Association of a location as a background in a novel is very obvious. It is the place or the location that helps the novelist to create an appropriate setting for his novel. Sometimes, the location remains a mere background that does not assist much in the progress of the course of action as the novelist concentrates on certain other aspects. However, there are many occasions in which the novel chiefly aims to concentrate on the location of its setting and explore it from physical, environmental and social point of view. The place and its people become the matter of concern in the novel. These are the regional novels. These novels explore minute details of their location or the region. They depict the geography and topography of the region highlighting the customs, traditions and life style of the inhabitant living therein. The location no more remains a mere background; rather it becomes an integral part of the novel- an inseparable component which cannot be removed or altered without much damage to the novel. Being closely associated with the real people and places, the regional novels have always been the source of attraction as well as the interest of discussion.

Both English and Assamese literatures have a rich trend of Regional novel. The genre of English Regional novel was started by Maria Edgeworth with her Castle Rackrent in 1800 and followed by many like Walter Scott, Susan Ferrier, Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, E.C. Booth, Mary Webbe, Thomas Moult, Sheila Kaye Smith, Constance Holme, Frances Brett Young etc. On the other hand, the trend of Assamese Regional novel was developed in the hands of Rajanikanta Bordoloi with Miri Jiori (1894) and contributed by Birinchi Kumar Baruah, Abdul Malik, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharjya, Nabakanta Baruah, Amulya Baruah, Hitesh Deka, Nirupama Borgohain, Rang Bang Terang, Silabhadra, Mamoni
A comparative study of both English and Assamese regional novels has been considered as a subject of interest; and hence this research work is undertaken aiming at finding out the similarities and differences between the Regional novels of both the trend. The research work has been carried out in a form of contextual comparison, for which major Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy and a few trend-setter Assamese Regional Novels have been brought to discussion.

Thomas Hardy has been the most important of the regional novelists of England. He gave a new depth and gravity to the English Novel reintroducing the concept of regional novel with his settings of “Wessex”. His Wessex stretches from the English Channel in South, to Cornwall in the West, and as far as Oxford to the North. It is the limited region which forms the scenic background to each of his Wessex Novels. Hardy’s major Wessex novels include *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of D’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. All these novels display Hardy’s thorough knowledge of the Wessex region. Hardy described the physical features of his Wessex with great accuracy and realism. He has expressed the very spirit of this locality in his work. He has immortalized the land of Wessex which is a living, breathing reality in his novels. That is what made Hardy one of the greatest regional novelist. The regional concept of Thomas Hardy and other characteristic features are so universal that those Hardian elements can be traced in most other regional novels.

The Assamese literature also has a rich history of novel that includes a number of novels with regional aspects. Starting with Rajanikanta Bordoloi’s *Miri Jiori*, these novels emphasize the setting, social customs of
various regions from different parts of Assam and its surrounding areas. These novels beautifully depict the scenic beauty of those regions where they are set in along with the customs and rituals practised by the local inhabitants therein. Among these novels, the trendsetters which are undertaken for this study are Rajanikanta Bordoloi’s *Miri Jiori* that highlights the region by the bank of Subansiri river in the district of Lakhimpur, Nabakanta Baruah’s *Kapiliparia Sadhu* highlighting the region of Nagaon by Kapili River, Nirupama Borgohain’s *Sei Nadi Nirabadhi* and *Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar* describing the region by Pagaladiya river in Nalbari, Silabhadra’s *Madhupur, Ahatguri* and *Agamanir Ghat* depicting the Gauripur region of West Goalpara and Mamoni Raisom Goswami’s *Dantal Hatir Uniye Khowa Howda* upholding the Jagalia region of South Kamrup and *Nilakanthi Braza* demonstrating the environment in the Brazadham in Brindaban. Similar to that in the novels of Thomas Hardy the physical features of rivers, pastures, meadows, cultivating lands etc. appear and reappear in those Assamese regional novels too.

It is obvious that similarities can be noticed between Assamese regional novels and Thomas Hardy’s Wessex novels in regard to their settings, regional background, universally present nature and its domination on the character and environment, man’s helplessness in front of mighty nature and circumstances, vision of life, pessimism, belief in destiny, the folk tradition and characterisation etc. This research work has attempted to explore those similarities, and the differences, if any, that prevail in the discussed novels in particular and for all regional novels in general.