INTRODUCTION

I.I. Utility of the Subject

After World-War-II, no remarkable development in the writing of novel was made in Assamese literature. The disillusionment after the war and the busy mechanical life after the independence have made Assamese novelists realistic and socially accountable. The disillusionment of the middle-class ideology created an educated middle-class with a democratic ideology. Economic depression multiplied our social problems and corruption crept into our social habits. In this background Malik started writing his novels and short stories: "Under such a critical circumstances, Mohammad Pear, Sayed Abdul Malik, Premnarayan Dutta, and Hitesh Deka over-flooded the world of Assamese novel with their writings" (trans. mine, Rajkhowa, A, ed. Thakur, N, 2000, 403). Among these writers, Malik wrote the largest number of novels and short stories. From that point of view the study of Malik’s novels and short stories in detail have become a necessity to understand the nature and scope of novel and short stories of the period. Besides, the establishment of humanism as a permanent feature of the novel and short stories of the period is also a special concern of this study. The study of Malik as a humanist in the present-day context is a source of absorbing interest for the students of Assamese language and literature: "There comes the picture of the vast sky with the celestial bodies in it, the sea with its waves and bubbles, the garden with its fruits and flowers and the paddy field of
‘Suwagmani’ paddy when we think of Sayed Abdul Malik. The poet and writer of village Naharani, Dergaon has become a part of this area. He has become a light with his literary works and social works, his mind and heart, thoughts, ideas, his love for the land and the people. This Malik, a unique genius is the consciousness of society, the name is as sweet as beautiful, his speech is attractive i.e. as dignified as magical. His pen is the representative of the feelings and emotions of the heart of other people and the heart he has is the reservoir of love. Malik is famous and symbol of respect and influence for all. He has mystery in his lips, warmth of heart, beauty and infusion of life in presentation. Since the thirties of this century, he has got humanism, naturalism and love of literature. (trans. mine, Goswami, Lakhsmi Chandra, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 48). "Malik is also admired and appreciated for his vast gamut of literary production: “Someone may seldom become legendary during his / her life time. There are many influential and significant persons cannot come to the level of such legend. It is rare that one whose name itself is his / her identity. It goes without saying that Sayed Abdul Malik is such a legendary person whose name itself is sufficient for his identity. Perhaps, there will be only a few such names in Assamese society. The word Malik evokes the famous identity in Assamese Literature, culture and politics (translation, mine, Bora, Profulla Chandra, ibid, 5).” It is observed that “there is an open self in his writings which is wild in nature compared to other novelists of his time. His characters are round characters of flesh and blood with human qualities. There are love and urge for sexual gratification in his writings but that urge is humane (trans. mine, Rajkhowa, A, ed., Thakur, N, 2000, 405).”
Malik wrote with social commitment and with a programme of a humanist who said: “I believe in political philosophy and that philosophy is social philosophy. Till date, the Characters of my novels are these ordinary men. Collecting characters from among them I give them flesh and consciousness. For, I belong to that class. I remain inseparable from that class and shall remain inseparable forever. As a humanist, Malik searches out the good man among all the evils of a bad man. He reproaches not the evildoer but the circumstances that compels him or her to do so. It is this very humane attitude that pervades through the vast gamut of his writing (transl. mine, Saikia, N, ed., Rahman, L, 2001, vol. I, VII).” In Malik’s writings, there is universalism and the picture of real life of man: “There is verbosity of dialogue, humanism, plenty of sex, romantic emotion, natural sympathy for the poor and the oppressed and the poetic language in his writings (trans. mine, Sarma, S, N, 1998, 454).” He declared that the motto of his life is to become a means for bridging the gap between human souls: “There are anxieties of class – distinction, sympathy for the poor and the protest against the oppression of the poor by the rich in the romantic note of Malik in his stories during the progressive movement of the forties” (trans. mine, Borgohain, Kamala, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 93). His world of writing and his personal life are equally juvenile: “Sayed Abdul Malik, is the name of the "uncrowned King of Assamese literature which is associated with the vast field of literary creation and is a name very dear to Assamese readers. The world of literary works of Malik is very vast and he has achieved fame as a writer of beautiful short story throughout the world. Malik is the living example of a perfect
genius of short story, poetry, Drama, novel, essay, pleasant light writings, biography, Travel literature and satire. (trans. mine, Borgohain, Prodip Kumar, ibid, , 109).” For this, his works have aptly been praised and estimated in shakespearean language: “Age cannot wither them nor custom stale ........(trans. mine, ed., Borgohain,H.,2004,9).” From the above discussion and the observations of the famous critics and scholars of Assamese literature, it has become clear that humanism in the novels and short stories of Sayed Abdul Malik has made humanism as a distinguished literary feature of the period. To make this point clear the discussion of the origin and development of Assamese novels upto Malik’s time is essential. The publication of the Arunodai by the Christian Missionaries in 1846 is a hallmark in the history of the socio-cultural life of the Assamese people. Through this daily, Assamese people got a close connection with the scientific outlook of modern times and endeavoured to re-establish Assamese language. This disseminated western thought and learning, inspired the young generation of the Assamese people and paved the way for an intellectual awakening. The first Assamese novel Jātrā kar jātra by Dr. Nathan Brown was published serially in 1851 and in a book form in 1857. The novel had nothing to do with Assamese life and culture, as it was a translation of Banyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, a novel written on a story of the Bible. However, it is to note that this novel had made Assamese readers acquainted with the new form of literature of the modern times i.e. “novel” as a literary genre. The missionaries published some other stories in this daily such as- A. K. Gurney’s Kāminikānta(1877), Elokesi Bjsjā’r Bisay (1877), Ruthar Bibaran, Jochephar Bibaran and
Mrs. Gurney’s translation of a Bengali novel entitled *Phulmani Aru Karuna* (1877). Though these stories have some of the elements of novel, like ‘plot’ and ‘narrative’, they cannot be called novel proper and had little or no relation with Assamese society. Nevertheless, the works by the missionaries have a paramount importance in bringing in the Renaissance to Assamese life and literature: “The missionaries had thus contributions both in religious and secular subjects ..............They brought about the Renaissance in Assamese life and literature by opening the door to the West. The Mediavel outlook with emphasis on spiritual and supernatural themes was replaced by secular subjects and rational outlook and in its train there came western literary forms - lyrics, dramas, sonnets, novels, short stories, and biographies (Barpujari,H,k., 1977,136).”

Towards the later part of the nineteenth century, that we got the novels written by Assamese writers reflecting Assamese life and culture. Hem Chandra Baruah’s *Ba'hire Ra'aj C'yaj Bhite Kowa' Ba'turi* (1876) and Padma Devi Phukanani’s *Sudharma'r Upa'khja'n* (1884) are such two novels in Assamese. Hem Chandra Baruah satirized Assamese society and that the novel has a great historical importance in Assamese literature. Devi Phukanani’s novel was based on the dictum that “truth prevails” and that “the virtuous comes out victorious”. The noteworthy point is that it is admirable that a woman of nineteenth century of the Assamese society tried her hand in novel writing. The Renaissance in
Assamese literature reached its culmination in the *Jona'ki* *Age*. The *Jona'ki* (1889) successively edited by Chandra Kumar Agarwala, Hem Chandra Goswami and Laksminath Bezbaruah served the purpose of a forum for a group of eminent writers who had been instrumental in bringing in the Renaissance into Assamese literature. These writers were inspired by their counterparts in Bengali literature like Biharilal Chakravarty, Hem Chandra Chattopadhaya, Nabin Chandra Sen, Madhu Shudan Dutta and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhaya who were in turn influenced by English literature in their subjects, style and diction: "Contact with the European spirit through English literature brought in a real Indian Renaissance, and gave a new course to the literature in modern Indian languages. English literature itself, and the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, of Italy and France and Germany, and later on of Russia and Scandinavia (from the 20th century), which were brought to the door of the English knowing Indians, revolutionized the attitude to life and literature, and inaugurated the current phase or modern phase in Indian literature. This contact with the European mind first began in Bengal, and by the middle of the 19th century, the emancipation or modernization of the mind of Bengal and of Bengali literature had already begun. European methods of literary approach were eagerly adopted. We have an astonishing floraison of literature, in Bengali at first, and then gradually in the other languages, as European education through the English schools and colleges and the universities began to shape the mind of the intelligentsia as much as in the Physical science, became linked up with the modern world (Chatterji, S.K., 1963,105)."
The impact of the west brought in its wake new literary forms in prose literature viz. novel, essays and short stories. It resulted in a sea change in the literary field. Man has turned their look from the heaven to the earth, banished the gods from this world with a view to establishing humanism in their place. There rose an ardent reverence towards and an unshakable affinity with this dusty earth and the man of flesh and blood living in it, which has become the striking feature of modern literature. Henceforth humanity was utterly disregarded and dishonoured in the writers of the bygone writers. Gods and goddesses were praised and worshiped at the expense of human beings. During Renaissance, this cult of worshiping gods and deities has been discarded and in place that they were presented not as anything divine, rather they were presented as ordinary human beings and humorous characters. This may be called the beginning of the modern era in literature. What is noteworthy is that super human characters like gods and deities were sometimes ridiculed while man was always exulted in his beauty and potentiality.

In *Bijuli* (1890) Padmanath Gohain Baruah’s *Bha’numati* (1890-91) was published serially. His next novel *La’hari* was published in 1892 which may be called the first full-fledged Assamese novel. Gohain Baruah’s these two novels were written on historical background. In 1894, a new dimension of Assamese
novel was opened by the publication of *Mirt Jija’rî* by Rajani kanta Bardoloi. This novel established the base of Assamese social novel. Under the inspiration of Sir Walter Scott, Rajanikanta Bardoloi wrote a series of historical novels: *Manomati* (1900), *Dandua’ Droh* (1925), *Nirmal Bhakat* (1926) *Rahadai ligiri*, (1930) depicting the socio-political life of Assam during the civil strife and the Barmese invasions. Bardoloi’s works: “endures for its depth of philosophic comment, descriptive power, fidelity to life, creative imagination and charm of style (Baruah, B.K., 1995,74).” In 1905, Laksminath Bezbaruah’s *Padum Kuwârî*, a historical novel was published. Other prominent novelists of the period are: Sarat Chandra Goswami, Harinarayan Dutta Baruah, Chintaharan Patgiri, Daibya Chandra Talukdar and Dandinath Kalita. In 1944, Birinchi Kumar Baruah’s *Jîbanar Ba’tât* (published under the pseudo-nym-Bina Baruah) was published Which had expanded the depth and scope of plot-construction and characterization in Assamese novel. His *Seujî Pa’îtar Ka’hini* (1958, published under the pseudo-nym – Rasna Baruah) has taken the life of the workers of the tea garden as the background. These two novels of Birinchi Kumar Baruah show the skill of the novelist in plot-construction and characterization.

Present-day world is a world of moral perplexity and uncertainty. The wholesale criticism of the existing order of society and point of view from opposite and contradictory angles have made man more baffled. As a consequence, he knows not what to accept and what to reject. Psychological
studies have revealed that human beings are not so rational as they are supposed to be and also that man is guided not only by the conscious but also by the subconscious. There is a break up of the old authoritarian pattern in family life and a change in the relative role of the female sex. Political and religious skepticism, general disillusionment, cynicism, irony etc. have become the order of present-day life. Under such circumstances, the study of the life and works of Malik, one of the prolific writers of Assamese novel, as a humanist has ample significance, which may provide us with a peep into the inner being of the epoch maker of Assamese novel and short stories: “It is easy to write on Malik’s life and personality but not on his literary works. For, the contribution of Malik to Assamese literature is so vast that collectively they make another “Mahabharat.” In fact, from the middle of the thirties to the last of nineties of this century, Malik’s writings have been occupying the place of importance in almost all the newspapers and magazines of Assam. Thus, Malik has been shining as a legendary figure. (trans. mine, Choudhury, Lakhyadhar, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 14).”

This study may provide with knowledge and a training ground for restoring the lost values and aspiration for a universal brotherhood and a unified humanity: “It is my pride that I am a contemporary of Malik. The closeness with the writer behind this name has been inspiring and indebted many like me. As a writer, he is a bridging factor of ages – he has kept the past time intact and has
refuted the changes of the present time in his creative writings. He is an impartial friend of all and in respect of every event like a true historian of Assam history. He is an impartial friend having no ill-feelings even towards those who have differences of opinion. He has accepted the 'opposition' with smiles and tears, sympathy and fellow feelings leaving the opposed aside. In fact, he is an impartial friend of the Assamese, Indians. He is a human friend of our time and of the time to come. (trans. mine, Barua, Nabakanta, Agakatha: Aksar Arpan, ibid.)"

In this work, stress has been given on humanism for creation of ideal character. The term “character”, however, has been taken in its specific meaning that a humanist draws and upholds. The wide meaning of the term has not been considered here in this thesis. The responsibility of building character is generally vested on woman, and is infused in the mind of woman from early days. Therefore, a special attention has been paid to Malik’s handling of the female characters in his novels and short stories. It has been found that Indian culture has been destroyed because of the assimilation of western culture with it. Life has become unstable and insecure due to lack of man’s adherence to steadfast belief and social values. Under such circumstances, the importance of the study of Malik’s humanism, its implications in present-day context has been felt badly. The study may provide with ample knowledge about the way of life of the prolific writer, his life view, his social commitment as a writer and his contribution to Assamese language and literature. This may show the path of harmonial co-
existence and the path to the earthly heaven man has been searching for since long.

I.II. Subject matter of the thesis

*Humanism* is a cultural impulse of the Renaissance Europe, characterized by a revival of classical learning. It is an individualistic and critical spirit, a shift of emphasis from religious to the secular concerns. It dates to the fourteenth century Italy and the poet Petrarch, though earlier figures are sometimes described as humanists. Its diffusion was facilitated by the universal use of Latin and the invention of the movable type. The humanists of the Renaissance period were the students of *literae humaniores*, a phrase that denotes the classics of Greek and Latin as opposed to the works of the mediavel schoolmen. This term was derived from Latin *studia humanitatis*, an educational and cultural programme that excluded a range of academic fields like logic, mathematics, the natural sciences, astronomy, medicine, law and theology. On the other hand, *studia humanitatis* included the study of grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history and moral philosophy in its programme of study. There was a great revival of interest in classical literature and thought, to some extent, at the expense of mediavel scholasticism. There was a quarrel between humanism and scholasticism which was regarded by scholars as to be a quarrel "between science of man and the science of nature (Gandhi, L.1998, 47)."
The three themes—historical research, rediscovery of the classics, and the dignity of man were central to humanist thought and philosophy. The humanists thought and believed that their programme of study would produce complete individuals with both practical and cultural realization: "...the literae are about return with all their fertility, to form whole men, not just scholars. They call themselves "studia humanitatis" because they shape the perfect man (ibid, 46)."

In this programme of culture and education of the humanists, participation of the adult was also targeted, and ensured. While contemporary Renaissance literature captured the humanist inclination, its prime source was the classical writings of Plato, Cicero, Livy etc. that influenced their language, style and criticism. The humanist reinvigorated the existing conflict between free will and determinism and the optimism underlying the dignity of man in the hierarchy of creation became the hallmark of Renaissance humanism. Humanism prescribed certain human virtues to be cultivated as opposed to the restraint on certain others considered to be against humanism. This may be seen as an opposition between the normative idea of humanistic man (Homo humanus) and the aberrant idea of barbaric man (Homo barbarus): "Humanitatis', explicitly so called, was first considered and striven for in the age of Roman Republic. 'Homo humanus' was opposed to 'Homo barbarus'. 'Homo humanus' here means the Romans.......

Whose culture was acquired in the school of philosophy. It was concerned with scholarship and training in good conduct (Heidegger, 1977, ibid. 48)."
In this connection, Foucault observed that humanism functions as a double repression: in terms of those whom it excludes from the process and in terms of the model and the standard (the bars) it imposes on those receiving this knowledge (Foucault, 1977, 48). The change in outlook brought in by the Renaissance humanism had the following aspects:

I. the scholarly - concerned with the recovery or reconstruction of accurate texts of the classics,

II. the stylistic - concerned with classical rhetoric and literary criticism and their application to an improved vernacular literature,

III. the ethical - concerned with the highest ideals of Greek and Roman thought and

IV. the secular - concerned with the replacement of the theocentric universe by one based on man and his potentialities, the acceptance of human life and human values as of permanent significance, life ordered and controlled by a sense of proportion and interpreted in light of the best thought of antiquity and enriched and illuminated by the arts.

A European phenomenon, Humanism was a more worldly and secular philosophy which was anthropocentric and which sought to dignify man. It helped to civilize man, realize his potentiality and reduce the discrepancy between ability and attainment. It was a way of dealing with the disequilibrium created by the
conflict between belief and doubt. It is a form of philosophy concerned with the perfection of life in this earth rather than with the eternal or spiritual life. It includes anything and every thing relevant to the practical concern of life: "Humanism may mean many things: It may be the reasonable balance of life that the early humanists observed in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of humanities or polite letters; it may be responsive to all human passions of a Shakespeare or Goethe; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the center and sanction (Corliss, L, 1962, 9)." Traditional humanist criticism focus on literature with the intention of discovering some truth in what is revealed or expressed in the given text. Formalism, on the other hand, pays attention what is internal to the linguistic construct preparing the ground for structuralist criticism. The structuralist denies that a poem can be regarded as an object dependent on the psyche, personal history of the person reading it. The structuralists believed that the question of truth does not arise in connection with literature, rather it is the question of validity that matters, and that literature conveys no message but a system of signs. They considered the text to be an integrated verbal entity and totally ignore the content. They keep the text aloof, for any suggestion of value judgment and analyse it with a view to arriving at the centre. Ronald Berthes (1915-80), the French critic served as a model for most of the criticism to come. He describes structuralism as a certain mode of analysis of cultural artefact originating in the method of contemporary linguistics. The structuralists view literature as a system of signs. There are certain organizational codes that regulate all literatures and to find out these codes is their business. Their aim is to find the
underlying system of relationships, the structure within which any individual event can come to meaning. They think that the relation of culture to the textuality of literature is immediate, more pertinent and more compelling. Literature is discourse in a world of discourses, having its own protocols for meaning and typical use of language, rhetoric, subject etc.

The structuralists believe that what appears to be real to us in literature is coded and conventional. The reality effect of literature is achieved through the neutralization of the signs used by the writer, which they call *vraisemblance* or truth seeming. Some of the elements of *vraisemblance* are:

a. Socially given texts- that which is taken as the real world or taken for granted.

b. General cultural texts- That shared knowledge which would be recognized by the participants as a part of culture and subject to correction or modification but serves as a kind of *nature*. This is the level at which readers interpret motive, character and significance from the description of action, dress, attitude etc.

c. Conventions of genre- this is a specific literary or artificial *vraisemblance*, a series of constituent convention, which enables the writers to write various sorts of literary work.

d. Natural attitude to the artificial- A technique in which the writer may claim that he has intentionally violated the convention of the genre but in a specific way
that may serve some higher or more substantial purpose with an appeal to a greater naturalness or a higher intelligibility.

e. Complex Vraisemblance of specific intertextuality-In a literary text, irony forces the readers to posit an alternate possibility or reality in the face of the reality construction of the text. All surface incongruities register meaning at a level of the project of interpretation itself, and so comment as it were in the relation between textual and interpretive reality. In short, to imitate reality is to represent codes, which describe according to the convention of representation of the time.

Postmodernism is a general term used to refer to the changes, developments and tendencies that have taken place and also have been taking place in literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy etc. since 1940s. It differs from and react against modernism. Unlike any other isms, postmodernism is amorphous by nature and is much difficult to define. The term postmodernism was first used by Arnold Toynbee in a footnote in his A Study of History, vol. I. in 1939. The passing away of modernism during World-War I, was mourned by W.B. Yeats in 1919 in the following lines:

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world......
The best lack all convictions; while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."
After the two World Wars, certain features of literature are very evident viz. non-traditionalism, anti-authoritarianism and non-signification, the worst replacing the best as it lacked convictions. There is the experimental technique in fiction as displayed by the *nouveau roman* and the *anti-novel*. The first is somewhat biblioclastic in the sense that it rejects what has gone before i.e. plot, narrative, ideas; the delineation and analysis of character have nothing to do in a postmodern novel. Novel has been considered a form of *res-istentialism*. It should be about things; a systematized analytical record of objects. The best example of this sort is Michel Butor's *La Modification* (1957). However, this was not completely a new tendency. Kafka had shown that the conventional method of depicting characters were not essential while James Joyce had demonstrated that plot was dispensable. Proust, William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus had shown that it was possible to break with a number of traditional conventions of the novel form. In the *anti-novel*, there is little or no attempt to create an illusion of realism or naturalism. It has established its own conventions and a different kind of realism that deters readers from self-identification with the characters as well as from vicarious participation. Some of the characteristic features of this type of novel may be cited as: only diffused episodes instead of an obvious plot, minimum development of character, analysis of object with repetitions, innumerable experiments with vocabulary, punctuation and syntax. There are variations of time sequence and alternative beginnings and endings. Among other more striking features – detachable pages that can be shuffled like
cards, coloured pages, blank pages, collage effects, drawings and hieroglyphics are mentionable. Besides, postmodern novels sometimes turn to be mere gimmickry.

Postmodern poetry is an extension of the avant garde literature that includes even the altar poem and the Carmen figuratum. In this type of poetry, each poem is purposively presented in different shapes like pictorial typography which produces visual poetry. The concept was developed under the influence of Max Bill (1908-) and Eugen Gomringer (1925-) and was presented at an exhibition of concrete art at Sao Paulo in 1956. The Brazilian Noigandres group was also a pioneering influence which created a vogue which has since become widespread and has led to further developments and refinements such as emergent poetry, semiotic poetry, and kinetic poetry. The postmodern dramatic literature underwent a sea change in the way of experiments with form, content and presentation that resulted in such developments as The Theatre of the Absurd, Total Theatre and Theatre de Complicite. It is conceivable that the increasing popularity of the nonsense verse form from the mid-nineteenth century onwards is connected with the concept of the Absurd. Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Theatre of the Cruelty all influenced the development. There was mingling of tragedy and buffoonery with religious in order to frighten, surprise and arouse laughter. The idea, however, that man is absurd is not new. The concept of homo absurdus has acquired a rather more specific meaning in the last hundred years or
so. This is partly owing to the need to provide explanation of man's apparently purposeless role and position in a universe that is popularly imagined to have no discernible reason for existence. It is a pervasive attitude rather than a system of thought. Camus, one of the major dramatists of the *Theatre of the Absurd* expounded a vision of life that was essentially absurd, without an apparent purpose, out of harmony with its surroundings, sad to the point of anguish and at the same time, in a laconic fashion, funny. He stresses the destructive nature of time, the feeling of solitude, in a hostile world, and the sense of isolation from fellow beings. There was a deliberate irrationality, anarchy, cynicism, and rejection of the law of beauty and social organization. As for the *Theatre de Complecite*, a highly experimental form of Total Theatre, makes extensive use of mime, clown techniques, improvisation, the technique of *Comedia dell'arte*, acrobatics and most traditional theatrical styles and modes including Japanese *No*. Postmodern literature is markedly imaginative in nature and characterised by the features of an eclectic approach, an aleatory writing, a parody and a pastiche. It is marked by magic realism and new modes of science fiction. Under the influence of magic realism, postmodern literature has become marked by the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in surrealistic manner. The themes and subjects have become imaginary, to the extent of becoming outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dreamlike quality. There is juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic, skillful time shift, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots. There are myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element
of surprise and abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicability. The burgeoning of Marxist, Feminist, and psychoanalytic criticism is another aspect of postmodern literature. It also refers to a critical position in criticism in which a complete relativism exists. In 1960s and 1970s, a number of deconstructionists and Marxist critics along with a number of younger poets brought a distinct post-structuralist and postmodernist sensibility to their works. While the modernists tried to unify pieces into coherent whole, postmodernists strived unapologetically for *aesthetics of fragmentation and discontinuity*. This is a shift from epistemological skepticism to the ontological one. Postmodernists believe that in a discourse, there cannot be a monolithic value but diverse values, which should be approached dialogically. But it is to be noted that the Indian heritage, Assamese culture, social values and tradition present in Assamese literature deserves a consideration while considering Malik as a humanist though it stands quite opposed to the Postmodern literary practice and criticism in many ways. Keeping all the above mentioned aspects of humanism and the general practices of Structuralism and postmodernism as the following development of modernism, an attempt has been made in this thesis to investigate the nature and scope of Malik’s humanism and its socio-cultural implications in the present-day context.

I.III. The Scope of the Thesis

Sayed Abdul Malik is associated with the vast field of literary creation and is very dear to Assamese readers. The world of literary works of Malik is very
vast and he has achieved fame as a writer of beautiful novel with various subjects and short story throughout the world. Malik is the living example of a perfect writer of short story, poetry, Drama, novel, essay, pleasant light writings, biography, travel literature and satire. He was closely associated with Assam Sahitya Sabha. In regard of Assam Sahitya Sabha, Malik said: "Assam Sahitya Sabha has an ideal and tradition that it is a non – political literary organization. Let Assam Sahitya Sabha be the meeting – place of the heart and mind of the people. Let us embrace all with love and respect, let our creative impulse become lively in an integrated environment.

All and everybody wants to be associated with this organization because Assam Sahitya Sabha is a Sabha of the people (trans. mine, Amal Rajkhowa, ed., Hajarika, Hemen Chandra, 1999, 171).” The scope and importance of the study can be realized from the observation of the noted literary critic Karabi Deka Hajarika: “It seems just impossible to study and evaluate Malik’s endless extent of writing- so various, so contrastive. He speaks of man as well as nature. Sometimes it is tender and romantic; sometimes it is hard and practical. His themes embrace earth and sky together. His creations touch the reader’s heart with tenderness of love, tragedy of separation and warmth of union but it can be terrible and violent in times of need. He writes spontaneous and unprevented with the free flow of hilly spring that reflects the first love of a maiden to the frustration of an unemployed youth and from the miseries of a village woman to the suppressed agony of a modern prostitute. He can write of a real person with the zest of a novel. He has been and is painting the picture of every social group and every
individual of Assam with all their distinctions and individuality with the unflagging and endless creative skill of a real artist. If literature is the mirror of a society, perhaps Malik’s writings are the best mirror of Assamese society. It reflects the Assamese people of all time and all classes (trans. Borgohain, Mamoni Gogoi, Hajarika, Karabi Deka, ibid, 189)."

In this thesis, special stress has been given on the socio-cultural life of the region i.e. custom and conventions of Assamese society. Indian thoughts and principles have been given their due importance. Considering from this viewpoint, a historical survey of humanism as a literary movement has been made in this thesis. Further, the critical observations of recent times on postcolonial and postmodern literature have been discussed in this thesis.

I.IV. Art of the thesis

In accordance with the aims and objectives mentioned, Malik’s twenty representative novels and a few representative short stories from different collections have been critically analysed in this work. All the subject matters of the critical analysis have been studied from the point of their thought, beauty and expression, and importance has been given to the artistic aspect. Classification of literary humanism in general and Malik’s humanism in special have been made and advanced their analysis in the subsequent Chapters. The analysis has become socio-cultural analysis besides being a literary analysis. It is natural because
literature and society are inter-related and are in reciprocal relationship. In the process of analysis the following sources are consulted and considered:

a. Sayed Abdul Malik’s Life

b. His published works (novels, short stories, poems, dramas, diary etc.)

c. Works by other writers related to Malik and

d. All other relevant materials.

Less importance has been given to the stories and incidents of the novels and short stories of Malik in the conclusion part of the thesis. Only references to the text of the novels and short stories are made. All other references to his other writings as well as to the writings of other writers are furnished to justify the statements. Sometimes, examples are furnished to amplify the hypothesis and classifications, so that things may be more clear and intelligible. In most cases, the statements and findings of some renowned scholars are also cited to justify the statements and to make the arguments more logical and reasonable. Malik’s works have been used as the primary source of the study while writing by other writers on Malik, the theoretical books and the writings on the concept of literary movements have been used as the secondary sources.