the Khilafat and the Non-Co-operation movements, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, Russian revolution and the birth of the Bolshevik party - such political events touched his heart. Alternate feelings of hopes and despair crepted into his mind with the revolutionary and terrorist activities, constructive endeavours by Subhaschandra and attempts by the British administration to widen our communal differences.

In nineteen twenties and thirties, the all-round depression and despondency, especially in the cities, came up as the aftermath of the First World War. In the minds of readers as well as of writers the city remained no more the citadel of joy. The destiny of the middle class and fraught with consequences which resulted in a strong apathy towards its surroundings where the long-cherished values of life had been gradually changing while the middle class Bengalee joint-families were fast disappearing. The young writers could well understand the mind of middle class Bengalee as most of them belonged to this class. Both, the reader and the writer were after the freedom, though not in reality, yet in new man, in new environment.

Many of the young writers felt the necessity of leaving aside the much repeated, most familiar, hackneyed themes and they thought it wise to break new grounds and bring new surroundings in their creation.

With their attempt the Bengali fiction took a turn to the solid grounds of reality and came very closer to common men and delineated their sorrows and joys, hopes and despair. These writers of new trend in 'Kallol', 'Kālikalam' etc, mainly in their stories, and lesser in novels, brought the rural life and the ordinary rustick people into their works.

Tarasenkar's regional novels are unmistakably an addition to that much-desired new brand of setting and content in Bengali novel for which the younger writers had been putting in conscious efforts.

That literature is the creation of inspired intellect, that spontaneity is the soul of arts, and that no creative urge follows a preplanned method fails to stand the test when we attempt to survey the historical beginning of the modern Bengali poetry. An all-out effort on the part of the pioneers made it possible for Bengali poetry to transcend the all-pervading influence of Ravindranath in the first instance. More strenuous preparation is needed for novels than poetry, for the instant emotive urge explains the composition of many
poems. New trends appear in the field of literature when the young minds with the urge of creation feel the compelling force of discovering new horizon. It is but a natural instinct for a powerful writer to leave deep marks in the literary history of a language, lending his unique contributions with unprecedented radiance. Most probably, a literary mind is more saturated with the strong desire for the creation of variety. Bengali regional novel is the very product of this romantic attitude towards that desire for variety.

Another mighty factor that had brought a regional outlook was the change that came over the society together with new outlook on life. Nineteenth century continued to be the unbreakable fort of feudalism and all the characteristics of the Middle Ages were predominant. The common men entertained a reverence towards aristocracy and they supported the land distribution system of feudalism. So, we find landlords and aristocrats as the heroes of Bankimchandra's novels. But at the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of lower middle class people went on increasing. In this new society in formation, educational and cultural performances were looked upon with high respect. There was, at the same time, a broad-minded liberality to welcome the new. Men in towns and cities were inspired to a great extent by the socialistic ideals, democratic consciousness and individualistic trends. All these factors in combination brought about a change to the old society. The deception and exploitation of the rich upon the plebs and the lower middle class people brought about a spirit of unification. This was not in practice but in spirit that the two classes of down-trodden people reacted. Economic crisis was a challenge to their very existence. Both the reader and the writer, as we have noted earlier, belonged to this lower middle class, and their feeling under the yoke of capitalist exploitation and discriminating distribution gave birth to a New Humanism.

Ravindranath, with his lofty ideals of humanism, did not do much in depicting the life of the propertyless and struggling masses of people. Most of the heroes of his novels are imbued with aristocratic ideals and manners of living from their very birth. Even the problematic life of a Bengalee peasant or a struggling day-labourer is absent in his stories of "Galpaguccha". The reason is obviously his birth and living in a propertyed feudal environment. He was far above the reach of the middle class mentality. Saratchandra could feel the popular stream of thought, conventions and ideals. And therefore he could evoke sympathy in the mind of the readers by creating some memorable characters of the people belonging to the lower middle class and the people living on their brawn like Gaffur Miah of 'Mahes'. It was in the fictions, stories and novels based on the far-flung regions of Bengal that the neglected, the illiterate, the humiliated or the people of low caste, of irreputable origin came to limelight, and the credit goes to Bibhutibhushan, Sailajananda, Manik Bandopadhyay and Tarasankar.
Viewing from this angle, grounds are there to assert that Bengali regional literature is not a sudden and momentary flash. Such literature is but a natural and timed outcome of the evolutionary process, of that undoubted social consciousness.

Keeping these relevant facts in our mind we shall now attempt in our Second Chapter to define and bring out the implications of the terms 'regional novel' and 'regional novelist.'