CHAPTER ONE
CHAPTER ONE

1.00 Rabha litterateurs and their contribution to Rabha literature:

The Rabhas have a rich tradition of folk literature. But it was from the second decade of the twentieth century that the Rabha litterateurs started on their mission for the promotion of Rabha written literature. Purna Chandra Koch gave a start to this mission by publishing his book on traditional religious beliefs *Penem Lamon Dam* in 1926. After him it was the turn of Rajendra Rongkho and Adhar Chandra Rabha Bantho who did recommendable works such as *Rabha Zibrao Orgi (Rabha Katha) Bhag Tekkang* (1948) and *Songraya Rabha Katha* (1951) respectively. These two books contained basic elements of Rabha grammar. In a word to say these two grammar books enhanced the future development and spreadth of both Rabha language and literature. With the formation of *Rabha Kristi Sanmilan* in 1955 many Rabha writers were provided a suitable platform to showcase their talent and work for the enrichment of Rabha literature at large. This literary movement was initiated by Sangeet Natak Akademy Awardee folk lyricist and playwright Rajen Pam and his contemporary Prasanna Kumar Pam. The modern songs composed by these two talented artists were applauded by the masses and also went on air by the All India Radio, Guwahati. Prasanna Kumar Pam was also an acclaimed dramatist. He was the one to initiate drama movement in the rural Rabha society. During the period of 1957–1978 Pam wrote six legendary dramas and three social dramas which can be considered as a major contribution in the history of Rabha drama. His fellow dramatist Bineswar Kumar Santok, Rajen Pam and Ganapati Pam wrote dramas like *Jabedbir* (1960), *Swirgini Risi* and *Dodan Lupta* (1960) Publishing of the Rabha literary magazine *Badung D'Uppa* (1961–1962) edited by Samar Sing Rabha was a milestone in the history of Rabha literature. In its brief life
span it was able to motivate upcoming Rabha writers to express their feelings in words. In the year 1973 dramatist, short story writer and essayist Prakash Rabha edited a Rabha magazine titled *Jatini Khurang*. It’s aim and objective was similar to that of *Badung D’Upupa*. *Jatini Khurang* catered to the needs of the intellectual thirst of the educated Rabha people. But unavoidable circumstances halted the publishing of this particular literary magazine. In 1978 the literary magazine *Champa* made its presence felt under the editorship of renowned Rabha litterateur Listi Rabha Rongkho. From 1978 till 1982 – this period can be termed as the golden era of modern Rabha literature. The editor himself, was the driving force behind this change. He inspired many a talented writer to contribute their articles in *Champa*. Writers like Narendra Chandra Rabha (Naren Rabha Hakacham), Bhupendra Chandra Rabha, Ramesh Chandra Rabha, Naresh Rabha, Naresh Pam, Someswar Rabha, Suranjib Baksok, Dharani Pam, Charu Mohan Rabha Dabang, Shiv Charan Rabha, Madhuram Rabha, Upen Chandra Rabha (Upen Rabha Hakacham), Motiram Rabha, Dolen Rungdung, Bhaben Rabha, etc. were those writers who started their literary career in the *Champa*. In the later period many of those writers could make a niche for themselves in the various fields of Rabha literature.

Some other occasional journals and souvenirs also played a crucial role in the spread of Rabha literature in the last two decades of the twentieth century. As a result new writers emerged in the various fields of literature. Duryodhan Rabha rose to be a renowned short story writer of the *Post Champa* era though he started his career in the *Champa* era. Then we can cite the names of Maheswar Rabha, Jharna Chikacham, Dhiren Rabha, Bishwanath Rabha Tara. So far Gangadhar Rabha Hadu’s *Nango Choksa Mana* and Listi Rabha Rongkho’s *Charpakng Jhorachap* are the only two novels written in Rabha and published in the year 1998 and 2005 respectively. But unlike this grim state of novel writing Rabha poets and lyricists have carved a niche for themselves in their respective fields. There is also a good number of essayists writing in the Rabha
language. But very few writers are enthusiastic about critical writing. A selected group of writers have produced satirical works. There are also some translated works in Rabha. A few writers have contributed some work towards children literature as well. In our later discussion we have made an effort to evaluate the contribution of different Rabha litterateurs who have made a mark in various fields of Rabha literature.

1.10 Rabha lyrical literature:

Rajen Pam:

The Rabhas have a rich tradition of lyrical literature. Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee artist Rajen Pam was responsible for the popularisation and spreadth of Rabha lyrical literature. Rajen Pam was an accomplished singer, musician as well as lyricist. His popular songs *Hachu Chubayi Ang.....* and *O' Angi Chong.....* were recorded in gramophone by the H.M.V. company way back in the sixth decade of the twentieth century. The first song was in his voice. The second song was a duet song. In this song Sarala Rabha sang with him. *Karha Nolor Mou Sora Sur* 4 published in 1960 is Rajen Pam's first lyric collection. He was also a regular Rabha artist at the All India Radio, Guwahati. His first song that went on air was *O' Aya Nangbe.....* and it went on air on 17-7-1957. This song dedicated towards the well being of the motherland became an instant hit. Patriotism, love, glorification of nature and Rabha folk life were the prominent theme of his songs. In his song

*Chika Jhora !*

*Nijir Nijir – Chikajhora !!*

*Hachu Chubayini Para*

*Ribi Name – Bhoyamna*

*Rengo Name, – Aro Bichina !*

---

4 *Karha Nolor Mou Sora Sur* is published in 1960.

5 The songs mentioned are part of Rajen Pam's repertoire.
The lyricist Rajen Pam has described unexplainable beauty of the stream flowing down from the mountains. The endless flow of the stream covers many villages as it bends and twists its way through countless villages. The ever gurgling sound of water of the raising point of the stream fascinates the sensitive mind. But as the stream progresses on its journey nobody knows for sure where lies its ultimate destination. Taken from the same collection *Karha Nolor Mou Sora Sur* the following songs too, illustrate the specific flavour and artistic zeal of the lyricist Rajen Pam.

\[
\begin{align*}
Hui Hui Hui Hui & \\
Karha Kringeta I & \\
Hamandai Nathorange & \\
Chang Chuketa II & \\
Kringetare, – Hui Hui & \\
Praowetore, – Phui Phui & \\
Uchina Renga nake & \\
Teyan Praoweta II & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Meaning : Who is creating such melodious music playing on the *Karha* instrument? Where is he calling us? To the *Pharkanti*? To the *Baikho*? Or to somewhere else? Who is that mesmerizing accomplished folk artist?)

\[
\begin{align*}
Natham re Natham & \\
Kakayoni Muin – Nathame Ra I & \\
Charpakoni Rangchang & \\
Nar Nare Rengeta & \\
i Kathao – Nemen & \\
Muini Rachame Ra, – & \\
\quad \text{Nathame Ra II} & \\
\end{align*}
\]
(Meaning: O my heart - do listen! The sun named life is approaching towards the west in the sky of life. In good time it will disappear at the horizon. Our lives are like droplets of water on the arum leaf. Sometimes it may fall down before reaching the horizon. So my heart! Be alert when there is still time).

Another lyrical compilation of Rajen Pam has been published posthumously in 1999. This compilation titled *Rabha Geetmala* has been edited by his lyricist son Mukul Rabha.

Prasanna Pam:

Prasanna Pam was another Rabha artist who defined Rabha lyrics and went on to make a niche for himself in Rabha lyrical literature. Some of his songs were introspection into life, some philosophical and others were ode to Rabha culture and the magnificent world of nature. His lyrical compilation titled *Shilpi Prasanna Pamor Geet* has been published posthumously in 1984. It was jointly edited by Bhaben Rabha and Prakash Rabha. Prasanna Pam’s songs have a spontaneous flow. Those songs introspecting human life have a touch of melancholy about it. But in spite of this these songs are not void of musical beauty. One such song of Prasanna Pam is

*Phagunoni Pochiya Bao*

*Hui Huisse Na aare Mao l*

*Sona Hasong Sona Dalan*

*Khame Rengio Mao ll*

*Din Rikha Bochoran*

*Jaba Par Pare Dagata,*

*Dalan Noki Sodagorba*

*Charpak Phakhata ll 6*

The lyricist feels that death is the ultimate truth of life. So it is useless
hankering after material comforts. Finally it is only the lifeless body which is cremated. The wealth and other materials of comfort are left behind. Man should be prepared to accept this truth of life. It is music and the musical instruments which remains immortal forever. He hopes that the musical instruments *Karha Nol, Kham Naluk, Chinga* and *Daidi* would remember him after his death. In fact this is the aspiration of a dedicated artist who wishes to remain alive through his lyrical compositions till eternity. He has no lust for worldly comforts or honour. But he hopes that his songs will be able to bring happiness to the minds of people burdened by worldly cares.

The lyricist sings the glory of nature in the following song –

\[ \textit{Nijir O' - Nijir O'} \]
\[ \textit{Rong Nala O'} \]
\[ \textit{Aota Chayo Kanita II} \]
\[ \textit{Pan - Bani Majari} \]
\[ \textit{Sake - Boke Pare O'} \]
\[ \textit{Gomone Praoweta II} \]

The lyricist is fascinated by the beauty of the lush hills, the small streams and the wide variety of flowers blooming in the trees and plants. The distant sound of the flowing water of the streams seem to be a symphony which enthrals the exhausted mind. The blooming flowers seem to attract the bees to taste its pollen grain. Even the butterflies seem to enjoy that state of nature and fly from flower to flower in utmost pleasure. Experiencing this unworldly state of nature he feels as if he has attained that eternal place of bliss while still on this mortal world. In fact the lyrical compositions of Prasanna Pam enables one to experience the scenic beauty and gaiety of nature on one hand and on a more serious note enables man to realise the futility of an aimless life and encourages man to rise above material gains so that he can make his life meaningful. But melody and choice of perfect wordings have always been the assets of his numerous compositions.
Listi Rabha Rongkho:

Apart from writing prose Listi Rabha Rongkho composed several songs. His lyrical compositions have come out as two different collections titled *Chai Sabra Antham* (1974) and *Hursai Hursai* (1981). Man and nature have found suitable mention in his numerous songs. Most of his songs are direct imitation of folk songs relating to merry making, love and affection.

Ganapati Pam:

Ganapati Pam is also an accomplished Rabha lyricist. He created many soleful songs. His songs have come out as a compilation titled *Angi Khurang Angi Chai* (1989).

Parikshit Rabha:

From the younger generation of Rabha lyricists Parikshit Rabha was one such lyricist who could make a niche for himself in the field of Rabha lyrical literature. He was one among those few Rabha lyricists with the maximum number of songs which went on air in the All India Radio Guwahati. But his untimely death at a rather young age of twenty five created a void in the development of Rabha lyrical literature. So far his songs have come out in two compilations – *Angi Chai – i Nang* and *Madap kai Ganthini Khurang*. The first compilation was published by Nabin Rabha in 1988 and the second posthumously by the late lyricist’s father Biren Rabha in 1991. Most of his songs are subjective in theme. These songs are related to reforms in society. A selected few are objective in nature. These few songs reflect the inner being of the lyricist.

He had faith in the enthusiasm and strength of youth. He felt that it was the youth age of life when man could realise the dreams of his childhood and achieve his goal overturning all hurdles –
Here the lyricist is reflecting on his inner thoughts. The gentle breeze of spring brings cheerful tidings to him. But he is clueless about the feelings of his beloved towards him when his heart is burdened with frustration. In happier times whenever he weaves dreams he feels that his beloved is nowhere beside him with whom he could have shared his dreams. In fact his lady love is an enigma which he cannot decipher.

But he is always hopeful. He feels that it is hope which keeps the flame of life burning. In the midst of competition and hurdles it is hope which provides man the fruit of perseverance and turns him into a winner. Life is meaningless without hope. This aspiration of Parikshit Rabha is the life force behind many popular songs composed
by him. The following song reflects this hopeful attitude of the lyricist –

*Ashani Par Raye*

*Kheng Towa Dyimdak – O,*

*Manno Na Man Cha*

*Iyan Charpaknii Katha ii*

There are some more lyricists who have contributed to Rabha lyrical literature. Most of their compositions are scattered in magazines. Of course some of their selected compositions have been aired on All India Radio Guwahati. But only a few have their songs published in the form of collections. The first Rabha song to go on air in All India Radio Guwahati was Prabhat Rabha’s song *Phungini Rampar Pake* in 1958. The song *Ar Hasongayi Kocha Chamachingcha* went on air on 5.11.59 by Abinash Koch (Rabha) became quite popular. The song *Parjok Parjok Khope Rochok Rochoke Par* composed by Rajani Kanta Jhi in the drama *Dodan Bir* became popular among the masses. Sulochan Rabha has one compilation of songs to his credit. Bhaben Rabha, Phul Charan Rabha, Kongress Rabha, Sarat Rabha, Jamuna Prasad Rabha, Dharani Pam, Mani Rabha, Dolen Rungdung, Motiram Rabha, Naren Hakacham, Nista Rabha, Subodh Rabha, Amar Singh Koch, Charu Dabang, etc. have contributed songs conveying various themes. These songs haven’t remained confined in collections and occasional magazines. In fact some of those songs have gained popularity through All India Radio Guwahati.

**Dharani Pam:**

Dharani Pam was a Radio artist and lyricist. One of his songs published in *Hasongi Khurang* edited by Sulochan Rabha gives vent to the imaginative mind of the lyricist. His feelings towards his motherland has been beautifully described in his published song –
Here the lyricist talks about the national festival of the Rabhas – the Baikho. Baikho is that festivity of the Rabhas where Rabha life and culture get manifested in varied colours. The Rabhas take pride in dressing up in traditional attire that too woven by their women - folk. They offer their prayers to the deity Risi and seek his blessings during Baikho. In fact the Rabhas never hesitate to learn and practise new things for their progress. As a matter of fact the lyricist is proud to call himself a member of the Rabha community. This particular song of Dharani Pam has been included in the audio cassette Parshok and broadcasted in A.I.R., Guwahati in the artist’s voice himself.

**Jamuna Prasad Rabha :**

Jamuna Prasad Rabha has brought nature into his songs. In Bochor Pidani Chai he says –

*Bochor Pidani, Pidan Par*

*Mini, Mini Para,*

*Sake Boke Chitho Range*

*Par Bijan Para 1*

*Onuke Topak Gomone*

*Usi Pure, Pure Mara*

*Par Nuke Chingi Mon,*

*Ana Usina Mara 1*
The lyricist is fascinated by the beauty of nature at the dawn of the new year. The blossoming flowers seem to herald the new year with all gaiety. On seeing this serene beauty of nature the human mind is at rest. The first shower of rain clears the earth of dust and prompts the tillers to start their activities. This first shower also indicates the other people to concentrate on their respective works for their well being.

Selection of suitable words and a spontaneous flow of emotions have been a distinctive feature of the songs of Jamuna Prasad Rabha. His minute observation is also quite praiseable.

**Mukul Rabha:**

Mukul Rabha is also another talented lyricist as well as singer. His songs based on nature and its various elements have a spontaneous beauty of its own. His song *O Rangkhop Jane Jane Renga* recorded in the audio cassette *Chai Pidan* has become an instant hit among the listeners. Here the lyricist beckons the clouds and suggests that the clouds should sail away to those places which are in need of water. The clouds should come down in the form of rain and quench the thirst of the parched earth. Nature and love has found prominent place in his lyrics.

**Upen Rabha Hakacham:**

Upen Rabha Hakacham has also penned down a few memorable songs. So far he has composed more than a hundred songs. Four of his composed songs have gone on A.I.R. Guwahati and these are those songs which has brought recognition to him as a Rabha lyricist of the new generation. The theme of his songs are subjective. Most of the songs are based on patriotism with an earnest appeal to safeguard the rich heritage of the Rabhas. Some of his songs have a philosophical touch. These songs speak about the transiently of human life. Among his other songs the song *O Bibi Ghasuri Natham Nemsumari* made its way into the heart of music lovers due to its
popular theme as well as rhetoric beauty. Here a younger sister playfully advises her elder sister to weave the Pazar with care for her brother-in-law. The Pazar which will be wrapped round the neck of her brother-in-law must be the symbol of the artistic talent of the elder sister. So the elder sister should weave the Pazar with utmost care.

This particular song of Upen Rabha Hakacham has been published in the souvenir of B.R.K.R. (Dudhnoi Session). The same song has been recorded in the audio cassette Nasikai produced by Phurpon Rabha in 1995. Many songs composed by Rabha Hakacham are scattered in numerous occasional souvenirs and journals. These songs need to be compiled and published which will enable us to explore the lyrics of a promising Rabha lyricist.

Binay Kumar Rabha:

Binay Kumar Rabha (Binay Rabha Rungdung)'s songs deal with the crisis of identity. It is unfortunate that some people of the Rabha community fail to acknowledge the contribution of their forefathers towards the flourish of Rabha tradition and culture. Instead they prefer to hide their Rabha identity and look down upon their fellow brothers and sisters with contempt. The lyricist is pained at this indifference of some of his brothers and is reminding them of the past glory of their community which had illustrious sons like King Dodan. In his earnest appeal to those people he wishes that they may realise their mistake and work for the well-being of the Rabha community and the nation at large. His words have a certain amount of sarcasm and concern for the well-being of his mother land—

"O’ Angi Kakayoni Pithar Rabha,
Bir Dodani Chi Mangching Chika,
Towa Dongba Nangi Mom
Jatina Nachikai Bhab,
Rabha – Jati Une Une Chin – Chab 1"
Deepak Kumar Pam:

Deepak Kumar Pam has sung for various Rabha audio cassettes. He has sung some solo songs and has participated in group songs as well. So far he has produced three Rabha audio cassettes. These are *Dogojo, Phagunni Rampar* and *Sale*.

Rabha lyricists have brought forth the vibrant Rabha life and culture into their songs. But they are also aware of the tremendous changes in society and the everchanging taste of man. So, one gets to see nature and festivity in all its gaiety and colour together with the more complex feelings of the human mind. Some of the lyricists have excelled in such compositions. Their songs have also gained the appreciation of the listeners and readers alike. It is important to note that unlike other languages, in Rabha there is a good number of songs which has gone in A.I.R. and won accolades from various fronts. It was from the eighth decade of the twentieth century that compilation of Rabha songs began to be published by enthusiastic persons. This trend is gaining momentum now. *Chairunge China* compiled by Sashi Mohan Santok in 1982 and *Tokrangi Khurang* in 1987, *Isi Usi Tongkai Chai* edited by Listi Rabha Rongkho in 1991, *Kristi Chingi* a collection of 21 old and new songs compiled by Phurpon Rabha in 1994 and *Ningtha Parmala* in 1996 and *Chaini Thupakai* edited by Prabir Kumar Rabha in 1995 are some notable publications. About the same period some upcoming lyricists were being able to make their presence felt through their creations. Prominent among them are Prabir Kumar Rabha, Jantri Cherenga, Pabitra Kumar Rabha, Subodh Kumar Rabha, Banita Rabha, Himarani Rabha, Hara Mohan
Rabha, Kailash Rabha, Kameswar Rabha, Giridhar Rabha, Komiram Rabha, Rajkumar Rabha, Bolai Hadu, Benudhar Rabha, Anil Hadu, Probhawati Rabha, Karuna Kanta Rabha and Majid Rabha. More lyricists are emerging in this field now. In other words to say Rabha lyrical literature has a promising future ahead

1.20 Rabha poetry:

After lyrical literature it is poetry where Rabha poets have been able to explore vast limits. Lakshi Phenan’s poetic work *Rondona – Chondona* published in 1963 initiated the poetic movement in Rabha literature. His poetic work is based on a Rabha legend which speaks of the courage and perseverance of two brothers named Rondona and Chondona. The two brothers Rondona and Chondona met two sisters named Nirimuni and Nichhimuni in the forest. They fell in love with the two maidens and married them. Both the young couple’s union and separation together with the story of the creation of the Rabha musical instruments *Kham, Karhanol* and *Manchhalengka* finds place in this Rabha legend. Lakshi Phenan has turned this legend into a poetic work where each stanza has ten syllables and the metre followed is rhymed verse. Phenan was able to maintain the original flavour of the popular legend in his poetic work. After Lakshi Phenan Khagen Hato published his collection of romantic poems *Hachuini Khurang* in 1966. Kinsman, motherland along with nature becomes live in the poems of Khagen Hato. *Hachuini Khurang* can be considered as a milestone in the history of Rabha poetry.

It is a significant fact to note that though many senior Rabha poets have been writing poems since the fifth decade of the twentieth century, very few among them collected their writings scattered in different magazines and had those published as collection of poems. In this state of affairs many remarkable writings of the senior poets got lost or destroyed. It was during the Post Champai era that many of those
poets started compiling their creations. Prominent among these poets are Mani Rabha, Charu Mohan Rabha Dabang, Nitai Rabha, Sandesh Baksaka (Suranjib Baksok), Riniki Churchung Pam and Himarani Rabha.

The introvert poet Listi Rabha Rongkho tries to observe society from close quarters. His love and sympathy towards the down trodden is unquestionable. He is pained to see the horror of poverty and ignorance among the people. In his poem titled *Tongsa Dongha* published in *Hachhongi Khurang* edited by Sulochan Rabha and published in 1987-88, the poet observes the vast division among the Haves and the Have Nots. He accepts this truth that this world is nothing but a mirage. People have to bear their lot in this world. That is why when some are in agony others are enjoying to their heart’s content. Some may be enjoying extravagant feasts while others may not have even a morsel of food. In fact this is the way of the world. The poet’s advice is not to worry about these mundane affairs but keep one’s thoughts engrossed in higher things –

*Sangba Khapeta I*
*Sangba Minita II*
*Par Rochoketa I*
*Gomone Pureta II*
*Rangkhop Chonga I*
*Nodi Nala Rana II*
*Mai Mun Phaita I*
*Sachatang Bukhita II*
*Egandan Ching*
*Toyba Machaba*
*Tongsadongba*
*Sanabe Mana II*
Mani Rabha's collection of poems is *Charpakang Khurang* (1999). He is well known for his poem *Te Gami Chai*. The theme of this poem is social reform. The poet wishes to reform some outdated practices and customs prevalent in the Rabha society and replace those by some progressive practices and flexible customs. For the sake of such reforms if he has to stay away from his society then he will have no regrets. He believes that conservative thoughts and practices are not helpful towards the upliftment of a backward society. It is through the united effort of all the people in society that social welfare becomes possible.

Different aspects of human life, nature and human sentiments have been the features of Charu Mohan Rabha Dabang’s poetry collection *Khusumbrip Par* (1998). He has skillfully illustrated different facets of nature as well as human sentiments. *Khusumbrip Par* is the first poem of his collection where the poet describes the beauty of the Khusumbrip flower. This particular flower blooms in autumn. But the blooming takes time. Observing the flower the poet feels that the flower is too shy to bloom at once and so it is blooming part by part. But still the poet sees beauty in this half bloomed flower. He feels that this slow progress has heightened its beauty. He finds rhythm in its blooming. So he implores to the flower to remain blooming always.

The sensitivity of the poet can be observed in the second poem of his collection. In this poem titled *Dukkan Monikiya* the poet reveals his loneliness and anguish at the loss of his beloved. Fond memory of his beloved troubles him. But she is far away from his mortal reach. Human life is short-lived and nobody can reject this universal truth. The poet realises this but his heart still longs for his beloved. His endless wait for his beloved never ceases.

Nitai Rabha has to his credit *Rochok Par*. This collection has a number of philosophical poems. *Jugni Dhorom* is one such philosophical poem where the poet
talks about the four eras mentioned in the Hindu scriptures. He describes the significant features of the four eras and concludes by saying that it is only by chanting the name of Hari that mortal beings will be rid of their earthly burdens.

In his poem Angchango the poet expresses his concern over the corrupt practices prevalent in society. He wants his countrymen to respect the unity and integrity of the nation and work for its productively. He welcomes the development of science and wishes his countrymen to seek the help of science for their prosperity.

In the poem Horchok Par the poet describes the beauty of a garland of flowers. He wishes that the flower should partly bloom. The sensitive poet feels that the flower is whispering something to him. But he is not able to hear what has been said by the flower. He wishes to be the lone person to enjoy the beauty of that flower. He is reluctant to share the beauty of the flower with someone else. If such a thing happens then he will be mentally hurt. In this way the sensitivity of the poet gets reflected through the poem Horchok Par –

*Chandi Badang Rochokjo*
*Phesengjo Chango Bhulayna*
*Chiba Brencha Mon Angi*
*Enchok Nemchuk Nukhang Nangi l*
*Neken Konai Ato Kaniya*
*Mini Khouchrame Chango Bhulaya*
*Rochok Kaliyan Enchok Nema*
*Pardongbe Mao Benchok Nema l* 17

Sandesh Baksaka (Suranjib Baksok) has been writing poems since the Champai era. Sense of patriotism and concern towards well-being and development of Rabha people and culture has been his priority as a poet. His poem titled Mai Rengeta18 published in the Champai reflects the social responsibility of the poet. His other poetic
creations lay scattered in other occasional journals and souvenirs. In recent times his poetical work *Chemba* published in 2002 has received appreciation from different individuals and organisations.

Upen Rabha Hakacham has also made commendable contribution to Rabha poetry. His initial effort at writing poem-in-prose is *Handar Nai* published in the renowned Rabha literary magazine *Champai*. *Handar Nai* is a symbolic poem which shows the eternal conflict between darkness and light. *Handar Nai* was published in the second issue of the *Champai*. Here light symbolises a progressive society which is always on the move. In such a society enlightened minds bring liberated thoughts to the people's mind and encourage them to safeguard and promote their heritage. It is in such a society that one can truly dedicate oneself to the different causes of society. But a stagnant society shrouded by superstition and misconception of progress cannot march ahead in the path of progress. It is bound to stumble at a point. Discontentment, contempt, jealousy and frustration deepens the gloomy atmosphere in such a society. The poet refers to this above situation as darkness and urges such a society to come out to the light. The poet feel that some age old superstitious customs and beliefs have been ruining the Rabha society. So, he appeals to his fellowmen through this particular poem-in-prose. The poet has been able to maintain the lucidity of the poem. His experiment with symbolism has also been successful. Among his other poems *Parmai* has received overwhelming response from readers. This Rabha poem of Upen Rabha Hakacham was published in the journal of *Asom Sahitya Sabha*. The theme of this poem is based on the poignant story of a young girl *Parmai*’s life. Abandoned by her parents in childhood *Parmai* found shelter at the poet’s uncle’s house. She stayed there as a maid servant hoping for better days to come. But though many a suitor promised her a new life, yet nobody came forward to marry her as promised earlier. Finally the disillusioned and frustrated *Parmai* agreed to become the second wife of an aged man named *Barong*.
There are many young girls like *Parmai* in our society. The poet, a sensitive person, has tried to sympathise with such unfortunate human beings and makes an attempt to illustrate the mental agony and sufferings experienced by people like *Parmai*. It is important to note that *Parmai* has been well received in the national level too. This poem has been translated into both English and Hindi and has been included in the compilation brought out by the All India Tribal Literary Forum. Several other poems of the poet lay scattered in other souvenirs and magazines. One such poem of the poet is *Mangkhram Dami* published in *Par-Jhampur* a text book of Rabha Bhasa Parishad. The poet has been inspired by the Assamese poet Mofizuddin Ahmed Hazarika. There is the influence of Ahmed Hazarika’s poem *Morishali Khoni* (The Graveyard) in Rabha Hakacham’s *Mangkhram Dami*. In his poem *Ang Ja Ramu* published in *Karhanol* (4th year, 3rd issue, 2003), it is the spirit of a patriot, who, after his death observes that his colleagues and countrymen have become united for the well-being of the motherland. Collection and analysis of these poems will help to understand the diversified features present in the Rabha poems of Upen Rabha Hakacham.

Though very few Rabha women have emerged in the field of literature, yet, some among these women writers have been able to make a niche for themselves in Rabha literature. In poetry we can cite the names of Riniki Churchung Pam, Hima Rabha, Sumitra Hato and Kalpana Rabha. Among them Riniki Churchung Pam is the seniormost poetess whose poems are scattered in different magazines. But she has published her collection of poems quite late. From her poem titled *Mukachari* published in 2001 we can evaluate the poetic genius of poetess Riniki Churchung Pam. From her poems it can be seen that the poetess is very much sensitive towards social issues and reforms. Like most of her colleagues she too, realises that she has some social responsibilities. Her commitment towards the social cause has prompted her to pen down poems like *Angi Chatalai*. Here the poetess wishes for the rains to come and
clear the dust and dirt from every nook and corner of her house. She hopes for a heavy downpour that will wash away the pile of dirt which has been piled into a large stack since centuries. She also wants to rid her body of sweat and dirt in the rains on the eve of the new year. Here the word dirt is symbolic and it symbolises the superstitious beliefs and customs which have made the people suffer for centuries. She hasn’t hesitated to self-criticise herself. Getting rid of sweat and dirt of her body means she wants to rise above petty ambitions and weaknesses and practise to be such a person who is pure in thought and deed. As a woman she is well aware of her self dignity and inexhaustible mental strength. The inner world of a woman gets reflected in some of her poems. She has also expressed her view concerning the sensitive relationship between two human beings. As a matter of fact Riniki Churuchung Pam has emerged as a prominent poetess as far as Rabha poetry is concerned.

Hima Rabha has to her credit a collection of poems titled Charpak published in 2000. She is quite candid in her expression of the various flaws of the present society. Hypocrisy is not her way of thinking. In fact she reascertains her faith on the power of the common man who can change the course of history. Her poem Ang Moulkai Kayni Jaya indicates to this attitude of the poetess. The common meek man, when driven by urgency, can even challenge those traitors who doesn’t hesitate to mortgage their motherland to serve their selfish interest. Such faithless people have no regard for their rich heritage and cultural values. They can even go to the extent of dividing the different sects of people in society and engage them in conflict on the pretext of religion. These ill-minded people are to no good and the common man should have the courage to unmask such traitors and enemies of humanity. The poetess tries to invoke this spirit into the minds of the common people and make them morally strong and courageous. The poetess has also written poems on human relationships and other relevant issues. But the social reformer within the poet inspires to write more on social related issues.
Two more upcoming poetesses of the twenty first century are Kalpana Rabha and Sumitra Hato. Kalpana Rabha’s poem Ang Rabha Darai speaks of the dignified status of a Rabha maiden in Rabha society. In her poem Kalpana Rabha has pointed out towards some relevant socio-religious customs followed in the Rabha society where the young girls have some significant tasks to perform. In other words to say the poetess has painted a wide canvass of Rabha life and tradition through her poem. Adequate knowledge about the subject has made her poem analytical. Her poems are scattered in different magazines. Rabha poetry is yet to receive more from her pen.

Sumitra Hato is another upcoming poetess who has been contributing in different magazines. Most of her poems are based on patriotism. The social factor is quite relevant in her poems. In her poem Dhaowa Kherekai Doraytang Ribijo the poetess gives vent to her patriotic feelings. She has faith in the collective strength of the masses. A word of strong protest from the masses is far stronger than fire arms. But the powerful group in society always look for ways and means to disrupt the struggle of the masses. In view of this vile effort the leaders of the struggle have to see to it that equality and fraternity among all fellow workers and their supporters is preserved. It is then that the great struggle initiated by both men and women will become a reality. Human sentiments and nature have also found place in some poems of Sumitra Hato.

The list of Rabha poets is quite long. But few among these poets have been able to make a mark in the history of Rabha poetry. Their writings are scattered in various souvenirs and magazines. Some of these magazines are untraceable. Yet, from those magazines retrieved we can evaluate a few selective poems written by poets of the Champai as well as the Post Champai era.

The Rabha poets have been influenced by the romantic movement in literature. They have also been influenced by the writings of Assamese romantic poets.
Nevertheless this influence helped in the full nourishment of Rabha poetry. Like his predecessor Binay Kumar Rabha has been influenced by romanticism. His poem *Dowane San Dipor* describes the beauty of the spring morning. Birds and animals bask out in the rays of the rising sun. Even the kingfisher stops to enjoy the sunlight. It eagerly waits to enjoy the first rays of the morning sun. The poet is overwhelmed to see this eagerness in the world of nature. Out of enthusiasm he pens this poem. Man is oblivious of the various happenings of the world of nature. Unlike the denizens of nature he is unaware of the heavenly beauty of the minute incidents of nature happening in day to day life. Poet is the only human being who can attain pleasure at the sight of such happenings.

Like the other poets of the Champai era Anweswar Rabha Hakacham has also written poems on nature. Apart from nature he has touched some other topics as well. In his poem *Mecha* he has glorified womanhood. The poet is full of respect towards women. He feels that it is only woman who can rise above harsh situation by dint of their mental strength. But the male dominated society has only the word of sympathy for woman. The men feel that woman is helpless without a man. But many legendary and mythological woman figures have proved this to be wrong. By dint of their chastity and mental power they have made the impossible possible. Woman is the embodiment of maternal bliss. It is this glory of maternity that will always give woman a dignified status in society. This modern outlook of the poet and his support towards the liberation of woman can be clearly observed in this particular poem. The poem has been popular too.

Apart from other poems Bistar Chandra Hakacham has a few philosophical poems to his credit. His poem *Bai* describes his quest for God. He can feel the Almighty's presence everywhere. But he feels that he doesn't know the appropriate way of pleasing the Almighty. For him the heavenly bodies such as the moon and stars
are none else but God. So he tries to connect himself with God through his heavenly representatives like the moon and the stars. The following stanzas of the poem reflect the philosophical attitude of the poet –

Unaba Naronga Neme Tata Bai
Chyime Milkai Kai,
Narongi Moni Nachikai Chinga
Taneta Khichai 1

Jhangcha Phamâna Narongi Nachikai
Chyime Milkai Kai,
Jangkhare Dongba Narong Chinga
Jhan Bayni Para Nachidei Bai 1

Bhaben Santok wrote a good number of patriotic poems. His poem *Angi Jonom Hadam* expresses the poet’s overwhelming love and dedication towards his motherland Assam. The beautiful nature of Assam along with the mighty Brahmaputra, the fun and festivity closely associated to the life of the people, the universal appeal of love and brotherhood which is related to the spring time festivity Bohag Bihu can be seen nowhere else other than Assam. The poet is indeed proud to be a son of this prosperous land and so he sings the praises of his motherland.

The spirit of patriotism is alive in the poems of Hemo Rabha. In his poem *Rabha Hasongi Chai* the poet expresses his indebtedness towards his motherland and re-affirms his willingness to save his motherland at the time of trouble. If necessary he is willing to sacrifice his last drop of blood for his motherland.

Sarbeswar Rabha and Sanjay Rabha has portrayed nature in their own ways. In his poem *Topak* Sarbeswar Rabha talks of the enchanting beauty of the butterfly, whereas the poet Sanjay Rabha in his poem *Pange Takour* has laid stress on the virtues of man. For the poet the butterfly is a carefree insect which conveys nothing but joy to mankind. It seems that the butterfly comes from the land of joy. So, the poet wishes to be a part of that joyous land and away from the problems of mundane life. But Sanjay Rabha has a different view altogether. He is bold enough to face the hurdles.
of life. He advises others to follow the same path as his. He feels that it is through love that hatred can be done away with. Man must be fearless and face adverse situations boldly. From the study of both poems it can be concluded that one poet is an escapist whereas the other is bold and ready to face hardship in order to make life more meaningful. The Rabha community have always been a part and parcel of the greater Assamese society. The Rabhas have been contributing to the flourish and enrichment of Assamese culture since time immemorial. Bishnu Prasad Rabha is that illustrious person of Rabha lineage who has made valuable contribution towards the greater Assamese society. But the Rabhas of today have failed to keep up that noble tradition initiated by Bishnu Prasad Rabha and have become the subject of ridicule among the other people. The committed poet Naren Shankar Rabha has pointed to this drawback of the Rabhas in his poem *Doumdakayan Moungcha.* The poet appeals to his fellowmen to rise from slumber and take bold steps to revive their lost glory. The urgency of his appeal can be understood from the lines mentioned below –

*Moong Chingi Rabha – “Rabha” Bo Bichi Chingi Baba,*

*Chaba – Roungba – Rabai Mana Ching Braba ;*

*Asomi Rabha Chingba Khapak Koke Tongba*

*Aantangkai Ounjo Chingo Tebe Boba l*

*Moungchai Riba Riba Pheseng – Phuchu Khare*

*Chong Takeche Kagcha Aro Klm Raye,*

*Phari – Chani Khape – Praway Toi Ta Chingmonge*

*Liluk – Chilukkhare Hapchi – Haba Chaiye l*

Other poets of the Champai and Post Champai era who have made their contribution towards Rabha poetry are Narendra Chandra Rabha, Bhupendra Chandra Rabha, Someswar Rabha, Dharani Pam, Shiva Charan Rabha, Binay Kumar Rabha Rungdung, Hemo Rabha, Bharat Chandra Rabha, Dhwajen Rabha, Bishwanath Rabha

It is unfortunate that many of the Rabha poets have not been able to get the recognition they deserve. Most of them are reserved persons and lack the confidence to have their works publicised by able persons or organisations. Moreover the general readers are also not aware of their writings or simply remain indifferent to such works. This attitude, in the long run, has hampered the growth and development of Rabha literature. The writers are the worst sufferers. The Rabha poets are the worst sufferers due to this apathy. But changing times have made the intellectual group to take this matter seriously. Due to this change we see a good number of young Rabha poets emerging in the literary scenario.
1.30 Rabha fiction:

1.31 Short story:

Unlike poetry we see very few Rabha writers taking to short story writing and novel writing. The first Rabha short story ever published is Listi Rabha Rongkho’s *Pheshek Tiringkai To* which has been published in the *Jatini Khurang* magazine edited by Prakash Rabha in the year 1973. This was followed by Paresh Rabha’s short story *Nachhikaini Khurang* published in the magazine *Asamor Janajati* edited by Manoranjan Lahiri in 1976. After this the *Champai* gets the credit of publishing short stories written by Prakash Rabha, Ramesh Chandra Rabha, Naresh Rabha and Duryodhan Rabha. Their short stories *Niyasani Bar Khama Angi Khamami, Takmanbra Thalkhapjo, Kapal* and *Tukhur Sabra* created a new prose movement in Rabha literature. The short story of Paresh Rabha also received applauses for its theme. So, the period covering the publishing of *Jatini Khurang* and *Champai* became the ideal period for Rabha short story literature to develop and flourish.

**Listi Rabha Rongkho:**

*Pheshek Tiringkai To*³⁹ is set at the backdrop of a rural Rabha society. Here the exploits of a short-sighted extravagant daughter-in-law is being depicted who almost brings a prosperous household to the verge of bankruptcy. *Teren* is the wife of *Tlnai* She is much older than her husband and comes into matrimonial terms with *Tlnai* only because of his wealthy background. The greedy and haughty *Teren* had no regard either for her husband or her in-laws. *Tlnai* had nothing but to cope up with the undesirable behaviour of his wife. *Khitak* happens to be his cousin brother and they live in a joint family. But their serene and peaceful life comes to face a drastic change after *Teren*’s arrival to that house. She even went to this extent of exchanging old rice for new rice on the pretext of not been able to grind rice powder. This particular act of *Teren* almost
ruined the family of their rich stock of food grains. As a result the wealthy and respectable family of Tinai became poor due to the thoughtlessness and extravagant nature of his wife Teren. All throughout the story Tinai is a close observer of the activities of his wife. Agony and mental conflict leaves him a shattered man. But he has no way other than surrender to circumstance.

Among those writers of the Pre Champai era who wrote in the Rabha language, Listi Rabha Rongkho was the only short story writer who could make a niche for himself. In other words to say, he was the first modern short story writer in the Rabha language. The backdrop of his story is the rural Rabha society. But he has brought to life some natural instincts of man, their follies and over-ambitious nature which amounts to their downfall. This trait is quite common in mundane life of man. The writer has avoided the complexities of urban life in his story. But he has meticulously brought out the shortcomings of haughty and over-ambitious people in the rural setup. This is an important aspect of his short story.

It is worthwhile to mention that Listi Rabha Rongkho is the only writer of the Pre Champai era whose one and the only short story Pheshek Tiringkai To has a modern trait. His concern for the rural folks manifest his humane nature. Selection of the rural Rabha society has enabled him to showcase Rabha folk life in a higher level. Here his illustrations are vibrant and captivates the imagination of the readers.

The joint family system within a Rabha society gets highlighted through his short story Mundane activities practised by Rabha men as well as women finds mention in his short story. But the narrative isn’t void of colour and gaiety. In fact, the writer has done his best to manifest these aspects of rural Rabha life in a realistic manner.

Characters play quite an important role in this particular short story. Though
Teren and TInai are the main characters of the story, the other characters also have certain roles to play. Jealousy and mistrust among sisters-in-law within a joint family is no strange thing. Men are not affected by these feelings. In fact in a joint family setup, the men (brothers) often look up to one another in times of family crisis. But it is usually their wives who are affected by complexities. In Listi Rabha Rongkho’s short story too, the mothers of TInai and Khitak are jealous of one another and wish to see one another’s misery. The writer has been able to manifest this particular mental trait of women through his short story.

Inspite of her flaws and shortcomings Teren is the central character of the short story. It is through her senseless exploits that the story gets its dynamism. The writer has left no stone unturned to give Teren’s character a realistic shape. Indeed he has succeeded in his attempt. Whereas TInai is the meek and dominated husband who is powerless in preventing his wife from doing senseless deeds. His inability to understand his wife’s psychology goes well with the saying that it is difficult even for the Divine ones to read the mind of a woman. So, TInai has nothing but to silently suffer and see the gradual decline of their wealthy status in society.

This short story is also an initial effort in Rabha showcasing the traditional rural Rabha society in some of its varied colours. The matrimonial alliance between TInai and Teren, Teren’s responsibilities as the daughter-in-law and her numerous choirs, her relationship with her mother-in-law and TInai’s aunt, the traditional practices followed by Teren while going to pay her respects to her aunt-in-law - all these are the minute aspects of Rabha life which the writer incorporates thus giving the short story a more distinct flavour. This is also another important aspect of Listi Rabha Rongkho’s writing which cannot be ignored.
Prakash Rabha:

Prakash Rabha can be counted among the best of former short story writers of the Champai era who has made a mark for himself as a short story writer. His short story *Niyasani Bar Khama Angi Khapaki* is based on romantic relationship. Here the protagonist Shorot is a social worker who is dedicated towards the spread of Rabha culture and literature. On one such occasion he goes to the lower region inhabited by Maitori Rabhas to attend the Baikho festival. There he met a Maitori maiden named Neeli and fell in love with her. Incidentally he met his ex-lover Sewali there. Sewali was then a wife of someone else. She was in a fix as to how react in front of her ex-lover. But Shorot made her feel at ease. She found consolation at making this promise to Shorot that she would contribute her writings to the *Champai* a newly published Rabha magazine. Shorot thanked her whole heartedly and made her promise to stand by him as a colleague for the greater interest of Rabha culture and literature.

The writer has been successful in portraying romantic love. But the lovers here have chosen to sacrifice their personal love for the sake of greater interest of the society. Shorot and Sewali are the characters that have been sensitively portrayed by the writer. He is successful in manifesting their personal agony and mental conflict. But there is no display of passionate emotion. In fact both the characters have maintained a certain reserveness. Furthermore they are conscious about their social status. As a matter of fact the main characters of this particular short story respect their past relationship and nurture the hope of getting united in their next birth. Inspite of the fact that Sewali couldn’t get united with her lover Shorot she wished that he may get a suitable bride and promised that she will deny herself of seven square meals for Shorot’s well-being from the day of Shorot’s marriage. Situation plays a prominent role in this short story. It is the situation which determines the conclusion of the story. From this point of view this short story of Prakash Rabha can be considered as a situational short story.
Ramesh Chandra Rabha:

Ramesh Chandra Rabha has also portrayed romantic love in his short story *Takmanbra Thikhapjo*. His short story can be considered as a situational short story with a blend of romanticism. The orphan girl Jeema got shelter in the protagonist Prakash's house. Prakash showered her with affection. Jeema nurtured love for Prakash. But her dream couldn't be fulfilled. Instead she had to sacrifice her life for upholding the prestige of the family who gave her shelter.

Like the character of Sewali in Prakash Rabha's short story *Niyasani Bar Khama Angi Khapaki* the woman character Jeema of Ramesh Chandra Rabha's short story *Takmanbra Thikhapjo* too, experiences the agony of separation from her lover. But unlike Sewali who accepts realism and tries to forget the pain of separation by involving herself in social activities, Jeema, out of bitter frustration at seeing the indifferent attitude of her lover, decides to commit suicide. No doubt the writer has made an attempt to explore the inner world of a woman. But the weakness of the character concerned has left behind some unanswered questions.

Maheswar Rabha:

Maheswar Rabha's short story *Jimangdami Rongjumuk* published in the magazine *Rongjumuk* (1987) is a humorous story based on a simple incident of mundane life. Bodon Ram Barchung comes to his maternal uncle's house in order to request him to write something for a souvenir to be published on the occasion of a Silver Jubilee Celebration. Due to a misunderstanding the person's wife decides to leave for her father's house along with her daughter the same night. She hastens to complete her household choirs. The sound from the kitchen disturbs her husband in his sleep. Getting disturbed he beats his wife black and blue. At this behaviour of his she decides to leave him. But he implored to her not to leave the house. The person described this humorous
incident to his son-in-law afterwards. Actually this incident took place in a dream and in that dream the wife hit her toes against a granite stone (Rong-jumuk) and fell down. Seeing her fall down the husband went to her rescue and picked her up. Overhearing this narration of her husband to their son-in-law, the simple minded wife too, joined in the group to enjoy the narration. These are the occasional misunderstanding and reconciliation happening in conjugal life. Only sweet memories are left behind after all these. These humorous incidents are a part of life. The Rongjumuk is highly regarded by the Rabhas. The mention of Rongjumuk in the story indicates the preservation of traditional values. The writer’s sole aim at writing this story is to give the readers an opportunity to enjoy pure humour.

Duryodhan Rabha:

Duryodhan Rabha Juro is one of the most popular short story writer writing in the Rabha language. His short stories such as Chukhre, Birsani Ghori, Nukhar Tongchakai Phar, Banachika, etc. are popular short stories. Different facets of life get illustrated in his short stories. Some stories are ironic and other plain humour. But the writer has selected some basic issues related to life. In the short story Chukhre the writer describes how a drunkard husband Kapheng tortures his pregnant wife and forces her to leave for her father’s house that very day. But in the evening Kapheng felt helpless as because he didn’t know how to manage the three small children at home. It was then that he realised the importance of the wife in the household. Though men look down upon their wives, yet it is the wife who has the superior hand in the household affairs. There is a tinge of humour in this particular short story. But there is also a serious, relevant issue which indirectly speaks about liberation of woman and that men should never make the mistake of under estimating the self dignity and strength of woman.

Birsani Ghori has a tinge of irony in it. Here the protagonist Hentok is a
helpful young man who is always on the move. On one such occasion he meets an elderly person at the market. He willingly helps that person by carrying his goods home. The elderly person was pleased with the amiable nature of Hentok and tells him to stay at his house for some days. The elderly person and his wife never saw Hentok taking a bath. Later they came to know that he had a skin ailment. The itching increases during summer. So he takes care that nobody ever sees him taking a bath and discover his ailment. His host was a homeopathic physician. He convinced Hentok that regular treatment with medicine will get him rid of the ailment. The ailment also prevented Hentok from leading a normal life. No girl who knew about his ailment cared to marry him. In fact his ailment was an open secret for all. So, he learnt to stay with the mental wound brushing it aside by describing his ailment *The Summer Clock*. The writer, in his usual lucid narrative, has portrayed the character of Hentok. Hentok accepted the harsh reality and came to terms with his ailment. This helped him to remain indifferent towards his personal plight. Finally it was the kind physician who came to his rescue and rid him of his ailment. The humanity of the physician is also an important aspect of this short story. In-fact, among all the short story writers of the *Champai* era, Duryodhan Rabha Juro is that writer who has been able to incorporate diversified elements of life in his short stories.

**Ukil Chandra Rabha:**

Ukil Chandra Rabha is another short story writer of the *Champai* era. But he developed as a short story writer in the *Post Champai* era. His short story *Kamiyan Charipak* is the story of the life and struggle of an ideal couple Udhab and Nasimai. Due to the resistance of his step-mother and the villagers the intelligent Udhab couldn’t complete his studies. But inspite of not being able to complete his high school education, Udhab got the job of a primary school teacher at his village. On the other hand the fatherless Nasimai along with her widowed mother worked in the fields of other people.
Poverty compelled her to leave her studies at the 3rd standard of school. Udhab and Nasimai came to know one another and fell in love. They got married and led an ideal life co-ordinating both family life and farming at the same time. Their labour and dedication bore fruit. Udhab could even inspire his friend Chandra to lead an ideal life as his. In fact this short story portrays the selfless labour and dedication of a couple who could realise the meaning of the fruit of labour and could also inspire others to follow in their footsteps. The writer has succeeded in portraying the idealist Udhab and his co-worker and lady love Nasimai. The message of the short story is quite clear. Perseverance pays and the fruit of labour is always sweet.

Jharna Chikacham:

Jharna Chikacham (the pseudonym of a Rabha writer) emerged in the Post Champai era. Making her debate in the Rabha magazine Hasong Siri edited by Binay Rabha Lungdung, Jharna Chikacham penned down several short stories. Her first short story Habayni Songsar published in Hasong Siri in 1994 describes the eventful life of an industrious young man who falls in love with the like-minded Maimoti. Her love, dedication and sincerity wins the protagonist’s heart and he decides to make her his wife. Together they built their dream home and realised their dreams into reality. The story is being narrated by the protagonist in the first person. It is a love story where situation has played a major role. Both the main characters have been perfectly sketched. The story unfolds itself with the development of the characters.

But the writer has received critical acclamation for her short story Angise Jorai. The protagonist tells her own story in the first person. The protagonist Miysa has been exploited by men many a time. They took the advantage of her helplessness. But she nurtured her brushed self and waited for the opportunity to strike back at those who robbed her of her chastity. She had her revenge and gained control over her Enemies.
But the unanswered question still remained whether chastity of the mind is important or chastity of the body.

The ideal woman takes pride in her physical chastity. But the protagonist of *Angise Jorai* is no idealist but a practical woman who is aware of the harsh reality of life. She is no weakling who seeks to attract the attention of men in order to gain their sympathy. She is tough and shrewd and is acquainted with the way of the present world. Experiences have blessed her with the capacity to analyse the behaviour of man. So she can have her own way in the complex society. The writer has artfully sketched the character of Miysa. It is an accepted fact that Miysa’s exploits cannot be supported in the prevailing social system. But her candid views cannot be rejected either. In fact the views placed forward by the writer raise certain questions regarding the exploitative and dominative nature of the male dominated society.

**Bishwanath Rabha Tara:**

Bishwanath Rabha Tara is another writer of the *Post Champai* era. *Khapakini Parmala* (2002) is the collection of Bishwanath Rabha Tara’s short stories. The first story of this collection is *Khapakini Parmala* which portrays the tragic end of a love story. The hero Jabreng is in love with Khorai. But the reserved Jabreng couldn’t seek Khorai’s hand from her parents. Seeing Khorai and Chaini together at the Baikho festival Jabreng misunderstood Khorai. Without waiting to hear from her Jabreng left for his home. In the turn of events Khorai’s parents arranged her marriage with Chaini. When Khorai broke this news to Jabreng the shock was too much for him and he fell down dead.

The writer has given a sensitive touch to this love story. There was scope for the further development of the main character Jabreng. But the writer hasn’t explored such prospects. A little boldness on the part of the heroine Khorai would have saved...
Jabreng from doom. But she dared not defy her parents. Thus came a tragic end to their love story.

*Jorasinini Plla Phar* is another short story of his collection which has a different flavour. As the name suggests it is the anxious waiting of the newly married bride for her groom on the first night of their marriage. Romila is the new bride who has a dark past. Remembering those past exploits of her life she is hesitant as to whether her groom will accept her as his wife whole heartedly or not. Being the only daughter of a wealthy father she got the liberty to enjoy her life in her own way. The shrewd lustful men working at their farm took advantage of her wild ways and exploited her sexually. She was a virgin no more. Her husband Mengkong was unaware of her past and she felt guilty of herself. But to her surprise he told her that he was quite aware of her past. But she need not worry about their conjugal relationship for he believes that she along cannot be blamed for her past. Moreover he felt that men should have a liberated attitude towards such sensitive issues and should accept such victims of lust with respect. It is only then that society will change its view and assist such unfortunate victims of lust get over their feeling of self redemption and start life afresh with a new perspective towards life. Here the hero Mengkong is a blend of idealism and practical thoughts. He is the modern practical man with liberated opinion about women. For him woman is no longer subordinate to man and the slave of his desire. But woman is the friend and companion of man in his numerous welfare projects. Mengkong seem to echo the ideology of the writer and his modernistic outlook towards society.

The other short stories of the collection such as *Pengtamchini, Habang Hani Khet* and *Musa Sabrani Housa* portray different aspects of life with all its virtues and shortcomings.
Milan Chandra Rabha:

Milan Chandra Rabha’s short story Kharchokai describes a mundane incident of life. Here Kangora is the brother-in-law of Maya and her husband Bodon. But Kangora isn’t at all concerned about the ill-health of his sister-in-law Maya. In fact he is ungrateful and wishes to go to pay Maya a visit only because Bodon conveyed to him that they have a pitcher of rice beer ready for him. The temptation of rice beer was too much for him. Even Maya’s sarcastic remark had no affect on him. Kangora is but the manifestation of the indifferent, self-centred modern man.

Rabha short story writers have brought to life different facets of the Rabha society in their writings. Some universal faults in the human character as well as virtues will always be there in man. The Rabha people are not different from the other people. They too have their own share of joys, sorrows, jealousy and aggressiveness. Writers like Dhiren Rabha, Nilpadmini Rabha has observed such behaviour from close quarters and try to sketch an authentic picture of the life and aspirations of the Rabha people through their creative characters. To a certain extent they have succeeded in their endeavour.

1.32. Rabha Novel:

Compared to short story the publishing of Rabha novels isn’t at all promising. So far only two novels have been published in Rabha. These are Gangadhar Rabha Hadu’s social novel Nango Choksa Mana published in 1998 and Listi Rabha Rongkho’s novel Charpakngi Jhorachap published in 2005. Due to poor publicity Nango Choksa Mana couldn’t attract the attention of the intellectual class. Very soon it faded away from the public eye. Unavailability of the novel has indeed deprived us of exploring and analysing an important part of Rabha literature.

On the other hand Listi Rabha Rongkho’s novel Charpakngi Jhorachap is
based on a romantic story. Here Taluk (Talukdar Rabha) meets Chinai (Chenehi Rabha) at the wedding feast of Philap and Kanta. Taluk was the cousin brother of the groom Philap. Whereas Chinai happened to be the bride Kanta’s brother’s daughter. Taluk and Chinai got acquainted with each other at the feast. Gradually their relationship matured to love. They had a group photo shot at a city studio. This photo became the symbol of their love and togetherness. Much before he completed his High School Leaving Certificate Examination Taluk joined a venture school as a teacher. In due course he passed the H.S.L.C. examination and secured a permanent post of a teacher at Baida Middle school. Meanwhile his father Rampeng sought for a bride for his son Taluk without Taluk’s consent. He almost finalised the date of marriage between Taluk and the girl Nirola. One of his fellow-teacher Leben became the mediator and helped Taluk to overcome this crisis. Taluk’s father Rampeng had to compensate for his thoughtless deed and pay seven hundred rupees to Nirola’s parents for disgracing them in society. After this Taluk married Chinai. After her marriage to Taluk, Chinai got the job of a female Demonstrator, weaving at Agia Khadi Kendra in Goalpara. In this way she assisted her husband to run the household and presented the example of an ideal conjugal life.

As far as the story of the novel is concerned Listi Rabha Rongkho has tried to project some real problems faced by man in mundane life. He has limited his observation to the Rabha society only. But this limitation hasn’t hampered in the development of the story. In fact this particular aspect has enhanced the regional feature of the novel.

The protagonist Taluk is a liberal minded Rabha youth. Unlike his conservative parents he wants to rise in life by dint of his hard work and proper education. His lover Chinai too, faces hurdle while convincing her parents about the importance of education. It is Taluk who encourages her to remain firm in her goal and pursue a
creative career. Taluk's enthusiasm was such that after their marriage he supported Chinai and helped her to secure the job of female Demonstrator at the Khadi Kendra.

His awareness towards Rabha cultural life gets reflected in his resolution to visit Chinai's brother-in-law's village on the occasion of *Baikho* festivity. His participation in other social festivities reflect a particular aspect of his character. That is his support for the preservation of Rabha cultural elements from the wear and tear of time.

But his character isn't free of faults. At some stages he commits some errors. But these errors are quite human and projects a more humane aspect of Taluk's character. Taluk had ideological conflict with his father. But not once did he ever try to reason with his father. Instead his indifference towards his father increased. If he would have reasoned with his father then he wouldn't have suffered from mental stress regarding the issue of his marriage.

In spite of her liberal attitude towards life, Chinai too, experiences temporary frustration in her love life. But time plays the best healer and united her with her lover Taluk. Her capability to pen down creative pieces of prose and poetry is the manifestation of her cultural awareness. Securing the job of female Demonstrator at the Khadi Kendra after her marriage and her willingness to do the job indicates a modern trait of her character. That is her firm resolution to go hand in hand along with her husband Taluk and offer him financial assistance to meet their household needs together.

Some significant aspects related to Rabha matrimonial alliance, customs related to marriage feast, *Baikho* festivity and mundane life of the Rabha community get reflected through the story. The novelist has tried his best to maintain the authenticity of the description of the above mentioned aspects. He has succeeded in his efforts. But the artistic flavour is found to be missing in some of his description.
Listi Rabha Rongkho’s *Charpakngi Jhorachap* give us an opportunity to look into Rabha novel literature. No doubt Listi Rabha Rongkho’s contribution in this regard is quite praiseworthy. But in some parts of his novel the spontaneous flow is missing. He could have worked more in the development of the main characters. Inclusion of the official appointment letter at the end of the novel has marred the beauty of the concluding chapter of the novel. The novelist ought to have presented this particular chapter in a more suitable manner. Nevertheless in spite of its drawbacks publication of *Charpakngi Jhorachap* will be able to encourage other Rabha writers to write novels and enrich this form of literature in the Rabha language.

1.40 Rabha Drama:

The Rabha drama movement started in the post independence era. But the foundation stone for this movement was laid in the Pre-independent year of 1935. In the year 1935 Premon Rabha formed the Gajapara theatre group which performed at several places. After the initial effort of Premon Rabha Prasanna Kumar Pam appeared in the scene of Rabha drama. Prasanna Kumar Pam has been described as the father of modern Rabha drama. His first effort was *Dodan bir* in 1957. It was a legendary drama based on the exploits of a Rabha legendary hero Dodan. This drama received overwhelming response from the people. He wrote a few more dramas in Rabha. The first Act of *Dodan bir* has been published by the Rabha Bhasa Parishad in 1982. Later on Upen Rabha Hakacham transformed this Act into a dance-drama. The Shri Rasong cultural group of Satabari has staged this dance-drama and won overwhelming response from the people. From the little data available we can mention that Prasanna Kumar Pam wrote six legendary dramas and three social dramas. These are *Dodan bir, Marukhetri, Maya Hasong, Sristi Bidhan, Langa Mukti, Moyra Shakti, Kamagari Shokti, Kapalini Sindur* and *Pidan Sangsar*. Some of these dramas manuscripts are preserved by certain individuals. These persons are Sojini Rabha of Nodiyapara, Darka *(Dodar
After Prasanna Kumar Pam, Bineswar Santok wrote one more legendary drama *Jabed bir* in 1960. It was staged by the Satabari theatre group. It need to be mentioned here that most of the Rabha dramas have been staged in theatres by different theatre groups. Some of these dramas manuscripts are preserved well. But only a few among these dramas have come out in published form. In view of this, those Rabha dramas staged in theatres must be included in our discussion of Rabha drama.

The dramas written by the above mentioned dramatists resurrected patriotism among the Rabhas and sense of duty towards preserving their cultural heritage and traditions coming down from generation to generation motivated the common Rabha people. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee Rabha artist Rajen Pam wrote a popular Rabha drama named *Sirgini Risi*. Phorsingh Bantho wrote the legendary drama *Dodan Lupta* based on a ballad sung during Baikho. Dramatist and critic Prakash Rabha has commented that the historical value of this drama written by Phorsingh Bantho is much more than that drama *Dodan Lupta* written by Ganapati Pam. Janu Ram Rabha wrote a mythological drama named *Nal Raja*. It was the story of king Nala and his queen Damayanti.

Ganapati Pam contributed dramas like *Dodan Lupta* (1960), *Rondon Chondon* (1968) and *Pake Renjo Si Pithing* (1983) translated from Bengali. Phulcharan Rabha wrote *Angbato Kai* which was staged by Dairong theatre group.

In the sixth decade of the twentieth century Kirtan Rabha wrote a play titled *Bakhra Pala* (1963) Bijen Rabha followed him by writing *Moyra Pala* (1964). Listi Rabha Rongkho has also contributed a drama titled *Bolok Mastor* in 1972. It is a one-act play. Nirmala Rabha Hakacham is the only woman dramatist to contribute the drama *Michitangi Siksha* in 1975.
With the emergence of dramatist Prakash Rabha in the field of Rabha drama, Rabha drama literature experienced a drastic change. He gained prominence as a social dramatist. He was also the first Rabha dramatist to form a professional Rabha theatre group named *Sonajuli*. He wrote a good number of social dramas. Each of those dramas had a social message to convey. His dramas were able to influence the people which was a matter of credit for the social reformer within the dramatist Prakash Rabha. He was a person with a modern outlook and tried to incorporate this feeling in his social dramas. This committed dramatist wrote *Nukbare Mankai* (one act play) in 1970 which was staged by the students of Baida High School on the occasion of Independence day 1970. His drama *Neeli Chandan* was staged by Amguri and Konya Hachu theatre group in 1976. His *Mung Uni Maya* was staged by Amguri theatre group in 1979. *Patti* was staged by Doroni Bishnu Rabha Natya Sangha in 1982, *Sonarmoni Sonsar* by Naguwapara theatre group in 1995, *Bus Gari Thakala* (more popular as Gera Kamarni Pistol) by Sonajuli Theatre group in 1996, *Changkoi* by the Amguri branch of Asom Natya Sanmilan in 1998, *Ekai Nasi Jonoman Jonoman* (dance drama) by Gajapara, Amguri and Rongchhai theatre group in 1981 and the historical drama *Jerengani Soti* (dance drama) by Amguri, Doroni and Sonajuli theatre group in 1985.


Among the Rabha dramatists of the modern period Upen Rabha Hakacham has made some significant contribution. Like his predecessor most of works are in manuscript form and a number of his dramas staged in theatres by theatre groups. He has written a variety of dramas ranging from historical, legendary and social dramas. His social dramas include three one-act plays – Tilkar, Dosh Changi and Tauni Para Songina/1979, one three-act play titled Bhagimakai Hourabakai/1984, social drama Ayani Nakapoti Sona, legendary drama Maru Chikrang/1983 and historical drama RanggIr Parsuram/1998. It is his last drama RanggIr Parsuram published in 1998 which has brought profound recognition to his works as a dramatist. RanggIr Parsuram has also been recognized as a textbook by the Rabha Bhasa Parishad. It is a historical drama in Rabha on the heroic role of invisible Parsuram based on the Baharistan-I-Ghaybi which is a chronicle originally written in Persian by Ghaybi alias Mirza Nathan during the reign of Shahjahan in 1607-1641 A.D. This book has been translated later by Dr. M.I. Borah into English in 1936.

Parsuram was the king of the kingdom of Sambhor. His queen was the religious minded Maimoti. His son Tularam offended him by going against his father’s wish and married Pampila the princess of Dim Sing Khitri. Parsuram was mentally hurt by his son’s attitude. Moreover his mental weakness prompted him to marry the widow Khoporangsi on the pretext of saving her from the clutches of Taslim Khan – the
general of Mirza Nathan who was the ruler of Bengal. Meanwhile Parsuram was surrounded by traitors and they succeeded in causing his downfall at the hands of Mirza Nathan. Due to the conspiracy of persons like Akara raja, Gobinda Laskar and Balabhadra Das, Parsuram was arrested along with his second wife and three sons. When the prisoners’ boat reached Paglartek, Parsuram, on the pretext of bowing to Lord Shiva at Paglartek, jumped from the boat and ended his life in the waters of the Brahmaputra.

Parsuram is a conflictious character. His character isn’t above mortal faults. In fact Parsuram is a man of flesh and blood experiencing all the agony and rejection in life. He was the king of the peaceful Sambhor state. His subjects enjoyed peace and harmony. But displeasure and anxiety at the personal front left him a shattered man. His son Tularam rejected the arranged marriage with his fiance princes Ajali the daughter of the king Akara. Instead he married princess Pampila. This social embarrassment gave a hard blow to his self esteem and glorious exploits. He disowned Tularam for good. The Mughals of Bengal were waiting for the appropriate opportunity to attack the kingdom of Sambhor. At first they took to diplomacy and infiltrated into the ranks of the courtiers. Soon they identified a few courtiers like Balabhadra Das and Gobinda Laskar who were displeased with the king. The Mughals used these traitors as the mechanism to invade the kingdom of Sambhor. With the help of king Akara, Balabhadra Das and Govinda Laskar the Mughals occupied the kingdom of Sambhor. After murdering the king’s faithful companion and warrior Tahana, the enemies could arrest king Parsuram along with his second wife and three sons. Deceived by faith and betrayed by his own subjects, king Parsuram realised his shortcoming as a person. Due to his momentary carnal desire he dishonoured the faith of his dutiful wife and accepted the widow Khoporangi as his second wife. For the king Parsuram it was his duty to save the honour of each and every subject of his whether be it the widow Khoporangi or
others. But he took undue advantage of the situation and accepted Khoporangi as his second wife. The marriage alliance of his son Tularam with king Akara’s daughter Ajali was a diplomatic step to keep his rival king Akara in good spirit. As a thoughtful father he could have forgiven his son for his rash deed and persuaded him to marry Ajali as his second wife. In this way Parsuram would have regained the respect from his courageous son and also gain a king like Akara who was the lord of a strategic point as his relative. Lack of shrewdness made him incapable of identifying friends from foes. This is the reason that he could not understand the conspiracy of Balabhadra Das and Govinda Laskar. But it was too late for him to realise his mistakes. Yet he couldn’t be defeated so easily. He understood the call of destiny and chose to sacrifice his own life at the holy site of Paglartek rather than face endless humiliation at the hands of the enemies. Overlooking his fault as an ordinary human being it can be said that he could upheld the self dignity and pride of the brave Rabhas till the end.

In the original historical document other historical characters like Mirza Nathan, Chand Bahadur, Taslim Khan, Balabhadra Das, Govinda Laskar, Tahana, etc. are static characters. But in his historical drama RanggIr Parsuram the dramatist Upen Rabha Hakacham has brought to life these historical characters and added new dimensions. Even side characters like king Akara, Dimching Khitri, Tularam and the other woman characters have a part to play in the drama. These are not historical characters but have been incorporated from popular Rabha legends and ballads. In other words to say the dramatist has woven each and every character into the main story of the historical play in such a way that each character however big or small it may be, has its contribution to make in the development of the story.

The dramatist has been able to portray the contemporary socio-political scenario of the Rabha society in his place. His description is a blend of historical facts, popular legends and songs and an amount of creativity. The feeling of nationalism
among the Rabhas was great. But as like in other societies there was the presence of opportunists too. These people were a threat for the national integrity of a society. The dramatist has portrayed this with full fervour.

After Upen Rabha Hakacham we can cite the names of some more dramatists who have been contributing to Rabha drama literature. This include both senior as well as junior dramatists. The first among these is Nista Baksok who has written a few plays in Rabha. His dramas are *Pidan Sakhi* (1977), *Gosa Pimungini Chong* (1979), *Sonsarni Lokha* (1980), *Rupalini Borat* (1981), *Neutini Kapali* (1983), *Kastoramni Pathar* (1984), *Mayani Sindur* (1986), *Pharmajarni Nukchi* (1986), *Nokini Moyna* and an one-act play *Chukhuri*. Almost all his dramas were social dramas and were staged by various theatre groups. Gunadhar Rabha wrote *Baikhoni Chatalai* in 1997. Niranjan Rabha wrote two dramas *Barchakkai Charpak Tingra* (1998) and *Gangburani Sabrani Biya*. Khonindra Pam wrote an one-act play *Rajani Milan* in 1979. He also wrote the plays *Thirdakngi Katha* (1994) and *Timajo Chang* (1998). Dhananjay Rabha wrote *Niyam* (1994), *Samdubula GUdapkai Nok* (1995) and *Mai Rengkai Chika Dondeni Khurang* (1996) Jayanta Rabha and Lakhikanta Rabha wrote one play each — *Ayani Nukchi* (1985) and *Babruse Sabra* (1984). Pabitra Rabha wrote the drama *Phul Pajar* in 1996. In this way many Rabha writers have been contributing to Rabha drama. Very few of their dramas have come out in published form. But most of the dramas have been staged by different theatre groups in different periods. Some of those received critical appreciation and others rose to be popular plays at different juncture of time. The manuscripts of all the dramas need to be retrieved and preserved.

Dance-drama is also an important part of Rabha drama literature. So far many writers have composed dance-dramas in the Rabha language. This particular aspect indicate the Rabha dramatists inclination towards creative music. The flavour of Rabha folk music as well as modern music can be obtained from such creations of
the dramatists. Most of the dance-dramas are based on mythological and popular Rabha legends and ballads. Some of these are even inspired by folk tales and fables. But the same fate await these dances-dramas as that faced by the dramas. Lack of proper publicity and preservation has mared the flourish and popularisation of these dance dramas. So far Upen Rabha Hakacham’s dance-drama based on a legendary theme *Satee DUmakchi* has been published. This dance-drama has been recognised as a textbook by the Rabha Bhasa Parishad. The courage and self resistance of the Rabha princess DUmkchi against all odds in the central theme of the dance-drama. The musical value of this dance-drama is also mentionable.

Unavailability of sufficient data has been an obstacle in the documentation of dance-dramas written by Rabha dramatists. From the limited sources available we have been able to retrieve the contribution of some dramatists towards Rabha dance-drama. Among these dramatists Prakash Rabha was one of the first to write the dance-drama *Gerok Konya* in 1976. Anil Hadoo wrote the dance-drama *BaideuSar* in 1990. Rajani Barchung wrote *Janomi Hasong* in 1995. Upen Rabha Hakacham has a number of dance-dramas to his credit. These are *Hachuraini Bichar, Patalni Konya, Charpak Changkoi Gudunge*, the legendary dance-drama *Nangol Bibra, Marangini Hachi Na Sirgini Risi, Sirgini Jora, Baikhoni Chatalai* (1979), *Jabed Bir* (1980) and his most popular legendary dance-drama *Satee DUmkchi* in 1987. After him Nista Baksok has contributed dance-dramas such as *Satharni Phari, and Rongchhai Jhoran Kaniya*. Khanindra Pam’s dance-dramas are *Niromoni Nichomon* (1994), *Nengteng Ganji Chingi* (1994), *Aya Baikho* (1995) and *Bachumduram Jora*, Dhananjoy Rabha has contributed *Hachuini Par* (1994), *Mangkhramdamni Sabra Mecha* (1997) and *Onarjya Sabra Babrubahan* (1998).

Rabha dramatists have written several dramas and dance-dramas. The tradition goes back to the early part of the twentieth century. But lack of proper exposure
and enthusiasm among the dramatists, have debared us from seeing their works in published form. For the revival and thorough development of Rabha drama literature all the manuscripts should come out in published form. It is then that the evaluation of Rabha drama literature will be more authentic.

1.50 Other literary works:

1.51 Criticism:

Apart from the major fields of literature the Rabha litterateurs have also got involved in other fields related to literature. Criticism is one such field of interest. But the state of literary criticism in Rabha is quite frustrating. Listi Rabha Rongkho’s critical analysis on poetry compilation *Hachuini Khurang* published as introduction in the caption of *Dibichi* has been regarded one of the acclaimed critical writing in the Rabha language. *Hachuini Khurang* is a compilation of poems by the romantic poet Khagen Hato. *Hachuini Khurang* or Call of the Mountain is based on love and patriotism. In his critical analysis of the poems of Khagen Hato critic Listi Rabha Rongkho has touched all the aspects related to these poems. The sensitivity of the poet and his minute observation of small details of the natural world has found place in the critic’s eye. Appreciating the poet’s minute observation the critic comments that the poet has been able to make intimate contact with the mountain and other things and happenings associated with it. Be it traditional beliefs or age old customs of the mountains, the poet has been able to absorb every thing in his poems. In this way through the critical analysis of *Hachuini Khurang* Listi Rabha Rongkho has set a milestone in the history of Rabha criticism. No other Rabha writer has been able to reach Listi Rabha Rongkho’s position in literary criticism. Lately Charu Mohan Rabha’s critical writing on Rabha poetry *Rabha Kroumichini Halcha* published in 2000 has been received well by the intellectual group. His writing is a ray of hope as far as the development of literary criticism in Rabha is concerned.
After the Rabha poets it is the turn of the Rabha essayists who have made maximum contribution to Rabha literature. Be it articles related to science, education, social science, art and culture, folklore, etc. Rabha essayists have been contributing significantly in the numerous occasional souvenirs and journals related to art, culture and literature. It is encouraging to note that many essayists have brought out compilation of their notable articles. The first article based on science *Bigyami Katha* written by Britison Rabha has been published in *Jatini Khurang* edited by Prakash Rabha. Upendra Chandra Rabha’s (Upen Rabha Hakacham) article *To Pichini Gun* published in the *Champai* is based on the nutritious value of an egg. This can be related to health and nutritious diet-an integral part of science. Listi Rabha Rongkho has also contributed a few scientific articles. The Rabha essayists were much concerned about the socio-economic upliftment of the stagnant Rabha society. Jogendranath Bantho, Rajendra Rongkho were the early voices in this concern. Mani Rabha, Listi Rabha Rongkho, Sajon Chandra Rabha, Prakash Rabha, Charu Mohan Rabha Dabang, Maheswar Rabha, Duryodhan Rabha, Suranjib Baksok, Sarbeswar Rabha, Nitai Rabha, Rupnath Pam, Bishwanath Rabha Tara, Upen Rabha Hakacham, Malaram Rabha, Amar Sing Koch, Jantri Cherenga and a few others follow this list. These are those committed writers who have made a difference at interpreting the different facets of Rabha life, livelihood, culture and education. With the growing awareness among the Rabhas many new writers have diverted their attention to complex issues other than the existing ones. Writers like Baren Chapar, Jagat Kama, Mani Rabha, Nirmala Rabha, Naren Rabha Hakacham, Jantri Cherenga and Amar Singh Koch have written essays on issues related to the socio-political consciousness of the Rabhas. Their perspective related to various socio-political issues is not above controversy. But their writings have been able to attract the attention of the masses. In this way a number of essayists have been writing on various
subjects and issues highlighting Rabha life. Some of their writings have been quite inspiring. This has quickened the pace of progress in the Rabha society.

1.53 Satirical works:

Satirical writings is a part of modern literature. Satirical works are usually created to criticise a certain social system and action of a particular individual. A few Rabha writers have created satirical works. These works reflect their concern towards the under developed Rabha society. The indifference of the common people towards safeguarding their language and culture caused concern among the writers. Chingi Jati Chungphayta written by Listi Rabha Rongkho is one such satirical poem which manifests his concern towards the restoration of self-dignity among his people. Mani Rabha was also one such writer who visualised a prosperous future of the Rabha community. He wanted the stagnant society to get rid of its superstitions and conservative attitude towards liberal thoughts and ideas. He believed that it is far better to stay away from one’s motherland and work for its good rather than face stiff resistance from reactionary forces at home. His satirical poem Te Gami Chai published in Hasongi Khurang is a sarcastic remark at those ill-forces of society. Maheswar Rabha has written a humorous poem Budakayni Akkol in Rong jumuk. This light poem reflects on some mundane aspects of life with a tinge of humour.

Balai Rabha has contributed riddle in poem form titled Aleng-Deng-Chong in Hasongi Khurang. The flavour of Rabha folk life in prominent in this particular work of his. Naren Rabha Hakacham has composed a monologue, Phunji Hangor Phekechi. This particular piece of creative work is the poet’s personal reaction at the massacre of innocent people at Pandoba, Lempara Satabari and Nolonga village of Goalpara sub-division during the Assam Agitation (1983). Such type of poetic contribution can be paltry. But the significance of these creations in Rabha literature cannot be ignored.
1.54 Children literature:

As far as children literature is concerned in the Rabha language very few efforts have been made by the writers concerned. Inspite of the fact that the Rabhas have a rich store of folk tales, legends, fables and other stories related to the animal world, only a handful of Rabha writers have come forward to try their creativity at writing children literature. Lakshi Phenan has collected a few stories with educative value for children. Rajat Rabha has also written a few stories for children. These stories are scattered in different magazines and souvenirs. One of his story Klongkani Hanok has been published in Rongjumuk. After Rajat Rabha the creation of children literature in the Rabha language almost came to a standstill. Unlike other parts of literature, children literature in the Rabha language is almost a neglected part. Only recently the CIIL took the initiative of organising a workshop on Rabha children literature and entrusted upon the task of writing Rabha nursery rhymes to Prakash Rabha, Binay Rabha Rungdung, Jantri Cherenga and Upen Rabha Hakacham. Their task was accomplished and nursery rhymes for the nursery class came out as a compilation titled Momorongi Moina Khurang in 1997. There are about two hundred rhymes in the compilation. Some primers prepared by B.R.K.R. and published by Assam State Text Book Compilation and Publication Ltd. are such type of books. Prakash Rabha is a good composer for children. But still there is much to be done for the revival of this field of literature in the Rabha language.

1.60 Translation works:

Translation is that medium through which the literary essence of a particular language group can be enjoyed by others. When we talk of Rabha literature it can be seen that the history of translation in the Rabha language goes far as 1909. In 1909 the Christian Missionaries, in order to spread Christianity among the Rabhas, published

This enthusiastic step taken by the Christian Missionaries bore fruit. As time progressed creative writers took to translating works of other languages into Rabha. Poetry was one of their favourite subject of translation. The Rabha poets translation works were not limited to the Assamese poems only. They ventured to translate poems even of other languages such as English and Hindi. It is important to note that unlike other fields of literature it is not easy to retain the original flavour of poem through its translated version. But it is encouraging to note that Rabha poets have translated some selected poems of Assamese, English and Hindi poets into Rabha. Those translated poems have gained popularity due to their original flavour which have been well preserved by the translators. The first poet whose name needs special mention in this endeavour is Listi Rabha Rongkho. He has translated into Rabha the Assamese poet Jatindra Nath Duwarah’s famous work *Omar Tirtha*. Duwarah has translated Omar Khayyam’s immortal poem *Rubayet* into Assamese as *Omar Tirtha* Listi Rabha Rongkho’s Rabha version of this poem is *Umoroni Mom Nam*, which has been published
in the first issue of the magazine *Champai*. He has translated only a part of the Assamese version of *Rubayet*. But from that small portion his skilful ability at translation can be observed. The following stanzas quoted below is an indication to his dedication and creative ability –

Choko Brekcha Rakhoo Anga
Riba Nachikai Tongcha Somoi,
Kreng Jape Igo Charpakto
Renga Banake Rengeta Pui | 68

Charu Mohan Rabha has translated two Assamese poems into Rabha. These are Nilamoni Phookan’s poem *Shuchi* (Rabha translation *Pithar*) and Chandra Kumar Agarwala’s poem *Ai* (Rabha translation *Ayä*). Charu Mohan Rabha has been able to retain the essence of these romantic poems in the Rabha translation. His translation isn’t void of lucidity either. This can be realised on going through the poem *Pithar* –

Chukungi Bodami Manik ngi Jinam
Kanchik cha Saksaba Una l
Maniki Tongcha Chukungi Merdhana
Chidongan Moni Khouchana ll 69

*Ayä* is a poem dedicated to the mother. The original poem is the poet’s love, adoration and reverence for his mother. His utmost dedication and respect towards his mother is overwhelming. As a dutiful son the poet is always concerned about his mother’s comfort and wellbeing. She is the one who has brought him to this wonderful world. This act of her’s cannot be repaid in any way. As a son the poet realises it whole heartedly. The translator has been able to reciprocate the intensity of the original idea. He has been able to maintain the same in his translation –

Jani Proung Jouram Mane Manjo Ekai Hadam
Jani Nachi Mane Chutngjo Joubra Chingi Nang,
Nachi Nachi Bomai Rai Chokjo Phaidam Chai,
Uwan Aya Chingi Nang Rachamo Monikhai II

Under the pseudonym Hato Mama Prakash Rabha translated the Assamese poet Mitra Dev Mahanta’s poem *Shule Bhoni Shule* into Rabha as *Nukhar Rengjo Chingi Momo* and Someswar Rabha has translated Assamese poet Chandradhar Barua’s poem *Dhulikona Moi* into Rabha as *Gosa Dhuri Ang.*

Among all the Rabha poets who have dedicated their creativity towards the translation of poems, Upen Rabha Hakacham is the only Rabha translator who has a good number of translated poems to his credit. He has translated a poem in prose *Bhiksha* of the Assamese poet Jatindra Nath Duwarah into Rabha as *Namsrangkai*. He has also translated Duwarah’s poem *Puhorot Koi Endhar Bhal* in Rabha as *Nay Kay na Kara Handarkayn Nema*. He has translated poetess Nalinibala Devi’s poem *Jonom bhumi* into Rabha as *Pradam*. Patriotism is the main theme of *Jonom bhumi*. The translator has maintained the patriotic theme in its original flavour in the translated version *Pradam*. Lucidity of preservation of the Rabha version is also another aspect that needs mention –

1. Dengjo Piyila Neken  Nangi Bomayan Aya
   Jatokayni Pirichange Phungi,
2. Khomo Gandan Neken  Nangi Bômayan Guri
   Char pakni chhikai Rangchhi l
3. Chhikai Chabani Jen  Mana Gandan Hadam
   Nachhikai Khyichhana Bomay,
4. Ninggikai Charpak ba  Orani Jiron Rai
   Jirai Nowa Nangi Chhayay l

He has also translated the poem *Swadesh Prem* by Padmadhar Chaliha.
This particular poem of Chaliha has been inspired by Sir Walter Scott’s English poem *Patriotism*. Rabha Hakacham has translated it as *Jibra Hasong Nasi*.

Rawana Jyinam Changba I Byichhamutay
Rongtake Khapak Rongka Ganda,
‘Iyang Angi Pradam’ ine Myunang Myunang
Chao chhoba Aya Tepkhucha?  

Translation of a few Hindi poems into Rabha also goes to his credit. *Par ni Hauchh* is the translation of Hindi poet Makhan Lal Chaturvedi’s poem *Phulon Ki Abhilasha*. Here the flower doesn’t wish to adore the body of the heavenly nympha or be a part of the garland meant for the ardent lover. Neither it wishes to be spread over the corpse of a king nor used as offering before a deity. Instead the flower wishes that the gardener should pluck it with his hands and spread it all along the path through which the valiant sons of the motherland goes out on their mission to save the motherland from her enemies. This patriotic feelings of the poet has been beautifully described by the translator in *Par ni Hauchh* –

Kapalni Lekhon Ine Kapal Nangkai Changa,
Pardamgiri! Dake Ra Ango,
Dane Rakhu Ukay Rami,
Jibra Hasong Badang Charpak Thyipe
Renga Bir Panga Ja Rami!  

*Pakhar Aro Tambrong* is the Rabha translation of the Hindi poem *Talab Aur Nadi* by poet *Ramesh*. Here the pond ridicules the river for its tendency to flow towards the sea and join its salty water. The pond feels that this act of the river is meaningless. But the river has an answer for the pond. The river feels that stagnancy of the pond is the symbol of laziness. It is dynamism which proves the utility and worthiness of a person or thing. In fact the poet has tried to compare the dynamism of human life
with the movement of the flowing river. The theme of the original poem has remained intact in the translated version. In this way Upen Rabha Hakacham has made commendable contribution as far as the translation of poems into Rabha from other languages is concerned.

After Upen Rabha Hakacham we find another young Rabha poet Ayan Rabha as a promising translator. He has translated one of the well known romantic poems of the Assamese poet Debakanta Barua – *Kolong Parot Maz Nisha* into Rabha as *Tambrong Hakopi Phar Majari*. The romantic essence of the original poem has been retained in the translated version too –

Paroni Pitamkai, Nangi Mon Bekhereba

Changchano Ne?

Hoyto Changaba Towa, Changchanaba Towa, Duk Tongcha Angi

Tongcha Ahangkar ....................

Tikang Angan Tyipchengjo Nang Dorayna

Khapakini Nasi Angi

In this way a few Rabha poets translated some selected poems from languages such as Assamese, English and Hindi. Translation of prose is far easier than the translation of poems. But the Rabha poets deserve credit for making this not so easy task possible. A close review of their translated works will show that the original flavour of the poems have been retained in their work. This is quite encouraging. There is hope for the farther spreadth of translation of poems into Rabha.

When we talk about translation of short stories we come to see that so far no short story of other languages has been translated into Rabha. But it is encouraging to note that the CIIL has sponsored the translation of the popular Assamese novel *Jeevanar Batat* by Bina Barua into Rabha.
Rabha dramatists have contributed towards translation too. From the data available it can be said that those dramas and dance-dramas are in manuscript form. Still these creations have literary value. The first Rabha dramatist to translate a drama into Rabha is Rajen Pam. He translated the Assamese drama *Rengoni* written by himself into Rabha giving it the name *Rang chari.*

Ganapati Pam has translated a few dramas of other languages into Rabha. These dramas are *Nagraj* (1963, from Bengali) and *Shmosan Milon* (1975, from Assamese).

Januram Rabha has translated a drama to his credit titled *Kama Bodh* based on the valour of the great epic character Karna. The foremost Rabha dramatist of modern times Prakash Rabha has the credit of translating dramas and dance-dramas. His Rabha drama *Gorib Ana Khapa* written in 1978 is a translated version of the Bengali drama *Gorib Keno Kande.* He has jointly translated with Dhaneswar Rabha the dance-drama *Nal Damayanti* in 1977 and *Barasha rani* in 1996 along with a few artists of Sonajuli theatre. He has translated one more dance-drama named *Chandra Bangsha* in 1984. Rati Kanta Barchung has translated the mythological tale of Prahlad the devotee and turned it into a dance-drama *Bhakta Prahlad.* His dance-drama *Hachuini Mecha* is also a translated work. Nista Baksok has contributed the dance-drama *Mirtangi Sabra* (Miri Jiyari) which is also a translated work. Upen Rabha Hakacham has also translated into Rabha a portion of *Sonit Kunwori* – a drama by Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala.

Sukracharya Rabha is another enthusiastic Rabha dramatist who initiated the amateur drama movement. Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala’s Assamese drama *Rupalim* has been translated into Rabha and staged at Dudhnoi during the *Drama Festival of Theatre Forum of Assam* (12/9/03) There is a fusion of Rabha folk music
and folk instruments which is experimented through stage performance. This drama 
was later staged at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalashetra (18/10/03) and Sibsagar Natya 
Mandir. A Kannada drama has also been translated into Rabha as Madaiya Muchi and 
staged at Dudhnoi on 8/01/05. Moreover another enthusiastic Rabha dramatist Pabitra 
Rabha who is also a student of the N.S.D. has made significant contribution in this 
field.

The contribution may be less but not ignorable. Inspite of the fact that 
these works of Rabha drama are still in manuscript form, it can be said that the dramatists 
were enthusiastic about incorporating works of other languages into Rabha through 
translation. This has added a new dimension to Rabha drama literature.

At the joint initiative of the ABILAC and the Sahitya Akademi a project 
has been undertaken to translate some folktales of different states of India into Rabha. 
The project has been completed and the collection in Rabha Song – Hasongini Khircha 
was published in 1999. The editor of this translated volume of folk tales is Upen Rabha 
Hakacham. The translators of these folk tales are Jibeswar Koch, Jagat Kama and 
Upen Rabha Hakacham. This has been quite an encouraging step for the enhancement 
of Rabha children literature. Farther more Upen Rabha Hakacham has translated a 
Hindi story into Rabha titled Kayni Bis published in Chhok - Dumbay – a text book of 
Rabha Bhasa Parishad. The Rabha Bhasa Parishad has also been encouraging other 
Rabha writers to translate stories and folktales of other languages into Rabha.

Listi Rabha Rongkho has translated the biography of the founder of the 
Vishwa Hindu Parishad Dr. Headgawar into Rabha in 1994. This translated biography 
has been published by the Dr. Headgawar Birth Centenary Committee, Guwahati. This 
valuable work has been regarded as a significant asset to Rabha literature as far as 
biography writing is concerned. Inspite of being a translated work the Rabha version of 
Dr Headgawar’s biography has its original touch intact with lucidity of narrative and
singleness of aim and objectivity.

There is no dearth of writers in the Rabha language. But as far as quality is concerned not many of the writers have been able to achieve a position in the history of Rabha literature. The *Jatini Khurang* and the *Champai* gave opportunity to many a promising writer to hone their creative talent through these magazines. The outcome of the effort has been fruitful. Litterateurs like Listi Rabha Rongkho, Mani Rabha, Ganapati Pam, Khagen Hato, Rajen Pam, Charu Mohan Rabha, Prakash Rabha, Duryodhan Rabha, Ramesh Chandra Rabha, Lakshi Phenan, Suranjib Baksok, Maheswar Rabha, Ukil Chandra Rabha, Nitai Rabha, Jharna Chikacham, Riniki Churchung Pam, Sumitra Hato, Kalpana Rabha, etc. have been producing a variety of literary works, which, in the long run, have been evaluated as important and significant assets of Rabha literature. Literary awareness among the Rabha educated class started late in the last part of the twentieth century. Naturally the creation as well as publication of qualitative works of literature in Rabha has been less. Lack of enthusiastic publication houses have also hindered the publication of Rabha literature. Inspite of these shortcomings some dedicated Rabha litterateurs have been able to preserve the rich Rabha tradition and heritage through their numerous works. It is through the work of these Rabha litterateurs that we have been able to make an evaluation of their creditable work.

Notes & References:

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid p 205.
5. Ibid, p. 34.


7. Ibid, p. 5, Song No. II.


22. Rabha, Binay Kumar: *Dowane San Dipor*, San-Nari, Edited by Rabha, Banikanta, Published in 1989-90


24. Hakacham, Bistar Chandra: *Bai*, Hasongi Khurang, Edited by Rabha, Sulochan, Published in 1987-88.


28. Rabha, Sanjay: *Pange Takour*, Jougoum, Edited by Cherenga, Jantri, Published in 1995


32. Rabha, Ramesh Chandra: Ibid.

33. Rabha Juro, Duryodhan: Ibid.


41. Ibid.

42. Ibid, p. 46.


45 Ibid.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition/Year</th>
<th>Chapter/Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Rabha, Mani</td>
<td>Te Gami Chai</td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Rabha, Maheswar</td>
<td>Budakayoni Akkol</td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Rabha, Bolai</td>
<td>Aleng-Deng-Chong</td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Rabha, Charu Mohan</td>
<td>Khusimbrui Par</td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Rabha Hakacham, Naren</td>
<td>Phunji Hangar Phekechi</td>
<td>Souvenir, Satabari M.E. School, 1994</td>
<td>p. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Rabha Hakacham, Upen</td>
<td>Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya</td>
<td>2nd Edition, 2003</td>
<td>Chapter eleven, p. 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Rabha, Rajat</td>
<td>Klongkani Hanok</td>
<td>Rong jumuk, edited by Rabha, Milan Chandra, 1994</td>
<td>p.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Rabha, Charu Mohan</td>
<td>Khusimbrui Par</td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


75. Ibid, p. 10.


80. Ibid, p. 49.

81. Ibid, p. 50.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid, p. 51

84. Ibid, p. 53.

85. Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture

***********