CHAPTER- IV

HUMANISM IN MALIK’S NOVEL AND SHORT STORIES

IV.I. Nature of Malik’s Humanism

Critics and scholars agree in one point that humanism predominates over the novels and short stories of Sayed Abdul Malik. Throughout his literary career, he has been a committed humanist who insists upon the dignity of man, hatred, cruelty and pain, facism and feudalism and also imperialism. On the other hand, love, compassion, peace and prosperity are the watchword of his writings. “Malik’s concept of love is mainly romantic. He expresses a dignified view of love. This concept of love is built of feelings and emotion. According to him, love is the basic force behind life. The only source for making life beautiful and perfect is love. His concept of love is connected with a deep life – view. He has the meaning of life in love. He got the mysterious boundary of body and soul in love. Malik’s concept of love is mainly romantic (trans. mine, Kamala Borgohain, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 96).” Malik does not believe in “Art for art’s sake”. Rather, he abhors it and uses his never stopping pen for humanity’s sake. He advocates for education, for the equality of women. In regard of religion, he is a Tolstoyean who practised practical religion. Being a practical man, Malik believes in the role of Chance and accident in life, which is evident in most of his novels. He believes in human fate, yet strongly advocates for the possibilities of human efforts. His heroes and heroines are men and women of great industry and
toil and are tidy and never allows them to wait for opportunities to turn up. He makes theme create opportunities for themselves. Chance plays a strong part in the lives of many of his characters but they have their own limitations. He does not regard human being as perfect. They are depicted as common men and women possessing the qualities and weaknesses of earthly beings. Malik has a healthy and vigorous mind that was keenly alert to the happenings around him and was enthusiastic about everything conducive to human well-being. His writings abound in socio-cultural and political criticism but he never allows cynicism in his novels. He firmly believes that virtue triumphs over vice, love over hatred and sacrifice and service over selfishness, which most often occupy the place of importance in his novels and short stories. Assamese society is a traditional society in which the readers can not accept free discussion of sex and love in literature. But Malik was bold enough to go against such prejudices of our society: "Upto Jona'ki, love in literature was considered to be misleading. Rajanikanta Bordalai was warned against the fact by Ramakanta Kakati. He (Bordalai) had to promise him (Kakati) to maintain a control over his depiction of the love scenes in his novel. It was considered that writing about love might bring in moral erosion in society. Such type of hesitation about love in literature has been corrected by Sayed Abdul Malik in the forties of this century. The love stories of Malik could move the readers by the writer's own style and narrative technique from the forties to the sixties (transl. mine, Saikia, Keshab, ibid, 100)."

It cannot, however, be said that his characters are flawless or perfect, that they are ideal characters which betokens their affinity with the rest of the humankind, and
to the actual life. It is to real life that Malik goes for his materials. He portrayed life with history as background in some of his novels but the historical interest rarely dominated the art of the novelist. He is an accomplished scholar and can describe historical times with picturesque taste accuracy not without remembering the difference between fiction and history. We do not find merely a fastidious antiquarian with a profound reverence for the past only and an intense relish for historical research in him: “However, the main identity of Sayed Abdul malik is that he is a popular story writer. Though he wrote many novels parallel to his stories, he wrote best novels like “Surujmukhīr Svapna”. He expresses a dignified view of love. This concept of love is built of feelings and emotions. According to him, love is the basic force behind life. The only source for making life beautiful and perfect is love. His concept of love is connected with a deep life view. He has the meaning of life in love. He got the mysterious boundary of body and soul in love and still at this age, he has written great novels on the massacre of Neli. Yet, his identity was first exposed as a story writer. He started writing stories towards the last part of “Awa’han” and has been writing stories through “Rā’mdhemu” till date. On a few years ago, I have got in his life - sketch that he has written about 2000 stories. The nature of story today has been changed due to foreign influences. Sayed Abdul Malik too, has been changing the messages of his stories like his political thought and principles. Once, in every publication of “B’a’hi” of Madhab Chandra Bezbaruah, one of the stories of Malik was published. It was learnt that (whether true or false we don’t know) the storywriter sent a book of stories to the Editor from which he selected stories and
published one after another. Then, came the war, the country has been divided, the communal riot has been started. Malik the supporter of Muslim League has become a communist, has become the president of I.P.T.A. and at last has joined the Congress Party. The impact of all these changes have been found in his writings. The romantic note has been wiped out from his writings, but the impact of the changes in society has not been left aside in his stories. His experience of Censorship during the war, the humanism of “jīsukhrat Čhabi”, the broad discussion of war in “A’dharśila”, the inhuman picture of the communal riot, all are there in his writings (transl. mine, Das, Jogesh, ed., Hussain, Nilmani, 2008, 19 – 20)." The time when Malik wrote was a time of intellectual ferment in Assam. British Rule and the two World Wars have shaken the base of faith and belief of humankind. Natural calamities like earthquake of 1950 and the Language Movement of 1960 had contributed to an extent to uproot the traditional belief and social stability of Assam. The storm had come and passed leaving behind it doubts and uncertainties and out of these a new order had to be born, a compromise had to be made between too much anglicism and too much of conservatism. In society, in religion, in culture, a new foundation had to be laid for a better order of things to take the place of the existing chaos. It was through literature that Malik did his part, that he could reach all sections of his fellow citizens by providing them with pleasure and profit. His novel “Ubhati Ahār Gān (1989)” depicts the wretched condition of the life of poor men in Assam during World-War-II. The barbaric influence of war and Imperial power on general run of life have been portrayed vividly- the degradation of human values, chaos and
anarchy in social life, and broadening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots etc.

The prominent note in Malik's novels is his love for his country. He has a strong sense of national self-respect which led him to criticize the attitude of those who think that western thought is superior to Indian thought that unless the national weaknesses were ruthlessly exposed the race to which he belonged would lay behind in its march to progress. But in his criticism Malik is never malicious. Rather, "there are vivid pictures of rural life in the novels of Malik, written on rural as well as urban background. The writer's affinity with the middle class urban life has been expressed in his novels (transl. mine, Saikia N, ed. Thakur N, 2000, 405)". He wants his people to get rid of those drawbacks that sap the vitality of the race and was never afraid of using the harsh language, scathing terms in the most biting satire. It is 'love' on which the main plot rests in most of Malik's novels and short stories. Readers do not miss the point that Malik has a profound love-philosophy in the sense that Plato and Shelley had. His portrayal of love at different stages of human life is ever-present in all his novels and short stories - be it the love of a man for a woman, the love of the wife for the husband, the love of the young man for the maiden or vice-versa, the love of the patriot for the country, the love of the idealist for certain ideals and so on. Malik has depicted love as the natural outcome of men and women coming into contact with one another, or raising from other causes like early companionship, sudden
meeting, pity, sympathy, gratitude etc.: “Love and humanism are the subject
matter of Malik’s novels (transl. mine, Sarma Satyendranath, 1998, 52)”.
He never thinks it improper to deal with sex complication nor was he a purist in the
sense that in his treatment of love he is handicapped by any stereotyped
properties. He believes in the primary instinct of human nature and pays more
value to the love, which arises out of the appreciation of the qualities of a person
that love which grew out of the appreciation of mere beauty. He recognizes fully
in his writing that men and women are susceptible to love or attraction for each
other under certain circumstances. But he keeps love above the call of the flesh:
“The life of Sayed Abdul Malik has not remained within a boundary. He has
changed into a humanist through his literary creation. The universalism has
become clear in his writing after declaring himself as an Assamese. Malik’s only
one view is: Love and separation, hopes and despairs are reflected and echoed in
the heart of the people of different countries of the world as in the heart of the
characters of his stories. The novel on the life of Mahapurush Sankardeva is a
permanent discovery and creation of his life (trans. mine, Chandraprosad Saikia,
ed. Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 187).”

IV.II. Humanism in Malik’s novels and short stories

Upto 1958, Malik was prominent as Assamese literary writer. For about
twenty years, he was famous as a gifted storyteller. Afterwards, he enters into the
world of fiction and exposes the evils like class-hatred and exploitation of the less
privileged section. Throughout his career as a novelist, the prime concern is love, romantic love. Love takes its multifarious forms in his novels. Class-consciousness, dynamism, artificiality of urban life and a vivid picture of rural life mark his novels. Some other qualities of Malik's novels are his close affinity with the love of man and woman of different classes, humanism, sympathy for the marginalized and the neglected, relation with the aesthetic beauty of nature, criticism of the social evils, sexual urge of human beings. While depicting the rural life of Assam, Malik confines himself within the familiar Muslim society. But in case of the urban society, he is above community: "Malik, who declare as "Assamese language is mine, speech mine, song mine" was associated with progressive writer's conference and with I. P. T. A. movement and was a supporter of Communist Party of India. The trace of this relation is found in his La. Sa. Gu. (1939) and the following novels like "Rathar Çakari Ghure". But, mainly, Malik Sir was a humanist - A great humanist. Therefore, the inner man comes out of the theory in his novels. He comes out as Azad in La. Sa. Gu.

........................The human consciousness is always alert and active in Malik Sir. This consciousness and alertness is active not only in his writing but also equally active in his day-to-day life. We meet that man always in his activities like visiting the man in distress, congratulating someone in his achievement, inquiring of the what about of the familiar people during his travel, inquiring of whether the labourer has taken his meal or not etc. (trans. mine, Saikia, Nagen, ibid, 28 – 29)."
The first and most successful novel of Malik is his "Surujmukhir Svapna (1960)". The plot and characters of the novel are somewhat different from those of his earlier novels. The background of the story is village Dalim Gaon on the bank of Dhanshiri, subjected to the erosion of the river and is far away from the complexities of modern life. The well and woes of the village are interrelated with the river. As if the river is the goddess of the village when it is cruel, the river brings in calamities to the village, and when kind, it makes the field of crops fertile. The youths of this village are - Gulach, Tora, Kapahi and Chenimai, the complexities of whose love and affections are depicted in the novel. The central character of the novel is Gulach, a self-dependent, simple and self-respectful youth. The establishment of this Muslim youth is the subject matter of this novel.

The story of the establishment of Gulach starts right from his meeting of Chenimai. She is the first beloved of Gulach. Gulach eloped with her against the consent of her parents and lived together a hiding life for a few days. But their conjugal dream against the will of their parents has been shattered by the vanity of the parents. Gulach leaves home with her mother. Chenimai is married to Kalai, a man suffering from tuberculosis. Though they are submissive to the pressure of the time, their love remains unhampere
d. Chenimai has accepted Kalai as her husband but not as the owner of her heart or love. She is dutiful and looks after her ailing husband but her mind agitates unknowingly to go and have the love of Gulach. But Gulach's love towards Chenimai was physical love. He elopes with Chenimai but cannot live with her against the will of the parents. He lacks that much courage. The relation between Gulach and Chenimai is only a bitter
experience of their life, just a bad dream. Kapahi, another woman leaves her husband and is a snob. There comes a remarkable change in the life of Gulach when he comes to the touch of Kapahi. Kapahi is a snob as well as an epitome of carnal desire. Whoever comes to her closeness is bound to fall a prey of her sexual design. And so also Gulach. Gulach goes to her house attracted by her adopted daughter Tora. He thinks of building a new life with her but it has taken an opposite turn. He is deceived by clever Kapahi. She marries Gulach in the guise of Tora as Gulach's love towards Tora is firm. After marriage, Gulach understands the trick of Kapahi and becomes upset but has to accept the marriage as a social obligation. He realizes his fault of evoking the youthful love of Tora and leaving it to decay afterwards. He sympathizes her condition, becomes remorseful, and wants to amend his fault. But there is no way out to come out of the grip of Kapahi rather than to wait and see. Tora takes shelter in the house of Kapahi after saving herself from her forced marriage with the son of Safiat, the old man. Kapahi, the clever woman has been looking for the opportunity of taking her advantage for material gain. After her marriage with Gulach, She has been trying to send Tora from her house. At no cost can she let Gulach to come to the closeness of Tora. This would be her own ruin. She gives Tikhar indulgence inspite of Gulach's protest so that she can use her to mislead the mind of poor Tora. Gulach has to go to the town with Chenimai for the treatment of Kalai. Taking this leave of Gulach, Tikhar frequently visits his house but does not get the mind of Tora. She does not like Tikhar. Basirat, the former lover of Kapahi, avails of the same opportunity. At his return from the town, Gulach knows all
these, turns Kapahi out of his house, and accepts Tora as his companion. Kapahi, on the other hand, has to take shelter in the house of her former lover, Basirat.

The plot of the novel runs through a three-tire course of events, the relation between Gulach and Kapahi, between Gulach and Chenimai and Gulach's struggle for establishment. The relation between Gulach and Chenimai cannot be segregated by her marriage with Kalai. Kalai is suffering from disease, a poor man of ill health and cannot take the place of Gulach. He is the husband of Chenimai in name. He cannot support her. Rather, he himself is a burden upon her. Chenimai cannot forget Gulach. She has taken him with her to the town while taking Kalai for treatment and surrenders her person to him during those few days of their stay at the town. Leaving the husband in the hospital and sleeping with Gulach is against the moral code of our society. But there is nothing unnatural and amoral in their relation. They were united earlier, lived together as husband and wife for a few days. Kalai is Chenimai's husband unable to carry out his responsibility. He has the social recognition but has the economic capacity nor has the physical fitness. She is deprived of the maternal love. There is a desire for children in her heart for which she has her illegal relation with Gulach. This relation of Gulach and Chenimai is also a need for completeness of the plot. This relation with Chenimai has created the conflict between Gulach and Kapahi. Gulach's conjugal life with Kapahi for about three years is purely mechanical. There has been no union of hearts. Kapahi deceived him and made him compelled
to marry her. The conspiracy of Kapahi against Tora has a permanent mark in the mind of Gulach. Gulach wanted to have Tora as his life partner. Gulach did not know the illicit relation of Kapahi with Basirat. Moreover, Kapahi’s impotency made Gulach unhappy. Kapahi’s conspiracy for giving Tora to Tikhar has made Gulach uncontrollable. As a result, he has Kapahi out of his house. Above all, it is to note that Gulach, the hero of the novel is not a traditional hero but a common man with all the manly limitations. He is weak towards the female sex and is polygamous.

The struggle of Gulach for establishment is also an integral part of the story. He leaves the house with his mother and starts living on his own. Though the mother goes back to his father, he starts living with Kapahi ploughing the newly planned land. He quarrels with his mother. After his father’s death, his mother lives alone in that house. The land and property are separated (divided) between the son and the mother. Gulach has sold his share and has started living on cultivation on the bank of Dhanshiri. His relation with his family has an important role in the plot and has brought out the living picture of the life of Dalim Gaon – its socio-economic life and the cross-cultural and communal life of Hindu, Muslim and the Nepalese of the village.
The language of the novel is poetic. The zig-zag course of Dhanashiri and the natural beauty on its banks and the village life on both the sides have been drawn with a vivid description. The opening of the novel describes the background in a poignant and poetic language and urge. The narration has made the novel highly readable though it sometimes appears that the poetic urge is not essential for the development of the story. But this is a marked feature of Malik’s writing. There are four major characters in the novel – Gulach, Tora, Kapahi, and Chenimai. Gulach is a simple, hard-working and an up-coming youth. Love and weakness towards woman is one of the main features of his character. He elopes with Chenimai, accepts Kapahi, - older than him, as his wife. After marriage with Kapahi, his love and attraction towards Tora remains unaltered. He cannot consider the sexual matters in accordance with the code of morality. He has taken life and sex simply without formalities or idealism. He helps Chenimai at the time of her distress and continues the sexual relation even after her marriage with Kalai and his own marriage with Kapahi on the ground that once they loved each other. The mentionable aspect of such illicit relation is that Gulach never takes the initiative. What he does is that he accepts the offer and urge because he is helpless to help it.

Kapahi is another important character of the novel. She is aged but a hypocrite and the living example of sexual urge in woman. For sexual gratification, she deceives Tora and takes Gulach as her paramour first and the
husband next. She is a polygamous and that is why her first husband Nahar divorces her. She also has illicit relation with Basirat, which she continues after her marriage with Gulach. She tries her best for her establishment at any cost. She is very indifferent to moral codes and social obligation. She is selfish and self-centred in her design. Tora, on the other hand, is the symbol and personification of patience, sincere love and the sense of duty. She is at the opposite angle of Chenimai and Kapahi. This is a novel of social reality. It gives the picture of the Muslim people living on the bank of Dhanshiri. Critics and scholars are of the one opinion that this is the best of all the novels of Malik.

"Mai Ir Cərki (1959)", is the romantic novel of Malik where the novelist tries to bring out the life-view of an artist. The artist is a selfless man, centering round that there runs the love story of four female characters. The artist's attachment to these four women characters makes him compelled to come back to the earthly touch despite his highly imaginative nature. He cannot escape the human appeal in everything. He likes the claims and demands of Pari, the vanity and anger of Joba. He likes the fearless submission of Namita, the invisible love and reverence of the whore- Radha. He is not a beggar of love but he cannot reject the love offered by these women. Inspired by the deeper sense of humanism, he has taken the responsibility of treatment of Joba who has been suffering from tuberculosis. The humble request of Radha, Pari's sisterly claims and demands, Namita's beloved faith, all are his source of inspiration of his artistic life. The plot
of the novel is complex. The novel describes how the artist has come in touch with these four women characters. Among these four female characters, none cannot be given the front position. It is very difficult to decide who is central to the development of the story. All are equally important. But it can be said that Namita and Joba have played the larger part in the development of the story. Both are beloved of Hirannya, the artist. Namita has been waiting for Hirannya's return after rejecting the love of the handsome, educated youth, Paban Dutta, belonging to the privileged class. The wealth and position of Paban Dutta attracts her. But the attraction of worldly possession has nothing to do with the cordial attraction of Hirannya's heartful love and all embracing humanity. Pari and Radha's love towards Hirannaya are the sexual love in appearance but it can be said that their love is another manifestation of that. Radha knows that her love is not worth offering to Hirannya because she is a whore. She simply loves the artistic and soft heart of Hirannya. This love of her has turned into respect toward him. She has a man in him who sympathises for her troubles and unhappiness. Pari's sisterly claims and rights have the same sort of love mixed with. The lives of these four female characters make the artist highly influenced because the creative power works in its deep feeling for the humanity and its well and woes. Hirannya, the artist has been influenced by the distress and unhappiness of Joba and Radha. But as an artist, he has more been influenced by the attraction for beauty in life and creation.
Malik's "Anja A'kas/ Anja Tara (1962)" has similarity with "Ma'tjr C'aki". In "Ma'tjr C'aki" there are four female characters circling round the hero. Here in this novel, there are three female characters circling round the character of Dr. Raihan, a liberal, educated and rich idealist. At the bottom of the story, there is the uncertainty and communal conflict. Dr. Raihan gives shelter to the victims of the communal riot. He feels for the victims and has been influenced by humanism. The novel depicts the love between Dr. Raihan and Naji, daughter of a poor schoolteacher. The love has been growing right from their childhood. It (the novel) also depicts the relation between Dr. Raihan and Parvin whom he met at the dawn of his youth. The novel also gives a vivid picture of relation between Dr. Raihan and Aparna, who is a victim of the communal riot in Pakistan. Dr. Raihan’s relation with these three women in different circumstances and their analysis are the subject matter of this novel. The story of the novel is complex. Naji is a divorced woman and a companion at the childhood of Dr. Raihan. She is the daughter of Jelal Master, a schoolteacher and once an actor. He is a poor, unsuccessful old man but he is an invincing man. He might have hoped for a conjugal relation between his daughter and Dr. Raihan. But the force of circumstances has not permitted that. After completing his studies in London, Dr. Raihan enters into his service in World War-II. When he returns he meets Naji, a poor, divorced and neglected woman. His relation with Parvin grows up when they are college mates. But they do not opened their mind and as acceptable proposal comes Parvin is married to someone else. The division of India into Bharat and Pakistan resulted into communal riot in Pakistan. Aparna, a Bengali
girl becomes the victim of that riot. When she comes to India, she took shelter in the house of Dr. Raihan. After a long time, Dr. Raihan returns home and comes into the relation with Naji, Parvin and Aparna. His humane behaviour with them is the subject matter of the novel. He has given the half of his property to Naji, and has arranged for Aparna’s marriage and establishment. Though he does not get Naji, Parvin and Aparna in his life, he has all of them in heart and has started living a savage life with them.

There are similarities between the heroes of “Ma'tir Çak'í” and “Anja A'kas' Anja Tara”. Both are novels of character. Dr. Raihan and Hiranya Chaudhury, both are imaginative and idealists. They are not common people. Malik, the poet in essence, creates a world of imagination, describes the characters with relation to that world and leads the readers to that world unknowingly.

“Ruptīrthar jātrī(Paral, 1963, Part-II, 1965)” is Malik’s another representative novel. This a biographical novel based on the life of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, the artist. The artist’s pilgrimage to the shrine of beauty is narrated in imaginative language. The artist’s search for beauty, his creative impulse, his experience of life and his life-view have become the subject matter of the novel. The novelist has become successful in recreating the life of the artist. The events
and incidents of the artist’s life are not presented as it was in the novel. They are presented as they have been received by the imagination and idealism of the novelist. The novel narrates the history of twenty years of the life of the hero, the potential time of the artist’s revolutionary mind and creative impulse. The novelist has made a selection of the events and circumstance of the life of the artist. Only those that have relation with the progress of the artistic life of the hero are accepted and given colour of imagination and idealism. In the narration of the incidents and events, the chronological order is not maintained, only the artistic mind and creative impulse of the hero have been given the overall importance – “The worship of beauty is the game of life”, the ideal of his life. This is a one-man novel. All other characters in this novel are men and women met by him here and there on the way, who are fellow pilgrimage of the hero. But the female characters in this novel have played an important role in the development of the plot and the character of the hero. The four female characters are – Miranda, Rachna, Chili and Shabitri, the wife of the hero. The minor characters that have come to the closeness of the hero and have impact upon his life are – Hiranyai, the young brave female freedom fighter and female teacher- Fulmai. The relation between Miranda and Jyotirmay, the hero has been shown as a relation of romantic world. There is no physical relation between the two. The force of time has separated them but without breaking the relation. She is the source of inspiration for Jyotirmay through out his life. On the other hand, Rachna, another woman is the artist. He realizes the creative imagination in her acting. She is an actress, a crucial need and a grand success. Other than this, Jyotirmay is
indifferent to all other facts of her personality. Chili, another woman loves Jyotirmay, loves without asking any return. Jyotirmay also loves her, enjoys her company but without any desire. In the second part of the novel, Jyotirmay has come to meet different characters in his disorderly life. His artistic mind attracts them. In first part, the artist predominates but in the second part, he is primarily a revolutionary, a leader of the people. The young and brave woman, Hiranya who has laid down her life for liberty, the underground woman Fulmai, brave fighter Bijoy Rava, the spy Joseph and all other characters have come to the contact of the hero.

"Omal Gharar Dhuli (1964)" is based on the preparation for the confusion of a murder. The background is a tea garden. The tragedy of the murder, Bhagavan Das and his family is expressed in this novel. The novel also depicts the unruly conjugal life of the seducer, Manik Barua. His wife is a narcist who refuses the sexual union with him. Consequently, he goes on seducing young girls one after another. This has become the very cause of the quarrel between the husband and the wife. In essence, both the husband and the wife are psychologically abnormal. Mr. Barua has been suffering from Megalomania who has not only destroyed his own conjugal happiness but also the family of honest and pious labourer Bhagavan Das by seducing his wife and killing her afterwards. He does not stop killing Lakhidiya, the wife of Bhagavan Das, rather, he continues in his devilish design by seducing another village girl. Bhagavan Das happened to
be there suddenly and protected the girl from Barua. In order to save the girl, he has to kill Barua. Though the novel narrates the sad story of Bhagavan Das, the abnormal character and behaviour of Barua and his wife occupy the major part of the story. This has a special importance in the plot. The novel exposed through the mouth of Bhagavan Das, while he was in the prison hall, that there is no difference between the prison and the outer world in the life of the bounded labourers.

Another representative novel of Malik is "A'dhārśīla(1966)". The novel depicts a youth whose fatherhood is unknown. The plot is divided into six parts i.e., 1. A village, 2. A town, 3. Away from the village and the town, 4. Another town, 5. Another town and 6. The former familiar village. This novel gives a picture of the hero’s struggle for establishment against the odds of life and the indifference and ill treatment of the society. Other characters in this novel encircles round the character of the hero. The hero has been suffering from the stigma of unknown fatherhood and inferiority complex. Samir, the hero, is an illegitimate son of Sonpahi. He was born before her marriage. Sonpahi never told him the name of his father. She kept it a guarded secret throughout her life. The first part of the novel deals with the childhood of the hero upto primary education in school. In this portion, he preserves in his memory the love and affection of his maternal father-in-law, the sisterly affection of Pava, sometimes with a sexual indication and the social hatred towards him as an ill-begotten child. He passes
the second part of his life in a town in the house of his uncle (a distant relative) Ahmed, a contractor. His wife Julekha takes him (Samir) with motherly love but her behaviour with him sometimes becomes curious. The behaviour of Purnananda, a schoolteacher and his wife are the only source of consolation in Samir’s life. It was the time of World War-II. The educational institutions were requisited and were occupied by the soldiers. Earning money through unfair means had become the way of life. Samir joined the same. By contract, he earned a huge amount of money. This is the third part of his life. At the end of war, he returned with the money. His education has become to an end and he does not want to return to the house of Ahmed. He does not want to go to his home as his mother has been married to Hasmat, an old man of his village. Rather, he wants to stay at another town. His stay at that town is the fourth part of his life. His past life is a bitter one, society identifies him as a bastard and his future is uncertain. He lives in “now” only by searching enjoyment in drinking and in visiting the prostitutes. At such a critical moment of his life, he met Dr. Mahashin and Chenehi who taught him to see the world in a new light. Dr. Mahashin is a philanthropist and Chenehi, a nurse. Chenehi has a daughter named Jinia. The love and affection of all these there characters have an impact upon Samir’s mind that he can never forget. Therefore, he has changed his commercial and negative approach toward this world and has started to see the world with a new outlook. Despite all the difficulties of his life, he cannot forget the sisterly love of Pava, his companion during childhood. He goes to her. With the help of Pava, Sonpahi got the chance to go to the house of her brother when her husband died. Samir gets
the mental peace through the sisterly love of Pava. Unfortunately, his mother died two days before he returned to his village. He is shocked that he could not see his mother at the time of her death. Also that throughout her life, he had neglected her. Even at her death, she left another illegitimate child. Samir has promised to rebuild the broken Masjid of his village and to make the grave of his mother concrete. He has taken the responsibility of bringing the illegitimate child of Sonpahi up, and leaves the village.

The sub-plot comprises of Sonpahi’s pathetic life, the episode of Samir’s meeting with Dr. Mahashin, Chenehi and Jinia and the episode of Juti. Sonpahi never saw happiness in her life. She has committed a blunder by surrendering herself to someone before her marriage. She is made an outcaste in the society. None accepts her beauty and youth. At last, she is married to an old man, a widower. There too, she became the victim of the animal passion of Jafar, Hasmat’s worthless son. She cannot stand before the force of circumstance and ultimately commits the second mistake by yielding to the evil intention of Jafar. She gave birth to another illegitimate child by Jafar. In surface observation, Jyoti is a bad girl, who has taken prostitution for earning her livelihood. But the circumstances that made her compelled to do so cannot be ignored. Poverty and hypocrisy have led her to the path of prostitution. Dr. Mahashin rescued her from the evil path and the sympathy of Samir taught her to start a new life. Samir is the only source of mental peace for Jyoti. Samir gave her shelter on the ground of
humanity and not on other consideration. The life of Samir, the hero has become
the life of a wounded man subject to decay. He has an inborn hatred and
disgustion for society for which he cannot live as a normal man, i.e., at par with
other men. The society marginalized him as an ill-begotten and outcaste one. Dr.
Mahasin taught him to see the world in a new light. Chenehi also contributed to
this to an extent. She has taken him as her younger brother and Jinia as her elder
sister because they are also beggars of love. The presentation of prostitution, in
this novel is not realistic. Open prostitution in Assamese society is unrealistic.
The illegitimate children abound in the plot – Chenehi, Jinia and Samir. Sonpahi
gives birth to two illegitimate children. This makes the plot stereotyped. However,
the social place of the illegitimate child has occupied the place of predominance
in this novel.

“Aghari Atma r Ka’hini (1969)” is Malik’s another representative novel.
This is a subjective novel, which presents the confession of three unsettled
characters as its subject matter. They are product of the modern society who have
no moorings. These three characters are – Sashanka, Niranjan and Apara.
Sashanka and Niranjan are friends from their childhood, as well as classmates.
Afterwards they do not meet for a long time. They incidentally meet in the house
of Sashanka. Sashanka is the son of a wealthy man who was a minister once. He
is a victim of the sense of guilt. He has seen the brutality of his father. Another
prick in his conscience is that he had unknowingly made a small girl, named
Aparajita sightless. Suffering from these two guilts, he leaves his house. He comes to the closeness of a Marathi girl in Calcutta but does not marry her. He avoids the marriage in the name of self-respect. The girl, Saya has to commit suicide at last. This is another cause for Sashank's nomadic life. He has started independent business after his father's death. Now, it has become his duty to rescue and protect the parental property from Mriganka, the worthless elder brother of him. Aparajita whom Sashanka made sightless has become young, practises music and acting, and has fallen in love with Mriganka. Mriganka has deceived her. The selfless social worker and the idealist Niranjan has fallen in love with her and married her. But she cannot segregate her relation totally from Mriganka, her first lover. Her married life with Niranjan has come to unhappiness as they were issueless and also that the conjugal relation has become a mechanical one as a result of Apara's confession of her relation with Mriganka. Niranjan has turned to be a man depressed and indifferent to life. Apara has taken the task of a social worker. Niranjan has died in an accident. Thus, the characters of the novel are bourgeois in mind and the novel depicts the bourgeois world vividly.

"Sonaili Suta're Bandha (1972)" is another representative novel of Malik. This novel depicts the affection towards an impotent husband and the unbound urge for children of the heroine, Rita. Her husband Pabitra Chaliha is a handsome man with property and affluence who can give love to her but not a child. This has been revealed by Dr. Kakati, familiar to Rita. She begged for her motherhood
from Dr. Kakati not as a doctor but as a potent man. Dr. Kakati has become helpless before the beauty and youth of Rita and yielded to the urge of Rita. Rita has given birth to a child and has felt the success of female life. Dr. Kakati has gone to America for higher studies. Though Rita has become the mother of a child, she does not have the happiness of life. She has been suffering from the guilt of betraying the faith and love of her husband. There has come a great wall of gap between the husband and the wife. Rita cannot accept her only daughter, Nandita whole-heartedly. She informs her husband that Nandita is not his daughter but of Dr. Kakati. Still, Pabitra Chaliha has taken the responsibility of Nandita as his own daughter and let Rita free from her marriage bond. Rita has decided to go to America in search of Dr. Kakati. The novel has presented the conflict between the code of society and morality and the inborn urge of human heart.

"Kantāha (1989)" is a short story (in length) about a little man (less important). That life is an amalgamation of delight and despair is at the centre of the novel. Moin, the small shopkeeper of a shop of ‘pan’ learns the lesson in course of the story that the real friends in our life are love and self-confidence at the time of distress when our fair-weather friends desert us. A parallel comes to our mind, i.e., the story ‘A Piece of String’ by Moupassant.
"BanJui (1956)" is a romantic novel written on a rural background. The novel depicts human love through the characters of Golap, Jona, Premdhar and Makhan. The novelist has shown that man is the reservoir of love whether a good man or a bad man. The plot has been made of the events during World War-II. The social condition of Assam has been depicted in the novel. It shows the social degradation and the evil practices of the people in various responsibilities of maintaining peace and order.

"Rathar Cakari Ghure (1950)" is written on the bizarre life of the middle class and the emergence of a political movement in Assam. The novelist was a Marxist while writing the novel. He has shown the nobility of love in this novel. There are a number of female characters - Bina, Mandira, Reba, Upama, Aparajita, Nagini and Leena encircling round Kamal, a student of anthropology. Bina is the representative of the socialistic view of life. Upama symbolizes the oppressions of her forefathers. Taking of her guardianship shows the broadness of the heart of Madhab. All the characters mentioned are influenced by the socialistic idealism and joined the revolution for social change. Kamal's knowledge has been proved bookish and useless. All of them feel themselves lonely in the troublesome journey of life. The predominance of socialistic idealism has turned the novel into a novel of propagation of ideas.
"Dhanja Naratanu Bha'i(1987)" is a biographical novel written on the life of Srimanta Sankardev. It is a novel of discussion enjoying immense popularity. The purpose of the novelist here is not to write the life of the protagonist but to describe his humanistic philosophy and his aesthetic mind and creation. The teacher (Sankardev) is not installed in the Thapona of Namghar but is installed in the heart of the people. The Guru is not depicted as a Guru but as a man of flesh and blood. Towards the end of the novel, Sankardev tells his disciples a few things, which are not only the sum and substance of his teachings but also are the comments of the novelist. That, to establish man as man is his religion and his duty: "It is the duty of man to direct the ways of human life, to shape and reshape human outlook, hopes and ideals. To make a man as man is the duty of man (transl. mine, 285)." Malik has done a noble job by writing this novel on the life of Sankardev, the first novel on his life.

"Dr. Arunabh Asampurna Jibani(1957)" is a psychological novel. It deals with the inner conflict of the hero who has a strong thirst for knowledge and is psychological by nature. The novel is written in the form of a New Biography. The character of the hero is depicted with the help of his diary, letters and comments of other characters upon him. As the identity of Dr. Arunabh is not mentioned, it can fairly be concluded that it is a novel of character. The centre of the novel is the hero and his love for human beings – Uttara, Basanta, Shewali, Meena, Joseph, Dr. Masum and Dusmanta Talukdar. The novel shows the
novelist's inborn qualities like fellow feeling, sensuousness, thoughtfulness, poetic capability and social awareness.

“Nal – Birinā Khaṅgari(1973)” is a novel of the six seasonal changes of a village named Maujuri. The story narrates the environment of the village. It describes the rivers and the streams, natural changes of the rural scene throughout the year, describes the peasants, their hopes and aspirations, their customs and prejudices, their love and cordiality, their simple ideas and beliefs, their well and woes of life. The story develops through the conversation of the village folk and the comments made by the novelist. The colloquial language used by the villagers is the point of attraction in the novel. The objectivity of presentation in the novel is highly admirable. An unbound love for rural life has been presented with meticulous correctness. The success of the novel lies in its presentation of a simple and healthy way of life. It gives us the picture of the life of a carpenter. Kan, Jonaki, Bikodar and Rupali – all petty individuals in the vast human society like the Nal, Birina and Khagari in the midst of the natural objects. They are sons and daughters of the soil with an eternal touch. They do not know the modern hopes and aspirations, and are far away from the modern complexities of life. This novel is of great literary merit: “This is one of the best-written and well-read novels of Malik (transl. mine, Kakati, P, 1979, 22).”
Malik's "Amar Ma'ya(1970)" depicts the heart rending history of an absconding murderer. Rahan, the murderer has taken the shelter in the house of Maya on a hill who killed her savage father and husband. Rahan's confession generates sympathy in the heart of Maya instead of anger and hatred. She keeps his presence a secret before the police. Accidental meeting, unexpected happenings and romantic imagination have prevailed over the story. It is the humane love and fellow feeling, which have raised the story from merely a confession of a criminal to the level of a remarkable work of art, a novel. "Amar Ma'ya" is in words of the novelist: "the unspoken story of the pangs of two hearts (Malik, Egār Kathā′, 3rd Edn, 1996)." This is an idealistic novel presented in a dramatic way. Maya, an young widow resides with her old and blind mother. The criminal absconding from the jail named, Amar came one night and asked Maya's shelter. Amar, the eloped criminal told Maya his story: "Once, a rich man from the city ruined the chastity of Amar's two sisters (elder and younger). The man killed the elder sister and kept the younger one as a house cleaner in someone's house at a distant place. The younger sister gave birth to an illegitimate son whose name is Nahar. Nahar has been found to be none but the boy who works at Maya's house. Amar took revenge by killing that rich man. He killed the son-in-law of that rich man because he once ruined the chastity of Amar's wife. Amar was imprisoned for the murders. Amar escaped from the jail to kill the daughter of the rich man but he could not. The humane behaviour of the woman compelled Amar to leave his plan of revenge." Amar says: "The sufferings and purity of the
heart of the woman killed the ferocious animal in Amar. His mind knelt before the woman (translation, mine, Amar Ma’ya’, 66).

The novel “Kabita’r Na’m La’bha (1956)” is a novel of character. It draws the character of Bharati, a beautiful and cultured female teacher. Her husband is a poet. He is impotent. This makes Bharati frustrated in life. By the time, Sarat, a youth has arrived in Bharati’s life. Bharati undergoes a strong conflict, a conflict between social values and traditions in one hand, and an urge for complete enjoyment of life on the other. There are analysis of the unemployment problem and political condition of Assam. It has been shown that Assamese establishment is not possible only with the help of political power while the economic power has been in the hands of the non-Assamese. These sorts of socio-economic and political discussions were not essential for the development of the plot. But this shows the novelist’s, social awareness.

“Satjar Pathere, Šantir Rathere, Muktir Jayja’tra (1993)” is a novel written on the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his philosophy of life. The novelist has depicted Muhammad ((PBUH)) not as a superman but as a man of flesh and blood. Islam has not been shown as a religious creed but as a complete, healthy and peaceful way of life. The novel may help the readers clearing their doubts and confusions about the prophet and the religion: “Hajarat Muhammad
(PBUH) too led his life through the well and woes of life like others. As he wept at the death of his children, so also he celebrates with friends in marriage parties with the other persons. He was always cheerful and smiling. He treats his friends and relatives as hilariously and humorously as he used to treat his family members. If not against morality, he liked singing songs. He liked the poems of the Arabic poets very much. He did not forbid the female singers to sing songs in marriages and parties if that was not anti-moral. He himself beat the open drums in marriages. He never forbade games and sports, pleasures and delights, songs and celebrities, provided, they are not naked or anti-moral. He participated in wrestling, sports, archery etc. he advised Hasan, his son-in-law to write poems in reply to the poem against Islam, written by a non-Muslim. He said that a Muslim crusades with both the sword and the words. He was a man infinitely gracious and forgiving (transl. mine, 93).” He was a keen observer of this world: Muhammad (PBUH) could not find the truth he had been searching for, so he searches that truth in the concrete world and its objects and animals, in the sky and the planets and stars. The world was the source of knowledge for him. (trans. mine, 95). Hajarat Muhammad’s (PBUH) works and manners influenced his followers. He was “gentle and humble, benevolent and bold. He helped the orphan and the poor, the deprived and the victimized, with all and everything (transl. mine, 106).” The novelist gives a brief summery of the teaching of Hajarat Muhammad (PBUH): “The main purpose of Islamic life –view was to establish a selfless fraternal relation among men. Assume that what is good and acceptable for you, that is also good and acceptable for us. Love your fellow-
brothers as you love yourself. Go on doing good to others selflessly. Respect the sentiments of others. Consider all and everybody as brothers and belonging to the same human society, do well, and think good for all. Build up a brotherly relation of humanity through reciprocal co-operation.” One day someone asked Hajarat Muhammad (PBUH), “Which Islam is best?” He replied, “Provide food to the hungry and the poor. Welcome and greet and honour those whom you know and those whom you do not know,- that is the best Islam.”

Another popular novel of Malik is Ma’jat Ma’thon Himālay. It is a successful and fascinating novel expressing his experience in USSR. It is a beautiful collection of colourful scenes and rare experiences which bear the romances of a travel. The style of narration and description are Malik’s own. The novel has a resemblance with Hem Baruah’s fascinating travel memories. It has both the flavour of a novel and a short story. The history, society and people of Soviet Union are enlivened with bits of colourful pictures. For this novel, he was awarded the Nehru Award in 1965.

“Tris’ul (1968)” is a psychological novel of Malik. The subject matter of the novel is the story of Mrinal and Uttara. Poor Surjakanti, a young girl was raped by some wicked men. As a result, she became pregnant. She approaches Mrinal for help in this situation. Mrinal is sympathetic towards Surjakanti. He
assures her of help and asks whether she wants to live in this world or not. She has become perplexed and commits suicide that night. This incident has left a permanent mark in Mrinal’s mind. Uttara, another girl, has become disturbed in her mind by witnessing the scene of illicit sexual union of her mother. She has become doubtful of her fatherhood. She becomes doubly shocked by the suicide of her father and an elder brother. She is married to Mrinal. But there is no mental union between them. Uttara considers that her marriage with Mrinal is a kin of justice one to him as she is not certain about the legitimacy of her birth. Mrinal on the other hand, makes himself responsible for the death of Surjakanti. He feels the guilt of a murderer. Uttara tries to make him understand his innocence, but fails. Mrinal says: “The greatest enemy of man is his past …… and them, his memory. Man enters into certain complexities unwillingly. Later on, that circumstance takes its own course and takes the shape of a terrible fate in his life.” The novel is an attempt showing the reaction of the sensitive mind against the modern way of life.

“Eita Surja, Dukhan Nadī A ru Ekhan Marubhumī (1972) is an exceptional novel of Mailk. The novel is written on the basis of Indian classical music. At the untimely death of Razzak Ansari, his wife Gulnar, a young woman has taken to learn music under Ustad Jahagir Khan. Jamila and Sajjad are also students of Jahangir Khan. Gulnar was under the guardianship of Ustad Jaypuri. After a long period, Ustad Jaypuri has come to take Gulnar and his daughter Jamila back from Ustad Jahangir Khan when the story reaches its climax, Gulnar thinks that leaving
her teacher Jahangir Khan who is old and unmarried will be an act of ungratefulness. On the other hand, Ustad Jaypuri is her well wisher who once supported her at the time of distress. She cannot go against his will. Sajjad thinks that Jamila is the only source of consolation for Ustad Jahangir Khan at his old age. It will not be justified to take her away from him. Though there is a gulf of difference in age, the Ustad has unbound love for Jamila. Ustad Jahangir Khan has a sense of dignity and a respect for his age and profession. He wants Jamila and Sajjad to be united in marriage. He wants that Gulnar should be given under the guardianship of one of her relatives. All the characters of the novel are of good conscience, sacrificing attitude though there is difference of purpose among them. As a result, there prevails a pathetic picture among them which does not leave the readers untouched. The equilibrium of reason and emotion in the minds of the characters has been maintained skillfully. The description of the social environment of this novel is a new thing in Assamese literature. This is for the first time in Assamese novel that Malik has selected the background of his novel from outside Assam. This is one of the few readable novels of Assamese literature.

Malik started writing short stories before the World War II and can claim the authorship of the largest number of short stories in Assamese literature. He selected characters from different walks of life and portrayed them in his short stories. He is aware of the wide variety of human life and human experience.
Characters in his stories are men and women of the earth. His narration is characterized by long introductions and verbose descriptions. He has the artistic charm as a storyteller. Stories dealing with class struggle have a propagandist flavour in them. His famous story "Pran Powar Piqhat" is a long story that covers the life of many years but there is the unity of feeling, purpose and goal in it. The central feeling of the story is to express the various nature of human mind. The heroine, Jury is a common girl who learns the skill of dancing from Hemanta. She has become popular as a dancer, but all on a sudden, she leaves Hemanta and turns to Prakash Phukan. The first half of the story shows a love for idealism in Jury’s character. In the second half, this idealism has become dark and the commitment has become an utter failure. The story expresses the fact that the influence of time and circumstances are unlimited upon the evolution of human nature. “Kathphula” is a story bearing the feeling belonging to the Awa’han period but the writers has tried to come out of that world and enter onto the post-war period. This story is longer than “Pran Powar Piqhat" but a more successful story of Malik. The narration is poetic. The most important quality of the story is its psychological analysis of characters. There is sexual urge between Mamtaaz and Bedana but they never were united. Mamtaaz, a factory worker, while returning from his day’s work met Bedana on the way. She is helpless and houseless. He kept her in his house. They stayed like husband and wife but without physical relation. They loved each other. Mamtaaz gives his consent for the marriage of Bedana to the doctor. He has undergone an inner torture but cannot go against the happiness of Bedana. “jis’ukhra’tar Qheli” is clear picture of Malik’s
humanism. The hero is a soldier who has taken part in both the two World Wars and has been traveling from country to country. He meets two little girls of the age of his own daughter at his house. He remembers the daughter at home and loves the little girls. There are no romantic feelings in the story. This is a complete shift of Malik from romanticism of the pre-war period to the realism of the post-war period. The humane appeal of the story is similar to that of “Ka’buliwa’la” by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Both are pictures of human heart above all complexities. Another realistic story of Malik is his “Hari Ma’shtarar Dokain”. This story pictures the struggle of the teacher Harinath Bora with poverty for his existence. The writer as a realistic one with no artificiality has portrayed his character.

“Para/mani (1946)” is the first collection of short stories of Malik receiving immense popularity among the readers. The writer himself says of the collection: “My first collection of short stories “Para/mani” was first published in 1946. This collection was reprinted in 1962. This collection consists of the stories written during 1935-1945. Among the stories a few like “Kathphula” become very popular. “Kathphula” was translated into different languages and was broadcast through the radio. A film was produced based on this story”. He further said in connection with his story “Para/mani”: “Para/mani is an imaginative stone (touchstone) in touch of which an ordinary stone is transmuted into gold. Similarly, in touch of Almighty, human life is freed from the filthiness of
this world and become brighter (trans. mine, Saikia, Nagen, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 26).” The first story “Acjna'kiri Arghja” occurred in a ship called “Luçari” and deals with the incident of a little boy about to fall down from the ship and ultimately saved by Aman, a co-passenger. Though the parentage and all other things about the boy were unknown to Aman, he ventured to save the boy on humanitarian ground: “Anyway, he is a human child. The potentiality of a full man and truth has been in him (transl. mine, 481).” This very humanitarian consideration has made the character of Aman and the story itself immortal one. The story ends with recognition of this humanitarian act of Aman when the parents as well as the boy leave the ship with a ‘namaskar’. The second story, “ji’su Khрештар C̄habi” deals with the fatherly love of a soldier towards two unknown children. The soldier envisages the picture of his own children while he observes the Rupis (the unknown children) laughing and playing: “They (the soldier’s own children) too laugh this way, fear this way and play this way. They sit on my lap this way. They came running and embrace me calling me ‘daddy’ when I return from somewhere. My heart cries out whenever I see such girls playing (transl. mine, 492).” The soldier presents a picture of Jesus Christ to Rupis while he is transferred to another camp. The story has become popular for its presentation of the soldier engaged in war and at the same time having a heart filled with paternal love.
"Maram - Maram Lage (New Publication 1995)," the collection which has been titled after the title of the first story. The story was written in 1940. The story shows the nature of love which does not know the boundaries laid down by society. Love of Malbhog towards Mastarani, a married woman is a love beyond the love of flesh. It is the love between two hearts, pure and eternal. It is generated by the memory of a few days and sufficient to entail the tears of Mastarani now of departure: "Mastarani wiped out her eyes (trans. mine, 22)."

The story "Relar A'hir Dubari Ban" shows the cruelty of the rich people towards the poor. Phukan, the rich man does not consider the poor as men. He indulges in inhuman activities. He has beaten Kartik like a poor dog for merely criticizing him for his evil activities. The story has shown the moral degeneration of the materialistic wealthy men. They are blinded by their pride of wealth and cannot consider man as man. "Anves'yan" narrates the love-story of Amitabh, the poet and Prova, the harlot. The story shows the middle class outlook at war with the materialistic ideology. Amitabh criticizes Ziban, the communist: "You, the materialist do not believe in the eternal, do not believe in the infinite. You accept birth but not the lives following; accept life as the instant of being but not as the part of the inseparable universe (earth). I too do not believe in lives following, that is I doubt that man will get life after death (transl. mine, 59-60)." Ziban is a communist who thinks that the society can be changed desirably only when there is socio-economic revolution (82). Amitabh’s reaction to the revolution is that Ziban looks for the negative. He says: "You have been struggling for the rescue of these Probhas as a class. But you cannot shake off your age-old
prejudices. You consider the harlots as harlots, not as human beings. But I consider man as man irrespective of his / her profession. We should give them the dignity of men and then judge them otherwise.” The story ends with the adventure of Ziban and Probha to search and rescue of Amitabh, a search symbolizing the endless and continuous struggle of human life for something which man himself does not know. It gives the story the touch, that man be termed as “ending without an ending, a search without a goal.” The story “Prāṇeṣe ḟetiya’ NubuJe” depicts the love of Sneha towards Hira. The story has a similarity with Hemingway’s “For whom the Bell Tolls.” It shows the fickleness of the female mind, especially that of the educated middle class. The story ends with Sneha’s longing for Hira, the deserving one. “jaubanar Nis’vas” depicts the love of Rekha and Razat. The story is a beautiful study in character in the present-day intellectual and social context. It shows the writer’s communist bend of mind and ideals through the character of the protagonist. “Dharma’li” depicts the love of Ahsan Habib and Tasnim and the service of Ruhi, the nurse. The love depicted here in this story is pure and sacred, love between two hearts that runs a tough course due to some unavoidable circumstances and co-incidences. “Hari Maṣṭarar Doka’n” pictures the struggle of the teacher Harinath Bora with poverty for his existence. The writer as a realistic one with no artificiality has portrayed his character.

“Tīnī Ḷakīyaʼ Gāṛi” is a story full of humanitarian appeal. It narrates the past of Jabid;’s life. His father is tortured by his two brothers and leaves house
with his family i.e., his wife and three small sons. He starts the shop of spices in a
three-wheeled cart. He brings his sons up successfully despite numberless
problems. They all become good men of social position. The ordinary woman
who gives shelter to Jabid's father has shown the humanity of a poor but broad
heart. "Japana" portrays the characters of two teachers, Padma Thakur and
Pallab Chaudhury. They are poor. Padma Thakur knows the art of living through
struggles with poverty. Pallab Chaudhury has the determination to change his lot.
He participates the meeting organized by Avyudaya Shanga though his mother
was ill. He knows that cultural movement is more necessary than political
movement for changing the economic structure of a country. In this light, it can be
said that the subject matter of this story is more realistic and new. This shows the
awareness of the writer of the contemporary sensibility. There is, in this story, a
criticism of the capitalists and the politicians in the character of Pradip Duwara
and Sridhar Phukan. There is the picture of the social and moral degeneration.
Maya, a woman character has come out of her house in search of livelihood by the
prohibited business of body. "Bibhatsa Bedana" exhibits the cruelty meted to the
common people as a result of the communal conflict at the time of the division of
India into Hindusthan and Pakistan. Many for his naked descriptions criticized
Malik. But Malik took it as a natural reaction of the readers and critics. Though
the description is naked and unquoth, it is equally real and artistically appropriate.
A youth, called Dipak unclothes two women. The unclothing may be taken as
unclothing the so-called civilized society of ours. The story is a record of the
darker period of the history of India. "Bivatsa Bedana" is an uncommon and
exceptional story in Assamese literature. Many critics criticized the story considering vulgar and obscene. Regarding this criticism, Malik said: "That was not an unexpected experience in my literary and political life" (trans. mine, Utsarga, Bivatsha Bedana, Barua, Usharani, ibid, 105). The dramatic presentation, spontaneity of description, inner conflict, and the reaction of characters make the story an immortal one. "Q'ftar" is Malik's another story which has established his psychological realism in literature. The story shows the actions and reactions of the characters. The conversation between Prakash Gunda and Kanehan Byashya reveals their mental world. Kanchan, the wife of Raichaudhury is not happy, though they are wealthy and powerful. She considers their conjugal relation to be a sort of prostitution, a mere union of bodies and not of hearts. The story develops through conversation and not through narration. "A' Jokha'" is a story, which gives us a humane description of the poverty-ridden life of Manik, a simple and common man. Side by side, we get the sympathy of Manik's aunt. Well-knit plot construction, controlled description and linguistic economy contribute much to the success of the story. "Phrī Ka'por" gives the picture of a poor man who steals the festoons of political parties canvassing for vote. The man hangs those festoons during daytime and steals them during night asserting the reason that this kind of opportunity will come after a period of five years only. In addition, that he has not the ability to purchase new clothes. He is a poor man, named Dhaniram. This story depicts the disillusions of a democratic country like ours and the hypocrisies of our political leaders and social workers. "Maram" shows the soft corner of the heart of the captain, Bibekananda who
killed two hundred and fifty soldiers in the battlefield. The captain weeps when the baby of his domestic dog dies before him with a helpless sight in its eyes. The story may be taken as a presentation of the dictum: "love begets love." "Sihā't Natjage" portrays the character of a girl who is a juggler and who performs her jugglery in public places. She is young and beautiful. She knows that people enjoy her youth and beauty and insults her. She bears all those with her simple smiles. Nobody knows that there is a cruel poverty behind her smiles. This is the subject matter of the story, not Mafiz’s purpose of writing story. "Alap Da war Alap Pohar" portrays the skill and sincerity of Dr. Phukan. Such a doctor attempting to poison the daughter of his previous beloved Gayatri Chaliha is a rare experience. He does not undergo any mental conflict while doing so. There is no evil design in his mind when he says, "I am a doctor not a man." He does so in order to release the tortured soul of the girl, Basana, a service towards humanity. "Bhā'ga Ghar" shows the undesirable relation between the haves and the have-nots. Fakir is a poor man who lives in a rented house of Raisaheb. Raisaheb get him out along with his family at night as Fakir fails to pay the rent. The family has to take shelter in the house of a schoolteacher. The humanitarian fellow-feeling of the teacher shows the distant hope for the poor family. "Maris'atir Maran" portrays the helplessness of human being in the hands of an unknown power – 'fate'. "Dukhan Bharf" is a small but a good story. Satyam, the advocate was attracted by the beauty of the feet of Amala, the daughter of Raibahadur. But when Satyam learns that Raibahadur stepped over the body of a freedom fighter with his equally beautiful feet, his attraction towards the feet of
Amala fades away. Outward beauty has nothing to do with the hero. "A'biska'ir" is a complex story. Arunabh presides over the meeting at noon, attends the invitation at his would-be father-in-law's house at night, meets his would-be wife, Anjana, and while returning home has an illicit union with Sandita, the organizer of family planning. Arunabh studies the picture of Adam by Michael Angelo and misinterprets it. This is a story depicting the evil practices of our society, its artificiality and hypocrisy. "Çakrabehu" is a small story which portrays the honesty of Khaund and the I.T.I. This is a well-constructed story reflecting the idealism of Premchand.

Many critics notice the romantic feelings, excess of love and looseness of language in his (Malik's) novels and stories. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma says: "Verbosity of dialogue, humanism, excess of sexual life, romantic feelings and emotions, sympathy for the poor and the oppressed, poetic language are the general characteristics of Malik's novel (transl. mine, Asamiya Sa'hitjar Samim k'0sa'tmak Itibr'tja, 1998, 402)." Dr. Nagen Saikia says: "But these are not the last words about Malik. He has a deep sympathy for the common man, there is no doubt about that, but he has no hatred towards Dr. Arunabh and the characters of "Çhabighar". There remains a good man amongst the evils, and Malik searches out this good man. That man may be Bedana, rescued from the road, may be the scoundrel, Samir, may be the harlots like Champa or Maina, - and may be many others. Poverty may not let man remain good. Shall we make poverty or man
responsible for? All the stories and novels say that the man concerned should not be made responsible. The causes or the circumstances that made the man evildoer, those causes or circumstances are to be blamed. The humanism expressed through this has been over-flooded the whole writing of Malik. Many amongst them have become pure after repentance, there is Milad amongst them, there is the committed soldier, there is the boy who answered question number six, there is the wife of the station Master having the taste of black sweet fruit (Jamu), there is the nomad girl showing her jugglery. Hari Mastor, Abid – Satyam Chaudhury, Golap, Kapahi, Tora, Basir, Arunabh, Azad, poverty ridden father, young mother, absconding Golap Mastor – all such characters. They belong to our lower class, lower – middle class and middle – class life. Malik knows them – knows their speech of heart, speech of tongue, their dresses, manners and customs, their ways of life, their guilt and limitations, their powers and weaknesses. A petty story and a negligible character become lively and beautiful in Malik’s hands as a piece of wood turns a beautiful image in the hands of a sculptor. He creates them by his cordial love. He himself said that he goes on writing the song of their lives after making the braided wisp of straw (transl. mine, Pa’tani,ed., Rahman, L,2001, vol.I, VII).”

IV.III. Malik’s attitude towards woman

Another notable point is that Malik succeeds with his women characters. His knowledge of the psychology of woman helped him to depict her
sympathetically and his deep-rooted respect and innate reverence for womankind made him think of woman as being full of forgiveness, kindness and affection. He values the proper education of woman. He shows his craftsmanship in his portrayal of both the uneducated woman folk of the villages and the educated urban women of modern times. His mastery over the language makes it easier for him to expose the social tyranny over women they were subjected to. His women know their own limitations and most often confessed that frankly, though at times they are inclined to brag. Malik has a disregard for conventional ideas regarding the parentage of some of his female characters and looked for the purity in their characters. He preaches high ideals of wifehood and regarded marriage as a great and sacred institution. He also analyses here and there in his writings the causes of the failures of marriages. He also supports the inter-caste or inter-religion marriages. Malik neither criticizes nor supports traditional views and notion of the society without searching the reason behind it. He supports widow marriages but hated child marriages.

Dr. Nilima Sarma has discussed woman psychology as depicted by him in his novels and short stories as follows: "Malik takes the help of poetical language in portraying a woman character. The woman characters in "Rathar Cakari Ghure", are beautiful, young, prone to love, and full of carnal desires. Malik has the skill for expressing the inborn jealousy, fellow feelings and homeliness of woman. But when Malik has attempted to express his communist idealism through the woman characters, they have lost the female vigour and have become puppets of the writer's idealism (trans. mine, Asami'ya Upanja' sat Na'ri'r Manastatva, ed. N. Thakur, 2000, 305)."
It is very difficult task for a man to understand the conflict of a female mind, the pangs of life, the love of a motherly heart and the sky – high ambition of a woman’s heart. But we forget about Malik when we become a part of the life of a female character in the novels and short stories of Malik. His female characters are guided more by the dictate of feelings and emotions rather than by reason. We meet characters like Chenimai (Surujmukhi'r S vapna), Sarnalata (Aghari' A'tma'r Ka'hini') and Sonpahi (A'dha'rs'ila') who know nothing except the attractions of emotional life. Sex is everything for them. They are women without the backbone, just commodities for entertainment in the hands of men and without the slightest sense of self – respect. Saraswati (Tris'ul) is beautiful, wealthy and having husband and children but indulges in sexual relation with a hypocritical Brahmachari. Conscience for her has nothing to do with the physical excitement. What she does not get from her old husband, she has got it from the Brahmachari, secretly. Jaya (Ma'tir C'aki) is characterless who made her lover compelled to have sexual union and has gone far away with the child by him in her womb. She has come to the town and lived as a co – wife of a rich merchant, Madhab Chaliha. She considers that a secured life is more meaningful than a respectful life. Kapahi (Surujmukhi'r S vapna) is a mysterious character who has caused tremendous storms in the minds of Nahar, Basirat and Gulach. Her only aim in life is to tease men with her physical charm. Tagar (Kant'haha'r) is an opportunist and a covetous character who forsakes Moin, an honest and sincere youth, after obtaining everything from him with her acting of love. Another woman, Aikan (mother of Moin), who has tainted the picture of a mother by
eloping with her lover, wearing the necklace prepared by Moin for his sister's marriage. **Parijat** (*Raja*ni *gandhari* Cjakulo) is extremely beautiful who fell in love with Abinash, an ideal and dutiful youth. She is unable to be the partner of the struggle of Abinash for life. She married Hridaya, the handsome youth and the owner of a tea-estate and a director. She is jealous in nature and has a strong attraction for her younger brother in law and for Manohar Bhatia, the managing Director. She is a flatterer and is incapable of facing the reality of life. She prays to God for mercy but cannot confess her guilt before her husband. She is much concerned about physical beauty and charm but is ignorant of spiritual beauty of the female mind. On the other hand, we meet another female character, **Tagar** in the novel. She is a very simple and common woman who is ready to sacrifice anything and everything for the sake of her feminine dignity. She is merely a labourer but she has a strong sense of self-respect who has the courage to protest against the ill-intention of the Managing Director, Bhatia in his design for destroying her chastity. **Tagar** is not only the personification of boldness but also of tolerance and sacrifice. **Pari and Nina** (*Agnigarbha*) are modern educated women but they cannot convey the message of woman - liberation through their characters. **Shagarika**, (*Agnigarbha*) the merchant and the established woman who indulges in sexual gratification with a petty worker in her office in the darkness of night. In the name of woman - liberation, she leads an unbridled life. **Narmada** (*S'antana*) is a very beautiful woman who betrays Sasadhar, who has health and wealth, property, popularity, personality and unbound love for her. She eloped with an unknown foreigner for the reason best known to her female mind.
Priti Chaudhury (Sikhare – Sikkhare) is an aristocratic woman who has a free access to the playground, to the meeting, and everywhere in the public field. She stays outside until midnight with Singh and sometimes spends the night with him or with Ahmed. She remains away from her husband Chaudhury. Similarly, her younger sister Maya takes the advantage of her absence and engages in sexual union with her (Priti's) husband at night. They do not care for the moral or the social code. Gayatri Chaliha (Alap Da’war, Alap Pohar) is a beautiful woman who betrays Amrit, her husband, an honest and sincere doctor. She elopes with a rich man of Shillong, Ranjit Chaudhury. Bedana (Kat,hphula) is also a shallow and selfish woman. Kanchan (C’ikar) is also a shallow and unstable woman character.

It is to be noted that Malik is equally skillful in presenting woman characters, dignified in self-respect, bold and glorified with a motherly heart, with a sisterly stand and a beloved soul. Jaba (Ma’tir C’akî) is such a female character who can defy the paternal love for self-respect and dignity. Guleza (Anja jug BhinnaTîrtha) is a woman of dignity who can pursue higher education under the guardianship of Ibrahim Sir, despite her poverty and problems. She is the exposure of the woman – power underneath. Keteki (Rupa’barir Palas) is the representative of the infinite potentiality of woman. The sorrows and sufferings of the people of her village have made her a rebel. While she is physically living in a town for her higher studies, her mind is always with the Rams and Rahims and the
poor farmers of her village. Her pen writes about the sorrows and sufferings of the
village farmers. The character of Bharati (Kabita' Na'm La'hha) is a very
pathetic one. She is a teacher and leads an unfulfilled life with an impotent
husband, a life ignorant of male potentiality. Chara (Jiya Jurir Gha't) is also
subject to such an unfulfilled life as her husband has been suffering from
"Syphilis". She is the personification of perseverance, tolerance, sense of duty and
justice in woman. Maina (Mukti) is a rich and educated woman of honesty and
firm and just decision. Jharwali (Beja Ma'nuh) exposes the picture of a broad
heart through her works and thought. Tula (Wilson, Aranja A'ru Ma'i) is the
epitome of sacrifice and responsibility. Kakali (H'a'hire C'akulo Dha'ki) is an
independent girl and can establish her decision independently. Malik has
expressed the eternal need of the female mind through the character of
Jharnadevi (Sambardhana).

IV.IV. Malik’s heroes

Malik’s male characters can be categorized as many, such as heroes,
lovers, idealists, thinkers, scholars, social reformers, prophets, poets, artists,
leaders etc. though the divisions overlaps occasionally. While portraying the
characters, he lays stress on qualities like honesty, sincerity, and strength of
characters and steadfastness of purposes. He exults physical prowess but
considered moral force to be superior to mere physical strength. He does not
weaken men who loll in luxury and lead a life of ease and comfort. He believes in work, in action that means more to him than meditation or silent thinking. He is against asceticism or the ideal of renunciation. He does not like the sensual attitude nor the spiritual only. Both the two aspects of life should be amalgamated in a reasonable proportion to lead a normal life in this world: “Sayyed Abdul Malik, in fact, is a reservoir of humour. He can bring out a fluid of taste squeezing a dry wood and distribute among the readers and the audience. Sayed Abdul Malik is the real example of the saying: “The pen is mightier than the sword.” He has already built a place of permanence with his spirited narration. In fact, a national and justified analysis of the literary works of such a powerful writer has not been made. His “Surumukhîr Svapna” is a perfectly readable novel not only of Assam but also of India (transl. mine, Singha, Ningombam Gobinda, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 179).”

Malik’s “Surumukhîr Svapna” is considered the milestone of Assamese novel. The hero of the novel is Gulach, an enterprising ordinary rural youth struggling for establishment in life. He is simple in nature with a weakness for the fair sex. He is a poor youth but thinks that contribution to the good deeds of society is a delightful task for man. His life is closely connected with the nature—the paddy field and the river Dhanashiri. He is the earthly youth of Dalim Gaon and Dalim Gaon is his earthly heaven in which there is the harmonial co-existence of Hindus and Muslims. He is stoic in nature, though he reproaches Chenimai and Kapahi when they inform him about the marriage of Tora. He is polygamous and indulges in illicit relation with Kapahi and Chenimai. In the traditional sense, he
is not a hero, but an antihero fit to play the central role in a postmodern anti-novel. He takes life and love naturally. Idealism and social formality are unknown to him. It is to note that he did not take the initiative in his illicit relation with Kapahi and Chenimai. Rather, he yields to the sexual urge of them. Hiranya, the artist (Maṭir Cā'ki) is not a beggar of love but he cannot reject the love of four women. He is a humanist, who takes the responsibility of treatment of Joba who has been suffering from consumption. He has taken the love and respect of these four women as the source of inspiration in his artistic life. He is the worshiper of beauty. Dr. Raihan Choudury (Anja A'kaś, Anja Tora) is a humanist who gives shelter too Aparna, the victim of riot in Pakistan during the division of India. He has closeness with Nazi, his friend during childhood, with Parvin whom he met at the first stage of his youth. He leads a nomadic life. He does not get any of these three women as his life-partner but the love he has got from them is his source for living such a life. He is an idealist like Hiranya (Maṭir Cā'ki). Jyotirmay (Ruptīṛtha jā'ṛṭa) is influenced in his artistic life by a number of women characters like Miranda, Rachna, Chili, his wife Shabitri, the brave lady Hiranya and the lady teacher Fulmai. His ideal is - “Sundarar Aradhana, Jibanar Khel (The game of life is the worship of beauty).” His character is based on the life of Rupkowanr Jyotiprosad Agarwala. His attempt to produce Cinema in Assam, his discovery of young Lady artist Rachna, his marriage with Shabitri, his father’s death and his economic hardship is described in part – I of the novel. This part of the novel has depicted the artistic mind of the artist. The second part of the novel depicts the artist’s participation in the independence movement of India and the
death of his wife. This part has expressed the unbound desire of Jyotirmay for liberating the common people of his country from foreign rule and exploitation. **Samir (A'dha'r S'ilâ)**, is a youth who spends his childhood in village and youth in town and is continuously haunted by the stigma of being the illegitimate son of an unmarried mother, though later on, his mother was married to Hasmat, an old man. Samir is hardworking who has earned huge money by contract during World War – II. He indulges in drinking in order to forget his tainted childhood. He has become doubtful about the divine justice and has made God responsible for the miseries of human beings. But towards the end of the novel, he has become a believer in God and a humanist. His broadness of mind towards Juti and his help towards Bapdhan on the day Idd, show his humanitarian mind and principle and his human love is the base of human life. He realizes that hatred towards his mother was inhuman and repents for that. He promises to construct the grave of his mother concretely and to bear the half of the cost of the Masjid building of the village. He has taken the responsibility of bringing the illegitimate child of Sonpahi (his mother) up. Here lies the greatness of his character in accepting the illegitimate child as a human child. **Niranjan (Agharf Atma'r Ka'hi'nî)** is a failure in facing the problem of life like a dead cocoon, a representative of modern youth – lonely and without the mooring of life. **Kamal (Rathar Çakari Ghure)** is a young man full of bookish knowledge but lacks in practical knowledge of life in this world. Bina, the social worker, has made him a socialist. Bina turns him from a scholar into a social worker dedicated fully to the liberation of common people. **Saleh (Jiya Jurir Gha't)** is an unemployed youth suffering
from sexual disease. He steals the necklace of his wife for treatment of his secret disease. He was redeemed by the sacrifice of his wife Chara who gave her necklace to meet the cost of treatment of Champa, the harlot. Maina (Kantaha r) is a simple, poor youth running a small shop of betel in a town for his living. The picture of the socio-economic erosion after independence of our country is depicted through his life. Amar (Amar Māya') is an absconding criminal who murdered a rich man and his son-in-law in revenge of his elder sister's murder by that rich man. He has taken shelter in Maya's house on a hill. Amar has completely been changed by the humane behaviour of Maya. The wild man in him has been killed by Maya's sisterly behaviour and he has knelt down before her: the picture of redemption of a fallen soul. Dr. Ananta Kakati (Sona'li Suta're Bandha') has been made compelled to have sexual relation with Rita, the wife of impotent Pabitra Chaliha. He has been tossed between his double duties: duties as a man and as a doctor. Pabitra Chaliha takes Nandita, the child by Dr. Kakati as a human child with infinite possibility, as pure as other human child. Azad, Upen and Thomas (La. Sa'. Gu.) are the mouthpiece of the novelist's new political philosophy i.e. socialism. They dedicate their lives for the liberation of the proletariats and the marginalized. Azad (Eka - Bekat Br'tta) has an attempt to search for his own independent identity as an individual far away from the madding crowd. He says: "My problem is my identity." Dr. Arunabh (Dr. Arunabh Asampurna Ji'bani') is not only a world famous scientist but also a philosopher, a great humanist, an all rounder, polygamous and a romantic. He is a man of introspective nature undergoing inner conflict. Karamali (U'i - Hā'phalu)
is a village doctor, lively, helpful and typical in his dress and apparatus. He reminds us the priest in Goldsmith’s “The Vicar of Wakefield.” He is a humanist who takes human service as his mission of life. Srimanta Sankardev (*Dhanja Naratanu Bhal*), Sri Sri Madhabdev (*Prem Amrtar Nadi*) and Hajrat Muhammad (PBUH) (*Satjar Pather, Santir Rathere, Muktir Jayatra*) are humanists of universal appeal and are immortal portrait of Assamese literature.

Malik’s heroes, in many novels, are of similar temperament. They are sympathetic, polished, aesthetically cultured, weak towards the fair sex and romantic in nature. There are polygamous characters, both male and female in his novels. The noteworthy point is that the novelist has a soft corner for the female characters. His unbound sympathy for the neglected victimized and seduced woman has become crystal in his novels. Many of his characters belonging to the lower class are lively with human qualities of higher category. They are mere bus conductors, drivers, small shopkeepers like betel-shop or tea stalls. Characters of this class are never deprived of his sympathy and fair handling. But the plots of his novels are not uniformly well constructed. Most often, he describes a petty incident in a high-flown language and exaggeration. As a result, the description becomes verbose and emotional. The development of the story becomes improvised rather than well planned and neat. There is seldom an endeavour in part of the novelist to go deeper into the bottom of human life though there are ample instances of invention of new circumstances, varied mental pictures and
moods and above all heterogeneous characters in his novels. There is hardly any
deep intuition or self-scrutiny of reality of human life found in the characters
created by him. His creativity is well established; Language is catchy,
spontaneous and poetic. It is also very difficult to say about the influence of other
writers on his stories; it will be more appropriate to call it to be similarity than
influence. It is said that his stories have "O Henry like marvels of endings." It is
also referred that Maupassant inspires Malik's structural technique and he is the
first writer to create Chekovian atmosphere in Assamese short stories. Some critic
have seen the influence of Somerset Moughan's "Ragor's Edge" in one of
Malik's stories. It can be admitted that at the beginning of his literary career he
might have inspiration from Maupassant or other western writers but later on a
veteran short story writer Malik, with a well-developed style of his own, is,
perhaps, free from any other influence or inspiration.

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