Chapter – V

TECHNIQUE AND CHARACTERISATION OF THOMAS HARDY AND ASSAMESE REGIONAL NOVEL
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A literary technique is any element or the entirety of elements a writer intentionally uses in the structure of their work. The Formalists, and particularly the so-called Russian formalists, focused on literary technique or devices. In particular, Viktor Shklovsky, in 1917, wrote the essay *Art as a Technique*, which marks a significant shift towards this perspective. Literary techniques are tools, methods and a part of author’s style to express and give more meaning to their writing. Just like character, plot, setting and theme are critical aspects of story telling or novel writing, literary techniques are methods used by writers to give depth, subtlety and express ideas by fabricating them in bunch of words that can convey many things in just few lines.

Various scholars have advocated various views about the technique of a novel. Nevertheless scholars like Mark Sconer, Jeremy Hawthorn, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren etc. have considered “Technique” as one of the most important aspects in the creation of novel. Mark Sconer in his book *Technique as Discovery* opines that discovering the technique means discovering the novel as a whole. In his words “when we speak of technique, then, we speak of nearly everything for technique is the means by which the writers experience, which is the subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning and finally evaluating it”.

2. Westbrook & Handy (Edited): *Twentieth Century Criticism*, p.71
There are no hard and fast rules of using technique in a novel. Instead, the techniques are used in accordance to the subject matter of the novel and as the novelist wants to expose them. Hence technique may differ according to themes and subject matter of the novel. However, the use of technique, whatsoever it is, means a lot for the real success of the novel. A novelist may attain the level of genius by employing his technique. "It is just true that good writing cannot exist without some degree of technical skill and it is also true that technique, like understanding, exist on many levels. It is the combination of the highest level of both that might be called genius."³

Hardy as a novelist was great for his supreme mastery in plot construction. The history of English novel itself has a very strong tradition of a plot construction. The idea is that a novel must have a moral idea running throughout the story. Even characterization becomes secondary, "a novel must have a plot. There must be certain unity and purpose in the action. It must be possible to discern a line or lines, of progress towards consummation of some sort. In all great dramas, and in most great novels, the action is the logical outcome of the central characters. But even when character is most tyrannical in its control, the plot is also an expression of idea."⁴ No doubt in Hardy we find the domination of character. His characters are more impressive than his stories. It seems that his heart lies in the creation of fully developed characters. Even then we find that there is no plotlessness in his novels. He is the follower of the old traditions. There is the superb blending of the idea with the character in Hardy’s novels.

As Legouis and Cazamian put it, Hardy’s plots, “grow out of elementary passions, ambition, greed, love, jealousy, the thirst for knowledge, and springs which move them are psychological.”⁵ As Hardy’s art matures, the plot of his

3. Fast, Howard: Literature and Reality, p.48
novels increasingly grow out of inner conflicts. In the construction of his plots, Hardy was a follower of Fielding. Hardy's novels have a structure, a design, a plan, a framework which is definite, not loose. These plots are dramatic in quality, nothing superfluous and unrequired for is inserted in them. There is much in them that is sensational, melodramatic, and unreal, however, as per the demand of his plot.

An architect by his early training, Hardy gives to his novels a design that is architectural. He is a superb master on the constructive side of his plots. He builds it as a mason or an architect builds a house. As a monument rises brick by brick, so Hardy's plot rises scene by scene. They are constructed in scenes which are the bricks of his plots of which his philosophy is the cement. His plots are massively and solidly built, like a building of brick and stone. Of all great writers of the English novel, Hardy alone has, in equal proportion, great gifts of imagination and extraordinary powers of invention. Compton Rickett remarks in this connection, “as a story teller he [Hardy] allied rich inventive power with a sense of symmetrical development which, as a rule, characterises our lesser, not our greater men. Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, so productively fertile in invention, show often little perspective on the constructive side. For all his minuteness of method, Hardy never loses sight of the harmonious whole, his detail touches have their own special significance in unfolding the burden of the story, here he shows the economy of the greatest artist.”

The architectonics of Hardy have been universally praised. Architectonics is a word taken from architecture. It means, “those structural qualities of proportion, unity, emphasis and scale which make a piece of writing proceed logically and smoothly from a beginning to an end with no wasted effort, no

faulty omission." Hardy’s plots have all these qualities; they are models of symmetry and proportion.

His plots have a beginning, middle, and an end. Often he opens a story with a man going along a road. His narratives are conducted slowly at first, and great pains are taken to make clear the spirit to the country, with its works and ways, when that has been made clear, the plot begins to move with an increasing momentum to an incalculable goal, the characters come into conflict there is strong attraction and repulsion, ‘spirits are finally touched,’ then, there is a period of waiting, a breathing space, an ominous stillness and a pause, till at last, with increased force and motion, it goes forward to the ‘fine issues,’ all the inherent necessities of things cause their effects, tragic or comic, triumphs of the right or of the wrong, and the end of all is told with soft solemnity, a sense of petty striving against a sense of fate. The final grandeur is the total outcome of converging trivialities. In each separate incident there is an element which proves necessary to the completion of the whole. When we close one of Hardy’s greatest books, the deepest impression is always of something fated and inevitable in the sequence of events and this impression rest equally upon his skill in episode invention and his power of climax, his genius for imagination, his logic and his powers of penetrating vision. He is, in fact, a man of science turned novelist, a mathematician dealing with dramatic and poetic material. We find no digression, no superfluities, no redundancies. His novels always have unity of impression. His plots are simple, organic and symmetrical, they move in direct lines. ‘And however great the play of an external fate, the life or motive, which is the centre of each plot, is essentially psychological. Every novel is an answer to the question: Given certain characters, in certain circumstances, what will become of them.’

Hardy has the incomparable gift of a story-teller, that of making his stories interesting. The interest of his stories is remarkably maintained from the beginning to the end. Whenever the interest flags, something turns up to enliven the proceedings. Effective use is made of suspense and surprise, of hope and hopelessness of chance and incident. The ‘rustic chorus’ forms a kind of under plot and serves to dispel the tragic gloom when it begins to grow too painful, or to relieve tension by contrast. However, this comic under-current does not mar the tragic impression. It is skillfully blended with the main tragic story.

Most of Hardy’s plots have love stories. This has been all along the English tradition. There are, however, exceptions to the rule. Stevenson Conrad, Bennett and H.G. Wells do not always give us love stories. But “the Wessex novels are almost without exception built solidly round the erotic situation generally of a highly complicated nature”. The only exception in Hardy to the above statement seems to be Mayor of Casterbridge; although it has one or two love stories. In almost all his novels the plot is based on the fact “of two or more men loving one woman, or two or more women loving one man or the combination of the two varieties of complication.”

*Tess of D’Urbervilles* is a story of simple triangular love. Here Tess is loved by two rivals Engel Clare and Alec. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Oak and Boldwood love Bathsheba. Bathsheba loves Troy, but Troy loves Fanny. In *The Trumpet Major* Anne loves Job, Bob Festus and Bob Loves Mablda.

Thus almost all the novels of Hardy have love stories. They can be represented through Rhombus. Throughout these novels the same pattern of love has been followed. This is the simple law of Hardy’s plots. The action proceeds

10. Ibid, p.99
in direct lines. There are no digressions or sub plots or excess of characters. "In adopting this method of the broad simple outline Hardy departed from the practice of his immediate predecessors."\textsuperscript{11} He is not like Dickens or Thackeray whose novels have a big population. He established the tradition of simplicity of plot, and fewer characters. One can observe this simplicity in \textit{Tess of the D’Urbervilles}. There are few characters who are all prime characters. ‘Clare is the hero and of great interest, but he is rather portrayed definitely than studied and allowed to destroy his presence. He is chiefly necessary as part of Tess’s environment. Now is there any complexity in the action? Tess meets Alec and is seduced. She meets Clare and is Wooed and won, the two facts clash with infinite ruin. This is a very simple plot. Similarly in \textit{The Return of the Native} the simplicity is characteristic of the plot where Eustacia is shown torn between two lovers. \textit{The Mayor of Casterbridge}’ is again quite simple. It is one figure story. The novelist is chiefly concerned with the conflict in the mind of Henchard.

The plots are realistic. They represent life as it is. There is no exaggeration there. They observe the principle “willing suspension of disbelief.” In \textit{Tess of the d’Urbervilles}, the novelist has very cleverly divided the novel into seven phases, each one describing different stage and gradual development of Tess. Thus Hardy’s plots are simple. A single idea governs them throughout.

Use of symbols is one of the most prominent techniques adopted by Hardy in his novels. Hardy was a great symbolist. He made extensive use of the same in his poems and novels as well, and the themes of his major novels always have a great symbolical significance. The opening scene of \textit{Far From the Madding Crowd} or any of the major Wessex novels will show how adept Hardy has been in the employment of symbolism. The scene opens with Gabriel Oak who always carries in his coat-pocket a silver watch looking like a clock. Its peculiarity is

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.101
that either it moves too fast or does not move at all. Like this watch, its owner too shall have an irregular life to live. That is, Oak will never have a smooth sailing in his life. Further, Oak often remedies the stopping peculiarity of his watch by “thumps and shakes”. It implies that, like his watch, Oak will also get several “thumps and shakes” in the hands of his destiny.

An ornamental spring wagon, laden with household goods and window plants, comes down the slope and Bathsheba is found sitting on the summit of the load. She sits motionless surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, some pots of flower plants, a caged canary, and a cat in a partly opened willow basket. With half-closed eyes, the cat affectionately surveys the small bird around. This is a scene that symbolises what is in store for Bathsheba in future.

Moving from the opening to any other scenes, the symbolic significance does not appear less striking. The scene where Gabriel being saved by Bathsheba when he is about to die of suffocation, suggests that although she may have distaste in accepting him either as a lover or as a husband, he will be provided with all his primary needs by her. After his financial ruin in consequence of fire in his own establishment, Gabriel gets employment in Bathsheba’s manor farm and can thus maintain himself somehow.

The fire, which is about to destroy Bathsheba’s rickyard, is brought under control by Gabriel. It is symbolic of the part which Gabriel is destined to play in Bathsheba’s life. At every crucial moment of her life he will appear as a friend, a helper, a saviour. It also symbolises that the fire of love and passion, tormenting her feminine heart, will be finally extinguished only after her union with Gabriel.

In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy’s symbolism can be traced even in its setting. Egdon Heath is the setting: it is the vast tract of unenclosed wild which
embrows itself moment by moment. The face of the heath by its mere complexion can add half an hour to evening. It can in the like manner retard the dawn, sadden moon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to cause of shaking and dread. It is neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; it is neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor time. But like a time, it is slighted and enduring, and withal singularity colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changes, the field changes, the river changes, and even man changes; but Egdon remains unchanging and eternal. It has a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities. Egdon Heath, like the fungoid forest of The Woodlanders is essentially a symbol as it ambivalently presents nature in both her aspects: vestigial, Wordsworthian, benign on the one hand, casual, Darwinian, and frightening on the other.

The symbolical significance of Edgon Heath and Hintock Woods may also be interpreted in the way that nature, far from being a passive background of human joys and sorrows, is an active agent of Destiny to crush its victims at its own whim. Egdon slays Eustacia who is unable to stand its sombre sylvan spirit. Again, the Hintock Woods thrusts a rival in love upon Winterborne and works out his tragic doom. Thus, Egdon Heath and the Hintock Woods are not more landscapes but are the effective agents of Destiny to catch its victims under its unfailing meshes.

Of all the scenes of The Return of the Native, perhaps the gambling scene is the most symbolic. Mrs. Yeobright has sent Christian to distribute hundred family guineas to be distributed between Thomasin and Clym in equal proportion. Christian meets his fellow rustics and accompanies them to the Quiet Woman Inn to enjoy the game of raffle. His companions place their shillings on the table. Christian also yields to the temptation, and he too lays down his shilling. The
raffle begins and the dice goes round. To the surprise of all, and to his own
surprise too, Christian finds that he has won. This victory brings to his poor wits
the thought of being a lucky person. From his remarks it does not become difficult
for Wildeve, who is standing near him, to understand what he is carrying to
Thomasin. Both of them leave the inn to start for mistover. On the way Wildeve
induces him to try his luck again on the dark lonely heath, placing the guineas at
stake. It is now more than ten o’clock at night. This time Christian loses all the
guineas to Wildeve and he goes away in a miserable plight. Now Diggory comes
to the scene. He sits down at Christian’s place and lays down a sovereign at the
stone. So completely is Wildeve carried away by the excitement of recent success
that he at once places a guinea at stake, and the game of dice commences. Both
the gamblers are so engrossed in the game that they have now no sense of time,
place or situation. When their light goes off, Wildeve catches glow-worms to
continue the game. Their night long performance draws as many as fifty heath-
croppers around them to enjoy their gambling silently. But fortune favours the
reddleman who wins all the hundred guineas from Wildeve.

The gambling scene suggests more than what it says, and its suggestion
are various. It suggests, for example, that gambling is an exciting game that can
automatically attract a large crowd. About fifty heath-croppers have come to
enjoy its excitement even in midnight. It is too forbidden a game to be held in
public or in broad daylight. A scheduled spot, away from human haunts, and
preferably the darkness of the night are usually suitable for such a game. It is also
a temptation; it begins to tempt men by initial success to gamble more and more,
no matter how he may lose in the end. It is also most uncertain in its results; and
who will win or who will lose ultimately cannot be predicted beforehand. Under
the influence of such a reckless game, a gambler becomes unconscious of time,
place or situation. Both Wildeve and Diggory are notable examples.
The opening scene of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* essentially symbolises the wane out relationship between husband and wife. Poverty stricken Henchard has become the symbol of the victim of Industrial Revolution; he is thrown out of employment and reduced to poverty. The industrial revolution has unsettled and uprooted the English peasantry so long sustained and secured by the agrarian economy.

Another most symbolically significant scene of the novel is perhaps, the one in which Henchard sells his wife and child on auction. He enters the furmity shop at Susan’s request, but soon understands its real business and begins to drink. When he is fully drunk, the auctioneer is engaged in selling the old, worn out and useless horses on auction outside. The very idea of disposing of his wife and child through auction at once strikes him. Accordingly, they are put on auction and sold to the highest bidder, Rechard Mewson, a sailor.

The symbolic significance of the auction scene is that financial hardships enfeeble marriage bond so much so that the victim of poverty and unemployment may not hesitate to break it off completely. Though Henchard apparently sells his wife and child under the influence of liquor, the real cause behind is his acute poverty resulting from his early marriage. This is what he always feels but never speaks in his sober moments. He speaks of his feeling when he is drunk, and so he sells his wife and child to the highest bidder.

Another interpretation may be that liquor takes away all the good qualities of man and makes so much of a useless animal of him that he may consider even his own wife and child in terms of useless animals fit to be sold on auction like those of the old, worn out and useless horses. A third but the more significant interpretation may be that, like the present auction, Henchard’s own life is also going to be auctioned in near future by his cruel destiny. As he throws away Susan and Elizabeth Jane as useless articles to the sailor, the highest bidder,
Henchard’s fate will also throw him away as a useless article to his more worthy and more capable rival Farfrae who will displace him in business, in love, and in mayoralty.

As it is in *The Return of the Native*, nature has a symbolic meaning in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* too. There is a deep symbolic sense in which the eternal forms and manifestations of nature have been woven into the thematic scheme. Nature is seen as a part and expression of elemental forces that seem to obey the mighty dictates of a blind Immanent Will. With an autonomous existence, nature stands as a living force, as a living character, for human undoing. The Chase, the oldest wood in England, in which Tess is seduced by Alec in the darkness of the cold night, illustrates it. The whole natural atmosphere seems to have concurred with and connived at the villain’s villainy only to bring about Tess’s ruination.

The baptism scene in which Tess herself baptises her illegitimate child Sorrow, followed by the burial scene, is symbolically most meaningful. Her child is on the verge of death, and Tess knows it only too well. Yet she baptises him, and after his death, just after baptism, gives him a Christian burial by herself. In both the baptism and burial scenes Tess herself has to act as priest as no priest is available for services to an illegitimate child. Both the scenes may be interpreted in several ways. Mother’s distress at the misery of her child may make her so daring that she does not hesitate to transgress any law whether moral, social or religious. Another interpretation may be that mother’s heart always craves for the welfare of her child not merely in this world but even the world beyond. There is yet a third interpretation which is that Christianity in its too much of orthodoxy breaks its own gospel- to hate sin, not the sinner. This is what is suggested by the non-appearance of a regular priest for rendering baptism and burial services to Tess’s illegitimate child.
Further, this novel as a whole gives rise to several ideas. First, like The Mayor of Casterbridge, this novel presents a symbolic tale of gradual extinction of the age old Wessex peasantry by the emergence of the modern capitalistic economy. As Arnold Kettle puts it, Tess herself is the story as well as the symbol of destruction.\textsuperscript{12} Second, it is the symbolic tale of the suffering of a pure woman whose purity lies in her heart, not in her body. Tess suffers because she is impure in her body but pure in her heart. Third, it is the symbolic tale of an innocent young woman suffering on account of a double standard in man made moral laws in respect of purity and chastity for men and women. Unchastity for women is a transgression and punishment. For the same offence, if it is at all an offence for Tess, because she is forced to be involved against her will, there is no punishment for Alec, but Tess is severely punished and she suffers immeasurably.

Similarly, the theme of \textit{Jude the Obscure} stands as a symbol of several ideas. The first is the academic frustration of many young people of modern times caused by the lack of academic opportunities. Jude himself is its living symbol. The second is a pathetic human plight resulting from an individuality which is too strong to be fitted into the common scheme, but which is too weak to keep out of conflict with it. Jude and Sue are strong enough to violate the sanctity of the age old social institution of marriage. But they are too weak to stand its consequences and are completely crushed in course of time. The third is Hardy's own statement— happiness is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain. This idea is not however peculiar to this novel only. It has been translated through all other tragic novels of Hardy. In the lives of all his heroes and heroines —Oak and Bathsheba, Clym and Eustacia, Henchard, Giles, and Grace, Tess, and Jude and Sue— joy is casual, while pain is usual.

\textsuperscript{12} Kettle, Arnold: An Introduction to the English Novel, p.227
“As in his other novels, Hardy employs symbolism frequently and effortlessly in Jude”. For we have in this novel three types of novel in particular—natural, cultural and Christian or religious. The slaughtering of the pig by Arabella with Jude’s help is the most outstanding example of natural symbolism. The pig stands as the representative of all victims and scapegoats and sacrifices. Although Jude helps Arabella in slaughtering the pig, he feels for the animal. His pity for the animal and his bewilderment about the morality of its fate symbolise man’s reaction to the casual indifference of nature. The blood that stains the snow when the pig is killed symbolises all the suffering generated by existence. It is hideous and meaningless, but it is necessary; the very miserable existence makes it necessary.

The intense physicality of the pig killing scene also makes it a symbol of Jude’s degradation with Arabella. Jude has responded to the call of his flesh and pulse of his blood, and it has brought him to this grotesque wallowing in gore. It implies that Arabella, with Jude’s own existence, is slaughtering his hopes and aspirations, leaving only a limited physical satisfaction.

The rabbit caught in the gin seems to be symbolic of the plight of both Jude and Sue. Jude is caught up in the powerful machinery of his own obscure fate, while Sue is caught in the psychological and social trap of her marriage with Phillotson. Jude puts the rabbit out of its agony just as Father Time puts Sue’s younger children out of the world.

Hardy links up Arabella with the pig, while Sue with birds; and this linking certainly gives rise to a powerful symbolic suggestion. In her association with the pig Arabella symbolises the physical and the gross in her very being. But Sue, on the other hand symbolises the spiritual and the delicate in her association with birds. Jude is kind to birds from the very beginning of his life. We have seen

his kindness to them when he allowed the rooks to eat oats in Troutham's field when he was a mere child. It suggests that he will kind to Sue when he will meet her subsequently. He offers her not the trap of marriage she is much afraid of, but the 'nest'.

Passing from the natural to the cultural level, we have the symbol of Christminster. The Christminster symbol alternates with Jude's inspiration and frustration. When he sees this city for the first as a glow on the horizon, it symbolises Jude's aspiration for an academic life. But subsequently when he finds that an academic life is beyond his reach, Christminster symbolises to him mist, illusion and frustration.

Christian and religious symbols are however no less interesting than either the natural or cultural symbol. When man loses his religious faith, he begins to take upon him some of the characteristics of God and Christ. Henchard did it; Tess did it; and Jude and Sue are of no exception. Christminster is associated with Jerusalem. Like Christ abandoned by Jerusalem, Jude also abandoned by Christminster. Jude frequently quotes scripture, and his death-bed oration is an extensive quotation from the book of Job. His name is that of an apostle at least.

Sue, too, has biblical and Christian associations. She is "The Ishmaelite"; she first appears in an aura of high-church ritual; and after the death of her children, her cup of misery is full and she returns to her husband and is remarried to him. Like Christ in the garden, she herself chooses to drink the cup of her suffering, and in both the cases the motivation is the same- the fulfillment of God's will. So Sue, like Jude, Tess and Henchard, is a suffering Christ figure, Christ suffered for humanity. Hardy applies it to suggest that any suffering humanity is Christ.

Hardy is not only symbolic in the presentation of his themes but also fantastic and marvellous in the conception of his character and plot. In spite of a
logical sequence of cause and effect applied in the broad outlines of his characters and plots, Hardy's fondness for the marvellous, for the grotesque, for the tragedy that always underlies comedy makes him appear quite fantastic. The word 'fantastic' literally means a state of extravagant fancy, and he who is extravagantly fanciful may be called fantastic.

During the childhood Hardy had witnessed many memorable events, sad, ironic, sordid and criminal in his native place, rural Dorset. The images of these events, which he directly perceived from his senses, remained almost fixed in Hardy's fancy. But when his faculties had reached the creative stage of development, Hardy's imagination helped him almost to make new construction out of those fixed images of childhood, It is thus partly from fancy and partly from imagination, drawing his imagination from both of them, something using his fixed images and sometimes altering them that Hardy has become fantastic and marvellous. That Hardy is more interested in the unique and aberrant individual than the common relation type is an instance of his being fantastic.

Hardy wrote in his note book of April 1887: "In a work of art it is the accident which charms, not the intention; that only like and admire. Instance the amber tones that pervade the folds of drapery in ancient marbles, the deadened polish of the surfaces, and the cracks and the scratches". In another note of March 1880, Hardy recorded: "Art consists in so depicting the common events of life as to bring out the features which illustrate the author's idiosyncratic mode of regard; making old incidents and things seem as new". Hardy in his letter of May 1901, wrote: "My own interest lies largely in non-rationalistic subjects, since non-rationality seems, so far as one can perceive, to be the principle of Universe. By which I do not mean foolishness, but rather a principle for which

14. Hardy, E.F.: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p.191
15. Ibid, p.225
there is exact name, lying at the indifference point between rationality and irrationality”.\textsuperscript{16} Mrs. Hardy’s letter of Feb 18, 1920, shows that Hardy was rather an irrationalist than a rationalist. “He could show that no man is a rationalist, and that human’s actions are not ruled by reason at all the last report.”\textsuperscript{17}

Fond as he was of irrationalism, accident, idiosyncrasy, grotesquenes and strangeness, most of the Hardy’s prominent men and women are not of the common type. Clym, for example, quits his flourishing diamond trade in Paris with an avowed purpose of educating the heath people, despite his mother’s timely and most reasonable warning to the contrary. Something that strikes him once, he must pursue up to the last. He is not aware of his own limitation in materialising the scheme in his head. When he is seized with near blindness, he become an ordinary furze-cutter, being totally oblivious of his education, his former occupation in Paris, his social position and the sentiment of his town born wife. This is Clym’s irrationalism, rather his abnormalism. His wife, Eustacia, is freakish and shifty; she at first falls in love with Wildeve because there is no one else better in the lonely Egdon. But Clym being a better object to be loved, she falls in love with him and marries him. But the way she goes to meet Clym for the first time is worthy of note. She conceals her female identity and goes to Clym’s house as one of the mummers to play the part of The Turkish Knight in place of Charley. It may speak of her novelty, but also of her abnormality.

In the group of aberrant individuals, Henchard is perhaps the gem. In a drunken state his sub-conscious begins to work, when unwanted animals are sold on auction. He smarts under a sense of deprivation that the opportunities of his life have been thwarted by an early marriage. In such an abnormal state of mind Henchard disposes of his unwanted wife, Susan, on auction. Then he takes a vow not to touch wine and does not touch it for the next twenty years of his life.

\textsuperscript{16} Hardy, E.F.: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p.303
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.403
This is also not normal on the part of one who was once a first rate drunkard. It proves that Henchard is always extreme. If he loves any one, he loves him too much; if he hates someone he also hates him too much. Henchard’s fluctuating behaviour with Farfrae and Elizabeth are the case in point. The manner of his death and framing of his last testament, expressive of his bitter hatred towards all that he valued so much in life, also points to his abnormal temperament.

Tess is also uncommon and abnormal. Unlike any normal Victorian girl, she, a girl of thirteen only, undertakes a journey at night, herself driving the cart. Her only companion was her nine year old brother, Abraham. So happens the inevitable, the accident and the death of Prince, the only bread earner of the family. This does not seem to be normal on the part of a girl of thirteen years only. She also brings in illegitimate child in public and even allows her baby to suck her in public, completely disregarding all public titterings. She also baptizes her baby and gives it a Christian burial when it dies. She discloses her past to her husband, Angel Clare, despite her mother’s advice to the contrary. It may be moral, but not rational, on her part to have done so. Again, to kill Alec, her seducer, and that too, with a bread-knife, is also not expected of a normal Victorian girl.

Jude stands between rationality and irrationality, while she stands for abnormality. Jude is rational in that he is aware of his own limitation and he learns free-stone masoning so that he can learn and earn at the same time at Christminster. He seems to be however irrational in his violent passion for women, first for Arabella, next for Sue. Sue is intellectual, but she is pathetically abnormal. She is reported to have undergone a marriage rehearsal with a devoted young man, with whom she lived as wife but without any physical relation. On a sudden spur of the moment she is engaged to and marries Phillotson, who befits her more as a father than a husband. But she detastes her married life and runs to her
cousin. What is peculiar in her, she is desirous of her infusion with male spirit through marriage, but averse to any physical contact. She lives with Jude as his mistress, yet there is no physical contact for a considerable period of time. This kind of sexlessness is certainly an abnormal trait in her. The reappearance of Arabella however makes her nervous and she surrenders herself to Jude’s lust. She becomes the mother of Jude’s children without being married to him. Such an averse to marriage is uncommon among the common Victorian girls. When her children are killed, she can not bear the shock. She deserts Jude and returns to Phillotson to be remarried to him. But it seems to be her funeral rather than her wedding. Sue is abnormal in her complexity and nervousness, abnormal in her strength as well as in her weakness.

Hardy shows his fascination for fantasy, mystery, magic and the marvellous not merely in the idiosyncratic behaviour of his prominent men and women but also in his method of using natural objects and occurrences in a perfectly natural way.

The Reddleman of *The Return of the Native*, who is tall, silent, solitary, in close-fitting raiment, who is lurid red from crown to heel, and who is easily and always at one with the cryptic shades of Edgon, may be cited as an example. Mysteriously does he move across the vast Edgon abode of gloom. Omnipresent and all watchful over the destinies of other persons of the novel, he is ever ready with new moves, and interferes at all crises like the finger of a deity. He moves underground; and how does it come and go nobody knows. He is a ghost, and he should have disappeared like a ghost; but it is startling, somewhat fantastic to find him married quietly at the end of the story. ‘’His (Hardy’s) practice in this respect amounts to a denial of the Aristotelian doctrine that probable impossibilities are to be preferred to improbable possibilities”\(^{18}\)

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18. *Duffin, H.C.: Thomas Hardy, p.114*
Hardy also builds up the atmosphere of fantasy and marvelousness through chance, accident or coincidence. It is a ubiquitous, yet lawless and unacknowledged phenomenon in Hardy’s novels; and it is as important a feature in the lives of Hardy’s people as it is in real life. It crops up everywhere, in crises in passing events. When Bathsheba is almost mentally prepared to fall in love and to come to tears with Boldwood, she has a chance meeting with Sergeant Troy in course of her inspecting the fir plantation at night. Her flowing skirt is caught in the spur of this young handsome soldier. Hardy’s brilliant description of the event, even more than the conversation more than the two, can transport his readers into land of magic and marvel.

"The man to whom she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier. His sudden appearance was to darkness what the sound of a trumpet is to silence. Gloom, the genius loci at all times hitherto, was now totally overthrown, less by the lantern light than by what the lantern lighted. The contrast of this revelation with her anticipations of some sinister figure in sombre garb was so great that it had upon her the effect of a fairy transformation."

This strange coincidence does shift Bathsheba’s affection from Boldwood to Troy and brings her painful suffering in turn.

In *The Return of the Native*, chance almost assumes the form of an inexorable fate to turn human lives into a drama of pain and pathos. Almost at every step chance is at work to give a cruel turn to things unwillingly. Charley kindles a bonfire on the fifth of November to please his mistress Eustacia, but without ever knowing that Wildeve takes it as a signal from her; it is a cruel joke perpetrated on Eustacia by a cruel chance. It has a far reaching consequence in so far as it draws Wildeve to Eustacia again and places her in position to plan her

19. Hardy, Thomas: *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.182
flight from Egdon. But it ultimately ends her exit from life. It is another cruel chance that instead of starting at the midnight hour Wildeve is kept waiting, lost in his own thoughts, and starts fifteen minutes late. Had he started in time, one is left conjecturing, Eustacia might not have met her tragic end in the Weir.

After Susan’s death, lonely Henchard leans to Elizabeth Jane for solace and comfort. Just then he has the fatal discovery that she is not his daughter, but the sailor’s. At the very idea of being deceived so long by a falsehood, Henchard is too infuriated to control himself. The girl is so ill-treated that she is forced to run away from shelter of her step father. Further, when Lucetta is eagerly waiting for Henchard, the caller is not Henchard, but Farfrane who has come to meet Elizabeth Jane who is also not at home. This coincidence paves the ground for mutual affection, love and ultimate union between Farfrae and Lucetta.

In course of returning from Chase-borough weekly market on a Saturday night, Tess is physically assaulted by a dark virago, Car Darch, dubbed as the Queen of Spades, her sister Nancy, nicknamed the Queen of Diamonds, and by some more working women. For, they are all inflamed to madness by a long smouldering sense of rivalry against Tess. Just then Alec comes to her rescue. At almost any other moment of her life Tess would have refused such preferred aid and company; but now in her helpless state, she is forced to accept his help. This strange behaviour and acceptance however lets her fall from flying-pan into the fire. He takes him into the chase, and she becomes a victim of his physical lust. The maiden becomes a mother in due course. Thus, chances and co-incidences have a free play in Hardy, but they are unforced and always explicable; and sometimes they are sufficiently explained.

Hardy can create his fantastic and marvellous world even through the agency of events quite natural, yet strange and uncommon. The scene in the hollow amid the ferns in which Troy displays his sword fighting and wins the
heart of Bathsheba is an example. Troy stands waiting for Bathsheba at the bottom of a pit where the performance is to take place. He helps her down the slope. The pit is a saucer-shaped concave, naturally formed, with a top diameter of about thirty feet, and shallow enough to allow the sunshine reach their heads. Bathsheba is asked to stay a few yards off as if she were the enemy to be attacked by Troy. He misses her every time by a hair’s breadth. She is dazzled by a glitter of sword gleaming and flashing into her right, to her left, in her front, seeming to pierce through her, yet leaving her untouched. Then second performance is even more surprising. She scarcely sees the sword before it is a sky full of meteors before her eyes, close at hand. Finally she astonishes by cutting off a lock of her hair, and then a caterpillar sitting on her bodice, without touching her even. Bathsheba fears Troy, she sinks down overcome by a hundred tumultuous emotions, and the spell breaks in a stream of tears as he kisses her unawares and disappears. Bathsheba is now completely hypnotised by his marvellous skill. To her, it was a magic, but to him it was only his skill.

The intensity of fear also helps Hardy to create his wonder and fantasy. The precipice - adventure for the firing of love between Knight and Elfride is a case in point. Having gone to a precipice, Knight cannot keep his balance, and he slips. But somehow he is able to lay his hand on the rock and he keeps himself hanging. He is literally on the veritable verge of death. The situation is most fearful, and quite in an exciting manner. Elfride, by making a rope after tearing off her under-garment, is able to save the life of the dying man. It is by this incident that the two lovers are charged to the sparkling point.

Hardy’s fondness for things strange and uncommon also makes him fantastic and wonderful. Its best illustration is perhaps Tess’s baptism of her illegitimate child and Christian burial given to it after its death. Her child being illegitimate, no person comes to baptise it. But child is almost coming to its last
breath. Tess than stands erect with the infant on her arm beside the basin, the next sister holds the Prayer Book open before her, as the clerk at church holds it before the person; and thus Tess goes about baptising her child. The whole process is so uncommon and strange that it has become fantastic.

Tess baptises her baby at midnight, but it dies next morning. The Vicar refuses to give it a Christian burial. But Tess gives it a Christian burial by carrying the baby to the churchyard at night in small deal box, under an ancient woman’s shawl. The burial is made with a “lantern-light, at the cost of a shilling and a pint of beer to the sexton, in that shabby corner of God’s allotment where he lets the nettles grow, and where all unbaptised infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned are laid”.

The surroundings are untoward, but Tess bravely makes a little cross of two sticks and a piece of string, and having bound it with flowers, she sticks it up at the head of the grave. At the foot of the grave, she also puts a bunch of the same flowers in a little jar of water to keep them alive.

Jude’s first vision of Christminster, as a boy of eleven, is perhaps the most touching and beautiful of all Hardy’s suggestion of the natural-supernatural. It also goes to account for Hardy’s fantastic elements. Having climbed a ladder that he has been told may give him a view of what he thinks of as ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’, he finds the distance shrouded in a mist. From the ladder he looks in the direction of his city of dream and romance, but nothing is visible to him on account of mist. He kneels on the third rung of the ladder and prays for the removal of the mist. Jude sits and waits. Within ten or fifteen minutes the thinning mist begins to dissolve in the northern horizon. Within about fifteen minutes the cloud part away completely, and Jude looks back in old direction. Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape, points of light like the topaz gleam.

20. Hardy, Thomas: Tess of D’Urbervilles, p.124
The topaz points show themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates, and other shining spots upon the spires, domes, freestone-work, and varied outlines that are faintly revealed. It is unquestionably Christminster, either directly seen, or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere. Jude gazes and gazes till the windows and vanes lose their shine, going out almost suddenly like extinguished candles. The vague city becomes veiled in mist.

These instances are enough to show that Hardy is a master of mystery in a distinctly new and fascinating way. Hardy is not however a romancer, nor a mystic; and it is eminently satisfying to find in him, especially in such an acknowledged master of the realities of life of as Hardy is, a clear and practical conviction in the immanence of the supernatural. None can perhaps deny that the world is a queer place, and even queerer than we shall ever know. Hardy appears fantastic in his attempt to bring out the queerness of the world, the hidden truth that underlies human situation and the unusual truth that has seldom been revealed. This is a distinctively modern tendency in Hardy.

Hardy’s creative power is best exhibited in the portrayal of characters. The first and the best quality of Hardy as a novelist is his wonderful gift of developing characters in his novels. No critic has doubted the greatness of Hardy in this respect. His mastery in the art of characterization is seldom questioned. The reader of Hardy can never forget the long list of great characters which ever remain fresh in his memory. We have Jude Fawley, Gabriel Oak, Angel Clare, Michael Henchard, Clym Yeobright, and Giles Winterbore who are some of the male characters. They make deep impression on the minds of the readers. They have their own whims, impulses and philosophies. Among the male characters, we have unforgettable secondary characters such as, Boldwood, Farfrae, Philloston, Troy, Alec d’Urberville and Jocelyn Pustin. They are the finest examples of human weaknesses and virtues. Then we have female characters-
Tess, Sue, Bathsheba, Elizabeth Jane, Grace and Marty. Hardy has shown wonderful grasp of womanly ‘nature’. The above names are really ‘a symphony’.

In the presentation of these characters Hardy delves deep into human nature. “He places the crystals of human souls in his crucibles and subjects them to the awful test of a white enduring heat”. We can pick up Tess, for example, and analyse the method of Hardy in the creation of characters. He has seen agony and innocence in the heart of Tess. From beginning to the end, Hardy has wonderfully entered into the hidden parts of Tess’s heart.

A kind of Shakespearian tragic treatment is found in Tess. Tess not only dies but her soul is clearly ruined. This stark tragedy is similar to some of the great tragedies of Shakespeare like Lear, Macbeth and Hamlet “now not in the rest of Elizabethan drama, not in the rest of English literature till you find another soul’s tragedy until you reach Hardy and this supreme feature of Shakespeare’s tragedy is born again in the novels of pure modern.”

One important aspect of Hardy’s mastery of character-presentation is that he gives us what may be called the soul’s tragedy which is also a feature of Shakespeare’s genius as a playwright. The tragedy of Tess Lies not in her desertion, her struggle for bread, her frightful death; but it lies in her sin, her bewilderment of soul at Clare’s behaviour, the intense agony of her despair, culminating in the awful wrecking of her nature in the foul embrace of Alec’s renewed love making. To be crushed to death by grief is nothing; but for a pure woman to be crushed into impurity- there is a soul’s tragedy that has no equal in horror. Again, the pure, strong, and beautiful soul of Sue Bridehead is wasted away by the bitter processes of sorrow, fear, error until it becomes a shrunken, maniac thing, too pitiful to be thought upon. Only in these two greatest of the novels is the soul’s tragedy to be found, but in these two it is undoubtedly present and the fact is

sufficient to set Hardy, so far as tragedy is concerned, above all other novelists. It is to be noted too that in each case the subject of this special catastrophe is a woman). In some of the other novels too we have the soul’s tragedy, though in a much less concentrated and intense form: we have it in the grim struggles and vicissitudes of the Mayor of Casterbridge; in the splendors and disappointments of the love of Eustacia Vye; in the lightning-riven glooms of Farmer Boldwood etc.

The contemporary critics pointed out that all characters of Hardy are common people, villagers, rustics, peasants and labourers. Before Hardy, the practice of almost all character-creators, whether in novel or drama, had been in accordance with Aristotle’s theory, following in some modified form the precept that the tragic hero must be a man of high rank. However, Hardy draws his tragic hero or heroines from amongst the common people. They are Tess, a milk maid and hard-driven general farm-hand, daughter of a haggler and his vulgar wife; Jude Fawley, stonemason, sometime baker’s assistant; Gabriel Oak, shepherd; Sue Bridehead, elementary school teacher; Michael Henchard, itinerant hay-trusser. These five, the very greatest of the heroes and heroines, are all drawn from the most commonplace walks of life and from occupations which for other writers are completely devoid of romance. Few novelists had, before Hardy, dared to believe that a school teacher or a hay-trusser possessed not only a soul, but also characterised by beauty and grandeur. This in Hardy is the peculiar grace. This is perhaps his supreme achievement- to have found among the unnoticed and forgotten crowds of average humanity, persons as mysteriously interesting and as spiritually adventurous as were ever those of queens and emperors. In a sense this is Hardy’s special contribution to the Spirit of the Age-democracy. He first declared the common man to be individually a person of
great subtlety and of Olympian grandeur. This gives to Hardy an extraordinary position among the great creators of character.

The real greatness of Hardy is that he selects characters from ordinary walks of life and makes them so impressive. They become more universal. Out of prosaic incidents of life, he is able to weave a poetic pattern of life which is so appealing to the readers. Life is as interesting among ordinary people as it is in palaces and luxurious drawing rooms. Hardy has disproved that Hamlet's feeling are not present in among common people. By presenting common people, Hardy has really responded to the spirit of Democracy. "It is this type of dim unapprehended personality that Hardy, for the first time in the literature has definitely taken up and made his own. In a sense it is Hardy's special contribution to the spirit of the age– Democracy."  

Many critics and writers including R.L Stevenson were of the opinion that characters must come from ordinary life. In all the characters of Hardy, we have some special aspects which attract our notice by its simple beauty. "One can point to Tess, with her natural refinement, Oak with his natural dignity, Henchard with his natural grandeur." These characters spring from the very soil of Wessex. Hardy develops new presentation of man where nature forms the background.

The method of character-drawing followed by Hardy is set and his own. This is exemplified by– Henchard and Tess. In the creation of characters his eyes are always on the formation of human personality. For example in Henchard he studies the growth of his mind and heart. The essential substance of a man is manifested to the main currents of his career. But in addition to there are a host of incidental touches of portraiture – vivid descriptive phrases, metaphor illuminations and revealing comparisons, chance utterances of man himself that

23. Ibid, p.13
are Hardy's means of building up a personality of extraordinary consistency, probability, warmth and reality.

The characters of Hardy are true to life. He has not painted the idealistic aspects of life through his characters. One may find both virtues and vices, weaving the pattern of life. The members of Hardy's world, in short, present such a compounds of evil with good as their prototype on the wider stage of earth. There is however even a broader ground of judgment. It is not sufficient that his characters should be human; they must also be what is called universal. All characters that are not unreal, impossible, are either realist, typical or universal. The designers of realistic figures works from keen but superficial observation of men. He has an eye like a camera, and produces vivid photographs; he presented only an outside view of his creations, and his art needs no plumbing of human nature.

In the rustics drawn by Hardy although realistically drawn, there is imaginative or romantic colouring. They have been idealized by the novelist. Hardy becomes poetic when he describes labourers, plebeians, or villagers. Hardy shows marvelous power in describing the typical. The type are multiple, distinct and exclusive. Typical characters cannot show us the depth of human nature. Hardy's characters are not types. "But most of the characters of Hardy's novels are neither types not mere individuals but universals. Each comprehend within himself the whole of human nature which is one and invisible. They have their varied casting of the coloured glass of individuality, but the light at the centre is white. To call hardy a 'fearless realist', is to neither romanticist nor prude: but in the character his eye and hand are those of the idealist — the idealist who rises above the accidents and distinctions of external show, and looks deep down into human nature itself."
The key to Hardy’s attitude as a writer is to be found in one of his essays where he writes:

“The conduct of the upper classes is screened by conventions, and thus the real character is not easily seen; if it is seen, it must be portrayed subjectively; whereas in the lower walks, conduct is a direct expression of the inner life; and thus character can be directly portrayed through the act. In one case the author’s word has to be taken as to the nerves and muscles of his figures; in the other they can be seen”. 24

In the light of this, one can understand the ease and sureness with which he deals with simple, primal natures; and the awkwardness and theatricality which appear whenever he has to deal with the more complex character of the highly civilized man or woman. Hardy’s strength, as well as his inclination, lay in tracing the elemental things of life, and this is why he took Wessex as his province and did not, for the most part, deal with London and town society.

The Assamese regional novelists also employed various techniques in their novels. Mostly they were traditional in nature; nevertheless, certain experimentation can be found under the influence of western as well as Bengali literature. Nabakanta Baruah’s Kapiliparia Sadhu is a fine regional novel. It is a fine embodiment of use of the author’s own technique. It depicts mysterious kinds of intimacy of its hero with the Kapili River, as we can see in the case of Clym to Egdon Heath. Like Hardy, Nabakanta Baruah also has successfully presented creation in a poetic description. About his own creation, the novelist says that he was unable to write novel in a traditional style. He was not a novelist, rather a speaker only.

24. Quoted in John Boynton Priestley’s The English novel, p.107
Baruah has been a soft speaker, with intense thinking but less expression. His control of using words has reduced the volume of his novel. However, Baruah’s presentation technique is very intense and melodious. The influence of the poet Nabakanta Baruah can be seen in his novel too.

The novelist used the technique of symbolism in the very beginning of the novel. In the very first chapter, there has been a description of a Gorua fish, that was caught by the fisherman in Kapili. The very description of the fish symbolically depicts the next course of the novel, highlighting the mental set-up of the hero of the novel. The description of the fish is given as below:


Apparently it is a simple description, but it intensely highlights the sure and certain death of the fish. The act of washing the blood red hands by the fisherman symbolically depicts the fact that the Kapili River is certainly the silent spectator of pain and suffering of its neighbouring people. The suffering of the dying fish has also left deep impact on Rupai’s mind, for a moment he thought if his uncle also died like the fish. However, this feeling was not intense in his mind and he forgets it very soon. This was the technique used by the author to explain the perplexities of the mind of the hero in the novel. He immediately withdraws

26. Baruah, Nabakanta: Kapiliparia Sadhu, p.18
himself from the sadness and concentrates on some practical activity of shooting birds. Rupai was not mesmerized by the paths of life. This gives the indication of Rupai’s mental state.

The novelist has used the technique of mysticism and marvellous through the character of Rupai. Rupai is really a mysterious character. After the death of his beloved Sunpahi, Rupai’s abrupt decision of getting married shocked everyone. His way of acceptance that the death of Sunpahi was the will of mother Kapili, couldn’t be easily acceptable to the readers. Rupai never took life seriously. That is the reason neither the suffering of the Garua fish nor the death of Sunpahi could affect him for longer period. Again, that the course of action of the novel is bound by many deaths is denoted in the very beginning of the novel. The novel describes the deaths of Rupai’s uncle, his father Dhir Singh and his beloved Sunpahi. Rupai himself considered responsible for the death of his uncle, as the uncle died in Kapili River while searching for him. The death of his father disclosed the ugly truth of his life that he was an orphan. With discovery of this truth, Rupai lost his interest of living. He jumped into the Kapili to sacrifice his life. However he was rescued by Sunpahi. This incident changed the course of his life. He fell in love with Sunpahi, but couldn’t prepare himself to marry her. Pregnant Sunpahi had no choice but to commit suicide in Kapili. Thus one death provoke the other death in the novel; and all these were indicated in the very beginning with a symbolic presentation of the suffering and death of the Garua fish.

Nabakanta Baruah was a genius poet as well as a novelist. Influenced by the western and Bengali literature, he, like the other Assamese writers, tried new techniques to employ in his novels. His *Kapiliparia Sadhu* is a brief and short novel, but essentially with poetic qualities. In this regard Baruah’s technique is much similar to the technique of Hardy. The poet Baruah could be seen more often along with the novelist. Famous critic Prahlad Kumar Baruah observed
that beautiful imaginary presentation of the subject matter, lucid character and a well-knit plot may elevate a novel into a poetic novel.\textsuperscript{27}

In this regard Nabakanta Baruah’s \textit{Kapiliparia Sadhu}, Nirupama Borgohain’s \textit{Sei Nadi Nirabadhi}, Mamoni Raisom Goswami’s \textit{Dantal Hatir Unye Khowa Howda, Nilakanthi Braza} etc. can be regarded as poetic novels.

\textit{Kapiliparia Sadhu} carries a small story with simple description. But the theme and the subject matter emphasize much more depth. The novel discusses the mysterious relation between man and nature; man and river.

"Akarat saru haleu nadir lagat rahasyamoy sambandha pradarsan karat upanyas khane saphalya labh kara buli kaleu atyukti kara nahaba."\textsuperscript{28}

To discuss the mysterious relation between man and nature, the novelist used certain techniques to present the Kapili and the character of Rupai in a mysterious way. The novelist here used the technique of marvellous. He associated some ballads and other legends with the Kapili River. These include the legend of the Kamala Kunwari, the Gayan-Bayan Ghuli, the water-gods taking human to their world etc. The dream dreamt by Bairagi Bhakat relating to Mansingh’s leaving of Kapili etc. are the mysterious elements introduced in the novel. The main character Rupai and his psychology also added to the marvellous of the novel. Rupai’s unexplainable inclination to the Kapili river, his love towards Sunpahi which he never wanted to restrict by the bond of marriage etc. made him truly a mysterious character. His philosophy of upholding his love-affair beyond marital and family bondage gave a new direction to the novel.

"Upanyas khanar sesar angsa kabya sulabh hoi parise. Rupai Sunpahir samparka sadharan premar urdhat sangsthapita kari ek"  

\textsuperscript{27} Baruah, Prahlad Kumar: \textit{Upanyas}, p.76  
\textsuperscript{28} Sarman, Satyendranath: \textit{Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara}, p.247
With the main theme of human nature relationship, the novel also included the various sub-theme of Indian freedom struggle, the life and living of the people by the bank of Kapili river etc. which gave it a basis of a epic novel. However, the novelist denied the scope and confined the novel into a small volume, concentrating only on the main theme. Many situations in the novel became dull due to lack of proper expansion. With his poetic genius and in a smaller space, the poet-novelist expressed his ideas in symbols and elevated the novel into the level of a masterpiece. Upendranath Sarma rightly observed that the book (Kapiliparia Sadhu) is a fine draft of a novel. The extreme use of techniques and compact ideas need expansion to develop it into a complete novel. In his words:

"Muthate grantha khanak bhal upanyasar khachara buliba pari. Angikar adhiktar ghann sannadhata aru paristhiti adir adhiktar bristiti banchania."

Rupai is the main character of Nabakanta Baruah’s Kapiliparia Sadhu, which is presented with a flavour of mystery. The novelist tried to identify this character with the mystery of the Kapili River. Rupai always felt a kind of oneness with the Kapili- as his mother. A gradual developing of this character had been drawn by the novelist from his young age to manhood. Deprived and dejected in his true love for Khuki, Rupai joined the freedom movement and suddenly discovered the real meaning of life. Inspired by the Gandhiji’s ideology of truths

29. Sarma, Satyendranath: Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara, p.247
and non-violence, Rupai dedicated his life for the well being of his place, his people.

"He (Rupai) will work for his village, for his country. Nothing can be done in a day- nothing can be gained, if one does nothing and wait for a day to happen everything." 31

During the rescue of flood victims, he met Sunpahi and fell in love with her. Gradually he slipped away from his resolution for work and service to humanity. He became indifferent to his duties. However after losing Sunpahi, Rupai once again returned to his normal life. In the course of the novel, the character of Rupai is portrayed as mysterious and unrealistic. In a couple of occasions, Rupai lost his zeal of living and tried to commit suicide, but being saved everytime. Thereafter he was bold enough to face life- first for his love of Gandhian philosophy and then for his love and longing towards Sunpahi. But his philosophy of love, that he couldn’t accept Sunpahi as his wife was truly unconvincing. Some of the critics remarked that a mysterious character such as Rupai is rare in Assamese literature. 32 As observed by Dr. Umesh Deka the character of the hero, on many occasions, has been shown in an uncertain and weak light. For instance, Rupai by refusing to accept Sunpahi, who had conceived on account of their frequent intimate meetings at Gosai Pukhuri, that resulted in her ultimate suicide, has overstepped the boundaries of reality. As the hero of the novel Rupai has thus given an evidence of his weakness and cowardice. 33

Through the character of Sunpahi, the novelist revealed the core of woman heart. Love means everything for Sunpahi. She did not believe in platonic love. By giving her everything to Rupai, Sunpahi established herself as a simple and

31. Baruah, Nabakanta: Kapilibaria Sadhu, p.43
32. Bora, Hem & Bora, Purna: Nabakanta Baruah: Jivan aru karma, p.46; Upendranath Sarma’s article ‘Nabakanta baruahr Dukhan Upanyas’
33. Deka, Umesh: Post War Assamese Novel, p.94
common woman who aspired to be his wife, wanted to carry his baby. But Rupai’s unconvincing philosophy of love and her excessive emotion compelled her to commit suicide and end up her life.

With all characteristics of a regional novel, *Kapiliparia Sadhu* presented the Kapili river as one of the most important character of the novel. In a personal interview with Saroj Kakati, the novelist himself revealed that in the novel, the Kapili turned into a character which is identical with Wessex region in the novels of Thomas Hardy. The river has directly controlled the life of the hero. Further it also indirectly controlled the life and living of the people around it. Rewriting the comment of H.C. Duffin, we may say that “Kapili is not only the scene of the tale, it dominates the characters, it is sentiments, it feels, it speaks, it slays.”

Another important character of the novel is Tilak Gosain. With the help of this character, the novelist put forward a strong criticism of religious doctrines. Discarding the forefather practice of religious preaching, Tilak Gohain turned to humanity and brotherhood. Inspired by Gandhian ideology, this character left a deep impression on the mind of the hero and the readers as well. Apart from these, the novelist introduced minor characters like Dhirsing, Bhangua Bhakat, etc. who were the representative of the region. Again by introducing the lawyer and his daughter Khuki etc., the novelist successfully draw the differences between rural and urban mentality. Most of minor characters, which are similar to Hardy’s rustic characters, did not gain much attention or proper expression. But their presence helped in creating a true regional environment in the novel.

Nirupama Borgohain’s *Sei Nadi Nirabadhi* and *Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar* are written in conversational method. The *Sei Nadi Nirabadhi* was written in two episodes, with very realistic descriptions. The realistic description of the first half of the novel has turned into a psychological analysis in the second half.

34. Kakati, Saroj: Asamiya Sahityar Anchalik Upanyas, p.228 (Unpublished)
of the novel. Simple description and lucid language gave those novels poetic attainments. The beautiful description of river, landscape, sky, twilight etc. essentially made the novel poetic and romantic in nature.

**Sei Nadi Nirabadhi** reflects the life of a handful of people living by the bank of Pagladia. As Egdon Heath is in Thomas Hardy’s novels, so is Pagladia in Borgohain’s novel. All characters and incidents move round the force of the river, which is the source of happiness and sorrow. It is the inspiration of life in one hand and the cause of destruction on the other. For the novelist, Pagaladiya is a mysterious character- strange and unpredictable.

“Sei Nadi Nirabadh

Pagladia jibanar utsa, akau bidhangsi

ek sakti. Lekhikar dristit pagaladiya ek bichitra charitra, abudh

aru seyali.”\(^{35}\)

The central character Lakshmi can be identified as similar to the nature of Pagaladiya- wild, lively, and irresistible. However the influence has not been sustained for long; as Lakshmi after marriage has changed to a typical village woman- calm, quite and obedient. However the Pagladia still controlled the life of Lakshmi and the others as well. The river acted as the agent of destiny of the people living nearby. It also stood as the obstacle in the union of Dipu and Lakshmi.

The refrain ‘Lakshmi, I could not bring you this way across Pagaladiya’ “Tumak,

mai jibanat aru sachkoiye Pagladia par kari aniba nuwarilu, Lakshmi”\(^ {36}\) has been uttered thrice by Dipu. Thus the novelist has used a fine technique of presenting the river as the fate of the characters in the novel. This refrain ended up the novel, once again indicating the fact that the river is akin with the life and living of the people, and most of the time controlled the fate of the people.

\(^{35}\) Thakur, Nagend (edited): Exa Bacharar Asamiya Upanyas, p.637 (Rajen kakati’s article ‘Nirupama Borgohainr Upanyas’)

\(^{36}\) Bargohain, Nirupama: Sei Nadi Nirabadhi, p.168
Microscopic observation and detailed description is another strong technique employed by Nirupama Borgohain in her novel. The details in the first half of the novel include the intimacy of Lakshmi and Dipu, the lifestyle of the village people, influence of Pagaladiya on village life, and various aspects of the river etc. The detailed description of the flood for example, the villagers mental and physical preparation for this known phenomenon etc. are so lively that the audience can experience them through the words. All these detailed and vivid descriptions and the huge range of characters and incidents elevate this novel to the level of an epic novel.

However, the novelist failed to maintain these details in the second half of the novel, which concentrated more in the psychological revelation of the main characters. It is only because of its details in the first half that novel is able to uphold its regional nature. Moreover, the novelist has successfully retained regionalism through the use of folk tale, folk lore, local dialect and local convention. The language use by Borgohain is not poetic like that of Nabakanta Baruah, but it is essentially simple and lucid.

So far as art of characterization is concern, Borgohain attain great success in her maiden attempt. The main characters in the novel Lakshmi and Dipu. In the first half of the novel, the character of Lakshmi has been discussed much elaborately. The minute detail of this character got so much attention from the novelist that the character of Dipu was ignored to some extent. On the other hand, the second half of the novel had concentrated in depicting the mental conflict of Dipu, which dimmed the character of Lakshmi compared to that in the first half.

The character of Lakshmi was very dynamic. She was an amalgamation of courage, wilderness, sensitive and childish nature. Her nature is similar to that of the wild Paglagdia River. This seemed to be a projection of the novelist’s
ownself. Borgohain mentioned in her autobiography that she wrote this novel with the help of her own experience of staying in that region in her childhood days. Further she mentioned in her autobiography that her own image among people was like that of a nature-girl- irresistible and unpredictable. Some of her friend told her that the wildness of Pagladia blow through her vein. \(^{37}\) Thus Lakshmi was the reflection of the author’s own childhood. Pagladia as well as Lakshmi became the life force of the novel; especially in the first half. However, in the second half of the novel, widowed Lakshmi was no more as lively as before. Instead, she was calm, cool and composed now. Dipu noticed the change in Lakshmi.

"The young Lakshmi laughed and smiled in all talks, now she cried in all occasions." \(^{38}\)

The changed Lakshmi is the product of orthodox social tradition that subordinates women in all means; especially when it comes to the case of a widow. She was bound by social norms so rigidly that she even considered her contact with Dipu may bring misfortune to him. She asked Dipu to keep away from her in spite of her deep love for him. Through this character the novelist tried to establish the fact that customary practices may simply drain out all the promises of a child.

Dipu is the protagonist of the novel with a sensitive mind. This character has got enough scope for development in the second half of the novel. The pain and misery of his first love Lakshmi annoyed him. He faced many obstacles in his work station. His personal problems claimed so much priority that Dipu neglected his office duties and responsibilities. As its result, due to his ignorance, the river embankment was weak enough to bring the catastrophe of the novel by

\(^{37}\) Borgohain, Nirupama : Biswas Aru Sansayar Majedi, p.160
\(^{38}\) Borgohain, Nirupama: Sei Nadi Nirabadhi, p.148
flooding away Lakshmi's small child. Thus the character of Dipu fell prey to his own mental conflict. Neither he could perform his responsibility towards Laxmi, nor could he do justice with his profession. This character emerged to be a very weak one in the long run. The character of Laxmi is much stronger and attractive compared to Dipu, though the novelist couldn’t utilize optimum opportunity to develop it.

The other characters like Doli, Mamoni, Doli's mother, Dipu’s mother etc. revealed various aspects of family life, whereas Jayram Chaudhury, Manmohon Kakati etc. disclosed the ways of human living. However, these characters did not get enough scope for development.

Borgohain’s ‘‘Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar’’ is also themed on the background of a small village. Its story is written on the same background as Sei Nadi Nirabadhi. However the subject matter of this is more illustrated and expanded. Here the novelist draws the picture of post independence period. Various incidents that took place after independence, like economic changes, migrations to the cities for employment, decay of cultivating trend, human struggle in both rural and urban areas etc. were highlighted in the novel. Along with these were the discussions of moral degradation of human values. Hiren Gohain’s comment in this regard is noteworthy:

Highlighting various aspects of the rural as well as the urban society in a realistic manner, the novel displays many characteristic features of an epic novel. Analysing the themes and the subject matter of the novel, one can witness various problems endowed in the region. But the fact is that these problems and issues are not entirely regional or bound to that particular region only. Rather they have taken the universal shape—becoming the problems of humanity. Hence the novelist crossed the boundary of regionalism to step into universalism by using various techniques.

Another important technique employed in the novel is the use of the Pagladia river as central link of the story. Unlike Sei Nadi Nirabadhi, the Pagaladiya didn’t control all the happenings and the characters of the novel. But it established the link among all the episodes of the novel. The domination of the river can be seen on the life of main characters. At the same time it also had its influence, directly or indirectly, on the other characters. For example, Anjali, though lived a city life was influenced by the beauty of the river and hoped to live therein. By the bank of this river, Balin wrote his love letter to Anjali. Anjali’s father thought of settling down by the bank of Pagladia after his retirement. However he changed his mind at the end after being deceived by his own brother and friend. The people living in by the bank of Pagladia have developed a strong kind of intimacy with it. In all their day to day activities, the reference of river came spontaneously. For example, Nilakantha didn’t allow Bimala to study and expressed his unwillingness by saying that he rather would throw her into the Pagladia.

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39. Gohain, Rani (edited): Agragamini, p.5 (Hiren Gohain’s article ‘Nirupama Borgohainr Upanyas’)
"Kalejat parhba diyatkoi barang mai eik tukur-tukur kari Pagaladiyat bhahe dim."  

In the novel the Pagladia river also stood as a symbol of separation - between rural and urban, poor and rich, tradition and modernity. The wild Pagladia also stood as the symbol of destruction of human hopes and aspirations. The further use of local dialect and other linguistic expression made the novel a beautiful one.

**Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar** centered on its main female character Pateswari. The other characters brought into the development of the story were Pujan, Sabin, Anjali, Paresh Kalita, Nilakantha, Baneswar, Bimala, Upen, Balin etc.

Pateswari was born in a poor family in Dhalkuch village. Her utter poverty and extreme beauty became the cause of her tragedy. Many licentious male had their eyes on beautiful Pateswari. Young and innocent Pateswari ran away with Pujan who promised her to marry. But after fulfilling his desire, he deserted her and left her in a hotel in Guwahati. Poor Pateswari was supported at that point of time by Sabin. They got married; but poverty haunted them. Again she became the victim of lustful desire of the hotel owner. Pateswari couldn’t protest. Sabin revealed his cowardice nature by not protecting his wife and offering her in other’s hand. The tragic tale of Pateswari and her astrayed life remind us of Tess in Thomas Hardy. With no fault of her own Pateswari, like Tess, became the victim of circumstances. Repeating Satya Gopal Acharjee’s observation, we may say that Pateswari (Tess) has really broken no moral law; but in the eye of the society, she is a fallen woman.  

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40. Borgohain, Nirupama: *Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar*, p. 18  
41. Acharjee, Satya Gopal: *Modern Elements in Thomas Hardy*; p. 273
After Sabin’s death, Pateswari returned to the village, but misfortune did not leave her. Utter poverty compelled her to keep her daughter at other’s place as servant. The son stayed with his uncle at Tezpur. Pateswari was always scared of the lustful desire of the so-called reputed people in the village. But, now she is strong enough to protect herself. However, utter poverty ruined her health and mind as well. She became the symbol of the oppression.

In the course of the novel, Pateswari stood strong as a character. She did not accept defeat in the adverse circumstances. She boldly faced all the obstacles of life. Hiren Gohain rightly gave a tribute to this character by saying that ‘Pateswari was not a conscious woman; but her miserable life was full of some kind of untold bravery. The obstacle of life could not destroy her. She stood erect like a wounded snake’.42

Another important character in the novel was Anjali, through which the novelist revealed her reformist mind. The sensitive Anjali, who serves as a foil to Pateswari, was brought up in city, but had a keen affinity towards village life. Through this character the novelist put forward an analytical approach to evaluate human values. She was pained to see the oppression done by the wealthy class on that of the poor. Anjali understood the treachery and corruption prevailing in the society. She did not blame any individual for being dishonest. She believed that it was the social system and circumstances that is responsible for a person’s destiny. However this character undertook no action to protest the social evils, though she had been a good critic.

The novelist made a congregation of various characters including Pateswari, Anjali, Nilakanta, Upin, Nripin, Balin, Bom Mara Banu, Bakul, Sabin, Sabitri

42. Gohain, Rani (Edited) : Agragamini, p.9; Hiren Gohain's article "Nirupama Borgohainr Upanyas."
etc. Among them are Bakul, Banu, Pateswari etc. who are the representatives of the region, who are poor, helpless and are oppressed by the rich and wealthy character. Pateswari and Bakul were cheated by Pujanlal and Ramesh. Banu had to leave for the city to get rid of poverty. Nilakantha and Upin were the representatives of cruelty and treachery amidst rural simplicity. With the help of those representative characters, and through the incidents of their life, the novelist presented the regional issues in a universal light.

Silabhadra's *Madhupur, Ahatguri* and *Agamanir Ghat* were written in a conventional manner but with modern techniques. Madhupur revealed the story of the decaying feudal system and the power of the landlords with the rise of the new progressive and educated generation. The novel presented the story of two generation diverse in their thinking, ideology and work ethics. Silabhadra had employed autobiographical style in this novel. The complete novel is narrated in first person. The novel didn’t have a well maintained plot-construction. Unlike conventional novels, this novel didn’t have a complete story with a beginning, middle and end. Instead the story of the novel *Madhupur* is a harmonious blend of some small incidents that came across in the mind of the author. This is essentially a new technique employed by the novelist. As observed by a prominent critic.

"Madhupur is the reflection of the memories of an elderly person about his birthplace during his childhood days, where various aspects of the place came very naturally, of course, without proper planning. The novel is nothing but the small incidents reproduced in bits and pieces."^43

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43. Sarma, Gobinda Prasad: Upanyas aru Asamiya Upanyas, p.226
However, there was nothing new about the themes and the subject matters, although the techniques were essentially modern.

Silabhadra’s *Ahatguri* is another novel that depicts the history of a small village Perperia turning to a busy town Ahatguri. The novelist tried to identify the social, economic, industrial and mental changes which are influenced in the process of urbanization in a place. Once again, one can’t find any traditional story-line in this novel. Instead of it, the novelist tried to develop the situations to create and highlight an environment. According to Satyendranath Sarma, introducing some profile characters and by highlighting some small varied incidents, the novelist tried to present the scenario of a particular place in a particular period. Developing a story was not his intention at all.  

While writing this novel, the novelist performed the part of a detached observer. Like a true audience, Silabhadra observed each detail incident and produced those actions and reactions in a very objective manner. His vivid details and descriptions were just like the sequence snapshot of some beautiful realistic photographs. The novelist gives beautiful third person description in the novel.

*Aghanir Ghat* is another successful regional novel of Silabhadra. The novelist presented his first hand experience of working as a contractor in Agamani by the bank of Gangadhar river. In his autobiography *Madhupurar Smriti*, Silabhadra wrote about this fact. ‘I was then camping on the bank of Gangadhar river for my work.’

*Aghanir Ghat* is just like a document about various characters and incidents that the novelist had acquainted with during his stay in that place. To reproduce the character and the incidents of the novel, Silabhadra used the same

44. Sarma, Satyendranath: Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara, p.151
45. Silabhadra: Madhupurar Smriti, p.79
technique of flashback that he used in his previous novels. In the beginning of the novel *Agamani Ghat*, he wrote:

"To solve my problem, I must go back to that age. It is fruitless to dip in vain thinking. 'I shall not be there at home for few days', I told my wife.

'Where will you go?'

'Twenty years backward.'

'Time-Machine.'

'Yes'.

This is how the novelist uses the method of flashback to bring back the memories of the older time to incorporate in his novels. The first person description in the novel has given an autobiographical touch. The novelist has introduced all his characters and happenings centering round the character of the educated-contractor to present various ways of life and living of that place. Silabhadra's *Agamanir Ghat* is a persistent effort to capture life with the help of small episodes. That is the reason why Satyendranath Sarma called this novel a harmonious potter of mosaic weaving of little incidents and circumstances. The novel upholds the hopes and aspirations of the common people and his experience of customs and rituals prevailed among them. However, he always emphasised more on revealing the true nature of his character rather than their saga.

Silabhadra was a great artist of character portrayal. He made typical experiments in the art of characterization leaving a huge range of characters behind. Silabhadra's *Madhupur* successfully presents various characters from

46. Siladhadra: *Agamanir Ghat*, p.6
47. Sarma, Satyendranath: *Asamiya Upanyasar Gatidhara*, p.152
all sections of the society, right from the wealthy landlord to the poor daily workers. Instead of resenting a complete picture of life through a well developed story, Silabhadra insisted on presenting small episodes of human life and thereby revealing the true nature of his characters. Written in the style of an autobiography, Madhupur was the novelist’s recollection of various characters and their activities in an unsynchronized manner. Though there are a wide range of characters in the novel, none of them were developed into full-grown characters. The novel was themed on the socio-economic changes that took place in the Madhupur region; and the characters were made to witness and cause those changes. The influence of the Second World War dimmed the power and position of the rich landlords. The feudal system was on the verge of ruin. With it decayed the power of wealthy people and their so-called vain aristocracy. Gradually there came the raise of the poor people who were so far oppressed and exploited. As a result the old aristocracy suffered great depression. These changes of time - decay of old and rise of new generation were shown with the help of some truthful characters. Narayan Bardeuta, Narendra Narayan Chaudhury, Ruhini Baruah, Kamakhya Baruah, Dhirendra Narayan, his youngest son, Binod, the grandmother of the narrator etc. were the representative of wealthy and powerful class of the society. Those people could not pace with the changing time and ended up with their vain hypocrisy. On the other hand Kandura, Bhagirath Das, Mahendra Roy, Surabala, Maneswar, Madhusudan Roy, Mahesh, Aruna, Bimola, Hiramon, Hanyutmal, Prabin, Arati, Bijoy, etc. were the representative of once oppressed generation, who with their own wisdom and skill had brought new light to themselves. All these characters were drawn from the novelist’s own experience. Each of them explored various aspects of the Madhupur region.

Narayan Bardeuta, Narendra Narayan Chaudhury and landlord Dhirendra Narayan Chaudhury were the then wealthy and royal character of Madhupur.
They exercised their extreme power and rest of the common people had to check their words and movement in front of them. These proud wealthy people ignored and tortured the poor. Once Narayan Bardeuta severely punished Hanyutmal for not getting down from horse back in front of him. But time changed everything. The same Narayan Bardeuta, towards the end, had to buy goods on credit from Manilal, the son of Hanyutmal. Narayan Bardeuta couldn’t accept the truth that his servant’s son became equally rich like him; his worker’s son refused to sell him goods on credit. This vanity and hypocrisy made him suffer more. Likewise Ruhini Baruah etc. were the example of product of decayed and ruined feudal system. However, among those products of feudal system were some exceptional characters like Narendra Narayan, who were generous enough to help others, to feel for the poor.

The oppressed class of Madhupur was represented by Surbala, Maneswar etc. who became the victim of the wealthy and powerful landlords. With the changing of time, many oppressed young staff took the opportunity to climb the ladder to rise high. This new and progressive generation was represented by the grandson of Kandura Gulam, Prabin; his sister Arati who was studying MSc; the grandson of Parasar Mandal, Sani who was a first class Physics graduate; Assistant Professor of Watson University Mr. Bijay and well established contractor Madhusudhan etc. The new ideas and ideologies brought by these new people were not acceptable to Narayan Bardeuta and others like him. The vain aristocracy and idleness gradually form the basis of decay of the old wealthy class. Not being able to accept and keep pace with the changes and still boasting off with their fake pride, these people gradually proceed to the edge of ruin. Thus, Silabhadra through his characters vividly presented the conflict between two generations in Madhupur. The changing scenario of the society and upholding various social issues seemed to be the main objective of the novelist rather than
creating strong characters. In this regard Satyendranath Sarma commented that ‘through first person description, the novelist highlights the influence of changing scenario in a small region. Character portrayal was not his chief goal; his aim was to reflect the difference between two ages’.  

Silabhadra’s *Ahatguri* projects the transformation of a small village into a big town, and entire process is witnessed by the main character Nilambar. This central figure of the novel is the manifesto of simplicity and virtue. During the construction of National Highway-32, Nilambar set up his small establishment. With his hard work and sincerity, he expanded his business and turned it to a Tea Stall. His business ran very well in the beginning. Gradually, there came various people from far and wide and the small peaceful village turned into a big noisy busy town. Nilambar’s tea stall seemed smaller day by day compared to other grown up establishment. Gradually virtuous Nilambar lost his status and peace of mind. The busy Ahatguri turned into a place of treachery, discarding all goodness of the people like Nilambar. The urban Ahatguri took away everything from the life of Nilambar. His sister eloped with a Bihari boy, the business and turmoil of urbanization compelled his wife to commit suicide. The newly established block office, hospital, mills, industries and other big stalls dimmed the glory of Nilambar’s tea stall. He lost his social status that he enjoyed once due to his honesty.

*The people who came before had seen his virtues. He had helped everyone with his might. But the generation ignored him.*  
*For them he was just a third category tea-seller.*

The rapid developments in socio-economic scenario had standstill the life of Nilambar. He failed to cope with the fast pace of changes that took place in

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49. Silabhadra: Ahatguri, p.10
Ahatguri. He lost his charm of life. In the face of growing Ahatguri, Nilambar became a stagnant character - without any development. "He was, as if, the symbol of the Assamese people thrown out of track by others in the competition of economic growth".  

Nilambar is also the symbol of alienation and loneliness in the modern world, mainly in the urban life. The influence of urbanization and its cruelty led Nilambar to alienation, making him a tragic hero. However, his honesty had been duly rewarded as he could spend the latter half of his life with his loving sister.

Apart from Nilambar, the novel Ahatguri was packed with various characters like Bhola Babu, Benga Das, Kalidas, Biren Mastor, Jagannath Doctor, Hariram, Chemimai, Tara, Soneswari, Sankar, Ramratiya, Sitanath, Mahendra, Hachan Miyan, Jadu Babu, Gajen Mandal, Kasi Babu, Motia, Sadananda Hazarika, Robin Roy, Gobinda Das, his wife, Nabakumar, Natbar, Dhruba Chaudhury, Haripad Dutta etc. All of them were profile characters. These characters were not complete in themselves, instead they explored only certain aspects of life to reveal the true picture of the society. They discovered various sides of the society - good and bad, pleasing and cruel.

The characters in Ahatguri have been divided into three categories by Saroj Kakati. In the first category fall those characters who are honest by nature and managed to retain their virtues, Nilambar etc. are of this type. The second are those characters who involved themselves in corruption and enjoyment, and could do anything for their self-gratification. This category includes Sadananda Mahajan, Robin Roy, contractor Panchanan, Jadubabu etc. In the last category

50. Kakati, Prafulla: Swarajuttar Asamiya Upanyas Samiksha, p.107
are Bholababu, Benga Das, Sankar, Ramratiya, Suneswari etc. who were honest; but couldn’t pace into the changing trend and suffered their doom under the burden of modernization. Thus, all these characters collectively reflected a true picture of Ahatguri—what it was and what it has become now. Drawn from his real life experience, all characters became lifelike and convincing. About his characters, Silabhadra mentioned in a personal meeting that he always emphasized more is character portrayal. All his characters are real with a little creative touch. The characters exist in real world and sometimes he amalgamates two characters into one.  

Agamanir Ghat is once again a picture gallery of a huge range of characters. This novel seemed to be a part of ‘Madhupur’ where the life story of the common ordinary man and daily workers is reflected. The profile picture of the various characters, whom the central character encountered in various occasions in relation to his work were vividly portrayed by the novelist. The narrator introduced the poor workers like Ketu, Ramchela, Katak etc. whose life is full of misery and misfortune. Their living and life style depend on their physical strength. Towards the end of life, whom they have no more strength to daily work, these people suffered from utter poverty. These low class people of society had no security of life. The utter poverty sometime drive them to be heartless and feelingless. They even accept the death of their innocent and young child as very natural as they were helpless. With no physical strength to work, they were compelled to adopt begging for their livelihood. Silabhadra didn’t intend to portray a fully developed character, rather he wanted highlight socio-economic scenario of the region through his character. Hence most of his characters have become typed character. His huge gallery of character in the novel includes Nita, Manjula, Pramila Bau,

52. Ibid, p.262
53. Silabhadra, Agamanir Ghat, p.28
Pratul, Hridaynath Sarma, Mr. Brown, Sale Tax Officer Mr. Bhattacharya, ASO Mr. Sarma, Surjya Babu, Mahesh, Keramat myan, Ganesh, Sridam Mandal, Hema, Sital Babu, Rajani Das, Loknath Thakur, Gopinath Babu, Bijay, Gul Mahammad, Raghunandan, Praneswar, Rahman Miyan, Executive Engineer Mr. Das, Haren, Kadeb, Paban, Manik, Mohan, Fayaz, Manchur, Dhanbar, Gedu, Raghunath, Bipin Saha, etc. The activities and action and reaction of these various characters shaped the novel.

Through his characters, Silabhadra tried to highlight the contemporary society and social system. On one hand, the novelist portrayed the simplicity of poor working class with the help of Haren, Kadeb, Surjya Babu, Keramat Miyan etc. whereas on the other hand, he also exposed the treachery and deceitfulness through the selfish characters like S.D.O. Sarma, Bipin Saha etc. The process of urbanization and industrial revolution have not however, erase out the human qualities completely. Rajani’s act of marrying Pramila after knowing every truth of her life, Executive Engineer Mr. Das’s love and passion for Sanskrit poem; the simple living and high thinking Gul Mahammad etc. still provided the truth that humanity prevailed somewhere in the world. The novelist successfully depicted every aspect of human life- be it be treachery or honesty. And he did it through the sketch of his characters.

Mamoni Raisom Goswami is one of the foremost successful novelists in Assamese literature, whose novel ‘Dantal Hatir Unye Khowa Howda’ is packed with all the beauty of that of a long poem.\(^5\) The novel is highly symbolic in its nature. The title of the novel itself symbolically refers to the power and position of the Satras in those days and their gradual decay. Most of its characters like Jagannath, Saru Gosani, Giribala, Indranath etc. are very much symbolic.

\(^5\) Kakati, Saroj: Asamiya Sahityar Anchalik Upanyas, p.327 (Unpublished)
Discussing the style and technique of Mamoni Raisom Goswami, famous critic Gyananda Sarma Pathak compared her with Dorothy Richardson, Silabhadra, Padma Borkotoky and Phanindra Kumar Debchaudhury etc. calling that she is successful in portraying characters and exploring the environment with the stream of consciousness technique. And she has done it in a very realistic manner.

The novelist very technically, tried to analyze love in its platonic nature. The love affairs of Giribala, Indranath, Saru Gosani etc. are big failures from practical point of view. But at the same time, the novelist successfully upholds love in true platonic nature through the sense of separation and its agony. The real love can be felt only by those hearts who bore the pain of losses.

Thus the novelist upholds the love of Giribala, Indranath, Saru Gosani etc. that had no physical demands. The beauty of love is beyond physical in nature for them. The novelist tries to express her view that marriage is the means of glorifying love. However, it is a means to channelizing love into social acceptance. A man can secure his love only by offering the woman her due respect. Marriage is just but the symbol of social reorganization.

The novelist also took help of dream and other symbols to reveal the inner-psychology of the characters. The characters like Giribala, Indranath, Saru Gosani etc. were so much mentally tortured that their agony haunted them into their sleep. The deep love of Saru Gosani towards Muhidhar was reflected in one of her dream. In her dream, Muhidhar invited Saru Gosani to visit Nile-Madhav in Nilgiri and took her by hand through a road bloomed with yellow mustard flower. At the end of the dream, Saru Gosani woke up with fear when wild fire touched her. This fire of the forest is the symbolic presentation of Gosani’s

55. Pathak, Gyanendra Sarma: Sahitya Bithika, p.120
indomitable love towards Muhidhar, and his treachery is exposed through his invitation through an unknown path. Thus the love of Gosani and the deceitfulness of Muhidhar was turned into a symbol in which Muhidhar was the ‘black Mathun’ and love ‘the snake in cage’. Thus the novelist successfully introduced Freud’s theory of human psychology. The novelist further adopted such dream-symbols to explore the mental state of Giribala and Indranath’s failure to gain Iliman due to orthodox social customs was described by the novelist in the following words:

“That very night Indranath saw a dream. He stepped into a dry forest full of thorny bushes. He saw Ili standing amidst them. Her body turned to a red flower. The flower turned to blood, and the blood began to fall on those thrones drop by drop.”

By using these symbols, the novelist very successfully revealed the inner psychology of her character that helped her to present her viewpoint very boldly.

Mamani Raisam Goswami was yet another great character portrayer. About her art of characterization Gyanenda Sharma Pathak’s comment is noteworthy “Mamoni Raisom Goswami is another woman Voltaire. Like that of Charles Dickens, D.H. Lawrance, and Homen Borgohain, she picked up her characters from the deprived and disgraced class of the society.” In the Dantal Hatir Unye Khowa Howda the character of Indranath and Giribala are mostly enlightened among man and woman respectively. In portraying vivid rural characters the novelist was as successful as that of Premchand, Tarasankar and Sibasankar Pillai.

Both the character Giribala and Indranath were sketched with a kind of progressive mind. They were the worshiper of new ideas, looking forward to

58. Kakati, Saroj: Asamiya Sahityar Anchalik Upanyas, p.228
bring reformation and freedom breaking away the traditional dogmatism. However they couldn’t fight the tradition, and surrendered at the end to its rigidity.

Giribala was the victim of vain social customs. She was married to a characterless man in her childhood, and after her husband’s death she had to live a pathetic life of a young widow. The torture at her husband’s house compelled her to come to her own home. But she couldn’t get rid of the social criticism. Her character was projected as an exception to the narrow minded village women who knew nothing but to criticize the fellow women and derive pleasure by doing so. She was not ready to accept and follow the tradition and custom that were preserved only for woman in male dominated society.

The novelist projected Giribala as a rebellion character. She was not ready to follow those social norms which were meant only for women. The cruelty of her husband and other men always haunted her. She was not ready to follow the traditional practices of a widow; that too for that husband who never loved her. Breaking away all social convention, Giribala came out of her restrictions and went with Mark Sahib in search of old manuscripts in the villages.

The character of Giribala in true sense was a product of Goswami’s feminist approach. Unlike the common concept of man, Giribala couldn’t accept her husband due to his loose character; and even hated him after his death. This hatred helped her to establish her rebel against the prevailing social customs. Her womanhood was attracted by the good natured Mark Sahib. She wanted solace in his words, in his arms. She didn’t hesitate to express her love towards Mark Sahib, though it was very unconventional for an Indian brahmin widow. The novelist’s creating such a character in Assamese literature is truly commendable. That is why some critic said that Mamoni Raisom Goswami was the first Assamese woman writer to expose the want of physical desire so explicitly
through literature. So far these natural instincts were almost banned in literature considering that they were shameful and unpresentable.\textsuperscript{59}

The next important female character of the novel is Durga, who had been projected as the foil to Giribala. Durga was also a widow, living at her parents’ house. She had accepted her misfortune as her fate. She was ready to ruin herself—ruin her hopes and aspirations by following the customary laws for a widow, imposed by the society. She was a simple lady; didn’t understand the complexity of life. She had no will to come out of the rigid bondage of the tradition. Instead she acted as the preserver of those tradition and rituals. She was such a strict follower of her customs that she ran to take bath after she had touched the shadow of the Christian Mark Sahib.\textsuperscript{60}

Durga wanted to live with the memory of her dead husband. She followed all rituals of a widow for the salvation of his soul. She wanted to sell her jewellery so that she could go on a pilgrimage for her late husband’s ultimate peace. But the theft at Saru Gosani’s house spoilt her desire, and so she cursed those who stole her jewellery. Durga wanted to live on with the inspiration of the loving memory of her husband which was totally contrasting with Giribala. However, the opposite nature of these two characters was rightly justified for the love and ignorance they received from their husband. Durga had enjoyed long sixteen years with her loving husband; whereas Giribala always gained hatred and ignorance in contrast. Saratchandra Chatyopadhaya rightly said that “the value of a woman depends on the love, compassion and justice that they received from her husband.”\textsuperscript{61} Giribala turned rebellion for the tyranny of her husband whereas Durga worshipped her husband for the love she received from him.

\textsuperscript{59} Pathak, Sarma Gyanendra: Sahitya Bithika, p.119  
\textsuperscript{60} Goswami, Mamoni Raisom: Dantal Hatir Uniye Khowa Howda, p.68  
\textsuperscript{61} Chatyopadhaya, Saratchandra: Narir Mulya, Sarat Sahitya Sangrah, vol.-IX, p.365
Saru Gosani is another strong female character in the novel. The novelist presented her as the follower and preserver of old custom. Inspired by her husband, Saru Gosani preached her pupils after his death. She was extremely courageous and somehow different from the other characters. This character was driven by head, not by heart. Saru Gosani didn’t swept away by her physical desire, though she felt a strong inclination towards young Muhidhar. She felt a kind of conflict within her. But she controlled her desire and still loved the man, as she was the devoted follower of tradition and custom. However, Muhidhar took advantage of her love and trust; and cheated out of her properties by forgery. Saru Gosani couldn’t bear this unexpected betrayal of trust and fainted in utter guilt, thus submitting to the novelist’s viewpoint that all human strong or weak, are subjected to the hands of unknown fate.

Among the male characters, Indranath was portrayed with a progressive mind. He didn’t wish to follow the dogmatic practices of society that carried no value. This character, who was strong both mentally and physically, compassionate, reformative seemed to be carrying the ideology of the novelist herself.

Indranath was portrayed as a true human. He was compassionate enough to bring home his aunt Durga. He allowed his sister Giribala to mix with the Christian Mark Sahib in search of old manuscript. He encouraged his widowed sister for further education which was against traditional practices. He even thought of getting his sister married to Mark Sahib breaking away all prevailing social custom. However, his wish remained unfulfilled as Giribala suddenly embraced death stunning everybody around. Indranath had a mind with progressive outlook. Instead of advocating traditional rigidity, he whole heartedly wanted freedom for all, irrespective of men and women of that time society.
Indranath noticed social vices. He wanted all social abuses to be removed. But he could never be a rebel to do anything against them. Due to his vain hypocritical aristocracy, Indranath couldn’t think of marrying poor Iliman whom he dearly loved. He couldn’t express his love towards her as he was the would-be Satradhikar and Iliman didn’t belong to his clan. He was bold enough to think of getting married off his widowed sister, but couldn’t turn it to reality. On one hand he proved his generosity by saving the life of a low class child, but then he took bath on the other hand as the child was untouchable for him. Thus the character of Indranath emerged to be a blend of tradition and modernity. He certainly had dreams, but was not bold enough to turn them into reality. Renowned critic Dr. Hiren Gohain’s review of this character is mentionable “Though Indranath is a sturdy and spirited young man, even he hesitates before such entrounched and formidable force.”

The character of Indranath suffered further shortcomings, for which he couldn’t convince his peasants and got killed in their hands. He was misunderstood for his vain feudal behavioural practices though he actually wanted to help his peasants. In a personal meeting Mamoni Raisom Goswami revealed the fact that the real character of Indranath was not killed. The novelist did it in her masterpiece to bring dramatic effect to the scene. This revealed the fact that the novelist intended to create a desired situation than to emphasise her character sketches.

The novel is full of characters with unfulfilled desires. The love of Giribala and Iliman didn’t succeed. Indranath couldn’t express his love. The wishes of the peasants were not fulfilled due to the cruelty of the landlords. Saru Gosani’s love and trust was shattered by the treachery of Muhidhar. Thus the whole novel

was full of situations and characters that suffered from depression of unfulfillment. Observing this, Ashok Bhagawati remarked “On the whole this is a gloomy novel of despair and death of love rather than of fulfillment. This is what makes the novel really significant for modern reader. Though yearning for romantic love, such love is almost unattainable.64

*Nilakanthi Braza* is another successful novel that presents a very much unconventional storyline of a widow who want to spend her life as a Radheswami in Brazadham. The unexplainable sorrow and worry of the widows, the corrupt Raichaudhury and the literally inhuman living environment is sharply utilized by the novelist through the character of Saudamini. The feminist writer tried to put on a rebel with the help of her protagonist. However, she failed to establish it at the end as Saudamini embrace death protesting against social dogmatism.

Saudamini rebelled against the prevailing corruption and injustice in the religious organizations and exposed the treachery and challenged the corrupt system. Through this character the novelist established a kind of protest against social injustice. Saudamini was not ready to accept and follow the prevailing norms. She tried with her might to defy them and at last established her protest by committing suicide. This revolutionary character represents a product of women’s freedom.

The Radheshyanis are the symbol of women bondage in the male dominated society, whereas Raichoudhury and others are the representative of boastful men who never gave women their due. The protest of Saudamini and her death at the end reveal that the traditional practices are too strong to be broken by the efforts of one odd character.

64. Bhagawati, Ashok: *Indira Goswami: A Critical Study of Her Writings*, p.57
Discussing the art of characterization in general, one can see that Assamese Regional novels draw their character from the common people. They are the embodiment of vice and virtue. Like those in Thomas Hardy, most of the characters in Assamese novels are poor or middle class people influenced by modernization and new values. Similar to that in Thomas Hardy, most of the characters are life like, mostly drawn from the experience of the novelists.

The characters truly reflect the will and owe of the real life, revealing the fact that each human came to this world with their own expectations and desires, but many of them couldn't fulfill their expectations as there are situations and circumstances beyond their control; which is called destiny.